

# Church and Theology in Germany During the Time of National Socialism, 1933-1945

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## Abstract

This paper examines how the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches and their theologians responded to the specter of national socialism. The Roman Catholic church was silent regarding the Jewish genocide, while the German Christian church sought to remove all vestiges of Judaism. The Confessing church struggled against its Protestant counterpart, but failed to address the genocide. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, one of a few who resisted the regime, recognized the error of the dichotomy between faith and political life. It was this grievous error made by good churches and good people that contributed to the development of the evil regime that continues to haunt the church.

## Introduction

Consider for a moment the great cultural contributions of the German nation, the gifts of music, art, science, and on another level, the reforms of the nineteenth century nation-state, the first modern nation to provide national health insurance to its citizens. On the other hand, there is the darker side of society: the Prussian military machine, the strong sense of nationalism, the will to expand its borders and impose on other nations its culture, government, and ways of doing things. The events of the early twentieth century were calamitous: World War I in 1914; defeat in 1918, a nation severely punished for its aggression; the 1920s with the Weimar Republic; the 1930s with worldwide depression; and the rise of Adolph Hitler, who in his depraved mind would restore Germany to its rightful place in the world. This synopsis provides perspective for understanding the place of the church and theology in German society. Germany in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a fertile place for the development of theological and philosophical thought. In philosophy, the names are too numerous to mention. Kant and Hegel were two philosophers who were foundational for both theologians and philosophers in the years to come.<sup>11</sup> Gary Dorrien, *Kantian Reason and Hegelian Spirit* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), ix. Concerning theology, the names of many famous Germans or those of other nationalities who worked in Germany come to mind. In Old Testament theology, there was Gerhard von Rad; in New Testament, Rudolf Bultmann and Martin Dibelius; in systematic theology, Paul Tillich and Karl Barth; and Adolf von Harnack and Ernst Troeltsch in historical theology. There were many universities that provided opportunities for these thinkers to teach, study, and write. The church in both its Protestant and Roman Catholic forms was strongly ingrained in German society, and with the rise of Hitler, this did not change. Thus, in the early 1930s, Christian churches and universities were strong institutions in national socialism. While some theologians, most notably Barth and Tillich, saw the evil in this form of government (the most blatant being its systematic oppression of the Jewish people) and were asked to leave the country (Barth to his native Switzerland after refusing to swear allegiance to the fuhrer and Tillich to the United States), others were unable or unwilling to leave the fatherland. Still other church leaders and theologians did not see what was to happen; they saw national socialism as a way of restoring their beloved country to its appropriate place in the world.<sup>22</sup> Robert P. Ericksen, *Complicity in the Holocaust Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1. This paper

examines the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches during the time of national socialism (1933-1945) as well as select theologians who were part of those churches during that time. Within Protestantism, there were essentially two major churches, the Deutsche Christen or German Christian church and the Confessing church, which was formed in reaction to the German Christian church.<sup>33</sup>Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 1. Within Catholicism, six theologians, including Karl Eschweiler, Joseph Lortz, Karl Adam, Romano Guardini, Edith Stein, and Engelbert Krebs, will be considered. These individuals had quite different responses to the Nazi regime as did three Protestant theologians, namely Paul Althaus, Helmut Thielicke, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who will also be considered. This paper assumes that the actions of Hitler were evil and that to give them support was wrong. However, one must also recognize the complexity of the crisis which faced Germany in the Weimar period.<sup>44</sup>Robert P. Ericksen, *Theologians Under Hitler* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1985), 27. Seventy-five years after the fact it seems so easy to say what was the right response to this dreaded situation; in the 1930s things were not so clear; Germany was on the brink of collapse and there was a man and a party to revive the nation both economically and spiritually. Tragically, there were leaders of the churches and universities, including theologians, who gave their allegiance to Hitler and national socialism. In a letter to Reinhold Niebuhr, Bonhoeffer described the dilemma, which confronted all Germans, including theologians and church leaders, *I have made a mistake in coming to America. I must live through this difficult period of our national history with the Christian people of Germany. I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people. . . . Christians in Germany will face the terrible alternative of either willing the defeat of their nation in order that Christian civilization may survive, or willing the victory of their nation and thereby destroying our civilization. I know which of these alternatives I must choose; but I cannot make that choice in security.*<sup>55</sup>Elizabeth Sifton, and Fritz Stern, *No Ordinary Men* (New York, NY: The New York Review of Books, 2012), 69. In the stories that follow, it is remarkable that the churches and individuals who had very much in common could have such different responses to the evil which was to overtake the German nation. There were many aspects to this evil, but the most important one was the Nazi program to annihilate the Jewish people. An important objective of this paper is to understand how the Protestant and Catholic churches, as well as the individual theologians, responded to national socialism. More specifically, what was the response: complicity, accommodation, or outright opposition, including actions to bring down the government? A distinctive aspect of the paper is that it considers both Catholic and Protestant churches and theologians.<sup>66</sup>John S. Conway, "Coming to Terms with the Past: Interpreting the German Church Struggles 1933-1990," *German History* 16, no. 3 (1998), 377.**The Roman Catholic Church**Since its origins in the first century and its designation as the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, the Roman Catholic church evolved into a hierarchical organization intent on preserving itself so that God's grace would be immediately available to its members.<sup>77</sup>Robert A. Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2004), viii. For the church, redemption was a matter of saving the soul and not a moral commitment to the socio-political betterment of humankind.<sup>88</sup>Donald J. Dietrich, "Catholic Theologians in Hitler's Reich: Adaptation and Critique," *Journal of Church and State* 29, no. 1 (1987), 20. Unfortunately, the Catholic church had a long history of anti-Semitism which enabled it to easily abandon its association with the Jews.<sup>99</sup>Dietrich, "Catholic Theologians in Hitler's Reich: Adaptation and Critique," 45. One source of this anti-Semitism was the pernicious belief that the Jews had killed Christ, who ironically was a Jew. Since this was the case, Jews could not be part of the German nation, as they would contaminate the blood purity of the volk or people. With the advent of national socialism in 1933, the church's initial response was one of adaptation to the new regime. Initially, the church was prepared to support Hitler, but this changed as Nazi policies regarding sterilization were anathema to the church and its leadership.<sup>1010</sup>Dietrich, "Catholic Theologians in Hitler's Reich: Adaptation and Critique," 29. In Catholicism, procreation was the only purpose of human sexuality. Efforts to control fertility including contraception or sterilization were sinful and contradicted church teaching. In addition, suppression of the Catholic press by the regime also contributed to the change. Among Catholics, there was minimal support for the regime in that only one in seven Catholics voted for the Nazis.<sup>1111</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 3. On the other hand, there was not much

