

GARRETT-EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

“American Voices at the Crossroads:  
The Response to *Kristallnacht*  
of the  
Protestant Religious Press”

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THESIS

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By

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## Preface

In the summer of 2008, I was selected as Dorot Foundation Summer Research Fellow at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. My project was to research the response to *Kristallnacht* of the American religious press as part of a webpage subsequently posted on the museum's website. As the summer progressed, my interest narrowed to the Protestant press, specifically periodicals. Through my research at the museum's library, the Library of Congress, The American Catholic History Research Center at The Catholic University of America, and Wesley Theological Seminary Library a rich and complex history unfolded. This history, except for the work of a select few historians, has in large part been forgotten, but as I hope my thesis will show, the complex response to *Kristallnacht* in the Protestant press foreshadows the response of the American Protestants to the Shoah.

As with any project, there are many people to thank. First and foremost, I must thank my parents for their support emotionally and financially. In addition, The Dorot Foundation and the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; Paul Shapiro the director of the Center, Lisa Yavnai and Tracy Rucker for making the fellowship program a success. Thanks to Robert Ehrenreich, Dieter Kuntz, and Suzanne Brown-Fleming for sharing their wisdom with a young scholar. Thanks also to Ron Coleman and Vincent Slatt for their many hours of research assistance and for adding valuable insight to a complex topic. Thanks also to Shay Robertson and Krista McNeil for their hours of reading and thoughtful critique. Any mistakes made are my fault alone. Many apologies and thanks to everyone who has

contributed to this project, but whom I have neglected to name. Finally, I am profoundly grateful to my mentors, Stephen Ray and Victoria Barnett , without whom I would neither have achieved the goals I have set for today, nor would I aspire to the goals I have set for tomorrow. It is with profound respect and humility that I recognize those individuals whose lives were scarred, ruined or surrendered to the Shoah. I hope that I honor their memories with my work.

Job 8

## Introduction

The history of *Kristallnacht*, including what led to the pogrom, what transpired on that night, and what resulted from Nazi escalation from oppression to persecution, is well documented. Many scholars, including Raul Hilberg and Sir Martin Gilbert, have written on the events of November 8-10, 1938, but little research was conducted on international responses. At the time of *Kristallnacht*, America, France, and the United Kingdom were trying to avoid conflict with the fast rising and highly influential Nazi Regime. A few months earlier France and the United Kingdom agreed at Munich to hand over to Hitler Czechoslovakian lands. Appeasement was the official U.S. policy towards Germany. The U.S. and Western Europe did not want to break a tenuous peace, and Hitler's regime took advantage of that fact.

The response to the pogroms in the international press was mixed. Newspapers carried the events in great detail, as with any other major event, but a firm response calling for action was rare. On the whole, American newspapers condemned the actions but did little more than speak of the abhorrent nature of the attacks. American leaders such as President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President Herbert Hoover, and Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes protested the Nazi violence within days. The same held true for American churches, in particular the Protestant Church.<sup>1</sup>

While conducting my research I found one book that referencing the American Protestant Church and the Shoah. Robert Ross' *So It Was True: The American Protestant*

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<sup>1</sup> When referring to the Protestant Church I will focus on denominations which were involved in the Federal Council Churches of Christ in America because of the ecumenical beliefs.



*Press and the Nazi Persecution of the Jews*, written in 1998, delves deeply into many issues of the response of how magazines like *The Christian Century*, *The Friend*, *The Sunday School Times*, *The Lutheran* and others to the actions of the Nazi regime. Ross' work is pertinent to my research as a stepping-off point, but the thirteen pages dedicated to Kristallnacht is much more limited in scope than my own pursuit. Other works which have looked at the Protestant Church and antisemitism, are more surveys than in depth examinations. Two examples of this type of text are Franklin H. Littel's *American Protestantism and Antisemitism* (1985) and Robert Michael's *A Concise History of American Antisemitism* (2005). While both books offer theoretical insight into the actions of various denominations, neither can be considered factual or objective sources of information for research purposes.

The paucity of secondary sources leaves open a wide berth for my own interpretation of the available primary documents and as a result in large part the research represented here is original. Whenever possible, I have engaged secondary sources in dialogue with my own original research as I bring it to bear on the work of the Holocaust academy at large. In this way, my work will maintain its unique focus while also contributing to the field of general knowledge in an increasingly complex field.

Broadly speaking, the overarching question which guides my research is: how did the American Protestant Churches respond to the nights of November 9-10, 1938 otherwise known as Kristallnacht? This question is complex at the surface and becomes increasingly more complex as one digs down to the primary sources. As with all research in Holocaust Studies, pushing past the black and white issues at the surface to the ethical

grey zones is imperative for understanding the issue as a whole. The goal of my thesis is not to find a clear answer to this question but rather to give clarity to the issues inherent in the topic, while at the same time deliberately graying the picture.

In order to offer a thorough response, my research focuses on responses in the American Protestant press beginning in November 8, 1938 through March 10, 1939 and the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia. These parameters allow for a clean break from Kristallnacht and the beginning of war rhetoric in March 1939. A few articles were written on antisemitism in various denominational magazines after March, 1939; I will include the most pertinent in my research.

As previously stated, my research will focus on primary sources which include: magazines, journals, newspapers, and Nazi documents (translated into English as part of the *International Military Tribunal*). My research will be limited to essential primary sources due to the limited scope of an MTS thesis. Through the use of primary sources, confirmed by secondary sources as available, I will attempt to provide research that is both responsible and neutral. I will follow what Michael Marrus said in his article, “The Role of a Historian”:

“‘Getting it right’ is far more difficult and exhilarating than people assume. Leave aside the deepest questions: How could people do it? How could others allow them to do it? These questions ultimately fall outside the historians’ province, I believe, for the answers—if there are answers—are tied up with the notions of humanity itself and its capacities for good and evil. But there are also garden-variety questions, asked all the time by historians, but which for the Holocaust are extraordinary import, because we after all, are talking about the murder of millions of people: Who decided? How were decisions reached? Who acted? When? And how? What did people know? How did one place differ from another? What alternatives presented themselves? ... ‘Getting it right,’ involves posing such questions and addressing them with the best tools the historical culture of our society provides. It also requires some measure of objectivity, which brings us to perhaps the most important methodological

challenge for the historian of the Holocaust. Among the least appreciated attributes of the historian these days.”<sup>2</sup>

I will aspire to follow Marrus’ paradigm of a Shoah historian. Historical method is the bedrock of my research and writing. In the conclusion I might venture into deeper questions of “good and evil” or as I see them “ethical discourses,” but this will not overshadow my mission as a historian. In the study of the Shoah, historical examination takes precedence over theological examination because first and foremost the Shoah is the historical fact of the murder of millions and it is only through the comprehension and examination of that fact that philosophical enquiry can begin. The humanness of the victims must come first because if it does not, then victims become abstract and are eventually lost in the larger questions.

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<sup>2</sup> Michael R. Marrus, “‘Getting it Right’: Some Thoughts on the Role of the Holocaust Historian,” *The Holocaust: Memories, Research, Reference*, ed. by Robert Hauptman and Susan Hubbs Motin (Philadelphia: The Haworth Press, 1998), 151.

## Chapter 1

### “Kristallnacht: From Oppression to Persecution”

The events of the “Night of Broken Glass” or Kristallnacht did not begin on November 9, 1938. Rather November 9-10, 1938 was the culmination of actions that started on October 18, 1938. Over the intervening month, the Nazi government transitioned from a policy of oppression to one of persecution. For the first five years of the Nazi reign, actions against the Jews were primarily in the forms of propaganda along with social and governmental exclusion. Jews were publicly portrayed as being irreconcilably different, their businesses were boycotted (April 1938) and Jewish professors were removed from institutions of higher learning. On October 18, 1938, Nazi policy shifted from passive to active separation of Jews from society.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of October, on Hitler’s orders, the Nazis carried out their first deportation of Jews to Poland. The Jews expelled from Germany were Polish nationals who had lived in Germany for up to two generations. The Polish government announced that Polish citizens, who had lived in foreign countries for an extended period of time, would not have their passports renewed and would lose Polish citizenship. In reaction to this announcement, the Nazi government ordered all Polish Jews— who would soon lose citizenship and therefore not be deportable— rounded up and sent to the Polish border where they would be forced to cross before the passport deadline.

Reports of this deportation reached the American public within two weeks and major newspapers like *The Atlanta Constitution*, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post* carried daily updates of the

standoff at the border between Germany and Poland. On November 1, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post* published an Associated Press article describing the conditions under which Jews were driven across the border, dropped off, and forcefully kept from trying to reenter Germany.<sup>1</sup> According to Jerzy Szapiro's article, "Nazi Guns Forced Jews Into Poland," old persons and children arrived at the border and were forced to enter Poland with nowhere to go and no resources to survive. A young deportee from Hamburg described the treatment by the Nazis:

A few minutes after we had been unloaded from the train on the frontier S.S. men with fixed bayonets surrounded us and told us to march as quickly as possible. It was cold and wet and the road was full of holes and mud.

We were warned not to look back, but we heard the rattling of machine guns in the rear. The S.S. men threatened to shoot if any one tried to stay behind, so we moved forward for quite a while in dead silence. We were hungry and tired and some elderly people collapsed under the bundles they were carrying.

Suddenly, for no apparent reason, rifle shots broke the silence. The people ran or dropped to the ground, where they were beaten and trod on by guards. Many were injured during the stampede. I lost my baggage, as did many others. There was no time to recover it.

The worst happened when we came to a ditch right on the frontier. There was a barbed-wire fence on the other side. We were pushed across it carrying children and those who could not move.

We waded ankle-deep in water finally reaching Polish soil. The S.S. men remained behind. We proceeded unguarded to the station.<sup>2</sup>

Events like this one took place across the German-Polish border at the end of October 1938 causing mass chaos, the loss of life, and an insurmountable refugee crisis. The Nazi military forced "Polish" Jews back into Poland generations after immigrating to Germany

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<sup>1</sup> "Nazis and Poles Fix Fate Today of 9,000 Jews," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 1, 1938; "9,000 Huddled at Border," *The New York Times*, November 1, 1938; "9,000 Jews Huddled on German Border, Their Fate in Hands of Nazi-Polish Parley," *The Washington Post*, November 1, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> Jerzy Szapiro, "Nazi Guns Forced Jews Into Poland," *The New York Times*, November 1, 1938.

without hope of survival and also used the deportations for pleasure. The statement published in *The New York Times* illustrates how for the soldiers forcing them across the border at gunpoint, the Jewish deportees became a game. The behavior of the soldiers made a horrible situation all the more devastating. The goal of the Nazi military was to remove “Polish” Jews by any means necessary and the tactics used clearly showed the extremes to which the Nazis were willing to go to achieve ideological goals.

*The Spark that Ignited a Fire Across the Sky*

On November 3, 1938, in Paris, a young Polish Jewish man received a letter from his sister living in Germany describing the Nazi deportation of Polish Jews from Germany.<sup>3</sup> The same young man, named Herschel Grynszpan, read in a Yiddish newspaper the next day gruesome accounts of people driven to insanity and suicide.<sup>4</sup> Grynszpan was outraged by the events in Germany and on Sunday November 6<sup>th</sup> bought a pistol. The following day, Grynszpan went to the German Embassy and demanded to speak to the ambassador under the pretense that he had an important document for the ambassador; instead of meeting the ambassador, Grynszpan was sent to speak to Third Secretary Ernst vom Rath.<sup>5</sup> When the Grynszpan reached vom Rath’s office the Third Secretary asked for the document and the young Jew screamed, “You are a filthy *Boche* and here, in the name of 12,000 persecuted Jews, is your document.”<sup>6</sup> Grynszpan pulled

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<sup>3</sup> Martin Gilbert, *Kristallnacht: Prelude to Destruction* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 24.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Read and David Fisher, *Kristallnacht: The Nazi Night of Terror* (New York: Random House, 1989), 6.

<sup>6</sup> Gilbert, *Kristallnacht*, 24.

out the pistol and fired five shots at close range. Two bullets hit vom Rath, but did not kill him.

