Abstract

This thesis is a study of the policy of the Protestant church leadership towards the Weimar Republic and during the first six months of the Third Reich. The scope of the thesis is similar to that of existing studies of the Reichswehr, the Prussian civil service, and conservative political parties. Most work on the German Protestant church in the 20th century concentrates on the period of the Kirchenkampf under the Third Reich, but recently the part played by the church in the Republic has also attracted attention. The books on this subject, however, give only a general picture of the church as an anti-Republican institution. This thesis tries to show by a detailed study of the church leadership, based on manuscript sources, that there were also strong forces drawing the church towards an accommodation with the Republic. As in other comparable groups, there was an important Vernunftrepublikaner element within the church leadership.

The position of the church under the Empire is described in the Introduction. Before 1918, church leaders had already seen their ideal of a Christian state left behind by the introduction of the principle of state impartiality in matters of religious belief. Some Protestant leaders accepted that further development towards a secular state was likely.

The effect of the revolution of 1918 on the system of

church-state relations, which had been inherited from the Empire, is considered in Chapter 1. Although dramatic changes appeared likely at first in some German Länder, by 1924 it was clear that the church was again secure and that in most Länder it had little to fear from the new authorities. This created the possibility of a rapprochement between the church and the Republic despite the strong political tensions dividing them. The Prussian church treaty of 1931, which is the subject of Chapter 2, marked a major advance. The treaty established a legal modus vivendi between the church and the Republic in the most important German Land, which contained over 60 per cent. of the total German Protestant population.

The following four chapters discuss the attitude of the Protestant leadership to political affairs in general. Despite their hostility to Republican democracy, church leaders felt bound to make some concessions to the Republic if only to facilitate negotiations about church affairs with Republican Governments. The church leadership was also, in any case, opposed to attempts at counter-revolution both because it believed they were against the national interest and because it condemned violence on principle. In addition, after the election of Hindenburg as Reich President in 1925, the Reich again had a personal symbol of Obrigkeit which commanded respect in the Protestant church. Between 1925 and 1931, the church leadership cautiously advanced the doctrines of loyalty

to the state and recognition of the Reich constitution of 1919. The importance of this Vernunftrepublikaner position is considered in Chapter 3.

The foreign policy of the Protestant leadership was in line with its moderate, conservative position in home affairs. Church leaders were confirmed nationalists but they did not try to exploit Germany's grievances as a weapon in internal politics against the Republic. They also resisted the pressure of extreme nationalist groups who wished to prevent the German church taking any part in international Christian gatherings. Instead, the Protestant leadership tried to make use of its contacts with other Protestant churches in the ecumenical movement to further the general aims of German foreign policy. The possibilities and limitations of this attitude are discussed in Chapter 4.

Both in its policy of coming to terms with the Republic and in its attitude to foreign affairs, the church leadership resisted the influence of the anti-Republican Right. At the same time, Protestant leaders sympathized with many of the basic political convictions of the 'national opposition'. The relations between the church and the 'national opposition', particularly the NSDAP, and the reasons why the church leadership did not condemn the movement before 1933 are discussed in Chapter 5.

The crisis of the Republic in 1932 put the church leadership in a dilemma. Its policy of coming to terms with the Republic was discredited. The minority, right wing régime of von Papen and von Gayl appealed to the conservative instincts of church leaders, but they were afraid that its programme would lead to civil war. They therefore remained uncommitted. They issued general declarations urging political restraint and condemning violence but they made no attempt to defend Republican institutions and they were permissive towards exploitation of the church by the anti-Republican Right.

The last chapter describes the impact of the 'national revolution' of January-July 1933 on the church. It shows how the Protestant leadership was divided between a majority who wanted to co-operate with the Government in its 'national' aims but also to defend the independence of the church, and a minority who felt that the church would gain by associating itself more closely with the Third Reich. The chapter describes why the minority was successful.

The division of the Protestant church into 28 separate Landeskirchen created a technical problem in writing the thesis. However, the church leadership of the largest Landeskirche, the Old Prussian Union, had a powerful influence on the whole Protestant leadership and the thesis has, therefore, laid primary emphasis on its attitude. Secondly, all the Landeskirchen

were represented in a joint Kirchenbund and important local differences were raised in this organization. The records of the Old Prussian Union and of the Kirchenbund, taken together, give a reasonably full picture of the church leadership as a whole. Where the attitude of the minority was decisive - in the conflict within the leadership in 1933 - the records of the individual Landeskirchen chiefly concerned have also been consulted.

The main conclusion of the thesis is that the Protestant leadership was not an intransigently anti-Republican group, although it never became emotionally reconciled to the Republic. Its attitude swung from a Vernunftrepublikaner position in 1925-1931 to capitulation to the Third Reich in 1933. This illustrates both the pull which the Republic exerted on the church and the limits of the rapprochement achieved before 1933. It confirms the view that while the German conservative and national liberal traditions were not identical with the anti-Republican Right, they did not provide a clear critique of it. It would be interesting to have a parallel study of the German Roman Catholic episcopate over the same period.

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

THE POLITICAL ATTITUDES OF THE GERMAN PROTESTANT CHURCH LEADERSHIP, NOVEMBER 1918 - JULY 1933.

J.R.C. Wright

Merton College

Oxford

Michaelmas Term

1969

Abbreviations

Archives

A.A.	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes
A.k.A.	Archiv des kirchlichen Aussenamts
Bundesarchiv	Bundesarchiv, Koblenz
D.Z.A.	Deutsches Zentralarchiv
E.K.D.	Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland
E.K.U.	Evangelische Kirche der Union
G.St.A.	Geheimes Staatsarchiv
Lk.A.	Landeskirchliches Archiv

Parties

BVP	Bayerische Volkspartei
DDP	Deutsche Demokratische Partei
DVP	Deutsche Volkspartei
DNVP	Deutschnationale Volkspartei
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
USPD	Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands

Journals

AELKZ	Allgemeine Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung
AKfdED	Allgemeines Kirchenblatt für das evangelische Deutschland

Other

Diss.	Dissertation
RGG	Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart

Table of Contents

Preface		1
Introduction		5
Chapter 1	The revolution settlement, 1918-1924	23
	i. The Prussian Land and the Old Prussian Union	25
	ii. The other Protestant Landeskirchen	80
	iii. The creation of the German Protestant Kirchenbund, 1919-1922	84
Chapter 2	The negotiation of the Prussian church treaty, 1925-1931	92
Chapter 3	Political attitudes, 1918-1931	135
Chapter 4	Foreign Policy, 1918-1932	179
Chapter 5	The 'national opposition', 1927-1932	209
Chapter 6	The crisis of the Republic	261
Chapter 7	The 'national revolution', January-July 1933	286
Conclusion		374
Bibliographical note		376
Bibliography		377
Illustrations		separate folder

Preface

During the Weimar Republic the German Protestant church had almost 40 million members; over 60 per cent. of the German population were Protestants. Only about 11 million German Protestants, however, went to church; this was under 30 per cent. of their total number and about 18 per cent. of the total German population.[1] There was an important class and political distinction between those Protestants who went to church and those who simply paid their Kirchensteuer and stayed at home. The former came mainly from the middle and upper classes and voted for the DNVP, the DVP and, from 1930, the NSDAP. The latter came mainly from the working class and voted SPD or KPD. This division reflected the conservative political bias which the church had acquired after the revolutions of 1848. In the second half of the 19th century the church became identified with the German ruling élite in opposition to parliamentary democracy and social reform. After the revolution of 1918 and the disappearance of the German dynasties the Protestant church became a natural focus of conservative loyalties, important because of its size and widespread local organization. It is for this reason that the church is of interest to the political historian of the Weimar Republic.

1. See figures for the 1910 census in J.Schneider, Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelischen Landeskirchen Deutschlands 40.Jg. (1913),495-501, 536-7; and for the 1925 census, ibid., 54.Jg. (1927),144-5, 223.

The political role of the Protestant church between 1918 and 1933 has attracted considerable attention. The political attitudes of the church in the First World War and the revolution of 1918, the social position and political outlook of Protestant clergy in the Republic, the political content of Protestant literature and the Protestant press and the behaviour of the church in 1933 have been subjects of recent monographs.[1] Others are in preparation. Nevertheless the study of this subject is still in its early stages. The Protestant church has been depicted in recent work as monarchist, nationalist and authoritarian, as predominantly hostile to the Republic and ambivalent or openly enthusiastic towards Nazism. This is not a surprising picture and, within limits, an accurate one. It is not, however, complete. Little attempt has yet been made to answer the most interesting question about all conservative groups in the Republic, namely, how strong was the drift towards a Vernunftrepublikaner attitude, a readiness to co-operate with the Republic despite objections to it? Conversely, how strong were those who were irreconcilable and determined to overthrow the Republic? For this question, to which the

1. G.Mehnert, Evangelische Kirche und Politik 1917-1919 (Düsseldorf, 1959); K-W.Dahm, Pfarrer und Politik (Cologne,1965); H.Christ, Der politische Protestantismus in der Weimarer Republik (Diss.Phil., Bonn,1967); G.van Norden, Kirche in der Krise (Düsseldorf, 1963).

answer is not obvious, detailed analysis is necessary.[1]

The church leadership has much to recommend it as a group for detailed study. It was a small group but not an isolated one, for it was sensitive to feeling within the church as a whole. During the period 1918-1933 it had a mixed membership of lawyers, clergymen and laymen. Its activities are well documented. To it fell the responsibility of representing the church in all questions concerned with church-state relations. It also felt a responsibility to give moral leadership, and its attitude reflects the development of the Protestant political conscience between 1918 and 1933.

A study of the whole period from November 1918 to July 1933 is necessary to demonstrate the full range of political attitudes held by the church leadership. The documents (the bulk of which have not been used before) show a gradual advance towards a modus vivendi with the Republic followed in 1933 by an enthusiastic welcome for the Third Reich in a mood of nervous elation. The welcome given the Third Reich fits easily into the current picture

1. Studies of conservative groups where these questions are raised include: H.A.Turner, Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic (Princeton,1963); E.Jonas, Die Volkskonservativen 1928-1933 (Düsseldorf, 1965); F.L.Carsten, The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933 (Oxford,1966); W.Runge, Politik und Beamtentum im Parteienstaat (Stuttgart,1965).

of the church but it has not previously been described in detail. The preceding process of rapprochement with the Republic and its implications have not so far received serious consideration.

Introduction

The German Protestant church had a complicated structure. Following the great division within the Reformation in Europe it was divided first into Lutheran and Reformed (Calvinist) churches. There were important differences of theology and organization between the two. Lutherans attached prime importance to the doctrine of justification by faith (not works) and this corresponded with a certain passiveness in secular affairs; Lutherans depended on the state even for their church organization. Calvinism was distinguished by the doctrine of the elect and belief in active participation in the world; the Reformed churches had their own system of church self-government.[1] By the end of the 17th century the Lutheran church was the major denomination in the central, North and East German states and in Württemberg, Ansbach and Nuremberg in the South. The Reformed church was important in the Rhine Palatinate and Nassau and as a Protestant minority in the North-West. The Roman Catholic church was dominant along the Main, in the Upper Palatinate and Bavaria, and strong in the North-West and South-West.[2]

1. F.Fischer, Der deutsche Protestantismus und die Politik im 19. Jahrhundert, Historische Zeitschrift, 171 (1951), 474-6.

2. Westermanns Atlas zur Weltgeschichte (Berlin,1956), iii, 104-5.

During the 18th century there was a reaction against the divisions of the Reformation period; the Pietist movement which stressed the devotional side of Christianity reflected this change. In the early 19th century this development was carried further and attempts were made to unite the Lutheran and Reformed churches into a single Protestant denomination. In 1817, the third centenary of the Reformation, Frederick William III of Prussia issued a decree for a United Prussian Church. The King met strong resistance, however, both from the Reformed churches in the new provinces of Rhineland and Westphalia and from Lutherans in the East, some of whom broke away to found a separate Old Lutheran Church. The attempt to create a new denomination was abandoned, but the United Prussian Church survived as an administrative union; the Lutheran and Reformed parishes of Prussia continued to follow their own traditions but they were known as the United Prussian Church and were treated by the Prussian state in most respects as a single entity. The Prussian example was followed in Hessen, Anhalt and elsewhere; only in Baden and the Rhine Palatinate, however, was the original intention of Frederick William III carried out and a new united creed established.[1]

1. W.Elliger, Die Evangelische Kirche der Union (Witten,1967), pp.23-65. K.Kupisch, Die deutschen Landeskirchen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert (Göttingen,1966), pp.53-4.

Apart from the division into three main types of church - Lutheran, Reformed and United - the Protestant church in Germany was also divided by the frontiers of individual German Länder. Each Land had its own Landeskirche and sometimes, as in Hanover, both a Lutheran and a Reformed one. In some cases separate Landeskirchen survived after the Länder with which they had originally been identified had been taken over by more powerful rivals. Thus Bavaria contained two Protestant Landeskirchen, one belonging to the Palatinate. The same was true of Prussia after 1866, as Bismarck decided not to repeat the experiment of Frederick William III but to leave the Landeskirchen of the new provinces intact. As a result the United Prussian Church became known as the Old Prussian Union to distinguish it from the Landeskirchen in Schleswig-Holstein, Hanover, and the Prussian parts of Hessen. During the Weimar Republic there were still 28 separate Protestant Landeskirchen in Germany. Of these, the Old Prussian Union which contained about half the total number of German Protestants was the most important.

The idea of a single national German Protestant church was discussed during the 19th century but the strength of the different traditions of belief and of local loyalties made it impracticable. It was not until the Third Reich that a serious attempt was made to carry it through. However there was progress towards creating a federal organization to represent the common interests of the Landeskirchen on national

issues.[1] In 1848 a conference of leading Protestants (a Kirchentag) met in Wittenberg to discuss the formation of a Kirchenbund. This initiative petered out, but with the encouragement of Frederick William IV of Prussia regular meetings of the leaders of the Landeskirchen were held in Eisenach from 1852. These became known as the Eisenacher Kirchenkonferenz. At the same time a church newspaper for the whole of German Protestantism was founded. The Kirchenkonferenz remained restricted to senior church lawyers and clergymen until 1918; it was not widened to include members of the elected church assemblies (synods) which had been introduced into most Landeskirchen by the end of the 19th century. This restriction was due to the opposition of some Lutheran Landeskirchen who suspected the Kirchenkonferenz of being an instrument of the United Church and of Prussian hegemony. Nevertheless the Kirchenkonferenz grew in importance and in 1903 an executive committee, known as the Kirchenausschuss, was formed for it. The Kirchenausschuss had its seat in Berlin and from 1908 it was accepted that its President should be the senior official of the Old Prussian Union - the President of the Berlin Oberkirchenrat. This

1. W.Delius, Altpreussische Kirche und kirchliche Einheit des deutschen Protestantismus in O.Söhngen, Hundert Jahre Evangelischer Oberkirchenrat der Altpreussischen Union (Berlin,1950), pp.86-113. T.Karg, Von der Eisenacher Kirchenkonferenz zum Deutschen Evangelischen Kirchenbund (Diss.Recht, Freiburg,1961).

established a strong link between the central organization of all the Landeskirchen and the strongest single Landeskirche. The joint position of President of the Kirchenausschuss and President of the Berlin Oberkirchenrat gave considerable authority to a skilful man. Because of the federal basis of the central organization, however, there was no means of coercing Landeskirchen which rejected the policy of the majority.

The Landeskirche remained the basic unit of German Protestantism until 1933. This was natural as church affairs were a Land matter in which the Reich did not interfere directly before 1919 and subsequently only to enforce certain basic provisions of the Weimar Constitution. Before 1919 most Landeskirchen were closely dependent on the state. The state guaranteed the Landeskirche certain privileges and in return retained control over it. The Landeskirche was administered like a government department by the Kultusministerium and at a provincial level by the local government authorities for church and school affairs. There were, however, some qualifications to this general picture of dependence on the state. In Prussia both Frederick William III and Frederick William IV took an active interest in the Protestant church and were anxious to create an organization appropriate to it. As a result the departments responsible for ecclesiastical affairs in the state administration were gradually separated from the rest. Later the development towards a secular

system in educational and ecclesiastical matters gave rise to the desire for the separation of church and state. Synods which had been a distinctive feature of the Reformed Landeskirchen were adopted in most United and Lutheran Landeskirchen as well and given some control over internal church matters.

The process of separation had not advanced very far, however, before the collapse of the Empire.[1] Until 1918, throughout Germany, the normal conditions of a Christian state were observed: freedom of worship, protection of the Sabbath, a state guarantee of church property, and theological faculties at universities, religious education in schools, chaplains to the armed forces, hospitals and prisons - all maintained by the state. In theory freedom of belief was allowed but in practice there was discrimination against agnostics in public appointments. Protestant Landeskirchen and the Roman Catholic church enjoyed the especially privileged status of a Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts. This was ill-defined and the rights it gave varied from Land to Land, but in general it meant that the Landeskirchen were raised above the level of a private club and enjoyed some

1. W.Kahl, Lehrsystem des Kirchenrechts und der Kirchenpolitik (Freiburg,1894).

of the privileges of a government department.[1] Church officials had the status of Beamten and the churches were allowed to tax their members and even to make use of the state administration to enforce collection of the tax.[2]

By giving the Landeskirchen its protection and exceptional privileges the state demonstrated its belief in the national importance of the Christian churches. In return the churches had to submit to state supervision to ensure that their privileges were not abused and that the national interest was served. The rights of the state (Staatshoheitsrechte) also varied between different Länder. They included the supervision of church finance and property administration, protection of church members against excessive church tax burdens, the right to approve important church appointments and the right to confirm that church laws did not conflict with state ones.

The Protestant Landeskirchen were subject to the crown in certain additional matters known as the landesherrliches

1. Friedrich Naumann asked for a definition of the Körperschaftsrecht during the committee work of the Nationalversammlung at Weimar in 1919. He was told by Hugo Preuss that an official of the Ministry of Justice when asked to give a definition had replied, 'That is one thing I will not do'. Verhandlungen der verfassunggebenden Nationalversammlung (Berlin,1920), vol.336, p.198.

2. F.Giese, Deutsches Kirchensteuerrecht (Stuttgart,1910).

Kirchenregiment.[1] These included the right to summon the synods and to approve synod legislation and the right to appoint to senior positions in the church. After the revolution of 1918 it was disputed whether these royal powers belonged to the crown as head of the Protestant Landeskirchen (Summus Episcopus) or as head of state, but eventually the state acknowledged that the powers had been purely ecclesiastical and were quite distinct from the Staatshoheitsrechte.

Despite these close ties with the state and the crown the Protestant Landeskirchen made some progress towards a system of self-government before 1918. The most important example was the church of the Old Prussian Union.[2] From 1815 internal church affairs in the provinces had been delegated by the Government to a special body known as the Konsistorium. There was one Konsistorium to each province and lay administrators and clergymen served on it. In 1829 a system of Generalsuperintendenten was revived in Prussia with responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the provinces.

1. This applied equally to Protestant Landeskirchen in Länder with Roman Catholic rulers, like Saxony, where the king delegated his powers to three Protestant members of his Government. In the city states, Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck, the senates exercised the rights. Kahl, Lehrsystem des Kirchenrechts, pp.169-235. See also U.Scheuner, Kirchenregiment, in Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (Tübingen,1959),iii, 1520-2.

2. Elliger, Die Evangelische Kirche der Union, pp.37-9, 58-9, 72-84, 96-9.

The Generalsuperintendent was the leading clergyman of the province with a status comparable to that of a bishop. In 1848, at the suggestion of the Generalsuperintendenten, a central Oberkonsistorium was created separate from the state Kultusministerium though still retaining the Kultusminister as its chairman. The Prussian constitution of 1850 laid down that the church should administer its own affairs. As a result a further step towards independence was taken with the creation of the Evangelischer Oberkirchenrat, a central authority at least in theory independent of the Kultusminister and responsible to the crown alone.

There was some doubt about whether the creation of the Oberkirchenrat marked the completion of the new church organization or whether it was the prelude to further change. In fact no more progress was made until 1874-6 when, under Kultusminister Falk, synods were adopted in all provinces (they already existed in the Rhineland and Westphalia) and a General Synod was created to represent the whole church.[1] The General Synod had the right to give its consent to all church laws and to propose legislation of its own. Where church laws were not in conflict with state law and did not concern any part of the Staatshoheitsrechte, they were decreed by the crown; if the

1. E.Förster, Adalbert Falk (Gotha,1927), pp.174-209, 302-36.

Staatshoheitsrechte were concerned, a state law was necessary in addition to the church law.

This remained the position in the Old Prussian Union until 1918. The main features of the system, in which the administration of church affairs was shared by church officials and the synods with rights reserved to the crown and the Kultusminister, were common to most of the larger Protestant Landeskirchen.[1] Despite gradual progress towards self-government the emphasis remained on close ties with state and crown. The Landeskirchen did not achieve financial independence; the state paid all important expenses not covered by church tax including the salaries of church officials.[2] In many Landeskirchen the clergy were directly employed by the state to supervise local schools, a duty which led to the accusation that the church was the moral police force of the government and made the church hated by many teachers.[3] The church seemed to have no policy of

1. Kahl, Lehrsystem des Kirchenrechts, p.169. The Oberkirchenrat of the Old Prussian Union was, however, exceptional. The other Prussian Landeskirchen had no equivalent institution and remained under the Kultusministerium. This was true in most Länder but in Baden after 1860 the Landeskirche also had an independent Oberkirchenrat. Ibid., pp. 215-7.

2. J. Niedner, Die Ausgaben des preussischen Staats für die evangelische Landeskirche der älteren Provinzen (Stuttgart, 1904).

3. E. von Bremen, Die Preussische Volksschule (Stuttgart, 1905), p.190. O. Dibelius, Das Jahrhundert der Kirche (1st. edn., Berlin, 1927), p.67.

its own: for instance, in the question of social reform it simply repeated official attitudes, changing its mind with the Kaiser between 1890 and 1895.[1] The initiative in social questions passed to Protestant bodies acting independently of the Landeskirchen like the Innere Mission and the Evangelisch-sozialer Kongress of Adolf Stoecker and Friedrich Naumann.

German Protestants were sharply divided over the form the Landeskirchen should take. The church of the Old Prussian Union may again serve as a model. Within the General Synod there were four important groups or 'church parties'.[2] At one extreme were the Confessional Lutherans, who had never been reconciled to the existence of a United Church even in name and jealously guarded the separate Lutheran tradition. A little to their left stood the main conservative party, the Positive Union, which accepted the United Church but remained strictly orthodox in theology and resisted the growth of liberalism in church and state. The Positive Union opposed the introduction of synods although it soon became the dominant party within them. The centre

1. Elliger, Die Evangelische Kirche der Union, pp.102-5.
2. H.G.Oxenius, Die Entstehung der Verfassung der Evangelischen Kirche der altpreussischen Union von 1922 (Diss.Phil., Cologne,1959), pp.32-87.

was represented by the Evangelische Vereinigung. It was the party most strongly in favour of the United Church and it contained both orthodox and liberal members. It pursued a policy of compromise and peace in close agreement with the church officials of the Oberkirchenrat. On the left was a small group of liberals represented after 1918 by the Freie Volkskirche party. The liberals drew their main strength from intellectuals and had an influential journal in the Christliche Welt edited by Martin Rade.[1] Their primary concern was to protect pastors who had been trained in one of the schools of 'modern theology' from the anger of their parishioners and sometimes of the crown and the Landeskirche authorities as well.[2] The liberals were also critical of the Landeskirche system, which they described as a Staatskirche, but they were less clear about the alternative they would prefer. One group wanted the separation of church and state, another was attracted by the ideal of the fusion of church and state with the disappearance of the church as a separate institution. The slogan of a Volkskirche (to replace the so-called Staatskirche) covered both notions.

1. J.Rathje, Die Welt des freien Protestantismus (Stuttgart, 1952).

2. Ibid., pp. 64-74, 179-94, 201-10.
The most important figures in the theological revolution were Albrecht Ritschl (1822-89), Professor at Bonn 1859-64 and Göttingen 1864-89, and Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930), Professor at Giessen 1879-86, Marburg 1886-9 and Berlin 1889-1921.