in the way of opposition from rank and file Catholics. There was a strong resistance to modernity among Catholics who feared communism and were suspicious of democracy. In the end, the first obligation was to protect the church from outside threats, including other non-Roman churches and meddling governments; the Jews were for the most part an afterthought.<sup>1212</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 29. Ultimately, the structure and ideology of the church abetted the consolidation of Nazi rule.<sup>1313</sup>Dietrich, “Catholic Theologians in Hitler’s Reich: Adaptation and Critique,” 44. In the Catholic church, clergy and laity were not equal, and the pope was viewed as infallible. Pius XI, who was pope at the beginning of the regime, died in 1939 and was succeeded by Pius XII. Much has been written about what the Catholic church, and Pius XII especially, knew about the Holocaust and what it and he did in response to it. Some have called Pius XII Hitler’s pope, whereas others have named him a righteous Gentile.<sup>1414</sup>Kevin Madigan, “Judging Pius XII,” *The Christian Century* 118, no. 9 (2001), 6. Recently, papal documents regarding Pius XII and the Jews were released. These documents indicated that the Vatican did not want to jeopardize its relationship with Nazi Germany by denouncing the ongoing murder of Italian Jews.<sup>1515</sup>Kevin Madigan, “Neither Demonic nor Heroic,” *Commonweal* 147, no. 10 (2020), 19. Moreover, the pope did not intervene with the president of Slovakia to stop the exporting of Jews to Auschwitz.<sup>1616</sup>Kevin Madigan, “What the Vatican Knew About the Holocaust, and When,” *Commentary* 112, no. 3 (2001), 43. On the other hand, there is evidence that Pius XII loathed Hitler and that he did allow Catholics to rescue Jews.<sup>1717</sup>Madigan, “What the Vatican Knew About the Holocaust, and When,” 50. Kevin Madigan argues that the situation involving Pius XII, the church, and the Nazis was not black and white, but very complicated and deserving of nuance. In the end, Pius XII was like most Catholic priests—“no better or worse than those moral mediocrities who, like most European Christians, failed to transcend the cultural assumptions and religious prejudices of their day.”<sup>1818</sup>Madigan, “Neither Demonic nor Heroic,” 21. As did Pius XII, most Catholic theologians of the day remained silent regarding the Nazi regime; this was particularly true for Catholic theologians in Germany.<sup>1919</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 29. These individuals were for the most part suspicious of modernity and subscribed to scholastic or neo-scholastic theologies that had their beginnings with Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. There were, however, several who did speak out either in support of or in opposition to national socialism. Regardless of their stance toward Hitler, these priests, who were not all liberal or progressive, believed that theology must be engaged in the issues and ideas of the day. Compared to material on the Protestant church and its theologians, there are fewer English language books and papers on the Catholic church and its theologians during the time of national socialism as many of these documents are in German.*Karl Eschweiler (1886-1936)*Eschweiler, who had a PhD in philosophy and later earned degrees in theology, advocated for cooperation between the church and the Nazis.<sup>2020</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 31. He moved to Bonn where he encountered a diversity of thought, although most of the Catholic faculty there opposed Hitler. In 1928, he went to Braunsberg in Prussia, where the faculty was somewhat more favorable to the Nazi regime. For Eschweiler, the church was the ongoing incarnation of Jesus. He published extensively in political theology or the relationship between church and state. Suspicious of both democracy and communism, he desired a contemporary restoration of the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>2121</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 42. In May 1933 he joined the Nazi party and argued that the church and state had compatible world views, and that the swastika should not be offensive. Initially, he supported Nazi sterilization laws, and as a result he lost his ability to teach seminarians. Consequently, he withdrew his support of the laws and resumed teaching. In 1936, he developed kidney failure, died in September of that year, and was buried in his Nazi uniform.*Joseph Lortz (1887-1975)*Lortz was a proponent of ecumenism and studied at Bonn with Eschweiler and Guardini. Later he was a colleague of Eschweiler at Braunsberg. Educated as a Reformation historian, he was a sharp critic of modernity. In his mind, the church was a bastion of truth among corrupt cultures. He opposed liberalism and relativism and was disposed toward national socialism. For Lortz, the optimal form of government was not clear in that neither communism nor democracy worked for the church. Lortz joined the Nazi party in May 1933 and felt that Naziism respected the church’s autonomy in that there was a kinship between the two entities.<sup>2222</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 64. In 1935, Lortz moved to the University of Munster as a reward for his pro-Nazi stance, although he encountered resistance from his bishop who was an outspoken critic of the Nazi regime.<sup>2323</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi*

