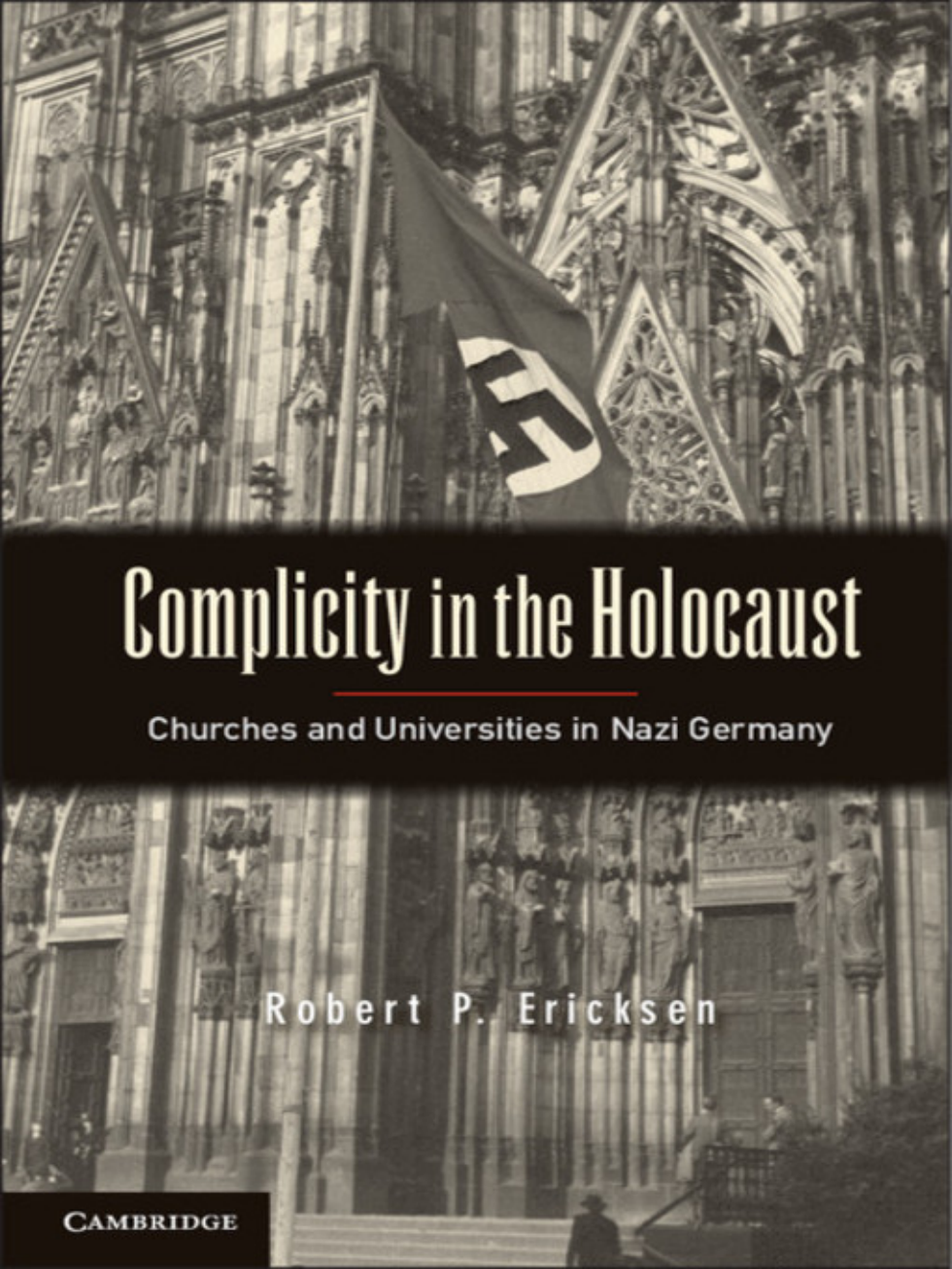

Complicity in the Holocaust

Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany

Robert P. Ericksen

CAMBRIDGE

Complicity in the Holocaust

In one of the darker aspects of Nazi Germany, churches and universities – generally respected institutions – grew to accept and support Nazi ideology. Robert P. Ericksen explains how an advanced, highly educated, Christian nation could commit the crimes of the Holocaust. This book describes how Germany's intellectual and spiritual leaders enthusiastically partnered with Hitler's regime, thus becoming active participants in the persecution of Jews and, ultimately, in the Holocaust. Ericksen also examines Germany's deeply flawed yet successful postwar policy of denazification in these institutions. *Complicity in the Holocaust* argues that enthusiasm for Hitler within churches and universities effectively gave Germans permission to participate in the Nazi regime.

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Dedicated to three children now grown,
Sasha, Justin, and Annika

Contents

Acknowledgments

My first thanks go to Professor Milton Shain, who invited me to give the Kaplan Holocaust Lectures at Cape Town University in 2004. His generous hospitality provided a remarkable experience and a pleasant start for the ideas that are finally presented in this book. I also am indebted to a longtime friend and colleague, Christopher Browning. Together we hosted a small group of scholars at a conference in 2005, supported by the Holocaust Education Foundation, where our discussion of "Future Directions in Holocaust Studies" guided my thoughts. Chris suggested years ago that I attend the third annual meeting of the Western Association of German Studies. We shared a room with John Conway, another important mentor and friend, and together we watched WAGS grow into the present-day German Studies Association. Annual meetings of that large and impressive organization have led to many friendships as well as a chance to present my own work and follow developments in the profession. In 1987, Gerhard Besier invited me to join John Conway and others at the first editorial board meeting of *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte*. KZG is now a successful journal, its coworkers include many old friends, and its annual meetings offer a regular chance to test my own ideas and listen to the work of others. In 2001, I joined the Church Relations Committee of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. This group has also given me contact with important scholars as well as a window on the relationship between Christians and Jews from the Holocaust to the present. In 2010, I joined the editorial board of the *Association of Contemporary Church Historians* (ACCH), an online quarterly inspired by the monthly online newsletter that John Conway maintained by himself for fifteen years.

Here, too, I am in touch with a group of scholars involved with topics considered in this book.

The listing of additional friends and colleagues who have contributed to my ideas and to my pleasure in the profession is too long to attempt here. Over the course of several decades, I have learned from hundreds of individuals in numerous ways. I will mention, however, some of the closest colleagues with whom I have shared work, conference sessions, and conversations. This includes a close working relationship for nearly twenty years with Susannah Heschel, now the Eli Black Professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College. Her friendship and support have been a pleasure, and we have shared our interest in twentieth-century German theologians in many venues and several publications. Two other scholars have become friends as well as important participants in the critical reassessment of churches in Nazi Germany. One is Doris Bergen, now the Chancellor and Ray Wolfe Professor of Holocaust Studies at the University of Toronto, and the other is Victoria Barnett, Director of Church Relations at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Susannah, Doris, and Vicki form a core group now at the heart of our assessment of churches in Nazi Germany, along with our critique of the churches' relationship to the "Jewish question." Hans-Joachim Dahms represents another *Glücksfall* in my career. We met in the Göttingen University Archive when we recognized that each of us was focusing on documents covered in swastikas. We then met regularly in Göttingen, followed by presentations at conferences, joint publications, and meetings in places as far afield as Beijing and Xian. Achim's contribution to my knowledge of universities in Nazi Germany parallels the contributions by Susannah, Doris, and Vicki to my assessment of churches.

I am indebted to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for several stints of research in Germany. I had the opportunity to work on two different occasions at the Max Planck Institute for History at Göttingen, under the hospitable leadership of a wise and gentle scholar, Hartmut Lehmann. He and his wife, Silke, are now good friends as well as colleagues. Hartmut introduced me to Manfred Gailus, whose important work on churches in Nazi Germany has also informed my efforts. Alexander von Humboldt's support also allowed an opportunity to work with Gerhard Besier, both in Heidelberg and in Dresden. In 2003, I worked at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. I was supported by a Charles Revson Fellowship and guided by the director of the center, Paul Shapiro, as well as by excellent staff members, such as Victoria Barnett, Suzanne Brown-Fleming, Robert Ehrenreich, and Wendy

Lower. I spent many hours in the Göttingen University Archive, assisted by the director, Ulrich Hunger. I also received access to denazification records at the Lower Saxony *Hauptstaatsarchiv* in Hanover and viewed various church records in the Archive of the Hanoverian *Landeskirche* and in the Central Church Archive in Berlin. Other friends in Germany include Gerhard and Sybille Hirschfeld and Jörg and Renate Ohlemacher. They have offered memorable meals and important conversations, the sort of thing that makes this profession hardly seem like work. At Pacific Lutheran University, I have been the beneficiary of endowed support, contributed by Kurt Mayer and his family, as well as Nancy Powell and her family. My Kurt Mayer Chair in Holocaust Studies has added significant travel and research support in the last few years. I am indebted to all of these individuals and institutions, as well as many more.

Various friends and colleagues have read portions of this manuscript and made helpful comments. That includes two careful and anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press, as well as Barnett, Bergen, Browning, Dahms, and Heschel, as mentioned earlier. Individuals closer to home include E. Wayne Carp, Brian Dunn, Audrey Eyler, John Eyler, Louis Graham, Philip Nordquist, Philip Schaeffer, and David Toren. As per the normal acknowledgment, each helped generously, but none should be saddled with any of the shortcomings in this book; they remain my responsibility alone. Lewis Bateman, an editor at Cambridge, has patiently kept me in touch with the Press. Eric Crahan, my editor on this project, has been swift, encouraging, and wise – everything one could want in an editor – and his assistant, Abigail Zorbaugh, has worked effectively with all of the details. The production staff at Newgen Knowledge Works, including project manager Jayashree Prabhu, as well as my copy editor, Amanda Mays of PETT Fox Inc., have been unfailingly helpful. Judith Meyers is now in the "first shall be last" position of these acknowledgments. First in my life and my thoughts, a most welcome critic and advisor, and a red pen for my prose, she is a *Glücksfall* above and beyond Achim, Susannah, or Chris.

Preface

In 2004, I was invited by Professor Milton Shain at Cape Town University to give the biennial Kaplan Holocaust Lectures. Those lectures represent the first time I formally combined my interest in German churches and German universities. They also represent the first time I began explicitly to consider the question of Holocaust complicity in relation to these two institutions. The following summer, Christopher Browning and I hosted a small conference in Gig Harbor, Washington, on the topic of "Future Directions in Holocaust Studies."[1] It was at this conference, funded by Zev Weiss and the Holocaust Education Foundation, that I began to ponder more seriously another question: If we try to identify complicity in the Holocaust, does that mean we are also identifying how not to be complicit? Does scholarship on the Holocaust imply a right, or even an obligation, to search for "lessons" of the Holocaust?

Anyone familiar with Holocaust education will recognize the ubiquity of this idea of lessons, whether in teaching children not to bully or teaching adults to value tolerance and oppose injustice. These are worthy goals. However, pieties in response to the Holocaust can become saccharine and simplistic. In the worst case, they can trivialize events and impede understanding. The Holocaust was horrific, probably beyond our understanding, and it likely has no "meaning" in any important sense of the word. Furthermore, anyone familiar with the norms of modern scholarship will detect another problem in the instrumental use of Holocaust

[1] Attendance at that conference of July 2005 included Omer Bartov, Yehuda Bauer, Doris Bergen, Christopher Browning, Robert Ericksen, Saul Friedländer, Peter Hayes, Dagmar Herzog, Susannah Heschel, Steven Katz, Claudia Koonz, Peter Longerich, Michael Marrus, Dan Michman, John Roth, and Zev Weiss.

education. Objectivity is an important expectation among scholars.[2] Can that be reconciled with turning history into moral judgments or the pronouncement of moral lessons? The nineteenth-century German, Leopold von Ranke, set the standard for historians when he said we must describe history "as it actually was," without letting our present concerns or points of view impinge.

I was trained in this expectation of historical objectivity. However, my first serious work on churches in Nazi Germany put me face-to-face with a difficult question: Must we really view Adolf Hitler with moral neutrality? It is hard, of course, to find historical treatments of Hitler and the Holocaust that do not indulge in some measure of moral criticism, and rightly so. In my first article on Gerhard Kittel and in my first book, *Theologians under Hitler*, I took the stance that we could assess these theologians by measuring, among other things, how explicitly and enthusiastically they supported Adolf Hitler, the Nazi Party, and the Nazi worldview.[3] I argued that our retrospective gaze since 1945 makes it clear that Hitler got it wrong. We are right to condemn the Holocaust and other crimes of the Nazi state. We are right to condemn the Nazi ideology and Nazi policies. Objectivity may be appropriate in analyzing how and why certain theologians praised Hitler and Nazism, trying to recognize the historical and intellectual determinants of their stance; but we also have a right to claim that any stance that involved enthusiastic praise for Nazi ideas and practices was a mistake, even a profound mistake.

In this book, I start with the moral judgment that murdering Jews and other innocent men, women, and children was wrong. Few would disagree, I am sure. I also argue that the Nazis signaled their basic approach to politics from the beginning, with harsh rhetoric and brutal policies in violation of well-established legal and civil rights. Each radical step

[2] I am speaking about the norms of "modern" scholarship, as rooted in the Enlightenment tradition of rationalism. "Postmodern" scholarship, by contrast, rejects the ideas of neutral objectivity and "historical truth." This can lead to a stance that allows both praise and condemnation of Hitler, or an unwillingness to distinguish between claims that the Holocaust occurred and claims that it did not. I agree with Richard J. Evans, *In Defense of History* (New York: Norton, 1999), 206–10, that this hyperrelativism represents a serious flaw in postmodern thought, alongside some useful contributions it has made. Good historians are obligated to search for truth, even in the realization that truth is exceedingly elusive. The recognition that the Holocaust happened is one of those truths not to be denied.

[3] See Robert P. Ericksen, "Theologian in the Third Reich: The Case of Gerhard Kittel," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 12 (1977), 595–622, especially 595–96; and *Theologians under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), especially 177–91.

from 1933 to 1939 was known to the German public – including the Aryan Paragraph of 1933, the Nuremberg Racial Laws of 1935, and the *Reichskristallnacht* pogrom of 1938. We can connect the dots and not be entirely surprised that the culmination of these policies included the murder of "lives unworthy of life"; the mobile killing units putting bullets in the brains of Jews lined up alongside mass graves; and the creation, beginning in December 1941, of half a dozen death camps whose primary purpose was the efficient murder of Jews. Seeing no need to remain morally neutral about these behaviors, I think it appropriate to ask questions about who helped make these behaviors possible.

Konrad Jarausch – writing about German lawyers, teachers, and engineers – also thinks it appropriate to ask such questions and make such judgments:

> The contribution of the professions to modern life has been profoundly ambiguous. On the one hand, the improvement of the legal system, the spread of learning, and the development of machines have increased justice, enlightenment, and comfort, thereby earning for professionals public gratitude and material rewards. On the other hand, the same experts have perpetrated callous injustice, engaged in stultifying indoctrination, and created engines of death for their own gratification and benefit.... Perhaps the most dramatic corruption of professionalism in the twentieth century was the evolution of German professions from internationally respected experts to accessories to Nazi crimes.[4]

Phrases such as "callous injustice," "stultifying indoctrination," and "corruption of professionalism" certainly represent value judgments. Although Jarausch deals with a different set of professionals, I believe similar judgments can be reached against pastors and professors.

Other observations by Jarausch are also relevant. For example, he notes that "[a]lthough the temptation to moralize about the catastrophes of recent German history is overwhelming, drawing overly facile lessons ought to be resisted." Then he adds, "Of course, it is equally misleading to approach the upheavals of the first half of the twentieth century in a machinelike 'objective' fashion. Values of the historian and the reader necessarily enter into interpretation, because humans are not robots."[5] While defending the need to include values in the discussion, he indicates certain value judgments of his own: "How could competent, individually decent university graduates fall collectively for the Austrian corporal?

[4] Konrad Jarausch, *The Unfree Professions: German Lawyers, Teachers, and Engineers, 1900–1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), vii.

[5] Ibid., ix.

What material and ethical price did these experts pay for their collaboration in the inhumanity of the Third Reich?"[6]

This book will describe many pastors and professors who "fell for the Austrian corporal" and thereby collaborated "in the inhumanity of the Third Reich." They gave a ringing endorsement to the "rebirth" of Germany under Adolf Hitler, even with all his anti-Jewish hostility readily apparent. Furthermore, this enthusiastic praise was not the message of just a few pastors and professors, but it was a predominate message within churches and universities as a whole. Finally, neither of these two respected institutions ever recanted their early endorsement of Nazism or harbored significant instances of resistance within their ranks. When a few examples of resistance did occur, those resisters were more likely to be condemned and isolated than congratulated or emulated within their institutions. That is what I am calling the complicity of churches and universities. Because the institutional approval of church and university for the Nazi state was expressed so openly and never recanted, I believe that approval is the primary impression Germans at the time would have perceived. When ordinary Germans, including church members and university graduates, were asked to do horrific things by the Nazi state, they presumably had a right to think they were given permission by their pastors and by their professors. Hitler had been praised as God's gift to Germany. Nazi rule had been praised as the wonderful culmination of German history.

If this level of approval for Hitler and Nazism seems hard to imagine today, that is partly because Germans threw up their hands in denial after 1945. Also, ironically, the nearly universal post-1945 condemnation of the Nazi regime makes it harder for us to imagine the alternative, that is, pre-1945 approval. Neo-Nazis who admire and defend Hitler are usually dismissed as an angry fringe group whose ideas are unworthy of discussion. It is thus hard for us to get inside the heads of Germans within the Nazi period, those who thought Hitler was a hero rather than a villain.

I am quite certain the "good Germans" we criticize today, those Germans who considered themselves respectable scholars and church leaders, would not have imagined our willingness to condemn their ideas and their values. When we read their actual words, however, and see their unabashed praise of Hitler, it is easy to condemn them for being dangerously wrong. I am happy to make that judgment. Nonetheless, my primary goal is to follow Ranke's advice and describe the world of German

[6] Ibid., 4.

pastors and professors "as it actually was." That means we must filter out the widespread condemnation since 1945 of Nazi ideas and Nazi practices. The level of that condemnation makes it hard for us to imagine that "good Germans" could support such bad things. It tempts us to give them the benefit of the doubt, to assume that they really felt much as we do about harsh and brutal Nazi behavior but simply could not say so. That certainly applies to some Germans of the period. I am convinced, however, that the majority spoke honestly when they praised Hitler to the heavens or otherwise indicated a level of enthusiasm beyond what might have been necessary for safety's sake.

This brings me back to the question about lessons of the Holocaust. If it is appropriate to identify the mistakes of these "good Germans" in the Nazi period, should we also try to identify similar mistakes today, similar blind spots? Will future generations look back in astonishment at our moral obtuseness, our inability to recognize contradictions in our alleged values? Jarausch warns us against "drawing overly facile lessons" in response to "the catastrophes of recent German history." I agree and will leave the search for lessons primarily to readers of this book. However, the idea that we might learn from history is certainly an appropriate component in our study of the Holocaust.

As I prepared my Kaplan Holocaust Lectures in 2004, one issue did stand out for me. The pastors and professors who gave their enthusiastic support to Hitler all were marked by a particularly intense nationalism. Furthermore, this nationalism justified in their minds any number of compromised values. If it would strengthen Germany at a time of crisis, the burning of books, the firing of professors, the attack on German Jews, and making war against German neighbors could all be rationalized as necessary and appropriate. These supporters of Hitler looked at the world through very German eyes, and they were proud to do so. Thus, they justified virtually any behavior deemed necessary to renew German strength and prosperity, even behaviors that seriously violated previous norms. For each critical word that might reach them from abroad, they had a justification or a rationalization. They would point to perceived injustices against Germany, along with the claim that Germany had every right to flex its muscles and protect its rightful place in the world. It is hard to imagine that "my nation, right or wrong" could ever be an appropriate maxim. In light of the German experience, I am inclined to see it more as a cause for alarm.

When I delivered the lectures that led to this book, I was speaking to an audience of students, academics, and an educated public. I still have that

audience in mind. Readers will note that "good German women" play a small role in this book. They were neither uninvolved nor unimportant. However, my focus is on representatives of the churches and universities who made up the public face of those institutions. During that era these were primarily men. Finally, readers will notice that many of my examples come from Göttingen University. It is a prominent and respected university, founded in 1737, the *alma mater* of Otto von Bismarck, with a reputation in the 1920s as perhaps the best place in the world to study math and physics and a very solid reputation in many other disciplines. I have returned to the libraries and archives at Göttingen for three decades. As is the case with all examples in this book taken from my own research, I believe them to be representative of the German experience. I also am convinced that the arguments I present in this book are consistent with a growing body of evidence from scholars on both sides of the Atlantic.

RPE
Gig Harbor, Washington
May 2011

1

Why the Holocaust Matters in a Century of Death

This book assumes that the Holocaust represents a very important event in modern history, not just for Jews and Germans, but for all thinking people who care about human behavior, human nature, and the future of human society. The German murder of approximately six million Jews and five million other victims of the Holocaust (besides tens of millions dead in World War II) certainly represents a low point in human history, the details of which are unusually horrific.[1] From mass death in gas chambers to medical experiments with human subjects, from bullets in the brains of children to beards of old rabbis pulled out at the roots, we are left with stories that make us wonder how human beings could have been so cold and so brutal. We are also left with the pledge expressed by many survivors, "never again," as well as the reality that genocide *has*

[1] Absolute precision on numbers is impossible, but the conclusion that Germany murdered at least 11 million innocent men, women, and children during the Holocaust is widely accepted and almost certainly not overstated. This number does not include the millions of war dead, whether military personnel killed in a war instigated by Germany or the millions of civilians killed as "collateral damage," a figure that may include more than two-thirds of the 26 million estimated Soviet losses. Rather, the claim that 11 million were murdered by Germans during the Holocaust includes those individuals or groups determined by Nazi ideology and practice to be "life unworthy of life:" Jews, Polish intelligentsia, Soviet POWs, Sinti and Roma, the disabled, homosexuals, and a variety of political or religious opponents who questioned the Nazi state. It is assumed throughout this book that these victims were innocent. It is also assumed they were murdered because of a brutal Nazi ideology that refused to acknowledge a simple right to life for Jews, the disabled, political opponents, or any category considered "less than human." Finally, it is assumed that enthusiastic support of and praise for Adolf Hitler and the Nazi state may or may not have been specifically antisemitic, but it always included a recognition that the Nazi state was hard-edged and brutal, both in its rhetoric and its policies. That was the constant, self-proclaimed identity of the Nazi movement, and it was apparent to all.

happened again, more than once, since the Nazi-perpetrated Holocaust.[2] This is a depressing topic, especially when we search out the trail of death from the beginning of the twentieth century to the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Despite the depressing nature of the material, this book also assumes that the Holocaust emphatically deserves our attention. The more we know about the Holocaust, the more we might be sensitized to the horror of genocidal actions or threats in our own day. Through the Nuremberg Trials, the United Nations, and the International Criminal Court, the world has expressed its condemnation of war crimes and of crimes against humanity. This type of response to the Holocaust, although sometimes tepid and ineffectual, might offer hope for the future. More importantly, perhaps, greater awareness of the Holocaust can provide a warning set of measurements by which to consider our own actions and inclinations, whether as individuals, as nations, or as members of an international community. It is very easy to view the Holocaust as an event and a set of behaviors completely outside our reality. However, the best historical inquiry draws us closer to the complexity of the past and makes it harder for us to dismiss other peoples and ages as totally "other."

To emphasize the complexity, I focus on two institutions – churches and universities – that usually enjoy broad respect. Churches aspire to spiritual and ethical insight. Universities cultivate intellectual acuity. In both cases, we might expect that leaders in these institutions would have seen the moral and intellectual flaws in Adolf Hitler and in the Nazi agenda, but there is little evidence of opposition and much evidence of support. Pastors and professors in Germany during the Nazi period probably never imagined that their stance could be considered contemptible; they may never have thought we would be looking back at their ideas and their behavior in condemnation. Many or most believed they were behaving morally and honorably, that they were acting out of idealism, *even as*

[2] The term "Holocaust" is widely used to describe the event at the center of this book: the German murder of Jews and others during World War II. This word means "destroyed by fire." It has the disadvantage of being Greek in origin and, more importantly, of possibly including a sacramental connotation. Burnt offerings sacrificed in ancient religious rituals were "destroyed by fire." Some prefer to use the term "*Shoah*," a Hebrew word that connotes only terrible destruction. "Holocaust" is also sometimes used for other examples of mass killing, and during the Cold War it was used to describe a potential nuclear war. For purposes of clarity and in line with widespread usage, I will use the word primarily to describe the event perpetrated by Germans and suffered by Jews and other victims. I will often use the words "massacre" or "genocide" when referring to other examples of mass killing.

they gave their support to Adolf Hitler. For that is the reality.[3] Many or most of those we might expect to have been the "good Germans" went along with the regime quite enthusiastically, endorsed its rationale, and supported its measures; and they did so in the conviction that they were the ones committed to a better Germany. In Peter Fritzsche's words, "It should be stated clearly that Germans became Nazis because they wanted to become Nazis and because the Nazis spoke so well to their interests and inclinations."[4] This book is an attempt to describe the acceptance of Nazi ideals by pastors and professors, and also to ponder the significance of their historical role.

Among genocides, the Holocaust is the one perpetrated by a nation and culture most deeply rooted in the modern West, and thus much like the United States and other Western nations today. Furthermore, pastors and professors represent categories of people we might most expect to mirror our best values. Modern, highly educated, Christian Germany produced an Adolf Hitler and perpetrated the Holocaust. Of the fourteen Germans who sat around a table at the Wannsee Conference in January 1942, planning the killing process, seven held a PhD. Michael Wildt describes the leadership of the Reich Security Main Office, the people who "designed the institutions of murder themselves, offered ideological justifications for them, and personally supervised the implementation of mass murder on location" while leading *Einsatzgruppen* and *Einsatzkommando* killing squads.[5] He notes the remarkably high level of education achieved by these men. More than three-quarters had passed the *Abitur*, their university entrance exam. Of the 221 he researched, approximately two-thirds earned a college or university degree and one-third earned a doctorate. In the sample of law students, one-third earned a PhD and two-thirds of students in the humanities earned that degree.[6] This gives us a snapshot of the young educated Germans who made the Holocaust possible. I argue that we best understand the Holocaust when we acknowledge

[3] This "idealism in support of Hitler" is implicit in the many statements of support described throughout this book. It was also extremely common during denazification trials for individuals to claim they joined or supported the Nazi Party out of idealism. See also Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[4] Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 8.

[5] Michael Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office*, trans. Tom Lampert (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 18. See also Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction*, trans. A. G. Blunden (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[6] Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation*, 38.

the role of university and church, and when we acknowledge that these perpetrators were people much like ourselves. Then we can try to understand what drove them to radical measures and perhaps even recognize circumstances that could tempt us in a similar direction.

Germans faced an unusual array of crises in the 1920s and 1930s: military, economic, political, and cultural crises that many or most Germans regarded as threats to their entire future as a nation. Might modern Westerners ever face such an array of crises? Would we be able to handle such crises without giving up our belief in human rights and civil liberties or otherwise pushing aside our democratic principles? Imagining ourselves into the world of "good Germans" in the Nazi era might be our best prophylactic. "Good Germans" almost certainly did not think we would pore through their papers half a century later and label them villains. We must hope that historians half a century from now will not be trying to understand behaviors of ours that they have learned to condemn.

The Century of Death

All of us born into the twentieth century carry the stigma of death, even though some might manage to ignore it.[7] Those who enjoyed middle-class comfort and Western affluence in the second half of the century might think it an idyllic period, and they might remember the good times, cultural achievements, human comforts, and relative safety. Europeans, especially those west of the Cold War divide, picked themselves out of the rubble of World Wars I and II and created a half-century of unprecedented peace and prosperity, capped by euphoria when the Berlin Wall came down and the Cold War came to an end. Americans during that period invented rock and roll, laid down ribbons of asphalt, built bigger cars and smaller computers, and built or imported a dizzying array of gadgets with which to cocoon or communicate in comfort. Those Americans not directly impacted by wars conducted abroad or pockets of poverty at home witnessed the horrors of the second half of the century only in their newspapers, in books, or on television.

Those who experienced only the second half of the century of death, and those whose access to the most violent parts has been only secondhand, can still recognize that the horrors were considerable, from starving children in Biafra to recurring examples of genocide. The word

[7] For one treatment of Europe in this period, see Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage, 2000).

"genocide" itself was invented only mid-century, when Raphael Lemkin, who had managed to escape the Nazi Holocaust, saw the need for a term to describe what the Germans had done. He then encouraged the newly created United Nations to take a stand. That body ratified a Genocide Convention, which since 1948 has condemned any attempt to kill or destroy an entire people. However, the killing did not stop. As we look back at the entire twentieth century, we see echoing images of genocide: from the Herero massacre in the first decade to the Rwandan massacre in the last, from the Armenian massacre in Turkey to "ethnic cleansing" in the Balkans, from the Jewish Holocaust to the killing fields of Cambodia.

The first half of the twentieth century provided a bloody counterpart to genocide in the form of two wars of unprecedented carnage. Europeans entered the Great War in a state of near innocence, at least in terms of understanding the horrors of modern warfare. British troops at the Somme were encouraged to kick a soccer ball across no-man's-land as they approached the German trenches, presumably to spur them onward and perhaps in some surreal attempt to make this seem like a game. However, 60,000 of those British troops were cut down like grass on the very first day of the attack, July 1, 1916. Despite the losses and what seems in retrospect to have been the insanity of marching directly into machine gun and artillery fire, General Haig sent his soldiers across no-man's-land again and again until the Somme offensive squished and squandered its way to a halt in the rain and mud of November. Losses on both sides totaled nearly one million men killed or wounded, with no appreciable change in the location of the front. Unfortunately, the Battle of the Somme was neither the first nor last of the interminable trench battles on the Western Front, battles fought out of wet, muddy, rat-infested trenches under the iron rain of modern, exploding artillery shells as heavy as Volkswagens. Both sides used poison gas during this war, with mustard or chlorine gas burning the soft, wet tissues of eyes and lungs, rendering victims blind, maimed, or dead, but not advancing the prospects of victory for either side.

Nearly nine million soldiers died in World War I and many more were maimed. These losses, nearly unimaginable, left few families in the participating nations untouched. Today one sees monuments in towns and villages across Germany, Austria, Russia, Italy, France, and Great Britain listing the large numbers of dead, often including several members of the same family. If we were to extrapolate the German war dead at approximately 2 million in a nation of 60 million, that would

correspond, for example, to some 10 million soldiers from the present American population of 300 million. By contrast, America lost 58,000 dead in Vietnam, 37,000 dead in Korea, more than 400,000 dead in the European and Pacific theaters of World War II, 115,000 dead in World War I, and 600,000 dead during the Civil War, counting both North and South. Losses in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, the Indian wars, the Spanish-American War, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are minute by comparison. Thus the total number of American dead in more than two centuries of fighting falls well short of 1.5 million, and yet Americans rightly grieve. Imagine the grief in post–World War I Germany.

Many historians say that the twentieth century did not really begin until 1914. The outbreak of war that year ushered in the century of death, bringing in its baggage both horror and disillusionment, as can be seen in Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and other literature from the war; but this horrible war proved merely a precursor to greater horrors. Twenty years after the Great War came to an end, Hitler plunged Europe into a second war, with the carnage this time reaching at least 50 million dead. Furthermore, in World War I most of the dead were combatants, even though murdered Armenians and some civilians in the battle zone represent exceptions. Relatively little death was inflicted beyond the battlefields, at least compared to World War II, in which noncombatants died in unprecedented ways and in unprecedented numbers. Aerial bombardment took a great toll. For example, the Allied bombing of German cities may have killed as many as half a million civilians, which would be more than the total number of American battle deaths suffered in World War II. The number of victims in the Soviet Union dwarfed these figures, with the total of civilian and military deaths estimated at 26 million. World War II also included the Holocaust, of course. Germans managed to murder approximately 6 million Jews and 5 million others, including (but not limited to) Soviet POWs, Poles, Gypsies (Sinti and Roma), the handicapped, homosexuals, and various categories of political opponents.

The record of death in the twentieth century also includes millions of victims of Joseph Stalin and Mao Tse-tung, each accounting for 10 million or more dead. Their victims died from starvation, from harsh treatment in prison camps, or by execution, having been selected on the basis of class and politics as determined by a dogmatic ideology coupled with raging paranoia. The depredations of Stalin and Mao should never be denied or dismissed, nor should the genocides: from the Herero massacre

in 1906 to the Rwandan and Balkan genocides of the 1990s, as well as the Congolese and Sudanese genocides at the turn of the twenty-first century. Despite the enormity of these other crimes, however, this book claims we should reserve a special place in our panoply of twentieth-century death for the German Holocaust.

The German Holocaust and Western Culture

Growing interest in comparative genocide tells a staggering tale of death and leaves us with some controversy about definitions. Most observers now apply the label of genocide to a number of massacres besides the Holocaust, including those in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, the Congo, and Darfur. In a world of many grievances and in the shadow of the deadly twentieth century, it seems impossible and inappropriate to try to calibrate and compare levels of pain and injustice in each of these events. Nonetheless, I will make two claims about the nature and importance of the German Holocaust, which underlie my purpose in writing this book. First of all, there is no other genocide in which the killing process included the methodical, industrial manner by which Germans accomplished a significant portion of the deaths. This killing process employed architects, chemists, engineers, doctors, lawyers, and a vast bureaucracy, both civilian and military. A clear governmental purpose undergirded the process, and it culminated in actual factories of death. This was modern, mechanized, purposeful killing, which means, for example, that many important perpetrators did not even see their victims – yet they were necessary and culpable cogs in a massive machinery of death. My second claim arises from the first: There has been no other genocide undertaken by a culture so rooted in the modern, educated, technologically advanced West.

Despite this parallel, however, the story of Nazi Germany routinely conjures up a sense of "otherness" that makes it difficult to imagine ourselves into that world. Nazis have often been portrayed as monsters or demons. It has been suggested that Adolf Hitler was a particularly evil and powerful figure who hypnotized the German people or took over the nation against its will and forced it to participate in his monstrous crimes. Daniel Goldhagen gives another version of this "otherness" point of view, one that cuts a much broader swath. He suggests that we should never think of German killers as being anything like ourselves. Rather, he argues, the German version of antisemitism was especially vicious and ultimately eliminationist. He recommends that we imagine all Germans

to have been as different from us as those Aztecs of the fifteenth century who sacrificed and ate human flesh.[8]

I would argue that these emphases on German "otherness" are based on mistaken assumptions and inaccurate history. German universities, for example, were arguably the best in the world during the nineteenth century. Germans such as Leopold von Ranke and Max Weber invented modern scholarship as we know it. This educational foundation made Germany a leader also in the creation of modern physics, as can be seen in the careers of Albert Einstein, Max Planck, and Werner Heisenberg, and it resulted in a large number of Nobel Prizes won by Germans. German education also helped establish the foundations of engineering and science, which still make that nation a leading producer of automobiles and other forms of high technology. During the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, these same skills helped Germany become one of the major military powers in the world, probably the most powerful nation per capita in terms of martial spirit, military technology, and commitment to the maintenance of its war-making ability.

Germany also has a very important place in the arts, having raised up within its cultural tradition some of the greatest classical composers, geniuses such as Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven. Goethe and Schiller represent a similar level of genius in the field of literature. By the early years of the twentieth century, Germany held an acknowledged place of leadership in art, architecture, theater, and film. Berlin became a cultural mecca in the 1920s, which is one more indication that Germany's cultural contributions to our modern world are broad and deep. If we turn to religion, it was a German, Martin Luther, who founded the Protestant tradition. German Protestants then built on the tradition of Luther and coupled it with the highly developed world of German scholarship. By the nineteenth century, German theologians led the world in Biblical scholarship and continued to exert enormous theological influence well into the following century. Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Rudolf Bultmann, and Paul Tillich all represent this German tradition, and the work of each continues to resonate in seminaries and schools of theology. Even Gerhard Kittel, deeply tainted by his enthusiastic support for the Nazis, still holds an important place in Biblical study through his massive *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*.[9]

[8] Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 27–28.

[9] See my treatment of Kittel in Robert P. Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 28–78.

When Adolf Hitler came to power, 97 percent of the German population considered itself Christian, with about two-thirds being Protestant and one-third Catholic. Less than 1 percent of Germans were Jewish in 1933, and only a slightly larger percentage registered as pagans or nonbelievers. It is true that the entire 97 percent registered as Christian did not attend church regularly or maintain a vibrant Christian identity. However, all of them agreed to pay the church tax, money they could have saved by the simple act of leaving their church. Furthermore, they received religious education in all German schools, and, of course, many of these 97 percent of the population were fervent Christians active in their faith. Germany in the 1930s almost certainly represented church attendance and a sense of Christian commitment and identity similar to that in America today, for example.

This highly educated, technologically advanced, Christian nation voted for Adolf Hitler in numbers large enough to make Nazis the single strongest party and result in his appointment as chancellor in 1933. Germans then followed his lead, both in the implementation of his vicious politics of antisemitism and in the various stages of World War II. All of these factors about Germany and its place in the modern world are worth noting as we contemplate the Holocaust. Among the many outbreaks of genocidal behavior, it is the German-perpetrated Holocaust that is most likely to reward our modern gaze with some faintly mirrored image of ourselves. Many of us, of course, are not tempted to look in this mirror, or perhaps we are unable to recognize ourselves. I will argue that this is only because we have distorted the mirror.

Our minds stop short at the horror of the Holocaust, and rightfully so. It is virtually impossible to look closely at the myriad grisly details without feelings of revulsion. Nearly every possible vile deed occurred during the Holocaust, nearly every example of human bestiality. The film footage of bulldozers pushing emaciated corpses into mass graves might be the image that pushes us to the brink, or perhaps it is the quiet testimony of a survivor describing some particularly egregious pain or humiliation. Not only are these details painful, they are also necessary to the story. We can never in retrospect fully understand the depths of horror that the Holocaust represents; however, we cannot even begin to understand if we do not at some point look closely at the details and put our noses into the stench of the camps and the ghettos.

If it is difficult to study the Holocaust, it is even more difficult to imagine that we see ourselves in that mirror. The most comfortable approach is to dismiss the Nazi killers as a small group of monsters, no matter how we choose to place them outside our world. Perhaps they were a

generation scarred by the loss of their fathers in World War I. Perhaps they were hypnotized by the evil genius of Hitler. Perhaps they were in thrall to an unprecedentedly vicious form of antisemitism. We could even imagine they were mutants or aliens from outer space, but we would be better advised to consider another "perhaps." Perhaps they were more like us than we would like to believe. We will be much more likely to understand the Holocaust and have a much greater chance to learn from this horror if we begin by imagining that the perpetrators were humans much like ourselves.

How Could It Happen?

For anyone exposed to the horrors of the Holocaust, the question typically arises, "How could it happen?" Historians in the 1980s argued among themselves over two broad explanations.[10] "Intentionalism" placed the blame on a few individuals, especially Adolf Hitler and his inner circle of supporters, arguing that they simply set out with a plan to kill Jews and then proceeded to do so. This explanation has the advantage of identifying evil and placing blame. Specific people made specific decisions to kill, and they can be condemned for doing so. It also accounts for the reality that certain people, such as Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, Adolf Eichmann, and Joseph Goebbels, held powerful positions in the Nazi state and did indeed lead that state into genocide.

Intentionalism drew criticism, however, for claiming too much. For example, Lucy Dawidowicz in her book, *The War Against the Jews*, claims that all of World War II was essentially a cover for killing Jews or a mechanism for doing so.[11] It is certainly true that the Holocaust could not have produced the death of millions of Jews if Germany had not invaded Poland and the Soviet Union, where most of those Jews actually lived. Furthermore, war created an atmosphere of death and emergency in which the list of "enemies" to be killed could be broadened, even to include noncombatants ideologically defined as dangerous; and the actual killing could occur in places guarded by military force and under the assumption of military necessity. However, most historians would

[10] See, for example, the treatment of this issue in Christopher R. Browning, *The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, Canto Edition, 1995), especially 86–121; or Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1987).

[11] Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933–1945* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975).

list a number of causes besides antisemitism in explaining the origins of World War II.

Another issue involves the question of when the "intention" to murder Jews developed. During the 1930s, the Nazi regime established a program to encourage Jews to leave Germany. During the early stages of the war, the SS spent time developing a "Madagascar Plan," with Germany hoping to acquire this African island from France as a place to send European Jews. Neither program would seem to make sense if the Nazi goal had always been simply to murder these Jews. "Functionalists" began to argue that the Holocaust developed incrementally, especially during the war years. A broad variety of actors and institutions faced a series of specific problems to be solved, often with the goal of anticipating Hitler's preferences or "working toward the Führer," as Ian Kershaw has described it.[12] By this analysis, the Holocaust developed as a complex society "functioned" in a particular setting.

Functionalism proved very good at showing the complexity of the Holocaust, including the complex chronology by which anti-Jewish measures escalated. It also showed the pervasiveness of the Holocaust, with a very large number of perpetrators making it happen. Functionalism has the potential danger, however, of leaving no one to take the blame for the murder of six million Jews and five million others. It is a little like looking so closely into the childhood and background of a criminal that the notion of guilt disappears. It becomes not really the criminal's fault, but the fault of his parents or his friends or his neighborhood or his deprivation in one or another aspect of life.

Most historians now merge intentionalism and functionalism, holding individuals accountable for their decisions and behavior but also acknowledging the complex development by which killing became policy. Complexity and multicausality are almost always allies to good historical writing. Good history is also wary of anomaly. It might be convenient to describe the Holocaust as an anomaly, placing the Nazi regime into a chronological box that began in 1933 and ended in 1945. Such a severing from the past and future can be good for Germans, if they do not want to take responsibility for the rise of Hitler or the crimes Germans committed under his lead. The idea of a complete Nazi takeover in 1933, an aberration in German history, and then a complete rebirth in 1945, a *Stunde Null*, severs Germans before and after from connection to that regime.

[12] See, for example, Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), especially chapter 1.

This approach can also be the most comfortable for the rest of us. The more the Nazis resemble monsters without forebears or progeny, the less they resemble us, and the less we must worry that we will resemble them. But this is bad history.

When we place the Holocaust into a larger historical context, it is possible to mine many centuries for evidence. Already in 1941 a book appeared under the title *From Luther to Hitler*, suggesting there was something in German character and culture that inevitably made Germans into Nazis.[13] Others look to the late development of the German nation-state, which emerged only in 1871 under the "blood and iron" politics of Otto von Bismarck.[14] Did Germany during that time suffer from an inferiority complex? Did it then try to catch up too quickly to the centuries of power and prestige enjoyed by nations such as England and France? Such speculations can be useful. Speculators in this vein, however, can be suspected of knowing the answers they want to find before asking the questions, as well as failing to hold other nations besides Germany to similar standards in the identification of deficiencies. For example, we can identify a long and deep history of hostility toward Jews in German culture, an obvious place to start looking for origins of the Holocaust. However, we can find a very similar tradition in most Western, Christian cultures. In fact, Jews moved in large numbers from other nations *into* Germany during the half-century before the Holocaust, suggesting that they found German culture a less- rather than more-hostile environment for Jews. The search across centuries for broad historical explanation, although important, includes significant problems of ambiguity and uncertainty. It seems easier, more concrete, and more directly relevant to look closely at the tumultuous quarter-century that preceded the Holocaust, beginning with the Great War.

World War I weighed very heavily on all participating nations. Besides the carnage, which provided virtually an entire generation of conscripts the experience of a hellish life in the trenches and a likely death or dismemberment in the field, the lives of civilians were also disrupted, physically

[13] William Montgomery McGovern, *From Luther to Hitler: The History of Fascist-Nazi Political Philosophy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1941).

[14] The *Sonderweg* thesis advanced by historians such as Ulrich Wehler focuses on the failure of Germany in the nineteenth century to act like democratic Western nations. See David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) for a critique of the *Sonderweg* idea. See also George Steinmetz, "German Exceptionalism and the Origins of Nazism: The Career of a Concept," in Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin, eds., *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 251–84, for his review of these issues.

as well as emotionally. Mothers were called on to donate their sons, and young women were called on to work in munitions factories or in what had been men's mechanical work on farms. All were called on to donate brass or cash or give up eating meat at certain meals; many went hungry, especially in Germany; and each nation set up a propaganda office to regulate and control its citizens' enthusiasm for this war. Despite all of the hardships held in common, the British and French had the benefit of victory, whereas Germans had to accept defeat, along with all the other hardships, as recompense for their efforts and sacrifice.

Because of the control of news during that war, Germans up until the final weeks had expected victory to result from their massive effort. The shock of defeat then culminated within months in a peace agreement – the Versailles Treaty – that Germans resented and quickly labeled a *Diktat* (a dictated peace). Some of their complaints were surely overdrawn in the emotions of the moment. However, the transfer of all colonies to Britain and France (because Germans were said not to be civilized enough to have colonies); the loss of territories in eastern Europe to Poland and Czechoslovakia and in western Europe to France; the requirement to make very large reparation payments (which turned out to be less onerous than thought, because they were only paid sporadically and in small installments); the restriction on Germany's military (limited to 100,000 troops and with no right to possess tanks, airplanes, or other modern weapons); and the so-called War Guilt Clause (Article 231, which affirmed Germany's responsibility for Allied damages, because the war had been "imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies") are examples of the postwar treatment that left virtually all Germans across the political spectrum deeply embittered.[15] They had been defeated in war, and now their enemies dictated their postwar existence – if necessary, with troops on German soil.

The political system that grew up in response to military defeat and the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II could not work itself out from under the weight of a lost war and a harsh peace. This new system, which came to be known as the Weimar Republic, included all the democratic principles favored by the victorious Western powers; but it suffered from serious problems and lasted only fourteen years before being hijacked by Hitler and the Nazi Party in 1933. There may have been flaws in the system

[15] The idea that the Versailles Treaty blamed Germany exclusively for starting World War I is now known to be a misconception. For example, the same clause appeared in treaties with Turkey, Austria, and Hungary.

itself, including the likely development of multiple parties and splintered government. Emergency provisions in the constitution allowed the aged President von Hindenburg and his advisors to abuse the system. This led eventually to Hindenburg's appointment of Hitler as chancellor, even though the Nazis could not command a majority in the Reichstag. We can imagine alternative outcomes and speculate that this or that change in the Weimar system might have prevented the rise of Hitler and all that then ensued. However, the political problems faced by this government extended far beyond the intricacies of constitutional language.

No matter how wisely developed, the Weimar system would still have suffered from its association with Germany's recent enemies in France, Great Britain, and the United States. Framers of a German constitution could not have created a democratic government without incorporating ideals associated with their recent enemies. Furthermore, American President Woodrow Wilson had specifically suggested in his "Fourteen Points" that Germany should adopt democracy in order to open a new and beneficial postwar relationship. Conservative and nationalistic Germans, who tended to despise Weimar throughout its existence, routinely suggested that it had been created by traitors to Germany for treasonous purposes.

Hitler was only one of many on the right who accused Weimar politicians of having "stabbed Germany in the back." This theory began with the contention, against all evidence, that Germany could have won the Great War, except that left-wing Germans inside the country, especially Jews and Socialists, had weakened the war effort. Leftists were blamed for damaging morale during the war by counseling caution and compromise, and the behavior of so-called Jewish profiteers was blamed for food riots and other examples of discontent.[16] These same "traitors" were blamed for creating a liberal, democratic government specifically to weaken Germany at a time when strong, authoritarian leadership was thought to be needed. The fact that the Weimar government signed the Versailles Treaty (under duress) and then could not solve the many problems of postwar Germany, especially including the economic crises that ensued, left this system of government with too few supporters when crises came. At the same time, classic scapegoating allowed many Germans

[16] See Belinda J. Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). See also Roger Chickering's study of the impact of World War I on one German city, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany: Freiburg, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

to think none of these problems were their fault – it must have been traitors, leftists, or Jews.

Economic crises in the Weimar period added significantly to a growing sense of desperation, beginning with a period of hunger, unemployment, and general dislocation in the immediate aftermath of war. In 1922–1923, Germany suffered what may have been the greatest inflationary crisis in history, so that within months the one mark that would have purchased a loaf of bread needed to be one trillion marks for the same purpose. One can easily imagine the impact of this inflation by imagining the level of fortune in a bank account that would seem to guarantee lifelong security. Then consider how it would feel if that amount of money – let's be generous and say, perhaps, $50 billion – could no longer buy a postage stamp. Every German who had accumulated a margin of comfort denominated in cash – whether in a savings account, life insurance, a cash inheritance, or otherwise – saw the value stripped away practically in an instant. Although some benefited from inflation – individuals with mortgages to pay, for example, or farmers with commodities to sell – a general sense of financial catastrophe prevailed. Whoever could be blamed for this – the Western Allies and their demands for war reparations, the Weimar government and its inability to solve the problem, or even Jews under the stereotypical charge that they controlled international finance – could expect a huge portion of anger. The second economic crisis, the Great Depression, hit Germany in 1930, grew worse until 1933, and created a mood of desperation. One result was that more and more Germans risked voting for the Nazi Party and its radical critique of the status quo. The implacability of the depression may have seemed to give credence to Hitler's scapegoating rhetoric, pointing to the inadequacies of Weimar, the machinations of Germany's enemies, and the idea that Jews must somehow be responsible.

Discontent in Weimar Germany went beyond the spheres of politics and economics. It also developed for some in response to the "roaring twenties," a time of rapidly changing cultural norms and challenges to traditional families and family values. Just as in other Western countries, the 1920s in Germany were marked especially by changing roles for women. This had grown out of women's role in World War I, to a certain extent, but also out of the inexorable logic of modern economies. All agricultural, pre-industrial, rural societies place women in a traditional role of helping in the production of crops but also producing and caring for large numbers of children. These children are cheap and useful. All modern, industrial, urban societies place women in a different role, working

more outside the home, gaining a higher level of education to make better careers possible, marrying later, and producing fewer children. Children in modern, middle-class societies are expensive and – at least until they have been cared for through their primary and secondary school years and then supported, perhaps, through a university education – they are not particularly useful. Many cultural changes coincide with this changed role for women in modern society, including political rights for women consistent with the principles of democracy and claims by women to get out from under a double standard of sexual morality.

Democratic ideals play a large role in this change by supporting the idea of individual freedom and personal choice. Suddenly, in Weimar Germany women could seek out new identities; and other minority groups, including Jews, could claim full rights within the society. These groups and individuals could also express their ideas – on stage, in print, in the arts, and at political gatherings – under the protection of a political system that promised freedom of thought and expression. Many conservative groups in Germany, certainly including representatives of the traditional bastions of church and university, felt threatened by these changes and opposed them.

This cultural crisis may have been a small concern alongside the military humiliation suffered by Germans at the end of World War I, the apparent political crises unresolved by the Weimar Republic, and the recurrent economic crises that so disrupted normal life; but it added to the weight of discontent. Few powerful nations have ever suffered political, economic, and cultural crises in such proximate intensity and under the shadow of a military defeat in which foreign nations could dictate the location of borders, the size and scope of the military, and the financial obligation to be paid to former enemies. Germans had created a powerful, modern nation with many accomplishments to be admired; but in the aftermath of World War I they faced an unusually acute convergence of crises. This is the reality we must remember as we note the German willingness to experiment with the leadership of an angry, aggressive, and radical politician such as Adolf Hitler.

Historical research over the past three decades has increasingly shown that many Germans facing these circumstances and this choice proved very willing to cast their lot with Hitler. Nazis did not inflict themselves on Germany; rather, Germans greeted Hitler, appreciated the economic success and renewed unity and strength that he offered, and proved ready to cooperate with his policies. One extreme example of cooperation can be found in Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion*

101 and the Final Solution in Poland.[17] Browning describes a group of men who were assigned the task of gathering up Jews in small towns in Poland and then murdering them. In some cases, this meant putting a bullet in the back of the victim's neck before rolling him or her into a mass grave, a process so personal that often blood and brain matter splashed on the shooter's uniform and into his face. In other cases, these men simply rounded up Jews and put them on trains bound for a death camp. Through both methods, the five hundred men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 accounted for the deaths of approximately 85,000 Jews.

It is crucial to note Browning's use of the term "ordinary." Historians had previously assumed that Nazi killers would have been young men, those who had reached adolescence and maturity within the Nazi state and under the full impact of Nazi forms of education and training. Furthermore, they were thought to be fervent Nazis, members of the Party and of the most ideological party formation, the SS. Browning's killers, however, were older, less likely to belong to the Party, much less the SS, and so uncommitted to the cause that by 1941 most were living at home and – nearly two years into the war – avoiding duty in either the military or a Nazi organization. These ordinary men were conscripted into a reserve police battalion to perform unexplained duties behind the front lines in Poland. Furthermore, when the duties were explained early one morning, as these men were given their first assignment to kill, they were told they did not have to participate if they found it objectionable. Browning estimates that 10 to 15 percent of these men opted out of the killing, either right away or over time, which means, of course, that approximately 85 percent of these ordinary men killed methodically, in some cases even enthusiastically, whenever they were told to do so.

Omer Bartov gives us a second example of cooperation in his book *Hitler's Army*.[18] For several postwar decades, the professional German military, the Wehrmacht, enjoyed a reputation for being isolated from the Holocaust and relatively clean of Nazi crimes. Bartov and many subsequent historians have poked holes in such a representation. For example, a documentation known as the "Wehrmacht Exhibition"[19] includes

[17] Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

[18] Omar Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[19] I viewed this exhibition in Peenemunde in 2003. It was presented as "*Verbrechen der Wehrmacht: Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941–1944*" ("Crimes of the Wehrmacht: Dimensions of the War of Annihilation, 1941–1944").

pictures of Wehrmacht soldiers shooting point-blank at civilian Jews standing on the edge of mass graves. Major subsequent studies, those by Saul Friedländer, Richard Evans, Peter Longerich, and Timothy Snyder, among others, all take for granted that the German Wehrmacht facilitated the Holocaust in a variety of ways and participated itself.[20]

Military leaders in October 1939 heard these words directly from Hitler: "The hard struggle of nationalities (*Volktumskampf*) does not allow for any legal constraints. The methods will be incompatible with our principles … [but] the old and new territory should be cleansed of Jews, Polacks and rabble."[21] In June 1941, German generals received and passed on Hitler's "Commissar Order," in which troops were told that political commissars in the Red Army and all those identified as "thoroughly bolshevized" should be shot. Peter Longerich quotes Commanding Generals Walther von Reichenau, Erich von Mannstein, and Karl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel, each giving orders in 1941 with invidious comments about Jews, making it clear that the "thoroughly bolshevized" enemy and "Jews" were virtually the same. Von Reichenau, for example, spoke to the "necessary execution of criminal, Bolshevist, and mainly Jewish elements." Longerich draws a somber conclusion: "The role of the Wehrmacht in the annihilation of the Jewish civilian population was by no means exhausted by instances of excess … or by isolated examples of support for the SS and Police during executions. Agencies and units of the Wehrmacht … did in fact cooperate so closely with the SS and the Police that one can legitimately speak in this context of a systematic cooperation and division of labour."[22] In sum, the attacks on Poland and the Soviet Union inaugurated a different sort of war, with German officers encouraging German soldiers to treat the peoples of central and eastern Europe – especially Jews – with unrestrained violence and contempt. It is clear that the Wehrmacht deeply engaged itself in the crimes of the Eastern front, that it was truly "Hitler's Army," and that it simply does not represent a body of professional German soldiers with clean hands.

[20] Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939–1945: The Years of Extermination* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007); Richard Evans, *The Third Reich at War: 1939–1945* (London: Penguin, 2009); Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

[21] Quoted in Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 12. Hitler's words were recorded by an officer present at the meeting he held with military officers and Party officials on October 17, 1939.

[22] Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews*, 242–43.

Turning to the home front, we can consider Robert Gellately's study of the Gestapo, the famed secret police of Nazi Germany. He noticed that the vast majority of Gestapo actions came not from spy work by the organization itself but from denunciations by German civilians.[23] This organization had supposedly turned Germany into a police state under Nazi control. Gellately shows, however, that Gestapo agents were very few in number, especially if we are to assume they were terrorizing an entire nation. Rather, it seems, ordinary Germans were policing themselves, informing on neighbors who might have assisted Jews or said nice things about them and informing on neighbors who told jokes about Hitler or criticized him. Gellately argues that the Nazi police state was self-imposed by the great majority of the German people. They simply endorsed and participated in the Nazi regime and its policies.[24]

One common denominator in the work of Browning, Bartov, Friedlander, Longerich, Evans, Gellately, and many other recent scholars is this realization: Everywhere you look at implementation of the policies of the Nazi state, you find large numbers of Germans participating willingly.[25] The same story applies if you look, for example, at doctors, lawyers, judges, or sociologists. These groups have each been studied, and in each case one finds a strong majority who went along with Hitler's policies, often enthusiastically. I studied Protestant theologians and reached the same conclusion.[26] Doris Bergen has shown that the pro-Nazi Deutsche Christen were far more significant in German Protestantism than previously admitted.[27] Susannah Heschel's book, *The Aryan Jesus*, identifies an extraordinary willingness in modern scholarship to deny the Jewishness of Jesus, which culminated, of course, among Nazi Christians who submerged historical reality in their commitment to Nazi antisemitism.[28] The trajectory in historical scholarship over the last

[23] Robert Gellately, *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy 1933 to 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[24] See also Gellately's follow-up study, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[25] Götz Aly has added an interesting explanation for this willingness, arguing that Nazi plunder of Jews and of the rest of Europe bought public support, giving Germans economic benefits and material comfort. See *Hitler's Beneficiaries: Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State* (London: Picador, 2008).

[26] See Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler*.

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

[28] Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

two decades points in one clear direction. Whenever one looks at a specific group of Germans, one finds an unexpectedly high level of support for and commitment to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi ideology.

Nazis, Germans, "Good Germans," and Decent Human Beings

Some Allied interpretations of the Nazi state tended toward a simple, black-and-white recognition of only two categories: Nazis and decent human beings.[29] That grew out of wartime emotions, of course, as well as the need for wartime unity, as can be seen in the now somewhat embarrassing films of the "Why We Fight" series, created by Frank Capra for the American military. The harshest version assumed that Germans in general inclined toward Nazi behavior or at least blind obedience to the Nazi state through some deficiency in their character or culture, so that decent human beings could be found only on the Allied side. Another version accepted that the number of true Nazis might have been small, and those true Nazis could exercise sufficient control over their neighbors in a totalitarian state. This opened the door for a postwar situation in which the Allies found themselves in need of "good Germans," both to help preserve their faith in human nature and to have a foundation of persons on whom to build a new, cleansed Germany. By that reasoning, some Germans had to be found on the "decent human being" side of the ledger.

Recent scholarship has complicated our interpretation in two ways. First of all, many or most of the "good Germans" no longer look as good as they once did. As I will argue in Chapters 6 and 7, there developed a mutual need in which large numbers of Germans learned to deny their past connections to and support of the Nazi Party and the Allies learned to accept that denial. Entire professions enjoyed better reputations after 1945 than they deserved, and that left entire professions vulnerable to the sort of research undertaken recently. Many skeletons were hidden in the closet, ready to come clattering out. Another side of recent scholarship has "bad Germans" no longer looking quite as bad as they once did. Not that their behavior was less evil, but that they are seen as more

[29] See Michaela Hoenicke Moore, *Know Your Enemy: The American Debate on Nazism, 1933–1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), for the argument that American attitudes before and during the war were ambivalent. This was based on a cultural affinity toward Germans among some, which meant less clarity in America's commitment to the war. It also led toward a quick postwar willingness to see West Germans as natural allies for the Cold War.

complex. This research tends to bring Nazis back into the company of other human beings, a German subset of the human family. They may have responded to a particular set of historical circumstances in ways that we rightly condemn, but accurate historical knowledge could help us to better understand that behavior and also relate it to ourselves and our circumstances.

Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men* represents a good example of this latter tendency. Struggling to understand the murderous behavior of the men he studied, he turned to postwar psychological experiments conducted in the United States. For example, Stanley Milgram showed that many normal Americans will administer electric shock to other humans, despite hearing their screams and even to the point of risking their death, so long as an authority figure in a white lab coat directs them and takes responsibility. Philip Zimbardo conducted a role-playing prison experiment at Stanford University in which American subjects were assigned the role of either prisoner or guard. Behavior deteriorated so quickly and dangerously that Zimbardo chose to end the experiment early for fear that someone would be seriously harmed. These and other experiments suggest that humans in specific situations can behave much more brutally than we might have thought.

What Constitutes Complicity?

Germans in the early postwar period complained bitterly about the alleged Allied charge of "collective guilt." The Allies never actually ascribed collective guilt to Germans, but they followed the precept that specific criminals should be tried in courts of law for specific crimes.[30] That still left massive room for disagreement, however. Germans tended to argue that only a very small number of leading Nazis held real responsibility for the crimes of the Holocaust. All others had simply had jobs to do, possibly under duress, and thus they were "only following orders" and should not be held accountable. The ideal version of this logic would have placed all blame on Hitler and Himmler, and they were conveniently dead. The Allies, however, insisted on culpability for those who committed war crimes and crimes against humanity, whether ordered to do so or not.

Besides these questions of specific guilt or innocence, there exists a much more complicated question of complicity and responsibility. Doris Bergen describes a workshop in which she asked a group of teachers

[30] For the somewhat more complicated circumstances of denazification, see Chapters 6 and 7.

the question, "Who killed Anne Frank?"[31] Each person was given a slip of paper with a name or description of some individual, and they were asked to place themselves in a line, with the most culpable individuals at the front. Bergen expected that Adolf Hitler would be at or near the front of the line, and perhaps those who revealed the Franks' hiding place. However, one person had been given the description of a pastor who preached on Sunday mornings, describing the evils of the Jewish people. She marched to the front of the line and refused to cede her place to others.

Clearly there exists a continuum on which ambiguous examples of culpability can be placed. This book assumes that churches and universities were significant institutions in German life, and that pastors and professors had a measure of influence in shaping public attitudes and behavior. The entire history and identity of church and university include their self-evident assumption that they are significant, that they have an effect on the members of their society. If that were not true, pastors and professors would surely have been failing in their intentions. Does that mean they should take credit for the "ordinary men" who went to Poland and murdered Jews? That is a question fundamental to this book.

It is difficult or impossible to ascribe specific culpability to those who dealt only in words, a circumstance typical for most individuals described in this book. Some exceptions exist. It is relatively easy to assign culpability to those figures in church and university who went beyond words, who participated directly in the killing process. However, most representatives of church and university can only be examined in terms of their words and their response to the issues of their day. How did they react to the rise of Hitler? Did they lend their support to the Nazi regime? Did they endorse the antisemitic policies of the Nazi state?

The rest of this book will look at the behavior of church and university leaders and the ideas they expressed. It will do so with the assumption that these individuals occupied respected positions and carried weight. Sunday sermons in church and religious education lessons in the schools together reached virtually the entire German population, and the rest of the teaching apparatus in German schools was built comprehensively on teaching and research undertaken in the universities. Most of the behavior to be described here would never be labeled criminal, except, perhaps, as an attenuated form of aiding and abetting. Is it possible, however,

[31] Doris Bergen describes this experiment in Steven Martin's film, *Theologians under Hitler*, created by Vital Visuals, Inc., in 2005 and based on my book of the same name.

that ordinary Germans who became killers for the Nazi state felt they had received permission from their churches or from their universities? Inquiring about the complicity of "good Germans" in church and university seems necessary in our attempt to develop more insight into how, really, such a horrific event as the Holocaust could have taken place.

