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Hitler's Table Talk: Troubling Finds

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Hitler was passionately hostile to Christianity: "I shall never come to terms with the Christian lie.... Our epoch will certainly see the end of the disease of Christianity. It will last another hundred years, two hundred years perhaps. My regret will have been that I couldn't, like whoever the prophet was, behold the promised land from afar." He accepted a broadly Nietzschean account of Christianity as a conspiracy of Jews for a slave revolt against their Roman conquerors: "Christianity is a prototype of Bolshevism: the mobilisation by the Jew of the masses of slaves with the object of undermining society."

*Jonathan Glover*¹

This is a claim often made, employing the same or similar quotations. But the quotations are largely false. Hitler did criticize priests and the Church and certain Christian dogmas quite a bit, but so do god-fearing Christians. Hitler never went quite as far as these statements imply. Has Glover been duped by a sham document? His source is *Hitler's Table Talk*, a curious text whose story remains to be adequately told by historians of the era. The need for further research will be emphasized by the findings presented here.²

What is the *Table Talk*?

The *Table Talk* is purportedly a transcription from notebooks written in shorthand by at least two secretaries to Hitler, Heinrich Heim and Henry Picker, who were instructed by Hitler's right-hand man Martin Bormann to record for posterity whatever Hitler said in his bunker in Berlin, usually during meals or tea. In addition to official matters, they recorded things he said off the cuff, each logged by date and time (like "morning," "afternoon," or "evening"). So far all accounts agree. Beyond this is some confusion that an enterprising historian will some day have to sort out.

That may be difficult, since much is said by Genoud and Trevor-Roper without a word as to how they know it. No sources or documents are cited.

One might readily question the authenticity of such a text, given the conflicting versions and questionable chains of custody in this case and the abundance of other forged works purporting to reveal the secret thoughts or plans of Hitler. But it is likely the notes were real. There are two completely independent manuscripts, and a fragment of a third; and all agree in such a way as to corroborate the existence of a genuine original. The fragment consists of forty-two typed pages in the Adolf Hitler Collection at the U.S. Library of Congress, which are probably authentic.³ Scribbled in handwriting atop the first page of these is the brief remark: "Found by Mr. Jos. Schrasberger,⁴ München, Herzog Wilhelm Straße 4." This is probably part of the lost copy of the Bormann manuscript (discussed below). Finally, Werner Jochmann's edition of the text includes an introduction citing notes and letters confirming the *Table Talk* was indeed being made and collated during the war.

Picker, of course, was an eyewitness to this affair, and says in his first introduction (33-34) that Heim had been authorized by Bormann to go beyond his official duty to transcribe Hitler's spoken orders and decisions and to include whatever else interested him, and this authority passed to Picker during Heim's brief absence. Picker says Hitler actually looked over his record on occasion and approved it as accurate, yet didn't realize how often these notes were being taken. He also reports that the official notebooks collated by Bormann were lost in the "confusion of the surrender." These would turn up a year later in Genoud's possession, and some pages from a copy of this apparently ended up in the Library of Congress. But Picker retained his own original notes and those made by Heim before him.

Trevor-Roper's edition claims to be working from a version of the notebooks extensively edited and collated by Martin Bormann, called the *Bormann Vermerke* ("Bormann Notes"), which until recently existed only in the private collection of François Genoud. Genoud relates in his 1952 preface that the thousand-page monstrosity had a note at front in Bormann's handwriting: *Bitte diese—später äußerst wertvollen—Aufzeichnungen sehr gut aufheben*, "Please preserve with the greatest care these notes of a capital interest for the future" (Jochmann publishes a facsimile of this note opposite his title page). According to Jochmann's introduction, these were to be the "official" notebooks, collated and edited from the originals by Bormann and published as a definitive party manifesto for the victorious Reich. Unlike Picker's, the Bormann text continues to 1944. Since Picker received his copy of the notes from Heim upon replacing him until Heim returned, he did not have access to the remaining notes taken after this tenure.

Jochmann and Trevor-Roper (in the preface to his third edition) both relate (among many other details) that the *Bormann-Vermerke* was sent piecemeal from Bormann to his wife Gerda. Another copy reportedly went to an office in Munich, which was likely destroyed by allied bombing, apart from the pages recovered by

Schrasberger. Gerda fled to Italy with her collection of the notes in 1945 and died there in a detention camp in 1946. A local Italian official then acquired the manuscript, which he sold to Genoud around 1948.⁵ That manuscript is the basis for Jochmann's text, as well as Genoud's and Trevor-Roper's translations.

Which Version Should We Trust?

There are so many published versions and editions of these notes I gave up attempts to track them all. In general, there are four major versions, each with its own advocate: Henry Picker (1951, 1963, 1976), François Genoud (1952), H. R. Trevor-Roper (1953, 1973, 2000), and Werner Jochmann (1980). Of these only two offer the original German (Picker and Jochmann). Genoud, a Swiss banker and lifetime Nazi, offers his own French translation. Historian Trevor-Roper presents the English translation of R. H. Stevens and Norman Cameron.