In Germany, the next day morning newspapers reported the shooting of vom Rath and reminded its readers three years earlier another Jewish man murdered a German diplomat in Switzerland. These two murders were proof the Jewish people were executing a murderous campaign against Nazi Germany.<sup>7</sup> *The New York Times* reported that German newspapers were blaming the international Jewry for these incidents and they would have to pay for their attempt on vom Rath's life:

The official correspondence service *Dienst Aus Deutschland* charged that "international Jewry" was responsible for the attempt of a Polish refugee from Germany to assassinate the secretary of the German Embassy in Paris today. The service indicated that Jews in Germany probably would have to pay for the attempt on Ernst vom Rath.<sup>8</sup>

The shooting in Paris was reported in Europe and the United States within a day and newspapers wondered what the response of the Nazi government would be. The worry was how severe Nazi retribution against the Jewish population in Germany would be for an attempted murder committed by one person.

Beginning on November 8, Nazi punitive measures were rained down on the Jewish population. Soon after reports reached Germany, all Jewish newspapers and magazines were ordered to cease publication.<sup>9</sup> On the same day, it was announced that Jewish children could not attend "Aryan" schools and "Jewish" activities were ceased

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> "Reich Embassy Aide in Paris Shot To Avenge Expulsions by the Nazis," *The New York Times*, November 8, 1938.

<sup>9</sup> Gilbert, *Kristallnacht*, 25; Read, *Kristallnacht*, 61.

until further notice.<sup>10</sup> According to Nazi officials like Josef Goebbels and Reinhard Heydrich, these acts were not sufficient retribution for the attempted murder of vom Rath. On the night of November 8, Propaganda Minister Goebbels called for “spontaneous demonstrations” against the Jews of Germany.<sup>11</sup> Within twenty-four hours of vom Rath’s shooting two synagogues were burned down. This would set a precedent for the type of actions to take place over the next two days.

On the evening of November 9, news reached Berlin that vom Rath had died and plans for reprisals began.<sup>12</sup> At the time of vom Rath’s death, most Nazi officials—including Hitler and Goebbels—were in Munich observing the fifteenth anniversary of the famed Beer Hall Putsch. When Hitler received word of the Third Secretary’s death, he was informed by Goebbels that reprisal demonstrations were taking place throughout Germany. Hitler ordered a Police withdrawal and demonstrations allowed to continue, so Jews would feel the full wrath of the people for the murder of a Nazi diplomat.<sup>13</sup> After giving these orders to Goebbels, Hitler left the meeting. Goebbels gave the closing speech, traditionally given by Hitler.<sup>14</sup> Goebbels addressed the gallery stating:

Ernst vom Rath was a good German, a loyal servant of the Reich, working for the good of our people in our embassy in Paris. Shall I tell you what happened to him? He was shot down! In the course of his duty, he went, unarmed and unsuspecting, to speak to a visitor at the embassy, and had two bullets pumped into him. He is now dead...Comrades, we cannot allow this attack by international Jewry to go unchallenged. It must be repudiated. Our people must be told, and their answer must be ruthless, forthright, salutary! I ask you to listen to me, and together we must plan

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<sup>10</sup> Gilbert, *Kristallnacht*, 25.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>12</sup> “Blood Transfusions in Vain,” *The New York Times*, November 9, 1938.

<sup>13</sup> “‘International Jewry’ Blamed,” *The New York Times*, November 7, 1938 and “Reply to Death of Envoy,” *The New York Times*, November 10, 1938.

<sup>14</sup> Read, *Kristallnacht*, 62.



what is to be our answer to Jewish murder and the threat of international Jewry to our glorious German Reich.<sup>15</sup>

Proclaiming that the events of Kristallnacht were “spontaneous” was an overstatement, if not completely false. Nazis were instructed to lead attacks against Jews throughout Germany, but not necessarily in uniform. It would be more appropriate to say Nazi officials, like Goebbels, incited the violence on November 9-10. The Nazis started and continued the pogrom with the complicity of bystanders who participated both directly and passively. The blame for these events does not belong entirely to the broader German people, but rather to the Nazis and their accomplices.

Reinhard Heydrich’s orders to local Gestapo offices provided for the protection of German properties, the confiscation of synagogue records, the Gestapo were in charge of all demonstrations against the Jews, and officials were to arrest as many Jews as feasibly possible.<sup>16</sup> As the night of the 9<sup>th</sup> became the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup>, Nazi orders were refined to ensure the safety of all Germans. As the pogroms continued, Gestapo and other police organizations were ordered to make sure no Jewish business was burned but that as many synagogues and Jewish centers were destroyed as possible.<sup>17</sup> It was a clear demonstration that the Nazi state did not want the Jews, just their wealth. At 12:03AM on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, the Munich fire department received its first major fire alarm—the first synagogue was set ablaze.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Reinhard Heydrich, “Re: Measures Against the Jews Tonight,” *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, vol. 5 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1946), 799-800.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

*Eyewitnesses to the Night of Crystal*

In an effort to show the plight of Nazi victims, the remainder the chapter will focus on eyewitnesses' accounts from bystanders, perpetrators, and most importantly victims. For the scope of the chapter, one city will provide a snapshot of atrocities committed during the thirty-six hours of wanton violence which transformed Nazi oppression into a policy of persecution. The city of Leipzig shared the same fate as many cities throughout the Reich. In Leipzig, the pogrom began at 3:51AM with the report of a fire at the Gemeinde Synagogue on Gottschedstrasse, yet by the time authorities reached the synagogue, fire had consumed the whole structure and only preventative measures were taken to ensure other buildings did not catch fire.<sup>19</sup> In order to make the area surrounding the synagogue safe, the authorities rounded up as many Jews as possible to clear debris from the streets. Since the Nazi government had declared the entire action the fault of the German Jews, they were ordered to clean up debris in Leipzig.<sup>20</sup>

At 5:05AM, a second fire was reported at Bamberger and Hertz on the corner of Goethe Strasse and Grimmaische Strasse. As with the previous fire, authorities arrived and declared the building unsalvageable and worked to protect the surrounding "Aryan" structures.<sup>21</sup> The official record of the fire states the cause as arson and the owners of the Bamberger and Hertz building were cited as the culprits. At 5:20AM reports of a second synagogue fire was reported. Once again fire fighters arrived in time to salvage surrounding buildings but not the synagogue. The second synagogue fire at the Eitz

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<sup>19</sup> Sholmo Wahrman, *Lest We Forget: Growing Up In Nazi Leipzig 1933-1939* (New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1991), 94.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

Chaim Synagogue was constructed in 1922 on Otto Schill Strasse and destroyed sixteen years later.<sup>22</sup> The synagogue on Faerberstrasse was demolished and the sacred texts thrown into the streets. When the main rabbi of the synagogue tried to salvage the texts, he was arrested and as punishment, had most of his beard trimmed.<sup>23</sup> The Broder Shul synagogue was the only synagogue not destroyed in Leipzig due to its close proximity to Aryan residences. While this synagogue was spared demolition, it was ransacked and had its sacred objects mutilated.<sup>24</sup> According to the author of *Lest We Forget*—who was a Jew living in Leipzig during Kristallnacht—official reports cite thirteen Jewish houses of worship that were destroyed, but the author and his father’s count approaches twenty vandalized or destroyed. After Kristallnacht, any houses of worship still standing was closed by Nazi officials.<sup>25</sup>

Heydrich’s orders to arrest as many Jews as feasibly possible resulted in more than 550 Jewish detainments from November 10 to November 15. Of the approximately 550 Jews arrested, around half were sent to Buchenwald concentration camp.<sup>26</sup> To the Gestapo, it did not matter who was arrested as long as they were “Jewish.” Prisoners ranged from teenagers to the elderly and at least two rabbis were among those sent to concentration camps.<sup>27</sup>

David H. Buffman, who was the American Consul in Leipzig at the time, reported the events to the Consul General in Berlin:

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

At 3 a.m. November 10, 1938, a barrage of [N]azi ferocity was unleashed that had had no equal hitherto in Germany or very likely anywhere else in the world. Jewish dwellings were smashed into and contents demolished or looted. In one of the Jewish sections, an eighteen-year-old boy was hurled from a three-story window to land with both legs broken on a street littered with burning beds, other household furniture, and effects from his family's and other apartments. This information was supplied by a physician. It is reported from another quarter, that among domestic effects thrown out of a Jewish dwelling, a small dog descended four flights to land with a broken spine on a cluttered street.<sup>28</sup>

A brief telegram from the American consulate in Leipzig to the Secretary of State in Washington, D.C. described the burning of three synagogues and hundreds of Jewish business' windows smashed.<sup>29</sup> Accounts from the American Consul in Leipzig gave the impression of a bystander to the outrageous attacks throughout the city and the country. These clear and unmistakable accounts of destruction documented the brutality of Nazi actions. Though the first concern of the Consul was the protection of American property and citizens, he did not stop at reporting their safety. The concise account was poignantly direct in regards to the bloody pogrom.

### *Conclusion*

On November 11, Heydrich met with other Nazi officials including Hermann Göring and presented a report detailing the actions of November 9-10.<sup>30</sup> Heydrich's report states thirty-six Jews were killed and the same number seriously injured.<sup>31</sup> According to Saul Friedländer's *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, these numbers are

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 104-5.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: Volume 1: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 1997), 275.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

extremely low. Friedländer argues that during November 8-10, 267 synagogues were destroyed; 7,500 Jewish businesses vandalized. Approximately ninety-one Jews were murdered, and hundreds more committed suicide throughout Germany.<sup>32</sup> The next several weeks proved even more disastrous for German Jews. Nazi officials, with the support of Hitler, passed new legislation against German Jews including a fine of 1,000,000,000 RM (the equivalent of \$400,000,000);<sup>33</sup> Jewish students were banned from institutions of higher learning;<sup>34</sup> Jews were temporarily banned from selling on the Berlin stock exchange;<sup>35</sup> and Jewish clubs, like the automobile club were banned.<sup>36</sup> Decrees would continue to be passed to eliminate the Jewish presence in Nazi society until May 1945.

The aftermath of Kristallnacht brought a new fury of attacks against the Jews of the Reich. November 9-10, 1938 was a shift in Nazi policy from publically claiming the Jews were different to officially branding them as such. Jews were isolated from the rest of society first with the destruction of their cultural symbols, then by their physical separation as a people from “Aryan” society, and finally their required marking as a “Jew.” These three elements were the beginning of the end for Jews within the Reich. Many tried to escape the Reich in the months following the pogrom, but with the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 and the start of World War II in September 1939, immigration outlets were sealed and few Jews would escape the horrors to come.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>33</sup> “Business of Jews Wiped Out; Nazis Levy 400 Million Fine,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 13, 1938; “Germany Slaps A Levy of 20% On Riches of Jews,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 24, 1938; “Nazis Draft New Decrees Against Jews,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 15, 1938.

<sup>34</sup> “Nazis Draft New.”

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 2

### “The Christian Century’s Response to Kristallnacht”

Like many other publications, religious or secular, the legacy of *The Christian Century* after Kristallnacht is complicated. What makes the magazine unique is its wide circulation and continuous and in-depth coverage from November 23, 1938 through March 1939.<sup>1</sup> Unlike many other religious publications, *The Christian Century* reported in each bi-weekly issue both the escalation of Nazi persecution and the responses to it in Europe and the United States. Since *The Christian Century* was published in Chicago, particular interest is paid to the responses of congregations and seminaries in the greater Chicagoland area. Though Chicago is the subject of a disproportionate amount of attention, America as a whole is the focus of the reporting. The magazine did not limit itself to church affairs, but rather tried to extend its influence to national policy; in particular, to start a refugee movement to help German Jews escape Nazi persecution.

During the five months after Kristallnacht, *The Christian Century* printed over one hundred articles reporting events in Germany—related to Kristallnacht. Many of these were small news articles either about congregational responses, large gatherings and fundraising events, or calls for refugee aid. Although many articles were small, several reports extended to multiple pages and were written by prominent theologians and church leaders such as Everett R. Clincy, Frederick C. Grant, and Rufus M. Jones, or *The Christian Century* staff.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert W. Ross, *So It Was True: The American Protestant Press and the Nazi Persecution of the Jews* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 115.

In order to arrive at a fuller understanding of how the largest undenominational<sup>2</sup>—though predominately Protestant —magazine reacted in the months following the pogrom of November 9-10, 1938, the responses in *The Christian Century* will be broken down into three types. First, the immediate reaction: condemnation or acceptance? Second, theological statements made by the magazine or by other groups and reported in *The Christian Century*. Finally, what type of action was taken, specifically regarding refugee assistance?