2

Churches and the Rise of Hitler

Two main churches existed in Germany when Adolf Hitler came to power.[1] The Protestant church, which represented about two-thirds of the German people, included a Lutheran faction dominating the heartland and a smaller Reformed group strongest in the Rhineland. These two groups, which shared a great deal, continued to be separated by doctrinal differences first argued by Martin Luther and Jean Calvin in the sixteenth century. The Protestant situation was further complicated by an act of the Prussian king in the early nineteenth century. Tired of the doctrinal split, and no doubt also by its resonance in bureaucratic matters, he combined by fiat these two Protestant versions of the church into the "Old Prussian Union." This variant of Protestantism then dominated

[1] It may seem obvious that these two churches included women as well as men, yet much of the story in this chapter will focus on the words and behaviors of men. That is because men served as pastors, bishops, and professors of religion at that time, and a major concern of this study involves the public face of church and university. Women nonetheless played important roles in many ways. That point is convincingly argued by Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). See especially ch. 7, "Women in the Manly Movement," where Bergen describes the important place of women in the German Christian movement, as well as the difficulty of fitting this fact into a masculinist ideology; and ch. 10, "The Bride of Christ at War," which explores the contradiction between a church that wanted to "be manly, celebrating hardness and aggression while eschewing compassion and humility" whereas "for most Christians in Germany, it was precisely qualities they deemed feminine – nurturing, caring, preserving purity – that defined what a church was and determined what it should do. How could they transform the church into a manly affair when their understanding of it was tied up in a perception of its womanly nature?" (192). See also Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin's, 1987), for her description of the importance of women in various institutions of the churches.

the large and populous Prussian region in northern and eastern Germany, although within the Union there continued to exist separate identities. Some Lutheran and Reformed Protestants never fully accepted the carelessness about doctrine implied in a forced marriage.

The Lutheran Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, fought with both spiritual and military weapons, culminated in the Thirty Years War (1618–1648). Large portions of southern and western Germany retained their Catholic allegiance, notably in Bavaria in the south and in the Rhineland, but with pockets of influence elsewhere. Catholic bishops, clergy, and parishioners represented a strong minority within the Christian community in Germany and continue to do so. After Hitler's *Anschluss* with Austria in 1938 (a merger greeted by many Austrians at the time, although widely disowned after 1945), the Austrian influx raised the Catholic portion of the German population to about 40 percent.

The year 1933 proved dramatic in church as well as state in Germany, as the churches learned to dance with a new partner. Both Protestants and Catholics went through conflicted changes that suggested the possibility of a rocky relationship with the new regime. Much stayed the same too, of course. Each church remained a state church, with the state continuing to collect the church tax and continuing to pay the bills. Furthermore, theological faculties continued to exist under state support at the universities, and religious education continued within the schools. The story of 1933 is one in which a potentially rocky relationship smoothed out and each church learned how to dance with the new German state. At first, it might not have seemed that this would occur.

The Protestant "Kirchenkampf" and the "Jewish Question"

Protestants applied the word *Kirchenkampf*, or church struggle, to events that flared up in 1933 and then continued to smolder and occasionally spark through the subsequent years of the Nazi period. For decades after 1945 this term, *Kirchenkampf*, and the idea of a church struggle created an image of church opposition to the Nazi state that made the church seem the most heroic and least tarnished of Nazi-era institutions. The names and stories of two prominent individuals helped to establish such a version. Martin Niemöller, a pastor in Berlin, played a large role in the struggles of 1933 and ended up being arrested and imprisoned in 1937. He spent the next eight years under Nazi imprisonment, and his name became a watchword outside Germany for Nazi oppression. Dietrich

Bonhoeffer, although younger and less well known at the time, also participated in the *Kirchenkampf* from the first battles. His growing opposition, culminating in his participation in a plot to overthrow Hitler, led to his arrest in 1943 and his execution on April 9, 1945, less than a month before the end of the war.

Most historians today acknowledge the heroism of Niemöller and Bonhoeffer, but they also argue that it misrepresents the story of the churches. These two men represented a small and radical wing of a large church that found much to like in the Nazi state. On both sides of the church struggle, one can find advocates and supporters of Hitler and the Nazi state as well as criticism of radicals like Niemöller and Bonhoeffer. Therefore, the *Kirchenkampf* is best understood as a conflict within the church, between rival factions, and fought largely over theological and ecclesiastical questions. It was never a fight directed against the Nazi state, although a very few radicals might have wished that it were.[2]

The first stages of the *Kirchenkampf* can appear promising for those of us who look back on the events from our present vantage point. We know that the persecution and murder of Jews was the most egregious Nazi crime, the greatest stain on Germany's reputation. It can seem that Jews were at the center of church questions in 1933 and that a large faction of the Protestant church stood up for Jews. This appearance, however, is deceptive.

In September 1933, Martin Niemöller called for the creation of a Pastors' Emergency League. In the next weeks more than one-third of Protestant pastors in Germany signed up and received their membership card. They were protesting the imposition of the "Aryan Paragraph" in matters of the church, meaning that they did not believe that the tiny number of Christians of Jewish descent serving as pastors or paid church officials should be removed from their positions because of their Jewish background. It was not the Nazi state insisting on application of the Aryan Paragraph, even though this proviso had been part of the Nazi "Law for the Restoration and Cleansing of the German Civil Service" introduced in April. Church officials, paid by the state, were thereby civil servants, but the Nazi regime did not want to tangle with the church over this issue or interfere with its self-management. Nonetheless, enthusiastic Nazi

[2] For an assessment of the historical treatment of the *Kirchenkampf*, see Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel, "The Churches and the Holocaust," in Dan Stone, ed., *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 296–318.

pastors and lay people who joined the Deutsche Christen (DC) wanted to prove the church's loyal place within the new state. Determined to merge Christian and Nazi beliefs, they began clamoring for the Protestant church to apply voluntarily the Aryan restriction on itself. On September 5, 1933, DC delegates at the Prussian synodical meeting passed such a resolution, and that led to Martin Niemöller's counterattack. He created the Pastors' Emergency League to fight for the idea that Christian pastors of Jewish descent were simply Christians and should be considered equal to any other Christian in the eyes of the church. Niemöller also argued that outside, political considerations should not interfere with the church's decision about whom to ordain and employ.

A second "Jewish issue" quickly added to the impression that Martin Niemöller and his supporters were standing up against antisemitism. Deutsche Christen found it difficult and very embarrassing to have to acknowledge the thoroughly Jewish roots of their religious faith. It also created cognitive dissonance for them when they tried to understand the Jewish origins of Christianity in the light of their thoroughgoing commitment to Nazi ideology, including its hatred of Jewish blood, any time and any place. Thus, they began tampering with the Jewish element within the Christian tradition. In a November rally of 20,000 people held in the Berlin Sports Palace, a DC leader called for the removal of the Jewish Old Testament from the Christian Bible. He also attacked Paul, who had written much of the New Testament, but whose Jewish origins could not be denied. Yet, if you removed Paul's letters from the Bible, you cut the ground from under Martin Luther, who based his concept of salvation by faith alone on Paul's Letter to the Romans. This DC foray into heresy, as it would be considered by all but the most acrobatic Christians, pushed many traditionalists away from them and into Niemöller's Emergency League.[3]

[3] Treatment of the Confessing Church and its origins can be found in John S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches, 1933–1945* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968); Klaus Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich, Volume 1: Preliminary History and the Time of Illusions 1918–1934* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988, originally published as *Die Kirchen und das Dritte Reich. Bd. 1: Vorgeschichte und Zeit der Illusionen 1918–1934*, Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, 1977); and Klaus Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich, Volume 2: The Year of Disillusionment: 1934 Barmen and Rome* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988, originally published as *Die Kirchen und das Dritte Reich, Bd. 2*, Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, 1986). See also Victoria J. Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest Against Hitler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Manfred Gailus, *Protestantismus und Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur nationalsozialistischen Durchdringung des protestantischen Sozialmilieus in Berlin* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2001).

Two false impressions can arise from these circumstances. One is that the Pastors' Emergency League was opposing the state and its imposition of the Aryan Paragraph. That is simply not true, because the attempt to institute the policy came from DC members within the Protestant church, not from the state. The second false impression could be that Niemöller and his colleagues were standing up for Jews. On the contrary, they were standing up for Christians and for two very important bulwarks within the Christian tradition. The canonicity of the Bible hardly needs to be mentioned. Early councils had established the size and shape of the Christian Bible, the church for centuries had accepted this Bible as God's inspired word, and Pastors' Emergency League members were unwilling to tamper with those centuries of tradition by removing the Old Testament. (Many did prove willing over time to reduce or even eliminate Old Testament readings from their worship practice, as the pervasive antisemitism in their surroundings brought its pressure to bear.)

The other important Christian bulwark involved baptism. Traditional Christians had to defend baptism as a significant event (along with the ordination of pastors, which also played a role here). They argued the primacy of spiritual reality, entry into the body of Christ, over a material reality based on the composition of one's blood. It is important to note that most Christians who stood up for "Jews" during the Nazi era almost always stood up for Christians who happened to be of Jewish descent.[4] They were not Jews at all, except, of course, under the racial categories insisted on by Nazis. It was possible to get in trouble in Nazi Germany by showing support for Christians of Jewish descent. However, Christians standing up for Christians of Jewish descent was far different from Christians standing up for Jews, a distinction understood at the time that should not be ignored after the fact. Many Germans throughout the denazification process drew up lists of all the Jews they had befriended or ever known. In many cases these were not members of the Jewish community, nor was the Pastors' Emergency League defending actual Jews in its fight over the Aryan Paragraph.

The Pastors' Emergency League that Niemöller formed in 1933 developed in the following year into the Confessing Church (Bekennende Kirche or BK), another movement within the German Protestant Church. This is the organization with which Niemöller, Bonhoeffer, and others

[4] Thomas Pegelow Kaplan, *The Language of Nazi Genocide: Linguistic Violence and the Struggle of Germans of Jewish Ancestry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), explores the significance of Nazi word choices and their implications.

have been associated, and this is the organization that has enjoyed a very positive postwar reputation. There were real heroes in the Confessing Church. Some of them actually opposed the Nazi state, some of them really tried to assist Jews, and some of them were imprisoned or even executed for the risks that they took. On the question of antisemitism, however, the reputation of the Confessing Church has significantly declined.

Consider Otto Dibelius, who served as superintendent (similar to bishop) of the Berlin-Brandenburg church prior to 1933. He later became one of the leading figures in the Confessing Church. In the postwar era he became a celebrity – elected president of the German Protestant Church and even serving as president of the World Council of Churches. This same Otto Dibelius sent an Easter letter in 1928 to the pastors under his care, commenting on the element in German nationalism known as the *völkisch* movement. The word *Volk* can be translated simply as "people," although for German nationalists the word included a racial assumption and was thought to represent a profound, spiritual reality for "true Germans." *Völkisch* emphases also served as a foundation for the Nazi Party, with its stress on the unacceptable, alien nature of Jews in Germany. Dibelius makes all of this clear in his Easter letter of 1928:

> My dear brothers!
>
> All of us will not only understand but have complete sympathy for the final motivations behind the *völkisch* movement. Despite the evil ring that the word has acquired in many cases, I have always considered myself an antisemite. It cannot be denied that Judaism plays a leading role in all the corruptive phenomena of modern civilization.
>
> God bless us Christians and our Easter proclamation!

By acknowledging an "evil ring," Dibelius seems to show restraint, but he also is happy to label himself an antisemite. Five years later, we see another example of his approach. On April 1, 1933, the Nazi regime organized a national boycott of Jewish shops. This represented the first dramatic gesture to show that Jews were unwelcome in Germany and would be targeted by Hitler and his government. It also preceded by less than a week the new Civil Service Law that contained an "Aryan Paragraph," the attempt to "cleanse" Germany by removing thousands of Jews from their jobs in teaching and other forms of public employment. The boycott on April 1 aroused international outrage, including an effort to organize a boycott against German exports. Dibelius rose to the defense of his government and its actions. On April 4, he wrote in Berlin's *Evangelische Sonntagsblatt*: "The last fifteen years in Germany have

strengthened Jewry's influence to an extraordinary degree. The number of Jewish judges, Jewish politicians, and Jewish civil servants in influential positions has grown measurably. Public sentiment turns against this." In a radio address subsequently published on April 6, Dibelius complained about "ghastly news reports" in the foreign press, dishonestly describing harsh measures undertaken by the new regime. These had caused "the Jewish community in several countries [to begin] agitating against Germany," so that Germany reacted with its Jewish boycott. He commended the restraint shown in the boycott, including the fact that it lasted only one day with "only one single bloody incident." Then he added, apparently with inside knowledge of the Civil Service Law to be published on April 7:

> In addition, a government operation is under way to remove the Jews from public administration, particularly the judiciary. Jews in Germany make up not even one percent of the population. The proportions here should become again what they were previously. The Christian Church stands for chivalry and love. The Church fervently wishes that the hour may soon come when violence is no longer necessary, but in which the newly ordered life of the state allows room for love and justice. That will depend on whether the foreign agitation against Germany stops or not. For this reason, as a servant of my church, I sincerely and urgently ask my Christian friends in America to use their influence so that false news reports about Germany are no longer disseminated and believed.[5]

The first problem here is that there seems to have been greater falsity in Dibelius's knee-jerk defense of his nation than in the foreign reports of which he complained. There was certainly more violence or threat of violence in the Jewish boycott of April 1 than he admits, with Sturmabteilung members (storm troopers, hereafter referred to as SA) in their brown uniforms standing outside Jewish shops, attempting to enforce the boycott through intimidation. Swastikas and anti-Jewish slogans were painted on shop windows as another form of intimidation. Furthermore, despite Dibelius's claim of minimal violence, he accepted the need for violence in response to what he described as the problem of Jews in Germany. In acknowledging the present impossibility of "love and justice" in the "newly ordered life" of the Nazi state, he hoped merely that some future time might allow its return. Then he tried to shift responsibility for the lack of love and justice onto foreign protestors against German behavior.

[5] This material and these quotations come from Wolfgang Gerlach, *And the Witnesses were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, translated and edited by Victoria J. Barnett (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 14–15.

It seems clear that Dibelius was trying to reconcile his deep-seated antagonism toward Jews with his recognition that the Christian tradition called for some sort of decency, even brotherly love, to be shown toward others. So he spoke of the "problem" that Jews had become in Germany.

Some of the harsh words by Dibelius as well as his analysis found echo several weeks later in the even harsher words of another leading Protestant in Germany, Professor Gerhard Kittel of the renowned theological faculty at the University of Tübingen. Kittel's father, Rudolf Kittel, had gained fame with a critical edition of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, the "Kittel Bible" as it became known. Following in the footsteps of his father, Gerhard Kittel learned Hebrew and studied Jewish sources; but he worked in New Testament studies, identifying the broad fabric connecting Jesus' teachings to other Jewish teachings of that day. In the 1920s, Gerhard Kittel seemed to have respect for Jews and the Jewish tradition, a respect that grew out of his scholarship. He also bemoaned the Weimar Republic, however, and what he saw as the moral decadence and political weakness of Germany. He welcomed Adolf Hitler enthusiastically and confirmed this stance by joining the Nazi Party in May 1933. On June 1, he gave a public lecture in Tübingen under the title "The Jewish Question," a lecture that soon appeared also in print.

Kittel immediately clarifies his purpose in this work. He wants to identify the appropriate Christian stance in relation to the harsh, racially based antisemitism making such an impact in Germany at that time. He notes that some question "whether such a radical set of laws against Jews is necessary and just, … whether such a set of laws can be justified from an ethical and Christian point of view, or whether it is not truly, as one says about us in the outside world, barbarian brutality." He adds that some Christians, especially among the most serious, "have, one is almost inclined to say, a bad conscience when they think about the Jewish question."[6] Kittel assures his audience, however,

> that the fight against Jews can be conducted from the platform of a conscious and clear Christianity. It is not enough to base this battle on racial points of view or current attitudes alone. *The actual, complete answer can only be found where one succeeds in giving the Jewish question a religious foundation, giving the battle against the Jews a Christian interpretation*. We must find … the clear path which allows us to think and behave in both a German and Christian manner, thus allowing us to come to an unambiguous decision.[7]

[6] Gerhard Kittel, *Die Judenfrage*, 1st ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933), 7–8.
[7] Ibid., 8 (emphasis in the original).

Kittel recognizes that the unambiguous decisions he supports will impact Jews so harshly that the hardship will arouse sympathy among many Christians, but "such considerations must never lead to a sentimental softening and paralysis."[8] Furthermore, "We must not allow ourselves to be crippled because the whole world screams at us of barbarism and a reversion to the past.... How the German *Volk* regulates its own cultural affairs does not concern anyone else in the world."[9]

Kittel hoped to relieve the conscience of Christians in Germany. He set out in this lecture and in almost all his work through the Nazi period to justify harsh, brutal treatment of Jews as a necessary response to the "danger" of Jews. He claimed he was arguing in defense of Germany and of Christian civilization. Already in this lecture of June 1933, Kittel advocated the stripping of citizenship from German Jews, so that a special set of laws could be created to remove them from medicine, law, teaching, journalism – every important niche in German life – and to forbid marriage or sexual relations with non-Jews. Here he was two years ahead of the government, which introduced its Nuremberg Racial Laws and took away Jewish rights of German citizenship only in 1935. The crucial thing to note is that Kittel was a significant figure in German Protestantism, a celebrated theologian who wrote extensively, preached often, and trained a significant portion of the next generation of Protestant pastors. He represents a broad swath of Christian sentiment in Germany, and he set himself the task of reconciling, for himself and his fellow Christians, the apparent harshness of Nazi rhetoric and policy with the supposedly soft contours of Christian love and compassion. One can note that Kittel never placed Jews into the category of "neighbor" to be loved. By accepting the semantics embraced by all antisemites, including the Nazis, Jews existed for him only as a "problem," a "question."

The same deep-seated prejudice and language of the "Jewish question" can be found throughout 1933 in an important Lutheran newspaper in Germany, the weekly *Allgemeine Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* (*AELKZ*). This newspaper, founded in 1868 and published in Leipzig, reached a national audience and considered itself a voice of the "new Lutheran" desire to reinvigorate traditional Lutheran beliefs. By 1933, this included a willingness to denigrate the Weimar Republic, arguing that the democratic system had been "built upon sand," without the firm

[8] Ibid., 62.
[9] Ibid., 39.

foundation of German tradition and without recognition of God's expectation for Germans. Then came an antisemitic note: "Even the history of its creation is a clear sign: It was puzzled out in a theoretical fashion by a Jewish professor of state law, far removed from German history and from the essence of Germanness."[10] This newspaper also welcomed with enthusiasm the new Civil Service Law, which would cleanse the German civil service of "unsuitable elements,"[11] by which was surely meant both socialists and Jews.

By the end of May, the *AELKZ* published an analysis of antisemitism in the ancient world that ran to nine pages and represented only the first installment of many. The author, Johannes Leipoldt, defends the Old Testament as part of the Christian Bible and acknowledges that Christianity grew up within the Jewish context; but he describes animosity toward Jews as a widespread phenomenon in the ancient world, quickly exhibited by Christians as well. "It is notable in religious history that Christianity did indeed grow up in the midst of Jewish culture, but very quickly made antisemitism its own. This must therefore have its own explanation."[12]

In his next installment, Leipoldt seeks to find the explanation for widespread, early antisemitism, and he spends most of his 1,200 words in this much shorter article dealing with race. "People today are inclined to base antisemitism above all on race," he acknowledges. Furthermore, "one may assume that the Jewish person exhibited in the ancient world the bodily [that is, racial] characteristics that we observe today." Leipoldt then argues that Jews were not purely Semitic, but rather a blend of races (a "mixture," which, although he does not say it here, always represented a negative for people committed to racial purity). He adds that they early on acquired "the most visible bodily peculiarity of the Jews: the hooked nose." While accepting the racial stereotypes of his day and while trying to give them historical legitimacy, he also points toward his own conclusion, to be explained in the next installment: "Racial difference is not adequate as an explanation for antisemitism in the ancient world." Rather, he will look to religious, political, and economic explanations.[13]

[10] "Wochenschau," *Allgemeine-Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* (hereafter, *AELKZ*) 66/15 (Leipzig, April 14, 1933), 353.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Johannes Leipoldt, "Antisemitismus in der alten Welt," *AELKZ* 66/21 (May 26, 1933), 482–90 (here 484).

[13] Leipoldt, "Antisemitismus in der alten Welt, II. Die Gründe," *AELKZ* 66/22 (June 2, 1933), 512–14.

In the subsequent issue, Leipoldt explains his personal conclusion: "It seems to me that the religious basis for antisemitism is the most important." This places him close to Gerhard Kittel, accepting the full thrust of antisemitism in its implications for Jews, but looking for something in his own area – theology and history – rather than giving over to biologists the right to identify and describe the main explanation. Not that Jews benefit from such restraint. "The religious peculiarity (*Besonderheit*) of Jews aroused an unpleasant reaction, indeed, even more so in that the Jew was proud of these differences (*Besonderheiten*)."[14] It is worth noting that Leipoldt's rather mild word, "differences," hardly does justice to the centuries of Christian hostility toward Jews. When Leipoldt complains that "the Jew was proud of these differences," he simply means that Jews chose to remain Jews rather than convert to Christianity; but that was a source of bitterness toward Jews unmatched by Christian prejudice against any other religion. The failure of Jews to accept Jesus as the Messiah represented for Christians a direct attack on the core of their religious belief and, of course, the unacceptable claim that Jews understood the Jewish tradition better than did Christians.

Leipoldt goes on to describe the religious, political, and economic bases for hatred of Jews as he purports to find these hatreds in the ancient world, including the stereotype that the Jew was quickly recognized by others as "unreliable in business."[15] One finds invidious comments throughout this work, a work that presents itself as highly scholarly; and one searches in vain throughout the many installments of this Lutheran reflection on the Jewish question for any word of sympathy for Jews. The attacks and injustice Jews suffered in the first year of Hitler's regime seemed to produce in Leipoldt no recognition that Jews might represent the "neighbor" Jesus had commanded Christians to love.

By contrast, Dietrich Bonhoeffer appears to us today as one of the most clear-sighted, ethically courageous Christians in Germany during the Nazi period. Thus, we are inclined to look to him for an exception to the antisemitic attitudes expressed by Dibelius, Kittel, and Leipoldt. He and his family stood to the left of most Christians in Germany, accepting the democratic principles of the Weimar Republic and never feeling attracted to Adolf Hitler, and he really did believe that brutality should

[14] Leipoldt, "Antisemitismus in der alten Welt, III," *AELKZ*, 66/23 (June 9, 1933), 534–36, here 534.

[15] Leipoldt, "Antisemitismus in der alten Welt, VII," *AELKZ* 66/27 (July 7, 1933), 632, 634.

not be accepted, rationalized, and covered over by Christian apologists. Bonhoeffer thus provides an important counterpoint in any analysis of Protestant antisemitism. In April 1933, he responded to the Jewish Boycott and to the Aryan Paragraph in the new Civil Service Law by presenting a paper, "The Church and the Jewish Question," which then reached a broader audience with its publication in June. This work represents a courageous – if also lonely – defense of Jews, noting that Christians are obligated to bind the wounds of anyone who suffers, anyone who has been crushed under the wheel of state action. In addition, he used a portentous image by suggesting that the church might also be called on to try to stop the vehicle, placing itself "in the spokes of the wheels." Bonhoeffer eventually followed his own advice, undertaking resistance against the Nazi regime, and he paid the ultimate price. This public statement enunciated in early 1933 signals the integrity and seriousness of his stance and his moral clarity on the question of Jews. However, there is another side to the story, and it is to be found within this same statement.

We can see that even Bonhoeffer was influenced by the tenor of his times, both by the centuries of Christian hostility toward Jews and by the current idea that Jews represented a "problem" in Germany.[16] His very willingness to work under the rubric of the Jewish question played into the hands of antisemites, especially in that Bonhoeffer did not deny the existence of a problem. Furthermore, he accepted the right of the state to deal with this problem. The church might bind up the wounds of the suffering but not interfere in the work of the state. Here, Bonhoeffer was accepting the traditional Lutheran view of two separate realms, which should not interfere in each other's business. He was also a traditional Christian as he noted the long, sad trail of Jewish suffering over the centuries. He attributed this suffering to the actions of a just God, punishing Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus, rather than to the more obvious explanation – unjust Christian punishment of Jews for being different. Finally, he expressed his belief that the Jewish problem and Jewish suffering would only be resolved when Jews did the right thing and accepted Jesus as the Messiah. This shows Bonhoeffer's commitment (at least at that time – it can be argued that he changed his view over time) to a very

[16] See for example, Kenneth Barnes' treatment of these issues in "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Hitler's Persecution of the Jews," in Robert P. Ericksen and Susannah Heschel, eds., *Betrayal: German Churches and the Holocaust* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 110–28.

traditional Christian view of its own supersessionism. This view holds that Christianity has replaced Judaism as God's favorite religion. Since then, Christians who believe in Jesus stand in God's favor, but Jews do not. By today's measure, even Dietrich Bonhoeffer was expressing ideas in 1933 that could be labeled antisemitic.

Today's assessment of antisemitism and the complicated subject of Christian antisemitism over the centuries represent issues that cannot be described in the space available here. Some background must be mentioned, however. First of all, many deny that Christian antisemitism exists, preferring to call the Christian version anti-Judaism. It is true that application of the word "antisemitism" to circumstances prior to 1879 is anachronistic, because the word was only invented that year. It is also true that modern antisemites base their views on a pseudoscientific theory, the racist idea that Jews are evil because evil is rooted in their blood. Christian hostility toward Jews is presumably rooted in religion, rather than blood, which leads some Christians to place the Christian past (or, in some cases, even themselves today) under the less offensive umbrella term, anti-Judaism. Antisemitism has fallen into such disrepute and carries such an historical taint that almost no one, sometimes not even the most egregious haters of Jews, wants to be tarred with the term. Anti-Judaism might imply that one is simply being true to one's own religion.

However, there is much evidence to suggest that Christian hostility toward Jews was almost never a purely religious complaint based on the refusal of Jews to accept Jesus as the Messiah or the extraordinarily exaggerated claim that "Jews" killed Jesus. (Not the Romans? All Jews? All Jews then? All Jews up to the present?) This hostility was overlaid with animosity toward Jews as outsiders, as a minority who refused to accept local customs of food, dress, and practice of worship. This hostility was also overlaid with socioeconomic, cultural stereotypes very similar, in fact almost identical, to the stereotypes of modern antisemites – that Jews are rich or conniving or deceitful. It also seems certain that Christians were the ones throughout the centuries of Western, Christian development who targeted Jews as appropriate objects of scorn and invented the stereotypes used to justify animosity. It was Christians who singled out Jews as worthy of hatred. By this view, modern, racial antisemites, wanting to hate Jews and no longer finding religious arguments adequate, turned to a more modern, supposedly scientific explanation – the blood; but modern antisemites accepted from their Christian forebears the idea that Jews were the ones to hate.

The story of Christians and antisemitism makes for uncomfortable reading. People in modern, democratic societies have learned to condemn antisemitism and to value tolerance as well as civil rights. Germany in 1933 practiced an increasingly rabid form of antisemitism, and Christians in that era – even including, to a certain extent, Dietrich Bonhoeffer – accepted the basic argument that Jews represented a problem and that their civil rights could be forcibly denied. Without accepting their antisemitic responses, we should at least note the historical context. For example, the response of Christians in Germany to the mistreatment of Jews emanated from a time in which civil rights had a lower profile than it does today. Prior to the rise of the mid-century civil rights and anticolonial movements, movements rooted at least partially and symbolically in the "fight against racism" represented by World War II, civil rights abuses were tolerated in America, in Europe, and in European colonies with little sense of guilt or outrage. Germans, with only a recent and never widely accepted experience of democracy, perhaps gave civil rights an even narrower place of respect. Another part of their world of ideas included centuries of Christian antisemitism, as indicated earlier in this chapter. However, the Christian response to anti-Jewish policies must also be understood in the broader picture of Christian responses to Adolf Hitler and the rise of the Nazi state.

Christians in Germany were almost certainly not attracted to Adolf Hitler *primarily* because of his antisemitism. Christians may even have found the Nazi emphasis on antisemitism too violent and rather vulgar. This is hinted at when Dibelius alluded to "the evil ring the word has acquired" and when Gerhard Kittel, so willing to play up his own antisemitic credentials in the new Germany, disparaged the "vulgar antisemitism" of some Nazis in comparison to his own allegedly more spiritual and cultural version. But Christians *were* attracted to Adolf Hitler. The story of the *Kirchenkampf*, once portrayed as a story of opposition to Hitler, included a deep-seated antisemitism, which can be found on both sides of the church struggle. It also included a widespread enthusiasm for Hitler. This enthusiasm was to be found among many members of the Confessing Church as well as among the especially eager Nazis who labeled themselves Deutsche Christen.

The Protestant Kirchenkampf and the Rise of Hitler

Paul Althaus, a professor of theology at the University of Erlangen and probably the leading Luther expert of his day, proclaimed in 1933, "Our

Protestant churches have greeted the turning point of 1933 as a gift and miracle of God."[17] It is important to note the enthusiasm in this statement. Hitler represented not just an adequate politician or the best choice of the moment but a gift from God and even a miracle! It is also important to note that Althaus was almost certainly correct in claiming to speak for Protestants in general. Voter support for the Nazi Party was particularly high in regions where active Protestant churches were strongest.[18] Martin Niemöller, soon to lead the Pastors' Emergency League, voted for Nazi candidates and welcomed Hitler's rise. His brother Wilhelm, also a pastor, not only voted for Hitler but had joined the Nazi Party already in 1923, thus making him a very early supporter. Both brothers had fought in the right-wing Freikorps movement in the early stages of the Weimar Republic, another indicator of radical, right-wing sympathies.[19] Finally, there are many other statements by Protestant church bodies proclaiming enthusiasm for the Nazi regime.

Weekly editorials in the national Lutheran newspaper cited previously, the *Allgemeine Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* (*AELKZ*), provide one window on political attitudes among Protestants at that time. We can assess the mood before Hitler's rise in an editorial from January 6, 1933. It begins with a quotation from Jeremiah, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jeremiah 8:20). It also draws images from Isaiah and claims the entire *Volk* is "struck down and hungry" and that "misery wanders through all streets."

> The *Volk* was never in such dark night as today.... When the World War ended, one believed that the worst was past; one yearned only for peace, cried for peace, peace at any price, and signed the Versailles Treaty. But that signature was not for peace but for war, not a blessing but a curse. The war, despite its losses and privation, was a golden time compared to the iron time of peace, which rolled over the *Volk* like an iron threshing machine, life-crushing, prosperity-destroying,

[17] Paul Althaus, *Die deutsche Stunde der Kirche*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1934), 5.

[18] See Hartmut Lehmann, *Protestantische Weltsichten. Transformationen seit dem 17. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1998), especially chapter VII, "Hitlers evangelische Wähler," 130–52.

[19] See Robert P. Ericksen, "Wilhelm Niemöller and the Historiography of the Kirchenkampf," in Hartmut Lehmann and Manfred Gailus, eds., *Nationalprotestantische Mentalitäten. Konturen, Entwicklungslinien und Umbrüche eines Weltbildes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2005), 433–51, especially 433–34. See also James Bentley, *Martin Niemöller 1892–1984* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), especially 24–25 and 39–43; and also Jürgen Schmidt, *Martin Niemöller im Kirchenkampf* (Hamburg: Leibniz Verlag, 1971).

strength-breaking. It was God's threshing machine. God called to repentance, and no one would come. With every year it sank deeper, the situation grew more hopeless, more at a loss, more confused.[20]

Although this editorial speaks to the hard times of the depression, it also is harsh toward the politics of the Weimar Republic and the cultural changes in Germany of the 1920s:

Where God is not in the house, one builds on sand, creates not a house but a collapsing ruin. Yes, ruination has come to the earlier, proud Reich. There remains no strength, except the strength to scold, to quarrel, to hate, to rage against one's own *Volk* comrades (*Volksgenossen*), with robbery and murder, with character assassination and embitterment.[21]

There is also a great fear directed toward the left, from the Bolsheviks in Russia to intellectuals in Germany:

If that restricted itself only to Russia, we would have no need to discuss it further. But, as we said above, the front of the Godless wants to conquer the world. It is a grandiose, almost fantastic plan, one wants to say. And yet, this plan is already in full execution. Bolshevism has fastened its feet in Germany, in Austria, in England, in France, and so forth, and then in America, in Africa, and in Asia. No government will have it. Everyone knows that with the loss of religion in Bolshevism, morality also goes under, and that a state without religion and morality hurries unstoppably to its own destruction. World history proves that surely enough. But no customs agent, no fortresses and no tanks can keep Bolshevism out; like the plague it surmounts the barriers [protecting] all peoples.

For alongside the open army of the Godless there is a closely tied, secret army. Without weapons, without force this pushes itself forward, effectively organized through journals, the daily press, radio, through lectures and assemblies, festivals, the building of cells, free times. It has at its disposal an excellent arsenal given to it by scholarship (*Wissenschaft*), and not just recently. Through the ages scholarship has undermined belief in God, in the Bible, and in the Church.[22]

This editorial also takes pleasure in the fact that the victor nations are suffering, and not just Germany: "Rich America begins to become a poor America, powerful England sees its power disappear." It also assesses guilt: "God's mill grinds slowly. The World War was a crime, and the peace treaty was a crime.... They thought they could thrust the sword into the breast of the defeated *Volk* so that it would never come out, but

[20] "Vorwort," *AELKZ* 66/1 (January 6, 1933), 1–2. This editorial, unsigned, was presumably written by Wilhelm Laible, editor of the *AELKZ*.
[21] Ibid., 3.
[22] Ibid., 5.

the sword turned its point into their own breast."[23] If we detect the attitude of a self-righteous Germany, blaming the Allies and blaming itself only in the mistaken cultural and political choices of the Weimar era, we might expect that this newspaper would reach out a hand of support to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. Subsequent weeks bear this out.

February 10, 1933, brought this comment: "We still stand in astonishment before the great turning point (*vor der grossen Wende*) brought by January 30th. To measure the entire breadth of the events, one must think back on the period thirteen or fourteen years ago.... Now democracy in all its shades has been struck down by its own weapons, and one can well imagine the disappointment [of its supporters]."[24] After the Reichstag Fire, a column gave this comment: "As regrettable as the burning of the Reichstag building is, and as impossible as it is to know its consequences, perhaps it required this flaming signal with its impressive force to open the eyes of many of our contemporaries, inside and outside Germany, to the seriousness of the times in which we live." The commentary goes on to repeat Hitler's interpretation. "It is more than unlikely that this ... involves only the work of a single fanatic." Germans must expect "that well-planned terrorist acts lie ahead, and that ... this and similar acts according to the model of Russian terrorists could quickly recur." That made the election two days later, on March 5, of special importance: "It is the decision between right and left, between the forces of November 1918 and the forces of the reawakened national Germany," a statement that leaves the stance of the *AELKZ* in no doubt. The column then adds, in light of the recent "victory" over democracy: "The government will stay at the wheel, no matter how the election turns out, for the parliament is no longer strong enough to withstand the concentrated powers of the Reich President, the army, Hitler, and the fighting coalition [of right-wing parties]." Some will not like everything about Hitler's government or the Nazi revolution, but one should not get caught up in "small criticism of this or that individual decision by the government, or this or that political personality with whom one is less pleased. One can only hope from one's heart that the great experiment will succeed."[25]

[23] Ibid., 3.

[24] "Wochensachau," *AELKZ* 66/6 (February 10, 1933), 138. The commentary has just described Social Democrats as the major beneficiaries of democracy, and thus the most disappointed by its collapse.

[25] "Wochenschau," *AELKZ* 66/9 (March 3, 1933), 210.

In April, the *AELKZ* returned to the theme that some aspects of the Nazi program might not please everyone, coupled with a statement of pronounced support:

> We get no further if we get stuck on little things that might displease us, failing to value the great things God has done for our *Volk* through them [the Nazis]. Or was it perhaps not God but "the old, evil enemy?" For humans alone have not done this, an entire *Volk*, or at least its largest part, raising itself up into a storm, breaking the spiritual chains of many years, wanting once again to be a free, honest, clean *Volk*. There are higher powers at work here. The "evil enemy" does not want a clean *Volk*, he wants no religion, no church, no Christian schools; he wants to destroy all of that. But the National Socialist movement wants to build all this up, they have written it into their program. Is that not God at work?[26]

As Doris Bergen has suggested, even the reference to misgivings by church leaders, the measured balancing of pros and cons, probably helped give credibility to the overall endorsement for lay Christians who were weighing these matters themselves.[27]

One week later, this Lutheran newspaper praised the authoritarian stance of the new regime as seen in the Enabling Act and the new law to cleanse the civil service.[28] Later in April it praised the collapse of democracy, the idea "that a large group of individuals who happen to make up a majority have the right to set up and put in place a social contract," now thankfully replaced by the idea of the *Volk*, which has "with its language and its characteristics a holy right and a holy duty."[29] Then we find a report on the Bavarian church, including a statement to be read in all Protestant churches in the region:

> A state which begins once again to govern according to God's command may expect not just the applause but the joyous cooperation of the church. With thanks and joy the church perceives how the new state protects against blasphemy, represses immorality, upholds discipline and orderliness with a stronger hand. It calls for fear of God, holds marriage holy, wants to know that youth are spiritually educated, and it brings the role of the fathers once again into honor, while warm love for *Volk* and fatherland is no longer scorned (*verfemt*), but enkindled in thousands of hearts.[30]

[26] "Kirche und Nationalsozialismus," *AELKZ* 66/14 (April 7, 1933), 328.

[27] See for example, Doris Bergen, "Nazism and Christianity: Partners and Rivals? A Response to Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich. Nazi Conceptions of Christianity*," *Journal of Contemporary History* 42/1 (2007), 25–33.

[28] "Wochenschau," *AELKZ* 66/15 (April 14, 1933), 353.

[29] D. Zoellner, "Die Bedeutung der Reformation für das deutsche Volkstum," *AELKZ* 66/16 (4–21–33), 367.

[30] "Kirchliche Nachrichten," *AELKZ* 66/16 (April 21, 1933), 379.

The *AELKZ* was careful to protect the prerogatives of the church and of the Lutheran confessions. It defended the Old Testament against attack, and it criticized the excesses of Deutsche Christen. "The 'Deutsche Christen' know that a large share of church people do not stand behind them. Wherein lies the difference? Certainly not in the thankful, joyful commitment to the new Reich. In that, almost all are united; the number of those who cannot yet go along is very small. The difference lies not in the national but in the religious area."[31]

In May, Wilhelm Laible reacted to a reader's concern over the use of the word "revolution," a word the reader associated only with violence and with disobedience to Romans 13 and its command to obey state authority. Laible (1856–1943), the editor of *AELKZ* since before World War I, was well known for his defense of Lutheran doctrine. For example, in 1913–1914 he organized a series of articles for his newspaper that defended traditional teachings against modern skeptics. He then edited a volume, soon translated into English as well, under the title *The Truth of the Apostles' Creed: An Exposition by Twelve Theologians of Germany*.[32] Laible responded to the reader's concern about revolution by acknowledging that the French and Russian revolutions had been filled with horrors. However,

> [t]he present "national revolution" is different from them. No hangman found bloody work, no fist of power was raised against the existing government, but everything occurred in the calm path of law and order. That is the wonderful thing about this overthrow and it belongs among those signs which show us that God had his hand in play, so that the old "legal" fell and the "legal" of the new rose up. Adolf Hitler, when his movement was still in its beginning stages, gave the motto to his followers: Only legally! With discipline worthy of our admiration, National Socialists held this motto fast. They went through the streets without weapons, because the carrying of weapons was illegal, and, like wild game, they let themselves be shot at by their opponents who carried weapons. Their numbers who were shot to death goes into the hundreds, their wounded into the thousands. If a few individuals broke, the movement as a whole held itself strictly to this "legal," their only weapon the word, the idea, the ideal of a free, morally pure, religion-based new Reich. God blessed this "legal." No fighting on the streets but a great spiritual struggle brought about the change, the rising up. Without violence your *Führer* came to the high place of Reich Chancellor, and he

[31] "'Deutsche Christen' und 'Deutsche Evangelische Reichskirche,'" *AELKZ* 66/17 (April 28, 1933), 396.

[32] Wilhelm Laible, DD, editor, and Charles E. Hay, DD, translator, *The Truth of the Apostles' Creed: An Exposition by Twelve Theologians of Germany* (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, 1916). This book on Lutheran doctrine is still available, with a reprinting in 2008.

now has a power that no chancellor before him ever possessed. No, it was not a revolution in the old sense, it was purer and greater: an awakening of the *Volk* to freedom, a breaking of their chains of slavery, a rising up of the *Volk* in a manner never imagined.[33]

This paean of praise to the calm and lawful rise of Hitler is hard to reconcile with our well-documented images of Nazi storm troopers marching through streets, intimidating their enemies, and threatening and brawling. However, Hitler did receive his appointment as chancellor and his Enabling Act in a legal manner. Furthermore, "revolution" was anathema to most readers of the *AELKZ*, for they associated it with the left, with the hated French and Russian Revolutions, as well as the abortive German revolution of 1918–1919. It was important to Laible to cleanse the concept of its "un-Christian" implications and, presumably, he wrote with a sense of his own integrity. He also must have written in the belief that his readers would recognize his version of events, even though historians today would find them candy-coated.[34] In the same issue of his paper, Laible printed this comment about his *Führer*: "And who could escape the deep impression when the Chancellor again closed [his] speech with a call to God, which in his mouth certainly means more than simply an effective way to close a speech: 'God, we will not let you go. Now save our struggle for our freedom, and thereby for our German *Volk* and fatherland.'"[35]

Another example of the Christian point of view in 1933 can be found in a statement labeled, "The Confession of a National Socialist," which Laible printed in June 1933. This Nazi begins, "I thank God that I may stand where he has placed me." He then goes on,

I separate myself from the world in which man was the measure of all things. I separate myself from the world in which the individual or a majority decided on its own, without a measure for false and correct, right and wrong. I separate myself from the world that finally was bound to nothing. I thank God that I know that my *Volk* can make demands on me. I bow to these demands and I know that it is exactly in bowing to these demands that I have my freedom.…

I want a church bound to the holy will of God. And I say further: I am helped by no word of God from which the teeth have been removed. I am not helped by a God who cannot make demands on me.…

[33] Wilhelm Laible, "Nationale Revolution," *AELKZ* 66/18 (May 5, 1933), 424.

[34] Richard Evans, for example, describes a high level of Nazi violence in *The Coming of the Third Reich* (London: Penguin, 2004) and *The Third Reich in Power* (London: Penguin, 2006), the first two volumes of his trilogy.

[35] "Wochenschau," *AELKZ* 66/18 (May 5, 1933), 425.

I will stand here. I will be a man and look my God and his truth directly in the eye. I know that this path, if I do not weaken, leads to the cross on Golgotha. I will take this path, the path taken before me by Luther, Ernst Moritz Arndt, Freiherr vom Stein and Bismarck.

I will stand in thanks and in manly faithfulness at the cross of the Savior, who in his path of sacrifice without equal took my sins upon him and opened for me the path to the heart of my Father in heaven.

I know that this is the place of judgment over all the selfishness in my life and all that to which I am bound. But I also know that a God who does not judge me, cannot guide me and save me.…

I want no religion that is an opium for the people. Therefore, I reject all religion which does not allow God to be God. But where God is allowed to be God, that is, the Lord, there I know that religion is not opium, but dynamite.…

I want no Christian faith just for myself. I know that the individual Christian cannot and may not live his life just for himself. Therefore, I want the church. I want the church which brings God's salvation to all generations. I want the church which will speak the truth entrusted to it by God in clear words of faithfulness. I am glad in exactly this point to be in full agreement with my *Führer* Adolf Hitler. I want the church which knows itself bound to its *Volk*, the church which is workplace and tool of the Holy Spirit, who is our home and our constant support.[36]

How are we to assess this effusive statement by a committed Nazi and committed Christian, along with the broader wave of Protestant enthusiasm for Adolf Hitler that clearly manifested itself in 1933? A number of caveats should be considered. For example, no German that year could fully have known the future, including the brutal policy of genocide undertaken later (even though some perceptive individuals clearly recognized the danger).[37] Early enthusiasm for Hitler might have worn off over time, so it is important to check attitudes toward the regime again at specific stages – after the Nuremberg Racial Laws, after the violence and brutality of *Kristallnacht*, after Jews began disappearing from German streets (first through pressure to emigrate and then through being openly rounded up and forced onto trains headed East), and, finally, after evidence of the murder of Jews in the East began slipping back into Germany. Almost all early Nazis claimed after 1945 that they had joined or supported the movement out of idealism, not anticipating the crimes of the regime that had betrayed their idealism. Many of those who professed only "early idealism" do not stand up well against the tests of 1935 and 1938 and

[36] "Bekenntnis eines Nationalsozialisten," *AELKZ* 66/25 (June 23, 1933), 592–93.

[37] See, for example, *Hitlers Weg*, written in 1932 by Theodor Heuss, who in 1949 became the first president of the Federal Republic of Germany.

beyond, and some do; but these topics will be explored in later chapters. Whatever the caveats that might attach to later stages in the Nazi era, the widespread and enthusiastic support of Protestant Christians for Adolf Hitler in 1933 needs to be considered on its own.

There are two reasons for highlighting Christian support for Hitler in 1933. First of all, once Hitler received his appointment as chancellor, he danced circles around President von Hindenburg and other politicians who had thought they could use him and his popularity for their own purposes. Rather, he managed within two months to consolidate his control over the government, and he never gave up this control until his suicide in April 1945. The "rise" of Hitler proved crucial, so that the act of placing him in power and endorsing that power bears a heavy load of significance. Secondly, it is important to consider what form of "idealism" attracted Christians to Hitler in 1933.

The idealism of Protestants in support of Hitler included a range of attitudes that have not stood the test of time. For example, it included their vigorous opposition to democracy. Most Christians had appreciated the authoritarianism of the Wilhelmine era, a system in which the state supported the church and "throne and altar" represented the highest authority in the land. Democracy, by contrast, meant that all people had rights and potential influence, not just the previously dominant Protestants. Socialists, Jews, and Catholics could take over the government, if they could build a sufficient coalition of voter support; and for much of the Weimar period, Socialists, Jews, and Catholics maintained significant influence. (It is worth noting that right-wing propaganda conflated Socialists with Bolsheviks, suggesting that a German echo of the Russian Revolution might be close at hand. Even more inaccurately, it conflated Socialists and Bolsheviks with Jews. That became standard government propaganda after the rise of Hitler, and it was a propaganda that matched the prejudices and almost certainly seeped into the consciousness of German Protestants.) Furthermore, democracy meant free speech and the right of Socialists and Jews and others to express their viewpoints – in the press, on stage, and in political rallies – whether offensive to Christians or not. Democracy also gave rights to women and supported the modern tendency of women to opt for new roles within the culture. Democracy meant that free expression within the culture could push against the boundaries of taste that middle-class Germans considered important, and Protestant Germans, many of whom were middle class, responded in anger and with cultural anxiety.

The Weimar Republic turned "outsiders" into "insiders," as a book by Peter Gay indicates.[38] In a small way, at least, it cracked open the door of the modern, pluralist state, because it gave greater political and cultural authority to those outside the German Protestant mainstream. Pluralism never suits the self-interest of those who have been in the dominant majority, because they never again wield quite as much power and authority. Germany had been dominated by Protestants, ever since its creation under the committed Protestant, Otto von Bismarck; and one should probably not expect that Protestants would welcome the sharing of power that democracy and pluralism entailed. Unfortunately, they believed that particularly in Hitler's values they could find protection against the moral decadence that they perceived in Germany's cultural and political change.[39]

When Paul Althaus praised Hitler as a "gift and miracle of God," he believed that Hitler stood for Christian values and for family values. Article 24 in the Nazi Party Program from the very beginning had advocated "positive Christianity" as the foundation of the German state. Hitler had railed against prostitution, pornography, and homosexuality, blaming modern moral decadence on Jews and promising to return Germany to its traditional values. This appealed to Althaus and the Christians for whom he spoke.

Much in Hitler's presentation of himself and the Nazi agenda can now be recognized as deceptive. For example, opposition to prostitution and pornography did not preclude an open sexual ethic outside traditional Christian boundaries, even to the point of encouraging young, single women in the *Lebensborn* program to have a baby for the *Führer*. Christians seem to have looked for aspects of the Nazi state that pleased them, crediting Hitler for these aspects; and they seem to have blamed "excesses" on misguided underlings, often with the phrase, "If the *Führer* only knew." Many Christians even accepted the myth that Hitler read daily from a devotional booklet widely used by German Protestants, or that he carried a New Testament in his vest pocket and read from it every

[38] Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961). See also Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[39] See Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). See also Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919–1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), for his argument that Christian beliefs actually permeated the Nazi leadership more than has been acknowledged.

day.[40] Even if they read his apparent disparagement of Christians in *Mein Kampf*, Protestants could read it as primarily an attack on the Catholic Church, perhaps, or as an appropriate critique of the institutionalized, politicized church.

It is important to note that the "values" endorsed by Christians in 1933 had nothing to do with equal rights for Jews or others considered undesirable. Most Christians accepted harsh measures without complaint. Paul Althaus celebrated the fact that the soft, wishy-washy liberalism of the Weimar Republic had been replaced by a harsh, law-and-order regime that enforced discipline and punished severely. Gerhard Kittel endorsed brutality and encouraged Christians not to be soft and sentimental. None of the brutal Nazi attitudes were hidden in 1933. Furthermore, the first anti-Jewish measures, the arrest of leftist politicians, and the creation of the first concentration camp at Dachau all occurred by the summer of 1933. Germans after 1945 often said, "We never knew." That statement is far too imprecise. Germans in general may not have known all the details – the specific location of the six death camps, for example, or the exact method of killing. From the very beginning of the Nazi regime, however, all Germans knew of a broad range of behaviors that we today consider in violation of basic human rights and label criminal. Even knowledge of the murder of Jews spread much further than most Germans wanted to admit after the war. As we assess the values endorsed by Christians in 1933, we need to remember that they praised these "values" at the same time they knew about and accepted a series of behaviors that we condemn.

The Roman Catholic Church in 1933

The Catholic position in Germany in 1933 was very different from the Protestant position. It was also very much the same. Both sides of this contradiction must be kept in mind to do justice to the story. On the one hand, hostility between the Nazi Party and the Catholic Church was real, including a policy just prior to 1933 by which Catholics were told by their bishops not to join the Nazi Party. Some Catholic priests also refused to allow Nazis in uniform to participate in Church burials or other rituals.

[40] Gerhard Kittel made this claim as late as 1937 at Cambridge University, when professors there challenged him on his support for the Nazi regime. This was told to me by Richard Gutteridge, who served as Kittel's Cambridge host in 1937.

Furthermore, Hitler's estrangement from his own Catholic childhood and his attacks on "clericalism" seemed anti-Catholic in both intent and effect. On the other hand, the Catholic Church changed its tune in the first months of 1933 to the extent that all bans against Nazi membership were withdrawn and Catholics in Germany, including Catholic bishops, allowed their enthusiasm for the "values" of the Nazi state to blossom and flower.

Several factors account for the early Catholic hostility toward the Nazi Party, an opposition that began to develop after the election of September 14, 1930. That was when the Nazi movement left behind its role as a tiny splinter party and had to be taken seriously. The basic Nazi ideology was too racist and materialistic for Catholic tastes, because Catholics (very like Gerhard Kittel and his fellow Protestants) wanted to emphasize the spiritual foundations of their view of reality. Furthermore, some radical Nazis followed the lead of Alfred Rosenberg, who condemned Christianity as a "Jewish religion" and called for a specifically German paganism, a return to old Teutonic gods. That was anathema to both Catholics and Protestants. It is also worth noting that the enthusiasm of the pro-Nazi Deutsche Christen included the idea that there should be just one church in Germany, with its newfound political unity and its emphasis on one *Führer*. If that agenda were to prevail, the one church would of course represent the dominant Protestant position, as the Deutsche Christen intended. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Catholic Church in Germany had its own political party. During the Weimar Republic, this Center Party could count on support from the Catholic hierarchy and a solid base of Catholic voters, thus allowing it to play a significant role. The Nazi Party would naturally be viewed as a rival, competing for votes and representation in the Reichstag. The Catholic hierarchy thus had a political reason to oppose Adolf Hitler and the Nazi worldview, alongside their various spiritual concerns.

Catholics also had many reasons to like Adolf Hitler. Just as with Protestants, they were attracted to the advocacy of traditional values and the opposition to moral decadence trumpeted by the party. Carl Amery, a young Catholic who came of age in the Nazi period, later bemoaned the easy capitulation of the Church during his youth, suggesting that the Nazi ideology represented a package of values with an almost irresistible appeal for "milieu Catholicism." Hitler's focus on hard work, discipline, punctuality, orderliness, cleanliness, anti-communism, and German national pride promised – and seemed poised to deliver – all that good

Catholics could want.[41] Derek Hastings has shown a Catholic affinity for Nazism that was especially apparent in the early years of the movement. The Nazi Party developed, after all, in heavily Catholic Munich, and Hastings describes many Munich Catholics, lay and clerical, giving their enthusiastic support.[42] Although this affinity diminished after the Beer Hall *Putsch* of 1923, it certainly could help to explain the readiness of Catholics to reassert their support in 1933.

On the issue of "Germanness," it has often been assumed that Catholics were tempted to support Hitler as an act of over-compensation. Bismarck had unified Germany under the leadership of his state, Prussia, with its Protestant foundations. He had accused Catholics in Bavaria and elsewhere of being bad Germans, with a primary allegiance to the Pope in Rome rather than to the German nation. He inaugurated a campaign in the 1870s, the "Cultural Struggle" (*Kulturkampf*), in which he harassed Catholics, banned some Catholic organizations, arrested some Catholic leaders, and tried ineffectually to break the power of the Catholic Center Party. German Catholics responded to this era with an inclination to verify their allegiance to the German nation. World War I seemed a great opportunity: German bishops proved that they would claim God's blessings for the German national cause, and Catholic citizens proved they could bleed and die in the trenches as well as Protestants. However, World War I produced only defeat and humiliation.

The Weimar experiment with democracy proved liberating to some Germans: liberal advocates of democratic process, artists freed from censorship, newly empowered socialists, women benefiting from new rights and the chance to vote, and Jews, who also realized new opportunities. Many Catholics, however, and much of the German Catholic hierarchy viewed these changes with trepidation. They feared "Godless communism," especially with the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia as a recent foreboding.[43] They also distrusted the openness of democracy, and they considered the social changes of the 1920s to represent moral degeneracy and a challenge to Church authority. Despite these concerns,

[41] See Carl Amery, *Die Kapitulation, oder, Der real existierende Katholizismus* (Munich: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1963, 1988).

[42] Derek Hastings, *Catholicism and the Roots of Nazism: Religious Identity & National Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[43] Both Catholics and Protestants expressed their hostility toward "Godless communism." It is worth noting, however, that Hitler's non-aggression pact with Stalin was in effect from August 1939 to June 1941 without arousing church protests or any apparent diminution of enthusiasm for the Nazi state.

the Catholic Center Party prospered in the parliamentary system of the Weimar Republic. No party or group could maintain a strong majority, so the Center Party became a necessary partner in almost every coalition government, represented in the bestowal of cabinet ministries and sometimes awarded the chancellorship. During the 1920s, Hitler's Nazi Party was a very small blip on the radar screen, ignored by the far more powerful and significant Center Party.

To the extent the Catholic hierarchy noticed Nazis, they criticized Article 24 in the Nazi Party Program, which endorsed "positive Christianity" as the natural religious foundation for Germany. Protestants tended to appreciate this stance, but to Catholics its apparently benign endorsement of Christianity implied too big a tent, a Christianity capable of embracing in some fashion all or most Germans. There was little or no protection within this concept for the specific teachings of the Catholic Church, teachings by which Catholics understood theirs to be the one true Church and by which they excluded non-Catholics from their communion.[44]

Until the election of September 14, 1930, these concerns hardly mattered. In that election, however, Nazis suddenly vaulted from the insignificance of 12 seats in the Reichstag to 18 percent of the popular vote and 107 out of 577 seats. By July 31, 1932, at the peak of their electoral success, Nazis earned 37.3 percent of the national vote. Their 230 of 608 Reichstag delegates made them the largest single party.[45] During this period of rapid growth, German Catholic bishops increasingly expressed their disapproval. Questions arose in the dioceses. Should storm troopers be allowed to attend services in formation, carrying the swastika and wearing their brown uniforms? What about Catholic burials accompanied by Nazi regalia? Should Catholics be allowed even to belong to the Nazi Party and expect still to receive the sacraments? The sudden emergence of a significant Hitler movement in 1930 turned these into pressing questions. Furthermore, that same year Alfred Rosenberg heightened Catholic fears when he published *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*.[46]

[44] Note that the explicit endorsement of "positive Christianity" in the Nazi Party Program actually had Catholic roots, with nationalistic, disaffected Catholics in Munich, Catholics suspicious of ultramontanism and political Catholicism, helping give it shape. See Hastings, *Catholicism and the Roots of Nazism*, chapters 1 and 2.

[45] See, for example, Klaus P. Fischer, *Nazi Germany: A New History* (London: Constable and Company, 1995), 227, 246, 262.

[46] Alfred Rosenberg, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, originally published as *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Hoheneichen, 1930).

This book attacked the Old Testament and other Jewish elements in Christianity and advocated a form of Christianity rooted in the Germanic race and the Germanic past. Rosenberg aspired to be the intellectual guru of the Nazi Party. If his take on "positive Christianity" were also Hitler's, Catholic rejection would have to follow.

Already in 1921 German bishops had banned Catholic membership in organizations hostile to the Catholic faith. It was not the tiny Nazi movement but socialism and freemasonry they had on their minds. Then the sudden significance of the Nazi Party beginning in 1930 forced them to consider how priests and laity should be advised. That year, the diocese of Mainz forbade Catholic membership in the Nazi Party: Card-carrying members should not be allowed to receive the sacraments.[47] By December, Cardinal Bertram issued a statement warning against the ambiguities of "positive Christianity" and the unacceptability of extreme nationalism: "Here we are no longer dealing with political questions but with a religious delusion which has to be fought with all vigor."[48]

In February 1931, the Bavarian bishops entered the fray, warning against Nazi ideology "so long and so far as it proclaims cultural and political opinions which are incompatible with Catholic teaching."[49] This did not repeat the Mainz diocese's categorical rejection of Nazi Party membership for Catholics, thus leaving bishops and clergy free to make decisions on an individual basis; yet it was an undeniably strong statement, and it was repeated by dioceses throughout Germany. The Fulda Bishops Conference met in August 1931, hoping among other tasks to establish a policy vis-à-vis the Nazi Party for all German Catholics. At first they could not agree, rejecting a strong statement that said that "the National Socialist party … stands in clearest conflict with fundamental truths of Christianity." They did agree, however, on this slightly more ambiguous comment: "The fight against radicalism, that is against extreme nationalism as well as against Socialism and Communism, should be carried out from the standpoint of the faith but not from the standpoint of partisan politics."[50] These statements represent a stronger criticism of Nazi ideology than could be found in most institutions of German life in 1931–1932, although they also betray willingness for future compromise.

[47] This discussion is based on Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich, Volume 1*, 134–35.

[48] Quoted in Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 8.

[49] Quoted in Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich, Volume 1*, 134.

[50] Quoted in Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, 13, 14.

Circumstances changed dramatically in the first months of 1933. President Paul von Hindenburg, facing a political crisis, decided to appoint Hitler as chancellor. The Catholic politician, Franz von Papen, of the German National People's Party (DNVP), had been unable to win national support or resolve the crisis of political instability. He recommended that Hitler be made chancellor and manipulated to their ends, with von Papen as Hitler's vice chancellor. Hitler, however, with his eighth-grade education, his intense ambition, and his surprisingly effective political skills, ran circles around these men. He never won a majority of the German vote in an open election, but he came to power legally. His politics clearly met the needs and desires of the majority of Germans, with his emphasis on national pride and unity; his remilitarization programs, which helped boost the economy; and his belligerent refusal to accept the lingering restrictions of the Versailles Treaty. Despite their earlier suspicions, leaders of the German Catholic Church quickly opted to support Hitler and the new Germany.

A crucial Reichstag vote took place on March 23, essentially handing Hitler dictatorial powers. In February, he had used the burning of the Reichstag building by an arsonist as pretext to arrest KPD leaders and try to break the power of Communists in the Reichstag. Under these circumstances, which he hoped would rebound to his benefit, he called for new elections to be held on March 5. However, Hitler polled only 44 percent, still short of the majority vote by which Nazis would have been able to dominate the government. Therefore, at the opening of the newly elected Reichstag, he asked for an "Enabling Act," which would grant him the power to govern strongly, quickly, and without the necessity of parliamentary approval. Nazis had always castigated the "weak" practice of democratic government, with its slow process, its close votes, its compromises, and its deals. The Enabling Act would change all that, based on the idea that a Germany in crisis could not afford wrangling and delay. Because this act would change the Weimar Constitution, it required a two-thirds majority and could not be passed by the Nazi and DNVP coalition by itself. Here the Center Party assumed a crucial role. Socialists and Communists would give no support to the Enabling Act, so the success or failure of Hitler's hopes for dramatically increased powers rested on Center Party delegates. They chose to give Hitler what he asked. In this way, the transition in Adolf Hitler's reign from democratic to dictatorial power came at the hands of German Catholics.

Why did the Catholic hierarchy and Center Party politicians decide to throw their support to Hitler? Despite the ban on the Nazi Party from

Catholic bishops and the apparent conflict between Nazi ideology and Catholicism, the Center Party and the Nazis had flirted with each other before. In August 1932 and in January 1933, the two factions had tried to create a coalition government, each time without success.[51] Now Hitler negotiated again, this time to secure support for his Enabling Act, and this time successfully.[52] To seal his side of the bargain, Hitler included in his opening speech to the Reichstag on March 23 phrases designed to verify his promises and also to appeal to Christians in general:

> The national government regards the two Christian confessions as the most important factors for the preservation of our national culture.... Their rights will not be infringed.... The national government will guarantee the Christian confessions their due influence in school and educational matters.... Likewise the government of the Reich, which regards Christianity as the unshakeable foundation of our national life and morality, regards the fostering and the extension of friendly relations to the Holy See as a matter of the greatest importance. The rights of the churches will not be restricted, nor will their relationship to the state be changed.[53]

Hitler achieved his purposes with this effective if disingenuous speech. Large numbers of Christians calmed their fear that the Nazi Party would prove to be anti-Christian, that is, that it would follow the lead of Alfred Rosenberg. They decided that the *Führer*, at least, was on their side, even if some radicals in the party were not. The Center Party also accepted Hitler's gesture, despite the fact that he had couched his public promises in language of his own choosing. Guenter Lewy calls this "a bad case of wishful thinking" in which Catholic leaders "grossly overrated and misunderstood Hitler's smooth talk." He failed to promise "existing rights" to churches in the field of education, for example, but only rights that were "their due."[54] In response to this speech, the Center Party voted for dictatorship, giving Hitler's Enabling Act its margin of victory.

This legislative act was very significant, establishing the legal foundation for Hitler's dictatorship, without which he would have had to pursue a more problematic strategy. Presumably, he would have had to follow

[51] Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, 21, 27.

[52] The negotiations are described in Rudolf Morsey, "Die deutsche Zentrumspartei," in E. Matthias and R. Morsey, eds., *Das Ende der Parteien 1933* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1960), 358 ff.

[53] Reprinted in Peter Matheson, ed., *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 9.

[54] Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, 35.

the normal democratic practice of seeking Reichstag support for each piece of legislation, a strategy at odds with the standard Nazi critique of slow and quibbling democracy. Alternatively, Hitler might have tried to rule by presidential decree, a practice routinely used to circumvent the Reichstag under Chancellors Bruening and von Papen before 1933; but that would have left considerable authority in the aging hands of President von Hindenburg, someone expected at the time to be a restraint on Hitler's radicalism. Finally, Hitler might have used violence to take dictatorial control, a policy that would have risked a higher possibility of disapproval and discontent among the German public. The Center Party saved Hitler from these unpleasant choices by handing him dictatorship by democratic means. Why?