Conservative groups in all Landeskirchen regularly enjoyed a clear majority in the synods and this did not alter after 1918 although the restricted franchise in most churches was then made more liberal.[1] The conservative majority had a complex attitude towards church-state relations. Their ideal was a Christian state in which crown, government and people shared the same creed (preferably Lutheran) and from which liberalism and unbelief were excluded. In this situation they would gladly have seen church and state closely united. As the state developed, however, during the 19th century, first towards constitutional government and parity in denominational matters (treating the Roman Catholic church and the Protestant Landeskirchen equally) and then further, though unevenly, towards a secular system which protected citizens who had no religious belief, Protestant conservatives became increasingly alienated. There was no doubt of their loyalty to the crown and the Reich but they began to feel that as the actual state had moved so far from their ideal, the church should be more independent. During the Kulturkampf in Prussia Protestants found that their church was affected as well as the Roman Catholic church. The Kultusministerium made plans for a system of secondary education in which no religion would be taught.[2] The reaction of Protestants is indicated by the motion of Kleist-Retzow and Hammerstein in the Prussian

1. For the position in the Old Prussian Union, see below, pp. 69.
2. Dibelius, Das Jahrhundert der Kirche, p.68.

Landtag in 1886 demanding that the Protestant as well as the Roman Catholic church should have more independence. (It was the occasion of the withdrawal of much Kulturkampf legislation.) This was a more extreme gesture than most Protestants were prepared to support before 1918; the motion received only 43 votes from the 123 Conservative deputies (though it also had the support of the Centre Party), and was contemptuously dismissed by Bismarck.[1] It was, however, symptomatic of the growing doubts among Protestants about the existing system of church-state relations.

The senior officials and clergymen, who held the leading executive positions in most Landeskirchen, shared the basic convictions of the conservative synod deputies. The officials, however, tended to be more flexible because of their close links with the state administration. This was particularly true of the Oberkirchenrat of the Old Prussian Union and although it was an unusual body[2] it had great influence, both because the Old Prussian Union was the largest Landeskirche and because the President of the Oberkirchenrat was also automatically President of the federal Kirchenausschuss which acted for all the Landeskirchen.

The foundation of the Berlin Oberkirchenrat had been,

1. W.Frank, Hofprediger Adolf Stoecker (2nd.edn., Hamburg, 1935), pp.158-9.

2. See above, p.14,n.1.

in one way, a conservative act for it gave the Protestant church a leadership independent of the Kultusministerium and therefore free of the Prussian Landtag and free from interference by liberal deputies. However, in practice, the Oberkirchenrat maintained close links with the Kultusministerium. The President of the Oberkirchenrat was a lawyer trained in the state administration who then chose to transfer to church administration. He was neither a clergyman nor the leader of a church party but a Beamte.[1] Even after the creation of the General Synod in 1876 the Oberkirchenrat maintained its separate position. It was criticized by liberal Protestants as a symbol of the 'Staatskirche' and by conservatives for its readiness to introduce reform with the Kultusministerium, like the new synods in 1874-6. Its closest relationship in law was with the crown but it was prepared to resist even the crown where it believed the interests of the church were at stake.[2] The

1. There was no formal rule excluding a clergyman, however, and occasionally one was a candidate for election. One of the two Vice-Presidents was always a clergyman, known as the 'spiritual' Vice-President; the other was called the 'secular' Vice-President.

2. For instance it refused to take disciplinary action against Adolf Stoecker in 1889 after he had fallen from royal favour and William II wanted him accused of insulting the crown; Elliger, Die Evangelische Kirche der Union, p.105.

ideal of the Oberkirchenrat was that of the Beamte, the virtue of Sachlichkeit, of impartial, objective service to the institution entrusted to it.

In 1917 the Kaiser asked the Oberkirchenrat for its opinion on the introduction of episcopacy into the Protestant church and the reply reveals its attitude to the problem of church-state relations a year before the revolution.[1] The Oberkirchenrat argued that in Prussia the introduction of Protestant bishops would be a further stage towards the separation of church and state as they would take over the duties of the Oberkirchenrat and of the crown as Summus Episcopus. This was, the Oberkirchenrat pointed out, what Kleist-Retzow and Hammerstein had wanted. The Oberkirchenrat added that this might be the direction in which the church should go and if the state developed further towards separation, the church would have to react accordingly. The Oberkirchenrat did not feel, however, that it would be right for it to accelerate this process and to sever the connexion with the crown and the state. The letter suggests that the Oberkirchenrat expected the church to be made independent in time.

Less than a year later, in November 1918, the separation of church and state was proclaimed in Prussia. The shock of Germany's defeat and the revolution threw the Oberkirchenrat of the Old Prussian Union and the whole Protestant church

1. It is dated 8 Dec.1917 and printed in Söhngen, Hundert Jahre Oberkirchenrat, pp.196-208.

leadership initially on to the defensive and made it afraid of the consequences of the revolution for the church. Later, however, it recognized that the innovations brought by the Republic marked only the culmination of changes which had started in the 19th century. In 1926 an ex-President of the Oberkirchenrat described the Weimar constitution as decisive for giving the Protestant church independence. But, he added,

> 'It was at the same time .... the conclusion of a slow but irresistible process since the transformation of the Prussian state first into a constitutional state, then into a state observing religious parity with an ever stronger and more decisive element of the inter-denominational Landtag which was basically neutral, not to say indifferent, to the church and religion. After the collapse of the check which still obtained earlier in the landesherrliches Kirchenregiment, the so-called "separation of church and state" was the only solution'.[1]

Protestant leaders might regard this development as no more than a necessary evil but the fact that they had been prepared for it before 1918 made it easier for them to accept. Having accepted it, the way was open to finding a modus vivendi with the new régime.

The first two chapters of this thesis trace the development of this modus vivendi within the restricted sphere of church-state relations. The following chapters describe the

1. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 63/ Beiheft (vertrauliches Material): Moeller Denkschrift, 22 Dec. 1926.

stand taken by the church leadership on political matters during the Republic, their attitude to National Socialism and their surrender to the Third Reich in 1933.

Chapter 1

The revolution settlement, 1918-1924

The revolution of 9 November 1918 destroyed the Empire with which the Protestant church had been closely identified and brought to power the Social Democrats whose programme declared that religion was a private matter and that support for the churches from public funds should be stopped.[1] Church leaders feared that the separation of church and state would be carried out abruptly and in a form damaging to the church on the model of the Third Republic in France. The abdication of the ruling dynasties created an awkward legal situation for the Protestant church that the Republic could exploit by claiming the former royal powers over the church for itself. There was also the possibility that liberal church members might seize the opportunity, brought by the revolution, to carry out a reform of the Landeskirchen regardless of the former church leadership.

Each of these fears had some justification, but in the end the Landeskirchen emerged unscathed and in some ways stronger than they had been before 1918. In this the example of the Protestant church follows the general pattern of the German revolution and, in particular, its failure to bring about a reform of German society which alone could have provided the new

1. Clause 6 of the Erfurt programme of 1891; W.Treue, Deutsche Parteiprogramme 1861-1961 (3rd.edn., Göttingen,1961), p.76.

political system with strong support.[1] The Protestant church, like the officer corps and the civil service, remained unreformed.[2] It is more difficult, however, to see how the ethos of the Protestant church could have been changed by government action than in the other examples. If the revolutionary government had possessed the will and if it had not been faced by other, immediate and formidable problems, it might have created a Republican army and civil service by legislation and political appointments. The Protestant church was too large an institution and too dependent on individual church members - the majority of whom were strongly conservative - for reform imposed by the government to have much effect, except over a long period of time. The modus vivendi which emerged from the revolution settlement was far from an ideal solution for the Republic but it was not a hopeless one, and even a stronger government might not have been able to impose a better one.

This chapter gives a detailed account of the relations between the Prussian Land and the Old Prussian Union, and the effect of the Weimar constitution on the church; it then describes the main developments in the other Landeskirchen and the extension of the federal organization of the Protestant church into a Kirchenbund.

1. For a recent account, mainly at Reich level, see W.Elben, Das Problem der Kontinuität in der deutschen Revolution (Düsseldorf,1965).

2. Cf. F.L.Carsten, The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933 (Oxford,1966) and, on the Prussian civil service, W.Runge, Politik und Beamtentum im Parteienstaat (Stuttgart,1965).

i. The Prussian Land and the Old Prussian Union.

On 12 November 1918, the new Government of the Reich issued a declaration to the German people. It guaranteed (Point 5) freedom of worship and ordered that no one should be forced to religious observance.[1] The following day, a similar declaration was issued by the provisional Prussian Government to the Prussian people. Its tone was sharper: it included the phrases, 'liberation of education from ecclesiastical tutelage' and 'separation of church and state'.[2]

Two ministers were appointed to the Prussian Kultusministerium, Adolf Hoffmann (USPD) and Konrad Haenisch (SPD).[3] Hoffmann, who was already well known for his hostility to the church, at once attempted to carry out reform by administrative decree. Haenisch also believed in the need for reform but he did not want to force the pace. Hoffmann went forward almost alone, ignoring the officials of his department and even his cabinet colleagues. He left no record of his ultimate intentions for the church but his views were probably similar to those of a socialist novelist, Alfred Dieterich, who was employed by the Kultusministerium during

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 32/1: Staatsanzeiger, No.269, 13 Nov.1918.
2. ibid.: Staatsanzeiger, No.270, 14 Nov.1918.
3. On Hoffmann, see F.Thimme, Das Verhältnis der revolutionären Gewalten zur Religion und den Kirchen in F.Thimme and E.Rolffs, Revolution und Kirche (Berlin,1919), pp.15-6,25. For Haenisch's account of his tenure of the Kultusministerium, see Kulturpolitische Aufgaben ed. by the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für staatsbürgerliche und wirtschaftliche Bildung (Berlin,1919) and K.Haenisch, Neue Bahnen der Kulturpolitik (Stuttgart and Berlin,1921).

the revolution to prepare a programme of reform.[1] The Kultusministerium later denied that Dieterich's memorandum was anything more than advice, but there were strong tactical reasons for disowning him once the revolution had taken a moderate course.[2]

Dieterich entitled his memorandum 'The separation of the churches from the state' but added that it could equally well be called 'the suspension of state contributions' or 'making the churches independent'. Dieterich argued that these aims followed logically from the previous Prussian constitution which had already given up the principle of a Staatskirche and guaranteed freedom of conscience. He recommended that as many reforms as possible should be carried out by ministerial decree under the authority of the old constitution. He suggested that immediate measures should be taken to end compulsory religious education. Religious education should be limited to two hours a week and the study of comparative religion introduced. Permission for new public or private denominational schools should be made more difficult to obtain and supervision of schools should at once be put in the hands of state officials. The obligation to take a religious oath

1. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 212/Beiheft 1.
2. A remark made by Haenisch in a letter to Heine (Prussian Minister of the Interior) on 27 Sept.1919 shows that Dieterich's memorandum had been the policy of the governing parties. Haenisch wrote, 'The policy originally represented by the Social Democrats as expressed in the memorandum by Dieterich has become impracticable'; D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.77, Tit.123, 157/1. See also F.Thimme, Revolution und Kirche, pp.30-3.

in legal proceedings should be ended. The doctrinal board of the Protestant church established to try clergy who subscribed to 'modern theology' and rejected the traditional creeds should be abolished. The state should refuse all new expenditure for the church and, because of the urgent needs of national education, the existing budget should be reduced by ending grants to parishes.

The further stages, Dieterich added, should aim at the complete subjection of the churches to the sovereignty of the state, but these stages would depend partially on the new constitutions in preparation for the Reich and Prussia. Dieterich proposed that all churches should be treated as private associations like clubs and that they should all be under direct state supervision. All church privileges would be abolished; the churches would depend on their members for financial support and all state officials in church service would be replaced by persons chosen and paid for by the churches. There would be no theological faculties at the universities and religious studies would, as far as possible, be regarded as an historical discipline taught in the philosophical and legal faculties; the churches would have to provide their own training institutions. The Roman Catholic church would be more closely supervised and the Jesuits expelled; there would be no more church treaties. The clergy would not be eligible for election to Parliament and there would be no requirement to give denominational details

on police and other forms. As far as possible church festivals would be changed into state and nature festivals. Church property would be regained for the state, the surplus capital fund of the churches expropriated and the churches taxed. Even cemeteries would be secularized.

On 16 November 1918, Hoffmann told the officials of the Kultusministerium that separation of church and state was to be carried out without delay and that state subsidies should end at the latest on 1 April 1919.[1] On 15 November he decreed that children of dissenters should be freed from religious education and on 27 November the supervision of Prussian schools by clergymen was ended.[2] On 29 November the most ambitious decree was issued.[3] Its ostensible purpose was to bring to an end a number of recognized abuses in the position of religion in education; it was, it said, the duty of a free, socialist state to take action in this matter. The decree explained that it was not an act of separation of church and state as the decision about that had yet to be taken; it simply applied the principle of freedom of conscience and only the perverse could argue that it encroached on religious freedom. Further, those who were honest about their religion and did not see it as a weapon of political power would be grateful for the ending of compulsory religious observance; as far as the Government

1. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 214/1: Die geistliche Abteilung (Kultusministerium) to Preussische Staatsregierung, 21 Dec.1918.
2. Zentralblatt für die gesamte Unterrichtsverwaltung in Preussen, 1918 (Berlin,1918), pp.708-9, 757-8.
3. ibid., pp.719-21.

was concerned religion was the sacred affair of each individual heart.

The decree laid down that the school prayer before and after classes should be stopped. There was no obligation on pupils to attend religious ceremonies and schools were not to organize such ceremonies. School holidays should not have a religious character; religious doctrine was not a subject for examination; no teacher was under an obligation to give religious education or to take part in religious observance. Pupils were not compelled to receive religious education: under 14 years of age their parents or guardians decided whether they should participate; over 14 they decided for themselves. Homework in religious education was not allowed. If there were no teacher willing to give religious education the local clergy should be allowed to teach it; if this was impossible the time should be given to history, natural history or indoor games.

On 18 November, a meeting of the Oberkirchenrat and the executive committee of the General Synod of the Old Prussian Union was called by President Voigts.[1] Its purpose was to discuss the situation created by the revolution and the announcement that the Government intended the separation of church and state.[2] Vice-President Moeller[3] explained that after 400 years

1. B.Voigts (1844-1920), Oberverwaltungsgerichtsrat in Berlin 1891, President of the Lutheran Landeskonsistorium in Hanover 1894, President of the Oberkirchenrat of the Old Prussian Union, 1903-19; Söhngen, Hundert Jahre Oberkirchenrat, p.193.
2. E.K.U., Gen.II, 21/1: minutes of the meeting.
3. R.Moeller (1855-1927), Regierungsrat in the Kultusministerium 1888, into the Oberkirchenrat 1891, secular Vice-President of the Oberkirchenrat 1904-19, President, 1919-24; Söhngen, Hundert Jahre Oberkirchenrat, pp.185-6.

of association with the state, the church was in a crisis. It was not clear what its relationship to the state would be in future, or if the Prussian Land had a future. The first question was how to enable the church leadership to survive the crisis. Moeller argued that, although the authority of the crown over the church was ended, church government continued. The royal powers over the church did not pass to the new state; on the basis of Protestant principles and the church constitution they now belonged to the church itself and, in particular, to the Oberkirchenrat and the executive committee of the General Synod. It was not possible, he said, to call a synod, because of the military occupation of the western provinces and disturbances in the east. It was necessary for the church leadership to be widened to include leading representatives of all aspects of church life and especially the great church organizations independent of the Landeskirchen.

Wilhelm Kahl,[1] a moderate synod deputy, supported this suggestion. He said that the parishes wanted united leadership and expected action to make the church secure. He mentioned

1. W.Kahl (1849-1932), church lawyer and DVP politician, leader of the middle group (Evangelische Vereinigung) in the General Synod of the Old Prussian Union, member of the Nationalversammlung and the constitutional committee 1919, and of the Reichstag (1919-32). Kahl was active in educational questions and chairman of the Reichstag committee on penal reform. He was also a notable exponent of a Vernunftrepublikaner attitude; see below, pp.163-5 , also H.A.Turner, Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic (Princeton,1963), p.112, and E.Schiffer, Ein Leben für den Liberalismus (Berlin,1951), p.212. Biographical details in Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart,iii,1088-9.

the danger that subsidies from the state would cease on 1 April 1919. In the circumstances, he argued, exceptional measures were required without undue concern for constitutional formalities. The existing church institutions were not enough: 'in true christian, democratic spirit one must draw on all the available, capable and willing resources of the church'. The luxury of church parties on the old model should no longer be allowed for if the church were not given a united lead its radicals would take command. Kahl added that an appeal had already been launched in Marburg for the formation of People's church councils (Volkskirchenräte); if this spread it would mark the end of the Landeskirche and the Volkskirche.[1] In fact the danger to the Landeskirche from radical churchmen was not as great as Kahl implied. Pressure from the radicals may not have been unwelcome to him and progressive members of the Oberkirchenrat as a means to encourage the conservative leadership of the General Synod to accept moderate reform.

There was discussion about recalling the General Synod but this was rejected since legally it had to be summoned by the crown and the church leadership did not want to open the question of whether royal rights over the church could be claimed by the new Government. Voigts emphasized the need to prepare a new constitution which could be implemented if separation were carried out. The council of advisers, which was to be asked to assist the church leadership in the crisis,

1. G.Mehnert, Evangelische Kirche und Politik 1917-1919 (Düsseldorf,1959), pp.115-29; J.Rathje, Die Welt des freien Protestantismus (Stuttgart,1952), pp.260-3.

was not to be an official organ of the church, since that might look as though the church regarded separation of church and state as inevitable. The meeting agreed to establish the council and chose its members, who eventually numbered 48.

On 29 November the Oberkirchenrat, the executive committee of the General Synod and the council of advisers, known jointly as the Vertrauensrat, met for the first time.[1] Voigts explained that a programme of separation of church and state was expected from the Government. He added that the idea of separation was not new and had found some favour in church circles; the Oberkirchenrat, he said, had previously been anxious not to do anything to bring it about but now the situation was different and they must be prepared. Moeller sketched the historical background. He mentioned that the royal declaration of Easter 1917 in favour of equal, universal suffrage in Prussia had aroused serious concern for the future of the church. (It was feared that a democratic Landtag would be hostile to the church.)[2] Now, said Moeller, the situation was worse; separation struck at the very heart of the church, its place in education and its subsidies. Together they must explain to the parishes what was at stake and bring their influence to bear, especially through instruction of the female electorate. 'For one can only encounter force with force', he added.

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/1: minutes of the meeting.
2. E.K.U., General Synod I, 18: minutes of the meeting of the Oberkirchenrat with the executive committee of the General Synod, 4 June 1918.

The Vertrauensrat agreed to set up a general committee of 12 members with Kahl as its chairman and subcommittees for separation questions, the new church constitution, education, social and propaganda work. The Vertrauensrat also approved a formal protest to the Prussian Government about its decrees, although some church leaders had already received personal assurances from members of the Government. At the same time a statement to the parishes was issued.

The legal protest rejected the use of administrative decrees to change the legal position and demanded that the state should not interfere in the internal life of the church. It said that it expected the state to try to come to an understanding with the church before making any change.[1] The statement to the parishes declared that the Protestant church was alive and would live. It claimed that the church was not bound to a particular type of state and that it was not afraid of the separation of church and state. It repeated the protest against interference in church affairs by the state, adding that, in the existing situation, Prussia had no legal government. The statement added that the abolition of religious education would strike a blow at the roots of the nation and that it was not in the national interest to force a conflict over religion. The statement concluded with an appeal for unity from church members, declaring that it was the aim of the leadership 'to serve everyone in love but to be slaves

1. G.St.A., Rep.90, 2380: Voigts to the Prussian Government, 2 Dec., sending the legal protest of 30 Nov.1918.

to no one but God'.[1]

The united front of the church had, however, already been broken. On 18 November 1918 a liberal pastor, Ludwig Wessel, addressed a meeting of 250 of his Berlin colleagues.[2] He argued that the problem of separation of church and state had been urgent before the revolution and he urged his audience not to cling to the past. Liberation from the state would free the church of the mistrust of wide circles, he said. He outlined a programme of democratic reform for the church with less power for lawyers and more for synods. He asked the clergy to help the present Government protect the Fatherland and he said that only by close contact with the Government could the church exert any influence over the programme of separation. He wanted to see the Volkskirche preserved. He expected from the Government a gradual separation, which did not touch church property and which fully indemnified the church for cancelled state subsidies to which the church had a legal title. A resolution along the lines of his speech was supported by an overwhelming majority of the meeting and sent to the Kultusministerium.

1. Verhandlungen der ausserordentlichen Versammlung der siebenten Generalsynode der evangelischen Landeskirche Preussens (Berlin,1920), ii, 79-80. Mehnert, Evangelische Kirche und Politik, p.105, gives the date of the statement and the legal protest incorrectly as 20 Dec.

2. An account of the meeting survives in the Kultusministerium files. D.Z.A. Potsdam, Reich. Min. f. d. kirchl. Angelegenheiten, 22166. Ludwig Wessel was the father of Horst Wessel; R.Mumm, Der christlich-soziale Gedanke (Berlin,1933), p.98.

On 5 December Hoffmann and Haenisch gave Wessel powers of supervision over the Oberkirchenrat by a Kultusministerium decree. According to this decree decisions of the church leaders had to be countersigned by Wessel. Wessel was given the right to take part in church committee meetings, and, if he thought it was in the Government interest, to take the chair at them. The Kultusministerium expressed the hope that by summoning a parish clergyman it had laid the basis for co-operation with church officials.[1]

The Oberkirchenrat protested against the appointment, which it described as interference with the independence of the church guaranteed by the law of 3 June 1876 establishing the General Synod. According to this law, the Oberkirchenrat said, church decisions required state approval only in certain, well-defined cases. The state had no general right of supervision and no authority at all over internal church affairs. Wessel's powers were, therefore, illegal. The Oberkirchenrat added that the clergy and their congregations were worried about the separation of church and state and this decree would make it impossible to reassure them. The Oberkirchenrat published the Government order in the church press, as it had been requested, but beside the order it also published its protest.[2]

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/1: Kultusministerium to Oberkirchenrat, 5 Dec.1918.
2. ibid.: Oberkirchenrat to Kultusministerium, 13 Dec.1918. Copies were sent to the Prussian Government, the Reich Chancellor and Wessel. cf. Kirchliches Gesetz-und Verordnungsblatt, 1918 (Berlin,1918), pp.61-5.

Hoffmann and Haenisch had already issued an explanation of Wessel's appointment (drafted by Wessel).[1] It said that Wessel had been appointed to mediate between the Kultusministerium and the church leaders, clergy and parishes. Wessel had the advantage of not bearing the onus of previous activity as a church official. By consulting with both sides he could help to bring about an understanding between them. He did not belong to the Government and had neither given, nor been asked for, any party political commitment. The Government promised to publish material about the separation of church and state, which would show that fears of rushed, radical measures were unnecessary. A commission which included clergymen, church legal experts and laymen had been set up to consider the problem.

Hoffmann and Haenisch probably intended to use Wessel to put pressure on the Oberkirchenrat and to encourage church liberals. Haenisch, in particular, was anxious at the same time to reassure the Protestant population that the Government did not intend to force through extreme measures and this may have been the reason for the appointment of a clergyman rather than Dieterich. The ministers probably also intended to show the workers' and soldiers' councils that the Government was taking action in order to prevent the councils taking matters into their own hands. Wessel believed that the danger of

1. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 212/Beiheft 1: Draft of the statement for Hirsch, Wolff (Telegraph Buro) and the Evangelischer Pressverband. The published version is in the Deutscher Reichsanzeiger und Preussischer Staatsanzeiger, 9 Dec.1918, No.290.

intervention by the councils had been one of the main reasons for his appointment.[1] In fact, however, there were no serious clashes between the church and the councils.[2] Several incidents were reported to the Oberkirchenrat but these included trivialities like public criticism of a senior clergyman for not saying 'Good morning'. (The council member responsible for this 'attack' suffered from insomnia as the result of a bad conscience and apologized.) There was one instance of a council ordering that church bells should be rung in honour of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. Some cases of rough handling of clergymen were reported and one senior clergyman was suspended for a short time. In general, however, government directives against local disturbances of this sort seem to have been effective.[3]

Wessel achieved very little. He never entered the Oberkirchenrat building and had no influence on its policy. On 13 January Haenisch allowed him to resign at his own request.[4] His only action had been the organization of two conferences.[5]

1. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 212/Beiheft 1: Wessel to Haenisch, 10 Jan.1919.
2. The Kultusministerium kept a file on intervention by the councils in church affairs but it has disappeared. The Oberkirchenrat record is contained in E.K.U., Gen.II, 30/1.
3. See E.Kolb, Die Arbeiterräte in der deutschen Innenpolitik 1918-1919 (Düsseldorf,1962), pp.262-81; cf. Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 46.Jg. (1919), 334-5.
4. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/1: Haenisch to the Oberkirchenrat, 13 Jan.1919.
5. The minutes survive in D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 212/Beiheft 1.

