

Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany. Robert A. Krieg. New York: Continuum, 2004.

ONE: THE BISHOPS ACCOMODATION WITH HITLER

“... only one out of seven of them [Catholics] voted for the Nazi party in July 1932, whereas two out of five non-Catholics voted for Hitler’s delegates in that same election.” [3]

“Catholics stood united against National Socialism until 1933.” [3]

Hitler’s ascension to the chancellorship forced a reconsideration on the part of the bishops. Still, in the March 1933 elections – while Hitler won 40% of the vote – of 12.5 million Catholic voters, 5.5 million voted for the Catholic Center party, the remaining 7 million split their votes among 7 other parties. [3]

But the new government required membership in the Nazi Party for civil service jobs. Thus, “Influential Catholic laity urged the bishops to reverse their stand against Hitler.” [4]

Bishops officially reverse position, and remained silent as measures against Jews were introduced. [5]

Concordat negotiated; approved by bishops on June 3. [6]

June 1933 – Nazis wage strong anti-Catholic campaign. [7]

Pius XI approved the concordat on July 2. [7]

The Concordat guaranteed the Church institutional rights. [7]

‘Church as a perfect society’ determined the bishops’ theological horizon. [9]

Autonomous, self-sufficient organization. [9]

The bishops’ revision of their stance had been done “without soliciting the advice of clergy and laity.” [22]

Their reversal also put in jeopardy Catholics who had spoken out against Hitler – some of these (e.g., Dietrich von Hildebrand) emigrated. [23]

Francis Stratman OP argued that the bishops’ authority had been weakened by “their quasi-approbation of the National Socialist movement.” [23]

“If Pius XI, Cardinal Pacelli, and the German bishops had followed the principle of subsidiarity in the winter of 1933, they, with the support of German Catholics, might have taken a stronger stand against Hitler.” [24]

The bishops had been suspicious of the Weimar Republic, which “manifested a spirit of personal autonomy and of self-determination that challenged centralized forms of civil and ecclesiastical decision making.” (Women’s higher education and suffrage, Jews in prominent government positions, no special status for particular churches) [24]

The pope and bishops saw their first responsibility as protecting the Church. [26]

1937: Nineteen faculties/departments of Catholic Theology in Germany, seven within universities. [27]
200 professors / 100 instructors / 4,000 students. [28]

In 1945 “sixteen of the original faculties were still functioning, though with almost no students.” [28]

Only ten Catholic theology professors joined the Nazi Party. Some theologians favored rapprochement (Eschweiler, Lortz, Adam); others “were publicly critical of Hitler and paid a price” (Guardini, Krebs). [29]

Those who spoke out – in either direction – shared one conviction not shared by their neo-scholastic colleagues: “They believed that theology must somehow be explicitly engaged in the issues and ideas of the day.” [29]

TWO: KARL ESCHWEILER – CLAIMING THE CHURCH’S AUTHORITY

“... maintained that Catholic scholars needed critically to engage modern ideas” ... “the human “deep-seated desire for ‘truth and faith,’ as manifested when they gather to celebrate marriages, anniversaries, and holidays. This innate longing for a transcendent reality and rich human experience is the starting point for God’s grace in people’s lives.” [33]

“Eschweiler eventually appealed to this idea in his attempt to build a bridge between Catholicism and National Socialism.” [34]

In an important 1925 lecture and subsequent book, Eschweiler argued that the Enlightenment turn to the subject had “already occurred” in Thomism: “a recognition of the role of the human intellect in all knowledge.” [34]

“Catholicism can support modernity’s emphasis on attaining full human life, but it sees that life in relation to God’s saving activity.” – posits the *potentia oboedientialis*. [35]

Seeks a “reconciliation of Hermes’s ‘apologetic consciousness’ and Scheeben’s ‘dogmatic’ consciousness. [36]

With Scheeben, Eschweiler “stressed that faith involves trust in ecclesiastical authority.” [37]

Eschweiler posited the Gelasian diarchy and concluded that “the church should support this shift from democracy to an authoritarian state” ... “since the authority appropriate to the state cannot be secured in a democracy, the nation needs to be sovereign in a highly structured society.” [38]

