

HITLER AND THE CHURCHES

1933-1939

by

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## ABSTRACT

For purposes of this thesis, we accept the view that the Christian Church's power declined after the Middle Ages, and a secular, industrial, mass society developed in Western Europe, a society which, by the nineteenth century, had begun to deprive men--particularly the proletariat--of their spiritual roots, and which created the need for a new faith. In Germany, this situation, especially acute after the first World War, was conditioned by the peculiar history of church-state relations there as well as by the weakened position of the middle classes. For a variety of reasons, young Germans in the first decades of this century were in a "revolutionary" mood. Adolf Hitler himself was such a young person, raised in a bourgeois Christian environment, yet strongly affected by the political and social trends of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

National Socialism, with its anti-Semitism and its call for national regeneration, became the substitute faith of Germans and was directed by cynical politicians. Much of this

"theology" was determined by political considerations; that is, by what appealed to non-Nazi Germans. It demanded, for example, a total commitment which many were ready to give. The religious trappings of this Weltanschauung were manufactured by Nazi leaders, who did not themselves believe in them. Seeking to win the nation's youth, Hitler found himself in conflict with orthodox faith, but he knew that, if the Party was permanently to dominate Germany, Christianity would have to be eliminated.

The Christian attitude, however, aided the Nazis in consolidating their power. The Lutheran view of the state, especially that of the "German Christians", offered little resistance. The Catholic attitude was more hostile, but ultimately did not prevent German Catholics from rivalling their Protestant colleagues in enthusiasm for Nazi reforms.

Hitler's approach to the churches after 1933 evolved in several stages, from apparent conciliation through frank hostility to grudging toleration. He tried to retreat from the position he adopted in the 'twenties, a position which upheld "positive Christianity", and which supported the "German Christians" and the Concordat of 1933. Although ready to abandon these elements and this agreement, he never could. After 1936 he began to intensify his attack on the Catholics and, to a certain extent, the Lutherans, but Hitler knew it was not necessary to assault the latter group as vigorously as

the Catholics. The outbreak of war showed both the failure and the success of the Party's Kirchenpolitik, for, while the activities of both confessions showed that the people still adhered to the old faith, the fact that both churches accepted the war in all its contradictory aspects, showed that the Weltanschauung had, in the political sphere at least, won the allegiance that the Party had sought earlier.

The Nazis were particularly concerned to eliminate Christian influence in education and youth training, and to substitute their own "faith". Many university students were already nationalistic, anti-Semitic, and "revolutionary", and most of the faculty of the universities were not hostile to the Party. Here Hitler was not concerned only to exclude Christian influence, but also to emasculate the critical faculties of the young and to ensure that only those who accepted National Socialism were educated. The public schools posed more of a problem, for here the churches often controlled both teachers and subjects, and here at the same time was the greatest opportunity and greatest need to educate and train good Nazis. Therefore the ideology became part of every child's learning and, where Christianity could not be altogether excluded, it was used and merged with the Hitlerite teachings. They also tried to limit the influence of parents with Christian prejudices over the child and to eliminate the Christian youth organizations. Throughout this campaign they

employed deceptive conciliation, deliberately confusing decrees, and anti-Christian propaganda. At first they benefited from the confusion in many Christian minds as to the nature of the movement, but this ambiguity was ultimately a disadvantage. In that they used Christianity to inculcate the new "faith", they weakened their anti-Christian position.

Uncertainty among Christian leaders combined with the faith of a part of their flock determined respectively the Nazis' considerable success in political organization and their failure to begin exterminating Christianity. Had the church leaders possessed a dynamic approach to social and political problems, the Nazi leaders would not have converted so many to their substitute faith. Their reforms succeeded because they were based on a lack of spiritual conviction in the reformers or of political maturity in the churchmen. Hitler was willing to use any sympathetic element to gain power, but, ironically, he never managed to win the entire devotion of the people because of this tactic of apparent compromise. In short, his alliance with and use of Christianity was ultimately one of his weaknesses.



## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

#### 1. Background: Spiritual Condition of Pre-Nazi Germany

The Christian churches have failed to provide solutions for twentieth century spiritual, social, and political problems; the result is that many of the semi-religious movements of the modern era, such as Communism, have taken place outside Christian theology and apart from Christian life. Necessity is the mother of invention; the need to solve these problems created much of the National Socialist phenomenon. German spiritual<sup>1</sup> confusion was of considerable significance in the development of the Nazi movement and in its rise to power. But while the Nazi elite did not seriously concern them-

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<sup>1</sup>By "spiritual" is meant not simply that which relates to the life of the spirit (i.e. "soul"), not religious life *per se*, but that which Dilthey called "die geistige Welt", translated by H.P. Rickman as "mind-affected world". This includes concepts of God, patriotism, world-view, social mores, and so on; phrases which imply an other-worldly sanction that, although vague, is nonetheless strong. See Wilhelm Dilthey, Pattern and Meaning in History. Thoughts on History and Society, ed. trans. H.P. Rickman, New York, Harpers, 1962, p. 23.



selves with the cause of the malady, they made effective use of the symptoms in their drive to power and the recommendations of would-be physicians in maintaining their position. This introductory chapter outlines the problem as it appeared in both European and German life. From this general background will be seen not only how Nazism was an integral part of German development, but also why un-political, non-fanatical, Christian Germans accepted and supported it.

Criticism of the Wilhelminian period and lamentations about its spiritual sickness began almost as soon as the age itself and have never stopped. Alfred Bäumler, a Nazi, declared that Bismarck left behind him a people who lived in a state they had not themselves created and who were therefore indifferent to its future. Their Kultur was poisoned by increasing commercial expansion, world-market competition, and, of course, materialism. All the finer elements of genuine "Germanness" (Deutschtum), the qualities of the German "soul", were sacrificed for individual material gain. With this decadent individualism and the corresponding neglect of the country's spiritual welfare, Bäumler was not surprised that the Fatherland collapsed in 1918.<sup>1</sup> He did not, in this analysis, get at the core of the issue. Nor did another Nazi, Alfred Rosenberg, when he condemned "the boundless, materialistic

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in George Frederick Kneller, Educational Philosophy of National Socialism, New Haven, Yale, 1941, p.30.

individualism aiming at an economic-political control of the world's money."<sup>1</sup> To be sure, if one ignores the jargon about "soul", one finds here some truth, supported by more reliable sources. The age was filled with great constructive potentiality, suppressed turbulence, and frustration. For many who were less articulate than, for example, Nietzsche or Paul de Lagarde, its security and comfort were not sufficient to give answers to the questions raised by a radically changing environment; they sought someone to lead them out of a social cul de sac. Take, for example, Thomas Mann's "Magic Mountain", in which a group of people are attracted by what seems to be originality or "charisma" in Mr. Peeperkorn. This novel is an encyclopedia of intellectual and social trends of the time. Although they were often critical of the age, the Wandervögel (or "Roamers"), youthful hikers and nature enthusiasts, stand for a similar tendency, seeking the "real" in human experience. It is significant, moreover, that the Church did not usually participate in the critical wave, nor did it often attract those who sought a reformation of national life. It had not managed to capture the allegiance of the working classes, who were born and grew up largely pagan from the early nineteenth century. Less inclined to be satisfied with superficial palliatives, the middle classes, more literate and self-con-

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred Rosenberg, Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts. München, Hoheneichen, 1934, p. 118.

scious, engaged in what now seems a frantic search for meaning.

The peculiarities of the Wilhelmian period were symptomatic of a deeper malaise, European in scope and much older than the Second Empire. By 1900, much Christian teaching and morality lived on only in a secularized form, and the majority of Europeans lived without a spiritual foundation to their existence. This condition, according to Nicolas Berdyaev,<sup>1</sup> represents the end of the Renaissance and the failure of humanism. The man the Renaissance humanists created now wanders the earth, lacking communion with the depths of life, relying too much on his own powers, and unbearably lonely. This loneliness, both spiritual and more simply social, has become an everyday experience of the urban masses. Meanwhile, according to Hannah Arendt, self-interest has to a certain extent declined and has been replaced by a numbness in the face of catastrophe which, coupled with an inclination toward abstract notions as guides for life, happily accepts a rigid, illogical ideology as long as it grants a minimum of self-respect. "What convinces the masses are not facts, and not invented facts, but only the consistency of the system of which they are presumably part."<sup>2</sup> A new system of belief,

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<sup>1</sup>In this introduction, I have confined myself to a discussion of three critics of the situation, Berdyaev, Arendt, and Fromm, representatives of three points of view, Christian political-social, and psychological. Much more has been written on the subject; here I can only indicate the common conclusions these writers have arrived at.

<sup>2</sup>Hannah Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, New York, Meridian, 1958, p. 316.

however, if presented in terms popularly understood--Soul, God, Fate, Fatherland--is almost assured of success. Europeans are ready, Berdyaev adds, to accept any kind of collectivism as long as the unwanted burden of human responsibility will vanish. If the new system appears consistent, they will gladly accept the offered spiritual counterfeit, forming "churches" that are mere imitations. This final dislocation of the organic structure of life means enslavement to mechanization and "civilized barbarism". There is, consequently, intensification of the loneliness which is at the root of human dissatisfaction.<sup>1</sup>

It could be maintained that the more Europeans gain political freedom and emerge from an original unity with other human beings and the natural world, the more isolated they become as individuals. The post-Renaissance situation, hand in hand with growing secularization and "enlightenment", leads the weaker majority of men to seek security through ties which destroy their freedom and their individual integrity. At any rate, writers as different as Berdyaev and Hannah Arendt agree that powerful tendencies exist to "escape from freedom" into submission or into some relationship with the world and men which relieves uncertainty. Erich Fromm comments; "by losing

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<sup>1</sup>Nicolas Berdyaev, End of Our Time, trans. Donald Attwater, London, Sheed and Ward, 1933, pp. 13-58. See also Arendt, op. cit., p. 46.

his fixed place in a closed world, man loses the answer to the meaning of his life."<sup>1</sup> What, or who, could restore this security?

In this particular aspect, Nazism was a European phenomenon, the end-product of this longing for spiritual security, but exacerbated by national frustration and economic disaster. Few could find solace in the political life of twentieth century Germany, where new forces, powerful and antipathetic to traditional values, threatened to bring anarchy. The political world had lost its connection not only with Christianity but also with much of Germany's ethical and cultural life. This complete secularization of politics deprived of refuge those unattracted by a declining church. The German who had no sense of function in religious and political life, and who could no longer believe in the divine right of the Emperor, sought, with the help of the Nazis, to give political life the trappings of religion again. The movement gathered momentum and strength as the critical rebels and despairing Christians found in it expression for their own needs.

For both believers and non-Christians alike, of course, it seemed easier to accept the imitation church Berdyaev

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<sup>1</sup>Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom, Toronto, Rinehart, 1941, p. 62.

prophesied than to adopt the more strenuous acceptance of spiritual doubt coupled with the generous tolerance Fromm prescribes, or the orthodox Christian attitude of faith. This was the situation in Germany after the Great War. The peculiarities of the Wilhelmian period were symptoms of a malaise, not limited to Germany alone, which became intense in the 'twenties and 'thirties. In the last analysis, not material comfort, not immersion in the beauties or functions of nature, not even the purging action of a great war effort, could relieve the agony caused by a development four hundred years old and European in scope. National Socialism, however, tried to reverse this development, but, in doing so, met with a rival; the Christian Church.

## 2. Catholic and Lutheran Views of the State

The Christian Church existed in Germany before the monolithic state, before the Empire, almost before civil government of any kind; and the views of Christians, Catholic and Lutheran, with regard to the state were part of established doctrine and determined the policy of every potential German leader, sometimes as personal articles of faith, as with the Lutheran Bismarck, sometimes as tenets of an alien world view, as for the nihilist Hitler.

For Roman Catholics, Thomistic philosophy provided a theory of the state apparently opposed to Nazi dogma. Lutheranism allows the state and the church each a sphere of in-

fluence in society, but Catholicism claims that the church's power is derived from a transcendental divine principle, standing above created nature, and, whereas the state is considered "natural", the church is "supernatural", above any natural creation of man.<sup>1</sup> Catholics believe that, while eternal law can find expression in laws of nature, the source and authority of human law must ultimately be the law of God; human law has no authority except as an expression of justice, defined by God's law as declared in Scripture. Thus, a secular government, whether democratic or autocratic, which governs in accordance with the law of God, is tolerable; the church continues to be the repository of eternal truth. The 1918 revolution and the 1933 developments were only ripples on the ocean of Catholic security. Nevertheless, as the Nazis were to discover, the Catholics tended to oppose any confusion of secular and divine power and to uphold eternal moral standards by which all powers in society might be judged.

Traditional Lutheranism, on the other hand, while it demands freedom to preach the Gospel and to administer sacraments without hindrance, leaves the political side of the church's life to the good will of the state, seeking, to be sure, to influence all classes in the state, but believing

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<sup>1</sup>see Thomas Aquinas, Treatise on Law, Chicago, Regnery, n.d., passim.

that the "powers that be are ordained by God." Orthodox German Lutherans often drew a sharp line between the realms of private devotion and public action, and the combination of personal piety and a ruthless use of force was characteristic, as with Bismarck. Wilhelm Niemöller explains the Lutheran attitude with the passage from the second Epistle to the Corinthians, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal".<sup>1</sup> Both the Catholics and the Lutherans believed in loyalty to the national state, but Lutheran devotion could go so far that during war the defence of the Fatherland became the religious as well as the civic duty of every Christian citizen. The Gott mit uns attitude did not die out after the Great War; in 1919, a Lutheran minister declared;

To foster national life, to let it blossom anew where it has disappeared or threatens to disappear, that is one of the most wonderful tasks which God has placed before His children...Among these peoples there is one to which goes our love, our pride, our wish, and our hope for the future: that is the German people.<sup>2</sup>

At the same period it was Pastor Martin Niemöller's desire to help his country out of its "desolate condition" that helped him decide to become a pastor.<sup>3</sup> There is nothing obviously

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<sup>1</sup>Wilhelm Niemöller, Kirchenkampf im Dritten Reich, Bielefeld, Bechauf, 1946, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Paul Kosok, Modern Germany. A Study of Conflicting Loyalties, Chicago, 1933, p. 201.

<sup>3</sup>Martin Niemöller, Vom U-Boot zur Kanzel, Berlin, Warneck, 1934, p. 163.



"Nazi" in the above quotations, yet many conscientious orthodox Lutherans supported Hitler and the "German Christians". How did an otherwise laudable love of country become a suicidal respect for authority?

By insisting that the true church was the church invisible, rather than the church visible, Martin Luther weakened the power of the ecclesiastical authorities over the state, while at the same time justifying absolute authority by divine right. This was no loss to Luther, who believed that religiously inspired inward liberty was the only important liberty. Obedience to outward civil and church authority is the theme of several of his treatises; for the dutiful Christian servant in the outer world, disobedience is a greater sin than murder or theft; even if those in power are evil and faithless, their power and authority is from God and therefore good.<sup>1</sup> A further theme among the Lutheran population was emphasis on the wickedness of human nature and therefore the insignificance of the individual and the necessity of subordination to a power outside the self; consequently, in questions of imposing discipline on a recalcitrant citizen, the Lutheran Christian would side with the state.

As the Lutheran church became the state-church in much of Germany, it is not surprising that it came to have a

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<sup>1</sup>paraphrased from The Reformation Writings of Martin Luther, trans. B.L. Woolf, London, Lutterworth, 1952, vol. 1, p. 357, and vol. 2, p. 298.

vested interest in the establishment and to be more sensitive than the Catholic church to change in governmental form. Throughout the seventeenth century, with religious wars and political rebellion in the German lands, there developed an understandable desire for a solid and powerful temporal authority. And while Luther's view of human salvation through individual virtue and grace may have been more honest than the prevailing Catholic view, the need for a divinely appointed but secular institution which could establish order in a chaotic world undoubtedly made many Germans willing to compromise with the state, however fragmented it may have been at that time. The continuing principle of submission of the individual to the Prince is behind the motivation of many Lutherans in the 'thirties, including Pastor Niemöller, who welcomed the Nazi "revolution". Thus the soul-searching which must have gone into the formation of the Bekennende Kirche (Confessional Church) can be appreciated. This organization, heretical by Lutheran as well as by Nazi standards, was not anticipated in the plans of the Nazis, but fortunately for Hitler, the majority of Lutherans still granted those in power a certain sanctity. Lutheran resistance was slight to an authoritarian movement which stressed the unity of all Germans and spoke in terms of "soul" and "sacrifice".

### 3. Church-State Relations in Germany

These, then, are the principles and trends which

determined Catholic and Lutheran behavior towards the state. A brief review of church-state relations up to 1933 will show how the Lutheran church, in particular, came to occupy an anomalous position in German life and how the Catholic church, on the other hand, felt itself strengthened after the first World War.

After the Reformation, both Protestant churches, Lutheran and Calvinist, soon became almost state institutions. In Prussia, for example, where the king was Summus Episcopus, Friedrich Wilhelm III in 1817 united the Lutheran and Calvinist Churches to form the Evangelical Church of Prussia, with the clergy as state officials. This occurred later in some of the other German states, but did not affect the status of the Lutheran or the Reformed Churches in, for example, Bavaria. In actual practice, the Prussian king only nominated authorities, pastors and laymen, to administer the church, but he could exercise, in accordance with Lutheran belief, supreme authority over the Evangelical Church, as shown by his act in creating it. Moreover, all church expenses were paid by the Prussian government and this financial dependence of the Evangelical Church created a vested interest in supporting the state. The unity of civil and religious life was strengthened by the fact that elsewhere in Germany every child was born into the Roman Catholic or the Protestant Church as well as into the state, and he received his religious education in government schools according to the affiliation of his

parents, whose church taxes were collected by the state. Although the state had some control over the churches it was at the same time intimately connected with and supported by them, and could ill afford to alienate them. The failure of Bismarck's Kulturkampf is the obvious example.

The 1918 revolution gave both denominations greater freedom from state control, for there was to be no state-church, and the federal constitution made each confession a private corporation, entirely controlling its own affairs and appointing its officials without state interference. There was not, however, complete separation of church and state, but simply no interference on the part of the government in internal church affairs; the state continued to guarantee many old privileges to both Catholics and Protestants which made the church-state relationship closer than might at first appear. The Lutheran pastors still drew their salaries from state funds and the government still considered every citizen a member of one of the churches unless he had formally resigned. Both churches still had the right to levy taxes on all members, which were collected and turned over to them by the state. Furthermore, in the 1920s, the various states which had confiscated Catholic lands during the Napoleonic era were still paying indemnities. The Prussian Evangelical Church also received indemnities for lands confiscated by the reforms of Stein and Hardenburg. This limited separation of church and state meant no decrease in the economic protection and support

given to the churches, which were able to expand their organization. In 1922 a larger union of the German Evangelical Church Foundation was formed which embraced all the territorial churches. In Bavaria, the 1924 concordat gave the Catholics complete freedom to administer their own affairs with considerable influence over the educational system; they could examine and certify all teachers who gave instruction in their faith. There was a similar agreement with the Bavarian Evangelical Church. Throughout Germany, religion was no longer compulsory for children whose parents claimed exception; in industrial areas, where there was considerable disbelief, the state supported special schools for industrial children, but this often had the effect of segregating children of non-believers and increasing the influence of religious instruction in other schools. Eighty-three per cent of the publicly-controlled elementary schools were still denominational in 1933.<sup>1</sup> The churches had complete control over their internal affairs; only in financial matters could the state interfere, since it collected church taxes. The churches were in a better financial position after the war than they were under the monarchy because they continued to receive financial support from the government, while enjoying administrative autonomy as well as influence in the educational system.

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<sup>1</sup>R.H. Samuel and R. Hinton Thomas, Education and Society in Modern Germany, London, Routledge and Kegan, Paul, 1949, p. 103.

Both major confessions, Protestant and Catholic, reaching through their auxiliary organizations into almost every corner of society, stood as great buttresses to the state and co-operated with the government as so many points that loyalty to the Christian Church was almost indistinguishable from loyalty to the state. While the political and moral duty of the citizen to the state was still sanctified by the church, the state, for its part, defended the beliefs of the accepted religious bodies; according to the Penal Code, blasphemy and public vilification of any of the churches, their beliefs, institutions, or ceremonies was punishable by imprisonment for a period of up to three years.<sup>1</sup> The governmental administration, the Catholic Church, and the Protestant Church co-operated in the task of preparing Germans for integrated and productive roles in their society; this three-pillared institution saw to it that belief in God, love of country, and public behaviour according to more or less Christian standards were part of the unconscious mind of most Germans, and, if not always unquestioned, then at least accepted as inevitable, prerequisites for respectable membership in the society of the Fatherland. Although--or perhaps because--anti-Christian movements abounded, the churches and the state relied upon each other for support.

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<sup>1</sup>Kosok, op. cit., p. 196.

Particularly with regard to the Catholic Church, the events of the post-war period resulted in an increase in the power and influence granted by the state to the churches. Central authority itself had been weakened and the fear of radicalism led many leaders to consider "religion" as a safeguard; the Catholic Zentrum (Centre Party), because the Social Democrats needed its support, gained influence. Thus, in 1933, traditional Christianity seemed to be in a strong position. But ten years later Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "This is a time of no religion at all...we have reached the stage of being radically without religion."<sup>1</sup> How was this possible?

#### 4. Problems in Lutheranism

The original energy of Lutheran Protestantism gradually declined over the centuries. Paradoxically, the state of mind that crippled many Lutherans and rendered them victims of Nazism, the belief that one's Christian faith was a purely private matter, a thing of individual and familial piety, began as a reform of the petrifying Lutheranism of the seventeenth century. Pietism deprecated mere doctrine and tried to turn Germans toward a simpler and more honest form of religion, an expression of immediate feeling rather than the

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<sup>1</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, London, Fontana, 1953, p. 91, See pp. 107-108.

result of study and discussion. Unfortunately, the feeling of dependence upon God which Pietists such as Schleiermacher and Novalis stressed as the most essential characteristic of Christianity tended to become a feeling of dependence upon the nation and its power, especially when those with a Pietistic upbringing lost God in the spiritual turmoil of the Wilhelmian and Weimar eras. For Schleiermacher himself, nationalism and Christianity were identical; "I know too clearly that it--the Fatherland--is a chosen instrument and people of God."<sup>1</sup> He professed, as did Hitler, that religious faith was "the sense and taste for the Eternal."<sup>2</sup> In this way, a dangerous vagueness entered German Protestantism; this extremely subjective style of religion was marked by uncertainty of direction. As Germany became more secular, nationalism itself became almost a religion as it seemed to have more real content and reference to actual life than the faltering church's doctrine. "The time was to come when well-meaning people were unable to distinguish between the emotions which welled in their hearts in a religious meeting and the surging feelings aroused by a Nazi party rally."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Koppel Pinson, Pietism as a Factor in the Rise of German Nationalism, New York, Columbia, 1934, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Karl Kupisch, Zwischen Idealismus und Massendemokratie. Eine Geschichte der evangelische Kirche in Deutschland 1915-1945, Berlin, Lettner, 1955, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup>F.H.Littell, The German Phoenix. Men and Movements in the Church in Germany, New York, Doubleday, 1960, p. 18.



And although Pietism improved and extended the social aspect of the church's work, it remained essentially conservative and aristocratic.

In this way, the corruption of the original Pietism is linked to Kulturreligion, "culture-religion", the concept that the best elements of Christianity are synonymous with the most characteristic and traditional elements of the German way of life or deutsche Kultur. Throughout the nineteenth century, the organized Protestant church remained obedient and loyal to the various princes, and lost much of its contact not only with the emerging proletariat, but also with the intellectuals. There were some attempts at reform, such as those of Johann Hinrich Wichern,<sup>1</sup> but their success was limited. The critical influence of Ludwig Feuerbach, of some liberal theologians, and of students of the sociology of religion also came to naught. Often, these tendencies too optimistically accepted bourgeois culture as the expression of a rational universe and too naively followed the idea of progress.<sup>2</sup> A "provincial harmonism" between Deutschtum and Christian values grew. While church-going became one of the virtues of a pious, patriotic Bürger, the court pastor Adolf

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<sup>1</sup>Wichern (1808-1881) was one of the catalysts of the Christian social movement and the Inner Mission; an evangelical minister, he established an orphanage in Hamburg.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Banwell Means, Things That are Caesar's. The Genesis of the German Church Conflict, New York, Round Table, 1935, p. 41.

Stoecker proclaimed that Christian faith and love of Germany were "an indissoluble unity".<sup>1</sup> This Protestantism which accommodated itself willingly to the interests of the middle class was examined by Thomas Mann in his Buddenbrooks.

By 1914 there was considerable confusion as to what the role of the genuine Christian in Germany should be. Moreover, the rapid strides made in industry and technology, the new search for profit, the rise of slums and the working classes aggravated the situation and brought Germany in step with the European development described in the first section of this chapter. Later, the Nazis Adolf Hitler and Ludwig Klagges denounced the era; "more and more the gods of Heaven were put into the corner as obsolete and outmoded and, in their stead, incense was burned to the idol Mammon;" the average Christian German became a "hard, one-sided rationalist and individualist, an abstract unit of calculating, utilitarian acquisitive consciousness."<sup>2</sup> Both of these men knew which drum to beat, but their outbursts also indicate a genuinely outraged, if perverted, idealism shared by many Germans. In the meantime, a cynical nihilism--what Meinecke called "mass Macchiavellism"<sup>3</sup>--grew in much of the lower classes; particu-

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<sup>1</sup>Kupisch, op. cit., p. 105 and p. 85.

<sup>2</sup>Aurel Kolnai, War against the West, London, Gollancz, 1938, p. 329; and Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, trans. Ralph Manheim, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1943, p. 234.

<sup>3</sup>Friedrich Meinecke, The German Catastrophe. Reflections and Recollections, trans. Sydney B. Fay, Cambridge, Harvard, 1950, p. 51.

larly among the Lutheran peasantpopulation of the lands east of the Elbe was this noticeable; little more than three per cent of the population there took part regularly in church services.<sup>1</sup>

After 1918, the church-leaving movement, which had declined during the war, increased. Those who before 1918 had been mere polite adherents to the Staatsreligion did not hesitate to desert a church which seemed to be a mere religious society among many others. Whereas the annual loss, 1900-1914, was 3000 to 20,000, in 1919 alone the Protestant Church lost 224,015 members, and, in 1920, 305,584.<sup>2</sup> The Catholic Church, too, was not immune; in Saxony, for example, in 1919-1926, 12.3 per cent of its membership defected.<sup>3</sup> Up to 1933, 100,000 to 250,000 Protestants annually left the church.<sup>4</sup> Within the church hierarchy, the teaching of theology in the Hochschulen was far removed from the religious life and social problems of the church. The political responsibility of Christians in a democratic state was never defined, and the church tended to look back to the Wilhelman period as a "golden

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<sup>1</sup>Kupisch, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>2</sup>Means, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Chester L. Hunt, "Life Cycle of Dictatorships as seen in Treatment of Religious Institutions", Social Forces, 1949, vol. 27, p. 366.

age". Whereas Karl Barth preached a return to Luther's faith as a suitable reform, his pupil Gogarten extended his ideas to a condemnation of liberalism and democracy as false teaching. Eighty per cent of the pastors in the Weimar period were members of right-wing political parties.<sup>1</sup> The Lutheran Church, therefore, often contributed more to intensifying the German malaise than to curing it.

