

Boston, while others dropped their memberships but continued to attend services. In other cases their wives continued their Christian Scientist memberships. Such actions had kept Hess's staff from elaborating on the membership ban, but police were to watch individual party members who maintained their contacts with Christian Science.¹¹⁸ Finally, on June 19, 1941, the highest party court in Munich ruled "that the ban on double membership included attendance at religious services of the Christian Scientists."¹¹⁹

Within a month all Christian Science churches were closed and their property confiscated. The police had already closed all Christian Science branch churches and reading rooms on June 6, 1941, as a result of Heydrich's order against occultists and faith healers.¹²⁰ When news of this action reached the German ambassador in Washington, he telegraphed to the German Foreign Office on July 10 that closing down the Christian Scientists right at the time of the Russian campaign would have a bad effect on public opinion in the United States.¹²¹ But the final decision had been made. On July 14, 1941, on the basis of the presidential ordinance of February 28, 1933, against communist activity, the sect of Christian Scientists was dissolved and forbidden for the whole territory of the Reich, and its property confiscated.¹²²

A month later, Heydrich drew up a summary exposition on the Christian Scientists and sent it to all state and district leaders. It gave a short history of the Christian Scientists in Germany, advanced reasons why they no longer could be tolerated, although "they had not been forbidden earlier because of foreign policy considerations during a time when the officials were trying to settle differences with England," and stated the measures which had been taken against them. There was a small elite group of Christian Scientists in Germany—among them the family of Count Moltke, chief of staff in 1914. "In this family, as is known, the horses were even cured through prayer." The widow of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke was also a member. The Christian Scientists' rejection of a personal God put them into opposition with other Christian churches; their denial of material existence put them into opposition to the National Socialist Weltanschauung. They had close connections with the United States and the democratic world, had no racial theories or teachings, included many Free Masons among their leaders, had close ties with anthroposophy and other occult circles, and constituted a real danger to the health of the nation. All told, it was a sect dangerous to the welfare of the state and had to be banned.¹²³ Such a postmortem justification was unusual for the Gestapo, and lends a mark of distinction to what proved to be only the temporary demise of Christian Science in Germany.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)

The Mormons also had close connections with the United States, but they numbered only 11,306 in Germany in 1930.¹²⁴ The U.S. ambassador noted in his diary on July 31, 1934: "Hitler has not dissolved their organizations or expelled their active preachers. There are other

than religious aspects to Hitler's let-up on the Mormons."¹²⁵ American-born Mormon missionaries' skill at basketball brought them favor in Nazi eyes, and four of them were asked to referee basketball games at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. The Mormon ardor for genealogy also gave them a certain standing with Nazis.¹²⁶ In 1938 the editors of the *Völkischer Beobachter* drew a parallel between the ejection of the Mormons from Missouri and Illinois and the Jewish problem in Germany, thinking it might help enlighten opinion in the United States as to what Germany was up against.¹²⁷ With the start of the war, the Mormon headquarters in the United States withdrew all its missionaries from Europe. Some of the missionaries in Germany were to leave via Denmark and others via Holland, but when the latter country refused to receive them they all went through Denmark. Thomas E. McKay, European president of the Latter-Day Saints, was among the last of the 697 missionaries to return. On landing in New York in March, 1940, he expressed his regret at leaving Europe and stated: "The Mormons have never been molested in Germany. We could not ask for better treatment. The only way the Nazis have affected our work is that our Boy Scout movement has been curtailed by the Hitler Youth movement."¹²⁸ The withdrawal of the missionaries from Europe, however, saved the Mormons from many wartime difficulties. In Germany they were among the few small sects which were not banned and dissolved, being accorded a treatment similar to that enjoyed by the Methodists and Baptists.

The Mormons, like most Germans, supported the war effort, and some of their leaders were strong supporters of the Nazi party. One deacon of Jewish descent was sent to the Theresienstadt concentration camp; other partly Jewish members in Hamburg were left unmolested. Three Mormon youths were arrested for printing and distributing anti-Hitler leaflets during the war. One of them was executed, and the worried Hamburg Mormon church officials excommunicated him after his death. (In 1948 church officials in Salt Lake City posthumously reinstated him.) On the whole, Mormons suffered no special discrimination and persecution; they simply suffered war casualties and property losses as did all other Germans.¹²⁹

After the war, German Mormons received special help from their brethren in the United States and other countries. The lure of sharing in this welfare aid led some Germans to convert to Mormonism, but most of these were later excommunicated when they neglected their church memberships.¹³⁰ The Mormons achieved the status of a "registered association" (*Eingetragener Verein*) in December, 1951, and two years later the much sought-after recognition as a corporation under public law.¹³¹ Their church property was thus made exempt from taxation, and they have since enjoyed the benefits accorded to such legally recognized church bodies in Germany. Membership underwent a rapid postwar growth, but began to slow down in the late 1960s. The increase was in no small part due to the numerous missionaries sent from abroad.¹³² While before World War II Mormonism was confined almost entirely to the largest cities, its work today has spread to small cities as well. The

church has undergone administrative reorganization, and higher church bodies peculiar to the structure of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints have been established. Today the church in Germany ranks ninth among the Mormon churches in the countries of the world, but still has a membership of only about 25,000.¹³³

