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A Wolf Amongst the Sheep: A Sociological Approach to Understanding the German Church Struggle

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A Wolf Amongst the Sheep:
A Sociological Approach to Understanding the German Church Struggle

Thesis submitted to
the Graduate College of
Marshall University

In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
In Sociology

by

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Marshall University
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ABSTRACT

A Wolf Amongst the Sheep:

A Sociological Approach to Understanding the German Church Struggle

By: Kevin L. Dingess

Researchers pursuing the *Kirchenkampf*, Church Struggle, have persistently concentrated on anti-Semitism to explicate why the Protestant Churches failed at stopping the Holocaust. Former studies indicate that the Protestant Churches were ineffective at limiting the Nazi regime. Essentially, this failure was accredited to the following: anti-Semitism (both past and modern), post-war resentment, common enemies or shared values between the regime and the Protestant Churches (including, Communists, Bolsheviks, Jews, and the secularism/liberalism of the Weimar Republic), and a strongly ingrained nationalism. Despite the facts that the validity of this past research has been supported numerous times over, this research observes features of why the Protestant Churches failed from a structural perspective. The Mainstream Protestant Churches were a bureaucracy when Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime took control. This study emphasizes that the organizational structures of the Protestant Churches were perhaps the most crucial cause of the Protestant Churches' inability to sufficiently bind the Nazi regime's tactics.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The Church Struggle is a very extensive and multifaceted situation that occurred in Germany during the supremacy of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime. The Church Struggle began around 1933 after Hitler became Chancellor, and ended arguably around 1945. The Mainstream Lutheran Protestant Churches had survived through their country's defeat in World War I, inflation from the Great Depression, and a major land reduction during the Weimar Republic years. The war, depression, and the land reduction were only the commencement of the Protestant Churches' tribulations. When the Nazi administration and Hitler took control, the Protestant Churches faced the dilemma of a total structural assimilation.

This land reduction would play an imperative role in the failure of the Protestant Churches' structure of authority which weakened its effectiveness to impede Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime. Once the land reduction of the Old Prussian Empire had been triumphant during the Weimar years, Hitler almost effortlessly became Chancellor of Germany. After Hitler's ascension to power was completed, he and the Nazi regime purposely and systematically dismantled the Protestant Churches' muscle and influence by using an assortment of strategies against the Protestant Churches' structure on an organizational level. Hitler and the Nazi regime used a "parallel organization" or the *Deutsche Christens*, German Christians, to assimilate the Protestant Churches' leadership, as noted by (Barnett 1992). Though this assimilation was not an easy feat, Hitler's true brilliance was his dissimulation to eradicate the Protestant Churches as a structural entity. Put succinctly, he somehow managed to convince the Protestant Churches' leadership time and time again that he had nothing to do with the Protestant Churches' troubles.

He somehow managed to convince the Protestant Churches' leadership of his innocence up to the very end of the Nazi's time in power.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Though some scholars (such as Barnett 1992, Helmreich 1979) recognized that the land reduction and restructure of authority was significant, they seem to overlook the Protestant Churches' failures from an organizational level most often relating it to individuals acts. Most researchers look to other factors such as: anti-Semitism (Bethge 2000; Staub 1989; Bauer 1982; Barnett 1992; Littlell & Locke 1974), common enemies or shared values (Neumann 1995; Herzog 2001; Hakeem 1992; Saunders 2003), and other issues which seem to derive from a cultural or psychological explanation. Conversely this research uses these past findings, and it suggests new insight which builds new theories on the Protestant Churches' failures. These new theories are derived by observing typical bureaucratic organizational behaviors along with applying theories of social conflict to the Protestant Churches' actions.

This study is also performed to isolate the devices used during the Nazi's supremacy in Germany. Both the Protestant Churches and the Nazi government used various methods to attempt to dismantle the others power. This research assesses these tactics of the Nazi regime, along with German Christians, to the counter-tactic of the Protestant Churches from an organizational level. Data such as church doctrines and other forms of historical information was further critiqued in an attempt to determine whether the Protestant Churches' campaigns were successful or fruitless. Through this effort such questions as, "How did the German Christians and the Nazi regime effectively divest the Protestant Churches' influence on the normal citizens of the state?" "How did the Protestant Churches' authority reply to such

maneuvers?” “Why were the Protestant Churches unproductive, in general, from an organizational perspective at hindering the Nazi regime?”

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The Church Struggle has been one of the most controversial issues since World War II ended. Theologians, sociologists, psychologists, and scholars from all realms have tried to illuminate this dark piece of church history. Most researchers have tried to answer the question, “Why did the Mainstream Lutheran Protestant Churches not provide more opposition toward Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime?” As noted formerly, most scholars have linked past research of the Protestant Churches’ disappointments to aspects such as: (a.) post-war resentment (Barnett 1992; Staub 1989; Saunders 2003), (b.) anti-Semitism (Bethge 2000; Staub 1989; Bauer 1982; Barnett 1992; Littell & Locke 1974), (c.) the secularism/liberalism of the Weimar Republic (Helmreich, 1979; Barnett 1992; Littell & Locke 1974), (d.) problematic post-war circumstances (Staub 1989; Helmreich 1979; Bethge 2000), (e.) common enemies between the Nazi regime and the Protestant Churches (Neumann 1995; Herzog 2001; Hakeem 1992; Saunders 2003), and (f.) an ingrained sense of nationalism (Barnett 1992; Behtge 2000; Hayes 1960; Kohn 1956; Littell & Locke 1974; Herman, Jr 1943).

A. Post-War Resentment

After Germany was beaten in World War I, its people were left in shambles. Germany was once part of the great Prussian Empire that was led by the Kaisers for numerous years. Germany was a place of pride before the war; however, the German people fell very hard following the war. Possibly, Germany’s worst resentment did not come from its defeat; it rather came from only one document that they were forced to sign. This document was called the *Treaty of Versailles* which was conceivably what really launched Germany into one of the darkest periods

of history ever known to mankind. France had lost numerous people during the war. Their casualties numbered around 1.2 million soldiers and 40,000 civilians, and they wanted to control some of Germany's factories for compensation for their sufferings. The *Ruhr* Area is where Germany transferred coal to France. After the plunder was divided amongst the victors, Germany was blamed for the war and was forced to pay back huge reparations. France's leader (Georges Clemenceau) was very demanding, and he wanted to ensure that Germany was punished thoroughly for what they had done. As a result in 1923, when Germany had refused to pay their compensations, France went in to the Ruhr Area and occupied it. This incident became known as the *Ruhr* Crisis.

This maneuver was very frowned upon by other countries, in particular, the United States and the United Kingdom. This event was bad on many levels; foremost, French occupation continued in the *Ruhr*, so that Germany's payments could still be collected. A consequence of these actions was that the German people of the *Ruhr* stopped working to keep from making these payments. This resulted in Germany printing additional money to support those of misfortune in the *Ruhr*, and this weakened the value of the German *Papiermark* or German currency. Everything was starting to take its toll on the German people by this point.

Germany had been humiliated by its defeat in the First World War. It was really no longer part of the renowned Prussian Empire. Its kings and princes were in exile, and on top of that France was controlling some of its most productive territories. When things seemed like that they could not get any worse, the Great Depression struck Germany. The only thing that the German people had left was their memories of the old German Reichs, and what it meant to be a Prussian. All of these events triggered them to long for the glory days of the Reichs. From a

sociological standpoint, they felt alienated and this alienation led them to create in and out groups.

By creating in and out groups, the German people redefined a whole new social construction of reality. This produced a new wave of anti-Semitism as a coping mechanism. The train of thought, at that time, was that if an individual was not reverencing the past of the German Reichs, then they were an outsider. The Jewish people quickly became easy scapegoats for the Protestant Churches and all of Germany. Jewish custom and tradition was different to begin with which really drew attention to them at this point. It was almost comparable to a melting pot of all three types of anti-Semitism which included: conversion, expulsion, and then annihilation. The German people, along with the Protestant Churches, faulted the Jews for everything. The Jews were accredited with causing the loss of the war, the depression, and ruining the values and customs of Germany. The German citizens and the Protestant Churches felt they had been stabbed in the back by the Jews. With this type of mentality, the Jews became easy targets for the people and the Protestant Churches.

B. Anti-Semitism

As mentioned previously, anti-Jewish policies have really taken three different forms. This type of anti- Jewish policy began in the fourth century, and it has lasted until modern day times. The initial form of anti-Jewish policy is conversion. Conversion has been the anti-Jewish policy used by the church. Following conversion in anti-Jewish policy is expulsion. Expulsion is more of a secularized approach that sees more differences than simply religious traditions. The thought behind expulsion is that the Jews cannot live among them. The last approach taken toward anti-Jewish policy is annihilation. Annihilation was what Adolf Hitler and the Nazi

regime used around 1941. This approach is literally to make the Jews extinct from the country by killing them all. The first two types of anti-Jewish policies had been evident all throughout Europe. However, the last advance in anti-Jewish policy was used by the Nazis in the early part of the Twentieth Century. As far as the Protestant Churches' stance went on anti-Jewish policy, Hakeem (1992)¹ stated, "...the Church Struggle was fought out within the churches and was not in opposition to the Nazi regime as such and certainly not to its anti-Jewish policies."

Germany had a long history of anti-Semitism well before Adolf Hitler and Nazi regime had ever step into power. Bauer (1982:22) proclaimed, "...the Middle Ages depict Jews as satanic, demonic figures, clearly not human." This view of the Jews as being "evil people" persisted throughout Europe, and it was mostly headed up by the Catholic Church. Although this vision of the Jews as being murderers of the Messiah was believed by almost all Catholics, they did not feel that the Jews should be killed. The Catholic Church felt that Jews should be merely converted by being ridiculed which in most instances was their course of action. Nonetheless, the world was facing a great change in the late Fifteen and Sixteen Hundreds. A Renaissance Period was entering Europe, and (on October 31, 1517) Martin Luther, a German minister, introduced a new idea called "Protestantism." Luther's proposal was to reform the "corruption" of the Catholic Church. Luther faced great opposition, but his idea of reform was successful.

Luther was one of the most influential men of his time; however, he led the next great wave of Jewish hatred. His anti-Semitic slurs would prove to have a detrimental effect on the Jewish people in Germany during the Holocaust. Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime used many of Luther's slurs to manipulate the Protestant Churches and the German people into thinking that this is what Luther really wanted. Bauer (1982:33) declared, "Lutheran Protestantism, in

¹ Hakeem, Michael. 1992. "Part 5: The Protestant Reaction To The Nazi Holocaust." *Free Thought*, October. Retrieved January 9, 2007. (<http://ffrf.org/fttoday/back/hakeem/holocaust5.html>).

particular, disappointed by the refusal of the Jews to accept their new religion, was rabidly hostile.” Luther wrote in one of his booklets, Of the Jews and Their Lies 1483-1546 (cited in Bauer 1982:22-23):

“First, their synagogues or churches should be set on fire, and whatever does not burn up should be covered and spread over with dirt so that no one may ever be able to see a cinder or stone of it...Secondly, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed...They ought to be put under one roof or in a stable, like gypsies...Thirdly, they should be deprived of their prayerbooks and Talmuds...Fourthly, their rabbis must be forbidden under threat of death to teach any more...If, however, we are afraid that they might harm us personally, then let us apply the same cleverness [expulsion] as the other nations, such as France, Spain, Bohemia, etc., and settle with them for that which they have exorted usuriously from us, and after having divided it up fairly let us drive them out of the country for all time.”