“The church does not stand at odds with the state but in fact cooperates with it so that civil authorities and religious authorities fulfill their divinely determined roles.” [40]

By the early 1930s – “Since the crisis of the Weimar Republic seemed to result from the ethnic, moral, and religious diversity of democracy, some Germans judged that the crisis would be remedied only by an authoritarian state in which the churches were given an official status.” [41]

Damasus Winzen OSB posited “the themes – leadership, organic and universal solidarity, and national effort” – and saw in the Third Reich the means of overcoming the French Revolution. [41]

There were calls for the restoration of the Holy Roman Empire. [41]

Eschweiler was dean of Braunsberg's Hochschule in 1933 – his bishop vehemently opposed Hitler and was ordered by the nuncio and Cardinal Pacelli to cease open opposition because he was complicating negotiations on the concordat. [44]

Bishop Maximilian Kaller continued to oppose Hitler, and was labeled an enemy of the state by 1938. [45]

Eschweiler joined the Nazi Party in May 1933. [46]

"According to Eschweiler, Catholicism and National Socialism have compatible worldviews." [47]

Swastika "as an expression of Aquinas's understanding of the union of the natural and supernatural orders." [48]

"... he argued that Hitler's state will nurture the whole person, thereby disposing men and women to God's grace." [49]

Eschweiler publicly backed the law permitting the government "to sterilize Germans whom it judged unfit to become parents." [49]

As dean, Eschweiler required his school's athletic teams to wear Nazi uniforms. [50]

For awhile he was forbidden to teach seminarians because of his support of the sterilization law – he withdrew that support. [50]

Eschweiler died of kidney failure in 1936, and was buried in his Nazi uniform "and with a Nazi service as well as with a funeral Mass." [50]

11 of 12 theology professors at Bonn opposed Nazism. [51]

Historian and theology faculty chair Wilhelm Neuse "argued that anti-Semitism violated Christian belief." [51]

Cardinal Schulte of Cologne supported the Cologne Carmel's acceptance of Edith Stein, and commissioned Josef Teusch to write pamphlets against National Socialism's anti-Christian propaganda – one pamphlet sold 7 million copies. [52]

A collection of essays was published to refute Alfred Rosenberg's *Myth of the Twentieth Century*. [52]

But the focus shifted in these works from a defense of the Jews to a defense of the church. "A concern for the preservation of Catholicism had apparently eclipsed a commitment to the protection of human rights in general." [53]

"... divergence among the church's leaders reflected differing assessments not only of Hitler and his movement but also of modernity." [54]

"While Eschweiler was progressive because he envisioned theology moving away from neo-scholasticism, he was simultaneously reactionary because he perceived no common ground between Catholicism and modernity regarding the notion of freedom." [54]

O'Meara: "What Eschweiler glimpsed [in Scheeben's work] was an ecclesiastical mysticism produced by a profound (though perhaps hardly perceived) fear of modern process and subjectivity." [54]

THREE: JOSEPH LORTZ – RENEWING WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Lortz was a prominent church historian and proponent of ecumenism. He argued, e.g., that Luther "was deeply committed to the Christian faith and made justifiable criticisms of the late-medieval church's practices." [56]

In his overview of church history, "he portrayed the church of the 1800s and 1900s as the bastion of divine truth and moral values amid the decay of Western society." [57]

Modernity – the age of nationalism – "came about because of the subjectivism that began with the Renaissance." [58]

"... mistaken belief" that "each human being is an autonomous self... that a person is a knowing subject who possesses the capability and freedom to shape his or her world and future." [58]

"Subjectivism led not only to anthropocentrism and atheism but also to parliamentary democracy, which entails governance not in relation to God's will as known through the church but in relation to the will of the people." [59]

Because of the manipulability of consensus, "democracy has resulted in the tyranny of the few in the name of the many." [59]

"This view of the opposition between Catholicism and modernity disposed Lortz to the Nazi state." [60]

"... the German people would lead the West into its fourth age as they themselves turn away from the subjectivism embodied in the Weimar republic." [62]

Lortz joined the Nazi Party on May 1, 1933. [63]

Lortz saw National Socialism and Catholicism as common opponents "of Bolshevism, liberalism, [and] relativism." [64]

