



Volume 7. Nazi Germany, 1933-1945

Heinrich Himmler on Christianity and Religion (June 9, 1942)

Although the Hitler regime largely limited itself to the subjugation and suppression of the Christian churches and postponed a “final solution of the church question” to the end of the war, there were radical groups within the government who called for the “de-Christianization” of the German people as soon as possible. At the beginning of the century, various neo-pagan currents were already making themselves felt in Germany. They often advocated *völkisch*-racial views and believed that the spiritual regeneration of the nation would come from its supposedly genuine Nordic-Germanic religion. After 1933, the NSDAP lent official support to “God Belief” [*Gottgläubigkeit*], an ersatz religion borrowing from neo-paganism. By 1939, “God Belief” had more than 3 million adherents in Germany. One of the most important Nazi proponents of racial-mystical paganism was Heinrich Himmler, who regarded his SS as an elite Germanic tribe. In the following speech, which was delivered on the occasion of Reinhard Heydrich’s funeral, he explained some of the principles of his faith, which were based largely on a general contempt for individuality and humanity.

[. . .] We will have to deal with Christianity in a tougher way than hitherto. We must settle accounts with this Christianity, this greatest of plagues that could have happened to us in our history, which has weakened us in every conflict. If our generation does not do it then it would I think drag on for a long time. We must overcome it within ourselves. Today at Heydrich's funeral I intentionally expressed in my oration from my deepest conviction a belief in God, a belief in fate, in the ancient one as I called him—that is the old Germanic word: *Wralda*. We shall once again have to find a new scale of values for our people: the scale of the macrocosm and the microcosm, the starry sky above us and the world in us, the world that we see in the microscope. The essence of these megalomaniacs, these Christians who talk of men ruling this world, must stop and be put back in its proper proportion. Man is nothing special at all. He is an insignificant part of this earth. If a big thunderstorm comes, he can do nothing about it. He cannot even predict it. He has no idea how a fly is constructed—however unpleasant, it is a miracle—or how a blossom is constructed. He must once again look with deep reverence into this world. Then he will acquire the right sense of proportion about what is above us, about how we are woven into this cycle.

Then, on a different plane, something else must happen: we must once again be rooted in our ancestors and grandchildren, in this eternal chain and eternal sequence. [. . .] By rooting our people in a deep ideological awareness of ancestors and grandchildren we must once more

persuade them that they must have sons. We can do a very great deal. But everything that we do must be justifiable vis-à-vis the clan, our ancestors. If we do not secure this moral foundation which is the deepest and best because the most natural, we will not be able to overcome Christianity on this plane and create the Germanic Reich which will be a blessing for the earth. That is our mission as a nation on this earth. For thousands of years it has been the mission of this blond race to rule the earth and again and again to bring it happiness and culture.

[. . .]

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

Source of original German text: 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, T-175, Roll 90, Frames 2664-2685; reprinted in Heinrich Himmler, *Heinrich Himmler: Geheimreden 1933 bis 1945 und andere Ansprachen*. Bradley F. Smith and Agnes F. Peterson, eds. Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1974, pp. 159-61.