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Religion and Politics in Germany since 1945: The Evangelical and Catholic Churches

SABRINA P. RAMET

Examining the nature of political opposition on the part of Christian ecclesiastical bodies in the twentieth century demonstrates that while churches have adapted to a variety of political systems, no church can compromise with the state when its “mission” is at stake: those factors which are minimally essential for its survival. These would include the liberty of priests, nuns, and other clerics to carry out their sacerdotal tasks, the preservation under church control of its facilities, control of the contents of its own theology, and the ability to enforce adherence to the core sexual-marital ethics of the religious body. While everything else may be open to negotiation—as the case of Lutheran Church policy under Bishop Zoltan Kaldy in socialist Hungary makes clear¹—when a state infringes on these core interests, church resistance is sharp, as the Nazis discovered in 1937 when Pope Pius XI issued his encyclical, “Mit Brennender Sorge.” The pontiff condemned the regime for the establishment of the German Christian Movement with its neo-pagan trappings and racist ideology, the wholesale arrest of Catholic priests, and the closure of Catholic schools, and declared:

Whoever raises race or nation or state or state form or the agents of state authority or other values of human communal life—which within the terrestrial order have an essential and honorable place—to the highest norm of all, taking it out of the

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1. Joseph Pungur, “Protestantism in Hungary: The Communist Era,” in *Protestantism and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia: The Communist and Post-Communist Eras*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1992), esp. 136-38, 142.

merely temporal scale of values to turn it into a religious value, making it the object of idolatry, inverts and adulterates the God-created and divinely ordained scheme of things.²

However, “mission” interests must be distinguished from “programmatic” interests, which embrace social values which the church wants to see protected (for example, specific human rights, the proscription of abortion or gay/lesbian marriage, etc.). A case study of the two principal churches of Germany—the Roman Catholic and the Evangelical-Lutheran—in the postwar period demonstrates that while the Evangelical Church has displayed more resilience under authoritarian systems, the Roman Catholic Church has tended to be much more politically active in democratic systems, openly voicing criticisms of the government and taking stands that oppose popular preferences. Differences in the theological mindset of Catholics and Evangelicals make for differences in the understanding of programmatic interests. For the Roman Catholic Church, the distinction between “the flock” (baptized Catholics) and those “outside the flock” is fundamental. Accordingly, while Catholic prelates give high priority to the needs of “the flock,” non-Catholics are treated as distinctly less important, indeed possibly of no interest to the Church at all. During the Second World War, for example, Catholic prelates in Germany and Croatia took few steps to protest the incarceration and liquidation of Jews and other non-Catholics,³ but protested vehemently once the position of the Catholic Church was threatened. Michael Cardinal Faulhaber, Archbishop of Munich, took the Nazi regime to task on this issue, declaring on New Year’s Eve 1941:

While Catholic soldiers serve at the front standing shoulder to shoulder with other German men, bearing the same burdens and trials, and bringing the same heroic sacrifice of blood; while the Catholics at home make the same sacrifices, contribute to the same collections whether required or voluntary—the Church is being treated with constant suspicion, spied upon and subjected to special regulations; Church and parochial facilities are commandeered as if they were nothing more than private residences.⁴

The *leitmotiv* of Catholic political behavior in authoritarian systems is not opposition, but compromise—though not without limits.

2. Pope Pius XI, “Mit Brennender Sorge” (14 March 1937), in *Mit Brennender Sorge—Das Christliche Deutschland 1933 bis 1945*, ed. Simon Hirt, *Katholische Reihe* 1 (Freiburg-im-Breisgau: Verlag Heider & Co., 1946), 5.

3. On Germany, see Klaus Scholder, *Die Kirchen und das Dritte Reich*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt/Berlin/Vienna: Propylaen Verlag, 1977); and Gordon C. Zahn, *German Catholics and Hitler’s Wars: A Study in Social Control* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962). On Croatia, see Fikreta Jelić-Butić, *Ustaše i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska 1941—1945* (Zagreb: S. N. Liber and Skolska knjiga, 1977), 214-21; and Ivan Mužić, *Katolička crkva, Štepinac i Pavelić*, 2nd ed. (Zagreb: Dominović, 1997), 247-352.

4. Quoted in Zahn, *German Catholics and Hitler’s Wars*, 107.

For Germany's Protestants, on the other hand, the understanding of "programmatic" interests was fundamentally shaped by the concept of the "two kingdoms"—a concept articulated by both Martin Luther and John Calvin. On this understanding, programmatic interests related to the Heavenly Kingdom are beyond compromise, while those of the Earthly Kingdom are primarily the concern of the civil authorities. In this sphere, the church should content itself with providing moral counsel.⁵ Demarcating the Heavenly Kingdom from the Earthly Kingdom may be simpler in theory than in practice, judging from the controversies which arose following the Nazis' rise to power. The main body of the German Evangelical Church (under Reichsbischof Ludwig Müller) came to terms with Nazi theological innovation and, in 1934, endorsed National Socialism as a "healthy and correct orientation" which "corresponds to our history."⁶ But a part of the Evangelical Church found this degree of accommodation unacceptable and, later that same year, declared the founding of the so-called Confessing Church (*Bekennende Kirche*), objecting to Nazi intrusions into Christian theology and ecclesiastical administration and rejecting the accommodative posture of the church leadership.⁷ Pastor Martin Niemöller played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Confessing Church, in which Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer was also a prominent figure.

THE ALLIED OCCUPATION AND THE LEGACY OF THE NAZI ERA, 1945-1949

In the wake of Naziism, the social role of religion was a matter of some interest to Allied occupation authorities, as reflected in the establishment of a coordinated Allied Religious Affairs Committee in August 1945. The Americans and British agreed that a restoration of "traditional" relationships between church and political authorities was desirable, by which they understood, *inter alia*, that the churches abstain from the promotion of "subversive political activities."⁸

Perhaps surprisingly, a certain animosity quickly developed between theologian Martin Niemöller, a leading figure in the erstwhile Confessing Church, and the American authorities. Niemöller, who had

5. Sape A. Zylstra, "Protestantism: Theology and Politics," in Ramet, ed., *Protestantism and Politics*, 13-14.

6. Quoted in Bernd Jeand'Heur, "Der Begriff der 'Staatskirche' in seiner Historischen Entwicklung," *Der Staat* (Berlin) 30, no. 3 (1991): 465.

7. On the Confessing Church, see Christopher Spehr, "Berichte der Gestapo über eine Synode der Bekennenden Kirche," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 107, no. 2 (1996): 232-47.

8. Quoted in Jörg Thierfelder, "Die Kirchenpolitik der vier Besatzungsmächte und die evangelische Kirche nach der Kapitulation 1945," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 18, no. 1 (1992): 7.

freely criticized the Nazis and thus been imprisoned, could scarcely have been expected to temper himself under American occupation. He not only criticized the American authorities to their faces, in autumn 1945, for their headlong internment of large numbers of suspected Nazis, but even told them that their methods made it difficult to see any difference between democracy and Naziism.⁹ Along similar lines, Bishop Theophil Wurm of Württemberg expressed his opposition to de-Nazification on the grounds that it was up to God alone to pass judgment on the consequences of obedience to human authority.¹⁰ On 1 February 1948, the church leadership of Hessen and Nassau, under the leadership of Niemöller, issued an unusually sharp remonstrance against de-Nazification, claiming that it had instituted measures reminiscent of "the terrifying years just ended."¹¹

Although French occupation authorities respected the general principles of religious freedom and noninterference in religious affairs, their religious policy was nuanced by their hope of wooing the Saarland into an open embrace of French annexation (a policy previously attempted after World War I) through the creation of an autonomous Evangelical Church of the Saarland, and briefly considered removing Otto Wehr of the Rhineland Church, insofar as he appeared to be "the decisive obstacle to our mutual understanding."¹²

The Soviet occupation authorities largely followed the Allied line on religion. Some churchmen had feared that Stalin would introduce tough antireligious measures, but Stalin hoped to avoid a showdown so soon after hostilities had ended—at least while American troops were still in Europe. He also hoped to trade German unification for a pledge of guaranteed German neutrality, accompanied by German disarmament. As a result, the Soviet authorities moved cautiously, and did nothing, for example, to hinder the restoration of the Evangelical Church.

COLLECTIVE GUILT

Understandably, the entire question of responsibility for the atrocities committed in the Third Reich posed an enormous dilemma for

9. Frederic Spotts, *The Churches and Politics in Germany* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 100-01.

10. Clemens Vollnhals, "Die Hypothek des Nationalprotestantismus. Entnazifizierung und Strafverfolgung von NS—Verbrechen nach 1945," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 18, no. 1 (1992): 55. See, also by the same author: *Evangelische Kirche und Entnazifizierung 1945-1949. Die Last der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1989).