No explanation of the Catholic Center Party decision seems able to evade the suspicion that they were satisfied with Hitler's government. Many Germans feared instability and crisis in 1933. The democratic system had seemed to fail, nor were Catholics by background and inclination partial to democracy. Catholics feared a revolution from the left far more than a revolution from the right. One Catholic historian, Heinz Hürten, suggests that the Center Party voted for the Enabling Act on the theory that it was preferable to give Hitler what he would otherwise take, thus prolonging the party's role as a force within the Reichstag.[55] However, it should have been apparent to professional politicians that the grant of dictatorial powers to Hitler would remove any serious role for the Reichstag. If Catholics in Germany had perceived the Nazi Party as the enemy, the Center Party need not have negotiated with this party (the NSDAP) in August or in January or in March. The postwar idea that Catholics really saw National Socialism as their enemy in 1933 comes into question with this Reichstag vote. Nazis may have been political opponents, certainly, and they may have included undesirable elements or characteristics. But when the Center Party delegates had a chance to vote against the Enabling Act in 1933, thus denying or slowing Hitler's path to full power, they chose instead to give him their support.[56]

[55] Heinz Hürten, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Katholizismus*, 1800–1960 (Mainz: Matthias Grunewald, 1986), 211–12.

[56] There exists a debate on whether the Center Party acted because of secret promises regarding a Concordat, with Scholder and Lewy on one side and two Catholic historians, Hürten and Konrad Repgen, *Hitlers Machtergreifung und der deutsche Katholizismus: Versuch einer Bilanz* (Saarbruchen: Raueiser, 1967), among those on the other. Neither position rules out my view that the Enabling Act vote rested on the belief that Hitler and National Socialism were acceptable.

The Center Party vote was only one indicator of Catholic change. German Catholic bishops also responded to these March events, including Hitler's conciliatory speech of March 23. Acting as a group five days later, they rescinded their ban on Catholic membership in the Nazi Party. Although this ban had existed only since 1931 and even though it had never been rigorously enforced, it had certainly indicated official disapproval of National Socialism. Hitler's popularity, his softer line in his speech on March 23, and the subsequent stance of the Center Party encouraged the bishops to reverse their position.[57] Word spread quickly, and many Catholics in Germany welcomed their newfound freedom, hurrying to join the party and to endorse the Nazi movement with enthusiastic rhetoric.

Protestants were not slow to take pokes at this Catholic about-face, indicative of the standard animosity that existed at that time.[58] Under the heading, "Churches and National Socialists," the *AELKZ* highlighted the prior Catholic stance, "damning" National Socialism and refusing party members the sacraments. Although Nazis tried to point out the error of the bishops' position, according to this article, the bishops would not listen. "Rome does not allow itself to be taught. It belongs to its history, not to allow itself to be taught. Look at Luther and Pope Leo X." Then Hitler gave his speech on March 23, and the bishops reversed themselves:

> One could not call it an honorable retreat. What Hitler said in the Reichstag, he had already said (even already in his book *Mein Kampf*).... National Socialists had said the same thing in numerous electoral speeches, and they had publicized it in the press. The bishops never wanted to listen; but now they listen, for they do not want to be at war with the "Reich Chancellor." They reach out the hand to the defamed one, even if coolly, only with the fingertips, and even at that with the petty comment that they were also correct in their earlier step.[59]

In a final comment that has badly stood the test of time, this jibe against Catholics went on to say, "The Protestant church was protected from such a retreat, thanks to the discretion of its church leadership," that is, their unwillingness to criticize the Nazi movement. Thus they were prepared to shake Hitler's hand warmly, not just with their fingertips, and to recognize that Nazis "long since had grown from a political party

[57] Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich, Volume 1*, 251–53.

[58] See Doris Bergen's assessment of Catholic-Protestant competition and its significance in "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany," *Journal of Central European History* 27/3 (1994).

[59] "Kirche und Nationalsozialisten," *AELKZ* 66/15 (April 14, 1933), 325–26.

into a movement of the *Volk*. Indeed, they were able under God's guidance to elevate the *Volk* movement into a *Volk* exaltation. The history of the newly awakened Germany will remain inseparably bound with their name."[60] Although prescient – for Germany and Germans have suffered from connection with the name "Nazi" ever since 1945 – this is a connection postwar Protestants would quickly want to deny.

None of the events of March 1933 transpired without the close attention of and a certain amount of influence from the Vatican. German bishops acted in confidence that their new stance pleased the pope. They also may have anticipated progress on a broader initiative to secure a Concordat between the Vatican and the new German government. Concordats serve as treaties between the Catholic Church and secular governments, spelling out in detail the rights and privileges acknowledged on both sides. The creation of a German Concordat especially concerned Catholics, because the German revolution of 1918–1919 and the creation of the democratic Weimar Republic had seemed to threaten the Church. Social Democrats in the Weimar government advocated a separation of church and state, along with the removal of prior privileges enjoyed by the churches. These threatened privileges included public funding (a church tax collected by the government and distributed to churches for salaries, building maintenance, and other costs) as well as continuation of Catholic schools and the right to provide religious education in secular schools.

No German Concordat emerged during the Weimar Republic. The points of view of Germany's elected representatives and the position of the Church were simply too far apart. However, 1929 saw the completion of a Concordat between the Fascist government of Mussolini and the Holy See. Concordats were also established between the Vatican and three German states with the largest Catholic populations (Bavaria, Baden, and Prussia). With the advent of Hitler, the Vatican wanted to assure that these arrangements with individual German states would not be sacrificed, and it also hoped to achieve its larger goal of a treaty with Germany as a whole. Hitler, in turn, would be pleased with the publicity and honor attached to an early diplomatic success with the Vatican, and after passage of the Enabling Act he had the advantage that he did not have to worry about pleasing a majority of the Reichstag with any treaty negotiated.

Hitler's vice chancellor, Franz von Papen, emerged as emissary in this project. He was a Catholic himself and served as head of a new

[60] Ibid., 326.

organization, "Cross and Eagle" (*Kreuz und Adler*), designed to encourage Catholics into a pro-German, pro-Nazi point of view. Hermann Göring went along to Rome to add weight to the delegation, and the two of them initiated a negotiation process that soon met with success. Hitler saw as one primary goal the removal of the Catholic Church as a political force in Germany; thus, he insisted on a provision in the Concordat that priests would no longer work actively within nor join a political party (meaning the Center Party, in which representatives of the Church had played a prominent role. This concern about banning party membership quietly disappeared when the only party available was the NSDAP, which priests were then allowed to join.) Hitler also made sure that guarantees for Church functions would be phrased in such a way that he could ban all but specifically religious activity. The Church for its part did establish its right to exist in Germany and, most importantly perhaps, its right to maintain Catholic schools, seminaries, and theological faculties. The right to give religious instruction in the schools actually increased under the Concordat, and financial support by the Nazi regime for the churches continued throughout the era of the Third Reich. When the final wording was signed on July 20, 1933, it appeared that peace between Nazism and Catholicism had been established.[61]

Much had happened in Germany by July 1933. After the Enabling Act in March, there followed in April the Jewish Boycott and the first significant piece of anti-Jewish legislation, the Law for the Cleansing and Restoration of the Civil Service. "Cleansing" of the civil service included not just Jews but also anyone considered "politically unreliable," which could affect Catholics too. This quickly produced complaints among the Catholic population. In fact, Nazi persecution of Catholics intensified just as the Concordat was under discussion. Furthermore, pressure on political parties culminated in their dissolution in late June and early July, sometimes by order and sometimes by choice. The Catholic Bavarian People's Party decided to dissolve itself on July 4, and the Center Party followed suit on July 5. July 14 saw passage of a law banning all parties but the NSDAP.

Despite all these signs and warnings, the Vatican entered into solemn agreement with Hitler's regime. Certainly there was hope in Catholic

[61] See Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, 57–93; as well as Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich, Volume 1*; Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches*; and Ludwig Volk, *Das Reichskonkordat vom 20. Juli 1933: Von den Ansätzen in der Weimarer Republik bis zur Ratifizierung am 10. September 1933* (Mainz: Matthias Grunewald, 1972).

circles that the Concordat would give protection against the very abuses suffered by Catholics and Catholic organizations in preceding months. In retrospect, however, the bargain seems suspect on several grounds. For example, the document specified that the Church could maintain its religious activities, but no definition of religious activities protected the viewpoint of the Church. Instead, phrases such as "within the limits of laws applicable to all," "in all matters of their pastoral office," and "within the framework of their competence" subsequently allowed the Nazi state to interpret the Concordat narrowly and according to its own interests.[62] Also, the list of Catholic organizations now protected by the Concordat could not be agreed on, so this crucial aspect remained subject to later negotiation and was in fact never resolved. International observers immediately assumed that Hitler had won a great coup by achieving a foreign policy success with a major player, the Vatican. Capitalizing on this prestige by association, the regime publicly interpreted the Concordat as Catholic endorsement of the Nazi state.

How and why did the Vatican slide into this position? The Concordat represented the culmination of a Catholic goal since 1918. Furthermore, the Concordat with Mussolini's Italy, concluded four years previously, seemed a positive model on which to build. These reasons may have helped the Vatican overlook some of the warning signs. However, it is also important to note a fondness for Nazi Germany to be found within the Vatican in 1933. After Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich visited Rome in February, he reported that Pius XI "publicly praised the Chancellor Adolf Hitler for the stand which the latter had taken against Communism."[63] One observer in Berlin, George Shuster, reported that Papal Nuncio Cesare Orsenigo "was frankly jubilant" about Hitler's rise to power.[64] All parties – Pius XI, Orsenigo, and the Papal Secretary of State Cardinal Pacelli, later to become Pius XII – leave little or no reason to doubt their preference for fascism over communism, their preference for Hitler's Germany over Stalin's Russia, and, eventually, their preference for Franco's Spain over the Spanish Republic.[65] Many postwar observers have been tempted

[62] Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*, 80.
[63] Ibid., 30–31.
[64] Ibid., 27.
[65] See Hilari Raguer, *Gunpowder and Incense: The Catholic Church and the Spanish Civil War* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2006), for the argument that the Vatican and the Spanish Catholic hierarchy were somewhat more flexible in their view of the Spanish Republic in the early stages of the Civil War than has been widely thought, though it remains true that most Catholics welcomed and supported Franco's victory.

to see the Vatican acting against its real instincts in 1933, crossing its fingers, hoping that consorting with an evil regime would produce more good than ill. That arises especially because our postwar assessment of the Nazi state has been instructed by hindsight. It is also possible, however, to imagine the Vatican in 1933 seeing this relationship as a positive good, not a necessary evil.[66]

By the end of July 1933, the five-month transition from Catholic opposition to Catholic support of the Nazi regime must have seemed complete. This "caving in" appears inexplicable (1) if we assume that the Catholic Church stood for basic moral values; and (2) if we are influenced by our subsequent awareness of and sensitivity to the immorality and crimes of the Nazi regime. However, if we try to look through Catholic eyes of 1933, this turning point and acceptance of Hitler's regime is less surprising. The behavior of the Center Party in approving the Enabling Act and thereby Hitler's dictatorship, the behavior of the German episcopate in withdrawing its condemnation of the Nazi Party, and the behavior of the Vatican in signing its Concordat with the Nazi regime all require some awareness that the Nazi Party and Hitler's leadership included elements attractive to the Catholic Church. None of these three bodies wanted to condemn the Nazis out of hand. Each found features sufficiently attractive to allay any hesitation to make common cause with this regime. That is the reality that must be recognized and understood to make sense of these events. Our hindsight tells us they were playing with the devil. Their point of view at the time did not.

Many differences can be noted between Catholics and Protestants in 1933. The former represented a minority in Germany (even though Catholics were a large minority that enjoyed majority status in several regions).[67] These Catholics were members of an international organization,

[66] The literature regarding the Vatican and its relationship to Hitler and the Nazi state is voluminous, passionate, and almost impossible to summarize. Gerhard Besier produced a recent, useful study, *The Holy See and Hitler's Germany* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, originally published as *Der Heilige Stuhl und Hitler-Deutschland*, Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2004). See also two books by Michael Phayer, *Pius XII, the Holocaust, and the Cold War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), and *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930–1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

[67] As noted previously, Catholics represented about one-third of Germans and, after the *Anschluss* with Austria, about 40 percent. It should also be noted that certain regions in Germany had a large Catholic majority, so that the Catholic minority status in Germany was primarily due to a very large Protestant population in Prussia. By contrast, Jews at less than 1 percent made up a minority in every sense of the word.

and their Church had taken a stand in opposition to certain tenets of the Nazi movement. Protestants were thoroughly and proudly German in their orientation, claiming Martin Luther as their tether to the soul of the German *Volk*. They had retained a greater openness to the rise of the Nazi Party and placed no barriers to party membership among their faithful. Little separates the two churches, however, in their response to the events of 1933. Each was prepared to endorse large components of the Nazi political package. Each persuasion welcomed a regime on the right and opposed any move to the left; each would support almost any regime that touted its anti-communism; and neither appeared to have broad sympathy for the open, democratic, and pluralistic Weimar Republic. The belligerent militarism of Adolf Hitler was welcomed by these Christians, who felt aggrieved by the outcome and aftermath of World War I, and nothing in the explicit and aggressive antisemitism of the Nazi ideology seems to have given serious offense. Not only Cesare Orsenigo, the Papal Nuncio, but also the vast majority of Christians in Germany seem to have been jubilant in response to 1933.

3

Universities and the Rise of Hitler

It is sometimes thought that academia stands on the left, a stance marked by left-wing professors and social-activist students. This stereotype – rooted especially in the 1960s, with American and European examples of campus activism – has never been entirely accurate and must allow for broad variations from campus to campus, region to region, nation to nation, and over time. However, an alternative stereotype makes a better starting point for German universities in the period after World War I. In parallel with the churches, universities stood mostly on the right, representing the establishment, the privileged classes, and a conservative nationalism. Many professors, of course, had begun their careers under Kaiser Wilhelm. Even new appointments, however, often went to individuals who identified with the ruling classes of the German nation, those who felt aggrieved and who were suffering along with other patriotic Germans in the harsh climate of disappointment after 1918.[1] Many of them nurtured memories of a "golden age" under Kaiser Wilhelm II, and few found much to praise in the democratic ideals of Weimar. Students also represented a privileged class, a group that had passed through the narrow gate of high academic achievement, but usually assisted by family privilege and money.

These conservative members of the academy might well have looked askance at the Nazi Party. Hitler himself had approximately the equivalent

[1] Exceptions could be found. They might occur, for example, in fields such as mathematics and the natural sciences, where ideology held less sway. Also, more liberal cultural politics during the Weimar Republic did lead on occasion to less conservative appointments even in other fields. This helps account for a number of faculty later purged under Nazi authority.

of an eighth-grade education. Furthermore, the Nazi worldview openly exalted action over thought, feeling over rational inquiry. Nazis were critical of "ivory tower intellectuals" and, when they came to power, they began to institute in the universities a new regimen of hard physical culture coupled with military and ideological training, for junior faculty as well as for students.[2] Despite the presence of anti-intellectualism in the Nazi movement, however, we find a great deal of enthusiasm for Adolf Hitler in German universities. Student organizations had often turned Nazi even before Hitler rose to power, and the bulk of the faculty applauded Hitler's rise in 1933. Viewed from another angle, we search almost in vain for evidence of opposition to the regime within the universities. The best-known example, perhaps, is that of the "White Rose" at the University of Munich, a courageous but small and ineffectual group of protesters to be considered in Chapter 5. The primary story of German universities in 1933 is one of enthusiasm for the German "rebirth."[3]

Background to 1933: German Nationalism in the Academy

As with all things Nazi, it is useful to look for background into the cauldron of World War I. At the first onset of war in August 1914, large numbers of patriotic university students marched to recruiting stations with joy and enthusiasm. They then fell in such large numbers during the autumn of 1914 that some have said it represented the loss of an entire generation. Many junior professors joined their students in the military and at the front. Even the renowned and thoroughly middle-aged historian, Karl Brandi, could not resist volunteering for active duty.

Born in 1868 near Osnabrück, Karl Brandi had become a full, tenured professor (an *Ordinarius*) at Göttingen in 1902.[4] He gained worldwide recognition for his biography of the Habsburg Emperor Charles V, and

[2] For a description of one such camp, see Hans-Joachim Dahms, "Einleitung," in Heinrich Becker, Hans-Joachim Dahms, Cornelia Wegeler, eds., *Die Universität Göttingen unter dem Nationalsozialismus*, 2nd, enlarged edition (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1998), 50–51.

[3] Studies of specific German universities during the Nazi period include the volume on Göttingen University mentioned in note 1, a project on which I participated. Since then, many or most German universities have had their Nazi period treated in a monograph, edited volume, or a series of volumes. For an important such treatment available in English, see Steven Remy, *The Heidelberg Myth: The Nazification and Denazification of a German University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

[4] See the Brandi *Nachlass* (hereinafter cited as BN), in the *Handschriftkammer* of the Göttingen University Library. This information is taken from file 127,6, which includes press reports on Brandi's sixtieth birthday.

by the early 1930s he served as vice president of the International Society of Historians. Although he was already forty-six years of age at the outbreak of World War I, Brandi volunteered to serve as a *Landwehr* officer and he received the Iron Cross, both first and second class. Brandi's papers contain a private diary of twenty-one typed pages describing his first responses to an assignment protecting the countryside behind the lines in Alsace and Lorraine. These provinces had been French until acquired by Germany in 1871 as an outcome of the Franco-Prussian War. Brandi's thoughts about his assignment in this region give us our first indication of his view of German identity and Germany's place in Europe: He wanted a large and powerful Germany, no matter what local people might prefer.

So, for example, we find Brandi concerned in the autumn of 1914 that the residents of Alsace and Lorraine still retained their French identity. He and his major found quarters with a seventy-year-old Madame Pierron, who did not even *try* to speak to them in German. "And that remains the case on German soil."[5] Regarding his own troops, he writes, "They completely fail to grasp that they are still in Germany, because all around us only French is spoken."[6] He sees an important iron industry, useful for Germany's future, but wonders whether this can be rendered entirely secure within a German cultural area: "A revision of the nationality question has seemed to me, from the very beginning, to be the most important problem of this war and of the new circumstances which will grow out of it."[7] He speculates about nations, such as Switzerland, where more than one language might work, but he also fears the powerful cultural impact of a people self-consciously French and proud of their heritage. He describes an old, rich widow, for example, the main landowner in a nearby village. She had been only twenty years of age in 1870, the last time Alsace and Lorraine had been part of France, but all her cultural ties were to France. She was well-traveled, sophisticated, and impressive, and she set the cultural tone in her community. "What can the German administration set against such an influence?"[8]

Brandi concludes that it would take generations to turn the people of Alsace and Lorraine into Germans. Furthermore, he is not so confident that all of his countrymen are right for the task. "My major," he writes somewhat cattily, "had not sat a horse for many years and rode very

[5] Karl Brandi, BN 127,2, *Privattagebuch*, 1.
[6] Ibid., 4.
[7] Ibid., 9.
[8] Ibid., 10.

anxiously at my side."[9] He also deplores young Bavarian soldiers who had been in the first group posted to this area, admitting that the local population had suffered "from the Bavarians … who felt as if they were in a foreign land, so that at first we had to heal the wounds."[10] However, he remains optimistic:

> Set against that, however, is the war, which works miracles. The families and the children together learn in these weeks more German, more German sensibility and German pride than they have in years. They know that their places and their fields are protected by our army, though the war spreads out its horrors elsewhere, and, even if against their will, they recognize this blessing.… The horrors of the first days and of the young soldiers, especially the Bavarians, are past. A certain northern German ease and comfort spreads itself out.[11]

Broadening his gaze from Alsace and Lorraine, Brandi then comments on the war as a whole:

> After I … cast my eyes once again over the vast area of the Reich, clean and free of enemies and of the hardships of war, the success of our weapons appears to me again and again as especially admirable and rich in prospects.… There is no other means for the preservation of German culture and the German states in the Reich and in Austria except fighting through this war to the very last possibility.… Whoever has the power can prescribe the paths of culture and accomplish all of its business in freedom.[12]

What import should we find in this diary, written by Brandi in the first months of the First World War? First, he was a successful historian. He also taught at Göttingen, a very successful university, founded in 1737 and famous a century later for the "Göttingen Seven." These were seven professors – including the Brothers Grimm – who became martyrs to academic and political freedom in their quarrel with Ernst Augustus, King of Hanover.[13] By the 1920s, Göttingen had possibly the best math

[9] Ibid., 1.
[10] Ibid., 4.
[11] Ibid., 11.
[12] Ibid., 12–13.
[13] In 1837, Ernst Augustus came to the throne of Hanover, but only because Hanoverian law prohibited female rule and thus forbade the rightful heir – his niece, Queen Victoria – from taking the throne held by her father, William IV of England. In another retrograde move, Ernst Augustus then overthrew the constitution of 1833, which had begun to introduce democracy to Hanover. When the "Göttingen Seven" publicly protested, they were summarily dismissed, becoming a symbol for academic and political rights throughout Germany and Europe and attracting attention to Göttingen University as it soon increased its reputation and profile.

and physics faculty in the world, as indicated by substantial funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, and it was strong in other disciplines as well. Thus, both Brandi and his university can be seen as substantial and admired representatives of German academia. When we view Karl Brandi's patriotism, as found in his Great War Diary, it might seem a common, garden variety to be found among colleagues on both sides of the trenches. We can note his regional prejudices, a decidedly north German man quick to suspect Bavarians as a lower order. We can also note, however, a hardheaded willingness to tie the borders of Germany to the backs of the German military and stretch them, even if it would take generations to tear locals from their original language and culture.

Brandi was hardly alone among German academics. For example, a broad cross-section of professors expressed their support for the war effort in a volume published in 1915, "German Speeches in Hard Times."[14] Their contributions praised the greatness of German spirit, advocated German leadership for the benefit of human advancement, and spoke to the rights of Germans to acquire large chunks of the European continent. Later describing the enthusiastic fantasies of professors as they considered the potential fruits of German efforts in the war, Helmut Heiber says, "Normandy and Kent appeared to be worthy of recommendation and discussion as possible boundaries and claims. Regions which lay closer, such as Poland and Burgundy, were taken for granted."[15] After two or three years of this war of attrition, some citizens on both sides began to suggest that peace might be preferable to war. Nothing had been gained, despite the losses and the horrors experienced in the fighting. These peace advocates proposed that a negotiated peace could end the carnage simply by returning Europe to its previous borders and – insofar as possible with the smell of death in the air – its previous circumstances. Such peace advocates, mostly to be found on the left, were shouted down by politicians, by patriots, and by "experts" in the academic community who had set their sights on the imagined fruits of victory.

The postwar settlement at Versailles turned the tables on German plans for expansion by taking back Alsace and Lorraine for France, by depriving Germany of its colonial possessions, and by recreating Poland and drawing up Czechoslovakia out of land formerly held by Germany, Austria, and Russia. This landgrab simply mirrored the plans

[14] *Deutsche Reden in schwerer Zeit*, Vol. 1–2 (Berlin: Carl Heymanns Verlag, 1915).

[15] Helmut Heiber, *Universität unterm Hakenkreuz. Teil 1, Der Professor im Dritten Reich* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1991), 31.

of Germans described previously. Furthermore, it emulated the forced redrawing of borders perpetrated one year earlier by Germany in the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the treaty by which Lenin's new Soviet Union gave up land for peace in its withdrawal from the Great War. During the 1920s, however, bellicose German scholars suffered amnesia about their plans for an aggressive, expansionist victory. Instead, they declared Germany innocent of any expansionist war aims and attacked the Versailles Treaty for its insistence on the revision of European borders at German expense. This is neither surprising, given the shock and anger throughout Germany in the aftermath of war, nor necessarily wrong. Scholars often serve in defense of their own nation and historians often are tempted to play the role of advocate, combing the evidence to defend one side of an argument rather than sifting the evidence and viewing it from some Olympian height. In light of the Nazi horrors, however, we are justified in probing further into this question, looking for threads of connection to later events.

Half a century later, two decades after World War II and long after Brandi had pondered the meaning of World War I in his diary and German professors had written about grandiose plans for expansion, Fritz Fischer brought out a startling new book. This publication, which later appeared in English translation as *Germany's Aims in the First World War*,[16] created a sensation both with historians and with the German public at large. Many reacted harshly, essentially calling Fischer a traitor to his nation. He had simply cited evidence to show that Germany's leaders during the Great War had endorsed German expansion, but he put it in the context of a drive toward "world power." In other words, he found unwelcome threads of connection between German aims in World War I and German aims in World War II. Germans in that first instance had hoped to achieve the sort of goals described by Karl Brandi and his professorial colleagues: Germany should use the Great War to grab territory and advance its position of strength in Europe. Fischer caused a stir because Germans had been arguing the opposite case for nearly fifty years.

When the Versailles Treaty charged Germany with "responsibility … for causing all the loss and damage" suffered by the Allied nations,

[16] Fritz Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (New York: Norton, 1967). This originally appeared as *Griff nach der Weltmacht: Die Kriegszielpolitik des Kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/1918* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1961), a title that emphasizes the "grasping" for world power.

Germans labeled this the "War Guilt Clause."[17] German historians then tried to show that Germany was guiltless, had had no plans to wage aggressive war for its own expansion, and had only been forced into war by its enemies. After 1945, Germans had an extra incentive to push this argument, insofar as they hoped to isolate the Nazi period of aggression and aggrandizement as an aberration, not typically German in any way. This required once again that German behavior in World War I be rendered guiltless. If post-1945 Germans were to seal themselves off from the Nazi crimes, they needed to assure themselves and others that no particularly martial or aggressive spirit characterized German life and culture.

Fritz Fischer threw all of that into question. The British historian, James Joll, introduced Fischer's English language edition with the moderating view that the controversy might be somewhat overblown. Fischer had indeed found evidence of aggressive World War I war aims in Germany, in contrast to the postwar claims of innocence. Joll suggests, however, that the archives of Great Britain or other participants, if assiduously searched in similar fashion, would yield similar examples of bellicosity. The behavior and attitudes of participants in the Great War simply cannot be limned in contours of black and white, good and evil. There seems to be enough guilt and hypocrisy associated with World War I to be shared among many nations. However, subsequent events in Germany add a significant dimension to our assessment. Because Germany lost the war, bellicosity there lingered in a different environment and it found a deeper wound of embitterment in which to fester. Furthermore, because it was in Germany that Hitler rose to power, and because it was Germans who perpetrated the Holocaust, the attitudes of Karl Brandi and other university professors and the evidence uncovered by Fritz Fischer of aggressive war aims rightfully come to our special attention.

Once again, the story of Karl Brandi provides an interesting and significant case study. First of all, he was a mature scholar already before World War I, world-renowned for his work and secure in his position at Göttingen University. He rose to a high level of respect in his profession, as a leader among historians in Germany and also internationally. Finally, he was a political figure of surprisingly moderate, even democratic persuasion. He

[17] For an analysis of the War Guilt Clause and other Versailles Treaty controversies, see Sally Marks, *The Illusion of Peace: International Relations in Europe, 1918–1933*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); and Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2003).

joined the German *Volk* Party (DVP), a party that, although conservative and nationalistic, stood well to the left of the Nazis. The DVP was willing to participate in coalition governments in Weimar, for example. Brandi was a local leader of this group in Göttingen, and he served as an elected delegate to his state parliament. Although Karl Brandi had reached sixty-four years of age when Hitler came to power, he was still active intellectually and presumably as well positioned by stature and political inclination as any scholar in Germany to stand up to the Nazi state. Subsequent events, however, indicate that he played no such role.

One issue in the latter years of the Weimar era provides an example of the connections that finally drew Brandi toward Hitler and the Nazis. It also gives an interesting comparison to Brandi's earlier ruminations on Alsace and Lorraine. There he had advocated that people of French culture should have been forced to become German following the success of German arms in acquiring those two territories. However, when Brandi came up against this same theoretical question in the East after the war, he gave a very different answer. The reestablished state of Poland now contained territories recently German, with a complex overlay of German and Polish identity. In this case, Brandi was eager to deny Poland the right to nurture Polish language and culture in territories that he continued to see as wholly German, or perhaps even "holy Germany," given the passion he exhibited on the subject.

Brandi developed a collection of materials on the former German provinces now under Polish control, including maps, newspapers, pamphlets, and books.[18] These materials dealt with the *Heilige Ostmark* (the Holy Eastern Provinces) as one of the newspapers described it. This newspaper was the mouthpiece for an organization founded in 1925, "in times of the greatest emergency in the German East." Brandi prepared a lecture from these materials, "Our Rights to the East," which he delivered in September 1927.[19] In 1929, on the tenth anniversary of the Versailles Treaty, he was selected to give the public lecture in Göttingen commemorating the treaty, although his purpose was less a commemoration than an attack on its injustice.[20] That year, Brandi also welcomed a like-minded colleague to the history faculty.

Percy Schramm, born in 1894, arrived at Göttingen in 1929, where he first stood in the shadow of the great Karl Brandi, who had arrived

[18] The box containing these materials is designated BN 75.

[19] BN 74, #2, a fifteen-page handwritten manuscript dated Sept. 24, 1927.

[20] Karl Brandi, *Versailles 28. Juni 1919: Rede vor der Göttinger Studentenschaft* (Göttingen: Göttinger Studentenschaft, 1929).

twenty-seven years previously. However, Schramm too became a historian of international stature. In fact, his early efforts to combine medieval cultural and political history make him a major figure in twentieth-century medieval studies.[21] His related interest in the regalia and rituals surrounding the British monarchy earned him such appreciation that he was invited to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1953. He also is known for having written the War Diary (*Kriegstagebuch*) for the High Command of the Armed Forces (OKW) during World War II. As a young professor in his mid-thirties when he arrived at Göttingen, Schramm quickly proved his popularity among and commitment to students. This can be seen most clearly as he climbed on Karl Brandi's *Ostmark* bus.

In February 1931, Brandi and Schramm noted the tenth anniversary of a sore point in German–Polish relations. On March 20, 1921, residents of Upper Silesia had been given the chance to vote on their national preference, and 60 percent had chosen reconnection to Germany. Not all of Upper Silesia was then ceded, however. Rather, with violence introduced by both sides and on the basis of a complex voting result – heavy Polish majorities in some regions, despite a German majority overall – the Council of the League of Nations eventually awarded about a third of the territory to Poland, including a large share of its most industrialized and coal-rich region. This aroused the wrath of many Germans at the time, with their argument that the referendum as a whole had not been honored. In 1931, Brandi and Schramm marked the anniversary of the vote by hosting the first "Eastern Provinces University Week," with Brandi as the main speaker. This was designed to encourage "love and fidelity to the *Ostmark*" among German students and show them the "importance of the *Ostmark* for the *Volk* and the *Reich*." A university newspaper accompanied its story about this event with a belligerent poem:

> "The Oder shall be the Polish border,"
> but we cry out with a holy no
> and reach to you brothers in conflict our hand
> for homeland and honor and fatherland.
> And if the new should arise out of the ruins,
> Germany in the East may never fade.
> German brothers hear only the one command,
> Save the East, the *Ostmark* is in need.[22]

[21] This claim is made by Norman Cantor in *Inventing the Middle Ages* (New York: William Morrow and Co, 1991).

[22] *Göttinger Hochschul-Zeitung*, Feb. 1, 1931.

Many activities grew out of this first celebration and teach-in. Other universities picked up on the idea and hosted similar weeks. Schramm then planned a bus tour for August 1931 in which he took thirty-three students to former German provinces now in Poland, a trip lasting fourteen days. Schramm later completed a report in which he notes:

> The Polish propaganda for the "regained" access to the sea gives a serious warning. If now the universities place themselves in service to the pressing work, it will be greeted thankfully in the East [by Germans, of course]; but only a beginning has been made.[23]

Schramm then suggests that the German goal should be, "Each German student once in the East!" Not only teachers but members of other professions should lead such tours. "The propaganda for this travel goal could really be much more actively pushed."[24]

Brandi joined Schramm in April 1932 for a trip to Gleiwitz, now in Poland. A German-language newspaper celebrated their visit with a large photograph of the two of them, coupled with praise for the "outstanding activity" of these two scholars in "the spreading of knowledge about the Eastern provinces."[25] Brandi and Schramm then continued their focus on lost provinces in the East by hosting the annual *Historikertag* at Göttingen in the summer of 1932, a meeting they dedicated to the "Eastern question." A history of these annual conferences of the German historical profession describes the outcome: "The one-sided thematic arrangement of the Göttingen program of lectures signaled unmistakably the almost brutal politicization of this gathering. No *Historikertag* before this one had shown itself so ready for 'service to the entire *Volk*,' for service to the *Ostmark*."[26]

A letter penned two months later in October 1932 indicates the lengths to which Brandi would stretch his enthusiasm for the lost German provinces in the East. He wrote to an archivist in Danzig, asking him to edit a book in a project suggested by Brandi and Schramm and supported by "leading persons" in the East. The appearance of scholarly values, he said, should not get in the way of the real purpose of this venture.

[23] "Bericht über die Ostpreussenfahrt Göttinger Studenten, vom 1. –14. August 1931," in *Personalakten Schramm*, File I, p. 82, in the Göttingen University Archive.

[24] Ibid.

[25] "Oberschlesienreise von Geh.-Rat Dr. Brandi und Dr. Schramm, Göttingen," *Ostdeutsche Morgenpost*, 104 (4–15–1932). I found a copy of this newspaper in BN 74, #71.

[26] P. Schumann, "Die deutschen Historikertage von 1893 bis 1937. Die Geschichte einer fach-historischen Institution im Spiegel der Presse," PhD diss., Marburg (1974).

The book should cover the Versailles *Diktat*, with statistical material on the population before and after the war, separating, where possible, the German and Polish numbers. Then he goes on,

> With all the material, the fighting and defensive character of the book should be decisive. The systematic ordering of the material should be more a camouflage of the primarily polemical details, rather than an end in itself. Thus, the sections on art and science are not actually meant to be descriptive, but rather to be proof of how importantly and fundamentally they stand as cultural creations on the foundation of the overall German culture.[27]

Historians of the stature of Karl Brandi cannot be pleased to have left behind correspondence as questionable as this. He was clearly using his reputation as a scholar and his ability to lend a scholarly appearance to printed volumes wholly for political ends. He provides the crucial word himself: The scholarly appearance and credentials were only to serve as "camouflage" (*Tarnung*) for the polemical purpose.

In terms of Brandi's sense of national identity and his role as a historian, this letter stands as evidence that a particular political goal outweighed his scholarly scruples. He was prepared to propose *camouflage* in the place of scholarship. Some might suggest that such politicization of scholarship has been the norm rather than the exception. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, scholars in both Europe and America regularly put their scholarship at the service of specific political goals. Postmodernists today would argue that it always has been and remains so. However, scholarship has also held the goal of historical objectivity, as proposed by Leopold von Ranke, the attempt to see the past, insofar as possible, "as it actually was." Brandi's hidden purpose of camouflage flies in the face of this latter set of ideals, as he seemed to recognize by his very need to describe the *appearance* of scholarship providing camouflage for political purpose. Furthermore, this particular example of politicization in his work grabs our attention because it endorsed a small first step in one of the most central elements in the Nazi program, the drive to the East. The goal of *Lebensraum* in the East held pride of place in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, with the implicit correlative that any means were legitimate in order to reclaim German provinces and expand German borders.

Within the spectrum of historians in Weimar Germany, the aggressive attitudes of Brandi and Schramm toward provinces lost to Poland

[27] Brandi to *Staatsarchivdirector* Dr. Recke, Danzig, 29.10.32, in BN 74, #85.

represented merely a moderate position. Their desire focused on the return to the borders of 1914, or perhaps just the argument that the plebiscite over Upper Silesia should have been honored as a whole rather than dissected. There also developed a much more aggressive version of *Ostforschung*, or research on the East, based on racial struggle, advocacy of *Lebensraum* for the allegedly superior German *Volk*, and ideas for German expansion far beyond the borders of 1914. As described first by Michael Burleigh and then by Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, this is a story of historians, economists, demographers, and other academics – labeled by Aly and Heim as "Architects of Destruction" – merging their scholarship with a radical form of politics.[28] These were mostly young scholars during Weimar, not yet secure in university positions and supported primarily by right-wing, nationalistic foundations. With Hitler's rise, their brand of *Volksgeschichte* – the history of racial communities, always with a preference for the German *Volk* above all – began to receive extensive state support. Then with the outbreak of World War II, these scholars researched and recommended aggressive policies for Germany in the East, including the "ethnic cleansing" of Slavs and Jews, so that ethnic Germans could take their place.[29]

The issue of historians and their relationship to Nazi policies in the East erupted at the German *Historikertag* in 1998. For the first time, the role of German historians in support of Nazi ideals came into public view, with two prominent postwar figures, Theoder Schieder and Werner Conze, being exposed as participants and/or supporters in the creation of a Nazi working paper, *Generalplan Ost*. This plan engaged the idea that extensive Eastern territories should be acquired, as radical German nationalists had long proposed, and that they should be "Germanized." Resettlement of Germans to these territories would be needed, and, more importantly, large parts of the local population would have to disappear! Because this document burned its fingers on genocide, responses to the 1998 *Historikertag* were heated, not least because Schieder and Conze had trained many of the most important historians of the next generation.

[28] See Michael Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastwards: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); and Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003, first published as *Vordenker der Vernichtung. Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine neue europäische Ordnung*, Frankfurt am Main, 1992).

[29] See, for example, Ingo Haar and Michael Fahlbusch, eds., *German Scholars and Ethnic Cleansing, 1920–1945* (NY: Berghahn Books, 2005), including a Foreword by Georg C. Iggers.

Some damned and some defended Schieder and Conze. Jürgen Kocka, one of many prominent historians trying to assess the significance of this story, describes the sometimes subtle role played by historians in making the Nazi state possible:

> Most important … among the "accomplishments" of historians for the benefit of National Socialism may have been this, that many of them encouraged a basic intellectual point of view, through their teaching, through their public comments, and within the circle of their personal contacts. And this point of view affected the young men and women receiving an education by distancing them from liberal principles, by making basic human values seem foreign, and by preparing them for delusions, partly utopian and partly nihilistic, of what could be accomplished. These elements became characteristics of the politics of conquest, deportation, and annihilation in the Second World War.[30]

Karl Brandi and Percy Schramm were not part of the *Historikertag* discussion in 1998. They were not even supporters of Adolf Hitler in the Germany of 1931 and 1932. Each had an international reputation, in Schramm's case still in an early stage, and each held a political stance to the left of the rabidly right-wing Nazis. Furthermore, the Eastern provinces that Brandi and Schramm sought to reestablish under German control represented only a small portion of contested land, not the gigantic appetite for *Lebensraum* revealed in the *Generalplan Ost*. Many professors at Göttingen and elsewhere in the early 1930s, usually members of the arch-conservative DNVP, advocated much more aggressive German nationalism, often with a heavy overlay of antisemitism.[31] Yet it seems certain that students under Brandi and Schramm were taught to see the renewal of a proud and expanding Germany as an extremely important, even a holy, endeavor. These students were directly encouraged to work for a renewed German presence in the East, at least in that small portion of the East lost to Poland after Versailles.

Although the *Generalplan Ost* extended Germany's appetite for acreage far beyond the holy *Ostmark* dear to Brandi and Schramm, reacquisition

[30] Jürgen Kocka, "Zwischen Nationalsozialismus und Bundesrepublik. Ein Kommentar," in Winfried Schulze and Otto Oexle, eds, *Deutsche Historiker im Nationalsozialismus*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2000), 345.

[31] Barbara Marshall, "Der Einfluss der Universität auf die politische Entwicklung der Stadt Göttingen," *Niedersachsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 49 (1977), 271 ff, emphasizes the political activism of Göttingen professors, with 36 percent in 1920 being members of or public speakers for political parties. Forty-two percent of these activists were in the DNVP, 31 percent in the DVP, 25 percent in the DDP, and one member of the KPD. Dahms cites these figures in "Einleitung," 35.

of the *Ostmark* surely whetted many German appetites for further conquest. It also encouraged the idea that German strength should be nurtured on a larger piece of ground, whether disputed by other national claims or not. By Jürgen Kocka's formulation, these students of Brandi and Schramm would seem to have been pointed at least on a first step toward "delusions, partly utopian and partly nihilistic" of what Germany could and should do. National enthusiasm and national resentment trumped objective scholarship in Brandi's eyes. Schramm wanted to send every German student at least once to the East, as a form of propaganda to enkindle German claims on that region. Other academics were far more aggressive in their desire to bring down the Weimar Republic, yet neither of these prominent scholars placed barriers to the rise of Adolf Hitler or to subsequent support for his policies. Almost certainly, their stance on German plans for expansion in the East made Hitler's rise seem attractive. Their very moderation in politics – based on the spectrum of their time and place – would likely have quieted doubts and broadened the potential base of Nazi enthusiasts.

Background to 1933: Student Activism

The Nazi Party presented itself as youthful, a movement able to tap the energy and idealism of German youth. University students across Germany responded in large numbers to this appeal, often in advance of their elders. Already by 1931 the dominant position of the National Socialist Student Association (NSDStB) at universities across Germany led to a Nazi student takeover at the national level, eighteen months prior to Hitler's rise to power.[32] This represented not only widespread *völkisch* nationalism among students, but also rabid antisemitism, which had been apparent for decades in German student fraternities. In 1925 at Göttingen, for example, a time of relative success for the Weimar Republic, a twenty-three-year-old student in chemistry, Achim Gercke, launched an ambitious project designed to facilitate a nationwide resolution of the Jewish "problem." With assistance from the local Nazi *Gauleiter* as well as from an honorary professor of history, Hugo Willrich, Gercke created the "Archive for Racial Statistics by Profession" (*Archiv für berufsständische Rassenstatistik*), with the goal of identifying and removing Jews from prominent positions in German life.

[32] See Geoffrey Giles, *Students and National Socialism in Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 68–72.

Census numbers for German citizens of the Jewish faith had been tracked since the late nineteenth century, but that simply supplied aggregate numbers without identifying individuals. In 1913 (and then in a second edition in 1929), the *Semi-Kürschner*[33] began to identify individual Jews. As indicated in its subtitle, this reference work sought to be a "Dictionary of Jews, Jewish associates, and Jewish enemies of all times and countries, especially in Germany, and of their teachings, customs, tricks … and secret societies." In Gercke's eyes, the *Semi-Kürschner* had two weaknesses: It failed to verify its data, resulting in embarrassing mistakes, and it failed adequately to search out hidden, assimilated Jews. Gercke decided to comb through thousands of volumes in the basement of the Göttingen University Library, volumes that listed all individuals who had successfully completed their *Gymnasium* examination (the *Abitur*) and volumes that provided a *curriculum vitae* (CV) for all those who had successfully completed a PhD. In both cases, the religion of the student would be indicated and information about parents would be provided. This allowed Gercke to identify all those of Jewish faith, as well as any change in religion between secondary school and university and any Jewishness indicated in the parents' records. His goal was to trace all professionals throughout Germany, making an index card for every person of Jewish faith or background he could find.

Gercke began by concentrating on "Jewish influence on German Universities." This resulted in eight booklets listing professors who were Jewish, married to Jews, or "connected" to Jews, focusing on the Universities of Göttingen, Berlin, Königsberg, and Breslau.[34] Despite occasional mistakes, the resulting publication indicated the high percentage of Jewish professors in certain fields, such as medicine and law. It also caught the attention of those held up for public scrutiny, beginning to create an atmosphere of fear among academics well before 1933. Gercke later packed up his index cards and made a career for himself as head of racial statistics at the "Brown House" (Nazi headquarters in Munich) from 1931 to 1933. Among other things, he checked and disproved the rumor that Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Security Service (SD) of the

[33] This name is a take-off on *Kürschners Literatur- und Gelehrtenkalender*, a reference work that periodically since the late nineteenth century listed and identified German scholars and writers.

[34] See, for example, *Der jüdische Einfluss auf den Deutschen Hohen Schulen. Ein Familienkundlicher Nachweis über die jüdischen und verjudeten Universitäts- und Hochschulprofessoren. Heft 1. Universität Göttingen* (Göttingen: Kreis der Freunde und Förderer der Deutschen Auskunftei, 1928).

SS, had been born to a Jewish father. He also confirmed the charge of Jewish "taint" that brought down Heinrich Düsterberg, a leading figure in the right-wing, antisemitic veterans' organization, the Stahlhelm. In 1933 Gercke moved to Berlin, where he served as race expert in the Ministry of the Interior until 1935.[35]

Gercke was not the only student under the Weimar Republic who paid attention to the race and politics of his professors. Nazi students kept a careful watch, boycotting classes, for example, even before Hitler came to power. Jews would be targeted, as would any professor considered insufficiently dedicated to the *völkisch*-nationalist and radically right-wing Nazi point of view. The story of Günther Dehn provides a good example of the danger for anyone violating the nationalist mood. As a pastor and theologian in Weimar Germany, Dehn had the courage to suggest that pacifism might have been considered a possible Christian response to the Great War, rather than simple martial fervor.[36] He gave a speech in Magdeburg in 1928 in which he questioned whether Christians should really place monuments in their churches to honor war dead or whether "heroic death" in war should be considered the equivalent of "sacrificial death" as understood by Christians.[37] Although he acknowledged the other side of the argument, the possibility of just wars and the

[35] See Dahms, "Einleitung," 31–32 and 39. I also want to thank Dahms for giving me access to his unpublished paper, "The Professionalization of National Socialist Jewish Statistics: Preparation for the Holocaust." See Volker Berghahn, *Der Stahlhelm. Bund der Frontsoldaten 1918–1935* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1966), for Gercke's role in confirming the Jewish background of Heinrich Düsterberg.

[36] See Günther Dehn's autobiography, *Die alte Zeit, die vorigen Jahre. Lebenserinnerungen* (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1962). His own experience during the First World War (described on pp. 189–97) primarily involved serving a church in a working-class district of Berlin, because he was already a pastor aged thirty-two years when war broke out. Although not a pacifist, he saw the suffering of war among the working classes and, already in early August 1914, he wrote in a letter, "I do not see why one should be enthusiastic for war" (190). His only war work, besides comforting those at home, involved six months in 1918 when he served as pastor to German soldiers interned in Holland. He did establish the condition that he not be designated a chaplain or wear a uniform, and that was granted (193). He served 2,500 German soldiers and 2,500 German civilians who had been interned in England. England and Germany had agreed to "free" 5,000 on each side in this manner, letting them remain interned in Holland, an act Dehn says would have been impossible in the Second World War (194). He admits that he never could "bring God and war together," as so many did from the pulpit in those years (196).

[37] See Dehn, *Die alte Zeit, die vorigen Jahre*, 250–53. He describes the setting: an invitation from Pastor Jacobi of the Ulrichskirche in Magdeburg, to speak about Christian ideas regarding war service, to a group of interested Christians, with the idea that they could be helped to see that the issues are more complex than public nationalist attitudes seem to suggest.

right of Christians to fight in those wars, his speech unleashed outrage on the part of right-wing nationalists.[38] Several retired military officers took umbrage at this offense to German soldiers, one claiming that Dehn had labeled all soldiers "murderers." It turned out that these officers had not even attended the lecture, nor had many of the other critics. The response consisted primarily of a thick tissue of rumor and anger, perpetuated by word of mouth and by the local press.

One young woman, who actually attended Dehn's speech, angrily approached him afterward and yelled, as he was exiting the building, "If the fallen cannot be honored with plaques in churches, then they might be seen as merely murderers."[39] The same woman argued that no one should advocate peace and reconciliation "as long as the 'war guilt lie' had not been removed."[40] Dehn admits he may have called that latter claim "nonsense," but it was the use of the term "murderers," soon credited to Dehn rather than the young woman, that especially inflamed nationalists. The local press picked up the story and the local German National People's Party (DNVP) challenged the official Protestant church to explain where they stood in relation to Dehn's stance.

The Brandenburg *Konsistorium* responded to the bad press by asking Dehn to give them a report. Dehn showed them the text of his remarks, which considered pacifism as only one of several possible Christian responses to war and which never suggested soldiers were murderers. The Church Council weighed this evidence against the anger that had been aroused among "reputable people," especially retired military officers who happened also to be aristocrats and this one young woman who happened to be educated, with a doctorate in economics. In the end, the church concluded that Dehn had "damaged the general interests of the church" by carelessly using words in a tone "only to be explained by irritation and an inadequate self-discipline," uttering remarks "which have led to regrettable misunderstandings."[41]

Dehn later claimed that his church could and should have noted that he spoke as a theologian, that he had a right to do so, and that the issues

[38] Dehn, *Die alte Zeit, die vorigen Jahre*, 255, notes that the same ideas expressed in the Federal Republic of Germany arouse similar anger, but now from those who think he is a militarist!

[39] See Ernst Bizer, "Der Fall Dehn," in Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *Festschrift für Günther Dehn* (Neukirchen: Neukirchen Verlag, 1957), 242–43. This quote is found in Dehn, *Die alte Zeit, die vorigen Jahre*, 256.

[40] Dehn, *Die alte Zeit, die vorigen Jahre*, 256.

[41] Bizer, "Der Fall Dehn," 242–44. See also Dehn, *Die alte Zeit, die vorigen Jahre*, 258.

he raised were based on an honest attempt to interpret Biblical texts. The official church, however, ran from controversy and left him to dangle. Despite this lack of church support, Dehn learned in December 1930 that the theological faculty at Heidelberg had voted unanimously to offer him their chair in practical theology. Then, however, Gottfried Traub, editor of the right-wing *Eisernen Blätter*, picked up and published the charges against Dehn from Magdeburg, including the false idea that he had labeled soldiers murderers. Traub did not take note of Dehn's self-defense or the fact that the text of his speech did not contain the words charged to him. Traub and his right-wing allies were ready for a fight, especially because of simmering controversy over a *Privatdozent* in mathematics at Heidelberg, Emil Gumbel. As a left-wing, Jewish pacifist, Gumbel was not likely to be admired by right-wing nationalists. Their anger intensified in 1925, when he said with regard to German war dead, "I do not actually mean to say that they fell on the field of dishonor; yet they lost their lives in a dreadful way."[42] This led to a temporary suspension of his right to teach, the threat of a formal charge of treason, and – after six years of agitation – his permanent removal from the faculty. Dehn was painted in Gumbel's colors, and right-wing critics organized against him.

At this point, Dehn also received an offer from the University of Halle. Thus he informed the Heidelberg faculty that, even though he preferred their offer, he would like their vote of confidence with regard to Traub's charges before he turned down the position at Halle. He sent all the necessary information, including documents from the Magdeburg hearings. Nonetheless, six of seven Heidelberg theologians refused to give Dehn their support, fearing that he could arrive on campus and then "come into difficulties, which could cause great damage for the faculty and the entire university."[43] Facing weeks or months of uncertainty, plus a newly unfriendly group of potential colleagues, Dehn turned down the Heidelberg offer and accepted the chair at Halle.[44]

In the meantime, however, Gottfried Traub's attacks on Dehn reached the ears of right-wing students at Halle. Immediately after his

[42] Quoted in Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 219. See also Bizer, "Der Fall Dehn," 245, n. 6; Dehn, *Die alte Zeit, die vorigen Jahre*, 260; and Remy, *The Heidelberg Myth*, 10–11. Dehn notes that by the latter years of the Nazi period, Traub grew quiet, apparently disillusioned by the regime he had trumpeted. Traub asked Dehn to forgive him for his attack those many years previous, and Dehn readily granted the request.

[43] Dehn, *Die alte Zeit, die vorigen Jahre*, 261.

[44] Bizer, "Der Fall Dehn," 246–47.

appointment became public, Nazi students distributed a flier filled with complaints and attacks on his character. The faculty senate responded by banning the Nazi Student Association for a year – this occurred in February 1931 – with the statement, "Universities have always considered freedom of scholarship … as their most important right and most valuable possession. It is unacceptable for a student association to attack a deeply serious, religious and scholarly lecture with the means and methods of the lowest party battles."[45] Students then arranged a demonstration "against the calling of Dehn and against police terror," and, by the fall of 1931, students showed unabated anger, as can be seen in this sanguine commentary:

> The *Rektor* and Senate believed that by banning the National Socialist Student Association they could make us pliable and silence those of us speaking out, those of us most strongly concerned about German honor and what it means to be German. They believed that through police action and the threat of rubber truncheon attacks (*Gummiknüppelattacken*) – and by pointing toward the economic neediness of students [in this time of depression] – they would rob us of our will to act. They have achieved nothing of the kind, but have only ripped from our breasts our trust in their academic leadership. We German youth have always held our teachers to the highest patriotic duty, that they should always and at every moment point us as students to our coming tasks. Our teachers should hammer into youth the recognition that at some point we must present the necessary courage, strength, and energy to break the yoke of slavery and bring the German *Volk* to a better tomorrow.[46]

Despite student anger and overheated rhetoric, the *Rektor* and faculty senate at Halle stood by Dehn. They accused the Nazi Student Association of having sought to create a caricature, not an actual assessment of Dehn as a person and a scholar. For example, the students had never sought him out to speak with him. They also accused him of being a Marxist and a pacifist, although he emphatically denied being either. The *Rektor* and senate resolved to "offer him every protection due to his person and to the old, fundamental principle of German universities, academic freedom in teaching and research."[47] One typical student response in an open letter to the *Rektor* and senate denied that students had created or were responding to a caricature. Rather, they had read his Magdeburg lecture and believed that any unbiased observer would recognize the Marxism and pacifism of his ideas. "It makes no difference to students, whether

[45] Ibid., 248.
[46] Quoted in Bizer, "Der Fall Dehn," 248.
[47] Quoted in Ibid., 249.

Herr Dr. Dehn likes to be labeled in that way or not. We must hold ourselves to the facts."[48]

As the time approached for Dehn's first Halle lectures in the fall of 1931, the Student Association announced their unflinching opposition: "We will categorically reject with the most complete, elemental, and forceful outrage of which German youth is capable any teacher or leader … who does not clearly and unconditionally advocate a national strengthening and renewal." They fully trusted witnesses against Dehn, witnesses "who have earned academic degrees and are clothed in high military rank," and they made no apologies for not having spoken with or tried to get to know Dehn himself: "How can German students relate to a man who, according to his words and his fundamental stance, has rendered homage to pacifist and Marxist ideas, even if he is not happy today admitting that?" Academic freedom was sacred to German students, they said, but they believed that "under cover of academic freedom one may not insult other people in their deepest thoughts and feelings, that under the cover of academic freedom one may not deprecate things to which millions of people are devoted with their entire hearts." They proclaimed their "most holy right and moral duty to fight for their beliefs until victory has been achieved."[49]

Dehn later called himself naïve for thinking it would help to sit down and talk with these students. He recognized that it was not his personal role that was important. He was, after all, a relatively unknown figure occupying the relatively insignificant position of professor of practical theology. Rather, this battle grew out of the political determination of right-wing students to force a fight. They wanted to overwhelm their foes in the academic world, showing that no German professor could hold left-of-center political views or consider Germany's place in the world with anything but assertive belligerence and escape their wrath.[50] Tenured professors would have been too formidable a target. As a new appointee with a modestly left-wing past, he represented as soft a target as they could find.

On November 3, 1931, at Dehn's first lecture of the term, both the *Rektor* and the *Regierungspräsident* attended. This indicated everyone's awareness of possible trouble, although Dehn rejected the offer of police protection. At first arrival he thought it might be his friends and supporters

[48] Quoted in Ibid., 249.
[49] All quotes in Bizer, "Der Fall Dehn," 250.
[50] Dehn, *Die alte Zeit, die vorigen Jahre*, 269.

filling the hall and making such a racket on his behalf, but that assessment proved wildly inaccurate.[51] Rather, these were primarily his enemies, and their noise only grew as he tried to lecture. Masses of students also stood outside the hall, singing the *Deutschlandlied* and shouting slogans against Dehn's appointment. Because he could not make himself heard, he tried writing theses on the blackboard, but to little effect. Halfway through the hour, the leader of the Student Association came into the lecture hall to tell the *Rektor* that he no longer could keep the masses of students outside from breaking through the doors. Although an attempt was made to bolt the doors, they soon burst open. The *Rektor* pleaded for calm, and police soon arrived. When the *Rektor* offered to get the police to leave if the students would only promise to maintain quiet and let Dehn lecture, the masses responded, "No, never!" Dehn did manage to complete the hour in some fashion, protected during the worst moments by about thirty students who gathered around him and created a protective barrier.[52] At the close of the hour, he and the *Rektor* left by a side door, under police protection, and Dehn rode home in a waiting automobile. Friends warned him not to sit near a window in his home that night or otherwise make himself vulnerable.

The next day Dehn lectured at 8 P.M., rather than in the afternoon, hoping that angry students would have other things to do at that hour. He also distributed passes to students who met with him personally and promised not to create a disturbance. Protestors arrived in the lecture hall anyway, and others made noise outside. In part they were diverted by an offer to speak with the *Rektor*, the dean of the law faculty, and the dean of the theological faculty.[53] Furthermore, the *Rektor* threatened disciplinary proceedings, with the result that Dehn got through some semblance of his lecture on that evening. At the close, however, Dehn supporters leaving the hall were attacked by Dehn's critics and once again the police arrived, this time making energetic use of their rubber truncheons. Dehn got safely home, accompanied by the *Rektor*.[54] He later suggested that no other university in Germany experienced two such days of disruption.[55]

After these two days, students continued to proclaim their commitment to ousting Dehn, "cost what it might."[56] One week later, two thousand

[51] Ibid., 272.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., 273.
[54] Bizer, "Der Fall Dehn," 251–52.
[55] Dehn, *Die alte Zeit, die vorigen Jahre*, 271.
[56] Bizer, "Der Fall Dehn," 252.

students from Halle, Leipzig, and Jena demonstrated against Dehn on the market square in Jena and committed themselves to victory in this battle. By then, they had also called for the resignation of *Rektor* Aubin, based on his ongoing support for Dehn, although the students did agree not to continue their violence in Dehn's lecture hall. The senate refused to consider the removal of *Rektor* Aubin, and both *Rektor* and senate continued to support Dehn; however, the Halle faculty as a whole threw the protestors a sop by stating that "although they had gone on false paths, students were motivated by pure and honorable feelings for the fatherland and for our university." Dehn later claimed, "As I read this declaration, I knew that I was a lost man."[57]

In December 1931, Dehn published his own account of the melee, thus proving that he did not shrink from battle but also reigniting controversy. His assessment at that time seems by today's standards to have been prescient, especially remembering that this came thirteen months before the rise of Hitler:

> It could be that the church of today stands on the threshold of a most difficult struggle with modern nationalism, in which her very existence will be endangered. Should I give a gloomy indication of this coming conflict by cowardly yielding and withdrawing from the attack in the interest of my personal equanimity? Here resistance must be given. One cultivates the youth in their current struggles mostly by conceding to them and praising their idealism, even if it is leading in the wrong direction. I must express serious reservations about that. Distorted idealism is demonic. It is simply not true that this fanatical love of fatherland – which in my view is colored by religion but actually dissociated from God – really helps the fatherland. On the contrary, it will lead the fatherland into destruction.[58]

We now respect the stance taken by Dehn, or at least we recognize that "fanatical love of fatherland" seems indeed to have been one of the main factors leading "the fatherland to destruction." This publication by Dehn, however, was seen by students in Halle as a violation of their "peace agreement" and as an insult to their values and beliefs: "Our idealism is falsified into something demonic. Indeed, Herr Dehn exceeds himself with the statement that one must lead the students back to God, must separate them from their ideologies of *Volk*, race, and fatherland."[59] They

[57] Dehn, *Die alte Zeit, die vorigen Jahre*, 274.

[58] Günther Dehn, *Kirche und Völkerversöhnung. Dokumente zum Halleschen Universitätskonflikt* (Berlin: Furche, 1931), as quoted in Jens-Holger Schjorring, *Theologische Gewissensethik und politische Wirklichkeit: Das Beispiel Eduard Geismars und Emanuel Hirschs* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1979), 171.

[59] Quoted in Bizer, "Der Fall Dehn," 256.

resumed their bitter attack. Many of Dehn's colleagues now also turned against him, agreeing with students that Dehn's critique of nationalism should be unacceptable in the Germany of their day.[60] The conflict spread across Germany as well. For example, Emanuel Hirsch at Göttingen criticized Dehn and offered an alternative view of the ideal Christian and academic stance. In a statement co-signed by his younger colleague, Hermann Dörries, and published in January 1932, Hirsch acknowledges the importance of academic freedom and the right to express one's views, even unacceptable views. In the case of Dehn, however, Hirsch and Dörries propose that he failed to meet the one minimal qualification for any person allowed to teach German students,

> the recognition that the nation and its freedom, despite all the doubtfulness of human existence, remains for the Christian a good thing hallowed by God. It demands a complete devotion of the heart and the life. And from this recognition follows an endorsement of the passionate will to freedom of our *Volk*, which is being enslaved and violated by enemies hungry for power and possessions.[61]

Dehn only managed to withstand for one year the full rush of right-wing anger, the "passionate will to freedom" felt and expressed by his students and his colleagues. After completing his lectures during the summer semester 1932, he received a one-year leave for purposes of research. By the spring of 1933, with Hitler now firmly in power, Dehn became one of the first victims of "civil service reform," the purging of racially and politically unwelcome faculty. He never taught again until his appointment at the University of Bonn in 1946.[62]

It is difficult to know the extent to which other professors felt threatened by their Nazi students before 1933.[63] For those inclined to challenge the reigning German nationalism, Dehn's experience must have seemed a warning. Nazi students across Germany prided themselves in their right-wing idealism and activism and their commitment to making a difference in university life, and these students in Halle proved they could do so. However, it is also difficult to know how many professors shared the

[60] Bizer, "Der Fall Dehn," 255–56.

[61] Quoted in Schjorring, *Theologische Gewissensethik und politische Wirklichkeit*, 171–72.

[62] Bizer, "Der Fall Dehn," 261.

[63] See, for example, Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Vol. 1: The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1997), 56–59. See also Giles, *Students and National Socialism in Germany*, 108–22, for his description of student claims to power coupled with an inefficient exercise of power; and see Becker, Dahms, and Wegeler, *Die Universität Göttingen unter dem Nationalsozialismus*, 43 ff, 47, 80, 82, 84, 113, 366, 403 ff, 531 ff, and 601, for examples of student boycotts at Göttingen.

politics of their students, as did Hirsch and Dörries. We can take a rough measure of professorial attitudes if we observe their response to Nazi policies implemented within a few weeks of Hitler's rise to power.

The Impact of 1933 on Jews, Books, and Academic Values

Hitler received his appointment as Chancellor on January 30, 1933, and then he was granted virtually unlimited power by the Enabling Act of late March. His first dramatic new policy came in the form of the Law for the Cleansing and Regeneration of the Civil Service, introduced on April 7. This is the law by which Dehn lost his position at Halle. All professors with regular appointments came under the civil service in the German state, because all universities were state supported and controlled.[64] Göttingen University, for example, answered to the Prussian Minister of Education, Bernhard Rust (later to be the national Minister of Culture). Civil servant status had worked to the advantage of German professors in terms of pay and conditions of employment as well as job security. The new Civil Service Law, however, sought to recast German bureaucracy; and it could only do so by identifying those from whom civil service protections would be removed. The second paragraph designated for removal "party bureaucrats," figures who allegedly had received their appointments under the Weimar Republic entirely through politics, without the appropriate qualifications. No single instance could be found at Göttingen to fit this category (although the Nazi university later would make particularly egregious use of political appointments, as noted in Chapter 5). The third paragraph, the so-called Aryan Paragraph, stipulated that "non-Aryans" would be removed; and the fourth paragraph, focusing on politics, banned from service any civil servant who could not work "without hesitation" on behalf of the Nazi state and the Nazi worldview.