From the isolated comparisons I made, Trevor-Roper's English appears to be an almost verbatim translation of Genoud's French. Yet the title "Hitler's Table Talk" is a direct English translation of Picker's title, not Genoud's,⁶ and Trevor-Roper's preface claims the translation was made from the German original of Martin Bormann. Genoud's version ends in 1942 (his preface declares an intent to publish the rest in a second volume, which never transpired), as does Picker's (who did not have any material beyond 1942), while Trevor-Roper and Jochmann continue with entries up to 1944.⁷

Assuming any published text is a genuine copy of these notes, Picker's edition (especially where it agrees with Jochmann) carries the strongest claim to authenticity. It contains the actual German, and was the first to be published, a year before Genoud, and though Genoud procured a lengthy but essentially trivial preface from Robert d'Harcourt of the Académie Française, Picker had the involvement and auspices of a major university and Hitler historian: "Arranged on behalf of the German Institute for the History of National Socialism, initiated and published by Gerhard Ritter, professor of history at the University of Freiburg."⁸ Moreover, Picker was one of the actual stenographers (from 21 March 1942 to 2 August 1942), and thus transcribed many of the notes himself in the very presence of Hitler, making him an eyewitness with access to the notebooks of his predecessor Heim, which he says he acquired directly, bypassing the editing of Bormann.

Picker's second and third editions also contain several testimonials to the text's accuracy and authenticity by fellow bunker officers, including Gerhard Engel, and also a testimonial by historian Walter Mediger who checked the first edition against Picker's own transcripts and "made corrections" accordingly, testifying to the accuracy of the new edition in relation to those notes. Picker asserted in his first edition that [translating Picker's German] "a sufficient number of the staff at the FHQ lives to be able to testify to the authenticity of the recordings of the table discussions, since Hitler spoke rarely at table on military affairs," and to demonstrate his personal knowledge he gives a detailed description of the bunker and meeting

room, and who was present on Hitler's staff at the time. Adding further credibility, Picker's text reads like a quick stenograph, with some things missing between entries, which are often short, with no time for any explanation or context (which Bormann on occasion added). Even the sentences themselves are often concise and sometimes missing simple words like pronouns.

Finally, Jochmann presents the text of the Bormann manuscript employed by Genoud and (supposedly) Trevor-Roper's translators, and it agrees with Picker and the pages recovered from Munich to such a detailed extent that we can be assured all three texts have a common ancestor, which must be the actual bunker notes themselves. Nevertheless, even at best, they are the hasty notes taken on the fly by a second party, not necessarily a true verbatim record of what Hitler said (all the editors underplay this fact, except Jochmann, who emphasizes it).

The work of Werner Jochmann presents not only some sound scholarship on the *Table Talk*, but an important version of the text. The differences from Picker are mostly minor variations in wording that have no substantial effect on meaning, though some deviations are more significant (e.g., sometimes one text contains entire entries lacking in the other). Jochmann supports his text's authority by including photocopies of typed pages, as well as handwritten notes by Heim and Bormann, and other items. Jochmann also relates his own version of events regarding how the notes came to be made, and other details, though unlike Picker, who draws on his own recollections, or Genoud and Trevor-Roper, who cite no sources at all, Jochmann reconstructs events from letters and documents. How successfully or judiciously he accomplishes this I did not attempt to judge, but no one else has done as much.

Jochmann seems convinced that the *Bormann-Vermerke* contains the Heim originals, and thus it is Picker who was careless whenever they disagree. But since Picker's second edition was independently checked and certified, against notes direct from Heim, while Jochmann is working from later drafts that had passed through the editing of Bormann and his secretaries, it does not seem plausible that Jochmann's text can claim greater accuracy than Picker's. But I will leave this debate for others to resolve.

What Jonathan Glover didn't know is that the anti-Christian quotes he used only appear in Genoud's French and Trevor-Roper's English, not the German, except one that appears only in Jochman. Yet Picker and Jochmann present the untranslated German, and from independent manuscripts. Indeed, Jochmann reproduces the very manuscript used by Genoud and (ostensibly) Stevens and Cameron. So whose version are we to trust?

Given certain blatant distortions in Genoud's French, it appears some shameful mischief has been done by Genoud, while Stevens and Cameron are equally guilty of some incompetence or dishonesty—at least, if they claimed to have translated the *Bormann-Vermerke* but in fact merely translated Genoud's French. In the preface to his third edition, Trevor-Roper describes the bitter copyright battle

between Picker and Genoud, which is supposed to explain why Genoud didn't allow the actual *Bormann-Vermerke* to be published until 1980, and then only after decades of insistent cajoling by academics. One might wonder if Genoud was also trying to conceal his crime.

There may be a clue on the website of the controversial historian David Irving.⁹ He relates how Genoud attempted to hoax him in the 1970s with what appeared to be a forgery of "Hitler's Last Testament," which Genoud published earlier.¹⁰ Irving even claims he got him to confess to forging this "testament," Genoud declaring in his defense "But it's just what Hitler would have said, isn't it?" Irving's story throws a lot of suspicion on Genoud as a man willing to perpetrate a hoax, thinking it permissible to fabricate the words of Hitler if it was what he believed Hitler "would have said." Such a man would likely have no scruple against altering and inserting words and remarks into the *Table Talk*.

