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### The Church Resists the Nazis

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**THE CHURCH RESISTS THE NAZIS**

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Historical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by

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June 1956

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. THE RISE OF HITLER AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM . . . . .	3
III. A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CHURCH CONDITIONS . . . . .	18
IV. THE CHURCH RESISTS THE NAZIS . . . . .	37
V. CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	54
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	59

U.S. History and J.C. West Professor, The Origins and Development of the Church in the U.S. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 121.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Traditional Christianity and National Socialism are irreconcilable. One is based upon the concept of human brotherhood and admonishes kindness, charity, humility, and peace; the other advances the doctrine of racial supremacy, regards charity and humility as symbols of weakness rather than strength and extols the virtues of brute force.<sup>1</sup>

The above quotation epitomizes the thinking of the majority of Americans with respect to Christianity as it was affected by National Socialism. How, then, did the Christians of Germany react towards National Socialism? Many people confronted with the question of war-guilt, make no difference between any individuals or groups. They simply place the German people, the various organizations, including the Church, into one large group and lay the burden of war-guilt equally upon the shoulders of all. It is more than likely true that they did not mean to imply that there was no opposition to Hitler, but they maintain that those who were anti-Hitler were few and far between.

The question that especially confronts us is this: What did the Church do when faced with Nazi theories, principles, and actions which were contrary to the Master's teachings? Confusion, in the popular mind also existed on this question. In the long catalog of confused

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<sup>1</sup>C.G. Haines and J.C. Ross Hoffman, The Origins and Background of the Second World War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 342.

ideas regarding the Nazis, the confused ideas on the relation of the Nazis to the Church and vice versa rank highest. Such is the confusion that one may hear it said: "The Church was completely subservient to the Nazis and catered to their wishes"; or, "The Church resisted the Nazis from the beginning with all her power"; or, "The Nazis supported the State Church"; or, "The Nazis closed all of the churches of Germany." Out of this limbo of confusion, a more nearly accurate picture of the relationship between the German Church and the Nazis ought to evolve. It shall be the burden of this paper to try to paint a fairly accurate picture of the Church conditions under the Nazis, and to show that the Church did resist the Nazis, but perhaps the resistance was not as virile as it might have been. Furthermore, we are limiting the scope of this paper to the answering of the above posed questions in their relationship to the Protestant Church, more particularly the Lutheran State Church.

At this juncture, it is interesting to note another quotation, which has bearing on the entire question of resistance offered by the State Church to the Nazi Regime. One of those who, with others, came to recognize Nazism for what it was, said:

We have no more thought of using our own powers to escape the arm of the authorities than had the apostles of old. But we are no more ready than they were to keep silence at man man's behest when God commands us to speak. For it is and must remain the case that we must obey God rather than man.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Martin Niemöller, Here Stand I, Trans. by Jane Lyburn (New York: Willet, Clark and Company, 1937)

## CHAPTER II

### THE RISE OF HITLER AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM<sup>1</sup>

In order to have an adequate understanding of the topic, a rapid survey and evaluation of Hitler and National Socialism, on the one hand, and of the State Church and conditions in it, on the other hand, is necessary.

National Socialism, as a system of political thought, was conceived and born in the minds of men long before recent dictators gave such a tremendous impetus to the system. National Socialism has its roots in Marxian Socialism<sup>2</sup>, and in the growing tendency toward Nationalism as a manifestation of political thought during the period of world history classified as Modern History. In the case of the Nazis, National Socialism was developed as the cure for all of the ailments of Germany which grew out of the collapse of the German Empire at the end of the first World War. The closing days of the war, and the days following them, were days of disillusionment, unemployment, suffering, distress, chaos, and hopelessness.

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<sup>1</sup>K. Heiden, A History of National Socialism, trans., Alfred A. Knopf, (New York: Lexington Press, 1935) for a rather complete picture of the rise of Hitler and National Socialism.

<sup>2</sup>For a brief summary of Marxian Socialism, see E. S. Bogardus, A History of Social Thought (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1929), p. 251-265. A detailed discussion is found in K. Marx, Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production (New York: Humboldt Publ. Co., 1873).

It will be of interest to look at a number of items which influenced, if they did not contribute towards, the rise of Hitler and National Socialism. No attempt is made to list these in their real order of importance, if such a thing were possible, because these elements usually dove-tail with each other, and it is well-nigh impossible to set up an order. One of these elements has to do with Wilson's Fourteen Points<sup>3</sup>, or, rather the disavowal of the Fourteen Points. The points may be summarized as follows: (1) Open Covenants of peace openly arrived at. (2) Freedom of the seas in peace and war. (3) Removal of trade barriers. (4) Disarmament. (5) Readjustment of world colonial problems. (6) German evacuation of Russia. (7) German evacuation and restoration of Belgium. (8) German evacuation and restoration of France and Alsace-Lorraine. (9) Readjustment of Italian frontiers. (10) Autonomy for the subject peoples of Austria-Hungary. (11) Evacuation and restoration of Serbia, Montenegro, and Rumania. (12) Autonomy for the non-turkish peoples of the Ottoman Empire. (13) Formation of an independent Poland with access to the sea. (14) Establishment of a League of Nations. On January 8, 1918, President Wilson had announced the Fourteen Points as a basis of peace talks. On October 3, the Kaiser named Prince Max of Baden, chancellor of Germany, and directed him to begin negotiations for a peace. Prince

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<sup>3</sup>For the full text of the Fourteen Points, consult Charles A. and Mary R. Beard, The Beard's Basic History of The United States, (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1944), p. 525-526.

Max sent an urgent message to the President of the United States, that the German government would accept President Wilson's Fourteen Points, as announced January 8, 1918, as a basis for peace. Between October 3 and November 5, three more appeals were made by the Germans, addressed to the American President, each one of them requesting the President to facilitate a conclusion of an armistice by land, by sea, and in the air. No definite answers were given to the messages. Finally, on November 5, Wilson informed the Germans that the Allied Forces would be ready to receive accredited representatives for the purpose of informing them of the terms of the Armistice. Thereupon the negotiations began. The Treaty, as drafted and presented to the Germans, constituted a disavowal of the Fourteen Points. "In several respects the terms imposed on defeated Germany did not conform to the war aims which President Wilson had so eloquently proclaimed to the world."<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, in January, 1919, a New York publisher disclosed the existence of a number of secret treaties by which Russia, Great Britain, France, and Italy, either during or even before the war, had agreed to divide the spoils at the end of the conflict.<sup>5</sup> All of this was grist for the mill of discontent which was grinding away in Germany.

Aside from the above, it soon became evident during the Peace Conference that certain undesirable elements were coming to the forefront. There were certain nationalistic ambitions of the British Dominions,

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<sup>4</sup>Charles A. and Mary R. Beard, op. cit., p. 435.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 436.



Japan, and France which demanded satisfaction. President Wilson said that "these nationalistic desires were antithetical in spirit to the pledges contained in the Fourteen Points on which the armistice with Germany had been negotiated."<sup>6</sup> Wilson opposed the nationalistic elements as much as he could without endangering his cherished ambition, the establishment of a League of Nations. The general discontent fomented by such procedures was bound to have an influence on the rise of National Socialism.

Another, perhaps even more influential point, so far as the rise of National Socialism is concerned, is the effect of the Treaty imposed upon Germany at the conclusion of the War. To say the least, the effects were far-reaching. The following summary is offered by Benns<sup>7</sup>.

Of her territory in Europe she was deprived of more than 25,000 square miles; of her population she lost about 6,000,000. But her loss of raw materials was far greater and much more serious. Her prewar resources of iron, coal, oil, potash, lead, zinc, and foodstuffs were all greatly diminished.....Altogether, Germany was compelled to surrender approximately 65 per cent of her iron-ore reserves, 45 per cent of her former coal wealth, 72 per cent of her zinc ore, 57 per cent of her lead ore, from 12 to 15 per cent of her manufacturing establishments.

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<sup>6</sup>W.C. Langsam, Western Civilization Since 1660. (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1942), p. 1328.

<sup>7</sup>F. Lee Benns, Europe Since 1914 In Its World Setting. (New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1945), p. 121.

Overseas, the effects were hardly any less disastrous, for Germany lost an area approximatēg one million square miles, inhabited by more than 12,000,000 natives. Tied up with this, was the loss of about 25 per cent of the prewar rubber supply, and in addition, the loss of valuable oils and fibers. Germany's merchant marine was reduced to 400,000 tons. Many of her prewar bases, special privileges, capitulations, and concessions were destroyed. She also had to grant without reciprocity most-favored-nation treatment to the Allies for a period of five years. On top of it all, Germany was committed to a reparations bill of unknown size.

The point of all this is: the above named considerations could not be without dire results for the folks at home in Germany. It would of necessity result in dire economic conditions. Economic conditions were already strained in Germany. Surely a complete breakdown could not be long in coming. Germany was reduced to a helpless nation, unable to cope with the economic problems that arose. Unemployment, which had developed already before the war, multiplied rapidly after the cessation of hostilities and especially after the terms of the peace of Versailles were imposed. A people out of work, hungry, disillusioned is a fertile breeding ground for radical ideas of all kinds, and out of these radical ideas came a tremendous boost for National Socialism.

The thoughtful reader will also consider the impact of the following upon the people of Germany. In order to drive home the defeat,

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to the thoroughly humbled Germany, and in order to have a token of submission on the part of Germany, the victorious powers determined that the Allied blockade should continue, and did continue until July, 1919. A nation was starving, yet the blockade of foodstuffs was maintained! All of this complicated the situation in Germany; problems were created, with which the new government, that had been formed, could not cope successfully. The conditions are described thus:

The new German government faced many difficulties. In the first place, there were recalcitrant elements both radical and reactionary to whom the system originating at Weimar was entirely unsatisfactory; by agitation and various types of violent activity they made themselves a nuisance as long as the republic lasted. In the second place, there was the aftermath of the first World War to meet. Unemployment, bitterness, financial difficulties, the care of millions whose lives had been blasted by the conflict, the burden of reparation payments to the victors, the struggle to rebuild a normal economic and business life - all these and more would have taken the wisdom of Solomon. And there was no Solomon in the German Republic.<sup>8</sup>

It was a situation well-calculated to keep the leaders in suspense, and the people in a political state of animated suspension, awaiting to be roused by the call of some kind of firm leadership.