With such statements by Martin Luther as these, it should be to no wonder that Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime could create a common interest between them and Lutheran Protestants. Jews not accepting Jesus as being the Messiah continued to plague them throughout the Renaissance period and up until the early twentieth century when the Prussian Empire was defeated in World War I (WWI).

C. Secularism/Liberalism of the Weimar Republic

When researching the Protestant Churches, in Germany, during the Weimar years; it is not hard to find that the Protestant Churches did not like the Weimar government. Mainly, this dislike occurred due to the secularism/liberalism of the Weimar’s leaders toward the Protestant Churches. Barnett (1992:23) proclaimed, “The predominately conservative Protestant leaders and pastors associated the Weimar Republic with Social Democrats like Friedrich Ebert, its first president. Conservatives within the church trusted the Social Democrats only slightly more than they did the Communists.” The Protestant Churches’ leadership detested the Weimar

government because of its secularization policies on the German culture. Many of the church leaders felt that some of these policies were attacks against the church itself. The Protestant Churches' were not the only group that abhorred the Weimar government. Barnett (1992:19) affirmed, "Embittered nationalists put the blame for Germany's defeat not on the Kaiser and his military commanders but on fragile new government that now saw itself compelled to observe the terms of the Versailles Treaty."

D. Problematic Post-War Circumstances

Germany's defeat in WWI was a major blow to its people. As noted formerly they had been held accountable for the war, and they had to disburse huge reimbursements to the war's winners. Many circumstances arose in Germany during the 1930s. As mentioned previously, one of the largest frustrations came when France occupied some of Germany's territories. On top of all of these awful circumstances, the German people were also suffering from other situations such as: post-war resentment, inflation, and most Germans were in a state of almost pure shock which was widespread all throughout Germany. Staub (1989) referred to these factors as "difficult life conditions." Staub (1989) also introduced an idea that he called a "continuum of destruction." In other words, Staub (1989) asserted that through processes the German people were synchronized to Nazi ideologies. He emphasized that the pressures from this "continuum of destruction" was a direct result of the "difficult life conditions" that the German people had faced. Staub (1989) declares that once an individual gets started down this path; the rest kind of just flows into place. These concepts directed the German people, along with the Protestant Churches, down a zigzagged path that ultimately led to the Holocaust.

E. Common Enemies or Shared Values

One reason the National Socialists were elected into power was their successful attempt to set mutual enemies between them and the Protestant Churches' leadership. Mass Society Theory claims, "...modernity is distinguished by the emergence of large-scale social structures but the disappearance of mid-level groups that would provide social anchors for individuals. With the demise of smaller scale social groups, modern society becomes a mass society in which isolation, depersonalization, and alienation become prevalent" (Buechler 2000:27).

Kornhauser's (1959) work lends further assistance to understand the gradual acceptance of the Nazis from the Protestant Churches' perspective. Kornhauser (1959) elucidated that when things are changing rapidly, people will search for a world that has vanished. In this instance, the Protestant Churches were looking back for the *glory days* of the German Reichs. When looking at the current situations that were arising in Germany, during the Weimar Republic years, the Protestant Churches' were getting desperate to get back to their *lost* nation. "Social stability and political continuity keep history in the past; instability and uncertainty keep its ghosts alive" (Barnett 1992:9).

F. Ingrained Nationalism

Nationalism ascended in Germany following WWI. Many negative attitudes emerged from patriotic Germans toward people whom were not nationalistic. Role theory states, "These roles emerge form interaction in which two or more persons have a set of common expectations about what is appropriate behavior for both themselves and for others. Culture is regarded as an organization of learned behaviors (roles) and the products of behavior that are shared and transmitted. These learned behaviors are no more than the actions of persons occupying roles"

(Scott and Scott 1971:47). Secular anti-Semitism becomes increased during this phase in Germany's history. One of the possible reasons was because of this ingrained nationalism throughout the country. Jews were seen heavily as outsiders because they did have their own country at this point-in-time. Jewish cultural traits were dramatically dissimilar than the nationalistic Germans' traditions. Jewish customs kept them practicing old traditions and this made Jews even more suspicious to the German nationalists.

Conclusion

The methods used throughout this manuscript are rooted by a historical content analysis. Historical documents such as: the National Socialist German Workers' party (NSDAP's) 25-Point Program, Adolf Hitler's speeches delivered to the public, the German Christians' 10-Point Church Plan, the Protestant Reich Church's 30-Point Church Plan, which was developed by Alfred Rosenberg, and the Lutheran Protestants' German Church Yearbook. These historical documents were compared with the chronological events that took place during the Church Struggle. From this information an investigation was launched to measure the tactics and counter-tactics from both groups, which were tracked through a chronological time-order-line to the literal events that occurred comparatively close to the day that these doctrines, speeches, or other forms of information was released.

Events such as the restructure of the Protestant Churches' authority was a key aspect in the Protestant Churches' incapability to suppress the Nazi's tactics. Another observation that was made came from looking at how Hitler and the Nazi regime had taken over other bureaucratic structures by setting up "parallel organizations." After extensive research two major assumptions were concluded: (1) the land reduction caused a large restructure to take place

which deeply weakened the Protestant Churches' on an organizational level. (2) Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime set up a parallel structure, the German Christians, next to the Protestant Churches' organization to keep them occupied, so that he and the Nazi regime could fully assimilate the Protestant Churches' into a state sponsored Nazi ecclesia.

Strong evidence emerged through a historical content analysis that demonstrated that Prussia's defeat in World War I led to a major land reduction (Barnett 1992 & Helmreich 1979). This land reduction produced resentment (Barnett 1992), along with an enormous diminution in the Mainstream Protestant Churches' membership and authority structure (Helmreich 1979). The Weimar years added to the Protestant Churches' wounds by instilling more secularism into German's society school systems (Helmreich 1959); this government also had a fairly large Centre Party that was made up of Catholics. Catholics and Lutherans had an enormous history of disliking one another. Even with all of these troubles, more problems arose such as the Great Depression which caused a large inflation in Germany. The inflation produced problems with the Protestant Churches' finances as well (Barnett 1992 & Helmreich 1979). The loss of World War I, restructure of membership and authority, secularism/liberalism of the Weimar years, and the Great Depression seemed to create mutual enemies between the Protestant ministers and laity with a newly emerging political party, the Nationalists Socialist German Workers' party.

The National Socialist party provided the Protestant clergy with the assurance of a religious revival. This gave the National Socialist party a dissimulation for Adolf Hitler's slowly merging tyrannical reign. With the Protestant and Catholic Churches' support, this gave the National Socialist party the edge that they needed to emerge into power. The National Socialist party did this by setting up a movement called the, German Christian Faith Movement, which presented a false pretense to the Protestant Churches that it was a Protestant Christian movement.

This movement would later become the parallel organization that succeeded in assimilating Mainstream Protestantism. After the assimilation was complete, the German Christian Faith Movement (GCFM) sat up a Protestant Reich Church that was built on nationalism and Nazi ideology. However, the GCFM knocked its own feet out from under it. At the Sports Palace Rally, they got too radical and numerous Protestant ministers resigned or quit. The GCFM never regained full control over the Protestant Churches again; however, they did show themselves to be useful to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime by creating a concept developed by Howard Zinn (2003) called a “buffer.” Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime used the GCFM, from 1934 throughout the rest of the Nazi’s reign, as a buffer between them and the Protestant Churches.

All of the following are examples where materials were drawn and evaluated or critiqued: Hitler’s speeches, the German Churches’ Yearbook, the 25-Point Plan of the NSDAP, and the 30-Point Church Plan for the National Reich Church to name only a few. These historical documents (along with numerous others) were evaluated and compared to the events that took place in Germany during the early period of the Church Struggle. After making connections between the two, commonalities as to why the Protestant Churches’ failed to provide more resistance to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime began to appear which pointed to their structural features. This led the researcher to formulate a theory that structural flaws as an organization led to the Protestant Churches’ lack of dissent. This theory is simply to add to all of the past research. This research is not to disprove any aged theories; actually, this study was assembled off of the past research and uses theories of the past to lucidly enlighten why the structural collapse led to lack of dissent.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Germany's defeat in World War I had a detrimental influence on the Protestant Churches' ability to provide more resistance against the Nazi regime.

Hypothesis 2: The restructuring of the Protestant Churches' authority during the Weimar Republic had a significant role in the churches' inability to effectively stop Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime.

Hypothesis 3: The Nazi regime created common enemies between them and the Protestant Churches to reduce the tension between the church and the government.

Hypothesis 4: The large size of the Protestant Churches' structure as a bureaucratic organization had an influence on the Protestant Churches' inability to increase resistance against the regime.

Hypothesis 5: Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime set up a parallel organization to absorb the main stream Protestant Church.

Hypothesis 6: After the absorption of the mainstream Protestant Churches failed, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime used the German Christians as a buffer between them and the Protestant Churches.

Chapter One:

Restructuring of Authority

Introduction

To fully comprehend the German Church Struggle, it is important to first recognize the Protestant Churches' dimensions. In 1925, a religious survey was taken. Table 1, below, was republished by Helmreich (1979:93) from the official *Church Yearbook for the Protestant Churches in Germany (Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelische Kirche in Deutschland)*:

Table 1:	
Protestant and Other Religious Groups, 1925 Census	
Protestants	Membership
Evangelical Land Churches	39,481,141
Evangelical Lutheran Free Churches	178,078
Evangelical Reformed Free Churches	9,559
Moravian Brethren (Herrnhuter)	6,445
Mennonites	13,298
Baptists	69,764
Methodists	48,891
Various New Apostolic Groups	138,149
Adventists	30,073
Other Evangelical Religious Organizations	39,279
Total	40,014,677
Other Religious Groups	Membership
Roman Catholics	20,193,334
Greek and Russian Orthodox	18,943
Old Catholics and Related Groups	33,042
Other Christians	35,595
Jews	564,379
Non-Christian Religious Groups	2,968
Weltanschauung (Philosophy) Groups	243,377
Without Religion	1,140,957
Without Designation	163,347
Total	22,395,942
Total Population of Germany Without Saar	62,410,619

In Table 1, above, the 1925 Religious Census reveals of how many members each church had as Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist party began to ascend to the top of the authority structure in Germany. Put succinctly, over forty-million Germans were Protestant eight years before the

Nazi's takeover. Around twenty-one million of these Christians were Catholic, and six-hundred and twenty-thousand Germans belonged to an assortment of smaller denominations, the majority of which were Protestant. Hitler and the regime realized one potential way to achieve control of the state was for the party to become appealing to the Protestant Churches.