Further study of Genoud's history and motives, and the nature of the distortions he introduced into the record, would be worthwhile. He appears to have been a very strange man with a colorful history: a Swiss banker and Nazi spy who laundered money for the Third Reich, a self-professed neo-Nazi right up to his suicide in 1996 (though never an open supporter of the holocaust), a voracious purchaser and profiteer of Nazi archives, and an admitted financier of terrorists.¹¹ But I will leave it to more able historians to explore the facts of his life. Whatever Genoud's motivation for doctoring the text, the fact that Stevens and Cameron's English translation matches Genoud's falsified French (as we shall see), and not the actual *Bormann-Vermerke* published by Jochmann, leaves many questions unanswered. Were they lazy? Duped? Accomplices in crime? Whatever the case, the Trevor-Roper edition is to be discarded as worthless.

One might find fault in Trevor-Roper's excuse, at least in his first preface, for not comparing the two editions of Genoud and Picker: that Picker's text was not organized chronologically. Picker's first edition did organize the notebook entries by subject, but each entry was still precisely dated, and it would have been little trouble to manage a comparison. And this problem was corrected in Picker's second edition anyway, which restored the chronological order, leaving Trevor-Roper no reason not to demand a collation. Yet he sponsored two more editions since without comparing the texts or assessing the troubling discrepancies. Nor before releasing his third edition did he check the Stevens-Cameron translation against the German edition of Jochmann, which would have revealed the hoax, since here was their very source.¹² Or so he believed.

Case Study: The Glover Quotes

At the conclusion of a two-page entry for the afternoon of 27 February 1942, the Trevor-Roper text reads as follows:

If my presence on earth is providential, I owe it to a superior will. But I owe nothing to the Church that trafficks in the salvation of souls, and I find it really too cruel. I admit that one cannot impose one's will by force, but I have a horror of people who enjoy inflicting sufferings on others' bodies and tyranny upon others' souls.

Our epoch will certainly see the end of the disease of Christianity. It will last another hundred years, two hundred years perhaps. My regret will have been that I couldn't, like whoever the prophet was, behold the promised land from afar. We are entering into a conception of the world that will be a sunny era, an era of tolerance. Man must be put in a position to develop freely the talents that God has given him.

What is important above all is that we should prevent a greater lie from replacing the lie that is disappearing. The world of Judeo-Bolshevism must collapse.

But Jochmann and Picker both have a very different text here:

Ich bin auf Grund höherer Gewalt da, wenn ich zu etwas nötig bin. Abgesehen davon, dass sie mir zu grausam ist, die seligmachende Kirche! Ich habe noch nie Gefallen gefunden daran, andere zu schinden, wenn ich auch weiß, dass es ohne Gewalt nicht möglich ist, sich in der Welt zu behaupten. Es wird nur dem das Leben gegeben, der am stärksten darum ficht. Das Gesetz des Lebens heißt: Verteidige dich!

Die Zeit, in der wir leben, ist die Erscheinung des Zusammenbruchs dieser Sache. Es kann 100 oder 200 Jahre noch dauern. Es tut mir leid, dass ich wie Moses das gelobte Land nur aus der Ferne sehen kann.

Wir wachsen in eine sonnige, wirklich tolerante Weltanschauung hinein: Der Mensch soll in der Lage sein, die ihm von Gott gegebenen Fähigkeiten zu entwickeln. Wir müssen nur verhindern, dass eine neue, noch größere Lüge entsteht: die Jüdisch-Bolschewistische Welt. Sie *muss* ich zerbrechen.¹³

My translation (here and hereafter with the assistance of Reinhold Mitschang):

I am here due to a higher power, if I am necessary for anything. Leave aside that she is too cruel for me, the beatifying Church! I have never found pleasure in maltreating others, even if I know it isn't possible to stand your ground in the world without force. Life is only given to those who fight for it the hardest. It is the law of life: Defend yourself!

The time in which we live indicates the collapse of this idea. It can still take 100 or 200 years. I am sorry that, like Moses, I can only see the Promised Land from a distance.

We are growing into a sunny, really tolerant worldview: Man shall be able to develop his God-given talents. We must only prevent a new, even greater lie from arising: that of the Jewish-Bolshevist world. That's what I [must] destroy.

There are many significant discrepancies here. Compare the two versions above and we see some sentences radically changed in meaning. Yet there is no doubt that both are derived from a common source. Given the greater credibility of Picker and Jochmann, the sham is almost certainly in Trevor-Roper's edition, the result of trusting Genoud.

In particular, the anti-Christian sentiment exhibited throughout the Genoud/Trevor-Roper version is largely lacking in the German. There is no "disease of Christianity" that Hitler wishes dead, but the expediency of his own Nazi-enforced Social Darwinism. So the version of this quote used by Glover is false. Hitler's only genuine anti-Christian remark here is against the cruelty of the Catholic Church specifically, with his sarcastic play on *die alleinseligmachende Kirche*, the idea of a "one true church" that alone grants salvation.

