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EVALUATING THE WHIRLWIND:
THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF PRE-WAR NAZI
GERMANY

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
John Philip Hellwege, Jr.
May 2009

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To my Dearest Denise,

If it were not for your continual love, support, and belief in me this work would not have been possible. I can't begin to thank you enough for all you have done for me and how you help me to grow, stretch, and attempt to do the best I can. With all my love, John.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AmL</i>	<i>American Lutheran</i>
<i>AnL</i>	<i>The Ansgar Lutheran</i>
<i>AQ</i>	<i>The Augustana Quarterly</i>
<i>CTM</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Monthly</i>
<i>DL</i>	<i>Der Lutheraner</i>
<i>DV</i>	<i>Dannevirke</i>
<i>ELGB</i>	<i>Evangelisch Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt</i>
<i>FL</i>	<i>Faith-Life</i>
<i>GSB</i>	<i>The Gettysburg Seminary Bulletin</i>
<i>JALC</i>	<i>Journal of the American Lutheran Conference</i>
<i>KB</i>	<i>Kirchenblatt</i>
<i>KZ</i>	<i>Kirchliche Zeitschrift</i>
<i>LCmpn</i>	<i>The Lutheran Companion</i>
<i>LCnslr</i>	<i>The Lutheran Counselor</i>
<i>LCQ</i>	<i>The Lutheran Church Quarterly</i>
<i>LH</i>	<i>Lutheran Herald</i>
<i>LiH</i>	<i>Lutherischer Herold</i>
<i>LSntl</i>	<i>Lutheran Sentinel</i>
<i>LStd</i>	<i>Lutheran Standard</i>
<i>Luth</i>	<i>The Lutheran</i>
<i>LW</i>	<i>Lutheran Witness</i>
<i>LY</i>	<i>The Lutheran Youth</i>
<i>NL</i>	<i>National Lutheran</i>

<i>NwL</i>	<i>The Northwestern Lutheran</i>
<i>PM</i>	<i>The Pastor's Monthly</i>
<i>SV</i>	<i>Svedok</i>
<i>TF</i>	<i>Theological Forum</i>
<i>TQ</i>	<i>Theologische Quartalschrift</i>
<i>WLM</i>	<i>Walther League Messenger</i>

CHRONOLOGY OF THE *KIRCHENKAMPF* AND NAZI GERMANY

Hitler name Chancellor of Germany	January 30, 1933
Burning of the Reichstag	February 27, 1933
Hitler given dictatorial powers via the Enabling Act	March 23, 1933
Friedrich von Bodelschwingh elected <i>Reichsbishop</i>	May 27, 1933
Bodelschwingh resigns from office of <i>Reichsbishop</i>	June 24, 1933
German Church elections	July 23, 1933
The “Brown Synod” of the Old Prussian Union	September 5-6, 1933
<i>Sportspalast</i> meeting of the <i>Deutsche Christen</i>	November 13, 1933
The Barmen Synod	May 29-31, 1934
Night of the Long Knives, or the Blood Purge	June 29, 1934
President Hindenburg dies and Hitler become Führer	August 2, 1934
Berlin-Dahlem Synod of the Confessing Front	October 19-20, 1934
Hanns Kerrl named Minister of Church Affairs	July 22, 1935
Oeynhausen Synod of the Confessing Front	February 17-22, 1936
Martin Niemöller arrested	July 1, 1937
Martin Niemöller released from jail and re-arrested	March 2, 1938
The Anschluss of Austria	March 13, 1938
Hitler and Chamberlain sign the Munich Agreement	September 29, 1938
Germany occupies the Sudetenland	October 1, 1938
<i>Kristallnacht</i>	November 9, 1938
German Army invades Czechoslovakia	March 15, 1939
German Army invades Poland	September 1, 1939

ABSTRACT

Hellwege, John P., Jr. "Evaluating the Whirlwind: The American Lutheran Theological Interpretations of Pre-War Nazi Germany." Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2009. 295 pp.

This dissertation is an examination of how the Lutheran churches in America perceived the events in pre-war Nazi Germany, including the *Kirchenkampf*. In particular, this is a periodical study of 30 representative periodicals from 1932 to 1939, representing a variety of American Lutheran bodies and every language in which American Lutherans published during this era. This study evaluates the theological lenses that the American Lutherans used in order to evaluate and comment on the events in Germany. As such, it is a study of American Lutheranism during the 1930s, with the events of pre-war Nazi Germany as the backdrop.

The study is broken into two major parts. The first part is an examination of the various theological concerns that the American Lutherans raised when viewing Nazi Germany. These concerns included the preservation of orthodox Lutheranism, the fear of unionism, an insistence on the separation of Church and State, fears over threats to Christianity, theological trends used by Nazi supporters, and the "Jewish Question." Related to the separation of Church and State, there was also a debate over the theological correctness of Just War doctrine.

The second part then looks at how the American Lutherans perceived the various groups involved in the *Kirchenkampf*. First there is an examination of how they responded to the *Deutsche Christen* movement. Then this study turns to how the American Lutherans viewed the Confessing Front. Finally, the study shows the American Lutherans' affinity towards the Confessional Church in Germany.

The thesis of this study is that the American Lutherans' primary concern was theological; and that this concern was for the preservation of orthodox Lutheranism, which they viewed as the truest form of Christianity, in Germany. This is shown in how this concern manifested itself throughout their evaluations of events in Nazi Germany, which very often took a decidedly theological hue. This is further shown in how the American Lutherans displayed a greater concern for those in Germany that they viewed as being the closest to being orthodox Lutherans and less concern for those who were not even Christian.

CHAPTER ONE

I INTRODUCTION

On January 30, 1933 in a move that would shake up the world in ways that no-one could have imagined President Paul von Hindenburg named a political firebrand, Adolf Hitler, as the new chancellor of Germany. This was greeted with jubilant celebrations in Berlin as a parade of uniformed members of the SS and the SA marched through the streets while being greeted with shouts as the Nazis progressed. The procession was the celebration of the end of one era and the beginning of a new era in the history of Germany.

This new era, known as the Third Reich, not only brought in the atrocities of the Holocaust and the Second World War, but it has also changed the very way that people view Germany and its history. Steven Ozment, in his 2004 history of the German people entitled *A Mighty Fortress*, uses most of his 14 page introduction to chronicle how most historians view German history through the lens of the Nazi regime.¹ Whether looking for causes of the rise of Hitler, or how the events of the Third Reich could be seen as illustrating a natural tendency in the German people, or even defenses of the Germans, these studies have garnered a tremendous amount of attention.

These events that were to so change the future of the world were also being observed and analyzed at that time in other European nations and across the Atlantic. These analyses were sometimes accurate, and other times rather flawed, as it was hard to determine just what was going on in Germany. The Churches in America were in no way excepted from these endeavors

¹ Steven Ozment, *A Mighty Fortress: A New History of the German People* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004).

to understand the nature of the Nazi movement. The Lutherans in America often followed these events with great interest because many hailed from German ancestry and virtually all were in some form of church fellowship with at least one church in Germany.

The Question

This study evaluates how the American Lutherans viewed the establishment of Nazi Germany, including the *Kirchenkampf*, in order to better understand their views of pre-war Nazism and the theological lenses they used to assess the events in Germany from the rise of Hitler to the outbreak of the Second World War. This is a look at how American Lutheran churches as a whole reported and thought about these events and then publicly discussed the theological issues involved in the German situation, including both theological issues that were at the American forefront and how Americans viewed the theological wrangling going on in Germany during this time.

The Current Status of the Question

While there has been a tremendous amount of study on the Third Reich and the *Kirchenkampf*, the study of American Lutheran perceptions of this era is still largely untouched. At this point, there have been several smaller studies analyzing particular aspects of American Lutheran reactions to Nazism. Some of these are journal articles that focused on one particular aspect of the American Lutheran views of Nazism. Other works are large studies that in some way touch on the topic of American Lutheran views of pre-war Nazi Germany, but do not focus in depth on the question.

An important study that helps to put the American Lutheran responses to Nazism into perspective within the American religious context of that era is one by Frederick Wentz.² Wentz did a periodical study of 27 American religious periodicals from 1933–1937. In his study, Wentz divided the American religious publications into 5 basic categories. The first three are divisions of American Protestantism, which he divides into: those concerned with “prophetic religion” which he defines as religious liberals and the neo-orthodox all of whom were concerned with the church speaking to the culture; conservative, fundamentalist, and millennialist churches which were primarily opposed to modernism and looked for eschatological meanings in the events of the day; and mainline Protestants who were mostly concerned with German state’s attempts to take over the church. To these groups, Wentz added the Roman Catholics and then those outside of Christendom, which emphasized Jewish periodicals. Yet of these, the United Lutheran Church’s *The Lutheran* is the only Lutheran publication addressed by Wentz, which he places in the mainline Protestant camp.

Another general study of the American Christian press that gives important context for the study of American Lutherans in the 1930s has been done by Frederick Murphy. While Wentz analyzes the American religious press by separating them out by tradition, Murphy contains himself only to Christian publications and investigated their general trends and attitudes towards the events in Germany, using those events as the markers that divide up his study. Murphy separates his study into parts looking at: attitudes and reactions toward Nazism and Germany, the struggle of the German churches, the Jewish question, the churches comments on events, and pre-war attitudes toward questions of war and peace. Murphy found that the American Christian

² Frederick K. Wentz, “The Reaction of the Religious Press in America to the Emergence of Nazism,” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1954). The results of this have also been published in: “American Protestant Journals and the Nazi Religious Assault,” *Church History*, 23 (1954): 321–38. and “American Catholic Periodicals React to Nazism,” *Church History*, 31 (1962): 400–20.

periodicals held no unanimity in their views of Nazism and that some supported events early on, but towards the end of the 1930s and the outbreak of war in 1939, there was nothing but derision for Hitler's regime. In his study, Murphy looked at 22 American Christian periodicals from 1933-1939, of these *The Lutheran* and the *Lutheran Witness* were the only Lutheran periodicals included.³

The one aspect that has garnered the most study so far has been the American churches response to the Nazi persecution of the Jews. In light of the horrors of the holocaust, and the many questions of how Christians could let this happen, it makes sense that there would be significant scholarship on this topic. These studies vary in size, scope and the particular aspects of the thought and actions of American churches in regard to the treatment of the Jews in Germany, and in their own expressions of concern for Jews and others who emigrated from Germany to avoid the persecution.

One of the larger studies of the period is aimed at the American Christian Press' treatment of the persecution of the Jews. In *So It Was True: The American Protestant Press and the Nazi Persecution of the Jews*, Robert Ross addresses the perception that the American churches were disinterested in this topic.⁴ He notes that the persecution of the Jews was in fact reported widely in the American Protestant periodicals, but while the American Protestant press was not silent on the matter, there was not an appropriate response by American Protestants who read about these atrocities.⁵ Ross' study, while limited to a single issue, did include a number of English language American Lutheran periodicals, these being: *The Bond*, *Concordia Theological*

³ Frederick I. Murphy, "The American Christian Press and Pre-War Hitler's Germany," (PhD diss., Yale University, 1970).

⁴ Robert W. Ross, *So It Was True: The American Protestant Press and the Nazi Persecution of the Jews* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 258-59.

*Monthly, The Friend of Zion, The Hebrew Lutheran, The Lutheran, The Lutheran Companion, The Lutheran Herald, The Lutheran Standard, The Lutheran Witness, and the Northwestern Lutheran.*⁶

A couple of other scholars have evaluated the lives and reception of “non-Aryan” Christians who were forced to leave Germany. The more full study was by William E. Nawyn, who studied how American Protestants responded to the refugees from Germany.⁷ Nawyn here offers one chapter on American Lutherans, in which he focuses on the United Lutheran Church in America and the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod because both were conservative and had a strong German heritage.⁸ Nawyn concluded that there was a consistent, but limited interest in the German refugees in the United Lutheran Church in America, but that the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod had relatively little interest. However, in all of American Christians, Nawyn finds a concern expressed by the leadership, but relatively little response by the general laity.

A related and much smaller study was then done by Ronald Webster. Webster looked at the English, Canadian, and American responses to German “non-Aryan” clergy who were forced to leave Germany. Webster’s article is only tangentially related to American Lutheranism, and shows that the “non-Aryan” clergy who immigrated to the United States were not always welcomed fully.⁹

Kenneth Barnes did a short analysis of the Missouri Synod’s views on Nazism from 1933-1945.¹⁰ This short article is based on studies of *The Lutheran Witness*, *Der Lutheraner*,

⁶ Ibid., 306–07.

⁷ William E. Nawyn, *American Protestantism’s Response to Germany’s Jews and Refugees, 1933–1941* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981).

⁸ Ibid., 81.

⁹ Ronald D. E. Webster, “German ‘Non-Aryan’ Clergymen and the Anguish of Exile after 1933,” *The Journal of Religious History*, 22 (February 1998): 83–103.

¹⁰ Kenneth Barnes, “American Lutherans and the Third Reich,” in *What Kind of God? Essays in Honor of Richard Rubenstein*, ed. B. Rubenstein and M. Berenbaum (Lanham, N.Y.: University Press of America, 1995), (continued next page)

Concordia Theological Monthly, and *The Walther League Messenger*. Here Barnes focuses on how, especially early on but even later in the 1930s, the Missouri Synod defended much of the Nazi regime, the Missouri Synod's perceptions of the persecution of the Jews by the Nazis, and the Missouri Synod's pro-neutrality stance between the outbreak of the war and the bombing of Pearl Harbor. This work also shows the concerns of possible anti-Semitism or at least indifference toward the German Jews to be of a major concern to the author.

Turning then to studies that have been directed at American Lutherans, the primary group that has been studied has been the Missouri Synod. Dean Kohlhoff studied the Missouri Synod's perceptions of Germany from 1914–1945, touching on views during the period this study examines. Kohlhoff's concern was how the Missouri Synod viewed itself as *Deutschtum* here in the United States. He focuses in on how the Missouri Synod early on identified itself greatly with its German heritage, but by the end he sees it as having more of leached out. Kohlhoff devotes one chapter to the era of the 1930's. With regard to this time, Kohlhoff emphasizes Missouri Synod figures that he sees as supportive of Hitler, particularly looking at Walter A. Meier. This work is helpful in identifying the ethnic and emotional connections that the Missouri Synod had with Germany during this time.¹¹

A couple of smaller studies of the Missouri Synod have also been attempted. First, there has also been one study of the *Lutheran Witness* from 1934–1945 by John G. Mager. Mager looked at the issue in light of the question whether or not the Missouri Synod should share in the guilt for not speaking out against the evils perpetrated in Germany, and concludes that yes, there

187–99.

¹¹ Dean Wayne Kohlhoff, "Missouri Synod Lutherans and the Image of Germany, 1914–1945," (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1973).

should be some guilt for turning a blind eye.¹² A more complete study of both the *Lutheran Witness* and *Der Lutheraner* is my own study of these periodicals from 1932-39.¹³

Finally, Ronald Webster looked at three individual leaders in American Lutheranism, bringing to the table some important archival work on these men. First, he looks at Ralph Long, Executive Secretary of the National Lutheran Council from 1930-48. Webster shows Long, like he views many American Lutherans of the time, as vacillating in his opinions of the events in Germany. Next Webster turns to Lars Boe, President of St. Olaf College. Boe, like Long, is seen as wavering between pro- and anti-Hitler sentiments. The final figure that Webster looks at is Theodore Graebner, the editor of the *Lutheran Witness*. Graebner is seen as something of a maverick in the Missouri Synod in that he was more sensitive to German anti-Semitism and was more openly supportive of America and its political leadership.¹⁴

There has only been one major study of American Lutherans that evaluates their perceptions of Nazism—a dissertation by James Kegel.¹⁵ Kegel looks at not only the period of the rise of Nazism, but also at the Second World War and the rebuilding of Germany. In his study, Kegel seeks to study the reactions of the eight largest American Lutheran bodies during this time period. He focuses his study on the United Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church, the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, the (Norwegian) Lutheran Free Church, the (Swedish) Augustana Synod, the United Danish Church, the Missouri Synod, and

¹² John Mager, “Nazis, Jews and the War: What the Lutheran Witness Said 1933–1945,” *American Lutheran* (hereafter *AmL*) 47, no. 11 (November 1964): 10–13.

¹³ John Hellwege, “What was Going On over There?: The Missouri Synod’s Struggle to Understand Pre-war Nazi Germany as seen in Two Popular Publications,” *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 80 (Summer 2007): 103–131.

¹⁴ Ronald D. E. Webster, “American Lutheran Opinion Makers and the Crisis of German Protestantism under Hitler,” in *Interpreting Lutheran History, Essays and Reports*, 1996, The Lutheran Historical Conference, ed. James W. Albers and David J. Wartluft, vol. 17 (St. Louis: Lutheran Historical Conference, 1999), 202–218.

¹⁵ James David Kegel, “A Church Come of Age: American Lutheranism and National Socialism, the German Church Conflict, and the reconstitution of the church: 1933–1948,” (ThD diss., Lutheran School of Theology, 1988).

the Wisconsin Synod.¹⁶ The key questions that Kegel asks are: “Does theology influence the foreign policy of a church body? An accompanying question: Does membership in international organizations or associations influence the reaction of partner churches?”¹⁷ Kegel therefore argues that theology really did not play as important of a role in the American Lutheran views of Nazi Germany as might be expected.¹⁸ Rather, he concentrates on “ecclesio-political” issues in his study.¹⁹ His study then concentrates on the political views of these churches in light of their Americanization, concluding that “acculturation was of primary importance – the more assimilated the group, the more its position reflected that of the larger American society.”²⁰ His primary conclusion coming from this is that the American Lutherans of the era reflected concerns that were more American than German and that this leaning towards American perspectives grew as time went on. As a result, Kegel sheds light on the Americanization of the Lutheran churches in America at this time; however, he does not directly analyze the ways that the American Lutheran’s theology was reflected in their reports and evaluations of the events in Nazi Germany during this time.

In light of these important contributions, this study is intended to add to Kohlhoff’s ethnic insights and Kegel’s placing the American Lutherans into their political and American context by examining the theological concerns that the American Lutherans brought to these events. The American Lutheran churches certainly were affected by their ethnic heritages and their international associations, yet they were and are self-described theological units as well. So, an evaluation of their theological analyses of the events in Germany will further enhance our

¹⁶ Kegel, 3–4.

¹⁷ Ibid. 4.

¹⁸ Ibid. 347.

¹⁹ Ibid. 353.

²⁰ Ibid. 349.

understanding of these churches. This study also seeks to broaden the scope to include some of the smaller Lutheran bodies in America and other leaders who have heretofore not been studied in this context.

Historical Background to Events

In order to rightly understand the responses and thoughts of the American Lutherans, it is necessary to understand the events that were happening in Germany at the time. However, while looking at these it must be remembered that we have many more sources at our disposal, and a little historical distance along with much scholarship on Nazi Germany, that allow us to have a clearer understanding of exactly what was going on in Germany than the American Lutherans could have had at that time.

Lurking behind the entire history of this time is the series of events that started with the First World War. Nationalistic spirits were high in Germany, as well as in many other countries as they embarked to fight in the Great War. The Germans believed that this was a time for German greatness. This attitude even affected the way that the German Generals reported events and the civil leaders then represented things to the populace. As a result, the average German believed that that they were winning, even late in the war. This led to a total shock when Germany surrendered. Germans were wondering how this could have happened, how could you go from the verge of victory to total defeat. What was harder still to understand was that the German army had not been pushed back into Germany, so there was no real evidence that the people could see that the war was lost. It was only because the Generals realized that their supplies and reinforcements were depleted that they then called for the leaders to sue for peace.

In light of this, the average German felt betrayed and sold out. The only answer that seemed to make sense was that someone within the leadership of the country had sold them out. This feeling was compounded when the Treaty of Versailles was signed. Now Germany was

forced to claim all guilt for the war, it had to virtually disband its military, they lost their honor, and on top of this the virtually depleted country was forced to pay reparations to the victors. The confusion and dissatisfaction was furthered by the forcing of the Weimar Republic on the people. While such a democratic government did actually have quite a bit of support in Germany, and at times it did succeed, many Germans still resented that this foreign form of government was being forced on them from the outside.

The Weimar Republic then was saddled with a number of problems that virtually doomed it from the start. First, there was the virtual decimation of the economy from the depletion of resources that the war caused, as well as the payment of reparations and the loss of working men who died or were disabled in the war. This led to rampant inflation and a depression that started long before it hit the rest of the Western world. Second, the Weimar Republic struggled to gain popular support and the various political parties made ruling difficult. The fear of communism spread, and justifiably so, as the communist party grew in popularity during this time. The Republic also had to deal with the nation's loss of self-respect at home and impotence abroad, placing it under enormous political pressure.

Due to these forces, as well as others, the Weimar Republic was ripe for a strong leader to take the helm. This leader was found in the insurrectionist agitator turned politician, Adolf Hitler, and his National Socialist party. Amongst other things, Hitler supplied an explanation for the loss in the Great War, namely the people were sold out by the Jews. He also had plans to restore Germany economically. Besides this, Hitler also offered the German people a return to having pride in their Fatherland. While the Nazi party gained seats in the Reichstag, it was never able to attain a majority. However, due to the previous Chancellors being unable to give real leadership to Germany and the Nazis placing great political pressure on him, President Paul von Hindenburg on January 30, 1933 offered the chancellorship to Hitler.

Then on February 27, 1933 the Reichstag burned to the ground. While it seems clear today that the Nazis actually started the fire, at the time Hitler and his party succeeded in blaming the fire on communists, tapping into German and Western fears of a Marxist revolution in Germany. This led to Hitler requesting and receiving from the Reichstag the “enabling act” on March 23, which gave Hitler virtual dictatorial powers in order to stabilize and rehabilitate Germany.

The year 1934 then brought in a couple of other significant events for the German people. The first was June 30, which has become known as “the Night of Long Knives” or the “Blood purge,” when the Nazis, in coordinated moves, brutally murdered a number of political opponents. This purge included the murder of a number of members of the SA, who were seen by Hitler to be a threat to his power within the party, as well as a seen as a threat by the leadership of the German Army. Hitler managed to sell these brutal killings as extreme, but necessary measures to protect and stabilize Germany. Then on August 2, President Hindenburg died. This led to Hitler claiming for himself both the role of chancellor and president, and taking the title of *Führer*, or “leader” of Germany.

This led to a couple of years of relative quiet in Germany, during which time Hitler strengthened the economy and rebuilt the military. On March 12, 1938, Hitler began in earnest his quest for more land with the *Anchluss* of Austria. Then, after negotiations with English and French leaders, culminating with Chamberlain’s now infamous “Peace in our time” speech, German forces took over the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia on October 1, 1938.

However, peace was not what the world got from the Nazis, but even greater levels of brutality. The world saw just how vicious the Nazi regime could be on the night of November 9-10, 1938. This is when the Nazis went forth attacking Jews and Jewish businesses and synagogues with unbridled brutality, with over 7,000 Jewish businesses and 600 synagogues

being looted, destroyed, or completely burned.²¹ There was so much broken glass in the streets the next morning that it has become known as the night of broken glass or *Kristallnacht* because the streets looked like they were covered with crystal. Then on September 1, 1939 the world learned the hard way that attempts at appeasing and containing the Nazis were futile as Hitler launched an all out assault on Poland and threw the world into what is now known as World War II.

While these are some of the main events that the world looks at as key episodes in pre-war Nazi Germany, there are others that were in many ways of even greater concern to American Lutherans; namely the events that took place within the German churches. Hitler's plan was for a complete *Gleichschaltung* or co-ordination of all German life, in which virtually every aspect of German culture and society was to be bent to serving the whims of Hitler.²² Hitler accomplished much of this at an absolutely dizzying pace. In September, 1933, American Lutherans were told that:

Within a few months, all facilities, all organizations, all left-hand establishments, all terrestrial and church situations came under the reshaping of one man's hand, a man whose name until recently was unknown. I mean of course the present chancellor of the German Reich, Adolf Hitler.²³

This movement of *Gleichschaltung* also included the German churches. When Hitler rose to power, there were 28 different *Landeskirchen*, each operating independently of the rest. However, Hitler's master political theory included the *Fuhrerprinzip* which was the basic principle that the German people, in any area, could best be led by a single leader or Führer who embodied the Volk and therefore could lead the people properly. In applying the *Fuhrerprinzip*

²¹ Nawyn, 3.

²² William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 196–204.

²³ C. Mueller, "Die Jugend des neuen Deutschlands," *Lutherischer Herold* 11, no. 52 (September 28, 1933), 4.

to the church, this meant that the divergent *Landeskirchen* should be united into one *Reichskirche* under the leadership of a single *Reichsbischof*.

At first, the movement to unify the *Landeskirchen* was widely embraced within the *Landeskirchen*, with the main concern being over the nature of the new *Reichskirche*. The main clout within the German churches was held by the Lutherans, since most of the *Landeskirchen* were Lutheran, while the largest *Landeskirche* was the Church of the Old Prussian Union, even here the majority of the churches and pastors were Lutheran. Therefore, it was quickly established that while the *Reichskirche* would be a single, hierarchical head of the Evangelical Church in Germany, the *Landeskirchen* would retain their own confessional identities, but under the leadership of a Lutheran *Reichsbischof*.

There quickly arose divisions within the German Church, as the group known as the *Deutsche Christen* or “German Christians” sought to gain control of the new *Reichskirche* and have one of their own elected *Reichsbischof*. In particular, the *Deutsche Christen* was a movement that supported the new nationalism and expected the German church to fully support the Nazi regime, and many felt that this would cause the loss of the autonomy of the church.²⁴ Hitler had named Ludwig Müller as the head of the *Deutsche Christen* and he was to be their candidate for *Reichsbischof*. In a preemptive move to prevent Müller from taking the helm, the church leaders on May 27, 1933 elected Friedrich von Bodelschwingh as *Reichsbischof* before the new Constitution was actually ratified. However, the *Deutsche Christen*, aided by the Nazi government, put enough pressure on Bodelschwingh, that he resigned his post within a month, and Ludwig Müller was consequently named *Reichsbischof*.²⁵

²⁴ For further study of the “German Christians” see: James A. Zabel, *Nazism and the Pastors: A Study of the ideas of Three Deutsche Christen Groups*, (American Academy of Religion Dissertation Series, ed. H. Ganse Little, Jr., no. 14. Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976) and Kurt Meier, *Die Deutsche Christen* (Halle: Veb. Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1964).

²⁵ Ernst Christian Helmreich, *The German Churches Under Hitler: Background, Struggle and Epilogue* (continued next page)

A series of church elections were then held in the various *Landeskirchen* throughout Germany on July 23, 1933. Those elected in this vote were to form the synods that would govern the future of the German churches and their integration into the new *Reichskirche*. The only group that was allowed to distribute voter's lists were the *Deutsche Christen* and in a surprising move, on the eve of the elections Hitler publicly endorsed the *Deutsche Christen* in a nationwide radio address. This led to the overwhelming election of *Deutsche Christen* throughout Germany.²⁶

The synod of the Old Prussian Union was so dominated by pro-Nazi forces, who showed up in brown SA uniforms, that it has become known as the "Brown Synod." At this synod of September 5-6, a law was enacted that radically altered the way that church membership would be considered in Germany. This law included a paragraph that has become known as the "Aryan Paragraph," which limited membership in the clergy to only those of Aryan descent who were not married to someone of non-Aryan descent.²⁷

During this same time period, Hitler was negotiating with the papal curia in order to form a Reich Concordat. The finalized Concordat granted to the Roman Catholic Church the rights to perform all churchly activities without interference, so long as those were not political activities. The trade off was that the formerly politically powerful Central Party was to be dissolved, since it was created to represent Roman Catholic interests in German politics. With this Concordat in place, the Roman Catholic Church gained official recognition by the Third Reich. However, the

(Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 136–38.

²⁶ Ibid., 142–43.

²⁷ Ibid., 144.

Nazis violated the terms of the Concordat in many ways, starting virtually immediately after it was signed.²⁸

The events within the Protestant churches in Germany were by no means accepted by all, however the resistance to the *Deutsche Christen* was, from the beginning, somewhat fractured and disorganized. The resistance was headed by a series of groups, often with the same leadership shifting from one to the next. First there was “Young Reformation Movement,” which was shifted to the “Gospel and Church” at the time of the church elections. The growth of the power of the *Deutsche Christen* led to the establishment then of the “Pastor’s Emergency League” which eventually was turned into the “Confessing Front.” However, while much of the leadership was the same within these groups, the membership was very fluid, rising and falling as the situation changed within the Protestant Church.

Further confusing matters, there was a core of more confessionally-minded Lutherans who never found themselves at home within these movements. This included the theological faculty of the University of Erlangen and the “intact” churches, namely those that were never taken over by the *Deutsche Christen*, led by Bishops Hans Meiser of Bavaria, August Marahrens of Hanover, and Theophil Wurm of Württemberg. At times there was cooperation, however even this was spotty and varied. A number of scholars consider the later development of the Lutheran “Confessional Church” as a splinter from the “Confessing Church” which was largely led by Karl Barth early on.²⁹ However, others point to the theological independence of the Confessional Lutherans from the start.³⁰ The most powerful point in favor of understanding the independence

²⁸ Klaus Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich*, vol. 1, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 381–413.

²⁹ This analysis can be found in Scholder, Helmreich and Arthur, C. Cochrane, *The Church’s Confession Under Hitler* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1976).

³⁰ This has been put forth most recently and clearly in Lowell Green, *Lutherans Against Hitler: The Untold Story* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007).

of the Confessional Lutherans from the start is that the Lutherans were the first to create a confession that took issue with the theology of the *Deutsche Christen* in a truly Lutheran document known as the “Bethel Confession.”³¹

In an event that truly shocked many German theologians, the *Deutsche Christen* held a gathering attended by approximately 20,000 on November 13, 1933 at the *Sportpalast* in Berlin. At this event, Dr. Reinhold Krause, the leader of the Greater Berlin *gau* or district of the *Deutsche Christen* gave the main address in which he called for all pastors to support the National Socialist agenda, and for the German church to remove all things “Jewish.” This included not only the extension of the Aryan Paragraph to all *Landeskirchen* but also the removing of “Jewish” aspects of the faith.³²

This requires a feeling for the homeland, and the first step towards the church becoming at home in Germany is the liberation from all that is un-German in liturgy and confession, liberation from the Old Testament with its Jewish recompense ethic, from all these stories about cattle-dealers and pimps. . . . Our provincial church will also have to see to it that all obviously distorted and superstitious reports should be expunged from the New Testament, and that the whole scape-goat and inferiority-type theology of the Rabbi Paul should be renounced in principle.³³

While Krause’s speech garnered thundering applause, it led to the quick exit of many German pastors from the *Deutsche Christen* movement and the swelling of the ranks of the “Pastor’s Emergency League.”

In the wake of this scandal, there was a huge turnover in leadership of the *Deutsche Christen*. However, *Reichsbischof* Müller boldly went forward with his own plans for the integration of all religious life in support of the Nazi government. On December 19, 1933 he

³¹ The definitive analysis of the Bethel Confession is Guy C. Carter, “Confession at Bethel, August 1933—Enduring Witness: The Formation, Revision and Significance of the First Full Theological Confession of the Evangelical Church Struggle in Nazi Germany.” (PhD diss., Marquette University, 1987).

³² Helmreich, 149–50.

³³ Peter Matheson, *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1981), 39–40.

announced the integration of the “Evangelical Youth Organization” into the “Hitler Youth” which was being led by the neo-pagan Baldur von Schirach. This effectively put all youth organizations in the Reich, except the greatly limited Roman Catholic one, into the “Hitler Youth.” This also turned what had been an organization for the Christian education of the youth into a vehicle for education in the support of the Nazi worldview.³⁴

In what has been the most publicized effort at resistance to the totalitarian claims of Nazism, the movement that came to be known as the “Confessing Front” gathered at Barmen May 29-31, 1934. The major thinker who dominated this whole gathering was Karl Barth. This Confessional Synod discussed and adopted the now famous “Barmen Declaration” which had been essentially penned by Barth prior to the synod.³⁵ This declaration particularly took issue with the theology of the *Deutsche Christen* and how they sought to make the Church subservient to the State.³⁶

The Barmen Declaration was not universally accepted by the more confessional Lutherans. Hermann Sasse was present at Barmen, but was the only delegate to dissent from the actions of the Synod and was the first to question the validity of a confession that was to be adopted by churches of differing confessions and could therefore create a confession that would rule over the historic confessions of these churches and create a form of unionism.³⁷ Likewise, Werner Elert

³⁴ Helmreich, 153.

³⁵ Studies of the Barmen Declaration include, Cochrane; Rolf Ahlers, *The Barmen Theological Declaration of 1934: The Archeology of a Confessional Text* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1986); and Alfred Burgsmüller and Rudolf Weth, eds., *Die Barmer Theologische Erklärung: Ein führung und Dokumnetation* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1983).

³⁶ The fullest examination of the Barmen Synod is found in Cochrane, 155–75.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 153, 193–96; also Sasse’s relationship to Barmen is explored in Martin Wittenberg, “Hermann Sasse und ‘Barmen’,” in *Die lutherischen Kirchen und die Bekenntnissynode von Barmen: Referate des Internationalen Symposiums auf der Reissburg 1984* ed. Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, Georg Kretschmar and Carsten Nicolaisen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 84–106.

and Paul Althaus of Erlangen took issue with the overly Barthian and Calvinist theology of the Barmen Declaration.³⁸

After direct attempts by the church government of Müller to take control of the intact churches of Württemberg and Bavaria through the house arrest of bishops Wurm and Meiser, there was an outcry by the Confessing Front. They called for a second synod to take place in Berlin-Dahlem on October 19-20, 1934. Here they decried the strong-arm tactics of the leadership of the *Reichskirche* and declared that the leadership had violated the new constitution of the church and therefore was no longer to be considered the spiritual leaders of the church.³⁹ Now the Confessing Front assumed this role, and proceeded to attempt to arrange the calls of pastors and even established two independent seminaries.

Through these events, it became clear to all that the leadership of Müller was ineffectual, and many complaints were registered with Hitler regarding his strong-arm tactics. Then on July 22, 1935 Hanns Kerrl was named minister of the government's newly created Ministry of Church Affairs.⁴⁰ While Müller was never really removed from office, the promotion of Kerrl effectively ended Müller's authority within the German Church. Kerrl attempted to work with and control the churches via a group of Church Committees, and attempted to steer a middle course between the Confessing Front and the *Deutsche Christen*. The leadership of the Confessing Front saw this as a challenge to their authority in the disputed churches, while the leadership of the Lutheran intact churches welcomed Kerrl's leadership so long as their authority within their churches was in no way undermined. This led to a final break between the

³⁸ Green, *Lutherans Against Hitler*, 181–85.

³⁹ Scholder, vol. 2, 266–70.

⁴⁰ Helmreich, 186.

Lutherans and the progressively more extreme leadership of the Confessing Front, with the Lutherans creating their own *Lutherrat*.⁴¹

The efforts by Kerrl failed to bring about a satisfactory resolution to the strife within the church and the government's desired unification of the churches. Therefore Hitler on February 15, 1937 decreed that there would be a new church election so that church could reorder itself "acting in complete freedom as the church people themselves decide."⁴² While this announcement was welcomed by most, the promised church elections never materialized.

Then in the middle of 1937, the German government began to crack down on the Confessing Front. The most significant move was made on July 1 when the Gestapo arrested Martin Niemöller at his home. While on March 2, 1938 Niemöller was ordered released by the court due to time served, he was immediately re-arrested by two Gestapo officers and sent to the concentration camps as Hitler's "personal prisoner," and remained so until he was liberated by American soldiers.⁴³ The arrest of Niemöller effectively demoralized and neutralized much of the Confessing Front, because he was the recognized leader of the movement by this time.

In September 1938, when the possibility of a military invasion of Czechoslovakia loomed, the Provisional Leadership of the Confessing Front called for an intercessory liturgy to be prayed in the churches. This prayer was an expression of corporate guilt for the outbreak of war. While the Munich Agreement prevented the war at this time and therefore the use of the liturgy, the authors of the liturgy had their pay blocked and greater measures threatened.⁴⁴ However, the outbreak of the actual war found not resistance, but a general support for the nation coming from the German churches of all stripes.

⁴¹ Ibid., 195–98.

⁴² Matheson, 65.

⁴³ James Bentley, *Martin Niemöller, 1892–1984* (New York: Free Press, 1984) 132, 140–41, 156.

During this same time of pre-war Nazi Germany, outside of the Christian churches there was also a growing neo-paganism that could be found in a couple of movements. The most visible figure was Alfred Rosenberg, who was one of Hitler's mentors and gave philosophical foundations for the Nazi party.⁴⁵ Hitler then elevated Rosenberg by naming him his Delegate for the Entire Spiritual and Philosophical Education and Supervision of the Nazi Party, which was a position with no real power, but afforded great prestige to Rosenberg.⁴⁶ Rosenberg's book *Myth of the 20th Century* called for the elimination of "Jewish" influences in the church, was second only to *Mein Kampf* in numbers printed during the Third Reich, and was recommended by the 'Central Gazette of the Curriculum Administration for Prussian Schools' for use in education in the schools.⁴⁷

The largest neo-pagan group in Germany during this era was the "German Faith Movement" led by Professor Jakob Hauer. Hauer was a former missionary of the Basel Missionary Society to India who was a proponent of a pagan Indo-Germanic religion that was heavily influenced by Hinduism.⁴⁸ The "German Faith Movement" was seen by some as another front in the *Kirchenkampf* and a tremendous threat to Christianity as it actively urged Germans to leave the Church.

The group that the Lutherans in America saw as the most extreme in its promotion of neo-paganism was the *Tannenbergbund*: led by World War I hero General Ludendorff and his wife Mathilde.⁴⁹ This group was smaller than the "German Faith Movement" and was stridently anti-

⁴⁴ Matheson, 77.

⁴⁵ Shirer, 97, 108.

⁴⁶ John S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933–1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1968): 56.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ The best study of Hauer and the "German Faith Movement" is Karla Poewe, *New Religions and the Nazis* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁴⁹ H. Koch, "Zur kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland," *Der Lutheraner* (hereafter *DL*), 91 (November 26, 1935): (continued next page)

Christian. The *Tannenbergbund* advocated belief in a distinctively German god or gods and promoted a radical form of nationalism.⁵⁰ However, this group did not have any political clout since it was never directly associated with the Nazi regime, largely due to Ludendorff's fallout with Hitler after the Bier Hall Putsch.

The Struggle of Lutherans in America to Understand the Events in Germany

Of course, when we look at these events from our historical perspective, we have better resources and a more objective standpoint from which we can evaluate these events than the American Lutherans of the time period under study. Sources, such as the accounts of how the Nazis actually viewed the *Kirchenkampf*, are available in the German archives, likewise we can look at the historical data to determine if the perceptions that the Lutherans of that day had were really accurate.

For many American Lutherans, the events in Germany were very dear to themselves as some were from synods such as the Missouri—Synod, the American Lutheran Church, the United Lutheran Church in America and the Wisconsin Synod which were still publishing in German and having many German language worship services throughout the 1930s. In 1935 the largest of these, the Missouri—Synod, elected John Behnken, the first American-born president of the Synod, with all previous presidents having been born in Germany. The Missouri—Synod still identified itself largely as German in its heritage and total social identity.⁵¹ Most American Lutheran church bodies were in fellowship with one of the churches in Germany, and sometimes called pastors back and forth across the Atlantic.

390.

⁵⁰ Conway, 5.

⁵¹ This is Kohlhoff's basic contention in his dissertation.

However, there were also a good number of American Lutherans whose ethnic background was not from Germany but from Scandinavia. There were Danes, Swedes, Norwegians and Finns who were now in America, and many still had close ties to their country of origin. Likewise, there were Lutherans from Slovakia, who also brought a unique perspective in light of their country of origin. Then there were also a great number of American Lutherans whose family histories went back for generations in America, some even before the American Revolution, and so their national allegiance was purely American.

While these American Lutherans brought a great deal of diversity of opinion and background to the discussion of the events in Nazi Germany, they by no means brought clarity and infallible insight into what was going on. Not surprisingly, those that were ethnically removed from Germany were less interested in the events in Germany, though they did not completely ignore them either. However, if one were to sum up how they understood the events in Germany, particularly during the first couple of years of the Third Reich, the best word would be uncertainty. This does not mean that they were not interested in what was going on, rather there was at times a great interest, but there was still a certain amount of hedging because they were not sure of their sources.

One of the foremost struggles for members and leaders of the American Lutherans was to find a source of news that one could trust. During this era, there were often many different, conflicting reports as to what was going on in Germany. As a result, it was difficult to ascertain what exactly was going on. These sources included the American mainstream press, the German press, correspondence with Germans, people who visited Germany, as well as efforts that were later revealed as attempts at German propaganda within the United States government.⁵² The editors of the journals were well aware of the difficulties of sorting through the varying sources

of news, as they themselves admitted. The editors even struggled with conflicting reports on the same events.⁵³ They report this difficulty, noting:

One reason for this is that the information which comes to us from Germany, both through letters and through the press, varies from week to week, if not day to day. What we write to-day concerning occurrences may not harmonize exactly with conditions as they will be when our reader receives this paper.⁵⁴

From the very beginning, when the first reports started to come out about the possible reorganization of the German churches, including some American newspapers predicting that there was a coming alliance between the Nazi party and the *Landeskirchen*, the *Lutheran Witness* simply stated that it was hard to say if these reports were true.⁵⁵ Often the problem was exacerbated by the rapid change in events that were sweeping Germany, changes that came so fast that it was difficult for them to be sure of what to report.⁵⁶ These changes in reports were such a problem that *The Ansgar Lutheran* warned “In fact, one hesitates to commit anything at all to writing about a situation which is so many-sided and so changing that any precise statement today may be obsolete before it appears in print.”⁵⁷ This was largely because it often took a report out of Germany several weeks to reach the United States, and sometimes one report might actually pass another due to irregularities in mail as well as the differences of things printed in Germany versus things wired here and printed in the US.⁵⁸ Even as the decade

⁵² Kohlhoff, 215.

⁵³ A. D. Mattson, “The Church in Germany,” *Journal of the American Lutheran Conference* (hereafter *JALC*) 1, no. 1 (January, 1936): 8, and M. Ösch, “Die kirchlichen Vorgänge in Deutschland, lutherisch gesehen,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* (hereafter *CTM*) 5 (September, 1934): 683.

⁵⁴ Martin S. Sommer, “What is happening in Germany,” *The Lutheran Witness* (hereafter *LW*), 53 (November 20, 1934): 402.

⁵⁵ Theodore Graebner, “The Lutheran Church in Germany,” *LW*, 52 (May 9, 1933): 169.

⁵⁶ Arthur H. Kuhlman, “Church News,” *Lutheran Standard* (hereafter *LStd*), 92, no. 51 (December 22, 1934): 10.

⁵⁷ Samuel McCrea, “Behind the Scenes in Germany,” *The Ansgar Lutheran* (hereafter *AnL*) 6, no. 25 (June 19, 1933): 5

⁵⁸ Julius Bodensieck, “Editorielles: Zur Kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland,” *Kirchenblatt* (hereafter *KB*) 76, no. (continued next page)

proceeded, and many events regarding the churches in Germany were reported and commented on, there still was a certain amount of hesitancy in their pronouncements due to the uncertain nature of the information that they were dealing with.⁵⁹

One theme that is found in the early era under study is a mistrust of the reports in the mainstream press. These press reports are discounted as biased against Germany and therefore unreliable. They even go so far as to state: “A man cannot always believe what he reads in the daily press.”⁶⁰ It was even hinted that the American press was not allowed to print good news coming out of Germany.⁶¹

One word that appears often in the texts and betrays definite sensitivity is “propaganda.” It is clear that the recent events as well as what was going on at that time were of great concern to the Lutherans of that day. There are many reports of communist or atheist propaganda that was being spread in the world.⁶² It appears that a mistrust of the mainstream press came from remembering the anti-German propaganda that was spread so widely during WW I.⁶³ They even used the term “propaganda” time after time in referring to reports in the press that they viewed as negative and wrong about Germany.⁶⁴ This perceived propaganda was seen as having “a distinct and important bearing upon our understanding of present happenings in Germany,” and was

31 (August 5, 1933): 3

⁵⁹ A.D. Mattson, “The Church in Germany,” *JALC* 1, no. 1 (January, 1936): 8, and Arndt, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Developments in Germany” *CTM*, 8 (May 1937): 399.

⁶⁰ J. T. Mueller, “Ein Zeugnis Für die Wahrheit,” *DL* 89 (May 16, 1933): 168. Similar sentiments questioning the reliability of the press can be found in Ludwig Fuerbringer, “Nachrichten aus Deutschland,” *DL*, 89 (April 18, 1933) 137–38; and Martin S. Sommer, “What is happening in Germany,” *LW*, 53 (November 20, 1934): 402.

⁶¹ Charles S. McFarland, “The Situation in Germany,” *LStd* 91, no. 46 (November 18, 1933): 15.

⁶² This was such a common and major concern, often overshadowing events in Germany, that it will be addressed in depth later in the dissertation.

⁶³ Kohlhoff, 213; Walter A. Maier, “Pogroms or Propaganda?,” *The Walther League Messenger* (hereafter *WLM*), 41 (May, 1933): 522; and “Die Verhältnisse in Deutschland,” *KB*, 76, no. 17 (April 29, 1933): 8.

⁶⁴ Sommer, “Germany and the Press,” *LW* 52 (April 25, 1933): 152–53; Theodore Graebner, “The Lutheran Church in Germany,” *LW* 52 (May 9, 1933): 169; and H. Dierks, “The New Germany: II,” *LW* 55 (October 20, 1936): 346.

denounced as “prompted by the father of lies.”⁶⁵ One reader even accused Walter A. Meier of “malicious propaganda” because of his defense of Hitler in 1933.⁶⁶

Many saw the news as being slanted by the mainstream press which was perceived to have an anti-German bias. This was buttressed by reports by people who either visited or recently moved from Germany declaring the American press reports to be propaganda.⁶⁷ Articles written by pastors and others in Germany took issue with the American press saying that their “reports of hideous murders, persecution of the Jews, chopped-off hands, and similar atrocities are infamous lies, poisonous propaganda.”⁶⁸

These fears of propaganda do not appear to have been entirely unfounded either. An example of propaganda in the press is given in the May 9, 1933 *Lutheran Witness*. This refers to a picture in “a St. Louis daily” of a man in a small dump cart, guarded by soldiers. The caption in the St. Louis paper says that it was a Jew who refused to clean the streets, and was now being made an example to other Jews. However, the writer had seen the same picture in a German paper which explained that the man was a communist leader who helped lead an uprising in Chemnitz, and was being brought to clean up the inflammatory posters. The German paper also had a second picture of the same man cleaning up the posters.⁶⁹

A couple of more examples of misreporting in the press were also noted in 1934. First there was the “legend” reported by the United Press that 600 pastors of the German Protestant Churches had joined the Roman Catholic Church. The *Kirchenblatt* noted that this was not a new rumor, as it had previously been reported with other numbers of pastors, such as 400,

⁶⁵ “Propaganda Versus Peace,” *LStd*, 91, no. 32 (August 12, 1933): 4.

⁶⁶ T. and E.E., *WLM* 41 (July, 1933): 643.

⁶⁷ This was included in letters to the editor: T.W.M., *WLM* 41 (July, 1933): 643; O.K., *WLM* 41 (July, 1933): 643–44; and Hilda Danik, *WLM* 45 (March, 1937): 402.

⁶⁸ Hans Kirsten, “Hitler Shows the Way,” *WLM* 41 (July, 1933): 692.

leaving the Protestant churches, and that all versions of this rumor are false.⁷⁰ Then the *Lutheran Standard* reported that a false rumor had been circulated that 200-300 pastors received letters of dismissal and most returned them unopened.⁷¹

Conversely, at least some of the American Lutheran editors and writers had fallen in with the anti-Semitic reasoning that the American and International press was biased because it was controlled by the Jews. Some of these claims came from correspondents in Germany, such as Hans Kirsten, a Lutheran Free Church pastor in Germany who went so far as to argue that the US would embrace the New Germany “were it not for the fact that Jewish interests controlling the world’s press find it expedient to distort the facts and misinform their international public with accounts of an alleged reign of barbarism and chaos holding the New Germany in its cruel grip.”⁷² Some of the American editors echoed these sentiments, for instance an editor of the *Kirchenblatt* introduced an article with the notation that “the Jewish International press has recently distributed stories about Germany that remind one of the wartime false propaganda.”⁷³ And Martin Sommer in the *Lutheran Witness* echoed the suspicion that the slant of reporting “may be attributed to Jewish influence.”⁷⁴

In light of these questions about the reliability of mainstream press reports and at least some suspicions of Jewish influence on the news, there was a strong questioning of the reliability of the reports of atrocities against the Jews. These reports were declared to be false propaganda by a press that was more concerned with the mistreatment of Jews in Germany than the

⁶⁹ Graebner, “The Lutheran Church in Germany,” *LW* 52 (May 9, 1933): 169.

⁷⁰ Th. Buehring, “Kirchliche Nachrichten: Massenübertritt deutscher Pastoren zum Katholizismus?,” *KB*, 77, no. 20 (May 19, 1934): 10.

⁷¹ Arthur H. Kuhlman, “Church News,” *LStd*, 92, no. 34 (August 25, 1934): 9–11.

⁷² Hans Kirsten, “The Church in the New Germany,” *WLM* 44 (December, 1935): 215, he also gave a similar slant in “Hitler Shows the Way,” *WLM* 41 (July, 1933): 662.

⁷³ “Die Verhältnisse in Deutschland,” *KB* 76 (April 29, 1933): 8.

wholesale massacre of Christians in the Soviet Union.⁷⁵ It was reported that German Jews even say that “The scary propaganda is mainly fictional, and the elements of truth in them are exaggerated to the point of being unrecognizable.”⁷⁶

Probably the most outspoken individual who denounced mainstream reporting as biased was Walter A. Maier in the *Walther League Messenger*. Maier boldly denounced what he saw as “poisonous propaganda” repeatedly using a number of different terms for it.⁷⁷ Not only did he condemn what he saw as false propaganda, but he also reported a number of times when he found false reports. These included an event where German refugee, Emil Ludwig, supposedly had his speech stopped by a German American Nazi waiter who sabotaged it via turning up the heat,⁷⁸ as well as the misrepresenting of one of Hitler’s speeches.⁷⁹ Maier was even willing to report on the rumor that a recent film about Germany which he had not seen was actually largely filmed in New York.⁸⁰ However, by the later part of the 1930s Maier was less of an apologist for Nazi Germany, arguing: “Nazi Germany has its faults and is making its serious mistakes. But let us protest against any misrepresentations which, in their cumulative effect, may help to throw our nation into devastating warfare.”⁸¹

⁷⁴ Sommer, “Church Conditions in Germany,” *LW* 53 (January 2, 1934): 6.

⁷⁵ Theo. Buehring, “Kirchliche Nachrichten – Aus anderen Kreisen: Zur Greuelpropaganda,” *KB* 76, no. 17 (April 29, 1933): 11; Fuerbringer, “Nachrichten aus Deutschland,” *DL* 89 (April 18, 1933): 138; and Sommer, “Germany and the Press,” *LW* 52 (April 25, 1933): 152–53.

⁷⁶ Julius Bodensieck, “Editorielles: Zur Greuelpropaganda,” *KB* 76, no. 42 (October 21, 1933): 5

⁷⁷ Walter A. Maier, “Pogroms or Propaganda?,” *WLM* 41 (May, 1933): 522; “The Watch Tower,” *WLM* 41 (July, 1933): 685; “Editorials: Jingo Journalism,” *WLM* 43 (October, 1934): 76; “Turret of the Times: Lloyd George’s opinion of the German situation has reversed itself,” *WLM* 43 (November, 1934): 167; “Editorials: Study the German Language,” *WLM* 44 (October, 1935): 74; “Turret of the Times: Anti-Semitism is not restricted to Germany,” *WLM* 45 (November, 1936): 169.

⁷⁸ Maier, “Jaundiced Journalism,” *WLM* 44 (January, 1936): 266–67, 304, 306.

⁷⁹ Maier, “Turret of the Times: The international press continues to misinterpret Germany,” *WLM* 45 (November, 1936): 169.

⁸⁰ Maier, “Editorials: The Old Game,” *WLM* 46 (March, 1938): 422.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Because the Lutherans in America were often unconvinced by the press reports, they often turned to reports from individuals within Germany itself as reliable eyewitnesses.⁸² Maier stated rather plainly when he wrote:

We hold no brief for any conditions or attitudes that exist in Germany. But our own pastors in Germany whose integrity is unimpeachable give us statements to the effect that there is gross and willful distortion in much that is printed in our American papers.⁸³

A number of the articles expressly stated that they were attempting to give a correct account of the events in Germany, which appears to betray either a mistrust of the press, or the fact that there were conflicting accounts going around.⁸⁴ Reports from respected Americans who visited Germany were also held to be more reliable sources of information.⁸⁵

In light of this, there is a definite emphasis on giving the benefit of the doubt to the Germans, and not to the press.

Let us be slow to believe evil of the German people. During the war a most shameful, deceitful, murderous, lying propaganda was carried on against Germany. Since then many have acknowledged their mistake. Those of us who know the Germans well and have traveled in that country know that there is scarcely another country where the visitor receives such kind, attentive, and considerate treatment as in Germany.⁸⁶

This was combined with warnings not to make hasty generalizations about the German people based on a given report in the news.⁸⁷ There was even a willingness to criticize editorials in

⁸² e.g. Fuerbringer, "Zur kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland," *DL* 89 (June 13, 1933): 203.

⁸³ Maier, "Jaundiced Journalism," *WLM* 44 (January, 1936): 306.

⁸⁴ Fuerbringer, "Nachrichten aus Deutschland," *DL* 90 (May 29, 1934): 180–81; and "Nachrichten aus Deutschland und über die dortigen kirchen Vorgänge," *DL*, 90 (March 6, 1934): 73–75

⁸⁵ Julius Bodensieck, "Editorielles: Zur Kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland," *KB* 76, no. 52 (December 30, 1933): 5; and "Observing the Times," *LStd*, 92, no. 14 (April 7, 1934): 3.

⁸⁶ Sommer, "Germany and the Press," *LW* 52 (April 25, 1933): 152–53.

⁸⁷ S. G. von Bosse, "Metropolitan Musings," *The Lutheran* (hereafter *Luth*) 15 no. 29 (April 20, 1933): 26; Samuel McCrea Cavert, "Behind the Scenes in Germany," *AnL* 6, no. 25 (June 19, 1933): 5; and Maier, "Editorials: 'Hitler Shows the Way,'" *WLM* 41 (April, 1933): 461.

other church papers that were thought to misrepresent the real conditions in Germany.⁸⁸

This is not to say that the editors of these periodicals simply trusted every other source but the press. Rather, there was a concern that getting a true picture of what was happening in Germany was very difficult.

Again, the press reports are unreliable and garbled, and even the writer of letters may be prejudiced or construct his theories upon insufficient data. We must therefore bide our time and wait for more stable arrangements if such be forthcoming from the present confusion.⁸⁹

Interestingly, when *The Lutheran Witness* reported that the American press had given credit to the Lutherans in Germany for standing up to Hitler, they seem surprised and thankful. “Of all this we ought to note, in the first place, that in this case the public press for once spoke words of commendation for Lutherans.”⁹⁰ It is also interesting to note that these questions regarding the reliability of the press are largely confined to 1933 and 1934. There were still some instances of questioning reports in the press as late as 1938, however there were very few, and even these did not question the basic premise that there was evil happening at the hands of the Nazis. It appears that as time went on there was more and more evidence that there were in fact problems in Germany and the press was not so off base. However, even as the outbreak of the Second World War was looming on the horizon, there still were warnings to be fair in the assessment of Germany and that Americans should not look down on the Germans.

We may look upon Germany from the point of view of the Pharisee. But will that get us anywhere? Should we not first sweep our backyard and say God be gracious to me a sinner! There are many things in our land that make us feel ashamed. We have the liberty, but that also gives a great responsibility.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Engelder, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: The Truth about Conditions in Germany,” *CTM* 6 (December, 1935): 947–48.

⁸⁹ Sommer, “What is happening in Germany,” *LW* 53 (November 20, 1934): 402.

⁹⁰ Sommer, “Church Conditions in Germany,” *LW* 53 (January 2, 1934): 6.

⁹¹ “Editorials and Comments: The Religious Situation in Germany,” *AnL*, 11, no. 33 (Aug. 14, 1939): 3.

The Methodological Procedure Employed

When seeking to evaluate how a theological tradition viewed things in a given era, there are a number of different resources that can be studied. These include the sermons being preached, the scholarly work that is done during that era, the convention proceedings, letters written and periodicals published. The primary method for investigating this topic will be a study of American Lutheran periodical publications. This is because a periodical study touches on all of the other forms of literature that a church produces in its life. While studying all of the preaching from an era is a massive task, and most sermons have not been preserved, periodicals do give a look at the preaching life of the church since important sermons by key individuals are often reprinted or at least summarized, and whole periodicals are often devoted to assisting pastors in their task of preaching.⁹² Periodicals also give an excellent insight into the scholarly work that was done during the time studied, since much of the content was scholarly articles, but they also included reviews and even ads for books that were published as well. Summaries of convention proceedings were generally published in the periodicals as a means of informing the membership of the churches on what took place at the conventions. To a somewhat limited extent, periodicals show the correspondence that the editors were having via the printing or summarizing of letters that they received from key individuals.

Obviously, one of the downsides to this method is that it is greatly stilted towards viewing the opinions of the elite within the churches who had the clout and editorial positions within the Lutheran churches of America. This means that there is a naturally clerical bias that is built in to the views printed. This is somewhat ameliorated by the fact that rank and file clergy and laity were able to get their voices heard via the writing of letters to the editor, however this is still a

⁹² For instance, *Pastor's Monthly* was predominately a preaching resource, and other periodicals such as *Concordia Theological Monthly* included a section on homiletical helps.

vast minority of the printed material. This shortcoming must be kept in mind when considering the results of this study.

There were more than 45 different American Lutheran periodicals published during this era, and the intent of this study is to analyze 30 periodicals that are representative of the whole body. These periodicals represent 11 different American Lutheran church bodies of varying sizes. Also two inter-denominational groups, the American Lutheran Conference and the National Lutheran Conference, will be studied. The Missouri-Synod's dissenting American Lutheran Publicity Bureau is also included, as are the publications of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, PA and one paper that is not associated with any specific group, *Dannevirke*, published by Holst and Christiansen. These periodicals also represent every language that American Lutherans published in, namely: English, German, Danish, Slovak, Norwegian, Finnish and Swedish. These publications also represent a great variety of genres, from academic works to popular works to youth publications and more straight news oriented papers. The variety of the periodicals also sheds some light into how widespread certain opinions were within American Lutheranism. Significantly, many of the articles were reprinted in several American Lutheran publications, representing different denominations or groups.

This list is not all inclusive, as some periodicals, such as the *Lutherland News* which was a local publication for southern Wisconsin, have been omitted. Also, for some of the smaller church bodies, only a single representative publication was chosen. Furthermore, there is at least one publication for which no extant copies from that period could be found.⁹³

⁹³ This is *The Zion* of the Slovak Zion Synod of the United Lutheran Church in America.

PART ONE

THEOLOGICAL CONCERNS OF THE AMERICAN LUTHERANS

The first and largest part of the study focuses on an analysis of the theological concerns that the American Lutherans had in regards to the events in Nazi Germany before the outbreak of the war. This is not intended to be a doctrinal analysis of their thought; rather it is an historical analysis of the varying concerns that they raised during this era. As a result, certain issues, such as the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms and the doctrine of Just War, while systematically related, will be treated separately, since the Lutherans of that era often debated these issues separately.

Chapter Two: The Passion for Lutheran Orthodoxy

This chapter deals with the theological issue that was the foremost concern of the American Lutherans, and in fact was underlying all of the other issues that they dealt with, this being the need to preserve Lutheran Orthodoxy in Germany. This chapter explores the American Lutheran writers' insistence on doctrinal purity and how this passion for orthodoxy underlay their evaluations of the events in Germany. This chapter also deals with some of the movements in Germany in which they saw Lutheran orthodoxy being undermined by the related threats of theological liberalism, unionism, and even a form of "papalism" which they saw as rearing their heads in the events in Germany. These movements were seen as subtly weakening the Lutheran church in Germany and therefore drawing it away from pure orthodox Lutheran teachings.

Chapter Three: Keeping the Two Kingdoms Separate

Of the various theological concerns that the American Lutherans raised during this period, the most prevalent one was the need for the Germans to keep straight Luther's distinction of the two kingdoms. While their understanding of this distinction often sounds more like the American political standard of the separation of church and state, the American Lutherans still saw this as rooted in Luther's theology. This chapter therefore will explore the great emphasis that the Lutherans in America placed on this distinction, as well as how they viewed those in Germany which they perceived as misunderstanding this distinction and thereby bringing in an inherently corrupting force into the church. This chapter also evaluates how the Lutheran writers in America perceived Hitler and the Nazi government in their exercise of civil authority. Extending from the concern for the right separation of Church and State, came an examination of the German groups that were perceived to be undermining or even destroying this distinction.

Chapter Four: The Debate over Just War Theory

A theological debate that was not really a subject in Germany during this era, yet greatly informed the Americans as to how one should act, particularly towards the growing possibility of war in the late 1930s, was the debate over Just War theory. While historically the doctrine of Just War has been accepted by Lutherans and is even codified in the Augsburg Confession, article 16, following the wake of the First World War and the growing pacifist movement in the greater Christian circles, this doctrine was questioned and debated by Lutherans as well. This chapter therefore examines the running debate within American Lutheranism over the veracity of the doctrine of Just War and its applicability to the events in Germany.

While there was general agreement within the American Lutheran circles that the Church and State should be kept separate, how this was to play out in the realm of war and peace was an open and raging debate at the time. This chapter therefore looks not only at the differing stances

that the American Lutheran writers took, but also how they waged the arguments and attempted to persuade their readers on this very timely subject. In many ways, the debate started out as a more academic one, dealing with the continuing aftermath of the Great War, but then as the 1930s progressed and the clouds of war began to gather again, this debate took on a more and more practical air.

Chapter Five: Concerns about Direct Threats to Christianity

A concern that not only regarded the events directly in Germany, but also helped to put these events into perspective for the American Lutherans, was the issue of the continued existence of Christianity at all. The American Lutheran writers viewed this era as a time of great direct threats to Christianity in Europe, from direct persecution to an undermining of Christian thought and the rise of neo-pagan religions. This chapter therefore looks at how the American Lutherans were concerned about persecution of Christians in Germany, as well as how the greater persecution of the church in the Soviet Union colored their views of the Nazi attacks. Another related concern addressed here is how the American Lutherans viewed the threat of neo-paganism and its impact on Christianity in Germany.

Chapter Six: Theological Trends Used by Nazi Supporters

There was much more to the *Deutsche Christen* than just the political support for the Nazi government. The theologians who supported the Nazi government did so with their own theological explanations, the foremost being the Nazi support of “Positive Christianity” and *Völkisch* theology. Therefore, an examination of the theological analysis of American Lutherans of events in Nazi Germany would be amiss to overlook how the American Lutheran theologians dealt with these theological concepts. Chapter Six then examines just how aware the Americans were of these ideas as well as their reactions to them.

Chapter Seven: The “Jewish Question”

When we look back at the events in Nazi Germany from our present perspective, the horrors of the Holocaust immediately come to mind. While the worst of those horrors took place after the outbreak of the war, the process of persecuting the Jews started from the very beginning of Hitler’s reign. This chapter therefore looks at how the American Lutheran churches dealt with the whole issue of the Jews, which at that time involved much more than just the Nazi treatment of them.

In this discussion, it is important to distinguish between how the American Lutherans viewed the Jews in both ethnic and religious spheres. Because the American Lutherans placed such a premium on keeping the right separation of Church and State, it should be of little surprise that they also often made distinctions between the civil and religious aspects of what one editor called: “the troublesome Jewish question.”¹ In this regard, it is also important to understand that the American Lutherans made the important distinction between the Jewish religion and the Jewish race, although this was admittedly a difficult balance since most Jews were Jewish both in religion and race.

¹ Gerhard Kittel, “The Church and the Jewish Christians,” *PM* 12 (March, 1934): 177-181.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PASSIO FOR LUTHERAN ORTHODOXY

One thing that has become abundantly clear in this study is that the American Lutherans' foremost concern was about Lutheranism and its preservation. Whether it was the movement to unite the *Landeskirchen* into the *Reichskirche* or the persecution of Christians in the Soviet Union, the foremost concern for Lutherans in America was proper Lutheran theology and the well-being of fellow Lutherans. This is not to say that there was no concern for other Christians, or even those outside of Christianity, but there was a definite concern for Lutherans first and foremost. If one were to give a priority to their concerns it would have been first for Lutherans, then for other Christians, and finally for those outside the faith.

Certainly, the American Lutherans were not unconcerned with those outside their religious fellowship, as there were real concerns given for other Christians as well as Jews and society in general. However, there is a somewhat parochial feel as their primary concern was for those who shared their faith. While this may seem strange to some, in the minds of the American Lutherans this made sense. After all, it is natural to be more aware of and concerned about those with whom one is in fellowship and therefore in communication with, than those outside of one's immediate sphere. To be sure, American Lutherans were not alone in this self-identification with their brethren in faith. As William Nawyn observed:

The strong tendency among American Protestants to find their self-identification in their denomination rather than in the broader Christian community showed itself in several ways. Appeals for "Christian refugees," for instance, aroused little special emotion. On the other hand, tales of persecuted Baptists and oppressed Mennonites stirred up sympathy and rage, even demands for government action or bitter

comments about the lack of concern for their coreligionists, within the Protestant denominations affected. This tendency is evidenced also by the capacity of denominational refugee and relief agencies to attract more support than those that were interdenominational, that is, Protestant-in-general.¹

This could be seen in a number of ways, in fact, Nawyn's observation was almost exactly paralleled in a 1938 article by Daniel Nystrom in *The Lutheran Companion*:

For most of us, the refugee problem is something which troubles us only theoretically. We talk about it and think something should be done. Oppression of Jews in Germany under the Nazi regime has created a serious problem for American Lutherans because of the large number of Jewish Christians who have been forced out of Germany by the Nuremberg laws. It was reported at the recent convention of the United Lutheran Church in America that 'it is estimated that for every Jew there are two Christians that fell under the ban. Among the victims are many Lutheran pastors and theological students who must seek openings in other countries.' Perhaps this problem will begin to demand something of us.²

If one takes seriously the theological belief that Lutheranism is the correct understanding of Biblical Christianity and therefore the purest of beliefs, then one would naturally make it a priority to make sure that those beliefs are protected throughout the world. There is little question that this was the view of the Lutheran editors and writers. J. E. Theon expressed this sentiment, albeit in an article concerned with the Lutheran unity movement in the U.S.:

When we speak of *True Lutheranism* we mean nothing less than real Biblical Christianity. The two cardinal principles of the Lutheran Reformation were: Scripture alone is the source and rule of Christian faith and life, and Salvation is by grace alone through faith in Christ Jesus. Wherever and whenever one of these fundamental principles is mutilated or lost True Lutheranism is destroyed. If we desire that our church is to be and remain truly Lutheran it is necessary that we adhere strictly to these principles and refuse to affiliate with those who build on other foundations by tolerating doctrines and practices contrary to Scripture.³

¹ Nawyn, 185.

² Daniel Nystrom, "The Spectator: A Review of Current News and Opinion," *The Lutheran Companion* (hereafter *LCmpn*) 46 (November 10, 1938): 1415.

³ J. E. Theon, "Will True Lutheranism Be Destroyed?," *Lutheran Sentinel* (hereafter *LSntl*) 18 (January 30, 1935): 35 italics original.

Beyond this, there were numerous exhortations to hold to true doctrine, and a number of the articles argued that things should turn out alright for the German churches if and only if they hold to Lutheran teachings, such as the authority of the Bible and a proper understanding of Law and Gospel.⁴ Then by 1939, when it was becoming more and more clear that Nazism was a problem, pure Lutheran doctrine was seen as the antidote. “Preachers who do not preach doctrine are woefully out of step with the modern world. Fascism, Nazism, communism, and all the other isms which disturb the world today have very definite doctrines which they endeavor to put into practice.”⁵

Not only was right doctrine understood as necessary for the church, but it was also seen as vital for rightly understanding the church situation in Germany. Some even argued that one could not properly understand the issues at hand without thoroughly looking at the theological concerns. For instance, a reviewer of Charles S. Macfarland’s 1933 book, *The New Church and the New Germany*, criticized him for not taking the theological issues into account: “He himself, however, does not take a firm stand towards the religious and theological problems involved.”⁶

When one boils down the concerns of the American Lutheran writers and editors regarding the rise of the Third Reich, their primary concern was for the preservation of a pure Christian church in Germany, which they defined as a pure Lutheran church. While the different Lutheran denominations in America had slightly different definitions of what pure Lutheranism was, the concern for pure Lutheranism was foremost for all of them. All of the concerns that they had

⁴ D. Schöffel, “Das Luthertum und die religiöse Krise der Gegenwart,” *Zirchliche Zeitschrift* (hereafter *KZ*) 60 (March 1936): 129–34. Arndt, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Hitler and the Lutheran Church in Germany,” *CTM* 4 (June 1933): 463–65; and Arthur Von der Thur., “Die Kirche Deutschlands und die nationale Erhebung.,” *KB* 76, no. 23 (June 10, 1933): 4–6.

⁵ Review of *Here We Stand* by Hermann Sasse in Arthur Brunn, *AmL* 22, no. 3 (March 1939): 23.

⁶ Review of *The New Church and the New Germany* by Charles S. Macfarland in *KZ* 58 (March 1934): 185–86.

really revolved around the preservation of Lutheranism, be it from outside attacks or from a theological watering down.

The Need to Preserve Lutheran Orthodoxy

If there is one thing that could be seen as the overarching and primary concern for the American Lutherans of the 1930s it would be a passion for the preservation of Lutheran orthodoxy as variously defined. For the Lutherans in America that were in fellowship or communication with those in the Lutheran *Landeskirchen* there was a real concern that Lutheranism in Germany be preserved. Likewise, those that were in fellowship with the Lutheran Free church were less bothered by the *Kirchenkampf* because they did not see those who were being attacked as orthodox Lutherans.

There was therefore an emphasis on the preservation of Lutheranism in Germany. Many of those who were in fellowship or communication with the *Landeskirchen* showed great concern that the new order in Germany, particularly in the church might be undermined by the events of the day. It has been noted that this was a concern that bothered Ralph Long of the National Lutheran Council: “It is our hope and fervent desire that the reorganization of the Church will not in any way militate against the life and influence of the Lutheran Church in Germany.”⁷ The Lutheran periodicals echoed that sentiment in a variety of ways throughout the 1930s. There was a common sentiment that in the midst of the *Kirchenkampf*, true Lutheran doctrine needed to be upheld and clung to all the more.⁸

⁷ Letter by Long to Gottfried Werner in Erlangen, quoted in Webster “American Lutheran Opinion Makers and the Crisis of German Protestantism under Hitler,” 208.

⁸ J. T. Mueller, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Ein mutiges Bekenntnis gegen die Deutschen Christen,” *CTM* 8 (April 1937): 310; “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland. Eine ernset und entschiedene Kundgebung aus Bayern,” *KZ* 58 (May 1934): 312–19; and “Lutheran News at a Glance,” *AmL* 20, no. 11 (November 1937): 20.

A number of the writers and editors noted that the Lutheran *Landeskirchen* in Germany had been greatly weakened over the past, due to liberalism and a general movement away from the Lutheran Confessions.⁹ Those that were in fellowship with the Lutheran Free Church observed: “These state churches are not strictly Lutheran, as is well known.”¹⁰ Without a doubt, Hermann Sasse was the prime source for this observation from a Lutheran perspective and he was quoted time and again in saying that in the 19th Century Germany attempted to create a church without a confession, therefore Germany is no longer a truly Lutheran country.¹¹

Others however pointed to a revival of Lutheran identity in Germany during this time as a sign of hope and joy. For many of these writers, the brightest light in the midst of the fog coming out of Germany was a definite renewal in Lutheran thinking, particularly in the early 1930s. In 1933, with the formation of the Reichskirche, a number of Lutheran leaders in Germany insisted that there be a strong Lutheran identity in this new church, which was then applauded in several American periodicals.¹² Then in January 1934 Ralph Long reported in several periodicals that the 450th celebration of Luther’s birth in November 1933 marked a definite turning point in a return to Lutheranism in Germany.¹³

⁹ W. Bodamer, “Die kirchlichen Zustände in Deutschland,” *Evangelisch Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt* (hereafter *ELGB*) 71 (October 4, 1936): 311; M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 63 (October 1939): 631–32; and review of *Here We Stand* by Hermann Sasse in Edward P. Nelson, *Augustana Quarterly* (hereafter *AQ*) 18 (January 1939): 75–79.

¹⁰ August Zich, “Hitler and Luther,” *The Northwestern Lutheran* (hereafter *NwL*) 20 (April 23, 1933): 132.

¹¹ M. Reu, *KZ* 58 (May, 1934) “The Place of the Lutheran Church in the Third Reich,”: 279; A. Valenčik, “Kde je sídlo luteránskeho povedomia?,” *Svedok* (hereafter *SV*) 30 (April 1, 1936): 148–50; and Hermann Sasse, “The Present Situation of the Lutheran Church Throughout the World,” *AnL* 8, no. 36 (September 9, 1935): 7–8 and 8, no. 38 (September 23, 1935): 7–8, 11 which was also printed in *Pastor’s Monthly* (hereafter *PM*) 13 (November 1935): 690–99 [Throughout this dissertation, multiple printings of articles in the periodicals studied will be noted in order to show that these opinions received a wider hearing than if they only were printed once].

¹² Arthur von der Thur., “‘Erfüllungen’ in der Kirche Deutschlands,” *Lutherischer Herold* (hereafter *LiH*) 11, no. 38 (June 22, 1933): 3–4; Arthur von der Thur., “Die Kirche Deutschlands und die nationale Erhebung,” *KB* 76, no. 23 (June 10, 1933) : 4–6; “Grundsätze und Forderungen,” *LiH* 11, no. 48 (August 31, 1933): 14.

¹³ Ralph H. Long, “Whither Germany?,” printed in *LStd* 92, no. 1 (January 6, 1934): 7–8; *AnL* 7, no. 2 (January 8, 1934): 6–7; and *LCmpn* 42 (January 6, 1934): 15–16.

