

Yom ha Shoah - What the Holocaust means to Adonaists

Exodus 23:1-2 HCSB "You must not spread a false report. Do not join the wicked to be a malicious witness. (2) "You must not follow a crowd in wrongdoing. Do not testify in a lawsuit and go along with a crowd to pervert *justice*."

Introduction

Throughout the centuries, the enemies of God's people have plotted our destruction. Time and again they have schemed, and counseled together, but in the end, their treachery has only come to rest on their own head as Hashem warned in,

- **Proverbs 21:7 HCSB** The violence of the wicked sweeps them away because they refuse to act justly.

And

- **Proverbs 26:27 HCSB** The one who digs a pit will fall into it, and whoever rolls a stone--it will come back on him.

The amazing part is that each time this has happened the children of Israel have been given a feast day to celebrate the wonders and mercies of God.

Passover. We see this at the time of the Exodus from Egypt. All the Jewish baby boys were to be killed at birth but God protected His people and gave them Pesach', the Passover Feast.

Purim. As we saw back in March, the Book of Esther tells us about the evil plot of Haman in Persia to wipe out the Jews, the deliverance of God and the establishment of the Feast of Purim

Hanukkah. We see this with the defeat of Antiochus Epiphanes during the Maccabees and the resulting Feast of Hanukkah.

- **John 10:22-23 HCSB** Then the Festival of Dedication took place in Jerusalem, and it was winter. (23) Jesus was walking in the temple complex in Solomon's Colonnade.

By the way, apparently Jesus also celebrated Hanukkah (also called the Festival of Lights) and His three principle sermons on light were all preached during that time period.

Yom ha Shoah. We even see the same pattern in the 20th century. This week my family will be observing Yom ha Shoah, a time dedicated to remembering the Holocaust which is called in Hebrew "Shoah". Today I would like to take some time to discuss with you what the Nazi Holocaust means to us as Adonaists.



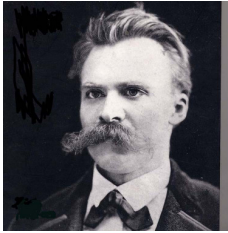
The shocking facts of Nazi Germany's history have raised hard questions. They are usually asked about the German nation; questions like: "How could a modern, cultured nation like Germany have followed Hitler in his terrible adventure in world conquest and his unprecedented atrocities?"

However, it is a much more serious question for the Christian Church. How could Hitler do what he did in a nation that was, according to the polls at the time, 97% Christian?¹

What does the Nazi era have to teach us about the quality of Christian civilization in Germany? Furthermore, since Germany was a leading nation of Western Civilization, what does this have to teach us about the quality of Western Christian civilization in general?



¹ German Lutheran church; image source: <http://missimer.com/LuthernChurch.jpg>



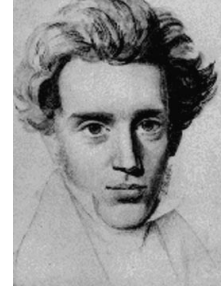
A generation before Hitler, another German, the philosopher Frederick Nietzsche, proclaimed the death of God

*"God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There never was a greater event - and on account of it, all who are born after us belong to a higher history than any history hitherto."*²

The grain of truth in Nietzsche's madness is that Christendom, i.e. Christian civilization is dead. He saw the churches as the tombs and monuments of God.³

The same message of the extinction of Christendom was proclaimed at the same time but from the Christian point of view by Soren Kierkegaard⁴ in Denmark. Kierkegaard wrote:

*"The Christianity of the New Testament simply does not exist. Here there is nothing to reform, what has to be done is to throw light upon a criminal offense against Christianity prolonged through centuries, perpetrated by millions (more or less guiltily), whereby they have cunningly, under the guise of perfecting Christianity, sought little by little to cheat God out of Christianity and have succeeded in making Christianity exactly the opposite of what it is in the New Testament."*⁵



Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, from their opposite perspectives, foresaw the end of Christian civilization. Nietzsche called for a neo-paganism that frankly and boldly proclaimed its hatred for Christianity. Kierkegaard called for the end of a hypocritical, paganized Christendom, in preparation for a renewal of authentic New Testament Christianity.

Both were men of long-range, prophetic vision. They were both misunderstood in their own times. But like time capsules, their messages began to take effect a generation after their death.



The Jewish novelist, Herman Wouk,⁶ (pronounced *woke*) identified Hitler as "*the apostle in action of the prophet Nietzsche.*" What Nietzsche wrote about, Hitler did in earnest.