They share "a kinship of essence." [64-65]

Matthias Ehrenfried, Bishop of Würzburg, "was an outspoken critic of National Socialism." [67]

"Because of his leadership, the Diocese of Würzburg remained a place of conflict between the church and the Nazi regime." [68]

Canonist Franz Gillman "wrote an article on the ethical obligations of priests in the military" – amazingly, he managed to have it published in an SS newspaper. [68]

One Würzburg theologian, Ludwig Ruland, was a Nazi Party member. [69]

Sebastian Merkle had directed Lortz's *Habilitationsschrift* – he argued that the church should take a more positive view of modernity and permit greater intellectual freedom. [69]

He initially supported Hitler, but by 1935 had become a sharp critic. [69]

Opponent of Jesuits, opponent of Ultramontanism. [70]

“In March 1945, Allied bombs destroyed Merkle’s home, including his library of twenty-five thousand books and many personal manuscripts.” [70]

Political resistance of Würzburg theology faculty was diluted by the transfer of theologians in and out. [70]

In 1933, Michael Schmaus (who had just become a professor of Dogmatic Theology at Münster) gave a lecture highlighting “potentially fruitful ‘contact points between the Catholic faith and the National Socialist world view.’” [71]

Nazism “emerged as an alternative to modernity’s ‘spirit of freedom, of disconnectedness, of autonomy’ – in short, its ‘spirit of liberalism.’” [71]

Three pillars of Nazism: ‘order,’ ‘community,’ and ‘life as an organic whole.’ [71]

Schmaus found similarities to Pius IX’s *Syllabus of Errors*. [72]

“Further, since the church recognizes the value of strong ecclesiastical authority, it can appreciate the new regime’s emphasis on civil authority.” [72]

Münster’s professor of Missiology, Joseph Schmidlin, was forced into retirement because of his opposition to Nazism. [72]

In retirement, he criticized his Bishop and former colleagues “for not taking a stronger stand against the state.” He was subsequently arrested and killed. [73]

Bishop Clemens August von Galen had been a critic of the liberal Weimar Republic. Critical of Nazism’s racial ideology, he nevertheless initially supported the Führer’s foreign policy – largely because of its opposition to Bolshevism. [74-75]

By 1941, Galen emerged “as one of the church’s most outspoken critics of the Third Reich.” 29 of his priests, and his brother, were imprisoned in retaliation. [75]

“Lortz brought about a radical shift in the Catholic approach to Luther, a shift from a polemic against him to an appreciation of him and his ideas in their historical context.” [77]

After the war, Lortz underwent a de-Nazification process. [78]

An ecumenical colleague of Lortz, Max Metzger, proposed a Catholic pacifism, for which he was executed in 1944. [79]

In postwar writings, Lortz acknowledged the evil of Christian complicity in failing to protest Hitler’s crimes against the Jews. [80]

Lortz’s fundamental argument was “that modernity was destroying Western culture, along with the church and belief in God, and that the modern era needed to yield to a new age characterized by a fresh respect for ecclesiastical and civil authority.” [80]

Re: Eschweiler and Lortz -- “Because they judged that modernity was a form of rebellion against God and the church, some theologians rejected democracy and favored an authoritarian state that would formally recognize the church.” [82]

FOUR: KARL ADAM – SEARCHING FOR A NATIONAL COMMUNITY

The Spirit of Catholicism is one of the most creative works of Catholic theology in the early 20th century. But Adam “was also one of the most naïve scholars in his attempt to find a common ground between Catholicism and National Socialism. In the summer of 1933, he spoke of Hitler in messianic terms and of his new state as the start of a national community that could bring about a renewal of Catholicism.” [83]

At Tübingen, Adam spent 30 years “developing his thought in relation to three coordinates: a critique of the church, a critique of modernity, and the development of a contemporary theology.” [84]

He belonged to a German tradition of ‘reform Catholicism.’ At age 34, he publicly criticized the Oath against Modernism. [85]

He avoided neoscholasticism, relying on *Lebensphilosophie*, a form of existentialism “meant to identify subject and object, to reconcile man and nature, consciousness and unconsciousness.” [86]