11. Quoted in Vollnhals, "Die Hypothek," 56.

12. Quoted in Thierfelder, "Die Kirchenpolitik der vier Besatzungsmächte," 16.

Germans. While no one argued that every single German had personally killed Jews or participated in other atrocities, many persons, especially non-Germans, felt that, in some general sense, all Germans shared in a collective guilt for what had been perpetrated in the years 1933-1945. Catholic and Protestant leaders both had welcomed Hitler's rise to power, hoping that he would "bring clarity out of confusion, restore morality in place of decadence, and national self-respect instead of guilt and humiliation."¹³ The Christian churches, for whom questions of sin, guilt, penitence, and atonement are central, were constrained to take a position on the issue. For the Catholic Church, this question had both historical and theological aspects. In historical terms, Catholic churchmen were aware that their church had been pusillanimous in its support of the Weimar Republic and had, in that way, played into the hands of the National Socialists.¹⁴ The Holy See had, moreover, by signing a Concordat with Hitler, shown a readiness to come to terms with Naziism. The historical record was undeniable, and thus embarrassing. In theological terms, however, the Catholic Church felt much surer of itself. Basing itself on the intertwined notions of individual responsibility, individual sin, and individual redemption (or damnation), the Catholic Church felt, as Bishop Clemens von Galen put it, "If anyone today contends that the entire German population and each of us made himself guilty through atrocities committed by members of our population during the war, that is unjust."¹⁵ Pope Pius XII set the theological tone in an address in June 1945. It was not Germans, or German Catholics, who were to blame for the Holocaust; it was Nazis. Hence, for the church, each German was expected to shoulder responsibility only for what she or he had personally done or omitted to do. At stake, implicitly if not explicitly, was the legitimacy of the Catholic Church's strategy of compromising on programmatic issues, in order to protect the core mission interests. Rather than defending the strategy on its own terms, Catholic apologists tried instead to play down the accommodationist aspects of church behavior in the Nazi era and instead played up instances of criticism, such as Pope Pius XII's first encyclical, "Summi Pontificatus" (20 October 1939), which "warned against theories which denied the unity of the human race and against the deification of the state."¹⁶

13. John S. Conway, "National Socialism and the Christian Churches during the Weimar Republic," in *The Nazi Machtergreifung*, ed. Peter D. Stachura (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), 124.

14. Spotts, *The Churches and Politics*, 90.

15. *Ibid.*

16. "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah," signed by Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, The Most Rev. Pierre Duprey, and The Rev. Remi Hoeckman, on behalf of the Holy See, from full text published in *New York Times*, 17 March 1998, A10.

The Evangelical Church adopted a less self-righteous posture, and, in October 1945, leading figures of the Evangelical Church met in Stuttgart and drew up what came to be called the Stuttgart Confession of Guilt. In this Confession, Protestant leaders admitted a certain degree of culpability with the words, "We accuse ourselves of not having been more courageous, of not having prayed more sincerely, of not having believed more joyously, and of not having loved more burningly."¹⁷ By today's standards, this admission sounds tepid and half-hearted, but few Germans were prepared to go further. Indeed, the admission provoked demands in the press that "the Church should not express itself on political matters."¹⁸ There were, of course, a few clergymen who were prepared to go much further. One of these was the irrepressible Niemöller, who told a meeting of some 1,200 students in Erlangen, in February 1946, "I am responsible for what happens among the German people. We Christians must accept and recognize our guilt. . . . For we Christians in Germany have been guilty. . . ." Niemöller went further yet:

Now six million Jews, an entire people, were murdered in our midst and in our name. When are we going to come to terms with this reality? If I were to ask one of you (concerning some particular atrocity), he would at once answer, 'For that you must ask the Ortsgruppenleiter. What could I do?' And the Ortsgruppenleiter will refer me to the Gauleiter, and so forth until we are referred all the way to the Court Hall at #22. And what will they say? Well, we hear it every day: they pass the buck to those three people, those three who are happily out of the way: Hitler, Himmler, and Goebbels.¹⁹

These were, of course, fighting words, and there were many who were not prepared to stand for such talk. In the days after Niemöller's talk, militaristic and nationalistic pamphlets flooded the University of Erlangen in response.

The Stuttgart Confession signalled the beginning of an era of "political Protestantism," as Dennis Bark and David Gress note. The operative assumption of Protestant Church leaders henceforth was "that the old separation of Church and state must now be overcome by ecclesiastical and theological involvement in political and social issues."²⁰

Ironically, the churches' first big battle in post-war Germany involved the issue of de-Nazification, which the occupation authorities, and especially the Americans, wanted implemented in the most ambitious terms possible. The churches led what was, in essence, a popular

17. Quoted in Frank Stern, "Evangelische Kirche zwischen Antisemitismus und Philosemitismus," in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 18, no. 1 (1992): 33.

18. Quoted in *ibid.*, 34.

19. Quoted in *ibid.*, 35.

20. Dennis L. Bark and David R. Gress, *A History of West Germany, Vol. 1: From Shadow to Substance, 1945-1963* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 152.

revolt against de-Nazification—a revolt on behalf of their “flocks.” By March 1948, the de-Nazification program had been revised twice and only 32,000 persons were ultimately affected; six months later, the program was essentially terminated.

THE CHURCHES IN WEST GERMANY, 1949-90

In the Federal Republic, an attempt was made to return to the pattern of Weimar Germany, but with two important differences: first, there would be specific assurances of the autonomy of the churches; and second, the churches would play a vital role as the conscience of the nation. In a letter of November 1948, addressed to Konrad Adenauer, chair of the Parliamentary Council, Bishop Wurm had set out the Evangelical Church's views concerning the importance of ecclesiastical autonomy, special protections for the family, and a recognition of the right of parents to educate their children in confessional schools. The Catholic Church, for its part, argued strongly for the notion “that parents possess a God-given right to have their children educated in state-financed schools where they could be taught by Catholic teachers and given instruction in history, literature, and so on, in a ‘Catholic spirit.’”²¹ In so saying, the Catholic Church was taking advantage of the democratic setting to press for concessions to its programmatic interests.

For the Catholic Church, the 1950s were an age of triumphalism in which no sense of guilt was allowed to intrude into the general sense of self-satisfaction.²² Both churches benefited from the constitutionally guaranteed church tax, which is collected by the district tax officers from citizens listed as members of the two large church organizations and turned over to those churches. Consisting of a supplement of 8-10 percent of the basic tax, the church tax has provided a generous source of revenue for the Federal Republic's Christian Churches. Between 1961 and 1968, the tax income of the Roman Catholic Church rose from DM 700 million to DM 1.3 billion, while that of the Protestant Churches rose fivefold in the years 1953-1968.²³ In 1986, for example,

21. Stern, “Evangelische Kirche zwischen Antisemitismus,” 186.

22. Michael Phayer, “The German Catholic Church after the Holocaust,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 10, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 155-56.

23. Bark and Gress, *A History of West Germany, Vol. 1: From Shadow to Substance*, 338. See also Donald P. Kommers, “West German Constitutionalism and Church-State Relations,” *German Politics and Society* 19 (Spring 1990): 1-13.

the Evangelical Church and the Roman Catholic Church received each about DM 5.8 billion from the church tax.²⁴

The church tax notwithstanding, the churches have jealously guarded their independence—an independence reflected, *inter alia*, in the fragmented voting patterns of believers.²⁵ But should this be the independence of relative aloofness or the independence of critical engagement? On this point, German ecclesiastical figures were divided. Arguing for a posture of aloofness from politics, Ernst Wolf, a Protestant theologian at Göttingen University, put it this way:

“The (Evangelical Church) has no political program at all because it has no interests at all of its own to pursue.

”The Church cannot be associated with a political program even to the extent of moral obligation without losing something of itself.

“I know of no contemporary program of ‘Christian policy’ whose Christianity can be clearly and convincingly formulated without contradictions, at least from the Protestant side.”²⁶

This was not a counsel of apathy, but a rejection of the notion of a monolithic Christian course of action, rooted ultimately in the distinction between the Heavenly Kingdom and the Earthly Kingdom. Conscience, not church authority, ought to inform Christian action and, according to this school of thought, moral diversity was inevitable.

The argument for political engagement was made by people such as Niemöller, Helmut Gollwitzer, and EKD synod president Gustav Heinemann. The dictates of Christian faith were clear, and the authority of the Heavenly Kingdom in the moral issues of the Earthly Kingdom indisputable. It was from this premise that Niemöller, Gollwitzer, and Heinemann played active roles in efforts to halt the West German rearmament program in the 1950s.²⁷ Historians have not been kind to the advocates of this approach. Dennis Bark and David Gress complain that “the biennial Protestant assemblies (DEKT) became mass rallies of the converted who encouraged each other in their simplistic views of politics and security.”²⁸ Be that as it may, some churchmen adhering to the “engagement” line argued in 1958 for a Christian responsibility to oppose the purveyance of nuclear arms to the Bundeswehr, urged in 1968 that there was a Christian obligation to

24. Gunther Kloss, *West Germany: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1990), 203. See also Ulrich Karpen, “Das Verhältnis des Staates zu den Kirchen im Wandel,” *Zeitschrift für Politik* (Munich) 26 (Neue Folge), no. 3 (October 1979): 228-33.

25. See Karl Schmitt, *Konfession und Wahlverhalten in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 1989).

26. Quoted in Spotts, *The Churches and Politics*, 124.

27. Dennis L. Bark and David R. Gress, *A History of West Germany, Vol. 2: Democracy and Its Discontents, 1963-1988* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 448.