On 12 and 13 December he and Dieterich met three representatives of the Oberkirchenrat and 17 officials from other Prussian churches. (Wiesbaden was not represented as it was expecting invasion.) On 14 December they talked to a more varied group of people interested in church affairs, including Wilhelm Kahl, and representatives of the free churches and the Jewish community.

Both meetings followed a similar pattern. Haenisch said that the Kultusministerium believed separation of church and state was an historical necessity, but that it was a very complicated matter. His own opinion was that preparatory steps could be taken but that the final decision should be left to the National Assembly. He knew of fears about the intentions of the Kultusministerium and the effect these had on separatist movements. He would be grateful if the church leaders would work to dispel the impression that the Kultusministerium was ruled by a 'clergy-devouring, shallow Enlightenment, iconoclastic, sectarian spirit'. In the terrible difficulties facing the Government they could not afford further unrest.

Wessel and Dieterich attempted to reassure the church officials further. They said that although subsidies would be reduced, the process would be gradual and hardship would not be inflicted. According to Wessel, Hoffmann had said that once separation had been carried out there would be no political objection to the church, and state supervision rights could be reduced. No assurance was given, however, that the church would retain its Körperschaft privileges. Wessel also said that the Government wanted to see a greater measure of theological

freedom; he did not believe it would think of forcing this on the church, but it would consider it a test of whether the church understood the spirit of the new period. A wider church suffrage including female franchise was necessary. He advised the church to be conciliatory. Dieterich added that all compulsion to religious observance must cease and that the principles of the church constitution must be in agreement with the new Reich constitution.

The spiritual Vice-President of the Oberkirchenrat, Lahusen,[1] conceded that church and state were no longer as closely identified as they had been but, he argued, Germany was still on the whole a Christian nation. If, however, the church was not allowed to contact the children, a German people without religion would result. The church had a legal title to its property, he added, and on that there could be no compromise. Dieterich assured Lahusen that the present Government did not intend expropriation of the church. He would deeply deplore it if they went away with that impression and he would deplore it even more if this were conveyed to the population. He pointed out, however, that if a majority in the Prussian Constituent Assembly favoured expropriation, the Government would have no alternative but to obey. As for the rumours about Hoffmann they should remember that in the present flux he might be replaced by someone more radical. Were he to

1. F.Lahusen (1851-1927), 1918-21 spiritual Vice-President of the Oberkirchenrat. Söhngen, Hundert Jahre Oberkirchenrat, p.185.

be replaced by Liebknecht, for instance, he would seem quite right wing. Lahusen thanked Dieterich for the assurance about expropriation but added that if this only represented the opinion of a minister, who might be overthrown at any time, there was all the more reason for them to warn the population. Objections were raised to the decree on religious education and Wessel promised to put them to Haenisch.

Lahusen (who had been elected chairman of the meeting) concluded on a conciliatory note. He thanked Hoffmann for summoning them, wished him a speedy recovery from his illness and said he believed that Hoffmann was a religious man. He thanked Haenisch, especially for saying that if a violent programme of separation were carried out he would resign.[1] He asked for official negotiations between the authorities in church and state as soon as possible. This meeting had reassured them, he said, about the good intentions of the Government. He trusted that the unity of purpose of church and Fatherland experienced during the war would continue to be effective for the good of both.

It is clear from this meeting that a balance had been established. The new Government had shown its powers with the November measures and the appointment of Wessel, but it was frightened of hostile propaganda by the church leadership. It was concerned about the effect of its November measures on separatist movements and in the frontier provinces where plebiscites were likely to be held. It feared that church

1. see below, p.43, n.3.

reform would have an adverse effect on its chances in the elections to the Prussian Constituent Assembly on 26 January. The church leadership was anxious to secure its property, privileges and rights in education. It knew that it could not forcibly resist Government measures but it was also aware of its electoral potential and Government fears. Both sides recognized that given the national crisis they should avoid an open conflict; neither wanted to provoke a Kulturkampf.

Hoffmann fell ill in December and resigned with the other Independent Social Democrats on 3 January. As Haenisch assumed control so government policy became more moderate. On 18 December the decree of 29 November on religious education was given an interpretation less hostile to the churches. On 28 December it was suspended altogether wherever it encountered serious difficulties.[1] On 15 February the decree of 27 November suspending clerical supervision of schools was withdrawn on the grounds that it was illegal as it had never been accepted by the whole Prussian cabinet.[2]

The head of the provisional Government, Hirsch, asked

1. Zentralblatt für die gesamte Unterrichtsverwaltung in Preussen, 1918, pp.721-2. On 1 April 1919, a new decree was issued which made religious education and observance voluntary for both teachers and pupils; ibid., 1919, p.427. Copies of the decrees and supporting documents are to be found in D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, VII neu, Sekt.1 B.Gen., Pt.I, 2/23.
2. Zentralblatt, 1919, p.362.

the Kultusministerium to comment on the protest of the church leadership of 2 December.[1] Haenisch replied that his personal opinion was that although separation was an historical necessity, it must be left to the National Assembly. He agreed with the Oberkirchenrat that as a matter of course the churches should be consulted and that the just interests of church people should be protected. Hirsch replied to the Oberkirchenrat to this effect. He added that the problem of separation had as yet been an object only of general consideration in the Kultusministerium.[2]

The officials of the ecclesiastical department of the Kultusministerium had strongly opposed Hoffmann's policy from the start. On 25 November they composed a memorandum defending the churches' legal title to subsidies and stressing the hardship cancellation would cause.[3] On 21 December they protested to the Prussian Government against the way they were being ignored. Their absence from the December conferences had, they argued, made the church leadership suspicious. They had not been consulted about Wessel's appointment and they agreed with the Oberkirchenrat that it had been illegal.

1. see above, p.33.
2. D.Z.A. Potsdam, Reich Min. f. d. kirchl. Angelegenheiten, 22166: Hirsch to Kultusministerium, 7 Dec.1918; G.St.A., Rep.90, 2380: Haenisch to Hirsch, 18 Dec.1918; E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/1: Hirsch to Oberkirchenrat, 9 Jan.1919.
3. D.Z.A. Potsdam, Reich Min. f. d. kirchl. Angelegenheiten, 22166.

The appointment had provoked a sharp reaction and it was irreconcilable with the aim of separation of church and state; it had been a political error, they concluded, which could have been avoided had they been consulted.[1] Haenisch admitted that this was true. He pointed out that Wessel had been dropped on 13 January and said that in future the department officials would be consulted.[2]

The church leadership was probably encouraged by these developments. They had known of the split between the ministers and could appreciate the importance of Haenisch gaining control.[3] They knew too of the protest of the

1. G.St.A., Rep.90, 2380: Die geistliche Abteilung (Kultusministerium) to the Prussian Government, 21 Dec.1918. On 30 Dec.1918,4 members of the Kultusministerium acting, they said, in agreement with Haenisch though as 'officials and citizens' not as representatives of the ministry, asked the Chairman of the Zentralrat, Leinert, for Hoffmann's dismissal; Nachlass Becker, 81: memorandum of the meeting.

2. G.St.A., Rep.90, 2380: Haenisch to Prussian Government, 25 Jan.1919.

3. On 20 Nov.1918 Lahusen, the spiritual Vice-President of the Oberkirchenrat, wrote confidentially that they knew of a division between the two ministers - Haenisch wanted to continue the subsidies; Hoffmann wanted to abolish them. Bundesarchiv, Nachlass Traub, 65: Lahusen to Traub, 20 Nov.1918. The dispute between the ministers was in any case soon public. At the end of November, Haenisch was reported in the press as saying that separation of church and state must wait for the National Assembly, otherwise he would resign. F.Thimme, Revolution und Kirche, pp.36-7.

Kultusministerium officials because the senior official concerned sent a copy to Kahl suggesting that he pass it on to the Oberkirchenrat, which Kahl did.[1] It is a striking example of the solidarity of the old Beamten in church and state against the new political authorities. At a meeting of the Vertrauensrat, on 23 December, Government assurances on church property and subsidies were reported with satisfaction. Vice-President Moeller said, however, that it seemed likely that the Kultusministerium would assume the powers of the crown as Landesherr.[2] On 14 November the Prussian Government had claimed all royal powers, without specifying the Landesherr rights over the church.[3] On 6 January 1919 the Oberkirchenrat, therefore, wrote to the Prussian Government claiming the Landesherr rights for the Landeskirche.[4]

The church leadership did not respond to Haenisch's request at the conference of 12-13 December that it should reassure the parishes about the intentions of the Kultusministerium. Haenisch had made it clear that the decisions over church-state relations would be taken by

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/1: Kahl to Voigts, 15 Dec.1919 and note by Voigts, 28 Dec.
2. ibid.: minutes of the meeting.
3. ibid.: Preussische Staatsregierung to all officials including the Oberkirchenrat, 14 Nov.1918.
4. G.St.A., Rep.90, 2380: Oberkirchenrat to Preussische Staatsregierung, 6 Jan.1919.

the constituent assemblies of the Reich and Prussia. Church leaders naturally sought to influence the elections and shock at the initial measures of the Government was a useful weapon.[1]

The campaign was directed in the Old Prussian Union by a subcommittee of the Vertrauensrat. It published a news-sheet edited by O. Dibelius.[2] It was technically not an official organ of the church and Dibelius seems to have been given a free hand.[3] The subcommittee, however, worked from

1. A list of 876 protests from Catholic and Protestant associations against separation of church and state survives in the files of the Prussian Government, G.St.A., Rep.90, 2380.

2. Mitteilungen aus der Arbeit der dem Evang. Oberkirchenrat und dem Generalsynodalvorstand beigeordneten Vertrauensmänner der Evangelischen Landeskirche. 12 numbers, probably a complete set, covering the period 17 Dec.1918 to 15 Sept.1919 are preserved in the library of the Evangelische Kirche der Union in Berlin. Similar campaigns were conducted in other German churches especially by groups formed at the revolution, for instance the Volkskirchenbund in Hanover, which by December 1919 claimed 300,000 members (Hanover Landeskirchenamt newspaper archive).
O.Dibelius (1880-1967), 1915 Pastor in Berlin, 1921 member of the Oberkirchenrat, 1925 Generalsuperintendent of the Kurmark, 1933 forced to retire, 1945 Bishop of Berlin and President of the Oberkirchenrat. Autobiography, O.Dibelius, Ein Christ ist immer im Dienst (Stuttgart,1961), Engl.transl., In the Service of the Lord (London,1964). Biographical details in Söhngen, Hundert Jahre Oberkirchenrat, p.176.

3. This enabled the Oberkirchenrat to evade responsibility. For instance, when a Pfarrer criticized the Mitteilungen for recommending only the DNVP and the DVP, the Oberkirchenrat replied that the Mitteilungen were not official. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/1: Habermann to Oberkirchenrat, 31 Jan.1919; Oberkirchenrat to Habermann, 21 Feb.1919.

the Oberkirchenrat building and reported to the Vertrauensrat, to which the Oberkirchenrat and the executive committee of the General Synod belonged. The first number of the news-sheet (17 December) explained that the Protestant church stood above political parties. At the same time, it said that only those parties which represented the interests of the Protestant church should be supported. Protestant associations were asked by the Generalsuperintendenten to question the parties about their intentions in church matters.[1] Provision of speakers for meetings was organized and appropriate literature recommended. The decree of 29 November about religious education had been bitterly attacked and its suspension was greeted as a triumph.[2] Extracts from Dieterich's programme for separation of church and state (which had appeared in the national press) were reproduced as late as 20 January despite Haenisch's assurances.[3] Special attention was given to organizing the Protestant female vote.

On 8 January the results of the enquiry into the political parties were given.[4] The DNVP, DVP and the Centre Party had

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/1: minutes of the meeting of the Vertrauensrat, 21 Dec.1918; report of the propaganda subcommittee.
2. Mitteilungen, No.3, 30 Dec.1918.
3. ibid., No.5, 20 Jan.1919. Dibelius did not accept Kultusministerium denials that Dieterich's programme provided the basis of their policy.
4. ibid., No.4, 8 Jan.1919.

replied favourably but the Centre Party was deemed unsuitable because it was a Catholic Party. The DDP was not considered reliable with regard to subsidies and education. The Social Democratic parties had not replied and this was taken to mean that there had been no change in their policy since the Erfurt party programme. Dibelius argued that the local clergy should tell their congregations whom to support. He quoted from Ezekiel (xxxiii.5) that if the godless sinned because they had not been warned, their blood would be on the heads of those who had failed to warn them. Many congregations, he said, intended to march together to vote after the church service on polling day (Sunday, 19 January).

Dibelius also organized a petition in support of Christian education to be sent to the National Assembly at Weimar.[1] The Vertrauensrat supplied forms and the clergy were instructed to collect signatures. The example of the Old Prussian Union was followed by the other Landeskirchen except for Baden and Württemberg where there was no threat of reform. By 26 April 1919, almost 6½ million signatures had been collected.[2] There is little doubt that there was wide support for religious education among SPD voters; it was claimed that even USPD voters had signed.[3] The petition was the most striking achievement of the Protestant church leadership in electoral

1. Mitteilungen, No.6, 1 Feb.1919.
2. E.K.D., A 2/238: Deutscher evangelischer Kirchenausschuss to Deutsche evangelische Kirchenkonferenz, 26 April 1919.
3. Mitteilungen, No.8, 12 March 1919.

organization.

The National Assembly met at Weimar on 6 February 1919. The parties favoured by the Protestant church had not been successful: the DNVP won 44 seats, the DVP 19. Nevertheless the provisions of the Weimar constitution were favourable to the churches. This was because of the power of the Centre Party (91 seats) within the Government coalition[1] which helped to make the SPD (163 seats) conciliatory. One SPD deputy told the constitutional committee that his party did not want 'a violent separation, but an amicable agreement'.[2] In addition, Naumann kept the policy of the DDP (75 seats) friendly towards the churches.[3] Four members of the Vertrauensrat of the Old Prussian Union took part in the proceedings of the constitutional committee. Wilhelm Kahl (DVP), Reinhard Mumm and Gottfried Traub (DNVP) and Adolf von Harnack as a Government expert on educational questions.[4]

1. R.Morsey, Die Deutsche Zentrumspartei 1917-1923 (Düsseldorf,1966), pp.208-220.
2. Verhandlungen der verfassunggebenden Deutschen Nationalversammlung, vol.336, 188 (speech of Meerfeld).
3. T.Heuss, Friedrich Naumann (2nd.edn., Stuttgart,1949),pp.477-83.
4. Verhandlungen, Nationalversammlung, vol.336, 76-8, 187-230, 515-37. R.Mumm (1873-1932), Reichstag deputy of the Christian Social party 1912-18, of the DNVP 1918-29, and of the Christian Social Volksdienst party 1929-32; formed the Protestant Reich committee of the DNVP,1921. See his autobiography, R.Mumm, Der christlich-soziale Gedanke (Berlin, 1933), also RGG,iv,p.1190. G.Traub (1869-1956), 1912 suspended from being a Pfarrer because of his liberal theology, reinstated 1918; 1913-17 Prussian Landtag deputy for the Fortschrittliche Volkspartei, 1917-18 for the Vaterlandspartei, 1919 Reichstag deputy of the DNVP, 1920 Kultusminister of the Kapp régime, 1921-34 editor of the München-Augsburger Abendzeitung in the Hugenberg interest, 1914-39 also editor of Eiserne Blätter. See his autobiography, first 2 chapters published as G.Traub, Erinnerungen (Munich,1949), the remainder in Bundesarchiv, Nachlass Traub, 5.

President Voigts, acting as President of the Kirchenausschuss on behalf of the leaders of all Protestant Landeskirchen, sent the National Assembly a list of demands for the new constitution.[1] It included the status of Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts, state recognition of the sabbath and church festivals, freedom of worship and protection of church property. State subsidies should be stopped only if full compensation were paid and agreement reached with church officials, it said. It asked that the Landeskirchen should be given freedom to administer their affairs independently of the state and the right to unite to form a joint Körperschaft. It also asked for a guarantee of church rights in theological faculties and of the position of chaplains in state institutions like the army. Voigts said that the Christian character of public education should be maintained and he referred to the petition which had been organized as evidence of the strength of feeling on this subject among the electorate. Any interference in the religious sensibilities of the nation would provoke a storm of anger, he said. The Protestant churches expected the National Assembly to take account of the Christian Wesen of the nation.

The Weimar constitution (11 August 1919) differed from previous Reich legislation in the extent of its provisions

1. Kirchenausschuss to Nationalversammlung, 13 March 1919, in Allgemeines Kirchenblatt für das evangelische Deutschland, 1 April 1919 (Stuttgart,1919), pp.154-7.

on church matters.[1] This met the wish of church representatives that radical Länder should be restrained by the Reich; if a Land acted in contradiction to the Reich constitution the church could appeal to the Reich Minister of the Interior and the Reich courts.[2] Freedom of conscience and of worship were guaranteed by Articles 135-6. No one could be forced to religious observance and no civil rights were dependent on religious beliefs. Religious observance was under state protection. Article 137 declared that 'there is no Staatskirche'. This was a formula for separation of church and state which everyone could accept. Every religious society was given the right to administer its own affairs within the laws common to all. Churches could appoint officials independently of the state. The churches were not reduced to the level of private clubs; the Körperschaft status remained, though other religious societies could also acquire it. The right of religious societies to unite was affirmed and the unions were also to be Körperschaften. The churches which had this status could levy taxes. The counterpart to this generous settlement was that Weltanschauung organizations, i.e. agnostic groups, could acquire the same rights.[3] (In practice few did.) Further

1. E.R.Huber, Dokumente zur deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte (Stuttgart,1966), iii, 148-50, 155.
2. See below, pp. 82-4.
3. See the explanation of Article 137 (Article 134 in the draft of the constitution) by the reporter of the constitutional committee to the plenum of the National Assembly, Verhandlungen, Nationalversammlung, vol.328, 164-5, and speech of Kahl, ibid., 1646-9.

regulations were left to the Länder. The end of state subsidies by Länder legislation was planned by Article 138. The Reich was to issue the principles on which it was to be based and subsidies were to continue until then (Article 173). The Reich in fact never issued the principles because compensation was too expensive and subsidies were not abolished. Church property was guaranteed. Sundays and other religious festivals were protected as days of rest and 'seelische Erhebung' (Article 139). Provision was made for chaplains in the forces, in hospitals, prisons and other public institutions (Articles 140-1).

The educational system authorized by the Weimar constitution was less satisfactory for the churches. In an ambiguous clause (Article 146) a unified educational system was given slight preference over separate denominational and secular schools. Parents could apply for denominational and secular schools, which were allowed if they did not interfere with the proper functioning of the educational system. Details were left to Länder legislation on the basis of a Reichsschulgesetz, which was never passed. Private schools were only allowed where a minority was not provided for by state schools and if the private schools were of the same standard as the state system (Article 147). The clauses about religious education, however, favoured the churches. Harnack unexpectedly spoke strongly in favour of keeping religious education denominational and in close contact with the churches.[1] Religious education was to

1. Verhandlungen, Nationalversammlung, vol.336, 216-8.

be a proper subject in all except secular schools (Article 149) and its content was to be agreed by the school with the appropriate church. Supervision was to be by state officials. The teaching of religious education was voluntary and parents could decide whether their children should attend. Theological faculties were to be kept as normal university departments.

The Protestant church had every reason to be pleased with the Weimar constitution. The November fears of a hostile programme of separation were dispelled. Church privileges were confirmed while state control over the church was reduced. The SPD was justified in arguing that this had produced a situation in which the church was free of the state but the state was not free of the church.[1] Naumann, in reply, admitted separation of church and state was incomplete and he was doubtful about retaining the Körperschaft status but, he said, great progress had been made and many Protestants would welcome the new freedom as a day of joy.[2] Pfarrer Veidt of the DNVP said he hoped the church would now become the Volkskirche, which the old Staatskirche had tried to be. They would go forward soberly and without fear though without Naumann's great optimism, he said.[3]

The Prussian Constituent Assembly met on 13 March 1919. The result of the elections was similar to the result of the

1. Verhandlungen, Nationalversammlung, vol.336, 188 (speech of Meerfeld), vol.328, 1650 (speech of Quarck).
2. ibid., vol.328, 1651.
3. ibid., 1651-8.

Reich elections and a coalition Government of SPD, Centre, and DDP was formed. On 20 March the Prussian Assembly passed a law for the provisional regulation of state sovereignty. It laid down (Paragraph 5) that the former royal powers over the Protestant church would be exercised provisionally by three Government ministers. They were to be Protestants appointed by the Government and would remain in power until the church had chosen new bodies of its own to take over from them.[1]

This development was not the result of Government policy but of a parliamentary accident. The original bill had spoken of all royal powers going to the Government; it evaded the issue of whether these included the royal powers over the Protestant church. The DNVP attempted unsuccessfully to have the church powers excluded from the clause. The DDP then proposed the formula which was finally adopted with DNVP support. Both DDP and DNVP spokesmen later admitted that the affair might have been better managed.[2]

The Oberkirchenrat protested against the new law to the Prussian Government on 26 March.[3] They argued that the royal powers over the Protestant church had always been distinguished from the powers of the head of state and they again claimed that these powers now belonged to the church. Minister President

1. Preussische Gesetzsammlung, Jg.1919, No.17 (Berlin,1919),p.53.
2. Die Christliche Welt: 17 April, 15 May 1919; Nos.16, 20.
3. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/2: Oberkirchenrat to Preussische Staatsregierung, 26 March 1919.

Hirsch replied that the decree was law but that it was only temporary and that the three ministers would take account of the independence of the church.[1] The Oberkirchenrat tacitly accepted the situation as they did not feel strong enough to defy the Government. In a meeting of church leaders on 3 April 1919, President Voigts said that the three ministers had been established by law and the church would take an enormous responsibility on itself if it disobeyed the law.[2] In another meeting, when a synod deputy argued that if the state laid down rules for the new church constitution the church should fight back, Vice-President Moeller rejected this advice saying that the result would be catastrophic because the church would not be united and the state would exploit its weakness.[3]

In July 1919, however, the Oberkirchenrat found a new reason for protesting against the appointment of the three ministers. It argued that the French and Polish Governments would conclude from the powers of the ministers that the church was under state control. The French and Poles would thus have a pretext to enforce the separation from the Old Prussian Union of the parishes which were now in the Saar or under Polish rule in the East. Protestant parishes there were strongly loyal to Germany, said the Oberkirchenrat, but

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/3: Hirsch to Oberkirchenrat, 11 June 1919.
2. ibid.: minutes of the meeting of the Oberkirchenrat and Generalsynodalvorstand, 3 April 1919.
3. E.K.U., Gen.II, 31/1: minutes of a meeting of the Vertrauensrat, 20 March 1919.

they depended on support from the home church.[1] Their separation would, therefore, damage the national cause in those areas. The Oberkirchenrat was supported in this argument by the Auswärtiges Amt.[2]

The President of the Prussian Cabinet, Hirsch, eventually decided to reject this plea. The French and Poles, he said, would in any case consider the Prussian church a Staatskirche because of its economic dependence on the state. There were also internal political reasons why the three ministers must remain. The state could continue to provide funds for the church only while it continued to exercise the rights of the Landesherr. Legal and financial separation of church and state, he implied, must go together.[3]

The main problem facing the authorities in church and state was the procedure to be adopted for the new church constitution. The state expected the church to make some concessions to democracy. The state had the right to confirm the church laws which would be necessary for the new constitution and, unless these laws were liberal, they might be refused by the Prussian Constituent Assembly. At the same time the state recognized limits to its competence to interfere in church matters, especially in view of the new constitution of the Reich.

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/3: copies of Oberkirchenrat to Kultusministerium, 9 July 1919 and Oberkirchenrat to the Prussian Government, 4 Aug.1919.
2. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 214/1: Friedensabteilung of the Auswärtiges Amt to the Prussian Government, 31 July 1919.
3. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/3: Hirsch to Oberkirchenrat, 13 Nov.1919.

The church accepted the right of the state to confirm the new laws and, indeed, wanted the security and permanence given by this confirmation. The Oberkirchenrat also accepted the need for some reform. There had, however, been no revolution within the church and any solution would have to be acceptable to the old General Synod since, even if the Synod were bypassed, the same people were likely to be powerful in any church assembly. This made radical reform impossible. It was also important that the Oberkirchenrat should not appear to accept reforms dictated to it by the state because this would annoy the conservative synod deputies. The church was especially hostile to the attempts of liberals to influence the new church constitution by pressure on the Government through the Prussian Constituent Assembly. On the other hand, the need to have state agreement and state pressure for some reform were not unwelcome to the Oberkirchenrat for it made it possible to argue that moderate reform (such as the Oberkirchenrat wanted) was necessary to get a settlement, and if a settlement were not reached the church would be left in a state of suspended legality.

