ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

History 610
Senior Project

Religions of the *Volksgemeinschaft*: How Three Christian Churches were similar in their Interpretations

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April 19, 2022

Department of History

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my comp advisor, Professor Brian Miller, for helping along the way and pointing me in the right direction towards some of the useful information that is presented in this essay. I would also like to thank my family for their support and encouragement during the process of me writing this essay. I would also like to thank my friends, who also gave me encouragement and allowed me to have time to relax after hours of research and writing.

Abstract

Both religious institutions and national governments have shaped how people have lived in different eras. This essay focuses on how three Christian religious institutions/churches reacted towards the National Socialists' concept of the German *Volksgemeinschaft* between the 1930s and 1940s. This essay focuses on the German branches of the Roman Catholic church, the Protestant Church, and the Jehovah's Witnesses both before and during the Nazi regime. These three churches will be examined on how their members supported, resisted, and even tried to make compromises towards the concept and ideals of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. By examining the aspects of all three of these Christian churches, this essay will argue that all three denominations shared a similarity with one another by the fact that their different versions and individual interpretations of Christian ideology and doctrine greatly impacted their ability, and the strength of that ability, to either take part in promotion or resistance towards the National Socialists' *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Introduction

The influence of religious ideology and organization have always been a key part in the formation of different societies throughout history. Some societies have used religious doctrine as the literal form of law, while other societies have used religious ideology as a basis for the creation of their regulations and morals. Every United States citizen that grew up in the nation's education system knows the phrase, "One nation, under God," due to daily indoctrination through the Pledge of Allegiance. On the other hand, there have been those societies that have tried to rid themselves of any aspect of religious influence, such as the Soviet Union. This goal of complete alienation from religious influence over a population can also be seen as part of the society that Adolf Hiler and the National Socialists tried to create in Germany between 1933 and 1945.[1] For the National Socialists, their goal in creating what they believed was the perfect society was the German *Volksgemeinschaft*, or "people's community."[2] As scholars Martina Steber and Bernhard Gotto state in the introduction of their collection of academic essays on the same subject, "Membership of the Volksgemeinschaft, it was believed, overrode all differences of social stratification arising out of religious or class affiliation."[3] Even though the idea the Nazis' had for creating their grand society involved no religious influences at all, the preexisting religions in Germany at the time still greatly affected the process of creating and maintaining this community. This composition will be focusing on the idea of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and how it related to preexisting Christian ideologies that were in Germany during the rise and duration of

[1] Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2000, 252-267, 717-728; John A. Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937." In *The Reluctant Revolutionary: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Collision with Prusso-German History*, NED-New edition, Berghahn Books, 2014, 103-129.
[2] Martina Steber, and Bernhard Gotto. "Volksgemeinschaft: Writing the Social History of the Nazi Regime." In *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives*, edited by Martina Steber, and Bernhard Gotto. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014, 1-29.
[3] Ibid., 2.

the Nazi regime. However, one must first understand the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and how the Nazis viewed Christianity.

The *Volksgemeinschaft* was the National Socialists' concept of creating an utopian society based on collectivism, racial importance, and complete obedience to both state and leader.[4] The key component of the Nazis' *Volksgemeinschaft* was the collective *Volk*, or people, who would be completely loyal to Hitler and the Nazi regime in every aspect of their lives.[5] In addition, the idea of the *Volk* didn't just symbolize the collective society of just living Germans, but also that of the deceased Germans and future generations.[6] Even though the Nazis' used the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* as the basis of their society, the consept was already present and gaining popularity in Germany during World War I.[7] During the Weimar Republic, many different political parties used the idea of the *Volksgemeinschaft* as a form of political programme to incite German unity.[8] For the political Right, their focus was on deciding who of those in the German population did not belong to the future people's community.[9] However, it was the strong combination of antisemitism and biological importance that the Nazi party promoted that differentaited their version of the *Volksgemeinschaft* from other political parties duing the late 1920s and early 1930s.[10]

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[4] Michael Wildt, "Volksgemeinschaft: A Modern Perspective on National Socialist Society." In *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives*, edited by Martina Steber, and Bernhard Gotto. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014, 43-59; Steber and Gotto, "Volksgemeinschaft: Writing the Social History of the Nazi Regime." 1-29.

[5] Steber and Gotto. "Volksgemeinschaft: Writing the Social History of the Nazi Regime."1-29.

[6] Ibid., 2-3.

[7] Ian Kershaw, "Volksgemeinschaft: Potential and Limitations of the Concept." In *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives*, edited by Martina Steber, and Bernhard Gotto. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014, 29-42; Wildt, "Volksgemeinschaft: A Modern Perspective on National Socialist Society." 43-59; Steber and Gotto. "Volksgemeinschaft: Writing the Social History of the Nazi Regime."1-29.

[8] Kershaw, "Volksgemeinschaft: Potential and Limitations of the Concept." 29-42; Wildt, "Volksgemeinschaft: A Modern Perspective on National Socialist Society." 44-59; Steber and Gotto. "Volksgemeinschaft: Writing the Social History of the Nazi Regime."1-29.

[9] Wildt, "Volksgemeinschaft: A Modern Perspective on National Socialist Society." 47-59.

[10] Kershaw, "Volksgemeinschaft: Potential and Limitations of the Concept." 29-42; Wildt, "Volksgemeinschaft: A Modern Perspective on National Socialist Society." 44-59; Steber and Gotto. "Volksgemeinschaft: Writing the Social History of the Nazi Regime."1-29.

The National Socialists tried to build their *Volksgemeinschaft* through the process of inclusion of the *Volksgenossen*, those who belonged to the *Volksgemeinschaft*, and the exclusion of the those who were deemed enemies of the community, the *Gemeinschaftsfremde* (community aliens).[11] Of those deemed to be a threat to the establishment and maintenance of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the Jews were claimed to be the major enemy of the "people's community."[12] Although, even those deemed fit to be part of the *Volksgemeinschaft* were still able to become unfit in the eyes of the Nazis if they were to do anything that was not unwavering loyalty to the regime.[13] In addition to this, the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was also a flexible ideology that was greatly affected by the interpretation of the society by the *Volksgenossen*.[14] As Detlef Schmiechen-Ackermann argues about the *Volksgemeinschaft* in his essay from the Steber and Gotto collection, "It also functioned, highly successfully, as a screen onto which large sections of German society projected their own conceptions of Nazi rule, at least for a while."[15] This was especially true when it came to the interaction between the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and

[11] Kershaw, "Volksgemeinschaft: Potential and Limitations of the Concept." 29-42; Wildt, "Volksgemeinschaft: A Modern Perspective on National Socialist Society." 44-59; Steber and Gotto. "Volksgemeinschaft: Writing the Social History of the Nazi Regime."1-29.

[12] Lutz Raphael, "Pluralities of National Socialist Ideology: New Perspectives on the Production and Diffusion of National Socialist Weltanschauung." In *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives*, edited by Martina Steber, and Bernhard Gotto. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014, 73-86; Detlef Schmiechen-Ackermann, "Social Control and the Making of the Volksgemeinschaft." In *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives*, edited by Martina Steber, and Bernhard Gotto. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014, 240-254; Kershaw, "Volksgemeinschaft: Potential and Limitations of the Concept." 29-42; Wildt, "Volksgemeinschaft: A Modern Perspective on National Socialist Society." 44-59; Steber and Gotto. "Volksgemeinschaft: Writing the Social History of the Nazi Regime."1-29.

[13] Wildt, "Volksgemeinschaft: A Modern Perspective on National Socialist Society." 52-53; Schmiechen-Ackermann, "Social Control and the Making of the Volksgemeinschaft." 240-254.

[14] Wildt, "Volksgemeinschaft: A Modern Perspective on National Socialist Society." 43-59; Raphael, "Pluralities of National Socialist Ideology: New Perspectives on the Production and Diffusion of National Socialist Weltanschauung." 73-86; Schmiechen-Ackermann, "Social Control and the Making of the Volksgemeinschaft." 240-254.

[15] Schmiechen-Ackermann, "Social Control and the Making of the Volksgemeinschaft." 244.

religious doctrine.[16] However, as stated previously, the Nazis held a negative view of the religious faith that the majority of Germans held at the time, that of Christianity.

As many of the different sources from which this essay draws from argue, the Nazis deemed Christianity as a threat to the furthering of their ideals and influence over the German people.[17] Adolf Hitler believed that there was no room for any Chrsitian religion within his Reich and *Volksgemeinschaft*.[18] For the Catholic Church, Hitler believed in the importance of drawing a strict line between religious Catholicism and political Catholicism due to what he observed from Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*.[19] John Cornwell states that Hilter had two different views of the churches based around privacy.[20] In a speech given in February 1933, Hitler declared that an integral part of German national life was the Christian churches.[21] However, within the following month of the same year, Hitler privately vowed to "eradicate" Chrisitiantiy from all of Germany.[22] Cornwell quotes Hitler as saying, "You are either a Christian or a German…You can't be both."[23] However, Hitler deemed it necessary to keep his personal goals a secret from the public and use careful manipulation of church powers for his own ends.[24]

As Michael Burleigh states in his book, *The Third Reich: A New History*, "The Nazis despised Chrsitianity for its Judaic roots, effeminacy, otherworldliness and univerisality."[25]

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[16] Wildt, "Volksgemeinschaft: A Modern Perspective on National Socialist Society." 43-59; Raphael, "Pluralities of National Socialist Ideology: New Perspectives on the Production and Diffusion of National Socialist Weltanschauung." 73-86; Schmiechen-Ackermann, "Social Control and the Making of the Volksgemeinschaft." 240-254.
[17] Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*. New York, 252-267, 717-728; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937," 103-129.
[18] Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*. 252-267, 717-728; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937," 103-129; John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII*. (New York: Viking Penguin), 1999, 104-178.
[19] Cornwell, 105.
[20] Ibid., 105.
[21] Ibid., 105.
[22] Ibid., 105-106.
[23] Ibid., 106.
[24] Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*. 252-267, 717-728; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937," 103-129; Cornwell, 104-178.
[25] Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*. 255.

Burleigh points out that the Christian ideals of forgiveness and compassion were not fitting for a society that focused on stamping out its weak.[26] Many Nazis saw Christianity as an obstacle in they're way towards furthering their racial ideologies and total claims to power.[27] An example of this can be seen in a letter written by Rudolf Hess' chief assistant, Martin Bormann, to Alfred Rosenberg about how Chrtistian ideology can not be taught in schools following the war.[28] As Bormann states,

> "Christianity and National Socialism are phenomena which originated from entirely different sources. Both differ so fundamentally that it will not be possible to construct a Christian doctrine that would be completely compatible with the point of view of National Socialist ideology, just as the communities of Christian faith would never be able to accept the ideology of National Socialism in its entirety."[29]

Even the semi-clerical members within the Nazis' ranks were disliked by many other members, due to many Nazis sharing anti-clerical views.[30] For the Nazis, Christianity was a foreign "servent ethic" imposed upon the German people and stripping them of their values and traditions.[31] In addition, the Christian ideology of the individual and transcendence after death were not agreeable in connection to the ideology of the Nazis.[32] Instead of focusing on the self, the Nazis based their ideology on the importance of the national community.[33] As Burleigh states, "Men otherwise so obsessed with death and destruction sought a thousand years of life through the superior racial properties of their *Volk*."[34]

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[26] Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*. 255.
[27] Ibid., 256.
[28] Martin Bormann," Letter of Martin Bormann to Alfred Rosenberg, 24 February 1940," in *The Nazi Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 237-240.
[29] Bormann," Letter of Martin Bormann to Alfred Rosenberg, 24 February 1940," 238.
[30] Ibid., 256.
[31] Ibid., 256.
[32] Ibid., 256.
[33] Ibid., 256-257.
[34] Ibid., 256-257.

However, the Nazis did find a common ground that linked themselves with some of the ideals of both major Christian faiths within Germany at the time.[35] Burleigh states, "There was considerable common ground between the Nazis and many churchmen, of both confessions, on anti-Bolshevism, anti-Judaism and the feeling that the country had gone to the dogs."[36] In addition, there was a period in which Hitler tried to use the actions of the pro-Nazi Protestant group, the German Christians, as a way of assimilating Protestants into the National Socialist state.[37] However, Hitler would later drop this attempt at assimilation in order to take a neutral position in the wars between the clergy.[38] Soon, the Nazis would begin their open assualt on the different sects of Christiainity through the manipulation of the Reich Concordat, prevention of clergy teaching in schools, and vandalsim of church property by members of the Hitler Youth.[39] Following the assualt in the Chrisitan religions, the Nazis tried to replace certian aspects of Christianity with their own quasi-religious cult and rites.[40] Examples included changes of the traditional calendar and its holidays, a nazified Passion Play that reenacted the events of the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch, and even a burial ceremony that involved the coffins of the Nazi Movement's sixteen "martyrs."[41] As Burleigh states, "These major occasions were essential to the only cult that really mattered in Nazi Germany, that of the Führer himself."[42] These quasi-religious events, and the divine image of Hitler as the savior and redeemer of the German nation, helped present how the National Socialist movement adapted into a quasi-religious political cult towards Hitler himself.[43]

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[35] Ibid., 257.
[36] Ibid., 257.
[37] Ibid., 260.
[38] Ibid., 260.
[39] Ibid., 260-261.
[40] Ibid., 252-267.
[41] Ibid., 264-265.
[42] Ibid., 265.
[43] Ibid., 252-267.

As seen in the previous paragraph, religious ideology played an important role in how the Nazis formed different aspects in their way of promoting National Socialism. However, this religious influence was also a two-way road, especially when it came to understanding the *Volksgemeinschaft*.[44] This composition will examine how the ideologies of three different Christian denominations affected different German people's understanding of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, and how these ideologies also affected their abilities to either promote or resist different levels of integration into the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The first chapter will examine the aspects within the German Catholic church and faith that affected the establishment of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The chapter will analyze the events of the 1933 *Reichskonkordant*, the promotion of National Socialism by the "Brown Priests," and resistance by Catholic individuals. The second chapter will examine the actions that occurred in the German Protestant faith at the time. This chapter will examine the "Church Struggle" that was occurring in the Protestant church during the Nazi regime, with an analyze of both supporters and resistors of Nazi integration. The Third chapter of this composition will examine the actions of the German branch of the Jehovah's Witnesses and examples of their strong resistance to National Socialism. By examining the aspects of all three of these Christian churches, this essay will argue that all three denominations shared a similarity with one another by the fact that their different versions and individual interpretations of Christian ideology and doctirne greatly impacted their ability, and the strength of that ability, to either take part in promotion or resistance towards the National Socialists' *Volksgemeinschaft*.

[44] Raphael, "Pluralities of National Socialist Ideology: New Perspectives on the Production and Diffusion of National Socialist Weltanschauung." 73-86; Schmiechen-Ackermann, "Social Control and the Making of the Volksgemeinschaft." 240-254.