28. *Ibid.*

support the Viet Cong, and charged the Kohl government, in 1983, with collaborating with the U.S. and NATO to prepare for a new war. In summer 1995, in a more recent manifestation of this spirit, Ernst Benda, president of the Evangelical Church Congress, spoke in favor of German troops participating in the U.N. Protective Force in Bosnia.²⁹

Although the Protestant Church leadership was, in the 1950s, to the political left of many clergy and lay people, it was not as radical as Niemöller and Heinemann felt it should be. The resultant intra-ecclesiastical tension was partly resolved in 1955 when Heinemann failed to be reelected president of the synod (though he eventually went on to become ceremonial president of Germany) and when Niemöller was ejected from council membership. Many Protestants compared their divided church unfavorably with the evidently tranquil and harmonious German Catholic Church. But this comparison was premature, as became evident in the 1960s, when the German Catholic Church experienced a crisis of confidence.³⁰

The experience of the Third Reich transmitted different lessons to Protestants and Catholics. Where Protestants concluded that they had been guilty of insufficient political responsibility and vigilance, inspiring some leading figures (specifically those inclined to a broad interpretation of "the Heavenly Kingdom") to seek to draw their church into political issues which lay far afield from either religion or German affairs, the Catholic hierarchy came to the conclusion that it had implicated itself, in various ways, in the Nazi seizure of power. The Catholic hierarchy became determined to distance itself, up to a point, from direct engagement in politics, though not at the expense of a vigorous defense of its programmatic priorities.³¹ Significantly, one of the immediate consequences of the Catholic hierarchy's rethinking of the situation was its decision to scuttle the old (clerical) Center Party in favor of a more interconfessional organization, i.e., the Christian Democratic Union (CDU).

To distance oneself from politics, however, is not the same thing as choosing to be apolitical. On the contrary, the church remained consistent to its long-standing philosophy which "rejects the notion that church and state are separate spheres and claims an important place for the church in political and social life."³² This philosophy was espoused by none other than Pope John XXIII in his 1961 encyclical, "Mater et Magistra." In that encyclical, the Holy Father stated, "The Church has the right and obligation not merely to guard ethical and

29. *Welt am Sonntag* (Hamburg), 18 June 1995, 2.

30. Spotts, *The Churches and Politics*, 129-30.

31. *Ibid.*, 149.

32. *Ibid.*, 150.

religious principles but also to intervene authoritatively in the temporal sphere where it is a matter of judging the application of these principles to concrete cases.”³³

The Catholic Church, therefore, decided to scuttle the Center Party and to throw its backing behind the interconfessional CDU. The enemies were still liberalism and socialism; thus, to split Christian votes between a revived Center Party and an emergent CDU would have been a tragedy. Since the Center Party refused to dissolve itself quietly, the result was that the Catholic Church now waged open warfare against its would-be champion—using all the power of the pulpit to drive home the message. The Center Party held on for a while, participating, for example, in the 1951 elections in Lower Saxony, trying to make the case that it remained a better defender of Catholic interests. When the Center Party rejected appeals that it “merge” with the CDU, bishops, lower clergy, and Catholic lay groups intensified the struggle, fearing above all that a divided Catholic vote would play into the hands of the dreaded Social Democratic Party (SPD). By 1958, it had ceased to play any role in politics.

The Catholic Church had won its battle—but had it been the right battle? By the mid-1960s, the CDU had shed most of its Christian ideology and was headed by a liberal Protestant, while the SPD was working to effect a rapprochement with the churches. Bishop Johannes Pohl Schneider of Aachen sounded positively mournful in 1965, declaring,

We sacrificed to the CDU the chance of a purely Catholic party. We sacrificed to it the possibility of a Catholic daily press; and we sacrificed to it many of our desires in the educational field—for example, the establishment of a Catholic university. And what have we gotten out of this mixed marriage? A liberal party in power and now even a liberal Chancellor.³⁴

Still bearing the psychological scars of having been a minority church in Germany from 1871 to 1945, the Catholic Church actually enjoyed near parity with Protestants in post-war West Germany, because the division of Germany left the overwhelmingly Protestant regions of the east outside of the Federal Republic. According to the 1961 census, 45.1 percent of the population (excluding West Berlin) were Catholics, and in 1980, 46.7 percent of the population were listed as Protestant (Lutheran and Reformed) while 43.8 percent were Catholic.³⁵ In es-

33. Quoted in *ibid.*, 50.

34. Quoted in *ibid.*, 166.

35. John H. Whyte, *Catholics in Western Democracies: A Study in Political Behaviour* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1981), 139; John Madeley, “Politics and Religion in Western Europe,” in *Politics and Religion in the Modern World*, ed. George Moyser (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 37.

sence, the Catholic Church had ceased to be a minority in any meaningful sense. One must, of course, distinguish between nominal Catholics and active Catholics. The percentage of Catholics regularly attending mass rose from 51 percent in 1949 to 55 percent in 1963, dipping to 50 percent in 1968, and sinking to a mere 35 percent by 1973, with worshippers primarily drawn from the older generation.³⁶ Accompanying the generational change was a broader transformation in the mainstream values of German society, a transformation which, with time, undercut the village pastor's ability to impress political messages upon his parishioners. One sign of the changing times was the liberalization of divorce laws in 1977, in the face of embittered criticism from Catholic hierarchy.

EAST GERMANY, 1949-1990

The modes of thought characteristic of churchmen in the West were, as one might expect, found also among churchmen in the East. But because the political conditions in East Germany differed substantially from those in West Germany, parallel modes of thought tended to be translated into somewhat different, albeit recognizable, patterns of behavior. Thus, for example, Protestant clergymen in the West were divided between those who sought to restrain the church from associating itself with a political program, and those who urged political engagement in moral issues of the day, even where they were certain to clash with the predilections of state authorities. In the East, in the first decade and a half after the war, one may speak of a division among Protestant clergymen between those who sought to restrain the clergy from open political activity (such as the Bishop of Saxony who, in a July 1946 circular letter, expressed concern that such activity could compromise the pastoral role of clergy—the prioritization of “mission”),³⁷ those espousing resistance to the Socialist Unity Party (SED), such as Berlin's Bishop Otto Dibelius, and those prepared to choose a protective role over a prophetic role and to reach an accommodation with the SED regime (such as Bishop Moritz Mitzenheim of Thuringia).³⁸ Later, after 1978, there was a fourth current, i.e., those who urged political engagement in moral issues of the day, such as pacifism and environmentalism, in full knowledge that this activity clashed with

36. *World Catholicism in Transition*, Karl Gabriel and Franz-Xaver Kaufmann, “Catholicism in German-Speaking Central Europe,” in Thomas M. Gannon, ed., (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 158, 159.

37. Richard W. Solberg, *God and Caesar in East Germany: The Conflict of Church and State in East Germany since 1945* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 30.

38. See Florian Ehlert, “‘Suchet der Stadt Bestes!': Bischof Mitzenheims Bemühungen um Einvernehmen mit dem Staat,” *Kirche im Sozialismus* 14, no. 3 (June 1988): 97.

SED programs and policies; the fourth current gained increasing importance in the course of the last decade of the GDR's existence.

And as in the West, so too in the East, the Roman Catholic Church again charted its own course, in this case abjuring the SED regime as a "totalitarian, atheist regime," and embracing a self-conscious posture of self-isolation from anything connected with the communist infrastructure.³⁹ This policy was associated, most especially, with Alfred Cardinal Bengsch, the Archbishop of Berlin, who passed away in December 1979.

As already noted, the GDR's population was overwhelmingly Protestant. In 1946, of the 17 million inhabitants of what was then the Soviet zone of occupation, 15 million were members of the Evangelical Church, while only 1.75 million were Roman Catholics.⁴⁰ I shall restrict myself, in the remainder of this section, to a discussion of the Protestant or Evangelical Church, thus, except to note that the small Catholic Church, once more experiencing conditions of authoritarianism, remained unable to assert its programmatic objectives and contented itself with the defense of its core mission interests.⁴¹

In the earliest post-war years (roughly 1949-1958), the terms for a relationship were unclear, in part because the question of German reunification remained open (until 1955) and in part because of "unclear legal circumstances" in the church-state relationship itself.⁴² One reflection of the "unclear" character of church-state relations came in the form of the Communist party's declaration, in 1946, that it was not necessary to be an atheist in order to join this (avowedly atheist) party, and that a party member could even be, at the same time, a church member.⁴³ Moreover, by 1949, the Evangelical Church had constructed a new organizational infrastructure, which spanned all of Germany. With the creation of the GDR, however, Berlin's communist authorities soon began to intimate that they had certain expectations of the church in terms of its public pronouncements. On 3 October 1955, culminating an extended period of strained relations, Otto Nuschke, chair of the CDU-Ost, in a talk to high-ranking officers of his organiza-

39. Reinhard Hildebrandt, "Die Evangelische Kirche im DDR-Sozialismus," *Die Neue Gesellschaft. Frankfurter Hefte* 40, no. 8 (August 1993): 701.

40. Otto Luchterhandt, *Die Gegenwartslage der Evangelische Kirche in der DDR* (Tübingen; J.C.B. Mohr, 1982), 3.

41. For further discussion of the Roman Catholic Church in this period, see Robert F. Goeckel, "The Catholic Church in East Germany," in *Catholicism and Politics in Communist Societies*, ed. Pedro Ramet (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990).

42. Johannes Althausen, "The Churches in the GDR between Accommodation and Resistance," *Religion in Eastern Europe* 13, no. 6 (December 1993): 26.