The first question was the type of assembly to grant the new constitution. The Oberkirchenrat and the Vertrauensrat (see above, p.32) favoured a democratic body elected by direct, universal suffrage. There were several reasons for this policy. It was in line with the wishes of the Government. In addition the constitutional subcommittee of the Vertrauensrat

thought that only a new and fully representative assembly could decide who should exercise the former royal powers.[1] H. Kapler, a senior official and subsequent President of the Oberkirchenrat,[2] advanced arguments of a more general kind. In a meeting on 9 January 1919 he said,

> 'one must give full weight to the fact - whether one considers it regrettable or gratifying - that the mental atmosphere in Germany has experienced a far-reaching transformation, and that the world of the church as well has been caught up by the great democratic wave which is moving through our period.'

If they wanted to preserve the Volkskirche, said Kapler, they should create a constitution upheld by the trust and joyful participation of all church people. This demand was more urgent than ever now that state support had been withdrawn. To the objection of Landrat Winckler, the chairman of the General Synod executive committee,[3] that the church might be swamped by radicals, Kapler replied that one must trust the good sense of church people.[4]

The plan for a new democratic assembly, however, aroused fierce opposition from conservative groups. All the provincial

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 31/1: meetings of the Vertrauensrat, 30 Jan. and 20 Feb.1919.
2. H.Kapler (1867-1941), 1901 into Oberkirchenrat, 1919 secular Vice-President, 1925-33 President; Söhngen, Hundert Jahre Oberkirchenrat, p.182.
3. Winckler was also chairman of the DNVP in the Prussian Landtag until 1928; Handbuch über den Preussischen Staat, 134.Jg., 1928, p.118.
4. E.K.U., Gen.II, 31/1: text of Kapler's speech to the constitutional subcommittee meeting of 9 Jan.1919.

synods which met,[1] especially the Rhineland and Westphalian synods, rejected it. The Kreuzzeitung even referred to a church Spartacist group which planned brutal coercion of the conservatives.[2] In view of this opposition the Oberkirchenrat agreed to a compromise which it reached together with the General Synod executive committee; otherwise it feared that the church would be split. The compromise was to have the election to the constituent assembly in two stages. There would first be elections to parish representative bodies on the basis of general, equal and secret election - as previously for the General Synod. However women would now be included and there would be a more generous interpretation of the qualifications for voting. These parish bodies would then elect by the same method to the constituent assembly. (The old General Synod had been elected only after two further intermediate stages, elections from parish to district bodies and from there to the provincial synods.) In order to preserve legal continuity with the previous system the Oberkirchenrat proposed to submit this compromise solution first to the General Synod (which would be re-convened in its old form). The Oberkirchenrat accepted that the new electoral law would then require state confirmation. It therefore wrote to the

1. Rhineland, Westphalia, Brandenburg, Pomerania, Silesia; Verhandlungen, Generalsynode, 1920, ii, 127-33, 136-40.
2. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/1: Kreuzzeitung report of 19 Jan.1919; it apologised on 28 Jan. but maintained its criticism of the election plan.

Kultusminister on 30 May 1919, explaining what had happened and asking whether Haenisch would be prepared to ask the Prussian Constituent Assembly for confirmation of the compromise plan. The letter added that perhaps the powers of the three ministers might be altered at the same time.[1]

Haenisch replied that in view of the opposition to the three ministers law and because it appeared that the Reich constitution would free the churches from any contact with the state, he could only speak with great reserve. He knew that wide circles wanted direct elections and this system alone would fulfil the normal conditions required for administering large sums of national finance. The alternative system of election proposed by the Oberkirchenrat would favour conservative, rural parishes and he disapproved of the clause which reserved a third of the places in the assembly for clergymen. Haenisch continued that without taking a position on this inner church matter he deplored the proposed electoral law and he hoped the General Synod would change it. He would not be able to say until after the Synod whether he would ask the Prussian Constituent Assembly for an appropriate state law. It was also possible, he added, that by then, if the Reich constitution had been passed, a state law would be unnecessary.[2]

1. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 214/1: Oberkirchenrat to Kultusministerium, 30 May 1919.
2. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/3: Haenisch to Oberkirchenrat, 21 July 191[illegible]

Haenisch's letter was a compromise between two conflicting views held in the Kultusministerium. Ernst Troeltsch, Professor of theology and philosophy, member of the DDP in the Landtag and State Secretary to the Kultusministerium, strongly opposed the Oberkirchenrat proposal, although he recognized that the state could not impose its views on the church. Stalmann, one of the civil servants who had been in office before 1918, argued that the state had no right to interfere and should not express any views on the proposal. Troeltsch replied that this would work to the advantage of the conservative group within the church and that it was the task of the Kultusministerium to do right by both groups, remembering that the Weimar constitution had guaranteed freedom of conscience.[1]

On 6 September the Oberkirchenrat and General Synod executive committee agreed that the electoral law should be put, unaltered, to the General Synod.[2] It included a clause by which the royal powers over the Protestant church would be exercised by the Oberkirchenrat and the General Synod executive committee (instead of the three ministers) until the new constitution came into force. On 30 October 1919 the Oberkirchenrat informed the three ministers that they planned

1. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 214/1: Troeltsch draft, 6 June 1919; Stalmann reply, 16 July, and Troeltsch marginal comment. On Troeltsch, see W.Köhler, Ernst Troeltsch (Tübingen,1941).
2. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/3: minutes of the meeting of the Oberkirchenrat and Generalsynodalvorstand, 6 Sept.1919.

a meeting of the General Synod in December.[1] They defended the proposed electoral law against the criticisms Haenisch had made and mentioned the guarantee of church independence contained in Article 137 of the Reich constitution, which had become law in August. Because of the hostility of church circles to the General Synod being summoned by the three ministers, they asked that they, the Oberkirchenrat and General Synod executive committee, should summon it and declare at the same time that the three ministers agreed.

The DDP intervened in the Prussian Constituent Assembly, on 11 November. It tabled a motion supported among others by Oeser, one of the three ministers, Rade, the most prominent church liberal, and Troeltsch.[2] It maintained that the church proposal with regard to the royal powers contradicted the law by which the three ministers had been appointed and that the electoral law contradicted the basic democratic rights of the Prussian state. The motion asked the Government what it intended to do to protect the rights of the state and its Protestant citizens. The importance of this intervention was that the church could not expect a majority in the Constituent Assembly to confirm the electoral law if it did not have the support of the DDP.[3]

1. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 214/1: Oberkirchenrat to the three ministers and Haenisch, 30 Oct.1919.
2. Sitzungsberichte der Verfassunggebenden Preussischen Landesversammlung (Berlin,1921), Drucksachen, vol.4, 1611.
3. The seats in the Prussian Constituent Assembly were divided as follows: DNVP 48, DVP 23, Centre 94, DDP 65, SPD 145, USPD 24, others 3. Statistisches Jahrbuch für den Freistaat Preussen (Berlin,1920), vol.16, p.424.

The DDP motion was debated on 3 December 1919. Dr. Berndt (DDP) argued that the great mass of church people supported the principle of universal, direct suffrage, as had the Oberkirchenrat and the Vertrauensrat. The Oberkirchenrat had given way before an excited opposition, he said. The DDP demanded freedom of the church from the state but, he added, it also demanded freedom of the church from the absolute rule of particular church groups. The object of the right wing in the church was political: they aimed to misuse the power of the church to overthrow the existing state. Their hostility had been understandable when Hoffmann was Kultusminister but it was no longer justifiable; the Reich constitution and the majority parties were friendly to the church and they must ask it to submit to the state which was now the legal authority of the country.[1] Martin Rade also stressed the danger that the church would become a party church, 'a bulwark of reaction'. He accepted that the church constituent assembly should be free to decide the election system for future synods as it wished but it was essential that elections to this church constituent assembly should be democratic. Any other system would be 'unevangelical, unprotestant, unecclesiastical and unchristian'. The existing

1. Preussische Landesversammlung, vol.6, 7060-8.

church bodies were not viable and church officials were still state officials, he added; it was the state's responsibility to stand the church on her own feet.[1]

The DDP motion found support from the SPD but was opposed by spokesmen of the DNVP, Centre and DVP. Generalsuperintendent Reinhard (DNVP) pointed out that where the system of direct, universal suffrage had been adopted (in Baden and Württemberg) church liberals had lost by it.[2] Generalsuperintendent Klingemann (DNVP) suggested that the DDP still carried traces of the vulgar liberalism of the past which had shown little understanding of church questions. He admitted, however, that the church had been too closely bound to the state before the revolution and he implied that it respected the new legal authorities.[3] Richert (DVP) said that his party also favoured liberal reform within the church, although it was divided about the merits of the proposed electoral law, but it believed it was for the church alone to decide. He quoted with approval words used by Naumann in the National Assembly, 'One should not carry on the system of a state church in an underhand way after one has given it up publicly'.[4] Kultusminister Haenisch took a middle position. He said that he agreed with the

1. Preussische Landesversammlung, vol.6, 7105-16.
2. ibid., 7072.
3. ibid., 7118, 7120-2.
4. ibid., 7165-9.

church that its election system was legally its own affair, but he had asked that it should be made more democratic; if the Constituent Assembly disapproved of the electoral law they could refuse it state confirmation.[1]

On 13 November, two days after the DDP motion had been tabled, the three ministers (Oeser - DDP, Südekum and Heine - both SPD) refused to allow the General Synod to be summoned.[2] They repeated the objections made by the DDP. They pointed out that as the Constituent Assembly had to approve the electoral law it was necessary for there to be some measure of agreement between the legislature and the church before the General Synod passed the law; otherwise there would be a conflict between state and church. They suggested negotiations between the Oberkirchenrat and the legislature and offered their services as mediators.

The Oberkirchenrat reacted sharply.[3] It argued that the demand that church legal projects should be agreed to in the first instance by the state legislature was unprecedented, let alone the idea that church institutions should conform to the political ideology of the state. The only legal right the state had was to consider church laws after they had been passed by the General Synod. The attitude of the three ministers

1. Preussische Landesversammlung, vol.6, 7140-3.
2. The text of their letter is printed in Verhandlungen, Generalsynode, 1920, ii, 113-4.
3. The text of their reply, dated 15 Dec.1919, is printed in ibid., ii, 114-21.

was irreconcilable with the Reich constitution. Their demands were in any case intolerable as the majority of the Constituent Assembly did not belong to the Protestant church. The Oberkirchenrat admitted that far-reaching alterations of the state constitution had regularly had repercussions on the church constitution but they did not accept that they were bound to rigid conformity to the latest ideas of the state; the church alone must decide on the degree of adjustment appropriate. The Oberkirchenrat claimed that it also wanted to avoid a conflict but that its opposition to the ministers' demands only reflected the mood of church people. The Oberkirchenrat was prepared, however, for negotiations on the basis of its proposals.

At the negotiations (27 January and 21 February) a settlement favourable to the church was reached without difficulty.[1] The ministers accepted that the principle of direct election had had to be dropped because of the hostility of provincial synods. They agreed not to pursue the demand further provided that Kahl and his church party introduced an amendment in favour of direct election at the synod. The church leadership made concessions to the state on the number of extra votes to be given to urban parishes and on the reservation of seats in the synod for clergymen. The state accepted that the powers of the three ministers would fall

1. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 214/1: Protocols of meetings of 27 Jan. and 21 Feb.1920.

to the church as soon as the church constituent assembly met.

It is not clear why the ministers were content with comparatively minor concessions from the church leadership when with the support of the SPD and DDP they would have had a majority in the Prussian Constituent Assembly.[1] Several explanations are possible. The threat to the coalition caused by the opposition of the Centre Party to Government handling of church affairs may have made the Government give way.[2] Signs of strain within the coalition had been evident during the debate of 3 December 1919.[3] It is also likely that the three ministers were unsure of their legal position. They faced strong opposition from department officials;[4] they had gone further than Haenisch by claiming the right to influence the church election system and they may have feared that the Reich would support the church as had happened in a comparable situation in Brunswick.[5] Perhaps they had

1. Rittberg argues that with the support of the Centre Party the church had a majority of deputies friendly to it in both the Reich and Prussia but this was true only if the DDP supported the church, which was not the case on this issue. E.von Rittberg, Der Preussische Kirchenvertrag von 1931. Seine Entstehung und seine Bedeutung für das Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche in der Weimarer Republik (Diss.Phil., Bonn,1960), p.53.
2. ibid.
3. See the exchanges between Haenisch and the Centre deputy, Lauscher; Preussische Landesversammlung, vol.6, pp.7089-7104, 7130-9, 7156-61.
4. Troeltsch fought a running battle with the officials; see D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 214/1, and ibid., Rep.77, Tit.123, 157/1. cf. E.Troeltsch, Spektatorbriefe (Tübingen,1924), pp.37,89; and E.Kolb, Die Arbeiterräte, pp.274-6.
5. see below, pp. 82-3.

only intended to bring the maximum pressure to bear on the church without allowing the dispute to end in open conflict and legal proceedings. They may also have been impressed by the sharp reaction of the Oberkirchenrat and feared a Kulturkampf.[1]

The electoral law was submitted to the General Synod which met in its old form for the last time in April 1920. Kahl's amendment in favour of direct election was defeated by a large majority.[2] Despite criticism both of the Oberkirchenrat handling of the situation since the revolution and of the proposed electoral laws, the compromise was accepted. It was recognized that it was in the interests of the church to stick to the agreement reached with the three ministers.[3] The church had been promised that once the constituent assembly met it would be free to decide its constitution without state interference.[4] The President of the Oberkirchenrat, Moeller, in his closing speech referred to an historian who had said that all great things were based on sacrifice and ideas. The General Synod, he said, had made the sacrifice.[5]

1. The Prussian Cabinet discussed the attacks of the right wing press on the three ministers and the use made of the affair by the Welf (Hanover separatist) movement on 19 Dec.1919; D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.90a, Tit.III 2b, 6/168.
2. Verhandlungen, Generalsynode, 1920, i, 476.
3. ibid., 51-58, 528.
4. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 214/1: protocols of the meetings of church leaders with the three ministers and representatives of the Kultusministerium, 27 Jan. and 21 Feb.1920. It was agreed that the new church constitution would require state confirmation only in so far as the state was involved.
5. Verhandlungen, Generalsynode, 1920, i, 576-8.

The next problem was the form of the new constitution. The General Synod executive committee and the Oberkirchenrat were unable to agree on a joint project. Instead they each presented their own plan to the constituent assembly.[1] The synod leaders wanted to return to a more indirect system of election than they had accepted for the constituent assembly. In future they wanted the election to be in three stages - from the parish bodies to the provincial synods and from there to the General Synod. The Oberkirchenrat opposed this further concession to conservatism and favoured perpetuation of the two stage system by which the constituent assembly had been elected.

The synod leaders wanted synods at both the provincial and central level to be the effective authority of the church with powers over the priesthood and church officials. The Oberkirchenrat accepted that both synods and priesthood, especially the Generalsuperintendenten, should have more power than previously. However, they wanted the Generalsuperintendenten in the provinces and the Oberkirchenrat at the centre to enjoy more prominence than the synod leaders would give them. Although they accepted a diminished role for church officials,

1. Bericht über die Verhandlungen der ausserordentlichen Kirchenversammlung zur Feststellung der Verfassung für die evangelische Landeskirche der älteren Provinzen Preussens (Berlin,1923), ii, Anhang.

the Oberkirchenrat argued that their expert advice was still essential. They were, they said, the servants of the whole church and they were also more stable than synods where majorities were liable to fluctuate. They believed that church officials should retain some independence within a framework of general responsibility to the synods.[1] These differences were clear in the rival plans for the leading authority of the church. Both plans provided for a committee which would act for the General Synod when it was not in session. Both planned that it should be a mixture of synod deputies, members of the Oberkirchenrat and representatives of the Generalsuperintendenten, and both agreed that the synod deputies should be in the majority. The Oberkirchenrat, however, believed that its President should chair the committee whereas the synod leaders thought it should be the President of the General Synod. The Oberkirchenrat argued that its President had the advantage of being a permanent official, independent of church parties and also that his understanding of the way the state worked was necessary.[2]

The elections to the constituent assembly were a victory for the united right wing parties (Bekenntnistreue Vereinigung)

1. Verhandlungen, Kirchenversammlung, ii, 181-2.
2. ibid., 77-83.

which won 145 seats, while the middle party (Volkskirchliche Evangelische Vereinigung) won 47, the liberals (Freie Volkskirche) 19 and another liberal group 10.[1] The assembly accepted the electoral proposals of the old General Synod executive committee by a small majority (104-93).[2] It also decided that the President of the first General Synod to be elected under the new constitution should be the President of the central committee of the church, the Kirchensenat. It is doubtful whether either made much difference. Any election system would probably have given conservative groups a majority and the Oberkirchenrat was bound to consider the temper of the synod carefully before making any proposal. The Oberkirchenrat also retained formidable advantages, as a permanent and expert body, in steering the Kirchensenat even though it did not provide its President.

Most public discussion of the constitution was provoked by an issue contained in neither of the original plans. By a majority of 127-81 votes[3] members of the Bekenntnistreue Vereinigung inserted a statement of belief at the head of the constitution.[4] This mentioned the resurrection and the historical creeds of the church which were described as the basis of the 'teaching, work and communion of the church'.

1. Verhandlungen, Kirchenversammlung, ii, 44-7.
2. ibid., i, 1411, 1510-1.
3. ibid., i, 1353, 1507-10.
4. ibid.,ii, 248.

The Oberkirchenrat advised against this 'Preamble' and the liberals and middle group voted against it. The liberals feared the 'Preamble' might have legal authority over them though this was denied by its supporters. The strength of feeling against the 'Preamble' was registered by its opponents voting against the whole constitution which was passed by only 126-77 votes.[1] The controversy surrounding the clause aroused fears of further political intervention on behalf of church liberals.

There was general agreement that parts of the new constitution required state confirmation. The revolution had not, after all, brought separation of church and state but only a 'greater loosening of the previous connexion'.[2] The church was still a Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts with special privileges within the state and the state therefore continued to exercise rights of supervision over it.

The state had, first, a right to participate in the administration of the property and finances of the church.[3] It watched over the interests of individual Protestant citizens,

1. Verhandlungen, Kirchenversammlung, i, 1484, 1511-2.
2. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/7: memorandum of a meeting of church representatives with the Kultusministerium, 18 May 1922; the phrase was Kahl's.
3. See the explanation of a Kultusministerium official to representatives of the other ministries in D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 214/2: memorandum of the inter-departmental meetings about the Protestant church constitution of 16, 25 and 30 Jan.1923.

parishes and church provinces, as well as the Landeskirche as a whole. The division of rights and obligations between them was part of public law, not simply a private affair. The first article of the state law concerning the new constitution (8 April 1924), therefore, recognized its validity so far as the administration of church property and taxation was concerned.[1] Secondly, the state retained the right to object to church laws if they were in conflict with state law, if the help of the state was necessary to their execution, or if financial arrangements were altered in a way the state thought unjust. To enable the state to decide whether these conditions applied, the church therefore accepted that it should notify the Kultusministerium of all its laws before they were announced. The Oberverwaltungsgericht was to decide in cases of conflict.[2] The church still wanted the state to enforce its decisions over taxation and in cases of discipline. The state, therefore, retained rights of supervision so that it would not have to enforce a decision it thought unjust.[3] Lastly the church continued to administer cemeteries and parish registers, both of which were in part a secular concern and the state retained rights in both matters.[4]

1. G.J.Ebers, Reichs-und preussisches Staatskirchenrecht (Munich,1932), pp.639-48.
2. ibid., Article 2.
3. ibid., Articles 7, 10-12, 14-16.
4. ibid., Article 6, cl.3 and cl.5 pt.3, Article 19, cl.4.

The negotiations for the state law confirming the new church constitution showed how much remained of the system in force before the revolution. One Kultusministerium official referred to the church laws of the 1870's as a precedent to be followed.[1] The Kultusministerium even tried to make the composition of church bodies which administered property subject to state confirmation, which would have given the state control over the composition of synods. The Oberkirchenrat resisted this demand successfully on the basis of the guarantees in the Reich constitution; President Moeller pointed out that otherwise the church would have been less free than it had been before the revolution.[2] The state, however, retained the right to confirm alterations in church representation where the administration of property was concerned.[3]

Despite the predominantly conservative character of the settlement, the church enjoyed, at least formally, increased legislative independence. The range of cases in which the state could object to church laws had been restricted.[4] In addition, church officials ceased to be state officials. They were appointed by the church and responsible to it. The

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/7: memorandum of a meeting of church representatives with the Kultusministerium, 18 May 1922.
2. ibid.: meeting of the same, 9 Sept.1922.
3. Article 1, cl.2.
4. P.Schoen, Das neue Verfassungsrecht der evangelischen Landeskirchen in Preussen (Berlin,1929), p.37.

Endowment Law (Dotationsgesetz), 15 October 1924, regulated provisionally the expenses of church officials (previously borne by the state) until the Reich should issue the principles on which a general settlement of church subsidies could be based. The law set up a fund to meet the expenses of church officials, thus making the church independent of the annual budget of the Prussian Land.[1]

The Endowment Law included a clause which empowered the Prussian Government to negotiate a treaty with the church about the expenses of church officials.[2] The church leaders had asked for a treaty because of the security it would give against unilateral state action.[3] The state negotiators agreed to the demand provided that in return the state was allowed to object to the appointment of leading church officials if it disapproved of them on political grounds. This proposed limitation of church independence provoked strong opposition from church circles.[4] The state accepted that the objections should be limited to cases where an appointment was a threat to public order but the church leaders insisted that there should also be provision for an independent court of

1. G.J.Ebers, Reichs-und preussisches Staatskirchenrecht, pp.655-8.
2. Clause 9.
3. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/Adhib. E/1: Oberkirchenrat to Kultusministerium, 15 Feb.1924.
4. ibid.: Oberkirchenrat to Kultusministerium, 4 March 1924, and the articles by a right wing synod deputy in Der Reichsbote, 27, 29 July, 1 Aug. and 5 Sept.1924; E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/9.

arbitration.[1] The negotiations foreseen by the Endowment Law were not, in fact, taken up by either side. The clause and the reactions it provoked, however, formed an important precedent for the subsequent negotiation of the Prussian church treaty of 1931.

An attempt by church liberals to use the state's right of confirmation as a means to obtain the rejection of the 'Preamble' and the election system of the new church constitution failed. Rade sent an article he had written in the Christliche Welt, suggesting state intervention, to the Kultusministerium[2] but contrary to the suspicions of the Oberkirchenrat[3] the Kultusministerium was not influenced by it.[4] In 1921 Boelitz (DVP) had become Kultusminister after gains by right wing parties in the Prussian elections of 1921 at the expense of the SPD and DDP and as a result the

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/Adhib. E/1: memorandum of the negotiations of 22 and 29 March 1924.
2. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 214/2: letters from Rade of 22 and 28 March 1922, enclosing Die Christliche Welt, 16 March 1922, No.11.
3. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/8: Oberkirchenrat to Kultusminister, 17 Jan.1923, urging a quick settlement and implying that the delay might be due to liberal pressure on the Kultusministerium. The Oberkirchenrat assured the Minister that the views of the Christliche Welt would meet united resistance from the rest of the church.
4. The delay was due to various reasons not the fault of the Kultusministerium and not the result of liberal pressure. The Kultusministerium pressed for a quick settlement; D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 214/2: memorandum of the inter-departmental meetings about the Protestant church constitution of 16, 25 and 30 Jan.1923 and Kultusminister to Minister President Braun, 25 Sept.1923.

policy of the Kultusministerium became conservative.[1] Nevertheless Hallensleben, the leader of the liberal group in the General Synod, brought objections to the 'Preamble' and church election system before the Prussian Staatsrat of which he was Vice-President. He was narrowly defeated.[2] The Staatsrat, however, ruled that it did not consider the 'Preamble' a part of the constitution and that it had no dogmatic authority. A conciliatory motion was then introduced into the Landtag by the DNVP and the DVP confirming that the 'Preamble' was not part of the church constitution and that it was not legally binding.[3]

A joint declaration was issued by the Oberkirchenrat and synod leaders to mark the introduction of the new constitution on 1 October 1924. It described the constitution as the first that the church had ever made for itself and as the beginning of a new period in its history.[4] The Reformation Festival, 2 November, was chosen to celebrate the new constitution in church services. The constitution was well received by most church members though it was a disappointment to the liberals. Criticism also came from the anti-Republican Right: in the

1. The result of the elections was: SPD 110; DNVP 76; Centre 76; KPD 31; DVP 59; DDP 26; Wirtschaftspartei 4; Deutsch-Hannoversche Partei 11; USPD 27; Polnische Partei 2; Handbuch über den Preussischen Staat, 134.Jg.(1928), p.82.
2. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.77, Tit.123, 161/1: report of the Staatsrat proceedings, 27-8 Nov.1923.
3. Sitzungsberichte des Preussischen Landtages, 1.Wahlperiode (Berlin,1924), vol.15, 21562.
4. Kirchliches Gesetz-und Verordnungsblatt, 1924, pp.255-7.

