*Mit Brennender Sorge* [“With Burning Anxiety”], Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on the Church and the German Reich, read from German Catholic pulpits on Passion Sunday, March 14, 1937

Entire text available at Vatican website in:

German original English translation

The following excerpts focus on (a) two passages that, far from countermanding the favorable signals from the Vatican’s newspaper toward the Nuremberg Laws from September through December 1935, are worded in ways that reinforce those signals and (b) multiple passages from the encyclical that criticize other aspects of German government action and Nazi Party ideology.

(a) The first reinforcing passage is one directed to German youth, encouraging them in the effort to develop a “true *Volk* community,” or in the original German, *Volksgemeinschaft*. German historians have observed that *Volksgemeinschaft* was a central concept of Hitler’s worldview. E.g., Michael Wildt, “Die Ungleichheit des Volkes” [“The Inequality of Peoples”], in Wildt and Frank Bajohr, eds., *Volksgemeinschaft* (Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2009). An essential aspect of *Volksgemeinschaft* in Nazi Germany was that it excluded Jews. The Nazis proclaimed in their founding Party platform in 1920 that “no Jew can be a member of the *Volk*.” (Platform point no. 4). It is possible that Pope Pius XI had in mind the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* that arose in Germany during World War One among moderate and responsible Germans: a solidarity among all people in Germany without regard to previous dividing lines of class and religion. That concept included Jewish as well as Protestant and Catholic Germans. On the other hand: Pius XI was writing in 1937, not 1917, and Germans in 1937 had been hearing the Nazi version, not the moderate responsible version, of *Volksgemeinschaft*. For the German youth to whom this passage of Mit Brennender Sorge was addressed, the Hitler Youth proclaimed the Nazi version. E.g., Baldur von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend* [“The Hitler Youth] (Berlin: Zeitgeschichte Verlag, 1934), pp. 76, 191. Pope Pius’s use of the term *Volksgemeinschaft*, viewed in historical context, is consistent with the pattern of his newspaper’s support in September through December 1935 for the Nuremberg Laws, which were designed to create a national community with Jews excluded.

The original passage from the Vatican website (¶ 43): Niemand denkt daran, der Jugend Deutschlands Steine in den Weg zu legen, der sie zur Verwirklichung wahrer Volksgemeinschaft führen soll, zur Pflege edler Freiheitsliebe, zu unverbrüchlicher Treue gegen das Vaterland.

English translation from Vatican website (¶34: the paragraph numbering is different in the English translation from the German original): No one would think of preventing young Germans establishing a true ethnical community in a noble love of freedom and loyalty to their country.

English translation by S. Galebach: No one would think of laying an obstacle in the path of the youth of Germany that should lead them to the realization of a true *Volk* community, the fostering of a noble love of freedom, and steadfast loyalty toward the Fatherland.

Translator’s note: The German word *Volk* means “people” in most contexts, but in the context of Nazi Germany it had a distinctive meaning, which can be understood from this original source.

The second reinforcing passage refers to the “calling” of Germany, a concept that *Osservatore Romano* presented in 1934 and 1935, as Nazi Germany’s mission for which the nations of the world owed a debt of gratitude, and which Bishop Hudal presented, as a spokesman on German Church-State issues who was repeatedly lauded by the Vatican’s newspaper and by the Vatican-supervised *Civiltà Cattolica*.

This passage is only paraphrased, not translated completely, in the Vatican website English version of *Mit Brennender Sorge.*

German original from Vatican website:

Dann wird der Tag kommen, wo an Stelle verfrühter Siegeslieder der Christusfeinde aus dem Herzen und von den Lippen der Christustreuen das Te Deum der Befreiung zum Himmel steigen darf; ein Te Deum des Dankes an den Allerhöchsten; ein Te Deum der Freude darüber, daß das deutsche Volk auch in seinen heute irrenden Gliedern den Weg religiöser Heimkehr beschritten hat, daß es in leidgeläutertem Glauben sein Knie wieder beugt vor dem König der Zeit und Ewigkeit Jesus Christus, und daß es sich anschickt, im Kampf gegen die Verneiner und Vernichter des christlichen Abendlandes, in Harmonie mit allen Gutgesinnten anderer Völker, den Beruf zu erfüllen, den die Pläne des Ewigen ihm zuweisen.