Even in the throws of the *Kirchenkampf* there was a hope that Lutheranism would survive in Germany and in fact be strengthened by the ordeal. Several periodicals reported that the answer for the German churches was a return to the Lutheran Confessions and that a number of Lutherans in Germany were calling for just that.¹⁴ E. C. Fendt reported in a number of periodicals from late 1935 into 1936 that there was in fact a renewal going on in the Lutheran churches in Germany, particularly in the Confessional Churches which he referred to as the *Bekennnistreu*.¹⁵ The readers of *The Ansgar Lutheran* were likewise encouraged in January 1937 that:

In spite of the confusion of the church in Germany it does seem, in the opinion of Dr. [Alfred Th.] Jorgensen [of Copenhagen and member of the executive committee of the Lutheran World Convention], that out of the confusion a very strong Lutheran consciousness is making itself felt.¹⁶

On top of this, there were periodic reminders to the readers that the majority of German pastors still held to the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions, despite what was happening with the church leadership.¹⁷

For many of the editors and writers from a number of different American denominations, the *Kirchenkampf* was really a fight over the very nature of the church, and therefore the Gospel itself was threatened.¹⁸ A number of the writers went so far as to depict the *Kirchenkampf* as an

¹⁴ Engelder, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Erklärung der preussischen Vereinslutheraner," *CTM* 5 (July 1934): 485–87; Th. Buehring, "Kirchliche Nachrichten: Botschaft der deutschen Bekenntniskirche an die Obrigkeit," *KB* 78, no. 29 (July 20, 1935): 11; and "Church News: German Lutheran Day," *LStd* 93, no. 35 (August 31, 1935): 9.

¹⁵ E. C. Fendt, "Die religiöse Lage in Deutschland," *KB* 78, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 5–7; and the English form of this article "The Religious Situation in Germany," which was printed in *Lutheran Herald* (hereafter *LH*) 19 (October 29, 1935): 1056–57; *LCmpn* 43 (November 2, 1935): 1382–84; *LStd* 93, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 6–7; and *JALC* 1, no. 1 (January 1936): 59–62.

¹⁶ "Editorials and Comments: World Lutheranism in 1936," *AnL* 9, no. 4 (January 25, 1937): 3.

¹⁷ Ralph Long, "Deutschland marschiert!," *KB* 77, no. 1 (January 6, 1934): 8–9; G.C. Gast, "Church News: Peace in the German Church," *LStd* 93, no. 48 (November 30, 1935): 11–12; and Engelder, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Volkskirche oder Freikirche?," *CTM* 7 (March 1936): 230–31.

¹⁸ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 61 (April 1937): 255; "Ein Schweizer über die

attack on Lutheranism in Germany.¹⁹ A couple of periodicals cited Hermann Sasse in this regard and how Sasse wrote that the world was attempting to sentence the Lutheran Church to death.²⁰

Since many of the American writers saw this as a theological battle, the answer that they prescribed was for the German Churches to cling to the Lutheran Confessions in order to fight off these attacks. In particular, in good Lutheran fashion, the German churches were encouraged to hold to preaching the Word of God and administering the sacraments as the primary means of fighting off these attacks.²¹ Because of this, every triumph over the *Deutsche Christen* by the more steadfast Lutherans was trumpeted in America. This was proclaimed to the readers of the *Lutheran Standard* who were told, “The true Christians of Germany are rejecting the pseudo-Lutheranism which Müller, Jaeger and other theorists are attempting to impose on Germany,” and that “Hitler has swept everything before him throughout Germany – until now.” In particular, the winners were the Lutheran Bishops Meiser, Wurm and Marahrens.²²

The Threat of Liberalism and Modernism

Many of the Lutherans in America saw the shadows of liberalism and modernism behind the various theological threats to the Lutheran church in Germany. The history of theological liberalism in Germany was seen as weakening the theological backbone of the Lutheran church and allowing the various aberrations to enter into it. Some traced this history, while others

kirchliche Lage in Deutschland,” *LiH* 13, no. 1 (October 4, 1934): 5–6; this was also reflected in an ad for the book *Religion and Revolution* by Adolf Keller in *LH* 20 (January 28, 1936): 102.

¹⁹ M. Reu, “Wer sind die “deutschen Christen? Schluss,” *KZ* 57 (December 1933): 720–39; M. Willkomm, “Zur Kirchliche Lage in Deutschland,” *ELGB* 70 (January 13, 1935): 9; and review of *Here We Stand* by Hermann Sasse in Edward P. Nelson, *AQ* 18 (January 1939): 75–79.

²⁰ Lawrence S. Price, “The State of the Church,” *JALC* 4, no. 8 (August 1939): 40; and review of *Was heist lutherisch?* by Hermann Sasse in L. Fürbringer, *CTM* 8 (April 1937): 317.

²¹ Baron von Ropp, “Die Kirche in der Entscheidung,” *LiH* 11, no. 42 (July 20, 1933): 3–4; review of *Volkskirche und Freikirche* by Karl Pabst in *KZ* 59 (July 1935): 428; and Engelder, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Die Aufgabe der lutherischen Kirche,” *CTM* 9, no. 10 (October 1938): 783–84.

²² Arthur H. Kuhlman, “Church News,” *LStd* 93, no. 5 (February 2, 1935):16–19.

pointed out that the new movements, such as unionism, really stemmed from the liberals' weakening of the church via undermining the Bible and the Confessions.

For most of the American Lutheran writers theological liberalism and its philosophical counterpart of modernism were inherently bad, however, often the terms liberalism and modernism were used interchangeably as the ideas were seen as insolubly linked. Therefore the ideas of modernism and liberalism were denounced far and wide as problematic and corrosive for faith and culture.²³ Oscar Olson made this quite clear when he wrote in the *Augustana Quarterly*:

Liberalism is clearly spiritually insolvent. The validity of revelation destroyed, the foundation of religious faith becomes but shifting sand. Moral sanctions are swept away, a spirit of skepticism and cynicism takes hold of the new generation. The "acids of modernity," to use Lippman's phrase, eat away the patina of refinement and character. The end is disillusionment and despair. But man can not live without religion nor civilization survive without it.²⁴

This attitude was also colorfully illustrated in a few of the titles of articles which included: "Modern Religious Liberalism: Is it Genuine Freedom or Disguised Slavery?"²⁵ "Modernism Sitting in Judgment of Foreign Missions,"²⁶ and "What is Modernism Doing to our Young People?"²⁷

This concern about the rise of liberalism or modernism was closely tied to Germany in the minds of the American Lutheran writers. Many of the ethnic German churches in America were

²³ Arndt, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Turning Away from Modern Theology," *CTM* 6 (August 1935): 616–17; Herman A. Preus, "Recent Developments and Trends within the Church," *Theological Forum* (hereafter *TF*) 6 (April 1934): 66–87; and review of *Modern Religious Liberalism* by John Horsch in Fendt, *LStd* 96, no. 28 (July 9, 1938): 14.

²⁴ Oscar N. Olson, "The Position of the Church in the present World Situation," *AQ* 14 (January 1935): 40–53.

²⁵ S. M. T., "Modern Religious Liberalism: Is it Genuine Freedom or Disguised Slavery?," *SV* 30 (April 15, 1936): 187–88.

²⁶ "Modernism Sitting in Judgment of Foreign Missions," *LH* 16 (December 27, 1932): 1476.

²⁷ John W. Bradbury, "What is Modernism Doing to our Young People?," *LH* 17 (January 3, 1933): 4–6.

founded by individuals who left Germany at least partly due to the rise of rationalism and subsequent theological liberalism. Therefore, there continued to be a sore spot in these periodicals regarding how liberalism first arose in Germany.²⁸ Even some of the Scandinavian-American Lutherans pointed out that Germany's problems arose from their initial embrace of liberalism.²⁹ For a number of the writers, this was really the root cause of all of the problems in Germany, because theological liberalism had so undermined the Church and nation that they were susceptible to all sorts of wrong influences.³⁰ The periodicals cited Hermann Sasse a number of times as one individual in Germany who was giving a clarion call that the German churches were inherently weak because of over 100 years of liberalism.³¹ A number of authors took it a step further by arguing that the events in Germany in the 1930s really could not be blamed on Lutheranism, since orthodox Lutheranism had for so long been undermined in German theology that there was little left of Luther in the German churches of the day.³² The fact that the confessional conscientiousness and integrity of the German churches had been thus

²⁸ W. H. T. Dau, "The Meaning of Calvary in the Minds of Modernists," *CTM* 3 (February 1932): 85; "Do European Conditions Affect Us," *JALC* 2, no. 2 (February 1937): 40–42; and O. P. Kretzmann, "The State of Visible Christendom: V. The Decline of Modernism," *AmL* 22, no. 7 (July 1939): 9–10.

²⁹ *AnL* 9, no. 33 (August 16, 1937) p. 1, 7–8; and no. 34 (August 23, 1937) p. 1, 6 "Karl Barth and the Church Struggle in Germany"; and Paul H. Andreen, "From Luther to Hitler," *LCmpn* 43 (April 13, 1935): 454–58 this article was also printed in *TF* 7 (April 1935): 90–107.

³⁰ Arndt, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Ein Weltchristentum auf unionistischem Fundament," *CTM* 4 (March 1933): 226–27; Aug. F. Zich, "Martin Niemoeller," *Theologische Quartalschrift* (hereafter *TQ*) 35 (January 1938): 18–19; "Karl Barth and the Church Struggle in Germany," *AnL* 9, no. 33 (August 16, 1937): 1, 7–8; and "Karl Barth and the Church Struggle in Germany," *AnL* 9, no. 34 (August 23, 1937): 1, 6.

³¹ Hermann Sasse, "The Present Situation of the Lutheran Church Throughout the World" *AnL* 8, no. 36 (September 9, 1935): 7–8; Hermann Sasse, "The Present Situation of the Lutheran Church Throughout the World" *AnL* 8, no. 38 (September 23, 1935): 7–8, 11; Lawrence S. Price, "The State of the Church," *JALC* 4, no. 8 (August, 1939): 40–55; and Hermann Sasse, "Die lutherische Kirche der Welt in der Gegenwart," *KB* 78, no. 41 (October 12, 1935): 5–6.

³² M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik: Ausland: Erweichung des konfessionellen Bewusstseins?," *KZ* 56 (March 1932): 189–90; M. Willkomm, "Zur Kirchliche Lage in Deutschland (Fortsetzung)," *ELGB* 70 (January 27, 1935): 23–25; and review of *Things that Are Caesar's* by Paul Banwell Means in Oscar N. Olson, *AQ* 15 (April 1936): 174–75.

undermined was seen as the cause of the growth of unionism in Germany, as will be discussed below.

The criticisms of theological liberalism were centered particularly around the use of Historical Criticism and the perceived attacks on the Bible that these entailed. Most of the writers were greatly concerned about these attacks and at times pointed to how the Lutheran *Landeskirchen* in Germany had largely moved away from the Bible because of Historical Criticism. In their eyes, the use of Historical Criticism undermined the authority of the Bible and placed human ideas and analyses over the Bible.³³ These critiques of Historical Criticism and liberalism were almost universal in the American Lutheran publications, with the only exception being the *Lutheran Church Quarterly* which periodically praised this as a proper theological approach.³⁴

This concern was not only aimed at Germany, but often articles were aimed at American Historical-Critics as well. More than once, the authors used the perceived problems of liberalism in Germany in order to criticize liberal teachings in America.³⁵ An article in *The Lutheran* went so far as tying American liberals with the radicals in Germany by declaring: “The so-called ‘German Christians’ are worthy exponents of the theology advocated by the editors of *The Christian Century*”³⁶

³³ W. Bodamer, “Die kirchlichen Zustände in Deutschland,” *ELGB* 71 (October 4, 1936): 310–13; J. T. Mueller, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Theologie, Konfession, Glaube,” *CTM* 7 (December 1936): 946–48; and J. T. Mueller, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Die ‘deutsche Bekenntnisfront von den Grundsätzen der Reformation gewichen.’,” *CTM* 8 (February 1937): 149–50.

³⁴ Review of *Der Kampf um das Alte Testament* by Paul Volz in J. M. Myers, *The Lutheran Church Quarterly* (hereafter *LCQ*) 7 (January 1934): 81–82; review of *Das Alte Testament und die Predigt des Evangeliums* by Emanuel Hirsch in O. F. Nolde, *LCQ* 11 (January, 1938): 92–93; and review of *Theologia Militans: Schriften für lutherische Lehre und Gestaltung* ed. by Martin Doerne et al., in *LCQ* 12 (April 1939): 211–17.

³⁵ Martin S. Sommer, “Hitler and the Old Testament,” *LW* 52 (May 23, 1933): 183; Julius Bodensieck, “Editorielles: Das Alte Testament in christlichen Jugendunterricht,” *KB* 82, no. 10 (March 11, 1939): 5–6; and Walter A. Maier, “Turret of the Times,” *WLM* 42 (March 1934): 428–29.

³⁶ Paul Morentz and Hoh, “Is John’s Gospel Anti-Jewish?,” *Luth* 19, no. 51 (September 15, 1937): 11–12.

Liberalism was seen as corroding away the very essence of historic Christianity, and therefore leading to the potential downfall of much of the Western world. In the minds of the writers, one of the greatest threats to peace, security and Christianity in the world was communism. Communism was seen as inherently tied to atheism as an aggressive and evil political form of atheism.³⁷ Therefore, when several of the writers argued that liberalism was leading ultimately to communism and atheism, this could be considered a very serious charge.³⁸ This charge is shown in the words of George Lillegard in the *Lutheran Sentinel* in 1934:

[W]hen men, like Dr. Larsen, expect to realize "the ideal of God's Kingdom" by establishing a "more Christian social order" and putting through "social reconstruction," they are not only bound to be disappointed, but form a real menace to society, because they so readily swallow the propaganda of the atheistic socialists and Bolsheviks who today are making a desperate effort to conquer the world for their anti-Christian system of government and social organization. That this is the result of Modernism and the Social Gospel is abundantly clear from the way in which Modernists support and praise the "great Bolshevik experiment."³⁹

For the American Lutheran writers, another perceived outgrowth of liberalism was the rise of heathenism in the world. Several of the authors directly linked the growing heathenism in the world and in the U.S. to liberalism.⁴⁰ August Zich even went so far as to say: "If almost any American liberal were to listen to any of the comparatively few neo-pagan Nazi preachers he invariable would come away wondering what was wrong with it."⁴¹ Likewise, there were a

³⁷ See Chapter 5 below for further discussion of this.

³⁸ "Governments and Economic Systems," *LH* 21 (August 31, 1937): 855–57; Geo. O. Lillegard, "The Debacle of Lutheranism in the Norwegian Lutheran Church: III. 'The Social Gospel'," *LSntl* 17 (June 6, 1934): 179–83 and continued in "The Debacle of Lutheranism in the Norwegian Lutheran Church: IV. A Bolshevik Aid Society," *LSntl* 17 (June 20, 1934): 195–200; and C.R. Tappert, "Currents and Counter-Currents Regarding the Liberal and Biblical Attitude Toward Religion," *TF* 7 (January 1935): 19–27.

³⁹ Geo. O. Lillegard, "The Debacle of Lutheranism in the Norwegian Lutheran Church: III. 'The Social Gospel'," *LSntl* 17 (June 6, 1934): 183.

⁴⁰ Martin S. Sommer, "Hitler and the Old Testament," *LW* 52 (May 23, 1933): 183; "Modernism and Nazified Religion in Germany," *LH* 18 (November 13, 1934): 1003; and review of *The New Paganism* by Dr. W. E. Biederwolf in G., *NwL* 21 (November 25, 1934): 383.

⁴¹ August Zich, "Nazi Pagans and Liberal Pastors," *NwL* 21 (October 28, 1934): 340.

number of authors who argued that the German neo-pagan groups were the ultimate outgrowth of theological liberalism in Germany.⁴² Interestingly, even the *Lutheran Church Quarterly*, which otherwise is supportive of Historical Criticism, had an article in 1938 that argued that the problems in the religious situation with its exaltation of blood, race and soil in Germany came from “that extreme humanism which would limit revelation to what man discovers, whether through experience or in the social process itself.”⁴³

Quite a few of the American Lutheran writers and editors also tied religious liberalism with the events of the *Kirchenkampf* and with the *Deutsche Christen* in particular. A number of assessments of the German church situation of the 1930s all agreed that the *Deutsche Christen* were at least led by and rallied around the theological liberals in Germany.⁴⁴ In particular the writers were upset by the *Deutsche Christen* assaults on the Old Testament, as illustrated so vividly in the *Sportpalast* event, yet often this was not seen so much as anti-Semitic as it was seen as an outgrowth of Historical Criticism.⁴⁵ The *Lutheran Herald* described this group as “The modernistic movement in Germany, much advertised in the press, which has called for the exclusion of Jews from offices in the Church, the abolishment of the Old Testament, and even the whole Bible, and the substitution of a Nordic pagan religion.”⁴⁶

⁴² Missioninspektor Lokies, “Christentum und völkische Religiösität,” *KZ* 58 (November 1934): 660–66; JEN, “News and Notes,” *The Lutheran Youth* (hereafter *LY*) 3 (October 1938): 9–10; and E. C. Fendt, “Die religiöse Lage in Deutschland,” *KB* 78, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 5–7; and the English form of this article “An Estimate of the Religious Situation in Germany,” *JALC* 1, no. 1 (January 1936): 61 this same article was also printed in: *LCmpn* 43 (November 2, 1935): 1382–84; *LH* 19 (October 29, 1935): 1056–57; and *LStd* 93, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 6–7.

⁴³ John Aberly, “Notes and Studies: Religion in the Third Reich,” *LCQ* 11 (October 1938): 385–95.

⁴⁴ M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland Ausscheidung des linken Fluegels der Deutschen Christen,” *KZ* 58 (January 1934): 58–63; “German Protestantism Entrenched Against Radicalism,” *LH* 17 (December 26, 1933): 1187–88; and E. Theodore Bachmann, “Protestantism in the Nazi State,” *LCQ* 8 (January 1935): 2.

⁴⁵ “Andre Lande: Den tysek Kirche og Nazismen,” *Dannevirke* (hereafter *DV*) 54, no. 47 (November 22, 1933): 1; Ralph H. Long, “Whither Germany,” *AnL* 7, no. 2 (January 8, 1934): 6–7; and Martin S. Sommer, “Hitler and the Old Testament,” *LW* 52 (May 23, 1933): 183

⁴⁶ “German Protestantism Entrenched Against Radicalism,” *LH* 17, no. 52 (December 26, 1933): 1187–88.

For the writers of these periodicals, this rejection of the Old Testament signified in fact a rejection of the Bible as the inspired, inerrant Word of God, and therefore as a rejection ultimately of the heart and soul of Christianity. For these men, once one had rejected the Bible as the source and norm of doctrine, as the *Deutsche Christen* had done, then ultimately it would pull one's faith from Christianity into a new form of paganism. In this, they saw the movement as a total attack on the essence of Christianity, as they noted that not only was the Bible itself rejected, but also the Bible's central message of the Gospel.⁴⁷

While most of the writers in the American Lutheran periodicals were concerned about liberalism and its destructive influences, not all were worried about the future of it. Some of the writers saw the events in Germany as a sign of a movement that was actually in its death throes as more and more Germans reacted against the excesses of liberalism and neo-paganism. In May of 1939 the *American Lutheran* celebrated the decline of "the momentary heresy known as Modernism."⁴⁸ In much the same way, other periodicals expressed relief that the liberal churches in Germany were in fact failing to attract people.⁴⁹ In this regard, Karl Barth was often hailed for his work in thwarting liberal theology in Germany.⁵⁰ One particular event that was especially celebrated in a couple of periodicals was how Barth addressed a meeting of liberal theologians in 1937 at St. Gall, Switzerland and told them "Friends I wish to call you, but *brethren in Christ*,

⁴⁷ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 61 (April 1937): 251–56; review of *Christ versus Hitler?* By William Kraft in August, Zich, *NwL* 24 (June 6, 1937): 191; and J. P. Band, "Den tyske Kirkestrid," *DV* 54, no. 25 (June 20, 1934): 8.

⁴⁸ "The Decline of Modernism," *AmL* 22, no. 5 (May 1939): 3–4.

⁴⁹ Interview of G. H. Bechtold, in "Inner Missions in Germany," *JALC* 1, no. 11 (November 1936): 37–41; Arthur H. Kuhlman, "Church News: Noted Tuebingen Theologian Speaks on Church Situation," *LStd* 93, no. 13 (March 30, 1935): 11; and "German Protestantism Entrenched Against Radicalism," *LH* 17 (December 26, 1933): 1187–88.

⁵⁰ Herman A. Preus, "Recent Developments and Trends within the Church," *TF* 6 (April 1934): 66–87; "The Decline of Modernism," *AmL* 22, no. 5 (May 1939): 3; and review of *Here We Stand* by Hermann Sasse in Edward P. Nelson, *AQ* 18 (January 1939): 75–79.

no! For that is just what we are *not!* We are not only disunited on single points, but we are entirely so, even on fundamental and final truths.”⁵¹

A number of writers of Lutheran publications in America took great hope in signs that they believed pointed to a concerted effort by the Nazi government to clamp down on theological liberalism in Germany. Some saw Hitler as a savior of Christianity because he clamped down on liberalism and its products of atheism and communism. A couple of the authors went so far as to declare that Hitler had silenced or otherwise vanquished liberalism from Germany.⁵²

The one group that was seen by many American Lutheran periodicals as an inherently liberal group was the Freemasons, due to its deistic beliefs. A number of writers emphatically insisted that freemasonry was really an outgrowth of liberalism.⁵³ Because of this, there were a number of articles that reported on the status of freemasonry not only in Germany, but around the world.⁵⁴ When Hitler banned the Freemasons from Germany, this was cheered by a tremendous amount of writers.⁵⁵

⁵¹ J. T. Mueller, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Professor Karl Barth’s Gratifying Frankness,” *CTM* 8 (December 1937): 955–56; and “Editorials and Comments: The Church’s Struggle in Europe,” *AnL* 9, no. 11 (March 15, 1937): 3, 7–8. Emphasis original in the *AnL* article.

⁵² Gustav Entz, “Die Lage der evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland,” *ELGB* 73 (May 15, 1938): 150–52; E. C. Fendt, “Die religiöse Lage in Deutschland,” *KB* 78, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 5–7; and the English form of this article “The Religious Situation in Germany,” which was printed in *LH* 19 (October 29, 1935): 1056–57; *LCmpn* 43 (November 2, 1935): 1382–84; *LStd* 93, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 6–7; and *JALC* 1, no. 1 (January 1936): 59–62.

⁵³ Review of *Christianity vs. Freemasonry* by Theo. Dierks in Henry Manken, Jr., *Luth* 15, no. 13 (December 29, 1932): 22; “Lodge Religion and Christianity,” *LSntl* 15 (December 7, 1932): 338–39; and G.A. Aho, “Christian Youth and the Lodges,” *LY* 4 (February 1939): 7–9.

⁵⁴ “Wie stark mögen die Freimaurer sein?,” *ELGB* 67 (April 3, 1932): 109; “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Turkey Forbids Freemasonry,” *CTM* 7 (February 1936): 152; and Theo. Buehring, “Kirchliche Nachrichten – Aus anderen Kreisen: Vom Freimaurertum,” *KB* 75, no. 11 (March 12, 1932): 10.

⁵⁵ J. T. Mueller, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Die neue Staatsführung und das Freimaurertum,” *CTM* 5 (June 1934): 487; Walter A. Maier, “The Watch Tower,” *WLM* 41 (June 1933): 618–19; Julius Bodensieck, “Editorielles: Das neue Deutschland und die Freimaurerei,” *KB* 76, no. 42 (October 21, 1933): 3–4; “Freimaurer in Deutschland,” *ELGB* 70 (November 3, 1935): 347–48; and “Andre Lande: Frimureriet i Tyskland skal opløses,” *DV* 54, no. 17 (April 23, 1933): 8.

The Fear of Unionism in Germany

One of the specific areas that the Lutheran writers in America saw liberalism as undermining the true, Lutheran faith in Germany was in the prospect of unionism in the German Churches. For most of the American Lutherans, this fear was shown most vividly in the formation of a united *Reichskirche*. Since this meant that the Lutheran *Landeskirchen* would now be a part of the same church as the smaller Reformed churches and the large Church of the Old Prussian Union, the Americans figured that this meant that this would be a new union church. There was a further concern that the Confessing Front also expressed a form of unionism, since it was made up of Lutherans, Calvinists and members of the Prussian Union.

In general, most of the writers feared unionism as an evil that would undermine the true faith. This was a theological concern that predated the attempts to create a united *Reichskirche* in Germany, since there were articles written in 1932, as well as later, warning of the dangers associated with unionism in the United States.⁵⁶ This shows an overall concern about unionism, which was further reflected in the concerns about the nature of the events in Germany. A couple of articles went a step further in arguing that for churches to have any form of union they must first have unity in doctrine.⁵⁷ The clearest statement of this sentiment was a quote by Hermann Sasse in response to the work of Faith and Order.

The Lutheran Church has a special task laid upon it, now that the movement for union has reached this point. It must reaffirm and win recognition for a principle which has exposed it to contempt and to the charge of impenitent confessionalism, namely, that

⁵⁶ M.C. Waller, "Unionism: What Does the Bible Say about Church Union?," *LSntl* 15 (January 20, 1932): 27–28; H.A. Preus, "What is Unionism?," *LSntl* 15 (April 27, 1932): 137–41; and J. T. Mueller, "Theological Observer – kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: The Blindness of Modernistic Unionists," *CTM* 3 (March 1932): 217.

⁵⁷ Arndt, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Ein gewaltiges Zeugnis gegen Irrlehre," *CTM* 7 (November 1936): 869–71; "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland. Ein Wort der Ev.luth Kirche Altpreußens an ihre Glieder," *KZ* 58 (May 1934) 319–20; and "Wird es Deutschland zu einer evangelischen Reichskirche kommen?," *LiH* 11, no. 32 (May 11, 1933): 13.

true Church unity is utterly impossible without unity of faith, teaching and confession.⁵⁸

The concern over unionism was so prevalent that there were only three articles that expressed the sentiment that any sort of union across confessional lines was generally a good idea in Germany or in the world.⁵⁹ These writers argued that the Protestant church in Germany should be willing to work together for the common good; being part of a stronger, united church that could better respond to the challenges of the day. As the report in *Gettysburg Seminary Bulletin* described Martin Schlunk's position: "The church in Germany is undergoing a baptism of fire which should produce a new, strong, united Protestant body."⁶⁰ These sentiments appear to reflect an early form of ecumenicalism, and therefore see this as a good thing. Two of these articles come from the *Gettysburg Seminary Bulletin* and the *Lutheran Church Quarterly* which both were issued from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, PA; while the *LCQ* was co-published by The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Mt. Airy, Philadelphia, PA. Here there is a common thread also in that the *LCQ* was the only periodical that endorsed theological liberalism in Germany.⁶¹

The primary concern here was that when one creates a church union with those of other faiths, the orthodox faith is thereby diluted, and undermined. The reasoning held that if one is in union with those who hold wrong beliefs, then one is tacitly endorsing these wrong beliefs or otherwise saying that proper belief is not important. The end result therefore is a theologically

⁵⁸ Hermann Sasse, "Church Unity and the Lutheran Confessions," *JALC* 1, no. 11 (November, 1936): 31–34.

⁵⁹ These three were: E. Theodore Bachmann, "Protestantism in the Nazi State," *LCQ* 8 (January 1935): 1–12; Heinrich Frenzel, "Einigung des Protestantismus!," *LiH* 15, no. 45 (August 5, 1937): 12–14; the third instance was actually a report on how Martin Schlunk, from Germany, lectured on this at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg in "Lecture by Prof. Martin Schlunk, D.Theol.," *The Gettysburg Seminary Bulletin* (hereafter *GSB*) 15, no. 4 (November 1935): 9.

⁶⁰ "Lecture by Prof. Martin Schlunk, D.Theol.," *GSB* 15, no. 4 (November 1935): 9.

⁶¹ See note 34 above.

weakened church which will have trouble proclaiming the Gospel and can end up being further watered down since it is hard to stop once one begins compromising with wrong teachings.⁶²

Because of this, it is hardly surprising that the Lutheran writers in America reacted with tremendous concern in 1933 when it appeared that all of the *Landeskirchen* might be placed together into a *Reichskirche* formed from the different confessions. These concerns were raised from a number of sources across the American Lutheran spectrum. Interestingly, there was one illustration that a number of the authors pointed to in this concern. This was the history of Prussia; as these writers saw this *Reichskirche* as a new, expanded version of the Prussian Union.⁶³ Further evidence of this was seen in the fact that the ultimate *Reichsbischof*, Müller, was also bishop of the Old Prussian Union.⁶⁴

The structure of the new *Reichskirche*, in that it was made up of *Landeskirchen* of a variety of confessions all in one *Reichskirche* while each of the *Landeskirchen* still kept its confessional autonomy, flummoxed the American Lutherans as to whether it was really a unionistic church or not. The majority of voices in America did declare that it was inherently unionistic, yet there were a number of dissenting voices as well and a few who were not sure. The *Concordia Theological Monthly*, *Lutherischer Herold*, *Augustana Quarterly*, *Theologische Quartalschrift*, and *The Northwestern Lutheran* all were convinced that the new church was in fact a form of improper church union.⁶⁵ Standing on the other side of the issue were the *Lutheran Standard*, *The*

⁶² J. T. Mueller, "Theological Observer – kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: The Purpose of Modernistic Church-Union Movements," *CTM* 3 (March 1932): 217–18; M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland: Bekenntnis und Union," *KZ* 60 (October 1936): 630–31; and "Von der Neugestaltung der Kirche in Deutschland," *LiH* 11, no. 40 (July 6 1933): 5–6.

⁶³ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 57 (December 1933): 759–67; H-n, "Miscellanea: Genesis der Union in Deutschland," *CTM* 8 (November 1937): 860–61; and "German Protestantism Under Nazi Government," *LH* 17 (June 27, 1933): 587.

⁶⁴ Lauerer, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland Zur lage des Luthertums," *KZ* 58 (February 1934): 117–21.

⁶⁵ "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Ein Zeugnis gegen den Unionismus," *CTM* 4

Lutheran Church Quarterly, and the *Lutheran Companion* all of which maintained that since the *Landeskirchen* maintained their autonomous structures and confessions, the *Reichskirche* was in fact not a union church, but a central body over independent churches.⁶⁶ The authors in the *Lutheran Herald* were predominantly on the side of seeing the *Reichskirche* as properly keeping the confessions separate, with one dissenting opinion.⁶⁷ For a number of the other periodicals, the sentiment was split between these two understandings of the *Reichskirche*. For the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* and the *Kirchenblatt*, and even specific authors such as Michael Reu, their early assessments of the formation of the *Reichskirche* reflected a fear that it was in fact a new union.⁶⁸ However, as time progressed they then looked again and noted the independence of at least some of the *Landeskirchen* and concluded that it really wasn't unionistic after all.⁶⁹ Interestingly, the assessment of the *Evangelisch Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt* went in the other direction.⁷⁰

(September 1933): 706–07; “Befürchtungen und Hoffnungen im deutschen Kirchentum,” *LiH* 12, no. 9 (November 30, 1933): 8–9; review of *Here We Stand* by Hermann Sasse in Edward P. Nelson, *AQ* 18 (January 1939): 75–79; August Pieper, “Die Zustände in der protestantischen Kirche Deutschlands,” *TQ* 31 (October 1934): 270–78; and August Zich, “The Protestant Church in Germany,” *NwL* 21 (December 9, 1934): 390.

⁶⁶ Ralph H. Long, “Impression of World Lutheranism,” *LStd* 92, no. 18 (May 5 1934): 17–18; J.F. Krueger, “Theological Studies in German Universities,” *LCQ* 6 (October 1933): 353–70; and E. S. Hjortland, “Augustana Brotherhood section The Church and The European Situation,” *LCmpn* 46 (March 10, 1938): 313–14.

⁶⁷ *LH* had a number of articles that maintained the position that the *Reichskirche* was not unionistic, including: “German Protestantism under Nazi Government,” *LH* 17 (June 27, 1933): 587–88; “Lutherans Object to Confessional Agnosticism,” *LH* 17 (June 27, 1933): 588; and L.W. Boe, “Europe of Today,” *LH* 18 (January 2, 1934): 5–6, 20–22. The only dissenting article was “Church and State in Germany,” *LH* 17 (October 17, 1933): 932.

⁶⁸ M. Reu, “Wer sind die “deutschen Christen? Schluss,” *KZ* 57 (December 1933): 720–39; and Theo. Buehring, “Kirchliche Nachrichten – Aus anderen Kreisen: Eine Stimme aus Hessen,” *KB* 76, no. 34 (August 26, 1933): 10–11.

⁶⁹ M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 59 (July 1935): 433–41; Ralph Long, “Deutschland marschiert!,” *KB* 77, no. 1 (January 6, 1934): 8–9.

⁷⁰ W. Hoenecke, “Noch einmal zur Lage der Kirche in Deutschland,” *ELGB* 68 (July 9, 1933): 215–19 argued that it was not unionistic, but then M. Lehninger, “Die Kirche im Dritten Reich,” *ELGB* 69 (June 17, 1934): 183–84 and W. Bodamer, *ELGB* 71 (October 4, 1936) “Die kirchlichen Zustände in Deutschland,”: 310–13 argued that it was a union church.

As the decade wore on, there was a growing concern that even if the initial *Reichskirche* was not really unionism, there was a growing pressure for unionism within the *Reichskirche* as the differences between the confessions were being downplayed. Some writers further lamented that often there were pressures on the Lutheran pastors to downplay distinctive Lutheran teachings in the church.⁷¹ Many of the authors were upset by the pressure by the *Deutsche Christen*, who from the beginning pressed to make the *Reichskirche* into a union church.⁷² Then later it was lamented that the “Thuringian German Christians” were pushing to create a “Confessionless National Church.”⁷³ However, more of the authors actually laid the blame for the pressure for unionism right at the feet of Hitler and that Nazis.⁷⁴ In particular, there was a concern that the Nazis were pushing that the ideology of Nazism was to override all Christian teachings.⁷⁵ However, some of the writers breathed a sigh of relief following the *Anschluss* of Austria, since the Nazis left the Lutheran churches intact and independent of other confessions.⁷⁶

Because of their concerns that unionism not be allowed to take over the Lutheran Church in Germany, a number of American Lutheran authors expressed support for those in Germany who

⁷¹ W. Bodamer, “Die kirchlichen Zustände in Deutschland,” *ELGB* 71 (October 4, 1936): 310–13; “Um die Einheit der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche,” *LiH* 15, no. 45 (August 5, 1937): 10–11; and J. T. Mueller, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Union als Gewissenslast,” *CTM* 9 (January 1938): 66–67.

⁷² W. Hoenecke, “Noch einmal zur Lage der Kirche in Deutschland,” *ELGB* 68 (July 9, 1933): 215; “Wohin treibt die deutsche Reichskirche?,” *KB* 77, no. 15 (April 14, 1934): 5–7; and “Die ‘Deutsche Evangelische Reiskirche’ (Fortsetzung),” *LiH* 11, no. 34 (May 25, 1933): 8–11.

⁷³ “Thüringen,” *LiH* 14, no. 44 (July 30, 1936): 13.

⁷⁴ M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 61 (December, 1937): 762; “German Church Delegates Denied Passports,” *LH* 21 (August 10, 1937): 783; and Ek., “Ako to dnes vyzerá v Nemecku v kresťanskom živote?,” *SV* 30 (August 1, 1936): 346–50.

⁷⁵ August Pieper, “Hitler und die Protestantische Kirche Deutschlands,” *TQ* 31 (January 1934): 45–52; August Zich, “Church News from Germany,” *NwL* 25 (March 27, 1938): 99–100; and interview with President Knubel in “At a Fork in the Road: World Lutheranism Reaches Place of Choice in Sphere of Duty to World Christianity,” *Luth* 20, no. 37 (June 15, 1938): 13.

⁷⁶ A.F. Gräbner, *KB* 81, no. 19 (May 7, 1938) “Die lutherische Kirche in Oesterreich,”: 16; M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland: Anschluss Oesterreichs,” *KZ* 62 (May 1938): 317; and M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland: Die neue Ostmark,” *KZ* 62 (June 1938): 369–71

attempted to prevent this from happening. The writers echoed those who warned that the unionism that was in Germany should not be allowed to expand.⁷⁷ The periodicals also sometimes reprinted specific statements from the Lutheran *Landeskirchen* that insisted on confessional autonomy for the Lutheran church in Germany.⁷⁸

Since there was a great deal of concern about the *Deutsche Christen* and their pushing for unionism, it is of little surprise that the leaders of the church resistance movements were also evaluated in regards to their own responses to this unionism. A fairly common assessment of the Confessing Front is that it was inherently unionistic as it was made up of Lutherans, the Reformed and members of the Prussian Union.⁷⁹ The Barmen Declaration was specifically singled out as an example of a new declaration of faith that did not take into account the varying confessions.⁸⁰ However, these criticisms were not entirely without some moderation. Several of the writers, while not overly happy about the unionism in the movement, understood it as a possibly necessary evil in order for these churches to work together against a far greater evil of the *Deutsche Christen*.⁸¹

⁷⁷ “Kirchliche Nachrichten: Deutscher Lutherischer Tag in Hannover,” *KB* 78, no. 35 (August 31, 1935): 10–11 which was also reprinted in “Erklärung des ‘Deutschen Lutherischen Tages’ in Hannover,” *LiH* 13, no. 50 (September 12, 1935): 11; and “Ein Bekenntnis der Ev.=Luth. Kirch Altpreußens” J. T. Mueller, “A Confession of the Ev. Luth. Church of Old Prussia,” *DL* 90 (June 12, 1934): 203.

⁷⁸ Th. Buehring, “Kirchliche Nachrichten: Lehre, Gestalt und Ordnung der Lutherischen Kirche: Erklärung des ‘Deutschen Lutherischen Tages’ in Hannover,” *KB* 78, no. 35 (August 31, 1935): 11; and M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 61 (April 1937): 251–56.

⁷⁹ “Ein evangelisches Bekenntnis in den Kirchlichen Wirren der Gegenwart,” *LiH* 12, no. 37 (June 14, 1934): 12–13; August Zich, “The Church in Germany,” *NwL* 24 (June 20, 1937): 195–96; and W. Bodamer, “Die kirchlichen Verhältnisse in Deutschland,” *ELGB* 74 (June 25, 1939): 198–201.

⁸⁰ W. Ösch, “Der Höhepunkt des Kirchenkampfes,” *CTM* 6 (December 1935): 881–88; M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland: Kirchliche Konsolidierung?,” *KZ* 61 (June 1937): 383–84; and J. T. Mueller, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Ein ernstes Wort gegen die Barmer Unionsplattform,” *CTM* 9 (September 1938): 708–09.

⁸¹ Arndt, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Die Stellung der Bekennenden Kirche verurteilt,” *CTM* 7 (December 1936): 945–46; M. Hulsemann, “Die politische und religiöse Gestalt des dritten Reiches (Schluss),” *KB* 77, no. 9 (March 3, 1934): 7–8; and Max Monsky, “Zur Kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland,” *LiH* 12, no. 47 (August 23, 1934): 4–6.

For many of the Lutherans in America, especially those in fellowship with the Lutheran *Landeskirchen*, there was some hope and pride that the confessional church was avoiding unionism.⁸² In particular, there was a certain amount of encouragement that came from the fact that the Lutheran bishops of the intact churches refused to allow their churches to be swallowed up in a union within the *Reichskirche*.⁸³ There was also a fair amount of praise for the Lutheran leaders in Germany who refused to join in the unionistic Confessing Front. Lutheran critiques of the Barmen Declaration were trumpeted in America, especially in the *Concordia Theological Monthly*.⁸⁴ In much the same way, a number of writers expressed their joy when the Confessional Church and the Confessing Front parted ways.⁸⁵ However, some of the writers in America were still critical of some of the Lutheran leaders, including bishops Meisner and Wurm as well as Bodelschwingh, for being too willing to work with and commend the Reformed within the *Reichskirche* and the Confessing Front.⁸⁶

There was one group that all agreed was free of unionism in Germany, and that was the small Lutheran Free churches. Some upheld these as the ideal from the start, while others lamented that in the end these were the only truly Lutheran churches left because unionism in the

⁸² See also the discussion of this in Chapter 10 below.

⁸³ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 59 (December 1935): 745–61; August Pieper, "Die Zustände in der protestantischen Kirche Deutschlands," *TQ* 31 (October 1934): 270–78; and L.W. Boe, *LH* 18 (January 2, 1934) "Europe of Today," 5–6, 20–22.

⁸⁴ Engelder, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Ein lauter Protest gegen die Union," *CTM* 5 (December 1934): 959–68; W. Ösch, "Der Höhepunkt des Kirchenkampfes," *CTM* 6 (December 1935): 881–88; and Engelder, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Der Unionismus der lutherischen Landeskirche," *CTM* 9 (January 1938): 63–65.

⁸⁵ W. Ösch, "Der Höhepunkt des Kirchenkampfes," *CTM* 6 (December 1935): 881–88; M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland: Kirchliche Lage," *KZ* 60 (October 1936): 627–32; and Th. Buehring, "Kirchliche Nachrichten: Lehre, Gestalt und Ordnung der Lutherischen Kirche: Erklärung des „Deutschen Lutherischen Tages“ in Hannover," *KB* 78, no. 35 (August 31, 1935): 11.

⁸⁶ Ösch, "Die kirchlichen Vorgänge in Deutschland, lutherische gesehen: II, 1934," *CTM* 6 (August 1935): 594–600; M. Lehninger, "Die Kirche im Dritten Reich," *ELGB* 69 (May 20, 1934): 149–50; W. Bodamer, "Die kirchlichen Zustände in Deutschland (Schluss)," *ELGB* 71 (October 18, 1936): 328–31.

Reichskirche had swallowed up the Lutheran *Landeskirchen*. Interestingly, these reports were not solely from those who were in fellowship with the Free Churches.⁸⁷

“Romanism” that crept into the *Reichskirche*

Another aspect where a segment of American Lutheran writers saw the orthodoxy of the churches in Germany being undermined was in the very structure of the new *Reichskirche*. While it might seem like a small concern, a number of Americans viewed the naming of a *Reichsbischof* as a move away from true Lutheranism. The problem was that this move placed all of the German *Landeskirchen* under one ecclesiastical head who was perceived to hold total ecclesiastical power over the rest. This was seen as too much like the Roman Catholic Church with the Pope as the supreme head of the church.⁸⁸ Hermann Sasse was even quoted in the *Concordia Theological Monthly* as saying that the formation of the *Reichskirche* was one of the darkest days in Lutheranism, partly because of the imposed papal type hierarchy in the church.⁸⁹ There were a couple of authors who were not as upset about the presence of bishops and even a *Reichsbischof* in the new church as they were concerned with the incredible amount of power that was wrongly concentrated in the hands of a few men.⁹⁰

A couple of the authors took a somewhat deeper look at the very nature of the political structure in the new German Church. They argued that the very idea of a single head of the

⁸⁷ J. T. Mueller, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Vereinigungsbestrebungen lutherischer Freikirchen in Deutschland,” *CTM* 6 (March 1935): 230–31; M. Reu, “Wer sind die ‘deutschen Christen? Schluss,” *KZ* 57 (December 1933): 720–39; and W. Bodamer, “Die kirchlichen Zustände in Deutschland,” *ELGB* 71 (October 4, 1936): 310–13.

⁸⁸ M. Ösch, “Die kirchlichen Vorgänge in Deutschland, lutherisch gesehen,” *CTM* 5 (September 1934): 693–94; August Pieper, “Hitler und die Protestantische Kirche Deutschlands,” *TQ* 31 (January 1934): 45–52; L. Fuerbringer, “Nachrichten über die neugeordneten kirchlichen Verhältnisse Deutschlands,” *DL* 89 (November 14, 1933): 375–77.

⁸⁹ L. Fuerbringer, “Miscellanea: Eine beachtenswerte Stimme aus Deutschland,” *CTM* 4 (December 1933): 937.

⁹⁰ “Die Bischofsfrage,” *LiH* 12, no. 3 (October 19, 1933): 9; and Daniel Nystrom, “The Cross and the

church, following Hitler's *Fuhrerprinzip*, was actually hierarchical in a way that replicated the papacy when applied to the church.⁹¹ This analysis came from an insight based on how Hitler was a nominal Catholic and that he intended to unite the German churches, not by doctrinal agreement as Lutheranism espoused, but by a hierarchical structure such as the Roman Catholic Church is built upon.⁹²

The majority of articles that expressed these sentiments came from the *Concordia Theological Monthly*, *Der Lutheraner*, and *Theologische Quartalschrift*. This shows what might be a continuing reticence to support the idea of bishops in the church due to those churches early problems with bishops in their own traditions. However, there were a couple of other periodicals who also reflected concern over the *Reichsbischof*, so the concern was not restricted solely to these churches.⁹³

Some Conclusions Regarding the Passion for Orthodoxy

The American Lutherans, much like American Christians of all stripes, were primarily concerned with the preservation of their fellow believers in Germany. However, this concern manifested itself in more than just a concern for the well being of Lutherans. Rather, their primary concern was that pure Lutheran teaching be preserved in the midst of the struggles of the *Kirchenkampf*. As Kegel aptly notes: "The major concern of American Lutherans in the church struggle can be stated unequivocally: concern for the continued confessional witness of German

Swastika," *LCmpn* 42 (February 17, 1934): 198–99.

⁹¹ "Worauf es für die protestantische Kirche in Deutschland ankommt," *LiH* 12, no. 31 (May 3, 1934): 10; and Daniel Nystrom, "The Cross and the Swastika," *LCmpn* 42 (February 17, 1934): 198–99.

⁹² August Pieper, "Hitler und die Protestantische Kirche Deutschlands," *TQ* 31 (January, 1934): 45–52; and review of *Lutherische Kirche Deutschlands – wohin?* by H. Kirsten in Engelder, *CTM* 10 (August 1939): 639–40.

⁹³ These other articles included "Worauf es für die protestantische Kirche in Deutschland ankommt," *LiH* 12, no. 31 (May 3, 1934): 10; "Die Bischofsfrage," *LiH* 12, no. 3 (October 19, 1933): 9; and Daniel Nystrom, "The Cross and the Swastika," *LCmpn* 42 (February 17, 1934): 198–99.

Lutheranism.”⁹⁴ In this way, they praised those that they saw as holding fast to historic Lutheranism, while criticizing those who were willing to compromise their beliefs.

American Lutherans in the 1930s were almost unanimously resistant to liberalism and modernism, and this was reflected in how they constantly raised concerns about the German situation. For most of the Lutheran writers in America the single biggest theological problem in Germany was theological liberalism or modernism which was seen as undermining the true faith as based on the Bible. They saw this elevation of human reason and lowering of the Biblical authority as ultimately tearing away at the true faith. As a result, liberalism was seen as connected to the root of many of the problems that will be evaluated in this study; such as unionism, the mixing of the Two Kingdoms, communism, neo-paganism and Nazi theology. The only dissenting note came from the *Lutheran Church Quarterly*, which was published by the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, PA and The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Mt. Airy, Philadelphia, PA and therefore reflecting their heritage of Americanized Lutheranism coming from the tradition of Samuel Simon Schmucker.

This is not that surprising, seeing how the churches of the Synodical Conference were outspokenly hostile to liberalism, and the American Lutheran Conference had been formed in 1930 largely out of concerns about the liberalism of the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA).⁹⁵ However, even some of the voices within the ULCA raised concerns about the rampant liberalism in Germany, which indicates that the ULCA’s brand of liberalism was not nearly as extreme as those in Germany. It appears that all of the American Lutherans were concerned about the extremes of liberalism and they were not quite as divided as their rhetoric between the American bodies might imply.

⁹⁴ Kegel, 66.

This basic agreement concerning liberalism and its undermining of Biblical authority was seen directly in the movement towards unionism in Germany, as perceived in the *Deutsche Christen*, the *Reichskirche*, and the Confessing Front. The basic rationale was that if one loses their grounding in the true faith, then one is open to mixing that faith with others, since neither is really seen as ultimate any more. Therefore the unionism was seen as a sign of the possible death of Lutheranism in Germany.⁹⁶

Another, albeit smaller, concern was that the undermining of proper Lutheran theology also led the German *Reichskirche* to adopt a human form of government that was unbiblical, in the naming of a single *Reichsbischof* over all of the different Confessions in the *Landeskirchen*. For some of the writers, this was an echo of what happened in the Middle Ages under the Roman Catholic Church. There seemed to be a parallel between these two movements, one from history and one from that day, in elevating a single human head over the church, rather than establishing the church on the basis of sound, Biblical teachings.

The American Lutheran writers' identification of the problem as being an undermining of orthodox Lutheranism by liberalism and its related problems implies also that these men viewed Germany, and probably all of Europe, as still an inherently Christian place. Terms that scholars today might use to refer to Europe as having moved past Christianity, such as Post-Christian and Post-Constantinian, would have been not only foreign terms but also foreign concepts to the American Lutherans of the 1930s. They saw Germany's inherent Christianity as terribly weakened by liberalism and possibly threatened as well, but it was still seen as essentially Christian at the time.

⁹⁵ E. Clifford Nelson, ed. *The Lutherans in North America*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980): 461–62.

⁹⁶ Interestingly, Kegel agrees that the American Lutherans were very concerned about the rise of Unionism in Germany, however he paints this as more of an American phenomenon than a truly theological concern, overlooking similar concerns by Meiser, Maharens, Wurm, Sasse, Elert, Althaus and others.

This concern might also explain how the American Lutherans were concerned with orthodox Christianity being undermined by the threat of unionism. If they had seen the very Christian nature of Germany as having been either lost or on the brink of being lost, there might have been more openness to supporting the unionizing tendencies of the Confessing Front as at least Christianity fighting for survival. This was the position of the more liberal few of Gettysburg, but they seem to have been the only ones to raise a fuss over this issue.

It is also possible that some did see the very presence of Christianity in Germany as being threatened, but rather than appeal to a united Christian front, they believed that a distinctively Lutheran and orthodox response was necessary. While the term was not used, they might have seen this as a time when the few remaining orthodox Lutherans in the *Landeskirchen* were in need of standing firm in a *Status Confessionis*. This appears to be the stance of the more theologically conservative voices from the Synodical Conference, as well as others like Michael Reu.

The virtually unanimous outrage at perceived unionism in Germany also shows a certain level of agreement within American Lutherans. While in the United States, some of the American Lutherans charged others with unionism because of church fellowship, these charges were leveled at Lutherans who were in fellowship with other Lutherans with whom they had theological differences. What this indicates is while some of the American Lutherans saw church fellowship between Lutherans of different stripes as unionism almost all American Lutherans agreed that fellowship across confessional lines was unionist and wrong.

As this study continues, this theme that proper Lutheran theology was being threatened or even lost, will be seen as a constant worry for the Lutherans in America. It seems that while they certainly did not want bad things to happen to people in Germany or elsewhere, the primary concern still rested in the realm of proper theology. In their eyes this was essential since proper

Lutheran theology was the only thing holding out eternal hope to the people of Germany and elsewhere.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

There was one theological error that many of the American Lutherans were gravely concerned about and saw as behind the possibility of unionism and other theological compromise in the German churches: the mixing of the Two Kingdoms or Two Realms. This comes from the doctrinal understanding put forth by Martin Luther that God rules this world through two different kingdoms or realms, the left and the right.¹ The right hand kingdom is God's ruling via the Gospel in the church and the left hand kingdom is how God rules the world through earthly means including, but not limited to, the civil government. However, during this time period, the term "The Two Kingdoms" is conspicuously absent from the discussion, as most of the American Lutherans referred instead to the doctrine of the "separation of Church and State."

This chapter is not intended to be a critique of how well these American Lutheran writers understood and applied Luther's teaching on this subject. They were part of a growing awareness of this Lutheran distinction, but in which men of that time did not generally describe it in ways that later Lutheran scholars would write of it.² In fact, the term, the "Two Kingdoms"

¹ Luther actually spoke of this as two kingdoms, two regiments, and even at times spoke of there being more kingdoms including a kingdom of the devil, see Kenneth Hagen, "Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," in *God and Caesar Revisited: Luther Academy Conference Papers no. 1*, ed. John R. Stevenson, (Luther Academy Conference: 1995), 28.

² For a discussion of the Lutheran distinction between the Two Realms, see Robert Benne, *The Paradoxical Vision: A Public Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

had only recently been developed in Germany, with the first use of this term being found in 1922.³

The Proper Separation of Church and State

The issue of the proper separation of Church and State was an issue that was in the forefront of the minds of the American Lutherans. It was even observed that there was an awakening in American Lutheranism in regards to this important distinction.⁴ In this regard, they reflected the concerns of most other American Protestants at this time.⁵ For many of the American Lutherans, the American Separation of Church and State was seen as an ideal example of the way it should be.⁶ It appears that the American Lutherans were conflating the American political dogma of the separation of church and state with Luther's distinction of the two realms. Yet it was clear that there was a real concern that their readers understood the nature of the separation of Church and State and this was reflected in a number of the articles.

These articles reflected an effort to explore this doctrine that went beyond just the periodical literature. Most notably, there were several books on the subject that were reviewed and summarized for their readers.⁷ This was such a live subject that lectures that were also

³ Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work*, trans. Robert C. Schultz, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 188.

⁴ L. H. Schuh, "God and Caesar," *AnL* 8, no. 27 (July 8, 1935): 1, 7–8, 16.

⁵ For a full study of this development see Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁶ "Editorials and Comments: Church and State," *AnL* 10, no. 15 (April 11, 1938): 3, 7; C. H. Becker, "The Relation Between Church and State," *PM* 10 (October 1932): 579–87; Theodore Graebner, "Separation of Church and State," *CTM* 4 (April 1933): 249–55; and "The U.S. Constitution and the Augsburg Confession," *LH* 21 (September 14, 1937): 904.

⁷ Reviews of *Seven Centuries of the Problem of Church and State* by Frank Gavin in Robert Fortenbaugh, *LCQ* 12 (January 1939): 97–98; and Walter A. Maier, *WLM* 47 (November, 1938): 192; review of *Church and State* by G. T. Lee in Olaf Lysnes, *LH* 16 (October 18, 1932): 1182; and reviews of *American Church Law* by Carl Zollmann in Theodore Graebner, *CTM* 4 (April 1933): 249–55; and *Luth* 15, no. 30 (April 27, 1933): 16.

reported on, including one that took place in Germany, but were seen as instructive to the American readers.⁸

The editors of the American Lutheran publications saw the distinction between the realms of Church and State to be a vital distinction that impinged upon the proper understanding of events in the United States as well as those in Germany. Their discussion of this doctrine ranged from simple explanations of what it means to criticisms of wrong understandings and even a willingness to shake a few fingers at the church in Germany because it was seen as blurring this distinction. Because of its perceived importance, the American Lutherans spilled quite a bit of ink over the proper understanding of this doctrine and how it should be applied.

Proper Distinction Discussed

As the Lutheran periodicals were edited by some of the better educated clergy and leaders in the churches, it is natural that they would take their role seriously as instructors and educators for the rest of the church. Therefore, they ran articles that would instruct the readers in various different aspects of Lutheran theology. The “doctrine of the separation of Church and State” was one doctrine that received at least as much if not more discussion and explanation as any other doctrine except the doctrine of Justification.

There were a number of articles that were published that simply endeavored to inform their readers of what the proper distinction between the Church and State should be.⁹ While there were countless articles that referenced some form of the doctrine of the Two Realms, there were a couple that went to great lengths to explain what the doctrine is and how it should be

⁸ Pastor Wm. Oesch gave a series of lectures on “Church and State” during an Augustavus Adolphus celebration which was reported by Ottomar Krueger, “Hands Across the Seas: Germany,” *LW* 52 (March 28, 1933): 124.

⁹ Nathan R. Melhorn, “Lutheranism and Government,” *National Lutheran* (hereafter *NL*) 8 (December, 1939): 23–26; Stephen Tuhy, Sr., “Cirkev a Štát,” *SV* 32 (December 1, 1938): 535–37; and S.J. Strandjord, “Church, State

manifested in our lives and outlooks. Lewis Schuh went so far as to print a series of 32 propositions on the proper relationship between the Church and State.¹⁰ Several articles pointed to Article 28 of the Augsburg Confession as the proper basis for this distinction.¹¹

Often, even the discussion of the issues of Church and State in Germany were couched in terms of attempting to instruct the American readers of how this relationship should and should not be handled. A number of the concerns over the perceived mixing of the two realms in Germany were given as warnings regarding what problems can befall the church and society when these realms are wrongly mingled.¹² In these cases, the authors viewed the situation in Germany as an object-lesson for their American readers.

A few of the studies that were presented attempted to give more historical understanding to the nature of the relationship between the Church and State. These included a couple of reviews of the book *Seven Centuries of the Problem of Church and State*, by Frank Gavin.¹³ The *Concordia Theological Monthly* informed its readers that many of the problems in modern European churches stem from a mixing of the Two Kingdoms that reaches back to the Middle Ages.¹⁴

Even purely in regards to the events in Germany, there were a number of defenses of the proper Lutheran understanding of this distinction. These were deemed necessary because there

and Society,” *LH* 21 (November 23, 1937): 1147–49.

¹⁰ Lewis H. Schuh, “Propositions on Relation of Church and State,” *NL* 5 (March, 1936): 1–2.

¹¹ E. Gorfem, “Home, Church and State,” *LStd* 93, no. 1 (January 5, 1935): 9; and “The U. S. Constitution and the Augsburg Confession,” *LH* 21 (September 14, 1937): 904.

¹² Examples of this include M., “Erziehung der Jugend,” *TQ* 33 (July, 1936): 205–07; August Zich, “Church and State,” *NwL* 20 (July 30, 1933): 244–45.

¹³ Reviews of *Seven Centuries of the Problem of Church and State*, by Frank Gavin in Robert Fortenbaugh, *LCQ* 12 (January, 1939): 97–98; and Walter A. Maier, *WLM* 47 (November, 1938): 192.

¹⁴ Engelder, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Die schriftgemässe Lehre vom Verhältnis zwischen Kirche und Staat,” *CTM* 6 (September, 1935): 708–10.

were several outspoken American Christians who accused Lutheranism as being the root of the problems in Germany because they claimed that Lutheranism espoused an attitude of subservience to the state. In particular, Edgar A. Mowrer's book, *Germany Puts the Clock Back*, was seen as a serious threat considering his contention that:

All the pet doctrines of Prussianism are found in the writings of the founder, Doctor Martin Luther. For him autocracy lay in God's plan; civil and religious authority, he wrote, should be mixed together in one hand as 'in a cake.' Therefore in each Protestant German state before the revolution the ruling prince was also the *summus episcopus*, the highest bishop. The unity of the Church lay not in its doctrine, but in the local dynasty. A prince 'by God's grace' had not only a right to rule, but he could rule relentlessly. 'The ass wants blows and the rabble to be ruled by violence; therefore God did not place a fox's tail in the hands of the autocracy, but a sword.' The Lutheran Church came to exist primarily in and through the state.¹⁵

In light of these arguments, there were a number of defenses of Lutheranism against Mowrer and others.¹⁶ There was even the defiant declaration that it was Luther's conception of the separation of Church and State that kept the churches in Germany from becoming subservient to the Nazi state like all other parts of German life.¹⁷

A Christian's Responsibility to the Civil Authorities

An offshoot of their teaching over the proper understanding of the distinction between the Church and the State was the concern as to how a Christian was to relate to the civil authorities. Since many of the periodicals could best be described as revolving around the right hand kingdom, the editors apparently felt the need to explain the Christian's responsibilities towards the civil realm. Therefore, there were a number of articles that espoused the duties that Christians should fulfill towards the government.

¹⁵ Edgar A. Mowrer, *Germany Puts the Clock Back* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1933), 201–02 quoted in Theo. Buenger, "A Defense of Luther against Edgar A. Mowrer," *CTM* 5 (April 1934): 296–305.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*; Karl Koehler, "Pulitzer-Prized Propaganda," *Faith-Life* (hereafter *FL*) 6, no. 6 (June, 1933): 8, 11–13; and "Luther und Müller," *LiH* 13, no. 2 (October 11, 1934): 6.

These various articles that instructed the readers on the proper separation between Church and State attempted to show both what the proper separation entails and what it does not entail. These instructions included warnings that the Church should remain out of politics.¹⁸ However, many of these also pointed out that the Church does have a duty to the Left Hand Kingdom, namely to train members in the proper understanding of their duty to the government and civic morality.¹⁹ This was made abundantly clear for readers of the *Concordia Theological Monthly*:

The Church has been, and ought to be, a great factor in all matters which pertain to the building up of character in the individual. The Church ought to devote its effort to equipping the individual for citizenship by building up his intellectual and moral status. The Church, however, has no business in politics.²⁰

There were even some warnings that Lutherans should not join in political bandwagons to support given legislation.²¹ However, there was a disagreement as to what this all entailed, as some American Lutherans supported pacifist legislation.²² Also when the ULCA sent a letter of complaint to Hitler, this letter also garnered condemnation in *The Northwestern Lutheran*.²³ Related to this, there was a strong rejection of the notion that Christianity and the Church should not speak to the culture and nation at large.²⁴ In an example of this, the readers of the *Lutheran*

¹⁷ Wm. Siegel, "Luther's Political Philosophy," *AQ* 14 (April, 1935): 130–38.

¹⁸ S. C. Kloth, "To Caesar and to God," *AnL* 11, no. 48 (November 27, 1939): 4–5; August Zich, "Church and State," *NwL* 20 (July 30, 1933): 244–45. "Should the Church Engage in Politics?," *LH* 19 (February 19, 1935): 172.

¹⁹ E.g. S. C. Kloth, "To Caesar and to God," *AnL* 11, no. 48 (November 27, 1939): 4–5;

²⁰ W. Arndt, "Theological Observer – kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Meddling with Politics Condemned," *CTM* 3 (Jun. 1932): 464.

²¹ Olaf Lysnes, review of: *Church and State* by G. T. Lee, *LH* 16 (October 18, 1932): 1182.

²² See the following chapter.

²³ August Zich, "Hitler and the U.L.C.," *NL* 21 (December 23, 1934): 406.

²⁴ Prof. A. R. Wentz, "At a critical Period," *AnL* 9, no. 28 (July 12, 1937): 1, 5–6 and Theodore Schliepsiek, "Separation of Church and State," *AmL* 22, no. 8 (August 1939): 15.

Standard were encouraged, as individuals, to oppose Roosevelt's attempts to reorganize the Supreme Court.²⁵

The Lutheran publications also urged their readers to be good citizens of the United States. This was explained as part of the responsibilities that the Christian has in the Left Hand Kingdom. These included articles aimed at the youth of the church which extolled the importance and nature of patriotism.²⁶ Likewise, the importance of seeking to serve one's neighbor and government was explained in a number of articles.²⁷

Hitler and the Nazi's Exercise of Civil Authority

While there were a more than a couple of absolutely shocking endorsements of Hitler and Nazism during the 1930s, much of the praise that American Lutherans had for Hitler was explained as how he was fulfilling his responsibility in the civil realm to take care of the German nation, its culture, and its people. In this, the American Lutheran publishers reminded their readers regularly of the terrible state that Germany was in when Hitler came to power. There were articles pointing to how Germany was enduring an absolutely terrible economic depression.²⁸ A number of these articles even pointed directly to the Treaty of Versailles as a major cause of the economic and social troubles that had overtaken Germany.²⁹

²⁵ A. F. Greffenius, "The Supreme Court Issue," *LStd* 95, no. 15 (April 10, 1937): 2–3.

²⁶ Walter A. Maier, "More Than Passive Patriotism," *WLM* 45 (July 1937): 678–79; Walter A. Maier, "Pillars of Patriotism: Are they Built in Washington or in the Homes of the Nation?," *WLM* 46 (February 1938): 348–49, 394; and Amos John Traver, "The Young People: Patriotism," *Luth* 21, no. 38 (June 21, 1939): 19.

²⁷ Jens P. Jensen, "The Christian Community and the State," *JALC* 4, no. 1 (January 1939): 10–27; Nathan R. Melhorn, "Lutheranism in Political and Social Life: Press Reports from Germany Involve Attitudes and Policies of the Lutheran Church," *Luth* 15, no. 32 (May 11, 1933): 3, 13; and W. Arndt, "Theological Observer – kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Meddling with Politics Condemned," *CTM* 3 (June 1932): 464.

²⁸ "The Church in General: The Churches Helping in Germany," *AnL* 5, no. 5 (February 3, 1932): 10; "Across the Desk: Worthless Money," *Luth* 15, no. 24 (March 16, 1933): 15; and Eugen Kühnemann, "Das neue Deutschland," *KB* 76, no. 49 (December 9, 1933): 4–5.

²⁹ Walter A. Maier, "Editorials: 'They Died for their Country,'" *WLM* 41 (February 1933): 332–33; J. E. N. "Yhtä ja Tiosta," *LY* 4 (June 1939): 12–13; Theo. Buehring, "Kirchliche Nachrichten – Aus anderen Kreisen:

The publishers gave the greatest support for Hitler and Nazism in response to how quickly he turned around the German economy. There was a certain amount of amazement at just how positive things were starting to look for the German people.³⁰ This included an emphasis on unemployment and how the German nation was working to uphold the value of labor:

Judging superficially, they seem to be solving many of their difficulties in Germany and the other European lands far better than we are here. Unemployment is not as great. One gets the impression that they are approaching their problems not merely from the negative standpoint of relief, but on the more constructive platform of trying to get everyone on an earning and self-sustaining basis.³¹

A great fear that gripped the American Lutheran publishers was the spread of communism. There were numerous articles even about the threat of the spread of communism in the United States. Therefore, there was a collective sigh of relief from them that Hitler had saved Germany from the specter of Bolshevism. In this regard, Hitler was certainly seen as a savior of Germany, and often even beyond Germany as he was considered the first to truly stem the rising red tide.³²

Another problem the writers saw as having gripped Germany until Hitler eradicated it when he came to power was rampant immorality. This included the problem of the widespread publication of pornography in Germany.³³ There was also a concern about the widespread publishing of Bolshevik and anti-Christian literature in Germany. To this end, some of the authors even endorsed or at least understood the Nazi book burnings as a legitimate means of

Kriegsschuld, Reparationen, Abrüstung,” *KB* 75, no. 32 (August 6, 1932): 13; and L. W. Boe, “Europe of Today,” *LH* 18 (January 2, 1934): 5–6, 20–22.

³⁰ Interestingly, the only reference to Germany in *The Lutheran Layman* was praising how beautiful, orderly and clean Germany had become: Herman Wellensieck, “A Visit to Germany,” *The Lutheran Layman* 5 (December, 1934): 48.

³¹ Lars W. Boe, “Impressions of Germany,” *AnL* 7, no. 53 (December 31, 1934): 5

³² For further discussion of this topic see chapter 5 below.

³³ “Conditions in Germany,” *LH* 19 (November 12, 1935): 1100; Theo. Buehring, “Kirchliche Nachrichten – Aus anderen Kreisen: Neuer – und doch alter – Geist in Deutschland,” *KB* 76, no. 19 (May 13, 1933): 12; and

cleaning up the society.³⁴ Others, however were rather concerned about this, and especially how widely the Nazis appeared to be casting their nets regarding which books were legitimate for burning.³⁵

This did not mean that all that the Nazi government did was seen as good; however for many of the American Lutherans much of what was being done in the civil realm in Germany was seen as very positive. For instance, when asked by a reader how the *Lutherischer Herold* could speak so positively about the Nazi regime, C. R. Tappert responded that what Hitler was doing in the secular realm was good, and the problems only arose when he meddled in the churches.³⁶ Concerns were certainly raised about the treatment of the Jews, as well as the incursions by the Nazi government into the Church's realm. Probably the greatest concern that the Lutheran writers in America had with Hitler's regime was that the Nazi government was mixing Church and State. Yet for many what was going on in the civil realm in Germany was praised and a few even offered glowing support for Hitler in the very early 1930s. The most vocal praise was found in the *Walther League Messenger* where Walter A. Maier in April 1933 described Hitler as "a natural-born leader, accentuated by serious and sober judgments and moved by a rare understanding of Germany's essential needs."³⁷ Then in July 1933, Hans Kirsten, a Lutheran pastor in Germany Praised Maier's article as "calm, unprejudiced opinion" and referred to Hitler as "one of the great men of our history, but who, up to this time, has been

Walter A. Maier, "Editorials: 'Hitler Shows the Way,'" *WLM* 41 (April 1933): 461.

³⁴ "Hitler Burns Bolshevik Books," *LH* 17 (June 20, 1933): 564–65; "With Lutherans in Other Lands: Germany," *LCmpn* 41 (September 16, 1933): 1181; and J. T. Mueller, "Hitlers Bücherverbrennung," *DL* 89 (August 8, 1933): 267–68.

³⁵ "Ueber die feierliche Verbrennung undeutscher und schmutziger Litertur in Berlin," *LiH* 11, no. 39 (June 29, 1933): 5.

³⁶ C. R. Tappert, "Antworten auf allerlei Fragen," *LiH* 11, no. 45 (August 10, 1933): 8–10.

³⁷ Walter A. Maier, "Editorials: 'Hitler Shows the Way,'" *WLM* 41 (April 1933): 461.

maligned and dragged through the dirt of the streets by the unscrupulous foreign press under Jewish control.”³⁸ However, these statements were questioned by readers and by the late 1930’s Maier had repudiated Hitler and his totalitarianism which can be seen in statements such as, “Nazi Germany has its faults and is making its serious mistakes,” made in March of 1938.³⁹

Most of the statements in support of what Hitler and the Nazis were accomplishing in the civil realm came from churches such as the Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Synod and the American Lutheran Church which all had strong ethnic ties to Germany. It seems that their support of German policies, especially early on, came from a concern for the well-being of the German people and an acute awareness of just how bad things were in Germany prior to Hitler’s being named Chancellor. Whereas those publications from Lutherans who were of non-German descent or of long standing American heritage were far less preoccupied with how Hitler was rejuvenating the German nation.

The Need for the Separation of Church and State in Germany

Virtually all of the American Lutheran Publications saw the relationship between the Nazi state and the German churches to be an issue of paramount importance. However, exactly what that relationship was and where any problems might lie was far from clear to the Americans. Very often the perception of where the problem lay was based on what the particular perspective of the publication was, especially this was based on which church or churches in Germany with which a given American church was in fellowship and communication.

Some of the authors felt a need to make sure that their readers understood that the Church – State situation in Germany was very different from what we know in America. Therefore there

³⁸ Hans Kirsten, “Hitler Shows the Way,” *WLM* 41 (July 1933): 662

³⁹ Walter A. Maier, “Editorials: The Old Game,” *WLM* 46 (March 1938): 422.

were warnings against hasty judgments against Germany and the church situation.⁴⁰ Julius Bodensieck even took a French report to task in *Kirchenblatt* for not understanding the unique situation in Germany.⁴¹ It was also pointed out that most of the people in Germany were quite satisfied with the relationship between the State and Church and that they could work together without mixing the Two Kingdoms.⁴² President Knubel of the ULCA even went so far as to say that it is appropriate for the German *Volkskirche* to be a Lutheran Church.⁴³

However, for most of the Americans it was hard to miss the antagonism that existed between the two realms in Nazi Germany. For some, these tensions were seen as unavoidable since there was a strong church and a strong government involved, and especially when elements such as nationalism are injected into both, the mingling and therefore tensions between the two realms were unavoidable.⁴⁴ The readers of the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* were advised that the nature of the massive upheaval that Germany had experienced naturally placed a great stress on the church and it warned German churches as well as Americans that they should not fall into the extremes of quietism or getting caught up in the movement of the hour and thereby fail to rightly distinguish the two realms.⁴⁵

Some of the writers saw the clash of the church and state in Germany as inevitable, because both were making totalitarian claims on the individual. This was a radical clash of worldviews

⁴⁰ M. Hulsemann, "Die politische und religiöse Gestalt des dritten Reiches," *KB* 77, no. 8 (February 24, 1934): 9; and reviews of *Der Deutsche Lutherische Tag von Hannover* by Christian Stoll, *Evangelisch=Lutherische Kirche Deutschlands* by Georg Merz, *Bekenntnis und Bekennen* by Hanns Lilje, and *Kirche und Staat nach Lutherischer Lehrer* by Paul Althaus in *KZ* 60 (February, 1936): 110–11.

⁴¹ Julius Bodensieck, "Editorielles: Angebliches deutsches Kirchenprogramm," *KB* 81, no. 31 (July 30, 1938): 4–5.

⁴² "An Interview with Dr. Knubel," *Luth* 21, no. 40 (July 5, 1939): 3–4.

⁴³ Frederick Knubel, "President Knubel in Berlin," *Luth* 20, no. 1 (October 6, 1937): 6

⁴⁴ Nathan R. Melhorn, "That Which We Call Nationalism," *Luth* 15, no. 40 (July 6, 1933): 3–4; "Germany's Church Problems," *Luth* 20, no. 13 (December 29, 1937): 2; and J. Jenny, "Observations and Impressions of Church and Religious Life in European Countries," *NwL* 19 (November 6, 1932): 361–64.

that each claimed to give total meaning to one's life and therefore the two would be forced into a battle.⁴⁶ Karl Barth was cited in *The Lutheran Companion* as pointing out this unavoidable conflict: "Nazism, he says, is not only a political experiment, but is maintained as a religious institution of salvation; the Church can not, therefore, adopt a neutral attitude."⁴⁷ As a result, many saw the Nazi program of *Gleichschaltung* as a real threat to the church since the church was seen as being forced into the Nazi program and worldview.⁴⁸ A few even pointed to controls that the Nazi government was attempting to place on the church from the beginning including the role that Hitler played in electing *Reichsbishop* Müller.⁴⁹

For some of the Lutherans in America, it was a source of pride that the churches of Germany did not bow to the Nazi attempts at *Gleichschaltung*. Some even went so far as to state that it was the Lutheran teaching of the Two Kingdoms that helped to preserve the churches from being coordinated into the total Nazi program along with the rest of the German society.⁵⁰ Others heralded the Lutheran grounding in the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions as giving the Church in Germany the strength to withstand the pressure to conform to the Nazi ideals. An example of this is how the readers of the *Augustana Quarterly* were boldly told: "The conflict is not ended but it is safe to predict that the church, driven to her inner stronghold of faith rooted

⁴⁵ D. Schöffel, "Das Luthertum und die religiöse Krise der Gegenwart," *KZ* 60 (March 1936): 129–34.

⁴⁶ Arthur von der Thur., "Gleichschaltung des Evangeliums," *LiH* 11, no. 39 (June 29, 1933): 2–3; and Daniel Nystrom, "The Spectator: A Review of Current News and Opinion," *LCmpn* 47 (February 16, 1939): 199.

⁴⁷ Daniel Nystrom, "The Spectator: A Review of Current News and Opinion," *LCmpn* 47 (December 14, 1939): 1576.

⁴⁸ Arthur v. d. Thur., "Vor neuen Entscheidungen im deutschen Kirchenstreit," *LiH* 13, no. 52 (September 26, 1935): 11; and "At a Fork in the Road: World Lutheranism Reaches Place of Choice in Sphere of Duty to World Christianity," *Luth* 20, no. 37 (June 15, 1938): 13.