Deutsche Zeitung, Maurenbrecher attacked the Constitution for its half-hearted, parliamentary character. It was not a constitution of steel but a broth; the national and racist ideology would have to break through, he said.[1]

The Old Prussian Union had survived the attempts both from within and from outside to reform it. It had retained its privileges and gained increased independence. This was the result of many factors besides its own strength, the most important being the division of the Social Democrats and the size of the problems they faced in the first months of the Republic, and subsequently the strength of the Centre Party and the guarantees inserted into the Weimar Constitution through its influence. The church leadership was also able to depend on the loyalty of the conservative majority of its parishioners, the support of a group of Protestant politicians and the sympathy of the old officials of the Kultusministerium. This enabled the Oberkirchenrat to react sharply to state intervention and helped to ensure that an already hard-pressed government would not risk a conflict with the church.

A strong government could have abolished church privileges, expropriated the church and imposed state control - in fact, applied Dieterich's original programme. Such action, however, would probably neither have reduced the influence of the church,

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/Adhib. 1/1-2: Deutsche Zeitung, 17-8 Aug., Nos.360, 362.

at least for a generation, nor made it a liberal institution. The fundamental problem facing the reformers was the weakness of the liberals. Troeltsch saw this clearly in 1919. In a memorandum for Haenisch, he wrote that, even if the state succeeded in imposing the principle of direct elections, conservatives would win a big victory - 'the liberals are too indifferent and too weak'.[1]

The new church constitution gave power to the synods which were dominated by large conservative majorities. The President of the new General Synod and therefore President of the executive committee of the church, the Kirchensenat, was Landrat Winckler, chairman of the DNVP in the Prussian Landtag. The conservatives were basically hostile to the Republic, as the DDP spokesmen in the Landtag had predicted. They were satisfied with the new system of church organization and they recognized that a good settlement had been reached with the state. Understandably, however, they regarded it as a victory over the Republican parties and were reluctant to give the Republic credit for its moderation. O. Dibelius later referred to the revolution as 'the liberating storm' but even this was too conciliatory for some Protestant conservatives.[2] Nevertheless the fact that the church had been treated generously meant that there was a possibility of gradual rapprochement

1. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.77, Tit.123, 157/1: Troeltsch memorandum, 15 Aug.1919.
2. O.Dibelius, Das Jahrhundert der Kirche (1st edn., Berlin,1927), p.75; see below, p. 216.

between the church and the Republic, a possibility which would not have existed if a harsh settlement had been imposed.

This possibility might never have been followed up, however, had it not been for the distinctive and influential position retained by the Oberkirchenrat. It was led until 1933 by men who had been appointed to it by the state before the revolution and who succeeded to the leadership before the Kirchensenat took control.[1] As a result the Oberkirchenrat remained, as it had always been, more flexible and more sympathetic towards the state than the synod majority. When Kapler was elected President in 1925, Kultusminister Becker (himself a former official of the Kultusministerium) wrote to congratulate him. Becker pointed out that because of the Körperschaft status church and state would continue to have much work in common. He expressed his confidence in Kapler as a man who had for decades co-operated with the Kultusministerium and said he was sure that Kapler would also trust the state. Kapler replied that he would consider it a main part of his

1. R.Moeller, President 1919-25, and H.Kapler, President 1925-33. Moeller's appointment took place before the new constitution came into effect and was confirmed by the Kultusministerium at his own request; E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/3: Haenisch to Oberkirchenrat, 21 July 1919 and the Oberkirchenrat reply, 30 Oct.1919. Kapler was elected in January 1925 by a joint committee of the Oberkirchenrat and leaders of the old General Synod which had been empowered to act by the constituent assembly until the first Kirchensenat met in December 1925. E.K.U., Gen.III, 33/10: minutes of the meeting of 29 Jan.1925.

task to preserve a relationship of confidence between the Old Prussian Union and the Prussian state.[1] During the period 1925-31 Kapler demonstrated that this was more than a polite gesture. He was wise enough to see that the welfare of the church would best be served by maintaining good relations with the Republic.

ii. The other Protestant Landeskirchen.

All Landeskirchen were faced with the same problem of reconstruction as the old Prussian Union and most solved it in a similar fashion, giving more power to the synods but retaining an important place for senior officials and clergymen in the church leadership. In most Landeskirchen, however, unlike the Old Prussian Union, it was the senior clergyman who held the highest office in the church. There were some differences in the election systems adopted for the constituent assemblies, which are interesting as an indication of local feeling about democracy although of little practical importance. Hanover-Lutheran, Schleswig-Holstein, Frankfurt am Main, Württemberg, Baden, Brunswick, Oldenburg, Anhalt, Thuringia and the Bavarian Palatinate decided in favour of direct, universal

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/9: Becker to Kapler, 1 April 1925 and Kapler's reply, 6 April.

suffrage; Bavaria right of the Rhine, Lippe, Hamburg, Saxony, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Hanover-Reformed, Hessen and some smaller churches decided against, while Hesse-Kassel, Lübeck, Mecklenburg-Strelitz and Nassau adopted a mixed system.[1]

The Prussian Land treated all its Landeskirchen alike. This meant that the 'new' Prussian churches (Hanover-Lutheran, Schleswig-Holstein and the Landeskirchen in the Prussian parts of Hessen) shared the experiences of the Old Prussian Union. The appointment of Wessel and of the three ministers applied to them equally. The Old Prussian Union, however, bore the brunt of the opposition to these measures and, once agreement had been reached between it and the ministers, no obstacles were put in the way of the 'new' Prussian churches; in any case, most of them opted for a system of direct election to their constituent assemblies. The Prussian law of April 1924, confirming the new church constitutions, was common to all Prussian Landeskirchen.[2]

Most of the other Länder gave the Landeskirchen little cause for complaint.[3] In Baden, Württemberg, Hessen, Oldenburg

1. F.Giese and J.Hosemann, Die Verfassungen der Deutschen Evangelischen Landeskirchen (Berlin,1927) and Das Wahlrecht der Deutschen Evangelischen Landeskirchen (Berlin,1929).
2. Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 48.Jg. (1921), 402; G.J.Ebers, Reichs-und preussisches Staatskirchenrecht, pp.639-48.
3. For details, see Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 46.Jg. (1919), 359-64; ibid., 47.Jg. (1920), 376-420; also a survey carried out by the Kirchenausschuss in E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/6.

and Lippe, the revolutionary authorities made no attempt to interfere in the church and in Bavaria, Anhalt and Mecklenburg, the Landeskirchen were soon granted independence. Württemberg was so well treated that it was afraid that the Weimar constitution might restrict its privileges.[1] It was common for the revolutionary authorities to take measures to reduce the influence of the church in education. In a notable case, the workers' and soldiers' council in Hamburg ordered the abolition of religious education. Most of these initial measures, however, did not long survive the meeting of the constituent assemblies of the Länder and the passing of the Weimar constitution. Most Länder retained supervision rights over the church, but in Baden and the city states of Hamburg and Bremen (though not Lübeck) these were minimal.

Important disputes occurred in Saxony, Thuringia and Brunswick, where radical governments survived beyond the first elections and the constituent assemblies. In Brunswick the government attempted to impose a democratic constitution on the Landeskirche.[2] The dispute was referred first to the Reich Minister of the Interior and subsequently to the Reichsgericht:

1. Lk.A. Stuttgart, A 26/226: Konsistorium Stuttgart to Kirchenausschuss, 29 Dec.1918. Cf. K.Weller, Die Staatsumwälzung in Württemberg 1918-1920 (Stuttgart,1930), pp.145-8, 297.
2. E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/6: part 1 of the Kirchenausschuss survey.

both decided in favour of the Landeskirche.[1] The Reichsgericht declared in 1921 that the behaviour of the Brunswick government was illegal because of Article 137 of the Weimar constitution; this established a precedent which helped to prevent intervention elsewhere. In Saxony and Thuringia, during the inflation, the governments demanded that the number of church officials should be reduced. This was reported to the Reich Minister of the Interior, who took measures to prevent it recurring.[2] Real hardship was caused when Brunswick and Saxony refused to pay church subsidies. The Saxon church leadership wrote to the Reich Chancellor describing how the clergy were forced to work in factories, mines and offices to keep them from starving.[3] In both cases the courts decided in favour of the churches.[4] In a further dispute, the same government retired two senior church officials as they had reached the retiring age for Beamten but was once more forced to retract by the Reichsgericht.[5]

1. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 214/1: Reich Minister of the Interior to Rat der Volksbeauftragten, Brunswick, 28 Oct.1919; Entscheidungen des Reichsgerichts in Zivilsachen, vol.103 (1921), pp.91-4.
2. Bundesarchiv, R 431/2194: Reich Minister of the Interior to Reich Chancellor, 29 Dec.1923.
3. ibid., R 431/2195: Saxon Landeskonsistorium to Chancellor Cuno, 5 Feb.1923; cf. K-W.Dahm, Pfarrer und Politik (Cologne,1965), pp.140-2.
4. Entscheidungen des Reichsgerichts in Zivilsachen, vol.128 (1929), Anhang, pp.16-46; ibid., vol.113 (1926), pp.349-403.
5. ibid., vol.107 (1923), pp.287-90.

These disputes were prolonged. Litigation over the payment of church subsidies in Brunswick lasted until December 1929. They also caused great bitterness.[1] However, they were confined to a few Länder and in every case the guarantees of the Weimar constitution were eventually made effective by the courts. The anger of Protestants at the difficulties caused by the radical Länder was not enough to prevent the church leadership as a whole, under Prussian guidance, seeking a stable relationship with the Republic.

iii. The creation of the German Protestant Kirchenbund, 1919-1922.

Shortly after the revolution several Protestant associations were formed independent of the Landeskirchen with plans to reform the church. These associations asked the Kirchenausschuss (the executive committee of the federal organization of the Landeskirchen),[2] to co-operate with them. They planned a Kirchentag, a public conference representative of the whole of German Protestantism, which had not been attempted since 1848. If the Kirchenausschuss refused to join with them they intended to proceed alone.[3]

1. See Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 49.Jg.(1922), 399-404; ibid., 50.Jg. (1923), 384-7; ibid., 51.Jg. (1924), 427-32.
2. See above, p.8.
3. E.K.D., A 3/43: Arbeitsausschuss of the Konferenz Deutscher Evangelischer Arbeitsorganisationen to the Kirchenausschuss, 9 Jan.1919; minutes of a meeting of the groups concerned at Elberfeld on 3 Jan.1919.

The Kirchenausschuss had considered extending its membership beyond church officials before the revolution and it now welcomed the suggestion of the free Protestant associations.[1] There were several reasons for its attitude. It did not want to see a new popular organization of German Protestantism formed independently. It was the legal representative of German Protestantism with valuable property which would be at risk if legal continuity were not preserved.[2] With the Reich extending its powers in church affairs it was essential to have a strong, central Protestant authority.[3] The Protestant church also needed an organization which could compete with the Roman Catholic church, whose position within the Reich had been strengthened by the revolution.[4] Finally, the Kirchenausschuss accepted that it needed to adapt its constitution to the new political conditions.[5]

The Kirchenausschuss and the free Protestant associations together summoned a preparatory conference which met in Cassel on 27-8 February 1919.[6] Over 100 representatives of church

1. E.K.D., A 3/43: Kirchenausschuss to the Arbeitsausschuss, 13 Jan.1919.
2. E.K.D., A 2/18: minutes of a meeting of the Kirchenausschuss and the Arbeitsausschuss, 4 Feb.1919, speech of President Voigts.
3. ibid.
4. Protocol of the preparatory conference for a Kirchentag, Cassel, 27-8 Feb.1919, speech of Vice-President Lahusen. A copy of the protocol is contained in the Bundesarchiv, Nachlass Traub, 37.
5. E.K.D., A 2/18: minutes of a meeting of the Kirchenausschuss and the Arbeitsausschuss, 4 Feb.1919, speech of President Voigts.
6. Protocol as above, n.4.

officials, synods and the free associations attended. The meeting decided unanimously in favour of a Kirchentag as a regular institution of German Protestantism. It was emphasized, however, that the independence of individual Landeskirchen would not be compromised. The aim was not to establish a Reichskirche but only an organization to represent the common interests of the Landeskirchen. There was no agreement on the method of election to be used for the Kirchentag. A Berlin Professor and member of the Oberkirchenrat, J. Kaftan, opposed direct elections which, he said, would 'deliver the church to the masses'; on the other hand, Prälat Schoell, a senior clergyman from Württemberg, defended such elections and said that his Landeskirche had decided to adopt them 'as a matter of course'.

A committee set up by the preparatory conference made the arrangements for the first Kirchentag which met in Dresden in September 1919. Its members included 47 church officials, 102 synod representatives, 75 members of the free associations and about 100 others. Plans for the future constitution of the Kirchentag were aired but no decisions were taken as the Landeskirchen were to be free to decide individually whether they wished to join. There was an equal division of opinion on the principle of direct elections. The Kirchenausschuss, which was widened to include 15 members elected by the Dresden Kirchentag, was given the task of preparing a detailed constitution to be considered by a second Kirchentag and the Landes-

kirchen.[1]

The second Kirchentag met in Stuttgart in 1921. The constitution[2] foresaw a church union, Kirchenbund, which would represent the common interests of German Protestantism at home and abroad. The Kirchenbund, as had been foreseen by the Reich constitution, became a Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts. This was subsequently recognized by the Reich Minister of the Interior but no attempt was made to impose Reich supervision over the Kirchenbund in return for the privilege.[3]

The constitution established three institutions of the Kirchenbund. The Kirchentag consisted of 210 members: 150 elected from the synods of the individual Landeskirchen with a ratio of one clergyman to two laymen, 35 chosen by the Kirchenausschuss, 8 from Protestant theological faculties, 15 from independent Protestant associations and 12 representing school teachers who gave religious education. There was a

1. Verhandlungen des deutschen evangelischen Kirchentages, 1919 (Berlin,1920), pp.26, 84-118, 153-237, 293-306, 345-7.
2. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1921, pp.30-45.
3. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1924, p.13; cf. the discussion between Reich and Prussian ministers in D.Z.A. Potsdam, Reichs-Justizamt, 3483. The Reich Minister of the Interior (on the advice of the Reich Minister of Justice, 13 March 1923) recognized that the Kirchenbund was a Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts on 31 March 1924. The Reich Minister of Justice maintained that the Kirchenbund would be subject to the supervision foreseen by the Körperschaft law of the individual states in which it was active. This was not repeated by the Reich Minister of the Interior and became a dead letter.

further group of 25 to be nominated at the discretion of the Kirchenausschuss. The synod representatives were shared between the Landeskirchen according to size, with the Old Prussian Union sending 71 representatives and the next largest church, Saxony, 16.[1] The Kirchentag met every three years and was newly elected after 6 years.

Beside the Kirchentag there was also a Kirchenbundesrat and the Kirchenausschuss. The Kirchenbundesrat was the successor of the old organization of church officials, the Kirchenkonferenz, and had certain reserve powers to protect the Landeskirchen from too much central direction. Every Landeskirche had at least one vote in the Kirchenbundesrat but none more than 2/5 of the total. The Kirchenausschuss remained, as it had become before the revolution, the most important body. It was the executive committee of the Kirchenbund and the effective representative of German Protestantism. The Kirchenausschuss consisted of 18 members appointed by the Kirchenbundesrat (which meant that the small Landeskirchen could not all be represented at any one time) and 18 elected by the Kirchentag. It had to meet at least every six months. The President of the Berlin Oberkirchenrat continued as of right to be President of the Kirchenausschuss.

The constitution was approved by the Stuttgart Kirchentag.[2]

1. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1924, p.14.
2. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1921, p.248.

Dr. Böhme, the senior official of the Saxon Landeskirche, proudly described the Kirchenbund as a power which could be set beside the Reich, the Curia and the Catholic episcopacy.[1] The individual Landeskirchen all decided to join and the Kirchenbund was formally inaugurated at a ceremony on Ascension Day 1922 at the Schlosskirche in Wittenberg beside the graves of Luther and Melanchthon. On 1 January 1923 an office to serve the new organization was set up, known as the Kirchenbundesamt, with a small staff transferred from the Berlin Oberkirchenrat.[2] The first of the new Kirchentage met at Bethel in 1924 and passed a law extending the constitution to allow German Protestant congregations from outside the Reich to join the Kirchenbund.[3]

The Kirchenbund was an important new departure in German Protestantism. It provided a public platform - the Catholics already had a Katholikentag - and a more effective central organization than German Protestantism had previously possessed. Many matters were still settled at Land level by the authorities of the individual churches and Länder but, in 1933, when the Reich became dominant, the Kirchenausschuss assumed responsibility for the policy of the Protestant church as a whole. Even the Kirchensenat of the Old Prussian Union was eclipsed.

1. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1921, p.101.
2. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1924, p.15.
3. ibid. pp.139-73, 257-70.

The power of the Berlin Oberkirchenrat remained great within the new federal organization and benefited from its increased prestige. In his capacity as President of the Kirchenausschuss, the President of the Berlin Oberkirchenrat was the foremost representative of German Protestantism. This more than compensated for the failure of the Oberkirchenrat to obtain the Presidency of the Prussian Kirchensenat.[1] The synod leaders of the Old Prussian Union protested against this 'bureaucratic' preponderance within the Kirchenbund without effect.[2] At the same time the power of the President of the Kirchenausschuss remained limited by the independence retained by the individual Landeskirchen. The importance of this limitation was seen when a minority of Landeskirchen repudiated the leadership of the Kirchenausschuss in 1933.

By 1924 the Protestant church in Germany was again secure. Only a few Länder persisted in an anti-clerical policy and they were restrained by the Reich. Most Landeskirchen had been treated generously and regarded the result as satisfactory. This reflected the failure of the revolution and the weakness of the Republican parties. Paradoxically, as a result, a basis for co-operation between the church and the Republic had been

1. See above, p.70.
2. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1919, pp.100-5, and E.K.D., A 2/20: minutes of a meeting of the Kirchenausschuss, 30 June - 2 July 1921.

created. There still remained strong emotional tensions dividing the two. The church found it difficult to shed its loyalty to the old régime and the strongest Republican party, the SPD, often found it equally difficult to drop its hostility to the Protestant church.[1] Had the Republican parties been successful in imposing their original policy on the church, however, they would have gained little and the church would have reacted with intransigent opposition. As it was, despite the tension between the two sides, progress was made towards a rapprochement.

1. See below, Chapter 3.

Chapter 2

The negotiation of the Prussian church treaty, 1925-31

The Prussian treaty of 1931 established a formal partnership between the Prussian Land and its Landeskirchen. It was preceded by a similar agreement in Bavaria and followed by another one in Baden.[1] Had the Weimar Republic survived longer, a Reich treaty (the equivalent of a Reich concordat) would probably have been concluded. The treaties gave the churches greater independence and a new status; in return the state obtained political guarantees to ensure that the leading officials of the church were loyal to the constitution of the Republic.

There were strong motives of self-interest behind the Protestant demand for a treaty. The main one was to keep abreast of the Roman Catholic church which concluded concordats with Bavaria in 1924, Prussia in 1929 and Baden in 1932-3.[2] Before the revolution the Protestant church had looked to the crown for protection. After 1918 it decided that it would have to defend itself and that it could not allow the Roman Catholic church to win special privileges without claiming equal rights for Protestants.

There were also objections to a treaty purely on ecclesiastical grounds. Some Protestants argued that their

1. See below, pp.95-7. Also O.Friedrich, Der evangelische Kirchenvertrag mit dem Freistaat Baden (Lahr,1933).
2. E.Deuerlein, Das Reichskonkordat (Düsseldorf,1956), pp.9-87.

church was bound to be worsted if a concordat policy were successful. Because of its international power and the sovereign status of the Papacy, a concordat was like an international agreement, whereas a Protestant treaty was only an agreement between the state and one of its corporations. There was also a danger that by advancing counter-claims the Protestant church assisted the conclusion of concordats. If the Protestant church refused to negotiate a complementary treaty, it was said, the state would be put in a difficult position. The government might be unable to win enough support in the Landtag for a concordat with the Roman Catholic church, and even if it did, an agreement with only one church would be seen to be a breach of the principle of parity.

The treaty also raised important political questions. In return for the greater independence which the treaty would give the church, the state demanded the right to make political objections to the appointment of senior church officials. This forced the problem of loyalty to the Republican constitution on the church in a binding form. Some members of the DNVP did not want the church to make a permanent agreement with the Republic and were particularly bitter about the 'political' clause. After 1929 this opposition mounted, together with the general increase of radical right wing opposition to the Republic. This was embarrassing to the church leadership, which had previously counted on the DNVP for political support.

The treaty was also unwelcome to the SPD. It consented reluctantly to a concordat with the Roman Catholic church because of the importance of the Centre Party to the Prussian coalition. It was openly hostile to a treaty with the Protestant church which it considered as an enemy of the Republic.[1]

The senior officials and clergymen of the Prussian Landeskirchen, especially the Berlin Oberkirchenrat, decided that a treaty was on balance desirable. They thought that its advantages made the political concessions worthwhile. Despite the opposition from both Republican and anti-Republican parties, a treaty was negotiated and accepted by the synods and the Prussian Landtag. It was the greatest achievement of the church leadership during the Weimar Republic and marked an important stage towards acceptance of the Republic by the church.

The Kirchenausschuss first discussed a Protestant treaty in 1922 as a consequence of negotiations then in progress for a Reich concordat.[2] R. Mumm, a deputy from the Kirchentag and DNVP politician, suggested to President Moeller that the Kirchenausschuss should demand a treaty of equal worth; he said that he intended to make DNVP agreement to the concordat dependent on whether Protestant wishes had been satisffed.[3]

1. See.O.Braun, Von Weimar zu Hitler (New York,1940), p.335.
2. E.K.D., A 2/20: minutes of Kirchenausschuss meeting, 26-7 May 1922.
3. E.K.D., B 3/236: Mumm to Kirchenausschuss, 19 Dec.1921; Mumm to Moeller, 15 March 1922.

President Moeller agreed with Mumm that the Protestant church should receive a new settlement of its relations with the state equivalent to the proposed concordat.[1] The legal subcommittee of the Kirchenausschuss considered the problem and decided in favour of a treaty because it would make the church independent of the Reichstag and Landtage.[2] The Landeskirchen were consulted and their leaders all agreed that a treaty was desirable, though doubts were expressed about whether a treaty could be the equal of a concordat.[3] On 18 December 1922, Moeller and Kapler met Chancellor Cuno and the Reich Minister of the Interior, Oeser, who agreed to consider Protestant wishes for a treaty.[4]

Negotiations for a Reich concordat were delayed to allow a Bavarian concordat to be concluded first. The Bavarian concordat was signed on 29 March 1924 and ratified together with treaties with the two Protestant Landeskirchen of Bavaria by the Bavarian Landtag in January 1925.[5] The terms of these agreements provoked strong criticism from Protestant groups. The concordat was attacked for the extent of its concessions

1. E.K.D., B 3/236: Moeller to Mumm, 7 Feb.1922.
2. ibid.: memorandum of the legal subcommittee, 23 May 1922.
3. ibid.: replies of the Landeskirchen to Kirchenausschuss circular, 15 June 1922.
4. ibid.: note of Moeller about the meeting, cf. Bundesarchiv, R 431/2195: Moeller to Cuno, 5 July 1922; note of the State Secretary in the Reichskanzlei, 21 July 1922; and note of W., 22 Dec.1922.
5. E.Deuerlein, Das Reichskonkordat, pp.48-50.

to the Roman Catholic church. The validity of canon law had been recognized without any restriction. The Catholic church acquired influence over some appointments to philosophical and history faculties in the universities as well as theological faculties. Catholic schools, the great majority in Bavaria, were to be staffed only by teachers acceptable to the church. This clause applied not only to religious education, which was under the control of the church, but also to other subjects. The Catholic orders were given every freedom, including the right to teach in state schools and to found private ones.