The first implementation order for the new Civil Service Law, promulgated on April 11, defined non-Aryan in religious terms: "Non-Aryan will mean someone who stems from non-Aryan and especially from Jewish parents or grandparents. It is enough if one parent is non-Aryan. This is especially to be assumed, if one parent or grandparent has belonged to

[64] On May 6, the third "implementation order" added honorary professors, non-tenured appointments, and *Privatdozenten* to the list, persons who were not civil servants in the ordinary sense. This ensured a more thorough "cleansing" of the actual teaching process. See Dahms, "Einleitung," 40.

the Jewish religion."[65] President Hindenburg intervened to protect two groups from this paragraph: those who had been appointed to civil service positions before the outbreak of war in August 1914, that is, "old bureaucrats" whose appointments had come under the *Kaiser*, and those who had served as "front soldiers." The second implementation order on May 6 defined "front soldier" narrowly to mean only those who had "come before the enemy," not those who had served completely out of danger. The same order added "front soldier" status to those who fought in the Freikorps in postwar Germany against leftist revolutionaries or anyone who fought against "enemies of the national renewal." The idea also surfaced to add "especially excellent academics" to the protected list, but nothing came of it.[66]

Despite Hindenburg's intervention, the carnage among German professors was great. Approximately 25 percent at Göttingen lost their jobs through this effort at "reform." Some professors, such as Günther Dehn, lost their jobs because they were judged politically unreliable. This category included a far more famous theologian, Paul Tillich,[67] a man who had long advocated religious socialism and regularly criticized the Nazi ideology from his stance on the left. He accepted an offer at Union Theological Seminary and fled to the United States in October. Among those who suffered removal under the new Civil Service Law, however, by far the largest contingent was Jewish. In almost every instance, colleagues of those professors purged failed to stand up in their defense. Despite large losses to individual departments and to universities as a whole, despite the devastation within faculties of worldwide renown, and despite the violation of academic freedom and basic civil rights inherent in this policy, German academics did not protest the massive purging of their ranks.[68]

The circumstances surrounding James Franck at Göttingen University represent a particularly interesting and distressing case. Physics at Göttingen in the 1920s enjoyed an international reputation, especially after Franck received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1925. His colleague,

[65] Quoted in Dahms, "Einleitung," 40.

[66] This analysis is found in Dahms, "Einleitung," 40.

[67] Known as a theologian, Tillich's actual position at the time of his dismissal had been a chair in philosophy at Frankfurt am Main, where Theodor Adorno had guided his *Habilitation*.

[68] See Aniko Szabo, *Vertreibung, Rückkehr, Wiedergutmachung. Göttinger Hochschullehrer im Schatten des Nationalsozialismus* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2000), especially Section II, "Die nationalsozialistischen Verfolgungen an der Hochschulen," 31–84.

Max Born, received his own Nobel Prize in 1954. Franck and Born collected around them a highly capable group of physicists and worked with a sparkling group of mathematicians, figures such as Richard Courant, Felix Bernstein, Hermann Weyl, and Emmy Noether. As a result, Göttingen attracted ambitious students from around the world and significant financial support from the Rockefeller Foundation.

The Nazi regime that came to power in 1933 had little regard for such renown. Three mathematicians (Courant, Noether, and Felix Bernstein) plus the physicist Max Born represented two-thirds of the first group of six professors removed from Göttingen University on April 24, 1933. Although several might have argued for an exception, based on length of service or front soldier status from the war, each had a Jewish background and each had further antagonized Nazi sensibilities through some relationship to left-wing politics. Born, furthermore, had a close friendship with Albert Einstein, which would have added to Nazi hostility. He was such a valuable commodity, of course, that he very quickly received an appointment abroad, first in the form of a three-year position at Cambridge, followed by seventeen years in a chair at Edinburgh. Richard Courant soon found himself directing the Courant Institute of Mathematics in New York. Hermann Weyl accepted an invitation to join Einstein at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. Emmy Noether also accepted an invitation to America, where she died unexpectedly while undergoing surgery in 1935. Bernstein too carried on his career in the United States.[69]

James Franck, possibly the most prominent of all these figures, did not appear on the first list of six professors to be removed. Although Jewish, he fell into a protected category, having served the German military during the war. Furthermore, to whatever extent such things might have been taken into account, he had become a world-renowned scientist and brought the prestige of his reputation and his Nobel Prize to the natural sciences at the university. Friends urged him to sit back, accept his modest good fortune, and hope for the early demise of the Nazi regime, or at least the demise of these policies. However, the circumstances pricked at his conscience and he chose to stand in solidarity with his fellow Jews. Thus, he demonstratively resigned his position, even before the first removals took place, and he sent a letter to the Göttingen newspaper to explain his stance. It might have seemed unfortunate today if

[69] See Dahms, "Einleitung," 41–45, and Norbert Schappacher, "Das Mathematische Institut der Universität Göttingen," in Becker, Dahms and Wegeler, *Die Universität Göttingen unter dem Nationalsozialismus*, 523–32,

this act had been received like the proverbial tree falling in a forest that no one hears, especially because Franck hoped his gesture would encourage others to protest. It proved worse than that, however. He not only failed completely to arouse support for his stance, he had to recognize open hostility among many of his colleagues. Forty-two professors and *Privatdozenten* at Göttingen, approximately 20 percent of the teaching faculty, immediately signed and publicized a petition castigating him for behaving dishonorably against the new German state and calling for an "accelerated cleansing" of the university.[70]

The case of Fritz Haber gives another example of a Nobel Prize–winning scientist – who happened to be Jewish – being accused of dishonorable behavior.[71] His contribution to the German effort in World War I had been incalculable, because he developed a process to create ammonia from its constituent chemicals. This allowed Germany to manufacture explosive shells without the need to import nitrates from Chile. Such imports could be blocked by the Royal Navy, but Haber's process, for which he received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1918, saved Germany from the impact of that British naval success. Haber had been the founding director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Physical and Electro-Chemistry in Berlin, where he served from 1911 to 1933. Although he would have evaded the Aryan Paragraph due to his war service and his appointment as early as 1911, he refused to accept an order to replace Jewish scientists at his institute with "Germans," that is, so-called Aryans. Thus he was dismissed on October 1, 1933, despite his extraordinary service to Germany during the Great War and despite his Nobel Prize. Haber died in Switzerland four months later.

The Kaiser Wilhelm Society and the German Physical Society actually chose to honor Fritz Haber with a memorial service on the one-year anniversary of his death, even though the Nazi state did not approve. A decree from the Minister of Education informed civil servants that they were not allowed to attend:

Professor Dr. Haber was dismissed from his office on October 1, 1933, on the basis of a proposal in which his inner attitude against the present State was

[70] See Dahms, "Einleitung," 41–42, and Ulf Rosenow, "Die Göttinger Physik unter dem Nationalsozialismus," in Becker, Dahms and Wegeler, *Die Universität Göttingen unter dem Nationalsozialismus*, 555–58.

[71] See Edward Yarnall Hartshorne, Jr., *The German Universities and National Socialism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 133–37, for a description of these events. See also Dietrich Stoltzenberg, *Fritz Haber: Chemist, Nobel Laureate, German Jew: A Biography* (Philadelphia: Chemical Heritage Foundation, 2005).

unambiguously expressed, and which public opinion was forced to interpret as a criticism of the measures adopted by the National Socialist State.... I must therefore forbid all of my subordinates sworn in as State officials to participate in the Ceremony.[72]

It is noteworthy that private members of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society and the German Physical Society attended this memorial for Haber in early 1935. Members of the business world and retired soldiers chose to honor one of the important heroes of Germany's effort in World War I. However, we look in vain for academic attendees at the memorial. We also find no academics objecting to the removal of Fritz Haber as director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute or the loss of James Franck as director of the Physics Institute at Göttingen, in both cases simply because they were Jewish.

In May 1933, professors at universities across Germany faced another challenge to what might have seemed their core values: the destruction of unwelcome books. The Nazi Party organized a book burning for May 10, 1933, at universities across Germany. In Berlin, on the square of the Deutsche Staatsoper and directly across Unter den Linden from Humboldt University, more than 20,000 books went up in smoke.[73] Students throughout Germany participated enthusiastically, throwing books onto the pile at designated locations. "Black Lists" were circulated to guide them, essentially condemning anything written by a Jew or by an individual out of favor with the regime. Marx and Freud and Einstein were thrown onto the pyre. Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* also added to the flames, due to its negative portrayal of German martial valor, as did the works of Heinrich and Thomas Mann, both brothers considered politically unreliable. Books came from public libraries, from lending libraries, from private collections, and even from university libraries. Student leaders gave speeches while the flames leapt skyward, celebrating the "cleansing" process. Prominent professors also spoke, which is the first significant indication that scholars accepted this violation of the written word and its importance to the world of ideas. The other indicator can be found in the lack of opposition by professors to the book burning. Instead, they participated by donating books, speaking in support, and joining the jubilant crowd to watch the flames.[74]

[72] Hartschorne, *The German Universities and National Socialism*, 135–37.

[73] Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Vol. 1*, 57. He adds that 2,000–3,000 books were burned "in every other major German city."

[74] See, for example, Matthew Fishburn, *Book Burning* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). See also Gerhard Sauder, ed., *Die Bücherverbrennung 10. Mai 1933* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1985) for a description and for documents on the book burning.

Professors also accepted another major change to their normal ways of doing business. Faculty in Germany had exercised a good deal of power within academia, meeting as a faculty senate, heavily influencing the hiring of new personnel, electing their own administrators (whether dean or *Rektor*) for relatively short terms in office, and generally policing themselves. In other words, universities operated under reasonably democratic principles. This did not fit the *Führer* principle, as advocated by Nazi ideology, and universities quickly succumbed to government appointment of their leaders, coupled with increased powers to be exercised by each local *Führer*. In every case, of course, these local leaders had to be loyal to the new regime.

One prominent example can be found in the *Rektor* at Freiburg University, Martin Heidegger, who gave a famous *Rektor* address in the autumn of 1933. Heidegger, among the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century, was mentor to Jean Paul Sartre and a major contributor to the entire existentialist movement. His stature as a scholar can hardly be denied, and he has remained a very important figure since 1945, although it is also clear that he wholeheartedly endorsed the Nazi regime. In common with a large number of his colleagues in the academic establishment, he praised the rise of Hitler as a moment of rebirth for Germany. What sort of rebirth? Heidegger welcomed Germanic unity, a martial spirit, and an aggressive willingness to reestablish Germany among the leading nations of the world.[75]

Germans like Martin Heidegger celebrated the uniqueness of Germany rather than the place of Germans within the human community. Another instance in the career of Karl Brandi illustrates the touchiness of German sensitivity to such issues. This episode involved a meeting of the International Congress of Historical Science. Brandi, nominated to be vice president of the organization, planned to attend its gathering in the summer of 1933. One significant problem emerged, however. The conference would take place in Warsaw, capital of a nation much resented by Germans. Even worse, there were rumors that an excursion to a city in the "Polish Corridor" might take place. The Polish Corridor consisted of a stretch of land connecting Poland to the Baltic coast, as granted to Poland in the postwar settlement. It involved the much-disputed land of Pomerania, settled by Poles a thousand years before but taken from Poland by Frederick II in 1772. Frederick and his successors tried to "germanize" this region, renamed West Prussia, which now formed a German corridor to its province of East Prussia. A Polish majority remained, however, and

[75] See Chapter 5 for further treatment of Heidegger's politics.

what was "stolen" from Poland in 1772 was "stolen" back for Poland after World War I.

Poland in its entirety irritated Germans. This nation had been dismembered in the late eighteenth century and thus had not existed on the pre–World War I map. The Polish nation recreated in 1920 was carved out of formerly German, Austrian, and Russian lands. Patriotic German historians were concerned in 1933 that the Warsaw conference might include Poles dealing with Polish-German border questions, a subject on which they were sure to offend the German point of view. German historians also resented in advance the French presence at this conference and the sort of topics the French might present, including the likelihood that they would ally with Poles in their presentations and discussion. This German sensibility is highlighted in their concern about the languages to be used at the conference. Germans insisted on their right to present papers in German, and they insisted that Poles should not be allowed to present in Polish! Furthermore, Poles would also not be allowed to restrict themselves to French, but at least some would have to present in German.[76]

Brandi, long interested in Polish questions, as indicated earlier in this chapter, attended a preparatory meeting for this conference in The Hague. He later described to a colleague a "particularly unpleasant thing" that occurred there. A German historian from Bonn, unusual in that he wanted to encourage German-French reconciliation, proposed the development of a multi-volume German-French handbook. Then a Pole immediately suggested a German-Polish handbook as well. Fortunately, in Brandi's view, the Norwegian chair of the meeting did "the only right thing" by deferring such questions to the German Historical Committee. Brandi reports that he later chastised his Bonn colleague, leaving the latter in "no doubt, that … international situations must be handled with much greater care."[77]

Brandi did in fact attend the Warsaw conference. Then, in its aftermath, he suffered an unexpected attack from one of his colleagues in history at Göttingen. This came on January 18, 1934, the annual holiday celebrating Bismarck's founding of the German Reich. The ancient historian, Ulrich Kahrstedt, delivered the festive address. In the process, he attacked unnamed German historians who had attended an international meeting in Warsaw while Germans in Poland were being "hunted and murdered" and otherwise persecuted. He also added a hypothetical

[76] See, for example, Brandi to Prof. Dr. Kehr, 20.7.32, in BN, 41, #70.
[77] Ibid.

question, asking "What would happen to academics in any other country who similarly besmirched their nation's honor?" Kahrstedt then gave this threatening answer: "I believe we all know what would happen. The students would take up cudgels and beat the professors to death."[78] Both Brandi and Schramm recognized themselves in this talk, as well as the insult to their patriotism. Brandi wrote to a friend about what happened next:

> Immediately after the speech, still in my robes, I sought out the *Rektor* in his office. The speaker also was there, and Schramm followed me. I demanded of the *Rektor* the establishment of an honor court. Then I asked the speaker whether he was prepared to meet me with weapons in hand, to give satisfaction. I repeated the question within twenty-four hours through a colleague.[79]

This incident did not produce bloodshed, for Kahrstedt rejected the challenge, whether because Brandi was already sixty-five years of age cannot be determined. (His stated reason was that members of the Stahlhelm, a conservative and nationalistic veterans' organization to which he belonged, were only allowed to kill one another. It violated their sense of honor to duel with outsiders.) Then the *Rektor* convened an honor court and managed to get Kahrstedt to issue an apology. The *Rektor* also wrote to Brandi and Schramm that reproaches made against the honor of German historians who had attended the Historical Congress in Warsaw were now determined by the honor court to have been inaccurate. "I regret in the name of the university that these reproaches were made."[80]

Where does this picture of German universities leave us? By 1933, we find German students pushing the Nazi agenda. We also find various violations of academic freedom – book burnings, the purging of faculty on political grounds, the removal of Jews – and we find little or no objection raised by academics against these intrusions into their world. Instead, we find considerable readiness to accept Nazi goals and ideals, as indicated, for example, by two reputable historians, Karl Brandi and Percy Schramm. They do not represent terrible tales of historians behaving really badly. It is true that Karl Brandi could not see – or refused to regret – that his model for the Western front (overturning French identity in the interest of German political control) did not match his

[78] Quoted in Cornelia Wegeler, "Das Institut für Altertumskunde der Universität Göttingen 1921–1962: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Klassischen Philologie seit Wilamowitz," Becker, Dahms and Wegeler, *Die Universität Göttingen unter dem Nationalsozialismus*, 347.

[79] Brandi to *Bibliotheksdirektor* Dr. O.H. May, Hannover, 27.1.34, in BN 54a, #1.

[80] *Rektor* Neumann to Brandi and Schramm, 29.1.34, in BN, 127, #1.

model for the Eastern front (maintaining German identity despite Polish political control). Furthermore, he was willing to violate the standard mandates of historical scholarship by advocating fake scholarship, a scholarly apparatus serving only as camouflage for a propagandistic purpose. Percy Schramm also saw the *Ostmark* in terms of propaganda and clearly endorsed, in some fashion, the subsequent Nazi measures there.[81] Furthermore, he lived a life heavily influenced by and attracted to military values at a time and place where those values would be put to evil purpose. There is no evidence that his subsequent participation in "Hitler's Army," to use the words of Omer Bartov,[82] ever gave way to doubt or to opposition. In both cases, I believe these men committed the act deemed by Jürgen Kocka "most important" among the "accomplishments" of Hitler's historians. They created an intellectual atmosphere in which students would be inclined to accept the "utopian" and "nihilistic" delusions of the Nazi program, as well as the increasingly brutal measures used to implement it.

It is important to recognize that Brandi and Schramm were among those professors best situated to oppose Nazi inroads. Each was firmly established at Göttingen University, each had an international reputation, and each had roots in the right-of-center but reasonably moderate DVP prior to 1933. The fact that they also entertained attitudes about foreign policy and German patriotism quite in harmony with Adolf Hitler made them willing to endorse rather than question the regime. Martin Heidegger went several steps further, enthusiastically greeting Hitler's rise in a very public manner. No benign assessment seems possible. At a hard time and place, these academics took culpable steps in the wrong direction. Their story surely helps explain the enthusiasm of educated Germans in general for the Nazi state and the widespread participation in its crimes.

If we consider the impact of 1933 on a younger generation of German academics, we find an entire cohort less well established and more vulnerable to political blandishments. Within that cohort there was an even greater willingness to politicize the university, to teach racial science, and to hone one's political credentials through party membership and

[81] Willi Oberkrome, for example, notes that the work of Brandi and Schramm on *Ostfragen* did not appear or get cited in the literature on that topic. See *Volksgeschichte: Methodische Innovation und völkische Ideologisierung in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1993), 171, n. 2.

[82] Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

ideologically oriented research. The combination of an older generation represented by Karl Brandi, a middle generation including both Martin Heidegger and Percy Schramm, and a young generation eager to make their careers helps explain the collaboration, the *Selbst-Gleichschaltung*, and the lack of resistance that marked German universities over the next decade of Nazi rule.

4

Consent and Collaboration

The Churches Through 1945

"When are we going to admit the truth about the Church Struggle? We lost." These words to me by a member of the Confessing Church stand in stark contrast to much of the mythology about the Confessing Church nurtured after the war. It is now clear that the Confessing Church lost the battle against Nazism in two ways. First, the Deutsche Christen and their pro-Nazi ideas exercised more influence throughout the period of the Third Reich than did the ideas of the Confessing Church.[1] Thus, for example, the Confessing Church lost the battle over respect for and use of the Old Testament as churches began limiting Old Testament readings in their worship practice. The Confessing Church also lost the battle for respect toward and decent treatment of pastors of Jewish descent. Despite Martin Niemöller's opposition to use of the "Aryan Paragraph" within the church and despite the widespread support he received in 1933 and 1934 as measured by the growth of the "Pastors' Emergency League," all pastors "tainted" with Jewish blood lost their jobs in the church by 1937 or 1938.[2] The Confessing Church also lost the battle over the placement of professors in theological faculties at German universities, with advocates of the Deutsche Christen viewpoint over-represented in hiring policies.

[1] See Doris Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[2] See, for example, Wolfgang Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, edited and translated by Victoria J. Barnett (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 126–29. The measurement of "taint" followed the practice of the Nuremberg Racial Laws of 1935, in that one or two Jewish grandparents determined one's status as a *Mischling* of the second or first degree, respectively, and three or four Jewish grandparents rendered one a Jew, whatever one's religious belief or sense of identity.

There is a second way in which Confessing Church supporters lost the Church Struggle. They chose not to fight. That is, they chose not to fight against the real enemy that now seems so clear to us – the Nazi state and its racist, militarist, brutal ideology. Between the Barman Declaration of May 1934 and the end of the Third Reich, many members of the Confessing Church struggled bravely to uphold traditional Christian beliefs and practices in the face of Deutsche Christen heresy. Some individuals attracted the attention of the Gestapo because of their religious practices and beliefs, those who insisted on preaching and teaching and praying in ways that offended the Nazi state. Some members of the Confessing Church went further, risking their safety and their lives by hiding or assisting Christians of Jewish descent, and some really were imprisoned or even executed as a result. Thus, we can find real heroes in the Confessing Church besides Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. However, despite such behavior by a small percentage of Confessing Church members, the Confessing Church itself was marked by a refusal to attack or even criticize the Nazi state. It was possible for Confessing Church members to support the theology of the Confessing Church and still consider themselves loyal, even enthusiastic citizens of the Third Reich. This proved especially true after the start of World War II, when questions of national loyalty weighed heavily. The Catholic Church offers a similar pattern of minor conflict coupled with broad acquiescence. From the vantage point of today, with our recognition of the hatred and brutality of the Nazi regime and with our willingness to label that regime immoral and evil, the story of Christian churches from 1933 to 1945 reveals a pattern of small victories and large defeats.

Small Victories

The Barmen Declaration

It might seem inappropriate to label the Barmen Declaration a "small victory." This statement, crafted in May 1934, became the foundation of the Confessing Church, and it has been widely admired since 1945. For example, at an international conference in 1984 celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of this document, Bishop Desmond Tutu praised the Barmen Declaration as an inspiration to those Christian leaders in South Africa opposed to apartheid.[3] Many church bodies since 1945 have officially

[3] This 1984 celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Barmen was hosted in Seattle by the Annual Scholars Conference on Churches and the Holocaust. See Hubert G. Locke, ed.,

endorsed the Barmen Declaration or adopted it as part of their statement of faith. Martin Doblmeier's documentary film on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, produced in 2003, echoes the widespread admiration for Barmen, describing it as an "act of civil disobedience."[4]

The Barmen Declaration might be considered a small victory, however, when we realize how few Protestants it represented. According to Wilhelm Niemöller's assessment, only 20 percent of German Protestant pastors supported the Confessing Church, and that leaves 80 percent ignoring or even opposing Barmen.[5] Paul Althaus and Wilhelm Elert, for example, two powerful figures within the Lutheran establishment in Germany, quickly responded to the Barmen Declaration by producing a counter-document, the *Ansbacher Ratschlag* (an "advisory" tied to Ansbach, a city of importance to Lutherans).

Neither Althaus nor Elert were on the side of the Deutsche Christen, although they were tempted for awhile due to their fervent support of Hitler. However, they could not accept or endorse some of the radical DC ideas most offensive to the signers of Barmen, for example, the removal of the Old Testament from the Bible or the idea that Hitler was virtually equal to Jesus as a message from God. Althaus and Elert were among a very large middle group of German Protestants who positioned themselves between the DC and the Confessing Church.[6] Part of the problem was political. They insisted on distancing themselves from the implication that the Barmen Declaration might be seen as criticizing the Nazi state in its criticism of the DC, who were, after all, fervent supporters of that state. Thus, Althaus and Elert began their *Ansbacher Ratschlag* with a ringing political affirmation:

> As Christians we honor with thanks toward God … every authority … as a tool of divine preservation.… In this knowledge we as believing Christians thank God that he has given to our people in its time of need the *Führer* as a "pious and

The Barmen Confession: Papers from the Seattle Assembly (Lewiston Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986).

[4] Martin Doblmeier, *Bonhoeffer* (Journey Films, 2003).

[5] See Wilhelm Niemöller, "The Niemöller Archives," in Franklin H. Littell and Hubert G. Locke, eds., *The German Church Struggle and the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1974), 51–53.

[6] By the time of the Barmen Declaration, this middle group – which refused to join either faction, the Deutsche Christen or the Confessing Church – emerged as the largest segment of the German Protestant Church. The DC had lost some of their momentum after the radical Sports Palace gathering in Berlin of November 1933. State support for the DC then weakened by the spring of 1934, as early hopes that they could unify the church diminished.

faithful leader" and the National Socialist political system as "good government," a government with "decency and honor."[7]

Clearly, this illustrates a specific enthusiasm for Hitler as well as an emphasis on the traditional Lutheran belief in and respect for state authority.

Althaus and Elert also had theological objections to Barmen. They criticized the Christocentric narrowness inspired by Karl Barth. At first glance it may seem inoffensive to state, as the Barmen Declaration does, that God's revelation comes to human beings *only* through Jesus Christ as presented in scripture. Although modern advocates of religious pluralism and tolerance might take offense, because Christocentrism denies that any other religious tradition has an appropriate relationship to God, that was not the concern of Althaus and Elert. They were perfectly willing to claim Christianity as a universal truth, but they could not accept Barmen's formulation of this truth. They advocated the much more widespread and more common Christian belief that the hand of God, and thus a message from God, can be seen in history as well as in scripture. The entire Old Testament makes sense only if one accepts that God was "speaking" to the Hebrews in response to their behavior as their fortunes ebbed and flowed. The idea that God will answer prayer or bless those who obey him implies the receipt and recognition of a message from God; and many Christians insist on seeing God's hand in the fortunes of their nation.

Althaus and Elert wanted to claim and proclaim God's hand in the changes they perceived in Germany by 1934. They used the *Ansbacher Ratschlag* to make a theological point about how best to understand divine revelation, but also to celebrate the rebirth of Germany under Hitler. They suspected that Karl Barth, a political leftist and a non-German to boot, given his Swiss origins, could not join them in their enthusiasm. It seemed quite clear to them that Barth's critique of the Deutsche Christen grew out of political as well as theological reasons. Given postwar judgments of the politics involved, the narrowness of Barth's theology in the Barmen Declaration looks attractive. It may have been necessary and certainly was a useful doctrine for that moment. It tried to cool the hothouse atmosphere of nationalistic Germany and resist the growth of strange vegetation. Whether

[7] Paul Althaus and Werner Elert, *Der Ansbacher Ratschlag*, as reprinted in Gerhard Niemöller, *Die erste Bekenntnissynode der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche zu Barmen*, vol. I (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1959), 142 ff.

Barmen's Christocentrism is good theology is another question – and not one that need be decided here.[8]

A more important critique of Barmen, for our purposes, comes from a close reading of the document itself, especially when it is viewed from our perspective on the Nazi state. Barth actually did oppose Hitler, but Barmen did not. His specific purpose was to curb theological and ecclesiastical weeds, not political ones. There is simply no statement in Barmen by which a signatory would be making an explicit critique of the Nazi state. That was no accident. The framers of the Barmen Declaration included people like Barth, who really did oppose Nazi politics; but they also included politically conservative individuals, especially some Lutherans, who remained enthusiastic about Hitler's leadership. These individuals would not sign a document perceived to be disloyal to the Nazi movement and to the state. Barmen explicitly reassured them with statements such as this, from the first section: "Be not deceived by loose talk, as if we meant to oppose the unity of the German nation!" Every word of the Barmen Declaration is hostile to the theological excesses of the Deutsche Christen. No single word need be understood as hostile to Nazis or the Nazi ideology.

The entire text of the Barmen Declaration is relatively short. The fifth of these six statements is the one most often cited as hostile to Hitler, an act of "civil disobedience." It begins with an expression of the "two kingdoms" doctrine: "Scripture tells us that, in the as yet unredeemed world in which the Church also exists, the State has by divine appointment the task of providing for justice and peace." Barth had originally followed this statement with the words, "We reject the error, as though the State were the only and totalitarian order of human life. We reject the error as though the Church had to conform to a particular form of the State in its message and form." Many of the delegates at Barmen complained that this sounded like an attack on the Nazi state. Georg Merz, an important and quite conservative Lutheran representative, reminded Barth that their purpose was to oppose the Deutsche Christen and not the state, so Barth resolved the impasse with this final version:

> We reject the false doctrine, as though the State, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the Church's vocation as well.

[8] For a further discussion of Althaus' critique of Barmen, see Robert P. Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 86–89.

We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church, over and beyond its special commission, should and could appropriate the characteristics, the tasks, and the dignity of the State, thus itself becoming an organ of the State.[9]

If it were assumed that the Nazi state clearly and unambiguously demanded that all Germans accept its total authority in all things, Barmen Five could be understood as opposition to that requirement. We now commonly view Hitler as a totalitarian leader, so that Barmen Five, interpreted in that light, can take on the color of civil courage or political opposition. There were many reasons at the time, however, to view it otherwise. In particular, Article 24 in the Nazi Party Program, with its advocacy of "positive Christianity" as the foundation of the German state, remained official Nazi doctrine throughout the period of the Third Reich. Furthermore, Nazi policy regularly acknowledged the right of the churches to act freely *within their sphere*. Barth's revision of Point Five acknowledges and affirms that doctrine of two spheres. While claiming the freedom of the church to act freely within its vocation, there is no restriction placed on the state, even a totalitarian state, so long as the state makes no claims within the spiritual sphere reserved for the church.

The first version of Barmen Five had a sharper bite, and it is a bite consistent with what we know to have been Barth's politics. It would seem to condemn any totalitarian state, and it denied the appropriateness of the church conforming to any particular state. The version of Barmen Five that emerged, however, expresses a point of view that could be accepted by traditional Lutherans who also considered themselves good Nazis. Under that statement, churches that became politicized or pastors who criticized the state itself were not protected. Martin Niemöller would not rein in his tongue, even when the Gestapo placed speaking bans on him and monitored his behavior. By 1937 he suffered arrest and imprisonment. That need not have been seen as a violation of Barmen. Many or most members of the Confessing Church could accept Barmen and the Nazi state with no qualms of conscience, even when a few radicals found themselves in prison.

The reality that Barmen did not want a fight with the Nazi state becomes even more apparent when we see how it dealt with the mistreatment of Jews – it simply did not. There is no single reference to

[9] All quotations from the Barmen Declaration are taken from Arthur C. Cochrane, *The Church's Confession under Hitler* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), 237–47, with the reference to the original version of Point 5 found on p. 241, note 5. See also Niemöller, "The Niemöller Archives," 196–206.

Jews in the Barmen Declaration. There is no complaint against the Nazi state acting brutally in its treatment of Jews or other minorities. There is no apparent moral disquiet, no recognition (as we recognize today) that hatred toward and mistreatment of Jews was probably the single most serious crime in the long and egregious list of Nazi crimes.

There are at least two possible explanations for Barmen's refusal to mention Nazi brutality toward Jews. On the one hand, it might have been part of the desire to spread the nets of Barmen widely, to attract Nazis as well as anti-Nazis in the fight against Deutsche Christen heresy. On the other hand, there is no first draft of Barmen in which a stronger message can be found; there is no indication that the framers of Barmen restrained themselves. Nazi mistreatment of Jews seems not to have been an issue of concern! Dietrich Bonhoeffer appears to represent an exception when, one year earlier, he made his famous statement in sympathy with Jewish suffering.[10] Even Bonhoeffer, however, in that same statement accepted the right of the state to deal with the "Jewish problem" as it chose. The very act of using the words "Jewish problem" or "Jewish question" played into the racist, stereotyped, Nazi point of view, the view that German citizens of Jewish background or identity represented a problem. They simply could not be considered German citizens of equal rights and value. Even Bonhoeffer in 1933 let himself play that brutal game. The delegates at Barmen almost certainly accepted the concept of a "Jewish problem" with near unanimity. The fact that the Barmen Declaration said no single word in defense of Jews suggests that; and this failure implicitly allowed the state to persecute Jews as it chose, acting within its sphere of God-given authority.

Marching in the Streets against Nazi Policies

There were policies of the Nazi state that did arouse Christian protest. In fact, perhaps to our surprise, there were instances in which Christians marched in the streets and demanded that the government change its ways. Furthermore, confounding our image of a Nazi Germany where protestors "would be shot," these Christian demonstrations produced no

[10] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "The Church and the Jewish Question," in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, vol. 12 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 361–70. This English edition of the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke*, edited by Eberhard Bethge, et al., is under the general editorship of Victoria J. Barnett and Barbara Wohjoski. Volume 12 is edited by Larry L. Rasmussen. See a discussion of the issues involving Bonhoeffer and the "Jewish question" in Chapter 2.

arrests and resulted in a change in policy. The first important example of such behavior occurred in September and October 1934.

This story begins with Reich Bishop Müller and his legal assistant, August Jäger, hoping to secure national control over all of the regional churches. Such a policy represented Müller's intentions ever since his selection as bishop, although it had been sidetracked by conflict over the Aryan Paragraph, the rise of the Pastors' Emergency League, and then the development of a Confessing Church. By August 1934, Müller's more aggressive effort at consolidation, known as *Gleichschaltung* (coordination) in the Nazi lexicon, mirrored Hitler's own consolidation of power that month after the death of President Hindenburg.

Müller and Jäger met with a Reich Church synod of sixty delegates on August 9, 1934, just two days after the funeral of President von Hindenburg. They secured large majority votes in support of a leadership structure in which they, Müller and Jäger, would decide what to do, and the *Landeskirchen* would be subject to such decisions, despite whatever legal and church constitutional protections they might previously have enjoyed. Only ten delegates had the temerity to vote in opposition.[11] Hitler had already provided a model, using Hindenburg's death to consolidate his control over Germany. He declared that a new president need not be selected, because he was willing to function as president, chancellor and *Führer* all in one. Hitler soon secured public support for this decision by means of a plebiscite, and he sought to secure his control over the Reichswehr by requiring an oath of loyalty to himself personally as *Führer*.[12] Müller and Jäger hoped they could emulate this pattern in the Protestant church. In one day's work on August 9, they tried to establish their legal foundation.

Müller's goal of national church control assumed that Deutsche Christen would take control of each of the twenty-eight regional churches and, in turn, that these *Landeskirchen* each would accept his authority.

[11] Klaus Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich, Volume Two: The Year of Disillusionment: 1934 Barmen and Rome* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988; originally published as *Die Kirchen und das Dritte Reich. Band 2. Das Jahr der Ernüchterung 1934 Barmen und Rom*, (Berlin: Ullstein,, 1986), 225–26.

[12] Many *Wehrmacht* officers later claimed that their oath to the *Führer* kept them from resisting his orders or mounting some form of opposition. One problem is that the earlier oath of loyalty to the Weimar Constitution did not seem to carry the same weight. Also, it is now clear that the loyalty of senior officers was possibly achieved more through very large bribes than through any oath of loyalty. See, Norman J. W. Goda, "Black Marks: Hitler's Bribery of his Senior Military Officers During World War II," *Journal of Modern History* 72/2 (2000), 413–52.

By the summer of 1934, however, three "intact" churches represented a challenge to Müller's plans. These churches in Württemberg, Bavaria, and Hanover had no dearth of support for the Nazi state, but each had a strong regional bishop and a tradition of independence. That independent streak included a deep-seated Lutheran identity along with skepticism toward the blending of Lutheran and Reformed doctrine in a united church, a problem they had long criticized in the Old Prussian Union. By August 1934, other *Landeskirchen* had been taken over by DC majorities and had accepted Reich Church leadership. Even the Hanoverian church under Marahrens moved tentatively in that direction. However, the southern German churches in Württemberg and Bavaria remained skeptical, and it was their ten representatives who made their protests heard at the synod on August 9.

Müller's administrative assistant, August Jäger, soon proved true to his name by "hunting" uncooperative church leaders in Stuttgart and Munich in an aggressive manner and with the cooperation of state authorities. Bishops Meiser and Wurm wrote directly to Hitler, complaining about the behavior of Müller, Jäger, and the Reich Church and asking that the Minister of the Interior intervene; but they received only the response that their complaints had been investigated and proved unfounded.[13] Undeterred, both Meiser and Wurm issued statements by the end of August expressing their defiance against the Reich Church. These were to be read out on a Sunday morning; however, at the instigation of Jäger, police intervened to warn pastors against doing so.[14] On September 3, Jäger announced that the new leadership law would be imposed without delay on the Protestant churches in Württemberg and Bavaria.[15] Sides had now been drawn up for conflict.

Bishop Wurm polled his pastors on September 7 and found a support level of 1,184 in favor and only 92 against his stance.[16] The next day, Jäger arrived at church headquarters in Stuttgart and tried to win over the church officials there, but he met up against this phalanx of support for Wurm and made no headway. Therefore, he removed several church officials and he removed Bishop Wurm himself from all but his "spiritual duties." Claiming to have found financial irregularities in the church's books, he appointed a "Reich Church Commissioner" to administer the

[13] Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich, Volume Two*, 232.
[14] Ibid., 233.
[15] Ibid., 243.
[16] Ibid., 245.

church. The financial charges were specious; nonetheless, they lingered in the Nazi and DC press until overturned by a court in late November.[17] On September 13, Wurm asked to be reinstated. Instead, on the very next day he got his second visit from Jäger. The latter, unable to convince Wurm or members of the *Oberkirchenrat* to accept his demands, dismissed them from their duties on September 14 and convinced a local pastor to take over the role of bishop in Wurm's stead.

During these weeks of September, the first sign of resistance developed among laypeople in the churches. Prayer meetings and other services in Württemberg turned into a network of open support for Wurm. One dramatic example can be seen in the Swabian village of Truchtelfingen. After police banned a Sunday afternoon meeting planned by the local pastor, several hundred people gathered outside his parsonage the next evening, singing "A Mighty Fortress is our God." Local storm troopers refused to intervene and the SA unit from a neighboring community, which arrived to put down the rebellion, caused a riot instead. When the pastor was taken to the local *Rathaus* for questioning, a group of girls stood outside and sang more hymns.[18]

Events in Bavaria developed in similar fashion. Although Jäger let September slip by without taking direct action against Bishop Meiser, that did not prevent trouble. His challenge on September 3, threatening to "coordinate" the churches in both Bavaria and Württemberg, created a turbulent atmosphere, as did the example of ill treatment meted out against the neighboring Bishop Wurm. Furthermore, a few rabid Deutsche Christen in Bavaria began calling for Meiser's dismissal. These opponents arranged a demonstration to take place in Nuremberg on September 17. Storm troopers were invited to gather on Adolf Hitler *Platz* to demand Meiser's ouster; however, local pastors invited Meiser to come to Nuremberg in order to create a counter-demonstration that same evening. Meiser clearly prevailed in this battle. Crowds so overflowed the *Lorenzkirche*, where he was to speak, that they had to be directed to two neighboring churches, the Holy Ghost and the Egidien. Meiser made a circuit that evening, preaching in one church after another, and his loud, enthusiastic crowds made quite an impression on local Nazi authorities. An official report described Meiser's popularity with the masses of people, many of whom had arrived by 6:30 PM but did not go home until 11:00 PM. This report ended by warning that "the great majority of Meiser's

[17] Ibid., 246.
[18] Ibid., 248.

supporters in Franconia are to be regarded as loyal National Socialists who often include the old Party members."[19]

Jäger did not flag in the face of this support for Wurm and Meiser. Rather, he raised the stakes by arranging on October 6 for Wurm to be placed under house arrest. The order (based on the special law for public order created after the Reichstag fire in February 1933) forbade Wurm the right to leave his home. It also denied him the right to participate in church conflicts, send out letters or other types of messages, or receive church monies.[20] On October 10, the DC-controlled synod put in place by Müller and Jäger confirmed Wurm's removal from office. A few days earlier, Bishop Meiser had taken preemptive action by publishing an open letter. He challenged Müller as bishop of the Church to say whether he endorsed traditional Lutheran doctrines and whether he was prepared to turn back from his DC-inspired campaign for a unified national church. On October 11, Jäger arrived in Munich with Müller's answer: He marched into church headquarters personally to announce Meiser's removal from office, although the bishop was traveling at the time. The next day police arrived and placed Meiser under house arrest.[21]

Neither Wurm nor Meiser accepted Jäger or Müller's authority, and they, their clergy, and their lay supporters stepped up their protest. On the evening of October 11, just before his house arrest the next day, Meiser spoke to a packed church. "But we are not of them that shrink back," he said. "Now is the time for action. Now, community, the act of loyalty is required of you."[22] Masses had gathered outside the church in order to greet Meiser on his departure, with people crowded together so thickly that his car had to thread its way slowly and carefully as the crowds wished him well. They then remained in the square, singing and shouting, until broken up by riot police.[23] Over the next few days, protests also took the form of dramatic church services, with altars draped in black and candles left unlit. Wurm and Meiser's supporters continued to speak out in open defiance, singing hymns and spilling into the streets. They sang Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress" and other hymns; but they

[19] Ibid., 247–58. The report is quoted on 251.

[20] A photocopy of the order is printed in Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich, Volume Two*, 258.

[21] See Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich, Volume Two*, 260–62. For these events, see also John Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933–1945* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2001; reprinted from the original edition, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), 98–99.

[22] Quoted in Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich, Volume Two*, 261.

[23] Ibid., 262.

also sang the Nazi "Horst Wessel Lied," for most of the supporters of Wurm and Meiser were good Nazis and some held important positions in the local Nazi Party. These supporters had welcomed and endorsed Adolf Hitler and his plans for a new Germany, as had Wurm and Meiser themselves. Their complaint was distinctly ecclesiastical, directed against the specific policies of Müller and Jäger. Their anger may also have had a regional flavor. Germans in Württemberg and Bavaria tended to reject interference from northern Germans, resenting the power of northerners within Bismarck's united Germany and their alleged air of superiority.

This escalating fiasco led to frantic pleas directed to Berlin from south German government and Nazi Party officials. For example, Minister President Siebert of Bavaria wrote Interior Minister Frick on October 20, describing massive support for Meiser and estimating that Franconian farmers, who were also good Nazis, supported their bishop by as much as 95 percent. Siebert pleaded for "a rapid and immediate evaluation of the situation by the *Führer*" to avoid "serious internal unrest."[24] The Bavarian governor, Franz von Epp, added, "The situation is that we face a great rebellion of the whole Protestant church in Bavaria."[25] Hitler also heard from his foreign minister, Konstantin von Neurath, for this crisis had attracted international attention. The archbishop of Canterbury, for example, contacted the German ambassador and noted an imminent meeting at which British bishops were likely to withdraw their recognition of Müller's German Protestant Church. In the face of crowds demonstrating in the streets, frantic officials jamming the phone lines to Berlin, and the threat of a foreign policy fiasco, Hitler finally intervened. On October 26, he forced the resignation of Jäger, effective the twenty-ninth. (It is worth noting that Jäger went on to serve in a high administrative position in German-occupied Poland during World War II, for which he was convicted by a Polish court for war crimes and crimes against humanity and executed in June 1949 – despite a clemency plea from Otto Dibelius.)[26] Also on October 26, Meiser and Wurm received telephone calls releasing them from house arrest, and they received telegrams inviting them to meet with Hitler in Berlin in four days. On October 30, he and Interior Minister Frick met with the two bishops. Although Hitler would not agree to remove Müller from office (which, of course, would have represented an even more direct political interference in church

[24] Quoted in ibid., 263.
[25] Quoted in ibid., 277.
[26] Ibid., 281.

affairs than his earlier support for Müller's election), he promised that Wurm and Meiser, along with their fellow "intact" bishop, Marahrens, would be treated only under the provisions of the church constitution of July 1933, not with Müller's version of the *Führer* Principle. These three bishops then remained in office throughout the Nazi period.[27]

I describe this event as a small victory, because the goal was small by our standards or expectations. It is remarkable that people stood up for their bishops in the face of official threats and in the face of the Gestapo. They spoke out openly and marched in the streets. Manifestly, however, they did not direct their anger against the politics of the Nazi regime. They never spoke out against the brutal treatment of Jews. They never marched in the streets for causes central to our postwar condemnation of the Nazi state. Rather, they were content to be supporters of that state. It is also worth noting that when the state stepped in, it was on the side of the church protestors, not the side of what we would perceive as the harsh Nazi policies of Müller and Jäger.

Calling out Mr. Hitler

On one occasion, a portion of the Confessing Church actually stood up on principle against the immorality of the Nazi regime. In May 1936, Confessing Church leaders used a personal letter to Adolf Hitler to ask whether acts taken against the church represented his viewpoint or whether he would now openly repudiate such acts and expressions. They listed among their concerns the limitations placed on church newspapers, radio programs, and public education; the actions of police against church officials; the attempts of some Nazi leaders to "de-Christianize" Germany; and even the attempt to set up Germany in the place of God and to claim Hitler as God's foremost spokesperson. Uniquely in the record of the Confessing Church, this letter also took up the issue that now most causes us to condemn the regime, its antisemitism: "If Christians are pressed to adopt an antisemitic attitude as part of the National Socialist ideology, which will incite them to hate the Jews, then this is against the Christian commandment to love one's neighbor." There is a qualifier in that statement – antisemitism that did not require hatred might have been considered acceptable – but the letter then goes on with another strong complaint:

> The Evangelical conscience, which feels itself responsible for people and government, is hardest of all hit by the fact that in Germany, which calls itself a

[27] See ibid., 281–83.

law-abiding state, concentration camps can still exist and the activities of the Gestapo are not subject to any legal scrutiny.[28]

This letter represents a dramatic instance in which Confessing Church leaders announced in Hitler's Germany that they found Nazi behavior immoral and un-Christian. They had condemned the theology and behavior of the Deutsche Christen on many occasions, but here they actually asked Hitler either to condemn anti-Christian tactics or acknowledge that he stood for behaviors that the Confessing Church could not condone. Why would I label this a "small victory?" It seems to represent exactly what we would want to see, a brave act by the Confessing Church as an institution, rather than just the brave act of a single individual like Martin Niemöller or Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

The list of problems with this statement, unfortunately, is rather long. First, it represented only a rump group within the Confessing Church, an organization that Hitler had managed to divide in 1935. In July of that year, Hitler created a Ministry of Church Affairs, headed by an old Nazi functionary, Hanns Kerrl, thereby de-emphasizing the role and reducing the authority of Reich Bishop Müller. Kerrl, with no theological axe to grind, attempted to mediate between Deutsche Christen and Confessing Church factions in order to create a more cooperative Protestant Church. Many advocates of the Confessing Church, including the Bishops Marahrens, Meiser, and Wurm of the intact churches, decided to work with Kerrl, especially in order to show their loyalty to the state and to the nationalistic politics that Hitler represented. Martin Niemöller continued to see unacceptable state interference in the role of Kerrl, but he and his followers were now reduced to a fringe group often labeled the "radical Niemöller wing" of the Confessing Church, or the "Dahlemites," after Niemöller's parish in Dahlem, a suburb of Berlin.

The isolation of the Dahlemites quickly became apparent in the aftermath of this strong critique of Nazi behavior, sent as a private letter in May 1936 to the *Führer*. Hitler's strategy, apparently, was to ignore the letter. However, one of Niemöller's confederates then smuggled a copy to Switzerland, where it appeared in print and soon aroused excited comment, including criticism of Nazi Germany throughout the international press. Even the Dahlemites backed off almost completely, issuing

[28] Quoted in Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 162. See also "Protest of the Provisional Leadership to Hitler, 28 May 1936," partially reprinted in Peter Matheson, ed., *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans, 1981), 58–62.

a watered down pastoral letter on August 23 in which they merely complained of some Nazi excesses against the churches and criticized the paganism of Alfred Rosenberg's slant on Nazism. All of the strong statements about antisemitism, concentration camps, and the idolatrous placing of Germany and Hitler alongside God disappeared entirely. Bishops Marahrens, Meiser, and Wurm rejected even this milder document and by November issued a statement: "With the Reich Church Commission we wholeheartedly support the *Führer* in the struggle for the life of the German people against Bolshevism."[29] It is worth noting that this statement by Marahrens, Meiser, and Wurm came at a time when they were particularly pleased with Hitler, both for his remilitarization of the Rhineland in defiance of the Versailles Treaty and for his support of General Franco in the Spanish Civil War, seen by Christian leaders as part of the "struggle against Bolshevism."

The Nazi regime took no action against Dahlemites who read the watered down statement in their churches, possibly because the Berlin Olympics in that summer of 1936 dictated cautious politics in an effort to impress international visitors. The mild response also could have grown out of other considerations, including the assessment that this letter represented only a small faction within the Protestant church. From our perspective, the scramble to disavow this letter after it became public, and especially to protest against any charge of treason, disloyalty, or working for Germany's enemies abroad helps to dull any edge this document might have had. Only one person suffered in a serious manner. Dr. Weissler, the man who had arranged publication of the original letter in Switzerland, soon got a knock on the door by the Gestapo. Sent to Sachsenhausen, he died within months.[30]

Pius XI and his "Burning Concern" in 1937

By spring 1937, Pope Pius XI expressed his complaints against the Nazi state by means of an encyclical, *Mit brennender Sorge*, sent by secret couriers to Catholic churches throughout Germany and read without warning on Palm Sunday in March of that year. This document represented Vatican frustration at the bargain they had struck with Hitler in 1933, or frustration, at the very least, with the way in which the Concordat had

[29] Quoted in Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 164. See also "Agreement between the Reich Church Committee and the Leaders of the Provisional Churches, 20 November 1936," in Matheson, *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches*, 64–65.

[30] Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 164.

been implemented. Once the ink had dried on that document, the Nazi regime began nudging the agreement further and further away from what the Church thought had been guaranteed, raising questions about the rights of youth groups, adult societies, religious education, and innumerable other situations in which church activities occurred outside the walls of the churches themselves. The Pope called on German Catholics to stand by their Church and their faith in these circumstances. He also warned against German paganism and against over-emphasis on race and state, which in extreme cases, he said, could become a form of idolatry.[31]

This was the strongest attack on Nazi ideas ever promulgated by the Vatican. Some argue that an assertive Pope Pius XI, had he lived past 1939, might also have condemned the killing of Jews once that process began in earnest. By this theory, it was the quieter, more diplomatic, or even the more timid personality of Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, who became Pius XII, which cost the Vatican its chance to speak out when the Holocaust developed its full force of destruction. However, it is important to note that the issues raised in *Mit brennender Sorge* remained mostly, or perhaps entirely, ecclesiastical. In the time-honored tradition of quarrelsomeness between church and state, the Concordat signed in 1933 saw each side jockeying for position, each side seeking to increase its sphere of influence within the life of the people, and each side complaining that the other was failing to meet its obligations.

The modest aftermath of this encyclical may provide the clearest evidence of the limited extent to which it represented an attack on Nazi ideology. The regime confiscated copies of the encyclical and restricted its wider publication. However, Hitler did not want to overreact and chose not to inflict particularly harsh punishment on individual priests or the Church hierarchy for this act, nor to suspend the Concordat or otherwise break relations with the Vatican. The Church for its part went on with business as usual, arguing over individual cases of church-state jurisdiction, but expressing its loyalty to the Nazi state and encouraging Catholics to remain firm in their loyalty. Just over two years later, when Hitler chose to launch World War II by attacking Poland, perhaps as many as 1,000 Polish Catholic priests were murdered for fear they might be potential leaders of a future rebellion. Despite these murders and the harsh treatment of Poland as a Catholic country, Catholic bishops, priests, and lay people in Germany voiced no public protest. Rather, they prayed

[31] See "'With Burning Concern,' 14 March 1937," a portion of *Mit brennender Sorge* printed in Matheson, *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches*, 67–71.

their prayers in support of Germany's cause and sought to demonstrate that their loyalty to Hitler's Germany remained undiminished.

Marching in the Streets, Episode Two

We have already seen successful Protestant resistance to removal of Bishops Meiser and Wurm in 1934. In 1941, Bishop Wurm again found himself at the heart of an uprising, along with Catholic Bishop von Galen of Münster. Both men reacted to a specific policy of the Nazi regime, the so-called euthanasia program, which violated their Christian beliefs.[32] Hitler authorized this program in 1939, with the intention to terminate "life unworthy of life," a goal consistent with Nazi beliefs about race and eugenics. By the summer of 1941, knowledge of this program had become widespread. Deaths of institutionalized children and adults were announced to relatives, on some occasions shortly after these relatives had visited a seemingly healthy individual. Fictionalized versions of death sometimes flew in the face of evidence – for example, death by appendicitis for children who had had their appendices removed. Furthermore, parents or other relatives learned of these deaths only after the body had been cremated, so that they were offered ashes but no hint of verification regarding the cause of death.

Two things must be noted with regard to this program of death. First of all, it was not a program of "euthanasia" in any meaningful sense. "Mercy" was not the issue.[33] Neither the victims nor their family members were requesting assisted suicide in the face of a painful, terminal condition. Rather, the Nazi regime had chosen to "prune" the German population. This was considered a logical extension of an earlier program to sterilize the handicapped, because their reproduction was thought to weaken the German *Volk*. Killing those in need of care not only ended their chance to reproduce, but meant that their food could be used to feed healthier members of the *Volk*. Also, labor expended on their care would be redirected more profitably for a stronger Germany. The second thing to note is that the victims of this problem were not necessarily Jews or members of other disapproved minorities, although such individuals were certainly vulnerable.[34] Many came from just those German families

[32] See Victoria Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest Against Hitler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 104–21, for her background treatment of this topic.

[33] *Gnadentod* was the German term used, literally "mercy death."

[34] See Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), especially ch. 13,

comfortably ensconced within the majority culture. Accumulated anger felt by aggrieved families, combined with the aversion felt by religious leaders, led to an explosion in the summer of 1941.

Bishop August Count von Galen delivered three sermons in July and August 1941 that have given him a reputation for heroic resistance against the Nazi state and its policy of euthanasia. Beth Griech-Polelle tells a more complicated story. First of all, only the last of these three sermons referred to euthanasia, although the first two energetically criticized the Nazi state for other things: arresting Jesuits, confiscating church property, and otherwise mistreating the Catholic Church. Also, von Galen was hardly the first to make public protest against euthanasia. He not only relied on information supplied by Protestants, such as Bishop Wurm, but he waited until Protestants had been speaking out for about a year before he raised his voice.[35] According to Griech-Polelle, he wanted reassurance that Catholic criticism of euthanasia would not portray Catholics as disloyal to the German state, so the critique by Wurm and other loyal Protestants gave him cover. The fame and widespread dispersal of von Galen's sermons – with thousands of copies printed and spread across Germany and beyond – really did provide a boost to the awareness of state-sponsored murder and protest against it. Furthermore, on August 24, 1941, Hitler responded to public pressure by suspending the euthanasia of adults. He also put a stop to the confiscation of Catholic properties in Münster at the end of July 1941. It was not just von Galen's sermons that changed Nazi behavior, because others spoke out and applied pressure. However, von Galen's sermons had an impact; they helped produce modification of Nazi behavior, and, most importantly, von Galen suffered no punishment (though several leading Nazis thought he should be hanged).[36]

Henry Friedlander's study of euthanasia gives far less credit to Protestant and Catholic critics. He notes that Hitler merely ended the

"Killing Handicapped Jews," for his exposure of the myth that Jews were not victims of Nazi euthanasia. See J. Noakes and G. Pridham, eds., *Nazism: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts, 1919–1945*, vol. 2 (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 1012, for the form to be filled out regarding all patients in care centers. It includes a question about race as well as questions about relatives, whether the patient had regular visitors, and who was responsible for payment.

[35] See Barnett's discussion of Protestant protests throughout 1940 in *For the Soul of the People*, 110–21.

[36] Beth A. Griech-Polelle, *Bishop von Galen: German Catholicism and National Socialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 72–95, with reference to the suspension of euthanasia on p. 92 and to the suspension of property confiscation on p. 83.

first phase of adult euthanasia in August 1941, leaving the murder of children in place and moving the next phase of adult euthanasia outside German borders. Friedlander also credits the changed policy primarily to Hitler's concern about the loss of secrecy, coupled with the "general popular disquiet about the way euthanasia was implemented," rather than to heroic criticism by church leaders.[37] As for von Galen's postwar reputation as the "Lion of Münster," Griech-Polelle points out that he had little or no concern about the plight of Jews. Complaints about their persecution did not appear in the three famous sermons of 1941. She notes that "von Galen did not protest the April 1933 boycotts, the September 1935 Nuremberg Laws, the pogrom of 1938, or the countless other discriminations and acts of violence perpetrated against men and women who had lived in his diocese for years." She emphasizes his passionate anti-Bolshevism and his apparent acceptance of the Nazi idea that Jews and Bolshevism went hand in hand; and, she adds, "He was an ardent conservative and an ultranationalist, seeking constantly to prove that Catholics were truly Germans who could be just as loyal and obedient to the state as Protestants were."[38]

This story of von Galen and euthanasia, despite the complexities involved, adds to our recognition that Christians in Germany carried weight. Concern about public opinion and the stance of church leaders impacted Nazi policies. When individuals such as von Galen and Wurm opposed euthanasia, it was a brave act with some potential for success. However, such individuals rarely, if ever, came to the aid of Jews. They seem to have found as much common ground as conflict with the Nazi agenda.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Just as with the Barmen Declaration, many could object to placing Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the category of "small victories." His statue now stands over the entrance to Westminster Abbey as one of the modern martyrs of the church. By our postwar standards, he took exactly the right stance by opposing Adolf Hitler and courageously risking and then sacrificing his life in that effort. Furthermore, he did all this while writing important books and creating a theology for the modern world that continues to make him an impressive and highly influential theologian. The life and work and death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer could be considered

[37] Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*, 111.
[38] Griech-Polella, *Bishop von Galen*, 97.

a large victory by almost any measure except for one: He acted outside the confines and expectations of his own Protestant church and with a very small base of support.

In 1952, friends of Bonhoeffer made arrangements to place a plaque in his memory at the Flossenburg Concentration Camp where he had been executed. They asked Bishop Meiser of Munich to attend the ceremony, receiving only the angry reply that Bonhoeffer was no martyr to the church but a traitor to his nation. Twenty years later, I received a similar assessment from my landlady in Hamburg. When I asked to watch a Bonhoeffer special on television, she replied, "Werner [her husband] would never allow that on in this house. No doubt they will describe Bonhoeffer as a hero, but to us he was simply a traitor," and this from a couple who attended church every week.

It is tempting for Christians outside Germany to highlight Bonhoeffer as an example of the Christian response to Hitler, but this misrepresents the very lonely battle that he fought. His nearly unique response leaves Bonhoeffer scholars struggling to understand what made him different from his peers. Foreign travel almost certainly played a role, for Bonhoeffer lived and worked in Spain, the United States, and England before he took up his final resistance activities. He learned to view his own nation and tradition from outside, which can always be a useful and eye-opening experience; and in Harlem, while he worked at nearby Union Theological Seminary, he learned to empathize with black Christians in America and admire their spiritual response to adversity. Many nationalistic German theologians consciously refused to travel outside Germany or have dialogue with foreign colleagues. After World War I and the Versailles Treaty, they condemned that as fraternizing with their enemies and feared it would lead to a weakening in German resolve.[39]

The family environment in which Dietrich Bonhoeffer grew up also bears consideration. His family lived in Grünewald, a suburb of Berlin, where his father was a professor of psychiatry. The anti-Hitler stance of the seven children in this family (an eighth, the oldest brother, had died in the trenches of the First World War) proved remarkable. Dietrich and his brother Klaus were both executed for their part in the plot against Hitler. So were Hans von Dohnanyi and Rüdiger Schleicher, the husbands of

[39] For example, Emanuel Hirsch and Paul Althaus published a joint statement in 1931, urging German church leaders not to attend ecumenical meetings, where "Germany's enemies from the World War under cover of peace are carrying on the war against the German Volk." See Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler*, 143.

two of the Bonhoeffer daughters. A third daughter, Dietrich's twin sister Sabine, married Gerhard Leibholz, whose Jewish origins forced them to flee Germany for the safety of an academic stint at Oxford. It is almost certain that no comparable record of opposition to the Nazi state can be found in any German family tied to the Christian church. We must also note that the Bonhoeffer family's ties to the Christian church were almost entirely through Dietrich. Neither he nor his family had been regular churchgoers during his childhood, so that his youthful decision to study theology came as a not entirely welcome surprise to siblings and parents. It may even be that Bonhoeffer learned to oppose Adolf Hitler *because* he did not attend church as a child, because most church-going Protestants tended to think Hitler was wonderful. That would help clarify the uniqueness of his response and the loneliness of his battle.

Large Defeats

Responses to 1933

We have already noted the widespread enthusiasm for Adolf Hitler among both Protestants and Catholics in 1933 (see Chapter 2). It might be that this "defeat" was the most significant of all, for it pronounced a Christian blessing on the politics of the Nazi Party. It was not as if the main components of Nazi policy were hidden in 1933. Harsh antisemitism had been a hallmark of Nazi rhetoric from the beginning. It could not be hidden, and it was almost immediately written into actions in 1933, with a one-day boycott of Jewish shops, accompanied by harsh graffiti and hostile behavior, followed by the firing of Jewish civil servants from government jobs, all within the first week of April that year. The Nazis also trumpeted their desire to end democracy and to take away the civil liberties guaranteed by the Weimar Republic. Protestants reading their church newspapers or listening to sermons found almost nothing but jubilant praise for these changes. Catholics saw their Catholic Center Party cast the deciding votes for the Enabling Act in the Reichstag in March 1933. This act literally gave Hitler the legal right to be a dictator for the next four years. Not only did Catholic priests and bishops then encourage their parishioners to join and support the Nazi movement, the Vatican followed a similar line that summer by agreeing to a Concordat, the first international recognition of the legitimacy of the Nazi state.

Christians in Germany never received a clear reversal of these church judgments about the Nazi state. Every subsequent complaint, which some might have heard in their Protestant or Catholic parishes, directed

itself toward a specific ecclesiastical policy but never toward a rejection of the Nazi ideology as a whole. Never were Christians in Germany told that the judgment they had been given – that God had blessed them with the rise of Hitler – had been entirely wrong, a complete misinterpretation. Furthermore, the psychological and ideological endorsement of Adolf Hitler had been given concrete form as well. The political powers granted to Hitler by the Catholic Center Party vote in 1933, a political decision aided and abetted by the atmosphere of wild Protestant adulation for this *Wende* (turning point) in German history, were the very powers that Hitler then used to maintain his position and develop his policies over the next twelve years. Both psychologically and politically, it would have been difficult for church leaders subsequently to overturn the impact of their stance taken in 1933, even if they had wanted to do so. Unfortunately, there was never anything close to a consensus that they would want to do so.

Protestants Meet with the *Führer*

In the early stages of the Protestant *Kirchenkampf*, the Deutsche Christen began with a series of victories and then proceeded to throw their victories away, as noted in Chapter 2. Their ascendance had seemed assured with the creation of a new, national Protestant church, followed by the selection of Ludwig Müller, a leader of the Deutsche Christen, for the position of Reich Bishop. By September, these enthusiasts had created dissension by trying to force the Aryan Paragraph on the church, leading to the creation of Niemöller's Pastors' Emergency League. In November, the Sports Palace scandal in Berlin created further friction, for most Protestants were not prepared to jettison the Old Testament from their Bible or otherwise follow the radical course proposed by Reinhold Krause at that meeting. In December, Müller arranged for the merger of Protestant youth groups into the Hitler Youth; and in January, he reimposed the Aryan Paragraph. He also decreed that no pastors could speak against his actions in sermons or church publications, the so-called muzzling decree, and the Gestapo gave him state support by policing clergy behavior.

Church leaders on the side of the Pastors' Emergency League began calling for Reich Bishop Müller's resignation, sending appeals directly to Hitler and to President Hindenburg, the elderly war hero, aristocrat, and churchman whom they thought might be on their side. On January 5, 1934, an irritated Hitler announced a muzzling decree of his own: He refused to talk any more about these church problems, refusing even to

meet with Müller. It seemed clear that his hopes for a unified Protestant church in support of his policies had disintegrated. Hitler then changed course and invited twelve Protestant leaders to an audience to be held on January 25.

This meeting with Hitler included important regional bishops, such as Bishop Wurm of Württemberg, Bishop Marahrens of Hanover, and Bishop Meiser of Bavaria. Niemöller had also been invited, as one of the most obstreperous Protestants, and his presence became the basis for a counterstrike. Hitler started the meeting by turning to Hermann Göring, who read out the text of a Niemöller telephone conversation tapped earlier that day. Niemöller had somewhat cockily and carelessly suggested that President Hindenburg would take their side and put Hitler in his place – a hope of some conservatives ever since Hindenburg had decided to appoint Hitler Chancellor, but a hope that had long since proved ill-founded.[40] Hitler angrily accused Niemöller of attempting to create conflict between the chancellor and the president, and all Protestants in the room, except for Niemöller, were immediately cowed and beaten. The bishops promised to renew their support for Müller and work for harmony within the church. Their subsequent communiqué left no doubt:

> Under the impression of the great occasion on which the leaders of the German Evangelical Church met with the Reich Chancellor, they unanimously affirm their unconditional loyalty to the Third Reich and its Leader. They most sharply condemn any intrigues or criticism against the State, the People or the [Nazi] Movement, which are designed to endanger the Third Reich. In particular they deplore any activities on the part of the foreign Press which seek falsely to represent the discussions within the Church as a conflict against the State. The assembled Church leaders stand united behind the Reich Bishop and desire to carry out his measures and directives in the manner he has laid down, to prevent opposition against them from within the Church, and to strengthen the authority of the Reich Bishop with all the constitutional means at their disposal.[41]

This statement illustrates some of the difficulties in trying to separate politics and religion in our analysis of the Nazi state. This conflict began with church opposition to the leadership of Reich Bishop Müller, and it

[40] Victor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years, 1933–1941* (New York: Random House, 1998), 79–80, comments on the hopes some placed in Hindenburg, though he remained skeptical. He also has some interesting things to say about the Protestant and Catholic churches, with little confidence that they would thwart the Nazi takeover.