We also find clues here to what seems to have happened: Stevens and Cameron made a mistake, not in translating the German, but Genoud's French! For here is the same passage as it appears in Genoud:

Si ma présence sur cette terre est providentielle, je le dois à une volonté supérieure. Mais je ne dois rien à cette Eglise qui trafique du salut des âmes, et je la trouve vraiment trop cruelle. J'admets qu'on ne puisse s'imposer que par la force, mais j'ai horreur des gens qui ont le goût de faire souffrir les corps et de tyranniser les âmes.

Notre époque verra sans doute la fin de la maladie chrétienne. C'est une affaire de cent ans, de deux cents ans peut-être. Mon regret aura été, à l'instar de tel prophète, de n'apercevoir que de loin la terre promise. Nous entrons dans une conception du monde, qui sera une ère ensoleillée, une ère de tolérance. L'homme doit être mis dans la situation de développer librement les talents qui lui sont donnés par Dieu.

Ce qui importe avant tout, c'est que nous empêchions un mensonge plus grand de se substituer à celui qui disparaît. Le monde judéo-bolchevik doit s'effondrer.

My translation:

If my presence on this earth is providential, I owe it to a higher will. But I do not owe anything to this Church that tampers with the salvation of souls, and I find it really too cruel. I admit that one can assert oneself only by force, but I detest people who have a taste for torturing bodies and tyrannizing souls.

Our time will undoubtedly see the end of the Christian disease. It is a matter of a hundred years, two hundred years perhaps. My regret will have been, following the example of such a prophet, to see the promised land only from afar.

We are entering a conception of the world, which will be a sunlit era, an era of tolerance. Man must be put in the situation of freely developing the talents

that are given him by God. What is essential above all is that we prevent a larger lie from replacing that which disappears. The Judeo-Bolshevik world must be crushed.

Apart from the obvious fact that this is almost exactly what the Trevor-Roper translation says (and not what the *Bormann-Vermerke* says, per Jochmann), among many clues two particular details are most curious:

First, the English of Stevens and Cameron uses the word “trafficks” precisely where Genoud uses *trafique*. But though *trafique* sounds like *traffick*, it actually means “toy with, tamper with, to doctor,” *not* traffick (“to sell, deal with, trade in”). This makes their translation seem rather amateurish, as well as patently from the French, not the German, which doesn’t really suggest such a word.

Second, Stevens and Cameron have Hitler saying “I admit that one cannot impose one’s will by force, but...” which seems unintelligible. In the German and the French we see at once that Hitler’s “but” makes sense because he just admitted that one cannot impose one’s will *except* by force, hence the logic of his ensuing qualification. Why is Hitler denying this in Trevor-Roper when he asserts it in all other versions (Picker, Jochmann, *and* Genoud)? Most likely it is because Stevens and Cameron missed the *ne que* idiom used by Genoud, unique to the French language: the phrase does not mean *not*, as the *ne* alone would otherwise suggest, but *only* (“I admit that one can assert oneself *only* by force”). Thus, Stevens and Cameron made a mistake here that only makes sense if they are translating from Genoud’s *French*, not the original German. They clearly weren’t ignorant of the idiom, since they got it right when Genoud uses it in the following paragraph. They simply overlooked its use here.

Then there are crimes of omission. In Picker’s and Jochmann’s text, earlier under the same entry, Hitler says “Das, was der Mensch vor dem Tier voraushat, der vielleicht wunderbarste Beweis für die Überlegenheit des Menschen ist, dass er begriffen hat, dass es eine Schöpferkraft geben muss!” (“What man has over the animals, possibly the most marvelous proof of his superiority, is that he has understood there must be a Creative Power!”). Such a clear assertion of Hitler’s belief in God is not in Genoud or the Trevor-Roper text at all. As the table on the facing page on the right shows, the whole paragraph is missing in both texts, and the preceding paragraph radically altered. Again the English is clearly from the French. Why? How many other omissions are there? These are important questions requiring investigation. Compare:

Trevor-Roper:

In the trade union formed by the Church, many of the members have tangible interests to defend and see no further. A given set of grimaces, certain people identify them with true religion. After that, let's express surprise that these cynical exploiters of God are the true purveyors of atheism.

Why should men fight to make their point of view triumph, if prayer should be enough? ...

Picker:

In dem Verein ist ein Teil (die katholische Priesterschaft) an der ganzen Geschichte interessiert. Wie ist das aber, wenn ein so selbstsüchtiger Verein auf solche Weise die Schöpfung verhöhnt. Ein Götzendienst, der geradezu entsetzlich ist.

Das, was der Mensch von dem Tier voraushat, der vielleicht wunderbarste Beweis für die Überlegenheit des Menschen ist, daß der begriffen hat, daß es eine Schöpferkraft geben muß! Man braucht nur durch ein Teleskop oder durch ein Mikroskop zu sehen: Da erkennt man, daß der Mensch die Fähigkeit hat, diese Gesetze zu begreifen. Da muß man aber doch demütig werden! Wird diese Schöpferkraft mit einem Fetisch identifiziert, dann bricht die Gottesvorstellung zusammen, wenn der Fetisch versagt.

Warum überhaupt kämpfen, wenn es mit Gebet zu machen ist? ...

Genoud:

Dans ce syndicat constitué par l'Église, beaucoup des membres ont des intérêts tangibles à défendre et ne voient que cela. Ces certains les identifient la vraie religion. Etonnons-nous après cela que ces exploiters cyniques de Dieu soient les vrais pourvoyeurs de l'athéisme.