Chapter 1:
Catholicism in the *Volksgemeinschaft*

How would Jesus Christ, who was born Jewish, react to members of one of the biggest religious organizations on the planet being hostile towards Jews? As explained in the introduction of this essay, antisemitism was a key aspect of the Nazis' formation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. In Doris Bergen's 1994 article, titled "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany," she states," Chrsitian anti-Judaism was certainly not the sole factor, but without it, the Holocaust could not have occurred as it did."[45] In order to create an analysis into how different religious organization within Germany were connected by how they reacted to both the rise and duration of Hitler's Third Reich, especially with its push to create the racial society of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, this essay must first take examine one of the major religious organizations in Germany at this time due to its large civilian population, the Catholic Church. This chapter will first be examining the population size of German Catholics during the pre-war era of Nazi Germany. In addition, this introduction will also be examining longstanding antisemitic views within the Catholic Church, which helped played a part in the acceptance of Catholic Germans towards Nazi ideologies on race.[46] This introduction will also be examining the views that Hitler and other Nazi officals had towards the Catholic Church and the ideologies of the Christian religion. Following the introduction, this chapter will then examine the 1933 Reich Concordat and its regulations, as well as the actions of certain Catholic priests who supported and endorsed aspects of National Socialism.[47] This section will then be followed up by an analysis of different forms of resistance members of the Catholic faith performed against the ideals of National Socialism. The conclusion of this chapter will then apply how these acts of

[45] Ibid., 330.
[46] Doris L. Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany." in *Central European History* 27, no. 3, 1994, 329–48.
[47] Kevin P. Spencer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism.* (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 3-11.

endorsement and resistance to Nazi ideologies and state government by faithful Catholics in relation to the ideology of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. As being the first chapter in this analysis of three different Christian religions in Nazi Germany, this chapter will set a basis for some of the connections that can be made between all three of the churches (Catholic, Protestant, and Jehovah's Witnesses).

The German Catholic Population

The population of Germany during the reign of Hitler and the National Socialists, 1933-1945, overwhelmingly identified as Christian. During the 1930s, it was reported that around 95% of Germans remained as baptized members of Christian churches.[48] Historian Doris Bergen reports in her 1994 *Central European History* article that around one-third of this percent belonged to the Catholic church, while the rest were Protestant.[49] In his 1999 book, *Hitler's Pope*, John Cornwell states that the German Catholic population was approximately 23 million as of March 1933.[50] This population size grew tremendously as the Nazis took over more land surrounding Germany.[51] As Cornwell states," The addition of the Sudeten region following the Austrian *Anschluss* (annexation) made Catholics virtually a majority in the nation."[52] Soon, around half of the population within Hitler's Greater Reich belonged to the Catholic faith, including one-fourth of the members of the SS.[53] As can be seen, Catholics made up a significant proportion of the population within both Germany and the Greater Reich area, thus providing the reason for why it is important to focus on examining the members of this population since they were more likely potential members of Hitler's *Volksgemeinschaft.*

[48] Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany," 330.
[49] Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany," 330.
[50] John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII*. (New York: Viking Penguin), 1999, 133.
[51] Ibid., 201, 215.
[52] Ibid., 201.
[53] Ibid., 215.

German Catholic populations faced state persecution during the 19th century under a set of laws known as the *Kulturkampf*. The *Kulturkampf,* or "culture struggle," was a series of laws issued by the government of Otto von Bismarck in Germany during the 1870s.[54] This state action saw Catholic institutions coming under control of the state government, as well as the prevention of religious orders being allowed to teach.[55] As Cornwell states," the Jesuits were banished; seminaries were subjected to state interference; Church property came under the control of lay committees; civil marriage was introduced in Prussia."[56] This mass takeover of Church abilities was also seen in other nations throughout Europe at the time, such as: Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, and France.[57] This aspect of German Catholic history is important because it helps explain some of the reasons in which members of the Catholic Church became supporters of National Socialism.[58] As Robert F. Drinan states," Among Catholics, memories of Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* against the church fostered an ultranationalism which gave uneasy support to the regime."[59]As explained in the introduction of this essay, nationalism was one of the key aspects that the Nazis tried to evoke in the members of their *Volksgemeinschaft*. However, longstanding antisemitism within the Catholic Church also played a part in the Nazis gaining support from Catholic Germans, in addition to the events leading up to the Holocaust.[60]

Both the Catholic and Protestant Churches have been linked together throughout centuries of Christian history by their hostility towards Jews and Judaism.[61] Both churches drew on traditions based in Christian scripture for such hostility.[62] Such examples can be seen in

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[54] Ibid., 14-15, 81.
[55] Ibid., 14-15.
[56] Ibid., 14.
[57] Ibid., 14-15.
[58] Robert F. Drinan, "The Christian Response to the Holocaust." The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 450, 1980, 179–89; Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope,* 360-386.
[59] Ibid., 181.
[60] Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany," 329-348.
[61] Ibid., 331.
[62] Ibid., 331.

Matthew 27:25, John 8:43, and Acts 7:51 to name a few.[63] During the reign of medieval Christendom, Christians were inspired to protect Jews, but only for the purpose of converting said Jews towards Christianity.[64] Modern antisemitism soon incorporated elements of race and economics into the hostile view towards Jews.[65] As Christianity diverted into new sects, the traditions of antisemitic ideology was one of the factors that still linked the different sects together.[66] The year 1897 marked when German racist Wilhelm Marr first employed the term "anti-semitism."[67] Doris Bergen states," Some of the most vitriolic anti-Jewish images in Catholic and Protestant repertoires dated back to the sixteenth century, a time when the established church denounced Martin Luther and his followers as 'Jews,' while produced his own blend of anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic castgations."[68] This demonstrates that even though antisemitic ideologies linked these two major factions of Christianity, it was mainly used to attack each other's religious credibilty.[69] Catholics denounced Judaism as being associated with godlessness, immorality, and liberalism, such traits that were also used in attacks on Protestants and even Communists.[70] Some Catholic clergymen even used the pulpit as a stage to further spread their denouncement of Jews.[71] In addition, events during the nineteenth century increased the strength of the Catholic Church's hostility towards Judaism.[72] Bergen states," German Catholicism's opposition to emancipation in the nineteenth century and its attempts to rehabilitate itself after the *Kulturkampf* had left a legacy of openly anti-Jewish attitudes."[73] Both

[63] Ibid., 331.
[64] Drinan, 180.
[65] Ibid., 181.
[66] Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany," 332.
[67] Ibid., 181.
[68] Ibid., 332-333.
[69] Ibid., 329-348.
[70] Ibid., 336.
[71] Ibid., 334.
[72] Ibid., 345.
[73] Ibid., 345.

churches remained overwhelmingly silent once the Nazis began their persecution and genocide of the Jewish people.[74] Although this chapter focuses solely on the Catholic Church, it should be stated that the following chapter will return to the subject in order to describe aspects of antisemitism seen within the Protestant church.

The Reich Concordat of 1933

On July 20, 1933, a treaty between the Vatican and the government of National Socialists was signed, effectively limiting the power that the Catholic Church had within the Third Reich.[75] This agreement between the Vatican and the Nazis appealed to the political goals of members on both sides.[76] As stated above, Hitler believed in the importance of separating political Catholicism from religious Catholicism, with the ultimate goal of "eradicating" Christianity entirely from his Reich.[77] Hitler believed that the Catholic population within Germany could cause issues for the Nazi party if both Catholic laypeople and the church had a say in political matters within Germany.[78] However, Hitler learned from the *Kulturkampf* that a head-on attack on the German Catholic Church and its bishops would not be a good solution to this issue.[79] John Cornwell states in his book," From Hitler's point of view, the ideal solution to the Catholic threat was precisely a summit agreement with the Vatican in all respects similar to the Lateran Treaty, which had outlawed Catholic political action in Italy and effectively integrated the Church into Fascist Italy."[80] This was Hitler's goal when it came to the signing of the Reich Concordat of 1933.[81] This agreement would protect the religious and educational rights of the German Catholic Church, while having the Church withdraw from social and political action within the

[74] Ibid., 346.
[75] Cornwell, 130-156.
[76] Ibid., 1-8, 84-156, 360-371.
[77] Ibid., 105-106.
[78] Ibid., 105-156.
[79] Ibid., 105-156.
[80] Ibid., 133.
[81] Ibid., 1-8, 84-156, 360-371.

Third Reich.[82] For the members on the other side of the agreement, this treaty would allow Eugenio Pacelli, who would later become Pope Pius XII, to achieve his goal of centralizing power within the Church back to the position of the Pope.[83]

A concordat is defined within Cornwell's book as a formal agreement between the Vatican and the secular governments within different countries.[84] Cornwell states that concordats were used in "securing rights to define doctrine; conditions of bestowing sacraments; rights to worship and education; laws concerning property, seminaries, clerical and episcopal appointments and salaries; marriage and annulment."[85] Terms of these concordats varied based on the country or region, being specifically made to "local circumstances, customs, and secular patronage."[86] However, following the passing of the Code of Canon Law of 1917, which was also created by Pacelli to ensure greater power of the Pope over the actions of the Church, the regulations of concordats became centralized into the power of the papacy.[87] As Cornwell states," Thenceforward the concordat was to become an instrument of consensus by which the lives of bishops, clergy, religious, and faithful were regulated, top-down, everywhere and anywhere in the world on an equal basis."[88] This supported Pacelli's agenda in that the Church would survive in the modern world only by giving the papal authority more strength through the application of canon laws.[89]

For the Reich Concordat, the main goal was the ensuring of the religious and educational rights of the German Catholic Church, while agreeing that the Church would stay out of political

[82] Ibid., 133-156.
[83] Ibid., 1-8, 84-156, 360-371.
[84] Ibid., 84.
[85] Ibid., 84.
[86] Ibid., 84.
[87] Ibid., 6, 84-85.
[88] Ibid., 84-85.
[89] Ibid., 85.

and social affairs.[90] Similar to the Lateran Treaty in Italy, the Reich Concordat was an indication of the Catholic Church's moral approval of Hitler's policies.[91] However, Hitler was able to manipulate sections within the Concordat to the advantage of furthering National Socialist ideologies.[92] This supposedly was to prevent the Church from being allowed to take action against Nazi policies that the state government deemed as solely politcal matters.[93] For example, the passing of the Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring resulted in the Nazi government sterilizing 320,000-350,000 people on the grounds that this racial cleansing was solely political matter, and that the offical organization of the Catholic Church could not get involved.[94] The Law Against Overcrowding of German Schools and Universities, passed on April 25, 1933, allowed the Nazi government to traple on the educational rights of German Jews, while the educational rights of Catholics were upheld.[95] In addition, Catholic clergymen complied to orders from the Nazis to supply the government with marriage and baptism registries in order to identify German citizens with Jewish heritage.[96] As Cornwell states," In the case of the Holy See [the pope in the Vatican], however, there was far greater culpability, because the outreach and coercion implicit in centralized application of canon law, which Pacelli had spent so much of his career enhancing and strengthening, was not employed to defy the process."[97] This example of a high ranking official making a compromise with the Nazi government in order to achieve what they deemed was ideolocially important is an example of a similarity that is shared between all three Christian demoniations during the Nazi regime, as will be seen in th following chapters. Throughout the process leading up to the signing of the Reich Concordat,

[90] Ibid., 1-8, 84-156.
[91] Ibid., 153.
[92] Ibid., 1-8, 84-156; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*. 252-267, 717-728.
[93] Cornwell, 153.
[94] Ibid., 153.
[95] Ibid., 153-154.
[96] Ibid., 154.
[97] Ibid., 154.

many German bishops and clergymen voiced their concern towards the ideologies of the National Socialists, as well as their disagreement with forming a formal agreement between them and the Vatican.[98] Even though their warnings fell on deaf ears, there were members within the German Catholic clergy that fully supported the ideologies of National Socialism from its beginning.[99]

Endorsement by The Brown Priests

Within the membership of the German Catholic Church during the Nazi regime, there were some Germans that saw their own religion as being interconnected with the *Volksgemeinschaft.* Kevin P. Spencer, his book *Hilter's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism*, states," there were many levels of acceptance and rejection of the Nazi state among the German Catholic clergy."[100] Even the priests that often challenged the policies and ideologies of the Nazi government have made public racist statements during their ministeries.[101] However, there were 138 German priests that strongly supported the worldview of the Nazi party, even to the point that one-third of these priests enrolled into the Nazi party itself.[102] These priests that promoted the National Socialist party were derogatorily called the "Brown Priests," due to brown being the official color of the National Socialist movement.[103] This men had varying reasons for their devotion and endorsement of Hitler and the Nazi movement.[104] As Spencer states," For some, the events that followed the First World War and subsequent foundation of the Weimar Republic triggered a moral decline that they believed only National Socialism could arrest."[105] Other clergymen believed that they could advance their careers in both the church and the state,

[98] Ibid., 130-156
[99] Ibid., 130-156; Kevin P. Spencer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism.* (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 3-11.
[100] Spencer, 4-5.
[101] Ibid., 5.
[102] Ibid., 5.
[103] Ibid., 5.
[104] Ibid., 5.
[105] Ibid., 5.

and escape conflict with Church superiors, by gaining membership into the NSDAP.[106] Many often embraced Nazism for the primary reason in that the movement supported strong antisemitic worldviews.[107] Many Catholics were in fact presuaded by the Nazis antisemitic and nationalistic views.[108] The signing of the Reich Concordat even gave Catholics ample reason to support the new German government, at least at first.[109] As for the Brown Priests, they viewed themselves as the missionaries of the right-wing movements, who were also mystically in line with the views of Hitler and National Socialism.[110] As Spencer states," they often created their own national and Germanic vision, a mixture of German Catholicism and National Socialism that neither their Church nor the Nazi Party could fully embrace."[111] The Catholic Church viewed them as renegades who ignored the directives given by their superiors, while the Nazis viewed the priests as being "still too Catholic" to be trusted.[112] Thus, these men who became the Brown Priests were acting as individuals through they're support of the NSDAP.[113] This section will be examining the actions of two Brown Priests during the rise of the Nazi movement and state before the onset of World War Two.