[41] *Kirchliches Jahrbuch 1933–1944* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1948), 39; as quoted in Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 74.

included questions of doctrine (e.g., baptism versus the Aryan Paragraph) and of church politics (the extent of power to reside in decisions taken by the Reich Bishop). The bishops recognized, however, that the close political attachment of Müller to the Nazi movement also turned this into a question of "loyalty to the Third Reich and its Leader." It is quite clear that, when politics were called into question, their eagerness to show support for Hitler cancelled out any theological or church political questions they had carried into that meeting.

On the very evening of this meeting of January 25, the Gestapo arrived at Niemöller's home to search for incriminating material. On January 27, he was given a leave of absence from his pastorate; and on February 10, he was retired without right of appeal. In the midst of these circumstances, a bomb had also been thrown into the entryway of the Niemöller home. Thus began a three-year process that increasingly embittered Niemöller and culminated in his arrest in the summer of 1937. By contrast, the communiqué issued by the bishops signaled a pattern typical of the church throughout the Nazi period: political loyalty and enthusiasm for the "good" offered by Hitler trumped any concerns about how this regime might endanger church autonomy. They probably thought the question of values lay squarely on Hitler's side, so that, for example, they were more horrified by Niemöller's disloyalty than by the invasion of his privacy implicit in the tapping of his telephone. Naturally, the range of Jewish suffering by January 1934 was not even on their agenda.

Identifying "Non-Aryans"

With the writing of the Nuremberg Racial Laws in 1935, millions of Germans found themselves seeking out evidence to prove their "Aryan" purity.[42] No school teacher, professor, or policeman, no applicant to the armed forces or applicant for marriage could proceed without a document, signed and stamped in its four quadrants. These four boxes represented the four grandparents by which Jews, *Mischlinge*, and Aryans would be identified and segregated by German law. Anyone who could provide baptismal places and dates for four grandparents – in their infancy, of course – was through the gate. Lacking one or two of these recorded baptisms, persons would be labeled *Mischlinge* of the first or

[42] "Aryan" is a term used in Nazi Germany and used by other antisemites before and since. The use of quotation marks in this first instance is meant to remind readers that this is a racist concept. The idea of "Aryan purity" has no connection to historical reality.

second degree, unless adherence to the Jewish faith or marriage to a Jew pushed them into the category of Jew. Any person unable to locate two or more of the necessary baptismal records earned a "J" in his or her identity papers. That person now bore the stigma of Jewishness, with all that implied under the Nazi state.

One irony in this process involved the extraordinary importance of religious orientation, for Nazi ideology theoretically cared only about the taint of Jewish blood, not questions of faith. However, no measure could be found to replace the religious ritual of infant baptism of one's grandparents in this national process of trying to separate wheat from chaff. The other implication was this: Churches became the single most important site for the implementation of Nazi racial segregation. Millions of German applicants sought out four baptismal records each. Churches responded with some complaints about the extra workload and suggested some form of extra remuneration, but there is no record of complaint about being made complicit in the racist process. It seems to have been accepted by church bureaucrats as a matter of course, despite the harrowing implications.[43]

The Fate of Non-Aryan Pastors

At first glance, the Christian response to non-Aryan pastors seems to have been praiseworthy. We do not praise the Deutsche Christen, of course, who insisted immediately, while grasping Hitler's coattails, that non-Aryan clergy should be fired. However, the seven thousand pastors who joined Niemöller's Pastors' Emergency League opposed this disrespect for the sacrament of baptism. Theologians at Marburg University, led by Rudolf Bultmann, prepared a *Gutachten* (a position paper) rejecting any distinction between Jew and Gentile within the Christian church. Even Paul Althaus and his colleagues at Erlangen University, although eager to ride the Hitler bandwagon, prepared a *Gutachten* defending pastors of Jewish descent, at least to the extent of not removing the handful currently in office. They simply wanted to ban any future ordinations or appointments.[44]

[43] See Manfred Gailus, ed., *Kirchliche Amtshilfe. Die Kirche und die Judenverfolgung im "Dritten Reich"* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2008).

[44] See Paul Althaus and Werner Elert, "Theologisches Gutachten über die Zulassung von Christen jüdischer Herkunft zu den Ämtern der deutschen evangelischen Kirche," *Theologische Blätter* 12/11 (Nov. 1933).

We must remember that these expressions of Christian support were extended to fellow Christians, Christians of Jewish descent who had chosen to join the Christian faith or who had been born to Christian parents. These individuals no longer had a Jewish identity, and their Jewish "taint" might have been difficult to detect. In some cases, it would have been unknown to many with whom they came in contact and, in extreme cases, unknown even to themselves. Many Christians who showed support for these pastors of Jewish descent showed no similar concern for actual Jews. That is unfortunate, but the longer we hold our gaze on this story, the worse it gets and the less Christian principle and courage we find. Gerhard Lindemann is one of several German scholars who have tracked the fate of Christian pastors of Jewish descent.[45] The story is grim. In 1933 and 1934, they received moral support from the Pastors' Emergency League. Some of them also benefited from the exceptions to the Aryan Paragraph of 1933, by virtue of service in the trenches of World War I or appointment to their position prior to 1914. The atmosphere worsened, however, with the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, by which the exceptions of 1933 disappeared. Furthermore, the increasingly hostile atmosphere toward Jews in Hitler's Germany found its echo in the churches. For example, parishioners began to complain about having to take communion from a "Jew" or while kneeling next to one.

Bruno Benfey, born in 1891 to Christian parents of Jewish descent, was baptized as an infant and grew up with Jewish relatives but with no other connections to Jewish religion. He studied theology in Göttingen and Berlin and celebrated his ordination in Hanover in 1915 (having volunteered for military service in 1914, he had been turned down on medical grounds – nerve problems). In 1927, Benfey received an appointment as pastor at St. Mary's Church (the *Marienkirche*) in Göttingen, but not without controversy. Some 100 or more of the 8,000 members of the congregation signed a petition protesting the appointment based on Benfey's Jewish background. A few others wrote individually with the same complaint, claiming that they spoke for a broad cross-section of the congregation. However, the local church council agreed to accept the appointment, despite fearing a split, and the *Landeskirche* signed off quickly, at least partly because the Benfey family had always enjoyed a

[45] See Gerhard Lindemann, "*Typisch jüdisch.*" *Die Stellung der Ev.-luth. Landeskirche Hannovers zu Antijudaismus, Judenfeindschaft und Antisemitismus 1919–1949* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1998).

good reputation in Göttingen, both in its Jewish elements and in Bruno's Christian parents.[46]

In 1933, Benfey again faced questions due to his status as a Christian pastor of Jewish descent. Deutsche Christen won 69 percent of the vote in the Hanoverian church elections in July, raising the possibility that they might seek to enforce the Aryan Paragraph of the new Civil Service Law, as the Prussian church soon would attempt to do.[47] Bishop Marahrens tried to reassure Benfey, although he made no promises. He merely said that he expected future pastors of Jewish descent would be the only ones kept from office. The Reich Church backed away from application of the Aryan Paragraph in the fall of 1933, and Benfey's anxieties could recede for the moment. Various DC individuals in Göttingen campaigned against him behind the scenes, but to little effect.[48]

It might seem Benfey had won the battle, but the atmosphere surrounding his position worsened steadily during the mid-1930s. Antisemitic harassment increased until November 8, 1936, when some Nazi parishioners held signs outside the church warning parishioners to stay away. Others got up and walked out when he began the service, and protesters then shouted antisemitic slurs at Benfey and his wife as the couple walked home.[49] Failing to receive any significant support from Bishop Marahrens, he finally gave up and submitted his resignation in 1937. Other clergy in his position also resigned, often fleeing the country for safety abroad. By the time of *Kristallnacht*, pastors of Jewish descent had disappeared from the churches of Germany.[50] When Bishop Marahrens returned to his desk after *Kristallnacht*, smoke from the burning synagogue across the street still in the air, his secretary expected a somber word of empathy or concern. Instead, he gave her a brusque greeting of "Heil Hitler" and got on with his work.[51] This is the man who would

[46] Lindemann, "*Typisch jüdisch,*" 104–11. Lindemann speculates that the strong and early Nazi enthusiasm that developed in Göttingen must account for this petition. He also comments on Achim Gercke, the student who began the *Archiv für Berufsständische Rassenpolitik* in Göttingen (see Chapter 3 of this book). Gercke sat on the organizing committee for the Jewish boycott in 1933, and from 1933 he was *Sachverständiger für Rassefragen bzw. Rassenforschung* in the Reich Interior Ministry. This same Gercke worked after 1945 in the Hanoverian *Kirchenkreis und Kirchengemeindearchiv* before becoming a professor in Munich. See Lindemann, "*Typisch jüdisch,*" 107, including n. 506.

[47] Lindemann, "*Typisch jüdisch,*" 297 ff.

[48] Ibid., 310–16.

[49] Described in Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent*, 128.

[50] Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent*, 126–29.

[51] This story is told by Hartmut Lehmann in the documentary film directed by Steven Martin, *Theologians under Hitler* (Vital Visuals, Inc, 2005). Lehmann received the story from the secretary involved.

have had to behave heroically to try to save the position of someone like Bruno Benfey. It seems clear that his heart was not in such a task.

Dejudaization

An even more disturbing Protestant response to the plight of Jews under Hitler can be seen in relation to the most awkward circumstance for a Nazi Christian, the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. This problem had been seen by Deutsche Christen from the beginning, hence their desire to remove the Jewish Old Testament from the Bible. The more one looks, however, the more deep-seated one finds Jewishness in Christian origins: the Jewish Disciples, the Jewish Apostle Paul, the many Hebrew words, the frequent New Testament references to Jewish scripture, and, of course, the Jewish Jesus. The Nazi regime steadily intensified its mistreatment of Jews, from the Jewish Boycott and Aryan Paragraph of 1933 to the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 and the *Kristallnacht* pogrom of 1938. Christians responded to this worsening atmosphere. However, the response reveals very few Christians increasing their empathy for the victims and many Christians scrambling to protect Christianity from the charge of a Jewish taint.

One specific response can be seen in the "Godesberg Declaration," written by Protestants in March 1939. It represented an attempt by Church Minister Kerrl to find a way to unify Protestants. It also came after *Kristallnacht*, that violent and very public attack on German Jews; and it came at a time when the tension of an approaching war must have been palpable: *Anschluss* with Austria, the Sudetenland Crisis, an aggressive speech by Hitler on January 30, 1939, the dismantling of Czechoslovakia, and increasingly open preparations for war. The Godesberg Declaration proved to be another failed attempt at church unity. However, it shows us what a third of Protestant bishops were willing to sign by the spring of 1939:

a. What is the relation between politics and religion and between the National Socialist ideology and the Christian faith?

   We give the answer to the question: National Socialism attacks any claim to political power in the churches, and makes the native National Socialist ideology prerequisite for all. In doing this it is carrying on Martin Luther's work in the ideological-political field and helps us thereby to a true understanding of the Christian faith in its religious aspects.

b. What is the relation between Judaism and Christianity? Is Christianity derived from Judaism and has therefore become its continuation and completion, or does Christianity stand in opposition to Judaism?

   We answer: Christianity is irreconcilable opposition to Judaism.

c. Is Christianity by its nature above the states and above the nation?

We answer: A supranational or international church of a Roman Catholic or a world-Protestant type is a political denial of the nature of Christianity. The true Christian faith can only develop within the given orders of creation [i.e., individual nations].[52]

For any Christian in Germany by 1939 who was paying attention and who also wanted to remain a good Nazi, this Godesberg Declaration got to the heart of the issues. It could be understood to justify all Nazi restrictions on the churches, including the arrest of Martin Niemöller, the banning of Confessing Church seminaries, and the various Catholic complaints about implementation of the Concordat. These would be seen as the regime's legitimate attempt to separate politics and religion. It also expressed suspicion of the international entanglements of the Roman Catholic Church, a stance that marks this document as the Protestant creation that it was. The Godesberg Declaration flew from rationality most completely on the question of Jews, denying the Jewish reality that stood at the historical heart of the church.

The Godesberg Declaration might read today as an extreme *apologia* for the Deutsche Christen. The Confessing Church responded in a manner that seems slightly better at first, beginning with an acceptance of the Old Testament origins of Christianity. However, the Confessing Church response to Godesberg also proved willing to attack Jews: "It has pleased God to make Israel the bearer and instrument of divine revelation. This is not invalidated by the fact that the Jews themselves have become untrue to their divine purpose." This statement then affirms Christian claims to supercede Jews in God's eyes: "As the true Israel, the Church is heir to the promise that was given to the people of Israel." Worse yet, it declares that "[t]he Christian faith stands in insurmountable religious opposition to Judaism." Finally, it accuses Deutsche Christen of *acting* like Jews: "This Judaism … exists not just among the Jews, but in all aspirations for a national church as well. It is nothing more than the attempt by natural man to fortify his religious and moral self-justifications by combining them with a *völkisch* sense of mission and, in so doing, to reject Jesus as the Christ of God."[53]

[52] See treatment of the Godesberg Declaration in Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent*, 176–82, and also in Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 80–87.

[53] Quoted in Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent*, 179. See Uriel Tal, "On Modern Lutheranism and the Jews," *Leo Baeck Yearbook* (1985), for an early recognition that German Protestants denigrated one another by suggesting their opponents were acting or thinking like Jews. See also Steven Haynes, "Who Needs Enemies: Jews and Judaism in Anti-Nazi Religious Discourse," *Church History* 71/2 (2002).

In this contest between the Deutsche Christen and the Confessing Church to establish their anti-Jewish credentials, a culmination can be identified six weeks after the Godesberg Declaration. On May 6, 1939, professors, pastors, and church leaders gathered at the Wartburg Castle to celebrate the opening of a Deutsche Christen "Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life." Under the leadership of a former student of Gerhard Kittel, Professor Walter Grundmann, this institute set up its headquarters in Eisenach and pursued an active program until the collapse of Nazi Germany in 1945. Susannah Heschel has shown the widespread impact of this effort, originally founded by 7 of the 28 regional churches.[54] Hundreds of pastors attended its conferences, and dozens of well-known and respected professors of theology contributed to its discussions and its publications. It even reached across Germany's borders. The renowned Swedish scholar of Jewish texts, Hugo Odeberg, attended meetings along with several of his students, and Romania became home to the one branch institute. The goal of "eradication" included removing Jewishness from the Christian Bible, first by excising the entire Old Testament and then by removing Jewish concepts and references from the New. The result was hardly more than a pamphlet, but this new German Bible was then distributed to Wehrmacht troops and sold to interested persons across Germany. Grundmann's institute also tried to purge the hymnbook of Jewish words and references, although nostalgic loyalty to the words of old hymns – hymns replete with "hosannahs" and "amens" and other words of Jewish provenance – proved this removal to be less acceptable and thus more difficult.[55]

Grundmann himself took up the most difficult and most important task. He set out to prove an "Aryan Jesus." Building on antisemitic claims from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, he argued that Galilee had been settled by non-Jewish, Hellenistic outsiders prior to the birth of Jesus. These outsiders, probably Aryan in the viewpoint of Grundmann and others who so badly wanted them to be Aryan, would have contributed the non-Jewish bloodlines that would then explain Jesus' allegedly non-Jewish behavior – his opposition to Jewish teachings and to Jewish leaders. This eager turn to politicized research and antisemitic claims has

[54] Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 67–105.

[55] See Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 164–71. See also Doris Bergen, "Hosanna or 'Hilf, O Herr Uns': National Identity, the German Christian Movement, and the 'Dejudaization' of Sacred Music in the Third Reich," in Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, eds., *Music and German National Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

maintained little or no traction among serious theologians since 1945. On the contrary, the Jewishness of Jesus has become increasingly recognized and a major theme of Jesus research.[56] Unless one starts with a hatred of Jews and the conviction that absolutely no one tainted by Jewish blood could deserve admiration, the idea of removing Jesus from his Jewish roots is now seen as preposterous, taking its appropriate place among the detritus of crackpots and bigots. According to the Gospel account, Jesus was born into and raised up in the Jewish tradition. He prayed in the synagogue, he read and quoted from Jewish scripture, he preached to a Jewish audience, and he lived as a Jew among Jews. Despite these obvious truths, Walter Grundmann argued differently; and it is important to note that he lived and worked within the German theological tradition, supported by the Godesberg Declaration and backed up by funding from the German Protestant church.

It is also important to note the response of non-DC Christians to the ideas behind Grundmann's institute. Many Christians were too traditional to excise the Old Testament from the Bible. For professors of Old Testament, removal of that book could even impact their livelihood. So they simply intensified a longstanding Christian viewpoint – that the Old Testament is really an *anti-Jewish* book, because it illustrates the inadequacy of Jewish law and the need for Christian Gospel. Some who followed this approach, for example, the Old Testament scholar, Johannes Hempel, still worked closely with Grundmann.[57] Those members of the Confessing Church who did not want to challenge Jesus' Jewish bloodlines were usually quite ready to describe Jesus as a "spiritual" opponent of Jews. In fact, Confessing Church leaders often criticized Deutsche Christen by saying they were acting "like Jews" in their "legalistic" interpretations of Christian belief and their "materialistic" concern about blood. These responses tried to preserve traditional Christianity but made little or no effort to protect Jews from contempt.

In fact, the brutally antisemitic assumptions built into the work of Grundmann and his dejudaization institute could claim a place within sight of the Christian tradition, and it fit the brutally antisemitic assumptions of the Nazi state like a glove. There was no attempt to critique Nazi

[56] See, for example, Geza Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

[57] Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, especially 95–96 and 170–71, see also, Emanuel Hirsch, *Das Alte Testament und die Predigt des Evangeliums* (Tübingen: Katzmann Verlag, 1936), for his view that the Old Testament is useful only as an example of what religion should not be. He contrasts the "dead law" of Judaism with the "living Gospel" of Christianity.

hatred of Jews, only an attempt to position the Christian faith on the Nazi side of that divide. Furthermore, Grundmann received the support of the German Protestant Church, both in his funding and in the willing participation of so many pastors and professors of theology.[58] If we attempt to weigh and balance our assessment of the Christian response to Nazi antisemitism, Grundmann's institute hangs very heavily on the antisemitic side. There is simply no counterpart to match it, no comparable effort by Christians to scream out against the open, widespread, brutal, and obvious mistreatment of Jews committed in their name. As Hitler's anti-Jewish policies moved from mistreatment to murder, Grundmann continued his work, continued his campaign, and continued promoting his efforts to prove an Aryan Jesus. After 1945, he dropped the Aryan portion of his argument and finished out a long and successful career as a professor of theology and a writer of widely used theological texts.[59]

The Question of War

By some measures, Nazi harassment of Catholic and Protestant churches intensified in the last two or three years before World War II. Pius XI had issued his encyclical, *Mit brennender Sorge*, in March 1937; Martin Niemöller had been arrested and imprisoned in July 1937; Church Minister Kerrl had banned seminaries of the Confessing Church, such as the one at Finkenwalde led by Dietrich Bonhoeffer; and small attacks had regularly occurred in the form of church organizations being refused permission to perform a particular function or church publications given restricted access to paper and other resources. There is little evidence, however, that the majority of church leaders or church members lost their allegiance to or enthusiasm for the Nazi state as a result. One of the measures of that ongoing support can be found in the response of Christians when Hitler initiated aggressive war.[60]

We now blame the outbreak of World War II on a series of brazen and brutal steps taken by Adolf Hitler, culminating in the waves of destruction that broke over nearly the entire continent of Europe, plus North Africa and the Middle East, at a cost of some 50 million lives. At first, it was merely Hitler's decision in 1933 to leave the League of Nations or

[58] See Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, ch. II, on the creation and support of the Institute.
[59] See Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 249–66.
[60] For an overview of Protestants and World War II, see Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 155–93.

his open announcement in 1935 that he would flout the military restrictions imposed by the Versailles Treaty. These steps were applauded by most within the churches, as were the remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936 and the *Anschluss* with Austria in March 1938, each forbidden by Versailles. Cardinal Innitzer, archbishop of Vienna, claiming to speak for all Austrian bishops, enthusiastically welcomed the arrival of German troops. He praised this takeover of Austria especially as a protection against the alternative of Bolshevism, a typical Nazi claim and a typical Catholic concern. Innitzer then added, as he instructed Austrian Catholics how to register their response, "On the day of the plebiscite it will be an obvious national duty for the bishops to confess themselves as Germans in the German Reich. They expect, therefore, that all faithful Christians should know what they owe to their *Volk*."[61]

During the Sudetenland crisis in the summer and fall of 1938, it appeared that Europe might find itself in another war because of Hitler's claim on an allegedly German portion of Czechoslovakia. The radical wing of the Confessing Church (followers of Niemöller, now in prison) composed a liturgy of repentance to be performed on September 30. This liturgy spoke to anxieties lingering from the horrors of World War I, declared war a form of punishment, and asked God's forgiveness.[62] On September 28, two days before some Confessing Church congregations would have participated in this "defeatist" service, Hitler won a bloodless victory at a summit meeting in Munich.[63] England, France, and Italy handed him the Sudetenland, without bothering to ask the Czechs for permission.

Once again, Hitler and his enthusiastic supporters were able to divide the Confessing Church, beating back any potential opposition from the radical Niemöller group by labeling critics unpatriotic. Although the liturgy of repentance never was performed, it became public knowledge and the SS singled it out as an act of betrayal. Church Minister Kerrl gathered Lutheran bishops for a meeting to discuss the ensuing crisis. They then proclaimed:

> We hereby declare that the circular published by the "Provisional Church Administration" on 27 September 1938 regarding the holding of services, containing a "Liturgy of Intercession" because of the approaching danger of war, is

[61] As quoted in Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 220.

[62] See "The Intercession Liturgy, 27 September 1938," in Matheson, *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches*, 77–79.

[63] This was a German "victory" in the sense of gaining the Sudetenland without war, and it is usually seen as the most egregious example of British and French appeasement. Hitler, however, later considered it the worst mistake of his career, regretting that he stepped back from war at that moment.

repudiated by us on religious and patriotic grounds and has been refused in our churches. We condemn most strongly the attitude made public here and dissociate ourselves entirely from those persons responsible for this publication.[64]

Cardinal Bertram, speaking for his fellow German Catholics, sent Hitler a telegram in response to his seizure of the Sudetenland: "The great deed of safeguarding international peace moves the German episcopate, acting in the name of Catholics of all the German dioceses, respectfully to tender their congratulations and thanks and to order a festive peal of bells on Sunday."[65]

After parading their loyalty in response to the Sudetenland crisis of 1938, church leaders chose not to protest when German forces swallowed the rest of Czechoslovakia in April 1939. The invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, which inaugurated both World War II and the Holocaust, received this public statement of commendation and support from the German Protestant Church:

Since yesterday our German people have been called on to fight for the land of their fathers in order that German blood may be reunified with German blood. The German Evangelical Church stands in true fellowship with the fate of the German people. The Church has added to the weapons of steel her own invincible weapons from the Word of God: the assurance of faith that our people and each individual is in God's hand, and the power of prayer which strengthens us in days of good and evil. So we unite in this hour with our people in intercession for our *Führer* and Reich, for all the armed forces, and for all who do their duty for the fatherland.[66]

German Catholic bishops added their own call to arms:

In this decisive hour we encourage and admonish our Catholic soldiers, in obedience to the *Führer*, to do their duty and to be ready to sacrifice their whole existence. We appeal to the faithful to join in ardent prayer that God's providence may lead this war to blessed success for Fatherland and people.[67]

When German armies prevailed over Poland within a few short weeks, Bishop Marahrens of Hanover spoke at the Harvest Festival and thanked God for "another no less rich harvest with which we have been blessed." Catholic and Protestant churches designated an entire week in which church bells should be rung in celebration.[68]

[64] As quoted in Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 222.
[65] As quoted in ibid., 228–29.
[66] As quoted in ibid., 234. See also Matheson, *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches*, 84.
[67] As quoted in Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 234.
[68] See ibid., 234–35.

How should we evaluate this calling down God's blessing on acts of war? It is true that Christian leaders across the centuries have blessed warriors and proclaimed God's blessing on their national wars. It is also true that military chaplains have ministered to soldiers and blessed their actions for centuries, as they did in the German military during this war.[69] In September 1939, Catholic and Protestant bishops and clergy must have felt themselves part of a long and acceptable tradition. However, the invasion of Poland was unprovoked – although Germans faked a Polish attack on German soil in a vain attempt to make their war seem defensive – and it later was condemned at Nuremberg as a war crime. There also ensued unbridled violence against noncombatants. Germans quickly murdered large numbers of the Polish intelligentsia, including Catholic priests. Innocent Jews also were killed in this opening phase of the war, a first installment on the three million Polish Jews eventually murdered. As church leaders praised Hitler's war, Herbert Mochalski, a drafted Confessing Church pastor, participated in the Wehrmacht offensive. He later told Victoria Barnett:

> I saw horrible things.… I'll never forget the scenes, how people dug ditches out on the land, and all around them the SS was standing, and it was perfectly clear what was happening. It's nonsense when a German soldier says – above all, concerning the invasion of the Soviet Union – that he never saw anything, that the soldiers didn't know anything.… [W]hen we drove through the little towns, then one saw how the Jews were at the marketplace, and the SS men stood there and tore their beards out. Or how the Poles were loaded up. It's simply not true that we Germans didn't know what happened.[70]

By September 1939, German soldiers were just beginning to see (and participate in) the things Mochalski describes. Rumors and reports were just beginning to come back to German soil. However, no one in Germany at the outbreak of war should have expected that the policies of the *Führer* would be restrained or soft or benign, mindful of human rights and human dignity. His rhetoric had been harsh, his peacetime policies had been harsh, and now so was his war.

Two ironies accentuate this issue of Protestant and Catholic praise and support for Hitler's war. First of all, the one significant voice of

[69] See Doris Bergen, ed., *The Sword of the Lord: Military Chaplains from the First to the Twenty-First Century* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), especially her contribution, "German Military Chaplains in the Second World War and the Dilemmas of Legitimacy," 165–86.

[70] Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 164.

protest came from Johannes Blaskowitz, General of the Eighth Army, who received Poland's surrender in October and was then named military governor of German forces in Poland. Angered by the rape, murder, and pillaging all around him, he wrote detailed memoranda, with special protest against murderous SS behavior behind German lines. Hitler and Generals von Brauchitsch and Keitel dismissed his concerns. Blaskowitz was removed from his Polish command in May 1940 and never received the expected promotion to field marshal, although he continued to command German forces throughout the war.[71] No such critique came from German churches.[72] The second irony is that the war in Poland occurred under the umbrella of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. For this period from August 1939 until June 1941, church leaders in Germany could not employ their standard argument about Hitler's opposition to Bolshevism. Yet their support seems undiminished. If we ask about the message received by Germany's warriors, they must have felt that acts they were called on to perform represented duties endorsed by their church leaders. Each of the church statements quoted earlier in this section spoke of duty, and each spoke of the *Führer*. These calls for enthusiastic participation, *never recanted*, represent complicity in the killing. The only question for debate is one of degree.

Pius XII and Germany

Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli became Pope Pius XII in March 1939. Hitler directed his ambassador in Rome to extend "the warmest congratulations of the *Führer* and the government" to this new Pope, who then responded with exuberant thanks.[73] One month later, on April 20, 1939, Pius XII directed his nuncio in Berlin to play a particularly enthusiastic role in the fiftieth birthday celebrations held for Hitler.[74] These friendly gestures

[71] See, for example, Christopher R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939 – March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 74–81. See also Richard Giziowoski, *The Enigma of General Blaskowitz* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1997).

[72] Bergen, "German Military Chaplains," analyzes those chaplains on the Eastern Front who witnessed the sort of atrocities that angered Blaskowitz. She argues that their need to claim their rightful place on the battlefield and to prove themselves as loyal, manly Germans "may have increased their effectiveness as enablers of Nazi German slaughter" (p. 166).

[73] Klaus Scholder, *A Requiem for Hitler and Other New Perspectives on the German Church Struggle* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 161.

[74] Ibid.

between Hitler and Pius XII can be combined with Pacelli's many years in Germany as the papal emissary, plus his work in drafting and promoting the Concordat between the Vatican and the Nazi state, to suggest that this Pope had an especially close relationship with Hitler's Germany.

Pius XII is not lacking for critics of his behavior.[75] They have suggested that he completely failed to criticize, much less condemn, the behavior of the Nazi state; one critic even labeled him "Hitler's Pope."[76] By 1942, Pius XII did have detailed information about the murder of Jews taking place under German occupation. Various Jewish organizations as well as the governments of Great Britain and the United States vigorously pushed him for months publicly to acknowledge this crime and condemn it. As these advocates awaited his Christmas radio broadcast of 1942, they hoped for something dramatic; but they heard only generic comments of regret for injustices committed during war and statements of sympathy for innocent victims. The word "Jew" never crossed the Pope's lips in this address, nor was German behavior singled out for attention. In 1943, Jews in Rome were rounded up "under his very window," as one critic puts it, a critic who then claims that no single piece of evidence can be found to establish that Pius XII tried to help these victims.[77] It is important to note that Pius XII also failed to complain about one other case of widespread murder by the Nazi state. When Germany invaded Poland at the start of World War II, it unleashed a slaughter of potential resistance leaders – the Polish "intelligentsia" – and this included Catholic priests. Members of the Catholic hierarchy pleaded with Pius XII to protest, but he did not. Once he had opted for silence as Nazis murdered Catholic priests, he was not likely to opt otherwise as Nazis murdered Jews.[78]

Supporters of Pius XII extend a number of explanations for his unarguably cautious behavior: He was a quiet intellectual and natural diplomat, not a warrior pope; he wanted to maintain and protect his neutral,

[75] Criticism began with works such as Hans Müller, ed., *Katholische Kirche und Nationalsozisalismus: Dokumente 1930–1935* (Munich: Nymphenburger, 1963), and Saul Friedländer, *Pius XII and the Third Reich: A Documentation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), as well as Rolf Hochhuth's play, *The Deputy* (New York: Grove Press, 1964). For a contemporary look at the controversy aroused by Hochhuth's play, see Eric Bentley, *The Storm over The Deputy* (New York: Grove Press, 1964).

[76] John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1999).

[77] Susan Zucotti, *Under His Very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

[78] See Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930–1965* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 22–30.

diplomatic role in order to be a potential intermediary in bringing Europe to a peace agreement; he had to fear for his personal safety and the safety of the Vatican, given Mussolini's alliance with Hitler and given the potential arrival of German troops in Rome itself. These supporters also claim that Pius XII did save many Jews – some claim hundreds of thousands – by quiet methods of support in which Catholic institutions, clergy, and laypeople were encouraged to hide and protect Jewish victims. It must be added, however, that "Jews" saved by Catholic institutions were almost always Christians of Jewish descent. Willingness to save actual Jews was much more likely to be an individual's brave decision.[79]

The Pius XII debate is ongoing and passionate. Part of the problem in finding a resolution involves the routine Vatican policy of protecting its archives from public view. Given the high profile of this case and the vehemence of the controversy, the Vatican has taken the unusual step of publishing a large quantity of archival documents from that time. This is not the same as open access, however, because the Vatican has controlled the process by which documents have been selected. An international commission, including both Catholics and Jews, tried to negotiate more open access to records, but the negotiations broke down and the group disbanded. In the midst of these controversies, some elements within the Catholic Church routinely dismiss all critics as simply "anti-Catholic," even if they happen to be Catholic themselves and profess their concern for the Catholic Church. Critics react most angrily, perhaps, at the prospect, pushed by John Paul II and Benedict XVI, that Pius XII be canonized as a saint.[80]

No easy assessment of Pius XII seems possible in the face of these arguments and emotions, at least until the relevant archives are entirely open. However, certain things are clear. For example, we do know that the world looked differently through the eyes of Pius XII in 1942 than it

[79] See Eva Fleischner and Michael Phayer, *Cries in the Night: Women who Challenged the Holocaust* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1997).

[80] Even the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, which is careful not to politicize its work, issued a press release on Dec. 21, 2009, which begins, "At this time, as the possible canonization of Pope Pius XII moves forward, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum repeats its call for the opening of all wartime material from the Vatican archives, so that scholars can finally begin the important work of examining and evaluating this crucial aspect of history. The response of Eugenio Pacelli (Pope Pius XII) to the policies of the National Socialist regime – notably his failure to condemn publicly the genocide of the European Jews – has long been the topic of debate and controversy." Without actually opposing the canonization, it adds that "the opening of the post-1939 archival material is essential to a proper assessment of Pius XII."

does to us today. He was made aware of horrifying evidence concerning the Nazi murder of Jews, but the full extent of that process was not yet as clear as it became in the postwar period. Pius XII was hardly the only contemporary who could not quite get his head around such facts. He also grew up in a church and at a time when attitudes toward Jews had not yet changed in response to the Holocaust. Those attitudes remained instinctively negative, that is, antisemitic. Some even accuse Pius XII of virulent antisemitism, assuming that this would explain his refusal to condemn the murder of Jews, although no one can show that he actively approved their murder.[81] It is clearer that Pius XII's antagonism toward communism made him a particular critic of the Soviet state. When Hitler chose to attack the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Pope's sympathies almost certainly lay with the Wehrmacht.

Finally, there were many Catholic bishops, clergy, and laypeople within the German Reich. This is exactly why critics of Pius XII wish he had chosen to condemn Nazi behavior. Even Hitler himself had been baptized and raised a Catholic. Would a word of condemnation have restrained those Catholics in the SS, in the Wehrmacht, or in other positions from which they murdered Jews? Could he have influenced Hitler himself? If he had excommunicated Hitler, would Catholics have sat up and taken notice? These are questions impossible to answer, because we cannot change variables and run the experiment again. However, these questions also point to a final question that almost certainly influenced Pius XII's thoughts: If he called on Catholics in Germany to choose between their loyalty to the Catholic Church and their loyalty to the German state, how many Catholics would he lose? Widespread enthusiasm for Hitler among believing Catholics and very widespread support for the German cause during war would have placed German Catholics at a difficult point of decision Pius XII wanted to avoid.[82]

Gerhard Kittel

The story of Gerhard Kittel in 1933 as described in Chapter 2 is dreadful, but the story of Gerhard Kittel after 1933 is even worse. He was a

[81] See, for example, Daniel Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Church in the Holocaust and its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair* (New York: Vintage, 2003).

[82] See Michael Phayer, *Pius XII, the Holocaust, and the Cold War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); Kevin Spicer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008); and Gerhard Besier, *The Holy See and Hitler's Germany* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

paragon of Protestant theology, a son of the renowned theologian Rudolf Kittel, a professor of New Testament in the renowned theological faculty at Tübingen University, and founding editor of the monumental *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Yet Gerhard Kittel during the Nazi era seems to have become simply a shill for the Nazi, antisemitic ideology. It is startling to look at the trajectory of his career from our vantage point. For most of the Third Reich, he produced antisemitic propaganda posing as scholarship.[83] He also continued to train future theologians and future clergy. He never suffered any sort of reprimand from his church or from his university while he produced this material and, in the postwar period, he never apologized for his work nor admitted that it had been un-Christian or unscholarly.

In 1935 Walter Frank, a young and ambitious historian, founded the Institute for the History of the New Germany, a think tank intended to give scholarly credibility to the Nazi worldview. Frank hoped to attract reputable scholars from all fields. Gerhard Kittel responded with enthusiasm, especially by parlaying his expertise on Judaism, so that he became a founding member of Frank's special section on the "Jewish Question." Throughout the history of this institute, and especially in the pages of its journal, *Forschungen zur Judenfrage* (Research on the Jewish Question), Kittel emerged as one of the most enthusiastic contributors. He spoke at nearly every annual conference, and his work appeared in nearly every volume of the journal.

Much or most of Kittel's work in this institute is not recognizable as theology. He attempted to find evidence that Jews had shown themselves already during the period of the Roman Empire to have all of the noxious characteristics Nazis attributed to them in the modern age: deviousness, greed, sexual aggressiveness, sexual perversion, and an unflagging desire to destroy other peoples and take over the world. He pored through ancient texts to try to find evidence that Jews intermarried with Gentiles, which he considered a tool toward their other goals, and, in the process, he accepted that such "mongrelization" would harm the racial stock of the local people.

In the spirit of interdisciplinary cooperation, Kittel worked with a "racial scientist," Eugen Fischer, in an effort to discover physical evidence about Jews in ancient times. They studied several hundred tomb

[83] See Alan Steinweis, *Studying the Jew: Scholarly Antisemitism in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008) for a broader treatment of this phenomenon.

portraits from fourth-century Egypt. Kittel and Fischer thought they could recognize a handful of Jewish faces, some of which represented the typical Jewish intellectual (impertinent and sly) or the typical Jewish merchant (devious and dishonest). The authors acknowledged that the telling quality of these facial features was subtle and hardly subject to normal scientific measurement or description; yet, they claimed, it was clear to every trained eye familiar with modern Jews.[84] Kittel also got interested in some terra cotta caricatures found near Trier. Although they are now known to have been forgeries, he thought they expressed the anger of pure, Aryan Germans on the edge of the Roman Empire coming up against the aggressive and impure sexual behavior of Jews. These caricatures had large noses, which was all Kittel needed to convince him that they represented Jews, even though large noses are one of the most common of caricaturist devices. He also thought he could find a faint line on one of the many large and erect phalli, which he thought represented circumcision. Finally, the "shameful poses" and unnatural acts of these male and female figures, plus the fact that some of the male figures had a phallus both front and rear, convinced him that sexually perverse Jews had offended decent Germans near Trier and provoked this angry response.[85]

Kittel devoted one article and then an entire volume to these strange theories, employing very ambiguous evidence and proving his hatred of Jews more than any scholarly acumen. Kittel also used this material to try to support the infamous idea presented in the forged *Protocol of the Elders of Zion* that Jews have a plan to take over the world. He argued that this included a plan of aggressive sexuality, as indicated in the book of Esther in the Jewish Bible (and the Old Testament). Esther was prepared to marry a Gentile king in order to gain power for herself and leverage for her people. Kittel argued that such behavior was typical of all Jews at every time and every place.

From 1935 to 1943, as Kittel published his caustic materials in *Forschungen zur Judenfrage*, circumstances for Jews in Germany got worse and worse. Jewish civil servants lost their jobs to the Aryan Paragraph in 1933. All Jews lost their citizenship to the Nuremberg Racial Laws of 1935. Over the next few years, Jews lost their property to a policy of "Aryanization" of business. Then during the *Kristallnacht*

[84] Gerhard Kittel and Eugen Fischer, "Das antike Weltjudentum: Tatsachen, Texte, Bilder," *Forschungen zur Judenfrage* 7 (Hamburg: Hanseatischer Verlag, 1943). The entire volume 7 is devoted to this work by Kittel and Fischer.

[85] Gerhard Kittel, "Die ältesten Judenkarikaturen. Die 'Trierer Terrakotten,'" *Forschungen zur Judenfrage* 4 (Hamburg: Hanseatischer Verlag, 1940), 250–59.

pogrom, Jewish merchants lost their plate glass windows and all Jews lost any lingering sense of security or hope they might have retained. In September 1941, as rumors spread about Jews being murdered in Poland, the Baltic States, and the Ukraine, German Jews were forced to wear a yellow star. By October 1941, German Jews began being rounded up and transported to the East, so that by 1943 almost no Jews lived openly on German soil.

Gerhard Kittel, along with all of his fellow Germans, had to have noticed this disappearance. Not only had Jews been rounded up and put on trains, hardly a secretive process, they had simply vanished from the streets, from their neighborhoods, and from their homes. Furthermore, the many Germans who managed to acquire Jewish property at minimal cost were fully aware of the reason for their good fortune, although they may have preferred mystification over clarity.[86] We also know from Kittel's own later testimony that he learned by 1943 of the wholesale murder of Jews underway in the East.[87] And yet Gerhard Kittel chose to publish an article in 1943 in a journal produced by Joseph Goebbels, the notorious Nazi Minister of Propaganda. In this article, Kittel presented his critique of Jewish ethics. He argued that Jews were allowed by their religious beliefs to murder non-Jews, without regret and without accruing any guilt. In order to reach this conclusion, he interpreted several obscure phrases in a small corner of the Jewish tradition. He found a passage in the Talmud that tries to distinguish the punishment for the accidental killing of a fellow Jew versus the accidental killing of a non-Jew. He also found a statement about crushing the heads of certain people "even as you would crush the head of the best snake."[88] Kittel then goes on to suggest that Jews, who since the diaspora always lived as a minority population, were constantly a risk to stab their neighbors in the back or murder them in their beds. Such an interpretation has no resonance within the centuries of Jewish thought, nor did it correspond to any teaching that Kittel might have tried to find in modern Judaism.

[86] See Marian Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), for a look at the Jewish side of this experience.

[87] See Gerhard Kittel, *Meine Verteidigung*, 27, where Kittel admits that his son returned from the Eastern Front in 1943 and told him about the murder of Jews. *Meine Verteidigung* is a defense statement prepared by Kittel and dated June 1945, Tübingen. I am indebted to the late Dr. Herman Preus of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN, for access to this document. Kittel wrote an expanded version of *Meine Verteidigung* in Nov./Dec. 1946, which can be seen in the Tübingen University Archive.

[88] Gerhard Kittel, "Die Behandlung des Nichtjuden nach dem Talmud," *Archiv für Judenfragen*, vol. 1, Group A1 (Berlin, 1943), 7.

Kittel's assessment of Jewish ethics was wrongheaded. He might just as easily have accused Jews of advocating the murder of their own children, based on purposely misreading the story of Abraham and Isaac. Only in the rarified, distorting atmosphere of Nazi ideology did this assessment of Judaism make any sense. However, in that setting it fit perfectly into the Nazi atmosphere of hatred toward and mistrust of Jews. Furthermore, and most alarmingly, it seems transparently designed to provide an excuse for Germans to kill Jews before Jews had a chance to kill them. At a time when Jews had disappeared from the streets of Germany and at a time when Kittel himself knew that Jews were being murdered in the East, he published this article.[89] It is hard to read it as anything but a conscious justification of the Nazi Holocaust.[90]

Postscript: Requiem for Hitler

Adolf Hitler and his new bride, Eva Braun, committed a double suicide on April 30, 1945, inspiring the suicide also of Joseph Goebbels and his wife, who murdered their six children as well. Dishonest and vainglorious to the end, Hitler had a report put out the next day: "From the *Führer's* headquarters it is reported that our *Führer* Adolf Hitler fell today for Germany at his command post in the Reich Chancellery, fighting against Bolshevism to his last breath."[91] At that time, Archbishop Adolf Cardinal Bertram, president of the German Bishops' Conference, aged eighty-six and nearing death himself, had fled Breslau just ahead of Red Army troops. From the safety of a nearby castle, he penned a message to all priests in his archdiocese, commanding them "to hold a solemn requiem in memory of the *Führer* and all those members of the Wehrmacht who have fallen in the struggle for our German Fatherland, along with the sincerest prayers for *Volk* and Fatherland and for the future of the Catholic church in Germany."[92]

[89] See Victoria J. Barnett, *Bystanders: Conscience and Complicity During the Holocaust* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), for her assessment of the bystanders and their responsibility.

[90] See my treatment of these issues in Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler*, 50–70, and also in Robert P. Ericksen, "Theologian in the Third Reich: The Case of Gerhard Kittel," *Journal of Contemporary History* 12 (1977), 595–622.

[91] Max Domarus, *Hitler, Reden von 1932–1945*, vol. II (Wiesbaden: Löwit, 1965), 2250, as quoted in Scholder, *A Requiem*, 166.

[92] As quoted in Scholder, *A Requiem*, 166, from a document in the Archive of the Archdiocese of Wroclaw (Breslau).

Perhaps Cardinal Bertram can be forgiven for this lapse of judgment. He was very old. He also was not fully cognizant of the full range of crimes inspired by his *Führer* or the ignoble character of Hitler's demise. Furthermore, his requiem would have remembered fallen soldiers as well as Hitler, and it would have offered prayers for the Catholic Church in Germany. Finally, there is no certainty that any single requiem actually took place, or that this handwritten order from Cardinal Bertram even made it off his own desk.

However, the willingness of Cardinal Bertram, the president of the German Conference of Bishops, to honor Adolf Hitler as late as May 1945 echoes his own behavior and that of Christians in Germany throughout the Nazi era. It suggests a stubborn loyalty to the German government, even in its Nazi version, and it suggests at the very least an ambivalent, and perhaps even an ongoing enthusiastic response to that Nazi state. Cardinal Bertram had written Hitler every year on his birthday, offering "warmest congratulations." In 1940, he noted the "fervent prayers which Catholics of Germany are sending to heaven on their altars on 20 April for *Volk*, army and Fatherland, for state and *Führer*."[93] He continued to send similar birthday greetings through 1944. Within these messages, he also complained about various state policies to the detriment of Catholic Church activities in Germany, expressing his hope that Hitler would intervene against underlings who sought to do the churches harm; and Hitler responded in kind – although only with words, never with actions. Yet Hitler continued to make an effort with his words, as on July 13, 1944, when he wrote to Bertram, "You may be sure, my Lord Cardinal, that I know the rectitude and integrity of your aims and fully accept them." Hitler then signed off, "In sincere respect, yours sincerely, Adolf Hitler."[94]

Christian Complicity?

Is "complicity" too strong a word to tie to these Christians in Nazi Germany? I have not described any one of them pulling a trigger or releasing pellets of Zyklon B. I have not focused on someone like the pastor and professor of theology, Walter Birnbaum. He spent the Second World War lecturing members of Hermann Göring's *Luftwaffe* on the Eastern Front on the perils of Bolsheviks, a term that almost always was

[93] As quoted in Scholder, *A Requiem*, 161.
[94] As quoted in Scholder, *A Requiem*, 165.

spoken in Nazi Germany in one breath with Jews. The dreaded enemies of Germany were Bolsheviks and Jews, Bolsheviks and Jews. It is hard not to assume that Birnbaum urged on the brutal behavior typical of the Eastern Front, including the murder of innocents. I have not focused on someone like Ernst Biberstein, who studied theology, became a pastor in the 1920s, worked in the Ministry of Church Affairs during the Nazi era, transferred to the Reich Security Main Office, and literally murdered Jews during the Holocaust. He led *Einsatzkommando* 6 of *Einsatzgruppe* C, part of the mobile killing operation that murdered about one million Jews in the summer of 1941. Biberstein was tried at Nuremberg and sentenced to death. This sentence was reduced to life imprisonment and he was released in 1958, which led to his return to the clergy.[95]

I did not emphasize Birnbaum and Biberstein, because I would not claim they are representative figures of the church. However, their roots in the church did not restrain them from supporting and also participating in the harshest policies of the Nazi state. When Christian bishops and pastors shouted out their praise of the Nazi regime in 1933, when they offered prayers in support of Adolf Hitler, when they held services in support of German attacks on Poland at the start of the Second World War, when they sent their enthusiastic greetings to Hitler on his birthday, how would lay Christians observing these great waves of support be given reason to question and criticize? When no major Christian institution, from the Confessing Church to the German Catholic bishops to the Vatican, could find itself willing to condemn Nazi mistreatment of Jews, why would Christians be held back in their participation? When Gerhard Kittel spent a decade of his life describing Jews in terms echoing the harshest Nazi rhetoric, and when he warned in 1943 that Jews (no longer even present in Germany) were likely to murder good Germans in their beds, were simple Christians in the pew supposed to have parsed his words, deconstructed his logic, and disavowed his authority to speak as a leader of Christian thought? I think not, and that seems like complicity to me. I am not certain ordinary Germans would have participated so willingly and ruthlessly in the killing without what appeared to be religious sanction to do so.

[95] See Walter Birnbaum, *Zeuge Meiner Zeit. Aussagen zu 1912 bis 1972* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1973), especially 232–33. Biberstein's brief biography and trial record can be found in John Mendelsohn and Donald S. Detweiler, eds., *The Holocaust: Selected Documents in Eighteen Volumes*, 17 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), 214–44. See also Hilary Earl, *The Nuremberg SS-Einsatzgruppen Trial, 1945–1958: Atrocity, Law, and History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

5

The Intellectual Arm

Universities Through 1945

Many Nazis demeaned "ivory tower" intellectuals. They considered them ineffectual. They called them all talk and no action. They also suspected that intellectuals would critique the Nazi ideology, that they might harbor ideas on the left, and that they might be influenced by Jews and infected by "Jewishness." However, as we have seen, the Nazi regime actually found enthusiastic support in German universities during the transition of 1933, from students and faculty alike, and Nazis were effective in weeding out Jews and left-wing critics, thoroughly and without mercy. For the rest of the Nazi period, the atmosphere at German universities seems to have been one of enthusiastic support for the new regime and its policies, rather than resistance or criticism.[1] That is almost certainly the image that students or others at the time would have observed and the message they would have absorbed.

The German university system had strengths that might have been expected to protect it against politicization. These included a deeply embedded concept of academic freedom. We saw this before 1933, for example, when colleagues at the University of Halle supported Günther Dehn in the face of Nazi student opposition. The universities also had a strong tradition of faculty governance. Each of the important administrative positions rotated regularly, filled by a professor elected by his fellows. This included each dean of a faculty as well as the *Rektor* of the university. There was a faculty senate in place, made up of professors with the right

[1] See, for example, Max Weinreich, *Hitler's Professors: The Part of Scholarship in Germany's Crimes Against the Jewish People* (New York: YIVO, 1946; a 2nd edition was published in New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

to guide academic policy. Despite these institutional strengths, German universities throughout the Nazi period continued to give their support to the Nazi regime. Examples of resistance or opposition within universities proved rare and ineffective, even less so than within the churches, entirely failing to curb the tide of enthusiasm and cooperation.

A Contemporary American Observer

Although we cannot return to observe the German university of that time, we can listen to a young American tutor in sociology at Harvard University who chose to study German universities in the mid-1930s. With support from the Social Science Research Council of New York, with encouragement from his academically prominent father-in-law, with assistance from the American Embassy and the U.S. Consulate General in Berlin at gaining access to papers in the Education Ministry in Berlin, and with the imprimatur of Harvard upon which to draw, Edward Yarnall Hartshorne, Jr., spent the year 1935–1936 in Germany, primarily in Berlin. The following year he published his study, *The German Universities and National Socialism*.[2]

Hartshorne writes from the perspective of an American academic with great respect for the accomplishments of German universities in the past, but with great concern that the accomplishments of German scholarship will not survive the imposition of a totalitarian ideology. He witnessed firsthand many indignities suffered by German professors. For example, in preparation for the third annual celebration of Hitler's January 30, 1933, rise to power, professors at the University of Berlin received word from their *Rektor* that this year's event would have a "somewhat altered aspect." Student speaking-choruses of the NSDStB (National Socialist German Student Association) would "have to take up their position on the platform which ordinarily is reserved for the Faculty." Therefore, the "usual entrance procession of the Faculty" would be omitted, with, however, members of the senate being given a chance to sit "in the first row of chairs." Other professors would be allowed into the auditorium only if in possession of an entrance ticket. The remainder could listen to the proceedings in overflow lecture halls.[3]

[2] See Edward Yarnall Hartshorne, Jr., *The German Universities and National Socialism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937). Among other credits, Hartshorne thanks his father-in-law, Professor Sydney B. Fay, for guidance throughout the project.

[3] Taken from a document sent by *Rektor* Krüger to the Berlin University faculty ten days before the event on January 30, 1936, and quoted by Hartshorne, 145–46.

Hartshorne points out one of the less obvious indignities of this announcement. This particular *Rektor*, who informed professors of their demotion and back-seat participation, had only arrived at Berlin University in 1934. At that time, at the age of thirty-seven, he had been appointed *Rektor*, based, apparently, on his record as a doctor of veterinary medicine and former official in a slaughter house, with no publications to his credit ever mentioned in *Wer Ist's*.[4] Hartshorne then describes the ceremony over which the *Rektor* presided, an event very like a religious service. Nazi students chanted the liturgy and sang the hymns, with the massive audience allowed to shout out at appropriate moments, "we believe" or "we demand" or "we know." Hartshorne concludes:

> It had not, it seemed, been necessary after all that the Faculty should attend. The student speaking-chorus knew better than they what they would have said had they been invited to speak.... When all feel alike it is superfluous to hear divers individuals expressing their opinions – superfluous and intolerably monotonous. Much better, *much* better that the Faculty of the University of Berlin should have been replaced by a trained student speaking-chorus: it had saved the Gentlemen of the Faculty much trouble, it had ensured against slips in matters of dogma, and it had produced a more effective religious atmosphere for the ritual celebration of the "holiest hour in the nation's history."[5]

Hartshorne rarely drips such sarcasm into his text, although one catches him occasionally calling Joseph Goebbels a "national witchdoctor" or otherwise expressing his criticisms and his regrets at what he has found. Much or most of the time he seems to place his finger of blame on the dictatorial system of Nazi control, with German professors as victims of this process, the ones suffering slights and indignities at the hands of an aggressive ideology. For example, Hartshorne says of the professors, "There are a few who, despite all adversity, remain content with their books, their friends and their music. Others, while deeply depressed, seek to secure concessions on the part of the regime, 'to save what they can,' while continuing in their own work, believing that a dictatorship, like a bad storm or a bad cold, will not go away any the sooner because one worries about it."[6]

These comments reflect what we might expect or hope to find, if we cannot find outright opposition: professors who suffered adversity, got depressed, and waited for the Nazi storm to pass. However, Hartshorne

[4] Hartshorne, *The German Universities and National Socialism*, 128–29, 147.
[5] Ibid., 151–52.
[6] Ibid., 159.

also devotes a section of his book to the explanations – or "rationalizations," as he is tempted to call them – that he heard from the many German professors who defended the new regime and its role in the university. He outlines five standard arguments. (1) Universities had become "rotten inside," with too much specialization, too little care for teaching, too much privilege, too much corruption in appointments, and too little connection to the "real world." (2) Universities had become "hot-beds of radicalism." (3) Universities had become "hot-beds of Judaism." (4) University faculties had "degenerated into a nest of quarrelsome cliques or schools," with too much infighting, too much influence over the university itself, and too much power over the lives and future careers of students. (5) For those who criticize the loss of "scientific objectivity" in bowing to the Nazi *Weltanschauung*, these professors argued that objectivity had only been a myth of liberalism that had never actually existed in the real world. They were now simply being more honest in openly proclaiming their allegiance to a set of worthy values, a strong and resurgent Germany based on commitment to the German *Volk*.[7]

Many or most of these complaints could probably be heard in some version at any time in any university community. As for the specifics of the German situation, one might wonder at the phrase "hot-beds of radicalism," when the truly radical changes were those proposed by Nazis. One also could note the casual but deep-seated antisemitism that seems to underlie the complaint about "hot-beds of Judaism." The more important question involves the number or percentage of professors who served up these justifications. Which image is most accurate, the depressed or the enthusiastic professoriate? It is easy to imagine proud German professors being offended by students taking their professors' place on the dais and spouting dogma at them, some version, literally or figuratively, of "the future belongs to me." However, much depends on whether one likes or dislikes the dogma being spouted. The students might have been seen as callow, unwitting servants to a dangerous dogma; but some professors would have seen them as brave, energetic idealists committed to a better future. It is not a simple thing to assess this balance, to read the evidence and make a judgment about the internal reaction of the professoriate as a whole. Nor does Hartshorne come down explicitly on one side or the other. I would suggest approaching the question somewhat differently. We cannot look into the heart and mind of each professor, nor can we invent a nonexistent Gallup poll to find out what these individuals as a group

[7] Ibid., 161–65.

really thought. We can, however, try to imagine what a student or an outside observer might have assumed about the relationship of the German universities to the Nazi regime. I believe most would have reckoned the universities and their professors firmly on Hitler's side. The nearly total lack of resistance is one measuring stick. There are many others.

The Political University

Chapter 3 already described an academic community willing to countenance a major purge of its ranks on racial and political grounds, willing to shout in favor of book burnings, and willing to lend its support to the national excitement surrounding Germany's supposed "rebirth" under Adolf Hitler. The slogan of a "political university" developed openly and explicitly as a term to describe and endorse these changes.[8] Nazi ideology also used the term *Gleichschaltung* or "coordination" to describe its desired nazification of major institutions; and, as with the churches, one finds more "self coordination" than otherwise.

Despite strong elements of self-government within the tradition of German universities, self-government had always occurred in conjunction and in some tension with the role of the state in funding and overseeing university activities. Each German state government had a Ministry of Education with ultimate authority to hire and to pay bills. Each professor served under the authority of laws for the civil service, rules that gave professors many protections and also tied them to state policy. Each university had one official, the *Kurator*, to provide the point of connection between state and university, administering the financial and legal side. Under the new concept of the political university, academic enthusiasm for the current nationalistic mood of Germany, coupled with changes at the state level, made for significant changes in university governance, considerably tightening the bond.

Perhaps the most important change involved implementation of the "*Führer* principle" on university campuses. Now the *Rektor* and the deans would serve by political appointment, not election, and they would not rotate on a regular basis. This matched the anti-democratic rhetoric

[8] See Geoffrey Giles, *Students and National Socialism in Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), ch. 4, "The Political University." See especially Giles' treatment of Professor Adolf Rein of Hamburg University, 111 ff. Rein wrote a short piece in 1933, *Die politische Universität* (Hamburg: Boysen, 1934). He then made something of a career out of speaking on this topic and trying to implement the "political university" at his home university in Hamburg.

of the Nazi ideology, and it suited Nazi ideas about authority and obedience. There also developed across Germany two powerful Nazi organizations eager to control events on campus. Student government fell under the auspices of the National Socialist German Students' Association (NSDStB), which now desired to give ideological direction and fervor to all questions of student organization and extracurricular activity. For example, this organization endorsed the creation of rigorous summer camps, where students would get a strong dose of ideological training along with the honing of their bodies and the development of skills suitable for military service. Attendance at one of these camps became a path to preferment. The Nazi Student Association also controlled student politics on campus and monitored things such as the book burnings of 1933 and the boycotting of professors considered either racially or politically tainted. Nazi students could wreak havoc, with their belief that they were guarantors of correct Nazi ideology on campuses and the sense of power that this gave them.[9]

There developed a parallel organization for professors, the National Socialist German Professors' Association (NSDDozB). Membership in this organization, obligatory for junior faculty (*Privatdozenten*), included pressure on these younger members to attend summer camps, with a regimen of Nazi indoctrination plus physical training. Even older professors were encouraged to take up physical fitness for the *Führer*. Hartshorne quotes a memo in May 1933 to the tenured professors at Berlin, inviting them to join in exercise for two hours each Wednesday and Saturday morning. He is skeptical that many professors took up the invitation, because the regimen started at 7:00 A.M. on university athletic fields some twenty minutes away by tram.[10] However, leaders within the Nazi Professors' Association definitely paid close attention to and impacted academic and political matters, monitoring the work of *Rektor*, deans, and faculty senates.

These changes may have seemed small at first. Each new *Rektor* and dean acting under the concept of the *Führer* principle was still a professor appointed from within the faculty itself. The role of the NSDStB and the NSDDozB on campus could be seen as similar to previous national fraternities or groups organized across regional lines. Furthermore, and

[9] See Giles, *Students and National Socialism in Germany*. See also Hans-Joachim Dahms, "Einleitung," in Heinrich Becker, Hans-Joachim Dahms, and Cornelia Wegeler, *Die Universität Göttingen unter dem Nationalsozialismus*, 2nd enlarged edition (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1998), 31–32, 36 ff.

[10] Hartshorne, *The German Universities and National Socialism*, 127.

crucially, each of these changes made it seem that universities were part of the new national mood of rebirth. Very few students or faculty wanted to stand in the way of this national excitement, and many or most of them seem to have accepted the enthusiasm wholeheartedly. These changes were not to prove minor, however. At the University of Göttingen, for example, a professor of agriculture named Artur Schürmann held office as leader of the Nazi Professors' Association for all of Lower Saxony. From the heights of this Party office, he was said to exercise more authority in personnel and curricular matters than any other person at the university. Such changes in aggregate tipped the weight of decision making on questions of personnel and curriculum and thus led quickly to the widespread politicization of German universities. Professors participating in these changes consciously and intentionally accepted the idea of the "political university" and thereby tipped their universities toward the Nazi cause.

Hiring Policies

Several examples from the University of Göttingen illustrate the perversion of former hiring processes that occurred and came to be accepted within the newly political university. The hiring of professors in Germany had long involved a specific and rigorous standard of preparation and selection. First, candidates would have completed their doctoral dissertation. Then, they would research and write an additional dissertation on a separate topic for their *Habilitation*. The acceptance of that second dissertation by a university would have granted to the individual the *venia legendi* or the right to teach under the title of *Privatdozent*. However, this right to teach meant only the right to offer lectures or seminars in a particular faculty, with a very small remuneration based on the number of students who chose to attend. Such an individual might also receive another sort of appointment, filling in for a professor on leave or assuming some other temporary, non-tenured role. On the basis of successful teaching, however, plus a growing scholarly reputation, the *Privatdozent* hoped successfully to compete for a professor's chair. That would come after being short-listed as a candidate by the relevant department; giving a guest lecture; being recommended by the department, the relevant faculty, and the *Rektor*; and then being appointed by the regional minister of education. Such a professorship carried with it prestige, the protection of tenure, and remuneration consistent with an upper-middle-class lifestyle.

Eugen Mattiat entered his academic career at Göttingen University via a less-traditional path. Born in 1901, he studied theology and began his employment as a clergyman, first as an assistant pastor in Hamburg and then as pastor of a small village church near Göttingen. Mattiat joined the Deutsche Christen within the Protestant church in 1932, and politics then greatly assisted his dramatically upward career trajectory. His first stop was the bishop's office in Hannover, where he worked in 1933–1934. Next, he found a job in the Reich Ministry of Education in Berlin,[11] where, ironically for someone of such modest background, he soon became the chief advisor for academic appointments in the humanities at universities all over Germany. To increase the appearance that he belonged in this job, where he had to deal with professors on a regular basis, Mattiat received an appointment as honorary professor of practical theology and *Volk* studies in the theological faculty at the University of Berlin. One commentator suggests that the theological faculty accepted his unusual appointment as a political gesture, hoping thereby to protect its relationship with the Education Ministry. However, parallel efforts to secure the thirty-five-year-old Mattiat an honorary doctorate failed. The normal vetting process at the University of Berlin considered this a step too far.[12]

Nonetheless, without doctorate, *Habilitation*, or even an honorary doctorate, Mattiat then made the jump to a professor's chair at Göttingen. This surprise appointment in 1938 – an appointment preceded by no search, no short list, no trial lecture, in fact, by no discussion with the University of Göttingen at all – placed Mattiat in a new chair for German *Volkskunde*. This term, *Volkskunde*, which might be translated as "folklore," intended no broad and comparative study of various human societies. In Nazi Germany, it became an enthusiastically promoted discipline designed to encourage students in their awareness of and appreciation for their "Germanness," including their racial, linguistic, and historical roots. Mattiat had never studied this subject nor published a single word of scholarship on *Volkskunde*. Furthermore, his new colleagues at Göttingen had received no chance to comment on his suitability. It was a political appointment pure and simple. Mattiat's lack of preparation for his professorship had to be acknowledged in the very act

[11] The full name of this ministry is the "Reich and Prussian Ministry for Science, Education, and Volk Education." It is commonly referred to both as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture.

