

A Nazi Version of John's Gospel

The *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* (New York) published the following article on January 14, 1937:

A Nazified version of the Gospel According to St. John, modified to adapt the original to Nazi tenets and especially to portray the author of the Fourth Gospel, if not Christ himself, as anti-Semitic, has been published by a group of "German Christian" spokesmen in the Bremen area, according to a Berlin dispatch to the *Herald Tribune*.

The new Nazi adaptation, prepared with the collaboration of Dr. Heinz Weizmann, Evangelical Bishop of Bremen, at the Castle of Wartburg, where Martin Luther worked, is enough to make Luther turn over in his grave, said Ralph W. Barnes, the *Tribune* correspondent.

In the preface Bishop Weidemann says: "Lest sticklers become annoyed with us, we desire to help him who searches for truth. The German of the Third Reich must know what Christ, Whom the Jews nailed to the cross, means."

John lends itself especially to Nazi anti-Jewish purposes, since in it, more than in the other Gospels, the Jews appear as opponents of Christ. . . .

More than once the phrase "The Jews jeered and said," appears in the modified version, instead of "Then said the Jews," as in the

King James version and also in the German of the Luther Bible.

In the Nazi revision “Judenland” or Jewland replaces the “Judea” of the original, and this “Jewland” is carefully distinguished from the province of Galilee, where Christ preached.

An obvious effort has been made to distinguish, through modification in the text, between Christ and his disciples, on the one hand, and the Jews, on the other, and convey the impression that the former were not Jews. . . .

In several cases distinctly Jewish names, such as Elijah and Isaiah, are replaced by the term “prophets.”

In an alteration of Verses 31 and 32 of Chapter IV, an effort is made to convey the impression that Christ shared the “German Christians” contempt for the Old Testament as distinctly Jewish literature. In the King James version these verses read:

“Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written. He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.”

The corresponding passage in the Bremen version reads:

“The Bible also reports that bread fell from heaven for our ancestors in the desert.

“Jesus replied, I tell you the truth these old stories to which you continually refer do not help you. My Father alone gives you true divine bread.”

The phrase, “Behold an Israelite indeed,” in Chapter I, Verse 47, becomes, “You are a true man of God among our people.”

In Chapter I, Verse 38, and elsewhere in the Gospel, the term “rabbi,” as applied to Christ, is rendered by the German equivalent for “master” [i.e., nomenclature for a non-Jewish teacher].

For more on this project, see:

Doris L. Bergen. *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Ludwig Müller and Bishop Weidemann. *The Germanisation of the New Testament*. Foreword by H. C. Robbins. London: Friends of Europe, 1938.