He revised several books to keep them off the Index. [86]

Adam was critical of modernity: “rationalism had disconnected people from themselves, from their neighbors, and ultimately from God.” [87]

He believed that “the Enlightenment had introduced an imbalance into contemporary life by valuing the intellect at the expense of feelings and interpersonal relationships.” [87]

Clearly influenced by Scheler. [87]

Individualism / liberalism / relativism / secularism are “mentalities that erode interpersonal life as well as Christian faith.” [88]

“The people of the West now faced a choice: either they could move beyond individualism, rationalism, and subjectivism to a new sense of community, to a fresh understanding of personal existence, and to the recovery of objective reality. This breakthrough could occur by a return to Christ as known in the church.” [89]

“As body of Christ, the church shares in the mediation which Jesus Christ has accomplished between God and creation.” [90]

“... the central event in the drama of creation and history is the incarnation.” [90]

Adam maintained that neoscholastic emphasis on the divinity of Christ had fueled a misrepresentation of him in contemporary thought. [90]

“Christ meets and redeems women and men in their very humanity, that is, in their deepest yearnings, in their marriages, friendships, and daily work, and also in their history and culture.” [91]

Tübingen theology faculty “had committed itself to bringing about a fresh synthesis of the Christian faith and contemporary thought.” [91]

Bishop Johannes Baptist Sprall (Rottenburg) took “a strong public stand against Hitler” – he was forced into hiding. [92]

Adam opposed the bishop’s hard line against Hitler. [94]

“Munich was a center both of support and of resistance to Hitler.” [94]

Karl Adam “saw himself as a mediator between the church and the Nazi state.” [97]

Differing Catholic and Protestant views on nature and grace led to differing views on the relation of society and church. “The church’s work for the spiritual well-being of people builds on and supports the state’s work of keeping good order in this world” – church and state are ‘organically linked.’ [98]

The church both (a) presupposes a people’s specific culture (including ethnic, social identity) and (b) enhances every culture in which it is present. [98]

“Nationalism and Catholicism possess no intrinsic opposition.” [99]

On this basis, Adam accepted laws restricting the participation of Jews in German society, but insisted that Jews be treated with justice and love. [99]

Adam’s criticism was directed against Nazi proponents of neo-paganism, for which he was suspended from teaching – until he agreed to refrain from further criticizing National Socialism. [100]

In a 1939 public lecture, Adam stressed German patriotism, to the point of arguing that seminarians should serve in the Wehrmacht. [101]

His bishop ordered him to refrain from further public comment on the war. [102]

Adam also expressed anti-Jewish sentiments. [102]

“‘Jesus’ mother Mary had no physical or moral connection with those ugly dispositions and forces which we condemn in full flooded Jews.” [103]

Adam engaged in post-war ecumenical efforts. [104]

“Adam fashioned an engaging theology for his day as he employed rich notions of life, interpersonal existence, and community. But he simultaneously misjudged the social and political forces of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich because he dreamed of a polity that would overcome the individualism of parliamentary democracy and thereby form a national community in harmony with the church.” [105]

“The modern notion of freedom was distancing people from one another, the church, and God as it promoted cultural, ethnic, and social diversity in Germany. The situation required a new social and political reality that would restore order to society and foster community and German tradition.” [105-106]

FIVE: ROMANO GUARDINI – RESPECTING THE HUMAN PERSON

In 1935, Guardini accused Hitler of “promoting idolatry, of putting himself where only Jesus Christ should stand in people’s lives.” [107]

“He was held in suspicion by diocesan officials, however, because he made known his views that neo-Scholasticism was intellectually deadening, and that the seminary administration was too authoritarian.” [108]

“Bonaventure’s Neoplatonism shaped Guardini’s theology for the remainder of his life and simultaneously brought him close to the late dialectical thought of Friedrich Schelling and the phenomenology of Max Scheler.” [108]

Cardinal Bertram and Breslau’s Catholic Theologians

Cardinal Bertram of Breslau disdained National Socialism, but insisted his priests remain neutral toward the Third Reich because he hoped to use the Nazi State to oppose both Bolshevism and liberalism. [110]