There were numerous assassinations. Of the outbreaks, the one led by Wolfgang Kapp, March, 1920 and Adolf Hitler, November, 1923 were the better known.

A description of the conditions of these days is interesting and to the point, since a German relates the current political and economic ideas to the church. In a treatise, Helmut Kern speaks

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<sup>8</sup>W.C. Langsam, op. cit., p. 134-45.

as follows:<sup>9</sup>

Die Seele des deutschen Volkes war muede geworden vom Krieg und verlorenem Krieg, von Revolution und Inflation, - da schien die Stunde der Finsternis gekommen; die Stunde seit 130 Jahren, die Stunde seit der Franzoesischen Revolution: die Stunde ist guenstig, die Stunde ist da. Der offene Kampf des Satans setzt ein wider Gott und seine Kirche, das Bollwerk Gottes auf Erden. So hoeren wir die Vorwuerfe gegen unsere Kirche in der damaligen Zeit; so erleben wir es, wie der Versuch gemacht wird, der Kirche auf alle erdenkliche Weise politisch etwas anzuhaenger in den Augen des Volkes, um sie veraechtlich zu machen und das Vertrauen des Volkes in die Kirche zu erschuettern, um den Gottesglauben zu enthronen.

Die politische Leidenschaft des deutschen Volkes nach 1918 war die marxistische, die des marxistischen Internationalismus. Diese Leidenschaft gibt dem Teufel die Moeglichkeit zum ersten Vorwurf: Die Kirche ist National. Sie ist darum in einem Volke nicht zu brauchen, das international denkt. Sie ist ein voelkische Kirche, darum nicht zu brauchen in einem Volke, das Menschheitstraume traemt. Der Vorwurf wird laut: Die Kirche hat im Krieg dem deutschen Volk den Ruecken gestaerkt mit ihrer Predigt von Volk und Vaterland, Staat, und Obrigkeit, durch ihre Aufforderung, das Volk zu lieben bis zur Hingabe des Lebens, weil es kein Opfer gebe, das zu gross sei fuer Deutschland. Darum sei die Kirche schuldig geworden an der langen Dauer des Krieges.

In der Folge werden ueber diesen Vorwuerfen die evangelischen Pfarrer von der Masse geschmaecht ob ihrer voelkischen Haltung. Der Pfarrer Hans Meiser in Muenchen wird von den Spartakisten 1919 als Geisel verhaftet, weil er ein nationaler Mann gewesen ist...

Die politische Leidenschaft des deutschen Volkes nach 1919 war der marxistische Socialismus. Zwangslaeufig muss in solcher Zeit der Teufel der Kirche den zweiten Vorwurf machen: Die Kirche habe sozial versagt. Darum hoeren wir die Anwuerfe: sie halte es mit den Reichen und Grossen, sie unterdruecke das arme Volk, bereichere sich mit ihren Kirchensteuern, auf Kosten der kleinen Leute; sie sie die Kirche

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<sup>9</sup>Helmut Kern, Kirchenkampf - Wie Lange Noch? (Murnberg: Selbstverlag; Amt fuer Volksmission Murnberg, Hummelsteiner Weg 100, 1937), p. 1-3.

der Schwerindustrie und verrate die Arbeiterschaft.....

Hinter dieser politischen Leidenschaft stand die marxistische Weltanschauung des nackten Materialismus. Und so hoeren wir zwangslaeufig in jene Jahren die dritte vorwurfsvolle Behauptung: Die Seele des Menschen lebt nur in den Hirngespinnsten der Pfaffen. Die Kirche ver-  
trecestet aufs Jenseits, um als Dienerin des Staates und der Obrigkeit das Volk im Zaume zu halten. Mit dem Maer-  
lein vom lieben Gott soll das Volk, das sich nach Auf-  
klaerung sehnt, dumm gemacht und erhalten werden. Re-  
ligion ist Opium fuer das Volk! Darum die satanische  
Aufforderung: Heraus aus der Kirche!

The whole point behind all of this is again merely to call at-  
tention to the completely unsettled conditions existing in Germany  
after World War I. There was hunger, unemployment, disastrous infla-  
tion, economic chaos, suspicion, hopelessness. In this confusion all  
sorts of ideas floated around. Dangerous passions stirred the people.  
They were being encouraged to turn against even the most fundamental  
institutions of society. Plans and programs for some future  
action were discussed and laid. Whatever seemed to hold out any kind  
of hope whatsoever for the relief of present suffering was woven into  
the plans. People who ordinarily kept an even keel, not going off on  
tangents, either to the right or the left, were now openly flirting  
with dangerous isms. Anyone who could make himself heard above the  
babble of confusion, who could offer some sort of promise of relief,  
and who could get at least a working group behind him, was in a posi-  
tion to exert a tremendous influence upon people. Into that kind of  
situation Adolf Hitler stepped.

Out of these chaotic times came the abortive movement which as  
someone has said,

...had its obscure birth in Munich when a group of

six men met in the back room of a cafe in 1919. Hitler joined the group as a seventh member and almost immediately became its outstanding personality.<sup>10</sup>

This movement recruited its membership from the discontented Army groups, from the unemployed, from the middle class, which was daily growing impoverished because of inflation, and other unfortunates. In the early days much energy was devoted to building up the membership. An unsuccessful putsch was attempted by Hitler in November, 1923. He received a prison sentence from the courts of the German Republic. While in prison, Hitler willed away the hours producing the first volume of his Mein Kampf. Members of the group daily looked forward to the time when they would be able to have enough seats in the Reichstag to make their opinion a power to be respected by all. This party wanted power. Hitler, although even in 1923 still pretty much of an obscure agitator, became the spokesman. He made bombastic but clever speeches in which he dwelt upon a few salient facts, and these he tried to hammer home to whoever would listen. He spoke, for example, on: The Injustice of the Versailles Treaty; We did not lose the War, we were sold out; The Jews are the cause of the present-day troubles; and others. The success of the party fluctuated until in 1932, in the course of the presidential elections, the party revealed its growing strength. Successive Chancellors resigned because of their inability to cope with the depression and attending evils, and, in January, 1933, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor with a

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<sup>10</sup> M. S. Wertheimer, Germany Under Hitler (New York: World Peace Foundation, 1935), p. 10.

coalition government. Heiden says:

The Nazi Party would not have found it possible to acquire the strong influence over the masses that it actually did, but for two events that turned out in its favor. The first was the inflation in Germany. The second circumstance that turned out to Hitler's advantage was the triumph in October, 1922, of Fascism in Italy.<sup>11</sup>

Once in power, Hitler and the Nazis did all that was humanly possible in order to make themselves supreme in Germany. There were wholesale removals from office of those who were not party members. The Reichstag was dissolved, and a new election was ordered for March 5, 1933, as a result of which, Hitler controlled a majority of the 648 seats in the new Reichstag, with 288 Nazi representatives and fifty-three Nationalists. One gains a little knowledge of how the Nazis were going to work in the Reichstag from the following scene:

Wearing his Nazi uniform, Chancellor Hitler appeared before the newly elected Reichstag at its first session and.....demanded dictatorial powers for four years. In a single session the Reichstag rushed the enabling act granting these powers through the required three readings, and then adjourned indefinitely.<sup>12</sup>

In a short time, there was only one person above Hitler and that was Field Marshall Paul von Hindenburg, the aging President of the German Republic. Hindenburg, born in 1847, had been retired from the German army for old age in 1912. Called from retirement two years later, he was Germany's chief military figure, during the first World War. Called again in 1925 at the age of 78, he had, by 1933 served almost eight years as president, and was in his eighty-

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<sup>11</sup>K. Heiden, op. cit., pp. 96-97.

<sup>12</sup>F. Lee Bemns, op. cit., p. 255.

seventh year. He died on August 2, 1934, and Hitler, under prearranged plans for a union of the offices of president and chancellor, became the sole head of Germany as both Fuehrer and Chancellor. Hitler and the Nazis continued their work of concentrating power in their hands for they were aiming at undisputed jurisdiction over every phase of German life, yes, they desired power over body and soul. Hitler explained this desire for absolute power by saying that it was necessary in order to prevent the threatened disintegration of Germany. "Give me a chance", he pleaded in effect, "and I will remake Germany."