One of the most significant brown priests to endorse the Nazi party as it rose to power was Abbot Alban Schachleiter, who was the former abbot of the Emmaus monastery in Prauge. [114] Spencer first introduces Schahleiter as having the possibility to be the leader of the brown priests.[115] As he states," He clearly earned this position for a variety of reasons: the prominence of his ecclesiastical office, his age and years of exceptional service to the Church, and his

[106] Ibid., 5.
[107] Ibid., 6.
[108] Ibid., 6-7.
[109] Ibid., 7-8.
[110] Ibid., 8.
[111] Ibid., 8.
[112] Ibid., 8.
[113] Ibid., 8-9.
[114] Ibid., 34-60.
[115] Ibid., 35.

resolute approval of National Socialism."[116] Schachleiter began his clerical work at the Benedictine monastery of Emmaus, located in Prague, in 1881. While there, the abbot emphasized the importance of German nationalism, even suggesting that the Catholic faith and one's German identity were not mutually exclusive from each other.[117] However, Schachleiter fled from Prague due to the rise of the Czechoslovakain state and hostility from Czech nationals.[118] After being arrested by Czech soldiers and spending time in a detention cell, Schachleiter traveled to Linz, and later arrived in Munich on June 15, 1920.[119] By then, he had formed an extreme sense of German nationalism.[120] As Spencer states, "Instead of preaching love of neighbor and peace among nations, the most basic Christian message, Schachleiter began to accept speaking and preaching engagements from right-wing groups extolling him to champion Germany's virtues and to exhort German citizens to cross a battle line, so to speak, to fight anyone who stood in the way of Germany's rise to greatness."[121] The anti-Catholic events during his fleeing from Prague would later have the effect of strengthening his attraction to Hitler.[122] Schachleiter even met Hilter in person at a luncheon in 1922, leading to the future dictator giving his personal attention to the abbot until his death in 1937.[123] It was reported that Schachleiter had sympathy for Hitler's politics, but not the anticlericalism of the Nazi movement.[124]

Schachleiter would be the first brown priest to make a grand debut by accepting an invitation to preside at a memorial service for the Catholic WWI soldier Albert Leo Schlageter., whose trial and execution by a French military court made him a martyr for the German

[116] Ibid., 35.
[117] Ibid., 35-37.
[118] Ibid., 36.
[119] Ibid., 36-37.
[120] Ibid., 36.
[121] Ibid., 37.
[122] Ibid., 36-37.
[123] Ibid., 35.
[124] Ibid., 35.

right-wing cause.[125] On June 10, 1923, Schachleiter presided over a requiem mass for the German *Volk* hero.[126] Schachleiter gave a sermon in which he stated that the salvation of Germany would only take place through the spirit of deep patriotism, as well as a sacrificial willingness and unchanging faith in God.[127] In addition, Schachleiter also gave a sermon in March of 1926, in which he tried to bridge the gap between Catholics and Protestants by claiming that Good Friday should be celebrated by Catholics in the same way that it is by the Protestant Church.[128] Schachlieter would later on rally for Adolf Hitler's election campaign for Reich president in 1932.[129] As policies with the Nazi state became more in conflict with the ideologies of Catholicism, Schachleiter still remained connected to the NSDAP, believing that National Socialism and Catholicism were still compatible with each other.[130] Even as bishops within the German Catholic church tried to reprimand him for his endorsement of the Nazi state, Schachleiter still refuse to stop speaking in favor of National Socialism.[131] The abbot still viewed Hitler as the savior destined to restore Germany.[132] This belief would stay with him until his death on June 20, 1937, at the age of 76.[133] Schachleiter never stopped believing that National Socialism was based around positive Christianity, and that the *Volk* movement would always be one faithful to God and Christianity.[134]

The second best known brown priest, coming after Schachleiter, was Philipp Haeuser.[135] As Spencer states, "A staunch nationalist, who abhorred the Versailles Treaty, the Weimar

[125] Ibid., 46.
[126] Ibid., 47.
[127] Ibid., 47.
[128] Ibid., 53.
[129] Ibid., 56.
[130] Ibid., 80.
[131] Ibid., 80-91.
[132] Ibid., 81.
[133] Ibid., 80-91.
[134] Ibid., 31-56, 83.
[135] Ibid., 101.

democratic constitution, and the Catholic Church's support of the Center Party and Bavarian People's Party, he advocated unconditional support for Hitler and the *Völkisch* movement, which he fondly called the German movement."[136] In addition, similar to many other brown priests, Haeuser was strongly antisemitic.[137] In 1912, the Church allowed the publication of Haeuser's interpretation of the *Letter of Barnabas*, a late-first-century Christian writing that was openly hostile towards Judaism.[138] As Spencer states, "In his analysis Haeuser spent an inordinate amount of time juxtaposing the author's representation of Christians, who fully understood God's promises, with the author's negative sketch of Jews, who remained blind to the designs of God."[139] In 1922, during Germany's postwar turmoil and chaos, Haeuser published *We German Catholics and the Modern Revolutionary Movements*.[140] This writing called for Catholics to embrace monarchism and reject the government of the Weimar Republic.[141] Haeuser listed the enemies he believed to be against Germany as: the Bolsheviks, the Social Democrats, supporters of the Catholic Center Party, the French, and Jews.[142] Later in the same year, he published a writings titled *Jew and Christian, or to Whom Does World Domination Belong?* and "The Jewish Question from the Standpoint of the Church."[143] Within both these publications, Haeuser states that the Jews are Germany's enemies, as well as interpreting Jesus as rejecting the Jews and actively campaigning against them.[144] Haeuser even puts a great emphasis on the Jews being responsible for Jesus' crucifixion.[145] Haeuser would later find himself being scolded by his superiors for his interpretations of Jesus as a warrior fighting against the Jews, to the point in

[136] Ibid., 101.
[137] Ibid., 101-134.
[138] Ibid., 103.
[139] Ibid., 103.
[140] Ibid., 105.
[141] Ibid., 105-106.
[142] Ibid., 106.
[143] Ibid., 107.
[144] Ibid., 107.
[145] Ibid., 107.

which he could have faced expulsion from his priesthood.[146] In addition, Haeuser would also make the comparison between Hitler and Jesus.[147]

Another area that Haeuser voiced his beliefs on was that of the Catholic Church itself, and their responses to Haeuser's actions.[148] In 1932, Haeuser would publish *The Flawed Traditions of the Catholic Church*, in which he criticized aspects of the Catholic Church that he didn't agree with.[149] In addition, Haeuser also believed that the German Catholic bishops had betrayed the German people by issuing prohibitions against National Socialism.[150] The brown priest deeply believed that the Church must change its ways and join together with the National Socialists.[151] As Spencer states," he believed it was now the task of the Catholic Church to take up the mission of the warrior Christ and join Hitler in his battle to rid Germany of any Jewish influence."[152] However, Haeuser would later learn the Nazis' true opinions when it came to any form of Christianity.[153] In 1939, Haeuser began to be harassed by local NSDAP leaders for promoting Catholic instructions in a maternity home located in Straßberg.[154] Later on, Haeuser would be questioned by the Gestapo for preaching against the ill-treatment of the women in the NSV maternity home.[155] This visit caused him to remain quiet when it came to criticizing the government until the end of the Third Reich.[156] Haeuser would contribute these acts of harassment by younger members of the National Socailist movement to corruption.[157] Spencer states, "Towards the end of Hitler's regime the problems that Haeuser encountered, especially

[146] Ibid., 107-121.
[147] Ibid., 128.
[148] Ibid., 107-134.
[149] Ibid., 125.
[150] Ibid., 125.
[151] Ibid., 107-134.
[152] Ibid., 129.
[153] Ibid., 131-134.
[154] Ibid., 131.
[155] Ibid., 131-132.
[156] Ibid., 132.
[157] Ibid., 133.

with younger, less church-oriented National Socialists, led him to conclude that National Socialism, similar to Christianity, had become corrupted."[158] Haeuser did not directly blame this on the Jews, but rather on materialistic, greedy Germans who never experienced the struggle for power.[159] Even with this harassment and changes within the Third Reich, Haeuser always remained faithful to Hitler.[160]

It can definitely be said that the Brown Priests were strong supporters of the establishment of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*. In addition, Kevin P. Spencer also states that the counterpart to the Catholic Brown Priests was the Protestant German Chrisitan Movement.[161] As will be explained more fully in the next chapter of this essay, the German Christian Movement was a pro-Nazi Protestant group that view in their own interpretation of Chirstian ideology as being connected to the ideals of National Socialism.[162] The fact that the Brown Priests believed that their interpretation of Christian ideology was in line with that of National Socialism, so too were their interpretations used as a way to endorse aspects of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.[163] In addition, a connection between all three of the churches can be made in how some members of each church used antisemitic ideas as a way to justifiy their support or compromises with the Nazi regime, as will be seen in the next two chapters.

Catholic Resistance to the Nazis

Now that this essay has provided examples of Catholic support for the aspects of the *Volksgemeinschaft* as a basis for other connections, this next section will do the same for

[158] Ibid., 133.
[159] Ibid., 133.
[160] Ibid., 107-134.
[161] Kevin P. Spencer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism.* (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 3-11.
[162] Roderick Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany: Origins, Interpretations, Legacies*, (London: Routledge, 1999), 136-140; Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross : The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996, 1-21; John A. Moses, *The Reluctant Revolutionary: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Collision with Prusso-German History.* NED-New edition, 1. Berghahn Books, 2014, 117-126.
[163] Spencer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism*, 3-28.

examples of Catholic resistance. Within the introduction of his article titled *Questions about Catholic Resistance*, Professor Michael Phayer states," Although Catholic resistance was feeble, it existed."[164] The government of Hitler and the Nazis did not recieve a significant amount of resistance from the higher levels of the Catholic Church.[165] This may be connected to the signing of the Reich Concordat of 1933, seeing how that limited the Church's ability to engage in matters that were deemed political and social.[166] In addition, bishops remained silent on issues due to personal matters, such as the fear of being perceived as a traitor if Germany lost the Second World War.[167] As Phayer states, "In the event of a second catastrophic defeat the bishops did not wish to be fingered as stab-in-the-back culprits as Jews and Socialists (and even some Catholics like the Center politician Matthias Erzberger) were after World War I."[168] However, there were still actions of resistance towards the Nazis at the individual level, including Catholic lay people and a small amount of clergymen.[169] As Phayer states," The efforts of a few individuals and the small number of Jews who were saved by them laid the foundation for the understanding between Jews and Catholics today." This section will be focusing on three occasions of resistance by individuals that were members of the Catholic Church. By providing these examples of Catholic resistance, it can be seen that faithful members of Catholicism could have never been part of the Nazis' ideology of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

One of the ways in which Catholic resistors shared similarities with the resistors from the Prostestant and Jehovah's Witnesses Churches was their compassion and respect for people deemed enemies to the *Volksgemeinschaft*. As Phayer states," Rescue of Jews goes to the heart of

[164] Michael Phayer, "Questions about Catholic Resistance." *Church History* 70, no. 2, 2001, 328.
[165] Ibid., 328-331.
[166] Phayer, 328-331; Cornwell, 130-156.
[167] Phayer, 328-331
[168] Ibid., 331.
[169] Phayer, 328-344; Burleigh, 717-728; Cornwell, 130-156.

resistance because of the centrality of racism in Nazi ideology."[170] For Gertrud Luckner, a Catholic woman living in the city of Freiburg, this was her main goal throughout the duration of the Third Reich.[171] Luckner started her resistance in helping German Jews after the passing of the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, the regulations that began the isolation of Jews from the rest of the German population.[172] As Phayer states, "Luckner made it her task to break through the wall that the Nazi regime built around the Jews."[173] Luckner began helping Jews from Freiburg across the nearby Swiss border in reaction to "transportations" of Jews from Germany to the east.[174] In addition, Luckner also disable trucks used to transport Jews to the east, as well as finding places for Jew to hide.[175] Luckner was also able a contact in Berlin to send some Jews to the "safe" Theresienstadt concentration camp, instead of being sent to the east where they had a higher chance of being murdered.[176] Through the national organization Caritas, Luckner tried to set up multiple small groups of Catholics across the country that would help save Jews.[177] However, this plan turned out to be less successful due to many of the members of these groups being fearful of being caught by the Gestapo.[178] Luckner was later arrested by the Gestapo on March 24, 1943, while she was heading to Berlin in order to give a thousand dollars to Rabbi Leo Baeck in order to help the large Jewish population still in the city.[179] She was soon sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp where she spent two years, almost dying on several occasions either to illness or almost being sent to the gas chamber.[180] In the end, Luckner was rewarded with

[170] Phayer, 334.
[171] Ibid., 334-335.
[172] Ibid., 334-335.
[173] Ibid., 335.
[174] Ibid., 335.
[175] Ibid., 335.
[176] Ibid., 335.
[177] Ibid., 336.
[178] Ibid., 336
[179] Ibid., 336.
[180] Ibid., 336.

Germany's highest distinction in 1953, the *Bundesverdienstkreutz*, and Israel's Medal of the Just in 1966 for her efforts and bravery.[181]

In addition to the efforts of Gertrud Luckner in helping to save the lives of multiple Jews, Margarete Sommer was another German Catholic woman that focused on helping Jews during the Holocaust.[182] As Phayer states, "During the desperate years, when Germany's Jews faced emigration, deportation, and mass murder, Sommer was in charge of a Berlin church office whose sole purpose was to help them."[183] Following the 1938 national pogrom, Sommer began to help Jews who were fleeing en masse from Germany.[184] When the 1941 decree passed that forced Jews to wear a star patch whenever they were in public, Sommer appealed to Cardinal Adolf Bertram, the head of the German Catholic Church, to issue pastoral guidelines to priests that would help alleviate some of the humiliation the Jews who converted to Christianisty faced when they attended church.[185] In addition, Jews that were deported to Eastern Europe were forced to leave behind their homes as they traveled to an unknown fate.[186] In reaction to this, Sommer organized teams of Catholics to help protect the property of the deported Jews.[187] As Phayer states, "Sommer organized teams of Catholics, many of whom were 'Jewish,' to visit a soon-to-be-deported family, take inventory of their property so that, one day, they could reclaim it, prepare practical provisions for their journey, and calm them as much as possible."[188] After finding out that these deportations meant being sent off to their deaths, Sommer began to organize people to help hide Jews from the Nazis.[189] Even after the war, Sommer continued to

[181] Ibid., 336.
[182] Ibid., 337.
[183] Ibid., 337.
[184] Ibid., 337.
[185] Ibid., 338.
[186] Ibid., 338.
[187] Ibid., 338.
[188] Ibid., 338.
[189] Ibid., 338-339.

help those Jewish citizens that had survived the Holocaust, all while not never mentioing how many people her and her teams saved.[190]