Germany, 77. Lortz had second thoughts about his support of the regime, and in 1937 he tried to cancel his party membership but was told he could not. After the war, Lortz underwent denazification and after a long process was able to resume teaching in the university. He was heavily involved in an ecumenical movement which was founded by Max Metzger, a pacifist who tried to stop the war instigated by the Nazis and was executed by the Nazis in 1944.<sup>2424</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 79. Although he was a champion of ecumenism, Lortz opposed modernity and like Eschweiler favored an authoritarian regime that would formally recognize the church.<sup>2525</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 82.Karl Adam (1876-1966)Adam was at Tübingen where he was an historical and systematic theologian who critiqued the church's modernism. The Tübingen faculty also included the Protestant scholar Gerhard Kittel who was a supporter of Hitler. Catholic theologians at Tübingen were viewed suspiciously by Protestants and most of them remained distant from national socialism.<sup>2626</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 92. Adam was an exception to this, as he believed it was important to find common ground between Catholicism and national socialism. For Adam, Catholicism was a community of believers and although he never joined the Nazi party, he was distrustful of modernity and democracy. Adam's disagreement with Rudolf Bultmann's demythologizing of the New Testament is further evidence of his distrust of modernity.<sup>2727</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 104. The authoritarian nature of the Nazi government was appealing to him, as was the idea of the German volk. Adam spoke out against the neopagan German Faith movement yet had a positive view of invasion of Poland.<sup>2828</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 100. Adam did not undergo denazification after the war, and like Lortz was very involved in ecumenism. Unlike Lortz, he did not recognize his own complicity in the Nazi regime. Ultimately, Adam weakened the church's resistance to national socialism by trying to find common ground. Like most humans, he was a combination of both good and bad, but what was unusual is that he combined both in such abundance.<sup>2929</sup>John Connolly. "Reformer and Racist," *Commonweal* 135 no. 1 (2008), 13.Romano Guardini (1885-1968)Guardini was a professor at the University of Berlin when Hitler came to power.<sup>3030</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 107. He was a progressive thinker, who was against scholasticism and used the language of existentialism. Guardini was stalked by Nazi informers, and in 1939, the government dismissed him from his academic chair at Berlin for his views about Jesus and his anti-Naziism. He did not like national socialism but told his priests to live with it. The Catholic faculty at the university was wary of the Nazis but tried to steer clear of topics that would alarm the Pius XII and the holy office. Guardini survived the war and was named a cardinal by Pius XII in 1945. He had no illusions about national socialism and went to Tübingen in 1946 and later to Munich. He had concerns about liberal democracy in that it distanced Germans from the objective human values that were part of the Christian tradition, but he worked hard to build Germany into a pluralistic society with a vibrant democracy.<sup>3131</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 130.Edith Stein (1891-1942)Born into a Jewish family, Stein converted to Catholicism and was a philosopher who studied under Edmund Husserl. She also served as a nurse in World War I and was a strong supporter of the German nation. Because she was a woman, she was not allowed to pursue the second dissertation that would have allowed her to become a professor in a German university.<sup>3232</sup>John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism: A Global History from the French Revolution to Pope Francis* (New York, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2022), 189. The fact that she was born a Jew limited her employment opportunities in that she was often competing with Jewish men for non-faculty teaching positions. Stein was highly critical of the Nazi regime and feared that her church's silence would lead to attacks on Catholics.<sup>3333</sup>McGreevy, *Catholicism: A Global History from the French Revolution to Pope Francis*, 187. With Hitler's rise to power she lost her university teaching job, and ultimately joined the Carmelite order of sisters in Holland. Her request to join the Carmelite order in Switzerland was denied by the Swiss government. The Dutch bishops opposed the Nazi regime who in turn retaliated by arresting Stein and sending her to Auschwitz where she was murdered in 1942.<sup>3434</sup>McGreevy, *Catholicism: A Global History from the French Revolution to Pope Francis*, 214. The fact that Stein converted to Catholicism made no difference to the Nazi regime; she was murdered because of her Jewish heritage. She died a martyr because of her courageous opposition to the regime and for this reason she was beatified as a saint of the church by Pope John Paul II.<sup>3535</sup>McGreevy, *Catholicism: A Global History from the French Revolution to Pope Francis*, 386.Engelbert Krebs (1881-1950)Krebs was a colleague of Martin Heidegger at Freiburg, where the latter joined the party. He was ordained in 1906 and

directed Guardini's thesis. He had respect for post-enlightenment thought and believed humans would be judged according to how generous they were to those in need. He addressed racism in the church and made no distinction between Jew and Greek. He insisted that Christians acknowledge their Jewish origins and expressed a view of Judaism remarkable for the time.<sup>3636</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 139. He also supported Metzger's ecumenical efforts and opposed the Nazis but showed respect for the Reich's officials. Despite his efforts to remain on good terms with the government, he could not stop the execution of two Freiburg priests, Heinrich Feuerstein and Josef Schmidlin.<sup>3737</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 143. He did oppose the removal of Jewish professors, although Pius XII did not name him a cardinal as he did Guardini. In 1934, he stated that, "We are being governed by robbers, murderers, and criminals."<sup>3838</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 146. This statement led to the revocation of his teaching license in 1936. He lost his faculty position, which was restored in 1945, although he could not teach due to poor health. His theology brought Catholicism into dialogue with modernity. While Eschweiler, Lortz, and Adam saw the west as being in decline, Krebs had a much different view of the place of the church in the world. It is ironic, that among these individuals, it was the woman, the non-priest, Edith Stein, who was elevated to sainthood. As seen in the lives of these six theologians, there were vastly different responses to the specter of national socialism. It was Stein, a woman, who gave her life in opposition to the regime. None of the men, including the revered Guardini, gave his life as did Stein. Yet, the church recognized her courage and supreme sacrifice when it made her a saint. In the end, it is clear that the Catholic church could have done more to oppose Hitler. It paid a high moral price for its silence, especially as it applied to the Jews. The goal of Pius XII was to protect the church and not damage it by advocating for others. Karl Rahner stated that more could have been done to save the skins of others, including non-Christians, and not just the skins of those in the Catholic church.<sup>3939</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 173. The church above all else viewed itself as a perfect society and also as the body of Christ and less as a moral voice.<sup>4040</sup>Krieg, *Catholic Theologians in Nazi Germany*, 158. In conclusion, "the Catholic leaders' readiness to support the nationalist and anti-Semitic goals of the Nazi regime demonstrated how unprepared they were, institutionally or theologically, to mobilize their following in any campaign beyond the defense of the immediate interests of their own community."<sup>4141</sup>Conway, "Coming to Terms with the Past: Interpreting the German Church Struggles 1933-1990, 386.**The Protestant Churches: German Christian and Confessing**

The so called church struggle or *Kirchenkampf* in Nazi Germany was not so much between church and state as it was between two factions in Protestantism, the German Christian and Confessing Christian churches.<sup>4242</sup>John Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches* (Vancouver, CA: Regent College Publishing, 1997), xxvi. The German Christian church wanted to be the state church, but Hitler did not want a state church. Nevertheless, he did use the German Christian church to his advantage.<sup>4343</sup>Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 38. The German Christian church was anti-Jewish, anti-doctrinal, and was a "manly" church in which women were seen primarily as mothers.<sup>4444</sup>Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich*, 119. The German Christian church sought to remove all elements of Judaism and the Jewish people, including the removal of the Old Testament from the canon. It also promoted the idea of the *volk* or people as God's revelation. The Jewish people were not part of this people and this included Jewish women and men who converted to Christianity. Even pastors who were Jewish were excluded. The German Christian church was based on a mix of race, ethnicity, and culture, and in the end, it failed, because for the Nazi true believers, it was not Nazi enough and for those who ascribed to the Gospel of universal love, German Christians were not seen as brothers and sisters in Christ.<sup>4545</sup>Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich*, 230.