⁴⁹ "Church and State in Germany," *LH* 17 (October 17, 1933): 932; and "Wird es Deutschland zu einer evangelischen Reichskirche kommen?," *LiH* 11, no. 32 (May 11, 1933): 13.

⁵⁰ Wm. Siegel, "Luther's Political Philosophy," *AQ* 14 (April, 1935): 130–38; W. Arndt, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Hitler and the Lutheran Church in Germany," *CTM* 4 (June 1933): 463–65.

in the Word of God and her confessions, will manifest a resistance that no Hitler can permanently bend.”⁵¹

There were, however, a few voices that said that there really wasn't a problem between the Two Kingdoms in Germany. These writers insisted that Hitler and the Nazis were actually in favor of a Lutheran separation of the Church and State. While this might seem incredible today, there was some evidence in favor of this position. As evidence, they pointed to the numerous statements by Hitler and other Nazi leaders that they were in favor of this type of separation. The most common source cited was how Hitler argued in *Mein Kampf* that a political leader cannot be a religious reformer.⁵² They also cited Hitler's various speeches in which he declared that he was not interested in meddling in the church's affairs.⁵³ There were some writers that even held out hope that Hitler was going to step in and preserve the separation.⁵⁴ Beyond just Hitler, some of the Nazi leaders, including Gottfried Feder, Goebbels, Goering, Dietrich, Frick and Kerrl were also quoted from speeches to show that they were truly in favor of keeping a proper separation between church and state.⁵⁵

The Roman Catholic Church and the Center Party Seen as Mixing Church and State

The traditional Lutheran mistrust of the Roman Catholic Church could also be seen during this time period and in particular there was great concern that the Roman Catholic Church was guilty of attempting to exercise too much political power and even attempt to control the state.

⁵¹ Review of: *Things that Are Caesar's* by Paul Banwell Means in Oscar N. Olson, *AQ* 15 (April 1936): 175.

⁵² M. Lehninger, "Zur kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland," *TQ* 33 (July 1936): 195; M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 57 (June 1933): 377–78.

⁵³ "Ueber die kirchliche Lage in Deutschland," *LiH* 16, no. 33 (May 19, 1938): 10–11; M. Lehninger, "Zur kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland," *TQ* 33 (July 1936): 195–97.

⁵⁴ "Do We Appreciate the Blessings of Religious Liberty," *LH* 18 (March 13, 1934): 244.

⁵⁵ M. Lehninger, "Zur kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland," *TQ* 33 (July 1936): 197–98; M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland. Aus Generalfeldmarschall Görings Rede," *KZ* 62 (May 1938): 319–20.

These perceived attempts by the Papacy to gain control of the civil realm were seen as simply par for the course. When they made these charges, often the authors appealed to the history of the Roman Catholic Church and even seemed to see their mixing of the kingdoms as axiomatic.⁵⁶

For the American Lutherans in 1932 and early 1933 this was shown most clearly in the role that the Roman Catholic Center Party played in German politics. As a result, there were a number of positive reactions to the Center Party being dissolved in July 1933. Related to this, many American writers welcomed the Concordat between the Nazis and the Roman Catholic Church because it kept the Catholics out of the political arena. Some even reported with approval how Hitler was cracking down on “political Catholicism.”⁵⁷ However, there were a few voices of concern that the Germans “went to Canossa” when they agreed to the Concordat or at least it was rather odd that the German Government would need to make a treaty like this with a Church.⁵⁸ A few even expressed fears that the Papacy was attempting to gain political control in America through a new political party that would be like the Center Party had been in Germany.⁵⁹

Even after the Center Party had been disbanded, there was still a going concern by the Lutheran writers that the Roman Catholic Church was too political. Some of these concerns found a voice when they talked about how many of the Catholic priests and bishops were

⁵⁶ S. O. Briquet, “Opinions on Live Questions,” *NL* 8 (September 1939): 26–27; Walter A. Maier, “Turret of the Times: Austrian priests now disavow political ambitions,” *WLM* 46 (July 1938): 724–25; and H. Koch, “Zur Lage der Europäischen Freikirche,” *DL* 91 (October 29, 1935): 363.

⁵⁷ C. R. Tappert, “Antworten auf allerlei Fragen: Ein Leser nimmt Anstoss an der Bemerkung im Leitartikel der letzten Nummer, dass die Römische Kirche als ein ‘Reich von dieser Welt’ immer politische handle. Er fragt, ob sich das wirklich beweisen lässt,” *LiH* 11, no. 43 (July 27, 1933): 8–9; W. Bodamer, “Die kirchlichen Zustände in Deutschland,” *ELGB* 71 (October 4, 1936): 310–13; and “Hitler er haard ved Katolikkerne,” *DV* 55, no. 30 (July 24, 1935): 1.

⁵⁸ Quote was from a letter cited in L. Fuerbringer, “Kirchliche Nachrichten aus Deutschland,” *DL* 89 (December 26, 1933): 422; similar concerns were raised in “Germany and the Vatican,” *Luth* 15, no. 42 (July 20, 1933): 16.

⁵⁹ Louis Luecke, “The Battle for Religious Liberty,” *WLM* 45 (July 1937): 686–87, 727–29; J. B., “A Catholic

involved in supporting or denouncing the Nazi rule. They showed some amazement at how many of the German bishops supported Hitler more than the Vatican. Then with the Anschluss of Austria, there were even a few that wondered out loud if, due to Austria's heavily Catholic population, Hitler would now use the Catholic Church to attempt to garner more support and even use it as the fulcrum for uniting all churches under his power.⁶⁰ Even as late as 1939, some of the protests by the Roman Church were met with skepticism by the American Lutherans, since they thought that the Roman Catholics really wanted a similar sort of mixing of the Two Kingdoms that the Nazis desired. As the editors of *The Lutheran* put it:

The Roman Catholics of the Reich are opposed to the state's claims of totalitarianism, but their objectives are so intimately a part of the Vatican's polity of regaining what it lost in the Reformation period as to make one suspicious of its activities.⁶¹

***Deutsche Christen* and the Mixing of Church and State**

The majority of American Lutherans, when they looked at the issue of the mixing of Church and State, agreed that the *Deutsche Christen* were guilty of mixing the two. This stemmed from the *Deutsche Christen* motive of trying to get the church to be more supportive of the state and the Nazi party in particular. Likewise, the leadership of Müller was seen in many ways as exhibiting a mixing of the Two Kingdoms, from his receiving direct endorsement from Hitler to his willingness to use police to attempt to enforce control of churches that refused to bow to his demands.

For many of these writers, there was a great concern that the Nazi government was attempting to make the German churches subservient to the state via the *Reichskirche* and

Political Party?" *NwL* 20 (January 29, 1933): 35.

⁶⁰ Frederic Wenchel, "Germany and Rome," *LW* 56 (August 10, 1937): 268–69; Daniel Nystrom, "The Spectator: A Review of Current News and Opinion," *LCmpn* 46 (May 12, 1938): 583; and "What Did Hitler Promise Innitzer?" *LCmpn* 47 (June 1, 1939): 675.

⁶¹ "Across the Desk: The Situation in Germany," *Luth* 21, no. 35 (May 31, 1939): 13.

particularly through the *Deutsche Christen*. As E. C. Fendt advised the readers of four different publications regarding the different factions in the *Reichskirche*: “Those who were willing to subordinate the church to the state, making it merely a department of the state, became known as ‘German Christians.’”⁶² The opinion that the *Deutsche Christen* were really attempting to make the German churches subservient to the state was widely accepted. Henry Smith Leiper went so far as to say that in Germany God was allowed only if He salutes Hilter.⁶³ Michael Reu, in light of Hitler’s call for church elections in 1937, stated that one of the three main questions facing the German Church was “Should the Protestant Church become an instrument of the Nazi State?” with the *Deutsche Christen* being in favor of this happening.⁶⁴

Some went a step farther and argued that the *Deutsche Christen* were really attempting to make the church simply a division of the state. In this, the *Deutsche Christen* were seen as an instrument of the Nazi party which was being used to bring the *Landeskirchen* under the purview of the German state. Readers of *The Lutheran* were told of the platform of the *Deutsche Christen*:

It states the program of those who most thoroughly, and to us of the Lutheran Church in America, most mystifyingly, support a biased conception of the relations of the church to the state. To adjust their doctrine of the church to the definition of the state now dominant in the Reich, they reduce ecclesiastical authority to complete subjection to the claims of the state. They require Christianity to become anti-Semitic on the basis of blood and soil and not on the relationship of faith in Christ. On the basis of the propositions reported, it would seem difficult for a truly Christian Church to survive at all in Germany it could only be one department of government.⁶⁵

⁶² E. C. Fendt, “An Estimate of the Religious Situation in Germany,” *JALC* 1, no. 1 (January 1936): 61. The same article was also printed in: *LCmpn* 43 (November 2, 1935): 1382–84; *LH* 19 (October 29, 1935): 1056–57; and *LStd* 93, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 6–7.

⁶³ Henry Smith Leiper, “The Issues in the German Church Struggle,” *AnL* 7, no. 25 (June 18, 1934): 5–6.

⁶⁴ M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 61 (March 1937): 188–92. The article was also reprinted as “Staat und Kirche in Deutschland,” *LiH* 15, no. 27 (April 1, 1937): 13–14.

⁶⁵ “Across the Desk: The Situation in Germany,” *Luth* 21, no. 35 (May 31, 1939): 13.

The *Lutheran Herald* voiced the concerns of many when it stated in 1933: “What Hitlerism will do for Germany we do not know. We are opposed to the efforts of the government to mix the Lutheran Church into the affairs of the state.”⁶⁶

These fears were not without merit and some of the writers pointed out that it was through the intervention of the Nazi government that the *Deutsche Christen* were able to rise to power within the church. Many writers made clear from the start that governmental pressure led to Bodelschwingh’s resignation as well as Müller’s election as *Reichsbischof*. *The Lutheran Companion* went so far as to reprint the text of Hitler’s speech on the eve of the church election in 1933 when he urged support for the *Deutsche Christen*.⁶⁷ The readers of *Der Lutheraner* were told that a letter writer from Germany said that Müller was in fact a lieutenant to Hitler.⁶⁸

Some of the more insightful writers placed the *Deutsche Christen* and their work within the German churches as part of the Nazi movement for *Gleichschaltung* of all of German life. These men were concerned with how the Nazi government was attempting to take all aspects of German life, including not only the civil realm but also the church, and bend them to serve the Nazi worldview. They depicted this as a battle between the totalitarian claims of Nazism on all of the people’s lives and the autonomy of the Church to proclaim the Gospel. This went beyond just making the German churches serve the state to an outright takeover of the realm of the church.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ “Dangers Threatening the Lutheran Church in Germany,” *LH* 17 (April 18, 1933): 349.

⁶⁷ “With Lutherans in Other Lands: Germany,” *LCmpn* 41 (September 2, 1933): 1117.

⁶⁸ L. Fuerbringer, “Nachrichten aus Deutschland,” *DL* 90 (May 29, 1934): 180–81.

⁶⁹ Arthur von der Thur., “Krieg in der Kirche,” *LiH* 12, no. 31 (May 3, 1934): 5; M. Reu, “The Present Church Situation in Germany-III,” *Luth* 19, no. 51 (September 15, 1937): 12–13; and Charles M. Jacobs, “What is German Christianity?,” *LCQ* 7 (April 1934): 181–87.

The *Landeskirchen* as Guilty of Mixing of the Church and State

While it seemed clear to virtually all American Lutherans that the *Deutsche Christen* were guilty of mixing the Church and State some went a step further and saw all of the *Landeskirchen* guilty as well. This was seen primarily in the Americans who were in fellowship with the Free Church in Germany, namely the members of the Synodical Conference and most notably the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod. They viewed any form of state church as an improper mixing of the Church and State and therefore viewed all sides in the *Kirchenkampf* as equally guilty on this count.

For the Missouri Synod, their fellowship with the Saxon Free Church cast a huge shadow on how they viewed the *Landeskirchen* and their opinion that only a free church can rightly keep the Church and State separate. The Missouri Synod and Wisconsin Synod publications often quoted and printed whole articles by Martin Willkomm, the Rector of the *freikirchlichen theologischen Hochschule* of the Saxon Free Church which was located in Berlin-Zehlendorf.⁷⁰ The Saxon Free Church's publication, *Die Evangelische-Lutherische Freikirche*, was often cited and quoted as the best source of information. Because of this, Willkomm's statements on a free church being the only right form of church in Germany were often cited as the definitive statement on the matter.⁷¹

The readers of *The Lutheran Sentinel* of the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church were also informed that the problems in the fights between the Church and State in Germany were all confined to the *Landeskirchen*.

⁷⁰ M. Willkomm, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Die Stellung der Kirchen im nationalsozialistischen Staat," *CTM* 9 (March 1938): 225–26; and J. T. Mueller, "Ein ernstes Wort in bezug auf unsere Kirchengemeinschaft," *DL* 91 (March 5, 1935): 72–73; M. Willkomm, "Zur Kirchliche Lage in Deutschland," *ELGB* 70 (January 13, 1935): 9–11.

⁷¹ Martin S. Sommer, "Religious Liberty in Germany," *LW* 54 (February 12, 1935): 56; "Wie geht es den Freikirchen im jetzigen Deutschland?" *ELGB* 69 (June 17, 1934): 189–90; and Aug. Pieper, "Die Proklamation

It is worth noting, when reading these reports, that the Free Churches in Germany (those which do not depend upon the State for support) have had few complaints to make against the Hitler regime. It is the State Churches, which are supported by the State, whose pastors find themselves in conflict with the government on various issues.⁷²

And when it was reported that Hitler was trying to create a single church in Germany they then printed a correction by printing articles by Willkomm, “A German Brother,” from *Die Evangelische-Lutherische Freikirche* that showed that the Free Church was in a right relationship with the German state.⁷³

These American Church bodies all agreed that the real root of the *Kirchenkampf* could be found in the improper mixing of Church and State in the *Landeskirchen* and new *Reichskirche*. They believed that this basic confusion lead to all of the various issues that the German churches were dealing with; therefore they tended to see that persecutions of “Confessing” pastors as a civil matter, since they were really all mixed up with the government by being in the state sponsored churches. It was amazing how often these Americans expressed the idea that all would be made right if the German *Landeskirchen* would simply separate from the State and become Free Churches.⁷⁴ Or as August Zich put it: “So many of the woes suffered by the Protestants of Germany are due to the ill-assorted marriage between church and state.”⁷⁵

All of these churches were members of the Synodical Conference at this time, and were therefore in either direct or indirect fellowship with the Saxon Free Church which was directly in fellowship with the Missouri Synod. The other church that was a member of the Synodical

unserer deutschländischen Brüder gegenüber den Hitlerischen Kirchenplänen,” *TQ* 30 (July 1933): 199–204.

⁷² Geo. O. Lillegard, “The Church and the World,” *LSntl* 21 (January 26, 1938): 20–21.

⁷³ E. Ylvisaker, “A Correction and a Statement,” *LSntl* 17 (January 17, 1934): 31–32.

⁷⁴ Engelder, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Werden die vergewaltigten Glieder der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche sich separieren?” *CTM* 5 (April 1934): 322–24; and L. Fuerbringer, “Nachrichten aus Deutschland,” *DL* 94 (February 15, 1938): 54–55.

Conference, the Slovakian Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, did not quote from Willkomm at all. However when addressing the issue of the *Kirchenkampf* they echoed the refrain that the solution to the problem lay in a “Separation of State from Church” in Germany.⁷⁶ It appears that the entire delegation of the Synodical Conference was agreed that this historic, close relationship between the *Landeskirchen* and the German government inevitably led to the sorts of problems that the members of the *Landeskirchen* encountered. After all, it was reasoned, if one is so closely associated with the government, and the government collects taxes to support the churches, sooner or later the government would want to control the churches.

Even within the churches in America that were in fellowship with the *Landeskirchen*, there arose some concern about the close relationship between the *Landeskirchen* and the German government. Ralph Long noted that in Germany “the pulpit and the throne have been very close to each other” and therefore the political change was bound to affect the church.⁷⁷ Likewise, church bodies that were in fellowship with various *Landeskirchen* did opine that many of the problems in Germany would actually be solved by a true separation of Church and State, with the German churches becoming free churches. As the 1930s progressed, there was a growing sentiment that the only real solution would be the separation of the *Landeskirchen* from the German state.⁷⁸

Of course, it must be kept in mind that those who were not in fellowship with the German *Landeskirchen* were the most vocal in their concerns over the close relationship that the

⁷⁵ August Zich, “German Protestantism under Hitler,” *NwL* 20 (October 22, 1933): 340.

⁷⁶ J. J. Pelikan, “Nemeckí Evanjelici-Lutheráni Proti Nazismu v Nemecku,” *SV* 29 (April 1, 1935): 128; Stephen Tuhy, Sr., “Oddelenie Štátu od Cirkvi,” *SV* 32 (January 1, 1938): 14; and Stephen Tuhy, Sr., “Niemoeller v koncentračnom väzení,” *SV* 32 (April 15, 1938): 180–81.

⁷⁷ Ralph H. Long, “Impression of World Lutheranism,” *LStd* 92, no. 18 (May 5, 1934): 17.

⁷⁸ M. Hulsemann, “Die politische und religiöse Gestalt des dritten Reiches (Schluss),” *KB* 77, no. 9 (March 3, 1934): 7–8; “Easter, 1937, In Germany,” *Luth* 19, no. 29 (April 14, 1937): 4–5; and “Religionsfrihed i Tyskland?”

Landeskirchen had with the German government. It appears that much of the reason that these Americans were in fellowship with the Free Churches can be traced to their own history of emigration from Germany. For instance, the Saxon immigration that ultimately led to the formation of the Missouri Synod was in part due to a fear that the Saxon government might force a union similar to the Prussian Union on Saxony. This distrust of the government can then be seen to be continued in their concerns over events in Germany in the 1930s.

Conclusions Regarding the Perceived Need for Separation of Church and State

For the Lutherans in America, there was a tremendous amount of concern over the perceived threat to the church in Germany that was created by a close relationship with the German state. The fear was that the state would take over the church and thereby control not only the civil but also the religious realm. They also saw that the one thing that actually acted as a protection to the German churches was Luther's teaching of the Two Realms, which they interpreted as a separation of Church and State.

The American Lutheran churches were guided by their circumstances, these circumstances included those with who they were in fellowship. This influenced their perceptions as to which party or parties in Germany were guilty of mixing the two realms together. For those that were in fellowship with the *Landeskirchen*, the danger came from the *Deutsche Christen*. However, for those in fellowship with the Free Churches, the danger was inherent in the whole establishment of *Landeskirchen* to begin with. Either way, most saw the primary answer to these threats as a more complete separation between the *Landeskirchen* and the Nazi state.

Whether born out of their immigration history, their American context, or very likely a combination of the two, the American Lutherans of the 1930s expressed fears regarding any

DV 58, no. 49 (December 8, 1937): 8.

mixing of Church and State. It is not altogether surprising that the Synodical Conference, which had the more restrictive view of unionism, also had a more restrictive view of the relationship between the church and the state. Nevertheless, all of the American Lutherans showed an inherent distrust of governmental interference in the realm of the Church. In much the same way, there was a definite reticence on the part of the American Lutheran leaders to advocate a direct interference by the Church into civil matters, even when they felt the civil government was wrong.

At first glance one might be shocked by what appears to be their almost amazing ability to allow most uses and even abuses of authority by the Nazi party, so long as they left the German churches alone. Such a charge, however, is somewhat unfair in that the American Lutherans first of all had a confused picture of what was going on due to conflicting sources of information and therefore were unsure if the abuses were really occurring.⁷⁹ Considering that the primary source for the American Lutherans was their German counterparts, this means that they were receiving biased information.⁸⁰ When the American Lutherans were convinced that there were problems in Germany, they were willing to lament them, but did not call for much action to stop these civil abuses. This however, should not be interpreted so much as an endorsement of Nazi abuses of power as the belief that it was not the place of churches, especially those in a different country, to criticize a legitimate government in its exercise of authority within the civil realm.

It must be borne in mind that while the terminology of the “separation of church and state” which the American Lutheran writers were using hailed from an unfolding American legal tradition, they intended this term to reflect what they saw as a proper Lutheran theological

⁷⁹ See chapter 1 above, pages 21–30.

⁸⁰ One can even extrapolate from the Stuttgart Confession of Guilt of 1945, with its confession of guilt for complicity in allowing the evils of Nazism to occur in Germany shows, that the German churches were not as willing as they should have been to face up to and therefore inform other of the problems during this time.

distinction. Therefore while initially this term may seem more political than theological, its usage actually shows that their primary concern here was with the theological issue, which was often reflected in their quoting of Biblical passages to buttress what they were saying. While today's systematic theologians might take issue with some of terms and even understandings used by these writers, it was still a theological issue for them first and foremost. Coming out of this, the Lutheran writers meant to praise political systems that they saw in line with proper theology and did not intend to be turning their theology to suit politics.

One particular aspect of the relationship between the Church and State that was especially fought over by American Lutherans was the idea of Just War doctrine. This was one place where there was no clear agreement on how the distinction of Church and State should be applied. In this realm the Lutherans in America were rather divided, including the correctness of the doctrine of just war and over how the church should relate to the state in this area. This raging debate is therefore the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DEBATE OVER JUST WAR DOCTRINE

One debate that raged during this era that was not directly connected to the events in Germany, yet was influenced by them and in turn colored the perceptions of American Lutherans regarding Nazism, was the issue of the correctness of Just War doctrine. The nature of a Just War, and if there really could be one, factored into one's perceptions of the Treaty of Versailles, of the nature of international relationships, and even of who was at fault for the rearmament of Germany. This started out as a concern, and as the specter of the Second World War loomed ever greater, it became a more pressing subject.

The concept of a Just War is deeply ensconced within the Western theological heritage. The theory dates back to St. Augustine, and then was carried on by the Western Church and ultimately the Lutheran church.¹ Article 16 of the Augsburg Confession states that "Christians may without sin ... punish evildoers with the sword; wage just wars; serve as soldiers."² While the concept of a Just War has traditionally been a part of Lutheran thinking, it likewise was more assumed than it was clearly defined in Lutheran theology, such as in the Book of Concord.³

¹ A good study of the roots of Just War doctrine in St. Augustine's teachings is John Mark Mattox, *Saint Augustine and the Theory of Just War*, Continuum Studies in Philosophy (New York: Continuum, 2006).

² Translation of the German text from Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert eds. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 48.

³ For an overview of Just War doctrine, see David Wollenburg, "Is There a God-Pleasing Purpose to War?: An Introduction to Just War Concepts," *Concordia Journal* 29 (January 2003): 65–69 and the review essay: Burnam W. Reynolds, "The Once and Future Just War—A Review Essay," *Christian Scholar's Review*, 35 (Winter 2006): 259–74. A classic work on Just War doctrine is Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: a Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 1977). For a look at the Lutheran apprehension of Just War doctrine during the reformation see David Mark Whitford, *Tyranny and Resistance: The Magdeburg Confession and the Lutheran Tradition* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2001).

Because of this and growing pacifism this idea was being questioned widely in the wake of the First World War in American Protestantism and the movement towards Pacifism entered into Lutheran circles as well.

This aspect of the study is especially difficult in that the political and theological issues are so completely intertwined in this area. As will be shown below, often the differences of opinion can be broken down along ethnic lines with the Germanic-American Lutherans being more strongly in favor of Just War doctrine and the Scandinavian-American Lutherans being more in favor of pacifism. This is no doubt related to the varying political situations in their home countries, but even here there is not a clear line of cause and effect. This comes from the fact that the various countries that most of the American Lutherans emigrated from were predominantly Lutheran countries; some with an official Lutheran state church and others with the Lutheran church being supported by church taxes, but not an official state church. Because of the centuries-long status that the Lutheran churches had in these countries, there can be little doubt that Lutheran theology, as variously interpreted, had a formative influence on state policies, if often an indirect influence. While these countries all have a strong Lutheran heritage, over the centuries this Lutheran heritage developed in different ways in the different parts of Northern Europe.⁴

Most scholars who have addressed this period have not attempted to undo the Gordian Knot which is the interrelationship between the theological and political views of American Lutherans at this time. Kohlhoff, in his study of the Missouri Synod emphasized the ethnic aspects to the detriment of the theological.⁵ The best attempt has been the work by Kegel who

⁴ For further study in these differing Lutheran traditions see Nicholas, Hope, *German and Scandinavian Protestantism 1700–1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995)

⁵ Dean Wayne Kohlhoff, “Missouri Synod Lutherans and the Image of Germany, 1914–1945,” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1973).

focused on the foreign policies and “ecclesio-political” concerns of the churches.⁶ However, the American Lutheran writers of that era certainly did not believe that they were merely placing a theological mask on political concerns. Rather, it must be understood that to a large extent these people had deeply held theological and political beliefs that informed each other. Therefore, while the debate was held largely on theological grounds, one must not ignore the political side of things; yet the fact that there were strong theological dissents within many of the parties, points out that there was more than just an ethnic or social concern in their thought.

The Running Debate

During the 1930s there was a running debate over the appropriateness of Just War doctrine that heated up as the possibility of war drew closer. This debate could be seen noticeably in several of the journals, but also appeared to be occurring between the different periodicals as well. It is important to remember that the different editors were very aware of what was being published in the other American Lutheran periodicals, as is evidenced by the countless articles from one periodical that were either reprinted or at least summarized and commented on in other periodicals. Therefore, when two or more periodicals of this time were printing articles taking different sides of this issue, it is clear that they were aware of what the other was writing and often responding to it.

This was also a debate that was very active in both the periodicals and the sections of other periodicals that were specifically aimed at the youth of the churches. These included “Our Lutheran Youth” from *The Ansgar Lutheran*, “The Young People” from *The Lutheran* and “Luther League Life” from the *Lutheran Standard*, as well as *The Lutheran Youth*, and *The Walther League Messenger*. There were also reports of resolutions regarding war that were

⁶ Kegel, 353.

voted on at a variety of youth events.⁷ There were also a few appeals aimed directly at the youth in an attempt to sway them. The most powerful and poignant one was in *The Ansgar Lutheran's* "Our Lutheran Youth" in 1936, where the writer told of meeting with an old friend's "nephew" who was struggling after the Great War. It came out that the young man was only "over the top" once, but he was in the second wave and was called on to finish off wounded enemies with his bayonet. This article seemed to be an emotional appeal to the youth about just how terrible war really was.⁸

None of these periodicals advocated the American involvement in any coming European war. While the pacifist-leaning writers said that all war should be avoided, those who defended Just War advocated strongly for American neutrality in any European war. The defenders of Just War appeared to be the more isolationist group, because they rejected the international peace movement and argued that America should just stay out of it all.

Traditional Lutheran Just War Advocates

Within this debate, there were a number of American Lutherans who stood firmly with the traditional Lutheran understanding of Just War and either assumed it to be correct, or more often, defended the doctrinal position. Not surprisingly, the Lutheran bodies that advocated for a more traditional acceptance of Just War doctrine were the more theologically conservative churches. Likewise, the more Germanic churches tended to be strong advocates of Just War doctrine.

Two of the American Lutheran Denominations that clearly fit these designations were The Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod. In the Missouri Synod, the doctrine of Just War was assumed in most of the periodicals, with the *Walther League Messenger* being the periodical that

⁷ C. O. Nelson, "Augustana Luther League: Resolution," *LCmpn* 45 (March 4, 1937): 309; and Edward F. Rice, "Luther League Life: 'Keep Our Nation Out of War' Pleads District Convention," *LStd* 97, no. 41 (October 14, 1939): 9.

⁸ Frederick Hall, "Our Lutheran Youth: Things Untold," *AnL* 9, no. 46 (November 16, 1936): 9–10, 14.

most clearly and regularly defended the concept.⁹ The *American Lutheran* of the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, being published by a group from within the Missouri Synod, agreed with Missouri's acceptance of Just War. In much the same way the Wisconsin Synod publications often assumed and occasionally defended Just War doctrine. Interestingly, it was in the English language *The Northwestern Lutheran* and in the English and German *Theologische Quartalschrift* that most defenses of Just War were given¹⁰, whereas the popular German publication *Evangelisch Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt* treated it as assumed.¹¹ In virtually all German language periodicals, Just War doctrine was either assumed or outright defended.

The *Lutheran Sentinel* of the Synod for the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at times was one of the most vocal critics of the Peace Movement. Not only were there defenses of Just War doctrine, but there were assaults on Pacifism as undermining the Christian faith. The *Lutheran Sentinel* occasionally attacked the Pacifist movement as not only wrong theologically, but also a mouthpiece for communist propaganda.¹²

The Scandinavian-American periodical that was the most vocal in the need for a proper understanding of Just Wars and national defense was *Dannevirke*. Part of this might be explained because *Dannevirke* was not only written in Danish, but it also reported very heavily

⁹ Examples of *WLM* defenses of Just War doctrine can be seen in: Walter A. Maier, "Editorials: 'They Died for their Country,'" *WLM* 41 (February 1933): 332–33; Walter A. Maier, "Editorials: Armistice Day Thoughts," *WLM* 43 (November 1934): 141; and Walter A. Maier, "Sarcasm or Grim Reality? Veterans of Future Wars," *WLM* 44 (May 1936): 522–23, 527.

¹⁰ Examples can be seen in "Pacifism and the Policeman," *NwL* 19 (January 17, 1932): 22–23; August Zich, "War and the New Testament," *NwL* 23 (June 7, 1936): 182–83; and review of *Christianity and War — Can They Co-Exist?* by J. A. Boord *TQ* 35 (October 1938): 290–94.

¹¹ For instance the *ELGB* stated in a rather off-hand way that with the clouds of war looming, of course a nation is to defend itself in "Von Kriegen und Kriegsgeschrei," *ELGB* 73 (March 20, 1938): 93; and then after the war started it reported on the start of the war but did not concern itself with judgments. This was echoed in a review of *Christianity and War — Can They Co-Exist?* by J. A. Boord in *M.*, *TQ* 35 (October 1938): 293 where it was stated: "To sum up, it is not the province of the church to curb war, nor is she equipped for that purpose, but to proclaim the Gospel of salvation. To check wars is the duty of the state, equipped by God for that purpose with natural reason and the knowledge of civic righteousness."

¹² Geo. O. Lillegard, "The Debacle of Lutheranism in the Norwegian Lutheran Church: III. 'The Social Gospel,'" *LSntl* 17 (June 6, 1934): 183; and Geo. O. Lillegard, "Pacifist Propaganda," *LSntl* 20 (December 1, 1937): 372–73.

on events in Denmark. Because of this, and its more straight news-orientation, *Dannevirke* also reported on many events in Nazi Germany that the other periodicals did not.¹³ The writers in *Dannevirke* appeared to be more nervous about the possibilities of Nazi aggression from the early 1930s on, and this then probably colored their understanding for the need of defensive wars.

The one group that seems somewhat surprising for its support of Just War doctrine was The American Lutheran Conference. This is surprising because its membership included the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, the Augustana Synod, and the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church, all of which took more pacifist stands in their own periodicals. Despite this, the stand by the writers of the *Journal of the American Lutheran Conference* and *The Pastor's Monthly* was decidedly in favor of Just War doctrine.¹⁴ The *Journal of the American Lutheran Conference* argued that Pacifism was misguided and led actually to greater danger.¹⁵

The more Americanized denominations, namely the United Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church, officially defended Just War doctrine, but there was a large response from readers taking issue with it. Here there was a deep divide along the language lines. The American Lutheran Church's *Kirchenblatt*, and *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* as well as the United Lutheran Church in America's *Lutherischer Herold* defended Just War and criticized

¹³ For instance "Andre Lande: Tyskland," *DV* 53, no. 2 (January 13, 1932): 8 notes that Goebbels, "Hitler's right hand man" attacked the assistant police chief. Also "Andre Lande: Valget I Tsyskland," *DV* 54, no. 10 (March 8, 1933): 5 reports on the latest election and that Hitler "grabbed" more power. In "Fra andre Lande: Nazi Terrorisme?," *DV* 54, no. 13 (March 28, 1934): 5 it was reported that the Nazis were using terrorism in the Saar in order to make sure that there is not a fair vote in order that they will win.

Oscar Tressel, "The Christian Attitude Towards Military Service and War," *PM* 11 (September 1933): 515–30; H. Lindeman, "Luther and War," *PM* 11 (November 1933): 643–47; JPP, "Comment," *JALC* 1, no. 6 (June, 1936): 7; and C. R. Tappert, "The Christian and His Service in War," *JALC* 2, no. 4 (April 1937): 62–64.

¹⁵ J. A. Dell, "Editorials: Pacifism," *JALC* 1, no. 10 (October 1936): 2–3; E. Jansen Schoonhoven, "War Threats Harass Christians," *JALC* 1, no. 11 (November 1936): 35; and J. A. Dell, "Editorials: Pacifism in the Modern World," *JALC* 4, no. 5 (May 1939): 5–8.

pacifism;¹⁶ however, the American Lutheran Church's *Lutheran Standard* started out defending Just War, but then moved to a more pacifist view as time went on.¹⁷ Probably the most interesting example was the United Lutheran Church's *The Lutheran* which officially defended and explained Just War doctrine, but this was met with a firestorm of letters to the editor and saw a heated debate over the issue.¹⁸ Therefore it appears that the more Americanized elements of these churches were more sympathetic to Pacifism, while the later immigrants held more firmly to the traditional doctrine, since the staunchest defenses of Just War doctrine were in German.

It should also be noted that there were a few groups that initially did not enter the debate, but then weighed in as war loomed; most likely due to the political realities. In particular the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in *The Lutheran Counselor* and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran National Church of America in *The Lutheran Youth* both were worried about the possibility of aggression from the Soviet Union and therefore supported Finland's right to defend itself.¹⁹

Pacifism in American Lutheranism

Due to a number of factors, including the fallout from the extraordinarily bloody Great War, ecumenicalism, and pietism, several American Lutheran bodies moved away from the

¹⁶ Julius Bodensieck, "Editorielles: Auch der Pazifismus ist relativ!," *KB* 76, no. 41 (October 14, 1933): 3; review of *Der Christ und der völkische Wehrwill* by Werner Elert in *KZ* 61 (August 1937): 752; A. Pilger, "Christentum und Pazifismus," *KZ* 62 (August 1938): 449-61; and "Gegen den Pazifismus," *LiH* 15, no. 17 (January 21, 1937) 11.

¹⁷ Examples of defenses of Just War doctrine can be found in John Fahning, "From our Mail Bag: Wars Just and Unjust," *LStd* 92, no. 30 (July 28, 1934): 7; F.A. Schaffnit, "The Christian and War," *LStd* 92, no. 30 (July 28, 1934): 19; and Hans Boening, "Conscience and War," *LStd* 92, no. 33 (August 18, 1934): 6-7. Then by 1935, the preponderance of opinion was for pacifism as seen in Arthur H. Kuhlman, "Church News: 'Expose War's Crazy!' Ohio Pastors Told," *LStd* 93, no. 25 (June 22, 1935): 9-10; "Patriotism and War," *LStd* 93, no. 27 (July 6, 1935): 2-3; and C. G. Wolf, "Human Welfare or War?," *LStd* 95, no. 27 (July 3, 1937): 6-8.

¹⁸ The initial article, Nathan R. Melhorn, "When is a War Just?," *Luth* 21, no. 23 (March 8, 1939): 10, was responded to in F. Eppling Reinartz, "When is a War Just? A Statement of Personal Conviction," *Luth* 21, no. 25 (March 22, 1939): 8, 11 followed by 5 letters to the editor and another personal statement responding to the original article from vol. 21 no. 26 (March 29, 1939) through vol. 21, no. 29 (April 19, 1939).

¹⁹ Carl Tamminen, "War—Peace," *The Lutheran Counselor* (hereafter *LCnslr*) 1 (November 1939): 171; "Finland," *LCnslr* 1 (December, 1939): 191; JEN, "Sotaista Uutta Vuotta!," *LY* 3, no. 1 (January 1938): 14-15; and JEN, "The Lutheran Church on War," *LY* 3, no. 3 (March 1938): 3.

traditional Lutheran theological position on Just Wars and adopted a decidedly pacifist stance. In particular, some of the periodicals of the Scandinavian-American Lutheran Churches were most avidly pacifist. This shows their theological ties to the Scandinavian Lutheran tradition which took an early role in church peace movements as seen in the leadership of Nathan Söderblom and the ecumenical meetings in Uppsala in 1917 and Stockholm in 1925 where the Scandinavian influences helped to move the ecumenical movement forward as a force to bring peace in the world. This was also seen in the support that *The Ansgar Lutheran* offered for a statement by the Bishops of Norway that war is a sin.²⁰ The periodicals taking this side often staunchly denounced all facets of war throughout the entire period studied.

For the most part the pro-pacifism discussion was carried on more in the popular periodicals than in the scholarly journals. For instance, while *The Lutheran Companion* spoke to the issue a number of times, the *Augustana Quarterly* only addressed the issue three times.²¹ The *Theological Forum* did not even address the issue of Just War doctrine during the period studied. The *Lutheran Church Quarterly* was the most vocal of these periodicals, yet it only addressed four articles on the topic, two of which were in 1932 and three of these articles were by the same author: Dwight F. Putnam.²²

One clear example of a popular periodical that addressed the topic was *The Lutheran Companion* of the Augustana Synod; which reflected the Scandinavian Lutheran pietistic tradition. For *The Lutheran Companion* pacifism was a major issue, with close to an average of one article a week on it. One of the more ironic articles came in response to a letter from a

²⁰ "War," *AnL* 9, no. 34 (August 24, 1936): 5–6.

²¹ Review of *Preachers Present Arms* by Ray H. Abrams in Daniel Nystrom, *AQ* 13 (April, 1934): 179–81; Review of *Realistic Pacifism* by Leyton Richards in Oscar N. Olson, *AQ* 15 (October, 1936): 368–70; and "Oxford and Edinburgh, 1937," *AQ* 17 (January, 1938): 25–44.

²² Review of *The War-Method and the Peace-Method* by William I. Hull in D. F. Putnam, *LCQ* 5 (April, 1932): 338; F. Epling Reinartz, "The Church and War," *LCQ* 5 (October, 1932): 341–59; Review of *War is a Racket* by Smedley D. Butler in D..F. Putman, *LCQ* 8 (April, 1935): 207; and Dwight F. Putnam, "War and Religion: An unholy Alliance," *LCQ* 9 (April, 1936): 197–205.

pastor in 1935 in which the pastor asked “why the *Companion* does not fight the plague of war and militarism as vigorously as we have fought the curse of strong drink.” This question was responded to in the aptly named editorial: “We Thought We Had Said a Lot.”²³ Similar views were also seen in the Augustana Synod’s academic periodical, *Augustana Quarterly*, though with less frequency.²⁴

Probably the most consistently anti-war American Lutheran publication was *The Ansgar Lutheran* of the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church. This publication featured countless articles pointing out how war was evil and supporting the pacifist movement. This is well illustrated in how *The Ansgar Lutheran* reported on a protest by the Federal Council of Churches in 1935 against naval maneuvers in the Pacific, which were seen as a threat to peace and good will; in the report it was then lamented: “A cursory examination of the list [of signatories] revealed, however, the name of but a single Lutheran pastor.”²⁵

A somewhat more moderate form of pacifism was seen in the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America’s *Lutheran Herald*. Here there was a little early support for the idea of Just Wars,²⁶ but then they moved away from this to more and more pacifist leanings.²⁷ Curiously, the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America’s *Theological Forum* did not address the topic at all.

The one periodical that was not attached to a Scandinavian group that supported pacifism was the rather theologically liberal *Lutheran Church Quarterly* published by the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg and the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Mount Airy in

²³ “We Thought We Had Said a Lot,” *LCmpn* 43 (June 29, 1935): 803.

²⁴ Review of *Preachers Present Arms* by Ray H. Abrams in Daniel Nystrom, *AQ* 13 (April 1934): 179–81; and “Oxford and Edinburgh, 1937,” *AQ* 17 (January 1938): 25–44.

²⁵ N.C.J.C., “Protest against Pacific Naval Maneuvers,” *AnL* 8, no. 11 (March 18, 1935): 2.

²⁶ The earliest reference to the concept of Just War doctrine was Martin L. Cole, “The Lutheran Church and War,” *LH* 16 (March 15, 1932): 329–30 which defended the Lutheran understanding from CA 16.

²⁷ Some of the earlier works against all forms of war are “The Pacifist and the Fire-Eating War Fanatic,” *LH* 16 (April 12, 1932): 452–53; “The Home Circle: He Saw War” excerpts from Sir Philip Gibbs’ “The Way of Escape,” *LH* 18 (March 20, 1934): 275; and “Layman Calls Upon the Church to Preach Against War and Exploitation,” *LH* 18 (July 17, 1934): 645–46.

Philadelphia.²⁸ This is also of note because it was a decidedly scholarly journal and was the one scholarly journal that truly worked to advocate for pacifism in an academic manner.

However, often the periodicals that at least entertained certain elements of pacifism were not entirely on one side or the other. This is well illustrated in that the *Lutheran Sentinel* took issue with the *Lutheran Herald* for being too liberal and being too much a mouthpiece for pacifism.

"Lutheran Herald" has continually lent its columns to the Pacifist propaganda of the Peace Union and its Federal Council of Churches associates. This propaganda fits in perfectly with the Socialist, Bolshevist propaganda for "social reconstruction" that forms the substance also of Dr. Larsen's pamphlet. It is part and parcel of the vain, un-Christian dreams which would establish Christ's Kingdom of Glory here and now, instead of waiting for the Lord to create the new heavens and the new earth, where peace shall reign eternally.²⁹

Meanwhile, the equally conservative *The Northwestern Lutheran* several times quoted the *Lutheran Herald* approvingly for its stands on Just War.³⁰

Views of the Peace Movement

Following the First World War, there were several organized movements that advocated an end to war as well as made pacifist stances into official national and international policies. This loosely formed movement was not nearly as large or vocal as that which would grow in the United States following the Second World War and peaking during the Vietnam War.

Nevertheless, due to the growing and international nature of the peace movement of that day, it certainly did not escape observation by the writers and editors of the periodicals being studied

²⁸ This work contained one article: Dwight F. Putnam, "War and Religion: An Unholy Alliance," *LCQ* 9 (April, 1936): 197–205 along with several reviews of books that were published during this era: Review of *The War-Method and the Peace-Method* by William I. Hull in D.F. Putnam, *LCQ* 5 (April, 1932): 338; F. Eppling Reinartz, "The Church and War," *LCQ* 5 (October, 1932): 341–59; Review of *War is a Racket* by Smedley D. Butler in D.F. Putnam, *LCQ* 8 (April, 1935): 207.

²⁹ Geo. O. Lillegard, "The Debacle of Lutheranism in the Norwegian Lutheran Church: III. 'The Social Gospel'," *LSntl* 17 (June 6, 1934): 183.

³⁰ "Pacifism and the Policeman," *NwL* 19 (January 17, 1932): 22–23; August Zich, "Modernism and Pacifism," *NwL* 22 (February 17, 1935): 53–54; and August Zich, "Peace and War," *NwL* 23 (October 25, 1936): 341.

here. However, their views of this movement were widely varied from endorsements to very vocal denunciations of it. In the end, however many of the writers felt that pacifism was too extreme in that it did not allow for any war at any time for any reason.

The advocates of pacifism unsurprisingly had praise for the movement, which they saw as a movement that was attempting to carry out the very will of Christ in bringing peace on earth. A couple pointed directly to the example of Christ and celebrated the fact that He was being recognized as a leader in world peace.³¹ Because the aims of the Peace Movement included the saving of lives and the fostering of peace on earth, there were a number of exhortations to the Lutheran Churches to join the movement.³² In 1936, an article in *The Lutheran Companion* argued that while pacifism is idealistic, Christians should be idealists and therefore should join the movement.³³ In one of the more surprising endorsements, the *Lutheran Herald* praised the modernist Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick in his work for pacifism.³⁴

The more numerous criticisms of pacifism by Lutherans in America were certainly felt by the supporters of pacifism. It was clear that for many the term “pacifist” was a pejorative term, and this stung some supporters. The most defiant response was found in *Lutheran Herald* where Mrs. Lewis Asper wrote: “Let others call us pacifists, or what they will. Names at least do not kill or maim!”³⁵

While some of the American Lutheran writers praised the Peace Movement, there was a far more vocal criticism of the movement from the other side. Of course not all of this criticism was

³¹ Nona M. Diehl, “Missionary Convention Addresses,” *Luth* 20, no. 4 (October 27, 1937): 4–5; and F. Eppling Reinartz, “The Church and War,” *LCQ* 5 (October 1932): 341–59.

³² G.C. Gast, “Church News: Labor Appeals to Churches to Join Anti-War Crusade,” *LStd* 96, no. 36 (September 3, 1938): 19–21; Amos John Traver, “The Young People,” *Luth* 20, no. 8 (November 24, 1937): 17; and G.C. Gast, “Church News: ‘Peace Movement’ Considered by Coast Conference,” *LStd* 94, no. 42 (October 17, 1936): 16.

³³ G. Everett Arden, “What About War,” *LCmpn* 44 (March 14, 1936): 327–30.

³⁴ “The Pacifist and the Fire-Eating War Fanatic,” *LH* 16 (April 12, 1932): 452–3.

³⁵ Mrs. Lewis Asper, “Flagrant Social Evils of Today,” *LH* 22 (September 27, 1938): 974

a total rejection of pacifist ideals, rather a number of American Lutheran editors were concerned over the extreme stance that many pacifists took.³⁶ Others simply were upset by Lutherans and other Christians who adopted a pacifist stance and spoke out accordingly.³⁷

In a number of ways, the concerns over the peace movement were reflective of the American Lutheran writers' theological concerns that are discussed in other parts of this study. For instance, twice *The Pastor's Monthly* expressed concerns over the inherent unionism in the peace movement.³⁸ A number of periodicals and writers also expressed concerns over how the peace movement was an expression of modernism and modernist utopian hopes.³⁹

However, more criticism was leveled at the peace movement for confusing the Two Kingdoms than any other doctrinal aspect of the debate.⁴⁰ August Zich put it succinctly in *The Northwestern Lutheran* when he argued that the peace movement was led by modernists who "seem to have rejected the long established distinction between the church and state."⁴¹ An outgrowth of this thinking was that pacifism undermined the government's authority and attempts to protect its citizens.⁴² A number of the writers argued that a Christian had a biblically

³⁶ "Realism Against War," *JALC* 4, no. 5 (May 1939): 65–68; "Across the Desk," *Luth* 20, no. 51 (September 21, 1938): 10; James C. Peterson, "Annual Convention of Chaplains' Association," *LH* 21 (June 8, 1937): 575, "Gegen den Pazifismus," *LiH* 15, no. 17 (January 21, 1937): 11; and S.O. Briquet, "Opinions on Live Questions," *NL* 8, no. 3 (September 1939): 25–29.

³⁷ V. Eugene Johnson, "The Church and War," *JALC* 2, no. 9 (September 1937): 37–41; "Do the Churches of America Believe that Military Service is a Sin?," *LH* 19 (January 15, 1935): 51–2 this article was reprinted in *PM* 13 3 (March 1935): 187–89; and August Zich, "Luther on War," *NwL* 23 (March 15, 1936): 86–87.

³⁸ E.W. Matzner, "Another Peace-ship," *PM* 10 (April 1932): 229–31; and Oscar Tressel, "The Christian Attitude towards Military Service and War," *PM* 11 (September 1933): 515–30.

³⁹ Arndt, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Fosdick and War," *CTM* 5 (August 1934): 635–36; Geo. O. Lillegard, "The Debacle of Lutheranism in the Norwegian Lutheran Church: III. 'The Social Gospel,'" *LSntl* 17 (June 6, 1934): 179–83; and August Zich, "Modernism and Pacifism," *NwL* 22 (February 17, 1935): 53–54.

⁴⁰ A. Pilger, "Christentum und Pazifismus," *KZ* 62 (August 1938): 449–61; C.R. Tappert, "The Christian and His Service in War," *LH* 21 (March 9, 1937): 230–31; and E. A. Peterson, letter to the editor, *LCmpn* 46 (December 15, 1938): 1583.

⁴¹ August Zich, "Modernism and Pacifism," *NwL* 22 (February 17, 1935): 53–54.

⁴² V. Eugene Johnson, "The Church and War," *JALC* 2, no. 9 (September 1937): 37–41; C.R. Tappert, "The Christian and His Service in War," *LH* 21 (March 9, 1937): 230–31; and J.E.N., "The Lutheran Church on War," *LY* 3, no. 3 (March 1938): 3.

mandated duty to fight in defensive wars in order to protect their neighbors.⁴³ This point was made in the *Augustana Quarterly* where Oscar N. Olson wrote: “The dilemma of the Christian is not war or non-resistance as Tolstoy conceived it. The use of force or coercion is not in itself evil. It is quite conceivable that non-resistance under certain circumstances would be very immoral.”⁴⁴ Several writers felt that the whole pacifist movement was somewhat dangerous in that it ignored the realities of war, and the need for defense. Especially as war loomed more and more on the horizon, some writers saw pacifism as doomed to failure.⁴⁵

Is Just War Doctrine Correct?

For many of the writers in American Lutheranism the very correctness of the idea that there can be a Just War was up for debate. This became a sometimes heated debate as the two sides fired back Bible passages, citations from the Book of Concord and rationalizations for their divergent opinions. Therefore, the issue of the very possibility of there being a Just War was far from a settled issue.

Defense of Traditional Just War Doctrine

There were a number of American Lutherans, more from the more conservative churches, but not entirely, who held that the idea of Just War is a good, sound, and correct one. This does not mean that this group was at all ready to join in a new war, rather there was still a very strong isolationist bent to these thinkers. Nonetheless, they stood stoutly for the traditional Lutheran understanding of “Just War,” even if they thought that the First World War and any coming European war were not just, at least for Americans to participate in them. There were even

⁴³ Walter A. Maier, “Sarcasm or Grim Reality? Veterans of Future Wars,” *WLM* 44 (May 1936): 522–23, 527. C.R. Tappert, “The Christian and His Service in War,” *LH* 21 (March 9, 1937): 230–31; and J. A. Dell, “Editorials: Pacifism,” *JALC* 1, no. 10 (October 1936): 2–3.

⁴⁴ Review of *Realistic Pacifism* by Leyton Richards in Oscar N. Olson, *AQ* 15 (October 1936): 368–70.

⁴⁵ E. Jansen Schoonhoven, “War Threats Harass Christians,” *JALC* 1, no. 11 (November 1936): 34–36; J.E.N., “Sotaista Uutta Vuotta!,” *LY* 3, no. 1 (January 1938): 14–15; and Walter A. Maier, “Pathways to Peace,” *WLM* 47 (November 1938): 154–55, 202–06.

several articles praising the PCUSA for taking a stand in defending their traditional acceptance of Just War doctrine.⁴⁶

A number of the writers urged their readers to think seriously about the whole issue of Just War and not be taken in by simplistic, idealistic principles on either side of the debate. In response to the pacifist claims that war is sin, several writers argued that war in and of itself is not sin, but the effects of sin.⁴⁷ Then, in light of the running debate a number of the writers set out to explain the history and importance of Just War doctrine.⁴⁸ Not only were there these explanations of Just War doctrine, but quite a few writers also pointed out that the debate was far more complex than just is war good or bad. These men then pointed out that one must look at the facts in a given war to determine if it is in fact a Just War.⁴⁹

The exhortation to determine if a war is just or not was not only given, but also acted upon by some of the writers. For many of them, looking back they saw the First World War as one that was unjust, particularly for the United States. Many saw the war as being fought more for profits and munitions than for principles. Also, there was a concern that the war was not America's concern, since it was fought in Europe, and the U.S. was in no way threatened.⁵⁰ As the clouds of war loomed and then broke out over Europe even the supporters of Just War doctrine were opposed to American involvement, because the war was a European war and

⁴⁶ "Editorials: Presbyterian Decision on War Is to Be Commended," *JALC* 2, no. 7 (July 1937): 6; and August Zich, "War and the New Testament," *NwL* 23 (June 7, 1936): 182–83 which was also reprinted in *LSntl* 19 (August 12, 1936): 261–62.

⁴⁷ J. P. P., "Comment," *JALC* 1, no. 6 (June 1936): 7; "Do the Churches of America Believe that Military Service is a Sin?," *LH* 19 (January 15, 1935): 51–52 which was also reprinted in *PM* 13 (March 1935): 187–89; and Nathan R. Melhorn, "When is a War Just?," *Luth* 21, no. 23 (March 8, 1939): 10.

⁴⁸ Oscar Tressel, "The Christian Attitude towards Military Service and War," *PM* 11 (September 1933): 515–30; J. E. N., "The Lutheran Church on War," *LY* 3, no. 3 (March 1938): 3; and E. Oscar Johnson, "May a Christian Bear Arms?," *LCmpn* 47 (January 12, 1939): 42–43.

⁴⁹ C. R. Tappert, "The Christian and His Service in War," *JALC* 2, no. 4 (April 1937): 62–64; "Gegen den Pazifismus," *LiH* 15, no. 17 (January 21, 1937): 11; and Martin L. Cole, "The Lutheran Church and War," *LH* 16 (March 15, 1932): 329–30.

⁵⁰ "Once Burned," *PM* 12, (January 1934): 52–54; John Fahning, "From our Mail Bag: Wars Just and Unjust," *LStd* 92, no. 30 (July 28, 1934): 7; and C. G. Wolf, "Human Welfare or War?," *LStd* 95, no. 27 (July 3, 1937): 6–8.

America was not threatened.⁵¹ The editors of the *Lutheran Standard* made this clear when they wrote: “though we agree with the contention of Editor Dell in an editorial in the *Journal of the American Lutheran Conference* that, theoretically, there may be a ‘just war’ in a world that is full of sin, we see no case whatsoever for a ‘just war’ in the present world situation.”⁵²

A number of the writers also pointed out that war, because of its being done in the name of defending citizens, is part of the purview of the civil authorities. While the Church and individual Christians are to be careful not to sanction an unjust war, the Church also must be careful not to confuse the Two Kingdoms by telling the civil authorities that they must not wage war at any time.⁵³ Here again it must be noted that many of the writers pointed out that the civil authorities, and often fellow citizens, had a God-given duty to fight in some wars in order to defend and protect their neighbors.⁵⁴ A couple of writers appealed to the analogy of a policeman who might use force in order to protect others from harm at the hands of a criminal.⁵⁵

The aspect of Just War doctrine that was most widely supported and explained was that a war must be purely defensive in order to be just. A number of the writers argued that it is certainly acceptable for a nation to defend itself from outside attack. One key understanding was that aggressive war is sinful and comes out of human sin; this then means that evil is done and must be limited or stopped in some way, therefore it is not surprising that military aggression occurs and one must therefore be willing to fight to protect others from attack. Or as one writer

⁵¹ “Let Us Be Thankful That We Live in the United States,” *LH* 22 (November 22, 1938): 1176; Walter A. Maier, “Keep out of War!,” *WLM* 47 (May 1939): 564–65; and A. M. Rehwinkel, “War or Peace: Which Shall it Be?,” *LW* 58, no. 9 (May 2, 1939): 9 and reprinted in *LStd* 97, no. 22 (June 3, 1939): 5.

⁵² “Observing the Times: The Case for Peace,” *LStd* 97, no. 22 (June 3, 1939): 8.

⁵³ A. Pilger, “Christentum und Pazifismus,” *KZ* 62 (August 1938): 449–61; E. Victor Roland, letter to the editor, *Luth* 21, no. 29 (April 19, 1939): 20–21; and “Confusing Church and State, Law and Gospel,” *LH* 19 (January 15, 1935): 53.

⁵⁴ Walter A. Maier, “Sarcasm or Grim Reality? Veterans of Future Wars,” *WLM* 44 (May 1936): 523; E. Jansen Schoonhoven, “War Threats Harass Christians,” *JALC* 1, no. 11 (November 1936): 35; “Von Kriegen und Kriegsgeschrei,” *ELGB* 73 (March 20, 1938): 92–93.

⁵⁵ J. A. Dell, “Editorials: Pacifism in the Modern World,” *JALC* 4, no. 5 (May 1939): 5–8; and “Pacifism and the Policeman,” *NwL* 19 (January 17, 1932): 23.

put is succinctly: “in a world where the prince of the air rules, self defense is permissible.”⁵⁶

This sentiment was echoed in a number of other publications.⁵⁷ Even a couple of the more pacifist publications agreed on this point.⁵⁸ A strongly anti-war writer in the *Lutheran Herald* seemed to begrudge this exception when she wrote: “In a supposedly Christian and civilized country, such as ours, there is and should be only one legitimate and possible excuse for war and that is the invasion of our own shores by land, sea, or air.”⁵⁹

There Can Be No Just War

Despite the force of these arguments, the side that was probably the most vocal and strident was those that held that there could be no “Just War.” These views ranged from those who urged the joining of the peace movement to those that simply found all war to be evil and reprehensible. Many different theological arguments were brought forth in attempts to convince the readership that all war was inherently unchristian. There were even a couple of endorsements of Quakers and their rejection of war.⁶⁰

A number of articles argued that all war is sin. The most concise version of this was from the *Journal of the American Lutheran Conference* and reprinted in *The Ansgar Lutheran* where Jacob Tanner wrote: “No Christian will deny that war is a fruit of sin. Can sin ever breed anything but sin?”⁶¹ Because of this, the argument was then made that all war is unjust, or as F. Epppling Reinartz wrote in *The Lutheran* in 1939: “When is a war just? When it is just to cripple,

⁵⁶ “The Church and War,” *LH* 23 (March 28, 1939): 292 reprinted in *JALC* 4, no. 5 (May 1939): 65.

⁵⁷ Hans Boening, “Conscience and War,” *LStd* 92, no. 33 (August 18, 1934): 6–7; Nathan R. Melhorn, “When is a War Just?,” *Luth* 21, no. 23 (March 8, 1939): 10; and “Von Kriegen und Kriegsgeschrei,” *ELGB* 73 (March 20, 1938): 92–93.

⁵⁸ “The Law of Self-Defense Is Sanctioned in the Word of God,” *LH* 20 (February 11, 1936): 140–41; “Minnesota Conference Speaks on War,” *LCmpn* 43 (April 20, 1935): 502.

⁵⁹ Mrs. Lewis Asper, “Flagrant Social Evils of Today,” *LH* 22 (September 27, 1938): 974.

⁶⁰ “A Quaker’s Plea Against War,” *Luth* 21, no. 42 (July 19, 1939): 14; and review of *The War-Method and the Peace-Method* by William I. Hull in D.F. Putnam, *LCQ* 5 (April 1932): 338.

⁶¹ Jacob Tanner, “War,” *JALC* 1, no. 8 (August 1936): 2–5; also in *AnL* 9, no. 34 (August 24, 1936): 5.

maim, and slaughter babies, and children at play, though the use of aerial bombs, released by defensive or offensive airplanes – *then* a war is just.”⁶² Flowing directly out of this was the basic idea that war and Christianity cannot coexist.⁶³

A couple of writers took issue with the concept of a Just War because all wars can seem just at the time to the people on both sides. Since virtually all combatants feel they are doing right, then all war ends up being justified and Just War doctrine therefore means nothing. Likewise, there was the question of what is a “defensive” war, since all seem to be defending something. This thinking appears to be influenced by the First World War where most of the nations became involved via treaties and were therefore attempting to defend their allies.⁶⁴

One might have asked these men just how one should stop a military tyrant bent on invasion and slaughter, such as Hitler was, if not resorting to war. It would appear that this was exactly what happened in the inter-periodical debates of the era. The answer was given by Rev. E. A. E Palmquist, executive secretary of the Philadelphia Federation of Churches who was reported to have advocated non-violent resistance, as Gandhi used in India. It should also be noted that Palmquist said this in either late September or early October 1939, after hostilities had broken out.⁶⁵

Modern “Complete” Warfare Cannot Be Just.

Some took a somewhat moderating position between the extremes of outright Pacifism and traditional defense of Just War. This position held that while a war could theoretically be just,

⁶² F. Eppling Reinartz, “When is a War Just? A Statement of Personal Conviction,” *Luth* 21, no. 25 (March 22, 1939): 8; italics original.

⁶³ Review of Christianity and War by J. A. Boord in *AnL* 10, no. 19 (May 9, 1938): 9; Raymond T. Stamm, “Is Mars Also among the Just?,” *Luth* 21, no. 28 (April 12, 1939): 9, 22–23; and Dwight F. Putnam, “War and Religion: An unholy Alliance,” *LCQ* 9 (April 1936): 197–205.

⁶⁴ “Editorials and Comments: The Church and War,” *AnL* 9, no. 12 (Mar. 22, 1937): 3; and Alton M. Motter, letter to the editor, *Luth* 21, no. 26 (March 29, 1939): 23.

⁶⁵ “From Everywhere: Non-violence Seen Effective Foe of ‘Hitlerism’,” *AnL* 11, no. 41 (October 9, 1939): 7.

the nature of modern war, with the weapons of mass destruction and brutal tactics, left contemporary wars outside of the realm of “Just Wars.” In particular, this line of reasoning was used by the more pacifist publications in order to support their rejection of all wars in this day and age.⁶⁶

It is extremely improbable that a “just war,” in the traditional sense, could occur in the world today. If war comes, it will not be the expression of any social will. It will arise from a common unsociality. In such action no Christian ought to take part. It will not even be war, in the traditional sense, but an attempt at mutual destruction.⁶⁷

The *Lutheran Herald* quoted Dr. J. C. K. Preus who went a step further and argued that the very nature of modern wars was corrupted beyond all hope.

Today war, more bestial than ever before in human history, with its poison gas and liquid fire, with open cities bombed, with machine guns slaying non-combatants, with merchantmen again being sunk without warning, with laboratories searching for yet more efficient methods for destroying human life—such war, declared and undeclared, rages from the Straits of Gibraltar to the gorges of China's Yellow River.⁶⁸

The Causes of the Growing Specter of War in Europe

Agreement that War is Evil

While there was a stirring debate during this era over whether or not there could be a “Just War,” there was agreement across all denominational lines that war in and of itself is a terribly evil thing and should be avoided if at all possible. None of the periodicals glamorized or praised war in any way. The nature of the recent First World War removed any starry-eyed dreams of the glories of war. Rather, the topic was addressed with a grim realization of just how bad it

⁶⁶ “Editorials and Comments: The Church and War,” *AnL* 9, no. 12 (Mar. 22, 1937): 3; “Army Officer Renounces War,” *JALC* 1, no. 9 (September 1936): 6; and excerpts from Sir Philip Gibbs’ “The Way of Escape” in “The Home Circle: He Saw War,” *LH* 18 (March 20, 1934): 275.

⁶⁷ Daniel Nystrom, “The Spectator: A Review of Current News and Opinion,” *LCmpn* 45 (December 9, 1937): 1575.

⁶⁸ From a radio address by Dr. J. C. K. Preus and reported in “Who Wants War?,” *LH* 23 (March 28, 1939): 292.

was. For many of the writers war, because it entailed the killing of others, was seen as evil by definition. Some saw this as a necessary evil,⁶⁹ while others considered it an avoidable evil.⁷⁰

A sure sign of the general agreement that war was evil and the result of human sin came out of a declaration in which the National Lutheran Council issued a call to end war and the causes of war, in which the NLC called war a sin. While the report was criticized by the *Concordia Theological Monthly* for not pointing to Christ as the only answer, the *CTM* did agree that war was rightly called sin.⁷¹ In much the same way, and unsurprisingly, war was considered to be an evil that should be avoided if at all possible by virtually all writers and editors.

Post WWI Laments

One of the things that influenced most if not all of the writers and editors was the fallout from the First World War. The First World War was in many ways a wake up call for the world, and the American Lutheran writers were no exception. They were shocked by the incredible brutality of the war, the massive casualties and how the world had wrongly pinned such great hopes on the “War to end all wars.”⁷²

Not only did the war show just how terrible war is, but it also brought out more personal laments as many in the American churches had spoken and even preached in ways to support the American war effort. A number of different articles pointed to the Church’s guilt in fomenting

⁶⁹ “An Appalling Tragedy,” *Luth* 21, no. 52 (September 27, 1939): 12–13; Walter A. Maier, “Editorials: Wars and Rumors of Wars,” *WLM* 42 (February 1934): 332–33; and “Har Krig allerede ødelagt Civilisationen?,” *DV* 54, no. 43 (October 24, 1934): 1.

⁷⁰ Harold C. Jorgensen, “Glimpses of the World of Men,” *AnL* 10, no. 42 (October 17, 1938): 7; “We Thought We Has Said a Lot,” *LCmpn* 43 (June 29, 1935): 803; and John G. Whittier, “The Curse of War,” *LH* 19 (January 22, 1935): 77.

⁷¹ Arndt, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: The National Lutheran Council Holds Its Election and Issues Pronouncements on War and Movies,” *CTM* 6 (April 1935): 305–08.

⁷² “Salvation: Individual and Social,” *AnL* 8, no. 21 (May 27, 1935): 2; “Event and Thought in the Religious World: The World Disarmament Conference,” *PM* 10 (March 1932): 178; and C. G. Wolf, “Human Welfare or War?,” *LStd* 95, no. 27 (July 3, 1937): 6–8.

pro-war feelings with the First World War.⁷³ The *Lutheran Herald* pointed out that while many had criticized the Lutheran clergy for not being American enough in wanting to get into WWI, but the aftermath of the war showed that they were right.⁷⁴ Because of this, there was a renewed concern as the clouds of war once more arose in the late 1930s. In response to this many writers warned the churches not to be drawn in again by the pro-war propaganda.⁷⁵

Inequities in the World

As it was agreed that war was evil, there was also a similar agreement between writers over many of the more immediate causes of war beyond just human sin. These men looked at the events in their day that they believed were causes of the First World War and what they saw as leading to another potential war. For some the outbreak of the Second World War was not completely surprising.

The most complete analysis of the causes of war was found in an article by E. E. Ryden, which was printed in the *Lutheran Herald*, *The Lutheran*, and *The Ansgar Lutheran* in August and September 1938. Here Ryden assesses the causes as unequal distribution of the world's natural resources, restrictive tariffs along with other trade barriers, vindictive peace treaties like the Treaty of Versailles, an overemphasis on nationalism which results in racial hatreds, false propaganda which is promoted by those who profit by war, excessive armaments which create fear and distrust among nations, and secret diplomacy and military alliances. He then calls for

⁷³ "Salvation: Individual and Social," *AnL* 8, no. 21 (May 27, 1935): 2; review of *Preachers Present Arms* by Ray H. Abrams in Daniel Nystrom, *AQ* 13 (April 1934): 179–81; and there was a whole series of articles in *FL* from May, 1933 to September, 1933 under the larger head of "Political Propaganda and our Protest" that highlighted the church's guilt in WWI, often through things written at that time.

⁷⁴ "The Pacifist and the Fire-Eating War Fanatic," *LH* 16 (April 12, 1932): 452–53.

⁷⁵ A.M. Rehwinkel, "War or Peace: Which Shall it Be?," *LW* 58 (May 2, 1939):153; this was reprinted in *LStd* 97, no. 22 (June 3, 1939): 4; also "Haltet Amerika aus dem Krieg!," *KB* 82, no. 24 (June 17, 1939): 5–6; "President Makes Neutrality Plea," *LCmpn* 47 (September 14, 1939): 1155–56.; and W.J.S., "War News," *NwL* 26 (November 19, 1939): 374–75.

the nations to work together to make compromises as well as to educate the people about how to make the world more just.⁷⁶

Ryden's concerns of the unfair treatment of some countries, most notably Germany, Italy, and Japan, were echoed in other places as well. This is unmistakably shown in the November 13, 1937 issue of the *Lutheran Standard*.⁷⁷ The front cover, included the following illustration, made this abundantly clear. It should even be noted that here is something of an explanation that aggression by these three countries should not be surprising in light of these inequalities. While this was the most vivid illustration of this idea, there were a number of other articles that echoed the sentiment.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ E.E. Ryden, "The Church and the Problem of War," *LH* 22 (August 30, 1938): 867-68; "In Behalf of Peace," *Luth* 20, no. 49 (September 7, 1938): 5, 24 ; and "The Church and the Problem of War," *AnL* 10, no. 37 (September 12, 1938): 6, 15.

⁷⁷ "The 'Haves' and the 'Have-nots'," *LStd* 95, no. 46 (November 13, 1937): 2-3.

⁷⁸ "War Again Looms in Europe," *LCmpn* 44 (March 21, 1936): 356; JEN, "Armistice," *LY* 2, no. 11 (November 1937): 10; and "Wars and Rumors of Wars," *LH* 22 (January 11, 1938): 27-8.

entering the First World War in order to increase their profits. These allegations led to the Special Committee on Investigation of the Munitions Industry, led by Senator Gerald Nye and this committee is better known as the Nye Committee. The Nye Committee met between 1934 and 1936 and published a final report which led many to believe that munitions makers unduly influenced the American entrance into the war.

The Lutheran Companion in particular held Senator Nye in high esteem, referring to him and his committee from time to time,⁷⁹ and even going so far as to wish that the US Government would establish a Peace Department with Nye as the head.⁸⁰ While the other periodicals seemed to hold back from such direct support of Nye, they nevertheless echoed and supported his committee's work. For virtually all of the publications, it was understood that the Munitions industry was at fault for stirring up war in order to make money. *The Walther League Messenger* even ran a couple of articles by a munitions industry insider about how corrupt it was; curiously the editors felt it necessary to withhold the writers name for his own protection.⁸¹

Nye was not the only source that was cited here in this context. Another major source was General Smedley D. Butler, and his book *War is a Racket*.⁸² This book was considered especially powerful, since it was written by a retired, decorated US Marine General and not a rabid pacifist. A handful of other books and periodicals were also cited from time to time.

The belief that the munitions industry was fomenting war led to a number of calls that the industry be severely limited. There were a number of calls for the munitions industry to be taken

⁷⁹ "As Others See It: Backs Munitions Investigation," *LCmpn* 42 (November 17, 1934): 1442; "What the Press Does Not Tell," *LCmpn* 43 (February 9, 1935): 163; and Lynn Ash, "The Curse of War: A Review of an Address by Senator Gerald P. Nye," *LCmpn* 43 (May 25, 1935): 646-47.

⁸⁰ "We Thought We Has Said a Lot," *LCmpn* 43 (June 29, 1935): 803.

⁸¹ Anonymous, "The Munitions Racket," *WLM* 43 (October 1934):80-81, 124-25; and Anonymous, "The Munitions Racket part II," *WLM* 43 (November 1934): 142-43, 189-90.

⁸² Reviews of *War is a Racket* by Smedley D. Butler in E.W.S., *LStd* 93, no. 13 (March 30, 1935): 12; *AmL* 18, no. 7 (July, 1935): 16; G.T. Lee, *LH* 19 (April 9, 1935): 353; and D.F. Putman, *LCQ* 8 (April 1935): 207.

over by the federal government.⁸³ Others thought that the industry should be limited in ways to prevent profits.⁸⁴ Another proposed solution was that the government should bar all exportation of armaments.⁸⁵

The Treaty of Versailles

Turning then to things that were seen as leading potentially to another war, the primary cause was seen as the Treaty of Versailles. As a whole, there was a tremendous amount of criticism levied against the Treaty of Versailles. Some of these articles were even somewhat prophetic in that they predicted that the Treaty was going to lead to another war, while others published in the later 30s showed little surprise about Germany's militarism because of the Treaty.

The very nature of the Treaty of Versailles was assailed from time to time. Walter A. Maier and Michael Reu took exception with how it unduly put the burden of war guilt solely on the shoulders of Germany.⁸⁶ There was also a concern over how the Treaty of Versailles left Germany unprotected and vulnerable in light of the military strength of the countries around it in the early 1930s. This is shown visibly in a picture from the *Lutherischer Herold*:⁸⁷

⁸³ Walter A. Berendsohn, "The Bloody International," H. Skov Nielsen, trans. *AnL* 7, no. 38 (September 17, 1934): 5–6; "The Armament and Munition Industry," *LH* 18 (September 25, 1934): 836; and "War Issue Comes Before Synod," *LCmpn* 42 (June 9, 1934): 707.

⁸⁴ "Observing the Times: Praying and Profiteering," *LStd* 97, no. 40 (October 7, 1939): 7; Smedley D. Butler, "As Others See It: One Way to Stop the Armament Racket," *LCmpn* 42 (October 13, 1934): 1314; and "Minnesota Conference Speaks on War," *LCmpn* 43 (April 20, 1935): 502.

⁸⁵ J. A. Dell, "Editorials: Keeping out of War," *JALC* 4, no. 11 (November 1939): 2–5; and A.D. Mattson, "Labor, Marriage, War, and Peace," *LCmpn* 47 (June 15, 1939): 746–48.

⁸⁶ Walter A. Maier, "Editorials: 'They Died for their Country,'" *WLM* 41 (February 1933): 332–33; and M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik: Ausland: Um die Kriegsschuldfrage," *KZ* 56 (May 1932): 312–18.

⁸⁷ *LiH* 11, no. 33 (November 2, 1933): 69.



However, the greater concern was how the nature of the treaty was not simply to make peace, but to demand spoils and plunder from the German people.⁸⁸ A number of American Lutheran writers believed that because this treaty so degraded Germany before the world, it led to the rise of Hitler in Germany.⁸⁹ It was also believed that the Treaty of Versailles was also leading inexorably to the start of a new war.⁹⁰

War Due to Human Sin and therefore to be Expected in this Fallen World

While there was broad general agreement that war was evil and that there were injustices in the world that might lead to a new war, there was a stern disagreement over whether or not wars overall could be stopped in this sinful world. Some of the traditionalists in regards to Just War

⁸⁸ J.E.N., “Yhtä ja Tiosta,” *LY* 4, no. 6 (June 1939): 12–13; C. G. Wolf, “Human Welfare or War?,” *LStd* 95, no. 27 (July 3, 1937): 6–8; and “Armistice Day,” *LH* 19 (November 12, 1935): 1099–1100.

⁸⁹ C. G. Wolf, “Human Welfare or War?,” *LStd* 95, no. 27 (July 3, 1937): 6–8; “The ‘Haves’ and the ‘Have-nots’,” *LStd* 95, no. 46 (November 13, 1937): 2–3; and “A New War to End War in the Making,” *LH* 22 (November 8, 1938): 1027–28.

⁹⁰ “Across the Desk: Events in Central Europe,” *Luth* 20, no. 25 (March 23, 1938): 13; “Armistice Day,” *LH* 19 (November 12, 1935): 1099–1100; and “What Germany Is Really Asking,” *LCmpn* 43 (November 23, 1935): 1475–76.

started with the understanding that war was evil, and as such was a clear outgrowth of human sin, and therefore they concluded that war was to be expected as part of life in this fallen world, and while people should work to minimize it, the complete end of war was seen as a hopeless pipe dream. This led many of the writers to see the whole peace movement as an impossible venture and misplaced hope.⁹¹

Some of the writers proceeded to point to a few particular aspects of human sin that particularly led to wars. A primary root to war that many writers pointed to was that it came out of human greed and selfishness.⁹² A particular biblical text that was pointed to a couple of times was James 4:1-3:

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.⁹³

The impending clouds of war and subsequent outbreak of the Second World War became a source for reminders that war was a scourge that was due to human sin.⁹⁴ There were a couple of others who noted that while war comes out of human sin, it is also God's means of judgment against sin, and therefore cannot and should not be stopped by man.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Mark A. Matthews, "From Other Church Papers: War Abolishment 'Silly,'" *Luth* 21, no. 17 (January 25, 1939): 14–15; Walter A. Maier, "Pathways to Peace," *WLM* 47 (November 1938): 154–55, 202–06; and J. A. Dell, "Editorials: Pacifism in the Modern World," *JALC* 4, no. 5 (May 1939): 5–8.