The Evangelischer Bund,[1] the Christliche Welt,[2] G. Traub in a noted pamphlet, and many others[3] protested against these concessions. They also attacked the idea that the formal parity observed in the treaties with the Protestant churches gave them equality. It was noted that one of the school clauses of the concordat was only to apply to the Protestant churches should they ask for it:[4] this was seen as proof

1. E.K.D., B 3/236: Evangelischer Bund propaganda sheet. The Evangelischer Bund was an association independent of the Landeskirchen and quite distinct from the Kirchenbund. It was founded in 1886 primarily as an anti-Roman Catholic association. During the Weimar Republic it became a right wing Protestant pressure group.
2. Die Christliche Welt, 1925, Nos.1-6.
3. G.Traub, Das bayerische Konkordat und was es für Volk und Staat bedeutet (Munich,1925). See also C.Mirbt, Das bayerische Konkordat vom 29.March 1924, Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift, XXXVI (1925), 371-411.
4. Article 14 of the Treaty with the Lutheran church right of the Rhine, article 8 of the treaty with the United Protestant church of the Palatinate.

that they did not really want it. Protestant critics pointed out that there was no Protestant equivalent of canon law or of the Catholic orders. Inequality was also alleged in the financial settlement to each church. Traub said Protestants could stop the concordat by refusing the treaties; if they accepted, they would be inflicting much deeper wounds on the Protestant church.[1]

The reaction to the Bavarian treaties changed the policy of the Protestant leadership. In 1924 a Reich concordat was again considered by the Government and the Ministry of the Interior asked President Kapler for the views of the Protestant church.[2] Kapler was deliberately dilatory[3] but after renewed requests from the Reich he asked the legal subcommittee of the Kirchenausschuss to consider the matter again. A leading Bavarian layman, Pechmann,[4] strongly opposed a treaty. He argued that, in view of the developments in Bavaria, they could now see that they had been wrong to accept the idea of a treaty in 1922. Now they knew, he said, what they could expect from a concordat and a treaty. They knew, too, how papal diplomats and their German 'tools' could combine

1. Traub, Das bayerische Konkordat, p.15.
2. E.K.D., B 3/236: note of a visit by Ministerialrat Kaisenberg to Kapler, 25 Oct.1924.
3. E.K.D., A 2/22: minutes of the meeting of the Kirchenausschuss, confidential protocol, 24-5 June 1925, speech of Kapler.
4. Freiherr Baron von Pechmann, President of the Bavarian Handelsbank, President of the Kirchentag, 1921-30.

concordat and treaty so that the Protestant church would be forced either to refuse a treaty or to assume some responsibility for a concordat. He did not believe that the limited advantages of a treaty justified this risk. He suggested that they should simply enquire about the content of the proposed Reich concordat. His views found the support of the Kirchenausschuss.[1]

Negotiations for a Reich concordat were, however, then again postponed because the Prussian Government insisted that Prussia must first have its own concordat, since Bavaria had been allowed a separate agreement. Attention therefore turned to Prussia.[2]

In December 1926, after retiring from the Berlin Oberkirchenrat, President Moeller composed a long memorandum on the concordat problem.[3] It arose, he said, from the power of the Catholic church through the Centre Party in the new Republic. There was 'no (political) constellation in which the Centre Party would not be trumps'; the rule of the state was almost equivalent to the 'rule of parliamentary majorities with a decisive, ultramontane wedge'. He argued

1. E.K.D., A 2/22: minutes of Kirchenausschuss meeting, 24-5 March 1925, confidential protocol, report of Pechmann on behalf of the legal subcommittee.
2. Rittberg, Der Preussische Kirchenvertrag, contains a good account of the negotiations in Prussia; see also, E.Wende, C.H.Becker (Stuttgart,1958), pp.284-93, for an account from the Government side. Becker was Kultusminister in Prussia in 1921 and again in 1925-30.
3. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 63/Beiheft (vertrauliches Material).

that the old state had stood above party politics and the conflicts of social classes and religious denominations, and the Landesherr had represented Protestant interests while the Centre Party represented Catholic interests. This had changed.

The concordat, Moeller wrote, was forced on Germany by the new circumstances and was offensive to the Protestant church. The Protestant church had neither the international support nor the standing in international law enjoyed by the papacy. It might, for instance, be possible for the Catholic minority in Prussia to bring grievances before the Hague court. In addition, if the position of the Reich were undermined by the multiplication of concordats with individual Länder, Protestant interests, which depended on the guarantee of the Reich constitution, would suffer. The Catholic and Protestant churches, Moeller argued, had basically different attitudes to the state. The Catholic church considered itself above the state; if it could not win recognition of its superiority then it demanded equality through a concordat. The Protestant church accepted the state as ordained by God and whether the church demanded independence was conditioned by the type of state with which it was faced; the heathen world, the Christian state and the present, indifferent, neutral state all demanded different policies. The Protestant church must, therefore, protest against a concordat, both for its own sake and for the sake of the Fatherland.

Moeller believed, however, that it was not the duty of

the Protestant church to protect the state. The church must make it clear that while it rejected any responsibility for a concordat, if one were concluded Protestants would have to present their own demands to the Government. There was a serious danger, Moeller pointed out, that a concordat would be signed despite Protestant opposition and unless the Protestant church presented its own programme, it would be given concessions it did not want and not those it did. Moeller repeated the objections to the Bavarian concordat and said that no understanding would be possible over Catholic demands in state schools. While opposing these demands the Protestant church should, however, present its own programme for a financial settlement on a treaty basis and for full legal independence.

This, he continued, would be in accord with the development of the Protestant church since 1919 and, indeed, since Prussia had adopted a constitutional form of government. The settlement of 1924 had created the basis for separation; the time was now ripe to carry it out in full. There would still be numerous areas of fruitful co-operation between the Protestant church and the state; indeed, in the present conditions, co-operation would only be possible for a Protestant church which was free of the state. If this programme were realized 'a blessing for the Protestant church would grow out of the disaster of a concordat'. Moeller referred to the precedent of the Endowment Law of 1924 with its provision for

treaty negotiations. He suggested that a 'political' clause, giving the state the right to object to senior church appointments, would be tolerable if there were provision for an arbitration court and if the church were given financial independence.

The Oberkirchenrat, under Kapler's leadership from 1925, followed Moeller's advice. It faced opposition from both the Old Prussian Union and the 'new' Prussian churches. All the provincial synods of the Old Prussian Union passed resolutions requesting the church leadership not to follow the example of Bavaria. Silesia, Saxony and Westphalia asked specifically that relations between church and state should be settled by legislation not a treaty.[1]

This opposition was repeated at the General Synod which met in December 1925. Under the influence of the church leadership, however, a moderate resolution was passed.[2] The constitutional committee of the synod agreed that it was opposed to any concordat. It decided, however, that it should wait to see the content of the proposed concordat before publicly rejecting it. When it knew what was proposed, the committee would oppose anything contrary to Protestant interests, especially clauses concerning schools. It would refuse to

1. Verhandlungen, Generalsynode, 1925, i, 539-41.
2. ibid., pp.538-47.

be pacified by concessions made to the Protestant church as a counterpart to these clauses and it would mobilize Protestant support against them. At the same time, in return for harmless parts of the concordat the Protestant church would demand an agreement of equal worth.[1] The General Synod of April-May 1927 re-affirmed this policy.[2] On 9 June 1927, Kapler wrote confidentially to the Generalsuperintendenten asking them to see that none of the local district synods passed resolutions rejecting concordats as such.[3]

Ministerialdirektor Trendelenburg, the Kultusministerium official chiefly concerned with the negotiations with the churches, approached Kapler on 15 February 1926 about the concordat.[4] Kapler argued that it would bind the state by international law in a way which would be impossible in an agreement with the Protestant church. Trendelenburg questioned this, referring to an authority on church law, Professor Heckel, who had argued that the state would be bound by a treaty with the Protestant church.[5] Kapler also objected

1. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 63/Beiheft (vertrauliches Material): memorandum about the attitude of the General Synod to the question of a concordat.
2. Verhandlungen, Generalsynode, 1927, i, 633-6.
3. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 63/Beiheft (vertrauliches Material).
4. Nachlass Becker, 30: note of Trendelenburg, 16 Feb.1926.
5. ibid. : Heckel's memorandum entitled, Die evangelische Kirche und das Konkordat, 3 March 1926.

to the inclusion of any school clauses. Kapler later met Kultusminister Becker and sent him a memorandum explaining the attitude of the General Synod.[1] During the negotiations for the concordat with the Papal Nuntius, Pacelli, Becker supplied Kapler with confidential information about their progress.[2] On 29 October 1926, Trendelenburg and Professor Heckel met Karnatz, who represented the Oberkirchenrat.[3] Karnatz expressed doubts as to whether the Kirchensenat of the Old Prussian Union would accept a 'political' clause. Kapler informed the Kirchensenat of the meetings with state representatives and it set up a small committee to assist Kapler.[4]

On 4 July 1927, Kapler told Becker and Trendelenburg that, if a concordat were inevitable, the Protestant church would present its own legal and financial demands.[5] Whether these should be met in the form of a treaty or by legislation was for the Kirchensenat to decide, but he favoured a treaty. Kapler repeated the points made by the General Synod constitutional committee and added that the Landtag must not be allowed to accept a concordat and subsequently refuse a new

1. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 63/1: Kapler to Becker, 31 March 1926.
2. ibid. : Kapler to Becker, 31 March 1926; ibid., 63/Beiheft (vertrauliches Material): memoranda on the progress of negotiations for a concordat from 18 Oct.1926.
3. ibid. , 63/Beiheft (vertrauliches Material).
4. ibid.: meetings of 20-1 May, 2-3 Nov.
5. ibid.: note by Kapler, 9 July 1927.

settlement for the Protestant church. Becker said that the Prussian Finance Ministry believed that, after the 1924 settlement, there could be no further major financial award to the Protestant church. Kapler firmly rejected this view and said that if it represented Government policy a friendly agreement would be impossible. If Catholics were treated more generously than Protestants a storm of anger would be provoked. This would affect the behaviour of Protestant members of the Landtag whose support was necessary for the concordat. The Minister, according to Kapler, was surprised and even 'confounded' by his remarks. The next day, at a meeting attended by representatives of the Kirchensenat as well as the Oberkirchenrat and the Kultusministerium, the church leaders said they were prepared for provisional negotiations.[1]

On 10 December 1926, the Oberkirchenrat met representatives of the 'new' Prussian churches.[2] They did not want to present demands to the Government for fear that, as in Bavaria, this would smooth the way for the concordat. The Hanover Lutheran and Frankfurt Landeskirchen maintained their opposition in meetings with Trendelenburg, although he told them that a concordat would be concluded despite their opposition and

1. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 63/Beiheft (vertrauliches Material). Note by Karnatz, 13 Oct.1927; Nachlass Becker, 34: minutes of the meeting.
2. ibid.: minutes of the meeting.

that the Protestant church could have a treaty or nothing.[1] Despite their objections, the 'new' Prussian churches agreed to the Oberkirchenrat conducting provisional negotiations.[2]

Provisional negotiations took place between March and May 1928.[3] At the last meeting, on 26 May, the 'political' clause was discussed. It was to cover senior church officials and the Generalsuperintendenten but not synod leaders. Trendelenburg said that the state had to insist on it in order to observe parity with the Catholic church, but in practice it would seldom be used against the Protestant church. He accepted that there should be a guarantee against party political or church party objections being raised under the clause. He also agreed that the church should be allowed to examine any political objections raised by the state, but, he maintained, the state alone could judge whether the objections were sufficient for the candidate to be refused.

The negotiations with the Protestant church were broken off by the Government in the summer of 1928. This change of policy was imposed on the Kultusministerium by Minister

1. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 63/Beiheft (vertrauliches Material): records of discussions between the Hanover church leaders and Trendelenburg, 5 Nov.1927 and 26 March 1928, and of a meeting of Trendelenburg with the Frankfurt church leaders, 18 May 1928.
2. ibid.: minutes of the meetings of all Prussian Landeskirchen, 21 Oct.1927, 11 May 1928.
3. ibid.: account of the meetings.

President Braun. Becker had intended to satisfy the demands of both churches simultaneously and hoped to have the support in the Landtag of all parties from the SPD to the DNVP. Braun declared, however, that the SPD would not support this policy and demanded that the negotiations should cease. Becker explained to a friend that the SPD was reluctant to agree to a concordat with the Catholic church despite the importance of the Centre Party to the coalition; if the SPD were, in addition, asked to acquiesce in a treaty with the Protestant church, in which it saw 'the praetorian guard of the monarchy', it would revolt and both concordat and treaty would be rejected.[1]

This development had several important consequences. The Oberkirchenrat realized that it would have to persuade the Government that the church was loyal to the Republic and Kapler saw Braun and his State Secretary with this in view. At the same time, the prospect that a concordat with the Roman Catholic church would be concluded while the Protestant church was ignored made Protestants feel victims of injustice. This helped to unite them behind the demand for a treaty and made it easier for the church leadership to gain the support of the synods. Thirdly it became important for the church to win over some of the smaller, middle class parties in the

1. Nachlass Becker, 30: account of political developments 1928-9 by Becker.

Landtag whose votes would be decisive for the concordat.[1]

The Oberkirchenrat received confidential information about the reasons for the interruption in the negotiations from Trendelenburg, who also suggested that Kapler should consider approaching Braun personally.[2] Karnatz, for the Oberkirchenrat, warned of the consequences of excluding the Protestant church from an agreement. He said that Kapler had so far succeeded in controlling the excitement of the synods but he would be unable to do so any longer - and would have no interest in doing so - if parity were not observed. Karnatz added that it was an open question whether the Protestant church would be better served by the security of a treaty or by the strong feelings which would be aroused by the conclusion of a concordat alone. Trendelenburg asked Karnatz about the attitude of political parties. Karnatz replied that although the Oberkirchenrat had not made contact with the parties, he believed the opposition would do its utmost against the Government, and, should the DVP be in the Government, it would not ignore Protestant interests.

1. The results of the Prussian Landtag elections of 20 May 1928 were: SPD 137, DNVP 82, Centre 71, DVP 40, KPD 56, DDP 21, Wirtschaftspartei 21, NSDAP 6, Christliche Bauernpartei 12, others 4; Statistisches Jahrbuch für den Freistaat Preussen (Berlin,1929), vol.25, 321-5. The SPD and Centre were expected to support the concordat, giving it 208 votes; the DNVP, DVP, KPD, NSDAP and some of the small parties were expected to vote against it - about 190 votes. The attitude of the DDP and the Wirtschaftspartei was therefore crucial.
2. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 63/Beiheft (vertrauliches Material): memorandum by Karnatz, 31 Aug.1928. On 27 June 1928, Karnatz met Trendelenburg at Trendelenburg's invitation.

In August, the Oberkirchenrat received information that Braun's attitude had hardened.[1] He was decisively opposed to a treaty with the Protestant church but wanted a quick conclusion of the concordat. Braun had 'repudiated' Trendelenburg and, within the Kultusministerium, it was felt that Trendelenburg had gone too far. It was also reported that the Centre Party no longer insisted that parity be observed with the Protestant church, as it had previously.

On 23 August, Kapler and Karnatz met Trendelenburg to discuss the situation.[2] Trendelenburg was encouraging. Despite the opposition, he said, Becker's policy had not changed and he hoped negotiations with the Protestant church would soon be resumed. They also discussed the whole attitude of the Protestant church to the existing state and the behaviour of the Protestant church on the anniversary of the Weimar constitution. Trendelenburg mentioned the possibility of Kapler making contact with State Secretary Weismann in the Cabinet office to prepare a meeting of Kapler with Braun.

Kapler met Weismann on 28 August[3] and told him that he would like to meet Braun to discuss the concordat and the attitude of the Protestant church towards the present state. He said that he knew the Protestant church was reproached for not being Republican and for sticking to monarchism.

1. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 63/Beiheft (vertrauliches Material): memorandum by Karnatz, 31 Aug.1928.
2. ibid.
3. G.St.A., Rep.90, 2383: memorandum of Weismann, 28 Aug.1928.

Weismann told Kapler that a series of incidents, especially remarks of particular clergymen from the pulpit, seemed to justify this reproach. Kapler replied that it could not be denied that the Protestant church had had a different relationship with the crown from that of the Catholic church. The King of Prussia had been Summus Episcopus and they had the Hohenzollern dynasty to thank that the Protestant church had prospered. He continued, according to Weismann's memorandum,

> 'One should therefore be patient. It would be some time before everyone who held a position within the Protestant church had come to terms inwardly with the new situation. He must however emphasize that the Protestant church, as such, adhered to the state in its present form, as could be seen from many public and official declarations.[1] The reproach that it was anti-Republican was therefore unjustified. When individual clergymen went off the rails - which one could not prevent - they were always reproved most sharply. He therefore asked that in future the Government should give the Protestant church the confidence which it deserved'.

With reference to the concordat, Kapler said that the mere fact that a concordat was to be concluded had disturbed the Protestant population. He recognized that they would have to accept a concordat; he asked only that the rights of the Protestants should not be impaired and that they should not be presented with a fait accompli.

Kapler referred to one political incident in particular.

1. Kapler gave Weismann a copy of the Vaterländische Kundgebung from the 1927 Kirchentag, see below pp.165-7.

During the celebrations for the anniversary of the Weimar constitution, the Mayor of Berlin had contrasted the attitude of the Catholic church, which had rung church bells, with the silence of the Protestant church. Kapler gave Weismann a copy of an article in the official journal of the Kirchenbund, which suggested that the whole incident had been deliberately staged by the Berlin civic authorities.[1] It explained that the Kultusministerium had, as usual, written to the Oberkirchenrat about the participation of the Protestant church in the celebrations; the Oberkirchenrat had passed on the message to the parishes. The Berlin civic authorities had seen fit to write to the Berlin church authorities, in addition, to ask that the city churches should fly their flags and ring their bells. The Protestant leaders in Berlin replied that the parishes had been informed but the decision over whether to fly flags and ring bells rested with individual churches. Articles appeared in Vorwärts and the Vossische Zeitung suggesting that Protestant leaders were less keen about the celebration of the constitution than Catholics; in fact the authorities in both churches acted in the same way. On the evening before the celebrations the civic authorities sent telegrams to all Berlin Protestant churches, asking for flags to be flown and bells to be rung the following evening between 8.30 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. At that hour, the Mayor made a speech

1. Das evangelische Berlin (Berlin edition of Das evangelische Deutschland), 19 Aug.1928.

in the opera house in which he contrasted the behaviour of the Catholic and Protestant churches. He did not mention that the Protestant churches of the Neuköln district of Berlin had flown flags, whereas only one Catholic church had. The article added that Protestant church leaders fully recognized the constitution. The parishes may have acted cautiously because the recognition of the anniversary of the constitution as a holiday was the subject of party political controversy. Weismann noted that the explanation given by Kapler made the incident appear in quite a different light to the version in the daily press.

Kapler met Braun on 9 October 1928. He wrote to Winckler (the President of the Kirchensenat) that it had been a very pleasant meeting but that the result was negative as far as a Protestant treaty was concerned. Braun declared that his opinion, shared by his party, was that a treaty could not be concluded together with a concordat but must wait for later consideration. They had also discussed the general relationship of the Protestant churches to the state; Kapler thought that although this discussion would not influence the question of a treaty, it had been helpful in many respects in clarifying the situation.[1]

The church leaders decided to support Kapler's initiative with a formal demand for a treaty. On 29 September 1928, the Oberkirchenrat and the concordat committee of the Kirchensenat

1. E.K.U., Pr.II, 61: Kapler to Winckler, 11 Oct.1928.

decided to demand that a treaty should be concluded simultaneously with a concordat.[1] This was confirmed in meetings with the Generalsuperintendenten and the 'new' Prussian churches[2] and instructions were prepared for the church press about how it was to treat the subject.[3]

On 23 October 1928, the Oberkirchenrat wrote to the Prussian Government repeating its objections to a concordat but demanding a simultaneous treaty of equal worth and protesting against the break in negotiations.[4] It pointed out that Protestants outnumbered Catholics in Prussia by two to one. The other Prussian churches sent similar letters.[5] A full meeting of the Kirchensenat approved the action of the Oberkirchenrat and adopted a resolution making the same demands to be sent to the parishes.[6]

Braun replied that no decision had yet been taken on the concordat; when it had, they would consider the consequences for the Protestant church and parity would, of course, be observed.[7] The Oberkirchenrat wrote again saying that Braun

1. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 63/Beiheft (vertrauliches Material): minutes of the meeting.
2. ibid.
3. ibid.
4. G.St.A., Rep.90, 2383: Oberkirchenrat to Prussian Staatsregierung, 23 Oct.1928.
5. ibid.: letters from the 'new' Prussian churches, Oct.1928.
6. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 63/Beiheft (vertrauliches Material): minutes of the Kirchensenat meeting, 29 Oct.1928.
7. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 63/3: Braun to Oberkirchenrat, 8 Nov.1928.

had not made it clear whether the Government was prepared for a simultaneous treaty with the Protestant church.[1] To this ~~they~~ it received no reply.

On 21 December 1928, Trendelenburg suggested to Karnatz that it might be possible to secure guarantees for the Protestant church while the concordat was being considered by the Landtag.[2] This could be achieved by persuading enough parties to make their support for the concordat conditional on the Protestant church receiving a satisfactory equivalent. Kapler had already approached various politicians of the DNVP, DVP and DDP explaining the demands of the Protestant church and sending them material on the attitude of the church to the Republic.[3] This had some effect. The DVP demanded that the Protestant church should be given equal treatment before any agreement with the Catholic church came into force.[4] The DNVP demanded a simultaneous treaty and refused a request from Brüning that ~~they~~ it should support the concordat in return for Centre Party support for a subsequent treaty with the Protestant church.[5] Protestant members of the DDP put pressure

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/1: Oberkirchenrat to Prussian Staatsregierung, 23 Nov.1928.
2. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 63/Beiheft (vertrauliches Material): note of Karnatz, 29 Dec.1928.
3. E.K.U., Pr.II, 61: Kapler to the President of the Rhine provincial synod, 20 Oct.1928; to Pfarrer Graue (DDP), 23 Oct.; to Hallensleben (DVP), 27 Oct.; to Kriege (DVP), Boelitz (DVP) and Kahl (DVP), 2 Nov.1928.
4. Der Reichsbote, 27 Nov.1928.
5. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 63/Beiheft (vertrauliches Material): report of Koch, President of the Westphalian provincial synod and member of the Landtag, to Karnatz, 22 Feb.1929, of a discussion between Brüning and Linneborn (Centre) and Keudell and Koch (DNVP), 7 Feb.1929.

on their party in the Landtag to prevent it agreeing to a concordat more readily than the DVP.[1] The Oberkirchenrat also had intensive negotiations with the Wirtschaftspartei.[2]

Despite this pressure, Braun insisted that the concordat should be concluded first. He did promise the opposition parties, however, that negotiations with the Protestant church would be resumed subsequently.[3] The concordat was signed on 14 June. The Kirchensenat immediately summoned an emergency meeting of the General Synod. The synod protested against the way the Protestant church had been treated and asked the Landtag to insist on a simultaneous Protestant treaty before ratifying the concordat. The Kirchensenat was empowered to conclude the treaty. The synod passed a resolution which declared that, 'the Protestant church is always ready to give the state what belongs to it .... It demands, however, that the state should also give it what parity and justice require...'[4]

The Oberkirchenrat sent the General Synod resolution to the Prussian Government on 26 June 1929 and demanded immediate negotiations for a treaty.[5] Becker replied agreeing to negotiations but only after the concordat had been passed and

1. E.K.U., Pr.II, 61: confidential note of Kapler, 9 Feb.1929, about information from Professor Hermelink, Marburg.
2. ibid.: Kapler to a Generalsuperintendent in Hanover, 3 July 1929.
3. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 63/Beiheft (vertrauliches Material): report of the meeting, 7 June 1929.
4. Verhandlungen, Generalsynode, 1929, i, 23-5.
5. G.St.A., Rep.90, 2383: Oberkirchenrat to Prussian Staatsregierung, 26 June 1929.

he did not specify whether the negotiations would be for a treaty or simply a further church law.[1] Becker had, however, privately recommended Braun to allow treaty negotiations.[2] This was, he said, in any case politically necessary as the support of the Wirtschaftspartei was essential to the concordat, and the party had made its support conditional on negotiations for a Protestant treaty being started immediately the concordat had been accepted.[3]

In the Landtag the DNVP and DVP voted against the concordat because the Protestant churches had not been given simultaneous treaties. These parties argued that promises of future negotiations were not an adequate guarantee. The DDP and the Wirtschaftspartei supported the concordat on condition that negotiations for a treaty began immediately. This was accepted by Braun on behalf of the Government and passed by the Landtag with the SPD abstaining on 9 July 1929.[4]

Becker met Winckler (representing the Kirchensenat) and Kapler on 11 July 1929 to start preparatory discussions about the treaty.[5] The same day the Oberkirchenrat published a

1. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 63/5: Becker to Oberkirchenrat, 28 June 1929.
2. G.St.A., Rep.90, 2383: Becker to Braun, 20 June 1929.
3. Nachlass Becker, 30: account of political developments 1928-9 by Becker.
4. Verhandlungen, Landtag, 3.Wahlperiode, vol.6, 7625-748, 7956-89, 8118-34.
5. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/1: Oberkirchenrat to Kirchensenat, 11 July 1929, mentioning the meeting.

letter in the provincial church press saying that the church had no real security about the outcome of the talks and stressing the responsibility of the political parties who had voted for a concordat, on condition that negotiations were held for a Protestant treaty, to see that the Government kept its promise.[1]

On 27 July 1929, the Oberkirchenrat sent Becker detailed proposals for a treaty.[2] The Oberkirchenrat argued that because of the differences between the two churches the treaty could not be exactly similar to the concordat, especially in relation to the political clause. At a further meeting, on 16 August, Becker upheld the demand for a political clause saying that there must be some advantage for the state in the treaty as well as for the church.[3]

Regular meetings were held from 17 August to 9 October.[4] They were then interrupted because of differences within the Government, and because Braun did not consider it wise to give his opinion on the treaty proposals while the referendum about the Young Plan and municipal elections were being held.[5] The

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/1: Oberkirchenrat to Generalsuperintendenten, 11 July 1929.
2. ibid.: Oberkirchenrat to Becker, 27 July 1929.
3. ibid. (Beiheft A): memorandum about the meeting of 16 Aug.
4. ibid.: memoranda about the meetings.
5. ibid.: note of Karnatz, 30 Oct.1929; ibid., 39/2: minutes of a meeting of the Oberkirchenrat and representatives of the 'new' Prussian churches, 30 Nov.1929.

preparatory discussions were resumed in December.[1] After a further delay, during which Becker was replaced as Kultusminister by Grimme, who belonged to the Religious Socialist group within the SPD,[2] the Oberkirchenrat demanded formal negotiations and informed politicians of its demand.[3] The DNVP and Wirtschaftspartei asked questions in the Landtag[4] and Grimme then opened the formal negotiations on 8 February 1930.[5]

The main problem was the political clause. The church demanded that there should be provision for an arbitration court to settle disputes arising from the clause. Church representatives explained that this did not reflect mistrust of the existing Government but the desire for a guarantee against any future régime.[6] This argument was probably quite

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/1 (Beiheft A): memorandum about the discussions on 5,7,9,17 and 19 Dec.
2. See E.Wende, C.H.Becker, pp.294-301. Grimme was Kultusminister 1930-2. The Religious Socialists were a small group of Protestant theologians and laymen who belonged to the SPD and sought to reconcile German Protestantism and Socialism. See E.A.Suck, Der religiöse Sozialismus in der Weimarer Republik (unpublished Diss.Phil., Marburg,1953).
3. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/2: Oberkirchenrat to Becker, 25 Jan.1930.
4. Sammlung der Drucksachen des Preussischen Landtages, 3.Wahlperiode, vol.5, 3263, 3361.
5. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/1 (Beiheft A): minutes of the negotiations, 8 Feb.1930.
6. ibid., 39/5: minutes of the meeting of church and state representatives, 25 Feb.1931, speeches of Kapler and von Berg.

genuine in the case of the Oberkirchenrat and its fears were shown to be justified in 1933 when Kultusminister Rust used the political clause as a pretext for intervention in the church.[1] The main reason, however, for the demand for an arbitration court was that it would make the treaty less offensive to Protestant opponents of the Republic as the church would be able to appeal against Government decisions to an alternative tribunal. For the same reason the Government was unwilling to grant the demand. It was a mark of Kapler's skill that the treaty was nevertheless negotiated and accepted by the General Synod.

In December 1929, Kapler told the Kirchensenat that if they considered a political clause unacceptable in any form they must say so.[2] He was referring to press comment that any political clause was intolerable for the church.[3] Kapler

1. See below, pp. 360, 372-3. At the time of the negotiations of the treaty the Oberkirchenrat probably imagined this threat coming from a KPD government rather than from the NSDAP which denied any anti-clerical leanings. Some commentators had, however, foreseen the possibility of the NSDAP using the clause. R.Mumm wrote in the Tägliche Rundschau, 14 April 1931, that a conflict would be more likely with a National Socialist Kultusminister than with the SPD, which exercised reserve. The Frankfurt church leader, Kübel, suggested that the NSDAP would count race an adequate objection under the clause; J.Kübel, Der Vertrag der evangelischen Landeskirchen mit dem Freistaat Preussen (Berlin,1931), p.46. Cf. Braun, Von Weimar zu Hitler, p.336.
2. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/2: minutes of the Kirchensenat meeting, 13-4 Dec.1929.
3. ibid.: Oberkirchenrat to Protestant Konsistorium, Stettin, 30 Nov.1929, about a report in the Neue Preussische Kreuzzeitung, 15 Nov.1929, and reply of the Konsistorium, 7 Dec.1929, describing the resolution of the Pomeranian provincial synod (25 Oct.1929).

pointed out that this would mean the end of negotiations and would contradict the policy of the 1929 General Synod, which had known that a political clause was inevitable when it empowered the Kirchensenat to start negotiations. One synod deputy, von Arnim-Kröchlendorff, argued that a political clause should be rejected, but he found no support.

At their first meeting in February 1930, Grimme told the church representatives that the Landtag would not accept a treaty without a political clause but he promised that it would apply only to 'state political' objections, not party political ones; it was a question of loyalty to the constitution. Professor Heckel said the purpose of the clause was to secure a relationship of understanding and friendship between church and state. Winckler said the difficulty was that the opposition to the clause was growing. Trendelenburg refused the request for an arbitration court and said that after repeated statements from the church confirming their loyalty to the state he could see no difficulty for them in the clause. Kapler said he did not think that the demand for a political clause raised any objections to further negotiations.[1]

The General Synod, which met again in February-March 1930, expressed its confidence in the church negotiators and renewed their commission.[2] Agreement was reached on most points with

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/1 (Beiheft A): minutes of the meeting of 8 Feb.1930.
2. Verhandlungen, Generalsynode, 1930, i, 626-31.

the state by June 1930[1] and on 15 October Grimme sent the church leaders a draft treaty which had been approved by the Government.[2] The Kirchensenat subcommittee decided to concentrate on achieving improvements in the formulation of the political clause and to demand some form of legal protection in the event of disputes arising from the clause.[3] The Prussian churches replied jointly to Grimme on 24 November welcoming the treaty in many respects but arguing that the political clause was unsatisfactory.[4]

In a further letter the Oberkirchenrat explained its objections in detail.[5] It said that the political clause restricted the freedom which had been gained by the Reich constitution and the Prussian law of 1924. The Protestant church did not have the international support or the standing in international law enjoyed by the Catholic church; it therefore needed greater protection. In addition, Catholic appointments were made on a hierarchical basis and the state might have objections on national grounds to them. Protestant appointments, on the other hand, were made on a democratic

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/1 (Beiheft A): minutes of the meetings of February to June 1930.
2. ibid. , 39/4: Grimme to Kirchensenat, 15 Oct.1930.
3. ibid.: minutes of the meeting, 29 Oct.1930.
4. G.St.A., Rep.90, 2383/1: Prussian churches' reply, 24 Nov.1930.
5. ibid.: Oberkirchenrat reply, 26 Nov.1930.

basis within Germany. As there could be no state objection for national reasons, it was feared that the political clause would be used in a party political way. It was impossible to define a 'state political' objection; there must therefore be an independent authority to arbitrate in each case. This authority would establish the facts on which the dispute was based and, if that were not enough to bring about agreement, it would decide whether the objections were 'state political'. The state had foreseen an arbitration court in political matters in the 1924 Endowment Law; the whole administrative court structure operated on the same principle. The General Synod and the other Prussian churches were united with the Oberkirchenrat in the demand for legal protection.

The Oberkirchenrat explained its views to the Christian Social Volksdienst party through Hartwig, a Reichstag deputy of the Volksdienst and a member of the Kirchensenat.[1] Kapler also had several meetings with Dingeldey, the chairman of the DVP in the Reichstag.[2] Chancellor Brüning was approached by these parties: he said he attached great importance to the treaty and promised to help. He made enquiries at the Prussian Cabinet office but was told simply that the negotiations

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/6: memorandum about negotiations with members of the Reichstag, 8 June 1931.
2. E.K.U., Pr.II/61: undated memorandum by Kapler about negotiations with Dingeldey, Nov.1930 - March 1931.

were going well.[1] At the same time, right wing opposition to the treaty was growing. The new chairman of the DNVP in the Landtag, Winterfeld,[2] thought that acceptance of the political clause without provision for arbitration was impossible and he proposed to make this party policy. Kapler and Karnatz met Winterfeld and stressed that this was for the church and not for political parties to decide.[3] On 13 December 1930, the leaders of the Evangelischer Bund wrote to the Kirchensenat threatening that if it accepted a political clause without provision for arbitration, the middle class parties in the Landtag might vote against the treaty.[4] One of the leaders of the Evangelischer Bund, Karl Fahrenhorst, had earlier attacked the church leadership in an article entitled 'Luther battle or self-surrender?' for securing a treaty behind closed doors with 'Romish-Marxist Prussia' on the 'crutches' of a concordat. Kapler's comment on the article was 'nonsense'.[5]

1. Bundesarchiv, R 431, 2196: Brüning to Simpfendörfer, 31 Oct.1930, and to Dauch, 5 Nov.1930; Simpfendörfer to Brüning, 12 Nov.1930; Weismann to Reichskanzlei, 27 Oct.1930.
2. Winterfeld succeeded Winckler as chairman of the DNVP in the Landtag in 1929. This did not, of course, affect Winckler's position as President of the Kirchensenat and he retained an honorary position in the DNVP. Handbuch über den Preussischen Staat, 135.Jg.(1929), 121.
3. E.K.U., Pr.II, 61: copy of Winterfeld to Winckler, 3 Dec.1930, and note of Kapler, 8 Feb. 1931.
4. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/4: copy of Evangelischer Bund to Kirchensenat, 13 Dec.1931.
5. ibid., 39/Beiheft (Zeitungsausschnitte)1: Deutsche Nachrichten, 26 Oct.1930, No.43, and Kapler's marginal note.

At the next meeting of church and state representatives Winckler pressed the demand for improvement of the political clause.[1] The state representatives said they were prepared to tell the Government of church wishes but Grimme emphasized that all the ministers had opposed an arbitration court. He said it was possible, however, that the Government would agree to the facts on which political objections were based being given to the church and he favoured this concession. He believed that the church should trust to its own strength if a dispute broke out. The church should have understanding for the state attitude: the state gave the church, despite the constitutional fiction of separation of church and state, a whole series of privileges beyond their obligations under the Reich constitution; in return they must have guarantees that the church would be loyal. Heckel said an arbitration court was unsuitable for the church as well as the state: its judgements might involve internal church matters, in which the church would not accept its authority; in the same way the state could not accept an independent authority in political matters.

At a meeting of the Prussian churches, Winckler referred to the letter from the Evangelischer Bund as an 'unfriendly act' but declared that he intended to force a decision at the

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/1 (Beiheft A): minutes of the meeting of 16-17 Dec.1930.

next Kirchensenat meeting on whether a political clause without provision for arbitration would be acceptable.[1] The leaders of the other Prussian churches were critical of Winckler. They thought that he had been unduly hostile to the state representatives and that while the state was considering church proposals there was no occasion for an ultimatum. Kapler rejected the threat of the Evangelischer Bund to bring political pressure on the church leadership. He thought the church leaders should consider the treaty as a whole and the position of the church should the negotiations fail, before they rejected it on the issue of an arbitration court. Winckler insisted and said he might have to resign. Burghart, the spiritual Vice-President of the Oberkirchenrat, suggested that the arbitration court was in any case not an ideal solution for the church and the offer of the state to give the facts on which its objections were based might be preferable. Some of the other church leaders agreed with him.

The Kirchensenat met on 20 December 1930.[2] Winckler asked them to say that provision for arbitration was an essential condition for acceptance of the political clause. Kapler opposed this as untimely. He also pointed out that

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/5: minutes of the meeting of the Prussian churches, 16-17 Dec.1930.
2. ibid.: minutes of the meeting.

if the negotiations failed on the political clause, this would be exploited to cast suspicion on the loyalty of the church. Kapler proposed that they should continue to negotiate and press their demands for legal protection. The majority of the Kirchensenat supported him.

The next day von Arnim-Kröchlendorff expressed his shock to Kapler. He said that the decision of the Kirchensenat would have the same effect on their opponents as the peace resolution of 1917 had had on the Entente. Ninety per cent. of clergymen and laymen opposed the political clause, he said. With the weight of Kapler's authority they would be prepared to accept it if provision were made for arbitration, but he shuddered to think of the effect on church circles if it were accepted without arbitration. Kapler disputed the figure of ninety per cent. and said that a large part of the clergy and laity did not understand the complicated legal position. He rejected the view that the church representatives had weakened in their demand for legal protection; on the contrary, they would renew the demand though it was true that they had very little hope of success.[1]

On 11 February 1931, the state representatives reported to the church on the attitude of the Prussian Government.[2]

1. E.K.U., Pr.II, 61: von Arnim-Kröchlendorff to Kapler, 21 Dec.1930, and Kapler's reply, 7 Feb.1931.
2. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/1 (Beiheft A): minutes of the meeting. Trendelenburg had already (7 Feb.) given the Oberkirchenrat confidential information about the result of the Prussian Cabinet meeting, ibid.

The Government had conceded that the facts on which political objections were based would be made known to the church, but it had not granted the arbitration court. On 12 February Grimme asked the churches to decide on the treaty as a whole.[1] On 17 February the churches replied that they were ready to accept the treaty except for the political clause; they asked for further negotiations.[2]

The representatives of both sides met again on 25 February.[3] They were unable to agree. Grimme repeated that the state could not allow any authority other than the elected Government to decide on state interests. He suggested, however, that there might be a commission to clarify the facts on which the Government based its objections, although the assessment of these facts would remain the task of the Government alone. On 6 March 1931 Grimme told the Oberkirchenrat that the Government honoured the sense of responsibility of the church negotiators; it was prepared to give the facts on which political objections were based; it could not allow a third party to assess them. He suggested further negotiations.[4]

The Kirchensenat decided to continue negotiations and to uphold their demands.[5] Kapler favoured this policy (rather

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/5: Grimme to Kirchensenat, 12 Feb.1931.
2. ibid.: the Prussian churches to Grimme, 17 Feb.1931.
3. ibid. , 39/1 (Beiheft A): minutes of the meeting.
4. ibid. , 39/5: Grimme to Oberkirchenrat, 6 March 1931.
5. ibid.: minutes of the Kirchensenat meeting, 13 March 1931.

than acceptance of the terms offered) because attempts were being made to exert political pressure on the Prussian Government. Dingeldey (the chairman of the DVP in the Reichstag) offered to use his influence with Brüning and, on 26 February 1931, he wrote to the Chancellor saying that if an arbitration court were refused the treaty negotiations would fail. The treaty would then become a primary issue in the Prussian elections and the DVP might not be able to continue to support the Reich Government. (This was because the Centre Party would bear some responsibility for the failure of the treaty as it was part of the Prussian coalition.) An official in the Reichskanzlei also recommended Brüning to support the Protestant church. He argued that right radical circles did not want there to be a treaty between the church and the present Prussian Government. These circles hoped to prevent it until they were in a position to conclude it themselves and take the credit for it. The Prussian Centre Party tried to secure further concessions but they were unable to persuade the Prussian Government to grant an arbitration court.[1]

On 27 March the final negotiations were held.[2] Heckel, responding to an initiative from Kapler, suggested that if

1. E.K.U., Pr.II, 61: memorandum by Kapler on his negotiations with Dingeldey. Bundesarchiv, R 431, 2196: Dingeldey to Brüning, 26 Feb.1931; note of Reichskanzlei official, 2 March 1931.
2. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/1 (Beiheft A): minutes of the meeting.

the church leaders gave a declaration of loyalty to the constitution, it would make it easier for the state to grant further concessions. There was discussion of the possibility of a mixed commission to establish the facts on which objections were based. Grimme said a declaration of loyalty to the constitution would be psychologically helpful to him in proposing the commission to the Government.

On 31 March Trendelenburg sent the Oberkirchenrat the final proposals and expressed his delight that the Government had agreed to a mixed commission to fix disputed facts on which political objections were based.[1] In its final form the political clause (Article 7 of the treaty) laid down that no one would be appointed a leading church official or Generalsuperintendent before the church had made sure that the Government had no political objections to him. The clause applied only to 'state political' not party political or church party objections. If an objection were disputed, the Government would give the facts on which it was based. Finally, if the facts were disputed the mixed commission could be set up to establish them. In return for the last concession, the churches declared that they would consider only people of undoubted loyalty to the constitution for such appointments.[2] Both sides had the additional security

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/5.
2. E.K.U., Pr.II, 61: Kapler to Trendelenburg, 31 March 1931.

of Article 12 which laid down that disagreements would be settled in a friendly manner. Kapler argued that the church would also be able to appeal to the Staatsgerichtshof to protect its rights under the Reich constitution although the Kultusministerium disagreed.[1]

On 1 April 1931 the Kirchensenat agreed by 19 votes to 15 to Kapler's proposal to refer the treaty to the General Synod and to advise its acceptance. (Winckler proposed that the Kirchensenat should simply refer the treaty to the Synod without giving an opinion.)[2] The General Synod met in April 1931 and approved the treaty by 166 to 47 votes.[3] Kapler argued that although the church had not obtained all its demands, on balance the treaty should be accepted.[4] The main opposition was to the political clause. Von Arnim-Kröchlendorff said millions of Protestants 'who could not forget that the colours Black-White-Red had waved over them' would be offended by the treaty; it gave their opponents in the Prussian Government a right to which they were not entitled by the Reich constitution. It had been said, he continued, that a clergyman who was known to be a member of the Stahlhelm could

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/5: minutes of the negotiations of 27 March 1931. ibid., Gen. II, 39/6: Grimme to Oberkirchenrat, 4 May 1931.
2. ibid.: minutes of the meeting.
3. Verhandlungen, Generalsynode, 1931, i, 88.
4. ibid., i, 31.

not fulfil his duties to other groups. He did not agree; 'But if this is so, then they must also be allowed the right to say that senior church officials will be, to say the least, inhibited in their influence on wide circles of our people if they have received the marxist-jesuit placet'.[1]

The treaty was signed on 11 May 1931 and passed by the Landtag on 13 June by 201 votes to 56. The SPD except Braun abstained; the KPD and NSDAP voted against; the other parties, with the exception of a few individuals, voted in favour although the DNVP and DVP had reservations about the political clause.[2] The treaty was ratified on 29 June. In a speech at the ceremony, Braun said that it opened a new era in the history of the Protestant Prussian churches and in their relations with the state. The relations of church and state had been regulated 'in a spirit of trustful, peaceful co-operation to the benefit of both'.[3] A state luncheon attended by the leaders of both sides was held to celebrate the conclusion of the treaty.

The treaty of 1931 gave the Prussian Landeskirchen many advantages.[4] The state promised to protect their freedom of

1. Verhandlungen, Generalsynode, 1931, i, 63-4.
2. Verhandlungen, Landtag, 3.Wahlperiode, vol.15, 21128-74, 21375-401, 21403, 21415-31.
3. Amtlicher Preussischer Pressedienst, 29 June 1931.
4. The text of the treaty is printed in, G.J.Ebers, Reichs-und preussisches Staatskirchenrecht, pp.689-701.

belief and worship. Restrictions on church legislative freedom were reduced. In future, the church had to notify the Kultusminister only of church laws which affected the administration of property and taxation.[1] The state subsidy for the costs of church administration was increased by over a million marks to an annual grant of 4,950,000 marks. Church property was guaranteed. It was laid down that appointments to the numerous parishes formerly in the patronage of the crown (there were over 2000 in the Old Prussian Union)[2] would be made only after prior agreement had been reached between church and state. The new Prussian churches acquired rights in the appointment of theological professors similar to those previously enjoyed by the Old Prussian Union. This clause was bitterly resisted, particularly by the theological faculty in Marburg, and at one time it looked as though the negotiations would fail because of their opposition.[3]

More important than the individual clauses, the treaty gave the churches a new status. They became more than Körperschaften des öffentlichen Rechts; they were 'treaty-secured, autonomous, separation-churches'.[4] The difference

1. Article 2. cf. J.Kübel, Der Vertrag der evangelischen Landeskirchen mit dem Freistaat Preussen, p.21.
2. See E.K.U., Pr.II, 61: Oberkirchenrat to Hindenburg, 21 March 1931.
3. E. von Rittberg, Der preussische Kirchenvertrag, pp.174-205; Verhandlungen, Generalsynode, 1931, i, 67-70, ii, 144-5.
4. E.K.U., Gen.II, 39/5: minutes of the meeting of church and state representatives, 11 Feb.1931; Trendelenburg quoted the phrase from an authority on church law, Stutz.

was that none of the clauses of the treaty, unlike previous state laws concerning the church, could be altered unilaterally by legislation. The church was, in this respect, finally free of the Landtag. To gain this status, however, it had to concede the political guarantee contained in article 7 which restricted its freedom of appointment. In 1924 the state had retained considerable powers over what the church did, but not whom it appointed; the treaty of 1931 did the reverse. The new system imposed a directly political criterion of loyalty to the République.

The significance of the treaty has to be weighed carefully. The main motive of the church had been to defend Protestant interests. The Protestant church wanted a share of the rights given the Roman Catholic church by the concordat.[1] It was not until it became clear that the state intended to conclude a concordat without a treaty that Protestant church leaders openly demanded a simultaneous treaty. The demand for a treaty became also a protest against Government treatment of the church. The treaty was welcomed by Protestant leaders because it had increased the prestige and freedom of the church. In a letter of congratulation to Kapler, O. Dibelius wrote,

> 'even a few years ago it seemed unthinkable that the Protestant church could ever be an independent treaty partner of the state. The Protestant public thought so completely along the lines of old attitudes that

1. cf. the cartoon in Kladderadatsch, 14 July 1921, see Plate 1.

> it did not even consider such a relationship desirable. Yet the Protestant church would have been condemned more and more to unimportance if it had remained the object of internal state legislation. Now the prerequisite has been created for the Protestant to respect his own church. And thereby equally for the church to behave towards the state with a certain independence, so as to fulfil the tasks for which it is there'.[1]

The political clause, on the other hand, was accepted only reluctantly and the main opposition to the treaty within the church was directed against it.

Nevertheless, the treaty did mark an advance in the relations of the Protestant church and the Republic. The mere conclusion of a treaty between the Prussian Landeskirchen and the Republic in 1931, when right radical opposition was already strong, was important. Those who rejected the treaty because of the political clause were those who belonged to the anti-Republican Right; they were seen to be in a minority (about one quarter of the General Synod) and defeated. The acceptance of the treaty was a victory for Kapler and the moderate church leaders. It was also a victory for the Republic which had demonstrated that it was in a position to offer the church benefits and to demand its loyalty. The anger of extreme right wing circles was understandable; it was also a mark of the importance of the treaty. In 1932 a perceptive

1. Nachlass Kapler: Dibelius to Kapler, 22 June 1931.

observer, R. Smend, wrote that the treaty established an official and legal modus vivendi between the church and the Republic. The question remained, he said, whether the church would give democracy its moral support as well.[1]

1. R.Smend, Protestantismus und Demokratie, reprinted in Staatsrechtliche Abhandlungen und andere Aufsätze (Berlin,1955), pp.287-308; cf. a report in the Vossische Zeitung, 23 April 1931 (No.191), which came to the same conclusion, and J.Kübel, Der Vertrag der evangelischen Landeskirchen, p.26.

Chapter 3

Political attitudes, 1918-1931

The progress towards a legal modus vivendi between the Protestant church and the Republic was accompanied by political rapprochement. The desire to obtain legal security for the church gave its leaders an incentive to be conciliatory. This was made easier for them because the Republic itself rapidly became more conservative than had seemed likely in January 1919. At the same time, Protestant leaders continued to feel strong resentment against aspects of the new régime and they never became emotionally committed to it.