43. Sam Dahlgren, *Das Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche in der DDR während der Jahre 1949-1958* (Uppsala: CWK Gleerups Forlag, 1972), 27.

tion, affirmed that the church-state relationship would be better if the church were to show more "understanding" for SED policies. Nuschke returned to the theme on 5 December 1955; claiming that the church did not accept the GDR as a state of workers and farmers, he asserted, "Our state demands from the church nothing other than its loyalty."⁴⁴ This led directly to a meeting (on 10 January 1956) between Minister of the Interior Karl Maron and several churchmen, among them Bishops Mitzenheim and Krummacher. Maron claimed, on this occasion, that church institutions in the GDR had allowed themselves to be used by NATO propaganda. Confrontation seemed built into the situation, when, a month later, on 10 February 1956, Minister of the Interior Maron handed a church delegation a memorandum accusing the church of collaborating with the political leadership of the FRG in a conspiracy to overthrow the SED and abolish the German Democratic Republic altogether.⁴⁵ There were also tensions related to the so-called *Jugendweihe* or youth-initiation ceremony, introduced by the SED in 1954. Viewing the *Jugendweihe* as a rival to ecclesiastical confirmation and thus as an intrusion by the state into the affairs of "the Heavenly Kingdom," the Evangelical Church adopted the policy of refusing to confirm those who had gone through the *Jugendweihe*, even seeking to deny them the sacrament of communion.⁴⁶ Bishop Mitzenheim protested that there was no reason to provoke a showdown over the *Jugendweihe* or to deny sacraments to its initiates, but to no avail. And there were also problems related to the fact that the SED was creating obstructions for the education or career advancement of the children of pastors and other church employees.⁴⁷ The result was that church-state relations became ever more tense and fractious during these years.⁴⁸

A breakthrough came in the summer of 1958 when an EKD delegation headed by Mitzenheim sat down with the authorities for extended talks. On 21 July 1958, the two sides reached an agreement. The EKD, for its part, declared its loyalty to the GDR and its acceptance of the socialist program. The regime offered an endorsement of the principle of freedom of religion and, after the meeting, placed church-state relations on a new, more positive footing, which in turn provoked some opposition within the church. This came out into the

44. Quoted in *ibid.*, 140.

45. Luchterhandt, *Die Gegenwartslage*, 11-12.

46. *Ibid.*, 11.

47. Christoph Klessmann, "Zur Sozialgeschichte des protestantischen Milieus in der DDR," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 19 (1993): 35.

48. I am omitting many details and skipping certain issues. For a fuller picture of these years, see Solberg, *God and Caesar*.

open in 1963, after certain prominent Evangelical figures issued "Ten Articles about the Freedom and Service of the Church in the GDR." Professing their concern that so-called "progressive" Christians were bending divine writ to "accompany and confirm earthly ends," and in general "succumbing to the seductive opinion that certain forms of society in themselves make possible the obedience of faith,"⁴⁹ the authors of the "Ten Articles" sought to define the content and boundaries of responsible church action. Members of the Weissensee Work Group, among them Albrecht Schönherr, were incensed. They felt that the "Ten Articles" would serve only to perpetuate a politics of resistance that had been shown to be abortive.

Although there were clearly segments of the church open to further reconciliation with the regime, on terms to be renegotiated, the existence of ecclesiastical unity across East and West Germany remained a stumbling block. The new socialist constitution adopted by the GDR on 6 April 1968 redefined the position of the churches by underlining that church boundaries must coincide with state boundaries. The church readily comprehended the legal pressure signified here, and already on 30 November of that year, the three Lutheran Landeskirchen within the GDR held a synod in Freiburg and withdrew from the all-German VELKD to form a new association limited to the GDR. Subsequently, on 10 June 1969, under pressure from the regime, a new Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR was constituted, embracing both Lutheran and Reformed Churches.

Meanwhile, the Evangelical Church also rendered assistance to the GDR in its continuing quest for international recognition—an assistance fully in the spirit of Luther's teaching concerning the "Two Kingdoms." On 20 May 1968, scarcely much more than a month after passage of the new constitution, Albrecht Schönherr, the future Bishop of Berlin-Brandenburg, wrote a letter to the Conference of Church Leaderships, calling on the church as a whole, and in particular in the Federal Republic, to press for international recognition of the GDR. Subsequently, on 5 June 1969, Karl-Heinz Bernhardt, chair of the Regional Committee of the Christian Peace Conference of the GDR, and Carl Ordnung, secretary of the same body, signed a letter addressed to Bishop Beste of Mecklenburg, asking him to protest the non-recognition of the GDR at the Ecumenical Conference of Churches.

Meanwhile, in February 1969, Hans Seigewasser, then GDR Secretary for Church Affairs, suggested that the Evangelical Church consider embracing a new, and overtly loyalist, formula as its own—

49. Quoted in Althausen, "Churches in the GDR," 27-28.

“Church in socialism.”⁵⁰ The risk was plain—the church would be viewed as having “sold out” to the regime. On the other hand, there was the tantalizing possibility—and it was only that—that agreeing to this formula might open new doors and allow the church to obtain the satisfaction of some concrete and very specific desiderata.

The church took the bait and in 1971 proclaimed its acceptance of the formula, which it could justify on the argument that the Heavenly Kingdom had to build its foundations “in the Earthly Kingdom.” The gamble paid off. Church-state relations now started to mellow, perhaps facilitated by the accession of Erich Honecker to the General Secretaryship of the SED that same year, and on 6 March 1978, Honecker received Bishop Schönherr for a kind of summit meeting. At this meeting, the church obtained permission to build facilities in so-called “socialist cities” (churchless cities built after World War II); was granted full ownership of the Augustine Monastery in Erfurt; obtained access to state television and radio; and set up state pensions for clergy over the age of 65. In exchange, the church agreed to cooperate with the state in celebrating the Luther quincentenary in 1983.⁵¹ The Evangelical Church made its first television broadcast on the Good Friday following that meeting and had another fifteen television broadcasts over the next three years. The Evangelical Church was also able to start radio broadcasting and increase its publication activity, while the SED largely scuttled its antireligious atheist propaganda.

More strikingly, in June 1978, the Evangelical bishops protested energetically against the GDR’s announced decision to introduce pre-military training in schools. This protest demonstrated that the understanding reached in March would not attenuate the church’s moral independence or critical distance from the state. Indeed, this protest was only the first volley. Over the succeeding eleven years, the Protestant Churches became increasingly active in protest against pre-military training and discrimination against conscientious objectors, in sheltering independent pacifists and environmentalist groups, and in pressing for a liberalization of restrictions on travel to West Germany.⁵² The

50. Hildebrandt, “Die Evangelische Kirche,” 696.

51. For further discussion of this meeting, see Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nihil Obstat: Religion, State, and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), ch. 3 (“Varieties of Christianity in East Germany”).

52. Interviews with appropriate representatives of the Evangelical Church, Church of John, Methodist Church, Free Evangelical Community, Old Lutheran Church, Baptist Community, Quaker Community, and Mennonites, in Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Erfurt, and Eisenach, July-August 1988; also Reinhard Henkys, “Kirchen,” in *DDR Handbuch* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1985), 719-20; and Robert F. Goeckel, “The GDR Legacy and the German Protestant Church,” *German Politics and Society* 31 (Spring 1994): 86.

State Security Service (Stasi) was able to recruit collaborators among clergy involved in the independent pacifist and environmentalist groups, but failed to stop their activity; indeed, the same clergy often worked in both directions—encouraging and supporting critical opposition to the regime while passing along information to the Stasi.⁵³ By 1988, the regime was reassessing its “partnership” with the church, and subjecting the churches, and most especially the Evangelical Church, to increasing harassment. Some 190 persons attending a meeting at the St. Nikolai Church in Leipzig were, for example, detained briefly, and the censorship of church publications increasingly became a problem in 1988 and 1989.⁵⁴ In turn, the church became more insistent in its call for liberalization; on 24 October 1989, at the height of unrest and civil protest, Bishop Gottfried Forck of East Berlin addressed the nation on West German television to demand the reestablishment of political pluralism in East Germany. It is a compelling image which reminds us of at least one facet of the church’s politics.⁵⁵

MAINLINE RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS SINCE 1990

The unification of the two Germanys in October 1990 has had massive consequences for the churches—some foreseeable, some less so. A number of issues have arisen that have implications for the pattern of church-state relations in Germany.

a. *The Collaboration Controversy.* Since 1990, the Evangelical Church has been exposed to repeated charges that many of its trusted

53. John S. Conway, “The ‘Stasi’ and the Churches: Between Coercion and Compromise in East German Protestantism, 1949–89,” *Journal of Church and State* 36 (Autumn 1994): 733; and Patricia J. Smith, *Democratizing East Germany: Emerging Political Groups and the Dynamics of Change* (Unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1995), ch. 6, p. 27.

54. Karen C. Hartley, “The Churches as Catalyst in East Germany’s Freedom Movement,” in *Politics and Religion in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. William H. Swatos (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1994), 148; also Ramet, *Nihil Obstat*, ch. 3. The church’s vibrant opposition, even if compromised by sporadic collaboration with the Stasi, breathed new life into the church. In broad terms, secularization was taking its toll, and whereas, in 1946, 87.7 percent of newborns in the Soviet zone of occupation were baptized into the Evangelical Church, by 1976 only 17.3 percent of newborns in the GDR were being baptized Evangelical. But its role in championing pacifism, environmental concerns, and human rights more broadly gave the church real credibility among East Germans, whether they were believers or not, and many of those who joined church-sheltered independent groups were not themselves believers. See Robert E. Beckley, H. Paul Chalfant, and D. Paul Johnson, “Germany’s Reconstruction: The Role of the Eastern German Evangelical Church before and after Reunification,” in Swatos, ed., *Politics and Religion*, 165. On this point, see also Jurgen Moltmann, “Religion and State in Germany: West and East,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 483 (January 1986): 116.