*Initial Response: Ambivalence, Condemnation, or Support?*

An article published in the November 9, 1938 edition, and therefore before reports of the violence in Germany had reached the United States, demonstrates the apathetic response of *The Christian Century* to Nazi persecution of the Jews. The Polish government announced that it would not renew the passports of citizens who had lived outside Poland for an extended period of time.<sup>3</sup> The article titled “Polish Jews Deported From Germany” describes the resulting forced deportation of Polish Jews from Germany. According to the article, the deportation was justified because the Polish government revoked passports of thousands of Jews living in Germany:

The deportation itself was not without some plausible justification. At least it could be rationalized. An order by the Polish government having to do with renewal of passports by Polish citizens in Germany gave ground for suspicion that some of them might lose their Polish citizenship and thereby cease to be deportable.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Description given by *The Christian Century*.

<sup>3</sup> “Polish Jews Deported From Germany,” *The Christian Century*, November 9, 1938.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

In the eyes of *The Christian Century*, the Nazis seemed justified in their deportation of Polish Jews, which resulted in Herschel Grynzspan's assassination of Ernst vom Rath in Paris. Nazi retaliation for vom Rath's murder is well documented in newspapers and *The Christian Century*. This article is an example of the magazine's empathetic tone toward Nazi deportation of Polish Jews and documents the ambiguous nature of *The Christian Century's* editorial response.

On November 23<sup>rd</sup>, the first mentions of pogroms in Germany were reported, two weeks after news of the deportations were published in other media outlets.<sup>5</sup> Though the initial reference to the "Berlin pogrom"<sup>6</sup> is on the front page, on subsequent pages detailed accounts are devoted to an article aptly titled "Terror in Germany." *The Christian Century* describes the events of Kristallnacht as the latest outburst against the Jews and the article clearly states that it cannot fully describe the outrage of the world.<sup>7</sup> The action of one Jew in Paris does not warrant persecution cloaked as punishment of half a million persons by the Nazis.<sup>8</sup> The magazine clearly condemns the actions of the Nazis, but not German bystanders or non-Nazi participants. Two weeks after the pogrom, it is clear that media sources like *The Christian Century* do not believe Nazi reports that their actions were spontaneous retaliations for the murder of vom Rath. In fact, the article not only rebukes the violence, it claims the German people would not perform such deeds without instructions to do so:

If the rioting and violence had been the spontaneous act of indignant and undisciplined people, it would have been bad. But this is worse. The Germans are not an undisciplined people. They riot only when they are

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<sup>5</sup> Ross, *So It Was True*, 115.

<sup>6</sup> "Hitler Demands Colonies or Else," *The Christian Century*, November 23, 1938.

<sup>7</sup> "Terror in Germany," *The Christian Century*, November 23, 1938.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*



instructed to riot. The damage to property—which the owners have been ordered to repair at their own expense, besides being forbidden to occupy it hereafter and robbed of resources—was as much the act of the Nazi government as though it had been done by troops in uniform and under the direct command of their officers.<sup>9</sup>

Clearly, the magazine saw through the Nazi regime’s veil, intended to obscure the fact that it conducted brutal and violent attacks against anything that was symbolically Jewish. According to the article, the German people could have performed these acts, but since they are not an unruly society, one must conclude the government was in control of the situation. The repudiation of Nazi officials and the conclusions drawn by *The Christian Century* set a precedent of connecting the fate of the Jews to the Nazi party, while at the same time, disassociating the German people from ultimate culpability. Moreover, when referencing Germany, the magazine consistently used the term “Nazi Germany” rather than “Germany.” As a part of his condemnation of Nazi Germany, the reader is asked to imagine what if, instead of economic and social disadvantages, Nazi Germany would decide to murder the Jews?<sup>10</sup>

Escalation in the persecution of Jews in the aftermath of Kristallnacht was reported with the same fervor as the wanton mistreatment during the pogrom. *The Christian Century*’s reporting descriptions of legislation instituted after Kristallnacht; namely, the law requiring all Jews to add traditional Jewish names to their given name<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Though legislation was passed in August 1938, the law did not take effect until January 1, 1939. It forced all Jews to add names like “Israel” or “Sarah” to their given name in order to differentiate them from the rest of society. This legislation was further complicated by requirements that forced Jews to carry identity cards declaring them Jewish and their passports stamped with a “J.” For further information see Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: Volume 1: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 1997), 254-55.

to differentiate them from the rest of society.<sup>12</sup> The article “The Racial Branding Iron,” describes the new racial laws separating Jews from the rest of society and investigates the Nazi idea of race. It concludes Hitler’s “pseudoscientific” persecutions based on race are absurd and lack justification. Nazi race construction, according to *The Christian Century*, is a result of fear and resentment.<sup>13</sup>

Both articles condemn the Nazi pogrom and caution that the actions of the Nazis may lead to the massacre of Jews:

But we need to see the meaning of this portentous event, not only for the Jews who are robbed and dispossessed today and may be slaughtered tomorrow but for all who must live in the kind of world that contains a power so potent and so unscrupulous...suppose that, instead of merely subjecting the Jews to economic and social disadvantages, [N]azi Germany should decide to massacre them.<sup>14</sup>

Warnings of future Nazi actions are intriguing and important to understanding the approach of *The Christian Century*. In the months leading up to September 1939, the magazine was suspicious of the Nazi government’s actions and where they would lead. Prescience is not the best way to describe the specific article’s message, rather its point is the recognition of the slippery slope from dehumanization to violence.

On the front page of the December 7<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Christian Century* an editorial detailed additional measures taken by the Nazi government against the Jews, in the wake of the destruction of businesses and synagogues. The article equates the plight of German Jews with Dante’s *Inferno* and asks how many circles of hell the Nazi regime

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<sup>12</sup> “The Racial Branding Iron,” *The Christian Century*, November 23, 1938.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> “Terror in Germany.”

will force the Jews to trudge through.<sup>15</sup> The article referred to legislation ordering Jews to pay a billion-mark fine as a punitive measure for the destruction of property.<sup>16</sup> The magazine goes on to describe the situation as if the Jews were captives of Nazi Germany: “Sometimes a kidnaper who threatens to kill his victim if his terms are not complied with actually does kill,” and “The Jews in Germany are hostages in the hands of a desperate outlaw.”<sup>17</sup> As weeks turned into months, it became clear to *The Christian Century* that the kidnapper image was less a theory than an astute observation.

From November 23<sup>rd</sup> to December 7<sup>th</sup>, *The Christian Century* imbued their reporting on the pogrom in Germany with a singular message: the acts of Nazi Germany were horrific and unwarranted. The authors and editors interpreted the pogrom as an escalation from oppression to persecution of the Jews. A clear message of denunciation was published in the November 23<sup>rd</sup> edition and the magazine demanded a response from the American government and other world powers.

### *Theological Statements*

After *The Christian Century* first reported the events of Kristallnacht, the magazine regularly reported on the reaction of American citizens and churches. Those reports included notification of prayer services, interfaith dialogues, and theological statements. *The Christian Century*'s publication of religious responses began not in the

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<sup>15</sup> “New Measures Against Jews,” *The Christian Century*, December 7, 1938.

<sup>16</sup> On November 12, 1938, Nazi officials including Hermann Göring and Reinhard Heydrich met to discuss the events of previous days. Destruction to Jewish businesses was extensive. Much of the destruction consisted of broken windowpanes that were made in Belgium, therefore a significant portion of insurance claims would be paid to foreign corporations. At this meeting, Göring informed others in attendance that two days earlier Hitler had ordered Jews to pay for all damages—fine of 1,000,000,000 RM— and that Jewish insurance claims would be confiscated by the state. For further information see Friedländer, *Nazi Germany*, 280-292.

<sup>17</sup> “New Measures Against Jews.”

November 23<sup>rd</sup> edition, but rather in the November 16<sup>th</sup> issue which advertises an event sponsored by the National Conference of Jews and Christians to be held on November 30<sup>th</sup>. The “Inter-Seminary Institute” was held at Temple Shalom in Chicago and was one of the first interfaith dialogues held after the pogrom. Importantly, the institute was attended by professors from seminaries in the area including W.E. Garrison of the University of Chicago, Harris Franklin Rall and Paul Minear of Garrett Biblical Institute, Peter Stiansen of Northern Baptist Seminary, and Rufus D. Bowman of Bethany Biblical Seminary. Other speakers included Rabbi Louis Binstock of Temple Shalom and Rabbi Felix A. Levy of Temple Emanuel.<sup>18</sup> Though no reference to the conference is made in later issues, advertisement of the conference sets a trend for later reporting of interfaith conferences addressing the situation of Jews in Germany.

On November 20<sup>th</sup>, several temples and churches in Chicago held prayer services for the persecuted Jews of Germany. Speakers included Wilhelm Pauch of Chicago Theological Seminary; William F. Clark; Rabbi Joshua Liebman; James M. Yard; Rabbi Louis Binstock; Judge John P. McGoorty; Paul Hutchinson, who was employed by *The Christian Century*; and Rabbi Louis L. Mann.<sup>19</sup> It was reported in the same article that the Orthodox Jews of Chicago were observing a month of prayer for the victims of the Nazi pogrom. By including these and similar articles, the magazine demonstrated that persons of Christian faith and persons of Jewish faith had been brought together during the month following the attacks in Germany.

The November 23<sup>rd</sup> edition reports six different events that had occurred or were going to occur in response to Kristallnacht, ranging from the topics of sermons to rabbis

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<sup>18</sup> “Inter-Seminary Institute to be Held in Chicago,” *The Christian Century*, November 16, 1938.

<sup>19</sup> “Leaders Urge Common Front,” *The Christian Century*, December 7, 1938.

asking for mercy for German citizens. In St. Louis, Missouri, Rabbi F.M. Iserman spoke at the Sunday Evening Club:

Not by seeking destruction of our oppressors but by their regeneration and restoration to sanctity not by placing them without the pale of civilization but by remembering that they too are members of the human race and can return to the family of nations; not by yielding to hatred and revenge but through justice, will international peace and security be brought about. Only then can swords be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks.<sup>20</sup>

For Christian or Jewish leaders this response was unique in that it focused on the bystanders and perpetrators. Many articles and speakers condemned the Nazis and some included the German people in that condemnation, but to recognize the humanness of those who had committed the atrocious acts was rare. A more typical response was given by John Haynes Holmes in front of 300 Christians and Jews at the Brooklyn Peace Conference. Holmes argued that Americans should fight for the Jews not by fighting Germany but by rescuing Jews from Germany.<sup>21</sup> Though some articles advocated for war with Germany or requested that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt impose sanctions on Germany, many focused on the victims. If they mentioned the perpetrators, they did not dwell on their actions; attention was directed at helping German Jews.

Over the next several months *The Christian Century* reported acts of solidarity or prayer services throughout the country, including: a condemnation of Nazi persecution by North Carolina Southern Baptists,<sup>22</sup> a thanksgiving service held by Jews and Christians in Des Moines,<sup>23</sup> a meeting attended by 1,500 people in Los Angeles,<sup>24</sup> a letter

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<sup>20</sup> "Rabbi Asks Mercy and Justice For Germany," *The Christian Century*, November 23, 1938.

<sup>21</sup> "Commemorating the Armistice," *The Christian Century*, November 23, 1938.

<sup>22</sup> "Nazis Condemned by Carolinians," *The Christian Century*, December 7, 1938.

<sup>23</sup> "Jews and Christians Hold Thanksgiving Service," *The Christian Century*, December 14, 1938.

<sup>24</sup> "Los Angeles Mass Meeting in Behalf of German Jews," *The Christian Century*, December 21, 1938.

sent to President Roosevelt by German immigrants condemning Nazi persecutions,<sup>25</sup> and the increase of interfaith meetings in Cleveland.<sup>26</sup> In all, there were thirty-three articles detailing programs from mid-November 1938 through March 1939.