A. The NSDAP's Twenty-Five Point Program

As the National Socialist party was dashing through the ranks on its approach to capturing command and declaring the occasion as a new *Third Reich* in Germany, the party announced a twenty-five point program in a speech to the German people in Munich. On February 24, 1920 (point four and twenty-four) of the party's twenty-five point program, Feder (1971) decreed:

Point Four: "None but members of the nation may be citizens of the State. None but those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation. No Jew, therefore, may be a member of the nation" (P. 39).

Point Twenty-Four: "We demand liberty for all religious denominations in the State, so far as they are not a danger to it and do not militate against the morality and moral sense of the German race. The Party, as such, stands for a positive Christianity, but does not bind itself in the matter of creed to any particular confession. It combats the Jewish-materialistic spirit *within* and *without* us, and is convinced that our nation can achieve permanent health from within only on the principle: the common interest before self-interest" (P. 43).

This twenty-five point program is the initial tactic of the National Socialist party's strategy toward the Protestant Churches. Points four and twenty-four can be analyzed even further to assess more precisely as to what the National Socialist German Worker's party (NSDAP) was trying to accomplish with this approach. Point four of this political strategy is to announce the eviction the Jews. The NSDAP boasted that not a soul could be considered as a citizen unless they were of Germanic descent. This is a type of secularized anti-Jewish policy noted earlier. This anti-Jewish policy was not based on religious differences. The NSDAP felt that the Jews

were not even allowed to live among them. Therefore, they are calling initially for their expulsion from the country.

Point twenty-four is just as strategically important as point four in the NSDAP's program. Point twenty-four pronounces autonomy for all religious denominations. This issue went over exceedingly well with the Protestant Churches throughout the nation. The NSDAP articulated that they wanted freedom for all religious denominations; however, the stipulation was as long as the Protestant Churches did not provide confrontation toward the state. The NSDAP's unsurpassed scheme is revealed in the sentence which boasted that the party stood for a "positive Christianity." Helmreich (1979:123) acknowledged:

"It was a masterpiece of political formulation, for it was affirmative rather than negative, and yet it left the central concept undefined. Everyone was free to define "positive Christianity" as he would...Positive Christianity was obviously something which was anti-Marxist and anti-Jewish, and also something above petty interfaith and interdenominational differences. In general it was easier to point out what it was not than what it was. Positive in form, but paradoxically essentially negative in meaning..."

Point twenty-four was not just brilliant tactically in the logic that Helmreich stated in the previous paragraph; it was resourceful of the NSDAP because this twenty-five point program had already begun its manipulation of the Protestant Churches. Point twenty-four of this program gave the NSDAP and the Protestant Churches common enemies; although, it is important to note that the National Socialist party was not taken very seriously at this time. Conversely, this nonchalant position by the Protestant Churches benefited the NSDAP party. The Protestant Churches' leaders were getting fatigued from numerous diverse aspects such as: the augmentation in atheism (which Marxism and Communism had been blamed for in Germany), the scarcity of resources (that struck the Protestant Churches because of the Great Depression during the course of the Weimar years.), and the Protestant Churches were still in the

progression of a major shape change in power configuration. To reveal the structure of the Protestant Churches lucidly, Duncan-Jones (1938:42) pointed out that for a person to understand the Protestant Churches' factional formation an individual must:

“...remember that at that time there was not one German Protestant Church. From the theological standpoint there were three groups with different traditions, the Lutherans who were the largest body, the Reformed (i.e., Calvinists) who were specially to be found in Westphalia and the Rhineland, and the United (i.e. combinations of Lutherans and Calvinists). Geographically there were twenty-eight separate Churches (Landskirchen) corresponding to the States that made up the Reich. In 1922, a German Evangelical Church Federation (Kirchenbund) had been formed with limited powers...”

B. Restructuring of the Protestant Churches' Authority

Throughout this period, the Protestant Churches had been going through major restructuring in their authority. The Weimar Republic's prominent members had merged the Protestant Churches beneath three clerics who were afterward designated by the name, *Three Holy Kings* (Helmreich 1979:61). Before World War I, during the duration of the glory days of the first and second German Reichs, the Protestant Churches had been beneath various princes from an array of diverse provinces. The authority structure for the Protestant Churches was a very extensive progression that had been developing since the Protestant Reformation. When Martin Luther and the Protestants won their liberty from the Catholic Church, they spread the Protestant Church's authority around to keep Papal power from reemerging in the Protestant Churches. The German princes of each territory that a church was within would be accountable for that particular parish, whether Catholic or Protestant. The Protestant Churches' government evolved through dissimilar phases, but this type of Protestant Church supervision virtually lasted until the end of World War I.

After the Prussian Empire's defeat in World War I, the Empire collapsed, sending Germany into a tailspin. Germany entered 1918 under the control of an entirely new type of government termed the *Weimar Republic*. The headship of the Weimar Republic compounded the Protestant Churches' administration into the "Three Holy Kings" as noted earlier. For nearly four hundred years prior to this restructure, the princes had ruled over the land churches. However, the princes' guidance had all come to an end by November of 1918. Most of the Protestant Churches' powers shifted to regulatory courts known as consistories. This authoritarian collapse was not the only reason that the Protestant Churches' influence had shrunk. Germany was no longer a part of the Prussian Empire; in fact, Prussia had been dissolved almost entirely. Germany's king was in exile, and its people were scattered. Several of the German princes had vanished in this war along with their territories which held a large number of the Protestant Churches. A great amount of the Protestant Churches' affiliates and facilities were lost as a corollary of this land diminution. Victoria Barnett (1992:9) wrote:

"So this is what they would remember: the German Empire. Otto von Bismarck had united 18 different German states; the largest was the kingdom of Prussia, covering two thirds of German territory. Prussia's capital was Berlin; its territory extended east to the Lithuanian border, south to the Austro-Hungarian empire, and north along the Baltic Sea. Its western outposts included the farmlands of Westphalia, the Ruhr coal fields, and the vineyards and castles that flank the Rhine."

This land reduction is a noteworthy factor in the Protestant Churches' paralysis during the Third Reich. It would be extremely dubious that Adolf Hitler and the Nazis could have neutralized the Protestant Churches so successfully if the Protestant Churches would not have been reduced so severely. If the number of members within the Protestant Churches had not been diminished, the National Socialist party would had to figure out a way to suppress a plethora of princes who were in authority over the Protestant Churches which would have been

particularly complex as well. However, the NSDAP did not have to overcome the preceding situation, and they took advantage of the circumstances right away.

C. The Parallel Organization is Formed

The National Socialist party strategically placed soldiers throughout Germany in uniform and in ranks to win over the Protestant Churches' consent. This incident would be the first time that the National Socialist party and the opposition would face down one another. On November 10, 1931, the Evangelical Supreme Church Council issued a proclamation which prohibited soldiers to be dressed in a uniform to attend church services. To counter the Protestant Churches' "malevolent" attack and secure a majority vote in the Old Prussian Union, Wilhelm Kube (a leader of the National Socialist party in the Old Prussian Union) devised one of the party's most clever tactics on their way to power. He switched the party's name to the *Evangelical National Socialists*. Kube's ingenious idea improved the party's status in the Prussian lands, and it even helped to win over a lot of church laymen. Nevertheless, Hitler did not like the name because it tied them down to a denominational level. Afterward, Adolf Hitler and Gregor Strasser (Reich organization leader) changed the name to the *Deutsche Christens* or the German Christians (Helmreich 1979:126-127).

Kube's approach to enter the church elections in Prussia was purely for the NSDAP to gain politically, not religiously. This scheme was accepted by the Protestant Churches; no opposition from the Protestant Churches really took place from this tactic of the National Socialist party. These kinds of ploys actually elevated the National Socialist party's sovereignty even further and launched them into their next major tactic to neutralize the church. The *German Christian Faith Movement* (GCFM) was born; this faction was an obvious attempt by

the party to get the backing that it desperately needed by the Protestant Churches. On May 26, 1932, The German Christians issued a doctrine of ten guiding principles. (See Appendix 1: The German Christian Faith Movement's Ten-Point Program).

Chapter Two:

The Progression of Structural Absorption

A. Mutual Adversaries

These guidelines illustrate how the National Socialist party was trying to embed the Protestant Churches with the same ideologies from their 1920 twenty-five point program. A wealth of new guidelines persisted in this fresh document, but its underlying philosophies were the equivalent. The tactic, here, by the party is evidently to try to unite all of the Protestant Churches into one united church, namely a *Protestant Reich Church*. The National Socialist party was manipulating the Protestant Churches by chipping away at their foundations. If they could unite the Protestant Churches beneath one body, the NSDAP could control the Protestant Church body by appointing a *Reich Bishop* over it. The National Socialists go as far as to call Marxism the “enemy of God”, and they call the Catholic Centre Party “unspiritual.” They were principally beseeching with the Protestants to see things their way. Martin Luther is even referred to as a champion, and they censure the Jews for contaminating Germany’s culture. The GCFM is a tactic that worked, and the German Christians gained one-third of the chairs during this election.

The brilliance of this tactic lies in the principle that was noted earlier. The National Socialist party created mutual enemies or communal values between them and the Protestant Churches’ leadership. Initially, they both shared distrust for the Weimar Republic’s leniency. Then, this was accompanied by a hatred for Communism. Saunders (2003)² stated, “From 1922 the Bolshevik regime in Russia had systematically eradicated Christianity and thousands of priests and bishops had been executed or imprisoned, whilst monasteries had been completely

² Saunders, Will. 2003. “Cross and Swastika: The Nazi Party and the German Churches.” Academic Search Premier. Sep 2003 Issue 46, p9-14, 6p, 1c, 2bw. Retrieved September 12, 2006 ([http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=10663054&site=ebshost-live.](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=10663054&site=ebshost-live))

eliminated.” The Nazi regime used such events as these, and they connected the Jews to Bolshevism. By sharing adversaries, the National Socialist increased their influence that they needed from the Protestant and Catholic Churches. Without the Protestant and Catholic Churches’ consent, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime might not have come into control legally. Many scholars (Neumann 1995; Dagmar 2001; Hakeem 1992; Saunders 2003) accept that the Nazi regime and the Protestant Churches shared at least some values.

Perhaps an insight to Simmel’s proposal of conflict could lend assistance to the understanding of the National Socialists Party’s plan to coordinate the Protestant Churches into one body. Simmel (quoted in Coser 1956: 95-96) insinuated:

“Groups in any sort of war situations are not tolerant. They cannot afford individual deviations from the unity of the coordinating principle beyond a definitely limited degree” (P. 95).

A relatively small fighting group, in a situation of acute conflict, may benefit from a decline in its membership, as long as this decline purifies it of elements which tend to mediation and compromise....The majority group does not have to insist on such decisiveness of pro and con. Vacillating and conditional members are less dangerous to it because...its large volume can afford such peripheral phenomena without being affected in its center, every uncertainty of a member at once threatens the core and hence the cohesion of the whole. The slight span between the elements makes for the absence of that elasticity of the group which... is the condition of tolerance” (P. 96).