The Evangelical church in Germany or the Confessing church was established in opposition to the German Christian church. Karl Barth contended that the heresy of the German Christian church was its designation of race as God's revelation. While Barth and other members of the Confessing church, including Martin Niemöller, recognized this heresy, they did not acknowledge that it was rooted in hatred of Judaism and the Jewish people.<sup>4646</sup>Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich*, 21. The Confessing church also faced the dilemma of being true to the Gospel yet also not incurring the wrath of the German state. As shall be seen, this was not sufficient for Bonhoeffer, who felt that the Confessing

church was not doing enough to oppose the Nazi regime. Within both the Roman Catholic and Confessing churches, there were a few individuals who recognized the Nazi menace and did everything they could to resist it.<sup>4747</sup>Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches*, 46. As the various Protestant theologians are considered, the characteristics of the German Christian and Confessing churches will become more apparent.

*Paul Althaus (1888-1966)* Paul Althaus was a Lutheran theologian of great stature in twentieth century Germany, and is best remembered as a scholar of Martin Luther.<sup>4848</sup>Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1966), 1. In 1925, he went to Erlangen as a professor of systematic theology; he enjoyed the respect of his colleagues and was the perfect gentleman, teacher, and friend, who was inherently conservative and orthodox.<sup>4949</sup>Ericksen, *Theologians Under Hitler*, 79. He was comfortable with the middle ground in his approach to theology and politics as well. Generally, he did not pay much attention to politics, but felt that Germany had been cruelly degraded by the terms of surrender. He supported the rebirth of the German people but was not strongly anti-Jewish. He welcomed the leadership of Hitler and national socialism as the means for bringing about the rebirth of the people; for him, national socialism as such was above politics.<sup>5050</sup>Ericksen, *Theologians Under Hitler*, 86. The Weimar was permissive and had led to a breakdown of moral values which national socialism would correct. The Barmen declaration, with Barth as its primary spokesman and representative of the Confessing church, was written in opposition to the Deutsche Christen or the German Christian church and stated that God speaks to humankind only through Jesus Christ. Althaus could not accept this and supposedly signed the Ansbacher Ratschlag written by Werner Elert in opposition to Barmen.<sup>5151</sup>Ericksen, *Theologians Under Hitler*, 87. There is some controversy as to Althaus' role in his opposition to Barmen, but it is clear that he rejected the politics of Barmen. On the other hand, Althaus was also in opposition to those theologians who supported the German Christian church and saw Hitler as a prophet. The specter of communism was also a motivation for his support of national socialism. Politically, Althaus remained moderate within his milieu. He avoided the extremes of fanatical support of and any form of opposition to the Third Reich.<sup>5252</sup>Ericksen, *Theologians Under Hitler*, 98. Theologically, Althaus disagreed with Barth and the signers of Barmen over the question of revelation. The view of Barth and others was that God revealed himself only through the life of Jesus as described in the Bible. Althaus argued for a natural revelation as well, the message of God through his creation. Another area of theological contention was that of church and state and Luther's concept of the two kingdoms, that of God and man. Althaus hoped that the rebirth of Germany could be facilitated by the church in concert with the new state. A third area of theological concern had to do with the Jewish question. His belief that the unity of the race and its protection was an essential condition for the formation and preservation of the people. Although, he did not fully accept racial theory, he did support the national socialist policy of discrimination against the Jewish people. As in all areas of his life, he was not a fanatical supporter of this policy, but at the same time, he opposed the doctrine of the Marburg faculty (Bultmann et al.) that stated that the Aryan racial policy was inconsistent with Christian teaching. By 1943, Althaus was aware of the genocide and recognized the guilt of the nation; his hopes for a German rebirth were gone.<sup>5353</sup>Ericksen, *Theologians Under Hitler*, 109. Although Althaus lost a son on the battlefield, his life during the war was spent in relative comfort particularly when compared to Bonhoeffer and Thielicke. Immediately after the war, Althaus was dismissed from his position at Erlangen because of his early support of Nazism, but he garnered the support of many of his former students, including Thielicke. The denazification board found in favor of Althaus, and he resumed his teaching activities at Erlangen. He was held in high esteem by his colleagues and students and actively taught and published until his death in 1966. It is clear that before the war's end, he became disillusioned with national socialism and in his sermons after the war, there is a strong statement of corporate guilt, but no personal confession of guilt.<sup>5454</sup>Ericksen, *Theologians Under Hitler*, 115. Paul Althaus was a good man who was intellectually honest and above all a mediator. His failing if it can be called that was that he was inherently conservative and had a great fear of change and instability. What he had hoped would bring about a new Germany produced instead more instability and chaos than he could have imagined. Theologically, his differences with contemporaries such as Barth and Tillich were not dramatic; the major difference was political, having to do with his hope for the rebirth of the German state, a new moral order, which was ultimately exclusionary and illusory and led by the some of the most despicable men of the twentieth century or of any time in human history. Unfortunately, it took too long for Althaus to