As Phayer states, "No other group of Catholic people resisted Hitler as much as the Munich Jesuits."[191] The third individual that resisted Nazism as a Catholic is the Jesuit priest Alfred Delp. Alfred Delp was part of a group of Jesuit priests that joined Helmut von Moltke's Kreisau Circle resistance movement.[192] As Michael Burleigh states, "Influenced by Catholic Action, Delp was interested in the 'third idea' beyond liberal individualism and Marxist collectivism, and in Catholic solutions to social questions."[193] This interest in searching for solutions to social questions, in which he wrote position papers on, helped socialists such as Mirerndroff better cooperate with Prussian aristocracy.[194] Delp also took part in the Kreisau Circle's blueprints for a post-Nazi society.[195] In addition, one of the most morally challenging actions that Delp took part in is on the decision on whether to assassinate Adolf Hitler.[196] Even though many of the Jesuit priests were initially bothered by the moral question of assassinating a dictator, Delp seemed to reconsider, most likely in favor of the act.[197] One month before the assassination attempt on Hitler by Claus von Strauffenberg, Delp visited von Strauffenberg in what Roman Bleistein, a biographer on Delp, believed to be a conversation on the morality of the plot, and possibly the plans of it as well.[198] After the meeting, Delp was reported saying, "'I believe that tonight I have done more for my Fatherland and for all of you than in my entire

[190] Ibid., 339.
[191] Ibid., 339.
[192] Burleigh, 727-728; Phayer, 339-342.
[193] Burleigh, 728
[194] Ibid., 728.
[195] Phayer, 339-342.
[196] Ibid., 341-342.
[197] Ibid., 341-342.
[198] Ibid., 341-342.

previous life.'"[199] Delp was later arrested on July 28, 1944, and was executed by hanging on February 2, 1945.[200] As Phayer puts it, "that meeting with Strauffenberg cost Delp his life."[201]

What connects these examples of Catholic resistors with the resistors from the other churches (Protestant and Jehovah's Witnesses) is that they showed compassion towards the ultimate enemy of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*, the Jew. In addition, the examples of Gerturd Luckner and Margarete Sommer helping to save the lives and property of German Jews shows an incredibly strong resistance towards the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Especially since they were saving the lives of people deemed not worthy to live in the "people's community" by Nazi officals and supporters. Delp's example of resistance is also strong, since it goes against the prime ideal of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, in that all members must be completely loyal to Adolf Hitler. Taking part in an assassination polt to kill the leader you must pledge your life to is an extreme case of disloyalty, and thus and extreme case of resistance towards the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

Chapter Conclusion

As stated in the introduction of this chapter, this first chapter serves as a basis to begin finding connections between all three of the Christian churches (Catholic, Protestant, and Jehovah's Witnesses). Within this chapter alone, there have been extreme cases of both support and resistance by German Catholics based on their interpretations of Christian ideology. As was explained in the beginning of the chapter, the German Catholic Church has had a long history of supporting antisemitic views.[202] This long history of antisemitism, which the Catholics shared with their Protestant peers, help led to increase amounts of support towards National Socialism, as well as supporting some of the main ideals of the *Volksgemeinschaft.*[203] As for the first

[199] Phayer, 342.
[200] Burleigh, 728.
[201] Phayer, 342.
[202] Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany," 329-348.
[203] Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany," 329-348.

example of compromises being made between religious organizations and the Nazi government, the 1933 Reich Concordat provides an excellent example. This decision, as similar to the examples of compromise by officials from the other churches, was based on the ideology of a high ranking clergyman, Eugenio Pacelli. This future Pope Pius XII believed in the ideological goal of strengthening the Catholic Church by giving more power to the office of the Pope.[204] On the topic of religious supporters of the Nazi regime, the Brown Priests are also another great first example to begin making connections with. Similar to their Protestant counterparts in the German Christian Faith Movement, the Brown Priests interpreted Christian ideology as being compatible with the ideology of National Socialism, which they used in order to support efforts to create the *Volksgemeinschaft*.[205] On the topic of Catholic resistance, all three examples presented in the chapter are great examples, and connect very well to the efforts of the resistors of the other German churches (Protestant and Jehovah's Witnesses). This connection between all the resistors of all three churches was their compassion towards who the Nazis deemed was the ultimate enemy to the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the Jewish population. Now that this essay has a basis for making connects, this essay will now go even further into the connection between all three churches by examining German Protestantism during the Nazi regime.

[204] Cornwell, 1-8, 84-156, 360-371.
[205] Spencer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism,* 3-11, 43-60.

Chapter 2:
The Protestant Church and the *Volksgemeinschaft*

In continuation with this compostion's focus on Christian organizations during both the rise and duration of the Nazi regime in Germany, this chapter will shift focus onto elements of the Protestant Church. To begin the analysis of how members of the Protestant faith connected to the Nazi ideology of the German *Volksgemeinschaft*, this chapterbegins with an examination of the demographics of Protestantism within 1930s Germany at the beginning of the National Socialist rise to power. In addition, this chapter's introduction presents information on the antisemetic ideas long held within the German Protestant Church. This chapter then offers an analysis of the "Church Struggle," which saw a split within the German Protestant Church's ideals and attitudes towards National Socialism. This chapter examines both sides of the Church Struggle, analyzing the Pro-Nazi movement of the German Christians and the Anti-Nazi movement of the Confessing Church. The section on the German Christians focuses around their support for the ideals of the National Socialists. In contrast, the section on the Confessing Church focuses on aspects of resistance towards National Socialism by members of the Protestant faith. This chapter will end with a conclusion on how both factions within the Church Struggle were greatly impacted by their individual interpretations of Chritian doctrine and how they applied these interpretations to their ability to either support, compromise, or resist the National Socialist's concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This connects to the essay's main thesis in that the important impact Christian ideology had towards the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was what made all three churches (Catholic, Protestant, and Jehovah's Witnesses) similar to one another during the Nazi regime.

The Prostestant Population and Antisemitism

As stated previously, historian Doris L. Bergen reports that around 95 percent of the German population throughout the 1930s identified as being members of a Christian faith, with two-thirds of that percentage identifying as Protestants.[206] A similar percentage can be seen in John Henning's 1944 *Blackfriar* article in which Henning states, "According to statistics lately published and confirmed through investigations made among prisoners-of-war, ninety-three per cent of the German people are still members of Christian denominations."[207] For a more specific account of the Protestant demographic within Germany at the time, Cathrine A. Epstein suggests in her 2015 *Nazi Germany: Confronting the Myths* that, "In 1933, some 18,000 pastors ministered to roughly 41 million German Protestants."[208] Further, historian Michael Burleigh states in his 2000 *The Third Reich: A New History*, that Protestants were majoritively Lutheran, with a Reformed minority.[209] Returning to Henning's 1944 article, he states that by subdividing Germany along religious membership, it would seem that Protestants made up the majority of citizens in northern Germany.[210] However, southern provinces like Württemberg and the Palatinat had predominantly Protestant citizens living there.[211] In addition, the Protestants were also part of the German conservitive elite, believing in many of the ideologies and policies that Hitler presented to the German people.[212] This also connects to antisemitic ideology that was part of the German Protestant Church's history. This similar antisemetic history also provides a connection between some of the German Protestants ideologies with that of some of the ideologies the German Catholics at the time.

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[206] Doris L. Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany." in *Central European History* 27, no. 3, 1994, 330.
[207] John Henning, "CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS IN GERMANY." *Blackfriars 25*, no. 294, 1944, 336.
[208] Catherine A. Epstein. *Nazi Germany: Confronting the Myths.* Chicester: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2015, 107.
[209] Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2000, 71.
[210] Henning, 336.
[211] Henning, 336.
[212] Epstein, 107.

The German Protestant Church has had a long history of negative views towards German Jews, even going as far back as to the church's founder, Martin Luther.[213] As scholar Roderick Stackelberg states in his book, *Hitler's Germany: Origins, Interpretations, Legacies*, "Antisemitism and authoritiarianism could be traced back to Luther's own virulent later writings, which were published and widely circulated by the Nazi."[214] As stated in the first chapter, Catholics and Protestants shared a similar history of antisemitism that they both used in order to gain favor of the Nazi party.[215] As Bergen states, "Like their Catholic counterparts they tried to promote Christianity, deflect Nazi attacks, and prove their value to the Third Reich by highlighting their religion's inherent Germanness and opposition to Judaism."[216] However, there were members of the Protestant clergy that argued for the support of Jews and for Jews to be allowed in the Protestant Church.[217] The group that advocated for the antisemitic history and ideology of the Protestant Church was a pro-Nazi group of clergy called the "German Christians."[218]

Protestant Support of National Socialism: The German Christians

In contrast to the German Catholic Church, which only saw a small fraction of its clergy becoming full-hearted supporters of Hitler and the Nazis, the ideologies of the National Socialists cause a major split within the German Protestant Church. One of the main events involving the Protestant Church during the reign of the Nazis was known as the "Church

[213] Doris L. Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany." in *Central European History* 27, no. 3, 1994, 329–48; Roderick Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany: Origins, Interpretations, Legacies*, (London: Routledge, 1999), 136-140.
[214] Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany: Origins, Interpretations, Legacies*, 138.
[215] Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany." 329-348.
[216] Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany." 334.
[217] John A. Moses, *The Reluctant Revolutionary: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Collision with Prusso-German History.* NED-New edition, 1. Berghahn Books, 2014, 103-129; Donald D. Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." J*ournal of Church and State* 23, no. 1 (1981): 15–34.
[218] Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany." 334.

Struggle" (*Kirchenkampf)*.[219] Historians who study this hisotrical phenomenon suggest that the term struggle leads readers to think that this is a struggle between the Protestant Church and the Nazis.[220] However, the Church Struggle was not a struggle over politics.[221] It was a struggle for power over the entire Protestant Church by two ideologically different Protestant groups; The Pro-Nazi German Christian Movement and the Anti-Nazi Confessing Church.[222] For this section, this composition will be analyzing the German Christians and how they viewed the relationship between Chrisitanity and the National Socialists. First, this section will briefly explain the creation of the movement, followed by an examination of their world views. The section will then examine how the movement endorsed the Nazis and their ideologies. This section will finish with an examination of the Sport Palace speech by Dr. Reinhold Kruase, a speech that ended up causing the relationship between the German Christian Movement and the Nazi regime to deteriate.[223]

The German Christian Movement of 1933 was formed from the combination of several different German Protestant groups in the late 1920s and early 1930s, all of which shared similar ideas on nationalism and antisemitism.[224] For a brief history into the origins of the German Christians, one can look back to a book published by a member of them dated back into the 1930s. In 1933, the young Lutheran pastor and member of the German Christian Faith Movement, Arnold Dannenmann, published a book titled *The History of the "German*

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[219] Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross : The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996, 12-14; John A. Moses, *The Reluctant Revolutionary: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Collision with Prusso-German History.* NED-New edition, 1. Berghahn Books, 2014, 117-126.
[220] Susannah Heschel, "Nazifying Christian Theology: Walter Grundmann and the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life." *Church History 63*, no. 4 (12, 1994): 587; Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-21
[221] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-21; Heschel, "Nazifying Christian Theology" 587-605.
[222] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 12-21; Moses, 117-126.
[223] Mary M. Solberg, "Introduction." *In A Church Undone: Documents from the German Christian Faith Movement, 1932-1940*, edited by Mary M. Solberg, 1–43; Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 12-21; Moses, 119-121.
[224] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-21; Solberg, "Introduction." 14; Heschel, "Nazifying Christian Theology"

Christian" Faith Movement, in which he describes the origins of the German Christian movement.[225] In this work, Dannenmann mentions the organizations and individuals that helped form what the movement was to become by 1933.[226] One such organization that was helpful in the formation of the movement was the League for a German Church (*Bund für Deutsche Kirche*), a Protestant organization founded in Berlin in 1921.[227] Dannenmann states that following the 1918 November Revolution, there was an increased demand for renewing the Church "on the basis of a conscious *völkisch* experience."[228] During the early 1900s, many different Protestant organizations were trying to revitalize the life of the Church through a focus on German ethnicity and culture.[229] As the pastor Dannenmann states, "the League shook up people's thinking and brought the question of the "*völkisch* attitude and the Christian faith" to public attention. A host of texts, countless gatherings and debates were the result of their questioning. We remember them all."[230] The League provided an ideological starting point for the German Christian Movement, especially when it came to the League's argument for the "judaization" of Christianity and the claim of Martin Luther being the "German Prophet."[231] This idea of the importance of Martin Luther on German history is even seen in Dannenmann's writing, who compares Luther's importance on Germany to Hitler's. As Dannenmann states, "And when today we assert - no, we know - that with Adolf Hitler and National Socialism an epoch in German history has begun that is at least as decisive for the German people as, for example, the epoch of Martin Luther."[232]

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[225] Arnold Dannenmann. "The History of the 'German Christian' Faith Movement." In *A Church Undone: Documents from the German Christian Faith Movement, 1932-1940*, edited by Mary M. Solberg, 1517 Media, 2015, 121–62.
[226] Dannenmann. "The History of the 'German Christian' Faith Movement." 121-62; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43.
[227] Dannenmann. "The History of the 'German Christian' Faith Movement." 128-130; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43
[228] Dannenmann. "The History of the 'German Christian' Faith Movement." 128
[229] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-21; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43.
[230] Dannenmann. "The History of the 'German Christian' Faith Movement." 129.
[231] Solberg, "Introduction." 15.
[232] Dannenmann. "The History of the 'German Christian' Faith Movement." 125.