The German Christians follow the typical pattern of a sect. They were relatively small in size, and they focused their efforts on a principle that Max Weber called an *ecclesia pura*. This movement had its National Socialist party twists to it; the GCFM followers believed that they were purifying Germany of such factions as atheists and Jews, which they saw as debasing their nation. They held incredibly steady to a ten-point guideline that the movement leaders had created. These guiding principles were what Coser referred to in his work on conflict as *inelastic*, meaning that they would not endure anything less. The GCFM would not allow any exterior beliefs than what they deemed as a Godly doctrine.

It is very important to see this movement as a sect because it is very complicated to appreciate the German Christians' tendencies if they are not seen as a sect. This movement gradually tries to implement to the National Socialist party's main objective which was to progress the German Christians into an ecclesia or state religion which will be discussed later on in this study. With Hitler's sponsorship, the GCFM would rapidly grow in size. This augmentation in volume is another sign that Hitler and the regime supported the German Christians because most sects take years or even centuries to grow just into a church. The German Christians would grow into an ecclesia, which is larger than a church, in less than a year after Hitler and the Nazi regime came into power. This kind of expansion is debatably impossible without the regime lending aid and support. Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime's support of the GCFM would amplify along with their increased development in power.

B. Hitler's Manipulation of Religious Autonomy

On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler was elevated to power as he became the Chancellor over Germany. Hitler did not take long to influence the Protestant Churches; in fact, he addressed the Protestant Churches in his first radio transmission after rising into his Chancellor position. On February 1, 1933, Hitler declared, "The National Government will preserve and defend those basic principles on which our nation has been built up. They regard Christianity as the foundation of our national morality and the family as the basis of national life" (Baynes 1942:369-370). Only fifteen days later, at Stuttgart, on February 16, 1933, Hitler announced, "We want to fill our culture again with Christian spirit, not only in the theory. No, we want to burn out the putrefaction of appearances in our literature, in the theater, in the press, and shortly in our whole culture ..." (Nicolaisen 1971:9). Hitler's strategy, in his first few speeches, seems

to announce that Christianity would have liberty to practice as it may. Hitler even held the churches in high regard, and he credited them with being the moral fiber of Germany's culture. Nevertheless, in private, Hitler planned to assimilate the Protestant Churches to Nazi ideologies. His unspoken goal was to combine the Protestant Churches under one Reich Bishop. Obviously, a Reich Bishop which he would appoint himself. This Reich Bishop would be in charge of distributing the Nazi's propaganda. The objective of pretending to allow such things as religious autonomy, at first, is to get more support from the German people. Hitler saw no better opportunity to gain control of the state than through the state's main organizations the "Protestant Churches." In Hitler's design, this German Christian sect would be evolved into a Nazi ecclesia. This state religion would teach Germans what it meant to be a Nazi. The evidence that supports such a theory lies in hidden illustrations all throughout the rule of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime.

Hitler, in the speech mentioned previously, called for a religious revival, and it was a revival that he would deliver. By calling for a religious revival, the National Socialist party gained in several ways. This demand for purity showed that even though the National Socialist party did not hold fast to a particular denomination; it did take Christianity seriously. The call for religious purity elevated the National Socialist party's popularity among the Protestant Churches throughout Germany. This was a major aspect because for over fourteen years the Protestant Churches had been under scrutiny during the Weimar years. Now, Hitler and the National Socialist party called for a resurgence of religion, something that had not happened for the Protestant Churches in Germany for over a decade. Helmreich (1959:155) illustrated such a revival by attesting:

"...National Socialists flocked to church services and many who had left the church rejoined. Not to belong to a church was a tantamount to being a Social

Democrat or Communist, of which no good Nazi would wish to be suspect. The government had concretely shown its religious orientation by providing on February 25, 1933, for the gradual abolition of the 295 secular schools... Furthermore the classes in moral or ethical instruction which had been instituted in some elementary schools for those pupils who had been withdrawn from religious instruction were abolished... Instruction in all schools of Bavaria was to start and end with prayer and in general religion was to be stressed. Similar ordinances were issued by most of the other state governments. To the churchmen this all seemed a striking contrast to the time of the Revolution of 1918, when many of the new governments started out by taking action against school prayers and the traditional role of religion in schools. An example of this contrast may be found in the practice in Hamburg, where after 1920 it had been the rule that pupils had to make application for religious instruction. This procedure was reversed in 1933, and all students took religion in the schools unless they specifically applied to be exempted from these classes.”

C. Relevance of Group Size

The Nazi regime did not only attack secularism; they harassed other enemies of the Protestant and Catholic Churches. Jehovah’s Witnesses soon became the target of Hitler and the Nazi regime. The regime went after the Witnesses mostly because they would not profess allegiance to the Nazi regime. Their “disloyalty” came in different forms such as: non-membership to the German Labor Front, lack of participation, and even failures to report for enlistment duties. Jehovah’s Witnesses did not backpedal from the Nazi’s persecutions despite being sent to concentration camps, and sometimes even their children suffered their parent’s same fates. They even produced memorandums deprecating Nazi maltreatment of Jews even though the state was applying much pressure to quiet them (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Website³).

To logically comprehend the Jehovah’s Witnesses high level of disapproval and the Protestant Churches’ acceptance of the Nazi Regime, an individual might look at the size of their

³ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (n.d.) “Jehovah’s Witnesses: Persecution 1870-1936.” Holocaust Encyclopedia. <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10005394> (accessed September 19, 2006).

groups. This dissimilarity in size is the apparent variation between the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Protestant Churches. Coser (1956:102) stated that, "...group structure helps to define the intensity of actual or expected conflict with the outside; ...actual or expected intensity of external conflict in turn exerts pressure toward numerical smallness and high membership involvement." In other words the bigger that a religious group is in structure, the less prepared for external conflict it will be like the Protestant Churches. Alternatively, the smaller the religious group is in structural size; the more prepared the group is for exterior conflict like the Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Jehovah's Witnesses' smaller size qualifies it, in Coser's ideal type, as being a group that would have higher group membership participation. On the other hand, the Protestant Churches' large size makes it more likely to have lower group involvement. The Jehovah's Witnesses appear to fit Coser's model of sect with their member's involvement as well with a large number being devoted against the Nazi regime, and the Protestant Churches fit the larger structures model with a lower concentration of involvement. Besides virtual size and extent of contribution, Coser (1956:103) proclaimed, "...these must be considered in relation to a third ... continuously struggling as against only occasionally struggling groups." Put simply, religious groups that are expecting an immense amount of exterior conflict set up their organizations to be small with a profound importance on the members' personalities; whereas, religious groups that do not presume a multitude of outer conflict set up their organizations to be large with relatively few of their peoples' individualities being known. The size of the religious group did appear to have a significant influence on the degree of resistance; yet, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime were difficult to hinder either way.

D. The Nazi's Emergence to Power

On February 27, 1933, no one (in Germany) could have predicted what happened next. The Reichstag Building, the gathering place for the German legislature, was burning. After the fire was finally put out, the police explored the building and found many packages with combustible materials which had been used to start this inferno. The National Socialist party used these circumstances as a way to transfer their party even further up in authority. On the subsequent day, Adolf Hitler persuaded President Hindenburg to establish the Reichstag Fire Decree. Perhaps, the largest mistake in Hindenburg's life occurred when he signed this decree into law under Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution. This gave the National Socialist party exactly what they had been trying to accomplish all along. This restricted the rights of civil liberties for the German people. Therefore, the National Socialist party was free to go after anyone they deemed as antagonists while using the justification and the backing of the state. To secure a majority vote for the National Socialist party, Adolf Hitler abruptly became exceptionally spiritual. Baynes (1942:370-372) translated Hitler's speech to the Reichstag on March 23, 1933, as follows:

“The Government, being resolved to undertake the political and moral purification of our public life, are creating and securing the conditions necessary for a really profound revival of religious life....The advantages of a personal and political nature that might arise from compromising with atheistic organizations would not outweigh the consequences which would become apparent in the destruction of general moral basic values. The National Government regards the two Christian Confessions as the weightiest factors for the maintenance of our nationality. They will respect the agreements concluded between them and the federal States. Their rights are not to be infringed. But the Government hopes and expects that the work on the national and moral regeneration of our nation which they have made their task will, on the other hand, be treated with the same respect. They will adopt an attitude of objective justice towards all other Confessions. But they cannot permit the fact of belonging to a certain Confession or a certain race should constitute a release from general legal obligations or even a license for the commission with impunity or the toleration of crimes. It will be the Government's care to maintain honest co-operation between the Church and

State; the struggle against materialistic views and for a real national community is just as much in the interest of the German nation as in that of the welfare of our Christian faith....The Government will only make use of these powers in so far as they are essential for carrying out the vitally necessary measures....The rights of the Churches will not be diminished, and their relationship to the State will not be modified.”

The theme of Hitler’s speech mentioned previously is for political party increase. He never had the notion to honor this contract that he proposed to the churches in his speech to the Reichstag; however, this address won him immense support in churches all throughout Germany. This speech is also an attempt to secure a majority vote on the *Gesetz zur Behebung der Not von Volk und Reich*. This law is what people refer to now as the “Enabling Act of 1933.” The Enabling Act is an expansion of the Reichstag Fire Decree. The Enabling Act gave Hitler and his cabinet the right to make laws without, first, having to go through the Reichstag. This was an enormous stride in the Nazi’s takeover of Germany. Helmreich (1979:132) declared:

“Political parties, trade unions, business organizations, professional groups, and even to a great extent the army, succumbed to these Gleichschaltung (Regimentation or Coordination) procedures—but not the churches. The Nazis attempt to coordinate the churches led to the long, serious, complex conflict which has been aptly named the *Kirchenkampf*....The *Kirchenkampf* (Church Struggle) had many aspects. The Struggle to maintain purity of doctrine was more critical in the Protestant than in the Catholic church, for the German Christians, with their acceptance of many of the Nazi racial and folk ideas, threatened to take over the whole Evangelical church....The support lent by the state to the German Christians, as well as state policies toward the Christian youth organizations, the church press, the schools, the clergy, and above all the Jews, inevitably brought the churches into varying degrees of conflict with the state and party. While the *Kirchenkampf* as such was primarily concerned with the freedom of the church within the state and did not challenge Nazism directly as a political system, it was nevertheless, a broad channel through which criticism of Nazi policy could and did flow. It was not clear to churchmen at that time that in a totalitarian state all opposition in the end becomes political opposition.”

Chapter Three:

The Assimilation of the Protestant Churches' Structure

A. The *Kirchenkampf* Initiates

When the Church Struggle began, the Protestant Churches and almost all of Germany were being restructured. On April 3-4, 1933, the German Christians held their inaugural nationwide parliament in Berlin. They met mainly to discuss two major adoptions to maintain their “purity” which was the Aryan clause and the *Führer* principle. “The slogans of the conference were: *Gleichschaltung* (the alignment of all sectors with Nazi goals), the *Führer* principle, the Reich church, and racial conformity. A number of theologians now began to ponder whether a ‘Reich church’ and ‘racial conformity’ might help the church gain the influence it desired” (Bethge 2000:270).