recognize this.<sup>555</sup>Ericksen, *Theologians Under Hitler*, 119. Helmut Thielicke (1908-1986) Born in Barmen in western Germany, Helmut Thielicke was a member of the reformed parish of Barmen-Gemarke where the Barmen declaration was first announced in 1934.<sup>565</sup>Helmut Thielicke, *Notes from a Wayfarer* (New York, NY: Paragon House, 1995), 37. Thielicke embarked on theological studies, but his work was interrupted by a severe illness resulting from an enlarged thyroid gland that impeded his breathing. Despite the advice of doctors that this could be treated with medication, he used his considerable persuasive talents to convince doctors to perform surgery. Thielicke says that it was not only his delight in dramatic and quick solutions that drove him to his decision, but above all the desire through pain and the dulling of consciousness to distract him from the horrible emptiness and dreadful lack of direction he was feeling.<sup>575</sup>Thielicke, *Notes from a Wayfarer*, 60. The results of the surgery were disastrous, he developed a pulmonary embolism and also postoperative tetany which was to plague him for years. These attacks of paralysis, due to lack of calcium, would come on suddenly and drove him to many doctors and ultimate despair and near death. Some physicians thought his condition was psychogenic, and he suffered the humility of being injected with placebos that worsened his condition. Fortunately, new research provided the medication which corrected his condition, though he was dependent on this medication for the rest of his life.<sup>585</sup>Thielicke, *Notes from a Wayfarer*, 66. As a result of his restoration to health, Thielicke approached his studies with a new vigor. After completing his first dissertation, he moved to Bonn to complete his habilitation or second thesis. It was there that he encountered Barth in 1932. Thielicke was critical of Barth because his theology was in the "ivory tower." He felt that Barth's lack of interest in anthropology created a vacuum which made the Nazi takeover even easier, since the takeover was concentrated on the church's worldly surroundings and not its dogma (e.g., creeds and confessions).<sup>595</sup>Thielicke, *Notes from a Wayfarer*, 68. As a student, Thielicke's instinct was that Barth's theology did not take the secular framework of human existence seriously and would therefore inevitably generate into dogmatic speculation. In an evening seminar at Barth's home, the young Thielicke told Barth this in as many words; of course, neither could convince the other of the correctness of his position.<sup>606</sup>Thielicke, *Notes from a Wayfarer*, 69. Thielicke left Bonn for Erlangen to study with Althaus for the second doctorate. Thielicke did not go to Erlangen to become a disciple of Althaus (there were no Althausians as there were Barthians), rather he went, because Althaus would allow him to develop his own thought, which ultimately was quite opposed to Althaus'. Once again, we encounter the kindly Althaus, the consensus builder, of whom Barth once said, "I would like to shake him again and again until at last he expresses an unambiguous opinion."<sup>616</sup>Thielicke, *Notes from a Wayfarer*, 74.

Thielicke and Althaus got along well except they had a major disagreement over the Barmen declaration. As mentioned earlier, Althaus allegedly signed the Ansbach Nazi recommendation of 1934, which Thielicke called an evil theological sanctioning of ideology. This document was actually the brainchild of Elert, the Lutheran dean of Erlangen. Thielicke's dissertation was an attempt to construct a reformed theology of history in opposition to the belief that God's eternal order could be ascertained empirically through observation of the world. That Althaus accepted Thielicke's dissertation was consistent with his character and indicative that his motives were not influenced by expediency. Elert, on the other hand, was a different kettle of fish; he did everything he could to prevent Thielicke from receiving his degree, and failing to do that, he was ultimately successful in thwarting Thielicke's efforts to obtain an academic position.<sup>626</sup>Thielicke, *Notes from a Wayfarer*, 75.

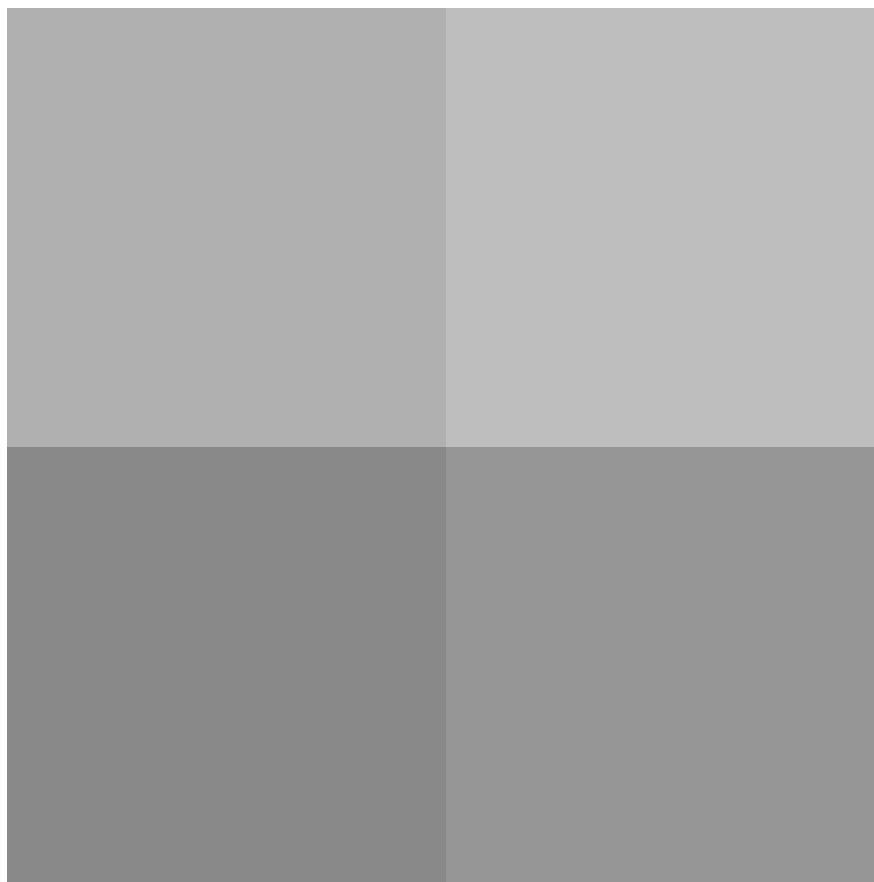
Thielicke's first contact with the Nazi regime came in a camp or academy required of university teachers and opened his eyes to the terrors it held. Thielicke was confronted with the dilemma of building a career without selling out to the government. He refused to join the Nazi party and would never in any form express support for the regime; his greatest disdain was for the unscrupulous opportunists who did not join the Nazi party, but nevertheless compromised their principles to help the party. His search for an academic position, constantly thwarted by Elert, resulted in Althaus sending him to Emmanuel Hirsch, one of the chief ideologists of the Deutsche Christen church and an ardent Nazi. He had a bizarre meeting with Hirsch, who asked him, "What do you feel when you press your ear against the stomach of a pregnant cow?" Of course, the desired response was that he would hear the creator's voice in the embryo's heartbeat; indication of affirmation of a natural theology supporting the belief that God was at work in the German