In addition, there were also key individuals that Dannenmann claims to have been vital in the creation and maintenance of the German Christian Movement. One such important figure that Dannenmann points to is Dr. Friedrich Wieneke, who Dannenmann credits as being the first German pastor to publicly publish his position on the issue of "National Socialism and Christianity."[233] Dannenmann states the ideals Wieneke had by stating, "Christianity and National Socialism both go back to God, that is, they have parallel origins. Some kind of living relationship between the two must therefore also be possible in the present."[234] Another individual that Dannenmann states had "critical significance" to the German Christians was Pastor Joachim Hossenfelder, a WWI veteran who would become the movement's leader up until the aftermath of the Sports Palace Speech.[235] As Dannenmann states, "One cannot really understand the story of the German Christians if one has not studied the life of Pastor Hossenfelder. Only by coming to know Pastor Hossenfelder can one truly understand the story of the German Chrisitians."[236] This is equally important because it was Hossenfelder who drafted the guidelines of the movement in March of 1932, during the meeting that officially founded the German Christian Movement.[237]

Hossenfelder's draft of the 10 guidelines of the German Christian Faith Movement demonstrate two of the key stances that the movement had, the unification of the Protestant Church under German nationalism and the endorsement of antisemitism within the church.[238] As

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[233] Dannenmann. "The History of the 'German Christian' Faith Movement." 130-131.
[234] Dannenmann. "The History of the 'German Christian' Faith Movement." 130-131.
[235] Dannenmann. "The History of the 'German Christian' Faith Movement." 133-140; Solberg, "Introduction." 15-24; Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 18-21.
[236] Dannenmann. "The History of the 'German Christian' Faith Movement." 138.
[237] Dannenmann. "The History of the 'German Christian' Faith Movement." 144; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43; Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-27; Joachim Hossenfelder, "The Original Guidelines of the German Christian Faith Movement." *In A Church Undone: Documents from the German Christian Faith Movement, 1932-1940*, edited by Mary M. Solberg, 1517 Media, 2015, 45-52.
[238] Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43; Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 257-267; Hossenfelder, "The Original Guidelines of the German Christian Faith Movement" 45-52.

point two of the guidelines states, "We are fighting to achieve an integration of the twenty-nine constituent churches of the 'German Evangelical Church Association' into one National Protestant Church [*evangelische Reichskirche*]."[239] This demonstrates the movement's goal of unifying all Protestant churches within Germany into one official church, which was also the goal of the National Socialists.[240] As for the movement's stances towards Judaism, one must look towards point nine of the original guidelines. Hossenfelder states:

> In the mission to the Jews we see great danger to our people. It is the point at which foreign blood enters the body of our people. There is no justification for its existing alongside the foreign mission. We reject the mission to the Jews as long as Jews have citizenship, which brings with it the danger of raceblurring and race-bastardizing. Holy Scripture speaks both of holy wrath and of self-denying love. It is especially important to prohibit marriages between Germans and Jews[241]

This guideline demonstrates the Movement's stance on the importance of maintaining the purity of German nationalism and genetics, even before the National Socialist gained power over the German government.[242] This point also ties into the stance that many members of the movement held, in that the church needed to deny the canonicity of the Old Testament as an effort to "dejudanize" Christianisty.[243] The Nuremberg Laws of 1935, which denounced Jewish Germans of their citizenship, heighten the attack on the Old Testament by the German Christian Movement, allowing their ideas to find resonance in a wider antisemitic society.[244]

In addition, the German Christians also altered their understanding of the New Testament to be more inline with their own ideologies.[245] One such way of doing this was to deny Jesus'

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[239] Hossenfelder, "The Original Guidelines of the German Christian Faith Movement" 48.
[240] Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43; Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 252-267; Hossenfelder, "The Original Guidelines of the German Christian Faith Movement" 45-52.
[241] Hossenfelder, "The Original Guidelines of the German Christian Faith Movement" 50.
[242] Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43; Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 252-267.
[243] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; 142-171; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43.
[244] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 142-171.
[245] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 154-164.

heritage and argue that he was never Jewish.[246] This ideal of "dejudanizing" Chrisitianity by denouncing Jesus' heritage can be seen in the ideologies of the organizations that emerged following the fragmentation of the German Christian Movement as a result of the Sports Palace affair.[247] In 1936, the Organization for German Christianity published a pamphlet that denounced the heritage of Jesus as a way of showing their support and usefulness to the Nazi regime.[248] This pamphlet even states that the 1935 Nuremberg Laws were the cause for bringing up the question of whether Jesus was Jewish or not based on the Nazi ideology of blood.[249] The pamphlet states that verbally Jesus rejected the idea that he was a descendant of David.[250] As the pamphlet states, "When the sick address Jesus as 'Son of David,' this expression should not be understood in genealogical or genetic sense, but rather as a title that the sick (or perhaps also the gospel writers?) apply to him."[251] Here, the pamphlet makes the argument that Jesus was only Jewish based on his title, and not his blood. In addition, the pamphlet also makes reference to the *Galilean hypothesis*. As it states, "It is true that Galilee, a 'Gentile province,' was won over to the synagogue through Jewish mission work about a hundred years before Christ, but religious mission work does not change the nature of the blood!"[252] This stance argues that Jesus was a Galilee by blood, and not Jewish.[253] The final argument that the pamphlet makes is that since Jesus had radical views towards Judaism, and that he clashed with the Pharisees, he was not a member of the Jewish people.[254] The pamphlet states, "He, who was himself murdered by the Jews for the sake of the truth to which he knew himself sent to testify, recongized the two

[246] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 154-158.
[247] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; 142-171; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43.
[248] Organization for German Christianity. "Jesus and the Jews!" In *A Church Undone: Documents from the German Christian Faith Movement, 1932-1940*, edited by Mary M. Solberg,1517 Media, 2015, 433–42.
[249] Organization for German Christianity. "Jesus and the Jews!" 439.
[250] Organization for German Christianity. "Jesus and the Jews!" 439.
[251] Organization for German Christianity. "Jesus and the Jews!" 439.
[252] Organization for German Christianity. "Jesus and the Jews!" 440.
[253] Organization for German Christianity. "Jesus and the Jews!" 440-441.
[254] Organization for German Christianity. "Jesus and the Jews!" 441-442.

essencial traits of the satanic Jews in their Godforsaken cruelity: murder and lies!"[255] The pamphlet finishes by comparing this interpretation of Jesus with what the movement felt Germany was facing at the time.[256] As they state, "It is not only that the Christian crosses in Germany would have been toppled, if the swastika had not triumphed! No, both support the struggle against [Jewish] murder and lies and for the brotherhood and the truth that God desires."[257] This pamphlet demonstrates the idea that Christianity is not compatible with Judaism, but that it is compatible with National Socialism.[258] Thus, the German Christian's understanding of Jesus' "true" heritage was one of the reasons in which they were able to support the notion of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in that Jews were enemies of the community and that the community should endorse pure Aryan heritage and biology.

Another source that perfectly demonstrates the German Christian Faith Movement's ideology is that of the Sports Palace Speech given by Dr. Reinhold Krause in Berlin on November 13, 1933.[259] Krause was the district leader of the German Christian Faith Movement in Berlin as well as committed member of the Nazi Party.[260] Krause begins his speech by stating, "Fellow Germans! [*Volksgenosse*] The tremendous experience we had yesterday brought out into the open what [our] enemies and betrayers feared most and what the yearning souls of old and young fighters for a new Germany fervently hoped for: Germans have become one people [*Volk*]."[261] On the main topic of this composition, that being the *Volksgemeinschaft* and how these

[255] Organization for German Christianity. "Jesus and the Jews!" 441.
[256] Organization for German Christianity. "Jesus and the Jews!" 441-442.
[257] Organization for German Christianity. "Jesus and the Jews!" 442.
[258] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 252-267; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43.
[259] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 252-267; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43; Reinhold Krause. "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin." In *A Church Undone: Documents from the German Christian Faith Movement, 1932-1940,* edited by Mary M. Solberg, 1517 Media, 2015. 249–62.
[260] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 252-267; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43; Krause. "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin." 249.
[261] Krause. "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin." 251.

organizations played into the ideology, Krause is congratulating Hitler and the Nazi Party for uniting the German people, one of the central aspects of the creation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. In addition, Krause's next section states one of the ideological beliefs the Movement had towards Hitler, that he was the redeemer of German society and was continuing the work of Martin Luther.[262] This can be seen when Krause states, "Though Luther's followers, in their limited and confession-bound "churchliness," did not understand that his life's work was a mission for his Germans, one he could not accomplish because he did not at that point have a German Volk, today, as we become a Volk, we are living out the Reformer's ethnonational [völkische] mission."[263] To Krause, and many members of the Movement, Hitler and the Nazi's work in uniting the German people has now allowed the chance for the contiuation of the Christian Reformation and the ability to change what they believed needed to be done in the Church.[264] Part of this idea of the Reformation that the Movement has, and in connection to the idea Hitler had in controlling the several Protestant Churches around Germany, was the creation of a unified German People's Church (*Volkskirche),* or Hitler's National Church (*Reichskirche)*.[265] This can be seen when Krause states, "The emerging Volk wants to shape a new church, and so we cry out in these times to the fiery spirit of Dr. Martinus, asking that he help us to complete his work, to create not a Lutheran, not a Reformed, not a unified, not a synodical or consistorial, not a bishops' or a General Superintendents' church, but rather a powerful, new, all-encompassing German people's church [Volkskirche]."[266]

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[262] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 252-267; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43; Krause. "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin." 249-254.
[263] Krause. "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin." 252.
[264] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 252-267; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43; Krause. "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin." 249-262.
[265] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 252-267; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43; Krause. "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin." 249-262; John A. Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937." In *The Reluctant Revolutionary: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Collision with Prusso-German History*, NED-New edition, 1,Berghahn Books, 2009, 103–29.
[266] Krause. "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin." 253.

In addition to these examples demonstrating some of the major goals and aspects of the German Christian Faith Movement, Krause's speech also makes mention of the need to alter the teaching and interpretation of the Bible.[267] One such interpretation falls right along with similar beliefs of other members of the Movement, that being the "dejudanization" of the Bible.[268] An example of this comes when Krause states, "the first step in this direction is liberation from everything in the worship service and our confession of faith that is not German, liberation from the Old Testament with its Jewish reward-and-punishment morality, with its stories of cattle-dealers and pimps."[269] Krause goes further by quoting the Barvian Minister of Culture, Hans Schemm, presenting the idea that the Old Testament does not apply to the German Christians, but only to the Jews.[270] In addition, Krause also ties his argument with the antisemitic attutides that were occuring in Germany at the time. As he states, "If we National Socialists are ashamed to buy a necktie from a Jew, then we should really be ashamed to accept from a Jew anything that speaks to our soul, the most intimate matters of religion."[271] Krause continues these antisemitic arguements by claiming support for the Aryan Paragraph, in addition to claiming that people of Jewish blood do not belong in the church.[272] This is presented right after the quote that is presented above, with Krause stating, "We have not only fought against the mission to the Jews, but have also emphasized repeatedly that people of Jewish blood do not belong in the German people's church, either in the pulpit or in front of it. Wherever they are now standing in the pulpit they must vanish as quickly as possible."[273] Even though this speech by Dr. Krause

[267] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 252-267; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43; Krause. "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin." 249-262.
[268] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 252-267; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43; Krause. "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin." 249-262.
[269] Krause. "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin." 257-262.
[270] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Krause. "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin." 257-262.
[271] Krause. "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin." 258.
[272] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 252-267; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43; Krause. "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin." 249-262.
[273] Krause. "Speech at the Sports Palace in Berlin." 258-259.

presents how the ideology of the German Christian Faith Movement connects deeply with that of National Socialism, this speech actually caused more damage than expected. Following the Sports Palace Speech, the Movement began to become fragmented, with several important members stepping down from their positions.[274] In addition, the speech also caused the Nazi Party to begin to dissapprove and distance themselves from the Movement.[275] Even though the Movement would re-unify later on during the reign of the Third Reich, this fragmentation proves that the members of the Movement had different degrees of supporting certain ideologies.[276] In addition, the act of Hitler and the Nazi Party disapproving of the German nationalistic movement demonstrates that even they did not belong in Hitler's *Volksgemeinschaft*.[277] In connecting to the main thesis of this essay, historian Kevin P. Spencer states in his book, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism*, that the German Christians were the Protestant counterparts to the Catholic Brown Priests, who use Catholic interpretations of Christian ideology in order to support National Socialism.[278] This applies to one of the aspects in which similarities can be made between all three Christain churches (Catholic, Protestant, and Jehovah's Witnesses) during the Nazi regime. As will be seen in the next chapter on the Jehovah's Witnesses, promotion of antisemitic ideas came more from the leading order of the religious organization.[279]

Protestant Resistance towards National Socialism: The Confessing Church and Dietrich Bonhoeffer

[274] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 252-267; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43
[275] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 252-267; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43
[276] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 252-267; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43
[277] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 252-267; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43
[278] Kevin P. Spencer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism.* (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 3-11.
[279] M. James Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*. University of Toronto Press, 2004, 3-28.

On the other side of the Church Struggle was a group of Prostestant clergymen that were against many of the ideologies that were being pushed by the German Christian Faith Movement.[280] This organization was known as the Confessing Church. It is important to mention that this movement was not a political one, since many members still believed in the Lutherian ideology of remaining obedient to one's state authority.[281] This section of the essay will focus on this organization and the stances they took in reaction to the German Christian Movement and the Nazi Party. This section will briefly go over the creation of the organization. Following this, the section will then shift focus on the ideology of the group and some of their actions against the German Christian Movement and Nazi policies. The section will then shift focus onto Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutherian pastor that strongly protested the German Christian Movement and the Nazi Party, and who would later be executed for his role in a plot to assassinate Hitler.[282] For further evidence, this section will provide segments of Bonhoeffer's writings and sermons to give an in-depth analysis of his resistance against the Nazis. By viewing these aspects of the Confessing Church, it can be seen that individual interpretations of Lutheran ideologies were similar to that of the interpretations of other Christian ideologies as seen in Catholic resistors and the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Many of the people that would later become members of the Confessing Church initially supported Hitler when he first gained power over Germany, in addition to some members still

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[280] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, 252-267; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29; Donald D. Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." J*ournal of Church and State* 23, no. 1 (1981): 15–34.

[281] Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29;Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Roderick Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany: Origins, Interpretations, Legacies*, (London: Routledge, 1999), 139.

[282] Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29; Isabel Best, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Douglas W. Stott, Anne Schmidt-Lange, Scott A. Moore, and Claudia D. Bergmann. "EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION." In *The Collected Sermons of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, edited by Isabel Best, 1517 Media, 2012, xiii–xxvi.

supporting the Nazi Government during the Second World War.[283] However, as the year came to an end, around 25 to 30 percent of the German Protestant clergy would begin to reject the Nazi regime's integration to church affairs.[284] These clergymen would later join in Martin Neimöller's Pastors' Emergency League, which was created as an opposition to group towards the Protestant Synod's adoption of the "Aryan Paragraph" in the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, passed by the Nazi government on April 7, 1933.[285] The main focus of the law was to rid several civil servant professions of members deemed to be enemies of the Nazi regime, especally Jews.[286] The General Synod of the Protestant Church of the Old Prussian Union, which was by then in the control of the German Christian Movement, adapted the paragraphs to exclude baptized Jews from positions of power within the church, such as being pastors.[287] Section two of paragraph one of the Aryan Paragraph states, "Those of non-Aryan descent or married to someone of non-Aryan descent may not be called as clergy or officials in the general church administration. Clergy or officials who marry a person of non-Aryan descent are to be dismissed. Who counts as a person of non-Aryan descent is to be determined by the regulations accompanying the laws of the Reich."[288] This paragraph effectively made any baptized Jewish pastors no longer have the right to hold their position.[289] This went against many of the Protestant

[283] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-16; Best, "EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION." xiii–xxvi; Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany,* 139.
[284] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Best, "EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION." xiii–xxvi; Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany,* 139.
[285] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Best, "EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION." xiii–xxvi; Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany,* 139; Various Authors. "The Aryan Paragraph in the Church and Responses." In *A Church Undone: Documents from the German Christian Faith Movement, 1932-1940*, edited by Mary M. Solberg, 53–80. 1517 Media, 2015, 53-55.
[286] Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany,* 139; Various Authors. "The Aryan Paragraph in the Church and Responses." 53-55.
[287] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Best, "EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION." xiii–xxvi; Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany,* 139; Various Authors. "The Aryan Paragraph in the Church and Responses;" 53-55; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29.
[288] Various Authors. "The Aryan Paragraph in the Church and Responses;" 57.
[289] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Best, "EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION." xiii–xxvi; Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany,* 139; Various Authors. "The Aryan Paragraph in the Church and Responses;" 53-55; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29.

clergymen's interpretations of Lutheran ideology, which states that those who came from Jewish backgrounds are allowed to be in the church as long as they converted to Christianity and were baptized.[290] This can be seen as a form of resistance to the formation of the *Volksgemeinschaft* because it goes against the Nazis' focus of complete loyalty to the regime, as well as it is advocating fot those who were deemed the official enemies of the new community. The interpretation of these clergymen towards their Lutheran doctrine appeals to a sense of compassion towards enemies of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*, which is seen by both members of the Catholic church and the Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Pastors' Emergency League would end up having around 7,000 members by January 1934.[291] In the May of the same year, all opposition clergymen came together at Barman and Dahlem (Berlin) to agree on a unified statement against the Reich's infringement on church affairs and as a statement of opposition towards the German Christian Movement.[292] This agreement would become known as the Barmen Declaration, which signified the formation of the Confessing Church.[293] The main focus of the declaration was that the Confessing Church was pledging their loyalty to Christ and informed the reader of the proper ways of secularized government.[294] The justification for their strong stance on the church and state having separate powers can be seen in section 8.22-5 of the declaration, which states:

> 8.22–5 "Fear God. Honor the emperor." (1 Peter 2:17)
> Scripture tells us that, in the as yet unredeemed world in which the Church also exists, the State has by divine appointment the task of providing for justice and peace. [It fulfills this task] by means of the threat and exercise of force, according to the measure of human

[290] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Best, "EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION." xiii–xxvi; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29
[291] Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29.
[292] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Best, "EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION." xiii–xxvi; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43.
[293] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Best, "EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION." xiii–xxvi; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43; Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany,* 139.
[294] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 16.