He insisted that Bishops refrain from criticizing even the deportation of Jews. [110]

Bishop Preysing’s Opposition to National Socialism

Trained as a civil lawyer, Preysing realized that any legal agreements with Hitler would be unenforceable and thus argued against the concordat. [112]

“... he cautioned against compromising with the new regime and urged that the bishops clearly differentiate the church’s teachings from Nazi ideology.” [112]

He consistently urged the German bishops and Cardinal Bertram to publicly oppose specific Reich abuses. He “prohibited Berlin’s churches from ringing their bells for Wehrmacht victories.” [113]

In 1940, he submitted his resignation to protest the Cardinal’s birthday greetings to Hitler, but the pope refused to accept it. [113]

“During 1943 and 1944, he sent thirteen letters to the pope informing him of the death camps and imploring him to speak out.” [113]

He established a diocesan agency to provide assistance, including emigration, to anyone in need, including Jews. [113-114]

National Socialism as Idolatry

“When modern men and women come under the influence of neopagan symbols and legends, they are disposed to treat other human beings as nonpersons, as objects having value not in themselves but in their usefulness. Further, the return to a mythic consciousness destroys respect for human beings as persons because it leaves people vulnerable to the dark forces in the human psyche. Jesus Christ has saved people from the demonic or evil powers by entering this world from outside it and revealing God and the character of human life.” [117]

“Christian belief attests that those people who truly commit themselves to Jesus Christ are freed from life’s destructive forces and become genuine persons. The confrontation between Jesus and Pilate in John’s Gospel highlights the human tendency to reject the genuine savior: Jesus, the bearer of truth, is brought before Pilate, the legitimate civil ruler, who condemns Jesus to death. This world’s leaders are disposed to reject Jesus Christ and the salvation that he offers to all people.” [117]

“Ultimately, Guardini indicated that something demonic was at work in Germany, something attacking the very character of personal existence.” [118]

It is in terms of this background reflection on ideology that Guardini’s *The Lord* must be understood. [118]

Guardini's work with a Catholic youth group, Quickborn, offered an alternative to Hitler Youth. [118]

The Reich removed Guardini from his teaching post, banned publication of a book, and prohibited public lectures. [119]

A Theology of Personal Existence

Beyond heteronomy to theonomy. [124-127]

"The primary safeguard of the value of a person is the acknowledgment of the person's sacred relationship to God. This is the most important guarantee against the pressures of a totalitarian state or a utilitarian society to treat human beings as objects." [136]

A Critical Dialogue with Modernity

In contrast to Eschweiler, Lortz, and Adam, Guardini did not view modernity solely negatively as a period of degeneration. He held a complex view of modernity – seeing the merit especially in modernity's "emphasis on the dignity of every human being." [129]

Also valued are the modern valuation of honesty/truthfulness. Separation of church and state leaves people free to accept/reject faith. [129]

But negatively, vulnerable persons are often not concretely valued. And the absence of Christian faith as society's cornerstone makes it ever more possible for influential persons to abuse their power. [129]

"According to Guardini, the emphasis on personal autonomy in the Weimar Republic had distanced Germans from the objective human values presented in the Christian tradition, thereby leaving people vulnerable to a dictator's persuasive rhetoric. Despite these concerns, Guardini worked tirelessly to support the building up of Germany into a pluralistic society with a vibrant parliamentary democracy." [130]

SIX: ENGELBERT KREBS – WITNESSING TO GOD'S KINGDOM

As early as 1926, Krebs criticized Catholic anti-Semitism. [137]

Krebs wrote widely on the Jewish elements/foundations of Catholic faith. [138-140]

Archbishop Gröber and Freiberg's Catholic Theologians

Freiberg's theologians opposed Hitler from the outset; Archbishop Conrad Gröber initially judged that Hitler and the church could work together. [141]

An Opponent of National Socialism

Krebs publicly criticized Heidegger's accommodation (as rector of the University) with Nazism. [145]

He also criticized the dismissal of Jewish professors. [145]

In a 1935 article, he argued that Catholicism could not become a nationalized church without betraying its essence. In another, he stressed the importance of the church's autonomy from the state. [146]