Though most of the editorial attention paid to Kristallnacht was in the form of congregational news stories, *The Christian Century* did publish articles of significant length on theological issues facing Christians and Jews, particularly related to antisemitism as an issue confronting Christians. In the November 30, 1938 edition, Everett R. Clinchy published an article titled, “Anti-Semitism Must Be Uprooted,” arguing that, in order to defeat Nazism, Christians must break the hold of antisemitism. Clinchy, who was the head of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, was well suited to address antisemitism in America and express how people could fight the rise of Nazi influenced antisemitism within the United States. According to Clinchy, statistics gathered by *Fortune* prove that seventy percent of Americans “do not consider anti-Semitism in this country a hot danger at the moment,” whereas “30 percent of our people who reckon the anti-Jewish<sup>27</sup> ill will is on the increase.”<sup>28</sup> Clinchy contends that the problem facing the nation was not that thirty percent of people thought antisemitism was on the rise, but that many who placed themselves within the thirty percent were also self-proclaimed antisemites.<sup>29</sup> The struggle against antisemitism was seen as a propaganda competition:

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<sup>25</sup> “A Letter to the President,” *The Christian Century*, December 28, 1938.

<sup>26</sup> “Interfaith Gatherings Increase,” *The Christian Century*, January 23, 1939.

<sup>27</sup> Though it does not fall into the parameters of the investigation, it is interesting to note that Clinchy uses “anti-Semitism” and anti-Jewish interchangeably and leads one to believe he did not differentiate between “Jew-hatred” or “anti-Semitism” and being against Judaism.

<sup>28</sup> Everett R. Clinchy, “Anti-Semitism Must Be Uprooted,” *The Christian Century*, November 30, 1938.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

The variable which will determine whether or not organized anti-Semitism will take hold in this nation will be propaganda. Malicious propaganda against Jews is being freely scattered. Will the forces at work to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Jew of Galilee, declare that anti-Semitism is devilish, a product of nethermost hell, and automatically unchurch the man who harbors it? Unless Christians propagandize as vigorously as and more intelligently than the hate-mongers, there is enough original sin in human nature, without a doubt, to win the contest.<sup>30</sup>

Clinchy saw the pogroms in Germany as an opportunity to defeat antisemitism in American churches and therefore offered a solution to rid the Church of “Jew-hatred.” The propaganda of antisemites could only be combated by the actions of faithful Christians who did not let hatred supersede the love taught by Jesus (who, as Clinchy points out, was a Jew). The author saw two courses of action against antisemitism. Firstly, continual and widespread interfaith dialogue between faithful Christians and faithful Jews would be required in order to communicate and solidify the humanness of those across the table. Secondly, Christians needed to rededicate themselves to God, thereby allowing the warmth of God to permeate all their interactions, including those with Jews.<sup>31</sup>

The second article of theological significance was written by Frederick C. Grant, Professor of Biblical Studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Grant’s article “Did the Jews Crucify Jesus?” is meticulous in its distinctions between the Jews of 1939 and their ancestors 2,000 years previously: “It is perfectly absurd to hold the Jews of 1939 responsible for a crime committed nearly two thousand years ago, even granting that the Jews of the first century were responsible, *as a people*, for Jesus’ death.” In this

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

piece, the author also separates the responsibility of Jews from the Romans.<sup>32</sup> In fact, the author refers to the responsibility of Jews once and thereafter, through the use of biblical interpretations; guilt is placed on Rome. Taking his argument a step further, Grant rejects the Gospel of John's inference that Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus. He compares Jesus' death to those of other historical figures: "you might just as well hold the Greeks responsible for the death of Socrates, or the French for the death of Joan of Arc, or the Americans for the martyrdom of Lincoln."<sup>33</sup> Blaming the Jews of 1939 for the death of Jesus is not rational or biblically sound. According to Grant, all humanity—past, present, and future—are to blame for the death of Jesus, not one group.<sup>34</sup>

Statements like the two presented demonstrate that, theologically-speaking, the Jews did not kill Jesus. Furthermore, absent an understanding and dialogue between Christians and Jews, America was in danger of falling into the trap of Nazi Germany's antisemitism. Acceptance of Jews was crucial to the message both of Clinchy and Grant, but the threat of becoming more like the Nazis underlies the overall message. In other words, if one will not fight antisemitism to save the Jewish people, then one should fight it to save America from becoming like the Nazis.

### *Refugee Assistance*

A third consideration of *The Christian Century's* response to Kristallnacht is the type of action the magazine recommended, implemented or reported. While some *The Christian Century* reports focused on churches, it is important to recognize the pressure

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<sup>32</sup> Frederick C. Grant, "Did the Jews Crucify Jesus," *The Christian Century*, March 1, 1939.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.



the magazine placed on the American government to loosen or abolish immigration laws and enable all eligible German Jews to escape the tyranny of Nazi Germany.

The first report of aid to refugees, or those who were oppressed in Europe, was printed in the November 23, 1938 issue. Starting with this first announcement of refugee aid, a trend begins: the involvement of The Religious Society of Friends (the Quakers). Soon after the inception of pogroms in Germany, the Quakers established a refugee board to help victimized Jews escape their plight in Germany.<sup>35</sup> From November 1938 to mid-March 1939, *The Christian Century* published three news articles describing actions taken by Quakers, including several Quaker leaders traveling to Germany to assess the damage to Jewish society. *The Christian Century* also printed a larger article describing Quaker advocacy of a movement to eliminate immigration laws and promote refugee aid. Four articles over five months does not seem like a tremendous amount of coverage, but it should be noted that no other denomination received more than one piece on immigration and refugee action in such a short span of time. The Quakers received disproportionate attention from *The Christian Century*, but their actions were noteworthy for leading other denominations to start refugee campaigns.

In the January 18, 1939 issue of *The Christian Century*, an article titled “Quakers and Refugees,” describes a trip by members of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) to Germany. The trip was led by Rufus M. Jones and the goal was to give humanitarian aid to Jews in Germany. It is described as follows:

The Nazis could see that the delegation was there not to make medicine against Germany but simply and solely to do a humanitarian service to the Jews. It is impossible even for the inhumane not to feel respect for that attitude, and they felt it. Only by implication was there any criticism of

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<sup>35</sup> “Quakers to Establish U.S. Refugee Committee,” *The Christian Century*, November 23, 1938.

[N]azi tactics, and the force of that implication was the more penetrating because of its indirectness. This was an unintended consequence of the visit, but none the important.<sup>36</sup>

According to the article, the work of the AFSC was recognized by Nazi Germany as not attacking them *per se*, but rather as helping the Jews recover. Eventually this aid turned into advocacy for Jewish refugee status in other countries. Though Germany might not have appreciated the help Quakers gave Jews, especially after anti-Jewish legislation was passed, the Nazis would find Quaker promotion of Jewish immigration beneficial.

According to “Quakers and Refugees,” the delegation which traveled to Germany realized the logistical problem that would arise by attempting to move German Jews to other countries. Havens for German Jews were desirous in previous years, but after the onset of pogrom and stricter laws in Germany, immigration became increasingly difficult. The AFSC recognized that Nazi antisemitism was spreading throughout central and eastern Europe. As a result, it was beyond the scope of a humanitarian agency to remove all Jews from within the Nazi sphere of influence.<sup>37</sup> In their assessment, the most important members of the Jewish community to be removed were the children:

We can back the effort to provide for refugee children from Germany, of whom there are many thousands. Hundreds have already been taken into Christian homes in Great Britain and Holland. Thousands will be taken. Other thousands could be taken in America....Nazi racialism has created a situation, that cannot be cured by voluntary humanitarian effort, but that does not excuse us from rendering such service as we can to some of the sufferers. Not the limits of the problem but the limits of our ability are our concern.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> “Quakers and Refugees,” *The Christian Century*, January 18, 1939.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

Almost immediately after starting the venture to remove Jews from Nazi territories, logistical problems arose which forced the Quakers and other groups to rethink their approaches to refugee assistance.

Many groups were working to find a way to help Jews leave Germany and the problem of where to send them became urgent. In “Call to Churches in Behalf of Christian German Refugees,” Myron C. Taylor states that there were 660, 000 persons in Germany needing immigration assistance to leave Germany.<sup>39</sup> Approximately fifty percent of the persons needing refugee help designated themselves as Jewish, but in the Nazi state most, if not all, persons needing help were branded Jewish by the Nazis.<sup>40</sup> These numbers do not include the Jewish populations in Austria or other Nazi territories.

Removing the Jews from the grip of the Nazis required a wealth of resources, including money and supplies. Seminaries formed committees and sponsored fundraisers to help gather resources for the presumed increase of German Jewish immigrants to the U.S. The Jewish Seminary in New York joined Union Theological Seminary to help efforts by democratic countries solve the refugee problem.<sup>41</sup> Though a committee was formed to address refugee issues in all democratic countries, this committee was focused on the unique situation of New York City, the main United States immigration harbor from Europe.<sup>42</sup> In Chicago, a fundraising event raised two million dollars for refugee efforts.<sup>43</sup> The keynote speaker for the fundraiser was James G. MacDonald, former League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In his address, he reminded the

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<sup>39</sup> “Call to Churches in Behalf of Christian German Refugees,” *The Christian Century*, November 23, 1938.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> “Jewish and Christian Seminaries Press Aid for Refugees,” *The Christian Century*, December 7, 1938.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> “Raise Fund for Nazi Refugees,” *The Christian Century*, January 18, 1939.

audience that German Jews were not the only people persecuted by the Nazis; he encouraged them to remember other persecuted groups as possible future refugees.<sup>44</sup> In reporting the events, *The Christian Century* was indirectly supporting these fundraising efforts.

Although *The Christian Century* never officially endorsed a refugee policy, the magazine published letters of persons directly involved. Readers suggested former German colonies or British colonies as possible destinations. One particular letter to the editor suggested the creation of a Jewish homeland in Africa as a way for European nations to pay off their debt to America.<sup>45</sup> Another possibility for Jewish refugees would have been Palestine. Great Britain, however, failed to arrive at an agreement with Arabs and Jews (living in the area) on the prospect of hundreds of thousands of German Jews moving to Palestine.<sup>46</sup> While *The Christian Century* never endorsed a refugee policy, through its editorial selections and the publication of the letters of its readership, its position on the issue is clear. Uniting the influence of its distinguished reputation and the impact of its high circulation volume, *The Christian Century* threw its weight behind the search for a satisfactory resolution to the plight of Jewish refugees.

### *Conclusion*

*The Christian Century*'s complicated response to Kristallnacht can be broken down into three categories: "condemnation", "documenting unification of religious communities in response", and "helping persecuted Jews" Focusing solely on *The*

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Israel Newman, "Two Suggestions for Jewish Havens," *The Christian Century*, December 28, 1938.

<sup>46</sup> "Palestine and the Refugees," *The Christian Century*, March 29, 1939.

*Christian Century*'s content immediately after November 9-10 does not show how complex the reaction was. Only by adding reports of other events, theological statements, and refugee work, can one gain a deeper understanding of how the magazine responded.

*The Christian Century*'s coverage of the actions of the Nazis and other perpetrators during the days of November 9-10, began on November 23, 1938. The magazine devoted a handful of articles to describing Kristallnacht and the legislation enacted in the weeks following. While relatively few column inches were devoted to informing the reader of the facts, the message of *The Christian Century* was clear. The magazine condemned Nazi Germany in a succinct manner and did not leave room for alternative interpretations. Nazi actions were wrong and demanded a response by other nations, particularly France, Great Britain, and the United States. The destruction of Jewish businesses and synagogues, and other persecutory enactments were not to be tolerated by the rest of the world.

From November 16, 1938 through March 1939, *The Christian Century* printed thirty-three news articles about events organized throughout the United States in response to the Nazi pogrom. Many events were held at seminaries or at large metropolitan congregations, both Christian and Jewish, and involved important religious leaders. In Chicago, church leaders from large congregations and seminary professors participated in interfaith events. Regional church organizations condemned Nazi actions and some passed resolutions which were later printed in *The Christian Century* to show solidarity with the victims in Germany.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> "A Letter to the President."

Programs were not limited to acts of protest or condemnation; some events were held to promote interfaith understanding within congregations in the United States. These events were characterized by a generalized fear of Nazism and a fear that this hate based ideology might infiltrate America. The result was the emergence of Christian theological statements rejecting antisemitism and traditions like: “the Jews killed the messiah.” The magazine recognized the prevalence of these attitudes in Christianity’s perception of “the Jew.” To stop hate mongers, like the Nazis, Christians must break down their misconceptions and racial hate against the Jews. *The Christian Century* interpreted the pogrom as an escalation from oppression to persecution and feared the spread of wanton Nazi hate.