> judgment and human ability. The Church acknowledges the benefit of this divine appointment in gratitude and reverence before him. It calls to mind the Kingdom of God, God's commandment and righteousness, and thereby the responsibility both of rulers and of the ruled. It trusts and obeys the power of the Word by which God upholds all things.[295]

This idea of a division between church and state powers is connected to the Confessing Church's members' interpretation of Lutheran doctrine, in which God is the only one to have ultimate power over the church's affairs, and that the state has ultimate authority over its own affairs.[296] This also connects to the traditional Germanic idea of the "doctrine of Two Kingdoms," which was the traditional German form of separation between church and state.[297] However, both interpretations of these ideologies also caused the leaders of the majority in the Confessing Church to try to compromise with the Nazi regime.[298] This is because both doctrines stated that the church could not get involved in state affairs, and could only get involved if the church deems that the state is no longer serving the interests of its people.[299] This enforcement of interpretations of religious ideology by the majority of high ranking clergymen is an example of a similarity between all three of the churches examined in this essay. For the Catholic church, compromise was based around the ideology, and interpretation of church affairs, of future Pope Pius XII, who was the writer of the Reich Concordat.[300] In addition, the majority of Confessing Church clergymen still believed in the Lutheran ideology that one must serve and follow the orders of authorities of their nation, which led to many members joining the ranks of the German

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[295] Karl Barth, "Theological Declaration of Barmen (1934)." In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, edited by Anson Rabinbach and SanderL. Gilman, 1st ed., 421–24. University of California Press, 2013, 423.
[296] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29.
[297] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29.
[300] John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII*. (New York: Viking Penguin), 1999, 1-8, 84-156, 360-371.

army during WWII.[301] It was only the radical minority that pushed for stronger acts of resistance towards the Nazis.[302] One of those radical members of the Confessing Church was Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer.[303]

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of the most strongest Protestant resistors towards the Nazi regime between the 1930s and 1940s.[304] As Isabel Best states in their introduction to a collection of Bonhoeffer's sermons, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer is considered one of the foremost Protestant theologians of the twentieth century."[305] Bonhoeffer dedicated his life towards the positive interpretation of the Christian/Lutheran ideology.[306] As a pastor, Bonhoeffer helped Martin Niemöller found his Pastors' Emergency League.[307] As explained previously in this chapter, this organization would later become the Confessing Church, which Bonhoeffer also helped establish.[308] Bonhoeffer was a strong supporter of the "doctrine of Two Kingdoms," in that he believed that the state should not be involved in church affairs and decisions.[309] Similar to the members of the Confessing Church, this resistance came as a response to the passing of the "Aryan Paragraph."[310] Bonhoeffer believed that the state had no authority to say who could be baptized and who could not, and that Jews were still allowed to be part of the Protestant Church.[311] However, Bonhoeffer had a more progressive interpretation of Lutheran ideology

[301] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34.
[302] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29.
[303] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29.
[304] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29.
[305] Best, "EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION." xiii.
[306] Best, "EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION." xiii–xxvi.
[307] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29; Best, "EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION." xiii–xxvi.
[308] Ibid.
[309] Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29.
[310] Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29.
[311] Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."106–29.

towards Jews than other members of his church.[312] In June of 1933, Bonhoeffer published his essay titled "The Church and the Jewish Question."[313] In this article, Bonhoeffer makes the argument that the church had the authority to say who can be a member and who could not, and fully supported the idea of Jews becoming members of the Protestant Church.[314] Resistance towards how Jews were view in the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* can be seen when he states:

> From the point of view of Christ's church, Judaism is never a racial concept but rather a religious one. Rather than the biologically dubious entity of the Jewish race, it means the "people Israel." It is God's law that constitutes the "people" Israel; thus one can become a Jew by accepting the law. But in the racial sense one cannot become a Jew. At the time of the great Jewish missions to the Gentile world, there were various steps toward becoming a Jew (Schürer III 1909, pages 150ff.). In the same way, being a Jewish Christian is a religious and not a racial concept. The Jewish Christian mission also extended to Gentile regions (see Paul's opponents in the Letter to the Galatians). There were Gentile Jewish Christians and Jewish Gentile Christians.[315]

Here, Bonhoeffer is rejecting the main aspect of *Volksgemeinschaft* exclusion, in that the Jews are classified as a race that does not belong in the "people's community."[316] In addition, Bonhoeffer also saw Chritianity and Judaism as being in a reciprocal relationship with one another.[317] This demonstrates that Bonhoeffer, in his interpretation of Lutheran/Chrsitian ideology, was similar to that of those Germans who resisted the *Volksgemeinschaft* by showing compassion to the enemies of the "people's community."

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how both factions within the Church Struggle were greatly impacted by their individual interpretations of Chritian doctrine and how they applied these interpretations to their ability to either support, compromise, or resist the National Socialist's

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312 Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."106–29.
313 Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."106-114.
314 Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."106–29; Dietrich Bonhoeffer. "The Church and the Jewish Question." In *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, eds. Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge, 1517 Media, 2013, 370–78.
315 Bonhoeffer. "The Church and the Jewish Question," 368.
316 Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."106–29.
317 Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."106–29.

concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This connects to the essay's main thesis in that the important impact Christian ideology had towards the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was what made all three churches (Catholic, Protestant, and Jehovah's Witnesses) similar to one another during the Nazi regime. As pointed out by Doris Bergen, around two-thirds of the 95 percent German Christian population identified as being members of the Protestant Church.[318] In addition, Bergen and Stackelberg also explain that the German Protestant Church has had a long history of antisemitism, going all the way back to the church's founder, Martin Luther.[319] On the topic of similarities between religious groups that promoted National Socialism and their view of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the Protestant German Christian Faith Movement shares many similarities with that of the Catholic Brown Priests.[320] Both interpreted Chrisitan ideology as either already being compatible with National Socialism, or needing to be altered to fit more alongside with the Nazi Party.[321] This idea of having religion being subjected to National Sociaslist control was one of the main goals in creating the *Volksgemeinschaft*. In addition, the decision by the the majority of the high ranking clergymen in the Confessing Church movement shares the same similarities with that of the Vatican , and what will be seen by the Watchtower Society (leaders of the Jehovah's Witnesses), in that all three organizations tried to compromise with the Nazi regime due to the ideological interpetations of their leaders. For the Confessing Church, it was due to their interpretation of Lutheran doctrine which states that the church cannot get involved in state affairs.[322] As for the similarities between Christian resistors, the compassion towards the enemies

[318] Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany." 329-348.
[319] Doris L. Bergen, "Catholics, Protestants, and Christian Antisemitism in Nazi Germany." in *Central European History* 27, no. 3, 1994, 329–48; Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany,* 136-140.
[320] Kevin P. Spencer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism.* (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 3-11.
[321] Spencer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism,* 3-11; Bergen, *Twisted Cross*, 1-60, 101-118; Solberg, "Introduction." 1-43; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29; Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany,* 136-140.
[322] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29.

of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, as seen by some members of the Confessing Church and especially Dietrich Bonhoeffer.[323] This demonstrates an exact similarity between Catholic resistors and Protestant resistors, and as to be seen in the next chapter, members of the German branch of Jehovah's Witnesses.

[323] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29.

Chapter 3:

Jehovah's Witnesses in Hitler's *Volksgemeinschaft*

The final chapter of this essay will now focus on how the German branch of the Jehovah's Witnesses were involved in the creation of Hitler's *Volksgemeinschaft,* and how their interpretation of Christian ideology affected this creation. The Jehovah Witnesses were the most resistant to Nazi interferance in their religious practices and ideologies as compared to the other two Christian denominations presented in this essay. As scholar Gabriele Yonan states in her 1999 article titled *Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany: The Case of the Jehovah's Witnesses*, "If there was one Christian group that rejected the Hitler-led German National Socialist State without compromise, it was the Jehovah's Witnesses."[324] Even after several years of persecution by the Nazis, imprisonment, and killings, the German Jehovah's Witnesses continued to stay steadfast to their beliefs and not give into the National Socialist's idea of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.[325] This chapter will examine the creation of the movement and the establishment of its German branch. Following this, this chapter shifts focus onto Nazi attitudes towards the Witnesses and how their ideology was the reason for several acts of resistance.[326] This chapter will conclude examination of how the Watchtower Society, the head leaders of the religious movement, tried to justify their position in Germany at the beginning of Hitler's rule, as argued by M. James Penton in his book, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*.[327] In addition, this chapter agrees with scholar Gabriele Yonan's

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[324] Gabriele Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany: The Case of the Jehovah's Witnesses." in *Journal of Church and State 41*, no. 2, (1999): 309.
[325] William F. Meinecke, Alexandra Zapruder, and Timothy Kaiser. *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust*, ed. by Laura Glassman and Barbara Hart. Washington D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2007, 31-39; King, Christina, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," In *Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis*, ed. Michael. A Berenbaum. New York: New York University Press, 1990, 188-193; Jerry Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps: A History of Their Conflicts with the Nazi State," in *Journal of Church and State 38*, no. 1 (1996): 87–113; Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-322.
[326] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-322.
[327] M. James Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*. University of Toronto Press, 2004, 3-28.

argument in which the beliefs and ideology of the Jehovah's Witnesses was the main reason for their strong resistance to Nazi society.[328] By examining these aspects of the Witnesses' involvement in Nazi society, this essay argues that the German Jehovah's Witnesses' version of Christian ideology and membership is a key example in how Christian ideology influenced the creation, development, and membership of the Nazi's *Volksgemeinschaft* in 1930s-40's fascist Germany.

The Jehovah's Witnesses were first founded in Allegheny, Pennsylvania in the 1870s by American businessman Charles Taze Russell.[329] Based in Brooklyn, New York as of the year 1902, the religious organization, then named the "Earnest Bible Students" would later take on the name "Jehovah's Witnesses" in the year of 1931.[330] The Witnesses have been active in Germany since 1896, making their first conversions of German citizens around 1900, and founding their German branch headquarters in 1902.[331] It is estimated that the German branch of the Witnesses was around 22,000 as of 1926.[332] Due to the economic unrest and issues that German citizens faced during the Great Depression, membership to the Jehovah's Witnesses greatly increased.[333] As M. James Penton states in his book, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, "Between 1932 and the spring of 1933 they grew from 12,484 to 19,268 in the numbers of actual door-to-door preachers or 'publishers.'"[334] By 1933, the year in which Hitler took power as chancellor of Germany, membership in the German branch of the

[328] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-322
[329] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-310; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193.
[330] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-310.
[331] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-310; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Peter Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." In *Against the Draft: Essays on Conscientious Objection from the Radical Reformation to the Second World War*, (University of Toronto Press, 2006). 425–48.
[332] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193.
[333] M. James Penton, "German Bible Student–Jehovah's Witnesses, 1902–1933." In *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, (University of Toronto Press, 2004), 142-145.
[334] Penton, "German Bible Student–Jehovah's Witnesses, 1902–1933." In *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 144.

Jehovah's Witnesses was estimated to be around 25,000 members, with an additional 10,000 German citizens acting sympathetic to the organization.[335]

The Jehovah's Witnesses' ideology centers around their allegiance as being citizens to the Kingdom of God.[336] The Witnesses believe that the world is near its end and that the powers of Satan have heavily influenced the powers of the world.[337] They believe that the coming battle of Armageddon will occur on the earth, and that the forces of Christ will defeat all that is wicked on the planet.[338] Following Armageddon, Christ would then install his millennium, a thousand year rule, on earth and that those who have stayed loyal to Jehovah and Christ would be the citizens of this new world.[339] Because of this ideology, Jehovah's Witnesses have already pledged their loyalty to this upcoming holy world order and not that of the current earthly governments.[340] For the government's on earth, Witnesses take a neutral stance and refuse to participate in any action that is deemed nationalistic or militarisitc to a specific nation or government.[341] This ideology of refusing to take part in earthly governments has caused many issues for the members of the German Jehovah's Witnesses, even before Hitler came to power in 1933.[342]

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[335] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-310; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." In *Against the Draft: Essays on Conscientious Objection from the Radical Reformation to the Second World War*, 425.

[336] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-310; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193.

[337] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-310; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193..

[338] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-310; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193.

[339] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-310; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48.

[340] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-310; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48.

[341] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-310; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48.

[342] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-310; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Penton, "German Bible Student–Jehovah's Witnesses, 1902–1933." 136-159.