5. German Society in General, particularly Post-1918 Youth.

The late nineteenth century bourgeois atmosphere of rationalism, skepticism, and positivism failed to satisfy many of the younger generation. For them, sacrifice, service, and obedience meant more than rational arguments; in short, many of them wanted "ideals" and the experience of having an "aim in life". The youth movement of the Wilhelmian period was partially a rejection of the "heavy-jowled materialism"<sup>2</sup> of a time when security, prosperity, and bourgeois propriety smothered adventurousness, intellectual or physical. The prosperous years around the turn of the century produced those turbulent forces mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. In its critical aspect, writes Albert Camus, the revolutionary movement of the twentieth century is primarily a "violent

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<sup>1</sup> Means, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> Fritz Kellermann, Effect of the World War on European Education, Cambridge, Harvard, 1928, p. 13.

denunciation of the formal hypocrisy that presides over bourgeois society."<sup>1</sup> Oddly enough, when the German movement began, few realized the immensity of the powers released, not merely political or military forces, but the dissatisfaction and energy of a generation seeking new values. At first, there was an uplifting experience of fraternity in August, 1914, when lonely individuals became as one mind and body; Hitler was not the only young "misfit" who thanked God on his knees when mobilization swept Europe in that summer. "What counts", said one young soldier, "is always the readiness to make a sacrifice, not the object for which the sacrifice is made."<sup>2</sup> Fourteen thousand Wandervögel became soldiers and one in four was killed, oblivious to the fact that they were defending what they hated.<sup>3</sup>

In 1930, Richard Scheringer, a young soldier convicted of Nazi agitation in the army, declared, "a lost war, an impotent State, a hopeless system, a Reich on the brink of

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<sup>1</sup>Albert Camus, The Rebel. An Essay on Man in Revolt, trans. Antony Bower, New York, Vintage, 1961, p. 135.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Hannah Hafkesbrink, Unknown Germany: an Inner Chronicle of the First World War based on Letters and Diaries, New Haven, Yale, 1948, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>Werner Klose, "Hitlerjugend. Die Geschichte einer irrefuehrten Generation," Welt am Sonntag, February 17, 1964, p. 13. Hermann Hesse's Demian is only one of the many examples that could be cited concerning this apocalyptic mood of the years before and after the Great War.

the abyss, that is our life!"<sup>1</sup> The "Front Experience" was meaningless in the world of Weimar Germany. The prevailing mood was often one of emptiness, a disgust for existing standards and the powers that be, and a yearning to lose one's self. Men like Ernst Jünger, if they remembered the golden age of security, remembered also how they had hated it and how real their enthusiasm had been at the outbreak of war. But without the chance of changing their roles, such as identifying themselves with a national movement, these young people often chose to continue immersed in the forces of destruction unleashed by the war as salvation from the meaninglessness of pre-established functions in a rotten society. Some rejected the complexity of the metropolis for rural simplicity, and others idealized the distant German past as being most genuine and pure. Sometimes they escaped into imaginary delights, a quest for cosmic visions as consolation for daily mediocrities. Frustrated religious feeling sought a way of expression, and sometimes found it in politics. A German Communist wrote,

by religion...I mean the longing for joy, for freedom, the struggle to be good, to create happiness, to bring joy and sunlight--but without anger and vengeance, in order thereby to throw down the old, the hateful, the unjust and to build up a new world, the kingdom of freedom, justice, and joy. Religion is around us, within us, and therefore because it is a part of us is indispensable.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in John W. Wheeler-Bennett, Nemesis of Power. The German Army in Politics, 1918-1945. London, Macmillan, 1954, p. 216. Scheringer later joined the Communist Party.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Means, op. cit., p. 98.

But for those who could not escape from the realities of German life, few ideals remained, other than the acceptance of struggle and revolution as ends in themselves.

A regeneration of some sort of faith and a change of values was sought by men with convictions as disparate as Walter Rathenau and Adolf Hitler; while the former considered himself part of the counterforces which might bring meaning out of the post-war chaos, a revival of the best of the old values, the latter knew how "disillusioned and outraged was this front-line generation, how full of disgust at bourgeois cowardice and shilly-shallying."<sup>1</sup>

The youth movement, which had begun as an escape and a protest, was now confronted with an opportunity for action; but entirely new problems faced it, and attempts to keep alive the pre-war Wandervögel spirit, as in the Wende Circle, the Kronach League, and the Free German League, achieved no positive results and the movement lost its earlier homogeneity. Nevertheless, the criticism and rebellion were still there. Ernst Neikisch describes how "the assured position in life, the deserved respectability of old age, the sacrament of private property, these were a mere joke to the young."<sup>2</sup> Ernst Röhm

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<sup>1</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 491.

<sup>2</sup>Ernst Neikisch, Reich der niederen Dämonen, Hamburg, Rowohlt, 1953, p. 27.

lamented that "hypocrisy and pharisaism...are the most conspicuous characteristics of society today...[The young] don't find their way in the philistine world of bourgeois double morals and don't know any longer how to distinguish between truth and error."<sup>1</sup> Probably as a result of the aforementioned developments in Lutheranism, "often when you talk to these young people," wrote Ernst Bergmann, "you are shocked by their deep hatred of Christianity."<sup>2</sup> The dominant mood of the young proletariat was cynicism; that of their bourgeois contemporaries, skepticism rapidly becoming suicidal political desperation. Many of the young were gripped by "boundless psychological lassitude,"<sup>3</sup> or by what Niekisch calls a "death mystique", a poor copy of the enthusiasm of 1914; "they had become deeply convinced that the value of an individual life was questionable, and that it was just as meaningless to destroy it as to seek to improve it."<sup>4</sup> A religious or political movement would have to be especially powerful to attract this generation; yet its very lack of any convictions rendered it susceptible.

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Arendt, op. cit., p. 334.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Leon Poliakov and Josef Wulf, Das Dritte Reich und seine Denker. Dokumente, Berlin, Arani, 1959, p. 177.

<sup>3</sup>Edmond Vermeil, The German Scene, trans. L.J. Ludovico, London, 1956, p. 141.

<sup>4</sup>Niekisch, op. cit., p. 207.



Under the blight of unemployment and inflation, many German homes possessed not only little physical security, but also little spiritual health. Parents, feeling that their very existence was at stake, and having lost any real philosophy or faith, could not give their children a constructive outlook on life. And when their elders could no longer support them, the young left their homes. According to Edmond Vermeil, "the young people were everywhere; they sang and played their guitars in trains so as to pick up a few Pfennig; still well-dressed enough, they played chess in doss-houses to keep themselves entertained, and during the summer season, they took to the roads in their thousands."<sup>1</sup>

As the young poet, Adam Kuckhoff, wrote in 1928, "We long for dogma and certainty,"<sup>2</sup> attachment to a community and to a leader, Bindung and Ganzheit (bonds and unity). It was possible, therefore, for adults to organize this generation. Whereas the Wandervögel had wandered aimlessly, the Weimar youth movement by 1929 was marching in formation. These energies found explicit and passionate expression in the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Klemens von Klemperer, Germany's New Conservatism. Its History and Dilemma in the Twentieth Century, Princeton, 1957, p. 130.

the Bündische Jugend. These more sophisticated heirs of the Wandervögel criticized the mustiness of bourgeois culture, traditional nationalism, the complacency of the Protestant clergy, and bureaucratic rule by desk-generals, trade unionists, and industrial czars. They stressed, not the individual, but the group. Because they failed to develop any new philosophy except a moral and religious nihilism, which later made Nazism seem highly appealing, they tended to undermine the true sources of regeneration and reform rather than to stimulate them. Both Communism and National Socialism seemed to offer something more constructive; another French observer wrote,

right-wing as well as left-wing revolutionaries, communist or nazi, whether they wear on their armbands the hammer and the sickle or the swastika, these are the same uniforms...marching to the sound of the same pipes and drums,...it is the same movement, the same mentality, nationalist, and bolshevist, the same hatred of the bourgeois order, of the liberal and individual spirit...the same frantic hope.<sup>1</sup>

Concurrently, some young people, attempting to save themselves from economic destruction in lower social levels,

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Edouard Spenlé, "Le Problème de la Jeunesse en Allemagne", Mercure de France, March 1, 1933, vol. 241-243, p. 297. Perhaps Hitler was aware of the nature of this revolutionary drive when he remarked, "there is more that binds us to Bolshevism than separates us from it." Quoted in Hermann Rauschning, Hitler Speaks. A Series of Political Conversations with Adolf Hitler on his Real Aims, London, Thornton Butterworth, 1939, p. 131.

sought to climb to safety on academic privileges. But with the large numbers of unemployed university graduates toward 1930, there grew a corresponding rejection of intellectual attainment as a measure of success, an anti-intellectualism which the Nazis later used in their limitation of university enrollment and praise of purely physical existence. Of these unemployed intellectuals, Jean Edouard Spenlé wrote "the most privileged become taxi drivers, car parkers, or streetcar conductors. You see medical doctors or lawyers shining shoes or selling matches or postcards on the sidewalks."<sup>1</sup> Thus there developed consciously and unconsciously among the younger generation an attitude despising urban "decadence", acclaiming existence on a biological level, expressing intoxication with "Life" and the claims of instinct over reason. Youth was to be admired because of its youth, action for the sake of action. As this perverted neo-romanticism flourished, the marching columns gained more adherents.

Unfortunately for the church, while there were many organized Christian youth groups,<sup>2</sup> the main body of the youth movement remained outside it, often politically oriented and often containing the kernel of Nazism. The Young German League,

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<sup>1</sup>Spenlé, *ibid.*, See also Daniel Lerner, The Nazi Elite, Stanford, 1951; a good discussion of the effect of alienated intellectuals on the Nazi leadership.

<sup>2</sup>See chapter five for the attitude of Christian youth groups.

for example, founded in 1919, was right-wing, nationalistic, and anti-Semitic; this Jungdeutsche Orden claimed to be inspired by Lagarde and planned an Arbeitsdienst (work service) and a programme of resettlement. Originally a Free Corps, it developed into a well-articulated organization with Gaue (districts), Gruppen, Gauleiter, and Gruppenführer. The Artamanen, who sought the development of a warrior peasantry, were also of this type. And this is not to mention the purely Nazi groups or the Communist or the less fanatical Social Democratic youth organizations.

How, precisely, did Nazism appeal to the young? National Socialism was more than partially an upheaval among the young people of Germany, and, as we shall see, when the Nazis sought to "co-ordinate" German society, the role of the Hitler Youth was paramount. But Hitler, who wisely aimed at capturing first the nation's youth, had a willing prey; he did not so much create National Socialism as nurture its already existing roots in German youth. Conservative and anti-Semitic groups dominated the German Student Union in the Weimar period, so that, when Socialists and Democrats founded the less radical German Student League in 1928, its influence was small. While the Catholic corporations, and most of the Protestant groups, remained passive, by 1931 half of the students in the universities sympathized with the Nazis.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Harry Pross, Vor und Nach Hitler, Freiburg, Walter, 1962, p. 71

Considering the above situation, it is not too much to say that to some young people, Hitler seemed to be another Luther. "I was ripe for this experience," writes Kurt Ludecke; "I was a man of 32, weary of disgust and disillusionment, a wanderer seeking a cause, a patriot without a channel for his patriotism, a yearner after the heroic without a hero."<sup>1</sup> For this now familiar type, the Nazis erected the image of the German race and told him that therein he would find faith in himself. The movement, as will be described in chapter three, was made to seem to have a connection with the roots of German life and to give an answer to the problems of the individual in mass society. It was, moreover, open to all, except the Jews, the ancient enemies of the race, and thus particularly appealed to a generation to whom class differences were less important. While it promised national rejuvenation, most important of all, it mobilized the spiritual as well as the physical resources of the youth, declaring that it fought atheism and Marxism, the traditional bugbears of both nominally and truly Christian Germans. Little wonder that it seemed to be a revolt against despair and an affirmation of faith in God as Creator. To an unemployed, goalless, idealistic young man, here at last was purpose and meaning in

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<sup>1</sup>Kurt Ludecke, I Knew Hitler. The Story of a Nazi who Escaped the Blood Purge. London, Harrolds, 1938, p. 23.

life, a group which demanded not merely different politics, but a complete change in world-view.

All the themes hitherto mentioned in this chapter come together at this juncture. The new movement was able to make demands of the type formerly made by Christianity, and the Nazi leaders knew how to formulate and present these demands. Faith and self-sacrifice were asked of the young and were gladly given. The church could no longer ask for and expect to get these qualities, but neither could Marxism. Nazism, on the other hand, could equal religion in strength of conviction. Even Christian youth, because of the traditions of the German churches, were susceptible to a radical national movement. Given the European situation and the particular conditions in Germany, the Nazis were helped to power by this confused, turbulent, and truly "lost" generation. The predominantly youthful element in Nazism was recognized by a senior army officer who described the Party in 1930: "It is the Jugendbewegung (youth movement). It can't be stopped."<sup>1</sup>

Those members of the nineteenth century bourgeoisie and aristocracy who, in Renan's words, said, "We can dispense with religion, because others have it for us. Those who do not

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<sup>1</sup>Wheeler-Bennett, op. cit., p. 221.

believe are carried along by the more or less believing majority,"<sup>1</sup> rendered it impossible for the Christian churches to reach the minds and souls of twentieth century German youth. The Nazis, however, could reach that youth and did. Their leaders knew, as Karl Mannheim knew, that

it would require either a callousness which our generation could probably no longer acquire or the unsuspecting naiveté of a generation newly born into the world to be able to live in absolute congruence with the realities of that world, utterly without any transcendent element.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Georges Sorel, Reflections on Violence, trans. T.E. Hulme and J. Roth, Glencoe, Ill. Free Press, 1950, p. 254.

<sup>2</sup>Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, New York, Harcourt Brace, n.d., p. 267.

## CHAPTER 2

## Adolf Hitler: His Faith and His Attitude to Christianity

## 1. Introduction

Not only did Adolf Hitler himself become almost an article of faith, but he was, at first, one of those millions who could not live "utterly without any transcendent element." Before proceeding to a discussion of how National Socialism organized its appeal and how it sought to eliminate the influence of Christianity, we should consider this man whose ideas determined much of the Party's approach to the problem of the people's faith.

"Hitler can change his opinions completely without even knowing that he is doing so," wrote Hermann Rauschning.<sup>1</sup> It is always difficult to know whether a remark of Hitler's

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<sup>1</sup>Rauschning, op. cit., p. 25.



represents his deepest belief or that multitude of ideas which floated about on the surface of his consciousness. A cursory review of his own religious beliefs gives the impressions that they changed radically over the years. Up to the middle of the 'thirties, he favoured a modus vivendi with the churches and the avoidance of a Kulturkampf: later he unleashed an attack on Christianity with the aim of destroying it. One might believe that, while he began his political career as a devout Christian, he was disillusioned later and lost his religious faith. But Mein Kampf and his early political speeches alone are not to be trusted. The ideas of the book are less important than the methods outlined therein, and disparity between these "sacred utterances" and later behaviour should not surprise the reader. Derogatory mention of Hitler's book was tolerated even in the Führer's presence,<sup>1</sup> and it was by no means regarded by the Party elite as the binding pronouncement it was given out to be for the masses--much of it was of purely tactical value. One must search farther to find out what, if any, were Hitler's personal religious beliefs. These, as far as they can be known with certainty, and his attitude to the churches and the Party are the theme of this chapter.

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<sup>1</sup>Rauschnig, op. cit., p. 71

Karl Mannheim writes that "the leader...knows that all political and historical ideas are myths. He himself is entirely emancipated from them, but he values them."<sup>1</sup> Since religion is a necessary imposture, Renan advised such a leader that even the most obvious ways of throwing dust in people's eyes should not be neglected when dealing with human beings.<sup>2</sup> A leader of Hitler's type judges political and religious beliefs only for their present value; he need not believe in the views he professes, and may blatantly change his "profound" convictions. As long as he and his aides appear united, a credulous public is successfully duped. Hitler used any idea that might bring power closer or make it more secure. Rosenberg's racial theories, more sophisticated than his own, and the political and economic ideas of Harrer, Drexler, and Feder were grist to his mill, and could be abandoned, both ideas and men, when their utility declined. Whatever his own beliefs, Hitler was a master manipulator of ideas. It will be seen that first he used Christian beliefs to combat Marxism, and later used the dogma of Nazism to combat Christianity; yet it is

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<sup>1</sup>Mannheim, op. cit., p. 138. Who were "the Nazis"? Throughout the thesis, I am concerned to show how the leadership did not believe in the details of the Weltanschauung; the party rank and file on the other hand very often did, while for the masses it was an esoteric but comforting jumble of hope and flattery; when I use the term "the Nazis" I am referring to the cynical elite, small in number, who were both simon-pure in their Nazism, in that they were nihilists, and apostates, in that they ignored their own doctrine.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Sorel, op. cit. p. 51.

doubtful that he ever believed Christian or Nazi myths.

## 2. His Faith

Hitler's own faith seemed to be a mixture of Schwärmerei (visionary enthusiasm) and political expediency. Throughout Mein Kampf, he plays the role of a pious German trying to further his country's well-being, keeping it in Christian paths; "I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator;...I am fighting for the work of the Lord," in a "sacred mission."<sup>1</sup> Germans had heard this from their leaders for decades and many still wanted to hear it. In January 1939, the same approach was useful; "if the Almighty God granted success to our work, then the Party was His instrument."<sup>2</sup> Hitler was not the good Christian citizen he played, but when he denounced cubism, dadaism, and jazz in his "Second Book"<sup>3</sup>, it was only partially in calculation; his upbringing was far from radical, and it is likely that, at least at the beginning of his career, he believed in a God. While his faith became psychotically perverted later, he was sincere in trusting this living, guiding force, "Providence", expressed

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<sup>1</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Hitler, Speeches, ed. Norman H. Baynes, London, Oxford, 1942, vol. 1, p. 559.

<sup>3</sup>Hitler, Zweites Buch: ein Dokument aus dem Jahr 1928, Stuttgart, Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1961, pp. 197-198.

in the life of the German people. Granted, his was basically a confused spirit and his potentialities for self-delusion were as great as his ability to delude others; the ideas that man should help himself if he wanted to secure God's help, or that disasters could be sent in order to bring nations to self-realization were very useful both for himself and his people.

Nevertheless, his basic belief was pantheistic and, at the same time, emphasized the survival of the fittest. With his faith in God in nature, in the Volk, and in their blood, he followed "only the iron law of our historical development."<sup>1</sup> "Fundamentally in everyone there is this feeling for the Almighty, which we call God (that is to say, the dominion of natural laws throughout the whole universe.)"<sup>2</sup> One can accept as true Hitler's claim that he satisfied his religious needs by "communion with nature". He planned to build an observatory at Linz, the pediment of which would bear the inscription, "The Heavens proclaim the glory of the Everlasting;" "it will be our way of giving men a religious spirit, of teaching them humility, but without the priests."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Rauschnig, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>Hitler, Secret Conversations, ed., H.R. Trevor-Roper, New York, Signet, 1961, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup>Hitler, Secret Conversations, p. 312.

Hitler liked to read Frederick the Great's cynical letters on religion and his "Theological Controversies", but it is unlikely that any of the writers of the past influenced him any more than did the pseudo-intellectuals of his own movement. Konrad Heiden reports that Hitler had read the "Decline of the West", but had rejected it; "he doesn't want to be a Spenglerian Caesar."<sup>1</sup> A few of Nietzsche's ideas filtered down to him at second hand before he went into politics. It was shrewd of him later to claim support from such a writer, who was often vague as to the actual application of his ideas. Moreover, whereas Gobineau, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Moeller van den Bruck were not considered sérieux by European intellectuals, Nietzsche was respected.<sup>2</sup> The fact that he wrote much that was even anti-German could be explained away. Hitler's ideas, which were only those of many other Germans, contained little that was original. Their force and their importance stemmed from his apparent belief in them and his use of them to enhance his power.

As his success increased, so did his belief in divine inspiration. But by 1945 he was spiritually bankrupt. In his own words, "a heathen to the core",<sup>3</sup> he had nevertheless always believed, like a demented saint, that he had a unique

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<sup>1</sup>Konrad Heiden, Adolf Hitler, Eine Biographie. Zürich Europa, 1936 (vol. 1) p. 343.

<sup>2</sup>See Crane Brinton's article, "National Socialists' Use of Nietzsche", Journal of the History of Ideas, April 1940, Vol. 1, pp. 131-150.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Ludecke, op. cit., p. 369.

relationship to the Everlasting. Did not his political machine achieve miraculous, providential successes? A multitude worshipped him; the cult of Himself was good for the movement and as long as he was triumphant it was easy to believe that he was truly inspired. But in his last days, the God of Struggle and Power withdrew His blessing and Hitler's final attitude was one of nihilism, the underlying "faith" of the entire National Socialist movement.

### 3. The Party's Role in Religious Life

Hitler's control of the Party meant that it usually clearly reflected his religious belief and his knowledge of politics. In Mein Kampf, he declared that he planned no alteration in the basic religious life of Germany, and said "anyone who thinks he can arrive at a religious reformation by the detour of a political organization only shows that he has no glimmer of knowledge of the development of religious ideas or dogmas."<sup>1</sup> He would not, he said, use religion politically; "political parties have nothing to do with religious problems, as long as these are not alien to the nation, undermining the morals and ethics of the race."<sup>2</sup> This qualification is

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<sup>1</sup> Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

important, because while Hitler tried to avoid any clash with the churches, he was eventually convinced that he should side with one religious group; but in 1925, this remark was safely in keeping with the Lutheran tradition of Kulturreligion. As far as the Catholics were concerned, when their religious institutions and doctrines injured the nation, the Party must never follow them on this path or fight with the same methods. In order to deceive a potential Christian opposition, he wrote that the people's religion is always inviolable for their leader.<sup>1</sup> In 1923, with wounded innocence he began his perennial lament that he, a Catholic, should be so criticized by the Catholics; "it hurts me all the more because actually no other movement does so much for Christianity as ours."<sup>2</sup>

It was necessary to deal with Christians every day in his slow progress towards the Chancellorship, and so Hitler began his career by stressing that the Nazi Party, while not a religious institution itself, supported Christian values and was not anti-Christian. The 1920 manifesto declared, "we demand freedom of all religious confessions."<sup>3</sup> In both religious denominations, the Party saw "equally valuable pillars

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<sup>1</sup>Mein Kampf, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Hans Buchheim, Glaubenskrise im Dritten Reich. Drei Kapitel Nationalsozialistischer Religionspolitik, Stuttgart, Deutsche Verlagsantalt, 1953, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>Gottfried Feder, Das Programm der NSDAP und seine Weltanschaulichen Grundgedanken, München, Eher, 1933, p. 22. (A reprinting of the 1920 program.)

for the existence of our people", and therefore it fought groups which degraded this foundation of an ethical and spiritual consolidation of the nation to the level of an instrument for party interest. This "fight against Mammon" supported a "positive Christianity"<sup>1</sup>, that is, an inward Christianity and an outward National Socialism. The Party opposed pagan cults as much as it did atheistic materialistic Marxism. Mein Kampf continued this theme; Hitler wrote that a political party cannot produce a religious reformation, and the 1933 edition of the Party program promised special protection for the Christian religion and its freedom of teaching. Suppression of Marxism was again promised.<sup>2</sup>

Contradictory, but only in the sense that it reveals Hitler's real intentions, is the following extract from Mein Kampf;

The most striking success of a revolution based on a philosophy of life will always have been when the new philosophy of life...has been taught to all men, and, if necessary, later forced upon them, while the organization of the idea, in other words, the movement, should embrace only as many as are absolutely required for occupying the nerve centers of the state.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 22, 38, and 62.

<sup>2</sup>See Mein Kampf, p. 118, and Feder op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>3</sup>Mein Kampf, p. 585.



This was Hitler's view of the ultimate necessity of every German accepting the Weltanschauung as well as his concept of the governing elite. If all men were to learn the new philosophy of life, what was to happen to Christianity? This problem seems to have escaped many.

In part, the purpose of Mein Kampf and the various programs was to deceive the Christian element in Germany. This book in particular shows Hitler's awareness that the churches could offer a snag in a possible future "co-ordination"; "today religious sentiments still go deeper than all considerations of national and political expediency."<sup>1</sup> From his own experience, he knew the strength of blind faith and how to use it. It was, ultimately, the faith of many Christians that forced him to restrain temporarily his later program for the elimination of their belief. He was also to learn that an effective assault on the churches would entail, not merely deception, but pseudo-religious trappings for the Party itself.

Particularly during the Weimar period, it was necessary for the fledgling movement to pay lip service to the few institutions, such as the churches and the army, that had survived 1918 more or less intact. Because both Christian groups favoured a revival of national life, the Nazis may have

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<sup>1</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 563.

felt that common cause could be made with them, and that the Christians would not oppose the Party's aims at a later date. It is more likely, however, that the free-thinking or atheistic leaders of the Party simply wanted to gather as many willing dupes as possible under their banner at the beginning for the sake of strength and to neutralize, for a while, any opposition. Naive "fellow-travellers" could be jettisoned later. One should remember that, while ostensibly the Nazi elite wanted to revive national life, in reality they sought only to revive their own fortunes. The nation, in the spring of 1945, could be destroyed according to their embittered whim.

"For the political man," said Hitler in Mein Kampf, "the value of a religion must be estimated less by its deficiencies, than by the virtue of a visibly better substitute."<sup>1</sup> While the temporary usefulness of Christianity declined after 1933, the popular belief in a God, because more permanently useful, would be maintained; "we don't want to educate anyone in atheism."<sup>2</sup> The Russians were entitled to attack their priests, but they had no right to assail the idea of a supreme force, because "it's better to believe something false than not to believe anything at all."<sup>3</sup> Obviously whether

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>2</sup>Hitler, Secret Conversations, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

or not the Russians threw out the concept of God, Hitler's own belief in an Absolute remained undamaged. "The man who doesn't believe in the Beyond has no understanding of religion,"<sup>1</sup> and Hitler understood at least the practical nature of religion. He always assumed a difference between religion, which he considered a powerful hierarchical institution, and faith, which he interpreted as blind obedience and unquestioning enthusiasm.

Hitler had greater respect for Protestantism as a better defender of the interests of Germany than for Roman Catholicism, and this determined much of the Party's later church politics.<sup>2</sup> Protestantism, moreover, from the record of its history, probably seemed more tractable. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, looked on indifferently to the desecration of the Aryan race by the Jews, who, in their turn, caused strife between the two large confessions. From here an attack on the Church could begin, and here also was an opportunity for Hitler to present himself as a saviour of "religion" in Germany. He was, he said, "sickened" by the spiritual degeneracy of the German people, but he could not condemn the Christian Church as such "when a degenerate individual in a cassock obscenely transgresses against morality"; nor would he condemn it when one of the many others "besmirches and betrays

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>2</sup>See Main Kampf, pp. 112-113, on the value of Lutheranism as a defender of "Germanness".

his nationality at a time when this is a daily occurrence anyway."<sup>1</sup> Both confessions were often at fault, but for the Catholic, Hitler, for a variety of reasons, had a special hatred.

A clear picture of his plans for the churches comes out in his unguarded private remarks before and after the actual church-state conflict. In 1933, he remarked to Rauschning, "fascism, if it likes, may come to terms with the Church. So shall I. Why not? That will not prevent me from tearing up Christianity root and branch, and annihilating it in Germany."<sup>2</sup> The co-existence until 1934 was temporary and as will be seen, was considered a tactical necessity. But in 1941, he repeated his view that "National Socialism and religion will no longer be able to exist together."<sup>3</sup> Thus, if they could have known the truth, the "German Christians" and other such groups would have early despaired of success, for in spite of his protestations of good will and in spite of his apparent approval of certain religious groups, Hitler never intended to allow any of the sects to attain more than a short useful existence. Why was this so?

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted by Rauschning, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>3</sup>Hitler, Secret Conversations, p. 36.

Hitler believed that the Catholic church, in particular, as an ecclesiastical hierarchy sought a degree of control over the people, and had, for this reason, to be eliminated if the Nazi triumph was to be complete. Moreover, his strongest memory of childhood, or so he claimed, was a hatred of "all those hypocrisies" of the Catholic faith.<sup>1</sup> Yet he never escaped his upbringing and, continued to admire the pomp, ritual, and organization of Catholicism. His vocabulary, possibly his subconscious mind, was filled with religious terminology. This hatred of the authoritarian church and his awareness of its political power led him to use the ideas of Alfred Rosenberg. Accordingly, he said he believed that the Roman Catholic faith was a rebellion against the natural law of the universe, a protest against nature, "the cultivation of human failure."<sup>2</sup> With this sort of Christianity had come into the world cruelty, ignominy, and falsehood, continued today by the Internationale of the priests, with its headquarters in Rome. This Church, when it could exert influence on civil government supported only a regime that recognized forms of popular organization which it sponsored and which were therefore dependent solely on the Church as the only leadership of the people. He was sure that, in periods of national tension, the Catholic Church would always try to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

occupy positions of temporal power, and always at the expense of the German community. And so, if disturbances broke out in the Reich, he would shoot first the insurrectionary leaders and then the leaders of the Catholic party.<sup>1</sup>

After this introduction, it is no surprise to find him equating, as did Rosenberg, Catholic Christianity and Bolshevism, while he and his Party were to be considered a Christian bulwark against godless Communism.<sup>2</sup> This similarity stemmed from Saint Paul's efforts to use Christ's doctrine to mobilize the criminal underworld of his time, organizing an intolerant "proto-Bolshevism".<sup>3</sup> Probably the most pressing immediate danger, however, was the fact that this sort of Christianity, un-German in essence, by adhering to a conception of the Beyond which was exposed to the attacks of "progress", and by binding itself to many of life's trivialities, was ripening men for a conversion to materialism.<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that Hitler echoes these ideas only in private and mainly in the later stages of his career when the church

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 388.