⁹² William Schoeler, "Undeclared Wars," *LStd* 96, no. 12 (March 19, 1938): 7; G.C. Gast, "Church News: Labor Appeals to Churches to Join Anti-War Crusade," *LStd* 96, no. 36 (September 3, 1938): 19–21; and "Armistice," *SV* 33 (November 1, 1939): 502.

⁹³ This was cited or quoted in "Observing the Times: Whence Come Wars?," *LStd* 95, no. 46 (November 13, 1937): 6; William Schoeler, "Undeclared Wars," *LStd* 96, no. 12 (March 19, 1938): 7; and "Observing the Times: The Call of Armistice Day," *LStd* 97, no. 45 (November 11, 1939): 3.

⁹⁴ W. Arndt, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: War," *CTM* 10 (November 1939): 857; JEN, "The Lutheran Church on War," *LY* 3, no. 3 (March 1938): 3; and John Dvorovy, "The Christian in Time of War," *SV* 33 (October 1, 1939): 450.

⁹⁵ H.C. Simpson, "Open Forum: Shall the Church Defend War?," *LCmpn* 40 (June 18, 1932): 800; and A. Schormann, "Canadische Korrespondenz: Zum Kriegsansbruch," *KB* 82, no. 38 (September 23, 1939): 9.

Because of these reasons, many of these writers argued in some way or another that war cannot be stopped in this sinful world. It is something that must come about because of man's sinfulness. This was best summed up in *The Northwestern Lutheran*:

There has arisen to-day a state of mind that denies that wars are necessary as an evil, need not be tolerated any more, but can and must be abolished by means of bringing the nations together in peace pacts of various kinds, leagues against wars, etc. . . . It is because the universal rule of sin is not acknowledged, nay even denied, that such utopian dreams can gain currency.⁹⁶

How the Arguments were structured

Because this topic was such a raging debate within the American Lutheran periodicals, it is helpful to take a look at how the arguments were structured and waged on each side. As a whole the supporters of Just War doctrine tended to point to more theological specifics, such as specific Scriptural or Confessional passages, while the supporters of Pacifism tended to point more to general principles of love and peace to defend their side. Yet both sides waged the debate on theological as well as some civil grounds in the quest to sway others to their side.

As theologians and scholars, many of the writers involved in this debate turned to the authoritative texts of the Lutheran tradition in order to buttress their arguments. In traditional Lutheran fashion, the texts cited fall into two categories. The first and most important category is that of the Bible, but Lutherans also point to the Lutheran Confessions as informative as to the correct interpretations of the Bible.⁹⁷ Therefore, it comes as no surprise that these writers often appealed to these sources of authority to prove their points.

⁹⁶ August Zich, "Wars and Rumors of Wars," *NwL* 19 (March 13, 1932): 85–86.

⁹⁷ While Lutherans all hold the Lutheran Confessions as important, different Lutheran denominations have traditionally held differing ways of understanding the role of the Lutheran Confessions. For a study of different ways that Lutherans in America have viewed the Lutheran Confessions see Charles P. Arand, *Testing the Boundaries: Windows to Lutheran Identity* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1995).

Biblical Texts Cited

As the Bible is the ultimate source and norm for Lutheran doctrine, the writers turned first and foremost to biblical texts in order to defend their individual stances. The choice of texts obviously varied depending on which side of the argument one was on, and interestingly, some of the advocates for Just War doctrine criticized those on the other side for choosing too limited a range of texts. Some conferences also debated over the question of whether or not the Bible supported Just War doctrine.⁹⁸

Curiously, those that opposed Just War Doctrine tended to be vaguer in their use of the Bible. Certainly there were biblical texts that were cited to support their views, but more often than not there were general appeals to the teachings of the New Testament or the teachings of Christ without citing any particular text.⁹⁹ It was this general appeal to the nature of Jesus' teachings that were then seen as the authority that the Church was to speak with.

War is fundamentally, directly and flagrantly incompatible with the ethical teachings of Jesus. Therefore as the institution which has upon itself the sign patent of Jesus Christ it is the clear duty of the church of Jesus Christ to spend and be spent of her spiritual, moral and material resources for the overcoming of the pagan war philosophy and the hellish practice of intentional and organized slaughter of human beings.¹⁰⁰

Related to this, a couple of letters to the editor of *The Lutheran* pointed in particular to Jesus' crucifixion, and how He did not defend Himself and from this they argued that likewise Christians should not fight either.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ G.C. Gast, "Church News: Ohio Conference Discusses the Church and War," *LStd* 97, no. 45 (November 11, 1939): 13.

⁹⁹ Raymond T. Stamm, "Is Mars Also Among the Just?," *Luth* 21, no. 28 (April 12, 1939): 9, 22–23; "Oxford and Edinburgh, 1937," *AQ* 17, no. 1 (January, 1938): 25–44; and "Can War Be Justified?," *LCmpn* 42 (July 14, 1934): 869.

¹⁰⁰ F. Eppling Reinartz, "The Church and War," *LCQ* 5 (October 1932): 343.

¹⁰¹ James E. Bristol, letter to the editor, *Luth* 20, no. 9 (December 1, 1937): 20–1; and Reginald E. Dozer, letter to the editor, *Luth* 21, no. 29 (April 19, 1939): 21.

A few other texts were cited in various places, but not with great regularity. The Fifth Commandment was brought up once, but then a second writer pointed out: “Jesus did not say, ‘Thou shalt not kill except in just wars.’”¹⁰² In a forum in the December 1939 issue of *The National Lutheran Rev.* Alton M. Motter wrote: “*When Christ disarmed Peter, He disarmed all Christians!*”¹⁰³ Another article, an editorial in *The Lutheran Companion* took issue with the Just War proponents’ use of Romans 13:1-5, when he argued,

The claim that the Bible sanctions the use of force by a government in the exercise of its authority likewise fails to stand as a justification for war. Since the passage in question refers clearly to the punishment of lawbreakers within a nation and has no reference to the mass murder of innocent people in international warfare.¹⁰⁴

In this debate, the advocates of Just War doctrine responded with texts of their own, as well as criticisms of the Pacifist’s biblical texts. The primary text that was quoted in favor of Just Wars is Romans 13, which *The Lutheran Companion* took on as noted just above. However, it was argued that this role of defending went beyond just police work to the military, because the military was seen as an extension of the police, only dealing with foreign threats rather than domestic ones.¹⁰⁵

Another important aspect of the argument for the defenders of Just War doctrine was the Old Testament with its many wars and even mandates for war. In particular, a number of the writers took the pacifists to task for refusing or downplaying the significance of the Old Testament.¹⁰⁶ As August Zich unambiguously stated: “Why the New Testament should be

¹⁰² J.A. Boord, letter to the editor, *Luth* 21, no. 26 (March 29, 1939): 23. The other reference to the Fifth Commandment was in Nathan R. Melhorn, “When is a War Just?,” *Luth* 21, no. 23 (March 8, 1939): 10.

¹⁰³ “Opinions on Live Questions: Conscientious Objectors and the Lutheran Church,” *NL* 8, no. 4 (December 1939): 18 italics original.

¹⁰⁴ “May a Christian Bear Arms?,” *LCmpn* 47 (January 26, 1939): 99.

¹⁰⁵ “The Church and War,” *LH* 23 (March 28, 1939): 291-2; “Pacifism and the Policeman,” *NwL* 19 (January 17, 1932): 22-23; and “Gegen den Pazifismus,” *LiH* 15, no. 17 (January 21, 1937): 11.

¹⁰⁶ E. Oscar Johnson, “May a Christian Bear Arms?,” *LCmpn* 47 (January 12, 1939): 42-43; V. Eugene Johnson, “The Church and War,” *JALC* 2, no. 9 (September 1937): 37-41; and review of *Christianity and War — Can They Co-Exist?* By J. A. Boord in *TQ* 35 (October 1938): 290-94.

singled out is not clear, does it not agree with the Old Testament in the matter of waging war?”¹⁰⁷ It was further argued that the New Testament, including the work of Jesus and John the Baptist, did not question the legitimacy of serving as a soldier or of defensive wars.¹⁰⁸

Several writers also took on the pacifists’ appeals to Jesus’ passion as well as His commands to turn the other cheek by pointing out that these were instructive for individual Christians, not the government. Yes, they argued, a Christian should follow Christ’s example and be willing to suffer wrongs, but those in authority had a God-given responsibility, as seen in Romans 13, to protect others. Therefore the pacifists are confusing the two kingdoms and misapplying these passages.¹⁰⁹

Appeals to Lutheran Authorities

The Lutheran tradition, being a tradition based on doctrinal standards, holds to the Lutheran Confessions as found in the Book of Concord, to be authoritative as a second set of texts to aid in understanding the Bible. Therefore it is unsurprising that the writers in this debate appealed beyond just the Bible to the Lutheran Confessions as well. Likewise, there were several appeals to Lutheran heroes in the attempts to prove that Just War doctrine is a proper Lutheran teaching.

The Lutherans who supported the traditional stance of Just War actually had the better texts to cite and therefore were the most vocal in using the Lutheran Confessions to support their stance. By far and away the most cited text was from the Augsburg Confession (CA) 16, particularly where it says “Christians may without sin exercise political authority; be princes and

¹⁰⁷ August Zich, “War and the New Testament,” *NWL* 23 (June 7, 1936): 182–83.

¹⁰⁸ C.R. Tappert, “The Christian and His Service in War,” *LH* 21 (March 9, 1937): 231; E. Oscar Johnson, “May a Christian Bear Arms?,” *LCmpn* 47 (January 12, 1939): 42–43; and August Zich, “War and the New Testament,” *NWL* 23 (June 7, 1936): 182–83.

¹⁰⁹ “The Church and War,” *LH* 23 (March 28, 1939): 291–92; “Pacifism and the Policeman,” *NwL* 19 (January 17, 1932): 22–23; and C.R. Tappert, “The Christian and His Service in War,” *LH* 21 (March 9, 1937): 231.

judges; pass sentences and administer justice according to imperial and other existing laws; punish evildoers with the sword; wage just wars; serve as soldiers.”¹¹⁰ Since this text refers directly to the work of soldiers and the waging of “just wars” a number of writers considered this to be the ultimate authority on the topic.¹¹¹ One article buttressed this argument by stating that CA 21, and the Apology to the Augsburg Confession 4 both reference civil leaders waging wars, therefore the Confessions not only argue in favor of Just War doctrine, but give examples as well.¹¹² G. M. Bruce, from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at St. Paul, Minnesota pointed also to CA 28, with its discussion on the limits of the Church’s power, and therefore insisted that a citizen has a responsibility to their government to fight in wars if necessary.¹¹³

Those who argued for pacifism only offered a couple of attempts to deal with these texts. In a letter to the editor of *The Lutheran* August Schneider argued that since Part I of the Formula of Concord states that the Bible is the only authority for doctrine:

This statement therefore allows us the prerogative to question this sixteenth article of the Augsburg Confession and even dare to suggest that a part of this article, namely, “to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers,” is not in agreement with the teachings of the New Testament.

I am persuaded that the principles of even a “just” war are the very antithesis of the principles of Jesus Christ. Even in a “just” war it is necessary to hate, lie, destroy property, take life, give free rein to all that makes life a living hell.¹¹⁴

The other argument apparently came from J. A. Boord from the United Lutheran Church in his book *Christianity and War – Can They Co-exist?* where he quoted Dr. J. W. Haas, also of the

¹¹⁰ Kolb and Wengert, 48.

¹¹¹ J.E.N., “The Lutheran Church on War,” *LY* 3, no. 3 (March 1938): 3; Nathan R. Melhorn, “When is a War Just?,” *Luth* 21, no. 23 (March 8, 1939): 10; Martin L. Cole, “The Lutheran Church and War,” *LH* 16 (March 15, 1932): 329–30; and review of *Christianity and War – Can They Co-exist?* By J.A. Boord in August Zich, *NwL* 25 (June 19, 1938): 206.

¹¹² V. Eugene Johnson, “The Church and War,” *JALC* 2, no. 9 (September 1937): 37–41.

¹¹³ “Opinions on Live Questions: Conscientious Objectors and the Lutheran Church,” *NL* 8, no. 4 (December 1939): 17.

¹¹⁴ August Schneider, letter to the editor, *Luth* 21, no. 28 (April 12, 1939): 22.

ULC, as saying “We must interpret the Augustana in its proper historical setting ... If any principle of the Word is not clearly stated, or if the Holy Spirit leads us into further truth, we must not hinder Him by the claim of fidelity to the past”¹¹⁵

Another related argument that was offered in support of Just War doctrine was that key Lutheran heroes spoke, wrote and acted in favor of Just Wars. The greatest one, in Lutheran eyes, to be cited was of course Martin Luther, who was also cited the most times.¹¹⁶ Besides Luther, Martin Chemnitz was the other major Lutheran theologian cited.¹¹⁷ There were several historical appeals to Gustavus Adolphus as an example of a great Lutheran hero who fought a Just War in defense of Lutheranism.¹¹⁸

Rhetorical Arguments Employed in the Debate

As one might expect when there is a heated debate, the participants of this debate were willing to turn to a number of different approaches in order to persuade their readers. While the appeals to the Lutheran Confessions were certainly more popular with defenders of Just War doctrine, the pacifists more often appealed to common sense and civil arguments. As was seen above, appeals were also made to rein in the Munitions industry to help prevent wars.

Probably the next most common appeal was to the tremendous cost of war, not only in lives, but also in money, and pointing in particular to the First World War. These included documentation on how the war debts of the nations were crippling and that the money could have

¹¹⁵ J.A. Boord, *Christianity and War – Can They Co-exist?*, (Burlington, IA: Lutheran Literacy Board, 1938): 147 quoted in review of *Christianity and War – Can They Co-exist?* By J.A. Boord in August Zich, *NwL* 25 (June 19, 1938): 206.

¹¹⁶ H. Lindeman, “Luther and War,” *PM* 11 (November 1933): 643–47; “A Brief Quotation from Luther on War,” *LH* 20 (February 11, 1936): 141; and C. R. Tappert, “The Christian and His Service in War,” *JALC* 2, no. 4 (April 1937): 62–64.

¹¹⁷ “Pacifism and the Policeman,” *NwL* 19, no. 2 (January 17, 1932): 22–23.

¹¹⁸ V. Eugene Johnson, “The Church and War,” *JALC* 2, no. 9 (September 1937): 37–41; “Can War Be Justified?,” *LCmpn* 42 (July 14, 1934): 869; and E. Oscar Johnson, “May a Christian Bear Arms?,” *LCmpn* 47 (January 12, 1939): 42–43.

been used instead on helping people.¹¹⁹ There were also several calls in *The Ansgar Lutheran* for nations to find other ways to work out differences rather than war.¹²⁰

Responsibilities of the Church in the Prevention and/or Conduct of Wars

This was far more than an academic exercise for the participants in this debate. The editors and writers of the American Lutheran periodicals attempted to apply their theological principles in order to give advice as to how their theological stance should work in practice. As a result, there were a number of things that the various editors and writers urged that either the Church at large or individual Christians should do regarding the conduct or prevention of wars.

Advocates of pacifism often argued that the Church at large had a God-given responsibility to work to end wars. To this end there were quite a large number of calls to the church to actively take part in the work of ending war. Leading the charge was the National Lutheran Council, which acted as the voice of the churches to call for the nation to get rid of the causes of war. First in 1935, the NLC issued a statement to this effect,¹²¹ and then in 1939 the NLC called for the U.S. to stay out of the war.¹²² Others also called for individual pastors to speak out against the evils of war.¹²³ Related to this, there was an even wider call for the churches to support an amendment to the U. S. Constitution that would require any declaration of war be

¹¹⁹ “War is costly,” *AnL* 5, no. 7 (February 17, 1932): 13; A. V. Neve, “The Cost of War,” *AnL* 8, no. 2 (January 14, 1935): 15; and “Who Wants War?,” *LH* 23 (March 28, 1939): 292.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* and James P. Christensen, “Out of the Fog: The Matter of War,” *AnL* 5, no. 14 (April 6, 1932): 6; Samuel McCrea Cavert, “Behind the Scenes in Germany,” *AnL* 6, no. 25 (June 19, 1933): 5–7; and “An Appeal for World Justice and Peace,” *AnL* 7, no. 16 (April 16, 1934): 2.

¹²¹ “Observing the Times: A More Excellent Way,” *LStd* 93, no. 7 (February 16, 1935): 3; “Council Committee on Social Trends,” *LH* 19 (February 12, 1935): 148; and “Peace and War Resolutions,” *PM* 13 (March 1935): 185–86.

¹²² “Lutheran Speak On War,” *LCmpn* 47 (November 2, 1939): 1393; and The National Lutheran Council, “‘Peace in Our Time’ Basal Considerations Underlying the Attitude of Lutherans in the United States toward the European Crisis,” *LStd* 97, no. 44 (November 4, 1939): 4.

¹²³ Arthur H. Kuhlman, “Church News: ‘Expose War’s Crazy!’ Ohio Pastors Told,” *LStd* 93, no. 25 (June 22, 1935): 9–10; G. Smedal, “Can the Church Make Wars to Cease?,” *LH* 21 (February 9, 1937): 128–29; and A. H. Belgum, “How Can America Stay Out of War?,” *LH* 22 (August 30, 1938): 880–81.

made by a popular vote by the American people.¹²⁴ There was also a coalition which stood in favor of calling for the U. S. to remain neutral in the coming war.¹²⁵

On the opposite side of the debate, there were some writers who urged their readers to obey their civil leaders, saying that this was not an issue for the Church; rather it was purely a Left Hand Kingdom issue. For these writers, one was to obey the civil rulers, even in matters of war, unless one was expressly ordered to sin.¹²⁶ This was forcefully explained in a letter printed in *The Lutheran Companion*:

You are a Christian. But you are also a *citizen*. While the world is still in its present state, you are a *citizen*, and as citizen your Scriptural duty is to be loyal to the state, to the national government under which you live. How can you possibly find room for such loyalty within the framework of the “I will oppose with all my might *any and all war*, I will *under no circumstance* take up arms for my country, or in any other way further any of its war undertaking” pronouncement, a pronouncement that *none-so-few* pastors, and among them a few of our Lutheran pastors, in all sincerity, but, I am convinced, mistakenly endorse?¹²⁷

In much the same way, the *Northwestern Lutheran* rejected both “peace sermons” and churches working for the peace amendment as the church wrongly meddling in the realm of the state.¹²⁸

Most of these arguments called for the individual Christian to exercise some personal judgment in what was going on. There were also some who advocated a higher level of trust in the governing authorities and to follow them provided that there was no evidence that they were

¹²⁴ “Observing the Times: Whence Come Wars?,” *LStd* 95, no. 46 (November 13, 1937): 6; “Layman Calls Upon the Church to Preach Against War and Exploitation,” *LH* 18 (July 17, 1934): 645–46; and E. Einar Kron, “Moving Forward to Greater Victories,” *LCmpn* 45 (May 20, 1937): 642.

¹²⁵ The National Lutheran Council, “‘Peace in Our Time’ Basal Considerations Underlying the Attitude of Lutherans in the United States toward the European Crisis,” *LStd* 97, no. 44 (November 4, 1939): 4; “When Editors Meet,” *LH* 23 (October 17, 1939): 979–80; and “Churches Protest Neutrality Change,” *LCmpn* 47 (September 28, 1939): 1219–20.

¹²⁶ Review of *War the and Christian* by C.E. Raven in Adolf F. Meyer, *AmL* 22, no. 12 (December 1939): 22–23; E.W. Matzner, “The Christian’s Attitude toward Peace,” *PM* 11 (November 1933): 648–55; and E. Victor Roland, letter to the editor, *Luth* 21, no. 29 (April 19, 1939): 20–21.

¹²⁷ E. A. Peterson, letter to the editor, *LCmpn* 46 (December 15, 1938): 1583.

¹²⁸ W.J.S., “Augustana on War,” *NwL* 24 (May 9, 1937): 151; and W.J.S., “Peace Sermons,” *NwL* 26 (October 22, 1939): 340–41.

in the wrong. However, by far the most extreme statement was found in *The Lutheran Youth* where the readers were told in 1939:

This is a time of war in many countries. We would call attention to the Word of God respecting obedience to the government: "Let every soul be subjected unto the higher powers." We may not agree with the government concerning the righteousness of the war, but we are bound by the Word of God not to rise against the government. There is a "time to keep silence and a time to speak." War-time is the time to keep silence if we disagree with our government.¹²⁹

Those that argued that the Church had no direct role in preventing War did not say that the Church therefore was powerless in the face of war. Rather, they advocated the notion that the only thing that would keep people from seeking to kill each other in war was the power of the Gospel of Christ. Therefore, they argued that the Church should continue to work to change hearts and minds of individuals through the Gospel as it was the only hope for true peace.¹³⁰ Then, when the Second World War did break out, a number of writers challenged the very notion of what peace was. Here they argued that real peace was not the absence of war, but peace with God through Jesus Christ.¹³¹

Calls to Pray for Peace

Since those on both sides of the debate agreed that war, in and of itself, was a bad thing, there were calls from all sides for readers to actively pray for peace. As the clouds of war gathered over Europe, the calls to pray became more and more fervent.¹³² There was even one call in *The Lutheran* to make November 20, 1938 a specific day of prayer for peace.¹³³ When the

¹²⁹ J. E. N., "News and Notes," *LY* 4, no. 12 (December 1939): 12.

¹³⁰ "Armistice," *SV* 33 (November 1, 1939): 502; J.E.N., "Armistice," *LY* 2, no. 11 (November 1937): 10; and Walter A. Maier, "No New Security!," *WLM* 45 (April 1937) 478–79, 521–22.

¹³¹ "Fred!," *DV* 60, no. 49 (December 6, 1939): 3, 8; "Peace," *LCnslr* 1 (December 1939): 190; "Observing the Times: Amid War, Peace," *LStd* 97, no. 46 (November 18, 1939): 7.

¹³² J.E.N., "The Lutheran Church on War," *LY* 3, no. 3 (March 1938): 3; A.H. Belgum, "How Can America Stay Out of War?," *LH* 22 (August 30, 1938): 880–81; and E. Oscar Johnson, "May a Christian Bear Arms?," *LCmpn* 47 (January 12, 1939): 42–43.

¹³³ "Prayers for Peace," *Luth* 21, no. 5 (November 2, 1938): 16.

war finally started, then the editors and writers became all the more vocal in calling for prayer that God would soon bring peace to the world once more.¹³⁴

Going beyond just calls for prayer to modeling it, several of the periodicals even printed prayers for peace.¹³⁵ By far the most commonly printed prayer was by Frederick H. Knubel from his presidential address to the ULCA.¹³⁶ It was even translated into German and printed for the German readers as well.¹³⁷ In this prayer, Knubel uses and expands each part of the Lord's Prayer to make it into a litany for peace.

Special Cases of Christians Interacting with the Military

The group that stood firmly in the crossroads between the secular realm of the military and the religious realm of the Church were military Chaplains.¹³⁸ While there were no direct criticisms of chaplains, it appeared that the criticisms of the military put pressure on the chaplains as well. As a result there were several articles defending the importance of the role of military chaplains.¹³⁹ Related to this, there were also reports on the status of the military chaplains and calls for more chaplains.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ A. Schormann, "Canadische Korrespondenz: Zum Kriegsansbruch," *KB* 82, no. 38 (September 23, 1939): 9; Carl Tamminen, "War—Peace," *LCnslr* 1 (November 1939): 171; and George A. Buttrick, "The American Churches and the European War," *Luth* 21, no. 52 (September 27, 1939): 21.

¹³⁵ N.M. Ylvisaker, "A Prayer for Peace," *LH* 23 (November 7, 1939): 1051; and "A Prayer for Peace," *LCmpn* 47 (September 7, 1939): 1121.

¹³⁶ Frederick H. Knubel, "Christian Ways in Times of War," *AnL* 11, no. 39 (September 18, 1939): 4; also printed in *Luth* 21, no. 52 (September 27, 1939): 2, 21; *LStd* 97, no. 40 (October 7, 1939): 19–20; and J. A. Dell, "Editorials: What Can We Pray For?," *JALC* 4, no. 10 (October, 1939): 2–4.

¹³⁷ F. H. Knubel, "Der Christ in Kriegszeiten," *LiH* 17, no. 50 (September 21, 1939): 8–9; also printed in *KB* 82, no. 40 (October 7, 1939): 3–4.

¹³⁸ The role of military chaplains is a role that has always stood in the realm between the civil and churchly realms, with a foot in both worlds. For additional reading on the unique situation of chaplains and how they are understood theologically see Clarence L. Abercrombie III, *The Military Chaplain* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977) and Alan Wilkinson, "The Paradox of the Military Chaplain," *Theology* 84, no. 700 (July 1981): 249–57.

¹³⁹ Col. Alva J. Brasted, "In Defense of Chaplains: Plain Philosophy of a Practical Pacifist," *LH* 19 (November 5, 1935): 1081–83; James C. Peterson, "Annual Convention of Chaplains' Association," *LH* 21 (June 8, 1937): 575; and James C. Peterson, "In Defense of the Chaplain," *LCmpn* 45 (August 12, 1937): 1033–34.

¹⁴⁰ G.C. Gast, "Church News: Navy Chaplains soon to Be Appointed," *LStd* 94, no. 30 (July 25, 1936): 17; "Kirchliche Nachrichten: Aus Dem National Lutheran Council," *KB* 82, no. 8 (February 25, 1939): 11; and "Army

Related to the argument over whether or not a war could be just; there arose an argument over what the Church's position should be towards conscientious objectors. Not surprisingly, a number of the more pacifist leaning periodicals stated that the church should be prepared to support those whose conscience did not allow them to partake in war.¹⁴¹ The *Ansgar Lutheran* also expressed outrage that the United States refused citizenship to those who had said that they would conscientiously object to fighting in a war.¹⁴²

While there were not really articles that specifically questioned conscientious objectors, the debate was brought before the public by *The National Lutheran* in December 1939. In this issue, they held a forum on the correctness of conscientious objection.¹⁴³ The individuals who submitted statements came from leaders of a great variety of Lutheran seminaries and groups. The majority of the writers supported conscientious objectors and held that the Church should protect these individuals. Of the 12 writers, only 3 argued against some form of conscientious objection. Dr. G. M. Bruce, from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at St. Paul, Minnesota and Rev. N. P. Lang both argued that the Christian has a duty to the civil realm and that if one allows objection in this arena, it could spread and cause further unrest.¹⁴⁴ Rev. Dr. Felix V. Hanson president of NY Conference of the Augustana Synod held that while the church could support objectors of aggressive wars, "When it is a question of DEFENSIVE war—defending country

Chaplain and His Uniform," *LCmpn* 45 (August 12, 1937): 1028.

¹⁴¹ G. E. Burton, "Church and War," *JALC* 4, no. 6 (June 1939): 36-44; James E. Bristol, "Open Letters: What about the Conscientious Objector," *Luth* 20, no. 9 (December 1, 1937): 20-1; and Martin L. Cole, "The Lutheran Church and War," *LH* 16 (March 15, 1932): 329-30.

¹⁴² "English Priest Refused U.S. Naturalization on Issue of Conscientious Objection," *AnL* 10, no. 1 (January 3, 1938): 7; and "Mennonite Denied Citizenship," *AnL* 10, no. 1 (January 3, 1938): 7.

¹⁴³ "Opinions on Live Questions: Conscientious Objectors and the Lutheran Church," *NL* 8, no. 4 (December 1939): 16-22.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 17, 20.

and home from an invading enemy—then THERE SHOULD BE NO CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS.”¹⁴⁵

Conclusions Regarding the Debate over Just War doctrine

Just War doctrine was somewhat unique among the doctrines that American Lutheran authors discussed in light of the events in pre-war Nazi Germany, because it was the only doctrine that was debated as to whether or not it was a correct biblical teaching. This debate likewise was informed by the various theological traditions within American Lutheranism. The ethnic backgrounds, religious traditions and theological differences between the American Lutherans made this the most vocal debate of the era.

In this aspect, the differences between the ethnic backgrounds of the American Lutheran traditions appeared to cause some of the theological differences. Here we find the different theological traditions within Lutheranism came to the fore within this debate. This came out in how the German-American Lutherans tended to give more support to Just War doctrine, while the Scandinavian-American Lutherans tended more toward pacifism. Yet, there was a general agreement between many of these groups that war was wrong and that the church should promote and pray for peace. The differences came from whether a war could in fact be just and what exactly the Church’s role should be.

Considering the fact that the more theologically conservative American Lutherans tended to be of German descent, it is little surprise that they also had a greater support for Just War doctrine. Their theologically conservative stance led this party to place a greater emphasis on the specific words and declarations of the Augsburg Confession, as well as a heightened respect for the Old Testament as informative to the proper understanding of war. Whereas, the Scandinavian Lutheran tradition was greatly influenced by pietism, which led it to endorse a

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 21 Emphasis original.

more pacifist stance which came out of their emphasis on the broader theological concepts of love, forgiveness, and the goal of “peace on earth.” It is this same Scandinavian preference for pacifism, exemplified in the declaration by the Norwegian Bishops calling all war sin, that could be seen in the Scandinavian-American Lutheran periodicals as well. Yet, all of this work was being done in the theological sphere. Therefore, while there was a definite disagreement between American Lutherans over the issue of Just War doctrine, the ethnic differences may not have reflected so much a different political stance as much as it was reflecting the differing theological traditions in American Lutheranism.

Also, these generalities should not be seen as absolute divisions along ethnic lines. As has been noted, the Synod for the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church’s *Lutheran Sentinel* and the Danish *Dannevirke* both bucked the Scandinavian trend and remained steadfastly in defense of traditional Lutheran Just War doctrine. Likewise, the American Lutheran Conference, whose membership included the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, the Augustana Synod, and the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church, also supported Just War doctrine in its *Journal of the American Lutheran Conference* and *The Pastor’s Monthly*. Therefore, even here one cannot make too strong of a line on ethnic grounds as the churches dealt with this issue.

The acceptance or rejection of Just War doctrine also appears to be something of an indicator of how much some groups were aligning themselves with the greater American Protestant movements as opposed to historic Lutheranism. The more Americanized ULCA and ALC elements were the non-Scandinavian groups that leaned towards pacifism. The debate over Just War doctrine was held mostly in English, and most of the non-English periodicals affirmed or assumed Just War doctrine. This implies that the more Americanized a group had become, the more it wrestled with this question. Since the peace movement was taking place as an ecumenical endeavor, the amount of support that individual American Lutherans offered for the

peace movement and pacifism could be seen as a barometer for measuring how closely those individuals or groups associated themselves with the larger protestant world in America, rather than just the Lutheran circles.

While the ethnic lines can be drawn, the battle still raged in the realm of theology. Those in favor of pacifism held that the general idea of love of neighbor and the love of Christ was to be the primary concern, while those in favor of Just War doctrine held to the more traditional theology and argued that while the Church was to proclaim the love of Christ, the civil government must at times wield the sword to defend those in its care. Neither of these groups was willing to simply dismiss the other, but felt that it was necessary to give theological arguments as well as any practical arguments in order to try to win the debate. Also, there was still a bedrock agreement that war was bad, coming from sin, and that Christians should work to prevent wars whenever possible. The real debate was over what the Church's role should be and how realistic it was to attempt to eradicate all war.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCERNS ABOUT DIRECT THREATS TO CHRISTIANITY

One of the biggest issues for Lutherans in America during this era was the various attacks on Christianity that were seen in the world. When we speak of the American Lutherans' desire to see that orthodox Lutheranism be preserved as the bastion of true Christianity, we must understand that this was a time of threats and outright persecution of Christians, and the American Lutherans were very bothered about this. The editors sought to keep their readers informed about the threats that were out there and how their fellow Christians were suffering for the faith.

The Problems of World Atheism and Communism

To the editors of these publications by far the greatest threat to Christianity was not in Nazism or Fascism, but in the outright atheism of communism. The editors tended to treat atheism and communism as synonymous terms. The "Godless" of Russia and the world were considered threats both in their propaganda as well as in the outright persecution of the church.

This fear of communism was seen all over in the Lutheran publications. Only four of the publications did not speak of the menace of communism, these being the very American focused *The Lutheran Layman*¹ and *Faith-Life*² as well as the academic publications *The Concordia*

¹ *The Lutheran Layman* was so focused on outreach within the American scene, that there was only one article that addressed the events in Germany in any way: Herman Wellensieck, "A Visit to Germany," *The Lutheran Layman* 5 (December, 1934): 48.

² *Faith-Life* was published by the Protestant Conference, a dissenting group within the Wisconsin Synod and

*Theological Monthly*³ and *The Lutheran Church Quarterly*.⁴ The other publications more than made up for this with a couple of hundred articles in total, including the *Lutherischer Herold* which had at least one article on the evils of communism in virtually every edition of this weekly publication.

Soviet Persecution of the Church

For the American Lutherans, the Soviet Union's persecution and systematic attempts to eradicate Christianity and all religion was the greatest single threat to all Christianity. These concerns overshadowed all reports of persecution of Christians and even that of Jews in Germany during this era. This is illustrated by how readers of the *Lutheran Sentinel* were told in 1939, at the height of the oppression of the churches in Germany:

[T]here is a great to-do in this country about persecution of the Christian Church in Germany, while little or nothing is said or done about the open persecution of all churches and the barring of the Bible in Soviet-controlled territories. Organizations like "the American Committee for Christian German Refugees," headed by the Socialistic Dr. Thomas Mann as Honorary Chairman, are trying to raise \$600,000.00 for relief of these so-called "German Christians," while not a finger is lifted to help the oppressed Christians in Russia. On the contrary, the same people who are most vocal in condemning Nazi "persecutions" are most loud in their praises of the Soviet system of government and social organization, of which anti-Christian propaganda is an integral part.⁵

therefore had relatively little information about Germany, or any other nation for that matter.

³ *CTM* was an academic publication that had as its major contributors, professors at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, several of which were editors and contributors to other publications which did speak on the perceived problems with communism. *DL* was edited by the faculty in general, *LW* was edited by Professors Theodore Graebner and Martin Sommer, and the *WLM* was edited by Walter A. Maier. So, it appears that the absence of articles on Communism in *CTM* was due to the men writing on this subject in other publications instead of in *CTM*.

⁴ Much like *CTM*, *Lutheran Church Quarterly* was an academic periodical created by The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg and The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and was edited by a team of professors from these schools. The *Gettysburg Seminary Bulletin*, published by The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg did report on the problems posed by communism such as in John Whetstone, "Dr. John R. Mott," *GSB* 16, no. 3 (August 1935): 4-5.

⁵ "The Bible in Germany," *LSntl* 22 (August 12, 1939): 238.

There were a number of these voices of outrage at how the American Press was busy lamenting the persecution of the Jews in Germany, while overlooking the widespread murder and destruction of Christians in the Soviet Union. One of the most vocal critics of this perceived injustice was Walter A. Maier, who wrote of communism:

The Christian must renew his vow of hostility to this enthroned blasphemy and redouble his interest and prayers in behalf of the oppressed millions of Christians in Russia concerning whom we have heard far less than the allegedly persecuted Jews of Germany.⁶

While this may seem surprising now, at the time it made sense to them; after all, there were a handful of pastors who were imprisoned in Germany as well as those Jews who were persecuted and even some killed, but this paled by comparison to the widespread persecution of Christians in Russia. It must be remembered that while Hitler and the Nazis were persecuting some, their worst offenses started after the outbreak of war. As James Kegel aptly notes:

During the same period that the *Kirchenkampf* was raging in Germany, the entire Russian Lutheran Church was wiped out. It is important to keep this backdrop in mind as we investigate American Lutheran reaction to Hitler. What often appears as approval of National Socialist aims and an apparent excusing of excesses in Religious policy or antisemitism is often based upon the contrast with Stalinism in Russia. It seems likely that American Lutherans would have been less forbearing and willing to excuse German government claims without the example of Stalinist terror.⁷

The reports of the persecution of the Christians in Russia were widespread and often vivid. There were several reports of an event when Soviet soldiers shot down Russian peasants on the Russian side of the Dneister River when they bowed down when they heard the church bells from the Romanian side announce the orthodox Ascension Day.⁸ The single event that got the

⁶ Walter A. Maier, "The Church Will Never Recognize Atheism," *WLM* 42 (December 1933): 239.

⁷ Kegel, 18.

⁸ "Peasants Killed While at Prayer," *NwL* 19 (June 19, 1932): 206; and R. Malmin, "World Religious Notes: A Russian Ascension Day Celebration," *LH* 16 (May 24, 1932): 660.

most press however, was the closing of the last Lutheran church, Church of St. Peter and Paul, in Moscow.⁹

Atheistic Propaganda

As if the outright persecution, murder and imprisonment of Christians in Russia weren't bad enough, the American Lutherans were also worried about the attempts by the atheists to lure Christians away from the faith. Many of these attempts were seen as originating in Russia, and were sometimes even joined with their perceptions of Russian hopes for world domination. As a result, the editors kept their readers well informed of the various meetings and schemes of the "godless" and other atheists, as well as chronicling their successes and failures.

The group that garnered the most attention in the American Lutheran periodicals was the "Godless Society of Russia." There were countless articles about this group and its successes and failures in its attempts to directly eradicate religion from the Soviet Union and its attempts to mock and ridicule all religion and Christianity in particular. Their meetings, goals, and aims were widely reported on. It was repeatedly noted that this society was founded on the premise of eradicating all of religion; and that it had plans far beyond just Russia. Related atheistic groups were also monitored; such as the society of godless youth in Russia which declared Jesus to be "public enemy No. 1."¹⁰ The readers of the *Lutheran Youth* were told of how The Society of Godless in France were baptizing people and giving them "red" baptismal certificates.¹¹ The truly international nature of this movement was seen in the World Conference of the Godless and

⁹ J. E. N. "News and Notes," *LY* 4, no. 1 (January 1939): 9–10; "Church News: Last Lutheran Church in Moscow Closed by Soviet Government," *LStd* 96, no. 37 (September 10, 1938): 12; "Kirchliche Nachrichten: Die letzte protestantisch Kirche Moskaus geschlossen," *KB* 81, no. 39 (September 24, 1938): 11; "The Church in Russia," *LCnslr* 1 (1938): 20; and "V Moskve poslednyĭ protestantskyĭ kostol bol zatvorenŭ," *SV* 33 (February 1, 1939): 62.

¹⁰ Julius F. Seebach, "In the World's Eye," *Luth* 20, no. 17 (January 26, 1938): 6.

¹¹ "Notes and News," *LY* 2, no. 4 (April 1937): 6.

Free thinkers that was called for February 9, 1937 in Moscow.¹² These threats to Christianity were also seen here in the United States, in groups such as the American Association of the Advancement of Atheism, the publication of *The Militant Atheist*, as well as the presence of communist and atheist professors at American universities.¹³

The Threat of Atheism and Communism in Germany

For the Americans these concerns were brought into the German scene just before and during the early years of the Nazi regime due to the prevalence of communist agitators in Germany. These were seen as a possible menace and certainly as a fate that would be worse than Hitler. This led to some of the most fervent support for Hitler and the Nazis in the early years, and even the fear that communism would come out of ashes of Nazism in the later 1930s.

From the start, the American Lutheran readers were told that the communist party in Germany was a real threat to take over. This came out of the fact that Germany was so politically and economically unstable. One of the primary explanations of why the Germans embraced Nazism in 1933 was that it was a hedge against communism.¹⁴ It was even reported that the Godless Society of Russia was working in Germany in order to destabilize it and prepare for a communist revolution.¹⁵ Ralph Long explained that the rise of Nazism “means a united nation determined in its effort to overcome chaos and communism.”¹⁶ *The Lutherischer Herold*

¹² R. Boehme, “Godless Propaganda Prepares a New General Attack,” *AnL* 9, no. 47 (November 23, 1936): 8.

¹³ Theo. Buehring, “Kirchliche Nachrichten – Aus anderen Kreisen: Wie sich die Atheisten Trösten,” *KB* 76, no. 36 (September 9, 1933): 10; Arthur H. Kuhlman, “Church News,” *LStd* 91, no. 13 (April 1, 1933): 17; August Zich, “Atheism vs. Morals,” *LSntl* 16 (January 4, 1933): 7–9; and “The Spread of Atheism,” *LH* 22 (July 19, 1938): 717.

¹⁴ M. Glage, “Zur deutschen Frage,” *KZ* 56 (December, 1932): 705–718; “Across the Desk: The Background of Hitlerism,” *Luth* 15, no. 29 (April 20, 1933): 17; and R. Malmin, “World Religious Notes: Anti-Atheistic Alliance,” *LH* 16 (April 26, 1932): 531.

¹⁵ “Lutheranism in Germany,” *LH* 16 (October 4, 1932): 1133.

¹⁶ Ralph H. Long, “Whither Germany?” *LStd* 92, no. 1 (January 6, 1934): 7–8.

gave a positive review for the book, *Communism in Germany: The truth about the Communist Conspiracy on the Eve of the National Revolution* by Adolf Ehrt, which contended that Germany was “within a hair’s breadth of Bolshevist chaos.”¹⁷ Likewise, the Americans generally accepted Hitler’s explanation that the Reichstag fire was really a communist plot and they were therefore thankful that Hitler stopped this great plot.¹⁸

While there was a general agreement that Hitler’s rise to power was good in that it stopped communism from spreading into Germany, the perceptions of how good this was were greatly varied. A number stated that Christians should be thankful for Hitler because he stopped communism from spreading in Germany and therefore to other areas of Europe as well.¹⁹ However, others were more concerned that while the stopping of communism in Germany was good; Hitler was not much better, as the *Lutheran Herald* editorialized: “The issue was between the choice of a red or a brown dictator, and the German people decided for Hitler, who was at least in favor of some form of religion as against the atheistic communists.”²⁰ In particular, there was a fear of the total power that was invested in Hitler.

Germany, tired of economic chaos and fearful of Communism vested absolute authority in Hitler. The same applies to Italy with its Mussolini. There is no doubt that these men saved their countries from Communism, and to an extent restored order in the economic life of their respective nations.²¹

¹⁷ Review of *Communism in Germany: The truth about the communist conspiracy on the eve of the national revolution* by Adolf Ehrt in *LiH* 12, no. 8 (November 23, 1933): 14–15.

¹⁸ “Hitler Burns Bolshevist Books,” *PM* 11 (August 1933): 500–01; and Hans Kirsten, “Hitler Shows the Way,” *WLM* 41 (July 1933): 663.

¹⁹ “Hitler Burns Bolshevist Books,” *LH* 17 (June 20, 1933): 564–65; Martin Ulbrich, “Brief aus der alten heimat,” *LiH* 11, no. 21 (February 23, 1933): 4–5.

²⁰ “Religious Liberty in Germany Threatened,” *LH* 17 (December 12, 1933): 1139.

²¹ N. C. Carlsen, “More From the Lutheran World Convention,” *AnL* 9, no. 3 (January 20, 1936): 3–5.

Not surprisingly, these concerns escalated as the 1930s progressed. By the latter years studied there was a growing number of voices that compared Nazism with communism.²² *The Lutheran Companion* quoted the Swedish Magazine *Nu* saying: “Communism and Nazism are really two sects that hold the same doctrine of dictatorship, whose chief tenets are: regimentation of the individuals, and their total identification with the holy state.”²³

Early on, there were some who saw Hitler’s rise to power as too extreme and therefore doomed to failure and then leaving Germany once more open to communist takeover. Hitler’s tactics were even compared by a reader of the *Walther League Messenger* to the Czarist policies that ended up leading to the rise of Marxism.²⁴ Some saw Hitler’s early reign as devoid of real power and something that will not last long.²⁵

The Threat of Neo-Paganism in Germany

Next to Marxist atheism, the rise of neo-paganism in Germany was the greatest threat to the continued existence of Christianity in the eyes of the American Lutherans. Here there was a series of movements that sought to undermine the Christian church and even supplant it.²⁶ As a

²² “Communism and Fascism,” *AnL* 9, no. 38 (September 20, 1937): 1, 8; Gustav Carlberg, “Clashing Ideologies,” *LCmpn* 46 (January 13, 1938): 45; and A. L. Vadheim, “Communism,” *LH* 22 (November 22, 1938): 1179–80, 1182;

²³ Daniel Nystrom, “The Spectator: A Review of Current News and Opinion,” *LCmpn* 47 (February 16, 1939): 199.

²⁴ Letter by Rev. Dallas Gibson, Fort Lauderdale, FL in *WLM* 42 (October 1933): 69.

²⁵ “An American in Germany,” *AnL* 7, no. 9 (February 26, 1934): 2.

²⁶ The power and prevalence of neo-paganism in Nazi thought has been debated over the years. A number have argued that Nazi thought was based on Christian anti-Semitism. This argument has been most recently put forth in Richard Steigmann-Gall, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919–1945* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). However, a larger body of work has pointed to the inherent neo-paganism in Nazi thought from Scholder, “Judaism and Christianity in the Ideology and Politics of National Socialism, 1919–1945” in *A Requiem for Hitler and Other New Perspectives on the German Church Struggle*, Trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press/ Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 168–81; to George L. Mosse, “The Mystical Origins of Nazism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22 (1961): 81–96; to the most recent work: Karla Poewe, *New Religions and the Nazis*, (New York: Routledge, 2006). The debate between Steigmann-Gall and Poewe was also analyzed in review of *The Holy Reich* by Richard Steigmann-Gall and *New Religions and the Nazis* by Karla Poewe in Uwe Siemon-Netto, *Lutheran Quarterly* 21 (Winter 2007): 479–82 where Siemon-

result, the editors of these periodicals commented on the various neo-pagan movements and reported with alarm their growth in power and prestige.

For a number of the Americans, the rise of neo-paganism in Germany was really just an example of the same thing happening all around the world.

The essential world-trend of the last three decades has been a reversion to paganism. The accepted virtues of leading nations are the virtues of Greece and Rome, not of Christianity. Spartan stoicism, boastful exhibition of power and prowess, physical endurance and indifference to pain, the elevation of a deified state above the rights of the individual – these are important if not universal earmarks of our age.²⁷

There were worries of the rise of neo-pagan worship in other countries as well, including Greece,²⁸ and even pagan thought in the United States; however without the outward religious forms.²⁹ Several argued that modern thought and theological liberalism led to this type of new paganism.³⁰ Likewise Karl Barth's warning that America was at risk of falling into paganism was also echoed.³¹

However, for the Americans, the biggest threat of neo-paganism was to be found in Germany. While every American Lutheran group was concerned about this German neo-paganism, the assessments of how rampant it was and even the nature of it varied greatly. There

Netto points to Poewe as having the better researched and better defended stance in explaining the Nazi regime as based on neo-paganism. Poewe further defended her contention in an unpublished paper Karla Poewe, "The Völkisch Origins of National Socialism: Why National Socialism cannot be blamed on Christianity" (Paper presented at the second annual "German Days at the Sem." at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, October 24, 2008).

²⁷ G. E. Burton, "Church and War," *JALC* 4, no. 6 (June 1939): 38.

²⁸ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Griechenland," *KZ* 61 (May 1937): 319.

²⁹ O. P. Kretzmann, "The State of Visible Christendom: IV. Cultural Change," *AmL* 22, no. 6 (June 1939): 8–10; Herbert Lendemann, "Some Old Virtues for the New Paganism," *AmL* 18, no. 2 (February 1935): 13–4; and Martin S. Sommer, "A Germany Pastor's Letter," *LW* 54 (April 23, 1935): 148.

³⁰ Review of *The New Paganism* by Dr. W. E. Biederwolf in G., *NwL* 21 (November 25, 1934): 383; "Modernism and Nazified Religion in Germany," *LH* 18 (November 13, 1934): 1003; and C. F. Sanders, "The Challenge of the Trinitarian to the Neopagan," *LCQ* 10 (July 1937): 255–75.

³¹ Review of *God in Action* by Karl Barth in John C. Mattes, *Luth* 18, no. 42 (July 16, 1936): 21.

were a few that saw the neo-pagans as a vocal, yet largely powerless, minority.³² Others explained that these groups were small, but wielded a disproportionately large amount of power.³³ Still others saw this neo-pagan movement as a fairly large and quickly growing threat to the existence of orthodox Christianity.³⁴ Of those that saw it as a real threat, there were a number of citations of how the neo-pagans were calling for the end of Christianity in Germany.³⁵

Showing this great concern was a quote from Karl Barth:

I wish the great struggle of the church in Germany was understood more in the churches of the world. It is not only a question of freedom in the church, but the fight of the church against a new religion—not a philosophy of ideas merely written about in books and periodicals, but a religion represented by the state and by persons like Hitler and his friends. It is a new religion which is also a new power in the world.

Never since Mohammed has Christianity been so threatened as it is in Germany. The church there is not strong and this great struggle came upon it unexpectedly. Declarations of sympathy from other churches will be of little avail. What we in Germany ask is that on this side a voice shall declare that the thesis of the Confessional Church is not a German domestic matter, it is a universal matter.³⁶

This type of fear was echoed in the periodicals time after time. It seemed that no matter if the writers saw the neo-pagan movement as large or small the very existence of it was unsettling. The American Lutherans of all stripes were agreed that this development in Germany was troublesome and should be watched.

³² H. Dierks, "The New Germany II," *LW* 55 (October 20, 1936): 346–47; Walter A. Maier, "Turret of the Times: Neo-pagan propaganda in Germany makes no appreciable gains," *WLM* 46 (February 1938): 384; and E. C. Fendt, "An Estimate of the Religious Situation in Germany," *JALC* 1, no. 1 (January 1936): 61 this same article was also printed in: *LCmpn* 43 (November 2, 1935): 1382–84; *LH* 19, no. 44 (October 29, 1935): 1056–57; and *LStd* 93, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 6–7.

³³ Frederic Wenchel, "Nazi Germany and the Church II," *LW* 56 (November 16, 1937): 390; and "The Younger National Socialists in Germany," *JALC* 3, no. 12 (December 1938): 70.

³⁴ "Will das deutsche Volk noch christlich sein?," *LiH* 16, no. 25 (March 24, 1938): 11; and John Aberly, "Notes and Studies: Religion in the Third Reich," *LCQ* 11 (October 1938): 386.

³⁵ Th. F., "Das Ende des Christentums?," *LiH* 17, no. 45 (August 17, 1939): 5–6; Hugo von Gaffan Perdelwitz, "Protestant Germany Today," *AnL* 7, no. 17 (April 23, 1934): 4–7; and Martin S. Sommer, "The Church in Germany," *LW* 53 (March 27, 1934): 121–22.

³⁶ Karl Barth, "As Others See It: Germany's Religious Issue Is a Universal One," *LCmpn* 45 (August 5, 1937):

Neo-Pagan Groups in Germany

From the early part of the 1930s on, the editors attempted to monitor and report on the various neo-pagan groups in Germany. Sometimes there was some difficulty in understanding the real power or impact that a given group may have had, but the concern was very real for the Americans. Due to their distance, the estimates that the editors had for the real impact of these groups on German life was greatly varied, yet all were at least somewhat concerned.

Many of the reports of neo-pagan activity in Germany were very general in nature, but others addressed specific groups. A couple of articles in the *Lutherischer Herold* and *The Lutheran Church Quarterly* even went so far as to enumerate a whole host of different neo-pagan groups that had arisen in Germany. These were veritable laundry lists of twelve or thirteen different groups and publications, often with their leading figure named as well.³⁷

Alfred Rosenberg and the *Myth of the Twentieth Century*.³⁸ The writers and editors of the American Lutheran periodicals saw Alfred Rosenberg as the single individual who posed greatest threat to Christianity in Germany. This concern over Rosenberg was not because they felt he had a large following, rather it was made clear to that it was Rosenberg's power in the Nazi Party that was the real issue. "The number of people who actually believe in Alfred Rosenberg's '*Blut und Boden*' religion is probably small. But its importance lies in the fact that its ideas lend themselves well to the aim and efforts of Nazi totalitarianism."³⁹ To be

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³⁷ "Die Deutschgläubige Bewegung," *LiH* 15, no. 7 (November 12, 1936): 14; and John Aberly, "Notes and Studies: Religion in the Third Reich," *LCQ* 11 (October 1938): 385–95.

³⁸ For examination of Rosenberg's religion see Hans-Peter Hasenfratz, "Die Religion Alfred Rosenbergs," *Numen* 36 (June 1989): 113–26; Robert Cecil, *The Myth of the Master Race: Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1972); and Harald Iber, *Christlicher Glaube oder rassischer Mythos: Die Auseinandersetzung der Bekennenden Kirche mit Alfred Rosenbergs: "Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts"* (Frankfurt am Main; New York: Peter Lang, 1987).

³⁹ Oscar N. Olson, "Editorial Notes and Comments," *AQ* 18 (July 1939): 285.

specific, it was Rosenberg's position as the official philosopher of the Nazi party that made him such an issue of concern; after all to have a vocal neo-pagan and anti-Christian as the official thinker of the German government was a scary prospect to Christians.⁴⁰

This is not to say that there was universal agreement on how much Hitler agreed with Rosenberg. This turned into a debate over whether or not Hitler really supported Rosenberg or just allowed him to be there. The event that sparked the clearest responses about this was a speech by Dr. Ernst Wilhelm Meyer, who had been a German diplomat for 16 years; Meyer spoke on Nazism on February 23, 1938 at a dinner in his honor held by the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America and the Universal Council of Life and Work. In his speech he declared: "Rosenberg has been Hitler's guide and philosopher. ... Never has Hitler denied a single word of Rosenberg: never has Hitler hampered any activities of Rosenberg."⁴¹ This speech was quoted at length approvingly in the *Lutheran Companion*, where Osborne Hauge observed that Hitler himself was behind Rosenberg.⁴² This assessment was strongly countered by Michael Reu in the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* where he argued "However, it is difficult for us to consider Hitler a Hypocrite with his repeated confessions of the living God." Reu points out that since Hitler did not push neo-paganism in Austria he must not support Rosenberg's ideas.⁴³

However, Reu's opinion that Rosenberg really didn't have that much real power, because of Hitler, was not widely accepted.⁴⁴ There were a number of writers who were upset over the

⁴⁰ Henry Smith Leiper, "Church and State in Germany, Russia, and Mexico," *AnL* 8, no. 32 (August 12, 1935): 5-6; Engelder, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Zustände und Vorkommnisse in der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche," *CTM* 5 (May 1934): 405-07; and Henry Smith Leiper, "The State of the Church," *JALC* 3, no. 6 (June 1938): 68-71.

⁴¹ Osborne Hauge, "Diplomat Condemns Nazi Rule," *LCmpn* 46 (March 17, 1938): 330-1.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 62 (April 1938): 252.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Reu did see Rosenberg as an enemy of Christianity and therefore a threat; however he did not see Rosenberg as having any real official power.

amount of power that Rosenberg wielded in the Third Reich. The readers of the *Northwestern Lutheran* and the *Lutheran Herald* were told that Rosenberg gave a private speech, ostensibly with Hitler's approval, where he stated "That the Catholic Church and also the Confessional Church in their present form, must disappear from the life of our people, is my full conviction, and I believe I am entitled to say that this is also our Fuehrer's viewpoint."⁴⁵ Likewise, a number of writers pointed out that Rosenberg was behind many of the persecutions against Christians that was taking place in Germany.⁴⁶

However, Rosenberg's greatest power was seen by all to be that of the pen and persuasion due to the respect of his office. His infamous book, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*, was therefore responded to in many different ways. One of the things that really concerned the American writers was how this book was placed in every German School and Hitler Youth group and that it was even protected by the force of the government.⁴⁷ There were a number of denunciations of this book as neo-pagan, anti-Christian and an attempt to create religion based on race.⁴⁸ A key resource that responded to this book which a number pointed to and reviewed was *Der Mythos: Rosenbergbetrachtungen* by Albrecht Öpke.⁴⁹ Likewise, those in Germany

⁴⁵ "Rosenberg Reveals Nazi Church Policy," *NwL* 25 (October 23, 1938): 342; and "No Religious Freedom in Germany" *LH* 22 (September 27, 1938): 968.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*; Henry Smith Leiper, "The State of the Church," *JALC* 3, no. 6 (June 1938): 68–71.

⁴⁷ "Persecution of Christians," *LH* 22 (November 29, 1938): 1200–01; "Nachrichten über die kirchliche Lage in Deutschland," *LiH* 13, no. 4 (October 25, 1934): 12–13; and "Rosenbergs 'Mythus' unter polizeilichem Schutz," *LiH* 13, no. 30 (April 25, 1935): 13.

⁴⁸ Elias Newman quoted in "Persecution of Christians," *LH* 22 (November 29, 1938): 1200–01; "Rosenberg's 'Mythus'," *LiH* 13, no. 38 (June 20, 1935): 11; and Frode Beyer, "Blodets Religion," *DV* 58, no. 48 (December 1, 1937): 6.

⁴⁹ Reviews of *Der Mythos: Rosenbergbetrachtungen* by Albrecht Öpke in R. W. Heintze, *CTM* 7 (April 1936): 317; S. H. Siefkes, *KB* 79, no. 8 (February 22, 1936): 14; and H. Offermann *LCQ* 9 (January 1936): 107.

who spoke up against Rosenberg and his *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts*, such as Martin Niemöller, August Marahrens and Walter Künneth were heralded in the American publications.⁵⁰

Jakob Hauer and the “German Faith Movement.” Since Rosenberg did not lead a specific group, the “German Faith Movement” led by Jakob Hauer was the single most dangerous neo-pagan group in Germany in the minds of the American writers.⁵¹ The American Lutherans considered it to be one of the biggest and most powerful religious groups in Germany.⁵² However, there was some confusion on the part of some American authors as to just how big and powerful the “German Faith Movement” was. While some understood the many different groups that existed, others essentially lumped all of the neo-pagan groups in Germany into one group as the “German Faith Movement.”⁵³

This concern over the “German Faith Movement” was based not only in its perceived size, but also in the fact that it was considered to be a great threat to the continued existence of Christianity in Germany. It was noted that the “German Faith Movement” was especially growing because of its outreach efforts to University students.⁵⁴ Adding to the fears of the Americans was the movement’s animosity towards Christianity. *The Ansgar Lutheran* reported how Manfred von Ribbentrop, one of the leaders of the “German Faith Movement,” had said, “Hauer said to me once, ‘There will always be Christians in Germany.’ I answered, ‘In three

⁵⁰ C.f. “Editorials and Comments: Have Nazis Won War on Church?,” *AnL* 9, no. 46 (November 16, 1936): 3; “Erklärung gegen Alfred Rosenberg” *LiH* 16, no. 12 (December 23, 1937): 12–13; and review of *Antwort auf den Mythos* by Walter Künneth in Karl J. Arndt, *LCQ* 10 (April 1937): 209–12.

⁵¹ For the best study of Hauer and the “German Faith Movement” see Poewe, *New Religions and the Nazis*.

⁵² M. Reu, “Aus dem Kampf um das Bekenntnis in der Kirche Deutschlands,” *KZ* 58 (September 1934): 513–33; “The Young People: Fuehrer Hitler and the Church,” *Luth* 20, no. 39 (June 29, 1938): 19 ; and M. Willkomm, “Zur Kirchliche Lage in Deutschland (Schluss),” *ELGB* 70 (February 10, 1935): 39–40.

⁵³ For instance, August Zich erroneously places Rosenberg and Hitler as members of the “German Faith Movement” in August Zich, “Church Conditions in Germany,” *NwL* 22 (March 3, 1935): 68–69.

⁵⁴ “Die Deutsche Glaubensbewegung und die studierende Jugend,” *LiH* 13, no. 52 (September 26, 1935): 11; and “German Pagans Launch Missionary Campaign,” *LH* 19 (July 23, 1935): 725.

years certainly, in thirty years perhaps, in three hundred certainly none.”⁵⁵ There were even several reports of how the movement had created its own neo-pagan rites to replace Christian ones. The best description was of a wedding:

In the “liturgy” used at a wedding which was recently celebrated in circles of the so-called “German Faith Movement” (Deutsche Glaubensbewegung), after the rings had been changed, the celebrant (Weihwart) spoke the following words of benediction: “May Mother Earth who lovingly bears us all and Father Heaven who blesses us with his light and his weathers and all good Powers in the air, govern your life till your destiny is fulfilled”⁵⁶

This is not to say that the Lutherans in America were uninterested in the beliefs of the “German Faith Movement,” rather there was plenty of discussion regarding the nature of their theology. Somewhat superficially, some of the writers saw the “German Faith Movement” as attempting to bring back the worship of the old German deities.⁵⁷ Those that better understood the movement saw it as not a rehashed paganism, but a new form of paganism. “Yes, *neopaganism* – for the old pagans believed in gods who were superior to them, but the new pagans, in line with the philosophy of immanentalism and pantheism, believe themselves as divine.”⁵⁸ Additionally, there were some that explained that the point of the “German Faith Movement” was to replace Christianity with a specifically German religion, which was a religious form of the Nazi worldview.⁵⁹ Probably the most interesting response to this was found

⁵⁵ “Editorials and Comments: The Church’s Struggle in Europe,” *AnL* 9, no. 11 (March 15, 1937): 7.

⁵⁶ C. R. Tappert, “Currents and Counter-Currents Regarding the Liberal and Biblical Attitude Toward Religion,” *TF* 7 (January 1935): 19–27.

⁵⁷ “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland. Ein neues Heidentum,” *KZ* 58 (May 1934): 309–12; M. Reu, “The Present Church Situation in Germany-II,” *Luth* 19, no. 50 (September 8, 1937): 12–13; and Arthur H. Kuhlman, “Church News: Noted Tuebingen Theologian Speaks on Church Situation,” *LStd* 93, no. 13 (March 30, 1935): 11.

⁵⁸ Review of *Germany’s New Religion: the German Faith Movement* by Wilhelm Hauer, Karl Heim, and Karl Adam in Th. Engelder, *CTM* 8 (June 1937): 483–84. Italics original.

⁵⁹ H. Koch, “Zur kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland,” *DL* 91 (November 26, 1935): 389–91; “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Graf F. Reventlow,” *CTM* 7 (August 1936): 628; and Frederic Wenchel, “Nazi Germany and the Church I,” *LW* 56 (November 2, 1937): 366–67.

in the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* where an article traced the history of German Christmas hymns and shows actually how much of the German culture has been formed around “the child in the manger.”⁶⁰

Erich and Mathilda Ludendorff and the *Tannenbergbund*. The group that the American editors considered the most extreme in their neo-pagan animosity towards Christianity was the *Tannenbergbund*. For many, it was disturbing that the German war hero, Erich Ludendorff, had married the avid neo-pagan Mathilda and supported her in forming the *Tannenbergbund*. Likewise, this group was very adamant in its attacks on the church and did so more openly than the “German Faith Movement.” However, because of its small size, there was less concern about the *Tannenbergbund*.

This was the group that most American Lutherans understood to be pushing a return to the German pagan gods, most notably Wodan.⁶¹ However the threat was seen as of a seriousness that was likened to communism, and in fact it was depicted to the American readers as a subsidiary group of communism.⁶² Because of this, and its open attacks, there were a number of articles that took issue with the *Tannenbergbund*, pointing out its faults and showing its attacks on Christianity missed the mark.⁶³

⁶⁰ “Das deutsche Volk vor dem Kind in der Krippe,” *KZ* 59 (February 1935): 76–86.

⁶¹ M. Reu, “Wer sind die “deutschen Christen?,” *KZ* 57 (October 1933): 594; Tappert, “Antworten auf allerlei Fragen,” *LiH* 11, no. 48 (August 31, 1933): 8–9; and “With Lutherans in Other Lands: Germany,” *LCmpn* 40 (March 19, 1932): 380.

⁶² R. Malmin, “World Religious Notes: Anti-Atheistic Alliance,” *LH* 16 (April 26, 1932): 531; “Communism in Germany,” *LH* 17 (March 14, 1933): 242; and “With Lutherans in Other Lands: Germany,” *LCmpn* 40 (March 19, 1932): 380.

⁶³ “Tyskerne hædrer Ludendorff,” *DV* 55, no. 15 (April 10, 1935): 8; Review of *Erlosung von Jesu Christo?* by Karl Heinrich Rengstorff in J. T. Mueller, *CTM* 3 (August 1932): 635–36; and “Die, Dritte Konfession,” *LiH* 12, no. 19 (February 8, 1934): 12.

Neo-Paganism Endorsed by the German Government

Towards the end of the 1930s more and more concern was raised by the authors of the American Lutheran periodicals over the open endorsement and support of neo-paganism by the Nazi government. While this endorsement never achieved direct, official status within the Third Reich, and Hitler never went on record as in favor of these moves, there were several aspects of neo-paganism that did come from the Nazi regime. These included the publishing and promotion of neo-pagan rites that were seen as replacements for church rites, neo-pagan influences in the Hitler Youth, and even the formation of a neo-pagan convent.

At the start of the 1930s a number of American Lutheran groups saw Nazism as impregnated with a neo-pagan religion and by the mid 1930s most American Lutherans agreed on this point. Curiously, however, there was something of a disagreement over what Hitler's own religious beliefs were. There were a handful of writers that maintained steadfastly that Hitler was a nominal Christian.⁶⁴ Others pointed to how Hitler never publicly said anything against Christianity, and that therefore he was neutral.⁶⁵ This was buttressed with the idea that it was really lower level Nazis who were pushing the neo-paganism.

Hitler, it is said, is officially neutral in the conflict between the neopaganists, the German faith movement, the Evangelical Confessional Church, and the Roman Catholic Church. Meanwhile, however, Rosenberg, Goebbels, von Schirach, and Kerrls, all ardent neopaganists, are in control of the youth, education, propaganda, and the Church. Their influence and efforts are against the evangelical faith. They are setting Germany against the Gospel.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 59 (December 1935): 760; Walter A. Maier, "Editorials: 'Hitler Shows the Way,'" *WLM* 41 (April 1933): 461; E. G. Sihler, "The New Leadership of Germany," *WLM* 42 (January 1934): 270–71, 310.

⁶⁵ C. A. Melby, "The State of the Lutheran Church in Germany (Conclusion)," *LH* 18 (July 24, 1934): 662; and H. Grüber, "Die kirchlichen Verhältnisse in Deutschland," *DL* 93 (January 5, 1937): 10–11.

⁶⁶ Frederic Wenchel, "Nazi Germany and the Church II," *LW* 56 (November 16, 1937): 390.

While some have pointed out that Walter A. Maier did support Hitler early on,⁶⁷ the one that really stood up time and again stating that Hitler was truly a Christian and attempting to do right by the church was Michael Reu. Reu repeatedly and in several different periodicals stated his belief that Hitler was truly a Christian and often quoted Hitler's speeches as proof.⁶⁸ This is not to say that Reu did not see serious problems with Nazism, rather he seemed sure that the problems were being perpetuated by lower officials and that Hitler was not involved in the problems. Only by September 1939 did Reu change his tune and say that Hitler was part of the effort to control the churches, and that Hitler did this by saying words to pacify the churches while the attacks were on.⁶⁹

Most of the other American writers ultimately saw Hitler and the Nazi movement as being inherently neo-pagan in its nature. Some followed Herman Sasse's lead in declaring that the Nazi worldview was fundamentally incompatible with Christianity.⁷⁰ Furthermore, there was a concern that the adoration and respect that Hitler garnered had spilled over into outright worship of him as a demi-god. Likewise, there were a number of other articles that pointed out that the Nazis were very actively promoting a neo-pagan religion or worldview.

⁶⁷ This view of Maier is presented in Kohlhoff, 210–13.

⁶⁸ Cf. M. Reu, "Adolf Hitler der Antichrist?," *LiH* 11, no. 43 (July 27, 1933): 9; M. Reu, "The Present Church Situation in Germany-IV," *Luth* 19, no. 52 (September 22, 1937): 9–11; and M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland "Ist Hitler wirklich ein Heuchler?," *KZ* 62 (April 1938): 249–52.

⁶⁹ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 63 (September 1939): 568–76.

⁷⁰ Hermann Sasse wrote went on record in 1932 saying that National Socialism is fundamentally incompatible with Christianity in: Hermann Sasse, "Die Kirche und die politischen Mächte der Zeit," *Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelischen Landeskirche Deutschlands*, ed. Hermann Sasse, (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1932): 65–67. This view was then echoed in Arthur v.d. Thur., "Neue Phase im deutschen Kirchenstreit," *LiH* 13, no. 26 (March 28, 1935): 3–4; "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Unterrichtsziele in Württemberg," *CTM* 8 (November 1937): 880; and "Bishop Marahrens Recognizes the Nazi Philosophy," *AnL* 11, no. 42 (October 16, 1939): 1, 10.

azi promotion of neo-Pagan Rites. One of the developments that the Lutherans in America saw as a particularly great affront to Christianity was the development and publishing of specific neo-pagan rites that were intended to replace Christian rites such as baptism, confirmation, marriage, and funerals. This concerted effort to support and encourage neo-pagan worship was very worrisome to the Americans as it was seen as an outright attempt to replace Christianity with a “German” religion. It must be kept in mind that most of these observations occurred later in the 1930s as the Nazi movement became bolder and realized that it was going to be unable to co-opt the German Churches via the *Deutsche Christen*.

The various neo-pagan rites that were developed with the express purpose of replacing Christian rites and worship were probably the most disconcerting to the Americans. As a whole the various Nazi replacements to baptism, confirmation, and funerals were seen as problematic, but not that widespread in Germany.⁷¹ The form of neo-pagan ritual that got the most attention from the American Lutheran press was the publishing of neo-pagan marriage rites. It was noted that the Nazis had published 5 different neo-pagan marriage rites, and that these were being actively promoted, especially by Himmler.⁷² There were even a couple of articles that described how Christian churches had the cross and other Christian symbols replaced for these services and that the officiant was to wear a brown robe, rather than the traditional Christian black robes.⁷³ However, the most extreme form of a neo-pagan alternative to a Christian form had to be the creation of a the Brown Sisterhood of Mercy, a Nazi convent, in which the leader suggested that

⁷¹ “Neue Albernheiten im deutschen Heidentum,” *LiH* 13, no. 26 (March 28, 1935): 14; Julius F. Seebach, “In the World’s Eye,” *Luth* 20, no. 14 (January 5, 1938): 6.

⁷² Julius F. Seebach, “In the World’s Eye,” *Luth* 20, no. 30 (April 27, 1938): 7; “From Everywhere: Nazi Wedding Ritual Published in Germany,” *AnL* 10, no. 24 (June 13, 1938): 14; and “Church News: Nazi Wedding Ritual Published in Germany,” *LStd* 96, no. 23 (June 19, 1938): 19.

⁷³ “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Eheweihung in der Schlosskirche zu Stuttgart,” *CTM* 8 (August 1937): 636–37; and Julius F. Seebach, “In the World’s Eye,” *Luth* 21, no. 23 (March 8, 1939): 6.

“a distinction should be made between undefined fear of God and those formulas, doctrines, and dogmas which people permit themselves to conjure up concerning God.”⁷⁴

Even more over the top from these neo-pagan rites were the attempts by the Nazis to create a new pagan religion. This included the publishing of Nazi creeds which called for faith in the German people and a German god.⁷⁵ The American Lutheran writers also felt that it was important to report to their readers about how the Nazis were attempting to replace Christian worship with pagan ceremonies to celebrate solstices and the like.⁷⁶

Some of these events were actually being sponsored by the “German Faith Movement” or other neo-pagan groups, but some of the American writers failed to see this distinction. However, other times the Nazi party was definitely supporting and advocating these forms of neo-pagan worship. It was noted in the periodicals a couple of times that Nazi Storm Troops chief of Staff, Viktor Lutze said, “It is fitting, in view of our heroic spirit, that we should hold these assemblies of our faith in localities in the German land (pagan high places) which previously had been taken over by an ideology foreign to us (Christianity).”⁷⁷

Hitler Youth Seen as neo-Pagan Group. The single German group that the American Lutherans saw as the most dangerous in regards to the forcing of neo-paganism on the German people by the Nazi Party was the Hitler Youth. Since *Reichsbishop* Müller rolled the Evangelical Youth Organization into the Hitler Youth on December 19, 1933, the editors of the American Lutheran publications were concerned about the spiritual character of the Hitler Youth. After all,

⁷⁴ “Church News: A New Female Religious Order,” *LStd* 95, no. 2 (January 9, 1937): 13.

⁷⁵ M., “Glaubensbekenntnis,” *TQ* 33 (April, 1936): 149; Julius F. Seebach, “In the World’s Eye,” *Luth* 20, no. 40 (July 6, 1938): 6

⁷⁶ “From Everywhere: The Nazi Lack of Humor,” *AnL* 9, no. 45 (November 9, 1936): 7; “Easter, 1937, In Germany,” *Luth* 19, no. 29 (April 14, 1937): 4–5; and “What’s the News? Many Nazis,” *LW* 58 (January 24, 1939): 18.

⁷⁷ Julius F. Seebach, “In the World’s Eye,” *Luth* 20, no. 11 (December 15, 1937): 8; “From Everywhere: The

the very idea of rolling all of the Church youth groups into a single, state oriented youth program was very unusual, and seen as dangerous.

This concern was greatly heightened since the Hitler Youth was led by the known neo-pagan Baldur von Schirach. Unlike the top ranking government officials, von Schirach left no doubt on where he stood in regards to Christianity, and his vocal attacks on it were more than a little troubling to the Lutherans in America.⁷⁸ He, along with the rest of the Hitler Youth program, was depicted as undermining the Christian beliefs of the German youth.

If these men remain permanently in control of all the educational and cultural agencies of the nation, there is good ground for the fear that ultimately even the liberal and modernistic views of the German Christians would have to give way to a new paganism or to a complete atheism. It should be said that Hitler himself, who is nominally a Catholic, has taken no part in this anti-Christian propaganda. On the other hand he has done nothing to discourage it, and by keeping men of this type in influential official positions, has at least allowed these trends of thought to have free sway.⁷⁹

Besides the directly pagan education, the Hitler Youth was also criticized for crowding out Christianity by not allowing the German youth time to attend worship and Christian instruction at their churches.⁸⁰ Some considered the rolling of the Evangelical Youth Organization into the Hitler Youth to be a form of persecution aimed at destroying the Christian Church in Germany.⁸¹ This movement was even compared to the Soviet Union's attempts to indoctrinate the youth via a single youth organization: "It is a great experiment. The leaders realize that when they are

Nazi 'Storm Troops' Have Received an Order," *AnL* 10, no. 2 (January 10, 1938): 7.