English translation from Vatican website:

The day will come when the *Te Deum* of liberation will succeed to the premature hymns of the enemies of Christ: *Te Deum* of triumph and joy and gratitude, as the German people return to religion, bend the knee before Christ, and arming themselves against the enemies of God, again resume the task God has laid upon them.

English translation by S. Galebach:

Then the day will come when, in place of the premature victory songs of the enemies of Christ, from the hearts and from the lips of Christ's faithful, the *Te Deum* of liberation will rise up to heaven; a *Te Deum* of gratitude to the Almighty; a *Te Deum* of joy that the German *Volk*, even in its currently wayward members, has trodden the path of religious returning home, that it, in faith purified by suffering, again bends the knee before the king of time and eternity Jesus Christ, and that it is preparing itself, in struggle (*Kampf*) against the deniers and destroyers of the Christian West, in harmony with all well-intentioned other peoples, to fulfill the calling that the plans of the Eternal assign to it.

(b) Excerpts criticizing measures by the German government and aspects of Nazi ideology (paragraph numbering is from the English translation at the Vatican website):

1. "painful trials of the Church and the increasing vexations of those who have remained loyal in heart and action"

4. "war of extermination" against the Catholic Church

5. the “other contracting party” in the Vatican-Germany Concordat “emasculated the terms of the treaty, distorted their meaning, and eventually considered its more or less official violation as normal policy” . . . conducting a "campaign against the confessional schools" - "destruction of free election, where Catholics have a right to their children's Catholic education" - "the extreme gravity of the situation and the anxiety of every Christian conscience" - policy that seeks "to strangle rights guaranteed by a treaty"

7. "pre-Christian Germanic conception of substituting a dark and impersonal destiny for the personal God"

8. "Whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State, or the depositories of power, or any other fundamental value of the human community" above their "standard value" to an "idolatrous level" . . . he is far from the true faith in God . . .

9. Misuse of the name of God

10. Blasphemy and “the obstinacy and provocations of those who deny, despise and hate God …”

11. "None but superficial minds could stumble into concepts of a national God, of a national religion; or attempt to lock within the frontiers of a single people, within the narrow limits of a single race, God, the Creator of the universe . . ."

13 "aggressive paganism"

15 excluding the Old Testament from accepted revelation

16 "Whoever wishes to see banished from church and school the Biblical history and the wise doctrines of the Old Testament"

17 "the so-called myth of race and blood"

21 "Secret and open measures of intimidation, the threat of economic and civic disabilities" against Catholics, "a pressure which violates every human right and dignity."

22 "the seduction of a national German Church"

23 distortion of fundamental religious concepts of "revelation," "faith," "immortality," "original sin," grace"

30 "Human laws in flagrant contradiction with the natural law are vitiated with a taint which no force, no power can mend."

31 Laws and measures that impede the believer's "absolute right to profess his faith and live according to its dictates" are "against natural law." . . . "Laws and measures which in school questions fail to respect this freedom of the parents go against natural law, and are immoral. The Church, whose mission it is to preserve and explain the natural law, as it is divine in its origin, cannot but declare that the recent enrollment into schools organized without a semblance of freedom, is the result of unjust pressure, and is a violation of every common right."

33. Pressures and threats against youth who are affiliated with Catholic religious associations.

34. "the voluntary and systematic antagonism raised between national education and religious duty."

35. Priests exposed to “many an undeserved insult now more frequent than ever.”

36. Priests “imprisoned in jail and concentration camps . . .”

37. "administrative measures hostile to Religious Orders"