<sup>2</sup>See chapter three for a more detailed review of Rosenberg's ideas, and chapters four and five for the effects in practice of this equation of Catholicism and Bolshevism.

<sup>3</sup>Hitler, Secret Conversations, p. 254.

<sup>4</sup>Hitler, Secret Conversations, p. 566.

struggle had begun and reconciliation seemed difficult. It is doubtful that he sincerely believed them, but, again, they were useful as ideological justification of necessary political measures.

In ideological matters, Hitler was more practical, more flexible, and more cynical than his doctrinaire followers. According to Ludecke, Hitler said of Rosenberg, "he is the only man whom I always listen to."<sup>1</sup> But in one of his secret conversations later, Hitler declared that the Mythus was not to be regarded as an expression of the official Party line.<sup>2</sup> Few of the party elite, for that matter, took it seriously. Rosenberg's unoriginal book had little real influence on his master, who never seems to have read it. In any case, it was not published until 1930, when Hitler's mind was already formed. It could be used, of course, as a weapon against the churches, but not until they had shown themselves to be stubborn.

As for the religion of the Volk, Hitler stressed the "feeling man has of his own impotence;" "The essential thing... is that man should know that salvation consists in the effort that each person makes to understand Providence and accept

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<sup>1</sup>Ludecke, op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>Secret Conversations, p. 400.

the laws of nature."<sup>1</sup> The helplessness of the common person under Providential laws, interpreted and expounded by the Party leadership, was characteristic of the Nazi state, quite apart from Rosenberg's ideology. This humility, of course, had little to do with Christian humility, but was essential to the establishment of a totalitarian government. It was paramount that the average German should "know that he lives and dies for the preservation of the species."<sup>2</sup> The elite of the Party, however, would understand the purely practical value of this "faith" and each of them would have his private creed.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, privately and publicly Hitler always preached the necessity of "faith"; for the small man, faith in God and His Adolf Hitler; for the Party man, faith in the Party and Its Mission. Thus, National Socialism, while it should not seek to replace the churches by a mass equivalent, would preserve the religious feeling of the Volk. In this way, "faith" (i.e. obedience) would be useful while the elite accomplished their aims. Later, Hitler came to realize the value of pseudo-religious trappings, but always held that "nothing would be more foolish than to re-establish the worship of Wotan."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 86. See Chapter Three for Hitler's concept of the elite within the Party.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 85.



Just as there was to be no return to Christian denominationalism after the war, so there was to be no future in the Party for the "German Christians". "A German Church, a German Christianity, is distortion", said Hitler; "these professors and mystery-men who want to found Nordic religions merely get in my way."<sup>1</sup> The ideal solution would be to let the religious sects devour themselves, but the Nordic sects could help to disintegrate Christianity. In order to facilitate this process, the National Socialists were to preserve what could be used in Christian doctrine and change its meanings, for that was what the Catholic Church had done when it successfully forced its beliefs on the heathen. "We shall take the road back: Easter is no longer resurrection, but the eternal renewal of our people. Christmas is the birth of our saviour: the spirit of heroism and the freedom of our people."<sup>2</sup> The masses, especially the peasants, would be told what the Catholic Church destroyed for them: the secret knowledge of nature, of the divine, and of the daemonic. The Christian veneer would be removed and a faith peculiar to the German race was to be developed. Nevertheless, most of this was for the future; by 1939, neither church was yet "co-ordinated", and the war necessitated a more careful approach by the Party. But in the meantime, by encouraging in the people a mystical respect for

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Rauschning, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

their racial origins, Hitler and the Party leaders tried to strengthen the image of themselves as leaders of the race. It is doubtful if the average German could survive long in this "cloud-cuckoo-land" between Christian faith and heathen superstition, supported only by national fervour and vague pantheism; but Hitler was confident: a statesman could maintain a nation's spiritual morale as well as a churchman. "All he has to do is to incorporate in the law of the land all the moral beliefs of the healthy elements of the people and then to support those laws uncompromisingly with the authority of force."<sup>1</sup> Christianity was still of some use;

To the Christian doctrine of the infinite significance of the individual human soul and of personal responsibility, I oppose...the saving doctrine of the nothingness and insignificance of the individual human being, and of his continued existence in the visible immortality of the nation.<sup>2</sup>

Well-known phraseology was turned upside down, yet might retain its old appeal. Thus, in spite of all assertions to the contrary, the Party was to produce a "religious reformation" and to provide a substitute for Christianity. The Protestant

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<sup>1</sup> Secret Conversations, p. 398.

<sup>2</sup> Rauschnig, op. cit., p. 222.

Church could be of more immediate and fruitful use, but eventually both confessions would have to make way for the new "religion".

While utmost caution was characteristic of his approach to the churches, Hitler believed that success was ultimately certain, particularly since he proceeded on a "realistic" view of human nature. Instead of giving five hundred million marks a year to the churches, he would give grants to archbishops, allowing them freedom to share out the sum placed at their disposal; in this way, the number of their "collaborators" would be reduced to a minimum since they would try to keep the greater part of the money for themselves. "With a tenth part of our budget for religion, we would thus have a church devoted to the state and of unshakeable loyalty." He praised American politicians whom he thought had subjected the church to the same regulations governing all other associations and institutions and had thus limited its field of activity to reasonable proportions.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, after the war, it would be the duty of the government to deal with the Catholic Church the same way as it dealt with other national associations. The Concordat and its financial obligations would be terminated: "it will give me the greatest personal pleasure to point out

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<sup>1</sup>Hitler, Secret Conversations, p. 517.

to the Church all those occasions on which it has broken the terms of it."<sup>1</sup> Becoming dependent solely on the offertory, the Church would receive only three per cent of the money it had previously received from the State.<sup>2</sup> After all, the agreement was only the survival of previous concordats between the Vatican and different German states and with the incorporation of the latter into the centralized Reich it was obsolete, a confirmation of past agreements rather than a current agreement in force. After the war, the Party would also take the necessary steps to make the "recruiting of priests" as difficult as possible; only the man who had passed his twenty-fourth year, and had finished his Labour Service and his military service, would be able to take up an ecclesiastical career.<sup>3</sup> But presumably by this time the Christian faith would be as obsolete as the Concordat.

This, then, was Hitler's personal faith, his attitude to religion in general, and to the Party's role in the religious issue. Throughout his life and his ideas, there run the two threads of latent nihilism and cynical pragmatism. While the faith to which he admitted was pantheistic, he considered the faith and ideas of other men as tools to be used; as for Himmler and Rosenberg, "Hitler laughed at them."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 518.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 520.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 390.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., ed. Trevor-Roper, p. xxvii.

But whatever the truth of its doctrine, Roman Catholicism was no laughing matter; he would eradicate it. Some sort of Christianity, however, a "positive" variety, Hitler sought to maintain, and although he insisted that the Party was purely a political institution, given his admiration of hierarchical power and his sense of inspiration, plus the initial dynamism and ultimate power of the Nazi movement, it was inevitable that the Party should fail to remain simply political group and should become a surrogate faith.

## CHAPTER 3

### The Nazi Movement as a Substitute Faith

#### 1. The Development of Nazism into a Pseudo-Church

As Nazism became a substitute for Christianity, and as it tried to control more than the bodies of men, the church-state conflict ensued. That the churches and National Socialism were ultimately incompatible was due in part to the uneasiness of the new regime and to its deliberate tendency to interpret every piece of Christian behavior as having political aims. For not merely were some Christians unable to refrain from resisting Nazi demands, but the government was eager to believe that even Young Catholic ping-pong matches were used as a cover for subversive activities. There is no doubt that, in some cases, they were justified in their suspicions, but what is important is the fact that, while the Christian opposition developed some of the traits of a political underground, the National Socialist state developed the characteristics of an organized church, a church, however, whose leaders did not believe in the doctrine which supposedly was fundamental

to its existence.<sup>1</sup>

Before 1933, as any new minority political group with revolutionary ideas, Nazism appeared to be a fanatical sect, appealing to the more religious aspect of political thinking; that is, having a mission and a "truth" to communicate. This appeal was not new in German political history.<sup>2</sup> Later, after the death of its brief partnership with the churches, the ill-fated Concordat, and the efforts to "Germanize" Lutheranism, there occurred a gradual withdrawal from Christianity, and the practical purposes of the state were more and more turned into holy causes: what Eric Hoffer calls "religiofication".<sup>3</sup> As will be described, this development was both planned and spontaneous. Because the Party sought a national rebirth, its Weltanschauung had to be accepted by every German, above all by the young. To achieve this, the qualities of the religious sect, in partial eclipse during 1933, when more practical politics occupied Hitler, were again stressed, and became a systematic substitute for traditional faith. Its application by the Party was confused

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<sup>1</sup>Here I assume that a religion entails recognition of a controlling superhuman power entitled to obedience, worship, and, above all, humility.

<sup>2</sup>In considering the non-revolutionary character of Nazism, one should remember that German political parties, from the time of the Second Empire, were more institutional than North American parties. With their own welfare organizations, unions, athletic associations, cultural leagues, and youth groups, they were societies which sought philosophical, Christian(or anti-Christian), as well as political goals.

<sup>3</sup>Eric Hoffer, The True Believer, New York, Mentor, 1958, p. 15.

and never complete, but its creation seemed mandatory, for, in the new Germany, the hierarchy and power of the Christian churches could not co-exist with the hierarchy and power of National Socialism. To fight the churches, the Party borrowed some of their own devices.

A sociologist describes the Nazi state as an "ecclesia",<sup>1</sup> a conservative social structure, universal in its aims, which attempts to amalgamate itself with the government and the dominant classes, and strives to control every citizen. Because it is also an educational system which trains its youthful members to conformity in thought and action, thus fitting them for the exercise of the religious rights they have inherited, the "ecclesia" attaches a high importance to the official administration of sacraments and teaching by authorized agents. The Nazi "ecclesia" did not isolate itself from antagonistic elements in German life as the Lutheran Church had previously done but resolved from the beginning to convert all doubters to at least outward adherence to the one true faith. In the late 'thirties, the Nazi Kultverband, led by the charismatic leader, did almost become the standardized routinized State Church that some of its adherents desired.

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<sup>1</sup>This is Howard Becker, in his book German Youth: Bond or Free (New York, Oxford, 1946). A similar study is Hans-Jochen Gamm's Der braune Kult, Das Dritte Reich und seine Ersatzreligion (Hamburg, Rütten und Loening, 1962), particularly the chapter "Der Nationalsozialismus als Kultverband", p. 156.



But National Socialism never achieved the perfect existence described by such writers and was definitely not a religion to its leaders; this fact alone limits the applicability of the term "ecclesia" to the new State. Nevertheless, while the Nazi leaders, Hitler, Goebbels, Bormann, had much less faith in their Weltanschauung than even the most cynical of Italian Renaissance priests in Christianity, for the "man-in-the-street", particularly the non-Christian, it was a reasonable facsimile.

## 2. Rosenberg, the High Priest

Alfred Rosenberg is usually associated with the Party's philosophy because, in spite of the fact that at various times the Nazi leadership sought to increase the distance between their stand and his in the public mind, he summed up more or less accurately the Party's attitude to religious problems. He was appointed "Director of National Socialist Weltanschauung" in January 1934 and received a National Prize in 1937. To be sure, he was shed later when his usefulness declined, but it did decline only because during the war the Nazi leaders could not afford to continue the Kulturkampf with the vigour Rosenberg demanded.

The chief object of Rosenberg's attack was Roman Catholicism, which had corrupted the German people throughout their history. But even earlier than this, he claimed, Saint

Paul had "judaized" Christianity, diverting it from its natural course by replacing the true Christ, Aryan and heroic, with a poor weakling Hebrew. Not as the crucified, but as the warrior against the Jews did Christ deserve honour among the Germans. "That the Catholic Church and also the Confessional Church...must disappear from the life of our people is my full conviction [and] our Führer's viewpoint."<sup>1</sup> In his Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts ("Myth of the Twentieth Century"), Rosenberg had first outlined the German national church which, while having a Lutheran tone, would embrace all the former denominations, including the Catholic, the beautiful rites of which were often of Nordic origin.<sup>2</sup> This faith would not be Christianity, of course, but National Socialism.

Rosenberg's ideas were clarified in the program<sup>3</sup> he drew up in 1942 for the national Reich Church, which expressed the intentions of the government, but which was probably not sanctioned by Hitler at the time it appeared. The Bible and the Christian cross were to be removed from all churches, to be replaced by Mein Kampf, "the greatest of all documents"; and

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Nathaniel Micklem, National Socialism and Christianity, Oxford, Clarendon, 1939, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Alfred Rosenberg, Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts, München, Hoheneichen, 1934, p. 610.

<sup>3</sup>This program is given in Carl Carmer, War Against God, New York, Holt, 1943, p. 7.

the swastika, "that unconquerable symbol"; no great structural alterations would be carried out on the existing churches after their confiscation because they were living monuments of German culture; the services were to be held only at night, on Saturdays, and with festive illuminations.

The Party's official attitude was never as clear or went so far as Rosenberg would have desired. By 1942, his pronouncements had become too aggressive for Hitler, who had to moderate his Kirchenpolitik during the war for the sake of domestic peace and who found directing armies more engrossing than slandering nuns. Accordingly, Rosenberg, like the German Christians earlier, was removed from his position of "high priest".

Hitler and his colleagues used Rosenberg's anti-Christian ideas as seasoning in the new national diet. When the leadership adopted some of his most palatable views, they did so fully realizing their propaganda value, yet never considering them worth serious personal consideration. There were no Christian or pagan gods to haunt the dreams of Hitler and his henchmen. Essentially nihilistic, they sought power in their world and nowhere else. If they were motivated by any ideas, these were perverted patriotic ones, and they found the existing corpus of political racial philosophy useful for rationalizing these ideals and making them more acceptable

to a conservative public.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Essence of the Nazi "Faith"

The political platform of the Nazis, presented in the form of a revolutionizing new world view, included the ideas of enthusiasts like Rosenberg or Ernst Bergmann, but it also had to appeal to concepts that the Germans held sacred, whether these were their faith in the Christian God or their belief in their country's great destiny. The distinctive and paradoxical character of the supposedly "revolutionary" Weltanschauung lay in this conservative system of values determined by the traditional beliefs of Germans. The system had to cover the individual's relation to the source and meaning of life and had to be expressed in terms usually associated with orthodox religion. Therefore, the Nazi leaders confirmed the idea that every race had a soul, and the German race, a special divine mission, with an apocalyptic promise of a glorious Germany in the future. Placed by God on earth as Germans, the Volk was described as the culmination of the divine plan. "In fulfilling the will of the people, the Führer fulfills the will of God; for the voice of the Volk is the voice of God."<sup>2</sup> This was merely an intensification of pan-German, superpatriotic ideas current in Germany since

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<sup>1</sup>These ideas often found sincere support in lower Nazi ranks because they were not new, but had been in circulation in Germany for as much as a century. See Fritz Stern, Politics of Cultural Despair, Berkeley, 1961, passim.

<sup>2</sup>Hans Schemm, a racial expert, quoted in Kneller, Educational Philosophy of National Socialism, p. 187.

before the first World War.

The calculated conservative element in the program and the continual reference to older ideas that had acquired a sacred hue appear in the attitude toward women. A woman was to be the heart of the family organism uniquely related to her own children and her own particular husband.<sup>1</sup> German women, moreover, were to stop smoking and powdering their faces, and to concern themselves with their children, their kitchen, and their church.<sup>2</sup> This appealed to the desire of many Germans to return to a simpler concept of womanhood and the family, to the orthodox Lutheran view of home life, and to the rebellion against the mechanical relationships of the industrial city. It was only bait in the trap, of course, for, as will be seen, in its very nature, National Socialism only intensified disintegration of human ties.

Nazism had an appeal to even wider current beliefs. As a replacement for orthodox Christianity, it met with great approval in younger circles, groups which felt that the church had failed to provide an attitude to the more material and con-

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<sup>1</sup>Paraphrased from Clifford Kirkpatrick, Nazi Germany: Its Women and Family Life, New York, Bobbs-Merrill, 1938, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup>See Ernst Bergmann, Die deutsche Nationalkirche, Breslau, Hirt, 1934, pp. 344-363, for "the priesthood of women".

temporary necessities of existence. Some young people called the church too other-worldly in outlook and felt it had not helped them to face life in a disjointed community; they felt a need for a sacred element in day-to-day existence. Hitler was aware of this need and so he stressed the spiritual aspect of his movement. The young were told that Nazism embodied the spirit of the old Wandervögel and that "blood and soil, folk and homeland are in the hands of God, from which we have everything that we are."<sup>1</sup> The sacred mission of the movement was constantly stressed and many of the newly written songs, for example, appealed to God to bless the Nazi work.<sup>2</sup> The effect on the average young person was to make him into a revolutionary, but a "conservative" revolutionary, ready to be led anywhere. This is well exemplified in Wolfgang Brügge's description of his reaction upon hearing Hitler for the first time; "here am I, take me and my strength, my ability, my will; use it all for Thy great goal."<sup>3</sup> Thus the material and the spiritual were effectively combined in a whole which, when presented to the public, did not seem to be atheistic or nihilistic, but rather at one with the best of German values. The state's power and discipline, moreover, were declared to exist

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Kneller, op. cit., p. 184.

<sup>2</sup>See Gamm, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Gamm, op. cit., p. 25.

not as a deterrent to man in his aim for human perfection, but as aids toward free growth and individual accomplishment.

One Nazi wrote that, on the model of the Catholic church, the Führer, with his exclusive power, corresponded to the Pope and the lesser Führers corresponded to the clergy, while the various Nazi corporations served as advisory bodies in the same way as did the college of cardinals.<sup>1</sup> How could this comparison be made, when so many Nazis were hostile to Catholicism? The popular enthusiasm for Nazism can be partially explained as a manifestation of the religious impulse, guided into, and expressing itself in a form more purely political than had been seen in the past. Christianity itself sought to set up at one time a Christian kingdom, led by the Papacy on this earth, and since the related desire for the millenium now, a paradise in this world, seems to be characteristic of the Western European Christian mind, some writers have called Nazism merely a further heresy within the Church proper. To be sure, not merely was the structure of the Nazi hierarchy embellished with terms taken from Christian theology, but some authorities would view the Weltanschauung as a degenerate form of the Messianic idea or as the Manichaeistic heresy. At any rate, the Nazis continually appealed to concepts

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Niekisch, op. cit., p. 102.

which were ingrained in German minds, whether they were the efficacy of the Catholic hierarchy or the need for a strong secular authority. Popular conceptions were embodied in the personification of Evil as the "counter-race", the incarnation of "everything horrible, evil, and dark,"<sup>1</sup> the bearer of those poisonous ideas, materialism and individualism. There was also talk of the "inseparable Trinity of State, Movement, and Volk."<sup>2</sup> To the Reich was applied the idea of "body" as Christians applied it to the Church when they referred to the Mystical Body of Christ. The concept of the eternal Aryan kingdom of light, versus the Jewish spirit of darkness was almost a form of Manichaeism adapted to meet the needs of the cause.<sup>3</sup> To attain salvation, the masses were to place their trust in and give unconditional surrender to the man with allegedly superhuman gifts, who in turn furthered the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Party. This is what Hitler meant when he said that "National Socialism is a form of conversion, a new faith."<sup>4</sup> He considered the Catholic Church a group of naive believers led by realistic, skeptical strongmen, was impressed by its hierarchical organization, and declared that he had followed it in giving the Party its structure; "the

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Walter Hofer, Der Nationalsozialismus. Dokumente, 1933-45, Frankfurt, Fischer, 1961, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>Vermeil, op. cit., pp. 159-160. See also Gamm, op. cit., p. 84, for the treatment of heretics.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Rauschning, op. cit., p. 61.



Church was something really big, Now we're its heirs. We, too, are a Church."<sup>1</sup>

Hitler was the messiah of the new "faith"; Robert Ley, Director of the Labour Front, expressed this concept as follows;

Adolf Hitler, to thee alone we are bound... we believe in this world in Adolf Hitler alone. We believe that National Socialism is the sole faith to make our People blessed. We believe that there is a Lord God in Heaven, who has made us, who leads us, who guides us, and who visibly blesses us. And we believe that this Lord God has sent us Adolf Hitler that Germany should be established for all eternity.<sup>2</sup>

The army, cabinet, and civil service oaths, as well as those for Lutheran pastors, show that supreme leadership was not an institution regulated by worldly rules and precedents, or an office with authority delegated from human beings, but the investiture of power in one divinely inspired person, Hitler. He, the Leader, was endowed with qualities lacking in ordinary mortals. Superhuman, messianic powers emanated from him and pervaded the state, the Party, and the Volk.

With time, Hitler came to believe this himself and was remarkably successful in convincing those lower in the Nazi ranks and in the people. Faced with the murder of their leader

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. Cit.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Klemperer, op. cit., p. 9.

and hundreds of their comrades in 1934, the trained and armed S.A. did nothing; this behavior is at least in part the result of charismatic obedience. Furthermore, it follows Mussolini's idea of ideal fascist organization; "discipline from the lowest to the highest must be essential and of a religious type."<sup>1</sup> Wolfgang Brügge declared that Hitler's great message was "to give us faith";<sup>2</sup> Kurt Ludecke was one of those who received this "faith" from the Führer--he had dabbled in fasting, "to make us hard and fit for the struggle to save Germany", and, on meeting Adolf Hitler, he "experienced an exaltation that could only be likened to religious conversion." I had given [Hitler] my soul". He writes that, following a brief arrest, he was being "martyred for the Cause". While the paranoid Ludecke probably knew little of genuine religious experience and completely gives the game away when he admits that one of the good results of the abortive putsch was that "the sixteen martyrs might come in handy later on,"<sup>3</sup> his experience was typical.

With followers like this who professed to believe that the Nazi faith was infallible, comprehensive, and eternal, the only world-view that could give purpose and practical expression to German lives, it was not difficult for Hitler to condemn

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Julien Benda, Betrayal of the Intellectuals, Boston, Beacon, 1959, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Gamm, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>Ludecke, op. cit., pp. 17-18, 25, 116, and 219.

groups or institutions which maintained an attitude of independence or neutrality. This "socialism grounded on religion"<sup>1</sup> expressed itself continually in terms like Ganzheit (totality) and Gesamtaufgabe (collective task),<sup>2</sup> and no racially pure German was exempt from this totality and task. The infamous judge, Roland Freisler, declared, "we demand the whole man".<sup>3</sup> No one should have time for Christian organizations, which, wrote Wilhelm Frick, Minister of the Interior, are active in areas where the Nazi state, in order to fulfill itself, has exclusive claim.<sup>4</sup> Astrologers, Free Masons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and fortune-tellers as well were lumped together and branded as intruders and unacceptable. This fanatical completeness smacks at once of the Spanish Inquisition or of the passionate affirmation of early Puritanism. Indeed, the Nazi movement was described as a "revolution of the soul",<sup>5</sup> and a good Nazi should never hesitate if he had to choose between the call of the "soul" and that of the intellect.<sup>6</sup> Precisely this total-

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<sup>1</sup>A Nazi writer in Germany Speaks, London, Thornton Butterworth, 1938, p. 235.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, Ernst Krieck, Nationalpolitische Erziehung, Leipzig, Armanen, 1934, passim.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Hans Rothfels, German Opposition to Hitler, London Wolff, 1961, p.113.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Hofer, op. cit., p. 134.

<sup>5</sup>Baldur von Schirach, Revolution der Erziehung, München, Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1938, p. 101.

<sup>6</sup>Loc. cit.

itarianism was desired by many Germans. That this spiritual need was felt, as well as a need for political and economic change, and was met, is the secret of the Nazi success.

The religious need was in the people; it remained for the Nazis to meet it and to develop their own pseudo-faith. The stumbling block was that the Christian churches still controlled many persons' allegiance. Hitler knew that ideas or spiritual movements could only be broken by physical weapons if these instruments were supported by another "kindling thought, idea, or philosophy."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, according to Goebbels, the Party would "use the tactics of the Catholic Church to hammer [its] ideology into German youth."<sup>2</sup> But force could succeed only if strengthened by definite spiritual conviction, inculcated by unconditional authority. Hitler considered religion a tool, but this did not prevent him from regarding the Catholic Church as his institutional ideal! "The greatness of Christianity did not lie in attempted negotiations for compromise with any similar philosophical opinions in the ancient world, but in its inexorable fanaticism in preaching and fighting for its own doctrine."<sup>3</sup> Christianity

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<sup>1</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in G.M. Gilbert, Psychology of Dictatorship, New York, Ronald, 1950, p. 165.

<sup>3</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 351.

did not content itself merely with building up its altars, but tried to destroy the rival heathen altars.<sup>1</sup> Nazism would succeed because, like the young Christian movement, it knew that "its idea must be put forward spiritually, but that the defense of this spiritual platform must if necessary be secured by strong-arm means."<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. The Religious Trappings Manufactured

Fabricating the "idea" was not difficult. Hitler believed that the politician could maintain the moral health of a nation as well as the churchman by incorporating in the law of the land the people's beliefs and supporting these laws with force. This the Nazis did. Their basic ideas, of course, were developed spontaneously in the German people over a period of fifty to one hundred years, but the Nazi elite organized and preached these concepts as a useful substitute for Christianity, surrounding them with an aura of sanctity in spectacular rituals. Atheism or agnosticism were not for Hitler. The people must be able to have faith in something, he said, "something for the imagination...fixed, permanent doctrines."<sup>3</sup> They were not to lose the sub-

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<sup>1</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 454.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Rauschnig, op. cit., p. 188

jective, "uplifting" element of religious experience; Ernst Bergmann wrote, "those who have freed themselves from a foreign religious faith...don't therefore have to live without religion."<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, there were many sincere Nazis, and millions of Germans seemed to believe the myth. But the religious elements in propaganda, ritual, and education were consciously used devices, and the charismatic qualities attributed to Hitler, while based on his personality and real oratorical power, were contrived. "The German leadership," writes Franz Neumann, "is the only group in present German society that does not take its ideological pronouncements seriously and is well aware of their purely propagandistic nature."<sup>2</sup>

One of the most important methods in developing this pseudo-religious element was the mass meeting, because there the convert, who feels "lonely and is easily seized with the fear of being alone, receives for the first time the picture of a greater community, something that has a strengthening effect on most people."<sup>3</sup> Hitler's advice was followed in this way;

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Littell, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>2</sup>Franz Neumann, Behemoth: the Structure and Practice of National Socialism, Toronto, Oxford, 1942, p. 467.

<sup>3</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 715.

on a foundation of Wagnerian music there was heard a daunting rumbling, slow and emphatic, of drums, and heavy footfalls pounding the earth, together with an indescribable rattle and swish and pant of armed masses on the march...now growing, now receding...

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This is a description of the broadcast of Hitler's entry into the congress hall of Nürnberg, September, 1938, and makes it easy to understand the feelings of apprehension and fascination implanted in the listener by the managers of the spectacle; of course the effect on those present was even greater. Moreover, the formal pomp of these celebrations could also be used to frighten doubting Thomases into submission through awe-inspiring symbols and effects.