55. I suspect it tells us more about Bishop Forck’s immense personal integrity and deep commitment to human rights than about the Evangelical Church more broadly.

officials had “collaborated” with the communist one-party state. There was renewed criticism that the “Church in Socialism” concept had been an ideological compromise on the part of the church. An early hint of trouble came in 1988 when East German theologian Richard Schröder criticized the formula for implying that the Evangelical Church was incorporating socialism into its theology.⁵⁶ By 1994, Peter Maser, professor of theology at the University of Münster, was blasting the concept as a “theological sin”—strong words from a theologian—and pointedly noting that the Catholic Church had refrained from any such ideological collaboration.⁵⁷

The real trouble focused on initially vague allegations starting in late 1990,⁵⁸ followed by documented disclosures in early 1992,⁵⁹ that high church officials such as Berlin-Brandenburg Church Consistory President Manfred Stolpe, Magdeburg Church Consistory President Detlef Hammer, Evangelical Bishop Hans-Joachim Frankel of Görlitz, Evangelical Bishop Horst Gienke of Greifswald, his predecessor Bishop Friedrich-Wilhelm Krummacker of Greifswald, East Berlin General-Superintendent Günter Krusche, Thuringian Church Superintendent Gerhard Lotz, Evangelical Church President Eberhard Natho, long-time synod President Siegfried Wahrmann, and others had all provided information to the Stasi on a routine basis.⁶⁰

At the center of controversy was Stolpe, who had resigned his church office in 1990 to become SPD Minister-President of Berlin-Brandenburg. Ironically, the Bundestag’s Investigative Commission into the GDR past was chaired by none other than Rainer Eppelmann (CDU), an Evangelical pastor who had been among the SED’s staunchest and most outspoken critics, and whose apartment had been bugged by the Stasi.⁶¹ Both the church and the parliament appointed commissions to review the more than seven thousand pages of material relating to Stolpe from Stasi files, Central Committee files, files of the State Secretariat for Church Affairs, and other files. In the end, the

56. Richard Schröder, “Was kan ‘Kirche im Sozialismus’ sinnvoll heissen?,” *Kirche im Sozialismus* 14 (August 1988): 137.

57. *Welt am Sonntag* (18 September 1994), 32.

58. See, for example, *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (3 September 1990), 12.

59. See, for example, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (30 January 1992), 3.

60. Goeckel, “The GDR Legacy,” 84; *Der Spiegel* (Hamburg), 28 June 1993, 92-93, (26 July 1993), 58, (27 June 1994), 8, and (30 January 1995), 54-55; *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich), 11 January 1995, 5; *Welt am Sonntag* (19 March 1995), 9; and *Focus* (Munich), 23 October 1995, 94. For more substantial documentation, see Ralf Georg Reuth, *IM “Sekretär”: Die “Gauck-Recherche” und die Dokumente zum “Fall Stolpe,”* 2nd ed. (Frankfurt/Berlin: Ullstein Buch, 1992); Gerhard Besier and Stephan Wolf, eds., “Pfarrer, Christen und Katholiken,” 2nd ed. (Hamburg: Neukirchener Verlag, 1992); and Gerhard Besier, *Der SED Staat und die Kirche 1969-1990* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Propylaen Verlag, 1995).

61. *Welt am Sonntag* (19 June 1994), 5.

Evangelical Church commission moved to reprimand Stolpe for having overstepped the authority of his office, while the parliamentary committee finally shelved his case, absolving him of having committed any crimes in the course and context of the more than one thousand meetings he had had with Stasi officers. The firm support of the Berlin-Brandenburg SPD throughout these investigations no doubt helped in bringing about this largely favorable outcome.⁶² Among the revelations in the course of his investigation was that when he had received the GDR Medal of Service in 1978, it had been on the recommendation of the Stasi!⁶³ New charges against Stolpe surfaced in June 1999,⁶⁴ but at this writing there is no indication that these will ultimately prove more damaging to Stolpe than earlier charges.

Meanwhile, the Evangelical Church was forced to review the records of all its pastors and other employees, finding that only a small minority of ecclesiastics had been involved in any way with the Stasi—about 5 percent, according to church sources.⁶⁵ Still, even confirmation at this level was discouraging to those who had trusted the church implicitly. Some churchmen had anticipated the fallout from Stasi archives. For example, Bishop Christoph Demke of Magdeburg had pleaded with Prime Minister Hans Modrow in late March 1990 to keep the Stasi files closed and locked.⁶⁶ The damage done to the Evangelical Church's credibility was tangible and possibly irreparable. As early as 1991, even before the documentation started pouring out, some could be heard to opine, "The Church in the GDR was no Church of the opposition against the power-holders, and did not lead any real opposition."⁶⁷ On the other hand, whatever one may make of that judgment, it is hard to find fault with Bishop Forck's statement, in 1996, that the church should not be seen either "as corrupted through and through or as an extended arm of the Stasi."⁶⁸ Indeed, the church was doing what it has always done—compromising on programmatic issues, broadly construed, in order to protect its mission.

b. *Controversies Relating to Ecclesiastical Adaptation.* Once the Evangelical Church of the GDR merged with its sister church in the

62. Regarding the number of pages, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (1/2 April 1995), 5; regarding the church commission, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (21 March 1995), 4, and *Die Welt* (Bonn), 28 March 1995, 1; regarding the parliamentary commission, Goeckel, "Church-State Relations," 45; regarding the number of meetings, Conway, "The 'Stasi' and the Churches," 738; and regarding the CDU's support, *Der Standard* (Vienna), 16 June 1992, 4.

63. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (26/27 September 1992), 2.

64. *Die Welt* (14 June 1999), at www.welt.de/archiv.

65. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (16/17 January 1993), 6.

66. *Welt am Sonntag* (3 December 1995), 41.

67. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (28 November 1991), 7.

68. *Die Welt* (9 March 1996), 2.

West—largely accomplished between September 1990 and February 1991—it became difficult to argue for the retention of different church policies in the East. Some churchmen in the eastern provinces disliked the church tax system in the West and preferred a more voluntary arrangement. Some felt that parish-based catechism classes were more effective in teaching church values than mandated religious instruction in public schools. Some even felt a certain ambivalence about an abrupt extension to the eastern provinces of the FRG's strict law on abortion.⁶⁹ The Catholic Church, for its part, readily embraced the changes in all three spheres; however, there was a degree of ambivalence among members of the Evangelical Church.⁷⁰

Party politics has played its role in this process, especially with regard to religious instruction. In the four new states under CDU rule—Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia, and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania—new education laws mandated that schoolchildren would have a choice between confessional religious instruction and a more secular ethics class. In the state of Brandenburg, controlled by the SPD, the state parliament decided to introduce a single, mandatory class in “Lifestyles, Ethics, and Religion.” This program stirred up passions on both sides, with Christian advocates characterizing the class as a veiled form of “de-Christianization” reminiscent of communist times. Stolpe, as Brandenburg's minister-president, has figured as one of the program's key advocates, while Eppelman, Stolpe's “inquisitor” in the Stasi controversy, has been a leading critic of the program. In August 1996, Catholic Archbishop Georg Sterzinsky of Berlin called on Catholic schoolchildren in his archdiocese to boycott the “Lifestyles” class. Meanwhile, earlier that year, the Bundestag moved to file a complaint with the Constitutional Court to block the Brandenburg “Lifestyles” program.⁷¹ The controversy has not died down, and in 1998, Protestant theologian Richard Schröder criticized the “Lifestyles” class as inadequate, claiming that it had the character of “a visit to the zoo.” Schröder demanded a reform of the school program.⁷²

c. *Withdrawals from the Churches.* In this decade, in both East and West, the pace of withdrawal from the mainline churches has accelerated. Indeed, between 1989 and 1995, the Evangelical Church

69. Goeckel, “Church-State Relations,” 40-42.

70. The Catholic Church would have preferred a tougher ruling in abortion than that finally upheld. See *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (30 September-1 October 1995), 6.

71. Regarding “de-Christianization” charges, see *Christian Science Monitor* (7 August 1996), 5; regarding Stolpe and Eppelmann, *Focus* (25 March 1996), 41; regarding Sterzinsky, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (10/11 August 1996), 2, and *Die Welt* (21 August 1997), 5; and regarding the Bundestag, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (16/17 March 1996), 1, and *Welt am Sonntag* (17 March 1996), 4.

72. *Der Tagesspiegel* (1 February 1998), 1.

lost some 1.5 million members, while the Catholic Church lost about 800,000.⁷³ This has had a dramatic impact on church finances. In 1970, West Germans alone paid some DM 28.4 million in church taxes to the EKD. In 1993, in a unified Germany, Evangelical Christians paid only DM 24.4 million.⁷⁴ As a result, the Evangelical Church has had to cut back the number of pastoral positions and church publications, and in 1997 EKD President Valentin Schmidt announced that church-run kindergartens (some 8,887) faced imminent closure.⁷⁵

Linked to this decline in membership is a fall in the prestige of the churches. The Ipsos Institute in Mannheim conducts public opinion polls to ascertain public trust in social institutions, on a scale ranging from +5 (complete trust) to -5 (no trust whatsoever). In 1984, the churches rated +1.9; in 1992, this had fallen (in West Germany) to +0.4, while in the East the churches received a poor rating of -0.2. Three years later, the churches' credibility had further eroded: +0.1 in the western provinces and -0.5 in the eastern provinces. Churches rank lower in public esteem than corporations, television, the federal government, and banking concerns, and far lower than the police and the Constitutional Court.⁷⁶

Where do exiting Evangelicals and Catholics go? According to figures publicized by the DAWN Organization, an umbrella organization for new Christian associations, more than one thousand independent Christian religious associations have been established in Germany since 1980—up to three hundred of them between 1988 and 1993 alone. Most of these associations characterize themselves as “charismatic,” “Pentecostal,” “evangelical-charismatic,” or “fundamentalist.”⁷⁷ As some church facilities (hitherto belonging to the Evangelical and Catholic Churches) have been converted into hotels, hair salons, museums, even in one case a candle factory,⁷⁸ the mainline churches have looked for ways to retain their flocks. Gambits on the part of the Evangelical Church have ranged from converting the liturgy into a puppet show,⁷⁹ to offering classes in astrology,⁸⁰ to staging a so-called “techno-

73. *Deutsche Presse-Agentur* (17 June 1995), on *Nexis*. See also *Welt am Sonntag* (9 April 1995), 31.