Before the National Socialists gained power over the German government and society, the Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany were already seen as outsiders by their fellow citizens.[343] Because of their preaching and beliefs both during and after WWI, both German citizens and government authorities began to have negative opinions about the Witnesses.[344] During the Weimar Republic, the Witnesses faced several attempts by different local German authorities to outlaw their door-to-door preaching and other actions.[345] Members of the organization would often be arrested and fined for breaking anti-peddling laws that local German authorities put in place to prevent further actions from the Witnesses.[346] In addition, the Witnesses were also looked down upon by members of both the Catholic and Protestant clergy, who viewed their organization as heresy.[347] As Penton states, "By the end of 1932, the last year of the Weimar Republic, 2,335 cases were pending against them, largely as a result of clerical action."[348] This negative treatment towards the German Jehovah's Witnesses only got worse during the rise of nationalistic ideals and the popularity of the NSDAP that occurred in the early 1930s.[349] The increase in negative attitudes towards the Witnesses in Germany was in part due to the organization's ties to Judaism and support of Zionism.[350] Members of the Nazi Party and many nationalistic citizens began to believe that the Jehovah's Witnesses were part of an international

[343] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39.
[344] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Penton, "German Bible Student–Jehovah's Witnesses, 1902–1933." 136-159.
[345] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Penton, "German Bible Student–Jehovah's Witnesses, 1902–1933." 136-159.
[346] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Penton, "German Bible Student–Jehovah's Witnesses, 1902–1933." 136-159.
[347] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Penton, "German Bible Student–Jehovah's Witnesses, 1902–1933." 136-159.
[348] Penton, "German Bible Student–Jehovah's Witnesses, 1902–1933." 142.
[349] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Penton, "German Bible Student–Jehovah's Witnesses, 1902–1933." 136-159.
[350] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 3-28; 136-159; Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-322.

Jewish conspiricy.[351] This accusation of being connected to Judaism would have already made the less likely to be welcomed into the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*. Witnesses would also be attacked by members of the SA, who would often disrupt Witnesses' meetings and physically attack individuals.[352]

Jehovah's Witnesses' during the Third Reich

Because of their belief in not pledging any loyalty to any earthly government, the Jehovah's Witnesses became a prime target for Nazi persecution from the very start of the regime in 1933, as well as during their rise to power before then.[353] From the very beginning, Jehovah's Witnesses became steadfast resistors to Nazi integration of all aspects of society.[354] As religious scholar Gabriele Yonan states in her 1999 article, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany: The Case of the Jehovah's Witnesses," the Witnesses saw Hitler's regime as being the advancement of Satan's army on earth, and that this was a time in which their loyalty to Jehovah will be tested.[355] As Yonan states," Their resistance was part of Jehovah's battle with Satan, and they viewed themselves as Jehovah's apostles, witnesses, and disciples. God had given them the mission to resist the Nazis."[356] Due to their beliefs, Jehovah's Witnesses refused to take any part in the Nazi culture, whether it be suluting to Hitler or joining Nazi ran organizations like the German Labor Front.[357] Resistance by the Witnesses was performed by

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[351] Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 143.
[352] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 144-145.
[353] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-322; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48.
[354] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-322; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48.
[355] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 315-322
[356] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 315.
[357] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-322; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 3-5.

members of any level or age, even by school children.[358] One example that is similar to what German Witness children faced can be seen in the experience of Austrian born Hermine Liska, who faced persecution for her religious beliefs.[359] As she states,"

> In accordance with my religious upbringing, as a schoolchild I refused to do the Hitler salute and to participate in any National Socialist activities such as singing nationalistic songs and saluting the flag, which was also customary during the daily singing. People tried to convert me by pressurizing me and giving me punishments, bullying me, giving me an "F" grade in conduct and by my demotion from the fifth to the first grade by the School Director Mr. G."[360]

Laws and regulations began to be passed that led to the confiscation of Witnesses' properties and banning of their organization and its practices.[361] One such example can be seen when the German Jehovah's Witnesses headquarters in Magdeburg was raided and seized by the Nazis twice in 1933.[362] The Reich authorities justified that the first raid was conducted because they suspected that the headquarters was promoting Communism, an ideology that the government tied to the Jehovah's Witnesses.[363] The Nazis also attacked the German Jehovah's Witnesses due suspicions based around the religion's American origins, in addition to the religion's ties to

[358] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-322; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48.
[359] Hermine Liska, "When they took me away it was Terrible," in *Lives remembered : Life Stories of Victims of National Socialism*, ed. Renate S. Meissner (Vienna: National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism, 2010), 195-197.
[360] Liska, "When they took me away it was Terrible," 196.
[361] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-322; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Penton, "German Bible Student–Jehovah's Witnesses, 1902–1933." 136-159.
[362] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 318; Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 136-159.
[363] King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 150-159.

Judaism and the Old Testament.[364] By 1935, the Jehovah's Witnesses organization, and all of their activities and meetings, was completely banned throughout all of Germany.[365]

In addition to the laws that banned the Witnesses from practicing their beliefs, regulations starting in 1938 allowed the government to take away the children of parents that were still practicing Jehovah's Witnesses.[366] The conditions that child Jehovah's Witnesses faced in these re-education centers and camps were often terrible.[367] An example of the conditions can be seen in a song recited by Austrian born Anna Maierhofer, who was arrested by the Gestapo and sent to the *Am Spiegelgrund* facility following her expulsion from school in 1940.[368] The song, which was sung by the children at were forced into the re-education facility, goes as follows:

On the windows are bars of iron,
We are kept under lock and key,
Steinhof is our constant company

If our parents try to come visit
They are cursed and sworn at out loud
Visiting's just not allowed

And when our punishment is over
They give us their hands with cursing disdain
Never come here again!

"Girl, what are you looking for out in the snow?"

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[364] King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 3-5, 136-159; Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-322.
[365] King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 3-5, 136-159; Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-322.
[366] King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 87–113; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48.
[367] Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48.
[368] Anna Maierhofer," The Spiegelgrund Song," in *Lives remembered : Life Stories of Victims of National Socialism*, ed. Renate S. Meissner (Vienna: National Fund of the Republic of Austria for Victims of National Socialism, 2010), 198-199.

"I'm looking for my parents who I lost long ago.
My father died of illness, my mother of poverty
And now they lie dead in the Simmering cemetery."[369]

What happened to Hermine Liska is another example of what happened when the Nazi government took children away from their Witness parents. As she states, "my parents' parental authority was withdrawn because they refused to renounce their faith and in 1941, I was taken to the National Socialist reform school in Waiern near Feldkirchen in Carinthia, 50 km from my home. And that was the worst of all."[370] While at the reform school, Liska was forced to take part in becoming loyal to the Nazi state in order to be granted equal treatment as the other children.[371] However, Liska remained loyal to her faith while being forced to stay at the school.[372] As she states, "In Waiern, I was able to rejoin the fifth grade of elementary school. But because I refused to give the Hitler salute, my right to attend the high school was withdrawn. Once, they wanted to force me to wear the uniform of the National Socialist girls' movement, but try as she might, the director was unable to get the cardigan past my elbows."[373] Even while she was taken away from her parents and forced to abide by the National Socialist's standards of society, Liska still resisted being integrated into the *Volksgemeinschaft* based on her faith.

Objection of the Military and Treatment in the Camps

One of the main reasons for which many German Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted by the Nazi regime was because of their strong refusal to take part in anything connectedd to the military.[374] As of 1935, the Nazi government reintroduced military conscriptions for any German

[369] Maierhofer," The Spiegelgrund Song," 199.
[370] Liska, "When they took me away it was Terrible," 196.
[371] Liska, "When they took me away it was Terrible," 195-197.
[372] Liska, "When they took me away it was Terrible," 196.
[373] Liska, "When they took me away it was Terrible," 196.
[374] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-322; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 87–113.

male between the ages of 18 and 45.[375] Due to their ideology and their steadfast loyalty to the Kingdom of Jehovah, the majority of German Witness males refused to take part in the German military.[376] For them, they were already soldiers of God and could not take part in any earthly nation's military efforts.[377] This refusal to the military draft initially caused the Nazi authorities to issue arrests on the part of those Witnesses that refused, who were either sent to prisons or concentration camps.[378] With the outbreak of World War II, the consequences for refusing to take part in the German military was soon elevated to the death penalty.[379] This was mainly because the Nazi government viewed any refusal to take part in its military efforts as being a non-German aspect.[380] However, the Nazi regime still considered German Jehovah's Witnesses as being viable members of the *Volksgenmeinschaft*, only if they give up their loyalty to their faith.[381] While in the concentration camps, Jehovah's Witnesses were given the choice to sign a declaration that officially declared their rejection of loyalty to their religion, and in the case of male, their acceptance and willingness to serve in the military.[382] The following is an example of what such a declaration looked like:

I herewith give the following declaration:

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[375] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48.

[376] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-322; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 87–113.

[377] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39.

[378] Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 87–113.

[379] Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48.

[380] Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–434.

[381] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-322; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 87–113; Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution,* 360-362.

[382] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 307-322; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 87–113; Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution,* 360-362.

1. I have come to know that the International Bible Students Association disseminates false doctrines and under the guise of religion promotes aims dangerous to the state.

2. Therefore, I have completely left this organization and have freed myself entirely from the teachings of this sect.

3. I herewith give assurance that never again will I participate in the activities of the International Bible Students Association. Should any persons come to me with the teachings of the Bible Students or who in any way show their association with them, I will immediately report them [to the police]. Should any Bible Student literature be sent to me, I will immediately take it to the nearest police station.

4. In the future I will respect the laws of the state, and especially in the event of a war will I defend the Fatherland with weapon in hand, and I will fully and completely join myself to the racial community of the [German] people.

5.1 am informed that I will again be immediately taken into protective custody should I act contrary to the declaration given today.[383]

By signing this declaration, these Witnesses were essentially joining into the *Volksgemeinschaft.* Refusal to sign this declaration was met with either brutal punishments or execution.[384] However, the majority of the Jehovah's Witness men that were given this choice chose to stay loyal to their faith and to Jehovah.[385] In addition, this steadfast resistance to integrating into Nazi society and the military actually lead to Jehovah's Witnesses gaining respect from both their fellow camp

[383] "The Declaration Whereby Jehovah's Witnesses Could Abjure Their Faith and Be Released from Prisons and Concentration Camps," in *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution* by M. James Penton (University of Toronto Press, 2004), 360-362.
[384] Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48.
[385] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 316-322; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 87–113; Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution,* 360-362; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 191.

prisoners Nazi guards and high ranking officals.[386] As the scholar Peter Brock states, "Even Himmler paid a backhanded tribute to the Witnesses when he suggested that they should be settled in areas to the East, which he expected the German forces would take over from the Russians."[387] Himmler viewed the Witnesses' complete loyalty to their faith and strong refusal to give up as being qualities that would have been great to induce into soldiers of the regime.[388] This rejection to integrate into Nazi ideology and to become disloyal to one's faith is an excellent example in how Christian ideology and membership heavily influnced Jehovah's Witnesses ability to join the *Volksgenmeinschaft*.

While in the concentration camps, Jehovah's Witnesses were treated in a horrific way due to their steadfast loyalty to their faith and their refusal to participate in any military action.[389] Witnesses faced punishments like beatings, lashings/whippings, solitary confinement, and even executions in front of others to set an example.[390] On some occasions, several Witness prisoners were executed just because one refused to sign the declaration renouncing their faith.[391] An example of the brutality Jehovah's Witnesses faced in the camps can be seen in the interview of Max Liebster, a German man that was raised Jewish, but later converted to being a Jehovah Witness following his interactions with them in the concentration camps.[392] As Liebtser states,

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[386] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 87–113.
[387] Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 440.
[388] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 87–113.
[389] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 316-322; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 87–113.
[390] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 87–113.
[391] Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 87–113.
[392] Max Liebtser, interview by Robert Buckley, *Oral history interview with Max Liebster*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, February 5, 1991.

"And then after we went up to Sachsenhausen -- we arrived there, the SS asked each prisoner why do you come to the concentration camp. So he said he was one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and they were beating him up more than all other prisoners and gave him with the boots and with the feet and with the hands, like animals, like lions, and treating him very bad. All other prisoners were treated better than the Witnesses."[393] In addition, Witnesses were also punished through hard labor that tested the limits of their bodies and the refusal of necessary health care.[394] An example of punishing Witnesses to the limits that their bodies can handle is also described by what Liebster witnessed in the camps.[395] As he states, "The winter of '40 was -- '39/'40 was very cold; '41/'42 was also very cold. Put them on the roof in the courtyards all wet with water and let them freeze outside. And many Witnesses died there."[396] However, it was because of the Witnesses ideology and martyr complex that allowed them to withstand these brutal punishments and still refuse to give into Nazi society.[397]

Another way in which Nazi camp authorities tried to pressure Jehovah's Witnesses into renouncing their faith was through the Jehovah's Witnesses' connection to other camp prisoners.[398] Witnesses were often isolated from other camp prisoners due to the fear Nazis officals had that the Witnesses would try to convert others to their faith, which was often the case in the concentration camps.[399] However, some camp officials did try to integrate Jehovah's Witness prisoners into other prison populations, in order to get the other prisoners to persuade the Witnesses to renounce their faith through brutal and harsh treatment.[400] This was ultimately a

[393] Liebtser, interview by Robert Buckley, *Oral history interview with Max Liebster.*
[394] Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 430-433.
[395] Liebtser, interview by Robert Buckley, *Oral history interview with Max Liebster.*
[396] Liebtser, interview by Robert Buckley, *Oral history interview with Max Liebster.*
[397] Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 94–113; King, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," 188-193.
[398] Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 94–113.
[399] Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 94–113; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39;
[400] Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 101-113.

failure since the Witnesses never gave up their faith, and on some occasions even managed to convert other prisoners into the Jehovah's Witnesses' faith.[401] One such example is Max Liebster himself, since he was converted to Jehovah's Witnesses following his experiences with Witness prisoners.[402] As he states:

> I was on the third, and there was Mr. Anstrawa, which I had learned about him before. He was sleeping on the other side. And during this time I learned very much about the Bible. And every night he was interested to get to me information of the hope which God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And God promised to Abraham all nations, all races would bless themselves in accepting the Messiah, which is proven in the Hebrew scriptures being the Christ. And 353 prophecies in the Hebrew scriptures. And many -- he knew all by heart. He explained it to me. That gave me conviction that this was true. He convinced me that is the only people which refused to kill one another. They love God more than themselves and their neighbor than themselves. And that convinced me that that is God's people. Then they bring the fruits of God's commandments.[403]

In addition, the following quotation by Liebster describes how he was even baptized while in a concentration camp.[404] Liebster states, "And we both got baptized in the bathtub of Lou Bloom, the president of France from Buchenwald. We both were baptized in the camp."[405] This ability to convert others is an excellent example of the Jehovah's Witnesses resistance to the creation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, in that they are actively converting other potential members of the Nazi's society away from Hitler's collective community. In addition, the Witnesses sometimes were also converting the people who the Nazis deemed as the main enemies to the *Volksgemeinschaft*, European Jews. This can also be seen as a connection between the Jehovah's Witnesses and the

[401] Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 94–113; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39.
[402] Liebtser, interview by Robert Buckley, *Oral history interview with Max Liebster.*
[403] Liebtser, interview by Robert Buckley, *Oral history interview with Max Liebster.*
[404] Liebtser, interview by Robert Buckley, *Oral history interview with Max Liebster.*
[405] Liebtser, interview by Robert Buckley, *Oral history interview with Max Liebster.*

Confessing Church. The Confessing Church believed in respecting Jews and allowing them to convert over to Protestantism.[406]

Compromise by Official Leaders in the Jehovah's Witnesses

In the wake of the initial attacks on the Jehovah's Witness community in Germany in 1933, the then leader of the Watchtower Society, Judge Joseph Franklin Rutherford, and other official leaders of the German branch of the Witnesses tried make a compromise with the Nazi government.[407] I agree with portions of Gabriele Yonan's argument that the ideology of the Jehovah's Witnesses was the main reason for their resistance, but I do not agree with her analysis of the Jehovah's Witnesses' "Declaration of Facts" as not being an attempt to appease the Nazi government.[408] I agree with the analysis of the declaration as presented in M. James Penton's book titled *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution.* In his book, Penton makes the argument that the "Declaration of Facts" was a form of appeasement to the Nazis on the grounds of antisemitism and attacking international powers like the United States, Great Britian, and even the League of Nations.[409] One section that stands out is subtitled "Jews" in which the Watchtower states that it has no connection to Judaism or has ever been funded by Jews.[410] One part of the section that Penton points out goes as follows:

> The greatest and most oppressive empire on earth is the AngloAmerican empire. By that is meant the British Empire, of which the United States of America forms a part. It has been the commercial Jews of the British-American empire that have built up and carried on Big Business as a means of exploiting and oppressing the peoples of many nations. This fact particularly applies to the cities of London and New York, the stronghold of Big Business. This fact is so manifest in America that there is a proverb concerning the city of New York which says: 'The Jews own it, the Irish Catholics rule it, and the Americans pay the bills.' We have no fight with any of these persons mentioned, but, as the witnesses

[406] John A. Moses, *The Reluctant Revolutionary: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Collision with Prusso-German History.* NED-New edition, 1. Berghahn Books, 2014, 103-129; Donald D. Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." J*ournal of Church and State* 23, no. 1 (1981): 15–34.
[407] Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 3-28, 136-159.
[408] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 316-322
[409] Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 3-28, 136-159.
[410] Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 3-28.