Pourquoi les hommes lutteraient-ils pour faire triompher leur point de vue si la prière devait suffire? ...

Though Picker originally omitted sentences, he corrected these and other mistakes in his second edition. One example appears in the same dated entry and contains another of the three quotes used by Glover, here expanded from Trevor-Roper:

I realise that man, in his imperfection, can commit innumerable errors—but to devote myself deliberately to error, that is something I cannot do. *I shall never*

come personally to terms with the Christian lie. In acting as I do, I'm very far from the wish to scandalise. But I rebel when I see the very idea of Providence flouted in this fashion. It's a great satisfaction for me to feel myself totally foreign to that world. But I shall feel I'm in my proper place if, after my death, I find myself, together with people like me, on some sort of Olympus. I shall be in the company of the most enlightened spirits of all times.

In Picker's first edition the sentences I have italicized above do not appear. The text simply runs from the preceding material to the following without stop. One might think they are spurious interpolations in Genoud (repeated in Trevor-Roper), except that Picker's second edition, corrected by Mediger against the original notes, has restored them as follows (my italics again):

Ich weiß, dass der Mensch in seiner Fehlerhaftigkeit tausend Dinge falsch machen wird. Aber entgegen dem eigenen Wissen etwas falsch tun, das kommt nicht in Frage! *Man darf sich persönlich einer solchen Lüge niemals fügen. Nicht weil ich andere ärgern will, sondern weil ich darin eine Verhöhnung der ewigen Vorsehung erkenne. Ich bin froh, wenn ich mit denen keine innere Verbindung habe.* Ich fühle mich wohl in der geschichtlichen Gesellschaft, in der ich mich befinde, wenn es einen Olymp gibt. In dem, in den ich eingehe, werden sich die erleuchtetsten Geister aller Zeiten finden.

My translation:

I know that humans in their defectiveness will do a thousand things wrong. But to do something wrong against one's own knowledge, that is out of the question! *One should never personally accept such a lie. Not because I want to annoy others, but because I recognize therein a mockery of the Eternal Providence. I am glad if I have no internal connection with them.* I feel good in the historical society I am in if there is an Olympus. In the place I'm entering will be the most illuminated spirits of all times.¹⁴

Again we see reckless distortion. The overwhelming anti-Christian sentiment is gone. In fact, the sentence "I shall never come personally to terms with the Christian lie" would not even fit here, and is thus more evidently an interpolation. In contrast, "One should never personally accept such a lie" fits perfectly, carrying over and completing the thought of the previous sentence.

The lie Hitler was really talking about was not Christianity, but any dogma contrary to what one knows to be true. The Catholic idea of a "one true church" was such a lie in his view, though, for he had just finished arguing for *absoluten Toleranz* of alternative paths to salvation. But there is no attack on Christianity *in toto* in Picker, only certain dogmas, such as exclusivism. It is again clear that another of the three Glover quotes is false.

The restoration of the missing sentences also corroborates the reality of the *Bormann-Vermerke*, since Genoud could not have toyed with sentences that did not appear in Picker. He must have had on hand in 1952 a genuine, independent manuscript agreeing with Picker's. There are many other corrections made by Picker that show counterparts in Genoud's earlier edition, making a strong collective case for the authenticity of their independent manuscripts.

We see still more evidence here that the Trevor-Roper translation is from Genoud's French and not the German of the *Bormann-Vermerke*. Genoud reads:

Je n'ignore pas que l'homme, dans son imperfection, peut commettre d'innombrables erreurs—mais m'adonner consciemment à l'erreur, céda je ne le puis. Je ne m'accommoderai personnellement jamais du mensonge chrétien. En agissant comme je le fais, je suis fort éloigné du désir de scandaliser. Mais je m'insurge quand je vois bafouée de la sorte l'idée même de la Providence. C'est une grande satisfaction pour moi de me sentir totalement étranger à ce monde. Mais je me sentirai à ma place si, après ma mort, je me retrouve, avec des gens de mon bord, dans quelque olympe. J'y serai dans la compagnie des esprits les plus éclairés de tous les temps.

My translation:

I am not unaware that man in his imperfection can make innumerable errors—but to give in consciously to error, I will never succumb to that. I personally will never accommodate myself to the Christian lie. In acting as I do, I am extremely far from the desire to annoy. But I rebel when I see ridiculed in this way the very idea of Providence. It's a great satisfaction for me to feel myself totally foreign to that world. But I shall feel I'm in my place if, after my death, I find myself, with people of my kind, in some Olympus. I shall be in the company of the most enlightened spirits of all times.

We see again the translators continued to mimic Genoud's French, using the same word order and sentence breaks, and employing obvious cognates, e.g. *innombrables erreurs* becomes *innumerable errors*, while *scandaliser* becomes *scandalise*, even though this is less natural a word in English for the context (“anger,” “annoy,” or “shock” are all acceptable translations of *scandaliser* that make more sense and are closer to the German).