⁷⁸ "Baldur von Schirach," *LiH* 13, no. 14 (January 3, 1935): 11; "Plain Speaking by Nazi Officialdom," *JALC* 3, no. 10 (October, 1938): 52; and "Editorials and Comments: Have Nazis Won War on Church?," *AnL* 9, no. 46 (November 16, 1936): 3.

⁷⁹ C. A. Melby, "The State of the Lutheran Church in Germany (Conclusion)," *LH* 18 (July 24, 1934): 662.

⁸⁰ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 59 (December 1935): 745–61; and H. Dierks, "The New Germany II," *LW* 55 (October 20, 1936): 346–47.

⁸¹ Arthur von der Thur., "Von der deutschen Kirchenrevolution," *LiH* 11, no. 46 (August 17, 1933): 5–6; C. A. Melby, "The State of the Lutheran Church in Germany (Conclusion)," *LH* 18 (July 24, 1934): 661–62; and M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 62 (November 1938): 698–704.

dealing with youth they are handling material as plastic as clay. Italy and Germany, too, are learning from Russia a lesson organizing the young people to serve the state.”⁸²

azi Persecution of the Churches

While there was never unanimity amongst the American Lutherans as to whether or not there was a uniform persecution of Christians by the Nazis, most did see at least sporadic examples of persecution of the Church. This was most keenly felt by the Americans who were in fellowship with one or more of the *Landeskirchen*, as those in fellowship with the Lutheran Free Churches tended to see these persecutions as more of punishments for political meddling by pastors and church leaders. Those that did perceive actions by the Nazi government as the persecution of Christians, faithful pastors, and bishops were quick to sound the alarm and denounce those measures. By late 1938, even Michael Reu saw Nazism as anti-Christian and demonic, not that it was trying to destroy the church; rather it was trying to control it.⁸³

One aspect that was differently received was the reports of oppression of the Roman Catholic Church in Germany. These views betrayed the traditional Lutheran distrust of the Roman Catholic Church. In particular, there were opposing responses to the news of the Nazi prosecutions of Roman Catholic monks and nuns on immorality charges in 1937.⁸⁴ But after this, there was more willingness by the Lutherans in America to give credence to reports by the

⁸² Erling Ylvisaker, “Our Four Leaf Clover,” *LSntl* 18 (July 17, 1935): 236–37.

⁸³ M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 62 (December 1938): 750–60.

⁸⁴ Some reported in Frederic Wenchel, “Germany and Rome,” *LW*, 56 (August 10, 1937): 268–69; and “Nonner og Munke arresterede,” *DV* 55, no. 14 (April 3, 1935): 5 that the reports of immorality in monasteries and convents were overblown. Meanwhile, Michael Reu appeared to buy into Nazi line of rampant immorality in M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 61 (July 1937): 438–45; and “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 61 (August 1937): 498–503.

Roman Catholics which were pointing out that the Nazis were persecuting Catholics, and in fact Christianity itself.⁸⁵

The fact that Goebbels prevented the Bible from being sold in German bookstores was seen as another effort to subtly crush Christianity.⁸⁶ However, it was also gleefully noted that these attempts to restrict the Bible in Germany were failing. As *The Lutheran Youth* reported: “the dangerous banana peeling on Hitler’s path – 200,000 more Bibles than Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* were sold in Germany last year.”⁸⁷ This general anti-Christian attitude was also seen in the closing of 14 of the 18 theological faculties in Germany in 1939.⁸⁸

There were also a number of calls for help for the refugees from Germany.⁸⁹ These reports were numerous enough to show that this was a real concern to many of the writers and editors of the American periodicals. However, it has been noted by William E. Nawyn that these calls apparently weren’t really heeded by the readers of the periodicals.⁹⁰

A couple of events that got the attention of a number of American Lutherans were the ecumenical meetings in which the Nazi government withheld the passports of the German churchmen from the *Landeskirchen*. The first was the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work held in Oxford in July 1937. What got their attention was the fact that this received a

⁸⁵ “Editorials and Comments: The Church’s Struggle in Europe,” *AnL* 9, no. 11 (March 15, 1937): 8; M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 62 (January 1938): 57–59; and “Persecution of Christians,” *LH* 22 (November 29, 1938): 1200–01.

⁸⁶ “Editorials: Doomed to Failure,” *JALC* 4, no. 7 (July 1939): 4–5; “Church News: Nazi Government Bans Religious Broadcasts,” *LStd* 97, no. 31 (August 5, 1939): 19–20; and “Reich Puts Ban on Religious Radio Broadcasts,” *LH* 23 (June 27, 1939): 621.

⁸⁷ J. E. N., “News and Notes,” *LY* 4, no. 7–8 (July/August 1939): 11–12.

⁸⁸ Arndt, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: The Theological Faculties of Heidelberg, Leipzig, and Rostock Liquidated?,” *CTM* 10 (September 1939): 708; and “Theological Schools Closed in Germany,” *LCmpn* 47 (November 30, 1939): 1508.

⁸⁹ C.f. “American Lutherans Will Assist German Refugees,” *JALC* 3, no. 9 (September 1938): 71–72; “Church News: Assistance to German Pastors Voted by Lutheran Board,” *LStd* 96, no. 31 (July 30, 1938): 16; and “Germany,” *LH* 19 (August 20, 1935): 818.

rebuke from the Oxford conference itself, which was repeated by many American Lutherans.⁹¹ This was echoed again in August of 1937 at the Word Conference on Faith and Order at Edinburgh, Scotland.⁹²

One form of persecution that gradually got the attention of the Lutherans in America was the Nazi censoring of the church press. The Nazi technique of controlling the information flow in Germany via censoring all press outlets slowly caught the attention of the American Lutherans. At first, there was little concern, because the church papers were left unmolested, however as the years progressed and the German church papers started being shut down by the Nazi government, then the Americans, particularly those in fellowship with the publishers of these papers, expressed their outrage.

A few noticed that the Nazi control of the radio and major media was being turned to control the budding *Reichskirche* via allowing only supporters of the *Deutsche Christen* to have access to the major media and therefore influencing the 1933 church elections.⁹³ The next step that garnered notice was the banning of specific Christian books, particularly but not exclusively, those that took issue with Nazi and neo-pagan activities. The list of banned books was then compared to the “Index of forbidden books” from the medieval Papacy.⁹⁴ Then when individual Lutheran church papers fell under the ban in Germany, there was a great hue and cry in America,

⁹⁰ Nawyn.

⁹¹ M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Weltkirchenkonferenz in Oxford,” *KZ* 61 (September 1937): 571–75; “German Church Delegates Denied Passports,” *LH* 21 (August 10, 1937): 783; and Daniel Nystrom, “The Spectator: A Review of Current News and Opinion,” *LCmpn* 45 (August 5, 1937): 999.

⁹² Geo. O. Lillegard, “The Church and the World,” *LSntl* 21 (January 26, 1938): 20–21.

⁹³ “Andre Lande: Kirkelig Strid i Tyskland,” *DV* 54, no. 23 (June 7, 1933): 5; M. Hulsemann, “Die politische und religiöse Gestalt des dritten Reiches (Schluss),” *KB* 77, no. 9 (March 3, 1934): 7–8; and “Aus Württemberg,” *LiH* 13, no. 7 (November 15, 1934): 14.

⁹⁴ Julius Bodensieck, “Editorielles: Ein ‚Index‘ im neuen Deutschland,” *KB* 79, no. 12 (March 21, 1936): 3; Th. Buehring, “Kirchliche Nachrichten: Deutschland,” *KB* 77, no. 37 (September 15, 1934): 12; and Julius Bodensieck, “Editorielles: Antichristliche Entwicklung?,” *KB* 81, no. 10 (March 5, 1938): 5.

in particular the American Periodicals were upset because these were in no way political papers, yet the government was censoring them.⁹⁵

Because of these and other forms of persecution to be addressed below, there was a growing concern that many Americans were turning a blind eye to the persecutions in Germany. Some expressed outrage at other Americans and especially American Lutherans for defending Nazism and ignoring the persecution of Christians that was taking place in Germany.⁹⁶

The baneful influence of Nazi rule on the church life of Germany can no longer be denied. Even granting the claim that many of the newspaper statements are highly colored, the reports that come from unprejudiced sources seem to establish the fact that the Church is gravely imperiled. In the face of the incontrovertible evidence of suppression and actual persecution one becomes somewhat weary of the American defenders of Nazism who vehemently seek to justify Adolf Hitler's church policy. Particularly does the defense of Nazism become "a pain in the neck" when it emanates from American churchmen and even from representatives of the Lutheran clergy.⁹⁷

It was also noted that *Presbyterian Tribune* reported that:

Christians all over the world have been deeply stirred by the persecutions inflicted upon their' fellow believers in Germany. While their sufferings have by no means equaled those meted out to the Jews of that land, a new paganism has arisen which hates the name of Christ, his ethic and his spirit⁹⁸

Persecution of the Confessing Front

The most open form of persecution that the American Lutherans perceived were the attacks that were brought upon leaders in the Confessing Church movement. This ranged from the house arrest of some pastors and bishops, to the sentencing to concentration camps, to the outright murder of pastors. However there was also the lesser, yet subtly more powerful,

⁹⁵ “,Lutherische Kirche’ verboten,” *LiH* 17, no. 42 (July 27, 1939): 12; W. Hoenecke, “Verboten,” *ELGB* 74 (April 30, 1939): 140–41; and Stephen Tuhy, Sr., “Noviny z Poľa náboženstva v Nemecku,” *SV* 33 (July 1, 1939): 302–03.

⁹⁶ Henry Smith Leiper, “Caesarism Advances in Hitlerland,” *LH* 19 (December 31, 1935): 1322–23.

⁹⁷ Paul Lindemann, “Editorial Musings,” *AmL* 21, no. 2 (February 1938): 7.

measure later on of the Nazi state withholding funding and church taxes from pastors and even churches that refused to bow to their will.

The first agent that was seen as oppressing the Confessing Front was *Reichsbischof* Müller and his use of police force to try to silence critics of the *Deutsche Christen* was seen as particularly odious. Because of his actions, Müller was once described as “a swashbuckling, heelclicking militarist.”⁹⁹ There was then some hope early on when Kerrl was named minister of the government’s newly created Ministry of Church Affairs. However, when Kerrl warned that the Confessing churches must either disband or be disbanded, this was seen by the Americans as a direct threat of persecution.¹⁰⁰ There was further concern that Confessing Front was being watched by the police, and was even required to tell the police in advance when they would meet so their meetings could be monitored.¹⁰¹

Even among those that were not in fellowship with the *Landeskirchen*, such as the Missouri Synod and Wisconsin Synod, there was concern about how the police were being used to crack down on the Confessing Front.¹⁰² However, there was still some skepticism over whether these actions really meant that the Nazis were attempting to crush Christianity in Germany.¹⁰³ Further concern was expressed over Nazi government’s shutting down the Confessing seminaries.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ “For Our German Brethren,” *PM* 13 (August 1935): 507–08.

⁹⁹ “The Church People of Germany in Revolt,” *LH* 18 (October 30, 1934): 956.

¹⁰⁰ “Aus dem Kirchenkampf in Deutschland,” *LiH* 14, no. 20 (February 13, 1936): 11–12; “De tyske Præsters vanskelige Kaar,” *DV* 59, no. 3 (January 19, 1938): 1.

¹⁰¹ “Religionskampen i Tyskland,” *DV* 57, no. 12 (March 24, 1937): 1.

¹⁰² Engelder, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Die Polizei im Dienste der deutschen Reichskirche,” *CTM* 6 (June 1935): 467–69; Arndt, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: The Church Situation in Germany,” *CTM* 10 (June 1939): 470; and “Reich Church Will not Keep Silence,” *NwL* 24 (November 21, 1937): 377–78.

¹⁰³ Arndt, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Is Christianity Being Crushed in Germany?,” *CTM* 10 (June 1939): 470–71.

¹⁰⁴ G. C. Gast, “Church News: German Seminaries Closed,” *LStd* 93, no. 50 (December 14, 1935): 10; Stephen Tuhy, Sr., “Noviny z Poľa náboženstva v Nemecku,” *SV* 33 (July 1, 1939): 302–03; and “Zur Kirchenfrage

Persecution of Pastors in Germany In the eyes of the American Lutherans the most common and egregious offense was the persecution of pastors who resisted the *Deutsche Christen* agenda or were otherwise deemed as enemies of the Nazi state. These persecutions started in 1934 and slowly grew over the time studied, with periods of relative peace interspersed. For most of the Lutherans in America, the efforts of the Confessing Front were seen as heroic stands of the truth of the Gospel and the independence of the church.

The earliest attempts by the *Reichskirche* officials to clamp down on those who dissented were exemplified by the house arrest of bishops Meiser and Wurm. Then when the people of Bavaria and Württemberg protested in support of their bishops, the American writers rejoiced.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, their reinstatement by Hitler was loudly applauded on this side of the Atlantic.¹⁰⁶ In an official action, the ULCA voted in 1934 to protest to Hitler regarding the coercion that was being placed on the German Churches.¹⁰⁷

In much the same way, American Lutheran writers complained when they saw other actions taken by the Nazis to suppress Christians. These outrages included the attempts by the *Deutsche Christen* to forcefully take over churches from opposing pastors, with the support of Nazi soldiers.¹⁰⁸ There were also reports of pastors being suspended from their posts because of opposing the *Deutsche Christen* or the Nazi government.¹⁰⁹

in Deutschland,” *LiH* 16, no. 25 (March 24, 1938): 10–11.

¹⁰⁵ Julius Bodensieck, “Editorielles: Bischof Dr. Has Meiser von Bayern: Furchtlos und Treu!,” *KB* 77, no. 52 (December 29, 1934): 5–6; “The Church People of Germany in Revolt,” *LH* 18 (October 30, 1934): 956.

¹⁰⁶ Lars W. Boe, “What I Saw in Germany,” *LStd* 93, no. 4 (January 26, 1935): 12–13.

¹⁰⁷ “United Lutheran Church Cables Adolph Hitler,” *LH* 18 (November 20, 1934): 1028.

¹⁰⁸ “Greue an heiliger Stätte,” *KB* 78, no. 1 (January 5, 1935): 11.

¹⁰⁹ “Tension Increases in German Church Situation,” *LStd* 92, no. 6 (February 10, 1934): 14; Arthur von der Thur., “Im evangelischen Kirchenstreit in Deutschland,” *LiH* 15, no. 42 (July 15, 1937): 11; and “Confessional Pastors Facing Starvation,” *LH* 22 (October 11, 1938): 1025.

As the 1930s progressed, the American Lutheran periodicals gave quite a few updates regarding the number of German pastors in prison.¹¹⁰ It was even pointed out that pastors were imprisoned for not only being involved in the *Kirchenkampf*, but also for simply questioning Nazi neo-pagan propaganda.¹¹¹ Beyond this, there were also a number of reports of pastors being killed by the Nazis for speaking out against them.¹¹²

One source that gave insights into the nature of the imprisoned pastors was *I Was in Prison* by Charles S. Macfarland. This book was a collection of letters from German pastors who were imprisoned. In the various reviews, it was noted just how strong and evangelical these men were, not waxing political but encouraging others in the faith.¹¹³

Because of these valiant stands for truth, many of the American Lutherans deemed these pastors as modern day martyrs for the faith. “The test has also shown that the Protestant church of Germany will not substitute mythology for revelation and that the spirit of Martyrdom may still burn brightly if needed.”¹¹⁴ Sometimes the writers even quoted the Bible to exemplify the stand of these pastors: “We point with pride to the six thousand clergymen who have refused to bow the knee to a modern Baal of mad nationalism.”¹¹⁵

However, some of the Americans questioned whether these pastors really were martyrs for the faith. Particularly, these were voices from the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod,

¹¹⁰ C.f. J. E. N., “Notes and News,” *LY* 3, no. 1 (January 1938): 7; Julius F. Seebach, “In the World’s Eye,” *Luth* 20, no. 18 (February 2, 1938): 5; and G. C. Gast, “Church News: Christmas Brings Arrest of German Pastors,” *LStd* 94, no. 5 (February 1, 1936): 18.

¹¹¹ Julius F. Seebach, “In the World’s Eye,” *Luth* 20, no. 10 (December 8, 1937): 7.

¹¹² Julius F. Seebach, “In the World’s Eye,” *Luth* 21, no. 22 (March 1, 1939): 8.

¹¹³ Reviews of *I Was in Prison* by Charles S. Macfarland in *JALC* 4, no. 9 (September 1939): 60–2; Johs. Birkedal Nielsen, “Breve fra fængslede tyske Præster,” *DV* 60, no. 1 (January 4, 1939): 3; and H. D. Hoover, *LCQ* 12 (October 1939): 435.

¹¹⁴ James P. Christensen, “As I See It,” *AnL* 7, no. 2 (January 8, 1934): 6.

¹¹⁵ Hugo L. Dressler, “Religion in an era of Social Change,” *LCQ* 8 (April 1935): 133–50.

who were in fellowship with the free churches. They pointed to the official Nazi position that the pastors were not arrested for their faith, but for violating civil laws. Many of these pointed out that the free churches were unmolested; therefore it could not have been a question of Christianity or pure Lutheranism being persecuted.¹¹⁶

Martin Niemöller as Symbol of Persecuted. As the figurehead of the Confessing Front and the highest profile pastor to be arrested and imprisoned by the Nazis, Martin Niemöller became for many in America the symbol of the persecuted church in Germany. It is interesting to note that Niemöller was not portrayed as a theological leader in the Confessing Front as Karl Barth was. For the American Lutherans, Niemöller was perceived more as a representative of the persecuted. Many of the reports that were published about the arrests of pastors in Germany included Niemöller as the only one specifically named.¹¹⁷

Niemöller was often seen as a hero who stood up to the “German Christians” and Nazi party early on. In particular, he was seen as one who really stood up following the *Sportspalast* debacle.¹¹⁸ Then, when he was briefly arrested, he was again hailed as a hero of the church.¹¹⁹

Niemöller’s arrest in 1937 was seen by most as a specific attempt to crush the Confessing Front. This was underlined then when the court sentenced Niemöller to time served, and ordered him released only to have him re-arrested and placed in a concentration camp as Hitler’s personal prisoner. These moves were lamented by many American Lutherans as a terrible

¹¹⁶ W. Bodamer, “Die kirchlichen Zustände in Deutschland (Schluss),” *ELGB* 71 (October 18, 1936): 328–31.

¹¹⁷ Julius F. Seebach, “In the World’s Eye,” *Luth* 20, no. 18 (February 2, 1938): 5; “Church and State in Germany,” *LH* 19 (March 26, 1935): 293; and “The Confessional Church in Germany,” *LCslr* 1 (March 1939): 70.

¹¹⁸ “Religious Liberty in Germany Threatened,” *LH* 17 (December 12, 1933): 1139; “Andre Lande: Hitlers Biskop sætter sig op som Diktator,” *DV* 54, no. 2 (January 10, 1934): 1.

¹¹⁹ Th. Buehring, “Kirchliche Nachrichten: Der Führer der deutschen Bekenntnissynode verhaftet,” *KB* 78, no. 15 (April 13, 1935): 12; “Tension Increases in German Church Situation,” *LStd* 92, no. 6 (February 10, 1934): 14; and “Church and State in Germany,” *LH* 19 (March 26, 1935): 293.

outrage.¹²⁰ He was seen as a hero, especially in light of the fact that he was repeatedly offered his freedom if he only agreed to not preach or speak publicly, yet he refused.¹²¹ At this time, Niemöller's books *From U-Boat to Pulpit* and *Here I Stand!* were widely reviewed and praised in showing how he followed the faith in standing firm for the Gospel.¹²²

Curiously, within the American churches in fellowship with the German free churches there was something of a debate over whether Niemöller was a hero or a political meddler. Both the *Concordia Theological Monthly* and the *Northwestern Lutheran* saw him as a hero of the faith.¹²³ In fact the *Northwestern Lutheran* summarized a sermon by him and concluded by stating: "This fearless witness to the truth of salvation is in prison at this writing."¹²⁴ On the other side the *Evangelisch Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt* maintained that he was arrested for speaking against the government from the pulpit, and therefore was legitimately jailed.¹²⁵

State Withholding Funding from Churches. While not as outwardly harsh as the direct imprisonment of Christians, another tactic that the German Church government used later in the 1930s to oppress those that didn't toe the line was the withholding of funds from pastors and whole churches. While many of the Lutherans in America were not overly surprised by this

¹²⁰ "Nazi 'Justice'," *AnL* 10, no. 12 (March 21, 1938): 3, 10; Julius F. Seebach, "In the World's Eye," *Luth* 20, no. 26 (March 30, 1938): 6; and "A Niemöller No. 2," *LH* 23 (February 28, 1939): 215.

¹²¹ Arndt, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Niemoeller Still in Prison," *CTM* 10 (March 1939): 223–24; Julius F. Seebach, "In the World's Eye," *Luth* 21, no. 16 (January 18, 1939): 10; and "Anmodede Hitler om at frigive Niemöller," *DV* 59, no. 13 (March 30, 1938): 5.

¹²² Reviews of *From U-Boat to Pulpit* and *Here I Stand* by Martin Niemöller in N. M. Ylvisaker, *LH* 22 (March 8, 1938): 234, 237–38; August Zich, *NwL* 25 (January 2, 1938): 14; and August Zich, *TQ* 35 (January 1938): 12–33.

¹²³ Arndt, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Niemoeller Still in Prison," *CTM* 10 (March 1939): 223–4; and W. J. S., "Protestant Church Revolt in Germany," *NwL* 24 (July 18, 1937): 231–32.

¹²⁴ August Zich, "Martin Niemöller," *NwL* 24 (August 15, 1937): 260.

¹²⁵ "Pfarrer Niemoeller," *ELGB* 73 (March 20, 1938): 93–94; W. Hoencke, "Pfarrer Niemoeller," *ELGB* 73 (April 3, 1938): 109; and W. Bodamer, "Die kirchlichen Verhältnisse in Deutschland (Fortsetzung)," *ELGB* 74 (October 1, 1939): 309–11.

tactic, because they saw this as a natural result of the mixing of Church and State, it was nonetheless decried by many as a form of persecution of the Church.

Many saw this shift as basically inevitable, because of the mixing of Church and State. Readers of the *Lutheran Herald*, and the *Journal of the American Lutheran Conference* were told:

Since the churches are financed by the state, we can easily understand how those who play with the Nazi government will get government support, and that those who insist on preaching the Gospel will be denied support and an effort will be made to starve them into submission.¹²⁶

Others gave an even more ominous reaction, stating that the control of the financing gives the Nazi government the upper hand in forcing their will, and that the church was now under the Nazis' thumb.¹²⁷

A few went so far as to point out that this move was really part of a coordinated effort by the Nazis to subdue the church and force it to follow their will. Michael Reu reprinted a memo that called for the church to be "pacified" via bringing it in line with the Nazi worldview, and one step in this was the controlling of all church finances.¹²⁸ Readers of the *Lutheran Youth* were told that Alfred Rosenberg was actually pushing the idea of financially strangling the churches.¹²⁹ The *Augustana Quarterly* pointed out that this was actually part of an even greater conspiracy:

Demands have been made upon the Confessional Church, which has most vigorously opposed the government, that it relinquish its claim to a share of the church tax, surrender its status as a legal corporation and transfer the use of some

¹²⁶ "Confessional Pastors Facing Starvation," *LH* 22 (October 11, 1938): 1025; and "Confessional Pastors Facing Starvation," *JALC* 3, no. 12 (December 1938): 71.

¹²⁷ Michael Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 61 (April 1937): 251–56; and August Zich, "The Church in Germany," *NwL* 23 (April 26, 1936): 134–35.

¹²⁸ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 62 (December 1938): 750–60.

¹²⁹ J. E. N., "New Persecutions Threatening," *LY* 4, no. 1 (January 1939): 10–11.

of its churches to the Hitler Elite Guard for its neo-pagan ceremonies. The demands have been refused but may nevertheless be enforced.¹³⁰

However, a number of periodicals also held out hope that this might actually present an opportunity for things to be put right in Germany. Essentially, the hope was that this financial constraint would lead to the Protestant churches in Germany finally renouncing their connections with the government. In this, they would finally be undoing the perceived mixing of Church and State and establishing a correct, Free Church system.¹³¹

Embarrassment and Ridicule of Christians

A less direct, yet very alarming trend to some of the editors of these periodicals was how the general atmosphere in Germany seemed to be aimed at embarrassment and ridicule of Christians and their faith. This was seen as a deliberate attempt to undermine Christianity and in some ways just as insidious as the attempts by the “Godless Society of Russia” to convince people to leave the church. This movement was never as organized as the one in Russia, and certainly not as widespread, but it still raised the hackles of the American Lutherans.

There were warnings from time to time that there was a growing amount of anti-Christian propaganda and hatred that was being spread in Germany. Early on these were seen as predominantly from the neo-pagans, but as time went on it seemed to be more than just allowed by the regime.¹³² Some of the American editors went beyond just mentioning the anti-Christian rhetoric and even quoted it. These issues ranged from minor to serious, with small ones being

¹³⁰ Oscar N. Olson, “Editorial Notes and Comments,” *AQ* 18 (July 1939): 284–86.

¹³¹ M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 62 (December 1938): 750–60; “Religionsfrihed i Tyskland?,” *DV* 58, no. 49 (December 8, 1937): 8; and Daniel Nystrom, “The Spectator: A Review of Current News and Opinion,” *LCmpn* 45 (February, 4 1937): 167.

¹³² “Religionsspørgsmaalet i Tyskland,” *DV* 54, no. 35 (August 29, 1934): 5; M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 61 (February 1937): 121–22. Daniel Nystrom, “The Spectator: A Review of Current News and Opinion,” *LCmpn* 47 (February 9, 1939): 167.

charging that Christianity undermined true heroism.¹³³ *The Ansgar Lutheran* even quoted from *Der Blitz*, a publication of “German Action,” which depicts Christianity as aloof and selfish, while Nazism is much better.¹³⁴ The most extreme example is quoted in *Lutherischer Herold* where they say that Christians are regularly referred to as “*Scheisskerle*” (bastards), “*Schweinekerle*” (swine-men), and “*Sauhunde*” (assholes), and that Lutheran Deaconesses are referred to as “*Dumme Luder*” (stupid bitches).¹³⁵

These attacks left some Americans worrying about the effects that these would have on Christians in Germany. Ralph Long compared this to the efforts in the Soviet Union, but with a different approach: “The opposition, however, is in the conflict of ideas, and the danger is that men and women will be laughed out of their faith rather than persecuted in a violent manner.”¹³⁶ Others concurred that if these attacks continue, then the German people might no longer remain a predominantly Christian people.¹³⁷ Some, however, remained optimistic that the German people were smarter than to be taken in by these attacks and that their faith will remain strong.¹³⁸

Conclusions Regarding the Fear of Direct Attacks on Christianity

Besides the various currents within the German churches that were seen as threats to the continued existence of a pure Lutheranism in Germany, the Lutheran writers in America were very concerned about Lutheranism and all of Christianity being wiped out altogether. There can be no doubt that this was an era in which the Christian Church was under attack to varying

¹³³ “Kamp mod Kristendommen blandt tyske Børn,” *DV* 58, no. 20 (May 19, 1937): 1.

¹³⁴ “New and Notes: Nazism versus Christianity,” *AnL* 9, no. 15 (April 12, 1937): 2.

¹³⁵ “Kirchenfeindschaft in Deutschland,” *LiH* 15, no. 20 (February 11, 1937): 11.

¹³⁶ Ralph H. Long, “Conditions that Exist in Europe,” *Luth* 21, no. 47 (August 23, 1939): 9, 23.

¹³⁷ “Will das deutsche Volk noch christlich sein?,” *LiH* 16, no. 25 (March 24, 1938): 11; and “Persecution of Christians,” *LH* 22 (November 29, 1938): 1200–01.

¹³⁸ Daniel Nystrom, “The Spectator: A Review of Current News and Opinion,” *LCmpn* 47 (February 9, 1939): 167; and Jens Holdt, “Indrtryk fra Tysklands Kirke i Øjeblikket,” *DV* 60, no. 13 (March 29, 1939): 5, 8.

degrees in the Soviet Union, Germany and elsewhere. Since some of these attacks took the form of outright persecution and murder of Christians, this was a matter of grave concern.

The greatest threat was seen in the existence of communism, which makes sense because during this time period Stalin was in the process of trying to destroy the Lutheran Church of Russia along with all of Christianity. The American Lutherans' greatest concern there was for the Lutheran church and then for the Russian Orthodox. This fits with their having a primary concern for Lutheranism, since it was considered the purest form of Christianity. The severity of Soviet persecution often overshadowed all of the various problems that Germany was experiencing, because it was of a much larger and more obviously official nature.

One needs to consider the seemingly political nature of their concerns over communism. The American Lutherans' worries over communism can appear to be politics taking a theological hue, especially since American Lutherans had concerns during this era regarding the move to a more socialist economy in the U. S. due to Roosevelt's New Deal. However, when one looks at the world situation, one can quickly see that there was a real worry about the atheism of communism, and the attempts of communist regimes to eradicate Christianity. Therefore, the American Lutherans' political conservatism in the U. S. might actually have been informed by their religious worries with communism, rather than the other way around.

Within Germany itself, there was an initial relief that the rise of Hitler prevented the spread of communism, but as time went on there became a greater and greater concern over the neo-paganism that was seen in Germany. Lutherans of all stripes in America were agreed that German neo-paganism was a threat, but were divided as to how great of a threat. In particular, the greatest threat was seen in ways that the Nazi government supported and spread this neo-paganism. By the later 1930s it was generally accepted that the Nazis were pushing this neo-paganism, but some remained startlingly convinced that Hitler was not a part of it.

Most of the Americans were likewise concerned about the Nazi efforts to persecute the Confessing Front for not falling into line with the Nazi agenda and worldview. Some however saw this as inevitable because of the improper mixing of Church and State, and especially with the Nazis able to control the churches' purse-strings. Here there was a naive optimism that a break between the Church and State, with the *Landeskirchen* being turned into free churches, would fix the whole problem. This continued emphasis by the American Lutherans on the need to preserve pure Lutheran doctrine shows that they were predominantly concerned with theological issues. If one were to place too much emphasis on the political concerns of the American Lutherans, then one would overlook this vital area in which they showed great concern. After all, the majority of pastors and church members in Germany were left undisturbed by the Nazi regime, yet the Lutherans in America were concerned about the right beliefs and freedom to hold to the Gospel for the German Lutheran as the issue of paramount importance.

The concerns about the future of Christians and particularly Lutherans were shared by the American Lutherans across all denominational, ethnic, and church fellowship lines. This appears to be first and foremost a concern for the preservation of the Christian faith, and the protection of their brothers and sisters in Christ. This is especially clear in that the same level of concern was not shown in the persecutions of Jews in Germany.¹³⁹

The American Lutherans saw this tumultuous time as a time of great threats to the Church, threats that bordered on the apocalyptic. This is not to say that they were wringing their hands and predicting the end of the world, however the threats were seen as very serious threats to the

¹³⁹ This is not to say that there was no concern over the treatment of Jews in Germany, however at this time period the primary concern was for those that shared their own religious faith. This will be looked at further below in chapter 7.

existence of Christianity if allowed to go unchecked. They viewed these forces that attacked the Christian church as attempts to destroy Christianity. It appears that for many of the American Lutherans, the political and economic struggle between Marxist communism and democratic capitalism was seen as a religious question as well. In much the same way, when their concerns were awakened regarding events in Nazi Germany, one of the biggest concerns was neo-paganism.

CHAPTER SIX

THEOLOGICAL TRENDS USED BY NAZI SUPPORTERS

Related to the neo-pagan ideas that were spreading in Germany which were discussed above in Chapter Five, there were new theological ideas which had made their way into the German churches as well. These ideas were at least partially connected to the neo-pagan ideas, yet were also given a distinctly Christian hue which caused confusion for the American Lutheran theologians. These ideas were supported by some of the greatest German theologians of the time, who therefore offered their support to the Nazi cause.

There were a number of theologians who offered varying amounts of support for Hitler and the Nazi program. These men believed in the truly Christian nature of the Nazi movement and therefore sought to support it by showing its theological soundness. Some of the biggest names in German theology of this time, including Paul Althaus, Gerhard Kittel, and Emmanuel Hirsch, were involved in these movements.¹ This is not to say that all who supported Hitler at any given time continued to offer their support throughout his reign. These men, while supporting Hitler, used several different arguments to support what Hitler stood for. Some put forth religious and social forms of anti-Semitism, which were occasionally echoed in America, as will be seen in the next chapter.

¹ For a study of these three and their support of Nazism, see Robert P. Eriksen, *Theologians under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emmanuel Hirsch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

Others in Germany used a couple of new theological formations to support Nazism. These gave the Nazi platform a theological basis and an ideological support before the German people and the world. While these trends seem to have been less important to the American Lutherans, they were nonetheless aware of them and reacted to them, albeit in sometimes conflicting understandings.

“Positive Christianity”

In 1926, Adolf Hitler declared Article 24 of the Nazi Party Program to be unalterable. This article stated:

We insist upon freedom for all religious confessions in the state, providing they do not endanger its existence or offend the German race’s sense of decency and morality. The Party as such stands for a positive Christianity, without binding itself denominationally to a particular confession. It fights against the Jewish-materialistic spirit at home and abroad and believes that any lasting recovery of our people must be based on the spiritual principle: the welfare of the community comes before that of the individual.²

This, of course, begs the question of what is meant by “positive Christianity;” however Hitler and the Nazis shrewdly left the term undefined, thereby allowing others to pour into it whatever meaning that they wanted and therefore supporting the notion.

It was the nebulous nature of the term “positive Christianity” that caused the different reactions in the American Lutheran press. Since it was officially undefined, it was variously defined and supported in America early on. However, later it was more roundly rejected because it was seen more and more as the politically savvy cover that it really was.

“Positive Christianity” Understood as Good.

Due to the nebulous nature of the term “positive Christianity” a number of American Lutherans optimistically thought that this was a good idea. In America, there were several

appeals to “positive Christianity” in support of Nazism or at least appeals that held out hope that Hitler would not give in to the neo-pagan ideas swirling around in Germany. However, the latest of these were found in March of 1935, as a growing cynicism mounted thinking that “positive Christianity” was really a ruse of some sort.

The most thorough and glowing review of “positive Christianity” was found in an article by Joh. Jeremias in the German *Allgemeinen Ev.=Luth. Kirchenzeitung* which was reported on and quoted a couple of times in the American periodicals. Here Jeremias notes that there really is no “negative Christianity,” rather it is positive in that it is in favor of holding firm to the faith. He points to Luther and that the crucified and risen Christ is the doctrine on which the church stands or falls; therefore “positive Christianity” holds to this with no compromise. The American editors applauded what they perceived as a firm stand for the truth of the Gospel.³

August Pieper then had an interesting take on this, as he argued instead that there is such a thing as “negative Christianity;” this he defined as theological liberalism, which tears down the Bible and traditional doctrines. Pieper applauded how under Hitler the theological liberals or “negative” theologians are being reined in. While Pieper in this article never actually speaks of “positive Christianity,” his reference to liberalism which he opposes as “negative” seems to point to a tacit approval of “positive Christianity,” which would then be traditional, Biblical Lutheranism.⁴

A somewhat more common thought was that the Nazi adoption of “positive Christianity” was really a way of standing against the neo-paganism that was rampant in Germany. This meant that the neo-pagan proponents of a “German faith” were really removed from what the

² Matheson, 1.

³ Joh. Jeremias, “Positives Christentum,” *LiH* 12, no. 49 (September 6, 1934): 6; and J. T. Mueller, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Positives Christentum,” *CTM* 6 (January 1935): 70–71.

Nazi party stood for.⁵ However, it also brought forth some questions as to why the Nazis were allowing such rampant neo-paganism to remain, be it in the *Deutsche Christen* as seen at the *Sportpalast* gathering or in publications in Germany. Therefore, there were some questions as to why they said they stood for “positive Christianity,” yet their actions were not consistent with this.⁶

Questions about what “Positive Christianity” Actually Means.

However, as the 1930s progressed and there was an increasingly greater concern over the real nature of Nazism, there was an accompanying skepticism about the nature of “positive Christianity.” There seems to have been a growing awareness that it either meant nothing, or else was a means of professing a form of theological liberalism. This led to several warnings about supporting the idea of “positive Christianity.”

A few pointed out that the term is really vacuous and therefore is nothing more than something that can be contorted to mean whatever one wanted it to mean. It was seen therefore as something that sounded good, but really didn’t mean anything.⁷ The earliest concern raised, back in March of 1933, was that “positive Christianity” was really a guise that sounded good but was intended to be a means of bringing about a national church and unionism.⁸ The *Lutherischer*

⁴ Aug. Pieper, “Hitler und die Protestantische Kirche Deutschlands,” *TQ* 31 (January 1934): 45–52.

⁵ Arthur H. Kuhlman, “Church News: Noted Tuebingen Theologian Speaks on Church Situation,” *LStd* 93, no. 13 (March 30, 1935): 11; and “Positives Christentum in nationalsozialistischen Parteiprogramm,” *LiH* 13, no. 31 (May 2, 1935): 13.

⁶ Arthur von der Thur., “Von der deutschen Kirchenrevolution,” *LiH* 11, no. 46 (August 17, 1933): 5–6; “Eine Stimme aus den Kreisen der ,Deutschen Christen’,” *LiH* 12, no. 37 (June 14, 1934): 13–14; and “Religionsspørgsmaalet i Tyskland,” *DV* 54, no. 35 (August 29, 1934): 5.

⁷ Willkomm, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Die Stellung der Kirchen im nationalsozialistischen Staat,” *CTM* 9 (March 1938): 225–26.

⁸ “Was geht in Deutschland vor?,” *LiH* 11, no. 26 (March 30, 1933): 8.

Herold then argued in 1936 that it was intended by Hitler to say that he was not against the church, but was twisted by the *Deutsche Christen* to be a form of social Gospel.⁹

While there was some thought that the term was being twisted in this way, by the mid 1930s more of the writers came to the realization that it was actually intended from the start to really mean a form of social gospel. In this, it was argued that the real purpose of “positive Christianity” was to give an umbrella under which the various Christian churches could be used to mold the people to live ethically and support the nation. It was pointed out that even neo-pagan movements could and were being placed under this same umbrella to serve the nation.¹⁰ One author even pointed out that when one looks at “positive Christianity” in light of the 28 theses from the 1933 “brown synod of Saxony,” which were pushed by the *Deutsche Christen*, then one finds that it is at best a very loose form of Christianity, but really more a form of “*schwärmerisches*”¹¹

By far the strongest warning against “positive Christianity” was put forth by Elias Newman who was quoted in the *Lutheran Herald*. He pulls no punches when he says:

One must not be confused by what the Nazi calls “positive Christianity.” In the eyes of the orthodox Nazi the Christian Church stands only a little higher than the synagogue. Hitler set the tone in *Mein Kampf* with the claim that the churches “sin against the image of the Lord” by preaching the doctrine of the “brotherhood of man.” Alfred Rosenberg took up the theme in his *Myth of the Twentieth Century*: “We recognize that neither Protestantism nor Catholicism expressed the needs of the Nordic peoples; we must create a German Christianity.” A whole literature was devoted to the search for a “positive” Christianity free from weakness of brotherly love and other Semitic poisons. “There is no such thing as ‘universal’ Christianity,” discovered Prof. D. K. Dietrich Schmidt in *Die*

⁹ “Was ist Positives Christentum?,” *LiH* 14, no. 51 (September 17, 1936): 13.

¹⁰ “Easter, 1937, in Germany,” *AnL* 9, no. 19 (May 10, 1937): 4, 8; and M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 59 (December 1935): 745–61.

¹¹ Ösch, “Die ‘Theologie’ der Deutschen Christen, des Reichsbischofs und des Professors E. Hirsch,” *CTM* 6 (September 1935): 661–70. It must be remembered here that Luther and the reformers often denounced those that did not hold to the Bible as the only source of Biblical truth, pointing instead to their own feelings and ideas, as “*schwärmerei*.”

Bekenntnisse des Jahres, 1933; “Christendom in itself is an abstraction devoid of all reality; for the German there can only be a Christianity rooted in the people.” As a natural result of this kind of propaganda the conviction prevailed that the racial cult, the necessity of pure blood, could alone meet Nordic needs. Every public school was to be a religious school for Aryanism.¹²

Here we see in this analysis, found in 1938, that it was determined that “positive Christianity” was in fact not really Christianity at all. Rather, he expressed well the fear that in fact “positive Christianity” was really a means to control and change the very nature of the church in an attempt to bend it to the wills of the Nazi party.

***Völkisch* theology**

Probably one of the most core aspects of the Nazi ideology was that there was something unique and vital in the nature of the German people as a *Volk*.¹³ Karla Peowe adroitly defines concept of *völkisch* as a term that

[R]efers to the sense of being grasped by the reality of nation that arises out of the unity of space, blood, and spirit and that constrains all into one community (*Volksgemeinschaft*). Here nation is the concrete spiritual mediator between providence and individual. And note, this definition assumes the fusion of religion and politics, religion and nation, biology and spirit, as well as tragedy and heroism. These are all aspects that made German faith so compelling to those who regarded Christianity as part of the demise of Western civilization.¹⁴

Poewe further points out that this is not a Christian notion, but a neo-Pagan idea based on the *Volk*.

Völkisch is the adjective derived from Volk. It has to do with religious yearnings that emerge, as it were, from a people and is specific to them. Within the völkisch movement, academics were busy turning Icelandic sagas (like the Edda) into an alternative religion which was given respectability by linking it to German mysticism,

¹² “Persecution of Christians,” *LH 22* (November 29, 1938): 1200–01.

¹³ Since the term *Volk* for the Nazis meant more than just a people, but was wrapped up in their idea of a united race, blood and culture, I have chosen to keep the term *Volk* untranslated rather than lose some of the meaning by trying to bring it over into English.

¹⁴ Poewe, “The Völkisch Origins of National Socialism,” 2.

German idealism, and the (non-Christian) religious perspectives of German classical writers like Goethe, indeed, all heretics through the centuries.¹⁵

In the extreme form, *Völkisch* thought was found in a type of dualism that viewed the world as embattled in a struggle between good and evil, with the German *Volk* being the representatives of good and the Jewish *Volk* as being the representatives of evil forces in the world.¹⁶ This is not a Christian notion; rather it is a form of neo-paganism. However there were some Christian thinkers in Germany, such as Emmanuel Hirsch and Paul Althaus that attempted to moderate this by arguing that one of the orders of creation that God placed in the world was the *Volk* and that therefore the church in a given part of the world had a special responsibility to its *Volk*.

The Perceived Roots of *Völkisch* Theology.

While the overall discussions of the roots of *Völkisch* theology in the American Lutheran periodicals were not very prevalent, they tended to be well informed. This included several expositions that traced the roots of *Völkisch* theology back in German philosophical history. These investigations showed that *Völkisch* theology came from a neo-pagan background and therefore was troublesome to say the least.

The most in-depth study of the background of *Völkisch* theology was done by Michael Reu; here he traced the history of this emphasis on “Germanness” back to the founding of the unified German nation following the defeat of Napoleon. Then he showed how *Volk* based thought was then fostered through Richard Wagner, Paul de Lagarde, Friedrich Langbehn, Houston Stuart

¹⁵ Ibid., 3.

¹⁶ Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich*, 1:74–87; and Scholder, “Judaism and Christianity in the Ideology and Politics of National Socialism, 1919–1945.”

Chamberlain and Arthur Bonus. Therefore he saw this movement as emphasizing the unity of the German *Volk* and then moving into the realm of pagan thought and belief.¹⁷

Analysis of *Völkisch* Theology

There were more attempts by the Lutherans in America to grapple with the significance of *Völkisch* thought for theology than there were recognitions of its roots. As a result, some appear to be unaware of the neo-pagan roots of this thought and viewed it rather as a Christian concern for one's nation or people. This is unsurprising, since there were leading Christian, and in fact Lutheran, theologians who were defending a *Völkisch* aspect to theology.

Others understood the *Völkisch* movement to be inherently neo-pagan in its formation and basis. They saw this as most boldly shown in the neo-pagan movements of the day, but also moving into the Christian church as well. Therefore they saw this *Völkisch* thought as a neo-pagan idea that was being foisted on the church and were quick to point this out to their readers.

Understanding of the Purpose of Theological Consideration of the *Volk*. Some of the Americans who took a more sympathetic view of the *Völkisch* theology saw it as a way of explaining how the Church had a responsibility to the people to which they were called. There were in Germany several prominent theologians who supported the idea that the *Volk* was an important consideration for the church. In particular, Paul Althaus and Emmanuel Hirsch, both Lutheran theologians in Germany, argued that the *Volk* was a creation by God and therefore needed to be understood in the orders of creation. This is an extension of the traditional Lutheran teaching on the orders of creation.¹⁸

¹⁷ M. Reu, "Wer sind die "deutschen Christen?," *KZ* 57 (October 1933): 592–602.

¹⁸ For example, Robert Benne speaks of the orders as: "The state – legitimate government – is one of these special covenantal structures, along with the family, the economic sphere, and the church. All are ordained by God from the Creation to give order to human life. Benne, 83.

In particular, a fair bit of attention was paid to Althaus' work on the orders of creation. Althaus wrote quite a bit about this, and these writings were certainly not ignored on this side of the Atlantic. Much of Althaus' emphasis on this was applauded, especially how he emphasized the Lutheran understanding that the orders of creation, while God ordained, are nonetheless tainted by human sin.¹⁹ Some of the American writers echoed Althaus' teaching that since God placed us within these orders, one has a duty to live within and serve these orders. The church in a given area has a specific call to serve the *Volk* in which it has been placed.²⁰ Althaus however, was praised for insisting that while he felt bound to his *Volk*, he was first and foremost a Christian and would not give that up.²¹

Of course, Althaus was not alone in this thinking, and the Americans also reported on the others as well.²² Because of this, the *Völkisch* pattern of thought was probably given a little more respect, since it was seen as a movement of thought that was broader than just Althaus. One author even marveled that Emmanuel Hirsch and Friedrich Gogarten were working together on this, despite the fact that they had been so strongly opposed over dialectic theology.²³

This *Völkisch* thought was described as a supporting of the God-ordained orders of creation.²⁴ Therefore the Nazi calls to support the unity of the German *Volk* were sometimes seen sympathetically. A few even argued that the neo-paganism in Germany was actually hurtful

¹⁹ Reviews of *Theologie der Ordnungen* by Paul Althaus in *KZ* 59 (April 1935): 248–49; *KZ* 61 (March 1936): 180; and E. E. Fischer, *LCQ* 8 (January 1935): 96–97.

²⁰ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 59 (October 1935): 617–40; and "Grundsätze und Forderungen," *LiH* 11, no. 48 (August 31, 1933): 14.

²¹ Paul Althaus, "Germanische Religion, deutsche Art und Christusglaube," *LiH* 13, no. 15 (January 10, 1935): 4–5.

²² Christian Keyfzer, "Christentum, Volk und Mission," *KB* 76, no. 39 (September 30, 1933): 6–8.

²³ "Ueber die theologischen und kirchlichen Zeitschriften in Deutschland," *LiH* 12, no. 13 (December 28, 1933): 11.

²⁴ "The Situation in Germany," *Luth* 21, no. 35 (May 31, 1939): 4; "Bücherbesprechung: Deutsche Botschaft von Erde und Ewigkeit von Paul Müller," *LiH* 13, no. 24 (March 14, 1935): 15–16.

to the unity of the German *Volk*. This is because while each *Volk* had its own culture and religion, one must understand that historically the German religion is Christianity.²⁵ To buttress this, several pointed out that Luther was a great German hero, but was a hero for being a devout Christian.²⁶ This was forcefully stated by Dr. Hans Luther, the German Ambassador to the United States, in his 1935 address at the dedication of an addition to the Lutheran Church of the Reformation in Washington, D.C. where he said:

Luther, the religious realist, felt deeply devoted to his own people. In the language of our days we would call him a great patriot. Believing that each generation of man enters anew into the eternal conflict between Good and Evil, Light and Darkness, he was convinced that the mission of the Church is to strengthen those who struggle onward for human betterment in all the lands.²⁷

Concerns about *Völkisch* Theology. While there were those who were in favor of some of the insights from *Völkisch* theology, even more writers had serious concerns about it. For some it was seen as something that was inherently non-Christian. Others within the American churches saw *Völkisch* theology as divisive of Christianity and at best one that fractured the church and rejected the concept of *Una Sancta*. There was also the concern that the *Völkisch* thought was crowding out true Christianity and making it subservient to the *Volk*.

While there were some who applauded the extension of the orders of creation to include the *Volk*, others were rather skeptical about it. There were some rather strong denunciations of this theological move. In particular, this was seen as undermining the Gospel, since the advocates of understanding a *Völkisch* aspect to theology tended also to make the church subservient to the

²⁵ “Kirchliche Nachrichten: Neues vom deutschen Kirchenstreit,” *KB* 78, no. 20 (May 18, 1935): 11–12; and H. Göbel, “Wie sieht es in Deutschland aus?,” *LiH* 11, no. 27 (April 6, 1933): 4–6.

²⁶ “Die Strömung in Werden der Deutschen Reichskirche,” *LiH* 12, no. 2 (October 12, 1933): 13–14.

²⁷ This speech is quoted in: Hans Luther, “A Church at the Nation’s Heart,” *AnL* 8, no. 8 (February 25, 1935): 14–15; and Hans Luther, “A Church at the Nation’s Heart,” *LStd* 93, no. 9 (March 2, 1935): 8–9.

Volk.²⁸ The German theologian that some American authors highlighted for his criticism of *Völkisch* theology was Hermann Sasse. Sasse was praised not only for rejecting the notion that Lutheranism was somehow a Germanic religion rather than universal Christianity, but he was also praised for arguing that in the Bible the only *Volk* that mattered was the people (*Volk*) of God.²⁹ Sasse further argued that the idea of *Volk* would have been foreign to the reformers, since it came out of rationalism.³⁰ The Confessions give the “Natural orders as a) Natural law, b) marriage (family), c) economy,” and correct order of priority as “a) marriage (family), b) economy, c) politics.”³¹ Sasse further argues: “Within these orders, the *Volk* has no place.”³²

The heart of the objections was the concern that *Völkisch* theology placed the *Volk* over the church and in light of this the American writers and editors insisted that the Christian church must be first and foremost. Therefore there were several writers who stated that the Church must put the Gospel first and above all; therefore the very notion that the *Volk* is to take precedent must be flatly rejected.³³ Related to this, Werner Elert was praised for writing in his *Morphologie des Luthertums* that the Lutheran Church is not at all a Teutonic Church, rather it is a universal church for all people and all nations. To make this point, Elert was quoted at length:

It is impossible to derive the positive side of the evangelical beginning from the Teutonism of Luther. For “the gospel,” which constitutes its proper content, is

²⁸ Th. Engelder, “Kirche, Staat, Obrigkeit, Volk, Rasse, Familie – und Gottes Wort,” *CTM* 6 (December 1935): 881–88; M. Reu, “Wer sind die “deutschen Christen? Schluss,” *KZ* 57 (December 1933): 720–39; and “Christentum und Germanentum,” *KB* 78, no. 14 (April 6, 1935): 5–6.

²⁹ Review of *Here we Stand: The Nature and Character of the Lutheran Faith* by Hermann Sasse in J.T. Mueller, *CTM* 9 (August 1938): 634–37; Hermann Sasse, “Das Volk nach der Lehre der evangelischen Kirche,” *KZ* 58 (April 1934): 193–218; and Hermann Sasse, “Die lutherische Kirche der Welt in der Gegenwart,” *KB* 78, no. 41 (October 12, 1935): 5–6.

³⁰ Hermann Sasse, “Das Volk nach der Lehre der evangelischen Kirche,” *KZ* 58 (April 1934): 196.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 210.

³² *Ibid.*, 212.

³³ Aug. Pieper, “Die Proklamation unserer deutschländischen Brüder gegenüber den Hitlerischen Kirchenplänen,” *TQ* 30 (July 1933): 199–204; and Crome, “Wer die Jugend hat, hat die Zukunft – nein, umgekehrt: wer die Zukunft hat, hat die Jugend!,” *KB* 80, no. 10 (March 6, 1937): 10–12.

absolutely transcendent not only in relation to Teutonism, but also to all forms of mankind. This can be doubted only if one sees in the gospel an ethical codex and consequently finds differences in the kind and manner of its realization between men and between the different nationalities. But it is exactly “Lutheran” to avoid this misunderstanding, and to understand the gospel to be exclusively the message about Jesus or the liberating declaration of God. If faith is nothing more than the hearing of the message and the reception of the declaration of liberty, then it is not at all psychologically qualifiable in its essence. Therefore there can be nothing specifically German in the faith of Luther. From this it follows that Lutheranism cannot be derived from Teutonism without surrendering itself with its evangelical foundation³⁴

To this end, it was insisted that the church in no time or place could be equated with a given *Volk*. The Lutheran writers in America insisted that the Church is the body of Christ, and that it is universal for all peoples.³⁵ The *Augustana Quarterly* pointed this out by quoting Otto Piper’s book: *Recent Developments in German Protestantism*. “To what extent can Christianity attain a national form without losing its universality and absoluteness?”³⁶ While the term *Una Sancta* was not specifically used, the concept is upheld time and again that the idea of a responsibility to a *Volk* actually was breaking up the One Holy Church.

A number of writers expressed this concern in pointing out that the church cannot exclude members of certain races. This was behind the concern over the “Aryan Paragraph.”³⁷ It was then pointed out that Jesus appointed the Church to serve all nations. Several pointed out that in fact the “Aryan Paragraph” and similar measures were not only excluding Jews, but also many other nations from the church, and that this was wholly unacceptable.³⁸ They saw this as

³⁴ Review of *Morphologie des Luthertums. Zweiter Band: Die Soziallehren und Sozialwirkungen des Luthertums* by Werner Elert in Joh. Hempel, *LCQ* 6 (July 1933): 341–43.

³⁵ M. Willkomm, “Zur Kirchliche Lage in Deutschland (Fortsetzung),” *ELGB* 70 (January 27, 1935): 23–25; and reviews of ‘Zweite Reformation’ oder Vollendung der Reformation? *Biblische oder völkisch Kirche?* by Hans Hofer and *Die theologische Krisis der Gegenwart und ihr geistesgeschichtlicher Ursprung* by Wilhelm Lütger in Th. Engelder, *CTM* 8 (August 1937): 642–44.

³⁶ Review of *Recent Developments in German Protestantism* by Otto Piper in C. William Carlson, *AQ* 15 (January 1936): 83–84.

³⁷ See discussion of this below in Chapter 7, p. 197–99.

³⁸ D. Burt Smith, “Serving Other Races,” *Luth* 20, no. 36 (June 8, 1938): 20; “Erklärung zur Kirchenfrage,”

changing the very nature of the church. Here it was moving the church from a spiritual body built on Jesus' saving work into a political unit to serve a state.³⁹

***Völkisch* Theology Observed in Germany**

The perceptions of the emphasis on the *Volk* in Germany was varied, however there was a growing discomfort with it from the perspective of the Americans. The American editors saw the Aryan Paragraph as an explicit dividing of the church by race and an improper intrusion into the church. Some even saw these attempts as inherently pagan and therefore a real threat to true Christianity. There was the fear that the leadership of the *Reichskirche* and the *Deutsche Christen* were in fact leaving the true faith in order to make the church subservient to "Arianism."⁴⁰ Interestingly, the *Lutherischer Herold* went so far as to argue that Germany was becoming "too German" in its emphasis on the *Volk* and therefore losing its true Christian moorings.⁴¹

It is of little surprise that most of the discussion of *Völkisch* theology in the American Lutheran periodicals was centered in the events in Germany, since Germany was the genesis of this theological movement. For most of the American Lutheran writers, there was a great concern over how this thought was playing out in the German scene. Especially when they put it in its German context, there was a great concern that *Völkisch* thought was really a form of pagan thought. It appears that when it was left in the abstract, it was somewhat more palatable, but

LiH 17, no. 34 (June 1, 1939): 13; "With Lutherans in Other Lands: Germany," *LCmpn* 41 (July 1, 1933): 828–29.

³⁹ Jens Holdt, "Indrtryk fra Tysklands Kirke i Øjeblikket," *DV* 60, no. 13 (March 29, 1939): 5, 8; Augu. Pieper, "Die Proklamation unserer deutschländischen Brüder gegenüber den Hitlerischen Kirchenplänen," *TQ* 30 (July 1933): 199–204; and "Erklärung zur Kirchenfrage," *LiH* 17, no. 34 (June 1, 1939): 13.

⁴⁰ Ösch, "Die 'Theologie' der Deutschen Christen, des Reichsbischofs und des Professors E. Hirsch," *CTM* 6 (September 1935): 661–70; "Editorials and Comments: The Most Subtle Foes," *AnL* 9, no. 15 (April 12, 1937): 3; and "A Declaration by German Christian Church Leaders," *AnL* 11, no. 21 (May 22, 1939): 8.

⁴¹ "Wird Deutschland zu deutsch?," *LiH* 14, no. 51 (September 17, 1936): 13–14.

when seen how it played out in fact, then there was little doubt that this was really a form of neo-paganism and one that was sometimes working its way into the church.

***Völkisch* Theology as Neo-Pagan.** Some of the American Lutherans pointed to the concern over the *Volk* in Germany as an example of neo-pagan thought creeping into the culture and possibly even into the Church in Germany, and therefore they were significantly alarmed by this development. There was a concern that while there had been nationalistic movements in the past, the present movement in Germany had taken on a religious tone. Also, they noted to the American Lutheran readers that there was a split in how this religious attitude was taken. Some attempted to Christianize this German nationalism, while others in Germany were seen as taking it to its logical end and moving instead into a form of neo-paganism.⁴²

There were a couple of American writers that put their finger on the true nature of Nazi belief: seeing this as a non-Christian belief based on faith in the German *Volk*, not on Christ. They understood that Nazism was based on a very different ground of faith than Christianity. This was understood as a religion based on race and therefore anti-Christian in its very nature.⁴³ *The Lutheran Companion* put it very succinctly when they said, “Love of Race is Hitler’s Ideology.”⁴⁴ This *Völkisch* religion, it was pointed out, was inherently pagan, as it tied into to ancient German Mythology in order to try to bolster the belief in the German race.⁴⁵ They quoted the German theologian, Otto Dibelius in order to show the difference between Christianity and

⁴² Lokies, “Christentum und völkische Religiösität,” *KZ* 58 (November, 1934): 660–61; and M. Reu, “Wer sind die “deutschen Christen?,” *KZ* 57 (October, 1933): 592–602.

⁴³ Review of *Völkische Erwachen und Evangelium* by Heinrich Hauck in *LiH* 11, no. 29 (April 20, 1933): 14; “Als doch Lehrgrundlage und Glaubensbekenntnis,” *LiH* 15, no. 47 (August 19, 1937): 12; and Karl Koehler, “Speaking of the Coronation,” *FL* 10, no. 6 (June, 1937): 4–6.

⁴⁴ Review of *Mein Kampf* by Adolf Hitler in C. L. Esbjörn, *LCmpn* 46 (August 4, 1938): 967.

⁴⁵ “Was geht in Deutschland vor?,” *LiH* 11, no. 26 (March 30, 1933): 8–10. “No Room For Christ: An Apologue and its Implications,” *AnL* 9, no. 7 (February 17, 1936): 6–7; and Frederic Wenchel, “Nazi Germany and the Church I,” *LW* 56 (November 2, 1937): 366–67.

this neo-paganism: “Religions, which the people construct for themselves, be they mysterious or Völkisch or assorted cure-all religions; are weak fantasies. God's facts alone, and not the ideas of the people, are valid in the world of religion.”⁴⁶

Völkisch Theology Encroaching in the Church. The greatest of the concerns that the American Lutherans had was that this idea of the church's responsibility to its *Volk* was encroaching on how the church itself was viewed in Germany and thereby changing the essential nature of the Church from a body built on the work of Christ, to a body built on the racial makeup of its members. Probably the most thorough discussion of this was by Michael Reu. He noted that the *Deutsche Christen* were in fact melding Christianity with a form of pagan belief in the German *Volk*. Reu analyzed a speech given by Friedrich Peter to the *Deutsche Christen* pastors over Church and Volk, and notes that while Peter started with a proper ground in the faith; he then proceeded to make the church submissive to the *Volk*.⁴⁷

While Reu gave the fullest analysis of this problem, his views were in fact echoed by a number of other authors. American Lutheran writers from a number of different traditions all agreed that this emphasis on the German *Volk* in the church was actually a struggle for the very soul of the German churches.⁴⁸ This was stated in the *Ansgar Lutheran*: “It is not a struggle for the purification of the Church, but a conflict between Christianity and Paganism.”⁴⁹ Among the writers, there was something of a debate over just how far the *Deutsche Christen* had swerved

⁴⁶ “Wird es Deutschland zu einer evangelischen Reichskirche kommen?,” *LiH* 11, no. 32 (May 11, 1933):13.

⁴⁷ M. Reu, “Wer sind die “deutschen Christen? Schluss,” *KZ* 57 (December 1933): 720–39.

⁴⁸ Arthur H. Kuhlman, “Church News: Noted Tuebingen Theologian Speaks on Church Situation,” *LStd* 93, no. 13 (March 30, 1935): 11; C. A. Melby, “The State of the Lutheran Church in Germany,” *LH* 18 (July 17, 1934): 647–48; W. Bodamer, “Die kirchlichen Zustände in Deutschland,” *ELGB* 71 (October 4, 1936): 310–13; Th. Buehring, “Kirchliche Nachrichten: „Die Lehre des Antichrists“,” *KB* 78, no. 15 (April 13, 1935): 11–12; and review of *God Transcendent* by Karl Heim in A. D. Mattson, *AQ* 17 (April, 1938): 177–8.

⁴⁹ “No Room For Christ: An Apologue and its Implications,” *AnL* 9, no. 7 (February 17, 1936): 6.

into paganism. W. Hönecke in the *Evangelisch Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt* argued there were “elements within the faith movement of the ‘*Deutsche Christen*,’ that obviously [don’t] stand on the ground of the gospel but seek to change Christianity into a Germanic race-religion of Christian coloring.”⁵⁰ However, August Pieper went even further and said that the *Deutsche Christen* as a whole were nothing more than bare heathens.⁵¹

Not only did the periodicals argue that *Völkisch* theology represented an invasion of neo-paganism into the church, they also backed it up with examples. The *Kirchenblatt* did the primary work here; first it provided evidence for neo-paganism in the church when in 1932 they pointed to how Emanuel Hirsch had published a book of old German stories and legends, and applied to today them to his context.⁵² Another good example can be found in 1938 when the *Kirchenblatt* reprinted a liturgy out of Altenburg Thuringia that includes the congregation saying, “*heil us! Heil the Führer and our Volk!*”⁵³

Some writers were further concerned that in Germany the civil leaders were attempting to force the church to be subservient to its neo-pagan *Völkisch* thought. This came particularly later in the 1930s, especially from 1937 on. *The Lutheran* made abundantly clear to its readers that this was the agenda when it stated that “National Socialism, according to Kerrl, ‘is a religious movement which not only fully recognizes the bond to God and the Divine Order, but lives it.’ ... This state religion must stand above the confessions and independent of all dogmas.”⁵⁴ Reu then reprinted a memo from November 12, 1938 that showed the Nazi plans to make the church

⁵⁰ W. Hönecke, “Wie entwickelt sich die kirchliche Lage in Deutschland?,” *ELGB* 69 (January 28, 1934): 27–28.

⁵¹ August Pieper, “Die Verfassung der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche,” *TQ* 31 (July 1934): 168–83.

⁵² “Neue Erzählungen aus dem Verlag von F/ Berthlesmann – Emanuel Hirsch,” *KB* 75, no. 36 (September 3, 1932): 18.

⁵³ “Kirchliche Nachrichten: Neue Gottesdienstordnung (?),” *KB* 81, no. 32 (August 6, 1938): 15.

⁵⁴ “Church and State Relationship in Germany,” *Luth* 20, no. 18 (February 2, 1938): 2

subservient to the Nazi state and the belief in the German *Volk*.⁵⁵ This concern was also echoed by *Dannevirke* when they opined that if the *Landeskirchen* could become independent, free churches, then they would be free from this pressure from the government to serve the *Volk*.⁵⁶

The perceived move into a neo-pagan worship of the German *Volk* was seen as leading the German church away from the true faith. This was seen most demonstrably in how, with their pro-German *Volk* fervor, many in the *Deutsche Christen* attempted to remove all “Jewish” influences from the Christian church, including the Old Testament.⁵⁷ A number of the writers understood that this was more than just anti-Semitism; rather it was a foreign belief in the German *Volk* that was opposed to and was attacking the true Christian faith. From the *Sportpalast* rally of November 1933 on the American writers were worried that the *Deutsche Christen* were selling out the Bible for *Völkisch* fervor.⁵⁸ In 1938, Theo. Engelder lamented that in Germany the state church is no longer ruled by the Word of God, but by “the state, the Volk and race.”⁵⁹ Walter A. Maier also praised the book *God Among the Germans* by Paul F. Douglass for cutting through to the heart of the matter:

This is the most serious and comprehensive attempt to analyze some of the chaotic conditions in German church life that have appeared in our country. The author discusses particularly the racial mysticism that has come to the front during the last years, the peculiar emphasis on das Volk, the German Christians with their denunciation of the Old Testament, the position of the Christian Jew in the Third

⁵⁵ M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 62 (December 1938): 750–60.

⁵⁶ “Religionsfrihed i Tyskland?,” *DV* 58, no. 49 (December 8, 1937): 8.

⁵⁷ For a further discussion of how the Americans dealt with this, see Chapter 7, p. 190–91.

⁵⁸ “General News: Jesus, the Aryan,” *LH* 17 (December 26, 1933): 1201; August Pieper, “Die Verfassung der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche,” *TQ* 31 (July 1934): 168–83; and W. Hönecke, “Wie entwickelt sich die kirchliche Lage in Deutschland?,” *ELGB* 69 (January 28, 1934): 27–28.

⁵⁹ Theo. Engelder, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Das Gericht über die Kirche,” *CTM* 9 (April 1938): 304–07.

Reich, the youth organizations the struggle for the national church and the present German Evangelical Church.⁶⁰

Beyond just the concern over the place of the Bible, there was also a concern that the Lutheran *Landeskirchen* would lose their Lutheran identity to a *Völkisch* identity. The authors and editors worried that the Lutheran Confessions would be subjected to the *Volk* and therefore lose their authoritative position for the German Churches. This would mean a loss of Lutheranism, which was seen as a loss of true Christianity as well. Therefore there were concerns that the Lutherans in Germany must hold to their faith, or else it would be lost.⁶¹

Conclusions Regarding Theological Trends used by Nazi Supporters

For many of the American Lutheran writers, while there was some hope for the Nazi regime in the civil realm early on, the Nazi theology was troublesome. This was seen as being brought into the church via the theological guise of “positive Christianity” and *Völkisch* theology. Early on, there was a hope by some that these theological ideas were really Christian in nature, but by the mid to late 1930s virtually all of the writers in America saw these as importing neo-pagan thought into the churches. This meant that these were real theological problems for the churches. For many, it was clear that the religious aspects of Nazism were nothing but trouble, as Lawrence Price wrote in the *Journal of the American Lutheran Conference*:

Nazism is itself a crusade that has ingeniously woven religious motives and loyalties into its structure. It is a religion and its god is not the God of the Christian. ... The basic conception in the Doctrine of Man as taught in Nazi counsels is that man himself is divine, the idea of the state the proper object of veneration, and the one

⁶⁰ Review of *God Among the Germans* by Paul F. Douglass in Walter A. Maier, *WLM* 43 (July 1935): 685.

⁶¹ M. Willkomm, “Zur Kirchliche Lage in Deutschland (Schluss),” *ELGB* 70 (February 10, 1935): 39–40; M. Reu, “Wer sind die “deutschen Christen? Schluss,” *KZ* 57 (December 1933): 720–39; and Engelder, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Wie lange werden die gewissenhaften Christen Deutschlands in der Reichskirche verbleiben?,” *CTM* 6 (February 1935): 147–50.

man who consummates hopes and ideals, Der Fuehrer, is none less than God himself.⁶²

However, this posed an even greater threat when aspects of this neo-pagan thought were being smuggled into the church.

Once again, we see that the American Lutheran writers and editors were first and foremost concerned with the preservation of orthodox Christianity, and therefore of true Lutheranism. When, early in the 1930s, some thought that “positive Christianity” or *Völkisch* thought might be acceptable, they did so by placing them into orthodox Lutheran categories. However, by the later part of the decade, it became clear that these ideas were really opposed to orthodox Lutheran thought and they were therefore rejected.

It must be pointed out that often some of those who were most concerned about the overemphasis on the German *Volk* were writers who were very close to Germany in their own ethnic identity as well as being in close contact with German sources and sometimes writing in German. Men such as Michael Reu, Walter A. Maier, and August Pieper were often the most vocal about how this *Völkisch* thought was really a betrayal of true Lutheranism. As great as these men’s concern for Germany might have been, their foremost concern was still with proper Christian teaching.

These were theological concerns that were echoed across the theological and ethnic spectrum of American Lutheranism. Besides the strong German-American voices just mentioned the calls of concern were echoed by the Danish *Ansgar Lutheran* and *Dannevirke*, the Swedish *Augustana Quarterly* and the *Lutheran Companion*, the Norwegian *Lutheran Herald*, and the more Americanized *Lutheran Church Quarterly*. This widespread agreement shows the

⁶² Lawrence S. Price, “The State of the Church,” *JALC* 4, no. 8 (August 1939): 44.

broad-based concern of American Lutherans of all stripes in light of these threats to Lutheranism in Germany.

The struggle early on with how these men were to understand and relate to these Nazi theological ideas shows how difficult it was and often can be to immediately recognize problems with new ideas. Most of the authors started out attempting to put a positive spin on these ideas; however, as they thought more deeply about these ideas, then the inherent problems and ensuing repercussions were seen and denounced. Their early acceptance also highlights a natural willingness to attempt to think the best of those in Germany and an expectation that things were, at root, alright. This reflects a pattern of how the American Lutherans viewed various aspects of the rise of Nazi Germany, first with hope and expectation that this was for the best, but then a growing awareness that things really were problematic in many ways.

CHAPTER SEVE

THE “JEWISH QUESTIO ”

Due to the staggering brutality and evil of the Holocaust, the question of how churches perceived the Nazi treatment of the Jews is of great concern. This area has drawn more studies than any other; even those studies of American churches focus more on the question of the perceptions of the treatment of Jews by the Third Reich than on any other factor.¹ The American Lutheran editors were in fact concerned about the treatment of the Jews, and reported on it, however there was anything but unanimity in the opinions.

The “Jewish Problem” as the Nazis called it, was indeed a confusing problem for the Lutherans in America as well. This stems from the fact that the term “Jewish” can refer to either a racial or a religious designation. This means that it was sometimes not all that clear what one was referring to when one spoke of the “Jews.” Many of the American writers did in fact acknowledge this distinction; however it was also clouded by the fact that most of the “Jews” were both racially and religiously Jewish.

Stemming from this distinction, the perspectives of the American Lutherans can best be divided into two different types of reactions, one from how the Jews are to be viewed in the civil realm as those of the Jewish race, and the other being how they are to be viewed as adherents of the Jewish religion. Even here, there was no consensus, as American Lutheran reactions range

¹ These studies include: Ross; Nawyn; Webster, “German ‘Non-Aryan’ Clergymen and the Anguish of Exile after 1933;” and Barnes.

from blatant anti-Semitism to fervent condemnations of every sort of anti-Semitism. While all of the American Lutheran periodicals were agreed that Jews were in need of faith in Jesus Christ for their salvation, there was still some disagreement over just how extreme the spiritual and physical ramifications were for the Jews who were outside of the Christian faith.

Racial, Political, and Economic Anti-Semitism

There can be no doubt that the American Lutherans knew that they lived in a world that involved people of Jewish descent and therefore they dealt with questions of how one was to relate to them and what their effects were on society. In this regard there was a great variance in how the American Lutheran periodicals viewed the Jews in society and suggested how they should therefore be treated. These views ranged from extreme anti-Semitism, to giving some plausibility to the Jews being too powerful in society, to stern renunciations of all such thoughts.

It must be remembered that this was an era of great racial awareness and concern. In no way were the Lutherans the only ones in America, let alone the world, who were dealing with the racial issue. Anti-Semitism was at least partially connected to the eugenics movement in the United States which had been going on for some time.² The fact that the Lutherans were aware that anti-Semitism was a going concern at that time was shown in the numerous reviews of *Antisemitism Historically and Critically Examined* by Hugo Valentin.³

Like much of the American population at this time, the Lutherans were divided over how one should view those of Jewish descent.⁴ Some bought into the anti-Semitic thought that was

² For a full understanding of the American eugenics movement, see Edwin Black, *War against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York/London: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003).

³ Reviews of *Antisemitism Historically and Critically Examined* by Hugo Valentin in W. Arndt, *CTM* 8 (December 1937): 965; C. B. Larsen, *JALC* 2, no. 5 (May 1937): 74; Paul I. Morentz, *LCQ* 10 (October 1937): 445; and Oscar N. Olson, *AQ* 16 (July 1937): 283–85.

⁴ In this regard, the majority of American Lutherans tended to reflect the general American stereotyping of

percolating in the world, while others distanced themselves from those movements. Ultimately, the movement of the American Lutherans was away from anti-Semitic thought and towards a more loving stance.

Jews Depicted as the Source of Social and Political Problems

Some of the American Lutherans made statements that can be described as nothing short of anti-Semitic. There were two multi-part articles published entitled “Die Judenfrage,” which was the very term used in Nazi Germany, and these echoed the most virulent charges that the Nazis made against the Jews.⁵ These articles read like something that could have been published under Goebbels direction. However, there were others that were not as strident, yet bought into certain aspects of the anti-Semitic thinking.

The one “source” for many of the anti-Semitic concerns was the so called “Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion,” which was a document that was reported to be a secret plot by Jewish men to take over control of the world.⁶ During this era, there were those who believed that this was in fact a reliable and important source of insight into the goals of “international Judaism,” and it must be noted that this document was heavily relied upon by Nazi thinkers. Some of the American Lutheran writers also pointed to the “Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion” as proof that

Jews, however this was not nearly as monolithic as Kegel represents it: “[C]ommon among American Lutherans was a racial and religious stereotyping of Jewish people which was common to most Americans, not just those of German extraction or Lutheran belief.” Kegel, 38.

⁵ W. Reinecke’s two part article, “Die Judenfrage,” in *KZ* 57 (July, 1933): 412–17.; “Die Judenfrage: Schluss,” *KZ* 57 (August, 1933): 473–79 and R. Joh. Flierl’s three part article “Die Judenfrage,” *KB* 77 (January 13, 1934): 4–7; “Die Judenfrage (Fortsetzung),” *KB* 77, no. 3 (January 20, 1934): 6–9, 14; and “Die Judenfrage (Schluss),” *KB*, 77, no. 4 (January 27, 1934): 6–8.