Wouk wrote that Nietzsche "*embraced the 'death' of the Jewish God (and therefore of Christianity) as a necessary step of the human race toward a higher existence, the day of the godless superman. He wanted to lay the axe to the root of what he thought was a doomed society and morality.*"⁷

Nietzsche proclaimed the death of the Jewish-Christian God and Hitler sought to destroy the Jews and convert the Christians. What he did to the Jews is well known. What he did to the Christians is not as well known. However, here too, he proved to be a faithful follower of Nietzsche, who penned these terrible words:

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

³ Nietzsche, Frederick, *Joyful Wisdom*, quoted in *The Will To Freedom or The Gospel of Nietzsche and the Gospel of Christ*, by John Neville Figgis, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1917, pp. 64-66.

⁴ Image source: <http://yastrow.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/kierkegaard.jpg>

⁵ Kierkegaard, Soren, *Attack Upon Christendom*, Beacon Press, Boston 1956, pp.32, 33.

⁶ http://c250.columbia.edu/images/c250_celebrates/remarkable_columbians/240x240_bio_wouk.jpg

⁷ Wouk, Herman, *This Is My God* Doubleday and Company, Inc. Garden City, N.Y. 1961 pp. 283-284

"I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great innermost corruption, the one great instinct for revenge, for which no means is poisonous, stealthy, subterranean, small enough - I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind."⁸

The Nazis fought the Christian Church with a variety of weapons. The most important was not overt persecution, but seduction. With his spell-binding oratory Hitler sought to win the hearts of professing Christians to his own world view. He was astonishingly successful.



In his "Berlin Diary", William L. Shirer, in 1934 an American reporter on the scene at a Nazi rally in Nuremberg⁹, likened it to a religious revival.¹⁰ The pageantry and symbolism, the dramatic, spotlighted entrance of the Fuehrer and above all his impassioned speeches, created a fanatical following of millions of hard-core Nazis and millions of other Germans who were convinced enough to cooperate or at least not oppose the Nazi

movement.

The biblical term for this conversion of the church and of Christian civilization is:

"*Apostasy*" - a rebellion against God.

The classic passage on the matter of apostasy is 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. Paul writes about the end of the age, the day of Christ's coming and our gathering to Him:

- [2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 HCSB](#) (3) Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. For *that day* will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction. (4) He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits in God's sanctuary, publicizing that he himself is God.

The passage predicts that a great rebellion against faith in Christ in the last times and suggests a repudiation of faith in any God or traditional religion.

The modern term for it is:

"*secularization*", the process that turns men's eyes away from God and any world to come and focuses their faith on the present world and man himself as the prime mover of events.

Secularists teach that if there is to be a society of peace and justice, it is man himself who must bring it about, not God, and that it must happen in ordinary history, not in some future life.

Germany was the leading nation in promoting secular unbelief when Hitler came to power. Her universities and theological seminaries were among the most influential in the world.

The most prestigious of them systematically undermined the biblical foundations of faith in the land of Luther¹¹, where the Reformation began in the 16th Century. Like an army of termites, German liberalism had eaten away the substance of Christian faith in Germany, leaving the walls of a defunct Christendom standing. Hitler came on the scene with his Nazi bulldozer and pushed over the walls.

The means he used were his extraordinary powers of persuasion. Scripture calls it "powerful delusion."

- [2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 HCSB](#) The coming of *the lawless one* is based on Satan's working, with all kinds of false miracles, signs, and wonders, (10) and with every unrighteous



⁸ Nietzsche Frederick, The Antichrist #62, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, Penguin Books, 40 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010, 1984, pp. 655,656.

⁹ Image source: http://xahlee.org/Periodic_dosage_dir/skina/cabaret2.html

¹⁰ Shirer, William L, *Berlin Diary*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1941, pp. 18-19.

¹¹ Image source: <http://www.n-georgia.com/images/savannah-lutheran-church-st.jpg>

deception among those who are perishing. *They perish* because they did not accept the love of the truth in order to be saved. (11) For this reason God sends them a strong delusion so that they will believe what is false, (12) so that all will be condemned--those who did not believe the truth but enjoyed unrighteousness.

There comes a time in the history of a nation and a people when God tests their hearts. Germany had been in possession of the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ since the Reformation broke out there in 1517. But had the German people loved the truth? In the secret counsel of God, a test was decreed and a powerful delusion was sent to reveal their hearts. The human instrument of that delusion was Adolph Hitler.