In 1937, the Reich removed Krebs from his professorship. That same year, Archbishop Gröber made him a monsignor. [148]

After preaching a sermon on Christian love of enemies, Krebs was reported and imprisoned for a few weeks. [149]

“Engelbert Krebs crafted a theology that brought Catholicism into a critical dialogue with modernity.” [150]

“Recognizing the modern emphasis on human initiative and action, he highlighted the ethical orientation of Christian faith.” [150]

“... the church must not withdraw from the world but must witness to the coming of God's new creation.” [150]

“While acknowledging modernity's shortcomings, Krebs saw its merits as well, including its respect for human rights and for democracy.” [151]

SEVEN: CATHOLIC THEOLOGY IN NAZI GERMANY

Understanding the Church's nature and mission – in terms of three models/notions (perfect society, moral voice, body of Christ) – led bishops/theologians to diverse responses to National Socialism. [152]

Theological Models in Conflict, 1933-1945

Neo-scholastic theology of church as perfect society dominated, but a notion of Church as moral voice was emerging – a tension between the two among the bishops unfolded in four stages.

1. 1933-1934: the bishops' goal was “to preserve the church as an autonomous institution in Germans” – this led to the Concordat. [153]

Bishops criticized various religious ideas (e.g., neo-paganism), but “the bishops remained silent concerning the new regime's political and social actions. [154]

There was even no public protest of the regime's murder of four nationally respected Catholic lay leaders in June, 1934. [154]

2. 1935-1939: The Third Reich intensified its persecution of the church. [154]

Actions directed against the Church were criticized by the Bishops collectively. [155]

“Individual bishops began to protest the Reich's actions publicly: -- with regard to Hitler's abuse of human rights. [155]

No collective protest, e.g., was made in response to *Kristallnacht*. Bishop Preysing, however, expressed outrage – as Bishops Galen and Sprall had about previous actions. [155]

These bishops “had demonstrated that the church could be a moral advocate, indeed a servant of justice, and they would have gained greater papal support for their model of the church if Pius XI (d. 1939) had lived long enough to issue his encyclical condemning racism, *Humani Generis Unitas*. [156]

3. 1939-1943: Tension among the bishops increased. [155]

“... they differed among themselves concerning their public stance toward Hitler’s disregard for human lives.” [156]

- Most (e.g., Bertram) “stiffened their resolve to protect the church by not protesting injustice.” [156]
- “Pius XII publicly declared that his primary concern was to preserve the church’s ability to care for its members’ spiritual needs.” [156]
- But “Germany’s dire moral situation strengthened some bishops’ conviction that the church must publicly speak out on behalf of the Reich’s innocent victims.” [156]
 - o Several spoke out against euthanasia. [156]
 - o Preysing and Galen proposed a pastoral letter against the Reich’s abuse of human rights, but “Cardinal Bertram convinced the majority of bishops that the letter would bring harm upon the church.” [157]

4. 1944-1945: Conflict among the bishops became more acute. [157]

As the Reich faltered militarily, it became even more ruthless at home. “Cardinal Bertram urged the bishops to be even more circumspect in their public statements.” [157]

But Archbishops Frings joined Preysing in successfully proposing the Decalogue Letter (August 1943), which “appealed to the Fifth Commandment in protesting the Reich’s killing of innocent people.” [157]

Pius XII also became more outspoken in defending human rights and affirming the values of parliamentary democracy. [157]

This overcame what Klaus Schatz called “the anti-revolutionary fixations which were maintained during the entire nineteenth century.” [157]

Underlying the conflict between the bishops were “two distinct models of the church”:

- a. Internal pastoral care for Catholics;
- b. Universal mission of the church as an advocate of natural law, and thus of human rights. [158]

Each ecclesiology had merits and limitations. [158]

Church as a Perfect Society

Popes, bishops and theologians generally “were resolved not to say or do anything that might provoke Hitler into closing the churches.” [158]

The Concordat at least enabled the church to continue to function, however restrictedly. [159]

Strengths of this model:

It fostered a sense of solidarity among Catholics in their “belief in the church as a divinely established institution superior to the Reich.” [159]

“Catholics refused to abandon the church’s religious teachings for the Nazi *Weltanschauung*.” [159]