⁶ The “Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion,” also translated as the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” and the “Protocols of the Sages of Zion” has been widely proven to be a total fraud. Major works on the history of anti-Semitism point to this fraud as probably the most powerful one in the 20th century, as shown for instance in Hugo Valentin, *Antisemitism: Historically and Critically Examined*, trans. A. G. Chater (New York: Viking Press, 1936): 165–83 and in the seminal work Léon Poliakov, *Suicidal Europe: 1870–1933*, vol. 4 of *The History of Anti-Semitism*, trans. George Klim (New York, Vanguard Press, 1985). There also have been some studies devoted purely to the history and debunking of the “Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion” such as Goran Larsson, *Fact or Fraud?*

a conspiracy of Jews was threatening the stability of the world.⁷ However, it had also become clear to a number of the American Lutherans that the “Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion” was in fact a forgery which had been put forward by anti-Semites who were trying to stir up anti-Jewish hatred.⁸ Elias Newman of the Zion Society for Israel worked the hardest at debunking the “Protocols” both in articles and a book.⁹

Jews Seen as Attempting to Control the World. While the number of American Lutheran writers who directly quoted the “Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion” was small, the basic attitude represented, namely that there was a group of “international Jews” who were working to control the world, was echoed to a slightly wider audience. Not too surprisingly, there were a couple of warnings about the power of “international Judaism” in the *Kirchenblatt* and *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, the same periodicals that had given the most play to the “Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion” and carried stories on “*Die Judenfrage*.”¹⁰

A few of the other publications also carried articles penned by Lars W. Boe where he referred to a plot by international Jews.¹¹ One even pointed to the books on International Jews

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion (San Diego: AMI-Jerusalem Center for Biblical Studies and Research, 1994).

⁷ W. Reinecke’s two part article, “Die Judenfrage,” in *KZ* 57 (July 1933): 412–17.; “Die Judenfrage: Schluss,” *KZ* 57 (August 1933): 473–79 and R. Joh. Flierl’s three part article “Die Judenfrage,” *KB*, 77, no. 2 (January 13, 1934): 4–7; “Die Judenfrage (Fortsetzung),” *KB*, 77, no. 3 (January 20, 1934): 6–9, 14; and “Die Judenfrage (Schluss),” *KB*, 77, no. 4 (January 27, 1934): 6–8; and; E. A. Dobberstein, “The World Plot of Communism,” *LStd* 93, no. 5 (February 2, 1935): 7–9.

⁸ J. S. Dallmann, “Why Single out the Jews?,” *LStd* 94, no. 10 (March 7, 1936): 8–9; reviews of *The Truth About the ‘Protocols of Zion’* by Herman Bernstein in Elias Newman, *LH* 19 (May 21, 1935): 497; and *AmL* 18, no. 12 (December 1935): 24.

⁹ Elias Newman, “The Fundamentalists’ Resuscitation of the Anti-Semitic Protocol Forgery,” *TF* 6 (October 1934): 212–30; and Adolf Pilger and Elias Newman, “Anti-Semitism,” *TF* 7 (January 1935): 28–41. He also attacked this in a book on the topic: *The Jewish Peril* by Elias Newman in N. M. Ylvisaker, *LH* 18 (July 3, 1934): 621.

¹⁰ M. Reu, “Wer sind die “deutschen Christen?,” *KZ* 57 (October 1933): 592–602; and Julius Bodensieck, “Editorielles: Das neue Deutschland und die Freimaurerei,” *KB* 76, no. 42 (October 21, 1933): 3–4.

¹¹ Lars W. Boe, “Impressions of Germany,” *AnL* 7, no. 53 (December 31, 1934): 4–7; and Lars W. Boe, “The Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Convention,” *LH* 18 (December 18, 1934): 1144–46, 9.

distributed by Henry Ford.¹² However, these articles appear to have been influenced by early German propaganda, since all of the articles were published in either 1933 or 1934. The only article published later that called for Protestants to fight World Judaism was the *Lutherischer Herold* in 1937.¹³

Jews Behind Communism A somewhat more common argument was that the Jews, or at least significant ones, were really behind the rise of communism and by extension its attacks on the Christian Church. This possibility was one of great concern due to the terrible persecution of the Church in the Soviet Union, as noted above in Chapter Five. This is not to say that there was uniform agreement that the Jews were behind communism; in fact there was something of a debate, often within a given periodical. One thing that drew attention to this, and in fact was sometimes cited as evidence, was that Karl Marx and some other leaders in Marxist thought were of Jewish descent.¹⁴ One writer, while speaking of the communist Party of Massachusetts, went so far as to include the parenthetical statement: “every other Jew seems to be a Communist and every other Communist a Jew!”¹⁵ There were a few who pointed more directly to Germany, noting that the leaders of the German communist movement were Jewish and this was blamed on the immigration into Germany of “Eastern Jews” which one author even went so far as to refer to as “Kikes.”¹⁶

¹² Alf. Bergin, “Hitler and the Jews,” *LCmpn* 41 (September 2, 1933): 1105.

¹³ Heinrich Frenzel, “Einigung des Protestantismus!,” *LiH* 15, no. 45 (August 5, 1937): 12–14.

¹⁴ Stinus S. Loft, “The Challenge to Christianize the Jews,” *AnL* 6, no. 22 (May 29, 1933): 6; “Bolschewistische Juden,” *LiH* 11, no. 37 (June 15, 1933): 15; Heinrich Frenzel, “Einigung des Protestantismus!,” *LiH* 15, no. 45 (August 5, 1937): 12–14; and Geo. O. Lillegard, “The Church and the World,” *LSntl* 21 (January 26, 1938): 63.

¹⁵ Geo. O. Lillegard, “The Church and the World,” *LSntl* 21 (March 12, 1938): 77.

¹⁶ “Hitler Burns Bolshevist Books,” *LH* 17 (June 20, 1933): 564–65. The same article was also reprinted in “Hitler Burns Bolshevist Books,” *PM* 11 (August 1933): 500–01.

Lest one get the opinion that this was the majority of American Lutheran opinion, for every article that pointed to the Jews as behind the communist menace, there was at least one that refuted this opinion. For instance, when the *Lutheran Standard* published a couple of articles in the winter of 1934 and 1935 on communism they attributed communism to “apostate Jews,” however, they were quickly called on the carpet by readers and then noted two issues later that communism came from a few apostate Jews, but that most Jews were opposed to it.¹⁷ A number of other periodicals pointed out that very few Jews were actually communists.¹⁸

Jews Seen as Overrepresented in Professional Circles. The least strident concern that a few American Lutherans bought into, at least for a while, was that the Jews as a whole were overrepresented in the professional circles in Germany and elsewhere and therefore exhibiting undue influence on society. These articles represented a fear that the Jews in Germany had succeeded in taking a disproportionate number of positions in law, medicine, academia, and banking and therefore were able to undermine the distinctly German culture.¹⁹ This attitude was most widely seen in the *Lutherischer Herold*.²⁰ Once again, it appears that these were simply echoes of the Nazi propaganda which were then left behind, since all of these articles were printed in either 1933 or 1934.

¹⁷ The first articles were E. A. Dobberstein, “Shadows of the Antichrist,” *LStd* 92, no. 52 (December 29, 1934): 6–7; and L. C. Masted, “The Signs of the Times,” *LStd* 93, no. 1 (January 5, 1935): 4–6; this was clarified, with a letter reprinted in E. A. Dobberstein, “We have Erred,” *LStd* 93, no. 3 (January 19, 1935): 4–5, 9.

¹⁸ “Das Judentum in der Sowjetunion,” *LiH* 11, no. 47 (August 24, 1933): 5; Daniel Nystrom, “The Spectator: A Review of Current News and Opinion,” *LCmpn* 46 (August 11, 1938): 999; and “What’s the News? Mr. Milton Solomon,” *LW* 57 (November 15, 1938): 382.

¹⁹ Nathan R. Melhorn, “That Which We Call Nationalism,” *Luth* 15, no. 40 (July 6, 1933): 3–4; and Eugen Kühnemann, “Das neue Deutschland,” *KB* 76, no. 49 (December 9, 1933): 4–5.

²⁰ “Deutschland, Hitler, die Juden und die Religionsfrage: Was eine Amerikanerin darüber denkt,” *LiH* 12, no. 41 (July 12, 1934): 4–5; S. E. Hiller, “Immer wieder die Judenfrage,” *LiH* 11, no. 38 (June 22, 1933): 2–3; “Ein Brief aus Deutschland,” *LiH* 11, no. 44 (August 3, 1933): 6; and Arthur von der Thur., “Die Rassenfrage in Deutschland,” *LiH* 12, no. 36 (June 7, 1934): 4–5.

The one profession that was the most widely suspected of being under Jewish control, not only in Germany but throughout the world, was journalism. There was often a fear that the news reports coming out of Germany were necessarily biased, because the Jews were controlling the press. As a result, especially early in the 1930s, reports of Nazi persecution of the Jews were often discounted because the source was seen as biased.²¹

Jews as Our Neighbors

In opposition to those who bought into the anti-Semitic thought and movements there was a vocal movement within the American Lutheran periodicals to denounce all of these forms of thinking and call upon all Christians to treat the Jews as our neighbors with full social acceptance and love. Many of the more anti-Semitic thoughts expressed, especially in the English-language periodicals were quickly responded to with pointed criticisms.²² Likewise, there were many articles that called for Christians to reject all forms of anti-Semitism.

A common theme that was echoed time after time was that Christians should show love towards the Jews as neighbors and therefore included in the Biblical command to “Love your neighbor as yourself.” The writers from a variety of Lutheran church bodies all agreed that Christians have a duty towards all, including the Jews, to treat them with respect and love. They then pointed out that this duty eliminates all possibility for racial hatred.²³

Rejections of Anti-Semitism. American Lutheran editors published a number of articles that directly addressed and attacked the anti-Semitism that was seen as rampant in the world at

²¹ This is discussed above in Chapter 1, in the section entitled: “The Struggle of Lutherans in America to Understand the Events in Germany” especially on p. 26.

²² For instance, when *The Lutheran Herald* published the idea that many of Germany’s problems were due to the immigration of “Kikes” from the East in “Hitler Burns Bolshevist Books,” *LH* 17 (June 20, 1933): 564–65, it was answered that this was anti-Semitic by Elias Newman, letter to the editor, *LH* 17 (August 15, 1933): 744.

²³ “Anti-Semitism,” *LH* 22 (November 29, 1938): 1199; J. A. Pfeiffer, “Church News: The Christian Frame of Mind toward the Jew,” *LStd* 95, no. 42 (October 9, 1937): 11–12; and Osborne Hauge, “Diplomat Condemns Nazi

that time. Of course, no editor or writer ever admitted to being an anti-Semite. Nevertheless, there were many more renunciations of anti-Semitism than there were examples of it. Some also pointed out that while much attention was being pointed towards Germany, anti-Semitism was also a problem to be combated in the US.²⁴ However, the main concern was that anti-Semitism was not a Christian attitude and that the Church must reject it.

There were a number of different statements that insisted that any form of racism is in contradiction with Christianity.²⁵ Not only did the writers insist that this was true, they also praised others who declared this. For instance, the *Lutheran Companion* praised the Scottish General Assembly for declaring that anti-Semitism is inherently anti Christ in its nature.²⁶ Also, the *Northwestern Lutheran*, as early as 1932, remarked that it is amazing that the Nazi party could be supporting the Christian church, since it preaches such racial hatred.²⁷ It was made clear that Christian teaching could in no way allow one to harbor hatred towards those of other races, including Jews. This is illustrated in the statement from the *Lutheran Standard*:

For those who submit to the mind of Christ there can be no compromise over anti-Semitism. ... The student of Scripture is not content to look upon the Jew as a financier, an industrialist, author, artist or musician. He rejects with indignant contempt the theory that Jews are enemies of society by whatever terms of opprobrium such enemies are designated.²⁸

Rule,” *LCmpn* 46 (March 17, 1938): 330–31.

²⁴ Hugo Eskildson, Jr., “Light – or Darkness? A Plea for the Jews,” *JALC* 4, no. 9 (September 1939): 70–75; J. E. N., “News and Notes,” *LY* 4, no. 4 (April 1939): 7–8; and Karl Koehler, “Pulitzer-Prized Propaganda,” *FL* 6, no. 6 (June 1933): 8, 11–13.

²⁵ ek., “Ako to dnes vyzerá v Nemecku v kresťanskom živote?,” *SV* 30 (August 1, 1936): 346–50; Oscar N. Olson, “Editorial Notes and Comments,” *AQ* 18 (July 1939): 284–86; and Walter A. Maier, “The Anti-Semitic Shame,” *WLM* 47 (February 1939): 358–59, 406.

²⁶ “As Others See It: A Scottish View of Anti-Semitism,” *LCmpn* 42 (October 13, 1934): 1314.

²⁷ J. Jenny, “Observations and Impressions of Church and Religious Life in European ‘Countries,’” *NwL* 19 (November 6, 1932): 361–64.

²⁸ P. W. Wilson, “Christian and Jew,” *LStd* 96, no. 36 (September 3, 1938): 7.

Probably the most interesting response to Nazi anti-Semitism was made by Paul I. Morentz. He argued that the race-based religion of Rosenberg is really a new form of Judaism; arguing that Rosenberg's preference for the German people echoed Judaism's preference for the Jewish people. In response to this, he advocated the universal nature of Christianity which offers salvation for all people.²⁹

Reactions to Nazi persecutions. This concern regarding how wrong anti-Semitic thoughts and actions are was echoed time and again regarding the treatment of the Jews. However, here it must also be kept in mind that many of the reports of Nazi actions against the Jews of Germany, particularly in the first several years of Hitler's rule, were discounted as forms of anti-German propaganda.³⁰

As time went on, however, it became more and more clear to the Americans that the persecution of the Jews was a real problem in Germany.³¹ With this, a few attempted to downplay the importance of these events. There were some who attempted to argue that the anti-Semitic outbursts were not sanctioned by the Nazis, but that some used the Nazi rhetoric as an excuse to lash out at the Jews.³² Others gave some credence to the idea that the early Nazi moves against the Jews were somewhat justified, yet still saying that the Nazis went too far.³³

These views were certainly influenced by their sources of information. It was reported that missionary Dr. Conrad Hoffman, Jr. spoke to the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg,

²⁹ Paul I. Morentz, "A Nationalistic Religion versus Christian Universality," *LCQ* 9 (July 1936): 309–14.

³⁰ This has been discussed above in Chapter 1, pages 21–29.

³¹ While this study does not intend to trace how the American Lutheran writers responded to the various Nazi persecutions of the Jews over time. For a good study of this, within the context of American Christianity, see Ross.

³² H. Dierks, "The New Germany II," *LW* 55 (October 20, 1936): 346–47; Walter A. Maier, "Turret of the Times," *WLM* 43 (October 1934): 106–07; and "Across the Desk: Jewish Persecutions," *Luth* 15, no. 27 (April 6, 1933): 17.

³³ "Auch ein Weihnachtappell," *LiH* 14, no. 12 (December 19, 1935): 8–10; and August Pieper, "Die Zustände

PA in 1935 on mission work to the Jews. It was reported that “His analysis of the anti-Semitism of the German government was sympathetic but judicial.”³⁴ Also, some pointed out that while the Jews were facing problems in Germany, it paled in comparison to the mass murder of Christians and outright attempts to eradicate Christianity in the Soviet Union.³⁵

However, most of the writers saw the Nazi persecution of the Jews as a real problem that required a response from the churches. Some put forth denunciations from the very start. It was reported that the National Lutheran Council even spoke out against Nazi anti-Semitism prior to Hitler being named chancellor.³⁶ By far the most vocal about the persecution of the Jews was *Dannevirke*. With its more straight news focus, and its Danish perspective, *Dannevirke* was very vigilant regarding all of the Nazi’s moves, including many aspects of persecution that either the other publications did not notice or felt was outside their purview.³⁷

However, throughout most of the 1930s virtually every American Lutheran denomination or group spoke out against various Nazi persecutions of the Jews. Samuel McCrea Cavert, General Secretary of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, was quoted in the *Ansgar Lutheran* as saying: “The treatment of the Jews in Germany is undeniably a scandal.”³⁸ In regards to his treatment of the Jews, the readers of *The Lutheran Witness* were told “The American Lutheran Church is by no means friendly towards Hitler in his suppression of

in der protestantischen Kirche Deutschlands,” *TQ* 31 (October 1934): 270–78.

³⁴ “Dr. Conrad Hoffman, Jr.,” *GSB* 15, no. 4 (November 1935): 10–12.

³⁵ Theo. Buehring, “Kirchliche Nachrichten – Aus anderen Kreisen: Zur Greuelpropaganda,” *KB* 76, no. 17 (April 29, 1933): 11; A. Von der Thur., “Die Kirche Deutschlands und die nationale Erhebung,” *KB* 76, no. 23 (June 10, 1933): 4–6; Walter A. Maier, “The Church Will Never Recognize Atheism,” *WLM* 42 (December 1933): 239.

³⁶ “National Lutheran Council Meets in New York,” *LH* 16 (February 9, 1932): 163–66.

³⁷ *Dannevirke* at times had numerous articles per issue on the mistreatment of the Jews and addressed such topics as: how Hitler reduced the Jews to second-class citizens “Andre Lande: Hitler reducerer Jøderne til anden Klasses Borgere,” *DV* 54, no. 15 (April 12, 1933): 8; how Jews’ travels within Germany were being restricted “De tyske Jødeforfølger,” *DV* 55, no. 33 (August 14, 1935): 1; and how Jewish names were being removed from lists of WWI heroes “Ingen Jøder paa Æreslisten,” *DV* 55, no. 44 (October 30, 1935): 1.

civil liberty.”³⁹ Then, the *Anchluss* of Austria brought forth additional concern for the wellbeing of the Austrian Jews.⁴⁰

While some have charged that the American Lutherans, along with other Protestants, kept silence regarding the outbreak of anti-Semitic persecutions in the Third Reich, this is simply not true. However, like Robert W. Ross points out, the response on a whole was inadequate, probably largely because of an inability to grasp the totality of the problem. As Ross says of the whole time period of Nazi Germany, through 1945:

The accepted view has been that the press had said little or nothing. Clearly this was not true. It must be said, then, that American Protestant Christians did know, for, if the people read, the people knew. But the editors and writers of the American Protestant press tried to deal with the mass extermination of the Jews of Germany and Europe as if it were a part of an ordered, stable, normal world. In fact, it happened in a world gone mad. In the end, editors and writers seemed unable to cope with something as unreal, even unimaginable, as the mass slaughter of millions of people, among them 6 million Jews, in an organized, bureaucratic, planned extermination.⁴¹

If this is true, how much more unimaginable could the exterminations have been in the 1930s prior to their start? While the American Lutheran periodicals reported on the events, and expressed outrage, it is clear that none of them imagined that things would or could become as terrible as they did.

Religious Reactions to the Jews of the Day.

The unique challenge that the Jews gave to the Lutherans, as well as other Christians, is that this is both a racial and a religious designation. Therefore one could not deal with Jewish people on a purely civil level, without taking into account the religious ramifications of Jews

³⁸ Samuel McCrea Cavert, “Behind the Scenes in Germany,” *AnL* 6, no. 25 (June 19, 1933): 5–7.

³⁹ Theodore Graebner, “Pelley’s Silver Shirts,” *LW* 53 (January 2, 1934): 3–4.

⁴⁰ Conrad Hoffmann, Jr., “Anti-Semitism Challenges America,” *JALC* 3, no. 6 (June 1938): 62–65; Julius F. Seebach, “In the World’s Eye,” *Luth* 20, no. 28 (April 13, 1938): 7; and Arthur von der Thur., “Kirchliche Nachrichten: Das neue Oesterreich,” *KB* 81, no. 17 (April 23, 1938): 11–12.

who were outside of the Christian faith, not to mention the place of people who are of Jewish descent, but Christian within the faith. However, even here there was a divergence of thought in the American Lutheran circles. This came from the fact that some bought into the notion that the Jews were a specifically cursed people, while others completely rejected this concept.

Religious Anti-Semitism

Throughout the middle ages and beyond a series of legends and beliefs arose surrounding the nature of the Jews as a people that was expressly cursed by God. Much of this stems from the account of Jesus' trial before Pontius Pilate and particularly the declaration of the people: "Let his blood be on us and on our children!" (Matthew 27:25 NIV). Because of this, various justifications arose to explain why the Jews were treated as a lower class or social outcasts; many of these justifications grew in prominence in the 19th Century.⁴² Curiously in the American Lutheran periodicals of the 1930s, there were more references to the idea that the Jews were responsible for Jesus' death that came from quotes of Jewish Rabbis than there were Lutheran writers who held this view.⁴³ And the Lutherans who reported on the Rabbis did not accept the idea that the Jews were somehow solely responsible for the crucifixion.⁴⁴

However, a somewhat softened version was found in a few other periodicals. There was in some a sentiment that the while the Jews had been God's chosen people in the Old Testament,

⁴¹ Ross, 300–01.

⁴² See Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany* trans. Noah Jonathon Jacobs (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975); and George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1987).

⁴³ The only example of a Lutheran stating this theory was R. Joh. Flierl, "Die Judenfrage," *KB* 77, no. 2 (January 13, 1934): 4–7.

⁴⁴ Martin S. Sommer, "A Jew Defends the Jews," *LW* 54 (April 23, 1935): 149 and "The Jews and the Cross," *LW* 56 (March 9, 1937): 84.

since they had rejected the promised Messiah, now they were rejected by God.⁴⁵ A few pointed instead to various Scriptural passages and argued that the Jews, having rejected God's covenant, were now bringing upon themselves the wrath of God.⁴⁶ A couple of sources pointed to the fact that ever since 70 AD the Jews have not had a homeland as evidence that the Jews had been rejected by God.⁴⁷

Easily the most open and vitriolic version of this idea was found in *Faith-Life*:

The world has always, ever since Abraham pulled stakes in the Ur of the Chaldees, had a Semitic problem, and what is more: it never will solve this Semitic problem. This is not a pessimistic prophecy, but it is the inevitable judgment of God upon the world in consequence of its rejection of the One Jew, whom God hath sent to be the Savior of the world. Mark you, anti-Semite and pro-Semite as well, 'salvation is of the Jews' (John 4:22), and damnation too. This Semitic question is packed with dynamite. So much so, that from the Jew — this haughty, yet despised, hounded, hated, money-worshipping Jew — you may get for yourself eternal salvation, or eternal damnation. It all depends whether the Jews are set for your fall or for your rising again by the attitude which you take toward the One Jew, whom the Jews and the Gentiles, for once united, nailed to the Cross nineteen hundred years ago. What do I mean? What has the present Semitic people, branded the world over as money-changers, war-mongers, and communistic corrupters, to do with Christ, born indeed of them nineteen centuries ago, but disowned and rejected by them these nineteen hundred years? Let's see!⁴⁸

There were also a few references to medieval anti-Semitic myths that appeared to have been still percolating. One reader wrote into the *Kirchenblatt* to ask if there was any truth to the rumor that Jews in Palestine were committing ritual murders; the editor flatly rejected this

⁴⁵ "Editorials and Comments: Why the Jews are Persecuted," *AnL* 9, no. 17 (Apr. 26, 1937): 3, 8; "Observing the Times: Is it Nothing to us?," *LStd* 96, no. 49 (December 3, 1938): 4–5; and August Zich, "The Sorrows of the Jew," *NwL* 23 (June 7, 1936): 183.

⁴⁶ August Zich, "The Jewish Rabbis of America," *NwL* 20 (July 16, 1933): 229–30; and "Why the Jews are Persecuted," *LH* 21 (March 16, 1937): 251.

⁴⁷ "Judenverfolgungen," *ELGB* 73 (December 11, 1938): 389–90; and Martin S. Sommer, "The Jews," *LW* 57 (March 8, 1938): 71–72.

⁴⁸ M. A. Zimmermann, "The Semitic Question," *FL* 12, no. 2 (February 1939): 3–6.

notion.⁴⁹ The slightly more prevalent myth was that of the wandering Jew.⁵⁰ This myth, in the fullest version, holds that a Jewish man shoved Jesus while he was carrying the cross and Jesus condemned him to walk the earth until His return. While none of the writers or editors gave credence to the myth, they did cite it as an example of how the Jews are a wandering, homeless people because they rejected Christ.⁵¹

The Nazi Quest for a Non-Jewish Christianity. A trend that occurred only in Germany, yet also garnered the attention of the American Lutheran press, can be found in the attempts to remove all “Jewish” aspects from German Christianity. As a whole, these were seen in America as ludicrous because of the central role that the Old Testament plays in Christianity and the traditional Lutheran understanding that the New Testament Church is the heir to Old Testament Israel through the saving work of Christ.⁵² As a result, they raised a large hue and cry over the attempts by the Nazis to remove the “Jewish” parts of Christianity.

First and foremost there were the attempts to remove the Old Testament from the German nation. The attempts by the Nazis to remove the teaching of the Old Testament and of Hebrew from the schools received scorn from many American writers.⁵³ Many were upset that this was

⁴⁹ Th. Buehring, “Kirchliche Nachrichten: Ritualmorde,” *KB* 78, no. 17 (April 27, 1935): 8.

⁵⁰ For an explanation of these medieval myths see Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution*: chapter 8 “The Jews: Myth and Counter Myth”: 113–27.

⁵¹ Aug. F. Zich, “The Wandering Jew (Der Ewige Jude),” *TQ* 36 (January 1939): 14–23; “Across the Desk: Once Every Hundred Years,” *Luth* 21, no. 16 (January 18, 1939): 17; and review of *Antwort auf den Mythos* by Walter Künneht in Karl J. Arndt, *LCQ* 10 (April 1937): 209–12.

⁵² “As Others See It: What Do Christians Owe to the Jews,” *LCmpn* 46 (December 1, 1938): 1506; Elias Newman, “The Jewish Passover and the Christian Lord’s Supper,” *TF* 6 (January 1934): 2–17; and I. Blakkan, “Persecution of the Jews,” *LSntl* 22 (August 12, 1939): 228.

⁵³ M., “Der hebräische Unterricht am Gymnasium,” *TQ* 34 (April 1937): 138–39; “Das Alte Testament im deutschen Volksschulunterricht,” *LiH* 17, no. 35 (June 8, 1939): 13–4; and M., “Das Alte Testament in der Schule,” *TQ* 34 (April 1937): 139–40.

an attempt to replace this part of the Bible with German sagas, legends and the like.⁵⁴ A common objection to this was that the Old Testament is not a Jewish work; rather it is God's Word.⁵⁵

Related to this were the attempts in Germany to expunge all Hebrew words from the church. There were clear demands by the Americans that these should be left in the liturgy and hymns, and that one must follow God rather than men.⁵⁶ Following this were the decrees that the German Churches should not be named after Jewish prophets. This even included an effort to purge the name "Jehovah" from the German Churches. Unsurprisingly, the American Lutheran writers were appalled at this move. However, many saw this as more silly and futile than anything else.⁵⁷

Incredible as it might seem, there was a movement in Germany by several leading theologians, including Emmanuel Hirsch, to say that Jesus was not really a Jew, but an Aryan. This was seen by the Americans as completely absurd, yet some felt it must be reported and responded to.⁵⁸ However this view was not unheard of in America since the *Lutheran Herald* reported that there was a pastor of the United Lutheran Church, in Iowa, who was removed from office for claiming that Jesus was an Aryan and not a Jew.⁵⁹

Luther on the Jews. It is of little surprise that considering their emphasis on German heritage and their anti-Semitism, some Nazi supports brought forth Luther's work *On the Jews*

⁵⁴ "Dangers Threatening the Lutheran Church in Germany," *LH* 17 (April 18, 1933): 349; and "Nazi Leaders Break Their Agreement With the Church," *LH* 18 (March 13, 1934): 244.

⁵⁵ Arthur Von der Thur., "Die Kirche Deutschlands und die nationale Erhebung," *KB* 76, no. 23 (June 10, 1933): 4–6; G. Schmidt, "Das umkämpfte Alte Testament," *LiH* 17, no. 22 (March 9, 1939): 3–4; and "Der Kampf in Deutschland gegen das Alte und Neue Testament," *ELGB* 70 (November 3, 1935): 347.

⁵⁶ "Verdeutschung hebräischer Ausdrücke im liturgischen Gebrauch," *LiH* 12, no. 3 (October 19, 1933): 9–10; and "Angriff der Deutschen Christen gegen das Kirchenlied," *LiH* 13, no. 2 (October 11, 1934): 13.

⁵⁷ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 62 (December, 1938): 750–60; Julius F. Seebach, "In the World's Eye," *Luth* 21, no. 11 (December 14, 1938): 6

⁵⁸ "General News: Jesus, the Aryan," *LH* 17 (December 26, 1933): 1201; "Ein bemerkenswerter Briefwechsel," *LiH* 13, no. 6 (November 8, 1934): 12–14; and "Random Thoughts," *PM* 12 (October, 1934): 578.

and their Lies and pointed to him as a hero of anti-Semitic thinking. As a result, a number of American writers felt the need to speak up in Luther's defense. Several writers pointed out that Luther wrote this work out of frustration because the Jews were refusing to accept Christ, and that Luther was right, because many Jews to this day refuse to accept Him.⁶⁰

Elias Newman took direct issue with the blatantly anti-Semitic pamphlet "Martin Luther on the Jews: Out with Them!" by Bishop Martin Sasse of Eisenach which was being circulated in Germany. Newman, a Christian Jew, was able to stand up and argue from a stronger perspective than the Gentiles that Luther was distinguishing between the Jewish race and the Jewish religion. "Luther was no anti-Semite. His violent language was always directed against the Jewish religion, which he considered false, and never against the Jewish race."⁶¹

Missions to the Jews

The one thing that was agreed upon by American Lutherans of all stripes was that the only real hope that the Jews had, was the same as the only real hope that Gentiles had, and that is salvation through Jesus. Because the salvation of the Jews outside of Christianity was a real concern for the Lutherans in America, there were a number of calls for mission work with the Jews. This came both as calls for individual witnessing to the Jewish neighbor and calls for organized mission work to take place. For the most part, there was a resounding theme that true love for the Jews means a desire to bring them to eternal life in Christ; in fact the calls for missions to the Jews far outnumbered the various type of religious anti-Semitism that were displayed.

⁵⁹ "Depose Lutheran Minister for Nazi Theology," *LH* 22 (July 12, 1938): 695.

⁶⁰ "Luther und die Judenfrage," *LiH* 17, no. 42 (July 27, 1939): 12; C. B. Gohden, "Question Box," *LStd* 91, no. 47 (November 25, 1933): 4; and Julius Bodensieck, "Editorielles: Martin Luther und die Juden," *KB* 82, no. 32 (August 12, 1939): 4-6.

⁶¹ Elias Newman, "Martin Luther and the Jews," *LH* 23 (May 23, 1939): 489.

There was a concern that the Jews were spiritually dead, because they did not know Christ. Some pointed out that even the Jewish synagogues were really spiritually dead, because as J. S. Dallmann said, “the rabbi himself does not believe what he preaches.”⁶² Elias Newman, in a thoughtful analysis of the situation of the Jews observed that after the World War, they broke out of the ghettos and into competition with the rest of the world, but they did so with such fervor that it aroused envy and therefore anti-Semitism. In leaving these ghettos, they also broke out of their ancient religious ways and into materialism.⁶³ This perceived spiritual weakness was seen by a number of writers as opening up a window of opportunity for Christians to share the Gospel with the Jews.⁶⁴ However, there were also voices of caution that the movement of Zionism and its attempts to recreate a Jewish homeland was distracting from the religious issue and hurtful to evangelism towards the Jews.⁶⁵

The writers and editors also made numerous calls for Christians to reach out offering the Christian faith to the Jews. These included specific calls for prayers on behalf of evangelistic efforts aimed at Jews,⁶⁶ as well as renewed efforts to share the Gospel with them. A number of articles argued that the only true way for a Christian to show love to the Jews, and other non-Christians as well, is to not only be kind to them, but to share the saving message of Christ with

⁶² J. S. Dallmann, “The Jew and the Synagogue,” *LH* 16 (November 22, 1932): 1322.

⁶³ Elias Newman, “There is Death in the Pot (2 Kings 4:38–42) The Spiritual Condition of the Jews,” *LH* 21 (March 16, 1937): 257.

⁶⁴ “Evangelism Among the Jews,” *PM* 10 (November 1932): 687; Binger Pernow, “Die religiöse Krisis in der Judenwelt,” *KB* 78, no. 29 (July 20, 1935): 6–7; and review of *The Jew and the World Ferment* by Basil Mathews in Edw. W. Schramm, *LStd* 93, no. 9 (March 2, 1935): 21.

⁶⁵ J. T. Mueller, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Ist der Zionismus Anfang der Bekehrung Israels?,” *CTM* 4 (January 1933): 69; and Elias Newman, “There is Death in the Pot (2 Kings 4:38–42) The Spiritual Condition of the Jews,” *LH* 21 (March 16, 1937): 257–59.

⁶⁶ P. J. H., “A Prayer for Jewish Missions,” *PM* 11 (December 1933): 745; Martin S. Sommer, “The True Friends of the Jews,” *LW* 57 (March 8, 1938): 72; and G. C. Gast, “Church News: Appoint Day of Prayer for Jewish People,” *LStd* 97, no. 45 (November 11, 1939): 8.

them.⁶⁷ It is interesting to note that this was also a common theme in the periodicals and sections of periodicals that were expressly aimed at the youth of the Lutheran churches.⁶⁸ Walter A. Maier summed up the thoughts of many articles when he said: “Instead of hating the Jews, let us show our love for this persecuted people by increasing our missionary forces to Israel and intensifying our zeal in behalf of their souls’ blessing. Those who work for the salvation of Israel can never be Jew-baiters.”⁶⁹ A couple of writers even argued that the conversion of the Jews was one of the greatest things that the church can do to receive God’s blessings.⁷⁰ Because of this emphasis on the importance of converting Jews to Christianity, several of the writers took umbrage with the series of speaking engagements that were taking place in America where Jewish, Protestant and Catholic leaders were speaking together to show good will, but not addressing the religious differences. These were seen as countering the Christian teaching of the need for faith in Christ to receive salvation.⁷¹

However, while all the writers and editors agreed that mission work with the Jews was a necessary thing, there was a disagreement over whether or not it was a very fruitful mission field. It appears that for many American Lutherans there was a perception that the Jews were

⁶⁷ Isadore Schwartz, “A Plea for the Jews,” *LW* 56 (December 14, 1937): 425; “National Lutheran Council Meets in New York,” *LH* 16 (February 9, 1932): 163–66; “The Church and the Jews,” *JALC* 1, no. 9 (September 1936): 58–9.

⁶⁸ A. W. Walck, “Luther League Life: Our Debt to the Jew,” *LStd* 97, no. 31 (August 5, 1939): 15; Amos John Traver, “The Young People: Present Position of the Jews and Christian Attitude Toward Them,” *Luth* 21, no. 44 (August 2, 1939): 19; and Isadore Schwartz, “Our Readers Say ... Do Good Unto the Jew,” *WLM* 46 (January 1938): 276.

⁶⁹ Walter A. Maier, “The Anti-Semitic Shame,” *WLM* 47 (February 1939): 406.

⁷⁰ Elias Newman, “The Enrichment of the Church and the Results of Jewish Missions,” *AnL* 8, no. 17 (April 29, 1935): 5–6; and R. R., ““To the Jews First’,” *SV* 33 (April 15, 1939): 188–89.

⁷¹ “What Jews Write About Jesus,” *LCmpn* 40 (April 9, 1932): 453; “Church News: Jewish-Christian Roundtables,” *LStd* 96, no. 10 (March 5, 1938): 19; and “The Scandal of Christian Sects,” *LH* 23 (February 21, 1939): 171–72.

especially resistant to evangelistic efforts.⁷² The Jewish, Missouri Synod pastor, Isadore Schwartz pointed out that these struggles involved a deep mistrust that many Jews and Christians had for each other:

Christian mission work among the Jews is the hardest and most difficult field in our Church, chiefly because of the prejudices which the Jews have against all Christians. ... Our work is also made difficult because of the oppression and persecutions of the Jewish people by Christians.⁷³

In response to this opinion, a number of periodicals worked to disprove this by pointing to the many successes that missions with the Jews have had. These included some very heartwarming stories of individual Jews who were led to faith in Christ through the witness of a Christian, and being turned to the Bible.⁷⁴ Other articles pointed instead to numbers of Jews who became Christians, pointing out that in the 19th Century 72,000 Jews converted to Christianity.⁷⁵ Some articles were even written with the express purpose of proving to the readers that the Jews are a very profitable mission field.⁷⁶

Because these efforts were seen as important, the writers also heralded the work of the specific ministries that were dedicated to sharing the Gospel with Jews in America. By far the most celebrated mission to the Jews was the Zion Society for Israel, which had many of its events and needs published in *The Ansgar Lutheran*, *Lutheran Standard*, *Lutheran Herald*, *The Lutheran* and *The Lutheran Companion*. Besides articles about the Zion Society for Israel,

⁷² "Die Zerstörung Jerusalems und die Judenmission," *LiH* 17, no. 44 (August 10, 1939): 8–10; by Julius Bodensieck, "Editorielles: Judenmission?," *KB* 82, no. 32 (August 12, 1939): 4; and Irving Gugler, "From Everywhere: The Jews in America," *AnL* 10, no. 48 (November 28, 1938): 7.

⁷³ Isadore Schwartz, "Obstacles in our Jewish Mission," *WLM* 42 (February 1934): 344.

⁷⁴ "The Jewish Surgeon," *LStnl* 16 (August 30, 1933): 158; W. J. Atkinson, "Jewish Refugee Finds Refuge in Christ," *LH* 23 (May 9, 1939): 450; and "The Jew," *AnL* 5, no. 42 (October 17, 1932): 12.

⁷⁵ G. C. Gast, "Church News: Jews a Promising Mission Field," *LStd* 97, no. 3 (January 21, 1939): 11; and "What's the News? Seventy-two thousand Jews joined Protestant churches," *LW* 58 (March 21, 1939): 90.

⁷⁶ Arndt, "Miscellanea: Victories of Christian Missions among the Jews," *CTM* 8 (April 1937): 294–96; Nathaniel Freidmann, "To the Jews First," *WLM* 41 (April 1933): 466–67; and "Church News: Prominent Converts

articles by J. S. Dallmann and Elias Newman of the Zion Society for Israel were plentiful as well. The Missouri Synod also touted its two Jewish missions in Chicago and New York.⁷⁷ The editors also sought to advertise the printing of special editions of the New Testament that highlighted how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament, which were specifically designed for outreach to the Jewish people.⁷⁸

While most of these debates and efforts were launched here in the United States, it is important to note that for many of the writers, the events in Germany were important in highlighting the need for evangelism to the Jews. Many pointed out that the Nazi persecution of the Jews had worked to remind the world of the need to reach out to the Jews in Christian love. As a result, the Nazi persecutions had the unintended affect of at least encouraging the American Lutherans to think more about evangelism to the Jews, whether or not the readers actually acted on those thoughts.⁷⁹

The Place for Jewish Converts to Christianity

The American Lutherans also gave some attention to the place that Jews should have in the Christian Church. Since “Jewish” is both a racial and a religious designation, the writers and editors showed some concern for those who were Jewish by descent, yet Christian by belief. They came to understand that this was a difficult position for these Jewish Christians, because in

from Judaism,” *LStd* 97, no. 17 (April 29, 1939): 11.

⁷⁷ Isadore Schwartz, “A Plea for the Jews,” *LW* 56 (December 14, 1937): 425; and Isadore Schwartz, “Our Readers Say ... St. Louis, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Attention!,” *WLM* 47 (January 1939): 284.

⁷⁸ G. C. Gast, “Church News: Campaign to Win Jews with God’s Word,” *LStd* 96, no. 30 (July 23, 1938): 12–3; “What’s the News? For distribution among Jewish people,” *LW* 58 (April 4, 1939): 118; and G. C. Gast, “Church News: Special New Testament for Jews,” *LStd* 97, no. 16 (April 22, 1939): 11.

⁷⁹ “Editorial: Hitler and the Jews,” *AnL* 6, no. 14 (April 3, 1933): 3; J. T. Mueller, “Die Juden hierzulande,” *DL* 89 (October 3, 1933): 331; and B. C., “Editorials: Anti-Semitism and Christian Opportunity,” *JALC* 4, no. 4 (April 1939): 4–5.

some ways they were not fully in either world, and especially at this time, were being hit from both directions.

It was noted that Jews who convert to Christianity were often rejected by their family and friends. A few even illustrated this with some graphic tales of how they suffered. For instance, *The Lutheran Youth* recounted the story of a young Jewish maiden who came to faith, and witnessed to her father on his death bed. When her mother found out that her daughter led her husband to Christ, she then imprisoned her daughter in the cellar for 6 months until she broke free.⁸⁰ While this story might have been more legend than fact, it illustrates their concern for Jewish converts who were generally rejected by their own people.

The American Lutheran writers noted that the problems of Jewish Christians were compounded by the Nazis, because while the Lutherans predominantly viewed the Jews through a religious lens, the Nazis viewed them predominantly through a racial lens. This could not have been made clearer to the world than when the “Brown Synod” of the Church of the Old Prussian Union in September, 1933 passed the “Aryan Paragraph” and thereby outlawed men of Jewish or partial Jewish descent from serving as pastors. This move was vocally decried by American Lutherans of all stripes.⁸¹ Many of the responses were in fact reporting on how theologians responded to the “Aryan Paragraph.” So, when the theological faculties at Marburg and Erlangen came out with rejections of it, these were echoed in America.⁸² Also, official reactions

⁸⁰ “Story of a Jewish Maiden,” *LY* 4, no. 3 (March 1939): 7–8.

⁸¹ “Die erste deutsche evangelische Nationalsynode,” *ELGB* 68 (December 10, 1933): 393–94; “Zum Abschluss des Verfassungswerkes,” *LiH* 11, no. 45 (August 10, 1933): 14; “A Formal Protest Against the Ban of Jewish Pastors,” *LH* 17 (November 14, 1933): 1029; “Evangelical Revolt in Germany,” *Luth* 16, no. 10 (December 7, 1933): 13; Ludwig Fuerbringer, “Kirchliche Nachrichten aus Deutschland,” *DL* 89 (December 26, 1933): 422–23; and “The Peril of the German Church,” *AnL* 6, no. 44 (October 30, 1933): 8.

⁸² Engelder, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Votum der theologischen Fakultät Marburg zum Arierparagrafen,” *CTM* 4 (December 1933): 950–51; “Die Marburger Theologische Fakultät,” *LiH* 12, no. 5 (November 2, 1933): 14–15; and “Der Arierparagraf in der Kirche,” *LiH* 12, no. 10 (December 7, 1933): 5–7.

from American and international Christian bodies were also announced and reprinted including: the International Executive Committee of the World Alliance for International Friendship⁸³, The Universal Christian Council for Life and Work⁸⁴, and the Federal Council of Churches in America.⁸⁵ Also, Lars Boe reported on how when he visited Germany, his group spoke to *Reichsbischof* Müller in order to directly protest the “Aryan Paragraph.”⁸⁶ Unsurprisingly, American Lutheran Press celebrated that fact that in November 1933, following the outcry in response to the *Sportpalast* debacle; the “Aryan Paragraph” was rescinded.⁸⁷

This concern went deeper than just the “Aryan Paragraph” to what it represented: namely a division that was being forced on the church from outside. This was seen as an attempt to segregate the *Una Sancta* and therefore place divisions in the church where God did not put them and this was a demand that was seen as impossible for the church to accept.⁸⁸ Vital to understanding this, a number of editors and writers explained that this meant a totally new foundation of the Church which meant that the church was no longer seen as based on God’s Word and His grace, but upon racial lines.⁸⁹ The editor of the *Lutheran Herald* insisted: “Hitler’s

⁸³ “A Formal Protest against the Ban of Jewish Pastors,” *LH* 17 (November 14, 1933): 1029.

⁸⁴ Untitled editorial, *AnL* 6, no. 50 (December 11, 1933): 2.

⁸⁵ “The Church under Nazi Rule in Germany,” *LH* 18 (April 24, 1934): 388–89.

⁸⁶ Lars W. Boe, “Europe of Today,” *LH* 18 (January 2, 1934): 5–6, 20–22.

⁸⁷ M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland Ausscheidung des linken Fluegels der Deutschen Christen,” *KZ* 58 (January 1934): 58–63; Ralph Long, “Deutschland marschiert!,” *KB* 77, no. 1 (January 6, 1934): 8–9; “An Encouraging Appraisal of the German Church Situation,” *LStd* 91, no. 52 (December 30, 1933): 4; “Observing the Times,” *LStd* 92, no. 2 (January 13, 1934): 4–5; Lars W. Boe and Ralph H. Long, “Dr. L.W. Boe and Dr. Ralph H. Long’s Report on Conditions in Germany,” *LH* 17 (December 19, 1933): 1166–67; “Dr. Morehead on the German Church Situation,” *LH* 17 (December 26, 1933): 1188–89; and the article by Ralph H. Long, “Whither Germany” which was printed in *AnL* 7, no. 2 (January 8, 1934): 6–7; *LCmpn* 42 (January 6, 1934): 15–16; and *LStd* 92, no. 1 (January 6, 1934): 7–8.

⁸⁸ August Zich, “German Protestantism under Hitler,” *NwL* 20 (October 22, 1933): 339–40; and “With Lutherans in Other Lands: Germany,” *LCmpn* 41, no. 26 (July 1, 1933): 828–29.

⁸⁹ “Die erste deutsche evangelische Nationalsynode,” *ELGB* 68 (December 10, 1933): 393–94; “Die Gemeinschaftsbewegung in den kirchlichen Auseinandersetzungen,” *LiH* 16, no. 1 (October 7, 1937): 13; “Church and State in Germany,” *LH* 17 (October 17, 1933): 932; “An Encouraging Appraisal of the German Church Situation,” *LStd* 91, no. 52 (December 30, 1933): 4; “Evangelical Revolt in Germany,” *Luth* 16, no. 10 (December 7,

order to ban Jewish pastors is plainly a violation of the freedom and rights of Protestant churches. To the Church there is neither Greek nor Jew, but all are to be treated alike according to the Word of God.”⁹⁰ A later event that was even more egregious in the eyes of a writer for the *Lutherischer Herold*, was the order given in Thuringia to no longer baptize Jews.⁹¹

There was also some sympathy for the Christian Jews in Germany, because they were not really accepted anymore in Jewish circles and were being attacked and sometimes expelled from Christian churches. *The Ansgar Lutheran* spoke poignantly about the Jewish Christians in Germany who were no longer welcome in the church, because they are Jewish; and not welcome in the synagogues, because they are Christians.⁹² The *Lutheran Standard* tried to wake up the Americans to the fact that the Nazi persecutions of the Jews were pointed also at Christians of Jewish descent. In an article, “Is it Nothing to Us?,” a title that belies the perceived apathy on this count, it was stated: “one aspect of anti-Semitism in Germany dare not be overlooked by Christians, namely, that this persecution is directed against *all* the Jews in Germany, Christian as well as non-Christian.”⁹³

Conclusions Regarding the Responses to Anti-Semitism

The most severe forms of anti-Semitism among American Lutherans were found in German language periodicals, in particular the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* and *Kirchenblatt*, both of the American Lutheran Church. When anti-Semitic statements cropped up in the English language periodicals they were very quickly countered by others. Likewise, the non-German,

1933): 13; and “The Peril of the German Church,” *AnL* 6, no. 44 (October 30, 1933): 8.

⁹⁰ “A Formal Protest against the Ban of Jewish Pastors,” *LH* 17 (November 14, 1933): 1029.

⁹¹ Arthur v.d. Thur., “Judentaufen in Deutschland,” *LiH* 14, no. 6 (November 7, 1935): 14.

⁹² “Plight of Christian Non-Aryans in Germany,” *AnL* 8, no. 14 (April 8, 1935): 2.

⁹³ “Observing the Times: Is it nothing to us?” *LStd* 96, no. 49 (December 3, 1938): 4 italics original.

non-English periodicals never seemed to participate in the racial anti-Semitism. For the bulk of the writers and editors, racism of any form was anti-Christian in its very nature and therefore must be rejected. This therefore led to numerous statements denouncing the Nazi persecutions of the Jews, and calls for love and compassion instead.

However, for the American Lutheran periodicals, the bigger issue regarding the Jews was religious.⁹⁴ Some appeared at first to think that the Nazi statements about Jews were religious, not racial, and then they were all the more upset when they found out that the Nazis wanted no Jews in the *Landeskirchen*. Likewise, some who expressed forms of religious anti-Semitism attempted to explain the racial bigotries in Germany on the religious ground of how the Jews had been God's chosen people, but then rejected the Messiah.

Then, when the "Aryan Paragraph" and other actions by the Nazis attempted to ban Jews from membership in the *Landeskirchen* these moves were met with a flood of protests that far outnumbered references to civil persecutions of the Jews. The writers and editors of these periodicals argued time and again that the primary need of the Jews was not civil liberty, but the same salvation in Jesus Christ that all people need. This is not to say that they were unconcerned with the physical well being of the Jews, but rather that the Jews' spiritual well being was the greater issue. Likewise, those who were the most concerned with the conversion of the Jews were also the most concerned with physical protection of the Jews.⁹⁵

The difficulty these writers demonstrated in identifying the full nature of Nazi anti-Semitism also points to a certain amount of gullibility by the Americans in regards to Nazi

⁹⁴ Kegel argues of the American Lutherans that "none seemed willing to grant validity to the Jewish religion," Kegel, 39; thereby dismissing the intrinsically theological basis of the American Lutherans' perspective that Christianity is the only saving faith.

⁹⁵ The conclusion that those who were most spiritual concerned were also the most physically concerned about the Jews is also found in Kegel, 350 and Ross, 147-48.

propaganda. Those who wrote and conversed most naturally in German were the most likely to fall prey to Nazi thought, including anti-Semitic thought, without fully thinking about the ramifications. These men appeared, at least early on, to be more willing to give their German sources the benefit of the doubt than those in the non-German press. However, even here it appears that time and more revelations eventually convinced all but a few of the evils of the Nazi racial attitude toward the Jews. Extreme anti-Semitic articles were not printed after 1934, indicating that the Lutheran editors were no longer willing to give voice to these ideas.

American Lutherans seemed to be waking up to the realities of the extreme nature of the Nazi anti-Semitism, as well as the extreme anti-Semitism in a few American writers as well. While individual American Lutherans probably held anti-Semitic views, the leadership distanced itself from these views as the 1930s went on. However, even then there seems to be an inability to see just how completely hateful the Nazi anti-Semitism was.

PART TWO

PERCEPTIONS OF GERMAN THEOLOGICAL AND CHURCH MOVEMENTS

Obviously, the theological and ecclesiastical issues in Germany in the pre-war Third Reich were not debated in a vacuum, rather there were passionate arguments as well as important events in the life of the German Churches as well. Therefore this second part of this study is about how the American Lutherans viewed the major parties and thinkers in the German theological scene.

While this may seem like a simple task, it is really more complicated than it sounds. First of all, the *Deutsche Christen* were not a single, united group even though the American Lutherans often viewed them as such. Much more confusing are those that opposed the *Deutsche Christen* because this body has alternately been understood to be one group that split apart, or two groups that occasionally worked together. For the most part, the American Lutherans took the latter view and distinguished between the Confessing Front and the Confessional Church.

Due to the nature of this study with its focus on the American Lutheran perceptions and theological evaluations of the events in Nazi Germany, this section is not intended to be an analysis of the proper understanding of the German figures. The theology of these individuals will be addressed only in so far as it was discussed within American Lutheranism within the context of the *Kirchenkampf*.

Chapter Eight: The *Deutsche Christen*

This chapter addresses how the American Lutherans viewed the most politically powerful and influential group in the German church, namely the *Deutsche Christen*. For most of the American Lutherans, the *Deutsche Christen* represented the embodiment of almost everything they saw as going wrong in Germany and especially in the German churches. In order to better understand the reactions, this chapter first takes a look at how the Americans viewed the *Deutsche Christen* movement as a whole, as being either Christian, heterodox or outright pagan. Then this chapter focuses on the key leaders and thinkers that the American Lutherans perceived as controlling and directing this movement; namely Ludwig Müller, Hanns Kerrl, Emmanuel Hirsch, and Gerhard Kittel.

Chapter Nine: The “Confessing Front”

When most people think about the German Church’s resistance to the Nazis, the group that is most revered is the “Confessing Front.” While this movement was certainly effective at garnering attention in America, the American Lutherans viewed this group with some suspicion as well as with guarded support. To best analyze this, the chapter evaluates the American Lutherans’ perceptions of this movement, first as a whole, including the famous *Barmen Declaration* and the formation of the “Dahlem front.”

Then the chapter takes a closer look at the individuals who were perceived to be at the head of this movement. First there will be a look at Friedrich Bodelschwingh and Martin Niemöller, who were considered in America to be the real movers behind the Confessing front. This is followed by a look at the primary theological leader of the “Confessing Front,” Karl Barth and the American Lutheran evaluations of him and his role in the German Church. However, the purpose of this section is not to give a full account of how Lutherans in America viewed Karl

Barth and neo-orthodoxy. Rather, the purpose of this is to give a brief overview of their views in order to show how these affected their perceptions of Barth's role in the *Kirchenkampf*.

Chapter Ten: The “Confessional Church”

While in the eyes of most later scholars the role of the Confessional Lutherans in the Third Reich is not as well understood, agreed upon or celebrated as that of the “Confessing Front,” often their work was of greater concern and interest to the American Lutherans of that day, since very often these were the men with whom the Americans were in fellowship and communication. This chapter then evaluates how the American Lutherans often viewed the Confessional Church as the real heroes in the *Kirchenkampf* and how these men were praised and sometimes criticized. The American Lutherans were primarily in contact with the leaders of the intact churches, bishops August Marahrens of Hanover, Hans Meiser of Bavaria, and Theophil Wurm of Württemberg. Following these men, the chapter then turns to the key theologians of Erlangen; Hermann Sasse, Werner Elert, and Paul Althaus and how the American Lutherans saw these men in their attempts to uphold Lutheranism in the midst of the Nazi torrent.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE *DEUTSCHE CHRISTEN*

One of the most influential parties in the whole of the *Kirchenkampf* was the group known as the *Deutsche Christen*. However, it is not quite correct to refer to the *Deutsche Christen* as a single group, because they were really a series of different groups that developed in Germany during the late 1920s through the 1930s. These groups were of diverse perspectives, however they all self-identified as Christians who supported the national and *Völkisch* renewal of Germany especially as led by Hitler.

The groups had varying characters and histories, which played differing roles in the *Kirchenkampf*.¹ The different groups of *Deutsche Christen* have been explained as being conservative or more clearly Christian, opportunistic or more politically motivated, or radical and revolutionary in character.² The membership in these various movements was often different, yet with a significant overlap, but far from being the same group of people from movement to movement.

To a large extent, the differences between the varied *Deutsche Christen* movements were not clear to the Lutherans in America and usually the whole were lumped together as one “German Christian” movement. This misunderstanding probably came about largely because of

¹ The fullest accounting of the various “German Christian” groups during the Third Reich is in Kurt Meier, *Die Deutsche Christen* (Halle: Veb. Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1964).

² These designations are the basis of Zabel’s study of the “German Christian” movements; see James A. Zabel, *Nazism and the Pastors: A Study of the ideas of Three Deutsche Christen Groups* American Academy of Religion Dissertation Series, ed. H. Ganse Little, Jr., no. 14 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), xiii.

the similarity in the names and aims of the groups, and that usually there was one main one at the forefront at a given time, therefore there were generally no situations where observers were forced to differentiate between the *Deutsche Christen* movements.

As a whole, the *Deutsche Christen* were seen by the American Lutheran observers as a plague on the German church and an embodiment of all that was wrong in the German churches. There were a number of articles that quite specifically blamed the *Deutsche Christen* for the *Kirchenkampf* and all of the related problems in the German churches.³ Due to their heavy handed election tactics M. Hulsemann told the readers of *Kirchenblatt* that the *Deutsche Christen* perpetrated a “violent rape” of the church.⁴ Naturally, many of the other American Lutheran writers often echoed the calls in Germany for the *Deutsche Christen* to be reined in.⁵

Some of the Americans did realize that the *Deutsche Christen* was not a completely united group, especially at first. There was awareness that there were relatively conservative, traditional Christians who were members of the *Deutsche Christen*, along with the radical wing.⁶ It was this “conservative” or “moderate” side that sometimes caused a few of the writers to give the *Deutsche Christen* something of a benefit of the doubt, but this was a fairly rare stance.

Without a doubt, the infamous *Sportpalast* rally of the Berlin *Gau* of the *Deutsche Christen* on November 13, 1933 did more to shape the American Lutheran periodicals’ writers’

³ “Deutschland, Hitler, die Juden und die Religionsfrage: Was eine Amerikanerin darüber denkt,” *LiH* 12, no. 41 (July 12, 1934): 4–5; ek., “Ako to dnes vyzerá v Nemecku v kresťanskom živote?,” *SV* 30 (August 1, 1936): 346–50; and J. T. Mueller, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Geist und Denkart der Thüringer Deutschen Christen,” *CTM* 8 (August 1937): 635–36.

⁴ M. Hulsemann, “Die politische und religiöse Gestalt des dritten Reiches (Schluss),” *KB* 77, no. 9 (March 3, 1934): 7.

⁵ L. W. Boe and Ralph H. Long, “Dr. L. W. Boe and Dr. Ralph H. Long’s Report on Conditions in Germany,” *LH* 17 (December 19, 1933): 1166–67; Kapler, “Ein Brief Kaplers an Hitler,” *LiH* 11, no. 48 (August 31, 1933): 5–7; and Lars W. Boe, “What I Saw in Germany,” *LStd* 93, no. 4 (January 26, 1935): 12–13.

⁶ C. A. Melby, “The State of the Lutheran Church in Germany,” *LH* 18 (July 17, 1934): 647–48; E. Theodore Bachmann, “Protestantism in the Nazi State,” *LCQ* 8 (January, 1935): 1–12; and H. Koch, “Zur kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland. 2,” *DL* 91 (December 10, 1935): 405–06.

opinions of the *Deutsche Christen* and of how radical some of the leaders were than any other single event. Reports about this event can be best described as total outrage at the sorts of attacks on the historic Christian faith which were launched from within a supposedly Christian organization.⁷ Some relief was then expressed following the removal from office of Dr. Reinhold Kraus, head of the Berlin *Gau* of the *Deutsche Christen* and offending speaker at the *Sportspalast* event, as well as Bishop Joachim Hossenfelder, national leader of the *Deutsche Christen*.⁸

The *Deutsche Christen* Seen as a Church Political Movement

To the Lutherans in America who observed the *Deutsche Christen* movement early on it was often perceived as primarily a church political movement. In essence they were viewed more as an attempt to take control of the power in the *Reichskirche* than as a theological threat to Christian orthodoxy in Germany. This attitude was prevalent during 1933, before the infamous *Sportspalast* meeting, after which the concerns over neo-paganism in the movement became pronounced. Also, the Americans who were in fellowship with the Free Churches tended to view much of the *Kirchenkampf* as an internal church political struggle, and therefore the *Deutsche Christen* were viewed as simply one of the warring factions. As H. Dierks reported in *The Lutheran Witness*,

These different groups attack and fight one another, not so much for purposes of doctrine and the Christian truths as with a view to patronage, power, and influence with the state. ... The real Christian truths are ignored or but lightly passed over by

⁷ “Andre Lande: Den tysek Kirche og Nazismen,” *DV* 54, no. 47 (November 22, 1933): 1; August Zich, “Bishop Mueller of Germany,” *NwL* 21 (February 4, 1934): 35–36; and “Wohin treibt die deutsche Reichskirche?,” *KB* 77, no. 15 (April 14, 1934): 5–7.

⁸ W. Hönecke, “Wie entwickelt sich die kirchliche Lage in Deutschland?,” *ELGB* 69 (January 28, 1934): 27–28; M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland Ausscheidung des linken Fluegels der Deutschen Christen,” *KZ* 58 (January, 1934): 58–63; “Nachdem Bischof Hossenfelder,” *LiH* 12, no. 16 (January 18, 1934): 11; and M. Hulsemann, “Die politische und religiöse Gestalt des dritten Reiches,” *KB* 77, no. 8 (February 24, 1934): 8–9, 14.

the great majority. Many of the pastors have become politicians, and they seem to be much more interested in politics than in the souls of their congregations.⁹

A Well Meaning, but Misguided, Attempt at Church Reform

There were a few Americans who viewed the *Deutsche Christen* early on as a well meaning attempt to reform the church. Here the perception was that the German church had been lulled into a real slumber, and that the *Deutsche Christen* was one of the groups that were trying to awaken it.¹⁰ This is not to say that those who thought this were endorsing the *Deutsche Christen*, but that there was at least some empathy for the movement. This sentiment was most clearly seen in *The Lutheran Companion* in June of 1933, when the editor wrote: “While recognizing the purity of the motives of these so-called ‘German Christians,’ the Lutheran Church bodies are holding back from amalgamating themselves with the movement, though some individual Lutheran pastors are active in it.”¹¹

Often these assessments saw the *Deutsche Christen* movement as a truly Christian movement, albeit one that had very political overtones. Some of these writers even saw the *Deutsche Christen* as a Christian effort to stave off the growing neo-paganism in Germany.¹² To this end, the *Lutherischer Herold* even printed a couple of statements by *Deutsche Christen* members who rejected the neo-pagan statements of the *Sportpalast* event.¹³

These somewhat sympathetic portrayals should not be seen as endorsements of the *Deutsche Christen*. It was clear that while some of the writers early on saw some merits to what

⁹ H. Dierks, “The New Germany III,” *LW* 55 (November 3, 1936): 373.

¹⁰ “Observing the Times,” *LStd* 92, no. 14 (April 7, 1934): 3.

¹¹ “With Lutherans in Other Lands: Germany,” *LCmpn* 41 (June 17, 1933): 750–51.

¹² F. H. Knuebel, “Those ‘German’ Christians,” *Luth* 15, no. 29 (April 20, 1933): 4; M. Reu, “Aus dem Kampf um das Bekenntnis in der Kirche Deutschlands,” *KZ* 58 (September, 1934): 513–33; and Ralph H. Long, “Development in the German Church Situation,” *Luth* 15, no. 39 (June 29, 1933): 8–9

¹³ “Eine Stimme aus den Kreisen der ‘Deutschen Christen’,” *LiH* 12, no. 37 (June 14, 1934): 13–14; and “Die Veränderten Richtlinien der ‘Deutschen Christen’,” *LiH* 15, no. 3 (October 15, 1936): 11–12.

the *Deutsche Christen* were trying to do, there were concerns as well. These men saw the *Deutsche Christen* as being too political in their agendas and methods, and therefore wrongly interjecting politics into the church.¹⁴

An Attempt to Change the Very Nature of the Church

By far the more common view of the *Deutsche Christen* was that this was a movement that was attempting to redefine the very nature of the German Church. The perception was that they were attempting to turn the church into a medium which supported the Nazi state and therefore removing its autonomy.¹⁵ Therefore, those that viewed the *Deutsche Christen* in this way saw this movement as a very real threat to the very nature and existence of a Lutheran Church in Germany.

Lying behind this was the Nazi ideal of *Gleichschaltung* of all aspects of German life and culture, which included the Church. For the most part, the *Deutsche Christen* accepted and endorsed this idea, and were intent upon bringing the German churches within this united sphere. As a result, a number of the publications of the Lutherans in America raised concerns that this *Gleichschaltung* was really equating the church with race.¹⁶ Further, most saw this as really subordinating the church to the government of Germany.¹⁷ This was therefore seen as wrongly mixing the two kingdoms, as was discussed above in Chapter 3. One particularly egregious example in the minds of some of the American writers, was how the government, along with the

¹⁴ E. Theodore Bachmann, "Protestantism in the Nazi State," *LCQ* 8 (January, 1935): 1–12; "With Lutherans in Other Lands: Germany," *LCmpn* 41 (June 17, 1933): 750–51; and "Observing the Times," *LStd* 92, no. 14 (April 7, 1934): 3.

¹⁵ For a full analysis of this, see chapter 3 above.

¹⁶ M. Reu, "The Present Church Situation in Germany-III," *Luth* 19, no. 51 (September 15, 1937): 12–13; "German Protestantism under Nazi Government," *LH* 17 (June 27, 1933): 587–88; and M. Willkomm, "Zur Kirchliche Lage in Deutschland (Fortsetzung)," *ELGB* 70 (January 27, 1935): 23–25.

¹⁷ W. Hoenecke, "Noch einmal zur Lage der Kirche in Deutschland," *ELGB* 68 (July 9, 1933): 215–19; Daniel Nystrom, "The Cross and the Swastika," *LCmpn* 42 (February 24, 1934): 231–33; and Charles M. Jacobs, "What is

Deutsche Christen controlling the *Reichskirche* called for all German pastors to take an oath of loyalty to Hitler, as was attempted both in 1934 and in 1938.¹⁸

The *Deutsche Christen* were also roundly denounced for being too politically motivated. Not only were they seen as too tied to the civil political structure, but also they were seen as being too intent on taking over the political leadership of the German churches as well.¹⁹ In this regard, the *Deutsche Christen* were generally blamed for the persecutions of the Confessing Front and its pastors.²⁰ Ralph H. Long pointed out in *The Lutheran* in 1939: “Where a man in authority is a radical German Christian (Nazi) a very intolerable condition exists in the area over which he presides.”²¹ Likewise, the writers voiced their outrage over the *Deutsche Christen* leadership of the *Reichskirche* and its silencing of various church papers.²² Not only were the *Deutsche Christen* seen as oppressing their opponents, but they were also depicted as mean-spirited and unchristian in their attitude. For instance the *Lutherischer Herold* published an article in December of 1933 about how pastor Eckert, the *Deutsche Christen* Provost of Neumark, stated that if anyone questioned his honesty, he would give them a kick and they would “spit teeth.”²³

German Christianity,” *LCQ* 7 (April, 1934): 181–87 this article was also reprinted in *TF* 6 (July, 1934): 153–60.

¹⁸ “German Church at Crossroads,” *LCmpn* 42 (August 25, 1934): 1059; J. E. N., “Yhtä ja Tiosta,” *LY* 4, no. 12 (December 1939): 15–16; and “The Church Struggle in Germany,” *AnL* 10, no. 38 (September 19, 1938): 5 which was also reprinted in *JALC* 3, no. 11 (November, 1938): 67–68.

¹⁹ M. Hulsemann, “Die politische und religiöse Gestalt des dritten Reiches (Schluss),” *KB* 77, no. 9 (March 3, 1934): 7–8; M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 62 (October, 1938): 634–35; and Lars W. Boe, “Impressions of Germany,” *AnL* 7, no. 53 (December 31, 1934): 4–7.

²⁰ “German Church at Crossroads,” *LCmpn* 42 (August 25, 1934): 1059; “Greue an heiliger Stätte,” *KB* 78, no. 1 (January 5, 1935): 11; and “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 61 (November, 1937): 637–40.

²¹ Ralph H. Long, “Conditions that Exist in Europe,” *Luth* 21, no. 47 (August 23, 1939): 9, 23.

²² Julius Bodensieck, “Editorielles: Deutschlands Kirche mundtot!,” *KB* 77, no. 33 (August 18, 1934): 3; Arthur von der Thur., “Der gegenwärtige Stand im deutschen Kirchenstreit,” *LiH* 15, no. 8 (November 19, 1936): 12–13; and M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 63 (April, 1939): 241–49.

²³ “Bergpredigt und ‘Deutsche Christen’,” *LiH* 12, no. 10 (December 7, 1933): 13.

Theological Problems with the *Deutsche Christen*

Many of the writers identified the root problem that lay behind the *Deutsche Christen* as theological liberalism. Just as Chapter two above showed that for almost all of the Lutherans in America, liberalism was bad and an undermining influence on the Church, so it was also seen as the root cause of many of the problems with the *Deutsche Christen*.²⁴ Interestingly, even the more theologically liberal *Lutheran Church Quarterly* printed an article by E. Theodore Bachmann in which he described the *Deutsche Christen* as “characterized by racial pride, religious liberalism, high pressure methods, and absolute loyalty to the Nazi state and its Leader.”²⁵ The American writers especially pointed to the liberalism of the *Deutsche Christen* as the root of their rejection of the Old Testament and the inerrancy of the Bible.²⁶ A few authors went so far as to say that the *Deutsche Christen* have left true Christianity or are outright heretics.²⁷

The Americans saw the *Deutsche Christen* therefore as basing their faith not on the Bible nor on the Lutheran Confessions, but on the racial creed of Nazism. Therefore, they saw the *Deutsche Christen* as trying to minimize or do away with the different confessional groups in order to unify around race. In this regard, the *Deutsche Christen* were seen as thoroughgoing unionists.²⁸ As was shown in Chapter 3, while there were disagreements between the Lutherans

²⁴ “German Church Delegates Denied Passports,” *LH* 21 (August 10, 1937): 783; Frederic Wenchel, “Nazi Germany and the Church II,” *LW* 56 (November 16, 1937): 390; and M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 61 (April, 1937): 251–56.

²⁵ E. Theodore Bachmann, “Protestantism in the Nazi State,” *LCQ* 8 (January, 1935): 1–12.

²⁶ Paul Morentz and Hoh, “Is John’s Gospel Anti-Jewish,” *Luth* 19, no. 51 (September 15, 1937): 11–12; M. Willkomm, “Zur Kirchliche Lage in Deutschland (Fortsetzung),” *ELGB* 70 (January 27, 1935): 23–25; and Engelder, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: über die jüngsten Vorkommnisse innerhalb der Deutschen Reichskirche,” *CTM* 5 (February 1934): 144–46.

²⁷ M. Hulsemann, “Die politische und religiöse Gestalt des dritten Reiches,” *KB* 77, no. 8 (February 24, 1934): 8–9, 14; M. Willkomm, “Zur Kirchliche Lage in Deutschland (Fortsetzung),” *ELGB* 70 (January 27, 1935): 23–25; and M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 61 (Mar, 1937): 188–92.

²⁸ “Thüringen,” *LiH* 14, no. 44 (July 30, 1936): 13; “German Protestantism under Nazi Government,” *LH* 17

in America as to how rampant unionism was in Germany, they all agreed that the *Deutsche Christen* were guilty here.

In a number of other areas, there were many criticisms of the *Deutsche Christen* and how they were warping Christian theology in their teachings. The root problem was seen in the fact that this group was trying to meld Christianity with Nazism, yet whenever the two were at odds, the *Deutsche Christen* chose Nazism over historic Christianity.²⁹ Several authors pointed out how the *Deutsche Christen* exchanged the Lutheran Gospel of Grace for a religion of works.³⁰ Related to this, a number of the authors charged the *Deutsche Christen* with being “*Schwarmerei*” or religious enthusiasts.³¹ These theological problems were especially seen in their embracing of “Positive Christianity” and *Völkisch theology*.³²

The Lutheran writers in America also saw the *Deutsche Christen* as essentially anti-Semitic, and denounce this roundly. This was demonstrated to the Americans by the infamous *Sportpalast* event. However, the “Aryan Paragraph” as pushed by the *Deutsche Christen* and

(June 27, 1933): 587–88; and “Lutheran State Churches in Germany Unite,” *PM* 11 (August 1933): 496–98.

²⁹ M. Hulsemann, “Die politische und religiöse Gestalt des dritten Reiches,” *KB* 77, no. 8 (February 24, 1934): 8–9, 14; and M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 61 (March, 1937): 188–92 which was also reprinted in “Staat und Kirche in Deutschland,” *LiH* 15, no. 27 (April 1, 1937): 13–14.

³⁰ “Easter, 1937, In Germany,” *Luth* 19, no. 29 (April 14, 1937): 4–5; M., “Eine grosse Ewigkeitspredigt,” *TQ* 35 (April, 1938): 143–44; and “Die neue Kirche im neuen Volk,” *LiH* 12, no. 5 (November 2, 1933): 6.

³¹ This charge is an echo of the Reformation denunciation of the radical reformers as being “enthusiasts” rather than having their doctrine based on the Bible. Examples of this include L. Fuerbringer, “Kirchliche Nachrichten aus Deutschland,” *DL* 89 (December 26, 1933): 422–23; “Ueber die kirchliche Lage in Deutschland (Schluss),” *LiH* 12, no. 29 (April 19, 1934): 8–10; and Ösch, “Die ‘Theologie’ der Deutschen Christen, des Reichsbischofs und des Professors E. Hirsch,” *CTM* 6 (September, 1935): 661–70.

³² This is discussed at length in chapter 6 above.

enacted at the “Brown Synod” also greatly concerned the American writers.³³ The *Deutsche Christen* were likewise criticized for positing that Jesus was not Jewish, but Nordic or Aryan.³⁴

The Threat of Neo-Paganism in the Church

Especially following the *Sportspalast* rally, the Lutheran writers in America viewed the *Deutsche Christen* as attempting to turn the church itself into a neo-pagan form of the church. The attempts to define the church on racial grounds, and to remove “Jewish” aspects from the church, including the Old Testament, were seen as a direct threat to the theology and the theological integrity of the Churches in Germany. Some Americans even saw the *Deutsche Christen* as a watered down version of the “German Faith Movement” and other such pagan groups. There were a few writers who failed to distinguish between these groups and wrongly placed some of the outright neo-pagan leaders, such as Alfred Rosenberg, as members and leaders of the *Deutsche Christen*.³⁵

When many of the Lutheran writers in America looked at the *Kirchenkampf* and especially at the theological battles within the Third Reich, they saw it primarily of a battle between Christianity and paganism that was attempting to infiltrate the church. In particular, they pointed to the *Deutsche Christen* as the group that was responsible for bringing this paganism into Christianity. They saw a very real threat of pagan worship and beliefs being foisted upon German church members and clergy. This was seen as a battle for the very soul of the Christian

³³ “Die erste deutsche evangelische Nationalsynode,” *ELGB* 68 (December 10, 1933): 393–94; L. Fuerbringer, “Kirchliche Nachrichten aus Deutschland,” *DL* 89 (December 26, 1933): 422–23; and August Zich, “German Protestantism Under Hitler,” *NwL* 20 (October 22, 1933): 339–40.

³⁴ “Ein bemerkenswerter Briefwechsel,” *LiH* 13, no. 6 (November 8, 1934): 12–4; August, Zich, “Race Idolatry,” *NwL* 25 (July 31, 1938): 244; and M. Reu, “Wer sind die “deutschen Christen?,” *KZ* 57 (October, 1933): 592–602.

³⁵ “Nazi Leaders Break Their Agreement with the Church,” *LH* 18 (March 13, 1934): 244; “Depose Lutheran Minister for Nazi Theology,” *LH* 22 (July 12, 1938): 695; and “Die ‘Deutsche Evangelische Reichskirche’,” *LiH* 11, no. 34 (May 25, 1933): 8–9.