A painting, "Triumph of the Movement", displayed in the party offices in Munich is an interesting example of the way Nazism frankly borrowed from Christian tradition. In Rauschning's description, this picture showed a large plain on which a huge crowd is thronging through storms and massed clouds towards a brightly shining swastika in the sky.<sup>2</sup> This sounds remarkably like certain sixteenth and seventeenth century paintings with titles like "Adoration of the Holy Name of Jesus". An even more obvious example of this tendency is another

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<sup>1</sup>Serge Chakhotin, Rape of the Masses. The Psychology of Totalitarian Political Propaganda, trans. E.W. Dickes, London, Routledge, 1940, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup>Rauschning, op. cit., p. 39.

showing Hitler haranguing a small group around 1920, the caption of which reads, "In the beginning was the Word."<sup>1</sup>

Because God's chosen people were the Aryan Germans, paragraph sixty-six of the blasphemy law was changed in November 1934; it became an offence "coarsely to outrage the feelings of the People."<sup>2</sup> Needless to say, this law covered a multitude of sins. Finally, in October, 1937, a law was passed making any utterance offensive to National Socialism a penal offence under the blasphemy law.<sup>3</sup>

Customs usually associated with Christian life were adopted and adapted by the Nazis. In April 1935, Goebbels and Rust drew up an Index of books which were labelled dangerous and undesirable. A grace before meals for children was suggested;

Führer, my Führer, sent to me from God, protect  
and keep me; Thou who has saved Germany, for  
my dail bread I thank Thee; stay by me, never  
leave me, Führer, my Führer, my faith and my light!  
Heil my Führer!<sup>4</sup>

The original was rhymed for easier retention. There were also homes for expectant mothers, in which a similar grace was said,

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<sup>1</sup>Reproduced in Micklem, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Gamm, op. cit., p. 312.



during which the women would stand, facing a picture of Hitler on the wall, raising their right hands and speaking in chorus.<sup>1</sup> Many a fanatical Nazi housewife provided her home with something resembling an altar, a large coloured picture of Hitler, beneath which stood a table with flowers. Everyday-life, as well, was affected in the use of the greeting, "Heil Hitler", which had a religious connotation, since "Heil" was usually associated with God; Gamm writes, "when Heil was related by the Nazis exclusively to the name of a human being, a new direction was to be given to existence."<sup>2</sup>

This new direction included substitutes for other Christian customs, such as weddings, funerals, confirmation, and the like, although these were not yet officially sanctioned by the hierarchy. But civil weddings were encouraged as over against church weddings. While the leaders were never able to officially establish their own system of appropriate ritual, they had plans for the future. In a brief to the Gauleiter, a regular order of worship in the cult of the state was outlined;

the permanent form of the NS service will include as the focal point the sermon (a solemn, well-written Address, lasting 10 to 20 minutes), followed by the creed, spoken in chorus. In conclusion, the Song of Commitment (an accompanied hymn, sung by all present).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gregor Ziemer, Education for Death, London, Oxford, 1941, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Gamm, op. cit., p. 162.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 211.

...and, of course, the appropriate number of Sieg Heils, a verse of the national anthem, and the Horst Wessel song. This service would take place on Sunday morning, and indeed actually did at certain places in the Reich, where it was possible. Every occasion on which a large group was involved was used to inculcate the religious mood; Edward Hartshorne reports a service held in the hall of the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin, 1936, to celebrate the founding of the Third Reich; after a stirring anthem, the voice of the chorus leader chanted the closing words of the service; "there followed an uncertain wait, as at the close of an impressive church service, but gradually the meeting broke up."<sup>1</sup>

There is a tendency for students and readers to accept and therefore to be misled by a writer's use of religious simile, but we are concerned here with the effect of these tendencies on the average man, and what seemed religious to a relatively unbiassed observer quite possibly was the essence of religion to an involved participant. Use of the Blutfahne, the Sonnenwende celebrations, the church-like atmosphere created when the HJ Pimpfe became Jungvolk ("confirmation")<sup>2</sup>-- by these methods, the vague but powerful religious feelings of the youth were given a channelled un-Christian outlet. The

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<sup>1</sup>E.Y. Hartshorne, German Universities and National Socialism, London, Allen and Unwin, 1937, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup>See Ziemer's description of the Marksburg ceremony, op. cit., p. 56.

Party had to proceed carefully, but its success is sometimes astonishing: Ziemer describes an incident concerning the worship of Horst Wessel by a group of German girls in order to improve their fertility.<sup>1</sup> This is probably an isolated case, an adolescent freak, but it shows the effect of the Nazi "faith" on malleable minds.

## 5. The Hitler Youth

In the same way that the Christian Church has always sought to bring its message to children and to control in some way their education, so did the Nazis. Adults might accept the Party's religious trappings skeptically, but children, even if warned by their parents, are probably constitutionally unable to resist such an appeal. The Deutscher Führerlexikon for 1935 reveals the indebtedness of Nazism to the youth movements; one third of the "leaders" were under the age of forty.<sup>2</sup> The Hitler youth, the foundation of the Party's present strength and future hope, originated in the Youth League of the S.A.; it became not only the source from which the elite's ranks were to be replenished, but also the instrument for directly controlling the most important group in society, young people,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 141-2.

<sup>2</sup>Deutscher Führerlexikon 1934-35, Berlin, Stollberg, 1935, passim.

and for indirectly, through families, controlling adults.

Youth is naturally active and idealistic, but has to be guided and controlled; the HJ demanded not only the entire youth of the nation, but also the entire life of each young German. Artur Axmann, Hitler Youth Leader after 1940, said that "the HJ became powerful as a Party organization; it has continually had the same path and the same goal."<sup>1</sup> The Nazi revolution was rooted in the nation's youth, wrote Ernst Krieck, and from the Hitler Youth the state would select the future leaders.<sup>2</sup> After the young had been trained in the myth, the best were to be taken for the priesthood, while the others would become the faithful foundation of the hierarchy. "We all have the task", said Heinrich Himmler, "of training and leading Germans from the cradle to the grave."<sup>3</sup> To Hitler, children were, in Trevor-Roper's words, "the continually replaceable (and therefore continually dispensable) material of conquest and colonization."<sup>4</sup> He knew when a child was most vulnerable; "there is no enthusiasm greater than that of a young man of thirteen to seventeen years of age. They will gladly let

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Werner Klose, "Hitlerjugend", p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Krieck, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Stewart W. Herman, Eure Seelen Wollen Wir; Kirche im Untergrund, trans. Wilhelm Gossman, München, Neubau, 1951, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup>Trevor-Roper, ed., Secret Conversations, p. xxx.

themselves be cut to pieces for the sake of their teacher."<sup>1</sup>

One Kurt Grüber was the leader of the S.A. Hitler Youth when it was founded in 1926. From the beginning there was no doubt as to the nature of this youth group--here was no fun club. All eighteen-year-old members had to join the Party, and in 1927 came the ruling that they must also join the S.A. This procedure made sure that no-one in whom the spark had been kindled would fall into the hands of other groups. At the same time, radical, independently thinking social revolutionaries were weeded out. The Hitler Youth grew in numbers and enthusiasm, reflecting the conditions among the younger generation described in chapter one. In 1931, there were 20,000 members, and by 1932, 100,000. In April 1933, they flexed their muscles and expelled the officials from the premises of the Federal Committee of German Youth Groups in Berlin. In the same year, the Hitlerjugend boasted of 107,956 Hitlerjungen ("Hitler-boys"), and by the end of 1934 over three and a half million German children had been "co-ordinated" and their enthusiasm had become a danger to the Party as well as to Germany.<sup>2</sup>

By 1936, their tendency to outstrip their leaders in

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 649.

<sup>2</sup>Klose, op. cit., March 3, 1963, p. 13.

fanaticism was controlled to the extent that the Party elite felt it could pass a law announcing that all the youth of Germany was automatically in the Hitler Youth; "the entire German youth is to be trained physically, spiritually, and morally in the Hitler Youth."<sup>1</sup> The parental home and the school were mentioned briefly as working in concert with the Party, but the church was pointedly omitted, and, as will be seen, the influence of the first two institutions was gradually to be limited.

The Hitlerjugend's leader until 1940, Baldur von Schirach, was directly responsible to Hitler and occupied a position equivalent to cabinet rank, a factor which reveals the importance of his work. Von Schirach's book, Revolution der Erziehung, gives an outline of what was to be taught to German youth, the stress being continually on the life of the spirit and the importance of faith; "what we are doing for the unity of Germany doesn't take place only in the spirit of politics, but also in the spirit of religion;"<sup>2</sup> and consequently always the need for Opferbereitschaft ("willingness to sacrifice"): "our youth movement was not created by money, but by the sacrificial deaths of fervent youth".<sup>3</sup> The children were being taught how

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<sup>1</sup>Nationalsozialistische Monatsheft, 1937, Heft 82, p.59.

<sup>2</sup>von Schirach, Revolution der Erziehung, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

faith in God, faith in the Führer, and faith in Germany were all one. Speaking at an equinoxial celebration in 1936, von Schirach said, "we open our hearts to the Almighty, ...devoted to the man whom God has given us as our Leader in honour and freedom, we solemnly vow to be loyal to Adolf Hitler."<sup>1</sup> Eager to crush the suspicion that the young were being trained in militant, intolerant atheism, he announced, "we all believe in an Almighty God."<sup>2</sup> Certainly few groups in Nazi Germany were so free with the name of God as the Hitler Youth, starting with the ten-year-old boy who promised "always to do my duty in love and loyalty to the Führer and to our flag, so help me God."<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, as early as 1933, groups of Hitler Youth boys were disturbing evangelical youth meetings and even though these events were, at this time, scattered and seldom, they represented the intolerant, anti-Christian bent of the Hitler Youth. In a decree of 1938, von Schirach gave public expression to this fact: Hitler Youth leaders were not to belong to any church.

The organization of the youth movement was so efficient

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>3</sup>Klose, op. cit., March 17, 1963, p. 13.

that the average child, particularly a boy, had so much of his time, interest, and attention directed towards its activities that he often had little time or energy left for activities centering in the home or in the church. A typical boy would have his regular school instruction on Thursdays and Saturdays from eight-thirty in the morning to one in the afternoon and until two during the rest of the week. But he would have Hitler Youth activities as well on Mondays (music from six to seven), on Tuesdays (gymnastics from five to seven), on Thursdays (training in a trade from four to seven), on Fridays (drawing from five to seven and the weekly meeting from eight to ten). On three Sundays and two Saturdays in the month there would be hiking or some kind of "service"-- and this was not all!<sup>1</sup> Obviously few children led such an existence, but this was the ideal, and its efficacy in training young Nazis, even granting Christian influence in the school and the home, is not to be doubted.

With the exception of the Nazi youth journal, all other youth publications were banned, unless, of course, they adopted the Nazi approach. There were also weekly radio programs which all children were obliged to hear. A new set of holidays from school was introduced; for example, January 30

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<sup>1</sup>"Schule oder Verein", Spectator, vol. 152, June 29, 1934, p. 994.



(Hitler's birthday) and the equinoxial celebrations. The Nazi drive for totality led to the establishment of special Hitler Youth units for crippled children.

It was claimed that, in the spirit of the old youth movement, "youth is to be led by youth": again, the appeal to tradition. But since the Führer principle was essential throughout the Party, the result was that youth was administered by youth and led by adults. After all, to repeat the comparison with the Christian church, twelve-year-old Sunday School teachers are not considered the best. In the Hitler Youth, there was no real charisma and no election of leaders; they were appointed. The Party, like the Church, could not allow the uninitiated to ramble blithely through its sacred halls without the firm control of trained adults. The term "movement" was also a misleading element of propaganda, for such a phenomenon the Party's youth groups never were. Thousands of young people were enthusiastic members of the Hitler Youth, but the organization was never independent. Control was always exercised from above to prevent the boisterous spirits of the young from straying into heretical paths. This rigidity never slackened and, in 1939, an Academy for Youth Leadership was opened in Braunschweig. Even when a young person "graduated" from the Hitler Youth, as, for example, into the Arbeitsdienst, educators and propagandists continued their influence on his immature mind and exhausted body.

At first, the public morality of Christian, pre-Germany, particularly where it concerned the young, was maintained by the Party leadership. They could point with pride to the fact that juvenile crime was reduced from February to December 1933 and to the fact that, after the "revolution", pornographic books largely disappeared and the stage and cinema were purified. Unfortunately, juvenile delinquency rose again in 1934 and by 1937 it was almost four times what it was in 1933, and this at a time when many immoral practices were concealed by Party authority.<sup>1</sup> Naturally, parents could not complain about the improvement, however ephemeral it was, an improvement which the churches had not been able to bring about; nor could they deny that the romantic values of the youth movement of the "good old days" did not seem to have been revived.<sup>2</sup>

However, although the Nazis stressed family unity, the dignity of motherhood, and the duties of children, the ultimate effect of a child's participation in the Hitler youth was to destroy his connection with his parents and to increase the sense of isolation that had in the beginning helped to create the movement. They claimed that they sought to eliminate tension between parents and children, but in many ways, they only increased the distance between parents and children. The natural conflict between generations was fully utilized; Werner Klose reports that "HJ leaders

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<sup>1</sup>Eventually the law against obscene literature passed in 1926 was revoked. This was in the Party's favour: the notorious Schwarze Korps could have greater freedom and what non-Nazi pornography did appear could be attributed to Jewish sources. See Persecution of the Catholic Church in the Third Reich, London, Burns Oates, 1940, p. 317.

<sup>2</sup>When referring to Otto Strasser in 1933, Hitler used "Wandervogel" as a term of derision. Klose, op. cit., p. 13 (March 10, 1963).

and BDM leaders regularly give in their autobiographies such conflict in their parents' home as the reason for their work in the national youth movement: 'our elders are backward...they don't understand us'."<sup>1</sup>

The very rigidity of the Hitler Youth may even have been its weakness and may partially explain why, in its work with the young, the Party was not completely successful. By 1936, the system was static and seemingly perfect, and there was no possibility of new branches growing. In controlling youthful energy, the Party also controlled enthusiasm and inspiration. There was apparently general disillusionment after the decree of 1936. Hans Scholl of the later Munich underground was one of those who, having joyfully participated in Hitler Youth activities, was eventually disappointed.<sup>2</sup> Some others steadfastly refused to be "co-ordinated", and there were considerable young people involved in the "Packs" during the war. Even in the large degree of success that the Party did achieve, there were disadvantages. Lukewarm young Nazis found that participation in the Hitler Youth offered opportunities to rise to positions in the Party and in society that had been unthinkable earlier.<sup>3</sup> But for those children whose homes offered little religious or moral training, the preparation for life in the new order was far advanced by

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<sup>1</sup>Klose, op. cit., p. 13. See also chapter five of the thesis.

<sup>2</sup>See the first chapters of Inge Scholl, Die weisse Rose, Frankfurt, Fischer, 1962.

<sup>3</sup>In 1934, for example, the state handicrafts leader of Hesse announced that only boys and girls who had completed their training in the HJ would be admitted to trades courses. Klose, loc. cit.

1939. The effect of participation in the Hitler Youth can be seen today in the attitude of middle-aged Germans to whom the Nazis appear as evil men, but men who nevertheless did much for the young people of the time.

The Nazi leaders evidently felt that by 1940 they had sufficient hold on the nation's youth. Nothing else could explain Goebbels's frank and cynical declaration of September 19 of that year: a statement of intention as well as a confirmation of the facts. "They shall give their best for the war and its task; their strength, their idealism, and their deepest capacity to believe."<sup>1</sup>

## 6. The Concept of the Elite

The idea of a governing elite was to permeate the nation and is inseparable from the concept of a faith-dominated state. Germany was an elite nation, governed by those Germans who participated in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Party, and within this elite group would function that priesthood-elite, the Leadership. The Hitler Youth would provide the members of this upper elite which had to be carefully nurtured and contain only the best men. Ernst Kriek described them as "regulated by honour, valour, loyalty, readiness for service and sacrifice... living hard, strong lives,...soldierly in public life."<sup>2</sup>

Hitler therefore sought to train a class of young men

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Goebbels, Die Zeit ohne Beispiel. Reden und Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1939-1941. München, Eher, 1942, p. 329.

<sup>2</sup>Kriek, op. cit., p. 83

who could accept the facts of the "life struggle" and who could function as leaders, initiates into the mysteries of the cult, and priests. He believed that the "nerve centers of the state" should be occupied by "only as many as are absolutely required"; they would be concerned with the "organization of the idea."<sup>1</sup> It was necessary for the movement to block enrollment in its ranks and to increase its membership only with extreme caution and after thorough deliberation. Only this way could it preserve its "unvitiated freshness and health."<sup>2</sup> The Catholic Church was again Hitler's model and he felt that the word "party" was a misnomer; "I should prefer 'order' myself...One is reminded of monastic orders."<sup>3</sup> While the ordinary party member was not to be too much concerned with dogma and doctrine, Hitler envisaged a "brotherhood of Templars round the holy grail of pure blood."<sup>4</sup> In this remark, it is not the blood-oriented Weltanschauung that is important, but the concept of a select few to whom the "Truth" has been revealed.

The S.S. represents a development of the elite principle. Heinrich Himmler possessed a large library concerning the Jesuit order and spent much time studying this group of devoted men. It would seem that the Jesuits were his model in organizing the S.S., the fundamental rule of which was absolute obedience, the execution of every command without contradiction. Near Paderborn,

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<sup>1</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 583.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 585.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Rauschnig, op. cit., p. 198.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

In Westphalia, Himmler had a medieval castle fitted out for an annual consistory where the S.S. leadership could retire for meditation and practice.

The Social Democrats and the Communists had party schools during the Weimar period, but the Nazis outdid these efforts by creating, outside the regular educational system and under the direct control of the Party, a comprehensive plan of training to cover almost fifteen years in the novice's life. In this way, a small elite of leaders would be formed, which would function similarly to, but with more power than, the higher ranks of the Christian priesthood. The National-political Training Institutes and Adolf Hitler Schools offered secondary education to a group of boys carefully selected by the Party for their physical perfection, qualities of "leadership", and record in the Hitler Youth. The first of these schools, fifteen of them, were established as boarding schools in 1933, with the aim of training indoctrinated soldiers. The Adolf Hitler Schools were established in 1938 and were more directly affiliated with the Hitler Youth; they were to train future political leaders. One of these schools was planned for each of the 32 Gaue; boys were chosen at the age of twelve to spend six years at the school. There were to be no examinations, but work groups and seminars, each class being responsible for the behaviour of each pupil, a "progressive" innovation. Those selected for the Leader schools would not have to pay fees and were to be free from financial worries the rest of their lives.<sup>1</sup> The headmasters of the primary

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<sup>1</sup> Robert A. Brady, Spirit and Structure of German Fascism, London, Gollancz, 1937, p. 115.

schools made up the lists of candidates, and parents were not consulted.

The potential member of the elite would spend six years at the Leader school, and, upon graduating, would pass seven years in the army, the Work Service, and professional life; then, if he was still acceptable at the age of twenty-five, he might be selected to become an Ordensjunker, a member of an even more carefully chosen group of not more than 2000 young men to be sent to the Ordensburgen, where he would be trained for an additional four years. Rosenberg was in charge of this training which, since it was suspended in 1939, remained largely in the embryonic stage.

This system would have been more complete than that of the Communists, not to mention that of the Church, and with respect to the latter institution the significance of the Nazi training appears. As over against the common experience Christians have of sin and of the need for redemption, because the Nazi world-view was fundamentally nihilistic, the only basic experience the members of the elite would have in common would be that of the ruthless struggle with each other for power. The system of training had either to mask this truth or utilize it in terms of a "German" struggle for Lebensraum.

Many different methods were applied to cull only the best of the national crop. In 1938, instead of admitting all who applied for membership in the Party, only 50,000 young people who had shown the greatest promise in the Hitler Youth were

admitted; and the number for the future Ordensburgen was reduced to 1000.<sup>1</sup>

This educational plan remained largely unrealized, but its contribution to the Nazi state would have been invaluable. Hitler himself describes best what it would have produced. The ordinary young person who, at the age of eighteen, became a Party member was not sent back to the "old trainers in class- and position-consciousness", but was taken directly into the Work Service, the S.S., or the S.A.;

and then if after one or two years they haven't become complete National Socialists, they're polished up for six or seven months in the Arbeitsdienst...and then if there's still something left of their old class or position in them, they go into the army for further treatment for two years. And if they return after two, three, or four years, then they go back into the S.A. or the S.S., so they don't revert to old habits...and for their entire life they are not free.<sup>2</sup>

Such an attitude was absolutely necessary in the Leader of an institution the fundamental belief of which was faith in power. Nothing else can explain Hitler's concept of what this fifteen-year training would produce; a "violently active, dominating, intrepid, brutal" young Nazi priest seeking to become or at least to emulate "the magnificent, self-ordaining God-man."<sup>3</sup>

## 7. The Final Enlightenment

The idea of the governing elite, as developed by Plato,

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<sup>1</sup>F. Brennecke, Nazi Primer, New York, Harpers, 1938, pp. xxvii and xxii.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Gamm, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Rauschnig, op. cit., p. 231.



did not inspire the Nazis; their new elite of masters, having given the masses the opiate of religion and seeing through the fraud of the dogma, concentrated on the only enduring truth, the drive for power. Indeed, if the mass of Germans had imbibed too much of this doctrine, the Third Reich would have dissolved in chaos. Hence the limitations imposed on the number of those who were supposed to become well-versed in the myth. Nevertheless, important for the future was the fact that at some point in the training of future leaders, probably at the Ordensburgen, the trainee was to realize that the myth of the twentieth century was a facade. Certainly if he did not realize it then, he was bound to be enlightened in the company of the original elite; there, Rauschnig reports that the racial doctrine was considered "Adolf's bunkum", and much insincere enthusiasm was behind the talk of the mystical experience in meeting the Leader for the first time.<sup>1</sup> But at this level as well there was no escape. However great his disillusionment, the "self-ordained" priest would have no choice but to stay on and, ever more cynically, enjoy the fruits of his training. These leaders, then, as Arendt writes, were distinguished from the ordinary German in that they did not believe in the truth of the ideology;<sup>2</sup> indeed, in the short twelve years of the Nazi supremacy, throughout the upper echelons of the Party there developed a contempt for the German people which had nothing

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<sup>1</sup>Rauschnig, op. cit., p. 253.

<sup>2</sup>Arendt, op. cit., p. 384.

to do with the racial principles which were supposed to be the basis of the Nazi "church" and which reveals the Weltanschauung for the fraud it was.

#### 8. Weaknesses

The Nazi substitute church was a faith only in outward appearances. Inwardly hollow, it rendered every German who accepted it also inwardly hollow. In order to claim the total spiritual resources of Germans, the Nazis developed this "faith", and every part of society was to be dependent on unquestioning acceptance of the edicts of its pseudo-priests. It has been said that the Party tried to resurrect the tribal instinct and the mystical sanctions of savage society. But in primitive life, loneliness is a rare and marginal situation, and fear is usually a shared experience, in relation to wild animals and natural phenomena. In Nazi Germany, the average man never ceased to experience the general loneliness discussed in chapter one, and his fear was directed toward his fellow Germans.

While it is a moot point how long the German people would have been spiritually satisfied with this rigid pseudo-church, there are two other weaknesses in the Nazi structure in this regard. The Nazis compromised with their enemy, the Christian churches. Unlike the Communists, they retained outward parts of the old faith, such as belief in God, and thus weakened their chances of ultimate success. This compromise in the field of terminology and the actual compromise in the field of toleration seemed at first to be essential and shrewd tactics. But these

very devices by which the Nazi leaders hoped to hold the people provided a common ground between the two faiths which led to continual confusion.

The second weakness was described by Hitler himself; the more easily attainable posts and offices a movement has to hand out, the more inferior stuff it will attract, and in the end these political hangers-on overwhelm a successful party in such number that the honest fighter of former days no longer recognizes the old movement...When this happens, the 'mission' of such a movement is done for.<sup>1</sup>

The development of the elite as well as the limitation of party enrollment were attempts to prevent this from happening. The Party's strength was dissipated precisely because it was not radical enough; respectable people sought membership in it, as there did not appear to be anything incompatible in simultaneous Church and Party membership; besides, this was the only way to achieve a respectable, successful career.

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<sup>1</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 105.

## CHAPTER 4

### The Church-State Conflict

The first three chapters have shown; first, the position of the German churches, their strength, such as influence over education, and their weakness, such as their uncritical patriotism; and secondly, with what spiritual armament Hitler and his Party approached the churches. In this chapter, the general themes and significance of events will be reviewed.

#### 1. Christian Attitude to the Conflict

First, we should consider how the Christian approach to Nazism worked out in practice. Both politically and spiritually, many Christians accepted the Nazi Weltanschauung. The year 1932 saw an example of this in a book, "What We expect from National Socialism", in which a Roman Catholic author interpreted the coming Reich as a sacrum imperium, and in which a Protestant writer expressed confidence that Nazism was only a political movement and

would "not claim for itself the whole man".<sup>1</sup> Later this optimism turned to disillusionment but rarely to general condemnation. In this way, confusion within the church ranks aided the Nazis.

The Nazi "revolution" presented the Lutherans with an entirely new situation; never before had the Evangelicals had any serious conflict with the state, in Prussia or elsewhere. They were seeking to execute their creed--render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's. But they were crippled by the delusion that the struggle was not a spiritual one. It was only later that they realized that the compromise would leave everything but the innermost life, if even that, to Caesar-Hitler.

The consequences of the Lutheran tendency to sanctify worldly power were unfortunate. Even Pastor Hans Asmussen, who eventually severely criticized Hitler, treated the idea of the Third Reich as a secular order of power reigning as a metaphysical counterpart of the Cross.<sup>2</sup> It was the Lutheran pastors, rather than the leaders of the Free Reformed Churches or the Catholic priests, who tried most vigorously to introduce Nazi concepts into Christian life. In their "positive" approach to the Reich, both orthodox Lutherans and "German Christian" Lutherans sought a

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Klemperer, op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Kolnai, op. cit., p. 258.

sanctification of the new spirit of sacrificial patriotism, believing that if the national rebirth was to be won for Christ, the church's message would have to be presented in terms currently understood. But their attempt, a confused mistake, negates any claim that the most effective resistance to Nazism was Christian.

The Lutheran Church as a whole welcomed the "revolution" and many pastors, including the influential Martin Niemöller, seeing in Nazism a chance to save old customs and a more genuinely German way of life, voted for the Nazis. Many still wanted the union of Throne and Altar that they lost in 1919. It seemed possible that Hitler might be the God-sent deliverer, and so the Lutherans prayed after services for the safety of the Führer and Chancellor, thus neutralizing much of a potential Christian opposition to Hitler. At first eager to help the national renaissance, they were actually at one with the more radical "German Christians" and the later objections they had to National Socialism were neither to the nationalism nor to the socialism, but to the claim that the state could control the church's internal affairs.

Pastor Niemöller, a former submarine commander, is a good example of this position. He said that, in 1919, "when a preacher...told us that we Christians in Germany bore our own measure of responsibility for the war and its outcome--and that

at a time when the Versailles Treaty had just been signed--I could not help it, I had to leave."<sup>1</sup> This attitude, and his view, "I accept the authority of the State as such whatever the circumstances,"<sup>2</sup> returned to confuse him afterwards. He asked, in 1941, to be allowed to fight once more for Germany and appealed to Grand Admiral Raeder to be recalled for service in the navy.<sup>3</sup> He was refused, not because his nationalism was doubted, but because he still insisted that the Nazis had no right to interfere with strictly ecclesiastical matters. He does not seem to have recognized the hostility with which the Nazi leadership regarded even Lutheranism, not to mention the anomaly of a man of God fighting for Adolf Hitler. Even such a man, a pastor of considerable integrity, was a victim of "positive Christianity". A similar situation is found among the Protestant youth organizations. After the "revolution", they suggested that Christian young people be included in the Hitler Youth as a special division; of course, they were refused.

These Christians were deceived, in part because the Nazis played on some of their most legitimate hopes. The Nazi Reich Bishop idea, for example, was welcomed because there had been such plans among Lutherans earlier. At first, the "co-ordination" probably seemed to be a logical conclusion to the union of 1922. Perhaps the unity of the German Protestant

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Dietmar Schmidt, Pastor Niemöller, trans. L. Wilson, London, Odhams, 1959, p.150.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>3</sup>Later he regretted the letter and stated that he had been prompted solely by the desire to resume active opposition to Hitler. Schmidt, op.cit., p. 120.

Church could be strengthened by building up a strong central authority and by bringing the formerly independent churches in the various states under the control of a Reich Church on the Anglican model. The Lutherans as well as the Reformed Churches accepted this principle, although they agreed that each was to have full liberty to retain within the new church organization their own traditional faith. Consequently, the Nazi leaders found orthodox Protestants, with their hopes for the future, ready to co-operate.