The third type of response by *The Christian Century* was not as successful as the first two but was perhaps the most consequential in the long term. The response of the international faith community to the pogroms in Nazi Germany was profound: it cleaved together in opposition to the atrocities in Europe and it sought to aid those in desperate need. The influence of an internationally recognized publication and its tacit endorsement of this agenda was a powerful tool in the arsenal of peace. The power of *The Christian Century* resided in the choice of editorial content. It publicized programs and printed articles that educated, unified and ultimately motivated people to act on their beliefs in response to the atrocities in Nazi Germany. Ultimately, the goal of aggressive refugee relocation and an established homeland for refugees was not achieved. Many factors led to hundreds of thousands of Jews being stranded in central Europe during the war years. Strict immigration laws by countries like the United States limited the

progress of refugee work. The relative impact of *The Christian Century* on this outcome is impossible to determine, only its attempt at influence can be documented.

*The Christian Century* condemned Nazi Germany and tried to help protect the Jewish victims within Germany. The magazine understood the power of its influence and editorial space and used it to create more publicity for causes like Quaker refugee campaigns. The role of *The Christian Century* in the weeks following Kristallnacht was to lend a platform for voices to be disseminated across the nation and the world. *The Christian Century*, as the largest religious publication in the United States, unilaterally supported efforts to document the dangers of Nazism and antisemitism, and help German Jews escape escalating persecution.

## Chapter 3

### “The Federal Council of Churches and National Radio Broadcasts”

#### *Introduction*

This chapter will document how the *Federal Council Bulletin* and two national radio broadcasts responded to Kristallnacht. The *Federal Council Bulletin*, as the periodical of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, was the voice of the Council to all its constituent bodies. During the period in question, it used this influence to support Jews and Christians in Germany who because of their “racial” difference are persecuted. The periodical printed articles on several different topics related to the persecution of Jews and when combined into one message, the *Federal Council Bulletin* produced one of the strongest efforts of support to persecuted Jews to emerge from an American Protestant publication.

The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America (FCC) broadcast and the Catholic University of America’s broadcasts offer an insight into coverage of the topic from Protestant and Catholic perspectives. Both broadcasts aired addresses by important leaders in American life, both clearly condemn the acts of Nazism, but they part ways dramatically in their perception of the Jews of Europe and the condemnation of their persecutors.

#### *Federal Council Bulletin*

In the November issue of the *Federal Council Bulletin* the Federal Council of Churches printed an announcement calling for churches to use their November 20<sup>th</sup> service as an opportunity to pray for those suffering from racial and religious oppression.



At the time of printing, Kristallnacht has not occurred; the FCC was responding to events like the deportation of “Polish” Jews from Germany and the escalation of isolationist tactics used against Jews by the Nazi regime. The resolution published by the Bulletin, signed by various religious leaders from around the country including the heads of many denominations, includes statements like:

We must recognize anti-Semitism, at home as well as abroad, as a plain denial of the spirit of our Lord who was Himself a Hebrew according to the flesh and who taught us all that men are brothers.<sup>1</sup>

Antisemitism frequently forgets the interconnectedness of Christianity and Judaism through the life of Jesus. With this action, the FCC called on the churches of the United States to remember that kinship, pray for those in need, and also to give aid to alleviate the suffering of Jews and “Jewish” Christians.

As a way to show unity between all Christians in support of the Jews under Nazism, the FCC asked all churches to use the same prayer:

For those who suffer most today from racial bitterness or religious persecution;  
For the refugees who are forced to leave their homes by the thousands;  
For a generous response to the cries for help that come from those who are oppressed by reason of their Jewish blood;  
For the banishment of racial ill-will and the renewal of the spirit of justice and humanity among men.<sup>2</sup>

This powerful prayer recognizes the multivalent issues that would not have been apparent to the average American church attendee before Kristallnacht. Since the FCC asked churches to use the prayer just days after Kristallnacht, there was an added significance given the time the prayer was to be used in congregations. In retrospect, it is hard to

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<sup>1</sup> “Day of Prayer for Victims of Racial and Religious Oppression,” *Federal Council Bulletin*, November, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

imagine, but some people in the pews on November 20<sup>th</sup> might not have made the connection between the new acts of persecution and a greater need for aid. This timely and simple prayer planted the seed of awareness among the congregations that would come to fruition in their response to Kristallnacht.

Since the *Federal Council Bulletin* was a monthly periodical, the first reports of Kristallnacht came in the December 1938 edition. The December issue had one article responding to the events in Germany. “Christians Unite in Sympathy for Jews” describes the measures the FCC took to show support for the Jews in Germany and to denounce the Nazis who committed the atrocities. The focus of the article was the FCC radio broadcast on November 13 which included several national church and secular leaders.<sup>3</sup> The article mentioned two other events and an organization working for German refugees. On November 20—the day of prayer for victims of racial and religious oppression—Dr. Joseph R. Sizoo, the Vice President of the FCC spoke on behalf of the National Conference of Christians and Jews on the Mutual Broadcasting Company. After the events of Kristallnacht, other groups like the Roman Catholic Church, several Jewish bodies, and even the governors of various states called on their people to observe the FCC’s day of prayer.<sup>4</sup> The *Federal Council Bulletin* also reported that the American Committee for Christian German Refugees made an appeal to churches on Thanksgiving to support their efforts on behalf of non-Aryans persecuted in Germany.<sup>5</sup> At the time of

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<sup>3</sup> “Christians Unite in Sympathy for Jews,” *Federal Council Bulletin*, December, 1938.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

publication, the committee estimated 285,000 potential refugees were non-Aryan Christians<sup>6</sup> persecuted because of their “Jewishness.”

The January 1939 edition had an article entitled “Anti-Semitism” looking at several different issues, but two are pertinent to the topic. First, the council made an appeal to all constituent bodies to “combat” all manifestations of antisemitism and to support all efforts to help refugees from Germany, including approximately half of whom were—as many periodicals have reported—non-Aryan Christians.<sup>7</sup>

The second point references the issues facing all persecuted minorities, particularly those in America. There is a plea for all white American Christians to recognize the racial issues in America and to support efforts here, while at the same time aiding refugees.<sup>8</sup> Americans were urged to support efforts to give all Americans the rights of full justice at home and abroad. Clearly inequality was sufficiently pervasive in American society to merit this plea, and yet how quick were these very Christians to condemn the acts of the Nazi regime.

In February the *Federal Council Bulletin* printed two relevant pieces—both starting on the front page: a prayer of intercession for all churches to use, and an article entitled “The Christian Attitude Toward Anti-Semitism.”<sup>9</sup> The prayer was intended to replace a church’s traditional prayer for the people and attempt to address the various problems in Nazi Germany. The prayer included those in prisons and tried to enter a

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<sup>6</sup> A group of Christians who did not meet the Nazi classification for “Aryan” because of their ancestry. According to Nazi propaganda, many Christians were classified as “Jewish” and treated as such, since the Nazi regime based Jewishness on race rather than belief systems. For further information see Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 36-38.

<sup>7</sup> “Anti-Semitism,” *Federal Council Bulletin*, January, 1939.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> “For Persecuted and Suffering People,” *Federal Council Bulletin*, February, 1939 and “The Christian Attitude Toward Anti-Semitism,” *Federal Council Bulletin*, February, 1939.

place of solidarity with the prisoners: “Let us enter in the Spirit into prisons and concentration camps to share the misery and anguish of all held in duress for righteousness sake, or by reason of race and faith in God.”<sup>10</sup> This is a prayer that attempts to reach into the minds in the pews and expand their horizons to encompass the persecution and imprisonment of fellow men for reason of their birth, citizenship or faith. The embrace of those in prison would have sounded strange indeed to those for whom prison is for criminals, but a nation of immigrants, many of whom were German by extraction, would respond readily to the persecution of those who were defined by the government as “other.”

Another section of the prayer said, “Let us wrestle with God on behalf of the Children of Israel, mocked, despised, and shamefully entreated.”<sup>11</sup> The word “wrestle” is chosen deliberately to describe the nature of Christian communication with God on the subject of His God’s chosen people. Wrestling with God implies the taking of an active role in the plight of the Jews, conscious intervention in order to stop what is happening to God’s people.

Along with the prayer, the *Federal Council Bulletin* suggested that churches consult Psalms 79 and 80 as part of their worship. Psalm 79 is a prayer of lament for mercy for Jerusalem. The nations have “defiled” Jerusalem and God’s holy temple, yet why is God angry?<sup>12</sup> The nations have given Jerusalem’s flesh to the animals of the earth and God’s people have become the mocked and derided of all nations, but why is

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<sup>10</sup> “For Persecuted.”

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 79:1.

God angry at Jerusalem and not the nations who mutilate Jerusalem?<sup>13</sup> Do not blame Jerusalem for the sin of her ancestors, rather, God, have mercy and compassion for the people of Jerusalem.

Unlike Psalm 79, Psalm 80 is a prayer of restoration and hope for the people of Jerusalem. In it, the people of Jerusalem pray for their restoration to God and for protection from the wrath of God and of the nations.<sup>14</sup> Where is the God of Jerusalem during times of death and destitution? Can God not come to protect the people chosen from the nations who wish to “burn” Jerusalem? “Restore us O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine that we may be saved.”<sup>15</sup>

The second article published in February 1938, stresses the commonality of Judaism and Christianity inherent in their shared scripture and faith traditions. As such, antisemitism is antithetical to Christian ethics and the doctrine of Jesus of Nazareth. The historic roots of Christianity are intertwined with the Jewish faith, at times to tragic effect, as in the cases of The Crusades, previous pogroms, and other events like Kristallnacht. The article is at pains to remind its readers of their connection to the persecuted Jewish peoples, and to disabuse them of any lingering fear of Judaism as a threat to Christianity.<sup>16</sup> An open confrontation of past atrocities committed against Jews by Christians can only contribute to the recognition that antisemitism is inherently unChristian.<sup>17</sup> This history was nowhere more apparent than in Germany, where the government is currently persecuting Jews, under the veil of Christianity.

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<sup>13</sup> Psalm 79:2-7.

<sup>14</sup> Psalm 80:3-13.

<sup>15</sup> Psalm 80:14-19.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

In May 1939 the *Federal Council Bulletin* printed an article entitled “The Christian Church and the Refugees,” which updated its readers on the need for aid for both Jews and non-Aryan Christian refugees. Although this article was printed after most periodicals had shifted their foci to the possibility of war, it is important to note that the FCC was trying to keep refugees top of mind for American Christians, as well as preparing them for the possibility of war.<sup>18</sup> By May 1939, the prospects for non-Aryans in Germany were dire. Such persons could not find work or were prevented from working in many professions. They lived in unconscionable conditions, but like most persecuted persons could not escape the tragedy of Germany. The American Committee for Christian German Refugees continued to help those wishing to leave Germany and while many members supported their efforts, more support was required.<sup>19</sup> The Religious Society of Friends established a sanctuary for refugees in Iowa that would support up to 20,000 persons, but the American refugee quota was 27, 370. They could not, therefore, meet the needs of all the persons in Germany unable to find refuge elsewhere.<sup>20</sup> Further complicating the refugee issue was the failure of some countries to honor the immigration quotas to which they had agreed at the Evian Conference. This combination of factors severely reduced the number of German victims offered refuge before the start of the war.

### *Radio Broadcasts*

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<sup>18</sup> “The Christian Church and the Refugees,” *Federal Council Bulletin*, May, 1939.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

Within days of Kristallnacht, religious organizations felt the need to take a stand against Nazism and the brutal tactics used against Jews and Jewish culture. Two of the most prominent radio addresses were made by the Federal Council of Churches and the Catholic University of America. These broadcasts featured many prominent church and secular leaders like former President Herbert Hoover, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, Archbishop John J. Mitty of San Francisco, and former governor of New York Alfred E. Smith. While both broadcasts strongly condemned the Nazi's actions, they approach the subject from very different perspectives. The FCC broadcast focused on the barbarism of the attacks; the practices which fly in the face of Christianity and the anti-democratic threat Nazism posed to the world. On the other hand, the Catholic University of America's broadcast tried to show the Catholic connection: their history of suffering and persecution for their faith, and its resemblance to the attacks on Judaism in Germany.