The last of the three Glover quotes brings up a new problem. This falls under a different entry, that for 19 October 1941 (evening), where Trevor-Roper's text contains the sentence “Christianity is a prototype of Bolshevism: the mobilisation by the Jew of the masses of slaves with the object of undermining society.” Picker has no entry for this date at all. But Jochmann's does, and it agrees with Genoud and Trevor-Roper: *Das Christentum war der Vor-Bolschewismus, die Mobilisierung von Sklavenmassen durch den Juden zum Zwecke der Aushöhlung des Staatsbaues*, “Christianity was the Proto-Bolshevism, the mobilization of the enslaved masses

by the Jew for the purpose of undermining the state” (my translation). This just after comparing Christianity to syphilis, as the two diseases that destroyed Rome (the context seems to be an indictment of the Vatican).

Further study is needed to ascertain if this is genuine. Why does Picker’s version of Heim’s notes lack this entry? Jochmann’s text indicates that the following entry (for 21 October) was made by Bormann, also not in Picker. Is it possible that Bormann also made the 19 October entry without noting it? Certainly, in-depth research of the whole *Table Talk* is needed, to establish not only how credible entries like this are, or who wrote them (might they even have been forged by Genoud?), but what Hitler meant in the *Table Talk* when he used various recurring words and themes, or indeed what he really believed, at least what we can reconstruct from the *Table Talk*.

It is especially curious that this paragraph under 19 October appears remarkably similar to another paragraph under 13 December, which appears in all editions and translations. There, Picker has this:

Christus war ein Arier. Aber Paulus hat seine Lehre benutzt, die Unterwelt zu mobilisieren und einen Vorbolschewismus zu organisieren. Mit dessen Einbruch geht¹⁵ die schöne Klarheit der antiken Welt verloren. Was ist das für ein Gott, der nur Wohlgefallen hat, wenn die Menschen sich vor ihm kasteien?

My translation:

Christ was an Aryan.¹⁶ But Paul used his teachings to mobilize the underworld and organize a proto-bolshevism. With its outbreak the beautiful clarity of the ancient world was lost. What kind of God is it who is only pleased if humans chastise themselves before him?

Here, Hitler’s position is more subtle. First, Hitler does not deny Christ but claims Christ for himself (Jesus was an Aryan and therefore his noble predecessor), and attacks not Christianity but the elements of Church doctrine (beginning with Paul) that are procommunist and antifascist, and thus hostile to Hitler’s capitalist-authoritarian program. Hitler later goes on to question Christian dogma, but implicitly accepts the existence of God and the authority of Christ, a very different impression than we might get using isolated quotes like those from 19 October. In fact, this passage is very similar to that one. In both paragraphs Hitler refers to the *antike Welt* as *schön* and, using different words, refers to its breakdown, and in both we find the word *Vorbolschewismus* and a cognate of *Mobilisierung*. Is the entry for 19 October something Bormann reconstructed from a faulty memory of what was actually said three weeks later? Or is it an attempt by Genoud to fabricate a new text drawing on 13 December? These are the sorts of questions historians need to answer. For now, this third Glover quote must be regarded as either suspect or out of context.

There is another popular sentence under 13 December 1941 that, though not used by Glover, should be addressed here, as it presents a third problem. Again, it is a sentence restored in Picker's second edition, proving Genoud was working from an independent source. Trevor-Roper reads: "But Christianity is an invention of sick brains: one could imagine nothing more senseless, nor any more indecent way of turning the idea of the Godhead into a mockery" (matching Genoud almost verbatim: "Mais le christianisme est une invention de cerveaux malades: on ne saurait rien imaginer de plus insensé, ni une façon plus inconvenante de tourner en dérision l'idée de la divinité"). But in Picker's German this sentence is somewhat different: "Das Christentum (lehrt 'die Verwandlung,' das) ist das Tollste, was je ein Menschengehirn in seinem Wahn hervorgebracht hat, eine Verhöhnung von allem Göttlichen,"—"Christianity (teaches 'Transubstantiation,' that) is the maddest thing ever concocted by a human brain in its delusion, a mockery of all that is godly."

The difference in meaning here is radical, and again shows how Hitler's words may have been distorted. However, the problem grows deeper here: Jochmann omits the material Picker placed in parentheses (Jochmann also replaces *was* with *das* but that has no effect on the meaning). Picker does not say why he placed parentheses around these words, but they are clearly meant to be incorporated into the sentence. Without them, the sentence does say "Christianity is the maddest thing that a human brain has ever concocted in its delusion." However, all versions follow this with a sentence attacking the absurdity of transubstantiation, as if that was indeed what Hitler meant. Such discrepancies between Jochmann and Picker thus present yet another problem for anyone aiming to get at what Hitler actually said.

Conclusion

All this is not to say that Hitler doesn't criticize Christianity even in Picker's and Jochmann's version of the *Table Talk*. For instance, again on 13 December 1941, Hitler argues against the idea of a physical resurrection and in favor of a spiritual one, and there and elsewhere he takes a very cynical view of Catholicism, voicing many of the same criticisms one might hear from a candid (and bigoted) Protestant. Yet even there he makes it clear that he believes in God, Christ, the immortality of the soul, and divine providence. Confirming this picture are recent studies of the religious beliefs of Hitler and the Nazi party by Bärsch and Steigmann-Gall.¹⁷ As Jochmann himself concludes after surveying Hitler's remarks on religion in the *Table Talk*: "Hitler was by no means unreligious" (*Hitler keineswegs areligiös war*, p. 31).