74. *Welt am Sonntag* (5 November 1995), 26. See also *Die Welt* (3/4 May 1997), 2; and *Der Spiegel* (10 November 1997), 86, 90.

75. *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (15 April 1997), 5; *Welt am Sonntag* (20 April 1997), 37; and *Welt am Sonntag* (14 September 1997), 3.

76. *Welt am Sonntag* (29 January 1995), 28.

77. *Welt am Sonntag* (26 March 1995), 26. I have translated “bibeltreu” as “fundamentalist.”

78. *Focus* (4 December 1995), 84-88.

79. *Der Spiegel* (4 October 1993), 106.

80. *Welt am Sonntag* (5 February 1995), 25.

party" in the St. Katharinen Church in Hamburg.⁸¹ Germany's Catholic bishops opted for an alternative strategy, hiring a leading advertising agency to mount a campaign "to convince Germans that the (Catholic) Church is still relevant to their problems and that it does not dodge tricky social issues."⁸²

d. *New Directions in German Protestantism.* The manifest crisis of confidence in the churches has provoked, in turn, a leadership crisis within the governing Council of the EKD, as different clerics have advocated different positions on major issues of the day.⁸³ The Bavarian branch of the Evangelical Church contracted the McKinsey Business Consultation Firm to analyze the church and to identify problems and possible solutions.⁸⁴

In the meantime, there have been some new directions taken within the Evangelical Church including consecrating the first female bishop (Maria Jepsen of Hamburg) in 1994, assigning Church Congress President Erika Reihlen to undertake a total overhaul of the Congress, and opening a Women's Theological Center as a haven for feminist theology.⁸⁵ The Evangelical Church has also begun to develop a new understanding of same-sex relationships. An early impulse came in 1994, when two gay men underwent a "commitment" ceremony in the Luther Church in Cologne. Elisabeth Lingner, president of the Synod of the North-Elbe Landeskirche, applauded the ceremony and urged that the church as a whole accept same-sex partnerships as equivalent to marriage.⁸⁶ Increasingly, she was joined by Bishop Jepsen in advocating this position.⁸⁷ Events in March 1996 brought the whole issue very much into the open. In mid-March, the nineteen member Council of the EKD issued a thirty-six page page on the subject of same-sex relationships, authored in part by EKD Council Chair Klaus Engelhardt, Bishop Jepsen of Hamburg, and the Superintendent of Plauen, Thomas Kuttler. Engelhardt and Jepsen are well known for their liberalism on this issue, while Kuttler is deeply conservative. As a result, the paper represented a compromise. As such, it urged that the church do everything possible to bring the state to eliminate all forms of discrimination against lesbians and gays and urged that there be no dis-

81. *Welt am Sonntag* (10 March 1996), 27.

82. *The Times* (London), 22 October 1993, 16.

83. *Welt am Sonntag* (14 August 1994), 3.

84. *Die Welt* (16 March 1995), 2.

85. Regarding the bishop, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (8 March 1994), 5; regarding the Congress, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (8/9 May 1993), 11; and regarding the Women's Center, *Die Welt* (9 April 1994), G1, *Welt am Sonntag* (10 July 1994), 5, and *Welt am Sonntag* (14 August 1994), 3.

86. *Welt am Sonntag* (14 August 1994), 25.

87. *Die Welt* (3/4 February 1996), 2.

crimination against lesbians and gays in the ordaining and appointment of pastors. On the other hand, the document stopped, at least for the time being, actual weddings for same-sex couples.⁸⁸ The document, therefore, simultaneously struck some people as going too far and others as not going far enough.

The second event was a decision taken late in the month by the Church Synod of North-Elbe to recognize same-sex relationships as socially and theologically equivalent to marriage. A review committee was appointed; when it met to vote, Bishops Karl Ludwig Kohlwege of Lübeck and Hans Christian Knuth of Schleswig voted to overturn the decision taken by the North-Elbe Synod, while Bishop Jepsen of Hamburg voted to allow it, producing the episcopal equivalent of a hung jury, thus leaving the synodal decision in place.⁸⁹ The North-Elbe Synod's decision was strongly criticized by Bishop Heinrich Herrmanns of Schaumburg-Lippe, who condemned moves toward greater tolerance as signifying the "relativization of marriage and family."⁹⁰ The issue is certain to cause further controversy.

The Evangelical Church of Germany has placed itself at the center of the discussion concerning asylum for refugees, has taken up the question of unemployment, and has undertaken a reform of its social assistance program. It joined with other local Christian churches to issue a statement condemning the firebomb attack on the synagogue in the north German town of Lubeck, which occurred on 25 March 1994.⁹¹ The Evangelical Church has also joined with the Catholic Church in spreading its programmatic wings, addressing concerns arising from Germany's rising unemployment and general economic crisis.⁹²

e. *Recent Developments in German Catholicism.* The four principal issues in the life of the Roman Catholic Church in Germany in recent years have been a reassessment of the guilt of Catholics for the atrocities of the Third Reich; demands for the liberalization of church positions on sexuality; the debate over crucifixes in Bavaria; and concerns about the church's relationship to the state's abortion-counseling program.

88. *Die Welt* (14 March 1996), 5; and *Welt am Sonntag* (17 March 1996), 26.

89. *Die Welt* (30/31 March 1996), 2, and (6/7 April 1996), 4.

90. *Welt am Sonntag* (4 May 1997), 9.

91. Regarding asylum, *Welt am Sonntag* (15 May 1994), 1-2, and *The European* (London), 27 May-2 June 1994, 2; regarding unemployment, *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (17 June 1995), 11, and *Welt am Sonntag* (25 June 1995), 4; regarding social assistance, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (8/9 April 1995), 2; and regarding the synagogue, *International Herald Tribune* (Tokyo ed.), 26/27 March 1994, 2.

92. Reuters World Service (28 February 1997), and *The Week in Germany* (7 March 1997)—both on Nexis; and *Die Welt* (Bonn), 28 February 1998, 2.

Whereas prominent Catholics had taken the position that “German Catholics were not National Socialists” and had no obligation to make any collective atonement, German bishops of the Roman Catholic Church have recently declared that Catholics shared in the responsibility for the Holocaust. In a statement issued on 26 January 1995, the bishops declared, “The denial and guilt that was prevalent in those days also came from the church. During the period of the Third Reich, Christians did not carry out the required resistance to racist anti-Semitism.”⁹³ Eleven months later, after sustained contacts at the highest level, Roman Catholic bishops from Germany and Poland issued a joint declaration urging their respective peoples to “forgive each other in such a way that the spirit of hatred never again divides our nations.”⁹⁴ Germany’s Catholic Church has endeavored to incorporate this rejection of racism into current policy. This has been reflected in the church’s sharp and outspoken condemnation of attacks on Jews, in an appeal registered by Catholic priests in Augsburg on behalf of some 300 Syrian-Orthodox Turks threatened with expulsion from Germany,⁹⁵ and in opposing the Kohl government’s tightening of restrictions on immigration.⁹⁶ However, memories of the Holocaust remain divisive among German Catholics; one need only to consider the controversy surrounding the proposed memorial to the Holocaust, planned for erection in Berlin, to see this point.⁹⁷

The second issue is that of church reform, and indeed, for most German Catholics, this is by far the most pressing theme on the current agenda. Those advocating reform, associated with the referendum movement inspired and initiated by Catholic layman Christian Weisner, have been demanding a role for the laity in the selection of bishops, a positive assessment of sexuality on the part of the church, an end to compulsory celibacy for priests, the ordination of women as priests, an end to the practice of denying communion to divorcees who take new partners, an end to discrimination against homosexuality, and an easing of the ban on contraceptives. The referendum movement gathered some 1.8 million signatures in favor of the aforementioned reforms—1,483,340 of them from Catholics—by late November 1995, and pledged to continue gathering signatures.⁹⁸

93. Quoted in *New York Times* (27 January 1995), A3.

94. Quoted in *National Catholic Reporter* (12 January 1996), 11.

95. *Welt am Sonntag* (19 February 1995), 4.

96. *Die Welt* (1 February 1996), 2.

97. *Welt am Sonntag* (21 March 1999), 2.

98. *The Sunday Times* (27 November 1994), 20; *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (21 November 1995), 2; *Welt am Sonntag* (28 January 1996), 4; and *Focus* (Munich), 24 July 1995, 52. See also *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (18 September 1995), 3.