Catholic religious devotion constituted a passive resistance. [159]

It also reinforced the church’s organizational structure and authority, preventing Hitler from taking control of the church.” [159]

This ecclesial autonomy kept the church’s lines of communication outside the Reich’s knowledge and control, enabling, e.g., the printing, distribution and Palm Sunday in-church reading of *Mit brennender Sorge* (1937) and distribution of Bishop Galen’s sermon condemning euthanasia (1941), and ministry to post-war refugees (both materially and spiritually). [159]

Klaus Schatz: “The churches were the single large organizations that remained intact in their inner value systems as well as in their organizational structures.” [160]

Limitations:

“Because it valued authoritarian governance, it blurred the differences between the church’s conservative political orientation and the reactionary thrust of National Socialism.” [160]

“Catholics and Nazis wanted an authoritarian government that would overcome individualism and build up the corporate character of society.” [160]

Focus on institutional maintenance prevented criticism of Hitler’s abuse of human rights; this eroded the hierarchy’s moral authority. [160]

Alfred Delp, S.J.: “... the church’s silence on the horrors perpetrated in the East was endangering its moral influence.” [160]

Laity were excluded from church-state-decisions. [160]

Bishops’ ending the ban on membership in the Nazi Party (without any consultation with laity – e.g., Catholic Center Party) – “they may have underestimated the strong resistance among the laity to National Socialism.” [161]

Because of their inclination to work in secret, bishops did not even inform laity of their opposition to Hitler’s policies and actions. [161]

John Jay Hughes: Too much reliance was placed on diplomatic protests, and too little was done to acquaint rank and file Catholics in Germany with the existence and content of these protests and to mobilize them in support of church rights. The fundamental cause of this failure was theological: the view of the Church as consisting of a more or less passive laity, an obedient body of pastoral clergy, and a hierarchy that directed and led both laity and clergy, making all decisions in lowly and splendid isolation.” [161]

Church as Moral Advocate

In February 1949, Pius XII named Galen, Preysing and Frings to the College of Cardinals, elevating the three prelates who had more publicly opposed the Third Reich – implicitly affirming “that the church’s mission includes the pursuit of social justice.” [162]

Merits of the moral Advocate model:

Differentiation between church and Kingdom of God: The kingdom is not fully realized in the church. “Hence the church must witness to the advent of God’s new creation.” [162]

The church’s mission is beyond itself. [162]

“... illuminates the significance of the suffering and death of individuals... who out of belief in Jesus Christ labored on behalf of human rights and were executed as enemies of the state.” [162-163]

“The Christian martyrs under Hitler made religious sense of their actions insofar as they had developed their own theology of Christian life as witnessing to a justice and truth greater than that acknowledged by civil authority and even by ecclesiastical authorities.” [163]

But pre-Vatican II servant ecclesiology contained an ambiguity, leaving unclear the ultimate aim of the church’s advocacy of social justice. [163]

Two diverse understandings:

1. In order to build a Christian society, explicitly founded on Christ and committed to the church;
2. In order that society can become more human, but not necessarily more formally Christian. [163]

Martin Conway: “Christian citizens acting within society without seeking to impose their values on it.” [164]

“... an acceptance of secularization.” [164]

Walter Kasper notes that the church accepted the modern notion of appropriate human autonomy and secularity with *Gaudium et Spes* and *Dignitatis Humanae*. [164]

Church as Body of Christ

“Using Ferdinand Tönnies’s distinction between society (*Gesellschaft*) and community (*Gemeinschaft*), they explained that the church is not only a hierarchical organization with rules, normal lines of decision making, and office holders; it is also an association of people with personal ties to one another, with a sense of themselves as a ‘we’.” [165]

To the extent that this drew on Romanticism's notion of 'organic unity' ("a human solidarity involving emotional bonds, common experiences, and shared customs") its discourse sounded similar to Nazi rhetoric about the need to overcome individualism. [165]

Eschweiler, Lortz and Adam "were intent on overcoming modernity by fostering the idea that Germans should see themselves not primarily as discrete selves but as members of a corporate or communal reality." [165]

This attracted them to Hitler's rhetoric. [165]