The largest issue was dealing with the adoption of the Aryan clause. The German Christian sect was already starting to see everyone outside of them as a potential betrayer. At this meeting, the German Christian leaders had already begun to denounce Lutheran Church leaders (including, Otto Dibelius, General Superintendent of the Mark of Brandenburg). Dibelius was seen as an outside threat to German Christian ideology, and he was in many aspects profoundly opposed to them. Among those being attacked that day was Dr. Hermann Kapler, President of the German Evangelical Church Federation. The German Christians saw both Dibelius and Kapler as threats mainly because their beliefs did not line up with their rigid doctrine. Coser (1956:103) maintained, “Their social cohesion depends upon total sharing of all aspects of group life and is reinforced by the assertion of group unity against the dissenter” In

this case, Otto Dibelius and Dr. Hermann Kapler are the dissidents of the German Christians' Faith Movement, and non-conformists must be taken care of right away.

Bethge (2000:270) claimed, " On 16 April [1933] Hossenfelder [a German Christian Leader] proposed to German Evangelical church president Kapler that a German Christian representative should attend all sessions of the High Church Council, the Church Senate, the consistories, and the provincial church councils; Kapler refused. On 22 April [1933], a state commissar was temporarily appointed to oversee the regional church of Mecklenburg." The assigning of a state commissar was one of first really big strategies for the German Christians. This stratagem has more meaning than an individual might consider at first glance. The German Christians used this position to help gain control of this particular region (Mecklenburg-Schwerin). While Hitler's preparation for the Protestant Churches' inclusion was starting to take roots, resistance broke out over the incident that occurred in the province of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. As stated previously, the Minister-President (Walter Granzow) assigned a State Commissar (Walter Bohm) without the sanction of the Protestant Churches' headship. The ministers of that region broke out in a tumult and deprecated Bohm. By April 25, 1933, Helmreich (1979:134) maintained, "The commissioner was withdrawn, and a committee was to be appointed by the church which would consult with the state authorities on desirable administrative changes."

The Protestant Churches authority's disapproval of Walter Bohm was successful. This incident truly illustrated the power of the Protestant Churches' voice in Germany. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's website, "Opposition ranged from non-compliance with Nazi regulations to attempts to assassinate Hitler."⁴ Group participation, of

⁴ United States Memorial Museum. (n.d.). "German Resistance to Hitler." Holocaust Encyclopedia. <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10005208> (accessed September 19, 2006).

Protestant Churches' ministers, did not have an effect because of their lack of action; resistance mainly came in the form of individual participation on the Protestant Churches part (including, Dietrich Bonhoeffer⁵ and Corrie Ten Boom⁶). Coser's perception of small and large groups, as already mentioned, explains thoroughly how when these ministers splintered off they provided more resistance. Dr. Hermann Kapler, President of the German Evangelical High Consistory, during all the chaos called for a conference to recreate the Protestant Churches' structure.

Accompanying Dr. Kapler on April 23, 1933, with the new church charter was Dr. Hermann Albert Hesse (Elberfeld Seminary Director), and he was representing the Reformed Church. Dr. August Marahrens (Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran National Land Church in Hanover) was also in attendance, and he represented the Lutherans (Helmreich 1979:133). This new church charter was an obvious attempt on the part of Dr. Kapler to preclude the progression of the GCFM. This restructuring made the twenty-eight provincial churches more unified in body structure. This maneuver kept the German Christians from being able to capture these provincial churches. Hermelink (cited in Matheson 1981:17) stated, "The reform of the constitution of German Protestantism is the dictate of the hour, and must be initiated forthwith. The aim of the reform is the creation of a federal German Evangelical Church, based on, and without prejudice to the Confession." This ploy was moderately successful; hence, the *Manifest of Loccum* as it would later be known was approved on May 27, 1933. A new Reich Bishop had to be approved following the acceptance of the Manifest of Loccum, which was the new church charter. The GCFM preferred Ludwig Müller with little surprise to anyone at that time.

⁵For more information go to:
Barnett, Victoria. (n.d.) "Dietrich Bonhoeffer." Holocaust Encyclopedia. <http://www.ushmm.org/bonhoeffer/>
(accessed September 19, 2006 from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Website).

⁶For more information go to:
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Corrie Ten Boom." Holocaust Encyclopedia.
<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10006914> (accessed September 19, 2006).

The Protestant Churches nominated Fredrick von Bodelschwingh. He was also known as Friedrich *the Younger* to differentiate him from his father. The Protestant Churches authority's scheme is nothing less than pure genius by nominating Friedrich the Younger. Bodelschwingh's father was renowned all throughout Germany for his work at Bethel Home for Epileptics. His father, Reverend von Bodelschwingh, had helped in the establishment of numerous schools for training deacons and deaconesses. He also instituted the initial workers colony, at Wihelmsdorf, to rehabilitate vagrants. For the Protestant Churches, Friedrich *the Younger* was a sure venture. Needless to say, Friedrich *the Younger* won the election almost hands down. On the other hand, he resigned only about a month later (June 24, 1933) in objection against the actions of the German Christians assigning of a state commissar, August Jäger.

B. The Assimilation of the Mainstream Protestant Churches

At this time, restructuring tore through Germany like the bubonic plaque through a small town literally capturing everyone in its path. It seemed as if every organization was being revamped. Barnett (1992:31) claimed:

“In retrospect, it is astonishing how quickly German society was restructured to serve Nazi purposes, but it is important to recognize that many new structures were initially created parallel to, not in place of, old ones. It would have taken Hitler years to dismantle the bureaucracy he inherited; his tactic was to set up organizations that gradually took over or absorbed the existing structures. In some parts of the civil service, this was accomplished fairly rapidly.”

Barnett's interpretation of how Hitler *absorbed* bureaucracies fits quite well with the GCFM.

Though Hitler claimed that he did not back any particular denomination, he clandestinely sponsored the German Christians who spread his “Nazi Gospel” to Germans throughout the country. As Barnett eloquently explained, Adolf Hitler's objective was to progressively absorb mainstream Protestantism into a unified *Volk* church. In his mind, the Protestant Reich Church

would be based on cultural characteristics as well as limited Christian doctrine (See Appendix 2: Alfred Rosenberg's 30-Point Church Plan for the National Reich Church). To adequately run such an organization, the National Socialist and the German Christians needed to announce a leader who would be proficient of such vigorous demands.

On April 26, 1933, Hitler's announcement (cited in Baynes 1942:348) declared, "Inasmuch as the events of the last few days have made it necessary to take a stand in relation to a series of questions which concern the relation of the State to the Evangelical Church, I appoint as my representative with full powers to deal with the affairs of the Evangelical Church in so far as these questions pertain to it Army Chaplain Müller of Königsberg. He has special commission to promote all efforts directed towards the creation of our Evangelical German National Church..." Duncan-Jones (1938:43) gave an account of Müller's life by affirming:

"Ludwig Müller was born on June 23rd, 1883, at Gütersloh, in Westphalia. He became a pastor in 1909. During the war (WWI) he was an army chaplain in Flanders, and a naval chaplain with the German fleet in the Dardanelles. After the war he became an army chaplain at Cuxhaven. Thus his chief experience was of a military character, and his outlook in keeping with his experience."

Duncan-Jones gave a description of a personal experience with Müller mostly describing him as man whom had a profound amount of "nationalism" engrained within him.

Hitler's tactic to synchronize the Protestant Churches was finally starting to take hold. As noted earlier, Hitler was creating "parallel structures" to the Protestant Churches in hopes that he could assimilate the organization to control the state with much less resistance. Hitler's assigning of Müller as his representative was certainly no accident. Müller was prominent for his support of National Socialism and Hitler himself. Duncan-Jones (1938:43) declared, "When at length Hitler had come to power after thirteen years of struggle Müller was one of those who regarded it as nothing less than a miracle wrought by God Himself." Hitler strategically intended

to get Chaplin Müller over the German Christians. Hitler's definitive plan was for the Protestant Churches to be incorporated into the GCFM leaving Ludwig Müller (who Hitler could direct easily) over the complete Protestant Reich Church body. Thus, Hitler would establish an ecclesia that supported the Nazi regime which he could manage with minimal confrontation.

As revealed earlier, one of the grounds for Friedrich von Bodelschwingh's departure came from an action taken by Dr. Bernhard Rust (Prussian Minister of Education and the Arts). On June 24, 1933, Dr. Rust (cited in Nicolaisen and Kretschmar 1971:68-69) bluntly stated, in a telegram to the Evangelical Church, "The situation of people, state, and church requires elimination of the existing confusion. I therefore nominate as the leader for the church department, [August] Jäger, as the [state] commissar with full authority over the area for all Evangelical National Churches of Prussia to take the necessary steps" August Jäger was pronounced as the new state commissar, and he tore through the Protestant Churches like a tornado. He decommissioned clerics left and right. His appointment to the state commissar position was a major blow to the Protestant Churches authority's tactical warfare. Jäger being appointed to office came about from the retirement of Dr. Kapler on June 22, 1933. When Dr. Kapler stepped down, the Protestant Churches were in a dilemma. They had to assign someone, but they could not do this without German Christian interference. Kapler was replaced by the Protestant Churches with Ernst Stoltenhoff (former Rhineland General Superintendent). Stoltenhoff did not see the Nazi State as a real danger, unlike Dr. Kapler who was strongly opposed to the Nazi State.

The German Christians quickly used this to their advantage by getting Jäger into office. Jäger did not consider whether his actions were illegal or not. He would assign German

Christians to church offices, and he helped them gain control of the Protestant Churches without any threat of repercussions. Helmreich (1979:140) proclaimed:

“That same day he dissolved the representative bodies of the various churches of Prussia. He dismissed Professor Dr. August Hinderer, the head of the Evangelical Press Service, and had his offices searched by the SA. The superintendents general of the Provincial churches were replaced by new church commissioners. Everywhere German Christians were put in administrative posts, among the most important appointments being those of Dr. Friedrich Werner as president and Pastor Hossenfelder as vice-President of the Supreme Church Council of Prussia.”

Ludwig Müller was not left out; he was named as the new chairman to the Church Federation Office. The GCFM had gained rapid momentum by this point. Jäger did not only assign German Christians to these church offices, but also some of these men were *Sturm Abteilung* (S.A.) officers. This maneuver is a clear sign that Jäger’s intentions were more political than religious. On the other hand, the Protestant Churches’ leadership countered quickly, and their disapproval rolled in like a tidal wave. On this occasion, confrontation did not just come from the leaders of the Protestant Churches; even normal laymen realized the severity of losing these offices to German Christian and S.A. soldiers. Bethge (2000:291) reported, “[On July 2, 1933] In Steglitz Pastor Grossmann was arrested by an S.A. commando—the first arrest in the church struggle.”

After a constant effort Bodelschwingh got through to Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, who told Hitler to take care of these circumstances. Hitler wanted these tribulations solved via Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick, and they were in large part. Bethge (2000:291) avowed, “The state commissars were withdrawn and the suspensions of the general superintendents and church councilors revoked.” Müller assisted Frick in the formation of a new charter commission, and on July 11, 1933, the charter was concluded (See Appendix 3: The New Church Constitution). Bethge (2000:291) wrote, “On 14 July [1933] Hitler proclaimed that work

on the constitution was complete. Soon afterward, on 23 July [1933], he made the surprise announcement of general church elections.”

