FOREWORD

NOT many Anglo-Saxon students of the missionary enterprise give to German missionary scholarship the attention which it undoubtedly deserves. In Protestant missionary work the Germans come third, after the United States and Great Britain. German missions are a legacy of the pietist movement in Germany, from which the earlier British missions also greatly profited, and for this reason there has never been the official connection between the German Churches and the German missions which exists in this country, in the United States, in the British Dominions, in some Scandinavian countries and elsewhere. Missionary enthusiasm has been channelled along group lines, and the well-known German societies—those of Berlin, Leipzig, Bremen and others —are local, not denominational groups, though they have severally acquired characteristics, in some cases doctrinal or ecclesiastical. (The Berlin society would, for instance, be regarded by strict Lutherans as less orthodox than the Leipzig.)

Nevertheless, while the German missions have been in a sense a private activity of German Christians and have not on the whole been linked up with the formal structure of German Protestant Church life, they have been profoundly affected by it. Broadly speaking, it would be fair to say that the German missions were in sympathy with the confessional movement, though by no means all with the Dahlem wing, so well known through the work and sacrifice of Pastor Niemöller. German missions, however, have suffered more at the hands of the National Socialist state through administrative hindrances than on formally doctrinal or ecclesiastical grounds. Since early in the Nazi regime it has been forbidden to use German missionary funds except for the support of German nationals, that is to say, for the support of missionaries but not for the subsidizing of the native Church, schools and other services. Even such funds have only been sent to the fields with great difficulty, owing to the restrictions on foreign exchange. The German missionary work, therefore, has been carried on under very great difficulties for the last twenty-five years and more. In the war of 1914–18 the German missionaries in the British

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Empire were either repatriated or interned, and they only returned to their old fields gradually, as conditions changed, and in smaller numbers owing to the difficulties of finance. In the present war the policy followed by the British Government has been one of notable generosity. The main line of policy has been to allow the work of missions to continue, and only to intern in cases where the continued activity of a missionary might, owing to his political affiliations or perhaps to some local consideration, be attended by danger to public security. While a number of German missionaries have been interned or repatriated, the majority are at their work, and the problem of maintaining their work has been more a problem of finance than of freedom. In this financial task the American churches, and above all the Lutherans, have given notable help.

It is important to mention these historical facts as they explain some aspects of German missionary writing and study. The thoroughness of the German approach to all intellectual problems has been well exemplified in their study of the problems of missions. I recollect a leading English teacher of missionary studies telling me, not long after he had taken up his work, that he found it necessary to read the German work with care, and that in spite of their long severance from the fields in which they had been at work and the other difficulties that had attended upon their efforts, it was still true that they produced more material that was indispensable to the scholar than anyone else. I could myself, as Editor of the *International Review of Missions*, bear testimony to the quality of German missionary scholarship. There are few aspects of missionary strategy and policy on which German writing could not with profit be consulted.

The historical conditions, however, also account for idiosyncrasies for which allowance has to be made. German theology has a wider range than one would gather from the missionary writers, and it was only after the more or less compulsory unification of the German missions under the Third Reich that one mission, of some distinction but also of liberal theological tendency, was included in the membership of the German *Missionsrat*. Further, the long separation during and after the last war between the German missions and missionaries and their fields in India, Africa and elsewhere lent a certain

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academic quality to some of their studies, and in particular produced a rather unfortunate attitude of criticism towards the developments that had come about in those fields, some of them developments in the direction of wider autonomy for the native churches. The loss of colonies made Germans, very naturally, extremely critical of the administration of the mandatory powers and unwilling to believe much good of them. Perhaps, in all respect and affection, it might also be said that the German tendency to regard its own theological standards as normative for Christendom became intensified by the struggles within Germany. Delegates at Madras were in no doubt of the conviction held by German delegates that they had much to teach the rest of the world ; they were less sensible of the willingness of Germans to believe that they had anything to learn, especially from the 'activist' Americans and British.

Readers of the present volume should therefore both be aware of, and not be irritated by, manifestations of the defects above indicated. The attitude of the writer towards the Australian mandatory government in New Guinea is unfair, but it can be understood. He judges India far too much from the rather limited inductive basis of the German missions, and some of the things he says about caste and the Church are, on a broader view, definitely untrue. But it would be a lamentable thing if such defects, the more annoying to English readers because of the psychological situation in which war sets us all, were to obscure the value of the book.

It is very important that British and American readers should get hold of the main things the Germans are after in their missionary thinking and practice. In what Dr. Freytag has to say about New Guinea the main points are to be found. In all German mission fields there is to be seen a keen consciousness of the community, tribal or group life of the people, a conviction that it has a Divine mandate and value, and a consequent determination to make this fact of the community life a decisive factor in the up-building of the Church. Probably these principles have been carried further by Chr. Keysser in New Guinea than by anyone else, but they are of great importance for all fields, and the German insistence upon them, if in some instances overstressed, has much to teach

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other missions for which the Western traditions of individualism and liberal institutions may have seemed to be bound up with Christianity. Few British or American readers will agree with Dr. Freytag, but if they study him carefully they will find valuable correctives from which much can be learnt.

A word about the writer. Dr. Freytag is one of the leading men in German missionary thinking and administration. He was a delegate to the Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Council in 1928, and also to that held at Tambaram, Madras, in 1938. He has for some years been Director of the German Evangelical Missions Fund (formerly the Missions Aid Society). Recently, on the disappearance of some well-known German missionary magazines from the scene, he has been made editor of the new *Evangelische Missions-Zeitschrift*, the one united and representative organ of German Protestant missionary thinking and scholarship. His book, now translated for the first time into English, is the result of a long journey undertaken in the interests of German missions through the Dutch Indies, China and India. It is regarded in German missionary circles as the most important book of the kind produced in recent years in Germany, and it is the earnest desire of the German missionary leaders that it should be read outside Germany and especially in the English-speaking world.

I trust, therefore, that the courage and initiative shown by the publishers in arranging for the translation and production of this book into English, at a time when such an enterprise must seem unusually difficult, may be rewarded. Few, if any, who read this English edition will not feel that humanly speaking the continuance of much of the missionary enterprise is bound up with the disappearance of Nazi authority from the world. But that must not blind us to the other truth, that in the fellowship of the world-wide Christian mission and the universal Church it is possible for a unity to persist in spite of war. Nothing can be more certain than that the different types of insight and ability which the Americans, the Germans and the British apply to the task of world missions all need one another. The publication of this book in an English dress will be a contribution to the task of reconciliation and understanding.

WILLIAM PATON

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