Church.³⁶ This was made very clear to the readers of *The Ansgar Lutheran* in 1936 when they were told, “It is not a struggle for the purification of the Church, but a conflict between Christianity and Paganism.”³⁷ Michael Reu even pointed to Hermann Sasse’s article in the *Kirchliches Jahrbuch* from 1932, agreeing with Sasse that Christianity and National Socialism cannot co-exist.³⁸

Early in the 1930s the *Deutsche Christen* were seen as being made up of a mixture of neo-pagans and heterodox Christians. This was seen as a battle within the whole *Deutsche Christen* movement for the soul of the movement.³⁹ At first it appeared that the neo-pagans in the *Deutsche Christen* had won, as was witnessed in the *Sportpalast* meeting of the Berlin *Gau*. There was then some confusion as to which way the movement was then going, because when the fallout from the *Sportpalast* led to a removal of the most vocal neo-pagans, it was reported to some of the American Lutheran readers that the neo-pagans were leaving the *Deutsche Christen*.⁴⁰ However, during this same time period a number of other writers argued that the *Deutsche Christen* were really heading further in the direction of neo-paganism.⁴¹ This was then echoed in 1938 when E. S. Hjortland wrote in *The Lutheran Companion*, “In order to reconcile

³⁶ Hugo von Gaffan Perdelwitz, “Protestant Germany Today,” *AnL* 7, no. 17 (April 23, 1934): 4–7; Oscar N. Olson, “Editorial Notes and Comments,” *AQ* 18 (July, 1939): 284–86; and “Zur kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland,” *LiH* 12, no. 28 (April 12, 1934): 11–12.

³⁷ “No Room For Christ: An Apologue and its Implications,” *AnL* 9, no. 7 (February 17, 1936): 6–7.

³⁸ M. Reu, “Wer sind die “deutschen Christen?,” *KZ* 57 (October, 1933): 592–602.

³⁹ C. A. Melby, “The State of the Lutheran Church in Germany,” *LH* 18 (July 17, 1934): 647–48; M. Hulsemann, “Die politische und religiöse Gestalt des dritten Reiches,” *KB* 77, no. 8 (February 24, 1934): 8–9, 14; and Hugo von Gaffan Perdelwitz, “Protestant Germany Today,” *AnL* 7, no. 17 (April 23, 1934): 4–7.

⁴⁰ M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland: Der Einfluss der Deutschen Christen,” *KZ* 59 (August, 1935): 511; and “Kirchliche Nachrichten: Neues vom deutschen Kirchenstreit,” *KB* 78, no. 20 (May 18, 1935): 11–12.

⁴¹ Arthur v.d. Thur, “Neus von deutschen Kirchenstreit,” *LiH* 13, no. 33 (May 16, 1935): 14; “The Struggle for Religious Liberty in Germany,” *LH* 19 (February 26, 1935): 197; and W. Ösch, “Deutschheidnische Strömungen,” *CTM* 6 (October 1935): 732–39.

National-Socialism with Christianity, the German Christians found themselves going more and more in the direction of the German Faith Movement.”⁴²

Very often, the American writers saw the *Deutsche Christen* as trying to mix Christianity with various aspects of pagan belief and practice. This was considered to be altering the very nature of the Christian religion by making it more “German,” and ultimately battling against the Gospel itself.⁴³ Because of this, a number of the authors defined the *Deutsche Christen* as trying to create a religion that was half Christian and half pagan.⁴⁴ W. Ösch wrote in the *Concordia Theological Monthly* that “The German Christians and the German Heathens have the same ground, in so far that both rejected Christianity as a message and as eternal power of the soul.”⁴⁵

An anonymous writer from Germany further explained in *The Lutheran* that

Confessional pastors say that the German Christians speak of God, yes, “but not the God of the Bible”; of Christ, yes, “but not the Christ of the Scriptures”; of the church, yes, “but not the church of the Holy Spirit, but a church of German blood and the Nordic race.”⁴⁶

There were also a number of writers that went a step further and argued that the *Deutsche Christen* were not really trying to mix paganism with Christianity, but that they were outright pagans. A number of articles did not mince words as they labeled the *Deutsche Christen* as

⁴² E. S. Hjortland, “Augustana Brotherhood section The Church and The European Situation,” *LCmpn* 46 (March 10, 1938): 313.

⁴³ M. Reu, “Wer sind die ‘deutschen Christen?’,” *KZ* 57 (October, 1933): 592–602; J. T. Mueller, “Die Stärke der ‘Ev.=Luth. Freikirche in Sachsen und andern Staaten’,” *DL* 92 (June 9, 1936): 201; and W. Bodamer, “Die kirchlichen Verhältnisse in Deutschland,” *ELGB* 74 (June 25, 1939): 198–201.

⁴⁴ “W. Ösch, “Synodaltagung der Deutschen Freikirche in Berlin,” *DL* 90 (August 7, 1934): 261–62; August, Zich, “The Church in Germany,” *NwL* 24 (March 28, 1937): 100–01; and Daniel Nystrom, “The Spectator: A Review of Current News and Opinion,” *LCmpn* 45 (July 15, 1937): 903.

⁴⁵ W. Ösch, “Deutschheidnische Strömungen,” *CTM* 6 (October, 1935): 732–39.

⁴⁶ “Easter, 1937, In Germany,” *Luth* 19, no. 29 (April 14, 1937): 5

“pagans” or even “impenitent heathens.”⁴⁷ While this group was definitely seen as a small group, they were shown as aggressive, and powerful.

The modernistic movement in Germany, much advertised in the press, which has called for the exclusion of Jews from offices in the Church, the abolishment of the Old Testament, and even the whole Bible, and the substitution of a Nordic pagan religion, is led by a small group of aggressive infidels, and by no means represents German Protestantism.⁴⁸

A couple of authors pointed out that while the *Deutsche Christen* were not the same as the “German Faith Movement” and other outright neo-pagan groups in Germany, they nevertheless kept close ties with these groups.⁴⁹

These writers not only explained that the *Deutsche Christen* were infected with neo-paganism, but they also provided evidence for these claims. There were a number of examples given, from how churches were decorated with Nazi symbols instead of crosses to how they were teaching the youth that there is no life after death. The *Kirchenblatt* and the *Lutherischer Herold* pointed to the new liturgies that praised the earth, Hitler and the German Volk.⁵⁰ The *Lutheran Youth* told its readers that

Germany is publishing and disseminating a Nazified Bible. Sin, grace, everlasting life, the Hebrew prophets, and many other objectionable features are deleted. The words of Christ, for example: "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth," are translated to read: "Happy is he who is always a good comrade; he will

⁴⁷ M. Ösch, “Die kirchlichen Vorgänge in Deutschland, lutherisch gesehen,” *CTM* 5 (September, 1934): 700; August Pieper, “Die Verfassung der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche,” *TQ* 31 (July, 1934): 168–83; and J. E. N., “Notes and News,” *LY* 3, no. 1 (January, 1938): 7.

⁴⁸ “German Protestantism Entrenched Against Radicalism,” *LH* 17 (December 26, 1933): 1187–88.

⁴⁹ “Befürchtungen und Hoffnungen im deutschen Kirchentum,” *LiH* 12, no. 9 (November 30, 1933): 8–9; “Die Germanen=Gläubigen melden sich auch,” *LiH* 12, no. 9 (November 30, 1933): 11; and W. Ösch, “Deutschheidnische Strömungen,” *CTM* 6 (October 1935): 732–39.

⁵⁰ “Kirchliche Nachrichten: Neue Gottesdienstordnung (?),” *KB* 81, no. 32 (August 6, 1938): 15; “Thüringer ,Gottesfeiern’,” *KB* 81, no. 37 (September 10, 1938): 6–7; “‘Glaubensbekenntnis’ deutschchristlicher Pastoren,” *LiH* 17, no. 20 (February 23, 1939): 13; and “Was lehren und glauben de sogenannten ‘Deutschen Christen’ Thüringer Richtung?,” *LiH* 17, no. 20 (February 23, 1939): 13.

make his way in the world. The purpose is to remove the "Hebrew element" from the Bible and make Christ's teaching as material and earthly as possible.⁵¹

Key Leaders in the *Deutsche Christen* Movement

The *Deutsche Christen* was a very powerful group within the German churches, with tremendous political clout. In 1933, they quickly gained control of the new *Reichskirche* as well as all but three of the *Landeskirchen*. Also, showing the power behind the group, it must be remembered that not only was Ludwig Müller named *Reichsbischof*, but he was also Hitler's personal choice for that position. Often the American Lutherans believed that the sole reason for the *Deutsche Christen* rise to power in the church was because of the Nazi government's support of the movement.⁵²

Ludwig Müller

Without a doubt, Müller, as *Reichsbischof*, held more power in the German church than any other single person at the start of this era. This was backed up by the use of the *Führerprinzip* that held that the leadership of any German organization should be centered in one man who embodied the German spirit, therefore giving Müller virtual dictatorial power over the German churches. However, after a few years Müller's power waned and then in July of 1935, with the naming of Hanns Kerrl as minister of church affairs, Müller's star was definitely waning. Reflecting this, most of the articles in the American Lutheran publications about Müller were published from 1933 through 1935.

Müller's being named as *Reichsbischof* catapulted this previously little known German chaplain into the spotlight in America as well as in Germany. However, for the American

⁵¹ J. E. N., "News and Notes," *LY* 3, no. 10 (October 1938): 9–10.

⁵² "Will the Nazi of Germany Dictate a Creed to the Church?," *LH* 17 (August 22, 1933): 756–57; C. R. Tappert, "Antworten auf allerlei Fragen," *LiH* 11, no. 45 (August 10, 1933): 8–10; and "With Lutherans in Other Lands: Germany," *LCmpn* 41 (September 2, 1933): 1117.

Lutherans this was a development that created great concern. There was only a single article printed in the journals studied that expressed happiness at Müller's assignment as *Reichsbischof*, and that was because he was a Lutheran.⁵³ Instead the overwhelming sentiment was one of dread. This came partially because of the way that the Nazis and *Deutsche Christen* had forced Bodelschwingh to resign from the post in order to get Müller in.⁵⁴ This led a number of the American Lutheran writers to view Müller as nothing more than a shill for Hitler within the church.⁵⁵ However, there were a few voices, while not happy about Müller being in power, were somewhat thankful that he represented a more moderate voice from within the *Deutsche Christen*, who was willing to quell the more radicals in the movement.⁵⁶

For a number of the American Lutheran periodicals, Müller was considered to be too much a part of the Nazi party for them to trust him. It was lamented that he was a thoroughgoing Nazi, and that this was foremost in his identity.⁵⁷ The *Lutheran Herald's* description of Müller is somewhat telling: "The Bishop of the German church, Ludwig Mueller, a former admiral in the German navy, looks more like a Prussian officer than a Bishop."⁵⁸ Because of this, there was a

⁵³ E. G. Sihler, "The New Leadership of Germany," *WLM* 42 (January, 1934): 270–71, 310.

⁵⁴ "Religious Liberty in Germany Threatened," *LH* 17 (December 12, 1933): 1139; M. Hulsemann, "Die politische und religiöse Gestalt des dritten Reiches," *KB* 77, no. 8 (February 24, 1934): 8–9, 14; and Lars W. Boe, "What I Saw in Germany," *LStd* 93, no. 4 (January 26, 1935): 12–13.

⁵⁵ J. F. Krueger, "Theological Studies in German Universities," *LCQ* 6 (October, 1933): 353–70; L. Fuerbringer, "Nachrichten aus Deutschland," *DL* 90 (May 29, 1934): 180–81; and "Wehrkreispfarrer Müller, Königsberg," *LiH* 11, no. 35 (June 1, 1933): 5.

⁵⁶ Ralph H. Long, "Development in the German Church Situation," *Luth* 15, no. 39 (June 29, 1933): 8–9; "Andre Lande: Nazismen og Kirke," *DV* 54, no. 52 (December 27, 1933): 1; and Th. Buehring, "Kirchliche Nachrichten: Erlass zum Kirchenstreit gemildert," *KB* 77, no. 39 (September 29, 1934): 11–12.

⁵⁷ "Auf dem Weg zur freien Volkskirche," *KB* 77, no. 16 (April 21, 1934): 8; J. F. Krueger, "Theological Studies in German Universities," *LCQ* 6 (October, 1933): 353–70; and August Pieper, "Die Zustände in der protestantischen Kirche Deutschlands," *TQ* 31 (October, 1934): 270–78.

⁵⁸ "Hitler's Totalitarian State," *LH* 18 (February 27, 1934): 196.

great concern that Müller would end up destroying the German church by Nazifying it, and thereby making it no longer truly Christian.⁵⁹

Since Müller was such a powerful figure within the *Reichskirche*, when American Lutheran leaders visited Germany, they visited with Müller and interviewed him a couple of times. These interviews were often positive in nature, as it appears that when they met with Müller they were at least positively impressed with his answers.⁶⁰ However it is also interesting to note that these positive impressions did not seem to last, because they were not echoed in other articles.

Early on, there were some real concerns in the American Lutheran periodicals that Müller had too much power and was all too willing to exercise that power.⁶¹ Then as the time went by, these fears were realized. Müller was often seen as behind the various abuses by the *Reichskirche* government and even the imprisonments of church leaders. For instance, it was noted that Müller overstepped his bounds in attempting to remove Bishop Hans Meiser of Bavaria from office: “The removal of Bishop Meiser by the Reichsbishop has not been recognized by Hitler and he was, therefore, back again in his work after a house imprisonment of two weeks.”⁶² Müller was then referred to as a “Tyrant” and a “Dictator” by a number of authors as well.⁶³

⁵⁹ “Will the Nazi of Germany Dictate a Creed to the Church?,” *LH* 17 (August 22, 1933): 756–57; and August Zich, “Bishop Mueller of Germany,” *NwL* 21 (February 4, 1934): 35–36.

⁶⁰ Gustav Grahn, “Mueller Defends Church Policy,” *LCmpn* 43 (July 20, 1935): 902–03; and L. W. Boe, “Europe of Today,” *LH* 18 (January 2, 1934): 5–6, 20–22.

⁶¹ “Will the Nazi of Germany Dictate a Creed to the Church?,” *LH* 17 (August 22, 1933): 756–57; “German Church at Crossroads,” *LCmpn* 42 (August 25, 1934): 1059; and L. Fuerbringer, “Nachrichten aus Deutschland,” *DL* 90 (May 29, 1934): 180–81.

⁶² Lars W. Boe, “Impressions of Germany,” *AnL* 7, no. 53 (December 31, 1934): 4–7; this same article was printed in “What I Saw in Germany,” *LStd* 93, no. 4 (January 26, 1935): 12–13.

⁶³ “Die vierte Reichssynod der Bekennenden Kirche,” *LiH* 14, no. 27 (April 2, 1936): 11–12; “Andre Lande: Hitlers Biskop sætter sig op som Diktator,” *DV* 54, no. 2 (January 10, 1934): 1; and “Karl Barth Dismissed,” *AnL* 7, no. 4 (January 22, 1934): 2.

Due to these perceptions that Müller was abusing his power, a number of American writers followed the rise and fall of his power with great interest. They were quick to echo to their readers' calls by members of the German churches for his removal as *Reichsbischof*.⁶⁴ There were also a number of cheers when it appeared that Müller was losing his power over the German churches.⁶⁵

There also developed an interesting debate over Müller in the aftermath of the *Sportspalast* event. At first, there were calls for Müller's resignation, then some of the American writers moderated their tone when Müller forced the leaders of the *Sportspalast* event to step down, this led to him being seen as a moderating force within the *Deutsche Christen*.⁶⁶ However, other authors saw him as an inherent part of the problem, and believed that for while he distanced himself from the most extreme statements, he was still part of the problem.⁶⁷

Not only were the American Lutheran authors concerned about Müller's abuse of power, but there was also a real concern over his theology. There were many articles in many of the periodicals that analyzed different parts of Müller's speeches and writings and found these works to be theologically wrong.⁶⁸ One red flag for a number of the writers was that Müller was bishop

⁶⁴ "Zur kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland," *LiH* 12, no. 12 (December 21, 1933): 10–11; J. T. Mueller, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Zur Klärung der Kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland," *CTM* 5 (August 1934): 641; and M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 59 (January, 1935): 52–61.

⁶⁵ L. Fuerbringer, "Nachrichten aus Deutschland," *DL* 91 (January 8, 1935): 5–7; M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 59 (March, 1935): 190–91; and "Conditions in Germany," *LH* 19 (November 12, 1935): 1100.

⁶⁶ M. Hulsemann, "Die politische und religiöse Gestalt des dritten Reiches," *KB* 77, no. 8 (February 24, 1934): 8–9, 14; W. Hönecke, "Wie entwickelt sich die kirchliche Lage in Deutschland?," *ELGB* 69 (January 28, 1934): 27–28; and Ralph H. Long, "Whither Germany?," *LCmpn* 42 (January 6, 1934): 15–16 this article was also published in *LStd* 92, no. 1 (January 6, 1934): 7–8 and *AnL* 7, no. 2 (January 8, 1934): 6–7.

⁶⁷ "Andre Lande: Den tysek Kirke og Nazismen," *DV* 54, no. 47 (November 22, 1933): 1; "Zur kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland," *LiH* 12, no. 12 (December 21, 1933): 10–11; and W. Ösch, *CTM* 6 (October 1935) "Deutschheidnische Strömungen," 732–39.

⁶⁸ Ösch, "Die 'Theologie' der Deutschen Christen, des Reichsbischofs und des Professors E. Hirsch," *CTM* 6 (September 1935): 661–70; M., "Eine grosse Ewigkeitspredigt," *TQ* 35 (April 1938): 143–44; and "Reichsbischof Ludwig Müller für eine neue Religion," *LiH* 15, no. 34 (May 20, 1937): 12–13.

of the Prussian Union, and therefore unionist in his thinking.⁶⁹ A couple of the writers even charged Müller with being a pagan, largely on account of how closely he allied himself with Rosenberg.⁷⁰ Probably one of the most interesting attempts to highlight the unorthodoxy of Müller's theology was in the *Theologische Quartalschrift* where statements of Müller and Luther were printed in order to contrast the two.⁷¹

Hanns Kerrl

Müller's power was severely limited on July 22, 1935 when Hanns Kerrl was named minister of the government's newly created Ministry of Church Affairs.⁷² While Müller held his office until his death, this move in effect took Müller's power away and placed Kerrl in charge of the *Reichskirche*. When Kerrl first took office, there was a fair bit of confusion and questioning as to if this was a good thing. In particular, Kerrl's formation of the Church Committees was a move that was very open to interpretation.

Kerrl never was the lightning rod for criticism from the American Lutheran writers in the way that Müller was. When Kerrl first came to power, a couple of the writers expressed hope that this was going to be a positive change in the German church situation and maybe even bring an end to the *Kirchenkampf*.⁷³ However, there was also some trepidation as to what this change really meant and if it would be a good change after all.⁷⁴ Later, when Kerrl offered an olive

⁶⁹ Lauerer, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland Zur lage des Luthertums," *KZ* 58 (February 1934): 117–21; Julius Bodensiek, "Editorielles: Deutschlands neue Kirchenverfassung," *KB* 77, no. 3 (January 20, 1934): 3–4; and Ralph Long, "Deutschland marschiert!," *KB* 77, no. 1 (January 6, 1934): 8–9.

⁷⁰ W. Ösch, "Deutschheidnische Strömungen," *CTM* 6 (October 1935): 732–39; and "Der Reichsbischof bei den Deutschen Christen," *LiH* 12, no. 27 (April 5, 1934): 6.

⁷¹ M., "Deutsche Gottesworte," *TQ* 33 (July, 1936): 207–08.

⁷² Helmreich, 186.

⁷³ G. C. Gast, "Church News: Peace in the German Church," *LStd* 93, no. 48 (November 30, 1935): 11–12; and "Die gegenwärtige Stand im deutschen Kirchenstreit," *KB* 79, no. 48 (November 28, 1936): 8–9.

⁷⁴ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 59 (December, 1935): 745–61; and "Church

branch to the Lutheran *Landeskirchen*, there was some confusion from the Americans as to the real nature of Kerrl's attempts to bring peace: *Dannevirke* tended to greet Kerrl's attempts with optimism, since he was willing to recognize and work with the intact churches;⁷⁵ meanwhile, an article that was printed in both *The Ansgar Lutheran* and the *Journal of the American Lutheran Conference* argued that bishop Marahrens was selling out to Kerrl in his compromise.⁷⁶

Overall though, the assessments of Kerrl were not very positive. When he rose to power, there were a number of American Lutheran writers who were concerned that he was really working to consolidate the power of the *Deutsche Christen* and to rein in the Confessing Front and the Confessional Church.⁷⁷ An article by Henry Smith Leiper, which was originally from *The Living Church* and reprinted in the *Lutheran Herald*, criticized the Confessional Church leaders for "the pathetic faith still held by many that Hitler intends to keep his promises to the church and that Herr Kerrl is a trustworthy leader basically interested in the Christian religion."⁷⁸ It became clearer and clearer over time that overall Kerrl was intent on trying to control the German churches.⁷⁹ Probably the single worst thing that Kerrl did in the eyes of the American Lutheran writers was his attempt to control the *Landeskirchen* via threatening to

Confusion in Germany," *LCmpn* 43 (December 14, 1935): 1571, 1582 this article was reprinted in *JALC* 1, no. 2 (February, 1936): 41–42.

⁷⁵ "Erklærer Fred i Kirkestriden," *DV* 57, no. 13 (March 31, 1937): 8; and Jens Holdt, "Indtryk fra Tysklands Kirke i Øjeblikket," *DV* 60, no. 13 (March 29, 1939): 5, 8.

⁷⁶ "Bishop Marahrens Recognizes the Nazi Philosophy," *AnL* 11, no. 42 (October 16, 1939): 1, 10; and "Bishop Marahrens Recognizes the Nazi Philosophy," *JALC* 4, no. 12 (December, 1939): 57–59.

⁷⁷ "Barth udvist af Tyskland," *DV* 55, no. 44 (October 30, 1935): 8; M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 61 (October, 1937): 637–40; and M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 62 (October, 1938): 634–35.

⁷⁸ Henry Smith Leiper, "Caesarism Advances in Hitlerland," *LH* 19 (December 31, 1935): 1322–23.

⁷⁹ Engelder, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Volkskirche oder Freikirche?," *CTM* 7 (March 1936): 230–31; M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 63 (January, 1939): 58–64; and "Church Confusion in Germany," *LCmpn* 43 (December 14, 1935): 1571, 1582 this article was reprinted in *JALC* 1, no. 2 (February, 1936): 41–42.

cut off funding to those who resisted the Nazi agenda.⁸⁰ Interestingly, there was one article, in *The Lutheran Witness*, that argued that this move by Kerrl was ultimately good because it would force a separation of the Church and State.⁸¹

Similar to their analysis of Müller, the Lutheran Periodicals in America took a look not only at Kerrl's leadership but also at his theology and much like Müller, they found Kerrl sorely lacking. Kerrl was criticized in some of the periodicals for various problems including unionism,⁸² works-righteousness,⁸³ claiming that the Church is not responsible for the care of souls,⁸⁴ and even for rejecting the deity of Christ.⁸⁵ A couple of the articles even went so far as to label Kerrl a pagan.⁸⁶

Theologians of the *Deutsche Christen* Movement

The other thing that made the *Deutsche Christen* movement so powerful was that it had some important theologians within the movement and who gave it theological heft. These men lent intellectual support to the movement as well as building up the theological side of things.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ See Chapter 5 for a full accounting of how this was perceived.

⁸¹ W. M. Ösch, "Church and State in Germany," *LW* 57 (February 8, 1938): 40.

⁸² M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 63 (April, 1939): 241–49.

⁸³ "Easter, 1937, In Germany," *Luth* 19, no. 29 (April 14, 1937): 4–5

⁸⁴ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 62, no. 6 (June, 1938): 369–75.

⁸⁵ "Bedenklich Verschärfung der kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland," *LiH* 15, no. 53 (September 30, 1937): 11; and "Berlin's Court of Law Honored," *NwL* 24 (September 12, 1937): 294–95.

⁸⁶ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 61 (April, 1937): 251–56; and Frederic Wenchel, "Nazi Germany and the Church II," *LW* 56 (November 16, 1937): 390.

⁸⁷ These men are the subject of Eriksen's work. Eriksen looks at the issue from a more political ground, hence the title *Theologians under Hitler*, and does not make the theological distinctions that the American Lutherans made. Eriksen addresses Emmanuel Hirsch, the theological heavyweight behind the "German Christians" and Gerhard Kittel, whose "instincts in 1933 were to side with the *Deutsche Christen*, who also believed in the 'historical hour.'" (Eriksen, 48) Kittel, while not a member of the movement, gave intellectual support of the movement through several anti-Semitic writings and speeches. Eriksen also includes in his work an analysis of Paul Althaus, however the American Lutherans perceived Althaus as a member and supporter not of the "German Christians" but of the Confessional Church, therefore Althaus will be addressed in Chapter 10 of this study with the other theologians of the Confessional Church.

The theology ranged from the establishment of *Völkisch* theology discussed in chapter 6 to a theological and historical support for anti-Semitic notions by the church.

Emmanuel Hirsch

Very possibly the brightest Lutheran theologian of the era was Emmanuel Hirsch. His insights into aspects of Luther are still valuable and influential in theological studies today.⁸⁸ However, he was also an ardent supporter of the Nazi party in thought and in action. Hirsch was one of the foremost thinkers in the *Völkisch* theology of the era.

There is little doubt that the American Lutheran writers had quite a bit of respect for Hirsch as a theologian. *The Lutheran Companion* in 1932 wrote of how Hirsch was a real leader in Lutheran theology in Germany, pointing to his role as an editor of the new German periodical *Faith and People; a Christian-German monthly*.⁸⁹ A number of his books also received very favorable reviews in the American Lutheran periodicals representing a broad range of perspectives.⁹⁰ Even when speaking of Hirsch's role in the *Deutsche Christen*, Michael Reu pointed out that Hirsch was a gifted scholar.⁹¹

The American Lutherans therefore looked at Hirsch as the theological power behind the *Deutsche Christen* and even Müller. The *Lutherischer Herold* even expressed some surprise that Hirsch and Friedrich Gogarten were now working together in the *Deutsche Christen* movement,

⁸⁸ For example, Hirsch's articles on Luther's preaching Emmanuel Hirsch, "Luthers Predigtweise" *Luther* 25 (1954): 1–23 and "Gesetz und Evangelium in Luthers Predigten" *Luther* 25 (1954): 49–60 are still the primary studies in this field of Luther studies.

⁸⁹ "With Lutherans in Other Lands: Germany," *LCmpn* 40 (February 27, 1932): 287.

⁹⁰ Review of *Der Römische Katholizismus und das Evangelium* by Emanuel Hirsch in Theo. Hoyer, *CTM* 3 (March 1932): 236–38; review of *Hilfsbuch zum Studium der Dogmatik* by Emanuel Hirsch in *KZ* 62 (September, 1938): 547; review of *Die Umformung des christlichen Denkens index Neuzeit* by Emanuel Hirsch in *KZ* 62 (September, 1938): 547–48; and review of *Das Alte Testament und die Predigt des Evangeliums* by Emanuel Hirsch in O. F. Nolde, *LCQ* 11 (January, 1938): 92–93.

⁹¹ M. Reu, "Aus dem kampf um das Bekenntnis in der Kirche Deutschlands," *KZ* 58 (September, 1934): 513–33.

since Hirsch opposed Gogarten's dialectic theology.⁹² The *Concordia Theological Monthly* expressed some surprise over how Hirsch then tried to argue that Luther actually was in favor of a uniting of Church and State.⁹³ Hirsch's emphasis on the German *Volk* and *Völkisch* theology was another area of concern for the American Lutherans.⁹⁴

Gerhard Kittel

Gerhard Kittel is probably best known for his work as editor of the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. In the American Lutheran periodicals of this time period, this work was reviewed more often than anything else save the commentary series by R. C. H. Lenski. This work was heralded as a great achievement, even one that brought together top scholars from all across the theological spectrum. When the eighth volume came out in 1938, the reviewer for the *Lutheran Church Quarterly* gushed: "Two more volumes are yet to follow. Then the greatest work that Biblical scholarship of our time has produced will be finished."⁹⁵

However Kittel also authored some rather anti-Semitic works, which gave theological and religious support for separating out the Jewish race from the church.⁹⁶ These works caused him to be a supporter of the Nazi regime and helped his cause within Nazi Germany.⁹⁷ However, for

⁹² "Ueber die theologischen und kirchlichen Zeitschriften in Deutschland," *LiH* 12, no. 13 (December 28, 1933): 11.

⁹³ Ösch, "Die 'Theologie' der Deutschen Christen, des Reichsbischofs und des Professors E. Hirsch," *CTM* 6 (September, 1935): 661–70.

⁹⁴ "Neue Erzählungen aus dem Verlag von F/ Berthlesmann – Emanuel Hirsch," *KB* 75, no. 36 (September 3, 1932): 18; M. Reu, "Aus dem Kampf um das Bekenntnis in der Kirche Deutschlands," *KZ* 58 (September, 1934): 513–33; and "Ueber die theologischen und kirchlichen Zeitschriften in Deutschland," *LiH* 12, no. 13 (December 28, 1933): 11.

⁹⁵ Review of *Theologische Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament* by Gerhard Kittel in H. Offermann, *LCQ* 11 (July, 1938): 309.

⁹⁶ C.f. Gerhard Kittel, *Kirche und Judenchristen* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933) and *Die Judenfrage* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933).

⁹⁷ Kittel is considered one of the quintessential theological supporters of Nazism, therefore was one of three theologians surveyed in Eriksen.

the most part the American Lutheran authors appear to either have been ignorant of Kittel's anti-Semitic works, or else they believed that they were not worth mentioning them to their readers.⁹⁸ The one exception was *Pastor's Monthly* which published a translation of the first part of Kittel's *Kirche und Judenchristen*.⁹⁹ This pamphlet argues that Jewish Christians are true Christians, but because they are not German, they should not be pastors of German churches. What is telling is that the translation is prefaced with: "We have made the following translation of a pamphlet by Dr. Kittel, because we believe it offers light on the troublesome Jewish question, a slant on the case that had not hitherto come to our attention."¹⁰⁰ So, it appears that there was no real alarm at Kittel's anti-Semitism.

Conclusions Regarding Views of the *Deutsche Christen*

When the American Lutheran writers looked at the problems that faced German Christianity, they saw the *Deutsche Christen* as the main problem. The *Deutsche Christen* were understood universally by the Americans as betraying historic Christianity into the hands of Nazism, and attempting to take the whole of the German churches with them. This group was recognized as tied to the Nazi party and aggressively trying to take control of the German churches. Whether the charge was liberalism, unionism, mixing the two kingdoms, neo-paganism, persecuting churches, warping theology, or anti-Semitism; the Lutheran writers in America saw the *Deutsche Christen* as guilty.

⁹⁸ This might be in part due to the fact that many of the American Lutherans also wrestled in some form with the "Jewish Question," albeit defining it in different ways. Also, Kittel's anti-Semitic works were never translated from the German, and the German language American Lutheran periodicals were the most sympathetic to anti-Semitism. Therefore those who would have been most offended by Kittel's writings may have been unaware of them, while those who were aware might not have been too troubled by them and therefore did not bring them to the attention of their readers. See chapter 7 above for a fuller account of the American Lutheran's struggles with the "Jewish Question."

⁹⁹ Gerhard Kittel, "The Church and the Jewish Christians," *PM* 12 (March, 1934): 177–181.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 177. It also should be noted that *PM* was one of the periodicals that were willing to print things that are more anti-Semitic, such as referring to Eastern Jews as "Kikes." See Chapter 7: p. 186, particularly n. 16, above.

As the *Reichsbischof*, Ludwig Müller was seen as the personification of all of these problems in the *Deutsche Christen*; he was rarely trusted by the American Lutherans and many good reasons were given for this lack of trust. In many ways his high-handed attempts to control the *Landeskirchen* were seen as endemic to the whole problem with power in Germany. The American Lutheran writers were also greatly concerned because Müller's theology was loose at best, and often diverged from their understanding of Lutheranism, and even basic Christianity.

Hanns Kerrl was then seen in a somewhat better light, as he was not perceived to be as directly attacking the churches in Germany. However, as time went on, they became more and more concerned that Kerrl had no better designs for the Church in Germany than Müller. And while there was not as much scrutiny placed on Kerrl as there was on Müller, his theology was also examined and found seriously wanting.

There was less direct analysis of the *Deutsche Christen* theologians than there was of the political leadership of the movement. This would at least partly be due to the fact that the theologians were not high profile figures in the *Reichskirche* and also were not seen as having directly attacked the church in the same way that Müller and Kerrl had. Emanuel Hirsch was seen as the primary theologian of the movement; this caused some struggles for the American Lutherans, because Hirsch was not only a Lutheran, but he was also a brilliant theologian. However, despite these very persuasive merits, there was still concern that his theology had strayed from where it should be.

When the Lutheran writers in America analyzed the *Deutsche Christen* they saw a great threat to Christianity. There was some disagreement over the nature of the threat and it was seen to shift as time went on; yet this is not surprising since there were different forms of *Deutsche Christen* over time. In many ways the *Deutsche Christen* were seen as the embodiment of all that was wrong with the churches in Germany.

Reflecting the theological and ecclesiological nature of the American Lutheran perspective, it is significant to note that Müller and the *Deutsche Christen* were generally seen in a worse light than Hitler was. Here again, Hitler was sometimes seen as a decent leader who was unaware of the abuses being done to the churches in his name. This stands in direct opposition to the way that people view this era today: where Hitler is understood to be the root of the problem and figures like the *Deutsche Christen* were merely tools that he tried to use to control the churches.¹⁰¹ While this inconsistency seems bizarre by today's standards, in truth it appears consistent with the American Lutherans' views of that era that the theological issues were of greater importance than the political issues. This is also consistent with their admonitions that the Two Kingdoms must be kept separate. As theologians they confined themselves to the churchly realm rather than the political. This also points to the shrewd approach that Hitler took in ruling, by which he got virtually everything he wanted, yet managed to keep his own fingerprints off of the process.

This almost unanimous opinion found the periodicals of the American Lutherans regarding the *Deutsche Christen* was not found in their analysis of the Confessing Front. The *Deutsche Christen* marked the extreme limit of the various American Lutheran opinions regarding what was acceptable doctrinally. However, the Confessing Front represented the middle ground over which the American Lutherans were divided, as will be seen in the following chapter.

¹⁰¹ Hitler's behind the scenes efforts to control and squash the German churches are best explained in Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933–1945*.

CHAPTER I E

THE CO FESSI G FRO T

Standing in opposition to the *Deutsche Christen* was a movement that morphed throughout the 1930s. This movement was somewhat more consistent in membership than the various *Deutsche Christen* groups, but there still was a very fluid membership in this group. To further confuse matters, early on this movement took on a number of different names. First it was known as the “Young Reformers” or “Young Reformation” movement, then it became known as “Gospel and Church” for the 1933 church election. It then morphed into the “Pastor’s Emergency League” following the *Deutsche Christen* takeover of the *Reichskirche* and most of the *Landeskirchen*. This group ultimately became known as the Confessing Front following the Barmen Synod. Even with this there were a number of different variations on the title, including the “Confessing Church” and the “Confessional Movement.” For simplicity and consistency this study will use the term the Confessing Front since it was the term that was most commonly used in the American Lutheran publications and using the term “Confessing” helps to distinguish it from the more Lutheran “Confessional” movement to be discussed in the next chapter.

This movement made the most direct and forceful objections to the *Deutsche Christen* and their agenda for the church. This movement went so far as to declare that the *Reichskirche* leadership under Müller had violated the constitution of the German Evangelical Church and therefore was no longer to be followed and furthermore declared itself to be the actual ruling body of the church. The movement even established its own seminaries in attempts to circumvent the Nazi indoctrination that was taking place at most theological schools in Germany.

Early Forms of the Confessing Front

The “Young Reformation Movement,” being the first attempt to respond to the changing conditions in Germany, was the least organized and therefore the hardest to define. It was a relatively short lived group; therefore it did not garner much attention in American Lutheran circles. However, when the group was reported on, it was viewed rather favorably by the American Lutheran writers.¹ In particular, it was noted that this group was attempting to revive the German churches, not politically like the *Deutsche Christen*, but with “most emphasis upon the importance of an *inward, spiritual* reformation.”² M. Hulsemann in the *Kirchenblatt* even argued that while the group, when it worked in the church election as the “Gospel and Church” movement, was made up of Lutherans and Reformed, this was understandable given the needs of the moment to defend themselves from the *Deutsche Christen*.³

Following the church election, Martin Niemöller used the mailing list of the “Young Reformation Movement” in order to form the “Pastor’s Emergency League.”⁴ This group was then the first direct resistance group within the churches now controlled by the *Deutsche Christen*. The readers of the American Lutheran periodicals were then given a very positive image of this new group, as it was depicted as those that were standing up against the abuses of the *Deutsche Christen*.⁵

¹ Daniel Nystrom, “The Cross and the Swastika,” *LCmpn* 42 (February 24, 1934): 231–33; “Die ‘Deutsche Evangelische Reiskirche’ (Fortsetzung),” *LiH* 11, no. 34 (May 25, 1933): 8–11; “Kundgebung der Jungreformatrischen Bewegung in Deutschland,” *LiH* 12, no. 8 (November 23, 1933): 14–15.

² “Observing the Times: The ‘New Reformation’ in Germany,” *LStd* 92, no. 14 (April 7, 1934): 3 emphasis original.

³ M. Hulsemann, “Die politische und religiöse Gestalt des dritten Reiches (Schluss),” *KB* 77, no. 9 (March 3, 1934): 7–8.

⁴ Helmreich, 146.

⁵ “Der Pfarrernotbund,” *LiH* 12, no. 15 (January 11, 1934): 11; “Hitler’s Totalitarian State,” *LH* 18 (February 27, 1934): 196; and “Pensionierung von Pfarrer Niemöller,” *LiH* 12, no. 28 (April 12, 1934): 11.

The Barmen Declaration

The most famous and influential document that the Confessing Front created was the Barmen Declaration of May 1934. This has been considered by many to be the German Church's one great public stance against Hitler and Nazism.⁶ However, it is really not aimed at Hitler and the Nazis; it simply takes issue with the *Deutsche Christen* attempts to subjugate the German church to the civil government. This document was hailed by a number of American Lutherans at its signing, but then as time went on there was more and more questioning of its theological content. Some of the writers, such as Reu, had a change of heart over the Barmen Declaration in this regard. While some other writers offered immediate praise of the Declaration; some, such as the Missouri Synod writers, took a more slow, cautious and critical look at it.

At the time of the Synod of the Prussian Union at Barmen, when the Barmen declaration was drafted and accepted by not only Prussian Unionists, but also Lutherans and Reformed theologians as well, the event was being watched by a few of the Lutheran periodicals in America. As they were struggling to make sense of what was going on in Germany, the writers

⁶ Not only is the Barmen Declaration seen as the great statement of resistance by the Church in Germany, but it also has set a model for later church interactions with the state in other continents. There have been several important symposia and collections of writings on this including *Barmer Theologische Erklärung 1934–1984: Geschichte – Wirkung – Defizit: Vorträge und Podiumsgespräch des Barmen-Symposiums in Arnoldshain vom 9. bis 11. April 1983* (Arnoldshainer Konferenz und der Evangelischen Akademie Arnoldshain) ed. Wilhem Hüffmeier and Martin Stöhr (Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag, 1984); *The Barmen Confession: Papers from the Seattle Assembly* (Symposium held at the University of Washington, Seattle, sponsored by the American Academy of Religion and others, held April 26–29, 1984) ed. Hubert G. Locke, Toronto studies in Theology; vol. 26 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1986); Robert T. Osborn, ed., *The Barmen Declaration as a Paradigm for a Theology of the American Church*, Toronto studies in Theology; vol. 63 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1991); and James Y. Holloway, ed., *Barth, Barmen and the Confessing Church Today*, Toronto studies in Theology; vol. 28 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1992). The Barmen Declaration is also used as a model for establishing a theology of the state in Eberhard Jüngel, *Christ, Justice and Peace: Toward a Theology of the State*, trans. D. Bruce Hamill and Alan J. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992). Wolfgang Huber compares it with the theological stand in South Africa in the Kairos Document in Wolfgang Huber, "The Barmen Declaration and the Kairos Document: On the Relationship between Confession and Politics," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 75 (June 1991): 48–60.

were largely taking a wait and see approach. At first, they were unsure of what this was going to bring, but were hopeful that it would be a good move for Christianity in Germany.⁷

A Lutheran Confession?

There was some confusion that arose in America regarding the theological nature of the Barmen Declaration.⁸ Early on it was hailed as a “Lutheran” document which demonstrated the strong Lutheran theological resistance to the Nazi regime. Later, the American Lutherans started to question this more; as it began to be clear to them that the Barmen Declaration was really more Calvinist in its theology, since it came essentially from the pen of Karl Barth.

Some of the earliest printings of the Barmen Declaration in American Lutheran periodicals as well as articles about it hailed this as a good document. A couple of the American Lutheran editors praised it as being an essentially Lutheran document. Especially, there was praise for it in that it was seen as rightly distinguishing between Church and State in good Lutheran fashion.⁹

Other, later voices in the American Lutheran periodicals were more critical of the basic theology of the Barmen Declaration. A couple of the writers took issue with the inherently Calvinistic theology in the Barmen Declaration due to its being written by Karl Barth. They believed that Barth, in the Barmen Declaration, confused Law and Gospel as well as having confused Sanctification with Justification.¹⁰ Some of this difference of opinion could be from

⁷ August Zich, “Hitlerism,” *NwL* 21 (June 24, 1934): 197; and M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland: Die Bekenntnisfront wird breiter und tiefer zugleich,” *KZ* 58 (July 1934): 446–48.

⁸ For discussions of the Lutheran churches in Germany and their reception of and relation to Barmen see Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, Georg Kretschmar, and Carsten Nicolaisen, eds., *Die lutherischen Kirchen und die Bekenntnissynode von Barmen: Referate des Internationalen Symposiums auf der Reissburg 1984* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984); and Kurt Nowak and others, eds., *Barmen und Das Luthertum* (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1984).

⁹ M. Reu, “Aus dem Kampf um das Bekenntnis in der Kirche Deutschlands,” *KZ* 58 (September 1934): 513–33; A. Zich, “The Barmen Free Synod,” *NwL* 21 (September 16, 1934): 290–91; and “Evangelical Principles,” *Luth* 16, no. 45 (August 9, 1934): 7 this was reprinted in *LStd* 92, no. 35 (September 1, 1934): 17.

¹⁰ W. Ösch, “Bekenntnissynoden,” *CTM* 6 (November 1935): 835–48; and M. Reu, “The Present Church

taking the time to better examine the Barmen Declaration, as well as possibly talking with other Lutherans and reevaluating it. This is particularly seen in the case of Michael Reu, who first saw the Barmen Declaration as Lutheran in 1934, but by 1937 he was very critical of it, especially its bearing Barth's unsound theology.¹¹

Several of the other writers did not see the Barmen Declaration as a decidedly Lutheran document; however it was still seen as a good, Christian confession. For many of these writers, the primary concern was that it was a rejection of the abuses and bad theology of the *Deutsche Christen*. Likewise, there was some happiness that Lutherans, Reformed and Unionists were willing to work together in rejecting this inherent problem in the Christians circles in Germany.¹²

An Example of Unionism

Another concern that arose in the American Lutheran circles regarding the Barmen Declaration was the possibly unionistic tone of the document. This was the concern that Hermann Sasse had from the beginning. It must be remembered that the Synod at Barmen was really a synod of the Church of the Old Prussian Union, which had invited Lutherans and Calvinists to participate in the synod and the subsequent ratifying of the Barmen Declaration.

For a number of the American Lutheran writers, the biggest problem with the Barmen Declaration was that it was a document that was to be a statement of faith for Lutherans, Reformed and Unionists altogether. The argument was that by creating a new confession, which does not address the historic confessional differences, the differences were really being papered

Situation in Germany-III," *Luth* 19, no. 51 (September 15, 1937): 12–13.

¹¹ Reu spoke of the Declaration as Lutheran in M. Reu, "Aus dem Kampf um das Bekenntnis in der Kirche Deutschlands," *KZ* 58 (September 1934): 513–33, but then in M. Reu, "The Present Church Situation in Germany-III," *Luth* 19, no. 51 (September 15, 1937): 12–13 he finds it to be unsound.

¹² Max Monsky, "Zur Kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland," *LiH* 12, no. 47 (August 23, 1934): 4–6; "Barth udvist af Tyskland," *DV* 55 (October 30, 1935): 8; and "Across the Desk: Martin Niemoeller on Trial," *Luth* 20, no. 20 (February 16, 1938): 15.

over. In essence then, the new basis for the Confessing Front was now the Barmen Declaration, and not the historic beliefs of the different churches.¹³ An article in the September 1938 issue of the *Concordia Theological Monthly* speaks volumes just with its title: “Ein ernstes Wort gegen die Barmer Unionsplattform” (A Serious Word against the Barmen Union Platform).¹⁴ A couple of other writers pointed out that the problem with the Barmen Declaration was that it was now a confession that had been put over the other historic confessions of the church and therefore was seen as more important than the Lutheran Confessions within the Confessing Front.¹⁵ Related to this, Reu expressed thankfulness that the Bavarian church, while having been affected by Barth and holding to the Barmen declaration, still in no way would allow the Barmen Declaration to overshadow the Lutheran Confessions.¹⁶

The Dahlem Front

The Confessing Front took a more radical turn at its meeting at Berlin-Dahlem on October 19-20, 1934. Here the Confessing Front declared that the *Reichskirche* leadership under Bishop Ludwig Müller had forfeited its authority and therefore was no longer the legitimate leadership of the German churches. For some this move was too radical, and there was a subsequent loss of some support for the Confessing Front. This more radical group became known to some as the “Dahlem Front.” For the Lutheran observers in America, this change was not always clearly noted. However, their views of this movement can be traced not only to references to the

¹³ “Ein evangelisches Bekenntnis in den Kirchlichen Wirren der Gegenwart,” *LiH* 12, no. 37 (June 14, 1934): 12–13; Engelder, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Ein lauter Protest gegen die Union,” *CTM* 5 (December 1934): 959–68; and Engelder, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Der Unionismus der lutherischen Landeskirche,” *CTM* 9 (January 1938): 63–65.

¹⁴ J. T. Mueller, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Ein ernstes Wort gegen die Barmer Unionsplattform,” *CTM* 9 (September 1938): 708–09.

¹⁵ Arndt, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Die Stellung der Bekennenden Kirche verurteilt,” *CTM* 7 (December 1936): 945–46; and “Ein Besuch in Berlin und einige Nachrichten über die kirchliche Lage in Deutschland,” *DL* 93 (October 12, 1937): 344–45.

“Dahlem Front” as well as later meetings of the group, but also to the dates of the events to which they were responding.

When the American Lutheran writers reported on the events of the Dahlem meeting of the Confessing Front, at first they were somewhat optimistic. They were especially pleased that the Confessing Front stood up to the *Reichskirche* leadership, especially August Jäger, Ministerial Director from the Ministry of Science, Culture and Education. In this capacity, Jäger worked with Müller and often served as Müller’s point man for attacks on church resistance. In 1934 Müller and Jäger attempted to take control of the intact Lutheran churches of Württemberg and Bavaria through the house arrest of bishops Wurm and Meiser. Therefore when the Confessing Front met at Dahlem and stood up to the Müller government, in defense of these Lutheran bishops, the American Lutherans were thankful. The Americans praised the Confessing Front for establishing an independent church government due to the abuses by the *Reichskirche* government.¹⁷ In much the same way, statements out of the Confessing Front, that the official *Reichskirche* leadership was not to be followed, both at Dahlem and later were echoed in America.¹⁸

Despite this enthusiasm, much of the American interest seemed to wane as the Confessing Front moved on. While there were many reports of the Barmen meeting, and a number of reports on the Dahlem meeting, there were only two reports on the meeting of the Confessing

¹⁶ M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 61 (October 1937): 637–40.

¹⁷ “Die Spaltung im Deutschen Protestantismus,” *KB* 77, no. 47 (November 24, 1934): 7–8; Arthur v. d. Thur., “Bekennnissynod gegen Nationalsynod,” *LiH* 12, no. 49 (September 6, 1934): 3–4; and M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 59 (January 1935): 52–61.

¹⁸ “Nachrichten über die kirchliche Lage in Deutschland,” *LiH* 13, no. 4 (October 25, 1934): 12–13; “Erklärer sig fri fra nazistisk Herredømme,” *DV* 54, no. 43 (October 24, 1934): 5; and “Church News: Nazi Government Bans Religious Broadcasts,” *LStd* 97, no. 31 (August 5, 1939): 19–20.

Front in Oeynhausen in February of 1936.¹⁹ This lack of interest is possibly tied to the fact that the American Lutherans seemed more and more convinced that the Confessing Front, and especially the more radical Dahlem Front, was not really Lutheran in its theology.

The concern for the American Lutherans was here again predominately over whether or not the Confessing Front was Lutheran. As seen above, this was a major concern over the Barmen Declaration. Then when the Dahlem meeting announced that it was going to set up an independent government, only one periodical, the *Kirchenblatt*, was hopeful that this would actually pave the way for a more Lutheran church in Germany.²⁰ Then, from 1935 on the American Lutheran perception was solidly on the side that the Confessing Front was not Lutheran, but Reformed.²¹ This is illustrated when Michael Reu informed the readers of the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* in January 1936 that the Nazis had shut down the two Confessing Front seminaries; in his report Reu assured his readers that these seminaries were not Lutheran.²² This actually reflected what was going on in Germany since during this same period there was a falling out between the leaders of the intact Lutheran *Landeskirchen* and the Confessing Front, which ultimately led to the formation of the independent Luther Council in March of 1936.²³

Key Leaders in the Confessing Front

The Confessing Front was an eclectic group, made up largely of those who were from “Broken Churches” in Germany. As a result, they were made up of Lutherans, Reformed and

¹⁹ “Die kirchliche Lage Deutschlands in reformierter Beleuchtung,” *LiH* 14, no. 46 (August 13, 1936): 12–13; and M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 59 (August 1935): 507–12.

²⁰ “Die Spaltung im Deutschen Protestantismus,” *KB* 77, no. 47 (November 24, 1934): 7–8.

²¹ Th. Buehring, “Kirchliche Nachrichten: Lehre, Gestalt und Ordnung der Lutherischen Kirche: Erklärung des „Deutschen Lutherischen Tages“ in Hannover,” *KB* 78, no. 35 (August 31, 1935): 11; “Die kirchliche Lage Deutschlands in reformierter Beleuchtung,” *LiH* 14, no. 46 (August 13, 1936): 12–13; and “Bekanntistreu oder ‚Konfessionalismus‘?,” *LiH* 14, no. 51 (September 17, 1936): 13.

²² M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 60 (January 1936): 63–64.

members of the Prussian Union. While this group endeavored to set up a provisional church government, they never really had any real power other than that of persuasion. Nevertheless, there were several key leaders that came to the attention of the readers of the Lutheran periodicals in America.

There were relatively few leaders of the Confessing Front who garnered much attention from the American Lutheran writers. Otto Dibelius, who was superintendent of the *Landeskirche* of Brandenburg until he was ousted by the church elections of 1933 and retired by the Nazi government, then became a leader in the Confessing Front. He was only mentioned a few times; however these were positive depictions of him as an individual who stood up to the abuses of the authorities.²⁴

Probably the most interesting, by way of absence, was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. If one today thinks of the church resistance during the Nazi era and of Lutherans within this movement, Dietrich Bonhoeffer often comes to the fore.²⁵ However, in all of the periodicals studied, there was only one mention of Bonhoeffer, and this was a quote of his from 1935 when he argued that the Confessing Front was fighting neo-paganism in the German Church.²⁶

²³ Helmreich, 198.

²⁴ Arthur von der Thur., "Der Umbau der Kirche im Dritten Reich," *LiH* 12, no. 4 (October 26, 1933): 4–5; "Church Confusion in Germany," *LCmpn* 43 (December 14, 1935): 1571, 1582; and "News and Notes: Resistance in God's Name," *AnL* 9, no. 26 (June 28, 1937): 2.

²⁵ The works on Bonhoeffer and his role in the resistance are legion, a few works on this are Eberhard Bethge, *Bonhoeffer, Exile and Martyr*, (New York: Seabury, 1975); Theodore J. Kleinhaus, *Till the Night Be Past: The Life and Times of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002); and Craig, J. Slane, *Bonhoeffer as Martyr: Social Responsibility and Modern Christian Commitment*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004). Bonhoeffer's role was even popularized in the movies: *Bonhoeffer: a Life of Challenge*, VHS, directed by John F. Boogaert (Baltimore: Mass Media Ministries, 1978); *Bonhoeffer, Agent of Grace*, VHS, directed by Eric Till (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999); and *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Pacifist, Nazi Resister*, DVD, directed by Martin Doblmeier (New York First Run/Icarus Films, 2003).

²⁶ "Wo steht der Antichrist?," *LiH* 14, no. 4 (October 24, 1935): 13.

Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, Jr.

When the *Reichskirche* was being formed and the *Deutsche Christen* were pushing for Müller to be named *Reichsbischof*, the non *Deutsche Christen* church leaders were in need of finding an alternate candidate that would be widely respected and to find that candidate quickly. Their choice was Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, Jr., who was widely respected as an able preacher and leader of the Bethel Inner Mission Center in Bielefeld. His work there with the mentally handicapped was well known and respected by Lutherans and Reformed alike. His service at the Bethel Inner Mission Center had gained him respect not only in Germany, but also in the American Lutheran circles as well.²⁷ There were even a couple of tributes in the *Kirchenblatt* to his father, Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, Sr., who had founded the Bethel Inner Mission Center.²⁸

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that when Bodelschwingh was elected *Reichsbischof* it was generally considered a good thing in the American Lutheran journals that reported on his election.²⁹ However, most of the periodicals did not mention Bodelschwingh's term as *Reichsbischof*, probably because it was such a short tenure that before they could mention his being elected, he had resigned. The *Kirchenblatt* and the *Lutherischer Herold*, which were the two publications who kept their readers best informed about Bodelschwingh's short tenure, also reprinted his inaugural letter to the German pastors.³⁰ There was only really one concern voiced

²⁷ "Die Kirche in Deutschland," *LiH* 11, no. 38 (June 22, 1933): 12–13; "Deutschlands Reichsbischof," *KB* 76, no. 27 (July 8, 1933): 5–8; and "Nachrichten über die kirchliche Lage in Deutschland," *LiH* 13, no. 4 (October 25, 1934): 12–13.

²⁸ Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, "Fruchtbar und Frisch," *KB* 78, no. 20 (May 18, 1935): 5–6; and "Ein Brief Vater Bodelschwinghs an seine Missionare," *KB* 80, no. 25 (June 19, 1937): 7.

²⁹ "Deutschlands Reichsbischof," *KB* 76, no. 27 (July 8, 1933): 5–8; Daniel Nystrom, "The Cross and the Swastika," *LCmpn* 42 (February 24, 1934): 231–33; and "Ein Flugblatt von Doktor von Bodelschwingh trägt die Ueberschrift: Ein Wort an alle, die unsere Deutsche Evangelische Kirche lieben," *LiH* 11, no. 44 (August 3, 1933): 11–12.

³⁰ von. Bodelschwinghs, "Stunde der Erneuerung," *LiH* 11, no. 38 (June 22, 1933): 4–5; and "Grusswort des

over Bodelschwingh, and that was that he was a little confessionally weak, but even when voicing this, Michael Reu noted that he has met Bodelschwingh and found him to be a man of God.³¹ Then a couple of the periodicals denounced the actions of the *Deutsche Christen* as dirty and mean when they forced Bodelschwingh to resign.³²

For a short period following his resignation from the office of *Reichsbischof*, Bodelschwingh served as a leader and mouthpiece for the fledgling Confessing Front. His work in this role was also well received in the Lutheran periodicals in America, as he was seen as a leader in the defense of truth and one who was attempting to protect the Church from the various wrongs of the *Deutsche Christen*.³³ It was also reported in the *Lutheran Standard* that Bodelschwingh was one of the primary recipients of a cablegram from 15,000 citizens of Chicago who were encouraging the faithful pastors in Germany to stand firm.³⁴ However, Bodelschwingh's leadership in the Confessing Front was also seen as short lived, as all of the articles that spoke of him were printed in either 1933 or 1934, with the only exceptions being the two articles honoring his father.

Martin Niemöller

The one person who best embodied the Confessing Front to the American Lutheran writers was Martin Niemöller.³⁵ He was a leader in the Young Reformation movement, the founder of

Reichsbischofs von Bodelschwingh.," *KB* 76, no. 26 (July 1, 1933): 6–7.

³¹ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland, Kirchenbildung," *KZ* 57 (July 1933): 447–48.

³² "Warum Deutsche Christen Gegen D. V. Bodelschwingh?," *LiH* 11, no. 41 (July 13, 1933): 12; and M. Hulsemann, "Die politische und religiöse Gestalt des dritten Reiches," *KB* 77, no. 8 (February 24, 1934): 8–9, 14.

³³ "Nachrichten über die kirchliche Lage in Deutschland," *LiH* 13, no. 4 (October 25, 1934): 12–13; "Die erste deutsche evangelische Nationalsynode," *ELGB* 68 (December 10, 1933): 393–94; and M. Hulsemann, "Die politische und religiöse Gestalt des dritten Reiches (Schluss)," *KB* 77, no. 9 (March 3, 1934): 7–8.

³⁴ "Observing the Times," *LStd* 92, no. 2 (January 13, 1934) 4

³⁵ For a contemporary look at Niemöller see Basil Miller, *Martin Niemoeller: Hero of the Concentration Camp*, 5th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1942). For further study of Martin Niemöller, see Hanfried Krüger, ed.,

the Pastors' Emergency League, as well as the key leader in the Dahlem Front. Naturally, the Americans recognized this and often referred to Niemöller as the head of the movement and in fact the embodiment of the movement. This was reflected also in the fact that when Niemöller was arrested, his persecution was often seen as indicative of the persecution of the entire Confessing Front.³⁶

Niemöller's work in establishing and leading the Pastors' Emergency League garnered a fair bit of attention from the American writers. They upheld him as a leader in this movement that was pointing out the numerous abuses of the *Deutsche Christen* and defending Christianity from their attacks.³⁷ In this regard, he was especially praised in a couple of publications for his steadfast refusal to give in to pressure, including when the government attempted to force him into retirement.³⁸

However, the later reviews of Niemöller's work in the Confessing Front were more mixed. When *The Lutheran* and the *American Lutheran* looked back at Niemöller's role in the Barmen declaration and the ensuing work of the Confessing Front, they looked at him as doing good, albeit diverging from the more Lutheran Confessional Church.³⁹ However, there were several writers who were more troubled about the direction that Niemöller's Confessing Front took

Bis an das Ende der Erde: Ökumenische Beiträge zum 70. Geburtstag von D. Martin Niemöller, (München: C. Kaiser, 1962); Dietmar Schmidt, *Martin Niemöller: eine Biographie*, (Stuttgart: Radius-Verlag, 1983); and James Bentley, *Martin Niemöller, 1892–1984*, (New York: Free Press, 1984).

³⁶ This was examined in depth in Chapter 5 above.

³⁷ Engelder, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Zustände und Vorkommnisse in der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche," *CTM* 5 (May 1934): 405–07; M. Hulsemann, "Die politische und religiöse Gestalt des dritten Reiches (Schluss)," *KB* 77, no. 9 (March 3, 1934): 7–8; and "Andre Lande: Hitlers Biskop sætter sig op som Diktator," *DV* 54, no. 2 (January 10, 1934): 1.

³⁸ "Pensionierung von Pfarrer Niemöller," *LiH* 12, no. 28 (April 12, 1934): 11; and "Ingen fri Religion i Tyskland," *DV* 54, no. 39 (September 26, 1934): 1.

³⁹ "Across the Desk: Martin Niemoeller on Trial," *Luth* 20, no. 20 (February 16, 1938): 15; and "Across the Desk: The Situation in Germany," *Luth* 21, no. 35 (May 31, 1939): 13; and "Lutherans Blamed for Loss of Democracy," *AmL* 20, no. 7 (July 1937): 3–4.

following the Dahlem meeting. This followed along with the split between the Confessing Front and the Confessional Church and Niemöller was therefore seen as the leader of the more radical, and not very Lutheran, Confessional Front.⁴⁰ August Zich also wrote in the *Theologische Quartalschrift* that Niemöller was a weak Lutheran who was defending the historic Confessions of the church, but not defining whether they be the Lutheran, the Reformed, or both.⁴¹ However, Zich doesn't blame Niemöller for his being no Luther, because "This man did not sit at the feet of Walther, or Hoenecke, or Pieper."⁴²

Overall, though, the perceptions of Niemöller were positive. Due to his strong stands against the *Deutsche Christen* and his ultimate arrest and imprisonment, he was often seen as a hero of the faith. In praising Niemöller, a number of the articles not only called him a hero, but were also quick to point out that he was a Lutheran pastor.⁴³ *The Ansgar Lutheran* even printed a biography of Niemöller by Pastor Martin E. Carlson boldly entitled: "Martin Niemöller, Hero of Faith,"⁴⁴ and the *Lutheran Standard* celebrated the fact that a movie was being made of Niemöller's life.⁴⁵ Several of the editors also took it upon themselves to make sure that Niemöller was able to speak for himself to their readers by publishing statements and a sermon by Niemöller.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ August Zich, "The Church in Germany," *NwL* 24 (March 28, 1937): 100–01; and E. C. Fendt, "Die religiöse Lage in Deutschland," *KB* 78, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 5–7; and the English form of this article, "The Religious Situation in Germany," which was printed in *LH* 19 (October 29, 1935): 1056–57; *LCmpn* 43 (November 2, 1935): 1382–84; *LStd* 93, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 6–7; and *JALC* 1, no. 1 (January 1936): 59–62.

⁴¹ Aug. F. Zich, "Martin Niemoeller," *TQ* 35 (January 1938): 12–33.

⁴² *Ibid.* 25.

⁴³ "Ingen fri Religion i Tyskland," *DV* 54, no. 39 (September 26, 1934): 1; Allan A. Hunter, "Niemoller's Church: God's Sounding Board," *JALC* 4, no. 2 (February 1939): 67–72; and Sverre Norborg, "The Lutheran World Council and Hitlerism: A Weak Point," *LH* 21 (August 17, 1937): 809.

⁴⁴ Martin E. Carlson, "Martin Niemöller, Hero of Faith," *AnL* 10, no. 39 (September 26, 1938): 1, 9–10.

⁴⁵ "Church News: Film of Niemoeller's Life Will be Made," *LStd* 97, no. 9 (March 4, 1939): 20.

⁴⁶ "Editorials and Comments: Have Nazis Won War on Church?," *AnL* 9, no. 46 (November 16, 1936): 3; W. B. S., "Kirchliche Nachrichten: Ein Wort von Niemöller" *KB* 81, no. 36 (September 3, 1938): 19; "Ein Brief von

Not only was Niemöller publically praised for his work, but also his writings were extolled by the Lutheran writers in America. His book, *From U-Boat to Pulpit*, received numerous positive reviews.⁴⁷ Niemöller's collection of sermons in *Here Stand I!*, were also praised, and the title's very direct reference to Luther's bold statement at the Diet of Worms was certainly appreciated by the Lutheran reviewers as well.⁴⁸

Karl Barth

The one individual that cast the greatest theological shadow over the Confessing Front was Karl Barth. Barth was the primary author of the Barmen Declaration and was often the figure that gave the greatest theological weight to the movement.⁴⁹ Of course, Barth as the innovator of the neo-orthodoxy movement played a huge role in theology in the early 20th century outside of his role with the Confessing Front. Likewise, Barth's theology garnered a large amount of interest both positive and negative from the American Lutherans.⁵⁰

Pastor Niemöller," *LiH* 16, no. 1 (October 7, 1937): 13; and C. C. Kloth, trans., "Pastor Niemöller's Last Sermon," *AnL* 9, no. 41 (October 11, 1937): 1, 7.

⁴⁷ Review of *Vom U-Boot zur Kanzel* by Martin Niemöller in *LiH* 13, no. 7 (November 15, 1934): 16; reviews of *From U-Boat to Pulpit* by Martin Niemöller in *AnL* 9, no. 50 (December 13, 1937): 8; *WLM* 46 (January 1938): 320; John C. Romer, *AnL* 10, no. 17 (April 25, 1938): 5; and Wm. Rodemann, *LStd* 96, no. 48 (November 26, 1938): 19–20.

⁴⁸ John Aberly, "Notes and Studies: Religion in the Third Reich," *LCQ* 11 (October 1938): 385–95; as well as reviews of *Here Stand I!* by Martin Niemöller in Pilger, *LStd* 96, no. 10 (March 5, 1938): 20; and M. R. Hamsher, *LCQ* 11 (April 1938): 222–23.

⁴⁹ For studies of Barth's theology and his role in the Confessing Front see Rolf Ahlers, *The Community of Freedom: Barth and Presuppositional Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989); Dietrich Braun, "Karl Barths Texte zur Barmer Theologischen Erklärung," *Evangelische Theologie* 45 (January-February 1985): 81–91; Douglas S. Bax, "The Barmen Theological Declaration: Its Historical Background," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 47 (June 1984): 12–20.

⁵⁰ Barth was only starting to be noticed by the English Speaking world. It appears that only one work of Barth's had been translated prior to 1933: Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (Boston, Chicago: Pilgrim, 1928). Then 1933 saw something of an explosion of translations of Barth's works with four of his works being translated: Karl Barth, *Theological Existence Today: (a Plea for Theological Freedom)*, trans. Richard Birch Hoyle (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1933); Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1933); Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, trans. H. J. Stenning (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1933); and Karl Barth, and Eduard Thurneysen, *Come, Holy Spirit*, trans. George W. Richards, Elmer George Homrighausen, and Karl Julius Ernst (New York: Round Table, 1933).

Within the purview of American Lutheranism there was a wide spectrum of opinion over whether or not Barth's theology was in fact orthodox. For some of the periodicals, Barth was a welcome response to and rejection of theological liberalism. These periodicals included *The Ansgar Lutheran*,⁵¹ the *Augustana Quarterly*,⁵² *The Lutheran*,⁵³ and the *Journal of the American Lutheran Conference*.⁵⁴ On the other side were a number of periodicals who maintained that while Barth may have moved away from strict liberalism, he was still too infected with Historical Criticism and a liberal view of the Bible; these periodicals included: *Theological Forum*,⁵⁵ *Dannevirke*,⁵⁶ *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*,⁵⁷ *Der Lutheraner*,⁵⁸ *The American Lutheran*,⁵⁹ *The Northwestern Lutheran*,⁶⁰ and the periodical that was by far Barth's biggest critic, the *Concordia Theological Monthly*.⁶¹ Significantly, these divisions are close to those found in the debate over

⁵¹ "Editorials and Comments: The Church's Struggle in Europe," *AnL*, no. 11 (March 15, 1937): 3, 7–8; "Karl Barth and the Church Struggle in Germany," *AnL* 9, no. 33 (August 16, 1937): 1, 7–8; and "Karl Barth and the Church Struggle in Germany," *AnL* no. 34 (August 23, 1937): 1,6

⁵² Review of *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik, I, Die Lehre vom Wort Gottes* by Karl Barth in Bertil Erling, *AQ* 13 (July 1934): 280–83; Oscar N. Olson, "The Position of the Church in the present World Situation," *AQ* 14 (January 1935): 40–53; and review of *Things that Are Caesar's* by Paul Banwell Means in Oscar N. Olson, *AQ* 15 (April 1936): 174–75.

⁵³ "Lutheranism in Germany," *Luth* 15, no. 14 (January 5, 1933): 2

⁵⁴ Albert A. Jagnow, "Karl Barth: Theologian," *JALC* 3, no. 10 (October 1938): 7–18; Albert A. Jagnow, "Karl Barth: Theologian," *JALC* 3, no. 11 (November 1938): 8–23; and Lawrence S. Price, "The State of the Church," *JALC* 4, no. 8 (August 1939): 40–55.

⁵⁵ Herman A. Preus, "Recent Developments and Trends within the Church," *TF* 6 (April 1934): 66–87.

⁵⁶ C. P. Højbjerg, "C.J. Scharling: Barthianisme II," *DV* 54, no. 2 (January 11, 1933): 3; and C. P. Højbjerg, "Kritisk Barthianisme," *DV* 54, no. 48 (November 28, 1934): 2.

⁵⁷ Otto W. Heick, "Existenz=Philosophi und Formgeschichte in der neueren Theologie Deutschlands," *KZ* 62 (November 1938): 641–55.

⁵⁸ W. Ösch, "Synodaltagung der Deutschen Freikirche in Berlin," *DL* 90 (August 7, 1934): 261–62

⁵⁹ Review of *A Conservative Looks at Barth and Brunner* by Holms Rolston in *AmL* 16, no. 9 (September 1933): 22; review of *Karl Barth's Idea of Revelation* by Peter Halman Monsma in O. P. Kretzmann, *AmL* 22, no. 5 (May 1939): 23; and O. P. Kretzmann, "The State of Visible Christendom: VII – Sören Kirkegaard and Karl Barth," *AmL* 22, no. 10 (October 1939): 8–9.

⁶⁰ August Zich, "Karl Barth," *NwL* 23 (January 19, 1936): 22.

⁶¹ J. T. Mueller, "Pensees uber den Barthianismus," *CTM* 3 (July 1932): 498–504; W. Kemner, "Die Theologie Karl Barths (Dialektische Theologie)," *CTM* 5 (November 1934): 817–29; and J. T. Mueller, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Die 'deutsche Bekenntnisfront von den Grundsätzen der Reformation gewichen.',"

Just War doctrine, with *The Ansgar Lutheran*, the *Augustana Quarterly*, and *The Lutheran* all being pacifist or at least giving more credence to a rejection of Just War doctrine, while *Dannevirke*, *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, *Der Lutheraner*, *The American Lutheran*, *The Northwestern Lutheran*, and the *Concordia Theological Monthly* all accepted it. The only exceptions were the *Journal of the American Lutheran Conference* which supported Just War doctrine and the *Theological Forum* which did not address the issue, but was published by the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, which opposed Just War doctrine in the *Lutheran Herald*.⁶² These differing evaluations of Barth's theology colored how the different periodicals then saw Barth's work in the Confessing Front.

Barth's leadership of the Confessing Front until his removal from office as a professor at the University of Bonn helped to give the movement its theological direction. In many ways, while Niemöller was seen as the *de facto* head of the Confessing Front, Barth was understood to be the theological head of the movement.⁶³ Not surprisingly, Barth's leadership role was noted on this side of the Atlantic and in some ways colored the American Lutherans' views of the whole movement.

When the Confessing Front first started as the Young Reformation Movement and moved into the Pastor's Emergency League, it did not have a set theological basis. The theological grounding for the movement was established with the Barmen Declaration. It was well known in the American Lutheran circles that the Barmen Declaration was Barth's and therefore they understood Barth to be the theological heart of the movement.⁶⁴

CTM 8 (February 1937) 149–50.

⁶² See Chapter 4 above.

⁶³ W. Bodamer, "Die kirchlichen Zustände in Deutschland (Schluss)," *ELGB* 71 (October 18, 1936): 328–31; and August Zich, "Church Conditions in Germany," *NwL* 22 (March 3, 1935): 68–69.

⁶⁴ "Barth udvist af Tyskland," *DV* 55, no. 44 (October 30, 1935): 8; M. Reu, "The Present Church Situation in

The next thing that Barth did that got the American Lutherans' attention was when he refused to take the Loyalty Oath, and was subsequently fired from his position at the University of Bonn. Most of the American Lutheran periodicals voiced outrage that the Nazi government was willing to do this to Barth.⁶⁵ However, some of the periodicals that took a more negative view of Barth gave more credence to the Nazi charges against Barth or otherwise cast him in a negative light when speaking of his dismissal.⁶⁶ A couple of later articles further argued that Barth was not to be viewed as a martyr for his dismissal, rather he had taken a too political stance within the church and paid for it.⁶⁷ The assumption that Barth was too political was then reaffirmed in the minds of some in 1939, when he argued that the Czech soldiers who fought the Nazis were fighting for God.⁶⁸

While Karl Barth was never the symbol of church resistance and the persecuted in the same way that Martin Niemöller was, he still was understood as playing an important role in the resistance. Barth's role in standing up to the *Deutsche Christen* and the Nazi government was praised by many of the American Lutherans. Often Barth's leadership was depicted to the readers of the American Lutheran periodicals as a heroic stand for Christianity against the forces

Germany-III," *Luth* 19, no. 51 (September 15, 1937): 12–13; and Engelder, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Der Unionismus der lutherischen Landeskirche," *CTM* 9 (January 1938): 63–65.

⁶⁵ "Karl Barth Dismissed," *AnL* 7, no. 4 (January 22, 1934): 2; G. C. Gast, "Church News: Karl Barth Expelled by Nazis," *LStd* 93, no. 46 (November 16, 1935): 12; "Andre Lande: Karl Barth afskediget," *DV* 54, no. 4 (January 24, 1934): 1; and M., "D. Karl Barth," *TQ* 32 (April 1935): 145.

⁶⁶ August Zich, "Karl Barth," *NwL* 23 (January 19, 1936): 22; Arthur v. d. Thur., "Gewalt und Gewissen," *LiH* 13, no. 16 (January 17, 1935): 4–5; and "Karl Barth in den Ruhestand versetzt," *KB* 78, no. 31 (August 3, 1935): 11.

⁶⁷ J. T. Mueller, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Gottesdienste oder politische Kampfversammlungen?," *CTM* 9 (June 1938): 469; and W. Bodamer, "Die kirchlichen Zustände in Deutschland (Schluss)," *ELGB* 71 (October 18, 1936): 328–31.

⁶⁸ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 63 (March 1939): 190–92; Julius Bodensieck, "Editorielles: Karl Barth ist längst erledigt," *KB* 82, no. 10 (March 11, 1939): 5; and W. Bodamer, "Die kirchlichen Verhältnisse in Deutschland (Fortsetzung)," *ELGB* 74 (July 9, 1939): 216–19.

of paganism.⁶⁹ Even *Der Lutheraner* praised Barth as “a man full of bravery, and compellingly clear vision” in his leadership,⁷⁰ which is remarkable considering the fact that the Missouri Synod publications were generally the most critical of Barth. After Barth’s removal from office and subsequent exodus from Germany, he was still seen as a valuable authority on the *Kirchenkampf* and a moral leader of the group. Several of Barth’s books on the *Kirchenkampf* were praised in the American Lutheran periodicals; including *Trouble and Promise in the Struggle of the Church in Germany*,⁷¹ *God in Action*,⁷² and *The Church and the Political Problem of Our Day*.⁷³ A couple of periodicals even printed some of Barth’s writings on the subject. *The Ansgar Lutheran* printed Barth’s introduction to Arthur Frey’s book *Cross and Swastika*.⁷⁴ *The Lutheran Companion* and *The Ansgar Lutheran* both printed an article by Barth entitled: “Germany’s Religious Issue Is a Universal One”.⁷⁵

While there was much praise for Barth’s bold leadership, there were many concerns as well because Barth was, after all, a Calvinist and appeared to be leading the Confessing Front in a decidedly Calvinistic direction. A number of American Lutheran writers warned that Barth was not Lutheran, but Calvinist and that his influence on the Confessing Front was turning the Lutherans involved in it to a more Calvinist theology.⁷⁶ Here again the greatest critic was

⁶⁹ “The Struggle for Religious Liberty in Germany,” *LH* 19 (February 26, 1935): 197; “Nachwort,” *LiH* 16, no. 24 (March 17, 1938): 8–10; and “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 59 (February 1935): 117–28.