With this new church constitution came the new church elections, the GCFM’s members were really getting on top of things prior to this election. The *Völkischer Beobachter*, the National Socialist newspaper, as (cited in Matheson 1981:27) detailed this event: “Attention! Church Elections! Everyone to the Polls! Every Party comrade will carry out his electoral duties on Sunday, 23 July, [1933] the day of the church election. That hardly needs to be said. *It is equally obvious that he (Adolf Hitler) will give his vote to the ‘Faith Movement of the German Christians’.*” By this time, Adolf Hitler started to become bolder about his support for the German Christians. The odd thing about Hitler was that he always pretended like that he did not care if the Protestant Churches or the German Christians were in control, yet on this particular election, Adolf Hitler openly admitted that he supported the German Christians. Hitler declared:

“In making clear what my position is in regard to the evangelical church elections, I am acting purely in my capacity as the political Führer...The strong state must welcome the chance to lend support to those religious groupings which, for their part, can be useful to it. The evangelical confessions have, in fact, seen the rise of a movement among the church people, the ‘German Christians’, which is determined to do justice to the great tasks of our time by working for the unification of the evangelical provincial churches and confessions...In the interests of the recovery by the German nation of its former greatness, which I regard as being inseparably bound up with the National Socialist movement, it is understandable that I should wish that the results of the new church elections should assist our new policies for nation and state” (Matheson 1981:28).

Hitler’s speech, before these church elections, is without question in favor of the German Christians. By giving such a speech, he almost automatically ensured victory for the German Christians in the elections to come. His address to the German people did prove to be sufficient, and the German Christians won about two-thirds of the seats in these elections. In opposition, the Protestant Churches’ leaders leisurely recognized the influence from Hitler’s speech; they

overtly started to contest the nearly predetermined elections of July 23, 1933. The prearranged elections were not the only quandary for the Protestant Churches' leadership. They had a monstrous restructuring process that was going on, and the reform was accommodating for the Nazi State.

The end of July through the early part of August was arguably one of the most difficult times for the Protestant Churches. They were trounced in the church elections, and the entire church governments' representatives were being made over. On July 24, 1933, Bethge (2000:296) averred, "...General Superintendent Otto Dibelius and a number of High Church Council members asked to be released from office." Many of the Protestant Churches were beginning to merge into one another. These consolidation developments were creating additional problems; the reductions were making the Protestant Churches easier to control for the German Christians. To be more coherent, this is exactly what Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime had been planning since the Church Struggle began. The *parallel organization* of German Christians were now *absorbed* completely into the mainstream Protestant Churches. After the months of July and August, it was nearly impossible to determine which organization was which. This bewilderment was mainly because the Protestant Churches and the German Christians were now one national ecclesia a Protestant Reich Church.

C. The Protestant Reich Church

The verification of a Protestant Reich Church exists in nearly all of Germany at this instance. Synods were slowly becoming all German Christian representatives. Helmreich (1979:144) stated, "In many synods delegates appeared in brown shirts, and there was a scant resemblance to the traditional tone and spirit of such bodies in the past. Of the seventy-nine elected members of

the synod in Schleswswig-Holstein, seventy-five were German Christians.” The churches were also facing major constitutional modifications such as the introduction of the Aryan clause and the *Führer* principle into the ecclesia sponsored church doctrine.

The German Christians were even attacking the former Protestant Churches’ hierarchal arrangements. In other words, they were altering the titles of these offices in an attempt to confound the Protestant Churches’ leadership, so that they could elect their own officials. They did this by eradicating some of the old positions and renamed them something else in order to dissolve the old authority. As mentioned previously, the adoption of the Aryan clause was quite dissimilar for the church than with the state’s induction. The Aryan clause for the church meant that any pastor who was not of Aryan descent was banned from ministry. This concept opened an array of positions for the German Christians to fill as well. As Bethge (2000:300) points out, “In Berlin the German Christians’ growing power was demonstrated by [Federal Marshal] Göring’s appointment of Ludwig Müller as a Prussian state counselor on 4 August [1933].”

This approach of positional name switching by the German Christians was very effective. On September 5, 1933, Ludwig Müller was selected to one of these positions whose name had been changed. The position that Müller filled once was called the *Superintendent General*, but when he assumed this position it was titled the *First Bishop of Prussia*. With the Aryan clause being firmly established, Baynes (1943:350) declared “The (Gospel and Church) group—the representatives of the section which later formed the Confessional Church—leaves the Synod.” With these men extracting themselves in protest, their representation in power had departed as well. The German Christians currently made up the entire synod which was not good for the Protestant Churches’ former leadership. Frey (1938:143) illustrated, “In the emergency there was founded a Pastors’ Emergency League which resisted the Aryan paragraph.” Frey

(1938:143-144) published, A vow (dated for the month of October, 1933) of the League drafted by Martin Niemöller states:

- 1.) "I engage to execute my office as Minister of the Word, holding myself bound to the Holy Scriptures and to the Confessions of the Reformation as the true exegesis of the Holy Scriptures.
- 2.) I engage to protest, irrespective of the sacrifice involved against every violation of the Confessional position.
- 3.) I hold myself responsible to the utmost of my ability for those who are persecuted on account of this Confessional position.
- 4.) Under this vow I testify that a violation of the Confessional position is perpetrated by the application of the Aryan paragraph within the Church of Christ."

Conceivably, the counter-tactic by the Protestant Churches' previous leadership was the only reason that the organization endured. Hitler and the Nazi regime devoured numerous bureaucracies by setting up similar structures beside them, and they carefully crafted and sculpted the organization until the original bureaucracies eventually were not there anymore. Hitler and the Nazi regime did this with the entire country, not only with the Protestant Churches' structure. It is astounding to see the difference in the Nazi regime's stance toward the Protestant Churches when Hitler first took the Chancellor position which promoted religious liberty; however, no autonomy was mentioned by September, 1933.

As a matter of fact, the former Protestant Churches' authority was merely hanging on by a thread as a sect themselves. "What happened to the religious tolerance that the NSDAP preached in its twenty-five point program or for that matter that Hitler himself had declared to the Reichstag?" All of these promises were merely Hitler's devious plan, a wolf disguised as a sheep in the pasture to dull the Protestant Churches leaders' senses. Succeeding the German Christians' takeover, Ludwig Müller was named as Reich Bishop. He immediately selected a *Spiritual Ministry* which of course was representatives from the GCFM and these men included:

Joachim Hossenfelder (United Church), Dr. Friederich Werner, Dr. Otto Weber (Reformed), and Bishop Simon Schöffel (Lutherans).

D. The Disintegration of the German Christian Faith Movement

The Protestant Churches' leadership was now the influential members of the Pastors' Emergency League (PEL), and the German Christians were now the Protestant Reich Church called the *German Evangelical Church*. This may sound a bit perplexing; however, most of the leadership from the Protestant Churches left the church. The majority of these ministers joined the PEL (whose leaders were Martin Niemöller, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Karl Barth). The PEL also expanded with new additions coming from a variety of diverse laymen from all over Germany. Despite the gloomy appearance that the PEL seemed to be facing, the Protestant Reich Church was about to condemn itself with its own actions.

Barnett (1992:34) announced, "Protestant outrage reached its peak after the national 'German Christian' rally, held at the Berlin Sportspalast on November 13, 1933." The Berlin *Sportspalast* or Sports Palace Rally assisted components of the PEL to recognize the true vision of spreading Nazi propaganda throughout the Protestant Reich Church. Barnett (1992:34) described the rally, "Decorated with swastikas and banners proclaiming the unity of Christianity and National Socialism, the hall was filled." Most of the men, who were considerate to the German Christians, now turned their back in revulsion. Barnett (1992:34) stated, "A series of speakers called for the removal of all pastors unsympathetic to National Socialism, the formation of a separate church for Christians of Jewish descent, and for implementation of the 'Aryan Paragraph' and the removal of the Old Testament from the Bible."

The Protestant Reich Church was becoming patent on its objectives as being more political than spiritual. The last straw for the PEL almost certainly came from the abandonment of the Old Testament in the Bible. Dr. Reinhold Krause, leader of the GCFM in Berlin, (cited in Matheson 1981:39-40) proudly boasted:

“What Protestants really wanted was not so much a new constitution for the church or new church authorities but the completion of the national mission of Martin Luther by a second German Reformation. This will result no in an authoritarian, clergy-dominated church, but rather in a church for the German people, a church able to accommodate the whole breadth of a racially attuned experience of God. In this outward form, too, it will be structured in the truly German manner to be expected in the Third Reich” (P. 39).

“Can our Reich church, our provincial church, achieve this? Only, my evangelical compatriots, if it renounces all violation of religious life, and turns its back on any ‘Christianity on command’. The first priority is to win over the flood of those who are returning to the church. This requires a feeling for the homeland, and the first step towards the church becoming at home in Germany is the liberation from all that is un-German in liturgy and confession, liberation from all these stories about cattle-dealers and pimps. This book has been characterized quite rightly as one of the most questionable books in the world’s history. It just will no do for German Christians pastors to explain: ‘We stand where we have always stood—on the basis of the Old Testament’, although, on the other hand, the guiding principles speak of ‘racially attuned Christianity.’ In practice the one excludes the other” (P. 39).

“...Our provincial church will also have to see to it that all obviously distorted and superstitious reports should be expunged for the New Testament, and that the whole scape-goat and inferiority-type theology of the Rabbi Paul should be renounced in principle, for it has perpetuated a falsification of the Gospel, of the simple message: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’—regard your neighbor as your brother and God as your father. The fact is that the whole history of the development of dialectical theology from Paul to Barth has made a speculative exercise out of our God-Father. Theology has always tried to separate God and man, tried again and again to justify its own existence by proving that man is fallen, weighed down with original sin, and therefore in need of salvation the church can offer. We recognize no God/man division, except when man deliberately sets himself apart from God...” (P. 39-40).

The pastors did not seem to be disturbed over Jewish rights being relinquished; however, they ostracized what they felt was the “Word of God” being compromised. The German Christians were finally starting to disperse. Pastors from all over Germany started to withdraw

their memberships from the German Christians or the German Evangelical Church. Intellectuals as well deviated from the GCFM following the grotesque events at the Sports Palace Rally, and these theologians were joining ranks with the PEL. Duncan-Jones (1938:59) announced:

“The general public was aroused, and began to take a new interest in theological discussions. The Emergency League—who were the younger pastors—began to win support in more conservative quarters. The older and more cautious Lutheran leaders joined in on their side. The Lutheran representative of the Reichsbishop’s “Spiritual Ministry”, Dr. Schöffel, the Bishop of Hamburg, resigned his post. The South German Lutheran Bishops came in behind the Emergency League, as well as North German Lutherans and also Reformed. A special significance attached to a combined declaration made by the church leaders of Bavaria, Württemberg, Hanover, Thüringen, Oldenburg, Hamburg and Euten, which aimed particularly at Hossenfelder. They demanded a reconstitution of the Spiritual Ministry, which would make it more representative of the Church as a whole than the National Synod, which had been dominated by the German Christians.”