Other Protestant Germans were more than merely co-operative. Only a few of the many radical reformers in whom religious and patriotic motives were mixed can be mentioned here. In 1921, for example, the League for a German Church was formed by Professor Joachim Niedlich; from this group came the German Christian Work Community, which later became part of Hitler's favourites, the "German Christians". Two pastors, both alumni of the youth movement of the 'twenties, Julius Leuthauser and Siegfried Leffler, founded the German Christian Church Movement of Thuringia. The first group to have a genuine Nazi flavour was the Work Community of National Socialist Pastors, founded in 1931 with Hitler's approval. This group also called itself the "German Christians", and formed with several others in 1932 the officially recognized Faith Movement of "German Christians" under Joachim Hossenfelder.<sup>1</sup> The latter group eventually became the spiritual Storm Troops which Hitler used to "co-ordinate"

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<sup>1</sup>The theology of the "German Christians" is well described by Karl Kupisch as a "religious mixture, in which can be traced the case history of a century-old theological and church sickness." Zwischen Idealismus und Massendemokratie, p. 190. See also chapter one of the thesis.



the Protestant Church. There were also groups which shaded off into paganism, such as that of General and Mathilde Ludendorff, and which found, for a while, Nazi approval.

Although they soon became divided among themselves, the "German Christians" had in 1933 several practical aims which won for them Hitler's support: they wanted to remove all clergymen friendly to the former regime, to concentrate all authority in a united church in the hands of their sympathizers, to establish the Führer principle in the church, and to eliminate everything in Christian teaching out of harmony with National Socialism. This included introduction of hero worship, the racial concept of national unity, and the sacred character of national ambitions. Seeking the final triumph of the German Reformation over Roman Catholicism, they wanted to form a living People's Church, in which "positive Christianity" would revive the "German spirit of Luther and heroic piety."<sup>1</sup> In particular, they fought against atheistic Marxism and the Centre Party, which they believe was controlled from Rome. The nation was to be protected from the incapable and the inferior; Jews were to be evicted, as were those with cosmopolitan or pacifist sympathies; the Old Testament was repudiated as Scripture. Besides being sympathetic to the Nazi movement, the "German Christians" represent the embodiment of implications within Lutheran doctrine, and thus won the sympathy of many within the church. Eventually, with the aid of the Party, they achieved almost complete control of the official Protestant church organization.

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<sup>1</sup>Littell, op. cit., p.180.

Some Protestants were clearer about the Nazi danger. In the spring of 1933, the Lutherans split into three groups of opinion, and eventually of action; the radically progressive "German Christians", the moderate middle group supporting von Bodelschwingh as Reich Bishop candidate, and the Niemöller faction, which eventually became the Pastors' Emergency League in the fall. With the latter group, it began to seem as though an unexpected and perhaps influential opposition to Hitler was forming among one of the groups from which he had hoped to derive support. In the Barmen Declaration of 1934 by insisting that the government should restrict itself to maintaining justice and order, the dissenting Pastors' Emergency League, now the "Confessional Church", struck at Nazi totalitarianism and objected to the oath of personal allegiance Hitler demanded and to totalitarianism and objected to the oath of personal allegiance Hitler demanded and to the requirement that they adopt anti-Semitism.<sup>1</sup>

This resistance achieved little, and only a quarter of the Lutheran pastors supported it.<sup>2</sup> Many, indeed, were forced by their deepest convictions eventually to condemn the dissenters. Under the onslaught of Naziism, they probably thought it wise to preserve at least a framework of a nominally Christian Church, even though the orthodox viewpoint had often to be glossed over and even though church offices were increasingly filled by "Blood and Soil" preachers. To these defenders of the Church,

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<sup>1</sup>Littell, op.cit., p.94.

<sup>2</sup>This figure is for 1934, after which their supporters declined in number. See Mother Mary Alice Gallin, German Resistance to...Hitler: ethical and religious factors, Washington, Catholic University of America, 1961, p.185.

while they may not have supported the "German Christians", the resistance of the Confessional Church seemed ill-advised, defeating their own ends by provoking the measures which, they feared, might lead to complete paganization.

But Wilhelm Niemöller notes that even the Confessional Church should not be considered as resistance,<sup>1</sup> and even if they had wanted vigorously to protest, it is doubtful if the Niemöller group could have achieved much against the general tide of collaboration, which penetrated their own ranks. In May 1933, a government-approved church council<sup>2</sup> of moderate churchmen sanctioned a plan, in the Loccum Manifesto, for an Evangelical German Reich Church, headed by a Reich Bishop of the Lutheran confession, with a "cabinet of pastors at his side. This plan was not produced by the "German Christians", but represents the efforts of the moderate churchmen. The more radical Union of National Socialist Pastors produced the Mecklenburg Theses, which advocated revision of the old ecclesiastical forms, adapting them to the new social structure. All this was music to Hitler's ears and he must have been further delighted when, after Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations, he received from the official Christian opposition of Niemöller and the other Confessional Church pastors a congratulatory telegram. Even his critics pledged "loyal adherence and prayerful support."<sup>3</sup> The leaders of the smaller Free Churches were hardly a problem;

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<sup>1</sup>Wilhelm Niemöller, Die Evangelische Kirche im Dritten Reich. Handbuch des Kirchen-Kampfes, Bielefeld, Bechauf, 1956, p.396.

<sup>2</sup>This consisted of the President of the Church Committee, Hermann Kapler, Bishop Marahrens of Hannover (Lutheran), and Dr. Hermann Hesse (Reformed), as well as the Reich Bishop Müller. Quoted in Means, Things that are Caesar's, p. 246.

as late as 1939, one Bishop Melle, perhaps as justification for this collaboration, informed a conference of American Methodist students that Hitler had saved German youth, had lifted them out of degenerate smoking and dinking, and had made them idealistic and ready for sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> The Protestant will to collaborate with the Party was eventually embarrassing for Hitler. While their co-operation seemed at first desirable, in making them comrades-in-arms, he ran the risk of betraying his real aims or of hindering the execution of those aims. Before the end of 1933, Hitler began to try to disentangle himself and the Party.

Collaboration was more difficult for the Catholics, because the Party considered the church hierarchy of earthly origin, and, for them, Law corresponded to the will of the Leader and his elite who recognized no authority beyond themselves; Right was that which, as interpreted by the Leader, allegedly served the destiny of the German people. The Catholics, on the other hand, believed law to have its source in God and the church hierarchy to be of divine origin. As over against the Lutherans, many Catholics were at first moved neither to attack or defence by the Nazi "revolution". The Roman Catholic faith, because it was the Truth, solved most of their problems. Hence they remained untouched by the Nazi, or any other, ephemeral heresy.

The Catholic Church left the problem of patriotism to each individual to solve and no justification was necessary, a

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Littell, op. cit., pp. 83-84

neutrality which in practice permitted as high a degree of patriotism to prevail among Catholics as among Lutherans. While a distinction between just and unjust wars was made, a patriotic Catholic, however much he may have despised the Hitler regime, experienced little doubt as to whether or not he should defend his Fatherland in 1939.<sup>1</sup> If he looked to his religious superiors for guidance concerning service in Hitler's war he received almost the same direction as from his Nazi ruler. When Austria was invaded, Cardinal Innitzer of Vienna officially greeted the German forces;<sup>2</sup> it should also be remembered that the fertile soil in which Nazism first thrived was Catholic Bavaria. At no time was Hitler, nominally a Catholic, ever excommunicated, and, when the Concordat was signed, Cardinal Faulhaber, usually associated with the resistance to the Nazis, sent Hitler a telegram congratulating him on achieving so quickly what the old parliamentary system had failed to do.<sup>3</sup> Although Faulhaber had accepted the honour of being chosen official protector of the German Catholic Peace League, he made no move to defend it when the Nazis dissolved it. Attempts at conciliation between the rival hierarchies were usually based on the common struggle against Bolshevism, which Hitler was always careful to stress, and were therefore usually successful. No Catholic clergyman publicly condemned the alliance with Bolshevist, atheistic Russia, or

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<sup>1</sup>I spoke with a Catholic gentleman from the Rhineland who declared that, when he joined the army in 1943, "Hitler was my ideal". See also Gordon C. Zahn, German Catholics and Hitler's Wars. A Study in Social Control, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1962.

<sup>2</sup>See Hitler's Secret Conversations, p.489, for his reaction to the greetings of another Catholic bishop in 1933.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Walter Kinkel, ed., Kirche und Nationalsozialismus. Ihre Auseinandersetzung zwischen 1925 und 1945 in Dokumenten dargestellt, Düsseldorf, Patmos, 1960, p.50.

the invasion of predominantly Catholic Poland. We must conclude that German Catholics accepted the authority of the Nazi state with almost the same willingness as German Lutherans.

Catholic periodicals appeared with articles in sympathy with the Party. The weekly "Time and People", founded a few months after Hitler's accession to the Chancellorship, and published by a Catholic firm in Munich, pursued the task of demonstrating and promoting unity between the Nazi state and the Catholic population. In the "Voices of the Times", a German Jesuit monthly, there appeared an article on the racial acceptability of the Christian idea of sin.<sup>1</sup> Joseph Lortz, in his "Catholic Approach to Nazism", expressed the widespread illusion that it was a purely political movement.<sup>2</sup> Monsignor Hudal, Rector of a German foundation in Rome, made continual efforts at mediating between the two powers, declaring that no conflict of conscience could arise between the German Catholic's loyalty to Rome and his national feeling; "the informed Catholic will bear no ill-will to a Germany groping her way from the socialistic poisoning of the people to the great traditions of her national past."<sup>3</sup> An inward consonance between Nazism and Catholicism was possible, wrote Franz Taeschner, for Nazism was the trustee of the divine will in the realm natural, as Catholicism was in the realm supernatural.<sup>4</sup> In this way, some Catholics sought to legitimize Nazism and to avoid conflict. While there was no important attempt within the

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<sup>1</sup>Kolnai, op. cit., pp. 258-259.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Lortz, Katholischer Zugang zum Nationalsozialismus, Münster, Aschendorff, 1933. See also Wilhelm Berning, Katholische Kirche und deutsches Volkstum, München, Callwey, 1934.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Kolnai, op. cit., pp. 259-260.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 261.

Catholic Church to sanctify Nazism, these writers weakened a possible common Christian front. With a united approach, Christians could have resisted Nazi corruption and misuse of their doctrine; with their confused approach, they were unable to prevent the great strides made by Nazi "co-ordination" of German life.

During the Weimar Republic, the Nazis experienced little critical resistance from the Catholics; their leaders cannot be said to have flatly approved of the Nazi movement, but they confined themselves to purely doctrinal issues and to refuting the assertions of propagandists like Rosenberg. Although it was not their official political agency, the Centre Party generally represented the political aspirations and activity of German Catholics. According to Karl Bachem, "the Catholic members of the Centre remain Catholics individually, but the party as a party does not necessarily accept the Catholic conception of the world."<sup>1</sup> Not all its members were Catholics and it was not always regarded favourably in high church quarters. However, Hitler always hated it for its opposition to himself, for its connection with the attempt to carry out the Versailles Treaty, for its more European outlook, and for its willingness to work with the Social Democrats. He considered it the arm, in Germany, of a foreign power, the Papacy. The Old Catholic Church, surviving from Bismarck's time, called itself now the "Catholic German National Church", and viewed the Nazis more or less favourably.<sup>2</sup> But on

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Benda, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>When the dogma of papal infallibility was proclaimed in 1870, a small group of German Catholics, led by Ignaz Döllinger, refused to accept it. Organized as the "Old Catholic" Church, they were without much influence but had the support of Bismarck.

September 30, 1930, a critical statement about the Party and the Church was made by the Bishop of Mainz; to the question whether a Catholic could be a member of the Nazi Party, the answer was "no".<sup>1</sup> Eventually the Party fell under an ecclesiastical ban. The position of the Catholic Church seemed to grow more hostile before 1933, and, considering this, the Nazis might expect greater resistance from Catholics in the future. This doubt probably determined their cautious approach to the Church in the first months of 1933 and their eagerness to conclude the agreement of that year.

The Concordat was an invaluable, and unexpected, windfall for them. According to the official view expressed in the papal encyclical of 1937, Mit brennender Sorge, the Church had "many and grave misgivings" but decided to go through with the agreement in order "to spare the faithful of Germany, as far as it was humanly possible, the trials and difficulties they would have had to face...had the negotiations fallen through."<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to know how far this is the wisdom of hindsight. Von Papen, after the signing, said that the pope hoped that "the new Germany had won a decisive battle against Bolshevism and the force of godlessness" and that he placed complete trust in the Chancellor's assurances that he would carry out the national rebirth in accordance with Christian principles.<sup>3</sup>

A few of the important articles and consequences of the Concordat should be cited. On the surface, it seemed that no previous German concordat had offered the Church such generous terms as that of 1933. Article 14 guaranteed religious orders their

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Micklem, National Socialism and Christianity, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Anne Fremantle, ed., The Papal Encyclicals in their Historical Context, New York, Mentor, 1956, p. 250.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Kupisch, op. cit., pp. 221-222.



pastoral, educational, and charitable work. Article 23 guaranteed the Church's rights in the existing schools and provided for new schools under church influence. Article 24 declared that teaching in Catholic schools should be in the hands of Catholic teachers and promised no interference in their training. Most important, Article 31 included protection for the Catholic youth organizations. The Concordat retained in the hands of Rome the appointment of all archbishops and bishops, although none unacceptable to the government was to be appointed, a concession made in other agreements.<sup>1</sup> It was also part of the Concordat that the Catholic church was to use its recognized authority and natural conservatism on behalf of the new regime, and, consequently, on March 23, 1933, the Centre Party voted for the Enabling Bill, and on March 28 the bishops conferring at Fulda formally lifted the ban on Nazism. There followed, in July, the dissolution of the Bavarian People's Party and of the Centre Party of their own accord. The concessions made by Hitler to the Church in the Concordat represent an attempt at a modus vivendi; it is doubtful if the co-operation of the Catholics rendered him less suspicious of their intentions or less hostile to their very existence.

To leave the discussion of the Catholic attitude to Nazism without mentioning the 1937 encyclical could not be completely fair. In this document, those who "by pantheistic confusion, [identified] God and the universe, by lowering God to the dimensions of the world, or raising the world to the dimensions of God", were condemned as unbelievers; so were those who followed "that so-called pre-Christian Germanic conception of substi-

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<sup>1</sup> For the text of the Concordat, see Johann Neuhäusler, Kreuz und Hakenkreuz, München, Katholische Kirche Bayerns, 1946, vol. 2, p. 412(appendix).

tuting a dark and impersonal deity for the personal God."<sup>1</sup> This was an attack on the "religiofication" of the Nazi movement and was a clear demand for Catholics to resist the Nazis' unjust laws. But it contained no suggestion that they should resist the government itself. It came too late and was not followed by stronger action, such as breaking diplomatic relations or excommunication of Hitler. The almost inevitable weakness of the Catholic position was that they acted always in a way that could be interpreted by the Nazis as "political".

What Friedrich Baumgärtel writes about the Lutherans applies to most Christian leaders of this time; they were themselves "weakened by disunity, and thus brought uncertainty, lack of clarity, and confusion into their parishes."<sup>2</sup> It is tempting to conclude that Christian faith played no great role in the Third Reich, except as a support to National Socialism! In any case, a recent study of the German resistance movements shows that religious belief was not the determining factor in the individual's decision to fight against Hitler.<sup>3</sup> Hitler could hope never to be threatened seriously by the activity or stand of Christians. He knew that some sort of conflict was inevitable but did not fear it. It became obvious that the Christians were divided and insecure; and this weakness was Nazi strength.

## 2. Themes of the Conflict

It has been suggested that the Nazi aim was ultimate

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Fremantle, op. cit., p. 251.

<sup>2</sup>Friedrich Baumgärtel, Wider die Kirchenkampf-Legenden, Freimund, Neuendettelsau, 1959, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>Gallin, op. cit., p. 280.

extermination of Christianity. But in spite of the weakness of the churches, they could not be eliminated in two or three years, and more than bribery and force were necessary to make people renounce their traditional faith. The Nazi approach to the churches while sometimes clumsy and transparent, was often subtle, and consequently often successful.

Consideration of their approach before 1933 shows that they never forgot the power and influence that both confessions still wielded. The neutralizing of this potential opposition was carried on from the beginnings of the Party in 1920<sup>1</sup> and continued throughout the most flagrant persecution to the end of the Third Reich. In the 'twenties, the Nazi leaders were concerned above all to make themselves "respectable" and were uncertain as to the attitude Christians, particularly their leaders, would take to the evolving radical aspects of the movement. They began, therefore, with promises of protection and declarations of respect. The fact that many Christians were members of the Party at thistime was reflected in the Twenty-Five Points of 1920, which assure equality of treatment to both Catholics and Protestants, who would remain unmolested as long as they did not threaten the morale of the people or the existence of the state.<sup>2</sup> Rosenberg's anti-Christian Mythus was not published by the Party's official printing house; this fact was indicated as proof that the Party's attitude was more moderate and at least not necessarily that of the Baltic radical--

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<sup>1</sup> See Point 24 of the Twenty-five Points in Hofer, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit.

his work was a private venture. Hitler knew the role he should play; according to Hans Müller, he said in 1930, "when I once get to power, the Catholic Church will have nothing to laugh about; but to get there, I can't do without its help."<sup>1</sup>

In Mein Kampf, Hitler went so far as to praise the churches. This was another fruitful line of approach. "As the churches are German institutions, we, as good Germans will support them". The greatness of the Christian Church, wrote Hitler, endures in spite of the mistakes of human beings within it.<sup>2</sup> It was possible that Deutschtum and Roman Catholicism were compatible; he, at any rate, would launch no Kulturkampf. In all his speeches and articles before 1933, he exercised caution and restraint, avoiding any irritation of his Catholic or Lutheran followers--or potential converts. In the Volksischer Beobachter ("People's Observer") of February 26, 1925, he denounced attempts to bring religious disputes into the movement or even to equate the National Socialist movement with religious problems. He was careful to avoid any identification of individual churches or sects with his own party. The great enemy of both Christendom and Germany was, after all, Bolshevism, and it was his supreme task, he declared, to ensure that in the NSDAP both Lutherans and Catholics could work peacefully together and resist the common enemy.<sup>3</sup> These promises made it easier for Christians, anxious to avoid the interdenominational squabbles that had disturbed German unity in the past, to accept the new movement and its program.

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Hans Müller, "Der pseudoreligiöse Charakter der nationalsozialistischen Weltanschauung", Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht, 1962, pp. 351-352.

<sup>2</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, pp. 115 and 119.

<sup>3</sup>Hitler, Speeches, vol. 1, p. 368.

With the signing of the Concordat in 1933, the highest Christian authority in the world legitimized and made finally respectable the Nazi regime. Were the Nazis surprised at the tractability of the Catholic Church? In spite of previous hints at resistance, they had some hope, for in 1931, Rosenberg had written:

The most amazing thing today is...the fact that in devoutly Catholic Italy, the most extreme concept of nationalism has become the government of the state, and that the Pope...has made peace with this glowing nationalism.<sup>1</sup>

At any rate, Hitler's tactics were met with success; but, of course, he knew how to handle the church; "they shall bend or break--but, since they are no fools, they will bow their heads."<sup>2</sup> This cynical attitude was supported by the facts. The behaviour of the Catholic hierarchy was such that it confirmed the opinion Hitler had of it. The Church would ban and condemn until it was cornered and then it would compromise. The Papal nuncio signed the Concordat and the German Church authorities lifted the ban. The Catholic Church, like the Lutheran Church, hastened to welcome the Nazis. With the Concordat, their approach to the most unapproachable of the churches was successful.<sup>3</sup> Their confidence grew apace.

One theme which never altered throughout the various

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Rosenberg, Blut und Ehre, München, Eher, 1943, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Micklem, National Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church, p. 158.

<sup>3</sup> To the Reichstag, Hitler described the Concordat as "an indescribable success", and saw therein three advantages; (1) the fact that the Vatican had been willing to negotiate at all, thus crushing accusations that the German government was anti-Christian, (2) that the new regime had been recognized by such a power, and (3) that the Catholic unions and the Zentrum were to be liquidated. From a protocol quoted in Hofer, op.cit., pp. 130-131.

stages of the conflict<sup>1</sup> was the effort to blacken the image of the Catholic Church by attacks on "political Christianity", the meddling of the church in German political life, and to maintain the image of the Party as a defender of a "positive", more Lutheran, Christianity. As Lutheranism was more in keeping with Deutschtum, Hitler aimed most of his propaganda at the Roman Catholic Church. Yet even Catholics could enjoy "inward" Christianity as long as they believed with "outward" faith in the German renaissance. Hitler stressed the difference between the Catholic Church's spiritual life and its political interference. "The fight against the Centre Party must not be waged because it processes to be 'Christian', but solely because a party which allies itself with atheistic Marxism for the oppression of its own people is neither Christian or Catholic."<sup>2</sup> In 1933 the Party founded the "League of Catholic Germans", a group which might have played a role similar to the "German Christians" in the Lutheran Church. But little came of this, for Hitler tried to give the impression that there was something inherently unnatural, unhealthy, un-German about Catholicism, even implying that Catholics, Marxists, and Jews were united in conspiracy. In Goebbels' words, "we do not fight the Centre Party because

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<sup>1</sup>The discussion that follows may be rendered clearer if we divide events into four stages which correspond to the evolution of Hitler's Kirchenpolitik after 1933. These are: 1934, the attempt to form a symbiotic relationship between the state and the churches; 1935-1936, beginning of disengagement towards a radical separation; 1937-1938, development of the Weltanschauung into what we have called a pseudo-faith; and 1939, greater coercion and persecution. In the war years, the Kulturkampf continued at a slower pace. This chronology corresponds to that of Alois Natter in his Der Bayerische Klerus in der Zeit dreier Revolutionen, München, Katholische Kirche Bayerns, 1946, p.256.

<sup>2</sup>Hitler, Speeches, Vol. 1, p. 368.

it is Catholic--which, if it ever was, it long ago ceased to be--but because it serves the Jews, and has sold our freedom."<sup>1</sup> The Party, on the other hand, was not a cult, but simply a nationalistic political party with racial principles; "we have no religious retreats", said Hitler, "but arenas for sports and playing-fields;" theirs was not the "mystical gloom of a cathedral, but the brightness and light of a room or hall which combines beauty with fitness for its purpose."<sup>2</sup> The Nazi movement did not want to damage Christianity in its essence but to deepen it and to renew it, to "serve the maintenance of a divine work and fulfil a divine will."<sup>3</sup> The National Socialist Party was a healthy and pious manifestation of all that was best in German history.

The Catholics, however, misused Christianity for political ends. According to Rosenberg, just as the Bolsheviks sought to divide Germany by their doctrine of class warfare, so the Centre Party sought to do the same with confessional differences. Just as the Social Democrat could see only his class and its problems, so the leaders of the Catholic church could see only the interests of their sect.<sup>4</sup> Both the Protestant and the Catholic clergy, if they were honest in declaring that they loved Germany, should withdraw from any political involvement.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Goebbels, Der Angriff, Aufsätze aus der Kampfzeit, München, Eher, 1943, p.182.

<sup>2</sup> Hitler, Speeches, Vol. 1, p. 396.

<sup>3</sup> Hitler, Speeches, Vol. 1, p. 396.

<sup>4</sup> Rosenberg, op.cit., p.56

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.54.

"It is just as unnatural for a pastor to be a politician as for a statesman to act as confessor."<sup>1</sup> Rosenberg strikes the familiar Nazi note when he declares that "political Catholicism" is the public manifestation of the "jesuitical-Roman system",<sup>2</sup> and its "Black International", which was at the root of various national scandals, including that of the November Criminals and their suppression of the Frei Korps movement. A pamphlet, "The Great Lie of Political Catholicism", showed that the Catholic leaders in Germany were confused or hypocritical, because on the one hand they spoke of persecution and martyrdom, and on the other they enjoyed full churches, enthusiastic pilgrimages, and generally thriving Christian activity.<sup>3</sup> This, of course, could be ascribed to what Rosenberg called Catholic Doppelzüngigkeit (hypocrisy).<sup>4</sup> Statistics were given to prove that church building flourished.<sup>5</sup> The state defended the churches against atheistic forces, and in scarcely any other country on earth at any time in history was religious life more secure. But in spite of this, the Roman Catholic Church, because it had lost its political influence, turned against the state "with most unchristian hatred."<sup>6</sup> The Nazis understood that the dubious material prosperity of the churches was not what Christian leaders prized

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<sup>1</sup> Rosenberg, Mythus, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Dieter Schwarz, Die Grosse Lüge des politischen Katholizismus, München, Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1938, passim.

<sup>4</sup> Rosenberg, Blut und Ehre, p. 83

<sup>5</sup> Schwarz, op. cit., pp. 20-22.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 4.



most, but by pointing this out they made the Christians seem greedy for more material advantages.

Rosenberg and Schwarz, as articulate rebels, were useful, but the official Nazi viewpoint was always less violent. Reichsminister Kerrl wrote that "we demand freedom of all religious denominations in the state so long as they do not endanger its existence" but that unfortunately "religion" throughout history had always harboured political corruption, and had not always maintained a purely religious mission.<sup>1</sup> The continual repetition of this theme with its vagueness and apparent moderation was the escape hatch by which the Nazis escaped the restraints of the Concordat. This official view was echoed in approved Nazi publications and in the lower ranks of the Party, but here with more real conviction and with less intent to dupe. Hans Kerrl, Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs, stated that it was the duty of the Party to insure religious freedom for all German citizens under all circumstances; it was the personal right of every German to choose for himself the religious sect to which he wanted to belong, provided that he made no "political misuse" of this privilege.<sup>2</sup> Robert Wimmer, a Nazi educational expert, wrote that the Weltanschauung occupied itself only with life on earth, while "religion" referred to the Beyond and prepared the individual for life after death. Wimmer denied that Nazism had any claim on the spiritual life of Germans and believed that Christianity and Nazism could co-operate, provided

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Kneller, op.cit., p. 184

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Kneller, op.cit., p.187

that the churches left control of this world to the proper powers. On the other hand, National Socialism realized that credit must be given to the churches as powerful contributors to modern German culture and so it wanted to retain Christianity as a necessary and basic characteristic of national life.<sup>1</sup> It might be argued that Wimmer is more sincere than Kerrl, but this idea is one shared by both devout Christians and anti-clericals in Western Europe and North America. It was very close to the Lutheran concept of church-state relations. On the surface, it seemed hard to deny the justice of the Nazi outlook.

A good Lutheran, even a good Catholic, German would find much to approve in Hitler's speech of October 24, 1933;

we have dragged the priests out of the depths of the political party struggle and have brought them back again into the Church. It is our determination that they shall never return to a sphere which is not made for them, which dishonours them, and which of necessity brings them into opposition to millions of people who in their hearts wish to hold to the faith, but who desire to see the priests serving God and not a political party.<sup>2</sup>

Later he said that in destroying the Centre Party and bringing back thousands of priests into the Church, the Nazi "revolution" had restored faith to "millions of respectable people" "The German priest as a servant of God we shall protect," the Führer said, "the priest as political enemy of the German state we shall destroy."<sup>3</sup> When the time came to attack the Catholic Church, as in the Currency and Immorality Trials of 1935 and

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Kneller, op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>Hitler, Speeches, vol. 1, p. 378.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 382.

1936, the Party did exactly this; thousands of priests were shown to be political and moral enemies of the German people.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the burden of Nazi anti-Catholic propaganda. But, as in the diplomatic sphere, Hitler did not wish to seem the aggressor in church-state affairs, and so deceptive conciliation characterized the Nazi side of formal relations with both the churches. Particularly during 1933-34, this moderation had to seem to be the Nazi attitude. It is not likely that events such as the murder on July 11, 1934, of Adalbert Probst, the national leader of the Young Catholics, or that of Dr. Erich Klausener, head of Catholic Action in Berlin, during the Röhm purge, were officially planned, or welcomed, by Hitler. The Nazis pointed out how "religion" was thriving in Germany and how their Party approved of this. Three years later, in February 1937, Frick, Minister of the Interior, shrewdly ordained that in official lists and documents there were to be three religious categories: members of religious denominations, believers in God, and unbelievers. Consequently, the census of 1939 showed only 1.5% of the population was "without religion", and the number of professed atheists was the same as in 1925.<sup>2</sup> Many gave their religion as simply "believer in God", which was good enough for Nazi propaganda.