⁷⁰ W. Ösch, “Synodaltagung der Deutschen Freikirche in Berlin,” *DL* 90 (August 7, 1934): 261–62

⁷¹ Review of *Trouble and Promise in the Struggle of the Church in Germany* by Karl Barth in H. D. Hoover, *Luth* 20, no. 48 (August 31, 1938): 20.

⁷² Aage Møller, “Kristi Kirche,” *DV* 56, no. 15 (April 8, 1936): 4–5.

⁷³ Daniel Nystrom, “The Spectator: A Review of Current News and Opinion,” *LCmpn* 47 (December 14, 1939): 1576.

⁷⁴ Karl Barth, “Cross and Swastika,” *AnL* 11, no. 3 (January 16, 1939): 9.

⁷⁵ Karl Barth, “As Others See It: Germany’s Religious Issue Is a Universal One,” *LCmpn* 45 (August 5, 1937): 994; and Karl Barth, “Germany’s Religious issue Is a Universal One,” *AnL* 9, no. 42 (October 18, 1937): 8.

⁷⁶ Aug. F. Zich, “Martin Niemoeller,” *TQ* 35 (January 1938): 25; review of *God in Action* by Karl Barth in

Concordia Theological Monthly, which regularly published articles critiquing various aspects of Barth's Reformed theology, as well as its impact on the Confessing Front.⁷⁷ Coming out of Barth's Calvinism, several American Lutheran writers warned that Barth was in fact attacking Lutheranism along with the *Deutsche Christen*.⁷⁸

There was a fear that Barth and his theology would end up enveloping the Lutheran churches in Germany and as a result lead to the virtual end of Lutheranism in Germany. Here the American Lutheran writers pointed to the perceived unionism in the Confessing Front and they believed that this could lead to an end of pure Lutheranism. For some of these writers, the problem was not just one of a general movement in the direction of unionism in the Confessing front, but in fact a direct outgrowth from Barth's theology and leadership.⁷⁹

Conclusions Regarding Views of the Confessing Front

While the American Lutheran writers all agreed that the *Deutsche Christen* were nothing but trouble for the Church in Germany, their perceptions of the Confessing Front was more varied. They gave the strongest support to the movement at the beginning, but then this support leeched out over time. In the beginning they saw the movement as being either Lutheran, or at least supportive of Lutheranism; however as it become more and more clear that the movement was turning more Reformed in its theology and unionistic in nature, they withdrew their support.

John C. Mattes, *Luth* 18, no. 42 (July 16, 1936): 21; and review of *Here We Stand* by Hermann Sasse in Edward P. Nelson, *AQ* 18 (January 1939): 75–79.

⁷⁷ W. Ösch, "Bekenntnissynoden," *CTM* 6 (November 1935): 835–48; F. Kreiss, "Present-Day Problems of Lutheranism: as Viewed by the Lutheran World Convention," *CTM* 7 (January 1936): 14–22; and Th. Engelder, "The Principles and Teachings of the Dialectical Theology (concluded)," *CTM* 7 (June 1936): 401–11.

⁷⁸ L. Fuerbringer, "Nachrichten aus Deutschland," *DL* 90 (May 29, 1934): 180–81; and reviews of *Karl Barths Index der verbotenen Bücher* by Werner Elert in *KZ* 58 (June 1934): 374–75; and Bodensieck, *KB* 78, no. 20 (May 18, 1935): 12–13.

⁷⁹ Review of *The Church and the Churches* by Karl Barth in P. E. K., *CTM* 8 (February 1937): 157–58; J. L. Neve, "Die lutherische Kirche Deutschlands und die Union," *LiH* 13, no. 25 (March 21, 1935): 5–6; and W. Bodamer, "Die kirchlichen Verhältnisse in Deutschland (Fortsetzung)," *ELGB* 74 (July 9, 1939): 216–19.

In this aspect, it is clear that how Lutheran they perceived the Confessing Front to be affected how favorably they assessed the movement.

This is also reflected in their opinions of the various leaders of the movement. The greatest support was for Bodelschwingh and Niemöller who were Lutheran pastors. Both were criticized for being weak in their Lutheran identity, however. Bodelschwingh was seen in a more unanimously positive light, probably because he withdrew from leadership before the Confessing Front was seen as turning more Calvinist. Niemöller was seen particularly as a mixed blessing. His leadership and willingness to stand up to the *Deutsche Christen* and *Reichskirche* government was praised; yet as he took the leadership of the increasingly radical Dahlem Front, American Lutheran support for him waned.

The support for Barth was far more divided than that for Niemöller, because of his Calvinist theology. Barth was in some ways supported as one who fought the abuses of the worst of the *Deutsche Christen* and of liberal theology; however some were also upset that he still rejected the inerrancy of the Bible. Barth was in some ways seen as good due to his stands for Christianity and in other ways as bad because he was seen as a threat to pure Lutheranism in Germany. Here the opinions of Barth were often influenced by how orthodox his dialectic theology was perceived to be. Those that saw Barth as theologically positive, if not perfect, tended to be more willing to praise Barth's work in the Confessing Front. On the other side, those who were most critical of Barth's theology were also more critical of his work in the Confessing Front.

The American Lutheran's perceptions of the Confessing Front hinged on their perceptions of how orthodox or Lutheran the movement was. While there was always some praise for the group for standing up to the neo-pagans and other problems in the church, those who saw the movement as less than Lutheran had little praise for it. It is especially interesting how the

American Lutheran assessments of the Confessing Front turned more and more against it as it was seen as moving more away from Lutheranism to Calvinism or unionism. This shows how the American Lutheran writers' concerns over pure theology were foremost, and that assessments of political and social aspects of the *Kirchenkampf* were then seen through this theological lens.

Many scholars have criticized the Lutherans for dividing the Confessing movement between the Confessing Front and the Confessional Church (which will be evaluated in the following chapter), charging that the Lutherans did not understand the gravity of the situation and split the church resistance for lesser reasons. If this charge holds true, then the American Lutherans would have been equally guilty as they were willing to show support for the Confessing Front only so long as they found it amenable to Lutheranism. It appears that the American Lutherans really did not recognize the full extent of the danger with which the Christian churches in Germany were threatened. While they were concerned about the preservation of pure Christianity in Germany, as well as presumably elsewhere, they rarely seemed to grasp the full danger that all of the Christian churches in Germany might have ultimately been destroyed if Hitler and the Nazis had their way. One therefore might conjecture that if the American Lutherans better understood the full scope of the threat, they might have been more sympathetic to the Confessing Front. However, even here their insistence that pure doctrine is the only thing that can save the church might still have kept them from full endorsement of this movement, but it still probably would have increased their appreciation of what the Confessing Front was doing.

CHAPTER TE

THE CO FESSIO AL CHURCH

While there is a disagreement between scholars over whether the Confessional Church was a split off from the Confessing Front or separate movement that sometimes cooperated with the Confessing Front, this study will treat the two as separate entities. However, it should also be noted that the Lutherans in America were not always clear about what was the nature of the relationship between these two groups. By the establishment of the *Lutherrat* in 1936, the division between the two camps in Germany was expressly clear, but prior to that there were some questions in the minds of the Americans.

The Confessional Church differed from the Confessing Front in a couple of key ways. The most obvious is that the Confessional Church was a purely Lutheran movement with an emphasis on remaining true to the Lutheran Confessions, hence the term “Confessional.” The Confessional Church also had a key ecclesiastical difference from the Confessing Front. While the Confessing Front came from the midst of the “broken churches” where the *Deutsche Christen* had gained control; the Confessional Church was found in the “intact churches” where the *Deutsche Christen* never gained local control. This meant that the Confessional churches had a different outlook and somewhat different concerns than the Confessing Front. Therefore, the Confessional Church was more willing to work with moderate Nazi officials, such as Kerrl, so long as their autonomy remained intact.

Unlike the *Deutsche Christen* who were seen as the epitome of all that was wrong in the German Churches, and the Confessing Front which was seen as a mix of good and bad, the

Lutheran writers in America almost universally approved of and supported the Confessional Church. The only ones who were rather quick to criticize the Confessional Church were those of the Synodical Conference who were in fellowship with the Lutheran Free churches in Germany. The most vocal in this respect was the Wisconsin Synod, which argued that the Lutheran *Landeskirchen* were Lutheran in name only and the only real Lutherans in Germany were in the Saxon Free Church.¹ The Synodical Conference also was concerned that the Lutheran *Landeskirchen* were all corrupted because of their wrong mixing of Church and State.² However, the majority of the American Lutheran publications and denominations were supportive of the Confessional Church.

From the very beginning of Hitler's reign, the American Lutheran publications praised the various movements in Germany that were attempting to renew a Lutheran consciousness. The *Lutherischer Herold* was particularly vocal in 1933 in informing its readers about the "Young Reformation" and "Young Lutherans" movements in Germany.³ Then during the earlier stages of the Confessing Front, when they met at Barmen and worked together, the American Lutheran writers often pointed to the involvement of the Confessional leaders as a means of giving validity to the movement as a whole.⁴

¹ W. Bodamer, "Die kirchlichen Zustände in Deutschland," *ELGB* 71 (October 4, 1936): 310–13; W. Bodamer, "Die kirchlichen Zustände in Deutschland (Schluss)," *ELGB* 71 (October 18, 1936): 328–31; and August Zich, "The Church in Germany," *NwL* 24 (March 28, 1937): 100–01.

² See Chapter 3 above.

³ "Die 'Deutsche Evangelische Reiskirche' (Fortsetzung)," *LiH* 11, no. 34 (May 25, 1933): 8–11; "Unstimmigkeiten in der deutschländischen Kirchenbewegung," *LiH* 11, no. 39 (June 29, 1933): 8–10; and "Ueber die theologischen und kirchlichen Zeitschriften in Deutschland," *LiH* 12, no. 13 (December 28, 1933): 11.

⁴ M. Reu, "Aus dem Kampf um das Bekenntnis in der Kirche Deutschlands," *KZ* 58 (September 1934): 513–33; H. Koch, "Zur kirchlichen Lage in Deutschland. 3," *DL* 91 (December 24, 1935): 421–23; and E. C. Fendt, "Die religiöse Lage in Deutschland," *KB* 78, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 5–7; and the English form of this article "The Religious Situation in Germany," which was printed in *LH* 19 (October 29, 1935): 1056–57; *LCmpn* 43 (November 2, 1935): 1382–84; *LStd* 93, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 6–7; and *JALC* 1, no. 1 (January 1936): 59–62.

Before the break with the Confessing Front, the American Lutherans watched, and were cheered by, the work of the *Lutherischer Rat* or “Lutheran Council” in Germany and it was often seen as the best of the resistance to the *Deutsche Christen*. The writers widely heralded the very formation of this movement as a good thing.⁵ Likewise, the American Lutheran periodicals proudly broadcast to their readers that the churches of the *Lutherischer Rat* had announced that the Müller government of the *Reichskirche* had overstepped its bounds and therefore they were pulling out of the *Reichskirche*.⁶

Then in 1936, following the Confessing Front meeting at Oeynhausen, the Lutheran bishops of Hanover, Bavaria, and Württemberg joined with the Lutheran brotherhood councils of Saxony, Mecklenburg and Thuringia to form the *Lutherrat* or “Luther Council” thereby making a complete break with the Confessing Front.⁷ While many have criticized this move for weakening the church resistance;⁸ for the Lutheran writers and editors in America, it was a move to be celebrated. The American Lutherans did not see this move as weakening resistance, rather they pointed to how this group boldly resisted the *Deutsche Christen*.⁹ Ralph Long delivered an address to the Lutheran Brotherhood Convention, July 18, 1939 at Minneapolis, MN that was

⁵ W. Ösch, “Der Höhepunkt des Kirchenkampfes,” *CTM* 6 (December 1935): 881–88; Th. Buehring, “Kirchliche Nachrichten: Lutherische Kirche in Deutschland,” *KB* 78, no. 14 (April 6, 1935): 15; and E. C. Fendt, “Die religiöse Lage in Deutschland,” *KB* 78, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 5–7; and the English form of this article “The Religious Situation in Germany,” which was printed in *LH* 19 (October 29, 1935): 1056–57; *LCmpn* 43, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 1382–84; *LStd* 93, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 6–7; and *JALC* 1, no. 1 (January 1936): 59–62.

⁶ Arthur H. Kuhlman, “Church News,” *LStd* 92, no. 44 (November 3, 1934): 16–19; M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 59 (December 1935): 745–61; and August Pieper, “Die Zustände in der protestantischen Kirche Deutschlands,” *TQ* 31 (October 1934): 270–78.

⁷ Hemreich, 198.

⁸ This examples of this view can be seen in Karl Barth, *The German Church Conflict* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965); Cochrane; and Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich*.

⁹ Lars W. Boe, “What I Saw in Germany,” *LStd* 93, no. 4 (January 26, 1935): 12–13; “Den tyske Kirkestrid,” *DV* 57, no. 11 (March 17, 1937): 5; and Paul H. Andreen, “From Luther to Hitler,” *LCmpn* 43 (April 13, 1935): 454–58 this article was also printed in *TF* 7 (April, 1935): 90–107.

then printed in *The Ansgar Lutheran* and *The Lutheran* in which he forcefully argued in the defense of the Confessional Church:

Men also find fault with our Lutheran bishops because they have taken a more moderate course, or the middle-of-the-road way. We hear criticism that they have not come out definitely for the church and definitely against the government. It must be said to their credit that those Lutheran bishops have fought a valiant fight, using a different technique. They have seen fit to combat this influence in a different way entirely and I think it is unjust and uncharitable to say that they are not loyal to their God or loyal to their Church. They are suffering too. We should offer our prayers in their behalf that they might stand fast.¹⁰

What made this movement especially valuable in the eyes of the American Lutherans is that it was understood as a bold stand to preserve and rejuvenate true Lutheranism in Germany.¹¹ Even the Missouri Synod's *Concordia Theological Monthly* referred to the *Lutherrat* as those "which are endeavoring to bring back confessionalism into European Lutheranism."¹² A common term the American Lutheran writers used for this movement, due to their holding to the Lutheran Confession, was the "*Bekanntistreue*."¹³ Due to the Confessional nature of the *Lutherrat*, the Americans also celebrated when more German churches joined the movement.¹⁴

¹⁰ Ralph H. Long, "The Religious Situation in Germany," *AnL* 11, no. 33 (August 14, 1939): 5; and Ralph H. Long, "Conditions that Exist in Europe," *Luth* 21, no. 47 (August 23, 1939): 9.

¹¹ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 61, no. 3 (March 1937): 188–92; "President Knubel in Berlin," *Luth* 20, no. 1 (October 6, 1937): 6; and "Kirkestriden i Tyskland," *DV* 57, no. 15 (April 14, 1937): 8.

¹² W. G. Polack, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: German Action against the Confessional Church," *CTM* 10 (February 1939): 151.

¹³ "Landesbischof D. Marahrens im Kampf um die Lutherische Kirche," *LiH* 13, no. 5 (November 1, 1934): 12–13; "Bekanntistreue oder ‚Konfessionalismus?‘," *LiH* 14, no. 51 (September 17, 1936): 13; and E. C. Fendt, "Die religiöse Lage in Deutschland," *KB* 78, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 5–7; and the English form of this article "The Religious Situation in Germany," which was printed in *LH* 19 (October 29, 1935): 1056–57; *LCmpn* 43 (November 2, 1935): 1382–84; *LStd* 93, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 6–7; and *JALC* 1, no. 1 (January 1936): 59–62.

¹⁴ "Church News: Lutheran Solidarity in Germany," *LStd* 94, no. 33 (August 15, 1936): 12; P. H. Buehring, "Kirchliche Nachrichten: Anschluss der Braunschweigischen Landeskirche an den Rat der Evang. Lutherischen Kirche Deutschlands," *KB* 80, no. 10 (March 6, 1937): 19.

The Intact Lutheran *Landeskirchen* their Leaders

The Confessional Church was based in several of the Lutheran *Landeskirchen* where the Lutheran bishops remained in power. Since these were the churches of the German *Landeskirchen* that were in fellowship and communication with many of the Americans, this group was a primary source of information on the events in Germany. Likewise, these men were often hailed as heroes in America for their stands not only against the *Deutsche Christen* but also in favor of Lutheranism. For the most part, these bishops were held up in America as faithful leaders who held to the Lutheran tradition and did not waver in the face of persecution.¹⁵ In particular, the writers exalted the fact that when Müller and Jäger attempted to have Wurm and Meiser removed, the bishops stood firm and won.¹⁶ Lars Boe went so far as to declare: “Men like Bishops Meiser, Marahrens, and Wurm have taken a stand, the ultimate consequences of which will mean everything to the spiritual and intellectual life of Germany and of Christendom as a whole.”¹⁷

Bishop August Marahrens of Hanover

A key figure not only in Germany, but also in world Lutheranism was Bishop August Marahrens of Hanover. Marahrens served as Bishop of Hanover from 1925 and also as President of the Lutheran World Convention from 1935 to 1945. This gave Marahrens a very visible standing before the Lutherans in America. Marahrens survived a number of attempts by the

¹⁵ Lars W. Boe, “Impressions of Germany,” *AnL* 7, no. 53 (December 31, 1934): 4–7; E. C. Fendt, “Die religiöse Lage in Deutschland,” *KB* 78, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 5–7; and the English form of this article “The Religious Situation in Germany,” which was printed in *LH* 19 (October 29, 1935): 1056–57; *LCmpn* 43 (November 2, 1935): 1382–84; *LStd* 93, no. 44 (November 2, 1935): 6–7; and *JALC* 1, no. 1 (January 1936): 59–62; and Paul H. Andreen, “From Luther to Hitler,” *LCmpn* 43 (April 13, 1935): 454–58 this article was also printed in *TF* 7 (April 1935): 90–107.

¹⁶ August Pieper, “Der neue Dienst in der neuen Kirche Deutschlands,” *TQ* 31 (October 1934): 293–95; and M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 59 (January 1935): 52–61.

¹⁷ Lars W. Boe, “What I Saw in Germany,” *LStd* 93, no. 4 (January 26, 1935): 13 also printed in Lars W. Boe, “Impressions of Germany,” *AnL* 7, no. 53 (December 31, 1934): 4–7.

Deutsche Christen to have him removed from office. Marahrens appears to have been somewhat slow in first recognizing the full danger represented by the *Deutsche Christen* but in the end stood fast to keep the Hanoverian church in its Lutheran heritage.¹⁸

Marahrens was seen by the American Lutherans as an important leader in the churches in Germany. His role as an early leader in the Confessing Front was noted time and again.¹⁹ The readers of the *Lutheran Standard* were also told when the Confessing Front Seminaries were shut down that one of those seminaries had been in a house that Marahrens had bought.²⁰ Yet, even during this time, he was generally seen as leading those who were trying to remain true to the Lutheran Confessions.²¹ Marahrens' leadership then with the *Lutherrat* was even more important in the eyes of the American Lutheran writers.²²

Marahrens' leadership was recognized by a couple of the Lutheran church bodies in America. The first came when the 1934 meeting of the United Lutheran Church in America sent greetings and encouragement to Marahrens and Meiser to continue to stand up for true Lutheranism in the midst of the *Kirchenkampf*.²³ The *Kirchenblatt* and the American Lutheran Church also kept close contact with Marahrens. They also sent a letter of encouragement to

¹⁸ Green, *Lutherans against Hitler*, 300–08.

¹⁹ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 59 (March 1935): 190–91; "Die Spaltung im Deutschen Protestantismus," *KB* 77, no. 47 (November 24, 1934): 7–8; and "The Struggle for Religious Liberty in Germany," *LH* 19 (February 26, 1935): 197.

²⁰ G. C. Gast, "Church News: German Seminaries Closed," *LStd* 93, no. 50 (December 14, 1935): 10.

²¹ "Die Bekenntnisgemeinschaft der evangelisch=lutherischen Landeskirche Hannovers," *LiH* 12, no. 37 (June 14, 1934): 13; "Landesbischof D. Marahrens im Kampf um die Lutherische Kirche," *LiH* 13, no. 5 (November 1, 1934): 12–13; and "Die Spaltung im Deutschen Protestantismus," *KB* 77, no. 47 (November 24, 1934): 7–8.

²² "Germany is Facing Church Problem," *LH* 22 (January 18, 1938): 53–54; "Kirkestriden i Tyskland," *DV* 57, no. 15 (April 14, 1937): 8; and "Church News: Lutheran Solidarity in Germany," *LStd* 94, no. 33 (August 15, 1936): 12.

²³ Arthur H. Kuhlman, "Church News: To Our Lutheran Brethren in Germany," *LStd* 92, no. 48 (December 1, 1934): 17.

Marahrens, and the *Kirchenblatt* then printed his reply.²⁴ Then when Marahrens visited the United States his address was reported on, as well as his reactions to America following his visit.²⁵ There were also some attempts to defend Marahrens' honor in the greater Christian environment. The issue that especially brought out defenses of Marahrens was when in 1939 the Archbishop of Canterbury issued an open letter calling for prayers for world peace and laying blame for growing hostilities at least partially at the feet of the German churches. Therefore, when Marahrens wrote a letter of response, defending the German churches and insisting that they are in fact praying for peace, a couple of the American periodicals reprinted Marahrens' letter and included praise for his response.²⁶

The one area of Marahrens' leadership that was up for debate in the American Lutheran periodicals was his willingness to have a close relationship with the Nazi state. For some, this was seen as understandable, since the German *Landeskirchen* had been in this close of relationship with the government for centuries, and they believed that Marahrens was keeping the church independent of state interference in its teachings.²⁷ Meanwhile, an article printed in both the *Ansgar Lutheran* and the *Journal of the American Lutheran Conference* accused Marahrens of selling out to the Nazi worldview because he was willing to work out a compromise with Kerrl that accepted Nazi philosophy so long as it didn't impinge on religion.²⁸

²⁴ Julius Bodensieck, "Editorielles: Bischof Marahrens' Antwort," *KB* 78, no. 6 (February 9, 1935): 3.

²⁵ Julius Bodensieck, "Editorielles: Auch ein Bischof hat eine Mutter," *KB* 79, no. 45 (November 7, 1936): 5; and Julius Bodensieck, "Editorielles: Marahrens' Amerikaeindrücke," *KB* 80, no. 3 (January 16, 1937): 3.

²⁶ "Ein Brief von Landesbischof Marahrens," *LiH* 17, no. 39 (July 6, 1939): 11–12; and "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 63 (September 1939): 568–76.

²⁷ Daniel Nystrom, "The Spectator: A Review of Current News and Opinion," *LCmpn* 44 (October 24, 1936): 1357; and "Across the Desk: The Situation in Germany," *Luth* 21, no. 35 (May 31, 1939): 13.

²⁸ "Bishop Marahrens Recognizes the Nazi Philosophy," *AnL* 11, no. 42 (October 16, 1939): 1, 10 and reprinted in *JALC* 4, no. 12 (December 1939): 57–59.

Bishop Hans Meiser of Bavaria

Hans Oswald Meiser was elected bishop of Bavaria in May 1933 and worked hard to preserve the Bavarian church's Lutheran identity. He was subsequently attacked repeatedly by the *Deutsche Christen* and Nazi forces. The most blatant was an attempt by the *Deutsch Christen* under Müller and Jäger to remove him from office in May 1934 in which he was also placed under house arrest. Meiser remained steadfast and the people of Bavaria supported him with protests, letters, and other statements of support until the Nazis were forced to back down and restore him to office. Even after this, Meiser received pressure and survived further attempts to remove him from office.²⁹

Because of his steadfast stand against the *Deutsche Christen*, and Müller in particular, the American Lutheran writers tended to see Meiser as the best church leader in Germany. Meiser was revered in many American Lutheran periodicals as a real leader of true Lutheranism in Germany.³⁰ The *Lutherischer Herold*, in particular, celebrated Meiser's election as bishop of Bavaria and then his early leadership.³¹ Meiser's hosting of the Annual Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Convention in 1934 in Bavaria helped to bring this new bishop into the American Lutheran spotlight.³² John A. Morehead even exalted Meiser in the *Lutheran Standard* in January of 1935 saying:

²⁹ Green, *Lutherans against Hitler*, 311–23.

³⁰ "The Struggle for Religious Liberty in Germany," *LH* 19 (February 26, 1935): 197; "Die Spaltung im Deutschen Protestantismus," *KB* 77, no. 47 (November 24, 1934): 7–8; and E. E. Ryden, "A Stranger Abroad: Munich: Birthplace of the New Germany," *LCmpn* 44 (February 22, 1936): 232–35, 239.

³¹ "Landesbischof von Bayern," *LiH* 11, no. 35 (June 1, 1933): 5; and "Ueber die kirchliche Lage in Deutschland," *LiH* 12, no. 27 (April 5, 1934): 8–11.

³² John A. Morehead, "Annual Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Convention 1934," *AnL* 7, no. 52 (December 24, 1934): 14–15; John A. Morehead, "Looking at World Lutheranism," *LStd* 93, no. 1 (January 5, 1935): 17–18; and Lars W. Boe, "Impressions of Germany," *AnL* 7, no. 53 (December 31, 1934): 4–7 which was also printed as "What I Saw in Germany," *LStd* 93, no. 4 (January 26, 1935): 12–13.

The wise and brave leadership of Bishop Meiser and his associates in behalf of loyalty to the confession in the maintenance of the freedom and integrity of the Church in spiritual matters has in reality made the headquarters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bavaria a veritable center of Lutheran Church life in Germany.³³

The other thing that thrust Meiser into the focus of the American Lutheran readers was Meiser's removal from office and house arrest, as well as his subsequent reinstatement due to the enormous popular support he received from the people of Bavaria. This made Meiser an immediate champion of Lutheranism who was seen as standing firm in the face of oppression.³⁴ The fact that Meiser's removal, arrest, and reinstatement happened so shortly before the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Convention only made this all the more vivid for the Americans.³⁵ Meiser was then held up as a hero before the readers of a couple of Lutheran periodicals in America.³⁶

Several of the American Lutheran church bodies did more than just admire Meiser from afar; they directly interacted with him in several ways. The United Lutheran Church in America at its convention in October 1934 resolved to send greetings and encouragement to Meiser as well as Marahrens.³⁷ *The Ansgar Lutheran* and *Kirchenblatt* both printed letters from Meiser for their readers.³⁸ Julius Bodensieck appears to have been particularly connected to Meiser, as he

³³ John A. Morehead, "Looking at World Lutheranism," *LStd* 93, no. 1 (January 5, 1935): 17–18.

³⁴ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 59 (January 1935): 52–61; "The Church People of Germany In Revolt," *LH* 18 (October 30, 1934): 956; "Die Spaltung im Deutschen Protestantismus," *KB* 77, no. 47 (November 24, 1934): 7–8.

³⁵ John A. Morehead, "Annual Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Convention 1934," *AnL* 7, no. 52 (December 24, 1934): 14–15; John A. Morehead, "Looking at World Lutheranism," *LStd* 93, no. 1 (January 5, 1935): 17–18; and Lars W. Boe, "Impressions of Germany," *AnL* 7, no. 53 (December 31, 1934): 4–7 which was also printed as "What I Saw in Germany," *LStd* 93, no. 4 (January 26, 1935): 12–13.

³⁶ N. C. Carlsen, "From the Lutheran World Convention II," *AnL* 8, no. 47 (November 25, 1935): 3–4; Julius Bodensieck, "Editorielles: Bischof Dr. Has Meiser von Bayern: Furchtlos und Treu!," *KB* 77, no. 52 (December 29, 1934): 5–6.

³⁷ Arthur H. Kuhlman, "Church News: To Our Lutheran Brethren in Germany," *LStd* 92, no. 48 (December 1, 1934): 17.

³⁸ "Bishop Meiser's Tribute to Dr. Morehead," *AnL* 9, no. 26 (Jun. 29, 1936): 2; and Julius Bodensieck,

reported on Meiser more than most, and kept the readers of the *Kirchenblatt* informed about Meiser's visit to the United States in 1936.³⁹

The most important criteria that the American Lutherans used to support Meiser were his strong Lutheran identity and his insistence on holding to the Lutheran Confessions. Many of the writers depicted the *Landeskirche* of Bavaria as a shining light of Lutheran identity in Germany.⁴⁰ Meiser was often specifically credited with helping to keep a robust adherence to the Lutheran Confessions in Bavaria in the midst of the struggles in Germany.⁴¹ A perfect example of the great confidence that many in America had in Meiser's Lutheran instincts can be seen in a statement by Sverre Norborg in the *Lutheran Herald*: "Still one is thoroughly convinced that when fundamental issues are concerned, Lutheran confessors like Dr. Dibelius and Dr. Meiser will be able to split the fog of the church politics of Dr. Kerrl."⁴²

The American Lutheran writers further cheered when the Bavarian Lutheran Church responded forcefully to the abuses by Müller and Jäger by withdrawing from the *Reichskirche*. A number of the periodicals reprinted Meiser's statement that Bavaria was withdrawing from the *Reichskirche* because Müller's church government had violated the constitution.⁴³ Others

"Editorielles: Bischof Meiser Antwort," *KB* 78, no. 3 (January 19, 1935): 3.

³⁹ Julius Bodensieck, "Editorielles: Bischof Meiser auf Besuch bei uns!," *KB* 79, no. 32 (August 8, 1936): 3–4; Julius Bodensieck, "Editorielles: Bischof Meisers Besuchsreise," *KB* 79, no. 40 (October 3, 1936): 3; and Julius Bodensieck, "Editorielles: Auch ein Bischof hat eine Mutter," *KB* 79, no. 45 (November 7, 1936): 5.

⁴⁰ "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland. Eine ernset und entschiedene Kundgebung aus Bayern," *KZ* 58 (May 1934) 312–19; "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland: Wachsendes Verständnis für Lutherische Kirche," *KZ* 61 (October 1937): 637–40; and "Die 'Deutsche Evangelische Reiskirche' (Fortsetzung)," *LiH* 11, no. 34 (May 25, 1933): 8–11.

⁴¹ John A. Morehead, "Annual Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Convention 1934," *AnL* 7, no. 52 (December 24, 1934): 14–15; Engelder, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: In Deutschland herrscht volle Kirchenrevolution," *CTM* 5 (June 1934): 485–87; and "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland. Eine ernset und entschiedene Kundgebung aus Bayern," *KZ* 58 (May 1934): 312–19.

⁴² Sverre Norborg, "The Lutheran World Council and Hitlerism: A Weak Point," *LH* 21 (August 17, 1937): 809.

⁴³ Arthur H. Kuhlman, "Church News: Bavaria Lutherans Protest German Evangelical Church," *LStd* 92, no. 44 (November 3, 1934): 18–19; "Bishop Meiser of the Bavarian Protests," *LH* 18 (October 30, 1934): 956–57; and

pointed to this resolution and explained how it was a good thing for the future of Lutheranism in Germany.⁴⁴ In much the same vein, other protests that Meiser made during this period were echoed and heralded to the Lutheran readers in America.⁴⁵ Not only did the American Lutheran periodicals show Meiser as protesting the abuses of the *Reichskirche*, but they also pointed out that he was fighting against the rising neo-paganism in Germany. *The Pastor's Monthly*, for instance, quoted Meiser as saying:

[A] new heathenism has arisen in our midst, a heathenism that seeks to persuade our nation that it must cease to be a Christian nation if it would aim to arrive at the full development of its power. This heathenism proclaims the self-sufficiency of man, and calls it a religious myth that the good gifts of God that we receive with thanksgiving come from the hands of God, or that we attribute to Him the gifts of the ancestral soil, the family, the race, the people, or the virtues of modesty and honor. This religious myth then is to take the place of divine truth.⁴⁶

While Meiser was cheered for avoiding the excesses of the *Deutsche Christen* and the neo-paganism in Germany, he was also heralded for not giving in to the unionism of the Confessing Front. It was noted that Meiser was willing to work with the Confessing Front, but in this he was shown to be able to maintain a Lutheran identity; insisting that unity must be found in doctrine before the church could have outward unity. In this regard, the *Concordia Theological Monthly* was the primary periodical that was concerned about this part of Meiser's work.⁴⁷

"Declaration of the Lutheran Church in Bavaria Concerning Incorporation into the National Church of Germany" *PM* 12 (December 1934): 754–57.

⁴⁴ "Religionsspørgsmaalet i Tyskland," *DV* 54, no. 35 (August 29, 1934): 5; "Reasons for Withdrawal of the Bavarian Church," *LH* 18 (October 30, 1934): 957.

⁴⁵ "German Church Situation," *LStd* 92, no. 8 (February 24, 1934): 10–11; "Grundsätzlich Erklärung der Lutherischen Landeskirche von Bayern," *LiH* 12, no. 33 (May 17, 1934): 5–6; and "Die Spaltung im Deutschen Protestantismus," *KB* 77, no. 47 (November 24, 1934): 7–8.

⁴⁶ L., "Sound Testimony from German Church Leaders," *PM* 13 (August 1935): 481–83.

⁴⁷ Engelder, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Ein lauter Protest gegen die Union," *CTM* 5 (December 1934): 959–68; Ösch, "Die kirchlichen Vorgänge id Deutschland, lutherische gesehen: II, 1934," *CTM* 6 (August 1935): 594–600; and Arndt, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Ein gewaltiges Zeugnis gegen Irrlehre," *CTM* 7 (November, 1936): 869–71.

Bishop Theophil Wurm of Württemberg

Like Marahrens and Meiser, the Bishop of Württemberg, Theophil Wurm, also received assaults from the *Deutsche Christen* attempting to unseat him and incorporate the churches of Württemberg into the *Reichskirche* under Müller. Wurm, while not as steadfastly Lutheran as Marahrens and Meiser, nonetheless kept his church from losing its Lutheran identity. His standing for Lutheranism in the face of Nazi persecution also gained him respect in the American Lutheran circles.

For the American Lutherans, Wurm's resistance against Müller was the greatest of his achievements. While the accolades for Wurm were far fewer than those for Meiser; there were still those that celebrated his stand when Müller and Jäger attempted to unseat him in 1934 and his subsequent reinstatement.⁴⁸ Besides this, there were a couple of later articles that praised Wurm for standing firm in the face of Nazi ideology and neo-paganism.⁴⁹

Unlike Meiser, however, the *Concordia Theological Monthly* questioned Wurm's orthodoxy. A couple of the articles by J. T. Mueller took Wurm to task for his rejection of Biblical inerrancy and support of Historical Criticism.⁵⁰ There was a question of whether or not Wurm was guilty of unionism.⁵¹ Interestingly, on this count there was some disagreement in

⁴⁸ "Aus Württemberg," *LiH* 13, no. 7 (November 15, 1934): 14; "Wendung im deutschen Kirchenstreit," *LiH* 13, no. 8 (November 22, 1934): 6; and "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 59 (January 1935): 52–61.

⁴⁹ L., "Sound Testimony from German Church Leaders," *PM* 13 (August 1935): 481–83; "Von der Freiheit kirchlicher Verkündigung in Deutschland," *LiH* 17, no. 20 (February 23, 1939): 14.

⁵⁰ J. T. Mueller, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Theologie, Konfession, Glaube," *CTM* 7 (December 1936): 946–48; J. T. Mueller, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Die 'deutsche Bekenntnisfront von den Grundsätzen der Reformation gewichen.'," *CTM* 8 (February 1937): 149–50.

⁵¹ Ösch, "Die kirchlichen Vorgänge id Deutschland, lutherische gesehen: II, 1934," *CTM* 6 (August 1935): 594–600.

American Lutheranism as Michael Reu in *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* later praised Wurm for his maintaining the difference between Lutheran and Reformed theology.⁵²

Theologians

Besides the church leadership, there was a group of Lutheran theologians that argued for the preservation of a Lutheran identity in Germany. While many of these men did not make the direct attacks on the Nazi regime that Karl Barth did, they nonetheless resisted the attempts of the *Deutsche Christen* to take over control of the church. The center for these efforts was in the Theological faculty of the University of Erlangen, the only theological faculty never controlled by *Deutsche Christen*.

It was noted in the American Lutheran periodicals that the Erlangen faculty, in particular Werner Elert and Paul Althaus, played an important leadership role in the Lutheran church in Germany.⁵³ One thing that the American writers took particular note of was how the theological faculty of Erlangen issued a *gutachten* which protested the “Aryan Paragraph” as something that was against proper Christian doctrine.⁵⁴ There were also a couple of articles that praised the theological faculty of Erlangen for standing against the pressures towards unionism in both the *Reichskirche* and the Confessing Front.⁵⁵

⁵² M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 60 (July 1936): 443–46.

⁵³ “Ueber die theologischen und kirchlichen Zeitschriften in Deutschland,” *LiH* 12, no. 13 (December 28, 1933): 11; Herman A. Preus, “Recent Developments and Trends within the Church,” *TF* 6 (April 1934): 66–87; and C. R. Tappert, “Currents and Counter-Currents Regarding the Liberal and Biblical Attitude toward Religion,” *TF* 7 (January 1935): 19–27.

⁵⁴ M. Reu, “Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland,” *KZ* 57 (November 1933): 699–704; Engelder, “Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Votum der theologischen Fakultät Marburg zum Arierparagraphen,” *CTM* 4 (December 1933): 950–51; and “Die neuesten Ereignisse in den evangelischen Kirchen Deutschlands,” *LiH* 12, no. 37 (June 14, 1934): 8–10.

⁵⁵ J. T. Mueller, “Proteste gegen die Neuordnung der deutschen Kirche,” *DL* 90 (July 10, 1934): 235; and “Kirchliche Nachrichten: Deutscher Lutherischer Tag in Hannover,” *KB* 78, no. 35 (August 31, 1935): 10–11.

Hermann Sasse⁵⁶

Hermann Sasse, the editor of the *Kirchliches Jahrbuch*, has the distinction of being the first to state publicly in Germany that National Socialism is incompatible with Christianity,⁵⁷ an act that got him temporarily arrested by the Nazis even though he had written this in 1932 before they came to power. He was also a professor at the University of Erlangen.⁵⁸ Sasse was present at the Barmen Synod and was the first to register his dissent as he left the conference before the vote for approval was taken because he saw the process as too unionistic.⁵⁹

Sasse was also the author of one of the most popular books in the American Lutheran periodicals in the 1930s: *Was heisst lutherisch?* which was then translated into English as *Here We Stand*. The original German work received glowing reviews in the German language periodicals.⁶⁰ Then when the translated version came out, it was widely heralded in a tremendous number of American Lutheran publications.⁶¹ The *Kirchenblatt* further noted that

⁵⁶ For more on Hermann Sasse and his work in the *Kirchenkampf* see Ronald R. Feuerhahn, "Hermann Sasse as an Ecumenical Churchman," (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1991); Gordon J. Gerhardy, "Hermann Sasse, Confessor," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 29 (May 1995): 2–41; and John R. Wilch, "Hermann Sasse and the Third Reich Threats to the Church," in *Hermann Sasse: A Man for Our Times?: Essays from the Twentieth Annual Lutheran Life Lectures, Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, Ontario (October 30–November 1, 1995)* John R. Stephenson and Thomas W. Winger, eds., 65–105 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1998). For a full account of Sasse's relationship with American Lutheranism see Ronald R. Feuerhahn, "Hermann Sasse & North American Lutheranism," *Logia* 4, no. 4 (October 1995): 11–23.

⁵⁷ Hermann Sasse, ed., *Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelische Kirche in Deutschland: 1932 Ein Hilfsbuch zur Kirchenkunde der Gegenwart* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1932): 30–32; key parts of this are translated in Matheson, 1–2.

⁵⁸ Sasse's relationship to the others in the Erlangen Faculty is further explained in Lowell C. Green, "Hermann Sasse's Relations with His Erlangen Colleagues," in Stephenson and Winger, 37–64.

⁵⁹ The fullest discussion of Sasse's interaction with the Barmen meeting is in Feuerhahn, "Hermann Sasse as an Ecumenical Churchman," 67–116.

⁶⁰ Review of *Was heist lutherisch?* by Hermann Sasse in L. Fürbringer, *CTM* 8 (April 1937): 317–18; review of *Was heisst lutherische?* by Hermann Sasse in *LiH* 15, no. 16 (January 14, 1937): 15; and review of *Kirche und Herrenmahl* by Hermann Sasse in *KZ* 62 (September 1938): 547–48.

⁶¹ Reviews of *Here We Stand* by Hermann Sasse in *LiH* 16, no. 33 (May 19, 1938): 14; H. Offermann, *LCQ* 12 (April 1939): 211–12; J. T. Mueller, *CTM* 9 (August 1938): 634–37; Richard Knudson, *JALC* 3, no. 10 (October, 1938): 77–78; *LStd* 96, no. 32 (August 6, 1938): 5; Julius Bodenseick, *KB* 81, no. 29 (July 16, 1938): 13; and Arthur Brunn, *AmL* 22, no. 3 (March 1939): 22–23; Casper B. Nervig, *LH* 22 (May 10, 1938): 478–79.

National Lutheran Council recommended the book.⁶² A couple of periodicals also celebrated the wide distribution that it was receiving.⁶³ As if that wasn't enough, the National Lutheran Council held Prize Essay Contest based on Sasse's *Here We Stand* and the winning essay was printed in several periodicals.⁶⁴ A couple of Sasse's other works were also noted, but not as widely. The *Kirchliches Jahrbuch* was reviewed a couple of times⁶⁵ and *Kirchenregiment und Weltlich Obrigkeit nach lutherischer Lehre* was reviewed once.⁶⁶

Despite all of this attention to Sasse, his 1932 warning that National Socialism is incompatible with Christianity went largely unnoticed in America with only one reference to it.⁶⁷ However, this is somewhat explained in that there were no more than two mentions of Sasse in any given year in all of the periodicals combined until 1935. Therefore, his walking out of the Barmen Synod went completely unnoticed in America as well.

Once the American writers fully discovered Sasse, then they quickly developed a deep appreciation for him. Casper B. Nervig wrote in the *Lutheran Herald and Journal of the American Lutheran Conference*: "Professor Sasse is the one man in Germany with whom our church ought to get acquainted, and one whose theology is of the same confessional spirit as our American Lutheranism."⁶⁸ The writers of the American Lutheran periodicals also cited Sasse a

⁶² "Kirchliche Nachrichten: Aus Dem National Lutheran Council," *KB* 82, no. 8 (February 25, 1939): 11.

⁶³ "'Here We Stand' Well Received," *NL* 7, no. 3 (September 1938): 1; and review of *Here We Stand* by Hermann Sasse in Julius Bodenseick, *KB* 81, no. 29 (July 16, 1938): 13.

⁶⁴ M. O. Dietrich, "Prize Essay," *NL* 7, no. 4 (December 1938): 1, 4 this was then reprinted in M. O. Dietrich, "Prize Essay on Sasse's Book," *LH* 23 (January 17, 1939): 57–58; and M. O. Dietrich, "Here We Stand: Prize Essay on Sasse's Book," *LCmpn* 47 (February 9, 1939): 174–75.

⁶⁵ Review of *Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelischen Landeskirchen Deutschlands 1932* in L. Fürbringer, *CTM* 4 (February 1933): 157; and review of *Kirchliches Jahrbuch 1934* in H. Offermann, *LCQ* 8 (January, 1935): 96.

⁶⁶ Review of *Kirchenregiment und Weltlich Obrigkeit nach lutherischer Lehre* by Hermann Sasse in *KZ* 60 (August 1936): 495–96.

⁶⁷ "Wer sind die "deutschen Christen?," *KZ* 57 (October 1933): 599.

⁶⁸ Review of *Here We Stand* by Hermann Sasse in Casper B. Nervig, *LH* 22 (May 10, 1938): 479 and reprinted

number of times as a good source of information on what was going on in Germany.⁶⁹ A couple of periodicals also pointed to Sasse as a key leader in the Confessional Church when it split with the Confessing Front.⁷⁰

Theologically, Sasse was often held up as a pinnacle of Lutheran theology in the German churches. A number of articles pointed out various aspects of Sasse's theology as good Lutheran theology.⁷¹ In general, Sasse was depicted to the readers of the American Lutheran periodicals as valiantly standing up for the Lutheran Confession and theology.⁷² Several times Sasse was quoted as saying that the challenges of the day represented those who actually trying to issue "a death certificate" for the Lutheran Confessions.⁷³ However, Michael Reu cited Sasse as cautioning against going too far in the other direction and think that the German churches were no longer churches of the Reformation, as Sasse pointed out that despite their problems they still had and preached the Gospel.⁷⁴

in Casper B. Nervig, *JALC* 3, no. 8 (August 1938): 78.

⁶⁹ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 58 (November 1934): 692–703; review of *Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelischen Landeskirchen Deutschland* by Hermann Sasse ed. in *KB* 78, no. 12 (March 23, 1935): 13–14; and Hermann Sasse, "The Present Situation of the Lutheran Church Throughout the World," *PM* 13 (November 1935): 690–99.

⁷⁰ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland: Kirchlicher Zusammenschluss," *KZ* 61 (March 1937): 188–89; and Arndt, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Die Lage in Deutschland," *CTM* 8 (March 1937): 227.

⁷¹ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 62 (February 1938): 123–27; Engelder, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Die Aufgabe der lutherischen Kirche," *CTM* 9 (October 1938): 783–84; and review of *Here We Stand* by Hermann Sasse in Arthur Brunn, *AmL* 22, no. 3 (March 1939): 22–23.

⁷² Hermann Sasse, "The Present Situation of the Lutheran Church throughout the World," *PM* 13 (November 1935): 690–99; John Aberly, "Notes and Studies: Religion in the Third Reich," *LCQ* 11 (October 1938): 385–95; and review of *Here We Stand* by Hermann Sasse in H. Offermann, *LCQ* 12 (April 1939): 211–12.

⁷³ Review of *Was heist lutherisch?* by Hermann Sasse in L. Fürbringer, *CTM* 8 (April 1937): 317–18; Lawrence S. Price, "The State of the Church," *JALC* 4, no. 8 (August 1939): 40–55; and Hermann Sasse, "Die lutherische Kirche der Welt in der Gegenwart," *KB* 78, no. 41 (October 12, 1935): 5–6.

⁷⁴ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 63 (January 1939): 58–64.

Lutheran commentators in America also were encouraged by Sasse's willingness to criticize the German churches' history, in particular how it was weakened by theological liberalism and had been too closely aligned with the state. Sasse was even quoted by M. Reu in an address given before the Lutheran Statistical Association at Dubuque:

If the Lutheran Church has a right to blame, then it must place this blame on its own head. For four hundred years it has borne the fetters of its status as a state church and conceded to the temporal powers authority within the Church which, according to our confessions, they have not right to hold or exercise. For two hundred years the Lutheran Church has tolerated a type of theology that was bound to misrepresent the teaching of the Reformation.⁷⁵

However, the *Concordia Theological Monthly* also criticized Sasse for not carrying this idea to its proper conclusion:

We regret, for example, that Dr. Sasse does not draw the final conclusion which his premises demand, namely, that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Europe (and in the world) should be a sovereign, autonomous Church, altogether free from state control or any substitute of state control. He does not insist upon the *Freikirche*, but rather advocates confessional Lutheran groups in the general *Volkeskirche* without perceiving that such association needs must stifle all effective confessionalism.⁷⁶

Sasse was praised, especially in the *Concordia Theological Monthly* and the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, for criticizing the unionistic aspects of the *Reichskirche*⁷⁷ and for his refusal to give in to the unionism inherent in the Confessing Front.⁷⁸ However here again, the *Concordia*

⁷⁵ M. Reu, "The Place of the Lutheran Church in the Third Reich," *KZ* 58 (May 1934): 279.

⁷⁶ Review of *Here we Stand: the Nature and Character of the Lutheran Faith* by Hermann Sasse in J. T. Mueller, *CTM* 9 (August 1938): 636.

⁷⁷ M. Reu, "The Place of the Lutheran Church in the Third Reich," *KZ* 58 (May 1934): 275–80; and L. Fuerbringer, "Miscellanea: Eine beachtenswerte Stimme aus Deutschland," *CTM* 4 (December 1933): 935–38.

⁷⁸ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland: Bekenntnis und Union," *KZ* 60 (October 1936): 630–31; Engelder, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Wie wurde eine reformiert=lutherische Fakultät eingerichtet sein müssen?," *CTM* 6 (September 1935): 710–12; and Arndt, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: A Survey of Lutheranism throughout the World," *CTM* 7 (January 1936): 70–71.

Theological Monthly criticized him for not disassociating himself from Reformed and Unionists within the resistance to the *Deutsche Christen*.⁷⁹

Werner Elert

A very different figure from Sasse was Werner Elert. While Sasse went openly on record questioning Nazism, Elert at times took stances that at least appeared to be supportive of the Nazi regime. The most notorious event came in the form of the Ansbach Memorandum which Elert and Paul Althaus signed on June 11, 1934. This memorandum was intended to be a response to both the abuses of the *Deutsche Christen* and the theological errors of the Barmen Declaration.⁸⁰ In this memorandum, there was a somewhat generic support for the orders of creation; as well as a strong statement of support for the *Führer*. However, then when the *Deutsche Christen* then used the Ansbach Memorandum to justify attempts to oust Meiser and force incorporation of the Bavarian church into the *Reichskirche*, Elert and Althaus withdrew from the group that had become known as the Ansbach Circle.⁸¹ However, Elert, as the Dean of the Theological faculty at Erlangen from 1935-1943, managed to keep the *Deutsche Christen* out of the department and thereby maintained its Lutheran identity.⁸²

While historians today point especially at Elert's association with the Ansbach Memorandum; it actually was almost completely unknown to the American Lutherans of the day.

⁷⁹ Arndt, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Die Lage in Deutschland," *CTM* 8 (March 1937): 227.

⁸⁰ For a full explanation of the Lutheran concerns in this matter see Hans-Jörg Reese, *Bekennnis und Bekennen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1974).

⁸¹ The intention of Elert and Althaus in signing the Ansbach Memorandum has been viewed in different ways by historians. The majority opinion has been that this work was essentially written by Elert and was an overt alignment with Nazism and the *Deutsche Christen* as seen in: Scholder, *The Churches and the Third Reich*, 2:163ff; Eriksen, 87–89; and Stayer, 131–33. However, Green argues that neither Elert nor Althaus wrote the initial draft, rather it was written by Hans Sommerer, who used it to further his own agenda with the *Deutsche Christen* and at this Elert and Althaus then distanced themselves from Sommerer; Green, *Lutherans Against Hitler*, 239–49.

⁸² Green, *Lutherans against Hitler*, 333–45.

Michael Reu is the only one to refer to it, as he gave his readers an English translation and represented it as a good Lutheran response to the errors of the Barmen Declaration.⁸³ The *Kirchenblatt* then pointed out in early 1935 that Elert insisted that his criticism of the Barmen Declaration was not meant in any way to support the *Deutsche Christen*.⁸⁴ Several voices in the American Lutheran scene applauded Elert for finding the right balance in understanding that a church did have a duty to bring the Gospel to the people in which it was placed and yet not falling into the *Deutsche Christen* error of tying Lutheranism to the German *Volk*.⁸⁵ On a couple of other occasions, the American Lutheran writers did commend Elert for standing firm for Lutheran theology in the midst of pressure from the *Deutsche Christen* on one side and the theology of Karl Barth on the other.⁸⁶ There were especially cheers for Elert's response to Karl Barth's book *Index der verbortenen Bücher*, where Elert took Barth to task for being too political and not really understanding what was going on in Germany since Barth had left.⁸⁷

The single greatest publication by Elert that gave him great notice in America was his book *Morphologie des Luthertums* which was published in 1931 and 1932.⁸⁸ As a whole, this work was received quite favorably in the American publications;⁸⁹ however the American Lutheran

⁸³ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 58 (August 1934): 506–08.

⁸⁴ Review of *Bekennntnis, Blut und Boden* by Werner Elert in F. Braun, *KB* 78, no. 2 (January 12, 1935): 14.

⁸⁵ Th. Engelder, "Kirche, Staat, Obrigkeit, Volk, Rasse, Familie – und Gottes Wort," *CTM* 6 (December 1935): 881–88; and review of *Morphologie des Luthertums. Zweiter Band: Die Soziallehren und Sozialwirkungen des Luthertums* by Werner Elert in Joh. Hempel, *LCQ* 6 (July 1933): 341–43.

⁸⁶ Herman A. Preus, "Recent Developments and Trends within the Church," *TF* 6 (April 1934): 66–87; review of *Theologia Militans* in H. Offermann, *LCQ* 9 (January 1936): 108; and review of *Karl Barths Index der verbotenen Bücher* by Werner Elert in Bodensieck, *KB* 78, no. 20 (May 18, 1935): 12–13.

⁸⁷ Reviews of *Karl Barths Index der verbortenen Bücher* by Werner Elert in *KZ* 58 (June 1934): 374–75; Bodensieck, *KB* 78, no. 20 (May 18, 1935): 12–13; and Karl Koehler, *FL* 8, no. 6 (June 1935): 16.

⁸⁸ Werner Elert, *Morphologie des Luthertums*, (München: C. H. Beck, 1931–1932); this has been translated into English as Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, trans. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia, 2003).

⁸⁹ Reviews of *Morphologie des Luthertums* (Band II) by Werner Elert in Th. Engelder, *CTM* 4 (June 1933): 474–76; and Joh. Hempel, *LCQ* 6 (July 1933): 341–43; and it was used as the basis for explaining the proper understanding of Lutheran missions in Eppelein, "Die Eigenart der Neuendettelsauer Mission," *KB* 79, no. 27 (July

theological extremes had some criticisms; as the *Concordia Theological Monthly* criticized Elert for leaning too much on the early Luther,⁹⁰ and the *Lutheran Church Quarterly* criticized Elert for holding that one needed to go back to Luther to find true Lutheranism.⁹¹

Paul Althaus

Scholars still debate over which side of the *Kirchenkampf* to place in Paul Althaus. Early on Althaus was a member of the *Christlich-Deutsche Bewegung* or “Christian German Movement” but he did not join in the shift to the *Deutsche Christen* or “German Christian” movement in 1933.⁹² He was also a proponent of a form of *Völkish* theology holding that the church in a given locale did have a duty to its *Volk*. He also gave outward support to Nazism which has led to some considering that his moderate support of Nazism gave it a more acceptable face before the German people.⁹³ Althaus also signed the Ansbach Memorandum with Elert

4, 1936): 7–11.

⁹⁰ Th. Engelder, “Theological Observer – kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Ausland: Was ist’s mit dem ‘jungen Luther’?,” *CTM* 3 (March 1932): 231.

⁹¹ Review of *Morphologie des Luthertums* by Werner Elert in C. M. Jacobs, *LCQ* 5 (January 1932): 84–87.

⁹² The *Christlich-Deutsche Bewegung* is best described by Zabel: “The *Christlich-Deutsche Bewegung* attracted conservative types, types who were not looking for revolutionary answers to the ills which they saw around them in the Weimar Republic. In the early 1930’s, these people were still pinning their hopes on the German Nationalist Party (DNVP) and on a return to the morals and politics with which they had been familiar before the end of the Hohenzollern monarchy. The attempt by the members of the CDB to reserve judgment concerning the Nazi Party and the CDB failure to support the Nazis actively before 1933 reflects the unrevolutionary nature of the movement, as well as its upper-class distrust of the rabble who made up the cadres of the Nazi Party and the Storm Troopers. Most of those associated with the CDB supported Hitler as only one of the possible nationalist-Völkish alternatives to the Weimar democracy. Those who did seek a closer identification with the Nazi Party abandoned the CDB in 1933 and adhered to the *Glaubensbewegung Deutsche Christen* which was founded in 1932 at the instigation of the Party, and which put more emphasis on radical thinking.” (Zabel, 219). Althaus’ refusal to make this move to the *Deutsche Christen* shows that he was not one of the radical supporters of Hitler.

⁹³ This is the argument of Eriksen. Eriksen does note that Althaus was not truly aligned with the *Deutsche Christen* but that he was closer to them than the Confessing Front: “In addition to opposing Barmen, Althaus opposed the other extreme, the *Deutsche Christen* movement. He did so only with reluctance, for he shared the concerns and goals of the *Deutsche Christen*. But Althaus fell into opposition when he could no longer accept their fuzziness of thought.” (89) Here Eriksen fails to differentiate between the Confessing Front and the Confessional Church, holding that the two main parties were the Confessing Front and the *Deutsche Christen*, without wrestling with the difference between the more Barthian Confessing Front from the “broken churches” and the more Lutheran Confessional Church from the “intact churches,” leaving Eriksen unsure of what to do with Althaus who was critical of both the Barmen Declaration and the *Deutsche Christen* on theological grounds.

which caused a fair bit of debate over his role with it along with Elert.⁹⁴ Yet others have pointed out that he, like Elert, ended up standing more for Lutheranism than Nazism.⁹⁵ This latter position was the one shared by the American Lutheran analysts of the era.

For the writers in the Lutheran periodicals in America, Althaus was a real theological leader in Lutheranism in Germany. In many ways, they saw him as one who attempted to remain true to historic Lutheranism, yet also one who was a leader in the present theological climate.⁹⁶ Althaus was especially heralded as one who was striving to return the German churches to a more truly Lutheran identity.⁹⁷ Much like Elert, the American Lutheran writers also saw Althaus as one who was struggling against the extremes of the *Deutsche Christen* on one side and the Confessing Front and Barth on the other.⁹⁸ The only periodical to really question Althaus' Lutheran orthodoxy was the *Concordia Theological Monthly*, which criticized Althaus for moving away from a sound Biblical theology towards the neo-orthodoxy of Brunner.⁹⁹

The single biggest theological issue in Althaus' theology that caught the attention of the American Lutheran writers and editors was his embracing of a *völkisch* approach to theology through his understanding of the orders of creation.¹⁰⁰ Michael Reu appears to have been the

⁹⁴ See n. 81 above.

⁹⁵ This is the stance that Green takes on Althaus in *Lutherans against Hitler*.

⁹⁶ "With Lutherans in Other Lands: Germany," *LCmpn* 40 (February 27, 1932): 287; review of *Theologische Aufsätze* by Paul Althaus in *KZ* 61 (March 1936): 180–81; and Julius Bodensieck, "Editorielles: Paul Althaus: Erlöst," *KB* 76, no. 13 (April 1, 1933): 5.

⁹⁷ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 61 (March 1937): 188–92; Herman A. Preus, "Recent Developments and Trends within the Church," *TF* 6 (April 1934): 66–87; and review of *Theologia Militans* in H. Offermann, *LCQ* 9 (January, 1936): 108.

⁹⁸ Review of *Politische Christentum und Kirche und Staat nach lutherischer Lehre* by Paul Althaus in J. L. Neve, *LiH* 14, no. 33 (May 14, 1936): 14–15; Engelder, "Theological Observer – Kirchlich=Zeitgeschichtliches: Ein lauter Protest gegen die Union," *CTM* 5 (December 1934): 959–68; and review of *Theologia Militans* in H. Offermann, *LCQ* 9 (January 1936): 108.

⁹⁹ Review of *Die letzten Dinge* by Paul Althaus in Th. Engelder, *CTM* 6 (May 1935): 392–93; and review of *Theologische Aufsätze* by Paul Althaus in Th. Engelder, *CTM* 7 (October 1936): 794–96.

¹⁰⁰ See chapter 6 above for a full examination of the American Lutheran's perceptions of *völkisch* theology.

American observer who was most interested in this idea; and in October of 1935 he printed a statement by Althaus calling for the church to recognize its God-given responsibility to the *Volk* and to therefore embrace the new movement of the *Volk*.¹⁰¹ One thing that was then particularly praised was that Althaus, in his work *Theologie der Ordnung*, balanced the love of one's *Volk* with a proper understanding of sin.¹⁰² A couple of articles also held up Althaus as an example of one who kept this notion Christian and rejected those who use the notion of *Volk* in order to support neo-paganism.¹⁰³ Here again, the one periodical that took issue with Althaus' theology was *Concordia Theological Monthly* which saw Althaus as placing the civil service of the *Volk* over the pastor's responsibility to preach the Word of God.¹⁰⁴

Conclusions Regarding Views of the Confessional Church

For the overwhelming majority of the American Lutherans at this time, the Confessional Church represented the good guys in the *Kirchenkampf*. When the Confessional leaders worked with the Confessing Front their participation was seen as giving legitimacy to the movement; then when they split from the Confessing Front, forming the *Lutherrat*, the Americans saw this as the best group distancing themselves from others who were theologically compromised. The one group in America that often questioned even the Confessional Church was the Synodical Conference, seen particularly in critiques from the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod. Here again, these groups still saw the Confessional Church as the best of the *Kirchenkampf*, yet

¹⁰¹ M. Reu, "Kirchliche Chronik – Ausland: Deutschland," *KZ* 59 (October 1935): 617–40.

¹⁰² Reviews of *Theologie der Ordnungen* by Paul Althaus in E. E. Fischer, *LCQ* 8 (January 1935): 96–97; *KZ* 59 (April 1935): 248–49; and *KZ* 61 (March 1936): 180.

¹⁰³ Paul Althaus, "Germanische Religion, deutsche Art und Christusglaube," *LiH* 13, no. 15 (January 10, 1935): 4–5; and review of *Völker vor und nach Christus* by Paul Althaus in *KZ* 61 (August 1937): 752.

¹⁰⁴ Th. Engelder, "Kirche, Staat, Obrigkeit, Volk, Rasse, Familie – und Gottes Wort," *CTM* 6 (December 1935): 881–88; and review of *Theologie der Ordnungen* by Paul Althaus, *Kirchliche Selbstvesinnung und Lebensgestaltung* by Adolf Köberle, *Kirche und Staat nach lutherischer Lehre* by Paul Althaus, and *Politisches Christentum* by Paul Althaus in Th. Engelder, *CTM* 7 (July 1936): 555–57.

they were quick to point out the faults of the group. This is hardly surprising because the Synodical Conference was in fellowship with the Lutheran free churches and none of the *Landeskirchen*.

Even with those who were in fellowship with the Lutheran intact churches and strongly supported them, this support was often tempered by concerns when Confessional Church leaders were seen as straying from orthodox Lutheranism. This can be seen in how the most conservative leaders, Bishop Meiser and Hermann Sasse, were also the most highly praised in America even though they did not wield as much power as others, such as Marahrens and Elert. Further, Bishop Wurm was seen as the least orthodox of the group and also received the least praise in America.

Even in their support for their heroes in the *Kirchenkampf*, the American Lutherans still placed Lutheran orthodoxy as the primary concern. Therefore, those who best exemplified this orthodoxy were the most praised. Also, these men scrutinized Althaus when pushed his understanding of the Church's responsibility towards the *Volk*, because the Americans wanted to make sure that this really was proper Lutheran theology. The Americans thus showed their foremost concern was theological even in their overwhelming support for the Confessional movement. If their primary concern was political, social, or power-based then the American Lutherans probably would have been more willing to overlook the theological shortcomings of their German friends; but one finds instead praise for their bravery accompanied with an insistence on their remaining orthodox.

The American Lutherans' perceptions of the Confessional Church were entirely predictable. After all, the Confessional Church represented their friends and the primary contacts in Germany for many of them, therefore the preference and bias towards this group is to be expected. Following from the American Lutherans' passion for theological orthodoxy, they

were still willing to criticize even those they saw as the better parties in Germany. Considering the American Lutheran reputation for theological squabbling, anything else would have been surprising.

CONCLUSION

When the American Lutherans in the 1930s looked at events in pre-war Nazi Germany, virtually all developments were viewed through a theological lens. Whether they attempted to evaluate the political or the theological issues, there was a nearly universal undercurrent of theological concern. The comments on the political actions by Hitler and the Nazis were far outnumbered by the comments on the *Kirchenkampf* and related theological concerns. Even when they did look at the political events, they were often careful to use the Lutheran theological distinction of the Two Kingdoms to guide their thoughts. This is not to say that their own American political context did not color their understanding of the Two Kingdoms; however, even when they spoke of the “doctrine of the separation of Church and State” they intended this as a theological doctrine that the political realm should emulate and not a purely political position.

Underlying all of the various concerns voiced by the American Lutherans of the 1930s was a concern for the preservation of orthodox Lutheran theology. Of course, this should in no way be construed to mean that there was uniformity amongst the American Lutherans as to what constituted orthodox Lutheran theology. Those of the Synodical Conference steadfastly held to their form of “restitution theology,” insisting that the historic Lutheran constructions were the only valid ones. As a result they were the most critical of events in the *Landeskirchen*, including the intact churches, because they saw these churches as corrupted by liberalism and its accompanying Historical Criticism of the Bible. On the other extreme was a more liberal and Americanized theology as represented by the United Lutheran Church in America and especially the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, PA. What is interesting is how often these

varied Lutheran theologians agreed on a given theological concept, such as the need to keep Church and State separate or the dangers of outright unionism, yet they applied these concepts in different ways to the events in Germany.

This is interesting in that there was little unity across the American Lutheran spectrum at the time. The debates between the different denominations and organizations would give one the impression that there was little agreement on theology between the various American Lutheran denominations. For instance, it is well known that the Synodical Conference was openly critical towards most of the rest of American Lutheranism for their perceived theological laxity. Further, the American Lutheran Conference had just been formed in 1930 because most of the members of the National Lutheran Council were mistrustful of the United Lutheran Church in America's size and more liberal bias. However, this study has shown that in many ways the general theological concerns between these churches were often the same. The issues and concerns were not isolated to one group or another; rather, the concerns were widely shared. What varied was how they applied these concerns and how widely or narrowly they drew the circles of what was acceptable Lutheran belief and practice.

While very often the American Lutheran denominations tended to focus on their theological differences in their relationships with each other, this study has found that when faced with the outside problems of the *Kirchenkampf*, their agreements were more evident than their disagreements. This suggests that in the grand scheme of things; their disagreements were perhaps not as large as they may have appeared. At ground, these different groups showed that they were at heart Lutherans with similar foundational beliefs, with relatively minor differences when compared with other American Christians. It is doubtful that this is still the case today. It appears that there has been a continual divergence between American Lutherans over the 20th Century. This may have come from the fact that emphasizing their differences pushed them

further apart or it may be that even in the 1930s they were on slightly different theological trajectories and that over the next several decades these differing trajectories led them further apart. Studies of American Lutherans later in the 20th Century would be helpful in attempting to discern this.

Concern for Lutherans First

Due to the American Lutherans' contacts with Lutherans of other lands as well as their shared theological heritage, their concerns were for the welfare of their fellow Lutherans first and foremost. As a whole, the theologically closer a given group overseas was to the American Lutheran writers the more concerned the writers were about their well-being. This can be seen in how the Soviet persecution of Lutherans far overshadowed concerns regarding Nazi persecution of Jews. In much the same way, those of the Synodical Conference who were in fellowship with the Lutheran Free Churches in Germany were less concerned about the persecutions of those in the *Landeskirchen* than those who were in fellowship with the persecuted. This was not out of the ordinary; rather this concern first and foremost for brothers in the faith was commonly found in other American churches as well.

For these men, the more something was perceived to be a threat to Lutheranism, the more concerned they were. Therefore, issues like unionism and theological liberalism were considered to be very real concerns, because they were seen as undermining the genuine Lutheran faith. However, even here there was disagreement as to how much of a danger was to be found in some movements and ideas. This is hardly surprising since some of the more theologically conservative American Lutherans, such as those of the Synodical Conference, saw other American Lutherans as infected with liberalism and therefore straying already from true Lutheranism.

In much the same way, the presence of neo-paganism in Germany was considered a very real concern and a movement that threatened the very Christianity of the people of Germany. Yet when some of this *Völkisch* thought was put in the more Lutheran terms of the orders of creation, it was sometimes seen as more acceptable. However, even here the ideas were ultimately weighed in light of proper Lutheran thought and found wanting.

The only issue that the American Lutherans truly debated was the proper understanding of Just War doctrine and whether or not it was theologically defensible. Even here, however, the debate was carried in a predominantly theological, not political, manner. Those who opposed this doctrine, which has historically been part of the Lutheran tradition, did not attempt to break from Lutheranism; rather they attempted to point out how this doctrine does not really fit in a proper Lutheran understanding of the Gospel. This means that even when a doctrine was questioned, it was not simply rejected out of hand; instead arguments were marshaled in order to argue that the doctrine does not rightly belong in orthodox Lutheranism.

Role of Ethnic and Social Influences

As much as the American Lutherans attempted to act and believed they were acting solely on theological grounds, it is clear that their ethnic and social worlds also played a role in shaping their views. Most clearly, the American concept of the constitutional separation of Church and State colored their view of the Lutheran distinction of the Two Kingdoms. However, they believed that they should not accept this principle if they did not think it was in accord with Lutheran theology.

The ethnic divide in American Lutheranism could be seen in several ways. First of all, those who were of relatively recent German descent tended to have more contact with their Fatherland and were more concerned for the well-being of the German people. They were more ready to give at least initial support for Hitler and his social reforms, because they believed that

these were helping the German people. However, one cannot say that they blindly allowed their German heritage to overshadow their concerns. Rather, it was from the German-American branch of American Lutheranism that the greatest criticisms were raised over the Nazis' emphasis on German culture being of primary importance. Those who were the most concerned about the overemphasis on the German *Volk* were the writers who were very close to Germany in their own ethnic identity as well as being in close contact with German sources and sometimes writing in German. Men such as Michael Reu, Walter A. Maier, and August Pieper were often the most vocal about how this was undermining true Lutheranism. As great as these men's concern for Germany might have been, their foremost concern was still with proper Christian teaching.

An ethnic distinction can also be seen in their debate over Just War doctrine. Here the Lutherans of Scandinavian background were the ones who were most vocal in their criticism of the doctrine. Yet even here there was no uniformity, as there were some Scandinavian-American publications that defended the historic Lutheran understanding of Just Wars. Also, some of the more Americanized Lutherans were in favor of the more pacifist theology. Yet even here, the battle was fought on almost completely theological grounds, rather than in terms of politics.

As a result, there can be little doubt that the ethnic background and the American context did color the theological constructs with which these men were working. This does not contradict the predominantly theological concerns of the American Lutherans, rather it points out that these individuals were no more able to completely extract themselves from their own historical constraints than anyone else. But they attempted to wrestle with these ideas in a truly theological manner, trying to remain true to orthodox Lutheranism as they understood it.

Areas for Additional Research

Like most historical studies, this study does not exhaust the area of research but illuminates other related studies that would be worthwhile. The methodology of this study has shown that considering reactions to a large external event, such as the rise of Nazism and the *Kirchenkampf*, can act as a mirror to help illuminate the theological relationship between different churches. Further studies of American Lutheranism in light of other external events or issues, such as the Vietnam War, might help to shed further light on how theologically close or separate the American Lutherans were to each other in other periods.

In much the same way, further studies in how other American Christian denominations viewed events in Nazi Germany would certainly be worthwhile. Parallel studies of Lutherans in Scandinavia, as well as other lands, would be very informative in helping to give a more universal picture of how Lutherans around the world dealt with the rise of Nazism and the *Kirchenkampf*.

Karl Barth is a figure of monumental proportions in 20th Century theology. The responses to Barth by the American Lutherans threatened to take over this study because of their sheer volume and the importance of Barth. However, since the American Lutherans' reception of Barth as a whole is outside of the question that this study examines, this field was left largely untouched. This leaves open the gaping need for a study in how the American Lutherans received, understood, and reacted to Karl Barth and neo-orthodox theology.

Another aspect of this study that points to the need for further research is the issue of American Lutheranism in the 20th Century and their acceptance or rejection of Just War doctrine. In this regard, a study that would trace the American Lutherans' views of war, tracing it from before the outbreak of WWI through at least the end of WWII, if not through the end of the 20th Century would be another helpful study. This is of particular interest because the technological

and political changes in the 20th Century greatly changed the nature of war and therefore challenged traditional Just War doctrine. Issues, such as the brutal nature of modern, mechanized warfare raises the issue of how a modern war can be just; furthermore the later development of “smart bombs” and other such technology keeps this debate alive to our day. Likewise, the growth of international treaties also complicated the use of traditional Just War doctrine. Questions arise such as: is defending another country because of treaties on the same level as a defensive war for one’s own country? Considering especially the outbreak of the First World War, and how most countries entered the war due to treaties, it is not very clear as to what was truly defensive.

Final Thoughts

This look at these American Lutheran thinkers is a humbling exercise. As much as we might like to put some of these men on a pedestal, we see instead that they truly had feet of clay. They attempted to wrestle with the tumultuous events of their day by remaining true to their theological beliefs; however, because of their own biases, the fog of the events, as well as confusing and incomplete information they were sometimes led to take stands that our historical perspective shows to be wrong. For instance, the support that Walter A. Maier and Michael Reu gave to Hitler is chilling to say the least, but when taking into account their sources and the data they were dealing with, while not condonable it is somewhat understandable. These men had no way of knowing at the time that the horrors of Auschwitz and Dachau as well as the Second World War were looming in the future. One also must give credit, especially to Maier, for changing his mind as the picture of Germany became clearer.

Likewise, there were a few who allowed their own biases to lead their theological perceptions to places they should not have gone. As an American Lutheran, one can only feel shame for some of the anti-Semitic pronouncements by a few writers. To a lesser extent, it can

also be observed that at times the men were somewhat reluctant to speak or act in defense of those with whom they had serious theological differences. Learning from this, theologians are challenged to speak from a posture of Christian love to all, even while attempting to maintain theological integrity.

All of this serves as a warning to theologians of this or any other day. When one sees how these men strove to remain true to their theological beliefs and yet struggled to rightly apply them to the events of their day it calls on us to be careful as we strive to do the same in our day. Things are not always as clear and simple as we like them to be and it is certainly possible that the perspective of history might judge today's theologians as similarly well meaning but occasionally mistaken. This is not to say that one should therefore not attempt to speak the truth of theology to the events of the world, in this regard the theologians of the American Lutheran churches of the 1930s are an example of churchmen attempting to apply their beliefs to the world around them. However, we are also reminded from their failings that one must do it with a certain humility and grace.

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Previous Theses and Publications

Hellwege, John, "What Was Going on over There? The Missouri Synod's Struggle to Understand Pre-War Nazi Germany as Seen in Two Popular Publications," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, 80, no. 2 (Summer 2007).

Walther, C. F. W. *Law and Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*. Edited by Charles P. Schaum. St. Louis: Concordia, 2010. (Contributor on a biography of Walther).

Current Memberships in Academic Societies

American Society of Church History

Evangelical Theological Society

Evangelical Philosophical Society