Bishop (Methodist Episcopal Church) Edwin H. Hughes opened the FCC broadcast on November 13 speaking of the need for help, on behalf of the persecuted in Germany:

In the German Reich the outrages appear to have two forms.

The first is represented by a deliberate legal process intended to hinder the Jews in a commercial way and doubtless so to harry them as to drive them from the land. If today's papers report truly some of these poor people are at this moment trembling at the borders of other countries praying for the refuge of exile.

The second form is mob-like rather than law-like. A poor, misguided boy, tormented and probably demented, fires a hastily shot and drops the spark into the magazine of terror. At once the revenge speeds away to visit itself upon innocent who had no more to do with the youth's mad deed than did any one of my radio listeners.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Edwin H. Hughes, "Text of the Protests by leaders in US Against Reich Persecution," *The New York Times*, November 15, 1938.

Bishop Hughes argued that the Jews of Germany were being punished for actions for which they were not responsible. To his mind, the acts of the Nazis were terrifying and unwarranted. The Bishop evoked the book of Esther in which Mor'de·chaī refuses to bow to Hā'man and as result Hā'man orders the murder of the Jews in the land.<sup>22</sup> As Hā'man, similar to the Nazis, plots to kill the Jews, Esther pleads for mercy from her husband, the King. As a result of her actions, the Jews were saved from destruction and those who tried to kill them and were themselves killed.<sup>23</sup> Bishop Hughes used the story of Esther to call upon all persons to emulate Esther and help the Jews.<sup>24</sup>

The next speaker was Reverend Robert Gannon, who at the time of the broadcast was President of Fordham University. Rev. Gannon compared the Nazis actions in Germany to the sacking of Rome by the Huns. The Huns, however, were barbarians living in a brutal and vulgar era, while the “civilized” Nazis perpetrate their crimes under the gaze of an enlightened world.<sup>25</sup> Rev. Gannon believed Germany among the nations is like Lucifer in relation to God: pride caused the nation of Germany to irrecoverably separate itself from the rest of the nations. Germany's pagan barbarism has forced them from the path of Christianity.<sup>26</sup>

After Gannon concluded his remarks, the broadcast moved to its most influential speaker: the former President of the United States, Herbert Hoover. Hoover encouraged Americans to be outraged by the Nazi attacks on the non-Aryans of Germany. However,

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<sup>22</sup> Esther 3:1-6.

<sup>23</sup> Esther 7:7-8.

<sup>24</sup> Hughes, “Text.”

<sup>25</sup> Robert I. Gannon, “Text of the Protests by Leader in the US Against Reich Persecution,” *The New York Times*, November 15, 1938.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



Americans should not blame the people of Germany for these attacks; the Nazis were solely responsible for this policy of oppression.<sup>27</sup> In fact, Hoover argued, the Nazi policy was oppressive to all Germans. The existing German government bore a striking resemblance to the government of Kaiser Wilhelm II which forced all of Europe into war.

Senator William H. King followed Hoover and quickly and forcefully condemned the attacks by the Nazis against Jews and Christians. The Senator did not differentiate between non-Aryan Christians and “Aryan” Christians who were persecuted. The present path, he argued, will lead the Nazi’s to their destruction as all barbaric nations throughout history have been destroyed by their actions. According to Senator King, the attacks by the Nazis can hardly be compared to anything in history.<sup>28</sup> In fact, these barbaric acts are not only a crime against the Jews of Germany or the people of Germany as a whole, they are a crime against the whole world civilization. Because of this new reality, he recommended the recall of the American ambassador to Germany and cessation of all relations with that nation until the Nazi persecutions desisted.<sup>29</sup>

The next leader to speak was Alfred M. Landon, former Governor of Kansas and Republican Party Presidential Nominee in 1936. He pleaded with Americans to understand that the Germans as a people were not inherently as brutal as the Nazi regime had forced them to become. He further argued against the isolationist attitudes spreading throughout the United States. Even if the American government avoided the conflicts in Europe, the Nazis could infiltrate America and our country could become its next

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<sup>27</sup> Herbert Hoover, “Text of the Protests by the Leaders in U.S. Against Reich Persecution,” *The New York Times*, November 15, 1938.

<sup>28</sup> William H. King, “Text of the Protests by Leaders in U.S. Against Reich Persecution,” *The New York Times*, November 15, 1938.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

victim.<sup>30</sup> He argued that awakened to and aware of the danger, Americans were then obliged to take action globally to protect all minorities from persecution. Americans should begin to “agonize” over the conditions of the persecuted Jews as well as the destruction that will ultimately rain down on their Gentile persecutors.

Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes was the only current U.S. diplomat to speak during the broadcast, but he made it clear he was not speaking as a member of the government; rather as a concerned Christian and American citizen. Although Sec. Ickes made the distinction, his words still held the weight of an American diplomat. His speech concluded the FCC broadcast and carried a powerful message to audiences in America, throughout Europe, and particularly in Germany. Sec. Ickes pleaded with the nations of the world, especially Germany, to recognize that peace cannot be obtained through sheer force, but rather by law.<sup>31</sup> The world’s populations must cleave to God’s law, or fall to tyranny. Americans must actively protest against persecution in every form or risk violating of the mandates of their faith and the foundations of their nation.

On the evening of November 16, the Catholic University of America sponsored a radio broadcast featuring prominent American Catholics which was carried by both the Columbia Broadcasting System and the National Broadcasting Company. The broadcast, which included both clerical and lay leaders, was organized and introduced by Reverend Maurice S. Sheehy, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Religious Education at the Catholic University of America.

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<sup>30</sup> Alfred M. Landon, “Text of the Protests by Leaders in U.S. Against Reich Persecution,” *The New York Times*, November 15, 1938.

<sup>31</sup> Harold L. Ickes, “Text of the Protests by Leaders in U.S. Against Reich Persecution,” *The New York Times*, November 15, 1938.

The first speaker, John J. Mitty Archbishop of San Francisco, immediately expanded and enlarged the existing tenor of solidarity with and support for the Jewish community in Germany. His words set the tone for the entire broadcast.

As Catholics, we have a deep and immediate sympathy with the Jewish men and women who are being lashed by the cruelty of a fierce persecution. They for racial reasons, and we for our religion, are writhing in Germany under the same intolerant power.<sup>32</sup>

There is a message of sympathy as well as a perception of joint persecution pervades the whole radio broadcast and both compliments and contrasts the FCC address of three nights before. Archbishop Mitty explained that the Catholic community understands the plight of the Jews as a result of their own persecution in Germany and Spain. He encouraged Americans to recognize that persecution of minorities was taking place in Europe, around the world, and particularly in the American South. He warned that American protests against Nazi Germany were hypocritical in light of our own failure to stop America's version of Nazi hooligans, the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>33</sup>

Bishop Robert I. Gannon, delivered a much more direct speech than the one he had delivered three days before: As the Jews are persecuted in Europe so also are the Catholics, whose time of suffering started with the Bolsheviks in 1917. The rise of communism brought the rhetoric of hate back to Europe and is the cause for all tyrannies now taking place.<sup>34</sup> During their time of tribulation, the Jews must remember there will be better times and turn to God to end their time of sorrow.

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<sup>32</sup> "Texts of Catholic Protest Broadcast," *National Catholic Welfare Conference News Service*, November 21, 1938.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

The speeches by Bishop of Richmond, Virginia Peter L. Ireton; former Governor of New York Alfred E. Smith, and the Rector of the Catholic University of America Monsignor Joseph M. Corrigan voiced much of the same message as Archbishop Mitty and Bishop Gannon. All of these speeches emphasize the importance of *imago dei*: loving one another as Jesus taught us, and the connection between Catholics and Jews through persecution.<sup>35</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The *Federal Council Bulletin* and both radio broadcasts paint the picture of a combined front in the American Protestant church. The *Federal Council Bulletin*, like *The Christian Century* printed a variety of articles including reports on the events of November 9-10, 1938, condemnation of the Nazi atrocities, and the need for refugee help. The FCB reported on the work of several different refugee agencies, both secular and religious, and continually reminded its readers of the need for aid.

The two radio broadcasts show a different side to religious responses. While Catholic responses are not the focus of this investigation, it is important to show multiple perspectives. The FCC broadcast focus is political and spiritual calling on their community to cleave together in faithfulness to the gospel that unites them. The Catholic University of America, on the other hand, aligns itself to Judaism through persecution and offers an interesting anti-Bolshevism slant, despite the fact that it is Nazism that subjugates the Jews. Both broadcasts take a strong stance against the Nazi violence and

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

advocate the need for aid, but there is ultimately, a fundamental difference in their message.

## Chapter 4

### “Denominational Response”

#### *Introduction*

While the other chapters show the response of one and at most two different groups, this chapter will examine of the responses of a variety of denominations to Kristallnacht and its impact on American churches. These examinations are necessarily cursory, but the selections that follow reflect an interesting and varied range of responses. Some periodicals focused on what happened, others on responses in prayer services, refugee aid, or the revelation of hypocrisy in the American response. The reader should not take these examples as definitive accounts, rather as a synthesis of numerous and complex responses to Kristallnacht among American churches.

#### *Lutheran*

The Lutheran response to Kristallnacht is particularly interesting as a result of the tradition’s Germanic origins. Large numbers of American Lutherans immigrated from Germany and Central Europe. *The Lutheran* and *The Lutheran Companion* are periodicals which represent the views of two distinct groups of Lutherans. First *The Lutheran*, which was the official periodical of the United Lutheran Church of America and according to the Federal Council of Churches’ *Yearbook of American Churches, 1939 Edition* had over 1.5 million subscribers. It was the largest Lutheran church organization in the country.<sup>1</sup> Of the three larger Lutheran bodies—American Lutheran

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, *Yearbook of American Churches: A Record of Religious Activities in the United States for the Years 1937 and 1938*, ed. by H.C. Weber (Elmhurst, NY: Yearbook of American Churches Press, 1939), 71

Conference, Synodical Lutheran Conference of North America, and the United Lutheran Church of America, the ULC was the most influential and most involved in international affairs. The president of the ULC was the Vice President of the Lutheran World Convention.<sup>2</sup>

The Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America (a member body of the American Lutheran Conference) published *The Lutheran Companion*.<sup>3</sup> The predominately Swedish-American synod's membership numbered roughly 350,000, yet as a member of the American Lutheran Conference it represented the third largest group of Lutherans in the country with 1.4 million members.<sup>4</sup> The ELASNA was not influential in national or international Lutheran politics. It did, however, publish one of highest circulation Lutheran periodicals in the country.

Despite the existence of two periodicals, the Lutheran response to Kristallnacht was non-existent or indirect at best. *The Lutheran*, from November 1938 to March 1939, had three articles referring to the problems in Germany; only one referencing the persecution of the Jews. The only time the periodical wrote about the Jewish condition in Germany was in an article entitled "That Father Coughlin Broadcast." In that article, as well as in the broadcast, the Jews were not the central focus. Father Coughlin's antisemitic tirades on national radio were seen as disrespectful and uncouth in the wake of the all but complete destruction of Jewish culture in Germany. The point of the article was to show while Father Coughlin delivered a diatribe against the Jews, the persecution

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 30.

of whom was vengeance exacted for persecution of Christians in communist Russia, good Lutheran congregations were praying to God for intercession on behalf of the Jews.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike *The Lutheran*, *The Lutheran Companion* did have a handful of articles referencing the persecutory nature of the Nazis and the persecution of Jews, Christians, and Jehovah's Witnesses in Nazi Germany. The December 1, 1938 issue reprinted an article from *The Presbyterian* calling for understanding and tolerance on the part of Christians towards Jews in this time of turmoil.<sup>6</sup> An article printed a week later, while not mentioning the persecution of Jews during Kristallnacht, condemns the German Christian movement<sup>7</sup> for advocating the removal of Jehovah from all religious works because of its Jewishness. In response, *The Lutheran Companion* said, "If they continue in their present un-Christian and un-godly policy, they will eventually eliminate Christ from their form of Christianity."<sup>8</sup> An American Lutheran periodical disagreeing with the policies of the German Christians, who were predominately Lutheran, was a powerful statement against Kristallnacht. *The Lutheran Companion* disagreed with the changes to Christianity that were evident in the actions and explanations of the Nazi regime.