The matter is complicated by the interfering hand of Bormann himself. As an editor he had a tendency to make Hitler sound more like a Deist than he might have been, as for example in the entry for the night of 11/12 July, 1941, where he inserts a note into Hitler's speech, defining God as "the reign of natural law throughout the universe" (*das Walten der Naturgesetze im gesamten Universum*). Apart from this

interpolation, and despite significant differences between the Picker-Jochmann and Genoud-Trevor-Roper editions, in the actual German of this entry Hitler does attack the Church, Christian dogma, and institutional religion, while promoting personal religion and religious tolerance. And while he talks of Christianity introducing lies, he still denounces atheism (e.g. “zum Atheismus wollen wir nicht erziehen”). In another entry Hitler talks of Christianity becoming obsolete while, again, denouncing atheism (14 October, 1941, midday). Hitler’s position appears to resemble Kant’s with regard to the primacy of science over theology in deciding the facts of the universe, while remaining personally committed to a more abstract theism. But I won’t argue for any particular construction of Hitler’s religious views here. It is sufficient to note that, whatever his beliefs were, they are distorted in Genoud, and these distortions among many others were retained in the text of Trevor-Roper. Yet that is the only English translation of the *Table Talk* in print, and few know how worthless it is.

There is need of much more work on this source before it can be used in any way by competent historians. At the very least we need a complete investigation of the manuscripts on which they are based and the persons who have claimed to have them, their motives and capabilities, and a collation of all versions and editions with commentary on all the discrepancies, with a new English translation based on a critical edition of Picker and Jochmann.¹⁸

¹ Jonathan Glover, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 355-56.

² Apart from still more changes of title, publisher, and publication date than are noted here, the following survey exhausts all major variants I know: First appeared the German version of Henry Picker in 1951 (1st ed., with Gerhard Ritter; 2nd ed. with Percy Schramm in 1963; 3rd ed. in 1976) entitled *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier, 1941-42* (1st ed.: Bonn: Athenaem-Verlag; 2nd & 3rd eds.: Stuttgart: Seewald). In 1952 came the French version of François Genoud, *Libres Propos sur la Guerre et la Paix: Recueillis sur l'Ordre de Martin Bormann* (Paris: Flammarion). Then in 1953 arrives the English version edited by H.R. Trevor-Roper, *Hitler's Table Talk, 1941-1944* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson), also published as *Hitler's Secret Conversations, 1941-1944*. Reprinted many times (e.g. 1961, 1988), a new (2nd) ed. was issued in 1973, and a 3rd ed. in 2000. In 1980 came the most important edition of all: Werner Jochmann, *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941-1944: die Aufzeichnungen Heinrich Heims herausgegeben von Werner Jochmann* (Hamburg: A Knaus). I have also stumbled across I. M. Fradkin’s 1993 translation into Russian of Picker’s version, entitled *Zastolnye razgovory Gitlera* (Smolensk: Rusich). Gitta Sereny, “The Truth Is, I Loved Hitler,” *The Observer*, 28 April 1996, mentions a serialization of the original German of Genoud’s manuscript in an unnamed German magazine sometime in the ‘70’s, which I could not confirm.

³ Cf. Gerhard Weinberg, *Guide to Captured German Documents* (Maxwell Airforce Base, Alabama: Human Resources Research Institute, 1952). On p. 55 it is noted that “safe 5” contains item 6, a “box of miscellaneous Hitler items” including sub-item 4: “Führerhauptquartier, Jan 18, 1942, abends, 4 pp.,” which “concerns German domestic politics;” “Führerhauptquartier, Jan 24, 1942, abends, 2 pp.,” whose contents aren’t described. Also in Safe 5 is item 8, “Typed copies of the utterances of Hitler, 1942, under item 6 above” (file no. 52-178). In fact, item 8 contains copies of everything in item 6, plus: Jan 8/9: 9 pp.; 16/17: 14 pp.; 17/18: 3 pp.; 18/19: 2 pp.; 19: 3 pp.; 20: 2 pp.; 22: 2 pp.; 24: 2 pp. (all from 1942). I did not attempt a systematic collation, but I noticed many handwritten corrections aligning what was typed to what appears in Jochmann or Picker.

⁴ The letter “a” in Schrasberger is unclear—it could be another vowel.

⁵ Cf. Sereny, “The Truth.”

⁶ A full translation would be “Hitler’s Table Talk in the Central Headquarters.” Genoud’s title translates “Candid Remarks on the War and Peace: Collected by Order of Martin Bormann.” A handwritten title page attached to item 8 in the Library of Congress reads “Hitler Privat-Gespräche,” which appears to be a reverse translation of Trevor-Roper’s alternate title (each entry has a similar handwritten cover sheet identifying the corresponding pages in an unspecified edition of Trevor-Roper).

⁷ The later entries were recorded by Heim upon his return, though several were recorded by Bormann himself. Jochmann’s edition does not include any of the entries personally made by Picker, between March and August ‘42, due to a copyright dispute—on the other hand, Jochmann includes many entries in ‘41 and ‘42, presumably made either by Heim or (more likely) Bormann, that do not appear in Picker.