What did Hitler actually want? That is rather difficult to say because there was so much in his character that seemed to be contradictory. There was so much in his speeches that was said for effect. He wanted to be supreme in Germany. He wanted Germany to become a tremendous power in the world. This was, of course, to reflect his power and glory. The various methods by which the eventual reconversion and renovation of Germany, according to the Nazi plan, was to be accomplished were borrowed and adapted from various sources. Heiden says: "Hitler is a genius in adapting and developing the ideas of others."<sup>13</sup> Hitler seems to have had a great deal of ability. He pushed aside simply as a non-entity, who, unconsciously, had ridden a volcano to power, but, who, having gained power, had no ability to control it. He has been somewhat underestimated in the interest of propaganda. Hitler demonstrated his ability in different ways. For example: although he had a great deal of opposition, although scheming

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<sup>13</sup>K. Heiden, op. cit., p. 7.



lieutenants desired to sit in the driver's seat, he somehow managed to play rival against rival, often playing both ends against the middle, so that only he gained in power and influence and his subordinates remained under control. We may call his speaking ranting and raving, yet biographers will admit that he had ability, and that there was a certain kind of logic to his speeches. Of this fact Heiden says, "It is this gift for logic which makes Hitler's speeches so convincing."<sup>14</sup> It is useless to speculate as to how long Hitler may have controlled things, had Germany not lost the war. One can see Hitler only through the feeble and fallible eyes of contemporaries, and these have not as yet gained a proper historical perspective. They picture him as a roaring, bombastic, fanatical, able, diabolically clever, frustrated, and egotistical human being, who was imbued with the idea of raising himself to a height of glory seldom equaled by man, and of raising Germany to a supreme place of honor in the world. Benns describes Hitler in this way:

The Nazi leader was apparently not particularly original in his methods or ideas, but he was certainly a skillful imitator. He undoubtedly understood the temper of the German people, particularly of the younger generation. He was an adept psychologist, a clever demagogue, and a master showman. At the same time, he was a resourceful agitator, a tireless worker, and an able organizer. Above all, he was a captivating and inspiring orator and knew how to sway people in the mass.<sup>15</sup>

In the matter of organizing, it may be noted, that on July 14, 1933, there was enacted a law which further established Nazi political primacy by forbidding any other party even to exist in Germany.

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<sup>14</sup>K. Heiden, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>15</sup>Benns, op. cit., p. 256.

At that time the Nazi party system comprised six structural groups: (1) the Hitler Youth, composed of young people from six to eighteen inclusive, organized into various age formations; (2) the National Socialist Students' Association; (3) the National Socialist Women's Organization; (4) The National Socialist Motor Corps; (5) The SA - "Storm Troopers"; and the SS - "Elite Guards." Each group had its uniforms, badges, emblems, and other paraphernalia important in the symbolism of the party.<sup>16</sup>

The people of Germany seemed to know little about the real program of the Fuehrer when he came to power in January, 1933. It seems that at that time, they knew only in broadest outlines his plans, which were couched in the broadest and most indefinite terms possible. True, they had the Twenty-Five Points representing the party program, but they were vague, and in their vagueness, they were reassuring. However, one wonders what the people of Germany really knew about the Fuehrer's program. When he came to power in January, 1933, the people had access to Mein Kampf which carried Hitler's blue-print of action. Several conclusions are possible. The people read Mein Kampf and were enamored of the possible greatness that was promised. They were themselves not interested enough in true religion to properly examine the statements made about religion. They were confused by the broad, vague, sometimes indefinite expressions used by Hitler. The people were willing to gamble on the outcome of the movement then in the making; they were willing to

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<sup>16</sup>W.C. Langsam, Western Civilization Since 1660 (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1942), p. 1349.

take the chance that things would work out all right. They did, however, have the Twenty-Five Points<sup>17</sup> representing the party program. These did not, however, specify the ways and means whereby the party was going to carry out its program. One must also keep in mind the fact that Nazism is eclectic, that is, it picks out things from past and present sources and builds these unrelated ideas into a system. It is a dynamic, ever-changing, and opportunistic system; its program is constant-changing. Particularly was this true in the early days of Nazism. This is quite apparent today; but it was not so apparent to the German people in 1933. In the course of time, as the ways and means of the Nazis became more and more apparent, when it became apparent through successive programs, edicts, and resolutions, the German people found out what Hitler and the Nazis were, and what they wanted, namely their bodies and souls. Now there were many people who were willing to go right along with the Nazi program. Also Church people, yes, church leaders were willing to ride the band wagon to envisioned success. Those who gradually had their eyes opened, and who did not want to go along with Nazism, found themselves thoroughly hampered. From 1933 to 1939 so many laws and regulations were promulgated, all intended to make the Party supreme, that little if any opportunity for mass resistance was possible.

In Germany the same mistake was made that is being made over and over again in many countries. People are not interested enough to study

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<sup>17</sup>Heiden, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

and to evaluate the basic issues. People are too ready to go along with whatever person or program that promises them the most material benefits. They do not investigate how the benefits are to be given them, nor what they may cost them. It is enough to know that they will have more today than they had yesterday. Times without number, people have found that they have sold themselves into some kind of slavery. They have also found that breaking the strangle-hold of this slavery has been much more difficult than entrance into slavery.

negotiations for the church of Guyana. The negotiations, which were held in London, through the Center Party, was able to participate actively in the formation of the New Guyana Republic after World War II. It negotiated certain important documents in Guyana (1955), in French Guiana (1958), and Belize (1974). According to these documents, the government must agree to pay 2,000,000 dollars annually to ecclesiastical institutions, in return for which the government would be allowed some voice in the election of the bishops and priests. At least it was to be asked in each case whether it had any objections to the choice of the candidate before he was confirmed by the papal chair. The negotiations with Guyana were not able to adjust themselves as rapidly to the new conditions brought about by the formation of the New Republic. They ended

<sup>2</sup> Albert J. Ryan, *Christianity and Politics: A History of the Church and Government of America and Great Britain* (New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1937), p. 127.

## CHAPTER III

### A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CHURCH CONDITIONS

In the scope of this paper, it is possible to indicate but briefly the conditions in the Church of Germany. At the outset, we want to limit the discussion pretty much to the Protestant Church of Germany, although some references may be made to the Roman Catholic Church.

The Weimar Constitution ushered in a program of changes and re-organizations for the churches of Germany. To begin with, Roman Catholicism, through the Center Party, was able to participate actively in the formation of the New German Republic after World War I. It negotiated certain important Concordats<sup>1</sup> in Bavaria (1924), in Prussia (1929), and Baden (1938). According to these Concordats, the government agreed to pay 2,800,000 marks annually to ecclesiastical institutions, in return for which the government would be allowed some voice in the election of the bishops and canons. At least it was to be asked in each case whether it had any objections to the choice of the candidate before he was confirmed by the papal chair. The Protestant State Churches were not able to adjust themselves so rapidly to the new conditions brought about by the formation of the New Republic. They acted

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Ryna, Christianity and Politics, A History of the Principles and Struggles of Church and State (New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1938), p. 228.

more or less independently. The territorial church (Landeskirche) drew up a new constitution. Then the separate groups negotiated treaties with their respective State Governments. Eventually they formed a loose organization known as the Kirchenbund. So while the Roman Catholics, through the Center Party, could and did cooperate with the Socialist Left in the Reichstag, Protestantism, without specific political organization could not. Protestantism's sympathies were directed largely to the conservative and nationalist right.

Actually the framers of the Weimar Constitution wanted to separate Church and State. However, since the churches were not willing to go along with this program, it was not carried out. Churches were not willing to give up the state revenue which they were receiving.

The specific features of the New Church Constitutions adopted by the German Evangelical Church after 1918 may be briefly enumerated as the following: (1) The right of self-administration; the local congregations were to maintain the right to order and administer their affairs independently. (2) Safeguarding the minister, who being bound by the Bekennnis, was accountable to his clerical superiors. (3) Church Districts and District Synods were arranged. Church workers and lay representatives of the congregation were a part of these Kirchenkreise and Kreissynoden. (4) Setting up of Territorial Synods or Landessynoden which constitute the highest representative bodies of the churches. These highest synods might be termed the legislatures of the church.

There were some twenty-eight Protestant church organizations in

Germany. They are: (1) The Evangelical Church of the Old Prussian Union, being constituted of eight church provinces; (2) The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hannover, made up of four dioceses; (3) The Evangelical Reformed Church of Schleswig-Holstein, with eight districts in Schleswig, and thirteen districts in Holstein; (4) The Evangelical Church of Hessen-Cassel with three dioceses; (5) The Evangelical Church of Nassau, with twenty districts; (6) The Evangelical Church of Frankfurt a. M.; (7) The Evangelical Church of Bavaria, in which the congregations are organized in districts called Dekanate. These districts are organized in three divisions called Kreise; (8) The United Protestant Evangelical Christian Church of the Pfalz (Palatinate); (9) The Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Free State of Saxony, a stronghold of Lutheranism, having thirty-one church districts; (10) The Evangelical Church of Wurttemberg with thirty districts; (11) The United Evangelical-Protestant Church of Baden with twenty-three districts; (12) The Evangelical Church of Hessen with twenty-three districts; (13) The Thuringian Evangelical Church with fifty-four church districts led by the Oberpfarrer; (14) The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Reuss is decidedly Lutheran; (15) The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mecklenburg-Schwerin with the congregations organized in church districts called Propsteien; (16) The Church of Mecklenburg-Strelitz with seven church districts; (17) The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Oldenburg, with two church districts; (18) The Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Dis-

trict of Luebeck in the Free State of Oldenburg; (20) The Evangelical Church of the District of Birkenfeld; (21) The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Braunschweig with nineteen church districts, each headed by a Kirchenrat; (22) The Evangelical Church of Anhalt with five districts; (23) The Evangelical Church of Waldeck and Pymont with four church districts; (24) The Church of Lippe, being predominantly Reformed, comprised five church districts of which one is Lutheran; (25) The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Schaumburg-Lippe with two church-districts called Inspektionen; (26) The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the State of Lubeck; (27) The Evangelical Church of Bremen; and (28) The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the State of Hamburg. These twenty-eight Landeskirchen were united in the German Evangelical Church Federation (Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchenbund).