The nation as a whole believed the lie, delighted in wickedness and came under God's condemnation in the judgments of World War II.¹²

The bulk of the people of Germany followed Hitler, many with enthusiasm, many as a matter of duty, some reluctantly. A minority opposed him. Albert Einstein said that it was mostly the ordinary Christians and their Pastors rather than the intellectuals who gave the Nazis whatever opposition they had from within Germany.¹³

The numbers were not large. Hitler "*was well aware*," wrote William L Shirer, "*that the resistance to the Nazification of the Protestant Churches came from a minority of Pastors and an even smaller minority of worshippers.*"¹⁴

Those who resisted; who would not be persuaded by his rhetoric; Hitler harassed and persecuted as the political climate permitted. What then was left of Christian civilization after the Nazi bulldozer had run over the land of Germany? Those who resisted this blatantly anti-Christian movement were a relatively small minority. Hitler demolished the myth of Christian Germany, leaving only a small body of stubborn believers.

The unlearned lesson in this terribly significant era is that

This is a universal and not a merely German phenomenon.

Historians look to the uniqueness of the German historical experience to explain Hitler and the Nazis. There still persists the naive confidence that it can't happen here or at least that it can be avoided here.

The truth is, this is a spiritual phenomenon related to the church, at the close of the age. And as the church is universal, so is the experience. Germany is not even the first, only the most dramatic and consistent example of a world wide anti-Christian uprising predicted for the last times.

The apostasy has already happened here.

A subtle but powerful delusion – a secularization - has occurred on the American ideological and theoretical stage. It has produced a social and cultural revolution and is now beginning to affect law and government our own country. We have reached the unstable point that Germany came to in the 1930s. Therefore, as God does not change and does not show favoritism, some such testing must be expected here.

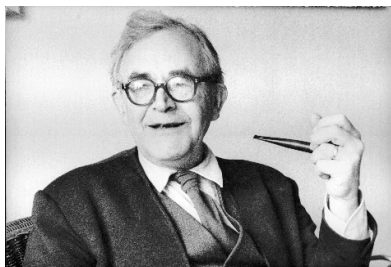
All that is necessary is some kind of crisis and the stage is set for a "charismatic" leader like Hitler to arise and galvanize the secular, anti-Christian potential into a consistently anti-Christian state.

¹² Image source: <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/images/30015036-p2.jpg>

¹³ *The German Church Struggle and the Holocaust*, Edited by Franklin H. Littell and Hubert G. Locke, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1974, p.19.

¹⁴ Shirer, William L. *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1960, p. 238.

The bulldozer such a leader could build in the United States today would be a far more sophisticated, powerful and deceptive machine than the Nazis built in Germany. However, the results would be the same. The myth of Christian America would be destroyed, leaving a relatively small and persecuted, confessing church.



Karl Barth¹⁵, the chief theologian of the Confessing Church in Germany and the author of the Barmen Declaration which brought that church into being, gave us some important counsel on how to serve God in the very different world we face since the advent of Hitler.

In his famous letter to an East German Pastor after the end of World War II, Barth questioned the suspicious tie between nationalism and faith. He warned of the dangers of the Christian church looking for public assistance, support, recognition or even tolerance from its national government. Did the early church in Jerusalem, Rome, Corinth or Asia Minor enjoy such a luxury? And where in the Scriptures are we promised such a thing? Barth writes:

"Yes, the hour may strike and has perhaps already struck when God, to our discomfiture, but to his glory and for the salvation of mankind, will put an end to this form of existence because it lacks integrity and has lost its use. Yes, it could be our duty to free ourselves inwardly from our dependence on that mode of existence even while it still lasts. Indeed, on the assumption that it may one day entirely disappear, we definitely should look about us for new ventures in new directions. Yes, as the Church of God, we may depend on it that if only we are attentive God will show us such new ways as we can hardly anticipate now."¹⁶

A generation has gone by since Barth wrote those solemn words of warning and counsel. The "new way" he commended to the church in East Germany, the same way he tried to find for the Confessing Church in Germany during the Nazi era, has become an urgent matter for Christians here in the United States. America today, like Germany in the 1930s, is a trap ready to spring on the Christian Church which seriously contemplates obedience to Jesus Christ and the Gospel.

The Church's adaptation to a potentially hostile society and government in neo-pagan America, is the most urgent issue facing the Christian community in our country today. Tragically, because the lessons of Nazi Germany have not been learned, it is an item that is not even found on most church's agendas! Let it not be so of ours.

¹⁵ Image source: <http://chaosandoldnight.files.wordpress.com/2006/07/karlbarthpipe.jpg>

¹⁶ Barth, Karl and Hamel, Johannes, *How to Serve God in a Marxist Land*, 291 Broadway, New York, N.Y., 1959, pp. 61-65.