[12] See Rolf Wilhelm Brednich, "Volkskunde – die völkische Wissenschaft von Blut und Boden," in Becker, Dahms, and Wegeler, especially 492–93.

of placing him in this position. His appointment in January 1938, backdated to November 1937, granted him a research leave until November 1938, when he would actually have to present his first lecture or lead his first seminar. This leave was literally designed to allow him to learn his subject.[13] Despite these weaknesses in his appointment, however, Mattiat quickly became an important force at Göttingen. Based on his political credentials alone, he became leader of the local Nazi Professors' Association, and from that position his voice outweighed most others at meetings of the faculty senate, as we shall see in this chapter.

Walter Birnbaum represents a second figure promoted to full professor without benefit of any of the normal qualifications. He too studied theology and became a pastor. In his one effort at graduate study – in pursuit of the Licentiate degree, roughly comparable to a Master of Arts degree – he failed to pass the final exam. However, he too proved his political reliability through enthusiasm for the Deutsche Christen. He worked in the national church office in Berlin under Reich Bishop Müller and August Jäger. When Jäger's career crashed in 1934, Birnbaum's position grew awkward due to their close association, and Berlin looked for ways to find him a suitable way out. The sinecure of a professorship at Göttingen emerged as the best alternative, so he was offered the chair in practical theology, first on a temporary basis and then with the full rights and privileges of a tenured position.

No one apparently opposed the appointment of either Mattiat or Birnbaum on the basis of academic scruples, even though such scruples might have seemed considerable, given their lack of appropriate training and the lack of a normal hiring process. In Birnbaum's case, however, religious scruples arose during his temporary appointment and briefly threatened to impede his permanent placement. These concerns developed among some students and faculty and also within the Hanoverian regional church, which depended on Göttingen University to prepare its future clergy. Enter Emanuel Hirsch, the dean of the theological faculty at Göttingen under the new "*Führer* principle." Hirsch openly advocated the Nazi cause and accepted the idea of the political university. He also was happy to add Birnbaum to his faculty as an advocate for the Deutsche Christen, although he seems not to have been overly convinced that Birnbaum was a prize academically. In commenting on his new colleague's teaching, he once joked that the "Fall" would never have

[13] See more details on the peculiarities of Mattiat's appointment as they emerged during his denazification, as described in Chapter 7.

occurred if Adam and Eve had been tempted by a *Birnbaum* (pear tree), rather than an *Apfelbaum*. However, Hirsch defended Birnbaum in the face of many protesting theological students, who claimed that he not only was boring, but that he was unprepared in theology and could not teach them what they would need to know for their exams.

Many of Birnbaum's student critics belonged to the Confessing Church, which caused them openly to resent his politicized comments, such as his claim that Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party were the new saviors of Germany. They were the ones who first brought Birnbaum's heterodoxy to the attention of the bishop's office in Hanover, which then tried to intervene. This Birnbaum affair provided more fireworks than most, with complaints from the church, the boycotting of his classes by students, the providing of *Ersatz* classes by other faculty members, and threats of reprisal from Hirsch, along with his secret reports sent to the Education Ministry in Berlin and to the SS Security Service (SD). In the end, Nazi politics triumphed over normal academic procedure as well as the concerns of the regional church. Birnbaum received his tenured appointment in 1936.[14]

The history seminar at Göttingen provides another interesting but more complicated example of politicized hiring policies. This story begins with recognition of the importance of history for Nazis, for they expected the historical discipline to help inculcate important elements of the Nazi worldview. Hitler himself in *Mein Kampf* had ascribed to historical reading his "breakthrough" in understanding. Only thus had he recognized the "world-historical significance" of evil Jewry and the proper place of a "healthy Germany" in world history. Nazis expected history to teach good Germans about their illustrious past, with emphasis on military grandeur and racial purity. One young historian, Walter Frank, proved adept at recognizing this Nazi need. He convinced the regime to support his concept of an "Institute for the History of the New Germany," so that in 1935 at the tender age of twenty-nine he became founding director of that institute.[15]

Walter Frank criticized the older generation of historians, particularly influential figures like Friedrich Meinecke at the University of Berlin, for practicing a "sterile" form of objectivity. Instead, Frank wanted a history

[14] See my treatment of these circumstances in Robert P. Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 168–76.

[15] See Helmut Heiber, *Walter Frank und sein Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des neuen Deutschlands* (Stuttgart: Deutscher Verlag, 1966).

brimming with passion and political purpose. At Göttingen, when the eminent Karl Brandi retired in 1935, *Rektor* Friedrich Neumann and the dean of the philosophical faculty, Hans Plischke, conspired to hire a young historian who would meet Walter Frank's ideal, representing both a high level of scholarship and the proper political passion. Soon they concluded, to their regret, that none of the younger, politicized historians had sufficient scholarly weight; so they hired the fifty-one-year-old Siegfried Kaehler, a staunchly conservative German nationalist loyal to the new Nazi state. Shortly after his arrival, he helped Göttingen celebrate the fourth anniversary of Hitler's rise to power by giving the main address at the Reich Foundation Festival. On behalf of the German *Volk*, he expressed his thanks for the "unerring drive of our *Führer* and Reich Chancellor."[16] But Kaehler was also a rigorous student of Meinecke. His role over the next two years indicated that historical objectivity and political passion could not easily be combined in one person.

When the third chair in history opened in 1938, advocates of political passion renewed their search. The actual search committee, however, came up with three candidates who did not please *Rektor* Otto Sommer. Kaehler later described how a meeting arranged by the search committee with Sommer, a professor of agriculture, showed the *Rektor* to be "entirely ignorant about matters of teaching and of research in the humanities."[17] Sommer in turn revealed his displeasure in the committee's selections, and the search collapsed. Several months later, in November 1938, the search committee returned to Sommer with a new list. This time Eugen Mattiat, newly hired and soon to be established as local leader of the Nazi Professor's Association, sat in on the meeting. On the basis of his politicized appointment and political reliability, Mattiat could be seen to speak for Artur Schürmann, the Göttingen professor of agriculture who headed the regional NSDDozB. During this meeting, only one of the three candidates was dismissed outright. Although he had been first on the list based on his scholarship, he was seen to have inadequate political qualifications. Both of the others were Party members, and one could claim to be both a storm trooper and an officer in the *Wehrmacht*. Nonetheless, Walter Hinz, dean of the philosophical faculty, intervened to say that this list could not yet go forward. In Kaehler's view, Hinz

[16] Siegfried A. Kaehler, "Wehrverfassung und Volk in Deutschland von den Freiheitskriegen bis zum Weltkriege. Rede zur Reichsfeier am 30. Januar 1937, gehalten in der Aula der Georgia Augusta," *Mitteilungen des Universitätsbundes Göttingen* 18/2 (1937), 2.

[17] A letter from Siegfried Kaehler to the Dean of the Philosophical Faculty, May 28, 1945, in the *Personalakten* Erich Botzenhart, Göttingen University Archive (hereafter GUA).

"already had heard from Mattiat the word that the university dictator at that time, Schürmann, had ordered them to arrange the appointment of Botzenhart."[18]

Here we see Kaehler's sense of the situation, that the two leading figures in the Nazi Professors' League, Artur Schürmann and Eugen Mattiat, would determine the outcome of this search, no matter what the search committee and relevant faculty thought. We also see the sudden appearance of a name not yet on any of the lists, Erich Botzenhart. He was a young protégé of Walter Frank who had worked in Frank's institute. Based on Botzenhart's political credentials, Frank hoped to find for him a university position, and this also became a chief motive for people such as Schürmann, Mattiat, Sommer, and Hinz. The historians at Göttingen were less convinced. Botzenhart had at least completed a doctoral dissertation on the topic of the *Freiherr* vom Stein, a German national hero in the struggle to push Napoleon off German soil. Prior historians had placed Stein's nationalistic desire for a free and unified Germany alongside his appreciation of certain liberal threads within the French Revolution, for example, on questions of representative, constitutional government. Botzenhart, however, consistent with his Nazi passion, argued that Stein had never been a liberal and had never been attracted to the ideals of the French Revolution.[19] After completing his dissertation, Botzenhart worked in the Stein archive on a multi-volume publication of Stein's papers, but he had never completed a *Habilitation* nor done any teaching. As for his narrow emphasis on Stein (the German word for "stone"), one wag at Göttingen suggested he should be considered more geologist than historian. Such dismissiveness did not prevail, however.

After Botzenhart gave his trial lecture on the German Revolution of 1806–1813, Kaehler remained unimpressed: "Even for non-historians it was clear," he wrote, "that the topic was a very slick attempt to show this [the events of 1806–1813] as a prelude to the Revolution of 1933, based upon a complete violation of the historical facts." The next day, when many on the faculty attacked Botzenhart's presentation, Mattiat stood up to announce that the Nazi Professors' Association placed Botzenhart first on the list. His lecture had placed him above the other candidates, Mattiat argued, because it had made the "spark of history" visible to his

[18] Ibid.

[19] See Erich Botzenhart, *Die deutsche Revolution 1806/1813* (Hamburg: Hanseatischer Verlag, 1940), 7. Ironically, Botzenhart's interpretation was a frontal attack on the standard interpretation by the liberal historian, Max Lehmann, who taught at Göttingen from 1893 until his retirement in 1921.

audience. Mattiat then added mysteriously that there existed "decisive, relevant reasons and fundamental considerations" behind his stance. When asked to name these "relevant reasons," Mattiat responded, "That won't do, for that would bring to an end this opportunity for us to work successfully together here." Hinz backed up Mattiat, even when someone noted that it would be hard in the future to convince students to go to all the work of completing a *Habilitation*, when it was now shown to be unnecessary. Nonetheless, Botzenhart received the appointment, but only because the three leading figures on the "Nazi passion" side, Sommer, Hinz, and Mattiat, prevailed over the advocates of objective scholarship.[20]

These appointments of Mattiat, Birnbaum, and Botzenhart suggest a thoroughgoing politicization of the German university system, especially because they violated both the normal process of faculty input on hiring decisions and the normal expectation of proper credentials for anyone placed in a university chair. Some caveats should be mentioned. For example, the subject in which Birnbaum was appointed, practical theology, can sometimes go to a person with extensive practical experience but fewer academic credentials. Also, at times when a new discipline suddenly becomes popular – even politics or sociology in 1968 in West Germany, for example – individuals without the *Habilitation* might receive appointments out of necessity. Furthermore, these appointments in *Volkskunde*, theology, and history were not central to the Holocaust. Racial studies, by contrast, which permeated the curriculum, had a more direct bearing on the murder of Jews. However, these three appointments illustrate the egregious politicization of personnel practices at Göttingen, and, in the case of Mattiat especially, the later implications of granting someone like him a high level of influence. Ironically, when the Nazis introduced the Law for the Cleansing of the Civil Service in 1933, one of their main charges had been that civil servants were granted political appointments under the Weimar Republic without respect for the

[20] This story, together with all quotations, is to be found in Kaehler's letter of May 28, 1945, to his dean (see n. 15). It has the problem of being postwar testimony, for the war had ended three weeks previously. However, the sort of faculty opposition to Botzenhart described here is consistent with other evidence about his controversial appointment, including his unhappy postwar fate, in which he never returned to the faculty. It is also consistent with Kaehler's disaffection from the Nazi regime, despite his conservative and nationalistic appreciation for some aspects of Hitler's leadership. See my treatment of this material in Robert P. Ericksen, "Kontinuitäten konservativer Geschichtsschreibung am Seminar für Mittlere und Neuere Geschichte: Von der Weimarer Zeit über die nationalsozialistische Ära bis in die Bundesrepublik," in Becker, Dahms and Wegeler, 427–53.

necessary qualifications. At Göttingen, no single example could be found of a merely political appointment to the faculty during Weimar. However, political appointments unsupported by academic credentials became rather common with Nazis in charge.

It is also worth noting, of course, that political appointments did meet with some resistance. Emanuel Hirsch had to fight off protests and even boycotts by students partial to the Confessing Church as he helped foist Birnbaum onto his faculty. Many people within the philosophical faculty opposed the blatantly political appointment of Botzenhart to his chair in history. We can also note, however, that each political appointment helped to tip the scales of decision making, until resistance proved futile. *Rektor* Sommer and Dean Hinz, both appointed to their positions as supporters of the Nazi ideology and as representatives of the *Führer* Principle, had the final say on hiring recommendations sent to the Ministry of Education in Berlin. Also, Eugen Mattiat soon found himself not only with the authority of his chair but in the position of leader of the Nazi Professors' Association. Thus a neophyte in academe could stand up in faculty meetings, hint darkly at the authority behind his words, and control subsequent appointments in disciplines about which he possessed absolutely no knowledge or understanding.

What made these travesties of academic hiring possible? Not least a faculty that basically approved the new, stronger, more nationally committed direction taken by Germany under Adolf Hitler. They had accepted several earlier violations of academic freedom: the purge of faculty in 1933 and the burning of books. Again at this point they accepted further insults to their independence and their professionalism, presumably because they did not want to rock the boat, did not want to damage the sense of unity that Hitler took as a mantra. The ambivalence can be seen quite clearly in Siegfried Kaehler, a man who could not swallow the appointment of Erich Botzenhart without a fight, without noting its bitter taste. Yet he also was willing publicly to endorse the "unerring drive of the *Führer*" as he celebrated the fourth anniversary of Hitler's accession to power. By January of 1937, when Kaehler praised Hitler's "unerring drive," the *Führer* had instituted arrest without trial, concentration camps for political enemies, the Aryan Paragraph to remove Jews from public employment, the Nuremberg Racial Laws to deny Jews the normal rights of citizenship, and a series of early steps with regard to Germany's borders that we now can see pointed toward war. Kaehler and his colleagues apparently regarded these as appropriate steps, the signs of a positive new Germany, which they should not put at risk by

quibbling over some heavy-handed treatment by Nazi underlings in university management.

Curriculum

Nazi perversion of the German university did not stop with politicized hiring. In order to assure widespread acceptance of the Nazi *Weltanschauung*, that worldview had to be given intellectual underpinnings, and each discipline was tempted to make at least minor adjustments toward that end. Professors of literature, already likely to be strongly nationalistic, now argued for the superiority of the German language and the greatness of the German literary tradition, in keeping with the Nazi idea of the Aryan super race.[21] Philosophers began to remove their Jewish forebears from the curriculum, insisting, for example, that individuals like Baruch Spinoza had never *really* been important in the development of philosophy. Rather, they had always been inferior to their lesser-known German counterparts.[22] Legal historians sought the Teutonic origins of Germanic legal practice, rather than looking to the ancient legal codes of Mesopotamia or Rome; and economists learned to dismiss Karl Marx, not just for his socialist ideas, but because he had been corrupted by his Jewishness. In the field of physics, the extraordinary influence of Albert Einstein that so marked the twentieth century had to be denied. Despite his German roots, physicists loyal to the new state condemned Einstein's relativity theory as Jewish and began to tout a "German physics" instead.[23]

Historians were tempted to intensify their focus on topics that would appeal to the Nazi worldview by emphasizing military history, the glory of past German heroes, and the appropriateness of wide German borders. Percy Schramm at Göttingen, for example, has already been shown advocating the Nazi goal of regaining lost territories in Poland. That is

[21] Several recent studies illustrate the nazification of the humanities in Germany. See, for example, Frank-Rutger Hausmann, ed., *Die Rolle der Geisteswissenschaften im Dritten Reich 1933–1945* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2002); Hartmut Lehmann and Otto Gerhard Oexle, eds., *Nationalsozialismus in den Kulturwissenschaften, Band 1: Fächer – Milieus – Karrieren* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2004); and Jürgen Elvert and Jürgen Nielsen-Sikora, eds., *Kulturwissenschaften und Nationalsozialismus* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008).

[22] See, for example, Max Wundt's article, "Das Judentum in der Philosophie," *Forschungen zur Judenfrage* 2 (Hamburg, 1937), which develops this argument.

[23] See Alan D. Beyerchen, *Scientists under Hitler: Politics and the Physics Community in the Third Reich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

only one example of his tilt toward Nazi themes. Going through the book collection of the left-leaning sociological institute, which had just been dissolved on political grounds, he noted in an internal memo that "the library contained … a not insubstantial number of books which either absolutely cannot be shown to our students or, if so, only under close regulation."[24] The safe books, however, he would be happy to appropriate for the history seminar in order to bring more social topics into the discussion. "Since the year 1933," he wrote, "which brought the concepts of *Volk* and *Volksgemeinschaft* close to the students, one can note the strong resonance of these topics, as lecture and seminar classes in social history have shown."[25] In 1938, Schramm wrote to his *Kurator* about the needs of the History Seminar: "The extraordinary pace of historical developments in recent years throws up one problem after another with which the historian must deal: war politics, Eastern history, colonial history, social history – these categories may indicate how the tasks of the History Seminar have grown since 1933."[26] In all cases, of course, Schramm signs off on his memos with "*Heil* Hitler!"

Alongside these attempts to adjust individual academic disciplines to the Nazi point of view, there also developed ideologically attractive disciplines that were entirely new. That was true of the new chair filled by Eugen Mattiat when he was assigned to teach German *Volk* studies. It made no sense to worship the German *Volk*, as Nazis did, without some explicit attempt to show how and why Germans were so absolutely wonderful. There had only been two chairs in *Volkskunde* at German universities prior to 1933, at Dresden and Hamburg. However, the first two years under Hitler saw the establishment of such chairs at Heidelberg, Berlin, Leipzig, and Tübingen.[27] The opportunity to study German cultural habits and proclaim them superior proved to be a growth industry. Naturally, the idea of a specific German culture led easily into the complementary and Nazi core idea of a specific German race, and this too entered the curriculum of the newly politicized universities.

"Racial science" probably represents the most dramatic curricular change imposed by Nazi ideology.[28] Hitler argued, first and foremost,

[24] Schramm to *Kurator* Bojunga, October 22, 1936, in GUA, K, XVI, IV, C.k.2, Bd II.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Schramm to *Kurator* Bojunga, November 28, 1938, in GUA, K, XVI, IV, C.k.2, Bd II.

[27] See, for example, Brednich, "Volkskunde," 491–92. Brednich, "Volkskunde," 494–97, also shows how easily the academic discipline of *Volkskunde* could slip into the amateurish and charlatan-like activities undertaken in Himmler's SS organization, the *Ahnenerbe*.

[28] See, for example, Alan Steinweis, *Studying the Jew: Scholarly Antisemitism in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

that Jews were responsible for every bad thing that ever happened to Germany. He argued that the "Jewish problem" would need to be resolved for Germany to succeed, and his regime quickly began imposing policies toward that end. "Racial science" became a required course in every school from primary through secondary levels, and universities quickly pursued research in racial science and programs in the teaching of racial science in order to provide a foundation for such courses.

Racial science does not seem to have been imposed on German academia against its will. There had been many precursors in the 1920s, especially in terms of interest in "racial hygiene" or eugenics. After 1933, racial science proved so attractive to German academics that they did not want to leave it to physical scientists alone. Rather, many attempted to work from within their social or humanistic disciplines in the search for racial difference and in support of racial purity. Gerhard Kittel is a good example. His career during the Third Reich can only be understood as an attempt to use his expertise in theology to help identify and clarify the "Jewish menace." When he first began to work in Walter Frank's Institute for the History of the New Germany, he sent out a call for interdisciplinary partners. He quickly received a response from none other than Eugen Fischer, director of the prestigious Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Genetics in Berlin. Together they published nonsense on the so-called evidence of negative Jewish characteristics to be found in Egyptian funerary portraits dating from the fourth centuries (as noted in Chapter 4). Such an example shows how easily even a trained and successful scholar in the physical sciences could succumb to the attractions of Nazi ideology. However, Fischer's adventure in bad anthropology gives only a small taste of the evil he and his fellows would inspire.

Fischer had gained attention during the Weimar period with his studies of heredity and racial difference. In particular, he wrote about the "Rhineland Bastards," mixed-race children born in the aftermath of World War I, fathered by colonial troops fighting on the French and British side. His allegedly scientific treatment of this "problem" fit in with the widespread racial prejudice, even horror, expressed by the public on this issue. It also mirrored, of course, racial prejudice typical for anthropologists and public alike in the early twentieth century on both sides of the Atlantic.[29]

[29] See, for example, Garland E. Allen, "The Ideology of Elimination: American and German Eugenics, 1900–1945," in Francis R. Nicosia and Jonathan Huener, eds., *Medicine and Medical Ethics in Nazi Germany: Origins, Practices, Legacies* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002).

The "Rhineland Bastards" represented for Fischer only one part of the broader area in which he worked in the 1920s, eugenics. He joined with two other professors, Erwin Baur and Friedrich Lenz, to produce in 1921 a standard textbook on questions of heredity and racial hygiene.[30] This term, "racial hygiene," combines ideas about race and "hygiene" that are not only offensive by today's standards, but that have been shown to be unsound, based merely on stereotyped prejudices without scientific content. In the 1920s, however, American scientists also pushed the eugenics movement, discussing ways to encourage "good people" to reproduce and discourage those considered unfit, usually by means of voluntary or even forced sterilization. Hitler's regime, of course, proved very interested in sterilization as a way to improve the German race, enacting on July 14, 1933, a new law on "hereditary health." This instituted a policy by which individuals with hereditary diseases or conditions considered undesirable – even alcoholism or unemployment – could be sterilized. Thus began the Nazi policy of racial hygiene.[31]

One young member of the medical faculty at Göttingen, *Privatdozent* Saller, provides an interesting reflection on the issues involved in eugenics, as well as on the nuances of politics in academia at that time. Saller showed promise very quickly. Born in 1902, he had his doctorate in hand by the age of twenty-two and his *Habilitation* completed by the age of twenty-five, both *summa cum laude*. He published eighty-four separate articles or books between 1925 and 1934. This bright and ambitious young man had quickly become one of the important scholars in Germany on the question of racial studies. He welcomed the rise of Hitler in 1933, and in April of that year he joined with forty-one of his Göttingen colleagues in signing a petition to attack James Franck and to call for a faster "cleansing" of Jews from university life.[32]

Saller's career prospects seemed brilliant, given his energy, his field of study, and his politics. He quickly received the support of his colleagues in the Göttingen medical faculty for a newly created chair in racial studies. But it was not to be. He not only failed to be appointed professor of racial

[30] E. Baur, E. Fischer, and F. Lenz, *Menschliche Erblichkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene* (Munich: Lehmann, 1921).

[31] See Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), especially ch. 1 and 2, for a description of the mistaken science that led to eugenics in both Germany and the United States.

[32] See Ulrich Beurhausen, Hans-Joachim Dahms, Thomas Koch, Almuth Massing, and Konrad Obermann, "Die Medizinische Fakultät im Dritten Reich," in Becker, Dahms, and Wegeler, 198–205.

studies at Göttingen, but within a year he had been condemned by various Nazi authorities, his books had been banned, and his *venia legendi* – his right to teach at a German university based on his *Habilitation* – had been withdrawn. Why? Karl Saller advocated a form of racial theory at odds with the ideas of Eugen Fischer and also at odds with what Saller called the "nonsense" endorsed by the amateur, Adolf Hitler.

In early July 1933, Saller published in a journal for clinical doctors an article titled "The State of Eugenics and its Task." Here he asked why so few doctors were putting into practice ideas advocated by eugenicists. His answer? Because of the careless ideas and "wild speculations" promoted by prominent eugenicists, and here he singled out Friedrich Lenz, professor of racial science at Munich and one of the coauthors with Fischer of that 1921 volume on heredity and racial hygiene. Saller was prepared to search for hard racial characteristics that seemed based on heredity, such as hair color, but Lenz insisted that softer characteristics, such as beauty or ugliness, courage, stupidity, or tendencies toward successful or unsuccessful marriage, could also be traced by race. Saller argued that this went far beyond the present level of knowledge and the norms of scientific proof. Furthermore, Lenz had advocated very high levels of sterilization based on his assessment of "inferior" hereditary stock. He suggested that 10 percent sterilization within each generation would be appropriate. Saller even quotes Lenz as saying, "It would doubtless be in the interest of our overcrowded fatherland if the most incapable third of the population produced no offspring."[33]

One week after Saller's article appeared, promulgation of the aggressive new Nazi law on hereditary health showed that Lenz's ideas were ascendant. The rest of this drama still required a year or more. In the spring of 1934, Saller received the endorsement of most of his colleagues for the new Göttingen chair in racial studies. One colleague in the medical faculty, however, Werner Blume, also happened to be leader of the NSDDozB at that time. Blume stated that the Party could not accept Saller, and he produced letters Saller had written to a student in 1932 to buttress his case. At that time Saller wrote, "That which … Hitler or even his colleague Rosenberg and Herr Klagges have put out on an area in which I have some expertise, namely the question of races, is relative nonsense [*Blödsinn*]."[34] Amazingly, the faculty still supported Saller, due to his excellent scholarly credentials, arguing that private comments

[33] Quoted in ibid., 200.
[34] Quoted in ibid., 202.

expressed in a letter before 1933 should not outweigh all else that stood in his favor. Saller also protested his full allegiance to the Nazi state and enlisted others to endorse his loyalty to nation and regime, but without success. Blume also failed, however, in his attempt to fill the chair with one of two Nazis possessing the requisite political credentials. The rest of the faculty protested the lack of scholarly credentials provided by these two. In this instance, there developed a complete standoff. The university gave up on its new chair in racial studies and the institute that would have accompanied it, so that Göttingen remained one of the few universities never to have such a position. Racial science still entered the curriculum, of course, in classes taught by other medical faculty as well as in a broad variety of other disciplines.[35]

Racial scientists at the University of Munich never showed the restraint of a Karl Saller. They also trained one of the most famous "racial scientists" of the Nazi era, Joseph Mengele. Before he accepted his post at Auschwitz, he studied at Munich and then earned his doctorate under Otmar *Freiherr* von Verschuer at Frankfurt. It was von Verschuer, successor in 1942 to Eugen Fischer as director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin, who suggested that heredity could be better understood by studying identical twins. When Mengele performed his twin studies at Auschwitz, along with other experiments on human subjects, he reported on his work to his former mentors and published the results of his work in standard medical journals. He also sent blood samples and body parts from Auschwitz to von Verschuer in Berlin, as well as to Heidelberg and other universities, so that scholars at these institutions could expand their racial expertise. When racial science entered the curriculum of German universities during the period of Nazi enthusiasm, it did not confine itself to esoteric theories about patterns of heredity. It participated eagerly in the policies of brutality and annihilation soon underway.[36]

Specific Contributions to the Killing

One of the most distinctive features of the Holocaust – its modern, technologically sophisticated nature – is rooted directly in German universities.

[35] See Karl Saller's description of these events in *Die Rassenlehre des Nationalsozialismus in Wissenschaft und Propaganda* (Darmstadt: Progress Verlag, 1961).

[36] See, for example, the treatment of Mengele and von Verschuer in Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basis Books, 1986), and Michael H. Kater, *Doctors under Hitler* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

University-trained technicians, engineers, architects, doctors, and lawyers assisted at various stages in the process, helping make it possible to kill so many people so efficiently in such a short space of time. Here the universities can be seen to have contributed in two ways. First, they provided the training necessary for experts to do their jobs. Lawyers could write the laws, regulations, and policies by which victims were separated and denied their civil rights; historians could identify the peoples of Eastern Europe needing to be removed to make way for ethnic Germans; engineers could design the sealed trucks in which Jews could be gassed by carbon monoxide; and doctors could plan and conduct the experiments in which Jews and others were used as human subjects. Some of these activities were undertaken by specialists with university positions; all were undertaken by products of the universities. Simply stated, it is impossible to imagine certain specific horrors of the Holocaust absent the training and expertise provided by German universities.

Besides developing in their students a set of skills that proved helpful in implementing mass murder, these universities also taught their students a set of values by which participation in the killing could take place. Each hiring of politically motivated Nazis to the professoriate and each curricular change in support of the Nazi worldview favored the already widespread enthusiasm for and cooperation with the Nazi ideology shown on university campuses in 1933. Few students are likely to have been cautioned in their enthusiasm for Nazi policies by their years spent at university. Rather, they were likely to see their support of the Nazi state and its goals as the highest form of idealism. That is the message of students in Berlin, shouting from the dais to their professors on January 30, 1936: "Our roots plunge deep in German soil; so what we do and dare is all devoted to her.... No one can rob us of our vision of the new age! With zeal have we treasured it in our hearts, until at last it will shine gloriously before the whole world!"[37] Indeed. These students and their peers were nurtured on words about German grievances, German greatness, and their right and duty to follow Hitler and set things right. Whether a few professors sat tight, aggrieved, and waited for the Nazi storm to pass, or whether many enthusiastically endorsed the new regime, they and their politicized universities were in some fashion complicit in the crime of genocide.

We can go further, of course, and identify ways in which some academics participated in the killing process itself. Once again, Göttingen

[37] Quoted in Hartshorne, *The German Universities and National Socialism*, 150.

provides an entrée to the story, if a complicated one. It is now known that the university clinic in Göttingen performed nearly 2,000 forced sterilizations as the Nazi policies of "racial betterment" took hold. A Göttingen care facility also sent more than 200 victims to their death as sterilization gave way to so-called euthanasia.[38] Two hundred victims may seem a small number in the face of some 200,000 probable victims of euthanasia, this Nazi experiment in "culling." However, the specifics of sterilization and euthanasia activities show that doctors at Göttingen University participated directly in actual crimes of the regime.

Between 1934 and 1945, university clinics at Göttingen performed 1,919 forced sterilizations. Each procedure began with an assessment by a doctor to determine whether an individual fit into one of the categories in the sterilization law. One study shows that 58 percent of the 787 women forced into sterilization at the women's clinic of the university had been diagnosed as hereditarily retarded. Only two of those women were sterilized due to "moral retardation." However, these two categories – hereditary retardation and moral retardation – were hardly separate, clear, and precise. The former was measured by questions such as "Where does the sun rise?" and "What is the capital of Germany?" These might seem legitimate bases for measurement. On the other hand, "What is 12 times 13?" might seem a little harsh. Furthermore, one woman who (a) had finished her schooling, having been held back only one year of eight; (b) could perform her job; and (c) had never been on public assistance, was placed nonetheless in the category "retarded," both by the original board of doctors and by an appeal board. Alongside her socially acceptable accomplishments, she had born five children out of wedlock. This convinced doctors that she was "without sexual restraint" and that such a level of "moral retardation" must indicate defective intelligence. Others were judged retarded because of "asocial" tendencies, such as lying or keeping a dirty household. Professors of medicine at Göttingen both advised and participated in all of this decision making, as Nazi law on racial hygiene reached down to touch normal citizens.[39]

Forced sterilization might arouse our condemnation today, even though it occurred in twentieth-century America as well as in Nazi Germany.[40]

[38] See Beurhausen, et al., "Die Medizinische Fakultät im Dritten Reich," 205–27.

[39] See ibid., 206–13.

[40] Forced sterilization was fairly common in the United States in the early twentieth century. Johanna Schoen, *Choice and Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005) has described its use as late as the 1970s in North Carolina, the state she studied.

The euthanasia policy perpetrated by the Nazi regime leaves no ambiguity. It was not "mercy death" implemented at the wish of the victim, but murder designed by the Nazi regime to weed out of the German population individuals considered more of a drag than a benefit, individuals considered "life unworthy of life." The significant difference between "mercy death" and Nazi "euthanasia" did not escape the attention of the regime at the time, as can be seen in the lack of openly stated law or the right of relatives even to be informed. The practice of "euthanasia" meant in reality murdering people in secret and then lying to family members about the cause of death. Professors across Germany participated in this process. Those at Göttingen turned over for murder some 238 victims.

Despite these 238 victims, the place of euthanasia at Göttingen illustrates some of the ambiguity that often surfaces in questions about the Nazi past. That can be seen especially in the case of Gottfried Ewald, a professor of psychiatry who routinely dealt with cases of serious psychological illness. His appointment at Göttingen included directorship of the state hospital and nursing home (*Heil- und Pflegeanstalt*), where cases of "life unworthy of life" might be expected to be found. Ewald's political commitment to the Nazi state had seemed unimpeachable. This extended back to his university days in Erlangen, where he joined a right-wing student organization in 1924, the *Bund Oberland*, which paralleled the Nazi movement. Ewald also proved an early supporter of the idea and the practice of forced sterilization. Thus, when the regime moved toward a policy of euthanasia in 1939, Ewald received an invitation to a meeting in Berlin. He and other academics at that meeting were asked to assume the task of sitting on boards to assess psychiatric patients. They would thus be the ones to determine which patients would be murdered for the greater good of Germany. It is important to note that many professors simply accepted their task, as noted by Ernst Klee and other writers on Nazi euthanasia. Ewald, however, refused and walked out of the meeting.[41]

Shortly after his return to Göttingen, Ewald composed a letter in which he explained his opposition to this policy and to this task. He then sent his critique to half a dozen individuals, including the Reich head of the doctor's association, Leonardo Conti, as well as to Professor Matthias Göring, director of the Institute for Psychology in Berlin. In the latter instance, he asked Professor Göring to forward the information to his

[41] See ibid., 222–24. See also Ernst Klee, *Euthanasie im NS-Staat: Die Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1985), and Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors*, 82–87.

cousin, Reich Marshall Hermann Göring. Instead of punishment, Ewald received a gentle response from Conti, one of Ewald's right-wing friends from his earlier years at Erlangen:

> Dear Professor Ewald!
>
> With best thanks I acknowledge receipt of your letter of 21 August this year.... I still remember your lectures in Erlangen with great pleasure. What you have presented certainly includes some things that are fully justified, as I know as well; despite that I take a different view, though I will not put it down on paper at this time. I want only to say this much: I am quite convinced that the views of the entire German *Volk* in these matters are in a state of flux and I can easily imagine that things which at one moment are considered unacceptable in the next moment can be declared the only right choice. We have experienced that numerous times in the course of history. As the most recent example I can easily point to the law on sterilization: Here the process of a transformation in thought is already far advanced.[42]

This letter includes the implicit reminder that Ewald had supported forced sterilization, even when it had been criticized by many. It also supports an observation to be made about both pastors and professors in the Nazi era: They learned to accept the growing surge of radicalized opinions within the Nazi state and gradually adjusted their own views to fit within that norm. Nazi Germany is nothing if not a laboratory for the study of groupthink and norms adjustment. Ewald, however, did not change his mind on euthanasia. He never served on an assessment board, although other professors of psychiatry from across Germany were willing to do so. On the other hand, Ewald drew up lists of severely afflicted patients in his psychiatric hospital, knowing their grim fate in advance. In 1940 and 1941, he sent 238 of his patients to their deaths, about one-third of the total number of patients under his care.[43]

Ewald provides a useful lesson in the complexity of culpability. In the postwar period, he was celebrated for his claim to have saved lives by intervening as much as possible on behalf of marginal patients. He and other doctors in Göttingen had considered whether to resign in the face of euthanasia policy, he said, but they decided that replacements in their positions would not know the patients or advocate on their behalf. They succeeded in having 136 patients removed from transport lists, using those categories provided by the government for making exceptions: war wounded, especially if they had been awarded medals for bravery; irreplaceable

[42] Quoted in Beurhausen, et al., "Die Medizinische Fakultät im Dritten Reich," 224.
[43] Ibid., 227.

workers; patients useful in medical instruction as objects for observation; or other special considerations, such as the likelihood a patient could still be educated. In his favor, then, Ewald protested euthanasia in his letter to public officials, he refused to sit on an assessment board, and he tried to save patients who could be exempted from the policy. However, Ewald supported the Nazi ideology, he advocated for and participated in forced sterilization, and he knowingly sent patients to their death. Where should we place Ewald on our moral spectrum? He probably saved lives. He also gave open and public support to the Nazi regime and he at least shared responsibility for 238 deaths. Incidentally, this number included a first group of twelve Jewish patients transported on September 21, 1940, to be "euthanized." In their case, no assessment was made of the severity of their symptoms and no effort was made to argue on their behalf; they were simply the last remaining Jews under Ewald's care.[44]

Resistance

Was there resistance in the universities? It is surely possible that some individuals quietly disapproved of the Nazi regime and its ideology, waiting "for the storm to pass," as Hartshorne put it. Quiet, internal disapproval would not have been apparent to an outside observer, of course, nor can we easily look inside individual hearts and minds. Virtually every professor after 1945 *claimed* to have been an opponent of the regime (see Chapter 7). Very few could provide convincing evidence, however. In light of the massive evidence of academic enthusiasm for the Nazi state, widespread claims of secret opposition should be dismissed as dishonest and self-serving. The exception to this rule can be found in a tiny handful of stories that demonstrate actual resistance, that is, actual efforts to oppose the regime, sabotage the regime, or even work toward its overthrow. Such stories highlight individual courage. Their very paucity, however, demonstrates how little such behavior is representative of the academic community. Their value is mostly symbolic.

The "White Rose" is the best-known example of a resistance movement on a university campus. Several Munich students, including Hans and Sophie Scholl, became so disaffected with the Nazi state that by June 1942 they began printing handbills against the regime. This group composed and distributed six leaflets, an act that required the illegal acquisition of duplicating equipment and reams of paper. They posted these materials to

[44] Ibid., 225–26.

thousands of individuals, sometimes traveling by train with suitcases of envelopes so that they could be postmarked from other cities. In February 1943, Hans and Sophie Scholl were apprehended dropping leaflets into the atrium of Munich University itself. The Scholl siblings and their friend, Christoph Probst, were arrested, given a show trial, and executed by guillotine in February. Alex Schmorell and Kurt Huber, a professor, were similarly executed in July, and Willi Graf in October. These students and one professor expressed what we might have wished: a moral critique, condemning the crimes of the Nazi regime, and a call for passive resistance against it. Members of the White Rose hoped that their execution would inspire other students to active resistance, but that hope proved in vain.[45]

The main example of resistance at Göttingen University, Heinrich Düker, illustrates a similar story of futile activity by low-level and isolated fragments within the academic community. He became a *Privatdozent* in psychology at Göttingen in 1929. With the rise of Hitler in 1933, he suffered months of persecution, based on suspicion of anti-Nazi leanings. This began with a police search of his home in March, the first step in an attempt to remove him from his position on the faculty. He then faced three charges: (1) that he was a member and supporter of the Communist Party; (2) that he had left the church[!]; and (3) that he was an active member of the International Socialist Kampfbund (ISK). Düker denied that he had ever joined or supported the Communist Party, claiming he never could have accepted the materialistic ideas of Karl Marx. He admitted leaving the church, but only for his own religious reasons. He joined the German Freethinkers' Union – not the Communist-oriented Union of Proletarian Freethinkers, he stressed – because it offered him the best place to discuss spiritual ideas and counteract actual atheism. Admitting that he belonged to the ISK, he argued that this organization advocated a non-Marxist form of socialism, based on German idealism, with goals of justice for the German people consistent with ideas often expressed by the leadership of the new regime. Düker received support even from Nazi members of his faculty. By August 1933 he was reconfirmed in his position.[46]

[45] See Annette Dumbach and Jud Newborn, *Shattering the German Night* (1986), a book reissued as *Sophie Scholl and the White Rose* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006) in the aftermath of a successful film, *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* (2005). See also Hans and Sophie Scholl, *At the Heart of the White Rose: Letters and Diaries of Hans and Sophie Scholl* (NY: Harper & Row, 1984).

[46] Rainer Paul, "Psychologie unter den Bedingungen der 'Kulturwende'. Das Psychologische Institut 1933–1945," in Becker, Dahms, and Wegeler. This summary of charges against Düker in 1933 is found on 508–09.

Düker escaped this first attempt to take away his right to teach at least partly because of the oddity of the ISK, an organization that did not quite fit alongside the communist and socialist groups most distrusted by Nazis. This movement had been founded in the 1920s by a professor in the mathematics and natural science faculty at Göttingen, Leonard Nelson. Already in 1917 Nelson had founded the International Jugendbund (IJB), which worked alongside youth groups in the Social Democratic Party. When cooperation with the IJB was banned by the SPD in 1925, Nelson created his second organization, the International Socialist Kampfbund (ISK). Based on Nelson's own ideals, the ISK expected of its members an incredibly strict regimen, including a commitment to vegetarianism, along with complete abstinence from alcohol, nicotine, sex, and belief in God. The charismatic Nelson hoped to train a cadre of idealistic youth ready to build a better future. From his position at Göttingen during the 1920s, he influenced a small number of students, including Heinrich Düker, and attracted up to three hundred members to the ISK before his death in 1927.[47]

The ISK was hardly as innocent an organization as Düker claimed during his interrogation in 1933. Despite his close call, he and colleagues in the group undertook a series of resistance activities. For example, on the night before May Day, 1934, which the Nazis wanted to steal back from the left as a "National Day of Work," Düker printed opposition flyers and pedaled his bicycle through Göttingen, distributing them under cover of darkness. This was not only dangerous, but presumably difficult, because Düker pedaled with a wooden leg, the result of his service in World War I. (His political friends even called him "Heinrich *Holzbein*.") Düker continued similar activities throughout 1935, until he and thirteen other members of the ISK were arrested in January 1936 and charged with treason. This time Düker could not talk his way out of the scrape. He was convicted and sentenced to three years in prison (not in a workhouse – the leniency due to his WWI record and his wooden leg).[48]

When Düker completed his prison sentence in 1939, he could not return to Göttingen, for the university had rescinded its acceptance of his *Habilitation*, thus taking away his right to teach. He found a nonacademic research job in Berlin and used his income to help support friends who had gone underground. This led to his arrest in late 1944 and his

[47] See Hans-Joachim Dahms, "Einleitung," and Erwin Ratzke, "Das Pädagogische Institut der Universität Göttingen. Ein Überblick über seine Entwicklung in den Jahren 1923–1949," in Becker, Dahms, and Wegeler, especially 30–31 and 320–21.

[48] Paul, "Psychologie unter den Bedingungen der 'Kulturwende,'" 510–11.

imprisonment at Sachsenhausen, where he was finally released with the arrival of Russian troops. After several months recovering in a hospital, Düker returned to Göttingen in August 1945, where he was offered back his right to teach. In 1946, he received perhaps the first major gesture of acceptance in his life, being elected *Oberbürgermeister* in Göttingen's first postwar election. In 1947, he accepted a professorship in psychology at Marburg University, where he spent the next twenty years.[49]

Düker has been celebrated in postwar Germany. For example, Göttingen made him an honorary citizen in 1985 and named a street after him. He also received an honorary doctorate at Düsseldorf in 1975, and he received the Wilhelm Wundt Medal from the German Society of Psychologists in 1978. However, it is worth noting that the Göttingen faculty member most worthy of honors for his opposition to the Nazi ideology was a fringe figure, a member of a sect-like political movement, who spent the twelve years of Nazi rule with his academic career entirely blocked. No significant figure at Göttingen University offered significant opposition to the regime. Düker represents a courageous exception, but he illustrates primarily the fact that German universities simply did not produce anything resembling serious resistance to the Nazi ideology or the Nazi regime.

It seems clear that the story of Göttingen University is representative. Political cooperation at German universities was extensive, political opposition almost unknown. Max Weinreich told his story of *Hitler's Professors* against the grain in 1946,[50] but scholars on both sides of the Atlantic have increasingly corroborated his story in the last twenty-five years. Many professors in Nazi Germany chose to be "Hitler's Professors." Whether one looks at individual universities, individual disciplines, or broad areas, such as science or the humanities, one finds extensive collaboration with the regime and its ideology. Stephen P. Remy published his 2002 study of Heidelberg University under the title *The Heidelberg Myth*.[51] The myth of clean hands and pure hearts in the academic world, the myth of clear-thinking critics of Nazi ideology simply cannot be maintained. The reality of complicity and collaboration is closer to the mark.

[49] Ibid., 511–12.

[50] See note 1.

[51] Stephen P. Remy, The *Heidelberg Myth: The Nazification and Denazification of a German University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

6

Repressing and Reprocessing the Past

Denazification and Its Legacy of Dissimulation

The story told in this book, the story of complicity among "good Germans," did not begin to emerge for a generation or two. Nazi crimes became public knowledge, of course. Allied military officers, horrified by what they found in the camps, insisted that the German public be exposed to photos and video footage, so that graphic knowledge quickly permeated the national psyche.[1] When convenient, Allied leaders paraded Germans through the camps themselves or drafted them into dragging corpses into mass graves. The Nuremberg Trials then put German atrocities on an international stage. Almost inevitably this story narrowed its lens and focused on a tiny group of "criminals," the sort of people in the dock at Nuremberg. These were the ones accused of ordering the brutalities, or they were the most egregious perpetrators. The Allies never imagined placing the entire German nation in a criminal court. They did, however, develop an alternative mechanism designed to "cleanse" Germany of the Nazi virus. That mechanism was denazification.[2]

A portion of this chapter appeared in my essay, "Hiding the Nazi Past: Denazification and Christian Postwar Reckoning in Germany," in Robert P. Ericksen and Michael J. Halvorson, eds., *A Lutheran Vocation: Philip A. Nordquist and the Study of History at Pacific Lutheran University* (Tacoma: Pacific Lutheran University Press, 2005), 137–56.

[1] General Eisenhower, for example, on his visit to the Ohrdruf concentration camp insisted that it be photographed, and he added, "I made the visit deliberately in order to be in a position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to propaganda." His words are featured at the entrance to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as a statement of purpose.

[2] See, for example, James F. Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: "Reeducation" and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); and Stephen P. Remy, *The Heidelberg Myth: The Nazification and Denazification of a German University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Almost no one today defends denazification. I will argue, however, that the Allies had a more accurate view of the need for denazification, or at least the relationship between average Germans and the Nazi crimes, than did the German public. The postwar German claim that only a tiny handful of criminals were to blame was convenient but inaccurate. I will also argue that German scholarship continued to echo for at least a generation the pattern of prevarication and repression that began in denazification hearings. Finally, I will argue that denazification, for all its many faults, still made an important contribution to the tremendous success story that is postwar Germany.[3]

Falsifying the Past: The Story of Denazification

The process of denazification forced on occupied Germany in the aftermath of the Nazi era abounds with contradictions. It was reviled by most Germans for being too harsh and criticized on the Allied side for being too soft. Germans at the time – and to a certain extent since – have derided the Allies, most especially Americans, for their naiveté and their ignorance about German circumstances. It was claimed that Americans just did not understand the complexities of German life under Nazi control, serving almost as the paradigm for Americans as well-meaning schoolboys without the benefit of European languages, education, and sophistication. I would argue, however, that American assessments of postwar Germany proved truer than the self-interested and inaccurate assessments claimed by the Germans themselves. In general, the Germans said, "Most of us were not Nazis," and the Americans said, "Most of you were." Scholarship over the past generation has suggested that the Americans were closer to the truth.[4]

[3] For an important treatment of Germany's postwar success, see Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945–1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Note that at least until 1989, and to a certain extent since, postwar success lay especially in the west, the Federal Republic of Germany.

[4] In terms of party membership, of course, most Germans were not Nazis. Hitler received praise and crucial support from many Germans who could later claim they had never joined the Nazi Party. Note also that I highlight Americans in this paragraph, although denazification occurred under British, French, and Soviet authority in their zones of occupation as well. See, for example, Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995). Americans were often thought to be pursuing the most ambitious, and perhaps most naïve, plan of implementation. For example, Americans insisted that *Fragebogen* be filled out by several million Germans in their zone of occupation, but they did not have enough personnel even to read, much less process, that many questionnaires.

The other remarkable fact about denazification is that it proved a veritable school for lying, deception, and misrepresentation.[5] Perhaps because Germans quite quickly rejected the legitimacy of denazification, and certainly because denazification would determine whether or not they kept their job, they learned to lie without restraint. Denazification records are absolutely filled with fabrications told by every sort of person, from university professors, who were among the most creative, to pastors, who were among the most enthusiastic. Very few admirers of denazification can be found among commentators over the decades, whether in or outside Germany. It is usually viewed as a misguided policy badly implemented. I believe, however, that despite all of its flaws and despite the dishonesty practiced by the subjects of this policy, denazification made an important contribution toward achieving its desired goal: a postwar Germany committed to democracy and without any significant Nazi resurgence.[6]

The benefits of denazification could hardly be detected at first glance. Rather, this process provides a useful starting point for another, broader story: the repressing and reprocessing of the past by which the narrative of what happened in Hitler's Germany became distorted. Two basic interpretations emerged in 1945. The victorious Allies assumed that "nazification" had been widespread in Germany, so they concluded that a cleansing would be needed, a rigorous "denazification." They wanted to remove convinced Nazis from all positions of influence and authority in Germany, which meant that some school teachers, university professors, policemen, government bureaucrats, and important figures in business would lose their jobs. The Allies hoped that "good Germans" untainted by the Nazi virus would prove to be willing partners in the process.

The typical German response, however, rejected denazification. Germans generally denied that "nazification" had been widespread and hoped radically to narrow the scope of the process. Allied hopes for the widespread assistance of "good Germans," therefore, quickly began to

[5] For examples and for a description of the actual process of denazification, see Chapter 7.

[6] Studies of denazification include Tent, *Mission on the Rhine*; Perry Biddiscombe, *The Denazification of Germany 1945–1950* (Stroud, UK: Tempus Publishing, 2006); Toby Thacker, *The End of the Third Reich: Defeat, Denazification, and Nuremberg*, January 1944 – November 1946 (Stroud, UK: The History Press, 2009); and, with a particularly critical view, Tom Bower, *The Pledge Betrayed: America and Britain and the Denazification of Postwar Germany* (New York: Doubleday, 1984). Rebecca Boehling highlights the Allied preference for economic development over democratization in *A Question of Priorities: Democratic Reform and Economic Recovery in Postwar Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1996).

diminish. For example, Martin Niemöller raised eyebrows in an interview with Allied reporters on June 5, 1945, admitting that he had been fully prepared to fight for Adolf Hitler's Germany and had even offered to do so. Furthermore, he did not think democracy a form of government suitable for the German people.[7] Other rude shocks came apace, as Clemens Vollnhals has shown. Already on May 2, Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich compared Allied bombing of German cities with Nazi crimes in concentration camps. In June, Faulhaber complained to the clergy in his Archdiocese of Munich:

> For weeks one [meaning the Allies] brought representatives of American newspapers and American soldiers to Dachau, and then they showed slides and movies of the most horrible sights from there, in order to place the disgrace and shame of the German people before the entire world, right down to the last village in Africa [*Negerdorf*].[8]

As the first wave of denazification ensued under military occupation, Faulhaber joined with his Protestant counterpart in Bavaria, Bishop Hans Meiser, to protest the application of blanket sanctions against Nazi party members and members of the SS. They also voiced an appeal for 102 bankers and industrialists who had been removed from their positions. Another leading Protestant, Bishop Wurm of Württemberg, warned in July that the postwar German bureaucracy would be filled by individuals not up to the task and "unsuited in terms of character" for the positions they would now hold. The subtext beneath his warning was that people suited in character, that is, church members, were largely being excluded as former Nazis. In October, Wurm attacked Military Government plans more systematically, arguing that loyalty to the church should be the crucial indicator of who could now serve the new Germany, with early membership in the Nazi Party a far less useful criterion. In justifying his critique, Wurm reviewed the circumstances of 1933, which included Hitler promising cooperation with the churches, the Pope signing a Concordat with Hitler, and an "elemental reaction of the German

[7] Clemens Vollnhals, *Evangelische Kirche und Entnazifizierung, 1945–1949. Die Last der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit* (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1989), 13. Another book on the topic of the churches and denazification is by Gerhard Besier, *"Selbstreinigung" unter britischer Besatzungsherrschaft. Die Evangelisch-Lutherische Landeskirche Hannovers und ihr Landesbischof Marahrens 1945–1947* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1986).

[8] Quoted in Ernst Klee, *Persilscheine und falsche Pässe: Wie die Kirchen den Nazis halfen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1991), 11.

Volk to the horrible Versailles *Diktat*." "For all these reasons," Wurm suggested, "many of our best within and without the civil service then followed Hitler's call."[9]

There was virtually nothing in these early church responses to Germany's collapse to indicate that Christian leaders acknowledged their actual political stance of 1933 or were willing to reflect on their own support of the Nazi regime. Each of the individuals mentioned – Niemöller, Wurm, Meiser, and Faulhaber – had expressed open enthusiasm for the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi state, which is only to say that they stood among their peers in positions of Christian leadership. In October 1945, one Protestant statement of guilt did indeed surface. However, this "Stuttgart Declaration" was flawed in several ways: (1) It did not arise spontaneously as a statement of regret and responsibility, but came only under pressure from the World Council of Churches, which virtually demanded such a statement before ecumenical work could begin with German churches; (2) It addressed the problem of guilt in extremely vague terms, apologizing for not "acting more courageously" in the fight against National Socialism, without acknowledging extensive Christian efforts in the fight *for* National Socialism. It also did not mention Jews or other specific victims; and finally, (3) the Stuttgart Declaration remained highly contested within the church as a whole, with signers often accused of having betrayed Germany by bowing to enemy pressure.[10] In response to Allied plans for denazification, the church was simply unprepared to cooperate. No awareness of Christian guilt, no statement of repentance, and no acknowledgment of the suffering of Germany's victims marked the church's side of the dialogue.

I first came across this set of issues while studying denazification at Göttingen University. It seemed remarkable that pastors had written so many of the statements on behalf of the accused, statements derisively known even at the time as *Persilscheine* (that is, "soap certificates" suitable for a whitewash). These clergy vouched for the good character of specific individuals, despite their past membership in the Nazi Party, the SS, or other Nazi organizations. Reference to religious belief or practice often dominated these statements, with the highest value placed on membership in the Confessing Church. Professor Siegfried Wendt submitted

[9] The details and quotations in this paragraph can be found in Vollnhals, *Evangelische Kirche und Entnazifizierung, 1945–1949*, 52–57.

[10] See, for example, Gerhard Besier and Gerhard Sauter, *Wie Christen ihre Schuld bekennen. Die Stuttgarter Erklärung 1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1985).

into evidence the claim that his family said grace before meals. Although Rudolf Smend, first postwar *Rektor* at Göttingen, placed Wendt within the "terror group" that had used Nazi politics to dominate personnel matters at the university and added that he would never again want to have him as a faculty colleague, Wendt's final appeal placed him in Category V, fully exonerated. His appeal board added the comment: "It is especially his genuine connection to Christianity and the church … which must be taken into consideration."[11]

Neither the reliance on clergy for *Persilscheine* nor the reference to religious belief for exculpation should be surprising. In both cases, this practice rested on the claim among Christians in Germany – and the hope among Christians abroad – that religious values could be seen as a natural counterweight to Nazi ideas and policies. Clear-eyed honesty would have shown otherwise. However, Germans had little desire to be clear-eyed or honest in the postwar period, and many in the Allied camp, especially in Britain and the United States, defaulted to their own sense that Christian values and Nazi beliefs would have been impossible to reconcile. The fate of Martin Niemöller, famously imprisoned since 1937, could be seen as proof that he and his organization, the Confessing Church, represented Christian opposition. Victoria Barnett tells a postwar story about Stefanie von Mackensen, stopped at a roadblock by American troops. Although she was a Nazi Party member and married to a nephew of General August von Mackensen, a well-known supporter of Hitler, her simple claim that she knew Martin Niemöller was all the American troops needed to hear. They not only waved her through the roadblock but gave her extra gasoline.[12]

Allied readiness to respect people of religious faith meant that the process of denazification became saturated with religious claims and clergy testimony. Pastors and priests responded so energetically that Frederick Spotts has called their *Persilscheine* "an act of sabotage" against denazification.[13] Documents in the Central Church Archive in Berlin indicate

[11] Wendt's file is in the *Niedersächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv* in Hanover, Nds. 171 Hild, 18531. Wendt's religious beliefs and practices are praised in letters from Günter Schweitzer (November 9, 1946), Heinrich Markwort (November 19, 1946), and Prof. Dr. Martin Dibelius (attached to Wendt's *Fragebogen* of January 18, 1947). The opinion expressed by his appeal board is in the "Entnazifizierungs-Entscheidung, Rechtskräftug am 18.2.1949." See also Robert P. Ericksen, "Religion und Nationalsozialismus im Spiegel der Entnazifizierungsakten," *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 7/1 (1994), 93–95.

[12] Victoria Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest against Hitler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3–5.

[13] Frederick Spotts, *The Churches and Politics in Germany* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan, 1973), 99, n. 2.

that this sabotage did not occur by accident. For example, to protect clergy and other employees of the church, the Council of the EKD (acronym for the postwar German Protestant Church) approved guidelines in May 1946 that guaranteed that such employees could ask for and receive a statement verifying their service to the church and their "personal Christian stance."[14] One regional church added this advice about such *Persilscheine*:

> Statements and testimony will have special influence if they draw attention to the early years of National Socialism … and if they are able to claim that the official represented the interests of the church in the *Kirchenkampf*. Other evidence of every sort … can be used.… The testimony and statements should be clear and convincing, expressing the essential and illustrative details with brevity. Individual details which make an overview more difficult and thereby delay the process and the final decision should be avoided.[15]

Almost certainly the "individual details" to be avoided included any reference to information suggesting support of or participation in the Nazi state.

By September 1946, Bishop Meiser had developed a twelve-page packet to advise clergy on how best to conduct their own defense in a denazification hearing. This included a review of the *Kirchenkampf*, to show that this struggle, "although in its deepest essence a struggle over faith, led finally and in reality to *active resistance* [emphasis in the original] against state and party."[16] Meiser noted that clergy must show that they gave active resistance and suffered actual harm in order to be placed in Category V and thus exonerated. His advice was to stress that the *Kirchenkampf* itself represented resistance (a claim that most pastors probably would have recognized as fraudulent) and to consider among examples of harm "*spiritual stresses* [emphasis in the original] … which led to depression, nervous exhaustion, and similar things."[17]

Alongside this campaign for an effective defense, an occasional document suggests that church authorities recognized the danger of inflated *Persilscheine*. In one case, the Bavarian church had requested that pastors

[14] "Richtlinien zur Durchführung der Selbstreinigung der Kirche," approved at Treysa on May 2, 1946, Evangelisches Zentralarchiv in Berlin (EZA), 2/318, 228.

[15] Landeskirchenamt an die Herren Pröpste und Dekane d. Ev. Landeskirche v. Kurhessen-Waldeck, June 24, 1946, EZA, 2/318, 171.

[16] Evang.-Luth.Landeskirchenrat, An die sämtliche Dekanate der Bayerischen Landeskirche, September 10, 1946, EZA, 2/321, 85. The entire document is found on pages 85–90, front and back.

[17] Ibid.

writing statements for their parishioners should submit them first to their dean. A follow-up memo stated:

> [Our] circular was not always understood in its actual meaning. This [procedure] proved necessary through experience, specifically in order to make statements from clergy as effective as possible, but also in the interests of the believability of the church as a whole. The creation of such testimonies should not be left solely in the hands of the individual clergy. Even in cases where the dean can say nothing about the content of a statement in terms of its accuracy … he can still draw conclusions from the frequency with which individual pastors write such statements and from the choice of words in which they are written. In some cases this could give occasion for a brotherly word … [After noting the extra work for deans, the letter goes on.] Still, experience has shown that this step must be taken. We have had awkward experiences with both German and Military [Allied Occupation] offices in which we had to be shown the extremely diverse consequences entailed by the willingness of some pastors to produce such statements.[18]

The gentleness of this language seems remarkable. The letter might have said, "You are lying. We know you are lying. Furthermore, the German and Military Government authorities know you are lying and it is making us all look bad." Such clarity, however, would presumably have offended clergy who thought they were lying in a good cause. After all, these cases involved individual members of the Nazi Party, well-meaning, idealistic individuals who should not be compared to the true criminals of the regime, or so the church was claiming.

We also have numerous instances, however, in which more significant individuals with more culpability in the Nazi crimes received enthusiastic support from leaders in the church. One such Nazi figure was Professor Otmar *Freiherr* von Verschuer, the racial scientist who inspired Joseph Mengele in his research on twins at Auschwitz. While director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology and Genetics in Berlin, von Verschuer received regular reports from Mengele on his work as well as shipments of body parts from his ample supply. During his denazification process, von Verschuer enjoyed startlingly enthusiastic support from his pastor in Frankfurt, Otto Fricke, a former leader in the Confessing Church and a postwar member of the Provisional Leadership of the Protestant Church. In Fricke's words,

> He [von Verschuer] and his family belong to my confessional congregation and he supported me most energetically during the difficult years of struggle over the Confessing Church and the freedom of the church and its message.… People of

[18] Evang-Luth. Landeskirchenrat an sämtliche Dekanate, June 1, 1946, EZA, 2/318, 281.

his type and his character are suited to guide the redirection of the German academic world onto a Christian foundation and promote the rebuilding of German life.... In this my testimony I speak as the responsible leader of the Protestant Church of Frankfurt and as specially commissioned representative of Bishop D. Wurm and Pastor Martin Niemöller.[19]

This claim on Bishop Wurm's reputation does not seem exaggerated. He too engaged his efforts for the most questionable individuals. For Hans Heinrich Lammers, the head of the Reich Chancellery who signed his name to Hitler's wartime legislation against Jews and other victims, Wurm declared on his behalf that he had taken "a stance beneficial to the church."[20] Regarding SS *Hauptsturmführer* Karl Sommer of the SS Economic and Administration Head Office (an office entrusted with the financing of the Holocaust operation), Wurm noted that Sommer had spent six years as a member of the Organization of Young Christian Men in Cologne. Ignoring Sommer's withdrawal from the church in 1933 but accentuating his subsequent reading of the New Testament and of devotional literature while in prison at Nuremberg, Wurm wrote: "I must therefore believe that Sommer, if he really committed crimes worthy of death, must have done so under the pressure of especially unfortunate circumstances, so that ... [he] as a believing Christian is worthy of a show of mercy."[21] In 1950, Wurm made a plea for Sister Helene Schürg, who had confessed to assisting in the injection death of 30 to 50 children. Although Wurm admitted he knew nothing of her personally, he claimed to have formed "a very favorable opinion" from documents he had been shown, leading to his conclusion "that Sister Schürg in individual cases had sought successfully to protect patients from the murder which threatened them."[22] And so he pleaded for mercy.