In addition to these territorial churches there are the Free Churches. They are: (1) The Evangelical Unity of the Brethern, known also as the Herrnhuter or Moravian Brethern; (2) The Federation of Free Evangelical-Reformed Congregations; (3) The Evangelical Lutheran Free Churches organized in the interest of creedal orthodoxy. (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Prussia; Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hesse; Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Hannover; Evangelical Lutheran Church of Baden; Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Hermannsburg-Hamburg; The Penitent Church of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession in Saxony.) (4) The Evangelical Reformed Free Church near the Dutch border; (5) The Association of Evangelical Free Church-



es in Germany. ( The Bund of Baptist Congregations; The Methodist Episcopal Church; The Evangelical Association; The Bund of Free Evangelical Congregations.) (6) The Salvation Army; and (7) Various Sects. (Seventh Day Adventist; Apostolic Christians; Darbyists; Pentecostal Association; Jehovah's Witnesses.)<sup>2</sup>

To complete the picture of Church organization in Germany, it may be noted that there is the Roman Catholic Church and The Old Catholic Church. The former is divided into twenty-five dioceses and six church provinces, namely Bamberg, Breslau, Freiburg, Cologne, Munich, and Freising, Paderborn, Meissen.

With the advent of National Socialism and its peculiar emphases, there came into being a new organization, and particular attempts to make the church subservient to Nazi aims and ideals. Let us look at the former.

There were the German Christians. This was composed of those in the Evangelical Churches who responded to the demand of the party that Christianity be harmonized with National Socialism, that the churches be subordinated to the state. These are the Deutsche Christen or the German Christians. The movement was founded in 1932. The Nazi state found in the German Christians its chief support within the church for its political and ideological struggle.

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<sup>2</sup> Headquarters, Army Service Forces, "Civil Affairs Handbook, Germany," Section 1B: Christian Churches. (Washington: 1944).

This group proposed a program that may be sketched as follows:

- a. Establishment of a unified national church.
- b. Unification of Germany to be accomplished through Christ.
- c. Christ is not a product of Judaism.
- d. The Fuehrer must be unconditionally followed.
- e. The National Socialist Weltanschauung must be unreservedly adopted.
- f. The church must be fitted into the national order established by the Nazi Party.
- g. The profession of the ministry must be reformed in such a way that it will further Christianity for the welfare of the German nation.<sup>3</sup>

The German Christians had a great influence and power in the early years, but because they identified themselves too closely with the party, they lost power and influence. There was a good deal of variety among the German Christians. Many tried to identify Nazism or National Socialism with Christianity. Others disclaimed this connection. To some, the name German signified an extreme national feeling; to others it signified only an interest in the German people because they needed to be brought back into the church. Some pastors with lofty ideals seemed to have been swept off their feet by the program in the early days.

There was much confusion. It is apparent from a quotation which was given as follows. "Many of us deeply regret that the 'German Christian' movement has become so confused. We accepted it simply as an effort

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<sup>3</sup>cf. E. Hirsch, Die Gegenwaertige Geistige Lage (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck, 1954). H. Oppenheimer, The Constitution of the German Republic (London: Stevens, 1923). G. J. Ebers, Staat und Kirche in Neuen Deutschland (Muenchen: Jueber, 1930).

to win the people back to the Church, from which they had become separated. We did not think of it in political terms but in terms of the gospel, both individually and socially applied. We certainly did not consider the word 'German' in the title as meaning a nationalization of Christianity, but simply as meaning that we wanted to bring back Germans to the church."<sup>4</sup>

The German Christians were hard to portray. They did not hold still long enough for careful study. The group was organized after the manner and pattern of the National Socialist party. National Socialism was championed, defended, and expounded at German Christian assemblies.

It will be helpful to consider some of the manifestoes delivered by the German Christians. It shows the confusion and the contradictions that existed. Under the heading of "The New Principles of the 'German Christians', The Goal of the Movement", the following was stated:

"In the national awakening in our fatherland the government has in a unique manner found the way to the German people, and the German people have in turn found the way to the government. One may believe that the German people, in their concern for the deepest sources of their life and strength, wish also to find again the way to the Church. The German Churches must therefore bend their every effort that this may come to pass. For a German Church which simply stands alongside(sic) the German people is nothing but an empty institution. She is truly a Christian Church among the German people only if she is a Church for the German folk, and if she, in self-forgetting service helps the German people

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<sup>4</sup>Macfarland, Charles S. The New Church and The New Germany (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1934), p. 106.

to recognize and fulfill its calling from God.

That is, also, according to repeated declarations of the National Chancellor, the ultimate goal of the present leadership in the government.....The new government wants the Church(sic), and that not in order to have in it a tractable instrument, but because the government realizes where the foundations of a people lie. Along with the tasks of government, the tasks of the Church are therefore now enormously increased. In the form which the German Churches have today, they are not in a position to fulfill this commission. To give the German Churches a form which will make them able to render to the German people that service to which they are commissioned by the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the goal of the movement of faith of the "German Christians".

In order to reach this goal we demand: 1. A new church constitution(sic) which shall determine the leaders of the Church's life not according to the democratic system of elections, but according to the qualifications which the candidates have demonstrated in the service of the congregations. 2. A unified leadership under a spiritual leader who must make, and be responsible for, authoritative decisions. 3. Union of the evangelical provincial Churches in one German Evangelical Church(sic), where at the same time there shall be reverent guarding of historically grounded special rights.

We appeal: 1. For the full preservation of the Reformation confessions. We demand, however, an expansion of the confession in the direction of a sharp repulsion of all modern false teachings, of marmonism, of Bolshevism, and of unchristian pacifism.... 3. For the obligations and rights of all believers, secured in harmony with the constitution of the Church, in accord with the purpose of John Henry Wicherns, the father of the Inner Mission. 4. For far-reaching measures which will make it possible for fellow-countrymen who are willing to work, who are industrious and aspiring, to earn their livelihood honorably and in goodly season to found a household which is German and Christian and in which joy in the growth of a happy group of children guarantees happiness and blessing.....5. Therefore also for the strong development of Christian charity within the church.....6. For Christian schools and education....7. And for churchly and German morality and chastity in city and village, for the sanctification of Sunday, and for the cultivation of every good and pious usage which is rooted in our race and national character.

We pledge ourselves: -and we demand this pledge not only from the official bodies of the Church but in addition thereto from all evangelical men and women - to services in our churches.

We wish to serve: - through our Church, our God and there-

fore, most effectively, our fatherland.<sup>5</sup>

(signed)  
MUELLER  
HOSSFELDER  
FEZER  
WEICHERT

Compare this proclamation with the following statement made by Bishop Joachim Hossenfelder, and one can see the differences are more than just degrees of emphasis. Hossenfelder addressed the German Christians as follows:

We stand on the ground of positive Christianity. We Confess an affirmative faith in Christ, a faith that is fitting for our race, a faith that corresponds to the German spirit of Luther and to heroic piety.

We see in race, nationality, and nation an ordering of life which God has given and entrusted to us, which we are to seek to preserve because it is a law of God. Therefore mixing races is to be opposed.

We see in the mission of the Jews a great danger for nationality. It is the doorway for the entrance of foreign blood into our national body.

We want to have an evangelical church which has its roots in our nationality, and we repudiate the spirit of a Christian world-citizenship...<sup>6</sup>

Another group that was developing with Nazi blessings was that known as The Neo-Pagan Groups. The neo-paganism of the Deutsch-glaebigen groups is a movement that has been classified as being made up of crackpots, initiated and supported by confused, half-educated minds or befuddled intellectuals. The chief concern of this group was the cultivation of the 'German way'. It was to be distinguished from the spirit of all non-Nordic peoples and especially from

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<sup>5</sup>Macfarland, *Op. Cit.*, p. 109,110. (Italics in text.)

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 111.

the foreign spirit of Christianity. The following groups are included in this classification; The German Faith Movement, Deutsche Glaubensbewegung; The Nordic Faith Movement, Nordische Glaubensbewegung; The Germanic Faith Fellowship, Germanische Glaubensgemeinschaft;

Though only 3.5 per cent of all Germans came under the sway of this movement, the importance of this Neo-pagan Deutsch-glaubigkeit cannot be underestimated because such people as Himmler, Alfred Rosenberg, Baldur von Schirach, Dr. Ley, and Dr. Darre were attached to the movement.<sup>7</sup>

There are several other things that must be kept in mind when considering the picture of the church in Germany. Some of this applies especially to the Lutheran Church, some of it to all Protestant churches. In the evaluation offered by one who was on the scene, there appear to be indications and hints that may help one understand why the church in Germany reacted the way it did to Nazi pressure. It would appear also that aids are offered in getting a picture of the church which helps one understand the tendencies to philosophize in matters of religion. The description follows:

European Lutheranism has a history of more than four hundred years. It originated on German soil and spread rapidly from there to the Scandinavian countries. But Lutheranism, true to the claim of its founder, never regarded itself a denominational sect. It rather confessed to be the true successor of the church of the early centuries

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<sup>7</sup> F. Lueb, Christ und Antichrist im Dritten Reich, (Paris: Carrefour, 1936). H. Schmidt, Apokalyptische Wetterleuchten, (Verlag der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern, Muenchen, 1947).

before the Bishop of Rome became the recognized supreme head of the church. This is most significant. It explains in part at least why European Lutherans are extremely historically minded. For them the coming of Paul to Europe in the first half of the first century is of greatest importance. Therefore their profound interest in early Christianity and its environment, such as languages, philosophies, religions, and other facets of culture. Therefore their interest also in the further growth and development of the church....Therefore the interest of European Lutherans also in the partistic period, in the conversion of the Germanic tribes, in the pre-reformation period, and, above all, in the age of the Reformation....But for them also the post-reformation period is important; the age of orthodoxy, pietism, the Aufklärung, 19th-century liberalism, the resurgence of Biblical theology since World War I, the ecumenical movement, and the place of Lutheranism in the Christian world of thought...

There are other factors inherent in European Lutheranism which may not be overlooked. One may not disregard for instance the training and education of Lutheran pastors in Europe. In Germany there are Kirchliche Hochschulen, Theologische Hochschulen, and Predigerseminare which attempt to relate the theological training offered as closely and directly as possible to the needs of the Lutheran parish. But many students preparing for the Lutheran ministry will, and, in countries like Sweden, must, get their ministerial training in state-controlled universities, which stress the scientific rather than the practical aspect of theological training and which, as history shows, often tolerate a great latitude of theological views.