The campaign for *absorbing* the Protestant Churches had finally collapsed. Bethge (2000:334) asserted, “...the resulting scandal shattered the German Christian movement and its church government.” Protestant churches all over diminished from the GCFM’s collapse. None of the German Christian privileged could calm the waters, and for Reich Bishop Müller the situation had become a double-edged sword. If Müller tried to calm the PEL, he angered the faithful followers of the GCFM. However, if he tried to back the GCFM, the PEL would probably have been quick to censure him. On November 15, 1933, Dr. Krause was renounced from his authority, by Müller. This ploy was an obvious attempt to stop the PEL from protesting the GCFM. Müller quickly deplored Dr. Krause’s speech given at the Sports Palace Rally; nonetheless, this effort did not seem to calm the dissent. As a matter of fact, Dr. Krause started his own movement (*anti-German Christian Faith Movement*) against Müller.

Another of the many desperate attempts to stop the chaos came on November 16, 1933, when the National Synod terminated all the decrees from the provincial synods. By doing this,

the German Christians were rescinding the assertion of the Aryan clause. Nevertheless, this decree by the German Christians did not stop the chaos that was running rampant against them. On November 19, 1933, “The pastors of the Emergency League read from their pulpits a protest against the Church Government: it had failed to defend the faith” (Baynes 1943:351). By December, the Protestant Reich Church did not appear to most people that it would survive the winter. Much of the Protestant Reich Churches’ authority had been dissolved. The once proud authoritarians of the Protestant Reich Church were now starting their own fragmented movements. Before its derangement, the Spiritual Ministry, the leaders of the Protestant Reich Church passed a law on December 4, 1933. The edict hindered the Protestant Reich Church’s pastors’ capability to belong to: groupings, parties, or even leagues.

This declaration was an attempt to keep the Protestant Reich Church ministers from joining the opposition movement at that time namely, the Pastors’ Emergency League. This effort by Müller failed miserably, and Hossenfelder was finally forced to resign all of his posts in the Protestant Reich Church. With Hossenfelder’s departure, Müller assigned a new man to take his place (Christian Kinder). Kinder, principally, began his authority by disbanding the terms *Faith Movement*. Helmreich (1979:152) proclaimed, “...henceforth the National Socialists of the Evangelical church would carry the name ‘German Christian Reich Movement.’” The name change of the movement was accompanied by new guiding principles. However, Helmreich (1979:152) stated, “But the German Christians had reached their zenith. Although they continued to play a role in the succeeding years, it was a diminishing one.” The failure of Müller to keep the German Christians thriving was a personal insult to Adolf Hitler and the National Socialists throughout the Nazi State. Hitler and the regime supported the German Christians still, but they did it from a much greater distance throughout the movement’s existence.

Conclusion

In a last attempt to expand Hitler's support, Reich Bishop Müller gave the Evangelical Youth over to the Hitler Youth led by Baldur von Shirach. Nicolaisen and Kretschmar (1971:183-184) quoted a pamphlet by Müller to Shirach that stated:

1. "The Evangelical Youth recognizes that the whole political education of the German youth is carried out by the National Socialist state and the Hitler Youth as the representatives of the secular arm. Members of the Evangelical Youth under the age of eighteen will be incorporated into the Hitler Youth and its subordinate groupings. From now on, no one in this age group can be a member of the Evangelical Youth unless he is a member of the Hitler Youth.
2. Athletics, including gymnastics and sporting, and political training up to the age of eighteen will be pursued only in the Hitler Youth.
3. All members of the Evangelical Youth will wear the uniform of the Hitler Youth.
4. The Evangelical Youth retains full freedom for its activities in educational and church matters...on two afternoons in the week and two Sundays in the month..."

This maneuver, by Müller, would be his last big hurrah before the end of 1933. This action caused a very serious upheaval among the Protestants of the nation. Matheson (1981:40) professed:

"The Evangelical Youth, with some 700,000 members in various Protestant organizations, had been strongly influenced by National Socialist ideas. On September 17, 1933, it entrusted the Reich Bishop with personal executive authority over it. Müller abused these powers by negotiating its integration with the Hitler Youth on terms which effectively destroyed the church youth organizations. Opposition from the latter was met by a wave of terrorist actions and the storm of protest led by Bishops Wurm of Württemberg and Meiser of Bavaria only abated when it became evident that the State would ratify the treaty. The Pastors Emergency League Alliance, however, continued to protest..."

At first glance, this procedure may not seem to be that big of a deal; however, handing the Evangelical Youth over is a paramount step for the National Socialists. Duncan-Jones (1938:63) declared, "Thus in regard to the Church, it was comparatively easy to get control over it. It was much more difficult—and more necessary—to dominate its mind. And where the young are concerned this is the vital task." The German Christians and the Nazis both know, by now, that

they are not going to be able to completely dissolve the Protestant Churches into one Protestant Reich church. So, their attention turns to infiltrating the Evangelical Youths' minds.

Germany was ninety-six percent Christian. Germany had gained a world renowned reputation for its commitment to God by way of its biggest patron Martin Luther. In other words, Lutheran Protestantism is a way of life for Germans; it's more than a denomination, it is their identity as a people. The Nazi Regime and the German Christians both discern early on to control the state is to manage the heart of the state, and that is by way of controlling the Protestant Churches (with the German people's backing). Since the GCFM failed, Müller felt that if the Evangelical Youth were raised with Nazi ideologies, then, they would follow Nazi principles. This method almost falls within the lines of brain washing. Integrating the Evangelical Youth into the Hitler Youth did not digest well with the opposition.

Many of them were calling for the Reich Bishop Müller's release. Müller was in some grave trouble because the leadership, which he had prearranged, was crumbling. The arrogance of Müller was inexorable; thus, he issued even more laws re-introducing the Aryan clause. The Reich Bishop even tried to stop pastors from denouncing him by issuing the "Muzzling Decree" on January 4, 1934. Müller (cited in Matheson 1981:41) declared:

"The controversies about church politics are destroying the peace and retarding the unification of the church; they undermine the necessary bond between the evangelical church and the National Socialist state, thereby endangering both the proclamation of the Gospel and the newly-won national unity.

In order to safeguard the constitution of the German Evangelical Church and to restore orderly conditions I therefore, without prejudice to any future measures, and in responsible exercise of the office of Führer which is my constitutional right under Article 6, par. I of the Constitution of the German Evangelical Church, decree the following:

1. The church service is for the proclamation of the pure Gospel, and for this alone. The misuse of the church service for controversies about church politics, in whatever form, has to cease. The release or use of churches or other church premises for any kind of meetings about church politics is forbidden.

2. Any one holding office in the church who circulates publications, especially pamphlets and circulars, directed against the leadership of the church or its constitution or who attacks them in public is in breach of the duties attached to his office...
3. Any one holding office in the church who contravenes the stipulations of paragraphs 1 and 2 will be automatically suspended from office and a formal disciplinary process will be initiated immediately with the aim of removing him from office..."

Bethge (2000:343) described the reaction, "Seventy-two professors and university lecturers published a protest against the Reich bishop. In response the culture minister forbade professors of theology, as civil servants of the Third Reich, to associate themselves with manifestos concerning the church government or join oppositional organizations like the Emergency League." The pastors of the PEL and theologians went straight after Müller. However, they called a truce with Müller until they could meet with Hitler. Arguably their worst mistake was that they had Müller and the German Christians by the throat and backed off. The reason that this was such a poor tactic was the fact that the pastors could have quite easily dismantled the Protestant Reich church; though, for some odd reason they did not. Perhaps, they felt that the German Christians had been weakened enough to not be a major influence. The PEL's inability to continue to pursue the German Christian kept the organization alive, and the German Christians would continue to plague the PEL for the duration of the Third Reich.

When the PEL thought that Müller would be dismissed, they got a huge surprise. On January 25, 1934, Hitler called for a meeting with Martin Niemöller and Ludwig Müller. Martin Niemöller was in high hopes along with the rest of the PEL thinking that Hitler was going to depose Müller; nevertheless, Hitler outfoxed the opposition by taping a telephone conversation between Niemöller's and Göring and broadcasted it to the visitors in attendance. Many different versions of this telephone conversation circulate, but one thing is for certain that Hitler used it

against Niemöller to keep him from being able to discuss the situation at hand, Müller's dismissal. Bethge (2000:345) acknowledged, "Publicly, the outcome of the reception seemed to be the regional church leaders' complete submission to the Reich bishop, who emerged stronger from the meeting than before." Despite the PEL's attempt to dethrone Müller, they finally suppressed their desire to oust him out of office and even agreed to follow the Reich Bishop's desires. The rest of the Church Struggle would mostly be battled out in courts or synods. The end result was a staggering blow that the church took for not doing more to stop Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime. Strong evidence suggests that Hitler and the Nazi regime used the German Christians as a *buffer* this concept of buffering was emphasized by Zinn (2003). Though, Zinn (2003) was referring to American elites, using the middle class as a *buffer* against the lower or working class. Zinn (2003) proposed that American elites stayed hidden by pitting these two groups (lower class and middle class) against one another. Hitler and the Nazi regime did the exact same concept to the Protestant Churches and the German Christians from around the end of 1933 throughout the rest of the Nazi reign around 1945. By creating this *buffer* between the two groups, Hitler and the Nazi regime kept the Protestant Churches' leadership distracted long enough against the German Christians that Hitler and the Nazi regime accomplished the persecution of the Jews and other groups as well. When the Protestant Churches' finally put their anti-Semitism and nationalism aside, it was too late for them to adequately provide strong dissention of any kind.

Chapter Four: Discussion and Conclusion

The degree of the mainstream Protestant Churches' failure is still a severely controversial issue. Most people feel that the Protestant Churches could have done more to help prevent the annihilation of the Jews. The fact of the matter is that the Protestant Churches had successes and failures. However, the Protestant Churches should not be held responsible, which seems to be the case, for a lot of intellectuals. Several factors contributed to the Protestant Churches' failures from an organizational standpoint. The Protestant Churches' structural failure contributed to the confusion of who was in charge such as the enormous land reduction after Prussia's defeat in World War I. The restructuring of the authority in the Protestant Churches' hierarchy seemed to have a significant role. The German Christians had the concealed backing of a dictator behind them. Debatably, the Protestant Churches' biggest malfunction came from being distracted from its surroundings. The Protestant Churches seemed to stay so busy fighting to keep and regain their churches' leadership that they failed to recognize that the Jews and many other groups were being persecuted. By the time that the Protestant Churches' leadership acknowledged what was occurring, they were too late. Mayer (1955:168f) interviewed a German professor in Kronenberg who commented on Martin Niemöller's famous poem stating:

“Pastor Niemöller spoke for thousands and thousands of men like me when he spoke and said that, when the Nazis attacked the Communists, he was a little uneasy, but, after all he was not a Communist, and so he did nothing; and then they attacked Socialists, and he was a little uneasier, but, still, he was not a Socialist, and he did nothing; and then the schools, the press, the Jews, and so on, and he was always uneasier, but still he did nothing. And then they attacked the Church, and he was a Churchman, and he did something--but then it was too late.”