Already in 1994, a public opinion poll conducted for *Der Spiegel* found that 60 percent of German Catholics felt the pope was damaging the church (while only 35 percent approved of his leadership), and 87 percent of Catholics thought that compulsory priestly celibacy should be abolished (vs. a mere 12 percent who approved of the restriction). Theologians Ottmar Fuchs (of Bamberg), Norbert Greinacher (of Tübingen), Norbert Mette (of Paderborn), and Hermann Steinkamp (of Münster) have declared that a “rising up” against papal authority and against automatic obedience to church pronouncements was the only way to save the church, a “last chance” before mass exodus reduces the church dramatically in size.⁹⁹

In August 1994, the Work Community of Youth Pastoral of the Orders (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Jugendpastoral der Orden) called for a lifting of the ban on contraceptives and a positive reappraisal of same-sex relationships.¹⁰⁰ Gay priests organized a “working group” about this time, demanding full acceptance for homosexuality.¹⁰¹ In October 1998, three German bishops clashed with the Vatican over the issue of sacraments for remarried divorcees. The bishops (among them, Karl Lehmann of Mainz, chair of the German Bishops’ Conference) had unilaterally decreed that their priests allow such persons to receive Holy Communion. But Pope John Paul II had demanded an end to this practice, provoking an outcry from bishops, clergy, laity, and even the prime ministers of two federal states.¹⁰² Critics of the Vatican pointed out that German Catholics were abandoning the church at the rate of 180,000 per year—in 68 percent of cases because of disagreement with the church’s stands on divorce, contraception, and other sex-related matters. Moreover, since 1965, some 8,000 priests have left church service, leaving one-third of Germany’s 13,327 parishes without a priest; most of them resigned their priesthood out of the desire to marry.¹⁰³ The church hierarchy readily admitted that this decline was creating a deep crisis for the church, and was contributing to growing financial difficulties for Germany’s archdioceses and parishes.¹⁰⁴ In

99. *Der Spiegel* (12 December 1994), 81, 84.

100. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (27/28 August 1994), 6.

101. Ökumenische Arbeitsgruppe Homosexuelle und Kirche (HuK), “Katholische Schwule Priestergruppen Deutschlands” (1998; updated 10 January 1999), at www.huk.org/allgem/priegr.htm. But see also *Die Woche* (7 May 1999), 4.

102. *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (15 October 1994), 4; *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (15/16 October 1994), 2; *Welt am Sonntag* (16 October 1994), 4; *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 26 October 1994, A8; and *National Catholic Reporter* (28 October 1994), 11.

103. *The Sunday Times* (27 November 1994), 20.

104. Regarding not enough priests, *Welt am Sonntag* (5 March 1995), 3; regarding financial difficulties, *Welt am Sonntag* (25 December 1994), 3, *Focus* (24 July 1995), 40, and *Welt am Sonntag* (30 July 1995), 3.

April 1997, Bishop Lehmann even admitted, on a radio program, that unless the priesthood were opened up to women, the vocations crisis would remain unresolved.¹⁰⁵

But even as the lay referendum got underway, and even after the CCGC, the highest deputation of lay Catholics in Germany, endorsed an opening of dialogue concerning alternative lifestyles, the more conservative among Germany's bishops resisted. Joachim Cardinal Meisner of Cologne described the referendum as "foreign" to Catholicism; Bishop Joachim Reinelt declared that there was no room for democracy in the church, and Archbishop J. J. Paderborn dismissed the entire referendum as "superfluous," on the grounds that these topics had already been under discussion.¹⁰⁶

Support for the petition drive came from an unanticipated source—in the course of interviews in anticipation of his ninetieth birthday on 3 August, Vienna's retired archbishop, Franz Cardinal König, observed that "Freedom of expression in the Church, even by the laity, is of tremendous importance," and added that he expected to see a lifting of the rule mandating priestly celibacy, albeit not as long as Pope John Paul II remains on the papal throne.¹⁰⁷ German conservatives were unimpressed. Basilius Streithofen, a Dominican priest and director of the Walberberg Institute for Social Sciences in Bonn, quipped, "It is incomprehensible that the Cardinal of Vienna has not yet retreated to a monastic cell. It is high time he did so."¹⁰⁸ Streithofen also trained his guns on the reform movement, which enjoyed, as he put it, the support of "notorious enemies of the pope such as Hans Küng, Norbert Greinacher, Norbert Mette, and Hermann Steinkamp."¹⁰⁹ And if, to the conservative mind, the reformers could be construed as "enemies of the pope," it is not surprising that some advocates of reform began to compare the hierarchical church with Stalinism—a comparison which would appear to construe John Paul II as a latter-day Stalin.¹¹⁰ Under growing pressure from German Catholics, including from the CCGC, Bishop Lehmann, in his capacity as chair of the German Conference of Bishops, brought the request for a lifting of the rule of celibacy to the

105. *Die Welt* (28 April 1997), 2. See also *The Week in Germany* (24 November 1995), on *Nexis*; and *Irish Times* (2 December 1995), 6.

106. Regarding the launching of the referendum, *Welt am Sonntag* (23 July 1995), 4, and (17 September 1995), 4; regarding the CCGC, *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (11 April 1995), 4; and regarding the reactions of conservative bishops, *Focus* (23 October 1995), 66.

107. *National Catholic Reporter* (25 August 1995), 11.

108. In an article by Streithofen for *Welt am Sonntag* (23 July 1995), 25.

109. *Ibid.*

110. *Der Spiegel* (4 September 1995), 76.

pope, though without success.¹¹¹ In turn, the pope told Bishop Lehmann that he considered German Catholics “decadent.”¹¹² The contempt was reciprocated, at least by a sector of the German population. When the pope came to Berlin on an official visit in June 1996, he was met with whistles, boos, and obscenities from protesters. Organized by an ad hoc coalition of lesbians, gays, and others favoring reform in the church, the protest used provocative tactics to get the message across:

At one location, around 1,000 protesters, some dressed as condoms, feted a former Hamburg prostitute who identified herself only as ‘Popess Domenica I’ as she conducted a spoof mass to beatify (certain) transvestites, mocking the Pope’s actions as he beatified two German priests who perished after resisting the Third Reich.

Steffen Zillich, a spokesman for the demonstrators, said the intention was to “resist the Vatican’s attitude to(ward) women and to(ward) sexual morality.”¹¹³

The previous month, in a dramatic and precedent-shattering move, the Old Catholic Church, which had broken with Rome in 1870 over the latter’s declaration of papal infallibility, ordained its first two women priests in a joyful ceremony in Konstanz. The women, both married, are Angela Berlis and Regina Pickel-Bossau.¹¹⁴ This event could have great significance for the future debate on these and other issues within the mainstream Catholic Church.

The controversy over crucifixes might be construed as a programmatic “luxury,” but it remains an emotionally charged issue. In 1968, the state government of Bavaria, acknowledging the conservative religious preferences of the population, mandated that crucifixes be placed in public schools. In 1985, however, a Bavarian artist, Ernst Seler, an adherent of Anthroposophy (a religious offshoot of Theosophy), brought suit on the grounds that the regulation was discriminatory. Ten years later, the Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe, the country’s highest court, declared by a vote of five to three in favor of Seler, and ruled that Bavaria could no longer require schools to hang crucifixes in their classrooms.¹¹⁵ The court stopped short of ordering that the crucifixes be removed, stipulating, instead, that unanimous parental consent (from the parents of all pupils in any given classroom) be obtained. The fallout was immense. Chancellor Kohl declared the de-

111. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (25/26 November 1995), 1, 6; and *Welt am Sonntag* (26 November 1995), 3.

112. As revealed by Lehmann in an interview with *Der Spiegel* (8 April 1996), 85.

113. *New York Times* (24 June 1996), A3.

114. *New York Times* (28 May 1996), A4. See also *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (25/27 May 1996), 10.

115. *The Economist* (London), 19 August 1995, 42-43; *Welt am Sonntag* (20 August 1995), 9; *New York Times* (23 August 1995), A3; and *Stern* (Hamburg), 28 September 1995, 262-63.

cision “unfathomable.” Bavarian Minister-President Edmund Stoiber vowed to keep the crucifixes hanging. And over the succeeding twelve months there were—if a report in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* is to be believed—some 256,000 protests against this decision, which would dwarf the total number of protests of all kinds over the preceding forty-three years—160,104 in all.¹¹⁶ In actual fact, the court’s ruling had very little effect: a year later, only six crucifixes had been removed in all of Bavaria!¹¹⁷

The crucifix controversy was far from over. It soon inspired a challenge by non-Christians to the wording of the school law in Hesse,¹¹⁸ while, within Bavaria itself, religious minorities have increasingly been voicing their discontent at having Christian influences and symbols imposed on them.¹¹⁹ By spring 1997, moreover, the familiar roadside crucifixes whereby the families of auto accident victims expressed their grief, were under attack in Ingolstadt, where local authorities ordered their removal.¹²⁰

In the meantime, Bavaria’s conservative legislators had adopted a new law in 1995, providing fresh legal grounding for the hanging of crucifixes in classrooms. In August 1997, the law withstood a challenge when the Constitutional Court of Bavaria ruled that the law did not violate the principle of religious neutrality proclaimed in the federal constitution.¹²¹ It appears certain, however, that the issue will again come before the Federal Constitutional Court.

Finally, a few words should be said about the controversy surrounding the Catholic Church’s participation in the state-run system of abortion counseling. Prior to reunification, abortion had been readily available in the east and highly restricted in the west. In 1992, an attempt to create a single policy for the country failed when, a year later, the Constitutional Court declared the new law unconstitutional. A revised measure was passed in 1995, by which abortion is “illegal” unless women obtain an “abortion license,” which is issued upon completion of a program of abortion counseling.¹²²

116. The figures were reported in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (10/11 August 1996), 2. Regarding the reactions of Kohl and Stoiber, see *Christian Science Monitor* (23 August 1995), 6.

117. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (10/11 August 1996), 2. See also *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (16/17 December 1995), 6.

118. *Die Welt* (10 April 1997), 2.

119. See Dana L. Simel, “Exclusionary Christian Civil Religion for Jewish and Islamic Students in Bavarian Schools,” in *Comparative Education Review* 40, no. 1 (February 1996).

120. *Die Welt* (22 April 1997), 5.

