

# Christianity and Crisis

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## A Blot on Our Record

SEVERAL years ago it was predicted by certain rather pessimistic observers of American life that before long the spirit of the Nüremberg laws would find expression in American national action. There was strong protest at the time. The pessimistic prophets countered it with the statement that any concessions to Fascism or Nazism would be cloaked in some camouflage which might deceive most Americans.

Recent events prove that the pessimists were right. Lovers of democratic principles must take seriously the progress which the "Nüremberg-law" philosophy has made here of late under emergency conditions. Sixty thousand Americans who legally possess every safeguard to liberty under the Constitution and the Bill of Rights have been informed that they must move from their homes, their professions, their jobs, their lands, or be forcibly ejected by the government. Without that due process of law which is guaranteed to all, the order was published by presidential proclamation on February 20th. It is now being carried out. The fact, universally attested, that it is being done with humane consideration and complied with gracefully does not alter the inner meaning of what is taking place.

No hearings have been held and none are planned. In order to apprehend a few who might be disloyal all citizens of Japanese ancestry are included in the order. In theory the order applied equally to citizens of German and Italian descent. But the political consequences of such high-handed action against these groups appeared too serious; and there is now no disposition to include them in the evacuation. The Japanese, however, are not sufficiently numerous to count politically and race hatred which has largely caused this move sees too good a chance to get them out of the coastal areas to be worried by the modest political risk involved.

What preceded the decision is in part well known and in part obscure. Pearl Harbor naturally provoked an immense emotional reaction on the Pacific

Coast—far more than in the middle west or on the Atlantic Seaboard. Wild rumors as to acts of sabotage on a grand scale in Honolulu by citizens of Japanese descent were circulated. The complete and sweeping denials of these charges by the Police Chief of Honolulu, Mr. Gabrielson, by the chairman of the Honolulu Citizens Council and by the head of the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce were not given wide publicity in this country. They were dated March 14th! The lapse of a quarter of a year before they were given publicity is disturbing. So firmly has the conviction been lodged in millions of American minds that the American citizens of Japanese descent in Hawaii were fifth columnists that no denials will change existing impressions three months after the serious charges first began to be bandied about by press and radio.

This is what aroused the very real danger of mob violence. The fact of that danger was used by the army as an argument for removing American citizens of Japanese ancestry from the defense areas. One might make a good case for the theory that these hapless fellow citizens of ours are being made scapegoats much as were the Jews in Germany under Hitler. There is an uncomfortable parallel at this, as well as at many another point between Nazi and American practice; although in all fairness it must be remembered that this happened in America in time of war, whereas the Nazi promulgation of the Nüremberg laws came in peace time. The fact that no single case of disloyalty has thus far been reported from the west coast Americans of Japanese descent is actually used as a further argument against them! The report of the Tolman Congressional Committee of Investigation perhaps unconsciously bears witness to this—first by stressing the fact that from December 7th up to the end of January no untoward events occurred and the American people remained sane and calm regarding the presence in the west coast areas of groups of aliens as well as citizen descendants of aliens from enemy countries. The FBI during that

period picked up some 4,000 persons who were known to be at least of doubtful loyalty or guilty of actual plotting.

The curious negative argument again appears in a footnote to the official report which states that "the committee heard testimony from Attorney General Earl Warren, of California, and others, urging that whereas there had been no sabotage on the west coast to their knowledge up to the time of their testimony, he believed that this constituted no guarantee against such sabotage in the future." Attorney General Warren drew a curious conclusion concerning the admitted lack of evidence of sabotage: "This is the most ominous sign in our whole situation. It convinced me more than perhaps any other factor that the sabotage that we are to get, the fifth-column activities that we are to get, are timed just like Pearl Harbor was timed. . . ."

From every area to which the ousted aliens and citizens of Japanese ancestry may go there arise loud outcries against them. When they arrive in a new locality it is easy to see that all of them without exception are apt to be adjudged guilty of proven disloyalty. In their old homes they at least had some friends among other groups of citizens who knew them and their records. In their home towns at least the informed persons knew that there have been no cases of sabotage among the citizens of Japanese descent. In the areas to which they go the opposite will be assumed true.

Americans of Japanese descent as well as alien Japanese are subject to the draft and many of them are already serving in this war as they served with distinction in the last. Even as in the case of the Nuremberg laws this makes no difference. No national responsibility of good sportsmanship is apparently recognized. Already some suicides have taken place among Japanese effected by the order. This is hardly surprising.

They have seen the land of their ancestors disgrace itself by treachery and aggression. Now the "one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all" to which they have pledged their allegiance subjects them to regulations which set aside all basic American principles. They know that much of the support for the policy of which they find themselves victims was developed by unscrupulous politicians, conspicuously by one man who saw in this agitation a chance to promote his own candidacy for the governorship. They know that the beginning of the move for drastic action was not in the War Department or in Washington but in the office of Hiram Johnson whose record as it concerns Japanese citizens is not exactly ideal.

The Churches have been deeply concerned over this whole matter. Many statements have been issued and certain plans formulated for assistance to the evacuees both in moving and in finding new homes. The government has taken tardy steps to protect their financial interests and Churches have advocated more care at that important point. It is good to know that both locally and nationally the Church is taking an interest. Municipal, State, and Federal, Councils of Churches are all alive to the need so suddenly created. Having observed the manner in which German Churches accepted the discriminatory legislation against a minority group without realizing the total threat to freedom which was involved in it, one wonders how far the American people, in or out of the Churches, realize the enormity of what has taken place.

H. S. L.

### That Guilt Feeling

**A** DOMINANT element in the response of American churchmen to our involvement in the war has been the feeling of guilt. From hundreds of pulpits has gone up the cry "we have sinned." This has been wholesome. A sincere confession of sin reduces human pride. It inspires men to make what recompense they can for their wrong-doing. It increases their capacity to learn from their fellows and from God.

But the guilt feeling, as the psychiatric clinic testifies, is an extremely subtle state of the soul. It may be a wholesome state. But it may also cover up or include undesirable attitudes of which the individual who confesses to the feeling may not even be aware. There are signs that the present wave of guilt confessions in respect to our participation in the war has some of these less praiseworthy aspects.

For instance, the guilt feeling is so respectable morally and religiously that it may serve to increase pride rather than diminish it. One may say, "I am at least the kind of person who can repent. . . . But think of those terrible Russians and Chinese who don't know any better than to fight with all their bloody might and main and who don't seem to feel guilty. Lord, we thank Thee that we are not as other people are."

Again, the guilt feeling may be played upon for ulterior motives. Think of how the "bad conscience" of Britain concerning the post-war settlement with Germany was used to secure a soft policy toward Hitler. A "bad conscience" in America now can be used to break down morale, civil and military, and to furnish the seed-bed for all sorts of appeasement propaganda, both religious and political.



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