⁸ From the title page: “Im Auftrage des Deutschen Instituts für Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Zeit geordnet, eingeleitet und veröffentlicht von Gerhard Ritter, Professor der Geschichte a. D. Universität Freiburg.”

⁹ David Irving, “The Faking of Hitler’s ‘Last Testament’” (www.fpp.co.uk/Hitler/docs/Testament/byGenoud.html); this is part of Irving’s “International Campaign for Real History,” Focal Point Publications (www.fpp.co.uk/docs/Irving/FPhistory.html). Irving does not deny the Holocaust happened, only that Hitler knew of it. His account of Genoud’s involvement with him is first person and credible.

¹⁰ François Genoud, ed., *The Testament of Adolf Hitler: the Hitler-Bormann documents, February-April 1945* (London: Cassell, 1961 [also Icon Books, possibly others]). This was republished in 1978 (Los Angeles: World Service) with an introduction by L. Craig Fraser. It also appeared originally in French as *Le Testament Politique de Hitler* (Paris: A. Fayard, 1959) with a preface by H.R. Trevor-Roper and commentary by André François-Poncet. On the questionable nature of this document, see Albert M. Beer, “Hitlers politisches Testament: Die Bormann-Diktate vom Februar und April 1945: eine Fälschung?” (Überarbeitete Fassung eines Vortrages auf der Tagung der Zeitgeschichtlichen Forschungsstelle Ingolstadt am 10. Mai 1986). In a letter to me of 17 October 2002, Trevor-Roper reports being undecided about its authenticity. He claims Genoud would have nothing to gain by forging it, but it could have been forged by one “Hans Rechenberg.”

¹¹ Cf. Sereny, “The Truth”; Ben MacIntyre, “Swiss Banker who Worshipped Hitler Commits Suicide,” *The Times*, 4 June 1996; David Lee Preston, “Switzerland is Urged to Open its Files on Nazi who Financed Terrorists,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 19 March 1997. See also Pierre Péan, *L’Extrémiste: François Genoud, de Hitler à Carlos* (Paris: Fayard,

1996); Karl Laske, *Le Banquier Noir: François Genoud* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1996); Karl Laske & Maria Hoffmann-Dartevelle, *Ein Leben zwischen Hitler und Carlos: Francois Genoud* (Zürich: Limmat, 1996).

¹² However, Trevor-Roper, now Lord Dacre, has since come to suspect just what I argue: that Stevens and Cameron translated from the French, and poorly at that. In a letter to me of 17 October 2002 he reports recently discovering a mistranslation in the Stevens-Cameron text only explicable as a mistake in translating Genoud's otherwise correct French (they render *confus* as "confused" when the German and the context clearly indicate the connotation "embarrassed"), though he could not remember the exact passage (he is now nearly ninety, in poor health and, in his own words, "very blind"). He also heard that Richard Evans noted some questionable passages, in a brief for David Irving's defense in a "recent libel action."

¹³ This is from Picker's 2nd edition, correcting several errors in the 1st, which agrees with Jochmann in every detail but one: Jochmann reads *einsehe* where Picker reads *weiß*, but these have essentially the same meaning. The concluding *muss* is italicized in Picker, presumably indicating the word is missing from his actual notes and was restored to complete the sense.

¹⁴ I have said there are minor discrepancies between Jochmann and Picker, demonstrating they employed separate manuscripts, though with a common origin. This will serve as an example: here, where Picker reads *dem eigenen Wissen* ("against one's own knowledge") Jochmann has *meinem Wissen* ("against my own knowledge"), and Jochmann ends the sentence *das mache ich nicht* ("I do not do that") instead of *das kommt nicht in Frage* ("that is out of the question"). Following the same theme of converting the impersonal to the first person, Jochmann then reads "I personally will never accept such a lie" (*Ich persönlich werde mich einer solchen Lüge niemals fügen*) instead of "One may never personally accept such a lie." The rest of the material is identical to Picker, with the exception of one substitution of a *dass* for a *wenn*. In short, none of the variations change the meaning in any significant way, and therefore Jochmann typically supports Picker. Most trivial variations from Picker in Jochmann might be explained as Bormann's handiwork, as here Bormann probably converted Heim's impersonal tone to the first person to match the context.

¹⁵ Jochmann has the past tense (*ging*) which is grammatically more correct, so I follow his reading in my translation.

¹⁶ That is, not a Jew. A footnote in Picker indicates the basis for this belief: Hitler, and other Nazis, believed Jesus was indeed fathered by a Roman legionary (a story that dates back at least to the second century A.D.) and therefore a member of the master race.

¹⁷ Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Claus-Ekkehard Bärsch, *Die politische Religion des Nationalsozialismus: die religiöse Dimension der NS-Ideologie in den Schriften von Dietrich Eckart, Joseph Goebbels, Alfred Rosenberg und Adolf Hitler* (Munich: W. Fink, 1998), esp. 286-300.

¹⁸ This article was completed with partial funding from the Freedom from Religion Foundation. All of my translations from the German were completed with the assistance of Reinhold Mitschang, for whose help I am most grateful.