Eschweiler argued that "a supernatural solidarity is possible only insofar as there already exists a natural solidarity." [166]

And Lortz saw Hitler as strengthening this natural solidarity "in such a way that the church as a spiritual body would flourish." [166]

In *The Spirit of Catholicism*, Adam had posited a universal humanity as the basis of the church. But by 1933, he "began turning to the idea that the unity in the church between Christ and human beings depends on a people's ethnic and racial character." [166-167]

Human nature is always determined by ethnicity and race. "The church 'needs an ethnic-racial people in order to be a living Catholicism.'" [167]

Guardini consistently refused to link the Body-of-Christ ecclesiology with the idea of ethnic-racial communities. [167]

"To become a people depends on religious, not biological factors, and it leads not to nationalism but universalism." [167]

"This appreciation for the solidarity of all women and men in Christ equipped Guardini to maintain a critical distance from talk of an ethnic-racial people."

Krebs also stressed the church's universality. While a specific ethnic-racial group enriches the church's life in particular ways, it does so with a grateful acknowledgment of the particular realizations of all other peoples. [168]

Other theologians: Erich Przywara (1940) distinguished supernatural communion in Christ from natural forms of community. Karl Rahner (1943) observed "that some theologians' emphasis on the nonrational aspects of Christian life – for example, on ethnicity and race – was harming theological renewal in German Catholicism." [168]

In *Mystici Corporis* (1943), Pius XII highlighted the church's universality, "its union with all people regardless of ethnicity and race." [168-169]

"Body-of-Christ ecclesiology without an ethnic-racial cast strengthened the church's resistance to Nazism because it called for the deliberate nurturing of Christian solidarity by means of worship, devotion, and various forms of mutual support." [169]

Participation in pilgrimages and processions increased: Mass attendance remained high. 'The faithful experienced a strengthening of their personal and social identities by participating in their local churches.' [169]

But this did not orient them toward concern to protect those outside the church. [170]

The Inadequacy of Ecclesiology, 1933-1945

Given the dominance of *societas perfecta* ecclesiology, Catholic leaders were unprepared "to mobilize their following in any campaign beyond the defense of the immediate interests of their own community." (John Conway) [170]

Suppression of theological inquiry in previous decades – "... thereby preventing them from critically reflecting on the character of modernity and on the church's nature and mission in the contemporary world." [171]

Theologians themselves: "Instead of learning from the social sciences, they continued to think within the neo-Scholastic framework and condemned the notions of personal freedom and of parliamentary democracy as expressions of rebellion against God and the church." [171]

"... they failed to recognize the valid insights of modern thought and the constructive elements of a parliamentary democracy." [171]

These five thinkers "opened the way for the next generation of scholars to think within an intellectual horizon not threatened by the Enlightenment and the post-Enlightenment." [172]

"Romano Guardini was one of the few theologians of his generation to contribute to theology after the war." [172]

"Theologians like Mannes Dominikus Koster, O.P., Karl Rahner, Rudolf Schnackenburg, and Otto Semmelroth inquired anew into the church's nature and mission, locating the church in relation to history, culture, and the universal human aspiration for freedom." [172]

"Rahner's experience of a radical transition in society confirmed his intuition that the church needed to undertake theology in new ways – ways that drew on existentialism and phenomenology while also returning to the Bible and patristic texts." [173]

Karl Rahner: "At that time, we priests already had enough to do in order to protect our own skins. But we should have done much more to protect also the skins of other people, of non-Christians, than we in fact did."

Gaudium et Spes embraced the notion of church as moral advocate. [173]

Lumen Gentium ended the hegemony of *societas perfecta* ecclesiology. 1[74]

Nostra Aetate rejected discrimination on the basis of any natural characteristic. [174]

"... an awareness of the Catholic church's inadequate response to Hitler shaped the theological orientations of the German-speaking bishops and theologians who participated in the Council." [174]

“Wanting to engage in a critical dialogue with modernity, they were intent on providing the church with a rich ecclesiology so that its pastoral leaders would never again be at a loss amid political oppression and social injustice.” [174]

“... religious ideas about the church and its role in society have definite social and political implications.”
[175]