There are many similar cases. Eduard Strauch was tried and sentenced to death at Nuremberg. He had been leader of *Sonderkommando* 1b in the Baltic states, that is, head of one of the "mobile killing units" that inaugurated the killing process in the Holocaust. Among other marks against him, he had once composed a thirteen-page diatribe against *Gauleiter* Wilhelm Kube for being too soft on Jews. However, Heinrich Held, president of the Protestant Church in the Rhineland, pleaded for him. Strauch had, after all, studied theology, and, according to Held, during his trial his

[19] Quoted in Klee, *Persilscheine und falsche Pässe*, 128.
[20] Quoted in ibid., 95.
[21] Quoted in ibid., 101.
[22] Quoted in ibid., 122–23.

susceptibility to epileptic fits may have left him unable to defend himself properly.[23] *Kommandoführer* Waldemar Klingelhöfer of *Einsatzgruppe B* received a *Persilschein* from his pastor that emphasized that he had rejoined the church, had used his opera-trained voice as a soloist on two occasions so far, and, in the view of the pastor, was "a person of upright, honest character, an enemy to all lies and every injustice … the sort of person we need today, outside, among our *Volk*, for a return to health and a rebuilding where so much corruption now prevails."[24] Klingelhöfer had been sentenced to death for the mass murder of Jews in Estonia; however, pleas such as this in support of his "honest, upright character" helped him win a pardon in January 1951.[25]

How could Bishop Wurm and many other clergy find it so easy to make such grand claims for such questionable characters? We find a partial answer in the internal correspondence of the Council of the EKD in 1945 and 1946.[26] It is clear that the church leadership never considered denazification a legitimate undertaking. Not only did leaders such as Niemöller, Wurm, Meiser, and Faulhaber oppose Allied denazification in the summer of 1945, the EKD intensified and focused its opposition, especially in the spring of 1946, drafting various arguments against the entire idea that Germany was in need of cleansing.[27]

Ironically, the focal point in 1946 developed around a newly created *German* law, Law 104 for the Liberation from National Socialism and Militarism, as passed by the state governments of Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, and Hesse in March of that year. Bishop Wurm and the EKD vehemently opposed the law, voicing their opposition directly to General Clay, the American head of the Military Government. The irony of EKD opposition to this law consisted not only in attacking the Allied Military Government for a law written and passed by Germans; it can also be argued that the real thrust of this law of 1946 was to create just the effect advocated by the church, that is, a very minimal removal of alleged Nazis from German public life. Under Allied Military Government auspices, individuals had been removed from their jobs based only on their actual

[23] See ibid., 99.
[24] See ibid., 99–100.
[25] Ibid., 99.
[26] See, for example, EZA 2/318 and 2/321, as cited in notes 11–15 of this chapter.
[27] Ironically, alongside the opposition to cleansing described here, the Catholic Church assisted in another form of "cleansing." Some Germans washed away their past and evaded postwar prosecution by fleeing to South America, many with false ID and other forms of assistance provided by the Vatican. See Gerald Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run: How Hitler's Henchmen Fled Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)

membership and participation in various Nazi organizations. If they had participated, they were held accountable. Law 104 accepted the same categories of responsibility – membership and participation in Nazi organizations – but with the proviso that mitigating circumstances could be presented to remove the presumption of guilt. This meant that *apparent* supporters of the Nazi state, individuals known to have been members and participants in Nazi organizations, could try to prove they were actually secret opponents or, at most, "fellow travelers" (*Mitläufer*) with the regime. It was this transition that allowed the vast majority of Germans to escape the serious or long-term consequences of denazification.[28] They could become the end product of a *Mitläuferfabrik*, a factory in which Nazis could be inserted at one end and mere "fellow travelers" would emerge at the other.[29]

Conflict over this law of March 1946 illustrates the tendency of the church leadership to rise up in immediate opposition to denazification policies of any sort. However, it also points to the fact of an early awareness among some church members that there could be an alternative point of view. One of the men responsible for this law, Adolf Arndt of Hesse, illustrates that alternative in his quick response to the EKD stance of opposition. In an essay published by Eugen Kogon in the *Frankfurter Hefte*, Arndt chastises the church for legal hairsplitting and questionable judgment in its attempt to negate denazification. He calls it particularly unseemly that the church should claim that early members of the Nazi Party could not have known the true nature of the regime. In a litany of abuses, he describes how "everyone knew" about the arrest of political opponents, the banning of political parties, and the violence against Jews in 1933; "everyone knew" of the violent and illegal purge by murder in June 1934; "everyone knew" of the burning of synagogues and the violence against Jews during *Kristallnacht* in 1938.[30]

Arndt's critique of the church reads better today than does the church's defense of its own position. Aware as we are of the crimes of the Nazi regime, we may be shocked to find virtually no apology, repentance, or rethinking within the church. Instead, we find an almost instinctive protection of Germans against foreign attack, against revenge. That response is

[28] This picture can be extracted from files in the EZA, especially in correspondence between Adolf Arndt and EKD headquarters. See, for example, EZA, 2/318, 185–99. See also Vollnhals, *Evangelische Kirche und Entnazifizierung, 1945–1949*, 60–68.

[29] See Lutz Niethammer, *Die Mitläuferfabrik. Die Entnazifizierung am Beispiel Bayern* (Berlin: Dietz, 1982).

[30] Adolf Arndt, "Quo vadis?" EZA, 2/318, 185–99.

far less surprising if we take two simple truths into account. First, church leaders could not accept the cleansing of Nazis from German life, because they had been Nazis. This was literally true for some, such as Wilhelm Niemöller. For many others, it was generally true of their attitudes and specifically true for various friends and relatives. Bishop Wurm provides a poignant example. While he led the public fight against punishment of "nominal Nazis," he conducted a private effort on behalf of his son, who had been sentenced to a year in prison for falsifying his *Fragebogen*.[31] Claiming membership in the Nazi Party only from 1938, Hans Wurm had actually joined with the early enthusiasts in 1922. This example from the Wurm family illustrates an obvious reality: Christians had been at home among members and supporters of National Socialism.

The second obvious truth involves those groups that had been least at home within the Nazi state, that is, leftists and Jews. The public and private comments of church leaders in 1945 and 1946 are filled with the recognition that a thoroughgoing purge of Nazis could only lead to political advantage for the "enemies" of the church, and it is clear that they reckoned leftists and Jews among those enemies. Thus, Wurm worried about those he considered incapable and of inappropriate character. He feared they would now fill the German bureaucracy. He also presumably feared that victims of the Nazi state, if placed in positions of power, would likely take revenge on those Germans who had served the Nazi state. This would have been a natural fear as well as a backhanded admission of guilt.

In fact, church fears about a harsh and harmful denazification proved largely unfounded. On the one hand, the most expansive American ideas about cleansing Germany proved simply impossible to implement: Not even that many *Fragebogen* could be read, much less that many Germans removed from the middle and upper ranks of the workforce. The Cold War also impinged, quickly modifying American and British passion for cleansing Germany into a quest for allies against communism. Harsh denazification did not fit that new reality.[32] Left behind in the sad remains of denazification we find the abuse of *Persilscheine*, including a willingness to give church support to almost any alleged war criminal along

[31] See Vollnhals, *Evangelische Kirche und Entnazifizierung, 1945–1949*. The "*Fragebogen*" was an Allied questionnaire in which Germans were asked to list all memberships in and connections with Nazi organizations.

[32] See Ericksen, "Religion und Nationalsozialismus im Spiegel der Entnazifizierungsakten," 83–101.

with a tendency to use euphemistic terminology, such as "war prisoners" even when "war criminals" would have been more accurate.[33]

Falsifying the Past: Popular and Scholarly Postwar Responses

Denazification produced among most Germans a three-part response: blaming German crimes on a tiny group of criminals at the top, absolving the German public of widespread support or responsibility for the Nazi regime, and hiding the many skeletons in a closet. The same trifecta dominated postwar scholarship for a generation, and in some cases even longer. The calamity of German behavior could not be denied, because the crimes had been shown in detail to the entire world. Widespread responsibility could be denied, however. A first response was to focus on leaders now dead – Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, and Joseph Goebbels – along with the political apparatus by which they implemented their evil designs. *Stunde Null* ("Zero Hour") developed as a term to describe the complete break with the Nazi past represented by 1945. It also proved convenient to see the Nazi era having no threads extending into the German past. This treatment of the Third Reich as a total aberration in history provided cover. It was consistent with the sort of arguments presented by tens of thousands of Germans undergoing denazification, and it became a path to psychic comfort for millions of Germans trying to bury unpleasant, or at least awkward, memories of the recent past.

One of the haunting sort of memories came to me thirdhand. I cannot vouch for its truth, of course, but it is worth considering as a window on postwar German responses to unwelcome memories. A student reported in my classroom the widespread claim that Germans would have been shot themselves if they had refused to shoot Jews. He had learned this from a high school history teacher who had learned it on a trip to Germany. Sitting next to an elderly man on a park bench, the American teacher heard the elderly German admit that he had shot Jews. His best friend, he said, had refused, protesting that he could not shoot innocent Jews in cold blood, and their officer dispatched him with a single bullet to the temple. Thus, our elderly eyewitness/perpetrator explained his participation and covered his guilt. There could hardly be a more representative – or more

[33] The fact that German prisoners of war continued to be held in the Soviet Union after the war gave credibility to the POW designation, thus adding an element of confusion about war criminals versus war prisoners. It also gave West Germany an issue to employ in the new Cold War climate.

useful – story. It was meant to exonerate this man of his crimes. It also captures the essence of the postwar explanation that Germans preferred: They were only following orders, and they were acting under the extreme duress of a totalitarian state.

The main problem with this story is that no single example has ever been found of a German seriously punished for refusing to murder Jews.[34] Christopher Browning notes that the "ordinary men" of Reserve Police Battalion 101 were specifically granted the right to opt out of killing Jews if they did not feel up to the task. He estimates that over the course of their actions – actions that resulted in the death of some 85,000 Jews – about 10 to 15 percent took advantage of their commander's offer and refused to do the killing. That left about 85 percent of these 500 men willing to participate, right up to the point of putting bullets into Jews at such close range that blood and brain matter splattered onto their faces and clothes.[35] Ernst Klee devotes a complete chapter of his ironically titled book, *The Good Old Days*, to the story of Germans permitted not to kill Jews if they so chose. In this chapter with the title, "Forced to Obey Orders – The Myth," he quotes fifteen different testimonies and statements, all variations on the theme that options were always available to refuse, always without serious punishment.[36] Defense attorneys in postwar Germany attempted to find all instances of harsh punishment for German troops refusing to kill Jews or other innocents, because it would have supported their defense of extreme duress for individuals under indictment. However, these defense attorneys, highly motivated to find such cases, came away empty-handed.

It does not take a brain surgeon to look inside the heads of postwar Germans and realize the attraction of the I-was-only-following-orders-and-acting-under-duress excuse.[37] Whether we look at actual murderers or enthusiastic members of the local Nazi Party, whether we look at pastors who preached hostility toward Jews or professors who lauded the Nazi worldview, they each had postwar reasons to separate themselves from

[34] The reference to Germans is important here. Non-Germans, sometimes even Jews, were at times coerced into killing, and they might indeed be shot for refusing.

[35] See Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), esp. 55–70 and 159 ff.

[36] See Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess, eds., *"The Good Old Days:" The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders* (Old Saybrook, CT: Konecky & Konecky, 1991), 75–86. This book originally appeared as *"Schöne Zeiten:" Judenmord aus der Sicht der Täter und Gaffer* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1988).

[37] A piece of street theater from the 1980s captures this attitude nicely with the title, "It Wasn't Us, Hitler Did It."

their Nazi past, from words and actions that would seem to tie them to a regime now thoroughly discredited for its crimes. When Allied authorities broadcast stories of the Holocaust across Germany in the weeks and months after the war, when they forced locals to visit the camps or even bury bodies stacked like cordwood, when they produced and showed documentary film footage of the horrors found at death camps, Germans responded with acknowledgment that these crimes had been horrific. But they also responded with the claim that they never knew, or that they would have been shot had they failed to go along.[38]

The reprocessing of memories and hiding of skeletons did not occur just during denazification or among old men on park benches. A session at the annual German historical conference in 1998, as mentioned in Chapter 3, sheds light on what historians had been hiding since 1945. This session made a sensation by exposing major postwar historians who had endorsed or helped create brutal policies of the Nazi regime. By 1998, fifty-three years after the collapse of the Nazi state, German historians had written many fine books about the Third Reich. However, German historians had hardly begun to write about German historians, or at least they did not do so with open eyes and a willingness to follow the evidence. Participants in that 1998 conference heard about professors who had by then taught two generations of younger historians. One month after Germany's invasion of Poland, Theodor Schieder contributed a report on how the forthcoming *Generalplan Ost* could maximize *Lebensraum* for the German *Volk*. He recommended harsh policies soon to be adopted, including the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Poles to allow a "healthy" repopulation by Germans, and he advocated "de-Judaization of the rest of Poland."[39] Werner Conze filled his descriptions of German conquest with a plethora of antisemitic comments typical of his time and place. For example, he wrote that "the National Socialist

[38] There was a specific reason for Germans to claim the defense that they were only "following orders," because a conviction for first-degree murder under German law required a base motive. See Rebecca Wittmann, *Beyond Justice: The Auschwitz Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), for a discussion of the implications of Nazi-era German law for postwar trials. One can note also the difficulty of combining two common claims – "did not know" versus "only following orders." Presumably, no one could claim both. Finally, for another important look at the Auschwitz Trial, see Devin Pendas, *The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, 1963–65: History, Genocide and the Limits of the Law* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[39] Götz Aly, "Theodor Schieder, Werner Conze oder, Die Vorstufen der physischen Vernichtung," in Winfried Schulze and Otto Gerhard Oexle, eds., *Deutsche Historiker im Nationalsozialismus*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1999), 163.

Revolution made a great impression on the White Russians. The name of the *Führer* has reached even the most remote villages, above all due to his clear politics on the Jewish Question."[40]

After this breakthrough in 1998, historians in Germany began taking a closer look at their precursors. The first book to publish the papers from that 1998 conference acknowledged that, despite some difference of opinion, the essence of the story could not be denied:

> Today we know the actual evidence, which shows that a greater number of historians served National Socialism than we previously thought. It is these sources which prove that the circle was far from being made up only of "secondary school teachers gone wild or outsiders" (Hans Rothfels) or young Party members. The circle stretches much further, even to those now considered the "founding fathers" of historical study in the Federal Republic, and this is the central finding. It was these individuals who helped in various ways, now completely undeniable, to build the "scientific" foundation for discrimination against Jews and legitimizing of the *Führer*-state, with its National Socialist demands for a politics of expansion and increase in the soil of the *Volk*.[41]

In February 2000, Frank-Rutger Hausmann hosted a meeting of fifteen scholars who then produced the first book on the role of the humanities in the Third Reich.[42] In March 2000, Hartmut Lehmann and Otto Oexle hosted a similar conference at the Max Planck Institute for History in Göttingen. This session on National Socialism and its relation to the humanities resulted in a volume of 18 contributions and nearly 700 pages.[43] Jürgen Elvert and Jürgen Nielsen-Sikora edited a similar volume, this time with 28 contributions and more than 900 pages.[44] Anson Rabinbach and Wolfgang Bialas hosted two conferences, one at University of California, Irvine, in 2001 and another at Princeton in 2003. Their effort resulted in a volume with 14 contributors.[45] Nicolas Berg took on

[40] Quoted in ibid., 173.

[41] Winfried Schultze, Gerd Helm, and Thomas Ott, "Deutsche Historiker im Nationalsozialismus: Beobachtungen und Überlegungen zu einer Debatte," in Schulze and Oexle, 16–17.

[42] Frank-Rutger Hausmann, ed., *Die Rolle der Geisteswissenschaften im Dritten Reich 1933–1945: Schriften des Historischen Kollegs, Kolloquien 53* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2002).

[43] Hartmut Lehmann and Otto Oexle, eds., *Nationalsozialismus und Kulturwissenschafte. Band 1: Fächer, Milieus, Karrieren* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2004). See also their second volume with the subtitle *Leitbegriffe, Deutungsmuster, Paradigmenkämpfe*, also published in 2004.

[44] Jürgen Elvert and Jürgen Nielsen-Sikora, eds., *Kulturwissenschaften und Nationalsozialismus* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008).

[45] Anson Rabinbach and Wolfgang Bialas, *Nazi Germany and the Humanities* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007).

the field of history specifically, publishing a book of nearly 800 pages on West German historians and their relationship to the Holocaust.[46] The common denominator in each of these large undertakings is the recognition that German scholars, in history and in virtually all other humanistic disciplines, found ways to support the Nazi regime. They sometimes expressed their support with minor reservations, but often with robust enthusiasm. This is the story about Nazi-era scholars that early postwar scholars had failed to tell.

The mechanism for this failure is easy to understand. Most scholars with skeletons to hide continued to teach in the postwar period. They were unlikely to dwell on their past, or at least that portion located between 1933 and 1945. *Curricula vita* shrank, with the most obviously nazified article and book titles disappearing. Students were disinclined to dig into their professors' past, either out of respect or out of fear for their own careers. Even by the 1980s, young scholars worked under the authority of mentors who had been trained in the Hitler era or scholars whose own mentors had built their careers during that time. These scholars had skeletons in their own closets, or they knew the location of skeletons that might damage revered members of their profession. It was also this group of senior scholars who exercised control over their discipline, choosing and advising graduate students, guiding dissertation research, selecting articles to be published in the major journals, and peer-reviewing books for publication.

During the 1980s, I had several experiences of this phenomenon, noticing signs of German sensitivity and reticence about the Nazi past. A member of the theological faculty at Göttingen asked me about my research interests and then murmured, "You should choose a different topic." When his faculty colleagues invited me to speak at Göttingen University's 250th anniversary celebrations in 1987, focusing on Emanuel Hirsch and his Nazi politics, a rump group of that faculty, complaining about their "dirty linen" being washed in public, boycotted my lecture. Another incident from that 250th anniversary at Göttingen involved an effort to create the first major study to describe Göttingen University under Nazi rule. The editors approached me to write a chapter on the theological faculty. Then, however, I was asked to write a chapter on the history seminar as well. Several young historians at Göttingen had been approached to contribute, but their mentors advised them that stirring up the Nazi past would not be good for their careers. A similar example involved a

[46] Nicolas Berg, *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker. Erforschung und Erinnerung* (Berlin: Wallstein Verlag, 2003).

German scholar who had written about one of the same theologians I covered, but treated him more gently, hiding the most egregious evidence of his support for Nazi antisemitism. When I asked why, I was told that no German publisher would have printed a harsher expose of this giant of German theology, nor could one expect professional advancement if one skewered such a hero to the full extent of the evidence.

These experiences of mine could easily be dismissed as unrepresentative, anecdotal evidence. I cannot know for sure that they represent a broader truth; however, they fit well within a much larger and widely acknowledged picture – the picture of historians who did not probe the Nazi careers of other historians until the 1990s, or the picture of other humanities disciplines in which Nazi secrets waited to be identified until the 1990s or later. This pattern is true even for Martin Heidegger. Even though his enthusiastic support for National Socialism was there for all to see, ever since his pro-Nazi *Rektor's* address in 1933, he had the benefit of several decades in which supporters dismissed his obnoxious political ideas as naïve, unrepresentative, and therefore insignificant. Only at the turn of the new century has the weight of interpretation shifted, so that the importance of Nazi ideology within his broader philosophy is increasingly acknowledged.[47]

In the field of church history, I published my *Theologians under Hitler* in 1985. A review in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* praised the book but noted that it had taken an American scholar to uncover this story of major Protestant support for Hitler, even though forty years had passed.[48] Others had certainly begun to raise a critique, but it was in the face of a widespread apologetic tendency during those early decades. Church historians turned their gaze upon heroes like Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Niemöller, making it seem like these radical figures – who really were persecuted by the Nazi state – represented the Protestant Church as a whole. Historians told a story in which churches suffered under Nazi persecution and, to the extent that bravery allowed, opposed Nazi crimes. The fact that so many church leaders had welcomed and praised Adolf Hitler disappeared from the narrative.

[47] See, for example, Hans-Joachim Dahms, "Philosophie," in Elvert and Nielsen-Sikora, especially 41–43, and Emanuel Saye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933–1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). Early critics of Heidegger include Victor Farias, *Heidegger and Nazism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), and Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

[48] See Klaus Goebel, "Theologen, die Hitler unterstützten: Über Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus, Emanuel Hirsch," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Nr. 127 (June 5, 1986), 11.

Wilhelm Niemöller, who probably can be called the father of Protestant history of the *Kirchenkampf*, provides a very good example of the blinders worn in those first decades. Using his own experience and his connections to his brother Martin, he built up an archive on his church premises at Bielefeld.[49] He then worked prodigiously, writing a dozen books and editing a half dozen more, all dealing with various aspects of Confessing Church history. He also made his archive available to other scholars. Several things mark his work. First, he explicitly gave precedence to spiritual rather than historical concerns: "As I began to write this book," he noted in 1948, "I did not want to walk among the historians.... I wanted much more to testify that God does miracles even today, that through his miraculous powers he compelled a tired and satisfied church ... to become a confessing church."[50] By 1965, he voiced concern that his pastoral approach might not prevail: "It almost seems as if one could be satisfied with the rather shortsighted conclusion that church history and 'profane' history do not differ from one another."[51]

We "profane" historians now see the distortion that resulted from Wilhelm Niemöller's spiritual methods. For example, when he wrote a history of the German Protestant Church in the *Kirchenkampf*, he dealt entirely with the Confessing Church, even though it represented only 20 percent of Protestants. He dismissed the Deutsche Christen as heretics, and he described it as pointless to discuss the large group in the middle: "Even if one wants to recognize the desire for peace among good men, no history comes out. At no time could a clear line be recognized, much less a significant act."[52] For lack of a "clear line" or a "significant act" to meet his standards, that is, because he disapproved of their stance, he was willing to ignore the history of that 80 percent of Protestants outside the Confessing Church.

For a full generation, nobody paid much attention to the missing part of the story. Most also gave the Confessing Church far more credit than it deserved, tending to see it as a resistance organization, even though the

[49] See Wilhelm Niemöller, ed., *Die vierte Bekenntnissynode der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche zu Bad Oeynhausen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1960), 5.

[50] Wilhelm Niemöller, *Kampf und Zeugnis der Bekennende Kirche* (Bielefeld: Bechauf, 1948), 9.

[51] Wilhelm Niemöller, *Wort und Tat im Kirchenkampf. Beiträge zur Neuesten Kirchengeschichte* (Munich: Kaiser, 1969), 11. This quote comes from "Entweder-Oder. Gedanken zur Methode der Kirchengeschichte," first published in *Junge Kirche 26, Beiheft zu Heft 12* (1965), 3–15.

[52] Wilhelm Niemöller, *Die Evangelische Kirche im Dritten Reich. Handbuch des Kirchkenkampfes* (Bielefeld: Bechauf, 1956), 46–47.

"struggle" within the Church Struggle was primarily ecclesiastical. One final element in the story of Wilhelm Niemöller highlights a deeper part of the problem. He not only narrowed church history to the story of a heroic Confessing Church, he neglected to mention his own attraction to the Nazi Party, which he had joined already in 1923. Furthermore, his brother Martin voted for the Nazis and praised the rise of Hitler. Both began to reconsider their political support only when the Deutsche Christen preached heresy and Nazi bureaucratic meddling in church matters meddled on behalf of the DC.[53] Wilhelm Niemöller might have been the perfect person to ponder his own early attraction to Adolf Hitler and try to understand and learn from the close affinity between German Protestants and the Nazi ideology. Instead, he repressed his own early politics as he repressed and distorted the history of his church.

A similar trajectory marks Catholic history of the Nazi era. In 1946, Bishop Johannes Neuhäusler published the first account, emphasizing Nazi persecution of Catholics in Germany and the brave Catholic resistance. He made no reference to the many ways in which Catholics had expressed support or sympathy for the regime or common cause with the Nazi worldview.[54] This story first ran into opposition in the early 1960s, when a number of authors presented alternative evidence or an alternative interpretation. Rolf Hochhuth aroused the most attention, perhaps, when his play, *The Deputy*, suggested that Pope Pius XII had stood in cowardly silence when he should have spoken out against Nazi atrocities.[55] A vitriolic battle continues to this day on the question of Pius XII, including the bitterly contested issue of whether he should be granted sainthood. However, virtually no one today claims that the story of Catholics and the Nazi state is one of unmitigated honor. John Paul II actually apologized to Jews in his statement of 1998, *We Remember*, acknowledging Catholic weakness and a portion of Catholic complicity in the crimes of the Nazi regime.[56] The story now includes descriptions

[53] See Robert P. Ericksen, "Wilhelm Niemöller and the Historiography of the *Kirchenkampf*," in Manfred Gailus and Hartmut Lehmann, eds., *Nationalprotestantische Mentalitäten in Deutschland, 1870–1970* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2005), 433–37.

[54] Johannes Neuhäusler, *Kreuz und Hakenkreuz. Der Kampf der Nationalsozialismus gegen die katholische Kirche und der kirchliche Widerstand* (Munich: Verlag der Katholische Kirche Bayerns, 1946).

[55] See Rolf Hochhuth, *The Deputy* (New York: Grove Press, 1964), and Eric Bentley, *The Storm over The Deputy* (New York: Grove Press, 1964). See also *Amen*, a 2002 film directed by Costa-Gavras, produced by K. G. Productions, and based on Hochhuth's work.

[56] *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, prepared by the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, at the request of Pope John Paul II, 2008.

of German Catholic bishops who praised Adolf Hitler and priests who expressed enthusiasm for Nazi policies against Jews.[57]

From Failed Denazification to Successful Democratization

Germany has been a major factor in the remarkably successful history of Europe since 1945. We know the alternative possibility. The peace treaty that ended World War I did not produce European harmony. Rather, Europe found itself in an even more costly war within twenty years. Since World War II, however, most of Europe has experienced decade after decade without war, with European borders increasingly open and unguarded, and with war between these newly friendly nations almost unthinkable. All of this has been possible most importantly because of one fact: Postwar Germany almost immediately and almost entirely jettisoned the Nazi ideology. In other words, despite whatever problems might have existed in concept or implementation, denazification somehow seems to have achieved its primary goal.

Many reasons account for the ideological shift and postwar success of Germany, so that denazification is hardly the only variable. The complete collapse of the German state and the total defeat of German forces showed Nazism to be a failure by its own, social-Darwinian metric: survival of the fittest. Hitler proved an absolute disaster for Germany and thereby dramatically reduced the attraction of his ideas. An "economic miracle" in the Federal Republic bought off West Germans, offering bourgeois comfort in place of angry politics. Furthermore, the early onset of a Cold War caused Britain and the United States to treat West Germany much more favorably than might otherwise have been the case, an obvious attempt to keep Germans oriented toward the West. An additional factor, however, seems to have been the very lies that dominated the process of denazification.

Tens of thousands of Germans declared during denazification that they had never been Nazis and had never really believed in Nazi ideas, no matter how much the surface evidence of memberships and activities might suggest otherwise. It seemed a "miracle" to the Allies that virtually no Nazis could be found in postwar Germany, and this miracle was

[57] See, for example, Kevin Spicer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008); and Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930–1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); as well as the early treatment by Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

routinely dismissed as misrepresentation; but it was this uniform refusal to speak the truth that allowed Germans to curry favor with the victors as well as keep their jobs. Having once recalibrated their political voice, denying any connection to Nazi ideas, it would have been almost impossible for these many Germans to preach or work toward a resurgence of the ideology. The bargain was almost explicit: You accept my unlikely claim that I was never a Nazi, and I will agree not to be a Nazi or preach Nazism in the future. Many German youth later complained that ex-Nazis filled far too many postwar positions of power, and it is likely that deep-seated attitudes among these ex-Nazis influenced certain behaviors and judgments. However, these ex-Nazis were never explicitly Nazi in their postwar behavior, and there never developed a Nazi politics in Germany after 1945, except among the tiniest radical right-wing fringe.[58] Instead, the widespread and fervent national message among Germans was to label Nazis as bad, to reject Nazism as unacceptable. Denazification, perhaps because of the very dishonesty it evoked, made a significant contribution toward that result.

The first two postwar decades saw no renewed advocacy of Nazi ideology, but that era also witnessed no honest assessment of the past. By the 1960s, German youth began to challenge the amnesia and dissimulation of their parents. Part of the agenda of the "1968 generation," as it became known, involved looking for the stories they had not been told during their childhood. In one incident at Erlangen University, theology students heard for the first time in 1968 that the revered theologian, Paul Althaus, had been a Nazi. He had died only in 1966, they had been required to read his books, and now, at a national church meeting held at Erlangen, they stamped their feet in protest at the widespread collusion by which his Nazi past had been hidden from them. Students at Göttingen University three years earlier had undertaken their first attempt to look under the covers of their university's past. In *Politikon*, a student publication, they devoted an entire issue to the story of Göttingen professors who had waxed enthusiastic during the Nazi era.[59]

[58] Exceptions include the Nazi-like *Deutsche Reichspartei*, forbidden in the 1950s, and various ex-Nazis who ended up politically active in parties such as the FDP (Free Democratic Party and the CDU (Christian Democratic Union). In the latter case, Hans Globke served as a close advisor to Konrad Adenauer until his close connections to Adolf Eichmann became known, and thus his participation in the Holocaust.

[59] See "Georgia Augusta – Universität im Dritten Reich," *Politikon: Göttinger Studentenzeitschrift für Niedersachsen* 9 (April 1965).

By the 1980s, all of German society began to acknowledge its squeamishness with recent national history. The media began using an eight-syllable word, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, to describe the difficult task of coming to terms with or getting control over the past. That was the decade of the "Hitler wave" in which books describing and dissecting the Nazi period dominated bookstore windows.[60] And yet that period, forty years after the horrors of the Holocaust had come to an end, did not lack for difficult moments, moments of repression and denial. In 1985, as part of the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II, Chancellor Helmut Kohl invited President Ronald Reagan to the small town of Bitburg. They could share an act of reconciliation at a military cemetery by laying a wreath at the grave of German soldiers killed in the war. Unfortunately, this photo opportunity and symbolic effort to bury the past produced an unwelcome reminder that the Nazi past could not so easily be dispatched. Reagan's advisors learned that *Waffen*-SS soldiers were among the Bitburg dead. Elie Wiesel, the highest-profile Holocaust survivor in America, took this opportunity to wag a finger at Reagan, during a White House ceremony, and tell him he must not honor SS as "victims" of the war. Reagan and Kohl were forced by American public opinion to add Bergen-Belsen to their itinerary, a gesture they had tried to avoid and a vivid reminder that victims of the SS and members of the SS could not really be celebrated as two similar versions of the "honored dead."

By the beginning of a new century, young German scholars and Germans in general seem ready to criticize their forebears, honestly and without restraint. Denazification as a policy may stand in disrepute, but denazification as a reality has been successful. The Allied goal of democratization has also been successful, despite a first generation or two marked by dishonesty, repression, and dissimulation. In the first decades after 1945, the terms "Nazi" and "German" were kept separate: The "Nazis" committed horrendous crimes, and "Germans" could do nothing to stop them. Scholarship in the past two to three decades seems closer to the mark. The Nazis were Germans, not some group of outsiders; and many or most Germans were Nazis, at least in terms of their attitudes, their hopes, and their aspirations, if not in terms of actual membership.

[60] The year 1983 was the 50th anniversary of Hitler's rise to power (an anniversary not celebrated) and the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's birth.

Claims otherwise, the widespread claims to have been anti-Nazi, need to be heard with a hermeneutic of suspicion.

One final example of a prominent postwar German illustrates the complications of the transition. In that first postwar generation, while repression and dissimulation were at their height, a minor incident occurred in the career of Otto Dibelius. He had been an important Protestant Church leader in the 1920s. He then became a leader in the Confessing Church, and, after 1945, his career included periods as bishop of Berlin, president of the Council of the German Protestant Church, and leader of the World Council of Churches. In anticipation of a visit by Dibelius to London in March 1951, *The Observer* profiled him with the following words of praise:

> Immediately after Hitler came to power in 1933, the Protestant members of the Reichstag were sufficiently blind to gather together … to give thanks in the *Nicolaikirche* at Potsdam. The Bishop exercised his right to preach. In a quiet, but firm, sermon he informed his listeners: "The dictatorship of the total State is incompatible with the will of God. For the sake of the Gospel, we need a democratic state."[61]

Dibelius is famous for that sermon he gave at the opening of the new Nazi Reichstag in March 1933, but the story in *The Observer* hardly reproduced its actual tone. Unfortunately for Dibelius, readers of this story in London included one C. C. Aronsfeld, who recognized the discrepancy. He wrote *The Observer* to complain that Dibelius had *not* praised democracy so courageously, and he had also certainly not *believed* in democracy. It turns out that Aronsfeld, a Jewish émigré, had gone to school with Dibelius's son, a youth who covered his school papers with swastikas and other doodles of radical right-wing provenance. Furthermore, Aronsfeld had a printed copy of Dibelius's sermon from 1933, complete with hymns sung and lessons read. As the editor at *The Observer* waffled, attributing the quote to a reputable Swiss newspaper, Aronsfeld discovered that the article in question had been contributed to the Swiss paper by an anonymous "German Protestant." He demanded a correction, because *The Observer* had demonstrably printed an inaccurate quote, whereupon he was told to direct his complaint to Zurich. Although he protested that it was the English-speaking world that concerned him, a world that would

[61] "Profile – Dr. Dibelius," *The Observer* (March 4, 1951), as found in the Dibelius Personal File, Wiener Library, London. The subsequent correspondence between C. C. Aronsfeld and the Editor of *The Observer* is found in the same file.

now misunderstand the past of Otto Dibelius, his complaint apparently earned no retraction.[62]

This is the same Otto Dibelius, described in Chapter 2, who defended the Jewish Boycott in April 1933 and described the German need to solve its "Jewish problem." His enthusiasm in March of that year for the rise of Hitler is hardly in doubt. This minor embarrassment in his postwar life illustrates two aspects of the broader story. First, the *actual* stance of most Christians and most professors in Germany during the Nazi era could not easily withstand the scrutiny of a postwar world, a world that believed in democracy and condemned the politics of Adolf Hitler. Most Christians and most professors in Germany had once thought otherwise. Secondly, various stratagems were undertaken by Christians and others in Germany to distort the past. They did so in hopes of earning a respectable place for themselves and their institutions within that postwar world. Decades later the repression, distortion, and dissimulation seem to have been more of a problem than a solution. The careful and honest practice of historical inquiry, undertaken within and outside Germany, makes a much surer contribution to contemporary Germany's respectable place in the world.

[62] C. C. Aronsfeld worked for many years at the Wiener Library in London and published, among other things, a memoir, *Wanderer from my Birth* (London: Janus, 1997).

7

A Closer Look

Denazification at Göttingen University

In spring of 1945, German universities were shut down and each campus was allowed to reopen only after a screening by Allied authorities. This resulted in the provisional removal of professors thought to be notorious in their support of the Nazi regime. It also included the appointment of a new *Rektor*, which in the British Zone, at least, meant someone who had been named on a "white list" developed in preparation for this moment. At Göttingen, Rudolf Smend emerged as the new *Rektor*, and he then worked with a series of education officers attached to the British military. Universities were considered by the Allies an important place to begin the "cleansing" and "re-education" of Germans.[1] All professors eventually went through a screening process, filling out their questionnaire (*Fragebogen*), which was then perused, first by British authorities and then by panels made up of Germans. Individuals had to answer questions about membership in the Nazi Party or any other Nazi organization. They also had to supply information about employment, pay, and military service. According to guidelines from the Allied Control Council, individuals would then be placed in categories from one to five. In practice, categories one and two were reserved for actual criminals. That meant professors at Göttingen might be placed in Category III, for those who had actively promoted the Nazi cause. Category IV was meant for those who had supported the Nazi cause but with less active leadership.

[1] See, for example, James Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); and Steven P. Remy, *The Heidelberg Myth: Nazification and Denazification at a German University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

These were the so-called *Mitläufer* or fellow travelers. Category V designated individuals completely exonerated of Nazi sympathies.

This culling process at Göttingen impacted the lives of faculty in a fairly serious manner, at least early on. After one year, when the British still had final authority, 40 percent of the 102 tenured professors or associate professors listed in May 1945 had been affected: 16 released, 13 released and reassigned on the basis of an appeal, and 14 still under investigation. These numbers gradually decreased on appeal, especially after 1948, when Germans were granted full authority. By the end of the process, the totals were reduced to only 3 persons in Category III and 5 in Category IV. Then these final results were essentially erased by Lower Saxony law. Beginning in 1951, "victims of denazification," those who had been placed in Categories III and IV, were simply placed in Category V. This removed all restrictions in employment, although in universities individual faculties could still obstruct the return of individuals considered too compromised. Through denazification and retirement, approximately 10 percent of Göttingen professors never returned to the classroom.[2] The pattern illustrated here – a very large impact early in the process, followed by the return of the vast majority – proved typical of denazification as a whole. It was a messy process, filled with dissimulation, misrepresentation, and a variety of legal gambits. The process moderated dramatically as the Allies reduced their role and negative public opinion among Germans gained influence. This chapter will present several cases from Göttingen University in detail in order to illustrate the process.[3]

Eugen Mattiat, described in Chapter 5, seems the perfect example of a *Nutzniesser*, someone who rose to his position entirely based on Nazi politics rather than personal merit. While serving in the Reich Ministry of Education, a political appointment, Mattiat assured that 23 theologians associated with the pro-Nazi Deutsche Christen received university appointments. Thus by 1936, 41 of 66 professors of theology in Germany represented the DC.[4] In 1937, the Ministry of Education rewarded Mattiat with a professorship in *Volkskunde* at Göttingen. He received the top

[2] Hans-Joachim Dahms, "Einleitung," in Heinrich Becker, Hans-Joachim Dahms, and Cornelia Wegeler, eds., *Die Universität Göttingen unter dem Nationalsozialismus*, 2nd expanded edition (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1998), 61.

[3] The following information is taken from the Lower Saxony State Archives in Hanover, hereafter cited as NSA.

[4] "Entnazifierungsentscheidung," June 13, 1949, in Nds. Hild, 20039, August-Eugen Mattiat, NSA.

pay of a full professor plus a generous 1,000 RM in guaranteed lecture money, even though he had never earned an advanced degree, lectured to university students, or published scholarship of any sort. He even had to be given an immediate research leave, so that he could learn something about his field before having to teach it. Mattiat also became head of the NS *Dozentenbund* at Göttingen almost immediately, so that he played a role in university affairs far beyond what his thin credentials and brief tenure might have suggested. Finally, his relationship with the notorious SS included an application in 1933, when he was turned down for being a pastor, and then an honorary appointment as *Untersturmführer* in the Security Service (SD) of the SS in 1937. During the war, he served primarily in the Wehrmacht; but he wore his SS uniform – now that of an *Obersturmführer* – in the last months, while taking a training course with the Waffen-SS.[5]

Mattiat's case looked bad. His file bore the stamp "of special significance," and he actually suffered quite a lot in the early postwar period. This began with a short stint as a POW in the last chaotic weeks of the war. When released in July 1945, he was interned the next day by the British due to his status in the SS, which the Allies considered a criminal organization. Mattiat remained in a camp at Neuengamme for nearly three years. When released in March 1948, he was given a provisional classification of Category III, which would deny him the right to vote, run for office, or, most importantly for him, return either to his professorship or to a position in the church. Thus Mattiat appealed to the German *Spruchgericht* in Bielefeld, but on March 16, 1949, this court confirmed his place in Category III.

The court at Bielefeld treated Mattiat's defense arguments rather derisively. He had claimed, for example, that he knew nothing about the reputation or role of the SS when he joined in 1937. While in the Education Ministry in Berlin, he explained, he had felt out of place wearing merely a business suit at special functions. He thus accepted an appointment in the SD of the SS only in order to have a uniform. He also admitted, however, that he had provided at least two secret reports to the SD as a "*V-Mann*" (*Vertrauensmann*), one of the secret spies on which the Security Service of the SS depended. The court wryly noted,

> When the accused claims that he never had the consciousness of being a member of the SS, … the fact that he received the rank … of an SS *Hauptsturmführer* and

[5] For these details, see "Das Spruchgericht XII. Spruchkammer. Urteil im Namen des Rechts!" from a hearing on March 16, 1948, in Nds. Hild, 20039, August-Eugen Mattiat, NSA.

wore a black SS officer's uniform with SS insignia and SS rank … makes it impossible to understand to what organization other than the SS [he] felt he belonged.… The objection that he did not have the consciousness of belonging to the SS is a claim invented for his defense in this trial and is based upon nothing else.

The court also would not credit Mattiat when he claimed to have no knowledge of arbitrary injustice in the NS state, his thinking, for example, that concentration camps contained only those tried and found guilty of crimes. "These statements appear unbelievable to the court," they wrote. For example, he would have known of the "sensational" case of Martin Niemöller, and the court found it "entirely unbelievable" that he failed to be aware that Niemöller and others were arrested and imprisoned by the Gestapo without legal process. In a final comment, the court noted that "the accused was extremely sparing of the truth, a reproach which he as a professor and theologian would better have avoided."[6]

This judgment left Mattiat in Category III and unable to provide for his wife and five children. He thus pursued an alternative tack, a local denazification hearing in Göttingen. For that purpose he gathered *Persilscheine* and worked with an attorney. His character references tended to come from friends with a similar Nazi past, who had somehow by 1949 found themselves out of harm's way. Emanuel Hirsch, for example, had joined the Nazi Party in 1933 and become known as a hard-bitten supporter of the political university. He would certainly have been given a Category III and lost his position, but he took some friendly advice from Rudolf Smend to use bad eyesight as the basis for an early medical retirement. In June 1945, Hirsch was thus able to secure British approval for such a retirement, before the extent of his Nazi enthusiasm had become known to the British officer in charge, Major Beattie. That left Hirsch free to testify for Mattiat about the latter's years in Berlin: "In difficult hiring cases, Prof. Mattiat always handled himself with the greatest politeness, with unqualified openness, and with complete reliability.… I have never been able to discover anything but ideal motives in his behavior."[7] This ignores, of course, the fact that Hirsch as dean of the Theological Faculty had worked closely with the Education Ministry and with Mattiat. His "ideal motive" consisted of solidifying the Nazi base within his faculty.[8]

[6] Ibid.

[7] Emanuel Hirsch, letter of August 11, 1947, in Nds. Hild, 20039, August-Eugen Mattiat, NSA.

[8] See Robert P. Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 166–76, as well as Ericksen, "Religion und Nationalsozialismus im Spiegel der Entnazifizierungsakten der Göttinger Universität," *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 7 (1994), 83–101.

Another old Nazi also came to Mattiat's defense. Walter Hinz joined the Party in 1937 and held membership in the SA. He had worked alongside Mattiat in the Education Ministry from 1934 and then arrived in Göttingen in 1937 as a specialist in Oriental (Middle Eastern) philology. Within one term he became dean of the Philosophy Faculty. Despite all of these indicators of Hinz's comfortable place in the Nazi cause, by 1949 he could declare himself a Category V. Hinz then claimed for Mattiat that "he never to my knowledge pursued any sort of party-political activity in the narrow sense; rather he pursued a completely openhearted politics, despite his personal convictions for the ideas of the Party." Hinz added that Mattiat was always most concerned about protecting academic values within the university, and that he had been selected leader of the NS *Dozentenbund* at Göttingen primarily to provide a "moderate" protection against "pure Party influence" by the *Gaudozentenbundsführer* Schürmann.[9]

Hermann Muhs, a state secretary in the Church Ministry when Mattiat worked in Berlin, gave testimony about how important Mattiat had been within the Education Ministry in protecting theological faculties. Citing the instance in which Mattiat was named an honorary professor in the Theological Faculty at the University of Berlin, primarily to give that Faculty a political benefit with the Education Ministry, Muhs cast this as a vitally important act by Mattiat to make sure that theological faculties in Germany did not lose their state support. He described changes in the Education Ministry in 1936 and 1937 in which Otto Wacker, whom he described as a tool of Martin Bormann, plotted to reduce the importance of theology. When Mattiat left the Ministry at the end of 1937, Muhs wrote, "[h]e could at that time not yet imagine that his effort for their ongoing existence [i.e., theological faculties] would have lasting success.... He had exerted so much effect that it did not become possible for Wacker and the almighty Party to realize their intentions."[10] At no point in his testimony did Muhs mention that he himself had joined the "almighty Party" in 1929, that he held high rank in the SS, and that he would not have been a state secretary in the Church Ministry had he not been a loyal supporter of the Nazi state and the Deutsche Christen. Neither did he specify any set of actions by which Mattiat allegedly "saved" theological faculties.

[9] "Aktennotiz, Prof. Hinz," March 9, 1949, in Nds. Hild, 20039, August-Eugen Mattiat, NSA.

[10] Testimony by Dr. Hermann Muhs, April 10, 1949, "Anlage" in Nds. Hild, 20039, August-Eugen Mattiat, NSA.

Mattiat's attorney, H. A. Luetgebrune, submitted a statement of defense in which he first played with the words attached to a Category III designation, that a person had "substantially promoted" (*wesentlich gefördert*) National Socialism. Luetgebrune argued that this term, "substantially promoted," could only mean "promoted the substance," or "promoted the essence" of the Nazi state. He then argued that the "essence" (*Wesen*) of the Nazi state could only be understood as the criminal activities undertaken by the regime. By that interpretation of the rules for denazification, Mattiat could not be left in Category III, for he had never "substantially promoted" Nazi crimes. Instead, he had merely "supported" (*unterstützt*) the regime. Deeply committed to his role as a pastor, Mattiat's "stance and relationship to NS [could] only be understood" in that light, that is, the light of his idealism. Luetgebrune then went on with a very benign assessment of Mattiat's behavior, making use of the *Persilscheine* and claiming, among other things, that it was "especially due to the service of the accused that theological faculties retained their place in the universities." Thus, Mattiat "did not promote the essence of NS. On the contrary, at great risk to his existence he put forth considerable effort to see that establishments [*Einrichtungen*, presumably meaning theological faculties and academic values] which had existed in the past would be maintained, although the NS and especially its active representatives wanted them removed."[11]

Several elements in Mattiat's defense find their echo throughout the denazification files for Göttingen University. Attorneys twisted words to try to find a niche, if ever so tiny, in which to place their hopes, in this case reinterpreting the meaning of "substantial promotion" of Nazi ideas and practice. No credence was given to negative testimony, which in the case of Mattiat included these reflections by a work colleague in Berlin: "It is like this, he placed himself 100% in favor of NS and was opposed to any concession. He was radically against Jews. According to his view, there were no decent ones among them."[12] The fact that Mattiat actually left the church in 1938 (presumably when his church membership raised eyebrows among enthusiasts in the SS) and returned to the church in the summer of 1945 (when it would prove useful) was ascribed entirely to a mistaken judgment in 1938 and a true recommitment to spiritual values

[11] This defense statement by Dr. jur. H. A. Luetgebrune, dated April 22, 1949, is 5+ pages in length, in Nds. Hild, 20039, August-Eugen Mattiat, NSA.

[12] Testimony by Amtsrat Draeger, April 25, 1949, "Anlage" in Nds. Hild, 20039, August-Eugen Mattiat, NSA.

after the war. His membership in the SS was described as naïve and innocent (he only wanted a nice uniform), and his leadership role in the NS *Dozentenbund* at Göttingen was labeled an effort to protect academic values in the face of the radical Nazi, Artur Schürmann, the head of the *Dozentenbund* throughout Lower Saxony. Everyone claimed not to have been a *real* Nazi, but only to have worked within the system, as necessary, in order to protect academic values, usually with some claim also to religious values.

Siegfried Wendt represents a second example. Born in 1901, he joined the Nazi Party May 1, 1933, the same year he completed his *Habilitation* in political economics. By October 1938, he received a position at Göttingen, followed by a full professorship in May 1939. He moved to the University of Giessen in 1943, where he was dismissed in 1946 due to his Nazi past. He then turned to a denazification hearing in Göttingen, where he had spent most of his career. The first ruling placed him in Category IV as someone who had supported (*unterstützt*) the Nazi Party. He was allowed to seek employment in business, but not to return to teaching – a judgment that occurred in September 1947, when German panels still reported to British Occupation authorities. The education officer, Geoffrey Bird, sent a memo to his boss in Special Branch, noting that this relatively mild decision of a Category IV would arouse discontent among professors less implicated than Wendt, but also placed in that category.[13] Nonetheless, the IV was left in place. Wendt, naturally, felt the decision much too harsh, especially the refusal to allow him to return to his professorship at Giessen.

Throughout these proceedings, Wendt had to acknowledge the obvious – his 1933 membership in the Nazi Party – but he claimed that it only represented his belief that National Socialist politics would emphasize social improvement for the unemployed and the poor. He stressed his membership in the Protestant church and even brought testimony from two students who had witnessed his family saying prayers before meals.[14] These and other letters made him look like a pretty nice guy. Rudolf Smend, however, gave the prosecutor a more damning version:

Your question about Prof. Dr. Siegfried Wendt is not easy to answer. I know little or nothing about his scholarly and political effectiveness. His rude and sharp

[13] Bird, Univ. Edn. Control Officer, U of Göttingen, to Special Branch, HQ Hild., December 9, 1947, in Wendt file, Nds. 171 Hild. Nr. 18531, NSA.

[14] Günter Schweitzer, November 9, 1946, and Heinrich Markwort, November 19, 1946, Anlage 13 and 14 in Wendt file, Nds. 171 Hild. Nr. 18531, NSA.

manner puts him immediately into an unpleasant light. In terms of character, I consider him relatively harmless, in terms of intellect insignificant. He is incriminated through his belonging to the group of Schürmann-Rath, which exercised a regimen of real terror here. He now claims to have taken the offer at Giessen [in 1943] in order to get away from the tensions here. If that were accurate, it would reduce his guilt somewhat. Still, until then he was fully involved in support of the terror activities of that group, for example, in faculty meetings, and for that reason I would not wish ever again to sit with him in a faculty gathering. In the last analysis, however, since he is really rather harmless and merely somewhat foolish, I would not consider it out of the question that he be judged in the end considerably more leniently than Schürmann, Rath, and Siegert.[15]

That comment by Smend seems to have driven the judgment in November 1947, which placed Wendt in Category IV, not Category III, but denied him the right to teach. Testimony from Hans Plischke, *Rektor* in 1943, had added to Wendt's problems. Rather than leaving for Giessen in 1943 to escape tensions at Göttingen, as he claimed in his testimony, he had tried to use the Giessen offer as a way to raise his Göttingen salary. Plischke denied him the raise and sent him on his way, claiming – in this postwar version at least – that he and his colleagues were glad to see Wendt leave, due to his "unqualified Nazism and the resulting support he gave to the so-called terrorists at the University." Plischke added that Wendt's enthusiasm for the Nazi state had also been shown in March 1945, when he requested to be sent back to active military service, even though he had been released from active duty by a deferment (*UK Stellung*) in November 1944.[16]

Within fifteen months, Wendt earned not just a reversal of the ban on teaching, overturning the testimony of Smend and Plischke, but full exoneration with a Category V. The process of his exoneration has left an odd paper trail. On October 9, 1948, the Göttingen denazification court rejected his appeal and left him in Category IV. In this instance they did not add the ban on teaching. However, Giessen University made clear they would re-employ only individuals completely exonerated by a Category V. Mysteriously, a document at the end of the file, signed and dated October 1, 1948, gives Wendt the Category V he so desperately needed. It is clear that the second decision did not really occur until February 1949,

[15] Rudolf Smend to Vorsitzender des Unterausschusses für die politische Überprüfung des Lehrkörpers der Universität Göttingen, July 7, 1947, in Wendt file, Nds. 171 Hild. Nr. 18531, NSA.

[16] This testimony of Plischke is cited in Entnazifizierungs-Entscheidung, October 9, 1948, in Wendt file, Nds. 171 Hild. Nr. 18531, NSA.

although it was back-dated to October 1. In the intervening period, he had pressed his case with great energy and with personal diplomacy.

Two weeks after receiving his second Category IV judgment on October 9, 1948, Wendt visited Dr. Ambrosius, chief prosecutor in the Göttingen denazification court. Later that day he wrote Ambrosius a letter, presumably as a summary of their conversation. He claimed never to have belonged to a "terror group." He claimed to have participated in only three personnel decisions, each involving a *Habilitation*. In one case, he approved the *Habilitation* of a non-Party member; in one case, he approved the *Habilitation* of a very knowledgeable scholar; and in one case, he denied the *Habilitation* of an individual especially supported by the leading Nazi at Göttingen, Artur Schürmann. As for his request for active military service in March 1945, it had nothing to do with enthusiasm for the Nazi cause. Rather, he had just turned down a request to lead the local *Volkssturm* (home guard) on the grounds they were ill-prepared for military action. He was unwilling to take responsibility for such a group; but he then felt obligated to return to the front in order to show he was not just evading his obligations as an able-bodied German.[17]

Wendt visited Ambrosius five weeks later, on November 16, 1948, and again he wrote a follow-up letter the same day. He professed not to know why he had received a military deferment in November 1944. Although it goes unmentioned in his letter, Wendt was reacting to a charge made on October 29, 1948 by Hans Plischke. The latter claimed that Wendt received his military deferment through Martin Bormann, who had placed his name on a list of ninety individuals considered especially valuable for their Nazi worldview. Bormann asked that they be taken out of military service.[18] Wendt speculated, however, that his surprise deferment had been requested by his colleague, Klaus-Wilhelm Rath. The two of them and one other colleague had developed a plan for reconciliation with England and other European countries after the war. The idea involved publishing pseudonymous pieces in Swiss newspapers and journals, hiding the German origins of these articles and making proposals that would ease the way toward postwar economic cooperation. Although Wendt had no knowledge of where or even whether these articles appeared in print, and although he retained no copies, he claimed this to have been

[17] Wendt to Ambrosius, Public Prosecutor, October 25, 1948, in Wendt file, Nds. 171 Hild. Nr. 18531, NSA.

[18] Vermerk, November 2, 1948, on testimony from Plischke on October 29, 1948, in Wendt file, Nds. 171 Hild. Nr. 18531, NSA.

his only political activity during the war years. Based on this extremely thin evidence, he claimed not to have been a Nazi but an advocate for European reconciliation.[19]

After two private visits with Ambrosius and after two letters, presumably written at least partly on advice from Ambrosius, Wendt requested a review of the October 9, 1948, decision.[20] His official reason was the claim to offer new evidence. Most of what he actually offered was not new, but a repetition of his themes – he stayed loyal to the church, he joined the Nazi Party out of hopes for better social-economic conditions, and he was never an activist. He added a rebuttal against specific charges, and he added one new item that may have been crucial. This involved a *Persilschein* from State Secretary Richard Skiba, leader of the state chancellery in Lower Saxony. In this letter dated February 14, 1949, Skiba repeated the emphasis on Wendt's religious upbringing and ongoing religious commitment. He also described serving in the same unit with Wendt during the war. He claimed never to have seen Wendt "acting like a Nazi" or advocating Nazi ideas; therefore, Skiba fully supported Wendt's wish to return to his profession.[21]

Five days after the letter from Skiba, a man who held an important position in the postwar bureaucracy of Lower Saxony, Wendt's Category V took legal effect. The date was February 19, 1949, but the document bearing the denazification decision was back-dated and allegedly signed on October 1, 1948. There is no explanation of this odd state of affairs and no reference to the decision signed and dated October 9, 1948, in which a Category IV is combined with much tougher language about Wendt's behavior. This outcome resonates, however, with an important change that occurred in the course of 1948 – the British gave up their role in denazification with a law of June 1948 and left it in the hands of German regional governments. At the same time, German public acceptance of denazification diminished. Both changes led to much milder treatment. Furthermore, the claim that church membership meant opposition to Nazi ideas had gained traction. Wendt's prior claims on his religious faith had not impressed Rudolf Smend, a man with significant ties to the Protestant church, but now the final judgment gave him this benefit of the doubt: "If he was slow in recognizing his error [joining the Nazi Party and supporting Nazi ideas], so that he cannot be spared the reproach of

[19] Wendt to Ambrosius, November 16, 1948, in Wendt file, Nds. 171 Hild. Nr. 18531, NSA.
[20] Vermerk, December 6, 1948, in Wendt file, Nds. 171 Hild. Nr. 18531, NSA.
[21] Staatssekretär Richard Skiba, Leiter d. Niedersächsischen Staatskanlei, February 14, 1949, in Wendt file, Nds. 171 Hild. Nr. 18531, NSA.

a lack in political judgment, on the other hand he must be credited with maintaining an above average capacity for inner independence.... This is above all to be seen in his genuine commitment to Christianity and to the church."[22]

Mattiat and Wendt were each relatively minor figures next to the so-called terror group of Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Karl Siegert, and Artur Schürmann, three individuals who were thought actually to have controlled Göttingen University during the Nazi years. Almost everyone else pointed to these three as the chief villains, especially in order to argue that they themselves were not the real Nazis at Göttingen. No matter how implicated an individual might seem, each claimed that he had merely worked within the Nazi system, as necessary, in order to protect the university and protect academic values against the true Nazis, Rath, Siegert, and Schürmann. That gives the cases of these three a special degree of interest. Is it possible Rath, Siegert, and Schürmann – routinely designated the "terror group" at Göttingen – admitted their stance and acknowledged their accountability? Not likely.

Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, born in 1902, was removed from the faculty by the British in July 1945, lost his appeal of that decision, and did not try to reopen his case until late 1948. The resulting judgment, dated February 8, 1949, placed him in Category III. It notes that he arrived in Göttingen in 1935 in a replacement position, followed by a teaching contract for two years, an associate professorship for one year, and a full professorship beginning in 1939. The panel found his relatively light incrimination in terms of Nazi organizations – Party membership since 1933, SA membership since 1933, but without high office, and no membership in the SS – more than compensated by his high level of activity in university politics. This included giving many lectures at summer *Dozentenlagern*, the camps at which young professors received physical training and political indoctrination. He was also a cofounder of the NS *Dozentenakademie* at Göttingen, the Nazi institute that tried to replace the *Wissenschaftsakademie*, a long-standing honorary organization that tapped the best scholars for membership. Finally, he gave support to the *Gaudozentenbundsführer*, Artur Schürmann, in their joint effort "in the most brutal fashion to make the University of Göttingen into a stronghold of the National Socialist spirit."[23]

[22] Entnazifizierungs-Entscheidung, October 1, 1948, in Wendt file, Nds. 171 Hild. Nr. 18531, NSA.

[23] Entnazifizierungs-Entscheidung, February 19, 1949, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA.

Rath had his counter explanation, of course: "As National Socialism came to power and the working class did not mount a general strike, I hoped to find in this a path to the ideal socialist solution and a newly-created economic system. For these reasons, I joined the Party." He added that he had hoped only "to help create a general solution to the intolerable tension that had arisen between capital and human work, and thereby to serve human progress." As for his membership in the SA, he joined that organization "in order to have closer contact to wider segments of the population, which, unfortunately, are normally lost to university professors."[24] Rudolf Smend assessed Rath more harshly, describing him as one of three members of a "terror group," along with Siegert and Schürmann, and as someone who promoted National Socialism among his students. Rath claimed only to have been pursuing his scholarship. The panel acknowledged him to be a serious scholar; but it seemed to accept Smend's view that Rath's very scholarship gave a veneer of respectability to the "terror group," because he was the only one with actual publications of scholarly merit.[25]

Rath was not happy with his Category III, to say the least. He set out attacking each aspect of the charges against him, tenaciously and creatively, so that in the end his denazification file was among the thickest. These hundreds of pages include, for example, the testimony of many individuals who wrote to the court, either changing or clarifying their prior testimony, usually after the words, "It has come to my attention." It seems clear that Rath went to each individual and through some manner of personal charm, threat, or stubborn insistence convinced them to make changes in what they had said. For example, Reinhard Schaeder, a former assistant to Rath, complained that his testimony had been wrongly reported in the official judgment on Rath's case and requested a conversation to clarify the matter. The chair of the panel refused, informing Schaeder that he saw "no point in further conversation, since you answered [my] direct question on the case of Rath in the sense that is reported, and this has also been confirmed by other witnesses."[26]

[24] Rath, "Bericht über meine politische und berufliche Entwicklung," an eleven-page statement attached as "Anlage" to his *Fragebogen*, signed apparently in the first week of 1949, although the date is indecipherable, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 3ff.

[25] Smend's testimony in "Öffentliche Sitzung der Entnazifizierungs-Hauptausschuss, Göttingen," February 1, 1949, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 59–64.

[26] Reinhard Schaeder to von Fumetti, March 4, 1949, and Entnazifizierungs-Hauptausschuss to Schaeder, March 8, 1949, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 110.

In the case of Hans Drexler, the last Nazi *Rektor* at Göttingen, Rath showed up at denazification headquarters with Drexler in tow. Rath noted that the Category III decision had cited Drexler's claim "that my writings were strongly influenced in the direction of the National Socialist economic doctrines as advocated by me." Rath then prompted Drexler to speak, "since a misunderstanding has apparently occurred." Drexler then said on command, "I did not in fact testify to the question" as reported. He said he had merely responded "to the testimony of Smend, as to whether he (or also I) had the sense in faculty meetings" that Rath pushed the Party's point of view. "As for the other point [Rath's Nazi writings], if I had understood the question correctly, I would only have been able to answer no, since I knew nothing to say about that, either from my own observation or from hearing."[27] This complicated syntax sounds far less like a memory of what Drexler did say than a coached response on what Rath thought he should have said.

Rath's wife also intervened, visiting *Rektor* Raiser at the university and claiming as "her firm conviction" that the decision against her husband came because of pressure from the university. Furthermore, she claimed that the chair of the denazification panel had talked to Rath and admitted as much, saying that the decision "came only due to pressure from the university and against the actual convictions of the majority of the members of the panel."[28] Raiser rebutted *Frau* Rath's claims and denied that the university was a party to the process; but he quickly reported her inflammatory charges to the public prosecutor, also expressing his concern that the wording of the decision might have been careless.

Rath worked not just through his wife and friends, but also with politicians in Hanover, taking advantage by 1949 and 1950 of the changed mood in Germany and the general sense among politicians and voters that denazification had been unfair and excessively harsh. Even at his first hearing in February 1949, Rath had packed the room with supporters who booed the Category III decision when it was announced. His supporters then flooded the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of the Interior in Hanover with letters protesting the injustice he had suffered. Ministry officials began writing to the Denazification Office, asking about the case and requesting to be kept informed. As further

[27] A handwritten report of the incident, signed by v. Fumetti, March 9, 1949, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 84.

[28] *Rektor* Raiser to Public Prosecutor Becker, June 17, 1949, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 113.

evidence of his machinations, Rath finally admitted in July 1950, "only with hesitation," because he "did not want to make trouble after-the-fact for a good friend," that he had gained secret (and presumably illegal) access into the prosecutor's files: "It was the head of the Special Panel for Denazification at Göttingen University. I have remained quiet for two years, in order not to expose the man who made these exculpatory files [*Entlastungsakten*] available to me.... I have worked like a criminal for two years."[29] Rath worked every angle possible, criminal and otherwise, to portray himself as an objective scholar and an innocent victim of those enemies who wanted unfairly to tar him as a Nazi. His energetic defense, his many complaints, and the anger of his supporters caught the attention of Rudolf Smend and badgered him into backing down on his early, harsh judgments.

Rath and his new lawyer, von Waldow, fiercely objected to Smend's use of the term "terror group," arguing that it had not been defined, its membership had not been explained, and that, in fact, no such group had ever existed. It had become clear, they argued, that this term represented merely the subjective impression of one single witness, Professor Smend.[30] Furthermore, von Waldow claimed that on direct questioning, Smend "could produce no single fact about the membership or the existence of a so-called 'terror group' to substantiate the charge made in the decision." Smend spoke instead of having had a "feeling of distance" during faculty meetings, even though he also testified that he respected Rath's scholarship, had participated in "stimulating discussions" with him, and even that they had enjoyed "walks together."[31]

Smend responded to these issues with a long letter to the chair of the denazification panel: "The Chief Prosecutor has shown me at my request the text of the first instance proceedings in the denazification of Rath. The occasion for this request involved my becoming aware of reproaches against my testimony and the impact of this testimony on the decision." Furthermore, he said, he had been "brought into personal difficulties in the denazification of Prof. Ebel through the use in a prepared interrogation of minutes which were not approved by me and which were not

[29] Trial record dated June 23, 1950, the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 220–30.

[30] Note that this argument obscures the fact that the term "terror group" was in common use, while taking advantage of the fact that only "one single witness" had been called on to comment on it.