There are other major factors which one must bear in mind in an attempt to understand European Lutheranism. There is the influence of Karl Barth, who, though he has unquestionably made Biblical Theology respectable once more and who may well become known as the most brilliant and influential theologian of the twentieth century, is not a truly Lutheran theologian. There are also the incursions on theology by philosophic thought, especially Kantianism, Hegelianism, and, in recent times, existentialism. Terms such as Aktuell, Ereignis, "the Church in Werden," the church in actu", "the Word of God in actu", were employed by German theologians.....Nor may one overlook the rising strength of the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD) organized in 1948, which, according to its constitution, is a federation, but which has not been able to silence the charges of those who maintain that EKD is functioning as a church. There is, furthermore, the growth of the Union (unierte Kirche), which aims to level out all confessional consciousness.....

There is a final consideration which the American interpreter of European Lutheranism must constantly bear in mind. This has to do with the operation of the church. European churches, except Lutheran Free Churches, can hardly conceive of the possibility of a church carrying out its functions without financial assistance from the state..... Whereas since World War I, Germany has granted no preferential status to any one form of the Christian faith, the government nevertheless still levies and gathers taxes in the various states of Germany and remits the earmarked amounts to the headquarters of the regional churches to be disbursed for salaries of pastors and executive officials of the church.....The effect of this arrangement has been that in many instances pastors are quite unaware of their spiritual responsibilities as shepherds of the flock of Jesus Christ and perform the duties of their calling in an utterly perfunctory manner.<sup>8</sup>

We briefly alluded to EKID above. We should consider it a bit more also bringing VELKD into the picture. EKID or Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland and VELKD or Vereinigte Evangelische Lutherische Kirche Deutschlands represent two union movements in Germany. As early as 1900 an appeal was made for a union of all Lutherans on the basis of Lutheran Confessions. Nothing came of this appeal. After World War I, confessional consciousness had been weakened by liberalism so that an appeal for union on a confessional basis was not acceptable.

Under the attacks on the part of Hitler and the Nazis, and the neo-pagan philosophies advocated by the leaders of National Socialism, the desire arose in the churches to unite for the purpose of protection. World War II arrested the movement. However, Protestant groups

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<sup>8</sup> Paul M. Bretscher, "Review of 'Bad Boll' Conferences," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXV (November, 1954), 839-41.



had been drawn together more closely. Plans were drawn in 1945 and executed in 1948 for a union of Protestant churches. EKID brought together Lutherans, Reformed, and Evangelicals (United) into one body.

There was no quick solution to the problems that confronted these groups. The question needed to be solved: will EKID function as a church or as a federation? The constitution specifies that EKID is a federation, not a church, of Lutherans, Reformed, and Evangelicals (United) Churches. The Free Churches did not join the federation on confessional grounds.

Over-against this organization another was proposed by some of the territorial Lutheran churches who opposed the unionism of EKID. The proposed organization of VELKD would be based on Lutheran Confessions, especially the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism. In view of the fact that Confessions are so variously received, one can see that VELKD would have great difficulties to surmount. One author says:

There are Lutherans in Europe who subscribe to all Lutheran Confessions and who take them most seriously. There are others who at their ordination were pledged on the entire Book of Concord, but who do not take it seriously. There are still other Lutherans in Europe who subscribe to all the Confessions except the Formula of Concord. There are yet others who subscribe only to the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism. For some the Augsburg Confession is primarily a legal and political document....There are, finally, Lutherans in Europe who pay hardly more than lip service to the Confessions.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Hretzcher, Op. Cit., p. 843-44.

Before bringing this section to a close, we must honestly admit that church-life in general was at a low ebb. The church had lost its hold on the people. There was very poor attendance at the church services. The people knew the church was there for them whenever they were ready to use it. Their share of the tax was used to support the church. Many felt it was all right to be a member, but it was not necessary to take things too seriously. In any event, the church was there for baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and funerals. After all these were the things to do. Beyond that, many people took no interest in the church. People neglected their spiritual well-being. While nominal church-membership in the individual congregations was very large, the pastoral office was understaffed. It was well-nigh impossible to check on delinquents, to make the necessary house calls, and to carry on the important Seel-sorge.

One must also consider that German churches were reaping what was sown by liberal theologians through a liberal theology and philosophy. We think in terms of Pietism, Rationalism, Higher Criticism, Relativism, and Nec-paganism.

Pietism as a movement in the church, was a protest against, what many considered a dead-orthodoxy,- an over-emphasis on doctrine, especially on the doctrine of justification at the expense of sanctification. While many persons contributed to its rise, Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705) became a leader in the Pietistic movement. In his Pia desideria, he made 6 proposals as the means of getting new life into

the church.

(1) The earnest and thorough study of the Bible in private meetings, ecclesiolae in ecclesia; (2) The Christian priesthood being universal, the laity should share in the spiritual government of the Church; (3) A knowledge of Christianity must be attended by the practice of it as its indispensable sign and supplement; (4) Instead of merely didactic, and often bitter, attacks on the heterodox and unbelievers, a sympathetic and kindly treatment of them; (5) A reorganization of the theological training of the universities, giving more prominence to the devotional life; and (6) a different style of preaching, namely in the place of pleasing rhetoric, the implanting of Christianity in the inner or new man, the soul of which is faith, and its effects the fruits of life. This work produced a great impression throughout Germany.<sup>10</sup>

Some immediately took over the whole program. This even though Pietism also had its weakness and sponsored several errors. Pietism sponsored chiefly three fundamental errors:

(1) The concept piety is separated from the means of grace and thus placed in a false relation to religion and salvation; (2) The concept orthodoxy is misunderstood and misapplied, so that indifferentism with regard to normative information from Holy Writ is underestimated; (3) There is erroneous teaching on the concepts spirit and letter, spirit and flesh. Out of these errors grew a contempt for the means of grace, an underestimation of the office of the Christian ministry, mixture of sanctification and justification, chiliasm, a false mysticism, and a general schismatic attitude.<sup>11</sup>

Out of the movement developed also a greater amount of rationalization which finally contributed to the rise and development of rationalism. The movement and especially its errors left its mark on German theology and so also on the German people.

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<sup>10</sup>"Pietism", The Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. XXI. (New York: The Encyclopedia Britannica Company, 1911).

<sup>11</sup>E. Lueker, Lutheran Cyclopedia (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 818.819.

Rationalism is a term applied to any system in which human reason is not only set up as the chief source of knowledge, but also as the final criterion of knowledge. The rationalist is commonly thought of as one who refuses to accept the Bible as the inerrant and infallible Word of God. The rationalist concludes that modern historical and archeological investigation make it unreasonable to accept the Bible as a book of supernatural origin, and that its stories are not to be considered true in a literal sense. Thus for example: "The story of the creation in the book of Genesis is shown from the point of view of chronology, to be a poetic or symbolic account by the discovery of civilizations of much greater antiquity."<sup>14</sup>

Within the Christian Church, rationalism usually accepted as revealed the fundamental facts of the creed, while thorough-going rationalism denied the supernatural. As it particularly fits into the frame-work of this thesis, we think of rationalism as followed by many German theologians and Bible scholars from about 1740 to 1836. Rationalism in the church was linked to the intellectual movement called the Enlightenment (Aufklärung). Considerable support for the movement was gained from English deists, from the Pietists, and the French esprits forts. The latter, as well as others, had delivered strong attacks against the idea of the supernatural origin

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<sup>14</sup>"Rationalism", The Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. XXII. (New York: The Encyclopedia Britannica Company, 1911), p. 916.

of the Scriptures. Sometimes considered the first great rationalist, J. S. Semler, maintained that true religion springs from the individual soul. He attacked the authority of the Bible. Eventually, he considered the Bible just another ancient document. Kant showed this spirit on the philosophical side in his "Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft (1793) in which he set forth his idea of Vernunft-glauben. Religion as a result was reduced to a system of morals. Though in time German theology attempted to return to a more positive Christianity, the influence of rationalism on religion in Germany prevailed, and eventually made its contribution towards the acceptance on the part of many people in Germany of the new ideas suggested by National Socialism.

German churches were reaping what was sown by liberal theologians and philosophers. Higher criticism contributed to this and to a weak and indifferent church. We are thinking of higher criticism which ignored and directly denied statements of the Bible which bear on the questions of authorship and origin of the various books of the Bible. Higher critics also denied the necessity of having faith in the miraculous origin and content of the Bible. The idea of relativism plays into the picture of a decadent church life. Relativism indicates the theory which says that truth may vary from individual to individual. "Knowledge is relative to the mind which knows it; the content of which the mind is aware is relative to past experiences; moral codes are relative to culture and experience."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> E.L. Lueker, Op. Cit., p. 896.

A weakened Christian consciousness was also subjected to the onslaughts of a virulent neo-paganism under the direction especially of Alfred Rosenberg. Rosenberg was a high party leader under Hitler. He became the high priest of a theory which was fundamentally opposed to the teaching of Jesus Christ. He prepared two elaborate volumes entitled The Myth of the Twentieth Century. The work received wide distribution. It proposed a new religious ideal under the name of Mythus. Not a few people were asking the question:

Was ist eigentlich der Mythos?

Ueber diese Frage veroeffentlicht Universitaetsprofessor Dr. Paul Schnable, Halle, in der 'Mitteldeutschen Nationalzeitung' vom 4. Juli, 1935 u. a. folgende Ausfuehrungen. ....

In gewissem Sinne ist der Nationalsozialismus eine Religion, denn er verlangt von seinen Anhaengern nicht, dass sie von der Richtigkeit seiner Lehre ueberzeugt sind, sondern dass sie an sie glauben.