state. Thielicke's insolent reply was that he thought he was interviewing to become a university lecturer in theology and not a veterinarian.<sup>6363</sup>Thielicke, *Notes from a Wayfarer*, 93. This snub led to later actions on the part of Hirsch who denounced Thielicke and put his life in danger in 1943. Unexpectedly in 1936, Thielicke received an appointment to a position in theology at Heidelberg where he married Marie-Luise Hermann in 1937. Thielicke spent several productive years at Heidelberg, but events there would ultimately lead to his dismissal. First, there was the reappearance of the man who was the previous occupant of the position that Thielicke held. There was an attempt to find Thielicke a non-tenured position at Heidelberg; when Thielicke confronted the dean who had been two timing him, the dean replied, "What stress the likes of us live under! Please take into consideration that a theology dean cannot have any principles nowadays."<sup>6464</sup>Thielicke, *Notes from a Wayfarer*, 113. Thielicke's appointment was denied at the higher levels of government, but one professor in the dental school, himself a member of the party, helped him with salary support for three months.<sup>6565</sup>Thielicke, *Notes from a Wayfarer*, 114. There is some evidence, however, that Thielicke may have played up to university leadership in order to keep his position at Heidelberg, thus negating the idea that he was always in opposition to the Nazi regime.<sup>6666</sup>Fabian F. Grassl, *In the Face of Death: Thielicke-Theologian, Preacher, Boundary Rider* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019), loc 1575. So here is Thielicke in 1940 without a job, a young wife, traveling to Munich to speak with the government office in charge of higher education. Essentially, he was told that as long as theology faculties existed, and that wouldn't be for long, they would be occupied by suckling pigs and no wild boars. Thielicke was in desperate straits without a job and the Gestapo paying more attention to him. With the help of an influential friend, he enlisted in the German army; this provided some money and reduced the interest of the Gestapo.<sup>6767</sup>Thielicke, *Notes from a Wayfarer*, 121. Finding the army boring after nine months, Thielicke used his medical condition as a reason to be discharged. Shortly after discharge, he received a letter from Bishop Wurm, the Swabian primate, who had read some of Thielicke's papers and was aware of his opposition to the Nazi regime. Thielicke traveled to Stuttgart in southwestern Germany to meet with the bishop to discuss how the Swabian state church could help him. Thielicke was sent to the Swabian uplands where he became a pastor. It was here that he began his great career of preaching; a task which early on caused him great difficulty and which later in his life brought him considerable fame as one of the world's best known preachers. Thielicke learned that faith comes from preaching and that theology is the result of later reflection on this faith. Therefore, theology does not precede preaching, as he originally supposed, it follows it. Thielicke, as was Bonhoeffer, was part of the Freiburg group, which worked in part to bring an end to Hitler, but also planned for the reorganization of German life after the war. After the failed assassination attempt on Hitler in July 1944, one of the documents that Thielicke wrote for the group fell into the Gestapo's hands as did a list of men who were present at the main meeting of November 17, 1942. One of the names on that list was illegible. In early 1945, a fellow member of the group, Walter Bauer, was tortured for two days with the result that he revealed the name of the one man who was yet to be captured. It was Helmut Thielicke! After his home in Stuttgart had been destroyed, Thielicke moved to a remote village in southern Germany. This coupled with the fact that communications were at a near collapse prevented Thielicke's capture. Thielicke had many encounters with the Gestapo, but the Freiburg document was never mentioned.<sup>6868</sup>Thielicke, *Notes from a Wayfarer*, 178. In the last year of the war, Thielicke became a refugee as did other Germans. His house and country had been destroyed, but he continued to preach in the bombed out churches of Stuttgart. The end of the war came, but much was to happen before normalcy returned. There were atrocities committed against the Germans by occupying Moroccan troops, and there was the denazification program, which was conducted by the French in southern Germany and resulted in some injustices. As was seen, Thielicke was a strong supporter of Althaus, as well as others, who in his mind had been unfairly treated. After the war, Thielicke was very outspoken about some of the injustices of denazification and attacks on the German people. Thielicke's theology defies categorization, as he is claimed by both liberals and conservatives. His theological concerns were always with the place where God and man intersect; his theology and preaching are characterized by its "down to earth character." As mentioned, he had fundamental disagreements with Barth over theological concepts such as the law and gospel and the doctrine of the two kingdoms, and he also had a great disdain for the Nazi government and for opportunists who were not necessarily members of the Nazi party. Remarkably, there is nothing in his autobiography about the Jewish question, although this was regrettably the case



with most German theologians. Thieliicke had a distinguished career as theologian, preacher, and university administrator. He went to Tübingen in 1945, and in 1954 established a new theological school at Hamburg. Thieliicke was a world traveler and prolific writer who authored several volumes of theology, including an eight volume treatise on theological ethics, and a three part systematic theology. He is probably best known for his many volumes of sermons which became especially popular in the United States.<sup>6969</sup> Helmut Thieliicke, *Life Can Begin Again: Sermons on the Sermon on the Mount* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 24. Again, it is significant that his autobiography contains little to nothing about the persecution of the Jews that he witnessed or ultimately the significance of the Holocaust.<sup>7070</sup> Lawrence S. Cunningham, “Notes from a Wayfarer,” *Commonweal* 123, no. 1 (1996), 27. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)*

Bonhoeffer and his twin sister Sabine were born in Breslau to a well-to-do German family.<sup>7171</sup> Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Revised Edition* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 3. His father, Karl Bonhoeffer, was a neurologist-psychiatrist and his great grandfather on his mother’s side was the famous church historian, Karl-August von Has, and his grandfather, Karl-Alfred von Has, was preacher to the court of Kaiser Wilhelm II. In 1912, the Bonhoeffers moved to Berlin, where Karl was professor of psychiatry at the University of Berlin. In 1923, Bonhoeffer started his theological studies at Tübingen and a year later moved to the University of Berlin. Before moving to Berlin, he visited Rome and his short time there led him to see how nationalistic, sectarian, and narrow minded his own church was. In 1927, he completed his doctoral dissertation, and in 1928, Bonhoeffer moved to Barcelona to assume his first pastorate. For the first time he was away from Germany for an extended period of time and saw the beginnings of the worldwide economic depression as well as the burgeoning poverty. In 1929, he returned to Germany to complete his second dissertation which led to an academic appointment at the University of Berlin.



In 1930, with the support of a Sloane fellowship he journeyed to the United States to study at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. While in New York he studied with Reinhold Niebuhr and developed a close friendship with Paul Lehman, who introduced Bonhoeffer to the concept of social justice. He saw racism firsthand as he gained familiarity with Black churches in Harlem through his friendship with Frank Fisher, an African American student at Union.<sup>11</sup>Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Revised Edition*, 150. He also developed an understanding of pacifism and the need for nonviolent solutions to the day's problems through his friendship with the Frenchman, Jean Lasserre.<sup>22</sup>Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Revised Edition*, 153.