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Appendix 1: German Christian Faith Movement's Ten-Point Program.	
Matheson (1981:5-6) published all of these 10 guidelines (except for point six), and the principles of the German Christian Faith Movement declared:	
Point 1:	"The aim of these guiding principles is to indicate to all believing German men how and why the church should be restructured. These guiding principles are not intended to be or to replace a confession of faith, or to challenge the confessional basis of the Protestant church. They are a confession of life" (P. 5).
Point 2:	"We campaign for a unification of the 29 churches gathered together under the 'German Protestant Church Federation' into one Protestant Reich Church..." (P. 5).
Point 3:	"Those campaigning as 'German Christians' have no intention of being the sort of political grouping usually found within the church up to now. They appeal to all Protestant Christians of German descent. The parliamentary era is out of date, in the church as well. ...We want a dynamic national church (Volkskirche), which expresses the living faith of our people" (P. 5).
Point 4:	"We stand on the basis of positive Christianity. Ours is an affirmative, truly national faith in Christ, in the Germanic spirit of Luther and of heroic piety" (P. 5).
Point 5:	"We want to make the recovery of the German sense for life a reality in our church and to give our church real vitality. In the fateful struggle for the freedom and the future of Germany the leadership of the church has proved to be too weak. Up to now the church has not called men to the decisive battle against Marxism, the enemy of God, and against unspiritual Centre group, but has concluded a church treaty with the political parties which represent these groupings. We want our church to be fighting in the forefront of the decisive battle for the existence or eclipse of our people. It must not stand aside, or even distance itself from the fighters for freedom" (P. 5).
Point 6:	This point was left out by the author, Matheson, who published the German Christian Faith Movement's Ten-Point Church Plan. I was unable to attain it by other sources.
Point 7:	"In race, nation, and cultural heritage we see the orders of existence which God has given us in trust; it is the law of God that we should be concerned to preserve them. Therefore racial admixture is to be opposed...faith in Christ does not destroy the race, it deepens and sanctifies it" (P. 5).
Point 8:	"Properly understood Home Mission is living, active Christianity. In our view, however, this is rooted not in mere pity, but in obedience to God's will, and thanksgiving for Christ's death on the Cross. Mere pity is 'charity', which becomes a mixture of arrogance and of a bad conscience, and makes a nation soft. We are not unacquainted with Christian love and the obligation to the helpless, but we demand that the nation be protected from the feckless and the inferior. On no account must Home Mission contribute to the degeneration of our nation..." (PP. 5-6).
Point 9:	"We regard the mission to the Jews as a grave danger to our culture. Through its doors alien blood is imported into the body of our nation. It has no right to exist except as Overseas Mission. We oppose any mission to the Jews in Germany as long

as the Jews have the right to citizenship and there is therefore a danger of bastardization and an obscuring of racial differences. Holy Scripture also has something to say about righteous anger and the failure of love. In particular marriage between Germans and Jews must be prohibited" (P. 6).

Point 10: "We want a Protestant church rooted in our own culture, and are opposed to the spirit of a Christian cosmopolitanism. We want to overcome the degenerate phenomena which derive from this spirit—pacifism, international freemasonry, etc.—by faith in our nation's God-given mission. No Protestant clergymen may belong to a Masonic lodge..." (P. 6).

Appendix 2: Alfred Rosenberg's 30-Point Church Plan for the National Reich Church.	
Hermann Jr. (1943:297-300) published the "30-Point Church Plan" for the National Reich Church as follows:	
Point 1:	"The National Reich Church of Germany categorically claims the exclusive right and the exclusive power to control all the churches within the borders of the Reich; it declares these to be national churches of the German Reich" (P. 297).
Point 2:	"The German people must not serve the National Church. The National Church is absolutely and exclusively in the service of but one doctrine: race and nation" (P. 297).
Point 3:	"The field of activity of the National Church will expand to the limits of Germany's territorial and colonial possessions" (P. 297).
Point 4:	"The National Church does not force any German to seek membership therein. The National Church will do everything within its power to secure the adherence of every German soul. Other churches or similar communities and unions particularly such as are under international control or management cannot and shall not be tolerated in Germany" (P. 297).
Point 5:	"The National Church is determined to exterminate irrevocably and by every means the strange and foreign Christian faiths imported into Germany in the ill-omened year 800" (P. 297).
Point 6:	"The existing churches may not be architecturally altered, as they represent the property of the German nation, German culture, and to a certain extent the historical development of the nation. As property of the German nation they are not only to be valued but to be preserved" (P. 297).
Point 7:	"The National Church has no scribes, pastors, chaplains, or priests, but National Reich orators are to speak in them" (P. 297).
Point 8:	"The National Church services are held only in the evening and not in the morning. These services are to take place on Saturdays with solemn illumination" (P. 297).
Point 9:	"In the National Church German men and women, German youths and girls will acknowledge God and His eternal works" (P. 297).
Point 10:	"The National Church irrevocably strives for complete union with the state. It must obey the state as one of its servants. As such it demands that all landed possessions of all churches and religious denominations be handed over to the state. It forbids that the future churches should secure ownership of even the smallest piece of German soil or that such be ever given back to them. Not the churches conquer and cultivate land and soil but exclusively the German nation, the German state" (P. 297-298).
Point 11:	"National Church orators may never be those who today emphasize with all tricks and cunning, verbally and in writing, the necessity of maintaining and teaching Christianity in Germany. They not only lie to themselves but also to the German nation, goaded by their love of the positions they hold and the sweet bread they eat."

Point 12:	“National Church orators hold office as government officials under civil service rules” (P. 298).
Point 13:	“The National Church demands immediate cessation of the publishing and dissemination of the Bible in Germany as well the publication of Sunday papers, pamphlets, publications, and books of religious nature” (P. 298).
Point 14:	“The National Church declares that to it, and therefore to the German nation, it has been decided that Fuehrer’s <i>Mein Kampf</i> is the greatest of all documents. It is conscious that this book not only contains the greatest, but that it embodies the purest and truest ethics for the present and future life of our nation” (P. 298).
Point 15:	“The National Church has to take severe measures in order to prevent the Bible and other Christian publications being imported into Germany” (P. 298).
Point 16:	“The National Church has made it its sacred duty to use all its energy to popularize the coeternal <i>Mein Kampf</i> and to let every German live and complete his life according to this book” (P. 298).
Point 17:	“The National Church demands that further editions of this book, whatever form they may take, be in content and pagination exactly similar to the present popular edition” (P. 298).
Point 18:	“The National Church will clear away from its altars all crucifixes, Bibles, and pictures of Saints” (P. 298).
Point 19:	“On the altars there must be nothing but <i>Mein Kampf</i> (to the German nation and therefore to God the most sacred book) and to the left of the altar a sword” (P. 298).
Point 20:	“The National Church speakers must during the National Church services propound this book to the congregation to the best of their knowledge and ability” (P. 298-299).
Point 21:	“The National Church does not acknowledge forgiveness of sins. It represents the standpoint which it will always proclaim that a sin once committed will be ruthlessly punished by the honorable and indestructible laws of nature and punishment will follow during the sinner’s lifetime” (P. 299).
Point 22:	“The National Church repudiates the christening of German children particularly the christening of water and the Holy Ghost” (P. 299).
Point 23:	“The parents of a child must take only the German oath before the altar. This oath is worded as follows: The man: “In the name of God I take this Holy oath that I (name), the father of this child, and my wife, are of proven Aryan descent. As a father I agree to bring up this child in the German spirit and as a member of the German race.” The woman: “In the name of God I take this Holy oath that I (name) bore my husband a child and that my husband is the father of this child and that I its mother am of proven Aryan descent. As a mother I swear to bring up this child in the German spirit and as a member of the German race.” The German diploma can be issued only to newly born children on the

	strength of the German oath” (P. 299).
Point 24:	“The National Church abolishes confirmation and religious education as well as the communion, the religious preparation for the communion. The educational institutions are and remain the family, the schools, the Hitler Youth, and the Union of German Girls” (P. 299).
Point 25:	“In order that school graduation of our German youth be given an especially solemn character, all National Churches must put themselves at the disposal of German youth. The Hitler Youth day will be on the Friday before Easter. On this day only the leaders of these organizations may speak” (P. 299).
Point 26:	“The marriage ceremony of German men and women will consist of taking an oath of faithfulness and placing the right hand on the sword. There will not be any unworthy kneeling in National Church ceremonies” (P. 299).
Point 27:	“The National Church declares the tenth day before Whitsunday to be the national holiday of the German family” (P. 299).
Point 28:	“The National Church rejects the customary day of prayer and atonement. It demands that this be transferred to the holiday commemorating the laying of the foundation stone of the National Church” (P. 300).
Point 29:	“The National Church will not tolerate the establishment of any new clerical religious insignia” (P. 300).
Point 30:	“On the day of its foundation the Christian cross must be removed from all churches, cathedrals, and chapels within the Reich and its colonies, and it must be superseded by the only unconquerable symbol of the Hakenkreuz (swastika)” (P. 300).

Appendix 3: The New Church Constitution.

Matheson (1981:24-26) wrote:

Article 1: “The unalterable basis of the German Evangelical Church is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, witnessed to us in Holy Scripture and brought to light again in the Reformation confessions. It is this which defines and delimits the fullness of authority needed by the church for her mission.

Article 2: The German Evangelical Church is composed of churches (provincial churches). The provincial churches remain independent in worship and confession. The German Evangelical Church can pass legislation to provide the provincial churches with unitary principles for their constitutions, in so far as these are not confessionally determined...Leading office-holders in the provincial churches will be appointed after consultation with the German Evangelical Church.

Article 3: The German Evangelical Church is in charge of the whole legal life of the German church. It is responsible to the state...

Article 4: Matheson (1981) did not translate this Article.

Article 5: At the head of the Church stands the Lutheran Reich Bishop. The Reich Bishop will be advised by a Spiritual Ministry...

Article 6: The Reich Bishop represents the German Evangelical Church. His task is to give visible expression to the features of church life common to all the provincial churches and to provide a unitary leadership for the work of the German Evangelical Church...The Reich Bishop appoints the members of the Spiritual Ministry. He meets regularly with the leading office-holders of the provincial churches for discussion and consultation...

Article 7: The task of the Spiritual Ministry is to govern and to legislate for the German Evangelical Church, under the leadership of the Reich Bishop. It is composed of three theologians and a legal expert...

Article 8: The German Evangelical National Synod is composed of sixty members. Two-thirds are dispatched by the German evangelical provincial churches from the synods and church administration. The German Evangelical Church appoints one-third from men with an outstanding record of service to the church...

Articles 9-11: Matheson (1981) did not translate these articles.

Article 12: The Constitution can be altered by legislation, except in regard to the stipulations about confession and worship. The law requires that assent of two-thirds of those attending the National Synod or the unanimous agreement of the Spiritual Ministry. For a constitutional change which has reference to the composition or the administrative organs of the German Evangelical Church, the law requires the participation of the National Synod.”