### *Religious Society of Friends*

Unlike many other denominations, the Quakers devoted abundant resources to the German Jew refugee problem. Although *The Friend* did not write on Kristallnacht, as many other newspapers and periodicals did, starting with the first issue after the events in

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<sup>5</sup> "That Father Coughlin Broadcast," *The Lutheran*, January 4, 1939.

<sup>6</sup> "What Do Christians Owe to the Jews?," *The Lutheran Companion*, December 1, 1938.

<sup>7</sup> The German Christian movement was a Protestant group aligned with Nazi ideals, particularly antisemitic and Völk ideology. For further information see Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> "German Christians Bar 'Jehovah,'" *The Lutheran Companion*, December 8, 1938.



Germany articles calling for refugee aid appeared. The Religious Society of Friends of Philadelphia and Vicinity published *The Friend* on a bi-weekly basis and from December to February 1939, printed six articles (or one article an issue) on the situation in Germany.<sup>9</sup> One article on the refugee issue per edition does not seem like an overwhelming number, but considered alongside denominational responses like the Lutheran churches, one quickly comprehends the importance of *The Friends'* response.

The first article, published in the December 1, 1938 edition, did not focus on the tragedy or the need of the Jewish people, rather it answered the call of many Friend's to respond to the call to action required by the troubling times. "The Refugees: A Word From the Service Committee," written by Rufus M. Jones and Clarence E. Pickett<sup>10</sup> outlined four steps the people could take and actions the committee took on their behalf. First, the committee assured the people that the government was acting "promptly" to meet the needs of the situation and sending letters demanding action would only slow down the process.<sup>11</sup> Second, the Service Committee's offices in Berlin and Vienna were helping people with the immigration process and before the pogrom had handled over 500 cases a week.<sup>12</sup> Third, the committee was trying to determine the need for food assistance among the victims, and whether the divergence of funds from other programs to Germany was necessary.<sup>13</sup> Finally, the committee set up a "special service" to assist

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<sup>9</sup> Federal, 60-1.

<sup>10</sup> Chairman and Executive Secretary of the American Friend's Service Committee respectively.

<sup>11</sup> Rufus M. Jones and Clarence E. Pickett, "The Refugees: A Word From the Service Committee," *The Friend*, December 1, 1938.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

those immigrating to the United States and recruited the assistance of Friends including guaranteed support and housing for at least three months.<sup>14</sup>

Of the subsequent five articles, three updated the refugee situation, one was by a refugee on being a refugee, and one was a statement on the persecution of Jews and non-Aryans. In the December 15, 1938 edition, Clarence E. Pickett announced that the American Friends' Service Committee would lead a delegation to Germany in order to assess the problems facing the Jews and non-Aryans.<sup>15</sup> One month later Jones published a piece describing what the committee saw during their trip Germany:

We found the agony of suffering almost greater than we expected. The "glass-breaking day"—November 10<sup>th</sup>—had destroyed every synagogue in Germany so that all corporate public worship for Jews in that country was at an end. Nearly every Jewish shop, and many private homes had all the glass on the street-front smashed and much of the property destroyed. Thirty-Five thousand Jewish men carried off to concentration camps where most of them still were during the nine days of arctic cold and storm which enveloped Europe during our visit. It was a veritable reign of terror for those long-suffering people.<sup>16</sup>

In one paragraph, Jones was able to do what some magazines could not do in the five months after Kristallnacht: make the people aware of the dire need for assistance and immigration support. These few lines show the desolation, impoverishment, and imprisonment that periodicals like *The Lutheran* and *The Lutheran Companion* ignored.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Clarence E. Pickett, "A Delegation to Germany," *The Friends*, December 15, 1938.

<sup>16</sup> Rufus M. Jones, "A Visit to Germany," *The Friend*, January 12, 1939.

*Baptist*

*The Watchman-Examiner*, published by the Northern Baptist Convention, added a unique perspective to the other denominational periodicals. Unlike the other publications, *The Watchman-Examiner* was published by a predominately African-American church and therefore added an aspect of solidarity due to the persecution African-Americans in the United States.<sup>17</sup> According to the *Yearbook of American Churches*, the Examiner circulated to roughly 1.5 million persons.<sup>18</sup>

The weekly periodical's first mention of the persecutions in Germany came in the December 8, 1938 edition. In this issue, two brief articles look at the problems facing the Jews of Germany in a manner that departed from the platform of the other organizations presented. The first one is an announcement that a negro congregation in New Rochelle, New York, while observing the Federal Council of Churches day of prayer on November 20, 1938, passed a resolution denouncing the acts of persecution against the Jews in Germany. The resolution also mentioned the continued suffering by African Americans in America:

[the pastor] stood in silent prayer and then passed a resolution denouncing the persecution of the Jews in Germany, and, in addition, calling attention to the sufferings endured by Negroes in this country where lynch law prevails.<sup>19</sup>

It is important to notice the connection between the suffering of Germany's Jews and African-Americans. While most periodicals focused on the problems abroad

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<sup>17</sup> Federal, 54.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> "Men and Things," *The Watchman-Examiner*, December 8, 1938.

they ignored or were ignorant of the connection between their condemnations of Nazi Germany and their silence on American policies. Rejecting one policy and not another leads the reader to believe, either consciously or unconsciously, that Jewish life is more important than African-American life. Although this falls outside the purview of the thesis, it is important for the reader to note the hypocrisy in denouncing Germany for acts which the American government allowed for almost two centuries.

The December 22 issue provides information on the problems facing Jews wishing to emigrate from Germany. In “Where to Send the Jews,” the publishers reject sending the refugees to Tanganyika in Africa or British Guiana in South America because both nations are less a safe haven than a way to hide the refugees.<sup>20</sup> The ideal destination, according to the periodical, was Palestine, but the Jewish communities, Arab communities, and the British government cannot come to agreement to admit hundreds of thousands of additional refugees into the area.<sup>21</sup>

Later in the edition, the editorial board printed, as did many other denominational presses, statistics showing the number of Jewish refugees who are in fact practicing Christians with Jewish ancestors. According to the article, Myron C. Taylor’s estimates presented at the Evian Conference<sup>22</sup> show 360,000

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<sup>20</sup> “Where to Send the Jews,” *The Watchman-Examiner*, December 22, 1938.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Conference of thirty-two nations in July 1938 on the French shore of Lake Geneva. The purpose of the conference was to discuss the growing migration crisis in Europe, particularly the Jews of Germany. no country agreed to greatly expand their immigration quotas for the Jews of Central Europe. See Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power: 1933-1939* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 559-60.

out 660,000 Jews in Germany are in fact Christians.<sup>23</sup> Based on this report and the work of James G. McDonald<sup>24</sup> The American Committee for Christian German Refugees was formed. The committee, after Kristallnacht, shifted focus to help remove all “Jewish” Christians from Germany.

A week later *The Watchman-Examiner* published a statement by the Administrative Committee of the Alliance<sup>25</sup> showing three steps the Baptist community took to combat antisemitism. First, the committee republished the statement agreed to at the Fifth World Baptist Congress in Berlin, 1934. The statement said,

This Congress deplores and condemns as a violation of the law of God the Heavenly Father, all racial animosity, and every form of oppression or unfair discrimination toward the Jews, toward colored people, or toward subject races in any part of the world.<sup>26</sup>

The time and place of the conference render the statement is particularly powerful. The assembly condemned persecution of any persons—including Jews and African-Americans— in the seat of the Nazi government and the congress included African-American delegates.

Second, the committee reaffirmed their belief in the statement agreed to at the congress in Berlin. Finally, the committee called on constituent bodies to reaffirm their beliefs based on the 1934 statement and to commit themselves to aiding victims of antisemitic persecution.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> “Christian Refugees,” *The Watchman-Examiner*, December 22, 1938.

<sup>24</sup> James G. McDonald was the League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees until 1935. See *Advocate for the Doomed*, ed. by Richard Breitman, Barbara McDonald Stewart, and Severin Hochberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>25</sup> Group formed by Baptist churches worldwide.

<sup>26</sup> “Baptist World Alliance and Anti-Semitism,” *The Watchman-Examiner*, December 29, 2008.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

The February 2, 1939 issue published an article by President Herbert Hoover calling for all people to show their disgust for the Nazi actions and to reaffirm their acceptance of all people.<sup>28</sup> President Hoover said,

The rise of intolerance today, the suffering being inflicted on an innocent and helpless people, grieve every decent American. It raises our every sense of indignation and resentment. It makes us fearful for the whole progress of civilization. It is our hope that those springs of tolerance and morals, of human compassion while lie deep in the German people may rise to control. But in the meantime our condemnation of these leaders should be without reserve. They are bringing to Germany a moral isolation from the entire world.<sup>29</sup>

As many other national leaders had done, the former President made it clear that Americans could not and would not support the actions of the Nazi regime. What made the statement unique was where it was published: few national leaders spoke directly to religious communities and President Hoover was the only secular leader to publish an article in a Protestant denominational periodical.

### *Presbyterian*

The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America published the periodical *The Presbyterian* for its almost 2 million members and was able to get information successfully from Germany to its congregations.<sup>30</sup> *The Presbyterian* printed an article or an update almost weekly on the treatment of the Jews in Germany and discussed various issues like the plight of the Jews, the amoral Nazis, or why Christians should help the Jews.

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<sup>28</sup> Herbert Hoover, "Justice for the Jews," *The Watchman-Examiner*, February 2, 1939.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Federal, *Yearbook*, 57.

Although it does not fit into the timeframe of this investigation, it is worth noting that *The Presbyterian* published an article in its November 10, 1938 issue on “The Plight of the Jews.” The article was important and timely, despite the fact that the news of the attacks was just reaching the United States on its date of publication. Clearly, it does not take into account newer developments and the needs of the Jews in Germany.<sup>31</sup>

The weekly editorial column by Arthur Burd McCormick, “The World As I See It,” devoted at least one piece per issue to the situation of Jews in Germany or the problem of the Nazis. McCormick first addressed the persecution of the Jews in Germany in the November 24 edition of *The Presbyterian* with two articles: “The Unimaginative Nazis” and “Cities of Refuge.”<sup>32</sup> In “The Unimaginative Nazis,” McCormick calls the Nazis “worse than King Herod”, who—according to the Gospel of Matthew—had all young males in Bethlehem murdered in order to secure his throne.<sup>33</sup> McCormick also warns the Nazi regime that actions like Kristallnacht would force the world to react in a way that would not benefit their cause.<sup>34</sup> He calls for all democracies to stand up and fight the tyrannies of dictators, rather than continuing a policy of appeasement.

“Cities of Refuge” suggests many places to send the Jews, realizing that most logical destinations have their faults. One suggestion is the Middle East and Palestine, but the “Arabs” are against Jewish immigration. America has immigration quotas that make removing all non-Aryans from Germany

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<sup>31</sup> Joseph Taylor Britan, “The Plight of the Jews,” *The Presbyterian*, November 10, 1938.

<sup>32</sup> Arthur Burd McCormick, “The World As I See It,” *The Presbyterian*, November 24, 1938.

<sup>33</sup> Matthew 2:16-18

<sup>34</sup> McCormick, “The World,” November 24, 1938.

impossible. The final suggestion is Canada—where Jewish communities would be built in the northern wilderness—or Alaska since there is plenty of land for all Central European Jews.<sup>35</sup> McCormick argues the allocation of the Utah territory by the United States government to the Mormons is an appropriate model for settling German refugees.<sup>36</sup>

Three weeks later, McCormick published another brief article reporting more problems for the Jews in Germany:<sup>37</sup> German legislation which furthered the Aryanization of the German economic system by outlawing Jews from owning businesses, holding real estate or to acquiring real estate, and requiring all Jewish assets are to be deposited in government approved banks without the possibility of withdrawal unless a government official approved the transaction.<sup>38</sup> McCormick cited a Nazi leader who said the object of the new legislation was to make the Jews so impoverished they would be forced into criminal life, which would give the government an excuse to kill them.<sup>39</sup>

Over the next several issues, *The Presbyterian* printed many articles about the situation in Nazi Germany, but not directly about the conditions for Jews or Kristallnacht. On February 2, 1939, Reverend Stuart Nye Hutchinson wrote an article titled “Who Is My Neighbor?”<sup>40</sup> Although the article primarily focuses on Jesus’ teaching about the subject, the article does articulate how the periodical or at least the author feels about the treatment of others. The article argues when

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Arthur Burd McCormick, “The World As I See It,” *The Presbyterian*, December 15, 1938.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Stuart N. Hutchinson, “Who Is My Neighbor?,” *The Presbyterian*, February 2, 1939.