When Bonhoeffer returned to Berlin in 1931, he was particularly disturbed by increasing discrimination against the Jewish people of Germany, some of whom were pastors in German churches. In this Bonhoeffer was a lone voice for the most part.<sup>33</sup>Ericksen, *Complicity in the Holocaust Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany*, 100. The attempts to make a strong statement against discrimination were thwarted in the Bethel confession, a precursor to the Barmen declaration.<sup>44</sup>Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Revised Edition*, 371. Bonhoeffer found himself in sharp opposition to the Nazi government, but also was in opposition to his fellow pastors and theologians, whom he felt were not strong enough in their opposition to the discriminatory practices of the Nazi regime. In order to get his bearings, he assumed pastoral duties in England in 1934. Bonhoeffer supported the Barmen declaration, but again was frustrated by its inadequacies with respect to the Jewish question. He witnessed the further assault of the government on the Confessing church. He became more convinced of the importance of nonviolent means as a way of resisting this evil and made plans to visit Gandhi in India. However, the increasing pressure of the Nazi regime forced him to return to Germany to set up a seminary in exile at Finkenwalde where he met Eberhard Bethge.<sup>55</sup>John W. de Gruchy, *Daring, Trusting Spirit* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), loc 268. The conflict for Bonhoeffer heightened as time progressed; he knew his government was evil, and yet it was as if he were a lone voice in his support of the Jews. His frustration with his fellow pastors grew and he drifted into a self-exile. He went to America in 1939 to teach at Union but after a short period of time returned to Germany, despite the pleas of Niebuhr and Lehmann. Upon his return to Germany he became actively involved in the resistance movement, including the plan to assassinate Hitler, through his brother-in-law, Hans von Dohnanyi, and brother, Klaus, who worked in the Abwehr, which was not only the counterintelligence agency of the German military but was also part of the resistance movement against the Nazi government as well as the center for plans to assassinate Hitler.<sup>66</sup>Sifton and Stern, *No Ordinary Men*, 73. Bonhoeffer became an agent of the Abwehr, which prevented him from being drafted by the military and also gave him immunity from arrest by the Gestapo. From 1940 to his arrest in April 1943, Bonhoeffer traveled throughout Europe, trying to find ways to bring down the Nazi government. The failed assassination attempt and increasing suspicion by the Gestapo led to the arrest of Bonhoeffer and many others, including his brother and brother-in-law. While in several prisons, including Tegel in Berlin, he wrote numerous letters which were ultimately published.<sup>77</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 56. With the help of his jailers and Bethge, these letters as well as his unfinished book on ethics were smuggled out of Tegel and years later were read by millions thanks to the heroic efforts of his best friend Bethge.<sup>88</sup>de Gruchy, *Daring, Trusting Spirit*, loc 1274. In late 1944 and early 1945, Bonhoeffer was sent to a series of concentration camps, the last one being Flossenbürg, where he was murdered April 9, 1945, weeks before the Allies liberated Europe. His death was a final act of solidarity not only with the cross of Jesus Christ but also with the countless victims of Nazi evil, as he himself became one of the last to die for having dared to resist that evil. The Bonhoeffer family, who lost sons Dietrich and Klaus as well as sons-in-law Hans and Rudiger Schleicher, suffered greatly as a result of the twelve years of Nazi rule. Bonhoeffer's Lutheran theology underwent radical changes as his contempt for the government and his fellow pastors grew, although there is an underlying consistency in his thought which was informed by Luther's theology of the cross.<sup>99</sup>H. Gaylon Barker, *The Cross of Reality* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 12. Throughout his life he was concerned about what it meant to be a disciple or follower of Jesus. For Bonhoeffer, accepting the call of Jesus leads to a change in the behavior of those who hear it. The call to discipleship creates a new situation<sup>1010</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 62. and leads to death, if not physical, then at least death of the old self or the old ways.<sup>1111</sup>Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 87. As a result of his imprisonment, Bonhoeffer began to see the world in a new way, stating, "It remains an experience of incomparable value that we have for once learned to see the

great events of history from below, from the perspective of the outcasts, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed and reviled, in short from the perspective of the suffering.”<sup>1212</sup>Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 52. Unlike Althaus and Thielicke, Bonhoeffer had traveled extensively and spoke English. For a young man who died before his fortieth birthday, he had experienced a great deal. His travels to America and his dogged opposition to racial cleansing shaped his view that the church is the church only when it exists for others, to be of service to others and not the self-esteem of the clergy. This radical view of Jesus as the one for others and the church as the servant of the world caught many of his fellow theologians off guard; some felt that this was not the real Bonhoeffer, the traditional Lutheran. Of course, Bonhoeffer never lived to write a theology to fully explain himself. This has led to controversy as to who Bonhoeffer really was and what he professed; it has resulted in much speculation and debate and has served to heighten interest in this remarkable man. One’s view of Bonhoeffer is shaped by which of his books you read, which period of his life you consider.

Another perplexing aspect of Bonhoeffer’s life was how he changed from a pacifist to someone who advocated the violent overthrow of his government. Bonhoeffer had been warned by Niebuhr that the nonviolent method of Gandhi would not work in the evil regime of Nazi Germany. This change was one that caused Bonhoeffer much doubt and insecurity but given his disdain for his government and his frustration with the Confessing church, it was probably the only course of action available to him. There is much that is not known about Bonhoeffer’s reasons for joining the conspiracy; the best source for understanding this is his *Ethics*, which he wrote while in prison and which was published posthumously. For Bonhoeffer, the decision to join the conspiracy was like a leap in the dark.<sup>1313</sup>Robin Lovin, “Reinhold Niebuhr and Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Responsibility,” in *Engaging Bonhoeffer: The Impact and Influence of Bonhoeffer’s Life and Thought*, ed. Matthew D. Kirkpatrick (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016), 78. The only certainty was that the conspirators were breaking the law by contemplating a premeditated killing and breaking their oaths of office. This grave action was in part explained by Bonhoeffer’s understanding of Jesus Christ, “who has taken on and bears the selves of all human beings.”<sup>1414</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 231. In essence, Bonhoeffer broke the law in order to sanctify it.<sup>1515</sup>Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 297. In the end, all he could do was rely on the grace of the Lord, who acts on behalf of others and becomes guilty in their place.<sup>1616</sup>Lovin, “Reinhold Niebuhr and Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Responsibility,” 78.