Part of this campaign of deception was Hitler's continually expressed belief that Christianity should be the

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<sup>1</sup>It was found that, contrary to the Nazis' complicated Devisen (currency) laws, some Catholic orders had paid back foreign loans in German Currency; they were accused of sapping the economic lifeblood of the Volk. In the later Immorality Trials, the past, and usually punished, crimes of priests and monks were<sup>2</sup> revived, exaggerated, and publicized.

<sup>2</sup>Official figures cited in Herman, op.cit., p. 24. To be sure, membership in a church as well had not absolutely

basis of German morality, and that the family should be the core of the life of the Volk and the State. The staging of the national reconciliation service at the Potsdam Garrison Church before the passing of the Enabling Act and Hitler's speech at that time promising to support Christianity were designed to give the impression that there was to be a return to a more Christian and upright government. Hitler promised to secure church influence in education--surely this was an indication that the new state would be more Christian than the Weimar Republic. Nevertheless, the official text of this speech which appeared in 1934 omitted any reference to education as did other official publications.<sup>1</sup> Allegedly because of the criticism of some Catholic bishops, Hitler and Goebbels, both erstwhile Catholics, refused to attend the High Mass offered at the Potsdam ceremony. Nevertheless, Hitler continued to maintain the pre-1933 image of the Nazi movement as the protector of "religion" and the family from such evils as Bolshevism. The middle class German, a pious family man, still listened with approval and was completely deceived.

Waldemar Gurian suggests that an open break with the Vatican was to be avoided in order to keep the Catholic population in confusion as long as possible and to create the impression that the Vatican was afraid to protect its German flock.<sup>2</sup> It is quite possible that a sense of helplessness within the Catholic hierarchy was inculcated by the fact that

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ceased to be a social advantage; in 1933, the Party itself sent formations of the S.A. to church.

<sup>1</sup>Hans Buchheim, Glaubenskrise im Dritten Reich, Stuttgart, Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1953, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup>Waldemar Gurian, "Hitler's Undeclared War on the Catholic Church", Foreign Affairs, vol. 16, January 1938, pp. 260-271.

if the Minister of the Interior, Frick, wanted to discuss Catholic administration, he visited not the Cardinal Archbishop of Cologne, but the Nuncio in Berlin, Monsignor Orsenigo. Here, however, the difference between policy and the confusion of the period itself is not clear.

When Hitler did not actually lie about events, he was silent, and his henchmen took their cue from him. During the most acute phase of the Lutheran problem, the press authorities made it difficult to follow events in the newspapers or to realize that any problem existed at all. The same tactics were employed in reverse during the Immorality Trials. Rosenberg's "National Socialist Monthly" scarcely mentioned the church problem at any time, and included reports on church activities without critical comment, although articles did appear lamenting the lack of Protestant resistance to the new "counter-reformation".<sup>1</sup> Not merely non-Nazi leaders, but also important clergymen were included in the 1935 Führerlexikon. At the end of 1934, relatively little happened in the church-state sphere, because the Saar plebiscite was soon to be held and the leadership needed domestic peace. In this case the silence indicated real inactivity. But when the Saar was safely part of Germany, the Currency Trials began. Reich Bishop Müller issued what became known as the "Muzzling Decree" on January 4, 1934, forbidding ministers to introduce into their sermons any subject matter dealing with the church controversy, and on November 6, 1934, two

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<sup>1</sup>"Die Gegenreformation von heute in den Ländern des Weltprotestantismus", Nationalsozialistisches Monatsheft, July 1937, pp. 591-606.

decrees by Frick prohibited further discussion of the church question in the press, in pamphlets, or in books. Reports of restrictive measures rarely appeared in print, a factor which helped to spread uncertainty and fear.

Hitler's attempt at conciliation and pacification of the Christians continued throughout the duration of the Third Reich, so that, for the uncritical, the situation seemed clear, and for those who might be anti-Nazi, resistance became more and more difficult. It was easier when, in Rosenberg's words, they put on the Brown Shirt, to ignore confessional differences and to see only Germans fighting for the honour of the Volk.<sup>1</sup> Always trying to keep Germans united behind--or beneath--them, the leaders denied excessive materialism, pagan tendencies, or hostility to Christianity on the part of the movement. Faced with mounting restrictions, the average Christian, who did not wholeheartedly support the Party and who yet loved his Fatherland, was confused.

Especially since the Führer himself was silent on the religious issue, and since the new state declared itself willing to grant every concession to the older faith, how could there be strife? If any existed or if the churches claimed to be oppressed, it must be part of a Christian, possibly only Catholic, plot to discredit the national reawakening. There is one good example of this approach, combining conciliation and protests of innocence. The cabinet agreed on the Sterilization Law on July 1,

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<sup>1</sup>Rosenberg, Blut und Ehre, p. 56.

1933, but its publication was carefully delayed until five days after the Concordat was signed on July 25; in the clauses of this law the Nazis inserted one which allowed for an individual's life-long sojourn in a private home, "in order that possible adherents of the Catholic faith who might have conscientious objections... be given the opportunity of observing their religious tenets."<sup>1</sup> Hitler added a verbal footnote to this, stressing the irresponsibility of the churches; "if [they] were to declare themselves ready to take over the treatment and care of those suffering from hereditary diseases, we should be quite ready to refrain from sterilizing them."<sup>2</sup>

For both confessions, the Department of State for Ecclesiastical Affairs, established in July 1935, eventually became more dangerous than schismatic groups or Hitler Youth extravagance. Through this bureau, the Party controlled church finances and did not simply interfere in church administration, but also arbitrarily disposed of church property, caused financial difficulties, and closed theological schools. Without the permission of the Department, no salary could be paid, no money spent, and no voluntary church collections could be taken up. Through the Department, the churches could be slowly suffocated. Its decrees were contradictory and vague, and were often accompanied by more vigorous action on the part of local sympathizers. The ambiguity and caution of the period until 1936 is summed up in Frick's

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. Walter Gross, in Germany Speaks, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup>Hitler, Speeches, vol. 1, p. 384.

statement of June 2, 1935, to the effect that "the Church conflict can no more be settled with the policeman's truncheon than the Jewish question can be settled by smashed windows."<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the first few years, Hitler, while sympathizing with his followers, had a greater awareness of the delicacy of the situation, and sought to restrain their enthusiasm for a while. The increasing persecution of Christianity was accompanied by continual denial that it existed. In January 1935, Bürckel, Hitler's plenipotentiary for the Saar, denied the existence of a Kulturkampf, and with this statement, Hitler agreed. A law of April 1934 forbade members of the Labour Front, in short, nearly every German worker, to be members of any Christian vocational organization. On July 23, 1935, Himmler forbade religious associations to have any share in sports, and there were to be no religious uniforms, flags, or marches. In September, members of the S.S. were forbidden to take leading parts in any religious organizations; but at the same time, Hitler announced that "neither today nor yesterday has the Party entertained the least aggressive intention toward Christianity."<sup>2</sup>

The year 1936 saw a gradual alteration in Nazi tactics; the attempt at disengagement became more obvious. Following the lead of the government, several radio stations, including Hamburg, ceased broadcasting religious functions; eventually all

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Hitler, Speeches, vol. 1, p. 356.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 360.



religious broadcasts were forbidden and were replaced with military music or observation of Nazi festivals. After the sensational Immorality Trials, the announcement of September 1937 that membership in the Christian Church could no longer be regarded as a factor contributing to the maintenance of German life could surprise only the most naive. Financial restrictions were introduced. In June 1937, Frick made it a crime to contribute money to the Confessional Church or to any other institution not approved by Reichsminister Kerrl. The Bavarian government planned reduction of subsidies to the Catholic Church, and on November 30, 1937, Kerrl announced that all state subsidies would gradually be withdrawn. Hitler believed that the churches were materialistic, and so these steps were bound to have effect.

With the obvious failure of the Reich Church idea and with the confidence of his successes in other fields, Hitler abandoned collaboration with the Christians in order to preach more fully the new "faith". In his diary, Rosenberg notes that the Führer admitted that it had been a mistake to try and form a national church.<sup>1</sup> Hitler never publicly announced the intention to destroy Christianity, but his follower Ernst Bergmann wrote;

The National Revolution has only preserved the Christian confessions for reasons of political tactics...In the meantime, our prophets and propagandists have to clear the field of those modern theorists who cherish the foolish ideas that Christianity and nationalism are consistent one with the other.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rosenberg, Politisches Tagebuch, Göttingen, Musterschmidt, 1959, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Kolnai, op.cit., p. 248

By 1939, it was apparent that the public attitude of the Party, had changed from apparent conciliation to blunt hostility. If what the Party said about the Catholic Church were true, they could not be blamed for hostility; the evidence of the Immorality Trials should prove this. Until the war, the propaganda changed little, but the persecution increased.

This then was the Nazis' approach to the churches. If they could not be won immediately by the new state and its "faith", they could be lulled into a sense of security or paralyzed by confusion. With this plan developing in his mind, Hitler used the "German Christians" and the Concordat. This idea was behind the repeated protestations that Christ's teachings did not contradict Hitler's. It was obvious that they did; yet continual repetition of a big lie, as Hitler knew, always has some effect.

### 3. Events of the Conflict

If we consider some of the events of the conflict by confession, differences in Hitler's technique and the general elements of his approach will be clarified as they are seen in action.

In the approach to the Lutherans much is already familiar. The period 1933-1934 was an experiment and involved precautionary measures. The attempt was made to have the Protestant Church work with the movement in "co-ordinating" Germany. In order to have the bishops of the regional Lutheran churches abandon the Confessional Church and accept government control

through the "German Christians", the Nazi leadership had to support the latter faction, a step contrary to the intentions expressed in Mein Kampf, and a step through which the Party became embroiled in sectarian disputes.

After the moderate Friedrich von Bodelschwingh was nominated Reich Bishop in May 1933, Hitler and the "German Christians" were not satisfied. The candidate was not progressive enough. The Nazis wanted Ludwig Müller, a former military chaplain and a "German Christian", who eventually did become Reich Bishop after von Bodelschwingh stepped down. Hitler approved of Müller because he was willing to be led and, if he did not please some, at least did not offend many. After April 17, 1933, Müller acted as Hitler's representative in the Church's self-reorganization: "my representative with full powers to deal with the affairs of the Evangelical Church."<sup>1</sup> When the law for a new church constitution was passed on July 14, 1933, Hitler, knowing that the "German Christians" were prepared for a church election, called one as soon as possible; that is, for July 23. A few days before the Müller faction was elected, Hitler gave a radio address urging the churches to take a stand in the "revolution" and the people to vote for those who viewed Christianity as an integral part of the national renaissance. He described the "German Christians" as the "forces of a living movement", who supported Nazism not in submission but in living affirmation.<sup>2</sup> These elections were meaningless as an indication

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<sup>1</sup>Hitler, Speeches, vol. 1, p. 56

<sup>2</sup>Hitler, Speeches, vol. 1, p. 377

of church opinion. Because of the political tension, no election was held in many churches, and the previous church boards simply resigned and gave way to the new boards, all members of which had previously been approved by the local Nazi leader. The "German Christians" received the support of the Nazi press and political machinery. Needless to say, they received almost three-quarters of the votes as well. This was "positive Christianity" in action.

With the support of the Party, this faction managed to introduce the Führer principle into the Lutheran church. Autocratic powers were given to higher church officials who were, to all intents and purposes, government nominees. It became easier for the Party to intervene in church disputes to put forward its candidates and measures. The first direct interference by the Party in church matters took place in Mecklenburg on April 18, 1933, when a Nazi sympathizer, Walther Bohm, was named State Commissioner for the Evangelical Church there; another direct invasion of the church by the state occurred in June when Bernhard Rust, Prussian Minister of Education, appointed as State Commissioner, August Jäger, also a Nazi, for the Evangelical Church. Müller was finally appointed Reich Bishop on September 27, 1933 and "German Christian" bishops were named for various territorial churches on October 5. Church committees were named by the government to administer Lutheran affairs, and finally on July 16, 1935, Hitler announced the formation of a Reich Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs with far-reaching supervisory powers. All this meant that the Lutheran Church became even more a part of the state than it had been under the Empire.

When it appeared that the Protestant Church had accepted "co-ordination", the Party sought to withdraw. At the National Synod at Wittenberg, on September 27, 1933, Rosenberg, as Party spokesman, stated that the government no longer backed any particular group or denomination. On October 11, Müller was forced to issue a public statement to the effect that no member of the church would be discriminated against if he was not a "German Christian". Perhaps he was trying to pacify the critics within the church; yet it seems probable that he was trying to pacify Hitler, whose personal representative, Hess, had just publicly stated that no National Socialist would be discriminated against if he was a practising Christian! The confusion is typical of the Nazis.

At the same time an attempt was made to moderate the radical tendencies of the Hossenfelder movement<sup>1</sup> within the "German Christians". Just as Hitler abandoned his "revolutionary" Chief of Staff, Ernst Röhm, for the Army generals, so he turned from the radical Hossenfelder to the army chaplain Müller who was more tractable. The opportunity to control the influence of the revolutionary element in the new church came on November 13, 1933, when the "German Christians" demonstrated in the Berlin Sport Palace under Hossenfelder's chairmanship. A layman, Dr. Reinhardt Krause, made sensational demands in his speech. The unity of the "German Christians" was broken over this incident, and the government was able to disentangle itself. This meant

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<sup>1</sup>Joachim Hossenfelder, as described earlier, led one of the radical groups which originally formed the "German Christians" of 1933.

—the decline not merely of the Hossenfelder faction, but also of the more moderate wing of the "German Christians". The Party's demarche had begun earlier; after the announcement of Prussian church elections in the summer, the Nazi sympathizer Jäger was removed and the church officers he had retired were reinstated. Now in the fall, Hitler initiated further steps to reduce the power of his own church faction. On November 30, Frick issued a regulation declaring that the Chancellor had decided that since the current disputes within the Evangelical Church were a purely ecclesiastical affair, no interference would be countenanced and that church officers were not authorized to ask Party members to intervene. Finally Wilhelm Kube, one of the founders of the "German Christians", professed a sharp separation of ecclesiastical and political matters, and declared that differences of opinion in religious questions should not be carried over into politics.<sup>1</sup>

The new "Guiding Principles" of the "German Christians" were published in 1934 but they were much different from those of 1932; the teeth of the radicals were pulled. Separating from Müller's group, Hossenfelder formed a "Faith Movement" which itself disintegrated into harmless "leagues" that vegetated for the remainder of the Third Reich. In a number of directives, 1937-38, on the "latest position of the patriotic-religious groups", one finds that the "NSDAP stresses a more or less strong Distanzierung from the German faith organizations", in order to be freer

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<sup>1</sup>The entire complicated evolution of "German Christian" affairs is lucidly explained in Arthur Cochrane's book, The Church's Confession under Hitler, Philadelphia, Westminster, 1962, pp. 35-40.

to attack the churches.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the obvious development Nazi policy experienced after 1934, hesitation and contradiction, sometimes elevated to a plan of deliberate confusion, marked the Party's attitude to the Lutherans until 1945. As a result of the Sport Palace scandal, the application of the Aryan Paragraph to the Prussian Church was suspended; on January 4, 1934, Müller annulled this order, reimposing the Paragraph. But on April 13, he annulled the latter decree, only to enforce the Paragraph again on November 25. In spite of the fact that Martin Luther was considered a folk hero, celebration of his 1517 protest ceased in 1933; this is only an apparent contradiction, however, because, while Luther's anti-Catholicism was approved, his independence of mind was not. The Nazi leaders gave up the idea of using the Christians<sup>2</sup> and welcomed less Christian attitudes that the Volk might develop, but the enthusiasm of pagan groups had to be restrained; in 1938 it was deemed expedient to restrict antagonizing the Lutherans by controlling such propaganda; the directive did not apply to anti-Catholic material.<sup>3</sup>

However, especially after 1937, the Weltanschauung of the pseudo-church increasingly determined Hitler's outlook. To pray for peace rather than for the victory of the national cause was treason, and therefore because of the intercession service they used during the Munich crisis, when they confessed

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Neuhäusler, op. cit., p. 376.

<sup>2</sup>See the decree of February 15, 1937, in which Hitler gives up the Reich Church idea. Hofer, op. cit., p. 146

<sup>3</sup>Neuhäusler, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 361.

the "sins of our people", some pastors had their salaries stopped or lost their positions on charges of disloyalty. Here we see the direct effect of Hitler's faith on Nazi policy, for it was a cardinal point in the Weltanschauung, one of the few points Hitler seriously considered, that power is a virtue, and those who possess it, cannot sin.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, because they were still identified in the minds of many Protestants with "positive Christianity", the Nazi approach to the Lutheran Church was largely successful, at least insofar as these Christians never challenged Nazi authority in the "outward" world.

A glance at the approach to the Catholic Church is also fruitful. The Nazis' surprise at the willingness of the Catholics to co-operate in 1933 explains their confident haste to break the terms of the Concordat. At the same time, they considered the signature as part of continuing Catholic strategy to influence German politics from Rome, and requiring firm, equally cynical, action on their part. Nazi behaviour was rooted both in caution and in sheer enjoyment of their power. Without any blunt renunciation, Hitler showed what he thought of the Concordat.

For one thing the Nazi leaders confused the definition of areas devoted solely to politics and to religious life and made the legal position of Catholic groups vague. On August 26, 1934, for example, the Catholic weekly, "Young Front", was banned for eight weeks; less than a month later, the ban was

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<sup>1</sup>On racial sin, see Rosenberg, Mythus, p. 71.



lifted, only to be enforced again on March 6, 1935. This is typical of Nazi procedure until 1936, after which Hitler became less noncommittal and restrictions increased as his self-confidence grew. In February of that year direct action was taken against the Catholic Young Men's Association in the Rhineland on charges of co-operation with the Communists; while the Vatican and the Archbishop of Cologne protested, Hitler replied that he could not intervene as the cases were in the hands of the people's prosecutor.<sup>1</sup> He allowed greater freedom, too, for anti-Catholic pamphlets to circulate; they bore titles such as Der Materialismus des Christentum, or Vatikan und Kreml.<sup>2</sup> Steps were taken to confine Catholic processions and pilgrimages onto side streets where they would be both less noticeable and less impressive. They could also be declared a hindrance to traffic.<sup>3</sup> In 1936, the Reich War Ministry forbade participation of officers and soldiers in the formation of Corpus Christi processions or in lining the roads with troops at such times; these celebrations would therefore become easier to disturb. These accusations and decrees were accompanied by seizure of Catholic buildings, such as schools and monasteries, the inhabitants of which were evicted.

The propaganda campaign of the 1935 Currency Trials and the 1936 Immorality Trials masked their ultimate results. The general public did not know that courts of appeal often

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<sup>1</sup>Hitler, Speeches, vol. 1, p. 363.

<sup>2</sup>See Hofer, op. cit., p. 162, for a list of further pamphlets, all designed to show how the Catholics were in league with un-German powers.

<sup>3</sup>See Neuhäusler, op. cit., p. 71. The directions for these measures specifically noted that the Party's marches and parades were exceptions.

greatly reduced the sentences of lower courts; whereas first judgments were advertised in large type in the press, second judgments were announced in a corner, or not at all. But this direct attack on the body of Christianity, this attempt to create "no martyrs, just criminals", had ultimately little success. The Trials were to be a justification of all the Nazis claimed about the corruption harboured by Catholicism. A justification it may have been, and restrictions appropriately followed, but the result of the Trials was largely to convince only those who already were anti-Catholic. The average Catholic was prepared to admit that some clergymen were "guilty" but he still had faith in the character of his own priest.

#### 4. Problems

One factor which emerges clearly from the Party's approach to each of the confessions is the ultimate moderation of this approach. Even with respect to the Catholic Church, in spite of Hitler's personal hostility, in spite of restrictive laws, and in spite of violent propoganda, no decisive step was taken which would force the Christian German to abandon his old faith and adopt the new national "faith". Why was this step not taken?

"Positive Christianity" itself was one reason. In October 1933, Hess decreed that Nazis need not belong to any religious group; three years later, in May 1936, he felt obliged to actually forbid Nazis in the upper hierarchy from holding offices in religious organizations. That this was necessary is indicative of the Nazi problem: to many there seemed nothing

anomalous in being both actively Christian and actively Nazi.

Increased persecution itself, while necessary, involved new problems. Hitler described his intentions; if the Catholic Church would not accommodate itself to him, he would unleash upon it a propaganda that would exceed her powers of hearing and sight.<sup>1</sup> This is what he did, but he was ever aware of the difficulty of such a campaign. The obvious and embarrassing fact of church persecution was camouflaged during the Olympic Games of 1936. Rosenberg, in Nürnberg, 1938, revealed one of the reasons why the state never openly declared war on the churches; "the international position of the Catholic Church calls for very careful tactics on our part...Every attack upon the Church affects international relations and can intensify difficulties of a position which is already serious enough."<sup>2</sup> Goebbels was also aware of the problem; in March 1943 he wrote in his diary that Hitler supported his ideas of moderation during the war. "We must proceed here very smoothly and not get wedded to doctrinaire ideas."<sup>3</sup> On noting that the Russians had restored a certain freedom of religion, he declared, "that's very sharp and clever tactics. It would be a good thing if we were also somewhat more elastic in these matters."<sup>4</sup>

The Nazi leaders were reluctant to moderate their approach to Catholicism but they were more elastic in their treatment of the Lutherans. In 1938, for example, Martin Niemöller was sentenced to seven months' fortress detention and a

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<sup>1</sup>Hitler, Speeches, vol. 1, p. 388.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Micklem, National Socialism and Christianity, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph Goebbels, Diaries, ed. trans. Louis B. Lochner, New York, Doubleday, 1948, p. 285.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 345.

fine of two thousand marks. This unusual verdict was "honourable" and remarkably light considering the seriousness of his crime in Hitler's eyes. This and the fact that the term of detention plus one quarter of the fine were remitted seems to indicate that the Nazis correctly estimated the number of his adherents, knew as well that most Lutherans were not as bold as the Confessionals, and guessed that Niemöller's patriotism would eventually triumph over his sense of injustice. It may also have been a form of bribery! But when later sentenced to Sachsenhausen concentration camp, Niemöller was Hitler's "personal prisoner" and his presence there was kept a close secret, evidence of the Nazis' sense of embarrassment; particularly when the Lutherans were such a useful support for the Party, it was unwise to let the fact of such a well-known man's imprisonment become national, or international, knowledge.

The method of calling up clergymen for service after 1939 and thus separating them from their flocks created another problem. Christian influence in the armed forces was, if not actually increased, at least intensified where it did exist, a fact which, while not entirely undesirable if thereby the fighting elan of the men was increased, tended to undo the previous work of the movement among the young. Goebbels wrote that the young army chaplains were more dangerous than the old cardinals at home, "for they rate high with the people".<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the chaplains were protected by the shield of military privilege from Party ideological interference and the Nazis

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Goebbels, Diaries, ed. trans. Louis B. Lochner, New York, Doubleday, 1948, p. 374.

feared that their work would be turned to "political goals";<sup>1</sup> they worried, too, about the number of German soldiers who visited the Vatican.<sup>2</sup> This difficult anomaly was part of the problem of how to deal with the churches when party members were still on paper at least Christian and when the Party had only incompletely achieved its breach with Christianity. The Nazis had always to be careful to avoid any association of godlessness with their movement, because the average German associated this with anarchy and Bolshevism. During the war, when the army became all-important for the preservation of Nazi gains, this problem became more complex.<sup>3</sup>

However practical the Nazi leaders were in seeking their goals and however carefully they preserved them, they acted sometimes with an irrationality derived from their--particularly Hitler's-- faith in the power of the movement. Micklem claims that the encyclical Mit brennender Sorge was a "severe blow" to the Party;<sup>4</sup> it is also true that Bishop von Galen's sermons at Münster in July and August 1941 against euthanasia were followed by a cessation of the program as well as by no punishment

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<sup>1</sup>From a 1939 report by Heydrich on the church situation to Reichsminister Dr. Lammers. Quoted in Poliakov and Wulf, op. cit., p. 197.

<sup>2</sup>Goebbels, op. cit., p. 246.

<sup>3</sup>Josef Perau's diary, Priester im Heere Hitlers, (Essen, Ludgerus, 1963) offers an interesting, if incomplete, view of the position of the Catholic priest in Hitler's army, particularly in his relation to "German Christian" pastors and more pagan soldiers. See pp. 31, 61, and 85-86. In the same connection, the Vierteljahresheft für Zeitgeschichte (1957, pp. 297-299) gives an exchange of letters between two officers; one complains that the Christmas edition of the soldiers' magazine has no reference to the traditional celebration, and notes that many will be disappointed.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Micklem, National Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church, p. 173.

of the offending clergyman. Can it be assumed that this indicates the Nazi fear of Catholic strength?

Granted that the Gestapo did seize copies of the encyclical, close the presses involved, and dispossess the owners, this does not necessarily indicate that Hitler suffered a severe blow or that he greatly feared the influence of the voice from Rome. A more rational man might have, but he did not, and events showed he was correct. Two years later, most of the Catholic population enthusiastically supported the state, confused perhaps, but undisturbed by the fact that the Pope disapproved of the Nazi Weltanschauung. Indeed, the encyclical did more than the Immorality Trials to convince "unbelievers" that the Catholic Church was still bent on interfering in German life. In 1933, the state might have been more circumspect, but, after 1936, Hitler was confident, and with justification, because while a series of protest letters were exchanged, the Holy See did not break off diplomatic relations with Germany. He had definitely won a point. He had proved that international Catholicism did not understand and would not tolerate National Socialism, but would seek to interfere with German domestic affairs. Even more important, he had shown that the Church was still unwilling to take a really vigorous stand against Nazism, for fear it would lose what foothold it had among the German population. Catholic behaviour thus again corroborated what the Nazis believed about it. The Christians in Rome were a group of power-hungry realists who knew that, if they sought influence in Germany, to break off relations would be unwise.

In the year of the assault on Russia, it was undoubtedly wise, particularly for the sake of national unity, to place

ultimate goals after immediate tactics. The destruction of Bolshevism was more important than euthanasia. The mentally ill were not plotting the downfall of Aryan Germany, as were the Jewish Marxists. But a short year later, when it seemed that victory was certain, Hitler, with confident, enthusiastic fanaticism, launched the Final Solution, a step he apparently considered fundamental to the existence of the Third Reich. This is reminiscent of the quite irrational arrest of the pastors in 1938 who sought forgiveness for the sins of Germany.

The war intervened in the Führer's plans so that it is still debatable if his Kirchenpolitik would have enjoyed ultimate success. At any rate, by 1939, the Nazis were still too involved with both churches. The result was that the concept of "positive Christianity", although abandoned by the Party, lived on in the people, who still believed they could be inwardly Christian and outwardly Nazi. Of Baden-Alsace in 1943, a Nazi leader wrote that,

The weltanschauliche situation in this area is in the truest sense of the word "black"...The arrangements for the Christmas celebrations have shown how weak the weltanschauliche conviction and certainty is both among political leaders and those actually in power.

The events of 1939 and after meant that the survival of Germany demanded internal unity. No Ausrottung ("tearing out") would aid the war effort. Moreover, the war showed that Christianity was far from dead and drastic action would be necessary to

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Günther Weisenborn, Der lautlose Aufstand, Bericht über die Widerstandsbewegung des deutschen Volkes. 1933-1945, Hamburg, Rowohlt, 1962, p. 54.

suppress it. While many fought for the greater glory of the National Socialist Truth, others fought because it was their duty as interpreted by their church to do so.



## CHAPTER 5

## Education and Control of the Youth

## 1. Introduction

The most acute and unresolved tension between Christians and Nazis arose over the disputed control of youth through formal education and leisure time organizations. In this particular aspect of the church-state conflict, National Socialism as a substitute faith, demanding the bodies and souls of its adherents, showed its true colours. The Party hoped to consolidate and to strengthen its control over Germany by securing the allegiance of the young; if it could not be sure of an enthusiastic generation of Nazis in forty years, its present triumph was futile. Chapter one described the raw material the Nazis had at their disposal and chapter three showed how they built the Hitler youth out of this material. This chapter describes how the Party met the Christian problem in this field.