Der Nationalsozialismus hat, wie jede Religion, seine Sittenlehre, seine Ethik. Sie liegt uns zunaechst in Klassischer Form gepraeagt vor in den Ausfuehrungen des Fuehrers ueber den arischen Menschen in seinem Buche 'Mein Kampf', dann in Alfred Rosenberg's Werk, 'Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts'.

Der Glaube, der Mythos des Deutschen und insbesondere des Nationalsozialisten, ist also die Ehre der deutschen Nation. Diesem Grundbegriff des Nationalsozialismus hat der Nationalsozialist alles andere unterzuordnen and hat alles zu opfern, was damit in Widerspruch steht oder in Widerspruch kommt.

Jede Lehre, die irgendwo anders herkommend, sei es aus einer anderen Weltanschauung als der des Nationalsozialismus, so der juedisch-liberalistischen, oder aus eine Religion, sie es der katholischen oder der evangelischen, hat in der Gesinnung des Nationalsozialisten, der seinem Fuehrer die Treue geschoren hat, gegenueber diesem Glauben des Nationalsozialismus zurueckzutreten und muss ihm ruecksichtslos geopfert werden.

Weltanschauliche oder Glaubenskonflikte darf es fuer den Nationalsozialisten ueberhaupt nicht geben. Er hat zu befolgen was sein Fuehrer ihn lehrt. Tut er es nicht, versucht er, die Lehre der Partei mit Lehren zu vereinigen, die aus anderen Weltanschauungen oder aus anderen Religionen

stammen, die in innerem Kampf stehen mit dem Nationalsozialismus, dann hat er aus der Partei auszuschneiden, denn er ist innerlich kein Nationalsozialist.<sup>16</sup>

In other words, "Accept as official and binding these new pagan ideologies, and, whenever a conflict between these and any other basic considerations develops, drop everything else, and hold on to these." In view of the fact that one was either a party member or else, there can be no other conclusion possible than this that here was an all-out attempt to remove among other things the basic considerations of the Christian religion.

As one considers the reaction of German people to Hitler's new ideas, and particularly as these influenced church life, one must keep in the consideration the foregoing considerations. With them in mind, one is able to view the church struggle from a more definite point of view.

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<sup>16</sup>H. Schmid, Op. Cit., p. 412.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHURCH RESISTS THE NAZIS

Speculations concerning the plans of the Nazis for the Church of Germany are many. As we view the evidence, there can be no question but that Hitler wanted one united church for Germany, which church must fit into his plans for Germany.<sup>1</sup> However, he could not hope to accomplish that with one of his many distatorial pronouncements. He tried to build up to that eventual condition, and as we re-construct the picture, certain items stand out in bold relief. It is quite apparent that the first things that he desired were to placate the fears of the Church leaders, and to reassure the faithful church members. So far as the Roman Catholic Church was concerned, the matter was accomplished by the signing of the Concordat between the Reich government and the Vatican, July, 1933.<sup>2</sup> This Concordat confirmed the Concordats already mentioned.<sup>3</sup> So far as the Protestant Churches were concerned, the program was to be accomplished by the use of pious, sanctified expressions and some definite promises on the relationship between the New State and the Church. The Twenty-fourth article of the Party Program read as follows:

We demand freedom for all religious creeds in the

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<sup>1</sup>Adolf Hitler, My New Order. (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), p. 187.

<sup>2</sup>Albert Hyma, Op. Cit., p. 229

<sup>3</sup>cf. p. 18.



State, in so far as they do not endanger its existence or offend against the moral and ethical sense of the Germanic race. The party as such represents the standpoint of positive Christianity without binding itself to anyone particular confession."<sup>4</sup>

Hitler, in an address on February 15, 1933, spoke as follows in Stuttgart: "National Socialism....regards Christianity as the unshakable foundation of the morals and moral code of the nation."<sup>5</sup>

Hitler also exerted a great deal of influence by the speech delivered in the Garrison Church at Potsdam on March 23, 1933. Many Germans did not consider this merely another political speech, but one in which the newly appointed Chancellor would present the lines of direction of the new government. They adjudged that Hitler stated his policy concerning the relationship of the State and the Church with such unusual solemnity as to give the impression that it was to be a fundamental law of the State. The Fuehrer declared:

The National Government regards the two Christian Confessions as important factors in the preservation of our nationality. It will respect the treaties made between them and the States. But it hopes and expects that its work for the moral and ethical renewal of the German nation will be equally respected by the Churches. The right of the churches to cooperate in education will be assured and guaranteed."<sup>6</sup>

These and other statements were made by Hitler and other high offic-

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<sup>4</sup>Konrad Heiden, Op. Cit., p. 18.

<sup>5</sup>Adolf Hitler, Op. Cit., p. 157.

<sup>6</sup>Konrad Heiden, Op. Cit., p. 325

ials of the Reich in order to allay the fears of the Church and they succeeded. Reading history backwards, or, judging on the basis of our more complete information, we can see that Hitler did not mean to be bound by such promises, but that he made promises which were convenient at the particular moment. As Chancellor, he made promises which as Party Leader he had no intentions of keeping. Furthermore, when Hitler spoke about Christianity, he was thinking of an entirely different concept from that of the Church. Even the Church realized that after a short time. However, at the beginning of 1933, Hitler's statements were accepted at face value. The Church was deceived, but so were many other people including national governments throughout the world. It would seem to be wise to refrain from pointing the finger of scorn against the German Church, as though Protestantism had bowed the knee to Hitler.

The next step undertaken by the Nazis in their Church program was to attempt to establish one Church. Hitler wanted one Church to fit in with his idea of one nation, one language, one church. In a speech of July 22, 1933, Hitler said: "If it is at all possible the place of the many Evangelical Churches should be taken by a united Reichskirche."<sup>7</sup> Hitler desired that Germany should have one national church (Reichskirche) with a national bishop (Reichsbischof) at its head, and that it should be subservient to the State. This latter point he ex-

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<sup>7</sup>Adolf Hitler, Op. Cit., p. 167.

pressed in a speech on July 22, 1933, saying: "The powerful State can only wish to extend its protection to such religious organizations as can in their turn become of use to it."<sup>8</sup> Eventually, it was not merely to be a union of all Protestants, but, once the Protestants had been brought together, of the Protestants and the Roman Catholics. Threats were being made early in 1933 that the Protestants would be co-ordinated.

As a matter of protection, the General Superintendent of the Rheinland, Dr. Zollner, issued a call on March 13, 1933 entitled: "Aufruf zur Sammlung der Lutheraner," a rally cry for the assembling of Lutherans. Especially those Lutherans who were conscious of their heritage, united in a closely knit organization under the leadership of the Bavarian Bishop, Dr. Hans Meiser. Similar organizations were effected in other states and provinces. This was followed by a union of all Protestant Churches who elected Pastor D. Fritz Bodelschwingh as leader and possible future Reichsbischof. Since Bodelschwingh was well-known and highly respected in Church circles, his appointment was received with a great deal of rejoicing by the congregations, and it was hoped that the Church question had been solved to the satisfaction of also the Nazis. This hope did not materialize, for Hitler refused to accept Bodelschwingh, and the Nazis did not desire such a purely churchly settlement of the problem.<sup>9</sup>

We have mentioned the Deutsche Christen and have given a brief

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>9</sup>Of. p. 18 ff.

description of the basic characteristics of this organization. It seems as though a transformation had been taking place within the organization so that the name Deutsche Christen came to have a party designation. Formally, and in the most exact manner possible, it duplicated the organization of the NSDAP, under the leadership of the radical Pastor Hossenfelder. After but a short time, the group whose main interest was national or political, began to exercise the controlling influence in the organization. The real activists of the organization were those who were enamoured of National Socialism, and they began to advance the ideas of identifying the Church and the State. Openly and secretly, they sought to use the Church with all of its ramifications in order to bring National Socialism to a full victory in Germany, even bringing it into control of the religious elements in the German Reich. The Roman Catholic Church was not too seriously affected by all this at this time, partly because of its own closely-knit organization, and because it seems that at this time the main emphases were directed against the Protestant Church. Hitler enlisted the aid of the German Christians in order to help solve the church problem. At the head of the German Christians was Hossenfelder, who has been characterized as a radical pastor " who is the champion of 'German' Lutheranism as opposed to 'foreign' Calvinism."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Konrad Heiden, Op. Cit., p. 254.

However, resistance to Hossenfelder on the part of the Church was so great that Hitler removed him from office and appointed Ludwig Mueller. Mueller was a chaplain in the Reichswehr and a personal friend of Hitler's from East Prussia. Mueller was named as supreme head of the German Christians. The public in general knew very little about Mueller. He had been acquainted with the Fuehrer since 1927; and, shortly after the organization of the German Christians, he had been appointed as the national leader of the Church party in East Prussia. He had discussed the problems of a United Evangelical Church in great detail with Hitler in April, 1933. Soon after this he was made Hitler's confidant, with full power to act, in the affairs of the Evangelical Church. This was a questionable procedure since the Church had leaders, both progressive and sound, in the various church boards and committees; leaders, moreover, who were obligated not to the political program, but to the spirit of the Christian Church. The uneasiness in the Church increased when Dr. Jager, a lawyer, bound solely by party principles, was appointed to the Prussian "Kultusministerium" with power to act in the interest of the Church. It was quite clear to the Church that only political considerations were to be weighed in future consideration, and as a result of this conviction, Bodelschwingh felt himself constrained to resign from the position of honor bestowed upon him. This he did at the synod of the German Evangelical General Church Committee in Eisenach on June 24, 1933. On Sunday, July 2nd, the Stas-tikas were run up on Protestant Church. However, a show of right and constitutionality was maintained, for a new election with respect to the representative organs of the Church were to be held in order

to ascertain the will and wish of the Church members. The real consideration was not to ascertain the wishes and the needs of the congregations, nor a desire to present a form of Church life which was more in conformity with the Gospel; it was merely a political move considered to be expedient for the party.