Amazingly, 1996 was the year that Dietrich Bonhoeffer ceased to be a traitor in the eyes of the German law.<sup>1717</sup>John W. de Gruchy, “Bonhoeffer’s Legacy: A New Generation,” *Christian Century* 114, no. 11 (1997), 343. Whereas some have viewed him as a traitor to his country, others believe he did not do enough when it came to the Jews.<sup>1818</sup>Kenneth C. Barnes, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Hitler’s Persecution of the Jews,” in *Betrayal German Churches and the Holocaust*, ed. Robert P. Ericksen and Susanna Heschel (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 110. It is noteworthy that Bonhoeffer’s twin sister, Sabine, was married to a Jewish man, Gerhard Leibholz, who moved to England before the start of the war. Despite these different assessments, one must never forget that Bonhoeffer had to leave the church in order to resist the Nazi evil and the complicit church. He paid the ultimate price for this resistance. Over the years, the interest in Bonhoeffer has been considerable. Never has a single theologian been claimed by so many from all over the world in places as varied as South Africa and South America. The International Bonhoeffer Society was established in 1973, and the Bonhoeffer works project was launched by Bethge to reconstruct and reedit Bonhoeffer’s works resulting in a sixteen volume set in both German and English. Most recently this intense interest along with the different views of Bonhoeffer have resulted in a battle over his identity.<sup>1919</sup>Stephen R. Haynes, *The Battle for Bonhoeffer* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 1.

## Conclusion

There was a staggering loss of life due to the never ending wars of the twentieth century, which must stand as one of the low points in human history. The years 1933-1945, the time of the Third Reich, may well be the nadir of human existence. This paper has examined the responses of Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians and their churches to the evil Nazi regime; these men and one woman were noted scholars and

seemingly committed Christians for whom following Jesus was of utmost importance. The Roman Catholic theologians demonstrated a range of responses to national socialism; at one end of the spectrum, Eschweiler was a party member and was buried in his Nazi uniform, whereas on the other, Krebs opposed the regime and lost his position for statements vilifying Nazi leadership. Moreover, he recognized the Jewish roots of his faith, and unlike some of his colleagues, he welcomed modernity. Yet, far worse was the fate of the Jewish convert Stein, who was murdered at Auschwitz.

Like his Roman Catholic counterparts, Eschweiler, Lortz, and Adam, Althaus was wary of change, but also wanted his nation and his race restored to its rightful place. He was on the fence, not supporting the German Christian church, but also in disagreement with the Confessing church. Yet, it was clear that he did not care about the Jews, even those who became Christians. Thielicke was disgusted with the Nazi regime and paid a price for his resistance, although he played up to the Nazi backed university leaders in hope that he could continue his work as a theologian. His memoir says nothing about the suffering of the Jews and the complicity of the church in that suffering. Even Bonhoeffer in his early years was criticized for not doing enough for the Jews. This of course changed as he left the church and joined family members in the resistance movement and the failed plot to assassinate Hitler.

Unlike Althaus and Thielicke, Stein and Bonhoeffer did not live to see the new Germany. Yet, it seems that Bonhoeffer's actions, were different from those of the others with the exception of Krebs and obviously Stein, particularly when it came to the Jews. It can be asked why Bonhoeffer's response was different from those of Althaus, Thielicke, and his Roman Catholic counterparts. This is a complex question, although it is possible that Bonhoeffer's exposure to life outside Germany may have given him a different view of the German nation. His time at Union Theological Seminary and his experience in the Black church in Harlem may have also provided perspective on the meaning of race and prejudice. Undoubtedly, the work of his brother and brothers-in-law in German intelligence had much to do with his decision to join the resistance. Again, the perspective of seventy-five years of hindsight makes it easy to judge these men, who all paid a great price for living in Nazi Germany. Ironically, Bonhoeffer decided to leave Germany for America, but then changed his mind. Who could have blamed him for not returning to Germany or his elders Barth and Tillich who remained in Switzerland and the United States, respectively? With this fateful decision, Bonhoeffer joined the Christian martyrs of the twentieth century, some well-known and others nameless, who followed Jesus' command "to take up your cross and follow me." (Mark 8:34). Among the were the aforementioned Roman priests, Metzger, Feuerstein, Schmidlin, and the Jesuit, Alfred Delp, who was executed for trying to persuade others that the Nazi regime had no value.<sup>11</sup>Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches* , 290. And of course there was Stein who was disregarded because of her sex and her Jewish ancestry.

These executions of these devout individuals can be viewed as intimidation that was especially aimed at the Roman Catholic church whose influence extended far beyond Germany.<sup>22</sup>Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches* , 66. Consequently, the Nazi regime had more to fear from the Roman Catholic church than it did from the feckless German Christian church or the weak Confessing church that still could not recognize its Jewish roots and its grave sin of supersessionism. One could ask why these churches offered such little resistance to national socialism, or asked in another way, why did they surrender to Caesar?<sup>33</sup>Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches* , 334. The reasons for this are complex, but it is likely that these churches had never found themselves in this position. Both Protestant churches and the Roman church were part of German society and had worked with governments in the past, in many ways these were state churches. In essence, these churches were in a new situation which was very difficult to navigate. Many of the theologians cited in this paper distrusted modernity and may have been happier living in the scholastic era of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, where politics mattered little to those living in a cloistered environment. For those who had a passing interest in politics, national socialism may have been more desirable than the dreaded entity on the other end of the political spectrum, communism. Although the churches' responses were more concerned with self-preservation and the denial of Judaism, the Roman and Confessing churches did have a few brave souls who resisted the evil regime. Among these souls were Stein and Bonhoeffer who understood that he had to live in this world and confront the powers. Niebuhr was impressed that in a short time Bonhoeffer had developed his political and social interests and was shrewd in his assessment of German

political and military tendencies.<sup>44</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, “The Death of a Martyr,” *Christianity and Crisis* 5, no. 11 (1945): 6. Moreover, in his faith, according to Niebuhr, Bonhoeffer had overcome the one fateful error of German Protestantism, the complete dichotomy between faith and political life.<sup>55</sup>Niebuhr, “The Death of a Martyr,” 7. It was this fateful error made by good churches and good men such as Althaus that contributed to the development of the evil regime that continues to haunt the church.

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