In a still basically Christian country, the Nazi leaders had to adapt their methods to their material. Fabrication of the religious trappings was described in chapter three. In the Nazi "co-ordination" of youth, the tendency to complete developments which had begun in the Weimar period is

again noticeable, as well as the appeal to the "finer", more traditional qualities of Deutschtum and to the enthusiasm, energy, and spiritual pliability of youth. Because every young German had to internalize the Weltanschauung, it had to be made as palatable as possible without damaging the ends of the movement. To justify their attempt to penetrate and to the control the public schools, the universities, and the nation's youth groups, the Nazi leaders began by arguing, with some justification, that they represented the revolution of youth against age, and appeared to stand for regenerative idealism. In short, they used the willing faith and vague idealism of young people, although, in Hannah Arendt's words, their aim was not to "instill convictions, but to destroy the capacity to form any."<sup>1</sup>

The national educational system was not an integral part of the Nazi hierarchy, but it was as important as the Hitler Youth. "One needs the children from the great masses of the Nation", wrote Hitler, adding that "they alone are determined and tough enough to fight this struggle to the bloody end"; they alone are truly impressionable.<sup>2</sup> "The first period of childhood is most readily susceptible to the possibility of [education], while with the mounting years the power of resistance increases."<sup>3</sup> No group of Germans was more deeply affected by the events after 1933 than the children. They were the "best" Nazis. A large part of the regime's power, propaganda, and discipline was directed to converting German youth. German adults might still retain some private interests or knowledge of the outer world,

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<sup>1</sup>Arendt, op. cit., p. 468.

<sup>2</sup>Indeed, the bloody end was often fought by children in the Volkssturm troops of late 1944 and early 1945.

<sup>3</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, pp. 136 and 171.

but the young could have few individual interests, knowing little of another life with other outlooks. The Nazis, moreover, sought to limit parental influence as much as possible. The ideal was that every young person should become a member of the all-encompassing "state-church" devoted to the perpetuation of the sacred value system. This process of indoctrination was given out as control or care in the same sense that the Christian Church had been concerned with the whole life of men, who thus gained a feeling of freedom from trusting in the authority and judgement of the Church in all important departments of life. In this way, the Nazi leadership, wittingly or not, met that need of many Europeans, who, having broken with the family of the Church felt not so much free as desolate.

The Führer's ideas determined the nature of many of the reforms. Aware of the weakness of German education before the first World War, Hitler condemned academic one-sidedness which tended to develop pure knowledge, without attention to ability. In German education, he wrote, not enough emphasis was laid on the development of the character of the pupil, who emerged as a "walking encyclopedia".<sup>1</sup> In this way, the Nazi concept of education had something in common with the progressive movements of the 'twenties. Nevertheless, later Hitlerian education was equally guilty of one-sidedness, but with intention. "I don't believe there's any sense", said Hitler, "in teaching men anything in a general way, beyond what they need to know."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 237

<sup>2</sup>Hitler, Secret Conversations, p. 340.

More precisely, he suggested that eventually an end would be put to universal education.<sup>1</sup> It was not necessary for each German to obtain "a full insight and precise knowledge of the ultimate ideas and thought processes of the leaders of the movement."

What is necessary is that some few really great ideas be made clear to him and that the essential fundamental ideas be burned inextinguishably into him so that he was entirely permeated by the necessity of the victory of the movement and its doctrines.<sup>2</sup>

While the training of the new elite was to develop an amoral class of power-leaders, the education of the masses was to produce a populace of unquestioning sheep, awed by the pseudo-religious aura surrounding the state, willing to be led to whatever slaughterhouse Hitler should choose. These are the conclusions that his own words inevitably produce; they are supported by what the Party did to the educational system of Germany.

The school system the Nazis inherited was not antithetical to their aims and they made use of ideas developed before their time. In eighteenth century Prussia, where education was regarded as a branch of statecraft, the higher bureaucracy viewed the citizenry as instruments for the achievement of political aims. During the Imperial period, the government tried to control teachers in regard to their national and political ideas. They were observed to see that they expressed only loyal views in their teaching. It was possible, through regular observation and reporting, to keep out of the teaching profession those inimical to the state, such as teachers with socialist

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Rauschnig, Hitler Speaks, p. 51

<sup>2</sup>Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 456

leanings. At the same time, the population were kept ignorant of political and administrative problems. Inasmuch as the Nazis continued these traditions, their "revolution" was mild.

The Republic tried to supplant monarchical loyalty by giving more civic training and by placing more stress upon the unity of all Germans, their common cultural achievements, and their faith in the future. Textbooks stressed national unity and freedom, and pointed out the injustices of the Versailles Treaty. There seems to have been no hesitation in Roman Catholic schools to use books as militaristic as those in Lutheran schools.<sup>1</sup> In Prussia, some schools observed the anniversary of the signing of the Versailles Treaty as a day of mourning. The three school holidays at Christmas, Whitsuntide, and Easter served as occasions to describe their specifically German character. While the Weimar educational system was less rigid and dry, academically speaking, the student graduated convinced of Germany's cultural supremacy over all other nations. What with the emphasis on German national consciousness in the press, on the radio, in local museums, in the study of Heimatkunde (local lore), as well as the youth movements' enthusiasm for German landscapes, young people were ready to embrace a radical nationalism, presented in terms of soul, sacrifice, and soil.

The republic aided the Nazis' efforts to "co-ordinate" the schools by not removing older teachers who had been raised to admire governmental authority. On the other hand, many of the younger teachers who had a part in the youth movement of pre-war

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<sup>1</sup> R.H. Samuel and R. Hinton Thomas, Education and Society in Modern Germany, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949, p. 75.

days were allowed to lose themselves in progressivism and, while some did good work, others only added to the anarchy of values in Germany during the 'twenties; the Nazis further developed the idea of organic and self-unfolding individualism, which had concerned some progressive school reformers, and fused it with the concept of self-determining nationhood. The older teachers often welcomed the authoritarian Nazi "revolution", and the former progressivists greeted the Nazis as a remarkable example of what they had always advocated. Seen in this light, the Nazi reforms of education represent not simply a further development of the new regime, but also a natural conclusion in the form of control and direction of trends of the Imperial and Weimar epochs.

## 2. The Universities

By 1914, the university professors had earned the title, "the intellectual bodyguard of the Hohenzollerns";<sup>1</sup> of the universities in the Weimar period, one critic wrote that "too many average minds...made up for their lack of brilliance by an exaggerated attention to detail or by a superficial brilliance which barely hid their lack of depth."<sup>2</sup> "Lack of depth" certainly continued to characterize the universities under the Nazis, but this was as much Nazi policy as it was a product of the situation of the 'twenties. The elite could no more allow objective criticism of their doctrine than the medieval church could allow the circulation of Albigensian tracts. Fortunately,

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel, op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> Walter M. Kotschnig, Slaves Need No Leaders, London, Oxford, 1943, p. 24.

there were few neo-Albigensians.

The morale of the educated class had deteriorated before 1933. The republic tried to promote higher education of proletarian children, but did not provide types of secondary schools which might have given an advanced education to the masses, without leading to the universities and learned professions. Simultaneously, the universities and profession became crowded and learning lead to economic misery, which in turn caused a decline in the prestige of intellectual work. Many graduates lost their faith in a future, abandoned the rationality one expects from the educated, and became part of the spearhead of the Nazi movement. Some of them were the first and remained the most ardent Nazi public school teachers and professors.

During the 'twenties, university students were ultra-nationalistic and highly critical of the less nationalistic state.<sup>1</sup> At the fourteenth German Student Conference in 1931, the National Socialist League of Students was enabled to obtain leadership of the German Student Union. In t he Burschenschaftlic he Blätter, March 6, 1933, appeared this declaration: "That which we have desired and sought for years, that for which we have worked year in and year out in the Burschenschaft spirit is at last reality."<sup>2</sup> The Nazi students' enthusiasm, alarming to both Nazis and non-Nazis, consisted, in the difficult period of spring and summer 1933, of slandering professors, attacking Jewish and Socialist students, and introducing into the univer-

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<sup>1</sup> See the Twelve Statements of the Student Union, which appeared in April 1933 and which are anti-Semitic and Nazi-oriented. Poliakov and Wulf, op. cit., pp. 117-118.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Pross, op. cit., p. 74.

sities the brown shirt, proclamations, a martial atmosphere, lecture hall disturbances, and many extra-curricular political duties for students. The book-burnings of 1933 are an example of this fanaticism.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the students' enthusiastic freedom was short-lived. The Student Union, which received official recognition on May 18, 1933, became immersed in the crushing system of nation-wide political organizations by which the Nazi elite consolidated its power. Youthful energy had to be controlled and directed. At this stage, the leading Nazis wanted to tread softly on national sensibilities; moreover, some of the student activity was not in complete accord with the Weltanschauung. Eventually, the ambitions of the Nazi students were viewed with suspicion by Rust, the Education Minister, who effectively stole their thunder, threatening them with severe punishment if they acted independently in ideological matters. But until at least 1937, some students continued to express support for the more radical social aspects of the Nazi program and persisted in a critical attitude to those who did not observe their standards.

At the same time, the "co-ordination" of the non-Nazi students proceeded apace. The older aristocratic and martial corps were officially dissolved in October, 1935, and caps, jackets, and banners were forbidden. Many of the old clubs were still active in 1936, in which year came an edict from the Federal Leader of the Student Union forbidding double membership in a

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<sup>1</sup>Once again, tradition disguised the radicalism of this step; in 1817, members of the Burschenschaften met on the Wartburg and burned un-German books.



student corporation and any of the Nazi organizations. Eventually by 1942, more than ninety per cent of the students were organized in Nazi student associations.<sup>1</sup>

The universities themselves lost any independence that might have distinguished them from purely governmental institutions. Rectors were no longer chosen by faculty members, but selected and appointed by the Ministry of Education. Financial responsibility of the states to the universities remained in principle untouched, but the creation of the Education Ministry in May 1934 with its full supervisory authority involved centralized control of finances. The academic life could not offer much to the training of the "violently active" elite or to the education of the Volk; accordingly, a law of April 1933 limited enrollments in the universities to 15,000 a year, and set a quota of ten per cent for women.<sup>2</sup> Total enrollments dropped sharply. Compared to 22,000 who were admitted in 1931, only 10,000 sought admission in 1934,<sup>3</sup> and, as was often the case with their radical measures, the Nazis had to remove the restriction in February 1935. Nevertheless, enrollment continued to drop, from 97,576 in 1932 to 51,527 in 1938; and enrollment of women dropped in the same period from 18,578 to 6,346. In general, student numbers were reduced by thirty per cent.<sup>4</sup> Few other figures indicate so

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<sup>1</sup>Neumann, op. cit., p. 399.

<sup>2</sup>There were economic as well as ideological reasons for this restriction; by 1933, the number of students graduated from institutions of higher learning was nearly double the number the economy could absorb in positions for which the students had prepared. This created the embittered "academic proletariat". See Frederic Lilge, The Abuse of Learning, New York, Macmillan, 1948, pp. 145-146.

<sup>3</sup>Samuel, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>4</sup>See E.Y. Hartshorne, German Universities and National

well the Nazi effort to limit the number of people who could approach the Weltanschauung critically.

These actions, however, did not assure that those students who remained accepted the Myth. Consequently, students to be admitted to university had to spend a season in a labour camp, win the approval of the local youth leaders, and receive the stamp "politically reliable". While more than two thousand professors were dismissed, those who remained and new applicants also, often had to attend a labour camp. Ultimately, the government was forced to take measures to train university personnel, not merely to obtain the right sort of teachers, but to fill the ranks of a profession which threatened to disappear. After September 1938 it became possible for those without the Abitur between ages twenty-five and forty to enter university by taking a special examination designed to discover unrevealed talent, while those who passed a "maturity" examination from a technical school could be admitted to university in special subjects. The secondary school course was shortened from nine to eight years and additional scholarships were introduced, but by 1939 there was no increase in students enrolled.

Lest all the professors be considered martyrs, we should note that there was little criticism on the part of university teachers, and their "co-ordination" was aided by their own confusion. Some of them felt with Martin Heidegger that one's

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Socialism, London, Allen and Unwin, 1937, pp. 72-74. He also suggests that the fall in the birth rate eighteen years before is also responsible for the decline in enrollment.

first loyalty should be to the people's community, or with Ludwig Marcuse that Nazism embodied the best of German idealism.<sup>1</sup> Nor did the professors stop at passive self-justification; when Hitler became Chancellor, the Technical University of Stuttgart offered him an honorary degree, which he refused.

If the new "faith" was to be accepted by a new class of intellectuals, subjects taught in the universities had to be "co-ordinated". Science became more or less the political theology of the secular theocracy, and philosophy once more an ancilla theologicae, no longer required for the doctoral examination. At the university of Berlin, for example, courses were given in the "Science of Religion", which showed the evil influence of religion and how faith of a nation in its leader was the best possible religion. An institute for religious science opened at Halle in order to study "German piety". Theology itself declined in popularity even before the theological schools began to be closed; for example, there were, in 1932, 7085 evangelical theological students, while in 1935, there were 4113.<sup>2</sup> Sociological research and speculation, on the other hand, were discouraged; the new state feared another Galileo. It is significant that the universities in occupied Czechoslovakia and Poland were to be closed forever.

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<sup>1</sup>For Heidegger's "Self-assertion of the German University", and the "Confession of German University and Technical School Professors to Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist State", see Pross, op. cit., pp. 97 and 98-101.

<sup>2</sup>Herman, op. cit., p. 151. For a review of decrees against theology students, see Dokumente zum Abwehrkampf der deutschen evangelischen Pfarrerschaft, ed. Fritz Klingler, Nürnberg, Mendelssohn, 1946, pp. 35-55.

### 3. Public Schools

The control of Christianity in schools was carried out usually locally and always gradually; that is, not by published government laws, but by municipal authorities. Micklem writes that "the task is approached piecemeal, lest there be too general indignation at any one time."<sup>1</sup> The rejection of standard religious education and the "co-ordination" of all school subjects evolved slowly and was never completely achieved. The Ministry of Education carefully refrained from issuing a single order formally abolishing denominational education.

The Reich Ministry of Education, embraced the Nazi Pupils' League, formed in 1928, and their Teachers' Union, formed in 1929. New training colleges were built in rural districts, where the prospective teachers could assimilate the glory of German scenery, soil, and peasant life. But, generally speaking, with the Nazi emphasis on non-intellectual pursuits, the number of schools, teachers, and students, declined between 1931 and 1940.<sup>2</sup>

The Nazi approach, as elsewhere, was characterized by ambiguity, hypocrisy, and deception. Often local clergymen remained ex officio members of school boards, and it was not until January 1941 that the Ministry of Education forbade priests to act in this capacity. Under the pretext of war conditions, the remainder of the denominational schools were closed in 1940. Hitler suggested that typewriting lessons be given instead of religious instruction

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<sup>1</sup>Micklem, National Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup>Neumann, Behemoth, p.379. See also Samuel, op. cit., pp. 38 and 50 for further relevant figures.

and that a corps of teachers for advanced primary education be formed from the ranks of re-enlisted soldiers,<sup>1</sup> but the application of such ideas remained largely the province of the Hitler Youth. Their activities often filled the weekends and clashed successfully with Sunday School lessons.<sup>2</sup> In the public day schools as well, the number of hours devoted to religious instruction was reduced; the former nineteen hours a week allotted in secondary schools were reduced to twelve over a period of eight instead of nine years.<sup>3</sup> Religious instruction was sometimes transferred to the last from the first period of the day, changing place with physical education; the different status of religions was thus stressed, and it could also be omitted on occasion. Religious instruction eventually ceased in the vocational schools. By 1937, most of the priests had been removed as religious teachers in public schools. In 1940, a decree denied secondary school pupils over the age of fourteen religious instruction; the same occurred in 1941 for intermediate school pupils. These examples indicate the Nazi intentions. Yet the syllabus was never formally altered by the Ministry of Education. The process was rather one of slow suffocation, and proceeded haphazardly on a local level.

Religion was still taught in the schools not merely as a tactical concession to the Church, but also in order to

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<sup>1</sup>Hitler, Secret Conversations, pp. 98 and 406.

<sup>2</sup>Stewart Herman describes the Sunday morning parades of the Hitler Youth; op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Neuhäusler, op. cit., p. 160. While 36 hours were devoted a week to physical education in 1925 in the secondary schools, 40 were allotted in 1940; for elementary schools, the figures are; 1928, 16 hours; 1939, 33. See also Samuel, op. cit., pp. 105, 108, and 160.

enlist simple faith in the service of the Cause. Indeed, the Pope indicated his awareness of this tactic in the 1937 encyclical, when he criticised "religious lessons maintained for the sake of appearances, controlled by unauthorized men, within the frame of an educational system which systematically works against religion."<sup>1</sup> In 1940 Martin Bormann advised Rosenberg that for the time being, Christian moral teaching, including the Ten Commandments, was to remain in the curriculum. A letter from Hess to Göring also has a similar theme.<sup>2</sup> The entire Nazi approach to Christian teaching in the schools was ruled by this pragmatism. The children were to believe in the Führer's divine purity. Many Catholic classes opened with the formula, "Heil Hitler! Blessed be Jesus Christ in all Eternity. Amen"; and closed with "Blessed be Jesus Christ in all Eternity. Amen. Heil Hitler!"<sup>3</sup> It was to be stressed to the children that Hitler was pious and reverent. A suggested question for the teacher to give students was "who, children, is it in these days who reminds us most of Jesus--through his love of humble people and his readiness for self-sacrifice?"<sup>4</sup> Edicts addressed to teachers of religion stressed that both "faiths" drew their strength from God. Teachers should do away with differences of opinion and stress the German experience of God. The Old Testament, as might be expected, was to be carefully expurgated; only those portions of it which treated of biological questions or

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Fremantle, op. cit., p. 254.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Poliakov and Wulf, op. cit., pp. 202-204, and pp. 206-207.

<sup>3</sup>Mann, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

were necessary for understanding of the New Testament were to be used. A belief in the "deeper meaning of war", creating a "uniform desire for war and victory as an indispensable condition of national independence" was considered an essential part of this training.<sup>1</sup> After 1936, when co-existence ceased to be useful for the Party leaders, the connection between "faiths" remained, and under growing persecution confused Christians and Nazis alike.

The Nazis managed to influence the teaching of secular subjects as well. In the study of history, for example, the conversion of the early Germans to Christianity was not to be treated "negatively". Frick wrote that "the adoption of Christianity appear(s) as a display of Teutonic influence over the whole area of medieval culture".<sup>2</sup> The message of Christ should appeal to Germans as an epic of heroism. Other stories of heroic self-sacrifice were taught as models of behaviour. The ancient Greeks were to be treated as the closest brothers of the Germanic race; how they succumbed when the population declined and were outnumbered by inferior and democratic peoples was important.

Private schools, other than state- or party-sponsored ones, were allowed only for those who needed special attention because of health or family conditions. Permission to operate these schools was granted only on the tested basis of political reliability of the headmaster and owners of the schools. Even then they were under the careful supervision of the state, for in its

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<sup>1</sup>Kneller, op. cit., p. 177.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Kolnai, op. cit., 262.

very essence, National Socialism could not acknowledge any right to attend or support autonomous private schools, instead of the people's public schools. Needless to say, courses of study and appointment of teachers for these schools had to be in strict accord with the principles laid down for public schools.

On September 29, 1936, the National Socialist Teachers' Union decreed that members could not belong to denominational organizations. Pressed to sever their formal ties with the Church, the number of teachers declaring themselves "believers in God" increased. It is hard to established how many of these actually were "neo-pagan", for while in 1940 13,143 out of 171,000 teachers so declared themselves, and while in 1937 ninety-seven per cent of all teachers belonged to the Nazi Teachers' Union, these figures do not show how many acted out of prudence rather than conviction.<sup>1</sup> More significant, perhaps, is the fact that in 1936 and 1937, 160,000 party functionaries came from the teaching profession, primarily from elementary schools.<sup>2</sup> The sympathy of sections of the pedagogical profession was a great advantage to the Party.

In spite of the implied intention of official decrees and in spite of Hitler's plans, it was a pragmatic estimate of the needs of the day that often played a decisive role in German education during the Third Reich. By and large, the vocational, elementary, and intermediate schools suffered least from the Party "co-ordination", because Hitler as well as the army realized

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<sup>1</sup>As over against 376 out of 185,000 in 1936. Samuel, op. cit., p. 105.

<sup>2</sup>Neumann, op. cit., p. 105.



that these schools had to be kept intact in order to furnish the skilled craftsmen and workers needed in industry and defence: the same situation that prevailed in the universities. When it came to driving a tank, a Catholic was often better qualified than a good Nazi. Fortunately for Hitler, the Catholics, in spite of the assaults made on their faith, were usually willing to drive tanks for the Party.

#### 4. Hitler Youth versus Christian Youth

Before considering the Hitler Youth, it would be well to describe the condition of family life in the Third Reich, which the Nazi leadership claimed, like the Christian church, to preserve and foster. A verdict of a Silesian court contained the following significant statement; "law, in the service of racial and national interests, confides the care of children only under certain circumstances to the parents. Namely, if the children are brought up as the nation and the state decree."<sup>1</sup> On October 9, 1935, Willy Becker, a Party official, expressed the new ideal succinctly; he said that parents who keep their children out of the Hitler Youth "commit a crime against the German people and its future; they do not deserve the name of father and mother."<sup>2</sup> In short, the child belonged to Hitler before it belonged to its parents. Nazi-trained teachers ran creches for infants and kindergartens for pre-school children. Although

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Mann, op. cit., p. 150.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Micklem, op. cit., p. 124. As early as 1934, the Nazi Youth Leader had to refute the claim that the HJ deprived children of a family life; von Schirach claimed that the Hitler Youth gave some children a family for the first time. Die Hitlerjugend, p. 104.

attendance was optional, parents had to sign a paper declaring that their children were under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Party during the time they were in the nurseries. In 1939, the government introduced a new type of school, the Hauptschule, to which only selected pupils were to be admitted; their attendance was to be obligatory, but if their parents objected, they could register a formal protest--at such a high level that all but the boldest parents were discouraged. The parents' councils introduced into Prussia and some other states in 1919 were abolished in 1934 and councils were introduced by the Nazis that were merely advisory, preserving the appearance of the former arrangement, but not interfering with the headmaster's position as Leader. Here is the best example of the Nazi tendency to destroy that family cohesion so dear to the Christian Bürger which they claimed to preserve.<sup>1</sup>

While unity within German families would have been an advantage to the cause, the movement was largely what the Nazis acknowledged it to be--a "revolution of the young". But whatever their success with the children, the Nazis were never able to convince their parents that they should sever their Christian ties. Although they implied as much, they never openly urged it, which, for the success of their plans, they would have to do eventually. Consequently, many a German saw nothing unusual in supporting the Nazi state and its Weltanschauung and in being a Christian. His children, however, spent so much of their time

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<sup>1</sup>"Parents complain that they never see their children any more, " wrote a correspondent to the Spectator in 1934. See "Schule oder Verein", Spectator, vol. 152, June 29, 1934, p. 994.

with Nazi teachers and trainers, that they were becoming more Nazi than Christian. The tension created between generations meant that while some sought all the more desperately the "family" protection of the Hitler Youth, many young people were faced at home with a less than positive attitude toward what they were supposed to die for. Once again, it is unfortunately difficult to know what the long-term effects of this problem would have been, because the war reunited parents and children in the common effort of saving Germany itself.

The Hitler Youth was part of the pseudo-ecclesiastical hierarchy of Nazism; as such it inevitably clashed with the hierarchy of Christianity. Baldur von Schirach, the national youth leader, describes best in his book Die Hitlerjugend, the aims and nature of the organization. What might be called an "educational totality" was sought, on the principle of "either completely or not at all."<sup>1</sup> Thus von Schirach declared war on the other German youth organizations, Christian and political;

The Hitler Youth organization declares itself the one and only representative of German youth. That is its claim to totality. As the NSDAP is the only political party of Germany, so the HJ is the only German youth organization.<sup>2</sup>

Its members were Hitlerjungen and Hitlermädels, devoted entirely to the Leader.

The "co-ordination" began formally in December 1933, with an act of Reich Bishop Müller, supported by Göring, entailing

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<sup>1</sup>Baldur von Schirach, Die Hitlerjugend. Idee und Gestalt, Berlin, Verlag und Vertriebsanstalt, 1934, pp. 130 and 35.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

the destruction of the independent Protestant youth movement, consisting of 800,000 young people.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, in the ostensible spirit of compromise of the years before 1936, von Schirach wrote that the Hitler Youth would guarantee its Evangelical members one night a week for their religious activities.<sup>2</sup> After December 1933, there followed independent action in the various states, which according to the usual pattern, was more radical than that in Berlin. The methods are familiar. Often the local Nazi leaders resorted to the technique of imposing a regulation, moderating or rescinding it for a short time, and then renewing it later in a more rigorous form. For example, in the summer of 1933, the Catholic Youth Associations of Münster were forbidden to wear uniforms; on September 1, 1933, the order was rescinded; in June 1934, it was re-enacted in a more severe form. In May 1934, the Local Nazis of Schweinfurt banned the uniforms, badges, and public appearances of the Catholic youth organization; Swabia followed suit, although the local Concordat of the previous February had guaranteed these things to the Catholics. The green shirts of the Young Catholics were also gradually forbidden all over Bavaria; as the Hitler Youth were given to tearing them off their wearers, prohibition became necessary "in the interests of order".<sup>3</sup> In July 1935, came the decree forbidding all church youth groups completely from wearing uniforms or from conducting marches, hikes, or camping excursions, carrying flags, and conducting military or sporting exercises through

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<sup>1</sup>Arno Klönne, Hitlerjugend: die Jugend und Ihre Organisation im Dritten Reich, Hannover, Norddeutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1955, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Schirach, op. cit., p. 39; but not to its Catholic members.

<sup>3</sup>"Persecution", New Statesman and Nation, vol.7, June 2, 1934, p. 837.

the entire Reich. A law of December 1936 finally compelled all youth to belong to the HJ. Yet it appears that all young people did not wish to be organized, as the law announced; a special office of the Gestapo was formed in 1936 to crush illegal youth groups. By 1938 all Catholic groups, more intractable than the Protestants, were also incorporated into the Hitler Youth. Although the meaning and scope of decrees was often left uncertain, the series of piecemeal laws culminated in that of November 1939 which gave the National Youth Leader unequivocal superiority in all youth matters over regional officials in all state governments and federal commissioners in occupied territories.

Between 1930 and 1932 the Christian youth organizations had about one and one half million members, and the National Socialists, on the other hand, about forty thousand. But in the 'twenties, German spiritual bankruptcy, despite large enrollment in the church organizations, had assumed the nature of a crisis. Wilhelm Niemöller admits that a large part of the population, especially the youth, had lost contact with the church.<sup>1</sup> Non-Christian youth flocked happily to the Party, but so did the Christian young people, who, along with their leaders, misinterpreted the events of 1933, and were therefore helpless before the consequences. Of course, they were tricked in that, at first, Hitler tried to minimize the radicalism of his young followers. Von Schirach wrote that they were carrying on the idealistic struggle of the Great War; "we are the spirit of their spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm Niemöller, Kirchenkampf im Dritten Reich, p. 15. The Social Democrats had about 60,000 and the Communists about 50,000.

The idea for which they died is the motivation of our life. Their battle is our fate."<sup>1</sup> Lamed by their patriotic passions, the Lutheran youth in particular were ready to recognize Hitler's claim to leadership of German youth. This confusion, writes Dieter Freiherr von Lersner, was characteristic, not only of the youth, but of church circles in general.<sup>2</sup>

Believing in the new goals set for youth, both churches supported the renaissance. Even the Catholic groups reacted this way. Within the encyclical, Mit brennender Sorge, there is a trace of the attitude which made the Nazis' plans successful;

If the state organizes a national youth, and makes this organization obligatory to all, then, without prejudice to the rights of religious associations, it is the absolute right of youths as well as of parents to see to it that this organization is purged of all manifestations hostile to the Church and Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

The leader of the Catholic Young Men's Association announced to von Schirach on May 21, 1933, "we greet the Reich Youth Leader and declare our readiness to work together with him in the best of our ability for the strengthening of German youth."<sup>4</sup> They were ready to work with the new state.