Germanic-Nordic Religious Groups

In the turmoil and enthusiasm that prevailed in Germany as Hitler took over, the various Germanic religious groups were faced with the problem of what their position would be in the new Reich.¹³⁴ Many of those who still had some concern for Christianity found their way into the ranks of the German Christians. They tended to join certain splinter groups as that movement began to disintegrate following the Sportspalast scandal of November, 1933.¹³⁵ Those groups which were opposed to Christianity and eager to build a truly Germanic Nordic religion met at Eisenach July 29-30, 1933. Here they formed the Working Association of the German Faith Movement, largely through the efforts of Prof. Jakob Wilhelm Hauer of the University of Tübingen.¹³⁶ He had served as a missionary in India, and through his study of Indian religions had become disillusioned with Christianity's absolutist claims. After study at Oxford he turned to teaching religious history, particularly the history of Indian religions. Hauer was elected chairman of the new association and was aided by a directorate of prominent men. Among them was Count Ernst Reventlow, author of numerous historical works, a member of the Reichstag since 1924; and a member of the National Socialist party since 1927.¹³⁷

Hauer was able not only to persuade the various Germanic groups to join the association, but also the League of Free Religious Congregations with its 70,000 members. The latter was a well-established organization of freethinkers dating back to 1859, which had many Marxists among its members and actually had nothing much in common with the Germanic religious groups. They sought a certain protection under Hauer's wings and actually elected him chairman of their own confederation the following September.

The Working Association of the German Faith Movement was an amorphous sort of organization, and at a meeting in May, 1934, at Scharzfeld, an attempt was made to strengthen and centralize it. The name was now changed to "German Faith Movement," the directory was abolished, and Hauer became sole Führer of the new body, with Reventlow as deputy Führer. Not all groups went along with the changes and some withdrew. Among these were most of the freethinkers. They later reconstituted themselves, only to be banned at the end of 1934. They then formed a new organization, but fell back to an old name, calling it the "People's Church" (*Deutsche Volkskirche*). It too was dissolved by the police in 1936. All that was left to the old Freethinkers' Association was freedom to continue their burial insurance program.¹³⁸

The German Faith Movement under Hauer now began to assert

itself. It demanded the introduction of German Faith instruction in the schools, but first books and curricula had to be worked out, which was never accomplished. A large-scale membership and propaganda campaign was launched in February, 1935, after the Saar plebiscite. As many as sixty meetings were scheduled in a week, and on April 26, 1935, a big meeting was held in the Sportspalast in Berlin at which both Hauer and Reventlow spoke. This activity alarmed the churches, which started a counteroffensive against the neopaganism threatening to engulf the nation.¹³⁹ In large part, what they wanted to proclaim against Hitler they shouted at Hauer; it was still safe to be against paganism.

The activity of the German Faith Movement no doubt added to the religious turmoil caused by the campaign against confessional schools and the other church measures which the government launched in the summer of 1935. Church peace was needed, and achieving it became the great task of Minister Kerrl and the new Ministry of Church Affairs. On August 15, 1935, the secret police headquarters in Berlin wrote to Hauer, asking him as leader of the German Faith Movement to stop all public propaganda and restrict his activity to closed membership meetings until an expected fundamental regulation was issued by the Ministry of Church Affairs.¹⁴⁰ In November, 1935, the German Faith Movement was permitted to have guests at meetings by written invitation, but open meetings were still forbidden.¹⁴¹ In the same month, police in Regensburg and Düsseldorf forbade the German Faith Movement to present Walter Knickendorff's choral work, "Trotz der Sünde," because it injured the feelings of many Germans.¹⁴²

The propaganda campaign of 1935 had brought to the fore many new speakers for the German Faith groups. Many of them were more radical than Hauer and gave a different thrust to the movement. They concentrated on attacking Christianity and the churches, while Hauer sought instead to create a real Nordic Germanic faith.¹⁴³ Anti-Christian propaganda, however, was easier and more immediately successful, and the result was that Hauer lost control of the German Faith Movement. Heydrich, who favored the tactics of the more radical elements, brought pressure to bear and in 1936 forced both Reventlow and Hauer to resign their leadership.¹⁴⁴ Many defections followed, and the influence of the Faith Movement declined. In 1938 the *Deutsche Glaubensbewegung* changed its name to "Combat Ring for German Faith" (*Kampfring Deutscher Glaube*). In December, 1938, a splinter group established itself as the "National Ring for God-believing Germans" (*Reichsring der gottgläubigen Deutschen*).¹⁴⁵ The force of the movements was spent, although they continued to exist throughout the war. In April, 1941, National Socialist party headquarters specifically ruled that in view of the directive of the Führer's deputy to observe neutrality in all religious questions, the party should not lend its support to the Reichsring der gottgläubigen Deutschen.¹⁴⁶

Under the guise of general religious toleration, the party and state permitted the German Faith Movement to carry on. Although party and state seemingly encouraged it at times, they never gave it their full