In connection with the election, no allowance was made for a real preparation for the election, nor for a canvass in behalf of the platform "Church and Gospel", the platform adopted by the Church in opposition to the platform of the Deutsche Christen. Time for thorough instruction of the congregations as to the real issues at stake was not given. On the contrary, the election was to take place within eight days of its announcement. Furthermore, although the most binding promises concerning the rights of the Church had been given; although, simultaneous with the proclamation of the election, every attempt to influence the course of voting from the outside was forbidden; and although the again and faithful Reichspräsident Hindenburg had reminded Hitler of the uncurtailed rights of the church; the elections held on the 23rd of July were under direct and tremendous pressure. For example: in June the house of the Evangelical Press Association in Berlin-Steglitz and also the office of the Church Council in Berlin were entered and searched by one branch of Hitler's police. On June 17th, the secret police in Berlin confiscated pamphlets and publications concerning the proposed Evangelical Church election. To no little consternation of the German Church people, because of the ease with which the leading statesman set aside his own promise,

Hitler delivered an address on the eve of the election over a nationwide radio network in which he gave an explicit and one-sided recommendation to vote for the German Christians<sup>11</sup> although he himself was a Roman Catholic. In certain localities, the attempts at influencing the election took on more drastic forms. At any rate, the desired returns came in to headquarters.<sup>12</sup> In general, the Church Committees were constituted by the German Christians, a result certainly not desired by the Congregations, nor indicative of an early settlement of the church problem. On the basis of this corrupt election, representatives of the Protestant Churches assembled at Wittenberg on September 27, 1933, elected Ludwig Mueller as the Reichsbischof. There can be no thought of real assent of the churches in this election. Sincere Christians were dumbfounded. Faithful church circles felt themselves deceived and betrayed; therefore, opposition began to develop in the church. At first, the opposition arose on the part of the leaders of the congregations. Pastor Martin Niemöller, Berlin-Dahlem, organized the "Pfarrernotbund"; and in Württemberg, 150 pastors declared their secession from the German Christians. Indignation in the Reich rose. There was no longer a particular need for the pastors and professors to spur on the indignation. The congregations themselves revealed their outraged feelings, so that Mueller himself, in order to preserve the fictitious title of Reichsbischof had to sever his relations with

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<sup>11</sup> Hitler, Op. Cit., p. 187.

<sup>12</sup> Heiden, Op. Cit., p. 330.

the German Christians. He did not, however, succeed in gaining the confidence of the Church. The Church objected to his completely arbitrary methods, his complete indifference to the established rights and ordinances of the Church, his system of aping the principles of the NSDAP and of the new State leadership. Yet, he wanted to try once more. He pounced upon a rather simple means of unifying the church. The individual provincial church organizations were simply made members of (eingegliedert), the German Christians, contrary to their will, without consideration of their historical background, -- by a stroke of the pen, by an administrative act. Mueller was prepared to use force if necessary, neither was he deterred by the decision of the Berlin State Court, No. I, which declared his action null and void on April 13, 1934. Mueller, apparently, chose to ignore the fact that the virulent hater of Christianity, Alfred Rosenberg, in January, 1934, was entrusted by Hitler with the complete "geistigen und Weltanschaulichen Schulung des deutschen Volkes"<sup>13</sup>; for he still remained loyal to the Party. The Party had discovered that it could use him, indeed, not for the proper reorganization of the Church, but to promote the destruction of the Evangelical Church. One wonders whether he realized that he was a traitor. The opposition to Mueller's church policies became so great that even party members saw that there could be no thought of a simple "Gleichschaltung" of the Church, nor of using the Church in or-

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<sup>13</sup>Uebersicht Ueber den Kirchenkampf (Bayern, Ansbach: Ev. Luth. Landeskirchenrat, 1945), p. 7..



der to strengthen or anchor the Party. The "Pfarrenothbund" sent the Reichsbischof the names of 6,000 pastors who expressed a vote of "no confidence" in their bishop. Throughout the Reich, the congregations were strengthened for the conflict by means of special confessional services.<sup>14</sup> However, the attacks on the church by the Party did not cease. A violent attack was made on the provincial bishop D. Meiser in the Nurnberg, Frankischer Tagezeitung, entitled: "Away with Bishop D. Meiser! He has become unfaithful, and a breaker of promises! His actions are contrary to the welfare of the people."<sup>15</sup> It was written by Gauleiter Karl Holz and the style and contents are indicative of the deep feelings. This occurred on September 15, 1934.

On the following Sunday, September 16, 1934, after the service in St. Matthew's Church in Munich, at which D. Meiser preached, a demonstration took place in behalf of the maligned bishop. The crowd moved to the office of the Church Council and then to the Brown House in Munich. The same procedure was repeated in Augustburg where D. Meiser

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<sup>14</sup>A handbill dated Bayreuth, 9 May 1937 proclaims: Evangelischer Kirchentag. Der Gott der Wahrheit will reden zu den Menschen der Gegenwart. Er hat der Kirche Jesu Christi befohlen, seine Botschaft zu hoeren, darüber zur Besinnung zu kommen und sie zu bezeugen. Unter diesem Befehl steht auch der Kirchentag in Bayreuth am 9 Mai 1937. Alle Glieder unserer Evan. Kirche sind eingeladen daran teilzunehmen. Vorabend: Samstag, den 8 Mai in der Stadtkirche; 20 Uhr: "der Menschensuchende Gott." Oberkirchenrat Sammetreuther, Muenchen. 16 Uhr: "die Biblefrage in der deutschen Jugend", Studienprofessor Oberdorfer, Nurnberg. 30 Uhr: "Beichte und Seelsorge", Superintendent Hahn, Dresden.

<sup>15</sup>Ev. Luth. Landeskirchenrat, Op. Cit., p. 10.

preached in the crowded Barfusser Church. The wave of protest was especially high and strong in Nurnberg. On Monday, September 17, 1934, outraged members by the thousands assembled in the three largest churches. The surprised and astounded bishop rushed to Nurnberg. On the next evening, Oberkirchenrat Daumiller found the large St. Lorenz Church of Nurnberg filled to overflowing. On Wednesday, the fifteen churches of Nurnberg were filled once more. During these days, 1000 special services were held, 400 of them in the Ansbach circuit alone.<sup>16</sup> The attacks on the church did not stop, even in the face of the protests. Bishop D. Wurm was placed under house arrest from the sixth to the twenty-sixth of October, 1934 for steadfastly refusing to recognize the "Eingliederung" in Stuttgart. While D. Meiser was absent from Munich, Dr. Jager with several guards entered the Church Council's office on the eleventh of October. Bishop Meiser was placed under house arrest from October 12-26. Once more a great storm of protest arose, including a strong protest by some veterans of the Party wearing the golden party insignia. Eight hundred Nuernbergers went to Munich to visit their captive bishop, but were not permitted to see him. On the 16. October, after services, which had completely filled the two large churches, St. Sebald and St. Lorenz(Nurnberg), some 16,000 people gathered in the Hitler Platz for a solemn, earnest and determined proclamation against the unjust attacks against the church. On the following day, all the pastors of Nurnberg and Furth were ordered to appear

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<sup>16</sup>Ev. Luth. Landeskirchenrat, Op. Cit., p. 10.

for a hearing. As spokesman, Baumiller presented all of the acts of the State which had precipitated such disturbances and asked for a correction. After the hearing, even Streicher recommended to the Nazis that they had better leave the Church alone; or, at least, it was necessary to try other means. Bishops Wurm and Meiser were released; Jager was removed from his position; and Muller was forced to revoke his orders of einsiedelung.

On July 16, 1935, the State organized a Reichs Church Ministry under the former minister without portfolio Kerri. The confessionally faithful church formed a loose organization under Bishop Marahrens of Hannover. Minister Kerri, to a certain extent, saw the justice of the claims of the Evan. Church and tried to help, but he was sabotaged by other departments of the State. More and more sinister attacks were made upon the Church. These were intended to force the Church to obedience over against the Nazis. Among others, these things occurred: Rudolph Hess on April 17, 1936 forbade all party officers to have membership in a church; in June, Bible colporteurs were forbidden to work; church programs could be held only in Church buildings; Minister of Education Rust, forbade the theological faculties from taking any open position in the Church conflict; Niemoller was placed into a concentration camp, as were other pastors; pastors were forbidden the right to speak, or were arrested, or were cut off from financial support, etc. The statement of Dr. Ley, made on July 7, 1936, did not come as a surprise to anyone. He said: "Here on earth, we believe only in Adolf

Hitler."<sup>17</sup> Everywhere pressure was increased to get the party members out of the church, especially also to separate the Hitler Youth from the Church. Significant was a statement on the signboards of the former Hitler Youth at Halle, reading:

Where are the enemies of our Hitler Youth? They are the religious fanatics, who still today fall on their knees with wistful looks directed upward, who spend their time attending churches and praying. We, as Hitler boys, can regard only with contempt or derision you people who still today run to their ridiculous Evangelical or Catholic clubs to give themselves up to eminently superfluous religious reveries.<sup>18</sup>

Suddenly a ray of light and hope appeared. Hitler, on February 15, 1937, gave permission for an election of a new General Synod. The announcement was received with mixed feelings. People were wondering whether this was just another trick to gain control of the church by means of a show of right, or whether it was really an indication of a new turn of events. A movement in the church was started, but there was no such enthusiasm as in the fall of 1934. A movement of such proportions was practically out of the question. While the Church had been forbidden the right to refute false ideas and laws, the Nazis went right on passing and promoting false laws and ideas. Increasingly, the Church had had to endure acts of terrorization from the Gestapo. There was some evidence of activity on the part of the Church. Pastor

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<sup>17</sup>Ev. Luth. Landeskirchenrat, Op. Cit., p. 11.