121. *The Herald* (Glasgow), 2 August 1997, 11; and *Welt am Sonntag* (3 August 1997), 9.

122. *The Daily Telegraph* (27 June 1992), 13; *The Times* (London), 27 June 1992, on Nexis; *International Herald Tribune* (Tokyo ed.), 29/30 May 1993, 4; *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (13/14 November 1993), 2; *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (16/17 November 1993), 2; *Reuter Textline* (9 February 1995), on Nexis; and *Welt am Sonntag* (25 January 1998), 9.

Catholic counseling centers began to cooperate within the state system and, as of January 1998, of the 1,685 pregnancy counseling centers in operation, 264 of them were managed by the Catholic Church's agencies, Caritas and Sozialdienst katholischer Frauen (SkF).¹²³ Although church conservatives were troubled that the church was playing a role in facilitating abortion, they could take solace in knowing that among Catholic women obtaining counseling at Catholic centers, only 10.3 percent decided ultimately to proceed with the intended abortion (according to 1997 data).¹²⁴ Moreover, Catholic counseling centers also reached many non-Catholic women and undoubtedly influenced many to refrain from having an abortion.

In spite of these considerations, conservative-minded Archbishop Dyba refused point-blank to be a party to the system. He ordered counseling centers in his archdiocese to stop issuing "abortion licenses" and insisted on referring the controversy to the pope for resolution, in the face of howls of protest from Germany's largest Roman Catholic women's organization.¹²⁵

The pope responded on 11 January 1998, more than six months after he had been asked to render judgment. His answer could not have come as a surprise to anyone familiar with the Polish pontiff's record on such matters. His letter did not mince words and called unambiguously on Catholic counseling centers in Germany to cease issuing state certificates of eligibility for abortion effective 1 January 1999. The Catholic counseling centers could continue to operate, of course, though inevitably some women who might otherwise have sought Catholic counseling will now look elsewhere. Archbishop Lehmann obediently pledged that no more certificates would be issued after that date, even while calling, rather curiously though in accord with the pope's expressed wishes, for an "intensification" of counseling. More honestly, Bishop Franz Kamphaus of Limburg compared the pope's simultaneous calls for an intensification of counseling and a termination of the issuance of certificates with an aspiration to "square the circle."¹²⁶

Bonn's coalition partners hastened to reassure the public that the laws regulating access to abortion would not be changed to accommodate the pontiff,¹²⁷ and German politicians called on the Bishops' Con-

123. *Der Tagesspiegel* (22 January 1998), 5.

124. *Ibid.*, (23 January 1998), 4.

125. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (4 September 1995), on *Nexis*; *Die Woche* (15 September 1995), 3; *The Daily Telegraph* (21 May 1997), 16; *The Week in Germany* (30 May 1997), on *Nexis*; *Der Tagesspiegel* (21 January 1998), 4; and *Der Tagesspiegel* (23 January 1998), 4.

126. *Der Tagesspiegel* (28 January 1998), 1.

127. *Der Tagesspiegel* (29 January 1998), 2.

ference to look for ways to remain within the state system. Archbishop Lehmann appointed a working group (*Arbeitsgruppe*) in early March, tasking it to generate new ideas concerning pregnancy consultations. Chaired by Lehmann himself, the working group held its first meeting on 7 April 1998.¹²⁸ But this was scarcely the sort of issue on which the Catholic Church would feel inclined to accommodate even an authoritarian government, let alone a democratic one. Hence, although the Evangelical Church affirmed its intention to continue cooperating within the state abortion counseling system, via its own Evangelical counseling centers,¹²⁹ the Catholic Church appeared certain to choose its own programmatic objectives, as defined by the pope, over cooperation with the government or concessions to public opinion.

By early 1999, German Catholic bishops, with the encouragement of their Evangelical peers,¹³⁰ were hoping for a “compromise” formula, in which the Vatican would respect the “sovereignty” of the German episcopate.¹³¹ In fact, even while declaring that they would not allow themselves to be influenced by public opinion, the bishops reached a tentative decision in the latter half of February 1999 allowing for the church’s continued involvement in the state counseling program.¹³² Finally, on 18 June 1999, the Holy See issued a reply to the German bishops, insisting on full and unconditional obedience to the Vatican’s teachings and directives.¹³³ The German bishops now beat an embarrassed retreat, offering to continue to stay within the state system but without issuing any certificates.¹³⁴ The pope offered a “compromise” of sorts, suggesting that the Catholic counseling centers, which could receive state subsidies only as long as they issued certificates, should add to these certificates a line indicating that they did not entitle their bearers to abortions. The bishops accepted this plan; to the ostensible surprise of at least some of the prelates, the state authorities decided that they would accept these certificates as qualifying their bearers for abortions in spite of the exclusionary clause.¹³⁵ However, the compromise has started to come unglued. Denouncing Archbishop Lehmann as a

128. *Der Tagesspiegel* (6 March 1998), 2; *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (6 March 1998), 4; and *Der Tagesspiegel* (8 April 1998), 2.

129. *Welt am Sonntag* (1 February 1998), 3.

130. *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (1 March 1999), 4.

131. *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (23 February 1999), 1, and (26 February 1999), 1; and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (27/28 February 1999), 6; also *The Week in Germany* (New York), 5 March 1999, 6.

132. *The Week in Germany* (New York), 29 January 1999, 6, and 26 February 1999, 7.

133. *Die Welt* (18 June 1999), at www.diewelt.de.

134. *Die Tageszeitung* (24 June 1999), at www.taz.de.

135. *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 18 June 1999, 1; 19 June 1999, 1; 22 June 1999, 1; and 24 June 1999, 1; and *die tageszeitung* (Berlin), 24 June 1999, at www.taz.de/tpl/06/24.nf/text.

“Pharisee,” Archbishop Dyba of Fulda came forward in mid-September to demand the church’s withdrawal from the state system altogether.¹³⁶ Meanwhile, Joachim Cardinal Meissner of Cologne withdrew his diocese from the state counseling system.¹³⁷ With about 70 percent of Germans feeling that the bishops should defy papal admonitions and resume full cooperation within the state counseling system,¹³⁸ the Catholic bishops agreed to remain within the state system, at least on the basis of this compromise, for at least the time being.¹³⁹

But by the latter half of November, the German Catholic Church had finally been forced to withdraw from the state system altogether.¹⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

German history in the last two hundred years has been marked by major upheavals; from political disunity to forcible unification under the Prussian monarchy, followed by a weak Weimar Republic, the rise and fall of the Nazi regime, military defeat, occupation, and division into two states (one pluralist but Christian in orientation, the other secular and communist). This is the legacy of a reunified Germany now defined as a pluralist, parliamentary democracy. Thus, Germany’s recent historical experience bears no comparison with that of other Western democracies such as the United States, Britain, or even France. Yet, the principles underpinning the behavior of Germany’s two largest religious associations reveal considerable continuity—a continuity which is grounded in theological and ecclesiological conceptions. Several conclusions emerge from the preceding discussion.

First, both the Catholic and Evangelical Churches, while capable of contemplating rebellion when their core interests are threatened by the state, are prepared to compromise on programmatic issues, especially on those considered less critical by the given church leadership.

Second, the Catholic Church has displayed a considerably greater proclivity to oppose the government, to criticize government policies, and to resist popular pressures in a democratic setting than in an authoritarian setting. While the level of Catholic Church “collaboration” with the Stasi was less than that of the Evangelical Church (two percent of Catholic clergy vs. five percent of Evangelical clergy), the Cath-

136. *Münchener Merkur*, 14 September 1999, 6; and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 14 September 1999, 1, 9.

137. *Die Welt*, 23 September 1999, at www.welt.de/daten/1999/09/23/0923de130450.htm.

138. *Ibid.*, 25 September 1999, at www.welt.de/daten/1999/09/25/0925de130765.htm.

139. *Ibid.*, 25 September 1999, at www.welt.de/daten/1999/09/25/0925de130752.htm, and 27 September 1999, at www.welt.de/daten/1999/09/27/0927de130930.htm.

140. *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (23 November 1999), 1; *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 24 November 1999, 1; and *Welt am Sonntag*, 28 November 1999, 4.

olic Church had been quite prepared, in the Nazi era, to support the Third Reich's war effort and to moderate its criticism of Nazi antisemitism, above all by limiting itself to verbal criticism, in the endeavor to protect its "mission."

Third, the Evangelical Church has shown greater internal divisions, concerning cooperation with authoritarian systems of either the left or the right, than has the Catholic Church, with the dominant tendency being toward limited accommodation rather than confrontation.

Fourth, the Evangelical Church in the GDR tended to embrace issues of conscientious objection, pacifism, and environmentalism—issues of marginal interest to Catholic prelates—while the Catholic Church has, for its part, concentrated quietly on matters related to family, marriage, sexuality, and reproduction.

Fifth, the level of church engagement in opposition politics in an authoritarian setting is apt to increase in direct correlation with the relaxation of authoritarian controls, which in turn may be the by-product of the decay of the authoritarian system concerned.¹⁴¹

And finally, while, under secular/anticlerical authoritarian governments, the churches feel the need to concentrate their energy on ensuring the continuance of the "mission," in democratic systems the churches can take "mission" for granted, concentrating their energy instead on the realization of their programmatic objectives. This is certainly the direction that both churches in Germany have taken since reunification.

141. Confirming the theoretical insights of Samuel P. Huntington and Alfred Stepan. See S. P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968), ch. 4; and A. Stepan, "Paths toward Redemocratization: Theoretical and Comparative Considerations," in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, eds. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).