[31] Attorneys Gonell and von Waldow to Entnazifizierungs-Berufungsausschuss, May 23, 1949, a ten-page appeal, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 96 ff.

quite accurate in content." Smend went on to recognize "the – perhaps natural – reaction of the accused against a very involuntary witness" and to argue that care and precision must be exercised to sustain the usefulness of his testimony. He then continued,

> The minutes … give a reasonably accurate version of part of my testimony on the so-called "terror group" in our Law and Politics Faculty in the years before the war. (The expression "terror group" does not come from me, but I was asked to speak about it without a narrower or more precise placing of the question.) But essential parts of the testimony are missing completely. I tried to describe the working of this group in various directions: its working on dissenting members of the faculty, the impression made by displacement of three faculty members (Kraus, Passow, v. Gierke …) plus the attempt to remove a fourth (Aubin) from the faculty, and the damage to the reputation of the faculty and the university because of that. It is also missing the part of my testimony which described the impossibility of ascribing responsibility to individual members of the group … Now a Dr. Stolting, who was present at the hearing, has sent out a number of long, written pieces … which direct a polemic against me, focusing especially on this reproach: I was never able to produce a really incriminating detail, but only spoke of feelings of oppression … etc. That is an objection and a reproach only if one accepts the fully unfounded thesis of the Stolting piece, that I was involved in the preparation of the proceedings, yes, almost as if I were the evil spirit which gave it direction. The truth is that I expressly refused to claim that I could place responsibility on any single member.[32]

We can first note that Dr. Stolting used the same words as Rath and his lawyer about no "incriminating details" but only "feelings" in Smend's testimony. The suspicion persists throughout Rath's file that he wrote – or at least edited – not only his own statements but many of those signed by his friends. We can also note that by the summer of 1949 even Smend was willing to use the term "evil spirit" in relation to denazification, and to refer to himself as a "very involuntary witness." He went on to say he had always thought Rath's case required inquiry into specific details, and then he added some exculpatory details provided him by Rath or Rath's friends. For example, Professor Welzel had now told him of Rath, early in his career (in August 1934 at a Nazi summer camp), being condemned as a "liberal" by the influential Nazi philosopher in Berlin, Alfred Bäumler. Smend called this charge, which Rath had already been using in his defense papers, one that "likely placed significant restrictions on Prof. Rath's academic and political freedom of movement." (Was there

[32] Smend to Vorsitzenden der Entnazifizierungs-Hauptausschuss, July 18, 1949, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 119–20.

damage, we might ask? Was it a "condemnation?" Rath was hired at Göttingen the following year and began his ten-year rise, so that this incident seemed to represent no impediment to his career.) Smend also said Professor Niedermeyer had disagreed with his early assessment of Rath as an especially responsible member of the Schürmann group. Finally, Professor Aubin's widow had told Smend's wife that she and her husband blamed his (Aubin's) difficulties on the *Rektor*, not on Rath.[33] This is the small change produced by Smend in his effort to be evenhanded with Rath. Instead of his own strongly felt experience of the Nazi era, he reports on hearsay evidence organized by Rath at a time when denazification itself held less and less respect.

Despite the shift in Smend's testimony and the changing mood of the nation, and despite the fact that denazification was now entirely in German hands, Rath suffered yet another Category III in his appeal of August 1949.[34] The statement explaining the judgment tried to soften its impact by claiming that Rath was a "highly respectable, right-thinking, decent man, who rejected the violent methods of the Party." However, it also noted his excellent connections with important Nazi leaders in the Ministries of Propaganda, Law, and Economics. More importantly, it quoted his own words from December 1943 in a letter to the Reich *Dozentenführer*: "We have developed in Göttingen a markedly National Socialist line in our university teaching, which is strongly perceived by the students. More than once students have openly expressed this, especially those who have come to us from other universities. It was the unified, clear and decisive political line which had impressed them."[35] Finally, the panel observed that Rath had written on the "Jewish question" in a way that conformed with Nazi ideology, calling for the removal of Jewish influence in economics. Thus, he had clearly been a "substantial promoter" of the Nazi cause and could not be given a gentler rating than Category III.

In January 1950, Rath asked the denazification court in Hildesheim to reopen his case, claiming that a series of new facts and evidence had become available since his appeal in August. The court granted his request and his case, which had already stretched out more than eighteen months, finally concluded during two lengthy sessions in June and July

[33] Ibid.

[34] Entnazifizierungs-Entscheidung, August 2, 1949, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 135 ff.

[35] Quoting a letter by Rath to the Dozentenführer, December 8, 1943, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA.

1950. By then, Rath had been able to remove all talk of a terror group at Göttingen. He also could quote the court's own words to claim he was a "highly respectable, right-thinking, decent man." Now he had to break through the claim that he had had a close relationship with leaders of the Nazi regime. Little in his argument was new, but he and his new attorney, van den Bergh, crafted it more carefully. In particular, Rath now introduced the claim that, far from being close to Nazi circles, he had spoken out courageously against the Nazi regime and suffered severe repression of his work as a result.

Rath claimed that in 1942, a few weeks after he published a book on the German insurance industry,[36] all discussion and further review of the book was banned. He argued that this ban, imposed by the highest Nazi circles, including Hermann Göering, proved his independence and courageous opposition to the regime. The ban on discussion was real. The idea that the book represented opposition to the Nazi state, however, or that the ban on discussion represented Nazi persecution was a huge distortion. Rather, he found himself on one side of a quarrel within the Nazi state. Not surprisingly, perhaps, it was the side favored by the Nazi Party, yet he labeled it for denazification purposes an act of opposition.

This complicated story begins with an unsavory Nazi *Gauleiter*, Franz Schwede-Coburg (imprisoned postwar for mass murder), who chaired the Reich Insurance Commission. He had been asked by Hitler to reorganize the entire structure of the insurance industry, which at the time involved a combination of state and private insurance.[37] Schwede-Coburg then asked Rath to join his commission and write a scholarly analysis of private versus state insurance. This included a very large honorarium for Rath, the better part of 50,000 RM designated as "expenses" for the project. Schwede-Coburg directed the leader of the private insurance group, Dr. Eduard Hilgard, to provide this sum. Hilgard protested that his group could not afford such a large amount (for purposes of comparison, 50,000 RM represented approximately four times the annual salary of a full professor).[38] Hilgard also refused Schwede-Coburg's request to

[36] Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, *Konkurrenzsystem, Organisationsform und Wirtschaftlichkeit im Versicherungswesen* (Leipzig: Meiner, 1942), as noted among Rath's publications in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 25.

[37] See Gerald D. Feldman, *Allianz and the German Insurance Business, 1933–1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) for background. For Feldman's treatment of Rath's role in this story, see 333–39.

[38] Dr. Eduard Hilgard to Prof. Dr. Raiser, *Rektor*, January 28, 1949, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 79ff. Full professor salaries during this period ranged from 11,000 RM to 13,000 RM per year. Rath disputed the claim that he received

name someone to sit on an advisory committee to Rath's work. Hilgard noted sharply that he had spoken with many colleagues and all agreed "that Professor Rath has not shown the sort of accomplishment, either in the area of insurance economics or insurance scholarship, which would prepare him to write an assessment of the insurance industry. Private insurers would never accept an assessment written by Prof. Rath as somehow the basis on which to build a new organization of the insurance industry in Germany."[39]

Gauleiter Schwede-Coburg wrote back to Hilgard, reporting that he had asked the leadership of the appropriate Nazi office, the *Reichsdozentenschaft*, to name "a combative National Socialist scholar on insurance, and Prof. Dr. Rath was suggested to me as the qualified person."[40] "Combative" would not have been a word meant to please Hilgard, given his hopes to protect the private insurance industry, but Schwede-Coburg was not trying to be subtle. He hoped to push Hilgard into simply accepting Rath. Instead, Hilgard wrote back, saying he had been unaware that Party offices had played a role, and he had nothing against Rath personally. In fact, he did not know either his person or his work. However, in checking on Rath's publications, he had found two books and a list of articles, but none of them on insurance except for one minor article on the pedagogy of insurance. "If you compare that to the activities of men like Kisch, Rohrbeck, Moeller, Grosse, etc., … I cannot with the best of intentions see how the assessment of such an incredibly complicated body of material as that of the insurance industry can be trusted to a scholar whose scholarly significance … lies far more in the fields of finance and general economics than in our area."[41]

Schwede-Coburg responded, trying to make Hilgard understand which issues were important and where he, Hilgard, fit into the power relationship. The appointment of Rath had been made "*in conjunction with the Reich Minister of Economics*. This fact alone insures that you must pay

50,000 RM, although not entirely convincingly. At the very least, he received 32,000 RM as a consultant to the Reich Insurance Committee (8,000/year from 1941–1944), an amount he acknowledged in his *Fragebogen*.

[39] Eduard Hilgard, Leiter der Reichsgruppe Versicherungen, to Schwede-Coburg, Der Vorsitzer des Reichsversicherungsausschuss, July 8, 1941, in response to Schwede-Coburg to Hilgard, June 30, 1941, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 86–87.

[40] Schwede-Coburg to Hilgard, July 16, 1941, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 87.

[41] Hilgard to Schwede-Coburg, July 23, 1941, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 88.

the appointment your entire and appropriate respect. And beyond that, when the relevant Party official, the *Reichsdozentenführer*, participated in the selection of Professor Rath, that should also show you with what care I have gone about my work." To Hilgard's complaint that he and his colleagues did not trust the quality of Rath's potential work, Schwede-Coburg responded, "Publications are not decisive for the judgment of a person and his work, *but rather his will and his ability as proven through his National Socialist deeds*.... I must once again express and emphasize my expectation of a comradely working together in the Reich Insurance Commission. I know we will place full value on this important challenge."[42]

It is clear that Schwede-Coburg did not like or trust the private insurers, nor they him. It also seems highly likely that Schwede-Coburg wanted increasingly to place insurance under the Nazi state, rather than leaving it in private hands. That is exactly what Rath's analysis endorsed, because he claimed to have found large sums of wasted money on the private insurance side. Furthermore, there is a reference to "war spending" in the paperwork, with the implication that the vast resources taken in by the insurance industry could more reliably be applied toward war expenses if entirely under state control. Rath's work was anathema to Hilgard, because of its criticism of private insurance, and it seems to have provided just what the Nazi functionary, Schwede-Coburg, wanted to hear. Why would the Nazi Party *punish* Rath for his services?

Hilgard made his version clear, writing to the public prosecutor in Göttingen in April 1949: "The plan was to turn the private companies over to the public establishment, which would be controlled entirely by the Party through Schwede-Coburg, and thereby make it of service to the purposes of the Party. Naturally, the financing of the war was among the most important of these Party goals, a task which the private companies tried to avoid, insofar as possible."[43] As for the repression of Rath's work, Hilgard said this had come only after his views appeared in print and received widespread exposure in the Nazi press. Due to the sensitivity of the issues and quarrelsomeness of the parties, Hermann Göring had demanded a truce between the private and public insurance establishments. But once Schwede-Coburg got out Rath's side of the story, the ban

[42] Schwede-Coburg to Hilgard, July 31, 1941. in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 89–90 (emphasis in the original).

[43] Hilgard to Public Prosecutor, April 18, 1949, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 80ff.

on all further discussion simply meant that the private insurance industry could not respond or criticize his arguments and evidence. By this reading, public discussion of Rath's work was repressed as part of an intrigue – because of his usefulness to the Party, because he had done his job – and not as a punishment or sign of disfavor. It is worth noting that he continued to sit on the Reich Insurance Commission for two more years, through 1944, receiving 8,000 RM per year as he admitted in his *Fragebogen*. To receive this 62 percent bonus on top of his substantial professor's salary hardly suggests he was being punished by the Nazi state.

Another issue in Rath's final appeal in 1950 involved correspondence that seemed clearly to reveal his close relationship to Nazi officials and enthusiastic support of the Nazi cause. Rath attacked these letters, claiming that "someone" had told him in 1943 that his mail was being read and that the Gestapo and SD were trying to build a case against him. Based on this warning, he claimed, he had begun writing a series of letters pretending to be an enthusiastic Nazi. He did this only as a subterfuge to protect himself and his family, although he neither named the person who warned him nor produced any corroborating evidence to substantiate this convenient story.[44]

The claim by Rath that he had written fake letters after being warned of SD and Gestapo investigation seems to have been made necessary by a cache of incriminating letters made available to the court at a late stage in the proceedings. This complex story involves Richard Passow, an older member of the Law and Politics faculty hounded out of his position by Rath and other young Nazis in economics who considered him too liberal. In 1938, a trivial incident gave Passow's enemies their chance. He had said to students that he was not a "Weichmann." That simply means a "weak man," but it was seen as a pun used to attack his Nazi colleague, Walter Weigmann. The latter sent a challenge by way of a messenger. Other Nazi professors backed Weigmann, calling the remark an insult to the honor of their colleague, and students threatened to boycott Passow's classes. Passow sent a written apology to Weigmann, but to no avail. This little joke ended up giving his enemies the leverage to have him removed from his position in August 1938.[45] He fought his dismissal over the next

[44] Rath made this claim in June 1950, after nearly two years of litigation and in response to a series of incriminating letters, presumably from the "Passow files" mentioned later. See the trial transcript, June 23, 1950, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 220–30.

[45] See Matthias Gross, "Die nationalsozialistische 'Umwandlung' der ökonomische Institute," in Becker, Dahms, and Wegeler, 171–72.

six years, with some tactical successes but no return to his position at Göttingen until April 1945. Passow replaced Rath, who had departed for his few weeks of military service at the end of the war. It proved a significant homecoming.

When Passow opened a desk in the Economics Institute, he found extensive files of Rath's correspondence. These "Passow files," made available to the prosecution by Passow's son in the spring of 1949, provided at least some of the letters and documentation by which Rath's Nazi enthusiasm was confirmed, helping to thwart his appeal in August 1949 and leaving him with a Category III. Rath's attorney attacked these materials in a variety of ways: claiming their privacy, questioning their accuracy, wondering whether these copies represented letters that actually had been sent and whether quotations had been taken out of context.[46] He also used the new claim that many letters written by Rath had been a subterfuge, his attempt to evade Gestapo suspicions. Quite typically, however, Rath's attorney also suggested that Passow was the true Nazi here, not Rath. "Passow is in no way the poor, persecuted liberal democrat unfairly pushed out of the circle of professors. He described his actual service to National Socialism in a very clear manner."[47] At that point, the attorney read from a letter Passow wrote in 1944. While trying to reclaim his teaching position, he had protested that his politics were never shown to be inadequate, that he had been checked and approved by Hitler's Chancellery as well as by the SD. The most telling evidence about who was the real Nazi, of course, is that Passow lived in the wilderness from 1938 to 1945, trying to get his job back, while Rath prospered.

When Rath's appeal reached its conclusion in the summer of 1950, only three witnesses were called. Two had been selected by the defense and the third, Rudolf Smend, might just as well have been. He testified that he remembered the period of political repression in the university with "extreme bitterness," but that this had primarily occurred up to 1939, when Rath was not yet a full professor. After that they had worked together harmoniously. With regard to the harshness of his

[46] Van der Bergh to Hauptausschuss Hildesheim, June 14, 1950, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 217. See also the trial record of June 23, 1950, 220–30. By the standards of American law, the use of these files could at first glance seem questionable. Although valuable to the prosecutor, they might be seen to represent an invasion of Rath's privacy, a case of "unreasonable search and seizure." However, American law protects against unwarranted search and seizure only by the police. Passow did not act in that role, so that use of the "Passow file" would probably pass muster.

[47] Trial record dated June 23, 1950, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 220–30.

earlier testimony, he described it as "more sharply written into the minutes" than he had expressed it at the time. Rath's attorney read back several passages, and Smend described them as a "very meager version of a nuanced answer," adding the comment, "I strongly reproach myself today." He had testified immediately after the war, and he said that in that earlier testimony he reported on "how we saw things at that time." This seems a strong nod to the changed view of denazification in Germany by 1950. He also gave credence to Rath's highly questionable claim to have been a "mere nothing" before 1939, a claim seemingly in violation of the evidence. "I did not think about the fact that he was not yet a full professor."[48]

The trial transcript shows that the prosecutor grew frustrated by the direction things were taking. He might have called Passow as a witness, but Passow was too ill to testify during the first appeal and he died before these final sessions. With Passow unable to speak for himself, Rath's attorney briefly acknowledged the appearance of insensitivity but quickly launched an attack. "It is repugnant to me to speak against the dead, but this dead one continues to attack the living." As Rath's attorney proceeded to impugn Passow, the prosecutor warned that he would walk out of the session. The chair of the panel ruled that Passow's character could not be mentioned any further. This prompted a threat from Rath's lawyer to leave the room.[49] Both sides then calmed down a bit, and that day's session continued on other matters. However, the final session one month later allowed Rath's attorney to return to his attack on Passow, making an incredible claim: Passow, he said, the true Nazi with close ties to the SD, was an "envier" (*Neider*) who then presented himself after the war as a democrat and a "Nazi victim." Using that status to take revenge on his enemy, he had "denounced" Rath and had achieved his goal, so that Rath "was released [from his professorship], without the chance to be heard and without the details being checked."[50] It should be noted that Rath

[48] The record of this session of June 23, 1949 takes up eleven two-sided pages. Smend seems to have accepted Rath's blurring of the issue in terms of his insignificance and vulnerability. Rath called himself "fully unknown," a "mere nothing," without tenure or security until his appointment to full professor in July 1939. In fact, he was a tenured associate professor from November 1937, he was already appointed assistant dean in his faculty that year, and the materials in his file indicate he exercised considerable influence during that time.

[49] Trial record dated June 23, 1950, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 220–30.

[50] Trial record dated July 8, 1950, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 249–53. Although this trial record begins with the date July 8, the transcript of the actual hearing (from p. 250) is dated July 31, 1950.

earned his removal in 1945 and his first Category III in 1949 entirely on his own reputation. The British played a role, Smend played a role, and the "Passow files" were not even known to the prosecution until the final two appeals were being heard.

By July 1950, it became clear that the Denazification Appeal Panel wanted to get this case closed. The prosecutor pleaded for more time, especially to analyze the issue of Rath's attitude toward Jews. Rath admitted that he had advocated the removal of "Jewish ideas" from German economics, an admission hard to avoid, because "breaking Jewish influence" appeared in the title of many of his publications. Rath's attorney thought the issue had been settled, because one witness who read one article by Rath on Jews had professed it free of antisemitic prejudice. Rath himself argued that his research "always dealt solely with the Jewish ideology, i.e., a certain type of thought, and therefore had nothing to do with a racial struggle" and nothing to do with National Socialism.[51] The prosecutor, far from willing to accept these claims of innocence, said he would request postponement in order to pursue the topic of Rath's antisemitism, unless the panel was already prepared to leave Rath in Category III. This request fell on deaf ears.

In August 1950, the panel split the difference, placing Rath in Category IV. This was neither the III insisted on by the prosecutor nor the complete exoneration of a V for which Rath had begged. "I am fighting … for my life," he said.

> My psychological strength is entirely exhausted. I am only allowed heavy manual labor. But I cannot do that, since I have been disabled by a serious war wound. My only possibility is to do scholarly work. I am not fighting for a Category V so that I can boast of having achieved a better grouping.… The little bit of life that I have left I would like to devote to scholarly work. I fight for every month. I must have a different category, because I simply cannot live otherwise. I stand ready to work wholeheartedly for the building up of democracy. I want to help. But I can only do so as an intellectual worker.[52]

Just before this final hearing, the minister of culture for Lower Saxony wrote the public prosecutor in Hildesheim. Under the heading, "urgent,"

[51] Rath, "Zur Frage der Behandlung des Judentums in der Nationalökonomie," a statement with no date, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 209–10.

[52] Ibid. Note that Rath, called up in the last few weeks of the war, suffered a wound on May 1, 1945, in Berlin. Five pieces of shrapnel from a grenade struck his lower right leg. See his *Fragebogen*, the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 13. He earned a disability of 50 percent for this war wound, a wound frequently mentioned at trial by Rath and his attorneys. As for the "little bit of life" he thought was left to him at the age of 48, it extended another 31 years and he died in 1981.

he asked to know the result of Rath's case as soon as possible. He also wanted to see a copy of the judgment as well as the minutes of the session, so that he could inform his minister president.[53] Whether due to political pressure, the changed mood in Germany, exhaustion in the face of Rath's tenacious and creative defense, or whether they were really convinced by his arguments, the panel members' final judgment accepted Rath's various claims to an extraordinary degree. They accepted the testimony of students and others that Rath "never pushed Party politics … and never showed an agitating tendency against Jews, either in his review of Jewish literature or his writings." They added that he was "not at all an antisemite." How did they know? Because he completed his *Habilitation* under a Jew (although that occurred by May 1933). They accepted his entire story about the ban on discussion of the insurance industry – that banning discussion of his book represented persecution, that the book itself was an attack on "the direction of National Socialist economic politics." They also accepted that he had learned "from a good friend" that his mail was being opened. "In order to protect himself and not least his family against further, unforeseeable consequences, he had to follow a path of camouflage. Therefore, he developed correspondence with Party offices."

The panel admitted that Rath's correspondence would have created a "heavy incrimination," if he had not been able to show the reason for these letters in his campaign of camouflage. But his new claim, judged to be "eminently convincing," placed the denazification trial of Rath "in a completely different light." It convinced the panel that his argument about letters written in 1943 should be accepted and the letters themselves should be dismissed. To further substantiate this decision, the panel noted the one compromise handed to Rath in his prior appeal. Even when confirmed in Category III, he had been judged "an upstanding, right-thinking, decent person who rejected the violent methods of the Party."[54] Despite all these words of praise, however, the panel members refused to grant Rath his Category V. They were simply not willing to ignore his writings against Jews, concluding that Rath "at the very least supported the National Socialist ideology in the area of racial politics, and this at a time – which is the essential point – when the Nazi state had already begun its persecution measures against the Jewish race."[55]

[53] Nds. Kultusminister to Public Prosecutor, Hildesheim, June 29, 1950, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 255.

[54] Entnazifizierungs-Entscheidung, signed August 30, 1950, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 253–54.

[55] Ibid.

Reading Rath's file decades later makes this mixed result seem particularly generous. For example, Rath served almost from the beginning of his time in Göttingen as the *V-mann* (spy) for the SD in his Law and Politics Faculty.[56] He also headed a committee for the *Reichsdozentenbund* to give advice on faculty appointments in economics throughout Germany. His letter to the *Reichsdozentenbundführer* Schultze from June 1939 is a case in point. He complains that he and his committee are not given enough notice, nor can he be expected to write references in every instance. Using the informal *Du*, he asks Schultze to give him a list of all the open positions and all the candidates, along with the references that already have been written. That way he will not have to write references from scratch, but simply peruse the body of material and give his recommendation. In particular, he suggests that the *Reichsdozentenbund* and the NS *V-männer* at individual universities must stay on the same page, or else their preferences will be confused and their impact weakened.[57] This undisputed letter of 1939, showing his national input on the politicized hiring of Nazi academics, comes from the man who later claimed he was a "mere nothing" at that time.

It is hard to read Rath's behavior in the late 1930s and early 1940s as anything but "substantial promotion" of Nazi goals. A letter from *Reichsdozentenbundführer* Schultze to Rath in January 1940 thanks him for his readiness to serve as leader among economists in the "scholarly work in support of [our] propaganda." Using the informal *Du*, he asks Rath for a list of co-workers he thinks can be used.[58] A letter in June 1944 from the Reich minister for education to the *Kurator* at Göttingen contains a request that Rath be deferred from military service: "As the Party Chancellery has communicated … Professor Rath is seen as the leading force behind the National Socialist point of view in the area of economic studies at Göttingen. His call-up would lead to the loss of National Socialist activity in this discipline. It is therefore requested that an extension of his deferment (*UK-Stellung*) be placed before the High Command of the Wehrmacht."[59]

[56] See for example, a list of various officers in the *Dozentenbundsführung* at Göttingen, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 273.

[57] This letter – certainly from Rath, although unsigned – is addressed to *Reichsdozentenbundführer* Prof. Dr. W. Schultze, Munich, June 29, 1939, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 74. It immediately follows a reference to the Passow file, and it probably is a copy of a letter found in that collection.

[58] Schultze to Rath, "top secret," January 22, 1940, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 274.

[59] Reich Minister f. Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung to Kurator, June 28, 1944, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 266.

One of the letters Rath wrote in 1943 indeed seems damning. Defending his book on the insurance industry in the face of criticism from a leader in the private sector that it was "tendentious," he wrote,

> My book did have a certain direction, a "tendency" … I wrote in the Foreword that the insurance industry … must be viewed and tested within the economics of the *Volk*, as to whether it matches the needs of the *Volk*.… Perhaps you are astonished to hear that I not only advocate this "tendency," but I am happy to claim this publicly. The time when an apparently objective science can be abstracted from the life of the *Volk* and thereby only too easily be blinded to the rights of our *Volk* … is namely over. We scholars in the Germany of Adolf Hitler can finally and openly advocate the "tendency" only to serve the German *Volk*, and in the sense of this "tendency" we can research and speak the truth.[60]

Throughout Rath's trial, he proclaimed his desire merely to pursue truth (*Wahrheit*) and speak the truth. Here we seem to have his definition of scholarly truth – that which served the *Volk* in Hitler's Germany. In the same letter, he clarified his attitude toward Jewish scholarship:

> Ever since the Jew Manes served for decades as the pope of an allegedly German insurance scholarship, enjoying copious support from the German private insurance industry, … perhaps a scholarly presentation of the state of the competition-based economic system will have surprised you. But you will need to put up with that. The times of Jews like Manes, Berliner, Goldschmidt and their glorifiers as well as their parrots are in the past, also for scholarship.[61]

Professor Walter Grosse of Leipzig was not Jewish, but he had worked before 1933 with Professor Alfred Manes. *Gauleiter* Schwede-Coburg, in his capacity as head of the Reich Insurance Commission, criticized Grosse for his participation in an *Insurance Lexicon*, edited by Manes with fifteen additional Jewish contributors. Schwede-Coburg complained in 1943 to the *Gauleiter* of Saxony that Grosse had spread his ideas "under the Star of David, and he now thinks he can spread them to the widest public as a Party member under the Swastika."[62] Rath was asked

[60] Rath to Generaldirektor Dr. K. Schmitt, Vorsitzer des Vorstandes der Münchner Rückversicherungs-Gesellschaft, March 12, 1943, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 271.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Schwede-Coburg to the Gauleiter of Saxony in mid-1943. This passage is quoted by Passow on November 27, 1945 in response to an inquiry from Prof. Dr. Walter Grosse on October 28, 1945. Grosse had heard secondhand that Passow possessed information about Rath's "machinations" against him. Passow responded by quoting the Schwede-Coburg letter, a copy of which he had found in the files of the Economics Institute in Göttingen (i.e., the "Passow files" mentioned previously). See the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 278.

by the *Reichsdozentenbund* to provide an assessment of Grosse, especially in light of Schwede-Coburg's criticism, as well as references from other professors that were positive. Rath took the side of the *Gauleiter*:

> It is a fact that Grosse worked in 1930 with Manes and a long list of other Jews.... It is certain that Jews accept as co-workers only people whose views are acceptable, and certainly not dangerous [to them].... I have not heard to this day that Prof. Grosse ... has attacked the views put forth [at that time]. Apparently he holds ... that the concepts presented there represent such objective scholarship, that it is a matter of indifference whether they were presented by Jews or Aryans. But this is exactly the point ... which aroused opposition from the *Gauleiter*.... [A]s an accurate specialist in this area, the *Gauleiter* has, as I may underscore, a clear knowledge of the Jewish infection in the insurance system.... What the *Gauleiter* positively demands is the clear removal of that which was once produced under Jewish leadership as so-called insurance scholarship. I would like to note that this demand of the *Gauleiter* is thoroughly justified on scholarly grounds.... If we want to free ourselves from that which once was spread under the leadership of Jews as "objective scholarship," then it is absolutely necessary that we examine as thoroughly as possible all that which was spread under Jewish influence.[63]

Rath's virtually absurd claim that he wrote letters such as this one in 1943 only as protective camouflage breaks down in many ways. There are many letters before 1943 testifying to his Nazi enthusiasm. Furthermore, he still seems closely allied to the *Reichsdozentenbund* in 1943 and also to the *Gauleiter* Schwede-Coburg, despite the "persecution" that allegedly began in 1942. He also was named by the Party in June 1944 as absolutely necessary for maintaining the Nazi point of view in the field of economics at Göttingen. This appears to be entirely *inconsistent* with his claim that he was *persona non grata* by then. Finally, the form of scholarship advocated by Rath in these letters of 1943 seems entirely consistent both with the Nazi ideology and with his earlier views – good scholarship is that which benefits the *Volk*. More importantly, his diatribe against Jewish scholarship fits smoothly within the Nazi worldview as a whole, and it fits entirely within the scholarship he produced in the second half of the 1930s, scholarship designed to remove Jewish influence and ideas from German economic thought. Yet Rath's appeals court in 1950 allowed him to claim that he had not really been a Nazi, but actually an opponent of Nazi ideas and a victim of Nazi repression.

[63] Rath to Reichsdozentenbundsführung, November 5, 1943, in the file on Klaus-Wilhelm Rath, Nds. 171 Hild. 9223, NSA, 279 ff.

By 1950, denazification courts seemed ready to credit almost any claim of innocence, so that mitigating circumstances of some sort would push an individual from Category III to Category IV or V. Friedrich Neumann (1889–1978) became a professor of German literature in 1927 and served as *Rektor* at Göttingen from 1933 to 1938. In this position, he presided over the removal of Jewish faculty and the nazification of the university through politicized appointments. All of his written work praised the Nazi ideology. He was removed from the faculty by the British in 1945. When he appealed in 1946, he was ruled an "enthusiastic Nazi supporter" and achieved no improvement in his status. Despite all this, a denazification panel in February 1949 found mitigating circumstances. He and others testified that Artür Schürmann was the real problem, and Neumann claimed to have defended academic standards as much as possible in those difficult times. The panel placed him in Category IV. He undeniably had worked within the Nazi Party and advocated its ideology throughout the Nazi era; however, the earlier judgment that these aspects of complicity made him an "enthusiastic supporter" fell away. He claimed to have used his membership in the Party "only to protect the life of the university against attack,"[64] and the panel members accepted his claim. He had become an early supporter of the Nazi Party, in their words, "at a time when development of a reasonable National Socialism could still be expected." Therefore, when he became *Rektor*, "it was simply understood that he would join the NSDAP, that he would not work against the *Gaudozentenbundsführer* Schürmann, that he would support the NS *Dozentenakademie*." These behaviors would have provided strong reason to place him in Category III, the panel said, except for his idealism and the other extenuating circumstances. "Through his misunderstanding of the true essence of National Socialism, whose exponent at Göttingen was Schürmann, and through his belief that the 'childhood illnesses' [of the Nazi Party] could be overcome, he can in a certain sense be considered a victim of National Socialism. On that basis the guilt to be reckoned to him, which is to be seen more in his tolerance than in active behavior, should not be considered substantial promotion, in the judgment of the panel, but rather extensive support."[65]

[64] Friedrich Neumann to Entnazifizierungs-Hauptausschuss, Göttingen, March 14, 1948, in Nds. 171, Hildesheim, 18915, Friedrich Neumann, NSA, 23.

[65] Entnazifizierungs-Entscheidung, February 8, 1949, in Nds. 171, Hildesheim, 18915, Friedrich Neumann, NSA.

Many other judgments reflect a similar dilution in the assessment of enthusiastic Nazis as time passed. Walther Hinz (1906–1992) received his appointment as professor of Oriental Philology in 1937, having worked since 1934 in the Reich Ministry for Education. His appointment came through the Ministry's intervention, not through normal process. He was named dean of the Philosophy Faculty almost immediately and worked reliably in the Nazi cause. He lost his position in 1945, having been considered an "enthusiastic Nazi." However, a denazification decision in September 1948 placed him in Category V.[66] Hans Plischke (1890–1972) came to Göttingen in 1929 as a professor of ethnology (*Völkerkunde*). This field fit easily into the racial ideas of the Nazi Party, and Plischke undertook his teaching and writing in full conformity, joining the Party in 1933 and supporting its various organizations in the university. He served as dean of his faculty in 1934–1935 and as *Rektor* from 1941 to 1943. The British released him in January 1946, and he received a Category III designation in February 1947. Despite abundant evidence against him, his colleagues rose up in his support. They claimed that by 1935 he had changed his mind about the Nazi ideology. After that, he used his Party membership and positions within the university to protect against enthusiastic Nazis like Schürmann. In September 1948, Plischke received a Category V.[67] Hans Heyse (1891–1976) joined the Party in 1933. He arrived at Göttingen in 1936 as a professor of philosophy, against the wishes of the faculty but under the influence of *Rektor* Neumann and Dean Plischke. Heyse was removed by the British in July 1945, received a Category III in July 1947, and then received a Category V in December 1948.[68] Hans Drexler gave testimony on Heyse's behalf. Already in 1940, Drexler claimed, Heyse had spoken privately of his opposition to the behavior of Schürmann.[69]

The common denominator for successful exoneration clearly involved pointing to Artur Schürmann as the real Nazi. It is interesting in this light to look at Schürmann's case. Born in 1903, he received his Göttingen professorship in agricultural politics in 1934, one year after completing his *Habilitation*. He also received the political appointment to be leader

[66] Entnazifizierungs-Entscheidung, September 27, 1948, in Nds. 171 Hildesheim, 11916, Walther Hinz, NSA.

[67] Entnazifizierungs-Entscheidung, September 28, 1948, in Nds. 171 Hildesheim, 8936, Hans Plischke, NSA.

[68] Entnazifizierungs-Entscheidung, December 13, 1948, in Nds 171 Hildesheim, 9084, Hans Heyse, NSA, 168 ff.

[69] A statement by Hans Drexler, October 2, 1946, in Nds 171 Hildesheim, 9084, Hans Heyse, NSA, 68.

of the NS *Dozentenbund* for the region of Lower Saxony in 1935.[70] In 1945, Schürmann suffered removal from his professorship by the British. In February 1949, he received a Category III. Then he was saddled with another Category III on appeal in October. His attorney, von Waldow, tried to make yet another appeal in December 1949. He complained that Schürmann had not even been present at the first hearing.[71] Furthermore, several witnesses then modified their testimony at the second hearing. "[I]n particular, the witness Prof. Smend declared that he could not maintain the statements he had made in the absence of the accused." Von Waldow also pointed to the recent case of Rath, in which it had been shown that trial minutes of denazification proceedings could not be trusted to be accurate. Finally, he complained that individuals in other parts of Germany were getting a Category V, even if they had occupied the same position as Schürmann, that is, *Gaudozentenbundsführer*.[72] Despite von Waldow's efforts, Schürmann's reputation and role in Göttingen were simply too extreme, so that the denazification panel saw no convincing evidence or reason to reopen his case.[73]

During these proceedings, Schürmann did make the standard claim that he was not the real Nazi at the university. He had only used his Party membership and Party offices to try to protect academic values against the true Nazis, with the result that he had been persecuted and became a victim. Interestingly, Schürmann could actually show that he had suffered a fall, being replaced as *Gaudozentenbundsführer* in 1942 and losing his professorship in 1943. He blamed these troubles on enthusiastic Nazis who thought he was too gentle with professors inadequately committed to the Nazi worldview, and that he was too eager to defend academic values instead of political values. His attorney, von Waldow, claimed that professors now being exonerated with a Category V were the true Nazis in the university, up to and including Rudolf Smend.

When Schürmann lost his positions in 1942 and 1943, colleagues such as *Rektor* Plischke and the local NS *Dozentenbund* leader at the time,

[70] Fragebogen, signed January 11, 1949, Nds 171 Hild, 20265, Artur Schürmann, NSA. This region was designated Süd-Hannover-Braunschweig at the time and included seven universities.

[71] This seems to have been a tactic planned by von Waldow. Schürmann received his invitation on January 11, 1949, replaced his first lawyer with von Waldow on January 21, 1949, and chose not to appear at the trial on February 1, 1949. See Nds 171 Hild, 20265, Artur Schürmann, NSA, 44, 52, 54, and 57.

[72] Von Waldow to the Haupt-Ausschuss, December 6, 1949, in Nds 171 Hild, 20265, Artur Schürmann, NSA.

[73] Letter to von Waldow, January 3, 1950, in Nds 171 Hild, 20265, Artur Schürmann, NSA.

Hans Drexler, really did testify against him. The charge against him in an honor court involved plagiarism. Interestingly, even Schürmann himself did not dispute the central element in the story – he took the work of a research assistant and published it under his own name. He and his supporters among the faculty claimed that this was simply what German professors do. Research assistants were meant to provide material to be published by their professor. Others testified, however, that Schürmann had surreptitiously stolen the life work of Henry van Steenberghe, a Belgian who had worked for years in the Congo. As a mature graduate student and teacher in Schürmann's institute, he was preparing a book on African colonialism. Schürmann's previous books had described cows and milk production in the Ruhr. Now he published on African colonialism, both as a way to pad his scholarly reputation and in hopes of participating in Nazi Germany's plans for new African colonies. Schürmann pursued these goals by stealing van Steenberghe's material, thus ruining the latter's chance for academic advancement while claiming an expertise he simply did not possess.[74] The honor court agreed, so that Schürmann lost his job in the Nazi Party and his place of power in the running of Göttingen University.[75]

Despite Schürmann's claim of victimhood, other forms of evidence against him convinced the denazification panel to leave his Category III untouched. One witness had taken stenographic notes of Schürmann's words at an NS *Dozentenbund* meeting: "We will work until everyone is either with us or has been pushed out.... The former years [of Weimar] have one advantage – we know exactly who is who. When one of them tries to raise his head, I will smash it. I will destroy them, those liberal dogs. Whoever sets himself against me, I will annihilate."[76]

When Schürmann's attorney complained directly to the minister for denazification in Hanover,[77] Dr. Becker, the public prosecutor in Göttingen, received a request to respond to accusations of unfairness. First of all, Becker denied that testimony against Schürmann had been

[74] See, for example, the testimony of Wolf-Jürgen von Engelhardt, in "Öffentliche Sitzung des Entnazifizierungs-Hauptausschusses, Stadt Göttingen," February 1, 1949, in Nds 171 Hild, 20265, Artur Schürmann, NSA, 57–60.

[75] See Heinrich Becker, "Von der Nahrungssicherung zu Kolonialträumen: Die landwirtschaftlichen Institute im Dritten Reich," in Dahms, Becker, and Wegeler, 647–48.

[76] Testimony of Prof. Mortensen in the trial of February 1, 1949, Nds 171 Hild, 20265, Artur Schürmann, NSA, 59.

[77] Von Waldow to Minister for Denazification, Hannover, December 6, 1949, Nds 171 Hild, 20265, Artur Schürmann, NSA, 367.

unfair or based on personal vendettas. On the contrary, he said, "the longer the trials go on, the less willing professors are to maintain testimony against their former colleagues. This is not because [earlier] critical testimony was inaccurate, but because the feeling has gradually developed that one should simply not criticize colleagues in a public setting, no matter what actually transpired." By contrast, testimonies in support were now so prolific as to become an "unspeakable nuisance." With regard to Schürmann's actual case, Becker wrote, "When the judgment says that the accused stood as the head of Nazi professors, it represents absolute reality. No person of sound mind who knows anything about the circumstances – and no single professor who belonged to the Nazi group – in reality thinks differently, even if out of anxiety he now fears to give this full expression and shies away from taking responsibility."[78] Becker's view prevailed. The minister for denazification ruled that a "review of the entire file … offered no basis" for overturning the verdict. Both the first and second panels "came to the conclusion, without legal error, that the accused is to be considered a substantial promoter [of the Nazi cause]."[79]

One last wrinkle in denazification can be observed in the case of Karl Siegert (1901–1988), another of the reputed "terror group." He arrived at Göttingen in 1933 as a professor of law. Quickly appointed dean of Law and Politics, he was widely considered to have been an influential partner with Rath and Schürmann in the Nazi domination of the university. This led to his removal from the faculty by the British in 1945 and a subsequent placement in Category III in March 1949. In August 1949, he secured a Category IV but with restrictions. Subsequent developments in his case illustrate both the changing mood and changing legal circumstances in Germany by the early 1950s. Lower Saxony passed a state law in June 1949 that established that any person placed in Category IV could have that judgment transformed into a Category V within one year. Individuals with a Category III had to wait two years before being exonerated. This legislation essentially represented the belief that the entire practice of denazification had been illegitimate, a violation of freedom of thought and of academic freedom. These laws effectively gutted the entire denazification project. A law passed at the end of 1951 placed professors

[78] Dr. Becker to Public Prosecutor, Berufsausschuss, Hildesheim, January 6, 1950, in Nds 171 Hild, 20265, Artur Schürmann, NSA, 375.

[79] As reported by the Public Prosecutor of Lower Saxony to the Public Prosecutor, Hildesheim, in Nds 171 Hild, 20265, Artur Schürmann, NSA, 377.

who had been released and had not yet reached retirement age into a new category, "university professors available for re-employment."[80]

The process of reinstatement to a professorship could still be complicated. First of all, a position had to be open. Secondly, faculty input had to be taken into account, as in the normal practice of academic appointment. Siegert tested these new circumstances in 1952, when an appropriate chair opened in the Law and Politics Faculty at Göttingen. Siegert hoped to receive the appointment; however, the provisional appointment of a Professor Dr. Schaffstein threatened his plan. A new organization based in Tübingen, the Association of University Professors Forced from Office, immediately jumped into the fray. The chair of this group sent an express letter to the minister of culture in Lower Saxony in July 1953. Fearing that Schaffstein was likely to be named permanently to the chair, this group protested that "according to paragraph 20 of the law of 24.12.1951, this chair should first be offered to Professor z.Wv. Siegert of Göttingen. This did not occur. Any other appointment is therefore in violation of law set by the *Landtag*."[81] This challenge added to a flurry of activity that had already begun behind closed doors. The minister of culture in Hanover, the Cultural Committee of the Lower Saxony *Landtag* in Hanover, and the Law and Politics Faculty at Göttingen had been wrestling for months with what should be done about the awkward presence of Karl Siegert.

The minister of culture explained his legal interpretation to the Cultural Committee: Displaced professors would be considered for open positions, but they would not be guaranteed appointment.[82] The minister and the university would be allowed room for discretion. With regard to Siegert, the Cultural Ministry already had asked the Law and Politics Faculty for input, and the response from Dean Weber left little doubt: "My faculty is decisively opposed to the idea of placing Herr Siegert in the vacant professorship." Weber included a report from October 1943,

[80] See the "Gesetz zur Regelung der Rechtsverhältnisse der unter Artikel 131 des Grundgesetz fallenden Angehörigen des öffentlichen Dienstes im Lande Niedersachsen," passed by the *Landtag* in Lower Saxony, Dec. 24, 1951.

[81] Verband der Nicht-Amtierenden (Amtsverdrängten) Hochschullehrer, Tübingen, to the Minister of Culture, Lower Saxony, July 10, 1953, in Siegert, Karl, Nds. 401, 85 I, Beiakten 4, NSA, 3. The designation "z.Wv." applied to professors in Siegert's position – released under denazification but now with rights reinstated. Labeling them professors "zur Wiederverwendung," or ready for reemployment, distinguished them from professors *emeritus*, for example.

[82] To the Verband der nicht-amtierenden (amtsverdrängten) Hochschullehrer, August 1, 1953, in Siegert, Karl, Nds. 401, 85 I, Beiakten 4, NSA,, 1.

in which the *Rektor* at that time, Hans Drexler, himself an enthusiastic Nazi, judged Siegert's behavior to be so harsh and un-collegial that he drove good faculty members away. Weber argued that the same problem would occur if Siegert returned.[83]

In April 1953, *Kurator* Bojunga at Göttingen entered the battle against Siegert, sending the minister of culture copies of various materials in order to underscore the reasons for faculty opposition to Siegert's return. "I consider these copies necessary to avoid a veiling of the real facts. The copied documents from the time *before* 1945 [emphasis in original] show very clearly that the decision of the Denazification Panel in Hildesheim of 22.9.1950, on which Professor Siegert naturally places his emphasis, is based on a complete lack of knowledge about the actual circumstances of that time." Bojunga especially deplored the panel's conclusion that the quarrel between Professors Passow and Weigmann (the quarrel that led to Siegert's attack on Passow) was "in no way based on different political views, but could be traced entirely to personal differences." On the contrary, it was entirely political, Bojunga claimed. Siegert had worked vigorously to get Passow removed because of his inadequate enthusiasm for the Nazi cause, as proved by Siegert calling out "the NS Student leadership as well as the NS *Dozentenbund* leadership against this older colleague."[84]

Politicians in Hanover debated Siegert's case at length, especially in meetings of the Cultural Committee of the Landtag and especially under the influence of a rabidly nationalist politician, Leonhard Schlüter, who sat on the committee.[85] In the process of defending Siegert's claim, Schlüter blamed it entirely on the personal animosity of former colleagues. Then he noted that the two finalists for the temporary appointment had included a professor of law guilty of antisemitic writings during the Nazi period and Schaffstein, who in 1933 had written an attack on liberal principles of

[83] Der Dekan der Rechts- und Staatswissenschaftlichen Fakultät to Ministerialrat Müller, Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, Hanover, January 8, 1953, in Siegert, Karl, Nds. 401, 85 I, Beiakten 3, NSA, 11.

[84] Kurator Bojunga to the Minister of Culture, Lower Saxony, April 21, 1953, in Siegert, Karl, Nds. 401, 85 I, Beiakten 3, NSA, 23 ff.

[85] With regard to Leonhard Schlüter, see an anonymously edited book, *Die Grosse Hetze: Der Niedersächsische Ministersturz – ein Tatsachenbericht zum Fall Schlüter* (Göttingen: Göttinger Verlagsanstalt, 1958). It begins on p. 7 with the words, "On 11 June 1955, a German Minister stepped down from his office. A rabidly organized agitation, which has no parallel even in our turbulent times, pushed the Lower Saxony Minister of Culture Leonhard Schlüter to this step." (The Göttinger Verlagsanstalt was a press owned by Schlüter and known for publishing right-wing and anti-communist materials.)

law and a defense of authoritarian Nazi ideas. "Representative Schlüter declared that it was unimaginable to him that a less politically incriminated applicant would be passed over out of personal reasons, while two applicants with an extraordinary level of political baggage would be shortlisted."[86]

Schlüter, an ally to Siegert, may have believed that it was merely personal animosity that prevented Siegert's rightful return; but the Law and Politics Faculty disagreed. They judged Siegert's machinations in support of the Nazi ideology simply too energetic and harmful to allow his return. Having denied his hopes for a chair, they also three years later vetoed his attempt to take up a simple teaching contract. When Siegert reached the mandatory retirement age of sixty-five, they allowed him an *emeritus* designation but, according to one commentator, continued to treat him as a "non-person" until his death in 1988.[87] The fate of Rath was similar. His eventual exoneration by the law of 1951 could not convince the economics section of the Law and Politics Faculty to accept his return. They also refused to offer him an early *emeritus*, so he turned to the Technical University of Hanover in 1957 for that designation.[88]

The fate of Siegert and Rath is indicative of the general postwar picture of denazification at Göttingen. Many enthusiastic Nazis found their way back into the classroom. However, the most severely implicated individuals – *Rektoren* such as Neumann and Drexler and professors such as Schürmann, Siegert, and Rath – did not. Emanuel Hirsch in theology escaped denazification and loss of his income by quickly claiming a medical retirement. When he tired of this ruse, however, and tried to return to his teaching, the Theological Faculty simply refused to take him back. Ironically, because he had taken a medical retirement, the 1951 decision to forgive individuals removed on "political" grounds, that is, for being Nazis, did not apply to his case. He lived until 1972, embittered and unrepentant.[89] Most political appointees who had lacked the academic prerequisites for their positions, individuals such as Botzenhart in history

[86] "Niederschrift über die 44. Sitzung des Kultusausschusses am 13. Oktober 1953," p. 20, in Siegert, Karl, Nds. 401, 85 I, Beiakten 4, NSA, 26.

[87] Frank Halfmann, "Eine 'Pflanzstätte bester nationalsozialistischer Rechtsgelehrter': Die juristische Abteilung der Rechts- und Staatswissenschaftlichen Fakultät," in Becker, Dahms, and Wegeler, 134.

[88] See Mattias Gross, "Die nationalsozialistische 'Umwandlung' der ökonomischen Institute," in Becker, Dahms and Wegeler, 174. See also Aniko Szabo, *Vertreibung, Rückkehr, Wiedergutmachung: Göttinger Hochschullehrer im Schatten des Nationalsozialismus* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2000), 299, n. 140.

[89] See Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler*, 191–93.

and Mattiat in German *Volkskunde*, never returned. Mattiat found reemployment in the church, a fairly typical route to an easier path. In his case, it included the added irony that Pastor Bruno Benfey, who had lost his pastorate in Göttingen for being "non-Aryan," successfully pleaded on Mattiat's behalf. Because Benfey remained 30 percent disabled from harsh treatment in Buchenwald, he needed help in his postwar Göttingen parish and Mattiat was ready and willing to assist.[90]

One important outcome of denazification involved the reality that some enthusiastic Nazis really did fail to find their way back to the university. In the Philosophy Faculty at Gottingen, for example, 12 professors suffered removal by the British and 7 of these never returned to their positions.[91] This ratio established at least some sort of lesson that hardbitten support of the Nazi ideology had postwar consequences. Even more importantly, the very lies told throughout the process of denazification inevitably worked as a form of inoculation. *Every* professor denied having been a real Nazi, up to and including Artur Schürmann. Every professor claimed that all evidence to the contrary – every Party position and every publication or lecture in praise of the regime – represented simply the necessary camouflage to allow covert forms of opposition. These claims cannot be taken seriously. They surely represent conscious and tenacious prevarication. However, these mistruths meant that every German professor who returned to the classroom had staked his return on the claim never to have been a Nazi, or, at the very least, early to have recognized the sins of the regime.

It is important to notice that no serious "renazification" ever occurred in postwar Germany. Neo-Nazis, defenders of Adolf Hitler, and Holocaust deniers have always represented only a tiny and widely disparaged fringe. That surely means that in some fashion or another, the "cleansing" of Germany worked. There are many reasons. The devastating wartime defeat of Germany certainly cost Hitler any posthumous glory. He had preached a philosophy of unapologetic success – do not be soft as you step on weak neighbors – but he and Germany suffered abysmal failure. The horrors of death camp photos and documentary footage also played a role, teaching Germans to be ashamed rather than proud of their past. Postwar economic success helped wean those in the Federal

[90] See letters from Benfey to the Entnazifizierungs-Hauptauschuss, July 15, 1950 and October 1, 1950 in Nds. Hild, 20039, August-Eugen Mattiat, NSA.

[91] Einar Brynjolfsson, "Die Entnazifizierung der Universität Göttingen am Beispiel der Philosophischen Fakultät," a Master's thesis in Historisch-Philologische Wissenschaft, Gottingen University, 1996, 100.

Republic from any interest in Nazi politics, and the rapid Allied resort to a Cold War footing meant that American and British authorities quickly softened their postwar punishment of Germans. All of these elements help account for the extraordinary success of reeducation in postwar Germany, a success that includes the long-term creation of friendly neighbors in western Europe and a European Union in which armed borders have entirely disappeared.

Among all the reasons for German postwar success, the much-maligned process of denazification has at least a small place. A recent generation of scholarship has shown that the Allies got it right in their claim that "nazification" had infected Germany. Far more Germans liked and supported the regime than ever admitted so after 1945. The complicity of masses of Germans made the Holocaust and other depredations by the Nazi regime possible. The widespread postwar claim that only a tiny handful of Nazi leaders were responsible for Nazi crimes now seems very wide of the mark. However, every postwar German who lied about the past, who denied ever having been a Nazi, helped establish in the public mind the toxic reality of the Nazi ideology and the Nazi regime. These denials also made it difficult, if not impossible, for individuals to revert to praise or promotion of the Nazi ideology by 1950, 1955, or later. Subtle threads into the past remained for generations, along with an unwillingness to be open and honest about history. However, very few Germans were eager to wave the Swastika. Very few named their child Adolf.

8

Implications

Much of the story told here was slow to develop. Postwar German churches and church leaders benefited from the horror with which the world viewed the smoking camps and the piles of dead bodies in 1945, as well as from the human need to find light in the darkness. Thus, they were able to create a myth in which they had been brave and long-suffering, moral opponents and also victims of the Nazi state. This myth lasted into the 1980s, and in some quarters it lingers still. However, an early generation of scholars – people such as John Conway, and Klaus Scholder, Guenter Lewy, and Ernst Helmreich – began to scratch at the surface of the falsified story. Two generations of scholarship since the 1980s have produced a flood of material that undergirds the arguments about churches made in this book. I include my own work, along with that of scholars such as Gerhard Besier and Clemens Vollnhals, Hartmut Lehmann and Manfred Gailus, Susannah Heschel and Doris Bergen, Donald Dietrich and Michael Phayer, Victoria Barnett and Kevin Spicer. The list goes on, fortunately, and we continue to benefit from the light directed into dark corners.

A similar pattern can be found in the history of universities in Germany. Faculty in those universities controlled the postwar process of historical scholarship for a generation or more, so that the study of the Nazi regime focused on safer subjects outside the academy. German scholars quickly produced good historical work on those people and institutions that were dead and gone: Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, the Nazi regime itself, the SS, and the SA. They chose not to turn their gaze upon themselves, so that the history of universities and the history of scholarly disciplines did not gain traction until the 1980s. Since then, however, there have

been a growing number of honest young scholars looking at the problems within the universities described here.

In both cases, whether with churches or universities, I am arguing within rather than against the flow of scholarship now emanating from both sides of the Atlantic. The story is simply one of greater enthusiasm among "good Germans" for Adolf Hitler than previously acknowledged. My intentions are twofold. First, I want to highlight the present state of scholarship on churches and universities during the Nazi period. On that basis, the story might seem new to some, but I do not claim it is new. Secondly, I have tried to tell this story with one eye turned toward its implications.

There are two sides to the question of implications. On the one hand, there is the question about Germans, the question of complicity and responsibility. As we try to understand how Germans could have perpetrated the Holocaust, we must recognize that they lived in a modern, highly educated nation with many admirable accomplishments to its credit. Germany by the early twentieth century stood well within the traditions of Western society; it participated in, contributed to, and professed much of the package of Western values – Christian and otherwise – still held dear. Most of us blanch at the idea of massive and heartless killing, the sort of killing we find in any example of genocide. However, I think we find it even more disturbing if we examine the killers and find that they look very like us.

I argue that the killers who resemble those of us who are members of Western culture were given a license to kill by their churches and universities. That is the basis for my claim of complicity among pastors and professors. Is that pushing the argument too far? Should pastors and professors really be considered complicit in the crimes of the Nazi state, at least partially responsible for widespread murder? Are these "good Germans" part of the answer to the question of how such horrors take place? We can begin to answer this question by trying to imagine the state of mind of ordinary Germans who murdered Jews. What would they have been taught if they paid attention in church, if they listened during their religious education classes, or if they read their church newspapers? What would they have learned if they paid attention to their university education, listened during their lectures, or read their textbooks? The evidence suggests that both church and university gave Germans permission to play their part in Hitler's machinations. Both institutions heaped praise on Adolf Hitler in 1933. Neither openly recanted this praise for Nazi ideas or seriously challenged Nazi policies

as the brutality escalated, especially in the mistreatment of Jews. Both church and university gave Germans permission to enact a brutal policy by their endorsement of a regime that openly spoke of its brutal intentions toward Jews, a regime that increasingly tightened the screws of injustice and mistreatment.

This is not the story told in the first decades after 1945. When a handful of Nazi leaders were demonized, the terms "Nazi" and "German" could be used almost as if they were mutually exclusive: The "Nazis" committed crimes, and the "Germans" could not stop them. Scholarship now clarifies an obvious reality: The Nazis were Germans, not some group of aliens who descended onto German soil. Furthermore, Germans were Nazis in large numbers, some in terms of Party membership and many in terms of their hopes and aspirations. We can remind ourselves that historical circumstances in Germany, especially from World War I through the Weimar Republic, prepared Germans to applaud Hitler's rise to power and then to become participants in his wild ideas and brutal behavior. The heavy hand of disappointing events worked on pastors and professors too. Therefore, they liked much of what Hitler offered. They indulged in nationalistic emotions, which convinced them that Germany needed to take strong actions to redeem its place in the world. They also accepted the antisemitic stereotypes and the atavistic prejudices by which Jews could be seen as a problem, even an enemy, and they showed almost no willingness to protect Jews from the ascendant ideology and the newly vicious state.

Because both churches and universities found much to like in the Nazi state, they were not prepared to oppose it in 1933. Instead, they accepted *Gleichschaltung* within their own institutions. They even coordinated themselves, jumping onto the bandwagon represented by Hitler and the Nazi ideology, a bandwagon emphasizing national strength and unity, energy and joy, renewed attention to certain traditional values, and commitment to national rebirth. They did not want to drag their feet or slow down the momentum of this movement, and thus they did not protest small violations of their previous values or small impositions on their previous practice. The problem, of course, is that these violations and impositions do not look small to us.

Because churches and universities liked so much of what they saw in Hitler, it was hard to resist the changed values and brutal policies that came along in the baggage. Instead, they learned to rationalize, and they learned to bite their tongue and accept. The main rationalization probably had to do with brutality. Human rights, civil rights, and political

rights are always subject to some limits "for the public good." War itself is a practice that involves people who do not believe in killing – Christians, for example – being free to kill. The question is always this: What sort or degree of problem allows what sort of bend in behavior? Patriotic Germans in 1933 saw the problems as extreme, made up of national humiliation, economic crisis, and ineffectual politics. Many accepted the brutal responses we now condemn – concentration camps, arrest without charge, incarceration without trial, and, permeating it all, a systematic removal of the Jewish place and Jewish influence in Germany. When war broke out in 1939, good Germans accepted the justifications for German aggression as well as the breakdown in humane behavior that came in war's wake. Church leaders and university educators got swept along in this changing set of values and behaviors. If common, ordinary Germans looked either to their pastors or their professors for moral advice, they would have found little or no reason not to pull the trigger, not to go along, not to follow orders and perpetrate the killing.

The second implication in this story is for non-Germans. Can or should we learn something from the Nazi experience? Is it relevant to us? Does the Holocaust represent a human problem that should give us pause or a German problem safely outside our world? Good historians place the Holocaust within rather than outside history, within rather than outside the human family. The Nazis did not descend from Mars. They were not an aberration, but the outgrowth of a particular historical context that impacted Germans in 1933. That makes this a human problem, not a German problem. However, such a conclusion leaves us with some difficult interpretive questions.

Our Moral Balancing Act

It is important that the crimes of the Nazi state not be watered down or washed away, even if we acknowledge the historical pressures and the multiple crises faced by Germans during the Weimar Republic. Hermann Göring at Nuremberg wanted us to dismiss the charges against him as "victors' justice." Only because the Allies won, he argued, were Germans placed on trial and charged with crimes against humanity; had Germany won, they could have done the same against Allied crimes. Holocaust deniers plow the same field and wish to plant the same seeds of doubt. However, these Holocaust deniers consciously and dishonestly misrepresent evidence. David Irving's case, especially his defeat at trial in London

in 2000, provides an excellent example.[1] Efforts by Holocaust deniers to use the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* also prove their dishonesty. That book is a forgery. It can easily be shown to represent no historical reality, but only a fantastic tissue of suspicion, anger, and hatred against Jews, with a nineteenth-century work of fiction as its foundation.[2] Holocaust deniers make other wild and spurious claims – that all of the photos and other physical evidence from the Holocaust were manufactured by a combined Jewish and American postwar conspiracy, for example; and that all of the survivor testimony, as well as the supporting testimony of perpetrators, is merely part of that same conspiracy. None of this can or should be reckoned serious historical inquiry. Holocaust deniers are always first of all antisemites whose primary concern is to stoke their hatred of Jews. They also are fans of Adolf Hitler. They want to retrieve his reputation as a figure to be admired, not condemned.

In the process of Holocaust denial, however, these individuals like to point to specific Allied behaviors to support their claims of moral equivalency. For example, they can find some American soldiers who angrily punished or even killed individual German POWs after seeing Buchenwald or other evidence of German crimes. They can find Russian soldiers raping German women as they made their final push toward Berlin. They also point to British and American bombing of German civilians, especially the firebombing of Dresden in February 1945. This example has an interesting history. Ferocious as the firebombing of Dresden might have been, Richard Evans has now shown quite clearly that the first major treatment of that story, by David Irving, was an early example of his dishonest, revisionist agenda. In particular, Irving established in the popular mind the idea that at least 100,000 and perhaps 200,000 victims were killed in the Dresden bombing. Evans argues that the figure was more like 25,000 and that Irving used information created by Joseph Goebbels' propaganda machine in March 1945. Irving not only was fooled into using this material, but he used it even after it had been made clear to him that the information was bogus propaganda.[3] The Dresden City Museum in the 1990s had a different and more appropriate message accompanying its

[1] See, for example, Richard J. Evans, *Telling Lies about Hitler: The Holocaust, History, and the David Irving Trial* (London: Verso, 2002); and Deborah E. Lipstadt, *History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006).

[2] See, for example, the *Protocols* exhibit in the Permanent Collection of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

[3] See Evans, *Telling Lies about Hitler*, 157–92.

exhibit on the firebombing: Remember that this event was not caused by the Allies, but rather by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi state.[4]

One can endorse this statement in the Dresden City Museum, even if one criticizes the firebombing. It is important to remember who started the war, who tramped across national borders and trampled on the concept of international order and international rights. The Nazis literally argued that might makes right. They argued that, in the law of the jungle, Germans could claim to be a master race and act accordingly. When Great Britain, the USSR, and the USA fought back against German depredations, it was clearly in self-defense or, in the American case, in defense of innocent nations that had been unjustly overrun. German behavior has no such claim. Furthermore, the entire apparatus of modern genocide, especially the factories of death, was invented by Germans *during* the war, but not in any way as a meaningful *act* of war. For all of these reasons, there is simply no point of comparison between German behavior and Allied behavior during the war.[5] And yet the stance taken by "good Germans" during the Nazi period seems important to me precisely for the points of comparison and for the lessons we might hope to learn.

Until their moral world and the German reputation collapsed around them at the end of World War II, good Germans probably thought their steps and stances were justified. Most would never have suspected that they could be accused of complicity in the murder of six million Jews and five million other innocent victims. Most church leaders and most university professors had learned to see many threats to Germany within a hostile world. They were convinced to view the tiny minority of Jews in Germany as a threat to German strength and unity; and they were ready to defend the steps taken by Adolf Hitler to respond to Germany's problems, even if his steps were decried by non-Germans at the time and by posterity. Gerhard Kittel literally said, "We must not allow ourselves to be crippled because the whole world screams at us of barbarism and a reversion to the past."[6] Kittel got it wrong. Germans faced adversity in the aftermath of World War I, and they proved ready to compromise

[4] I am paraphrasing the message I read on a visit in 1992. The Dresden *Stadtsmuseum* has now been completely renovated and its exhibit on the February 1945 bombing redone, but it continues to give the same overall assessment of German responsibility for the damage inflicted on Dresden during the war.

[5] This is not an attempt to deny Stalin's brutality, as emphasized by Timothy Snyder in *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010); but I am claiming differences vis-à-vis Nazi Germany, most especially in comparison to the Western Allies.

[6] Gerhard Kittel, *Die Judenfrage* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933), 39.

their values in an effort to reestablish national strength and security. That was not only wrong, but disastrous. It led to German destruction and left Germans suffering shame and guilt into the second and third generation.[7]

Neither little children nor Germans not yet born by 1945 can be considered guilty of Nazi crimes. However, the balance of the German population cannot simply shift all blame onto Hitler and his henchmen. We have a right to find fault in all those who succumbed to Hitler's charms and followed his lead. Nonetheless, that pointing of fingers should leave us concerned about where *our* steps might go astray. A close look at Nazi Germany should teach us something about how to respond to crises. It should warn us against compromising our values – human rights, civil rights, and international law – in the face of adversity. It should allow us to recognize that Germans who succumbed to Hitler were human beings rather like ourselves. The real lesson of good Germans and bad behavior is the ease with which a commitment to one's nation, plus some natural bending in the prevailing wind, can blind one to the moral implications of one's stance. It can blind one to injustice that might find itself condemned by a later generation. We cannot be certain to avoid some future generation condemning us for behavior and ideas we think acceptable – but we can try. The experience and stance of good Germans in Nazi Germany should sharpen our awareness. It should at least show us the danger of rationalizing injustice, even if it cannot show us exactly where our injustices lie.

[7] See, for example, Stefan Aust and Gerhard Spörl, eds., *Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit. Der Lange Schatten des Dritten Reichs* (Munich: Deutsche Verlag-Anstalt, 2004).

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