<sup>18</sup>Documents for the year 1936, Carnegie Endowment for Peace, Division of Intercourse and Education (New York: 1936).

Helmut Kerrn, from the office of the Nurnberg Volkmission wrote a booklet Mein Deutschland, Wohin? in which he tried to show the problems facing the Church as well as the duty of the Church in the face of these problems. 700,000 copies of the book were distributed, possibly the largest circulation ever reached by a church publication in Germany. It was a testimony to the fact that the Church had not succumbed. It is thought that Pastor Kerrn was saved from a terrible fate by the fact that he was called up as a reserve officer to serve on the Eastern Front. There, as a company commander, he was seriously wounded and died in the hospital in Bucharest towards the end of 1941. One wonders how much his booklet might have influenced Hitler for the elections were never held.

Instead, the attacks and recriminations against the Church were stepped up. Open defamation of the Church; terrorization, not only of pastors, but increasingly of members of congregations; de-Christianization of the schools; religious instruction relegated to inconvenient times; teachers forbidden to give further instruction; pastors permitted to give religious instruction only after they had been examined as to their aryan ancestry and their political trustworthiness; reduced time for religious instruction; in places, as in Wurttemberg, the teaching of Old Testament stories was to be especially ridiculed, because they would not do so, 700 pastors<sup>19</sup> were denied the right to teach; Christian school prayers were forbidden; crucifixes were removed from

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<sup>19</sup>Ev. Luth. Landeskirchenrat, Op. Cit., p. 16.

schools, although in certain localities, this activity had to be halted because of local pressure; the right to rear children was withdrawn from the Church by Rosenberg in an order dated December 12, 1937. "Nicht ohne", says a representative of the Church, "tiefste Sorge und Empörung in Weiten Kreisen des deutschen Volkes zu erregen, das sich trotz allem in der Volkszählung vom 17. 4. 1939 zu 95% also zu einer christlichen Kirche gehörig bekannte."<sup>20</sup> Further acts included: the closing of the Theological School of Bethel; definite tendency was shown to place men on the faculties in all schools who were subservient to the Nazis; the suppression of the Church Press; all persons dependent upon the State were forbidden to participate in Confessional Organizations; 800 pastors taken into custody; reprisals of all kinds. Such were the measures which the Nazis employed to make the Church submit to the hated "Gleichschaltung." In spite of numerous threats not mentioned, the Church did not give up resistance, although it must be admitted that it was becoming a token resistance.

While this side of the picture is given, no attempt is made to white-wash the Church, as though all in the Church were opposed to Hitler's program. The fact is that many pastors and professors sided with the Deutsche Christen, e.g., E. Hirsch, and others. Mahareus' roll in the unfolding picture was not so glorious. Many Lutherans were weak; fell in with the ideas of the Party; vied for recognition in the Party. Some reformed leaders appeared to be much stronger in their opposition.

With the outbreak of the war a new tendency was started. There

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<sup>20</sup>Ev. Luth. Landeskirchenrat, Op. Cit., p. 18.

could be no open attacks against the Church, as they had formerly been made; nor could the leaders in the Church lead open attacks against the State. This was war! All were engaged in battle, everyone had to make sacrifices. This did not, however, prevent the Nazis from trying to make the Church fall into line with their proposed program. The Nazi leaders developed all sorts of regulations, restrictions, etc., and gave as reasons for them; these measures are necessary for the successful prosecution of the war. Under this heading they forbade the pastors the publishing of names and addresses of their members in service; pastors were forbidden to send their soldier-members in service any religious materials, lest they interfere with the mythical Chaplain's Corps; pastors were not allowed to follow their members who were at the various labor camps<sup>21</sup>; church bells were confiscated; the ringing of the remaining bells was restricted; the Church Press was completely abolished, as they said "wegen kriegsbedingte Arbeits- und Papierersparnis."<sup>22</sup> In a circular letter the Reichserziehungsminister Rust, dated March, 1940, stated; "Mit Rucksicht auf die Erfordernisse des Krieges und fuer die Dauer desselben der Religionsunterricht an den oberen Klassen der hoeheren Schulen ueber das Volksschulalter hinaus" beseitigt werde.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Documents for the Year 1937, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of Intercourse and Education (New York, 1937).

<sup>22</sup> Ev. Luth. Landeskirchenrat, Oo. Cit., p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 20.





## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

On the one hand, leaders of Protestant churches spoke as follows:

Jetzt, wo sich der Druck zu loesen beginnt, ist uns nicht ruhmvolle zu mite. Aber wir duerfen doch nicht vergessen; die Evan. Kirche hat auch in dieser Zeit ihre Zeugen gehabt - in den Verhandlungen mit der Gestapo, in ihren Gefaengnissen und Lagern; und manchen von ihnen hat seine Treue mit dem Tod besiegelt... Mitten in der Anfechtung ist ein Stamm der Gemeinde treu und fest geblieben und hat sich tiefer im Evangelium verwurzelt, als es in Frieden geschieht; ja, da und dort, wo einst Uebersaetigkeit und Abkehr waren, hat ein neuer Hunger nach den ewigen Dingen sich zu regen begonnen und wir haben in tausend einzelnen Zeichen und erst recht in dem einen grossen Zeichen, dass die drohende Vernichtung der Kirche durch eine fuer uns anangreifliche Macht nicht gelungen ist, mit erschuetterten Herzen die Wunder und Gnade Gottes schauen duerfen. Nun sind wir zu neuer Hoffnung gerufen, da wir "den Bogen Gottes in den Wolken" sehen. Unsere eigene Kraft ist gering geworden, aber wir wollen sie treulich nutzen. Den christlichen Kirchen der anderen Laender moecht wir vertrauen, dass sie sich mit uns gemeinsam ans Werk gehen, das Fieber des Hasses im Volkerleben durch die in der Erloesung Christi wurzelnde Liebe des Reiches Gottes zu ueberwinden - welchen gewaltigen Dienst hat hier die christliche Oekumene an der im Grund Ratlosen weltlichen Oekumene gerade jetzt zu tun und zu verantworten! Aber unser letztes und tiefstes Vertrauen richtet sich auf den Herrn der Kirche, dessen Gerichte wir demuetig erleiden, dessen Wunder wir erfahren haben, dessen Erbarmen wir erhoffen.<sup>1</sup>

While this may be interpreted as inadequate as a confession of error, we ought not fail to mention a rather thorough going

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<sup>1</sup>Ev. Landeskirchenrat, Op. Cit., p. 21.22.

Schuldbekenntnis. This was issued immediately after the war in Stuttgart. In this document, the blame for any weakness and ineffectiveness in the struggle of the Church against the Nazis is assumed by Church leaders.

One ought not be too severe in judgments against the Church.

A Party member made this confession:

Do you know, my German compatriots that there remains in Germany only one party which has unfortunately evaded us? It has concealed itself in the religious catacombs, saying it is persecuted and that salvation is at hand because it knows that fools go quickest into the traps of the hypocrites. This party has nothing whatsoever to do with the real saints. There must be an end of this barricading behind church walls.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, one of the basic problems remains. It is the tie between Church and State. The State collects Church taxes and remits them to the Church. A system introduced in the first half of the nineteenth century is being carried on. The Church seemingly was afraid to break away from the system. It was not yet ready to dare to stand on its own feet. It would appear that serious problems and difficulties could arise out of this condition. While German church leaders expressed admiration for the system whereby the work of the Church is totally supported by the free-will offerings of the members, they did not have the courage to adopt a similar system.

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<sup>2</sup> Stewart W. Herman, Jr., It's Your Souls We Want, (New York: Harper Bros., 1934), p. 110.111.

In some circles of America, there seems to be a clamoring for some governmental support for church programs. One is amazed in view of the problems such an arrangement has brought to others. One is constrained to ask; if the government is asked to support religious work, should it not have a voice in the work? The government is, however, not to favor any one religious conviction over another. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."<sup>3</sup>

After the war there were certain immediate problems to be met. Some of these problems exist today. They include: (1) Refugees, who know their number, need care, food, clothing, and shelter. (2) People at home, who were "blitzed", need similar help. (3) The educational systems, secular and religious must be restored and expanded. (4) Libraries of all kinds must be reassembled, while the teaching process is going on. While this is true with respect to all schools, it is especially true with respect to religious institutions. (5) The Church of Germany must be revitalized in all its members by a return to the Word of God as the source of true religion and piety.

We are happy to note that great strides have been made towards a partial solution of the problems. It is laudable, indeed, that Americans, yes, American Christians have taken such a prominent part in this work. German people, however, needed just such evidence of "love for the neighbor" in their dire need.

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<sup>3</sup> Charles A. and Mary R. Beard, Op. Cit., p. 505

To be mentioned is the program of "Bad Boll Conferences" sponsored by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. These conferences were arranged for the purpose of discussing doctrine and life. The aim was to study Bible teaching and to more closely approach the Bible ideal in doctrine and life. While differences of opinion prevail, yet it is hoped and believed that a deep impression was made on European Lutheranism.<sup>4</sup>

In the total picture, there must be considered the development of EKid and VeLKD, to which earlier reference was made; the much heralded ecumenical movement, the union of several Lutheran Free Churches, and the Lutheran World Federation, organized 1947, as well as, the World Council of Churches, organized 1948.

We would conclude by directing the readers to a quotation from the Bible. In it we are given directions as to what to do in the face of danger, yes, danger such as the Church of Germany faced; yes, danger from without and within. It reads:

Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with

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<sup>4</sup>For a more extended report on "Bad Boll Conferences," the reader is referred to Paul M. Bretscher, "Review of 'Bad Boll Conferences'" Concordia Theological Monthly, XXV (November, 1954), p. 834-848. Some of the basic problems of the German Church are noted.



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