Jesus said treat your neighbor as yourself he meant all humanity is our neighbor. This means we should treat everyone as we wish to be treated, rather than just those who we like or are close to.<sup>41</sup> While this article does not mention the Jewish situation, given its publication date, the article implicitly makes connections to recent events. If this is the case, it would seem Rev. Hutchinson intends for his audience to make the connection between Jesus' message and their actions as Christians.

The February 9 and 16 editions reference a speech given by Hitler at the annual gathering commemorating the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP or Nazi) rise to power January 30, 1933. In this speech, delivered just months before the start of the war in Europe, Hitler ominously declares his intention to destroy all of European Jewry:

If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevization of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.<sup>42</sup>

Retrospectively, this statement represents an important moment in the development of the Shoah. But in 1939, that would not necessarily have been the case. While the Nazis had carried out vicious acts of violence against the Jews in Germany, like Kristallnacht, this quote is taken more seriously by historians today than it was by journalists at the time.

Both the February 9 and 16 editions of *The Presbyterian* are proof that journalists at the time did not consider Hitler's proclamation a serious threat. The

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> N.H. Baynes, ed., *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942), 737-741.

February 9 article by McCormick in his column “The World As I See It,” describes the speech as a reiteration of what the Germans want, peace:<sup>43</sup> a just peace in which Germany benefits and this requires that countries like America and their officials stay out of German affairs. In the second article, on February 16, McCormick has eased his approach to Hitler’s speech, calling it “more peaceful than warlike.”<sup>44</sup> McCormick calls for people to trust the words of Hitler as an “olive branch” rather than assuming the worst from the Nazi leader. He even argues it is the Christians’ duty to believe the best in someone and we should do the same for Hitler.<sup>45</sup>

However, the March 16, 1939 issue of *The Presbyterian* published an article calling for Christians to help Jews in two ways: to help them get out of Germany and to make them Hebrew Christians.<sup>46</sup> The article argues that helping Jews in German territories escape persecution without “helping” them convert to Christianity is un-Christian and Unitarianism. This article is the only one which emerged during my research that clearly promotes a policy of proselytizing to or converting the Jewish refugees.

### *Episcopal*

Like most other periodicals, *The Living Church*, in the issue published the week of Kristallnacht, announced the Federal Council of Churches plan to hold a day of prayer and intercession for the persecuted Jews of Germany and

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<sup>43</sup> Arthur Burd McCormick, “The World As I See It,” *The Presbyterian*, February 9, 1939.

<sup>44</sup> Arthur Burd McCormick, “The World As I See It,” *The Presbyterian*, February 16, 1938.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> “The Jewish Question,” *The Presbyterian*, March 16, 1939.

Central Europe on November 20.<sup>47</sup> The first report of the Kristallnacht pogrom in *The Living Church* came two weeks later in the November 23 issue.<sup>48</sup> The article described the scene in Germany as a “nightmare” and questions whether the civilized people of Germany have gone crazy or lost their religion in allowing barbarism on this scale to occur. The author refutes the claim that actions around Germany were “spontaneous” and believes planning must take place for a pogrom on such a large scale.

As a way of moving forward and helping the persecuted Jews, the article suggests three ways to show Germany America’s response:

There are three things that we in the country can do to make effective our moral indignation at the intolerance and wanton persecution of both Jews and Christians by the Nazis. We can express our protest so forcefully and overwhelmingly that it must be clear to the Nazi leaders that they have offended the moral sense of civilized world—even though Germans who are dependent upon Nazi-controlled press and radio for their news will probably never know of that protest. In line with this is President Roosevelt’s commendable action in recalling our Ambassador to Germany. Another thing that we can do—and this very important—is to see to it that no such spirit of intolerance and race hatred spreads in our own country.

Finally, and not least important, let us remember in our prayers and particularly in the Holy Communion those who are persecuted in Nazi Germany or elsewhere because of their race or faith; and let us remember also to pray in the spirit of our Lord for those whose moral fiber has so disintegrated that they can and do engage in such brutal persecutions.<sup>49</sup>

While most religious periodicals condemn the Nazi pogrom and call for help for the persecuted Jews of Germany, the third aspect of *The Living Church*’s response

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<sup>47</sup> “Churches Called to Fight Anti-Semitism,” *The Living Church*, November 9, 1938.

<sup>48</sup> “Terror Over Germany,” *The Living Church*, November 23, 1938.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

is unique in that it implores all Americans, particularly Christians to pray for the persecutor. This response has foundation in scripture and longstanding theological tradition.

In the same issue, *The Living Church* printed a report from Wisconsin of German immigrants who voted days after the pogrom to pass a “scathing” resolution denouncing the Nazi acts.<sup>50</sup> Included in the resolution was a call for President Roosevelt to recall all diplomats from Germany as a protest against the abhorrent acts of Germany. In conjunction with the resolution, the Milwaukee United Committee for Aid to Austrian Refugees and the National Conference of Jews and Christians condemned the persecution of German Jews and called for a protest against the Nazi regime.<sup>51</sup>

*The Living Church* mentioned the response of two bishops who called for prayers for the persecuted and asked their churches to respond accordingly to the problems facing the rejected in Germany. Bishop Stewart of Chicago asked all churches to observe the FCC day of prayer on November 20 saying,

It is not right and nothing can make it right that the race of Mendelsohn and Heine and Spinoza and Einstein and Freud should be set upon, robbed, beaten, tortured, and pushed out of their country by a band of political ruffians.<sup>52</sup>

As a part of his call for prayer for the Jews, Bishop Stewart published a prayer in *The Living Church* for the communities of Chicago and other cities to use in

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<sup>50</sup> “Church Groups Hit Nazi Persecution,” *The Living Church*, November 23, 1938.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> “Bishop of Chicago Hits at Nazi Rule,” *The Living Church*, November 30, 1938.

protest of the Nazi action and to act in solidarity with the persecuted.<sup>53</sup> He calls all Christians to remember that Jews are their brethren in faith and to rebuke those seek their demise.

The December 14 issue printed a prayer by Bishop Ingley of Colorado who called upon all congregations in his diocese to use the prayer in remembrance of those who were persecuted by the Nazis. Bishop Ingley's prayer "implores" God to protect God's people from the persecution directed toward them in Germany and to "turn the hearts of the oppressors from evil to good."<sup>54</sup> He goes on to say that all humanity is called by God to act for peace and justice for all people.

At the turn of the year, *The Living Church's* focus moved from reporting the problems facing Jews in Germany to helping them leave Germany. The publication of several articles on the subject gave the reader an understanding of the needs of non-Aryans and how the reader could help meet those needs. In fact, the Southern Ohio Diocese printed a pamphlet entitled "Aid the German Refugees," to help educate those who were interested in helping about what agencies to volunteer with or to whom to give money.<sup>55</sup>

In an ecumenical move to protect the children of persecuted persons in Germany, Anglican, Protestant, and Roman Catholic clergy presented a petition to President Roosevelt signed by clergy throughout the country which implored him

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<sup>53</sup> "Bishop Stewart Authorizes Prayer for Jews Persecuted by Government in Germany," *The Living Church*, December 7, 1938.

<sup>54</sup> "A Prayer for the Oppressed," *The Living Church*, December 14, 1938.

<sup>55</sup> "Aiding Refugees," *The Living Church*, January 11, 1939.

to change the quota to allow at least non-Aryan children to enter the country.<sup>56</sup> The letter points out that many children are either in concentration camps or orphan asylums and need rescuing from their situation in Germany. Four organizations are cited as desiring to help in refugee effort: American Friend's Service Committee, the Committee for catholic refugees from Germany, the American Committee for Christian-German Refugees, and the Committee for Aid to Refugees and Immigrants.<sup>57</sup>

### *Conclusion*

During the five months after Kristallnacht, all of these periodicals discussed, and many others printed various types of articles about, the plight of Jews in Germany. Many published pieces condemning the atrocities or describing the need for refugee help, the regularity with which they printed such articles varied. Some focused more on condemnation and prayer, while others used their influence to promote refugee reform and aid, and still others failed to respond at all. The different responses show the priorities or political maneuvering one periodical or another had to make to avoid alienating its audience. Each particular response is unique and the issues surrounding each periodical and their editorial staff leads to an understanding that is more complex than the simple and broad categories of "appropriate" and "inappropriate" responses.

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<sup>56</sup> "Haven Planned for Persecuted Children," *The Living Church*, January 25, 1939.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

## Conclusion

With the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939, the avenues for immigration closed throughout Europe and the United States. Although the path to the Shoah was not certain or even conceivable in 1939 the fate of Jews in Nazi occupied territories was set and little more could be done to help even a small number of Jews to escape the events of the next six years. While it is hard not to view the actions of American Protestant press as a failure in the shadow of the Shoah, one must view the information presented through the lens of 1938, when infamous camps like Auschwitz-Birkenau, Sobibor, and Treblinka were not conceptualizations of even the Nazis.

All the periodicals in questions, except the Lutheran press, clearly denounced the Nazi actions known as Kristallnacht and some called for the United States government to end all diplomatic relations with Germany to show their disgust with the wanton violence. Some responses included American leaders secular and religious, but others were local church pastors and congregations who thought they needed to show their disdain for the Nazi violence.

The second part to most responses came about a month after Kristallnacht in the form of theological statements denouncing the evils of antisemitism in the Nazi form and the Christian form. While all statements against antisemitism why hatred of Jews was unChristian, most of them made connections between Christianity and Judaism as a reason why Christians could not be antisemitic. The

example of Jesus as a Jew was a main example to counteract the problems of antisemitism in Germany from spreading to the United States.

The final and arguably the most important response was how each periodical approached the refugee crisis and tried to solve the problem of over 600,000 Jews in Germany who needed to escape the worsening conditions under the Nazi regime. At the point of refugee assistance, the different denominations took very different paths. Some briefly spoke of the problems facing non-Aryan Christians, while others—the Friends’—used all resources available to help remove Jews from Germany. In hindsight, the efforts from all denominations were insufficient in the sense that persecuted Jews could not escape Germany.

Should the larger realities skew how a historian responds to these various responses? Laying blame on denominational magazines for saving all the Jews of Germany is counter-productive and overbearing. Several factors led to the unsuccessful removal of Jews from Germany. First, many Jews physically or financially could not make the travel. Second, governments around the world—including the United States—refused to alter their immigration quotas to allow even an extra 1,000 Jews into their country. Finally, World War II started less than one year after Kristallnacht, ending any possibility for Jews to escape the Nazis.

Overall, the history of the American Protestant press’ responses to Kristallnacht is more complicated than one might initially realize and without extensive research it is even harder to comprehend how American churches seemingly allowed the Jews of Europe to be exterminated. This work is a



preliminary step into a rich history. In these pages a clear outlined account of how several religious periodicals responded to Kristallnacht is presented. The goal of my thesis was to present a clear history that, except for a few pages in one book,<sup>1</sup> has been largely forgotten. My work uses this previous book as a springboard to a deeper history and uses a vast library of primary sources and as a result greatly expands the historiographical knowledge of this particular subject.

My work provides another important contribution by showing the thinking of many different religious communities about the Nazi regime and their actions against the Jews. These various responses to Kristallnacht demonstrate the national feelings leading into the outbreak of World War II, particularly America's staunch isolationist mentality even in the face of extremely harsh treatment of Jews that could easily be counter acted by allowing more Jews into the country. The Protestant religious communities in question clearly disagreed with the antisemitic actions of the Nazis and accepted their shared history with Judaism.

While this work provides a clearer history, it does lead to more questions and due to the natural limitations, not all of them could be answered. The fact remains many aspects of American religious press could not be covered and unlike Deborah Lipstadt's coverage of American secular press, there is not a wide covering history of religious magazines and periodicals. Other research questions include, how did or did not, Christians lobby the American government to expand the immigration quota to admit more Jews into the country after Kristallnacht?

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<sup>1</sup>Ross, *So It Was True*, 109-121.

How many religious communities, particularly of German immigrants, supported the Nazis' actions against the Jews? Finally, how did Protestant communities and Protestant press respond to reports of the escalation of the persecution of Jews that would eventually lead to the Shoah?

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