> for Jehovah and in obedience to his commandment set forth in the Scriptures, we are compelled to call attention to the truth concerning the same in order that the people may be enlightened concerning God and his purpose.[411]

Yonan states that this document was not a declaration of antisemitism, but that it was more about being a sermon to try to convince Hitler in the ideology of Jehovah and the organization.[412] However, as Penton points out, that the declaration connected the Jews, the United States, and Great Britain as all being oppressive forces.[413] In addition, Penton also states the Rutherford, who was most likely the author of this document, was influenced by the rise in antisemitism in the West that was occurring in the 1920s and 1930s.[414] Penton points out that similar documents from Rutherford demonstrate his stances towards Jews even further, in that he had disdain for all Jews that were not Orthodox.[415] In addition, it also seems that the declaration also supports the Nazi ideology of an internationl cospricy in that Jews were taking over prominant positions in the world. This can be seen when the declaration points to the "commercial Jews of the British-American empire that have built up and carried on Big Business as a means of exploiting and oppressing the peoples of many nations"[416] This document, as well as other letters that were sometimes sent personally to Hitler, demonstrate that the Watchtower Society was initially willing to make a compromise with the Nazi government.[417] This example and Penton's analysis demonstrate that all three major Chrisitan denominations in Germany had elements of or participate in a form of compromise with the Nazi government based on the ideology of offical leaders.

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[411] Joseph Franklin Rutherford, "Declaration of Facts," in *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*. ed. M. James Penton (University of Toronto Press, 2004), 278.
[412] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 318-322.
[413] Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 3-28.
[414] Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 3-28.
[415] Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 3-28.
[416] Rutherford, "Declaration of Facts," 278; Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 3-28.
[417] Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 3-28.

Chapter Conclusion

Even before the start of the Nazi regime, the German Jehovah's Witnesses were already not viable members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Their actions of preaching and trying to convert other Germans between 1900s and 1930s already made the be seen as outsiders in German society, something that the Nazis would only excellerate.[418] Ideology in remaining loyal to only Jehovah and no one else was something the Nazis did not like.[419] This went against one of the prime aspects of the *Volksgemeinschaft* that the Nazis were trying to enforce onto the German population, that of complete loyalty to Hitler and the regime only. In addition, many Witnesses refused to take part in any action that was to the benefit of the regime during the war, even to the point of many male Witnesses facing beatings and death for refusing to enter into military service.[420] While in the camps for refusing to abide by *Volksgemeinschaft* standards, the Witnesses used their communities and compassion towards other prisoners in order to convert new people to become Jehovah's Witnesses.[421] This was a similarity that the Witnesses shared with both the Catholic and Protestant resistors, in that they showed compassion and respect towards those deemed as enemies to the *Volksgemeinschaft*, especially Jews. Another similarity that the German Witnesses had with the other churches is that high official leaders used their interpretation of ideology as a reason for trying to compromise with the Nazi regime. This was seen in the Catholic Church by the Reich Concordat, and by officials of the Confessing Church that remained somewhat loyal to some aspects of the Nazi regime due to their interpetation of

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[418] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Penton, "German Bible Student–Jehovah's Witnesses, 1902–1933." 136-159.

[419] Yonan, "Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany," 316-322; Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 87–113.

[420] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 87–113.

[421] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 87–113.

Lutheran doctrine.[422] What makes the German Jehovah's Witnesses stand out from the other two churches was that they did not have any known members try to endorse National Socialism and the *Volksgemeinschaft* by connecting it to the Witnesses' interpretation of Christian ideology.

[422] Meinecke, et al., *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust,* 31-39; Brock, "Jehovah's Witnesses as Conscientious Objectors in Nazi Germany." 425–48; Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps, 87–113; John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII*. (New York: Viking Penguin), 1-8, 84-156, 360-371.

Conclusion

By examining the aspects of all three of these Christian churches that has been presented in this essay, it has been argued that all three denominations shared a similarity with one another by the fact that their different versions and individual interpretations of Christian ideology and doctirne greatly impacted their ability, and the strength of that ability, to either take part in promotion or resistance towards the National Socialists' *Volksgemeinschaft*. The main focus of the essay was in how all three of these German Chrisitan churches (Catholic, Protestant, and Jehovah's Witnesses) shared similarities in how they used their interpretations of Christian ideology and doctrine in order to support, resist, or compromise with the Nazis' concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. As explained in the introduction of this essay, the *Volksgemeinschaft* was the Nazis' concept towards creating a collective German utopia, in which all members were strongly loyal to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi state.[423] The main aspect of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was the fact that it was a flexible concept that was open to small variations in interpretation by those deemed worthy of joining.[424] However, it was a community based on both inclusion and exclusion.[425] Exclusion for the *Volksgemeinschaft* was focused around those who were deemed enemies of the community, with Jews as being the main enemy.[426]

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[423] Michael Wildt, "Volksgemeinschaft: A Modern Perspective on National Socialist Society." In *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives*, edited by Martina Steber, and Bernhard Gotto. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014, 43-59; Martina Steber, and Bernhard Gotto. "Volksgemeinschaft: Writing the Social History of the Nazi Regime." In *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives*, edited by Martina Steber, and Bernhard Gotto. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014, 1-29.

[424] Lutz Raphael, "Pluralities of National Socialist Ideology: New Perspectives on the Production and Diffusion of National Socialist Weltanschauung." In *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives*, edited by Martina Steber, and Bernhard Gotto. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014, 73-86; Detlef Schmiechen-Ackermann, "Social Control and the Making of the Volksgemeinschaft." In *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives*, edited by Martina Steber, and Bernhard Gotto. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2014, 240-254; Wildt, "Volksgemeinschaft: A Modern Perspective on National Socialist Society." 44-59

[425] Wildt, "Volksgemeinschaft: A Modern Perspective on National Socialist Society." 43-59; Raphael, "Pluralities of National Socialist Ideology: New Perspectives on the Production and Diffusion of National Socialist Weltanschauung." 73-86; Schmiechen-Ackermann, "Social Control and the Making of the Volksgemeinschaft." 240-254; Steber and Gotto. "Volksgemeinschaft: Writing the Social History of the Nazi Regime."1-29.

[426] Ibid.

Both the German Catholic and Protestant Churches had members in their ranks that fully supported the Nazis' *Volksgemeinschaft* in connection to their interpetation of Christian ideology.[427] For the German Catholics, it was the individual, pro-Nazi Brown Priests. They saw their understanding of Catholic doctrine as being interconnected to the ideologies of the Nazi regime, and thus promoted the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in a way associted with Christianity.[428] Examples of Catholic priests supporting the National Socialists regime can be seen in the actions of Abbot Alban Schachleiter and Philipp Haeuser.[429] As for the German Protestants, their was the pro-Nazi German Christian Faith Movement.[430] This Protestant organization also tried to connect their interpretation Christian ideology to that of the National Socialists' ideology, in addition to trying to combine all the Protestant churches into one Reich Church, which was the ultimate combination of the two ideologies.[431] Both of these religious groups viewed that their religions needed to be altered in order to remain strong.[432] In addition, both groups supported strong stances on antisemitic ideals.[433] As historian Kevin P. Spencer states, the two groups were the counterparts to each other.[434]

As for those that resisted the Nazis' concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, all three churches had members that refused to take part in National Socialist ideology one way or another. For the Catholic Church, it was individuals like Gerturd Luckner and Margarete Sommer, who showed

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[427] Kevin P. Spencer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism.* (Dekalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 3-11.
[428] Spencer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism.* 3-11, 34-60, 80-101.
[429] Spencer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism.* 3-11, 34-60, 80-101.
[430] Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross : The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996, 1-21; John A. Moses, *The Reluctant Revolutionary: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Collision with Prusso-German History.* NED-New edition, 1. Berghahn Books, 2014, 117-126.
[431] Ibid.
[432] Spencer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism.* 3-11, 34-60, 80-101; Bergen, *Twisted Cross : The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich,* 1-21; Moses, *The Reluctant Revolutionary,* 117-126; Mary M. Solberg, "Introduction." *In A Church Undone: Documents from the German Christian Faith Movement, 1932-1940*, edited by Mary M. Solberg, 1–43.
[433] Ibid.
[434] Spencer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism.* 3-11.

compassion for German Jews and even tried to save as many as they could.[435] As for the German Protestants, Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer and several members of the Confessing Church argued for Jews to be treated with respect and be allowed to become part of the German Protestant Church.[436] While in concentration camps, German Jehovah's Witnesses respected their fellow prisoners, people deemed enemies of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, and were even able to convert some to become fellow Witnesses.[437] Members of all three of these denominations resisted the concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft* by showing compassion towards those who the Nazis deemed unfit to live in the new "people's community." In addition, individuals such as the Jesuit priest Alfred Delp and Dietrich Bonhoeffer provided examples of resistance through disloyalty towards the Nazi regime.[438] In addition, both men took part in plots to assassinate Adolf Hitler.[439]

As for events in which individual high ranking members of the church tried to make a compromise with the Nazi government, all three churches are connected in this similiarity. For the Catholic Church, it was the 1933 Reich Concordat signed between the Vatican and the Nazi government.[440] The Concordat was based on the ideology of Eugenio Pacelli, who would later become Pope Pius XII.[441] He believed that the only way in which the Catholic Church could be

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[435] Michael Phayer, "Questions about Catholic Resistance." *Church History* 70, no. 2, 2001, 328-344.
[436] Donald D. Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." J*ournal of Church and State* 23, no. 1 (1981): 15–34; John A. Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937." In *The Reluctant Revolutionary: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Collision with Prusso-German History*, NED-New edition, 1,Berghahn Books, 2009, 103–29.
[437] William F. Meinecke, Alexandra Zapruder, and Timothy Kaiser. *Nazi Ideology and the Holocaust*, ed. by Laura Glassman and Barbara Hart. Washington D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2007, 31-39; King, Christina, "Jehovah Witnesses under Nazism," In *Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis*, ed. Michael. A Berenbaum. New York: New York University Press, 1990, 188-193; Jerry Bergman, "The Jehovah's Witnesses' Experience in the Nazi Concentration Camps: A History of Their Conflicts with the Nazi State," in *Journal of Church and State 38*, no. 1 (1996): 87–113.
[438] Phayer, "Questions about Catholic Resistance," 328-344; Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15-34; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937."103–29.
[439] Phayer, "Questions about Catholic Resistance," 328-344; Isabel Best, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Douglas W. Stott, Anne Schmidt-Lange, Scott A. Moore, and Claudia D. Bergmann. "EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION." In *The Collected Sermons of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, edited by Isabel Best, 1517 Media, 2012, xiii–xxvi..
[440] John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII*. (New York: Viking Penguin), 1999, 1-8, 84-156, 360-371.
[441] Ibid.

strengthened during the twentieth century was to give more power to the office of the Pope.[442] For the Protestant Church, it was the decisions of the high ranking clergymen of the Confessing Church. They believed that they had to remain loyal to state authority and follow the orders given by the state, even if it was a call to arms as in the case of the Nazi government.[443] This was because of their interpretation of Lutheran doctrine, and only a few members decided to go against it, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer.[444] As for the German Jehovah's Witnesses, it was the decision by the leader of the Watchtower Society at the time, Judge Joseph Franklin Rutherford, to try to initially compromise with the Nazi government.[445] In a declaration sent to high ranking Nazi officals, the Watchtower Society tried to justify a compromise on the basis of antisemitic ideals, such as mutal hatred towards the percieved international Jewish conspricy that leaders of both organizations believed in.[446] All three of the German churches tried, at some point and in some way, to compromise with the Nazi regime.

As argued throughout this essay, all of the German churches examined in this essay (Catholic, Protestant, and Jehovah's Witnesses) all shared similarities in how they used their interpretations of Christian ideology to either support, resist, or compromise with the Nazis' concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This essay was not meant to examine if one religious organization in Germany at the time of the Nazi regime was better than another, it was to show that all were similar to one another in different ways. By examining how all three of these German churches were similar in some of their reactions to the Nazis' concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, it can be better understood of religious organization tried to find their place in

[442] Ibid.
[443] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15–34; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937." 103–29.
[444] Wall, "The Confessing Church and the Second World War." 15–34; Moses, "The Church Struggle to 1937." 103–29.
[445] M. James Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*. University of Toronto Press, 2004, 3-28.
[446] Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics under Persecution*, 3-28.

a community that had one of its main goals being to alienate all of the population from religious influences.[447] The hope of this essay is to further explore the historical analysis of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and to gain a better understanding of what occurred in the local German population at one of the darkest times in human history.

[447] Steber and Gotto, "Volksgemeinschaft: Writing the Social History of the Nazi Regime." 1-29.

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