

The Church's Witness

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This is being called forth in these times of crisis. Whenever there is a rise in a powerful world state which threatens men's lives, then also there arises the threat to their faith in God and in His Son Jesus Christ. That is the teaching of the Word and of history. It was clearly taught in the recent history of Nazism and now again some of the figures which gave a startling testimony in a decadent society of the world prior to World War II are giving strong testimony over against Communist Russia. They are giving that as they are directly concerned with the Russian Octopus.

Time Magazine featured an article on Bishop Otto Dibelius, and speaks of him as the leader of a 400 year old church community, the Marienkirche, the church of Martin Luther. On their front cover *Time* pictures Dibelius upon the background of the broken gammadions, the swastika cross of the Nazis, which has behind it a Red Octopus, and above it the Cross of Christ. It conceives of the true relation of the cross of Christ as we are taught to see it every Lenten season and as it has just been impressed upon us again in the Resurrection. The cross of Christ towers over the wrecks of time, and these wrecks are not the buildings, but the ideals of men.

Otto Dibelius is one of Germany's few consistent fighters against the totalitarian state. The German state can no longer claim, he maintains, divine sanction. Far from being a God-blessed state of St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, it, in Dibelius' opinion might conceivably change itself into another state mentioned in the New Testament—the godless, seven headed monster of St. John's Revelation.

Other things are said about this man's opinions. It is also stated that they have been criticized by Karl Barth as not being theology. Our point in this comment is not to consider the opinions of these men as to what constitutes the relation of the church and state. Our purpose is merely to show that a witness is being made again against a Communist regime. That shows that our calling as church is always being forced upon us by our Lord Jesus Christ who wills that His issue come to the foreground in all world issues.

One sentence of Dibelius was placed at the head of the article in *Time*, which I think is very arresting and which I shall quote without comment, to conclude my comment on the Church's witness.

“He has not made life easy for me. On the contrary. It would have been more comfortable to be without Him than to live with Him. He puts burdens on the soul, which one would rather let pass by unheeded. He exacts a great deal with His demands. And when one thinks that the cross is not so dread, which His children take upon themselves, then comes the moment when it grows very dread indeed . . . Report of Jesus of Nazareth.”

But, I cannot refrain to add that though it is so, it is not so; it is as Jesus says, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Another place of Witness:

From *Newsweek*, an item appears of a little interest for us in our apparently easy American life. The news carries headlines today of the possible Korean peace. Such will enable us to continue our eating and drinking ... but our witness will always be called forth wherever we are.

“Grace before meals”: A young couple came into an Indianapolis restaurant and sat down

in a booth. One of them took up a card and showed it to the other. Then they made silent use of it and like thousands of others took it home.

“Printed on the card were five prayers (Roman Catholic, Jewish, Lutheran, Episcopalian and Methodist), to be said at grace before meals. The age old custom of asking God to bless food and thanking Him for it was getting a tremendous boost. The Indiana department of the American Legion had started the movement in February as part of the “back to God” movement. By last week 23,000 cards had been distributed to restaurants, hotels and luncheons.

And in Monaroneck, New York, Rev. Wm. F. Fairman of St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran announced that 25 restaurants had agreed to print different versions of grace in Catholic, Protestant and Jewish, right on their menus.”

This is passed on to you to show a trend. It does not mean that we must join such a movement. Our witness is clearly laid upon us as individuals wherever we find ourselves, and our strength is not in a movement.

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