Thus, the sheep hoped that they could not only capture the wolves but also maintain their independence and rights in doing so. In this way, they compromised their position and rendered their members susceptible to an even greater extent to Nazi propaganda. Even after they had been banned, Evangelical

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<sup>1</sup> von Schirach, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Dieter Freiherr von Lersner, Die evangelischen Jugendverbände Württembergs und die Hitlerjugend 1933-34. Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht, 1958, preface.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Fremantle, op. cit., p. 253.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Heinrich Roth, Katholische Jugend in der NS-Zeit, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Katholischen Jungmännerverbandes, Düsseldorf, Altenburg, 1959, p. 59.

groups marched through the streets, carrying the swastika flag.<sup>1</sup> They believed that the goals of the Hitler Youth were national, not spiritual, and that the conflict that existed was patriotic and not religious. Needless to say, the HJ leaders often sought to further the misconception, while continually pursuing their own ends. In 1934, the official gazette of the Hitler Youth announced that their members were allowed to attend in uniform services of the Evangelical, Free, and Old Catholic Churches; the omission of the Catholic Church is significant, but even more significant is the result. At this time, there seemed to be something wrong with a youth who clung to his narrow confessional loyalty, when he saw other youths who were both patriotic, having joined the Hitler Youth, and pious, attending church regularly. The leader of the Hitler Youth in Württemberg-West summed up this idea of "positive Christianity";

We are condemned in the older Christian circles as godless, perhaps because we do not carry the cross on our flags and aren't always babbling biblical texts. We carry these things in our hearts, we are Christians, and the cross belongs as little on flags as the church does in politics and the political life of the young.<sup>2</sup>

The now familiar accusation levelled at the Catholic Church is paralleled by the also familiar attitude of deceptive conciliation towards the Lutherans.<sup>3</sup> In 1934, after the Evangelical Youth

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<sup>1</sup>Lersner, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>3</sup>An article in the Hitler Youth journal "Will and Power", November 1935, accused the former members of the Bündische Jugend of having communist sympathies and the members of the Catholic groups of welcoming such fellow members.

had been absorbed into the Hitler Youth, von Schirach complied with the request of Protestant leaders to allow the evangelical members two free afternoons a week for religious instruction.

The Party was able to appear the executor of praiseworthy trends. The "Strength through Joy" part of the Hitler Youth owed much to the half-military work camps founded by the Free Corps leaders such as Gerhard Rossbach. For non-Christian young people, the Nazi move seemed admirable, and Catholics may have remembered that Matthias Erzberger of the Centre Party had proposed a compulsory work service for young adults.<sup>1</sup> Among other factors, the organizational devices of the Young German League contributed to the Hitler Youth.

The anti-Christian bent of the Nazi youth was manifest very soon; in 1935, for example, a group of Hitler youths demonstrated in Hamm against the Archbishop of Paderborn. This action, like many others, was carefully planned and executed with military precision.<sup>2</sup> Needless to say, the Hitler Youth leaders, particularly after 1936, did everything they could to hinder participation of their charges in church services and processions. They instructed children in how to disturb religious teaching in the schools and developed an interesting approach to parental influence: "persons in authority" were to be placed before the children as good examples "against the parents in order to balance the influence of our opponents."<sup>3</sup> In 1938, von Schirach ordered that to belong to a Hitler Youth Leader Corps one had to leave the church .

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<sup>1</sup>Klaus Epstein, Matthias Erzberger and the Dilemma of German Democracy, Princeton, 1959, p. 378.

<sup>2</sup>Neuhäusler, op. cit., pp. 35-36, and Hofer, op.cit., pp. 134-135.

<sup>3</sup>Neuhäusler, op. cit., p. 107.



These attempts to mold young people's thinking into less Christian and more Nazi paths were thoroughgoing but never completely successful. Even after 1936, it did not really matter if the young possessed Christian beliefs or were atheistic or "pagan" as long as they accepted the paramount significance of the Third Reich in their daily, outward lives. And many did so, some for non-patriotic reasons or in the spirit of compromise and "positive Christianity" both the Nazi leaders and the Church favoured. Often career opportunities were, for those who accepted Nazi leadership, more important motives than genuine enthusiasm. As a result of a law of March 22, 1934, which decreed that young people who did not belong to the Hitler Youth could not enter the Labour Front, many saw their future careers endangered. Von Schirach's description of the Catholic youth--"it is their jobs they are concerned about, not religion"--could apply equally well to some of his own followers.<sup>1</sup> "Positive Christianity", accepted by Christians, and pragmatic realism on the part of the Nazis, assured the Hitler Youth of considerable success in the church-state conflict.

The youth problem shows clearly how Hitler and his elite, in their drive for power, used every idea or group at hand; we have described this aspect of the Party in terms of pragmatism, cynicism, and nihilism. This amoral willingness to compromise even with their enemies partially explains why the Party rose in ten years from a mere band of agitators to become the state

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Persecution of the Catholic Church in the Third Reich. Facts and Documents translated from the German, London, Burns and Oates, 1940, p. 94.

itself. But it was also, although perhaps only temporarily, a handicap. Sooner or later, they would have had to throw down the gauntlet and challenge not merely the Church but the Christian citizens of Germany. By 1939 they had not yet done this. Although the continuing support of Christians was advantageous during the war, Hitler never managed to deal with the churches as he wished.

## CHAPTER 6

### Summary and Conclusions

This discussion began with a review of institutional Christianity in Germany: still healthy financially and still commanding at least the respect of much of the older generation, it nevertheless lacked vigour after the Great War. While Nazism had economic and political roots as well, various aspects of the German spiritual crisis, including this Christian weakness, contributed fundamentally to the strength of the Nazi movement. The mistakes of the Christians, particularly the Lutherans, can be partially understood in light of the novelty and cunning of the Nazi approach. Nazism, although ostensibly concerned only with political life, could and consciously did provide solance for the spiritual problems of the masses at the same time as it revived the patriotic piety of Christians. Because it appealed to patriotic as well as spiritual needs, many Christians accepted its advent, often with deadly passivity, but sometimes with enthusiasm. The Lutheran attitude to worldly power and the too diplomatic approach of the Catholics helped the Party; we understand the Christian view that freedom to administer sacraments vital for salvation justifies concessions to tyrannical

governments, but the naiveté of Christians and their patriotic weaknesses were exploited by Hitler. While Christians might, through their traditional faith, be immune to the effects of life in a mass industrial society, those who had drifted away from Christianity, particularly the workers, found the Nazi "faith" appealing. Therefore, Hitler's Weltanschauung was, for Christians, a sanctification of their patriotism, and, for the non-Christian masses, a faith.

"Hitler himself created a large part of the sickness he was expected to cure," wrote Golo Mann.<sup>1</sup> With deceptive promises that he would give German lives more meaning, Hitler stimulated hopes of Christians and freethinkers alike; meanwhile he furthered their atomization in a totalitarian state. Because groups such as the family, the parish, the school--as well as others in plants, offices, or shops--were deliberately broken down, Germans were faced with an intensification of their original problem. The natural structure of society, which, despite the pre-Nazi dislocation, still existed in Germany, was dissolved by the new leaders, who attempted to replace it by an abstract "people's community". This led only to further depersonalization of human relations and to the isolation of human beings from each other. It was, of course, what Hitler needed in order to remain in power. The Weltanschauung triumphed because it appealed to the prejudices and frustrated longings of many

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<sup>1</sup>Golo Mann, Deutsche Geschichte 1919-1945, Frankfurt, Fischer, 1962, p. 78.

Germans, including Christians; "the ideological mish-mash of National Socialism," according to Harry Pross, "was successful precisely because it obscured every clarity and had something for everyone."<sup>1</sup> This is why Camus correctly describes the Hitlerian state as the expression of a nihilist revolution.<sup>2</sup>

Alex Inkeles believes that for the totalitarian state, the element of human friendship is important only insofar as "comrades" join forces in carrying out the greater task of all, and personal emotion, particularly depression, is frowned upon because all emotional energy must be turned to the ends of the Cause.<sup>3</sup> The most characteristic trend in Nazi Germany was this destruction of human relationships, paralleled by the development of a monolithic state with totalitarian claims and pseudo-religious trappings. Although the Nazi leaders claimed to support, for example, the family as the core of society, they actually weakened it. In order to win and maintain a sufficient following, they had to break down existing group ties, and since they demanded a fanatical devotion from their followers, they saw in these personal ties of blood or friendship a diminution of their own corporate cohesion.<sup>4</sup> Nazi Germany has been described as a regression to tribal intimacy on a national scale, but in reality it represents the destruction of all groups, of all support to the individual psyche in a secular industrial mass society.

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<sup>1</sup>Harry Pross, Vor und Nach Hitler, Freiburg, Walter, 1962, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup>Camus, The Rebel, p. 185. See also Cassirer, Myth of the State, passim.

<sup>3</sup>See Carl J. Friedrich, ed., Totalitarianism, Cambridge, Harvard, 1953, p. 101. See also Pross, op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>4</sup>Hoffer, op. cit., p. 115.

Those who had hoped to find in National Socialism a bulwark in an impersonal, irreligious world, and those who sought, in patriotic collaboration with it, a renewal of national Christian faith, were deceived and found themselves in an even more brutal, spiritually dead community, approximating the nightmares of Orwell and Huxley. "At the roots of the Nazi organizations," writes Hans-Jochen Gamm, "there was no community of feeling."<sup>1</sup>

Although the program was declared in 1926 to be unchangeable, it was officially explained that this applied only to the fundamental principles, and not to the methods by which the latter were to be put into practice. Indeed, Goebbels remarked that, if he were starting anew, he would have no program at all.<sup>2</sup> The Weltanschauung was not exactly a "retrospective philosophical justification" as Stephen H. Roberts claims,<sup>3</sup> but this phrase suggests well the pragmatic attitude that often characterized the actions of the elite. Their aim was to eradicate Christianity, but the vigour with which this goal was pursued depended on the fortunes, diplomatic and internal, of the moment. At times, sympathy with Christianity was publicly professed; later, hostility to the churches was openly implied. In private, of course, Hitler, Bormann, and Goebbels sneered at the churches. But the ideological trappings of the Party were just as cynically viewed by the leaders. The "superficial

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<sup>1</sup>Gamm, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Roberts, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit.

eclecticism" of the doctrine was intended only as a facade for the masses, and the technique set forth in Mein Kampf, that of using all forces from wherever they might come, was, along with anti-Semitism, the only enduring characteristic of the Nazi Weltanschauung. Pross suggests that, "it was as if, in these times when philosophy has ceased producing closed systems, the German social-religion would produce a closed system without any content."<sup>1</sup>

Ironically, this very pragmatism weakened the Nazi drive. Hitler could not eliminate Christianity because, to a certain extent, he depended on it and he never emancipated himself from that part of his propaganda which preached unity of will with Christians. Had the Nazi movement been successful in implanting its ideology in German minds, defeat in war would not have destroyed the new "faith". But the fact that so many Germans today find it easy to forget Nazism is proof that the Nazi "religion" is dead.

But did it ever live? In its most vital aspect, training the young, the Nazi success was ambivalent; while it brought them material prosperity and national pride, it failed to provide a substitute for Christianity and failed to counteract the influence of Communism. It is even claimed that the Party stimulated what it feared most: "the true spirit of Luther."<sup>2</sup> Under the strain of battle, the "faith" of Nazi soldiers vanished and the number of communicants in the army during the war increased considerably.<sup>3</sup> In the civilian world, many of

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<sup>1</sup>Pross, op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>2</sup>Fabian von Schlabrendorff, Offiziere gegen Hitler, Frankfurt, Fischer, 1962, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup>See Perau, op. cit., passim.

the resistance groups contained young people not yet out of their teens;<sup>1</sup> some were not Christians, but neither were they Nazis--somehow, the Weltanschauung had lost them. And what are we to conclude from the fact that of the nine Bormann children, raised by fanatically anti-Christian parents, seven (in 1954) had become Catholics, and one, Hitler's own "godson", was training to become a priest?<sup>2</sup> The Nazi leaders collaborated with the Christians and, always forced to proceed slower with their plans than they would have wished, were never able to free themselves from this involvement. Thus, just as the Christians suffered from the efforts to compromise with a heresy, so did the Nazis.

Two problems arise, problems which may not have solutions. National Socialism was accepted with religious fervour by many Germans...or so it seems. But how many were actually convinced by the Weltanschauung? The fact that the only Nazis in Germany today are lonely cranks leads to the suggestion that the German "man-in-the-street"--the Christian--must have had two mental compartments, one for Nazism, one for Christianity. This situation corresponds to what the Nazis claimed to support before 1937, but, while it must have become harder and harder to live like this, many did so until 1945, when the Nazi compartment was thrown out. Is it possible for the small man to believe in any permanent doctrine in the twentieth

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<sup>1</sup>Klönne, op. cit., p. 94, and Rothfels, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Bormann, Letters, ed. H.R.Trevor-Roper, trans. G.H.Stevens, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954, p. xvii. Joseph Goebbels had all his children baptized!



century? The Nazi effort to de-secularize German society, to revive a kind of religion, related to, but more fanatical than Kultur-religion, failed and may have been bound to fail. The Enlightenment and, among other elements, the positivistic outlook, may have weakened the non-Christian's capacity to have a lasting faith of any sort. Were the masses, influenced by materialism, A European development, and by the peculiar reverence for power in German politics, as cynical as their masters?<sup>1</sup> The second problem, how Nazism fits into the European situation, suggests answers to these questions. In Russia, the new "religion" had no ties with the Czarist past and did not have to combat an international counter-church; moreover, it accepted secularization and materialism as part of its doctrine, and was never concerned to appear respectable. The Christian Church still exists in Russia but a Kulturkampf never seems to have weakened the Communists as it did the Nazis. In Germany, there was no revolution; the past was not completely disavowed, but in the form of ideas and men was part of Nazism. In this way, Hitler was a purely German phenomenon. But the spiritual homelessness of the masses who accepted both Nazism and Communism is still a problem for Europe and is growing in the "developing" countries. The Nazi solution did not work, but the Communist one apparently does.

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<sup>1</sup> See Meinecke, op. cit., on "mass Machiavellism".

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Arendt, Hannah. Origins of Totalitarianism. New York, Meridian, 1958.

This conservative writer is most interesting of the behaviour of modern man in mass society and on cynical political elites. She holds that modern totalitarianism explodes the premise of the reasonable nature of the masses on which the Western concept of democracy is founded.

Baumgärtel, Friedrich. Wider den Kirchenkampf-Legenden. Freimund, Neuendettelsau, 1959.

A theologian attacks the idea that the Confessional Church recognized from the first the Nazi danger to Christianity; he shows, for example, that Wilhelm Niemöller was, in 1933 at least, an enthusiastic Nazi.

Becker, Howard. German Youth: Bond or Free. New York, Oxford, 1946.

In this history of the German youth movements, the author introduces the useful "ecclesia" idea, which led me to consider the pseudo-religious element in Nazism; his book contains a good bibliography on the subject as well. There is some unfortunate sociological doubletalk here, but the book is the best account in English on the youth movements (available at U.B.C. at the time of writing).

- Berdyaev, Nicolas. End of Our Time. London, Sheed and Ward, 1933.  
Berdyaev, in describing the loneliness of modern man, stresses that only a revival of Christian faith will regenerate the West, but he predicts that something like Nazism could pervert this revival.
- Berning, Wilhelm. Katholische Kirche und deutsches Volkstum. München, Callwey, 1934.  
This contribution to the Catholic approach to Nazism gave me an insight into a view which approved of the movement.
- Brennecke, F. ed. Nazi Primer. New York, Harpers, 1938.  
This is a good example of the kind of textbooks the Party introduced into schools.
- Buchheim, Hans. Glaubenskrise im Dritten Reich. Drei Kapitel Nationalsozialistischer Religionspolitik. Stuttgart, Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1953.  
Buchheim's study of the "crisis of faith" offers a lucid section on the confusing Faith Movements as well as a useful bibliography.
- Bullock, Alan. Hitler. A Study in Tyranny. New York, Harper, 1953.  
This is the best post-war biography of the Führer. Bullock believes, and I think rightly, that the Nazi movement was really barren of ideas, that its ideology was fraudulent, and that Hitler was an opportunist, whose only guiding principle was a will to power.
- Cochrane, Arthur C. The Church's Confession Under Hitler. Philadelphia, Westminster, 1962.  
For English readers, this is probably the best account of the Lutheran church's activity in the Third Reich.
- Friedrich, Carl J. ed. Totalitarianism. Proceedings of a Conference held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Cambridge, Harvard, 1953.  
There are several interesting and useful essays in this volume, such as those by Waldemar Gurian, "Totalitarianism as Political Religion", and by Alex Inkeles, "The Totalitarian Mystique".
- Fromm, Erich, Escape from Freedom. New York, Farrar and Rinehart, 1941.  
Fromm's almost classic psychological study suggests that the German middle class is sado-masochistic, an argument difficult to prove historically; I also doubt if he interprets Luther justly, but his insight into the German problem helps to balance the political analysis of Arendt and the Christian view of Berdyaev.

- Gamm, Hans-Jochen. Der braune Kult. Das dritte Reich und seine Ersatzreligion. Hamburg, Rütten and Loening, 1962.  
This book is especially relevant to the thesis; unfortunately, it is only a description of Nazi "religiofication", and does not draw many wider conclusions. Several interesting photographs and documents are reproduced.
- Groppe, Herbert. Das Reichskonkordat vom 20. Juli 1933. Köln, Bachem, 1956.  
Groppe considers the concordat only in its legal aspect.
- Hayes, Carlton J.H. Nationalism: A Religion. New York, Macmillan, 1960.  
This is a rather pedestrian study, but offers a good review of the phenomenon.
- Heiden, Konrad, Adolf Hitler. Eine Biographie. Zürich, Europa, 1936 and 1937, 2 vols.  
Heiden's book is still one of the best on Hitler.
- Kirkpatrick, Clifford. Nazi Germany: Its Women and Family Life. New York, Bobbs-Merrill, 1938.  
One of the few studies of this kind, Kirkpatrick's book offers insight into the effect of Nazi organization of those who were not actively political.
- Klönne, Arno. Hitlerjugend: die Jugend und ihre Organisation im Dritten Reich. Hannover, Norddeutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1955.  
This is the best description of the Hitler Youth I found.
- Kneller, George Frederick. Educ ational Philosophy of National Socialism. New York, Yale, 1941.  
Kneller's book on Nazi educational principles (if such they can be termed) offers an excellent review of the movement's pseudo-intellectuals and their beliefs; his bibliography was also useful. As yet there is no good post-war book on Nazi education.
- Kolnai, Aurel. War Against the West. London, Gollancz, 1938.  
This long and difficult volume is rich in quotations from Nazi and proto-Nazi sources, but contains no analysis or interpretation of the meaning of all that is reproduced. His criticism of Christianity is rather far-fetched.
- Kupisch, Karl. Zwischen Idealismus und Massen-demokratie. Eine Geschichte der evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland von 1815-1945. Berlin, Lettner, 1953.  
This is the best history of the Lutheran church available.
- Littell, F.H. German Phoenix, Men and Movements in the Church in Germany. New York, Doubleday, 1960.  
Littell has drawn from existing historical material and has not produced an independent study; nevertheless, it is a good summary and is useful for English readers.



Macfarland, Charles S. New Church and the New Germany. A Study of Church and State. New York, Macmillan, 1934.

Means, Paul B. Things that are Caesar's: the Genesis of the German Church Conflict. New York, Round Table, 1935.

Micklem, Nathaniel. National Socialism and Christianity. Oxford, Clarendon, 1939.

National Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church. London, Oxford, 1939.

Several books were written on the church conflict at the time; those cited here by Macfarland and Means suffer from a lack of "inside" knowledge and from real factual errors due to faulty research. Micklem's two books, however, are more scholarly, do not seem as dated, and are still useful. (The former two deal mainly with the Protestant church.)

Neumann, Franz. Behemoth. Structure and Practice of National Socialism. Toronto, Oxford, 1942.

In spite of the fact that this book is also a product of the period itself, and in spite of a legalistic, Marxist approach (fascism is equated with a stage of capitalism), "Behemoth" is still a remarkably good study of Nazism; Neumann offers some useful ideas on the pragmatic and nihilistic nature of the Party.

Neurohr, Jean F. Mythos vom Dritten Reich. Zur Geistesgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus. Stuttgart, Gotta, 1957.

This is one of the best of many attempts to trace the intellectual and spiritual roots of Nazism; Neurohr manages to avoid accusing Luther, Kant, or Hegel of actually contributing to Nazism--for this point of view, see W.M. McGovern's From Luther to Hitler (New York, Houghton Mifflin, n.d.).

Niekisch, Ernst. Das Reich der niederen Dämonen. Hamburg, Rowohlt. 1953.

Like Neumann, Niekisch gives a Marxist interpretation of Nazism; for him, too, the ideology was fraudulent.

Niemöller, Wilhelm. Die evangelische Kirche im Dritten Reich. Handbuch des Kirchenkampfes. Bielefeld, Bechauf, 1956.

The "Handbook" has been criticised by Baumgärtel (see above) for ignoring the complicity of even the Confessional churchmen in supporting the Nazis; his criticism would seem to be just, but Niemöller's book, and its smaller companion (Kirchenkampf im Dritten Reich, Bielefeld, Bechauf, 1946), are essential to understanding the motives behind the Barmen Declaration. I have not included here the various books, some of them by Wilhelm Niemöller, on the Confessional Church Synods, or on the theological issues at stake.

Perau, Josef. Priester im Heere Hitlers. Erinnerungen 1940-45.  
Essen, Ludgerus, 1963.

This book is the diary of a Catholic priest in the German army; it was not especially useful in the thesis, but presents the Catholic outlook well.

Samuel, R.H. and Thomas, R. Hinton. Education and Society in Modern Germany. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949.

This is a very useful book; the same authors would do even better to review the Nazi period alone.

Zahn, Gordon C. German Catholics and Hitler's Wars. A Study in Social Control. New York, Sheed and Ward, 1962.

A much needed study, this book helps to correct misconceptions about Catholic "resistance".

The secondary sources which follow were interesting but not as useful;

Brady, Robert A. Spirit and Structure of German Fascism.  
London, Gollancs, 1937.

Carmer, Carl. War Against God. New York, Holt, 1943.

Cassirer, Ernst. Myth of the State. New Haven, Yale, 1946.

Chakhotin, Serge. Rape of the Masses. trans. E.W.Dickes,  
London, Routledge, 1940.

Conrad, Walter, Der Kampf um die Kanzeln. Erinnerungen und Dokumente aus der Hitlerzeit. Berlin, Töpelmann, 1957.

Gallin, Mother Mary Alice. German Resistance to...Hitler: Ethical and Religious Factors. Washington, Catholic University of America, 1961.

Gilbert, G.M. Psychology of Dictatorship. New York, Ronald, 1950.

Hafkesbrink, Hannah. Unknown Germany: An Inner Chronicle of the First World War based on Letters and Diaries. New Haven, Yale, 1948.

Hartshorne, E.Y. German Universities and National Socialism.  
London, Allen and Unwin, 1937.

Herman, Stewart W. Eure Seelen Wollen Wir. Kirche im Untergrund.  
ins deutsche übertragen von Wilhelm Gossmann, München, Neubau, 1951.

Kellermann, Fritz. The Effect of the World War on European Education; with special attention to Germany. Cambridge, Harvard, 1928.

- Kosok, Paul. Modern Germany. A Study of Conflicting Loyalties. Chicago, 1933.
- Kotschnig, Walter M. Slaves Need No Leaders. An Answer to the Fascist Challenge to Education. London, Oxford, 1943.
- Lersner, Dieter Frhr. von. Die evangelischen Jugendverbände Württembergs und die Hitlerjugend 1933-45. Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht, 1958.
- Lilge, Frederic. The Abuse of Learning. The Failure of the German Universities. New York, Macmillan, 1948.
- Lortz, Joseph. Katholischer Zugang zum Nationalsozialismus. Münster, Aschendorff, 1933.
- Mann, Erika. School For Barbarians. Education Under the Nazis. London, Drummond, 1938.
- Natterer, Alois. Der bayerische Klerus in der Zeit dreier Revolutionen 1918-1933-1945. München, Katholische Kirche Bayerns, 1946.
- Neumann, Sigmund. Permanent Revolution: the Total State in a World at War. New York, Harpers, 1942.
- Pinson, Koppel S. Pietism as a Factor in the Rise of German Nationalism. New York, Columbia, 1934.
- Priepke, Manfred. Die evangelische Jugend im Dritten Reich 1933-36. New York, Columbia, 1960.
- Pross, Harry. Vor und nach Hitler. Zur deutschen Soziopathologie. Freiburg, Walter, 1962.
- Schmidt, Dietmar. Pastor Niemöller. trans. Lawrence Wilson, London, Odhams, 1959.
- Schrey, Heinz Horst. Die Generation der Entscheidung. Staat und Kirche in Europa und im europäischen Russland 1918-1933. München, Kaiser, 1955.
- Vermeil, Edmond. The German Scene. trans. L.J.Ludovico, London Harrap, 1956.
- Ziemer, Gregor. Education for Death. London, Oxford, 1941

In order to shorten the Bibliography, I have omitted from this list several books of lesser interest which appear, nevertheless, in the footnotes.

Periodicals;

There is a wealth of contemporary periodical material on the church problem; although much of it lacks documentation, it often sheds light on aspects of the conflict that do not come out elsewhere. Below I have listed only the most useful articles of the 'thirties and 'forties.

Beard, Charles A. "Education under the Nazis". Foreign Affairs, vol. 13, June 1935, pp. 483-498.

Brinton, Crane. "The National Socialists' Use of Nietzsche". Journal of the History of Ideas, vol. 1, April 1940, pp. 131-150.

Buxton, Dorothy. "Niemöller or Hitler?" Spectator, vol. 164, July 28, 1939, pp. 136-137.

Dean of Chichester. "Crisis of the Church in Germany". Spectator, vol. 158, August 11, 1933, pp. 183-184.

Gurian, Waldemar. "Hitler's Undeclared War on the Catholic Church". Foreign Affairs, vol. 16, January 1938, pp. 260-271.

"Parteischulen", Spectator, vol. 162, December 10, 1937, p. 1050.

Reed, Douglas L. "German Church Conflict". Foreign Affairs, vol. 13, June 1935, pp. 483-498.

Rouse, Ruth. "Does Young Germany Want War?" Spectator, vol. 151, December 1, 1933, pp. 797-798.

Rowan-Robinson, G.A. "The Training of the Nazi Leaders of the Future", International Affairs, vol. 8, March 1938, pp. 233-250.

"Schule oder Verein", Spectator, vol. 152, June 29 1934, p. 994.

Spénlé, Jean-Edouard. "Le Problème de la Jeunesse en Allemagne". Mercure de France, vols. 241-242, March 1, 1933, pp. 279-307

Tillich, Paul, "Totalitarian State and the Claims of the Church". Social Research, vol. 1, November 1934, pp. 406-433.

Several post-war articles are of interest; apart from the following, there are related articles in the Vierteljahresheft für Zeitgeschichte.

Hunt, Chester L. "Life Cycle of Dictatorships as seen in the Treatment of Religious Institutions". Social Forces, vol. 27, 1949, pp. 365-369.

Klose, Werner. "Hitlerjugend. Die Geschichte einer irreführten Generation". Welt am Sonntag, February 17 to March 31, 1963.

This series of articles, although only a journalistic description, is of particular interest for the thesis.

Mayer, Carl. "Crisis of German Protestantism". Social Research, vol. 12, November, 1945, pp. 397-432.

Mosse, G.L. "Mystical Origins of National Socialism". Journal of the History of Ideas, vol. 22, January 1961, pp. 81-96.

Müller, Hans. "Der pseudoreligiöse Charakter der nationalsozialistischen Weltanschauung", Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht, 12. Jahrgang, Heft 6, 1961, pp. 337-352.  
This article, as the title suggests, is fundamental to the thesis.