Two doctrines formed the basis of the official church attitude to political questions. The first to be developed was that of 'political neutrality', to avoid the church becoming identified with particular parties and alienating Protestants in others.[1] It was felt that only a neutral church could perform its religious duties to all parishioners. The doctrine did not prevent the church leadership commenting on national problems which were considered above party politics. The idea of an exalted area of national life above party politics was itself, however, a feature of right wing political attitudes. It was akin to the myth of the Kaiser as the impartial servant

1. It was formulated by the General Synod of the Old Prussian Union in 1920; Verhandlungen, Generalsynode, 1920, i, 530-1.

of the whole nation. Church leaders interpreted the national interest in their own terms. For instance, they did not regard the welfare of the church as a sectional interest and they were willing to act as a pressure group in its defence. Their natural political allies were the DNVP, the party most strongly opposed to the Republic in 1919. The situation was deftly summarized by the jingle, 'Die Kirche ist politisch neutral - aber sie wählt deutsch national'.[1]

Once the position of the church had been secured, however, its leaders became keen to take part in public life. They did not want to be permanently excluded by a reputation for disloyalty. The benefit to the Roman Catholic church of the position won by the Centre Party was an example of the advantages of co-operation. The election of Hindenburg as President of the Republic in 1925 and Government support for church work abroad also drew Protestant leaders closer to the new régime. They responded by proclaiming that the church was loyal to the state and joining the celebrations of the anniversary of the Weimar constitution. This policy followed the course taken by the DVP under Stresemann, and that of the moderate section of the DNVP after 1924.[2] It also had parallels

1. K-W. Dahm, Pfarrer und Politik (Cologne,1965), p.104.
2. H.A.Turner, Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic (Princeton,1963), and for the DNVP, M.Stürmer, Koalition und Opposition in der Weimarer Republik 1924-1928 (Düsseldorf,1967), pp.249-54, and E.Jonas, Die Volkskonservativen, 1928-33 (Düsseldorf,1965), pp.23-32. See further, R.Vierhaus, Die politische Mitte in der Weimarer Republik in Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht, Jg.15 (1964), 133-49.

among other conservative groups like the older Prussian Beamten who had remained in office after the revolution, and the Reichswehr.[1] Under Kapler, the Protestant leadership was aligned with the minority of German conservatives who genuinely attempted to find a stable relationship with the Republic. His ideas were close to those of Stresemann whom he knew and respected.[2]

The revolution of 1918 shocked the Protestant church and prevented it feeling at ease under the Republic. There was a nervous and irrational element in the Protestant reaction to the revolution which never completely subsided. As late as 1927 a comparatively cool observer, O. Dibelius, wrote that it had been caused by 'powers of darkness'.[3] The church leadership obeyed the Kaiser's request to his officials to co-operate with the new rulers: they declared that the church was not bound to any particular type of state, and church officials took the oath of loyalty to the Republican constitution

1. W.Runge, Politik und Beamtentum im Parteienstaat (Stuttgart, 1965), pp.222-37; F.L.Carsten, The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933 (Oxford,1966), pp.290-6.
2. Kapler's son, Pfarrer A.Kapler, is no longer certain which party his father supported but believes it was mostly the DVP - 'In any case this direction was relatively closest to my father's ideas'; letter from Pfarrer Kapler, 23 Aug.1966. See below, pp.197-8.
3. O.Dibelius, Nachspiel (Berlin,1928), p.101.

like ordinary Beamten.[1] Their sense of loss was acute, however. In his speech of welcome to the delegates of the first Kirchentag in 1919, the President of the Kirchenausschuss, R. Moeller, said,

> 'The glory of the German Kaiserreich, the dream of our fathers, the pride of every German is gone and with it the exalted bearer of German power, the ruler and the dynasty which we loved and honoured in our innermost being as the standard-bearer of German greatness'.[2]

The next Kirchentag which met in 1921 was still predominantly hostile to the new régime. Criticism was concentrated on the idea of a secular state. President Moeller described it as a break with a thousand years of history.[3] The spiritual Vice-President of the Berlin Oberkirchenrat, J. Kaftan, denied the authority of an irreligious state as it did not recognize the authority of God.[4] In the closing speech to the Kirchentag, its President, von Pechmann, declared amid shouts of support

1. The Kaiser's wish was reported in the Staatsanzeiger, 30 Nov.1918; (E.K.U., Gen.II, 27/1). On the declarations of the Landeskirchen in 1918, see above p. 33 , and G.Mehnert, Evangelische Kirche und Politik, p.97. For an example of the oath, see Kapler's record in E.K.U., Personalia, Lit.K/16.
2. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1919, p.57.
3. ibid., 1921, p.79.
4. ibid., p.130. cf. the correspondence of the brothers Julius and Theodor Kaftan, printed in W.Göbell, Kirche, Recht und Theologie in vier Jahrzehnten, ii, 1910-1926 (Munich,1967). Julius Kaftan was a Professor of theology in Berlin and spiritual Vice-President of the Oberkirchenrat from 1921-5; Theodor was a Generalsuperintendent in Baden.

from the audience,

> '... the changes which have befallen public life in Germany in the last three years .... have not only struck at the very marrow of the German people but represent a serious danger for the Protestant church ..., an alteration of things to its disadvantage which cannot be seen too clearly and taken too seriously .... we no longer have a state authority which is obliged by the constitution and urged by its conscience to hold itself above the conflict of parties and denominations, as far as is humanly possible, and .... to pursue .... the common welfare with a strong hand ..... And if we consider the parties which essentially share in this power, even their most enthusiastic supporters will not dispute .... that ... the weal and woe and essential interests of the Protestant church are not .... especially close to their hearts'.[1]

Despite the principle of political neutrality, individual Protestants were encouraged to take part in politics. In 1918-19, the church leadership allowed an election campaign to be fought on its behalf by independent or ostensibly independent Protestant organizations.[2] In Baden, the Oberkirchenrat itself took part in election meetings.[3] In Prussia, four Generalsuperintendenten were elected to the

1. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1921, p.252.
2. see above, pp. 44-8.
3. Gesetzes und Verordnungsblatt für die Vereinigte Evangelisch-protestantische Kirche Badens, 18 June 1919, No.7; (E.K.D., A 2/427).

Landtag as DNVP deputies.[1]

The Protestant church saw its task not simply as the defence of its organization but as the preservation of German Kultur.[2] This it identified with a conservative, Christian philosophy. The 1924 Kirchentag, which had social questions as its main theme, stressed the importance of marriage, the family and a Christian education. It paid tribute to the courage of the Mittelstand during the inflation. It criticized both sides of industry for selfish disregard of the Volksgemeinschaft. It expressed sympathy for the working class but added that their slogan-ridden hostility to Christianity should be dropped.[3] At the next Kirchentag it was noted that their views on the social question had been ignored by the SPD but that employers had shown an interest in them.[4]

The Kirchenausschuss wanted legal restrictions on personal freedom maintained in support of its moral code. It supported censorship and licensing laws. It opposed penal reform and clashed with the more liberal views of one of its own members, Kahl, who was chairman of the relevant Reichstag committee. It opposed, in particular, change in the laws

1. G.Mehnert, Evangelische Kirche und Politik, p.239.
2. See Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1921, pp.121-38 (speech of J.Kaftan).
3. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1924, pp.215-9.
4. ibid., 1927, p.73.

relating to sexual behaviour and divorce.[1] The decline in the birth rate was considered a national danger. One lay member of the Kirchenausschuss, Professor Titius, in a speech to the 1924 Kirchentag, attributed the decline partly to economic conditions and bad housing but also to a new code of sexual morality. For this, he blamed left wing propaganda; 'radical socialism like radical individualism have for decades attacked the existing marriage system'. He thanked the Government representatives who were present at the Kirchentag for what they had done, but said that only a change in their 'higher politics' would be adequate.[2]

It was easy for the Republic to become a symbol of the forces of modernism undermining the nation. The main enemy for conservative Protestants was socialism because of its doctrine of class war and its hostility to the church. By socialism they understood both the KPD and the SPD. The first officially opposed religion, and pastors were forbidden to join it. This was made explicit when a Pfarrer Eckert in Baden joined the KPD in October 1931 and was dismissed from the

1. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1924, pp.17,20-1; 1927, pp.30-1, 71-3,95-7; 1930, pp.48,109,115,140. E.K.D., A 2/20: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 26-7 May 1922.

2. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1924, pp.85-103. The 1927 Kirchentag issued an official declaration on the matter; ibid., 1927, pp.358-9.

Landeskirche.[1] The Kirchenausschuss took the Communist threat seriously particularly because of the persecution of Christians in the Soviet Union.[2] In November 1930 it considered a report by a Kirchenbundesamt official, Scholz, on the Communist atheist movement, Ifa, which claimed three million members.[3] Scholz described how the Ifa programme condemned church treaties as 'cultural reaction', and attacked the 'school fascism' of the church and the 'slavery' of religious literature and art. He also described anti-religious

1. Gesetzes und Verordnungsblatt für die Vereinigte Evangelisch-protestantische Landeskirche Badens, 22 Feb.1932, No.2. The leader of the Religious Socialists, Pfarrer Piechowski, asked the Kirchenausschuss how Eckert's expulsion could be reconciled with the doctrine of political neutrality. He was told that the church could not allow this doctrine to be exploited to protect those who attacked religion. Since this was the programme of the KPD, clergymen could not join it. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting, 24-6 May 1932.
2. This was condemned by the 1930 Kirchentag in common with many other Western churches. J.Hosemann, Der Deutsche Evangelische Kirchenbund (2nd.edn., Berlin,1932), pp.152-3.
3. This was the Interessengemeinschaft für Arbeiterkultur and probably represented their total international membership. The German section of the Internationale proletarischer Freidenker had only about 100,000 members in 1930 although it was very active in Berlin; S.Bahne, Die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands in E.Matthias and R.Morsey, Das Ende der Parteien (Düsseldorf,1960), p.666.

propaganda like a verse in Das proletarische Kind which read,

'If there really was a God
With a beard on his chin
Then the clergy would be sitting
As lice therein. Holaderie.'

Other Ifa activities included damaging church property, painting slogans on walls and disturbing church services. It had also organized plays mocking the church to coincide with the collection of Kirchensteuer; a lawyer would be present to assist those who decided to leave the church. At the same time, the movement used its own religious substitutes like hymns and initiation ceremonies - 'the anti-church is nascent', concluded Scholz.[1]

The SPD was not as hostile to the church either in its programme or its policies. The relations between the two remained cool, however. Although the great majority of SPD voters belonged, if only nominally, to a church, this was not the case with SPD deputies. In 1928, only 20 from 152 Reichstag deputies belonged to a church; in 1930, it was 21 from 140, and in 1932, 15 from 133. There was some local variation; in the Hessen Landtag over half the SPD deputies were members of a church but in Prussia the party was strongly agnostic.[2] Even the leader of the Religious Socialists, Pfarrer Piechowski,

1. E.K.D., A 2/27: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 27-8 Nov.1930.
2. H.Christ, Der politische Protestantismus in der Weimarer Republik (Diss.Phil., Bonn,1967), p.283.

was reported as saying that it was almost impossible to be a member of the SPD in Berlin if one were religious.[1] The SPD press frequently criticized the church; it made fun of Christian festivals, attacked state subsidies for the churches and church social work, and opposed denominational schools.[2] In 1928 the Kirchenausschuss received evidence that socialist baptisms, marriages and funerals had occurred in some Länder.[3] There seemed reason to believe that, in the words of the Kirchenbundesamt official, Scholz, 'Agnosticism is the conscience of the SPD'.[4] Against this background, Protestant leaders assumed with some justification that the moderation of SPD policy towards the church was the result of pressure from the Centre Party. Protestants were also influenced by memories of the initial measures taken by the revolutionary governments in 1918 and the reluctance of the Prussian SPD to concede a church treaty.

The referendum for the expropriation of the royal houses in 1926 led the Protestant leadership to take a public stand against the socialist parties on a political matter. The referendum was demanded by the SPD and KPD after the Reichstag

1. E.K.D., A 2/478: Evangelischer Pressedienst, 15 Nov.1929.
2. The press files of the Kirchenbund contain many examples, mainly from Vörwarts, see E.K.D., A 2/494-5.
3. E.K.D., A 2/493.
4. E.K.D., A 2/27: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting, 27-8 Nov.1930.

had rejected a motion for expropriation. Church leaders naturally opposed the plan but were divided about whether they should make their opposition public. Von Pechmann, the President of the Kirchentag and an ardent Bavarian monarchist, thought that they should. The Berlin Oberkirchenrat and Winckler (the President of the Prussian Kirchensenat), however, thought that a public statement would only damage the church.[1] The Landeskirchen of Frankfurt, Hessen, Hamburg, Lübeck and Bremen also wanted the church to stay out of the dispute because it was political.[2] The Frankfurt Landeskirche said that if the church started to comment on political questions, it would be branded as the church of a particular class and more people would leave it. It added that the royal houses had greater resources than the 'destitute mass' of the nation although it thought that expropriation would be unjust.

There was, however, strong support in the parishes and among the leaders of some Landeskirchen for a statement.[3] Pechmann described the referendum as 'a new wave of the

1. E.K.D., A 2/425: Pechmann to Kapler, 26 March 1926. E.K.U., Gen.II, 32/Beiheft 1: Winckler to Kapler, 5 April 1926 and Kapler's reply, 14 April.
2. E.K.D., A 2/245: Frankfurt Landeskirche to Kapler, 29 April 1926. E.K.D., A 2/24: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 3-5 June 1926.
3. E.K.D., A 2/24: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 3-5 June 1926. See, for example, the resolutions from parishes in the Old Prussian Union, in E.K.U., Gen.II, 32/Beiheft 1.

revolution' exploiting a 'diabolical lie'; it would be 'sin' to support it and the church should warn against it. A majority of the Kirchenausschuss agreed to a resolution condemning expropriation. It said that as well as the political and legal questions involved, the referendum affected the Christian conscience.

> 'The proposed expropriation of the royal houses without compensation means the removal of the rights of German fellow-countrymen and contradicts clear and unambiguous principles of the Gospel'.[1]

The church was sharply attacked by the socialist press for its attitude. The caricature in Lachen Links (see Plate 2) shows the type of ridicule to which it laid itself open.[2] The church leadership was also criticized by the Religious Socialists who supported expropriation and by the liberal Protestant journal, Christliche Welt.[3] On the other hand, in the right wing Eiserne Blätter, G. Traub attacked the church for being too weak and not taking a political stand.[4]

In addition to their dislike of socialist influence within the Republic, conservative Protestants also objected to the power which the Roman Catholic church had gained in the new régime. The influence of the Centre Party in Republican

1. E.K.D., A 2/24: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 3-5 June 1926.
2. Lachen Links, 3.Jg. (1926), No.24.
3. Vorwärts, 14 June 1926. J.Rathje, Die Welt des freien Protestantismus (Stuttgart,1952), pp.338-9.
4. Eiserne Blätter, 1926, No.27.

Governments meant that the Roman Catholic church seemed to receive official favour, reversing the advantage enjoyed by the Protestant church in North Germany under the Empire.[1] Protestants considered the policy of coalition with the SPD (which the Centre Party adopted) an unprincipled attempt to win sectional gains by alliance with a party which was basically hostile to the church and politically undesirable.[2] Protestant leaders were indignant that the Roman Catholic church, whose demands were often more extreme than Protestant ones, was nevertheless relatively exempt from attack in the Republican press. During the campaign for a Reich School Law, Scholz (an official in the Kirchenbundesamt) noted angrily,

> 'It is a finely contrived and yet transparent game the way the Catholic church and its press emphasizes common Christian interests towards the Protestant church but is silent about how it allows its coalition partners the Democrats and Social Democrats to agitate against the Protestant church.'[3]

Protestant leaders also believed that there was a systematic policy of excluding Protestants from Government appointments, although they could not prove it.[4] Instead of gratitude for

1. cf. above, pp. 98-9.
2. Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 59.Jg. (1932), p.116.
3. E.K.D., A 2/254: Scholz to Troschke, 19 Aug.1927.
4. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 24-5 Nov.1932; E.K.D., A 2/446: Kirchenausschuss to Landeskirchen, 10 April 1933 and their replies.

the concessions won by the Centre Party for both churches, they resented their dependence on a Roman Catholic party and saw it as evidence of the basic indifference of the Republic towards Protestant interests.

Another threat to German Kultur, in Protestant eyes, was Jewish influence. In a public lecture to the 1927 Kirchentag, Professor Althaus criticized völkisch theories but maintained that there was a Jewish danger. He quoted with approval a statement of the Central Committee of the Inner Mission which said that 'evangelization is today opposed on all sides by a mentality under Jewish influence in business, the press, art and literature'. Althaus said that the churches should not be afraid to speak out. It was not a question of racial or religious anti-semitism, 'but only of the threat of a quite particular demoralized and demoralizing, urban intellectuality, which is represented primarily by the Jewish race'.[1] The church leadership did not commit itself to a public statement, but there is evidence that it agreed with Althaus's analysis.[2]

The Protestant leadership shared the objections to democracy common among German conservatives. They felt no attachment to a parliamentary system; their ideal was the authoritarian state of Wilhelm I and Bismarck. Their dislike

1. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1927, p.216.
2. see below, pp. 296-308.

of German liberalism was increased by its reputation for anti-clericalism. During the Weimar Republic this reputation was no longer accurate, but there was still a difference between the educational policies of the liberal parties, the DDP and the DVP, and that of the majority of the church leadership. The DDP also made itself unpopular by trying to force a democratic constitution on the church through the Prussian Landtag.[1] In addition, its reputation for strong Jewish influence may have counted against it.[2] The church was grateful to one DDP politician, Friedrich Naumann, however, for his work in the Weimar constitutional committee, and his memory was honoured at the Kirchentag in 1919.[3] The DVP had more support in the Protestant church because it was more conservative. In some parts of the 'new' Prussian provinces, it was the main conservative party.[4] More important in this context, the DVP was the natural party for the

1. see above, pp. 61-7.
2. H.Christ, Der politische Protestantismus, pp.323-4.
3. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1919, p.61.
4. This was partly to do with the size of the farms - the medium and small farmers tended to vote DVP; owners of larger estates DNVP. It also reflected local dislike of the Prussian aristocratic tradition, associated with the DNVP. R.Heberle, Landbevölkerung und Nationalsozialismus. Eine soziologische Untersuchung der politischen Willensbildung in Schleswig-Holstein 1918-1932 (Stuttgart,1963), pp.28, 117; W.Hartenstein, Die Anfänge der Deutschen Volkspartei 1918-1920 (Düsseldorf, 1962), pp.236-53.

Vernunftrepublikaner in the church leadership to choose, since it could be seen as a conservative and national party which was loyal both to the church and the Republic.

The failure of successive Republican Governments to pass a Reich School Law, in line with the wishes of the church leadership, created a major obstacle to the development of good relations with the Republic. It also occasioned a sharp disagreement with the DVP. The Weimar constitution envisaged three types of school: denominational, inter-denominational and secular. Of these, it appeared to have a slight preference for the inter-denominational Gemeinschaftsschule. Most Protestant leaders favoured a denominational school; only in Hessen, Baden and Thuringia, where inter-denominational schools had been long established, did church leaders support them.[1] The Kirchenausschuss pressed for a Reich School Law favourable to the denominational school. It promoted Protestant influence within the parents councils, which could demand schools for minorities or a local change in the educational system to suit a majority.[2] It wrote to the Reich Minister

1. E.K.D., A 2/254: letters from the 3 Landeskirchen to the Kirchenausschuss, Sept.1927. The Hessen Landeskirche said that a change in their educational system would disturb the progress they had made towards reconciliation with the SPD and the teachers.

2. E.K.D., A 2/239: Kirchenausschuss to the Landeskirchen, 28 Feb. and 20 Dec.1922; ibid., A 2/268: Kirchenausschuss to the Landeskirchen, 20 Aug.1927. In Prussia, Württemberg, Brunswick and Mecklenburg-Schwerin in 1927 clergymen were freed from their normal duties to carry out propaganda work among parents; E.K.D., A 2/254: Kirchenausschuss to Landeskirchen, 2 Nov.1927, and replies from the Landeskirchen.

of the Interior, who was responsible for education at Reich level, and tried to influence Protestant politicians.[1] It even considered calling for a national referendum.[2] In 1923 a special subcommittee was set up. At its suggestion, Protestants were asked to give prominence to the educational question in the 1924 Reichstag elections.[3] The Protestant parents' organization, which claimed two million members, questioned the political parties. They received no reply from the KPD or SPD; the other parties replied favourably, except for the DDP which supported inter-denominational schools.[4]

Several Republican Governments attempted to pass a Reich School Law but none succeeded. Their failure seemed to bear out the criticism that in the Republic every party had its own Kultur programme but the state had none.[5] The educational

1. E.K.D., A 2/239: Moeller to Reich Minister of the Interior, 6 May 1921; ibid., A 2/253: Kirchenausschuss to same, 22 June 1925 and copies to politicians; ibid. A 2/254: Kapler to Reich Minister of the Interior, 27 Feb.1926 and 18 July 1927. In 1927 all Protestant Reichstag members were informed of Protestant wishes and a social evening held for them, Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1927, p.25.
2. E.K.D., A 2/20: Kirchenausschuss meeting, 16-18 Nov.1922 and ibid., A 2/21: same, 20-23 June 1923.
3. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1924, p.22.
4. Evangelischer Pressedienst, No.45, 5 Nov.1924; Die Schulfrage, 1924, No.23/4; copies in E.K.D., A 2/253.
5. O.Dibelius, Nachspiel, pp.15-8.

system depended on political control in the Länder. Brunswick was a notorious example; every change of Government was followed by a change in the schools.[1] In 1926, Kapler wrote to the Reich Minister of the Interior, expressing the disappointment of the church leadership. For nearly seven years, he said, the German people had waited for the Reich School Law. In the meantime Bavaria had made its own arrangements by concordat and treaty. In Saxony, Protestant denominational schools had been made inter-denominational, although Catholic schools had been left untouched. In Prussia, secular schools had been introduced illegally. The insecurity would damage national unity, Kapler declared, and since the many representations of the Protestant church on the subject had been disregarded, it looked as though it was being treated with scorn.[2]

Protestant hopes for a Reich School Law were almost realized by the coalition Government formed in January 1927. The DNVP and the Centre Party joined it partly with the aim of solving the school problem in favour of denominational education. The DVP, true to its national liberal tradition, resisted this policy and supported the Gemeinschaftsschule.[3]

1. See the account in the Christlicher Volksdienst (Berlin), 21 Jan.1928, No.3.
2. E.K.D., A 2/254: Kapler to Reich Minister of the Interior, 27 Feb.1926.
3. The formation and collapse of the coalition and the part played by the Reich School Law are discussed in, M.Stürmer, Koalition und Opposition in der Weimarer Republik, pp.182-90, 230-5.

The Kirchenausschuss became involved in negotiations with both the DNVP and the DVP to find a compromise. DVP leaders agreed, subject to the approval of the full Reichstag party, to a formula which would have allowed the traditionally inter-denominational areas to continue unchanged unless the local Landtage decided after a fixed period in favour of reform, in which case the principles of the new Reich Law were to be followed and denominational education introduced.[1] The compromise did not succeed and the coalition Government broke up. The DVP blamed the Centre Party which, it said, had lost interest in the school bill once it had been prevented from using it as a means to extend the provisions of the Bavarian concordat to the whole Reich.[2] Protestant leaders, however, in private held the DVP responsible. They believed that the bill had failed because the DVP Reichstag party had rejected the proposed compromise, which had been agreed with its leaders, and insisted that the old inter-denominational schools should be protected permanently and that it should be possible to extend the system to other Länder. This the Centre Party had refused.[3] In the 1928 election campaign, which followed the fall of the Government, Kapler publicly denied

1. E.K.D., A 2/254: report by the Kirchenbundesamt official, Scholz, 16 Jan.1928.
2. Speech by the DVP chairman, Scholz, published in the National-liberale Korrespondenz, 24 Feb.1928, No.37, and quoted by Kapler in a letter to the Landeskirchen, 16 March 1928, in E.K.D., A 2/254.
3. E.K.D., A 2/255: report by Scholz on the negotiations, 12 March 1928; ibid., A 2/268: report on the Evangelischer Reichselterntag, 10-12 April 1928.

DVP allegations that to a great extent he had agreed with its policy.[1]

The political sympathies of the Protestant leadership, and of the church as a whole, drew it naturally to the DNVP. In addition, until October 1928 when Hugenberg became chairman of the party, the church could count on its unconditional support. It stressed Christianity in its programme; it supported the church in the Reichstag against radical Länder; it worked for censorship and licensing laws; a DNVP Minister, von Keudell, produced the Reich School Law project in 1927 which was favoured by the church leadership; the party voted against the Prussian concordat because there had not been a simultaneous treaty with the Protestant church and later, despite its objections to the political clause, it voted for the Protestant treaty.[2]

The overwhelming majority of DNVP deputies were Protestant.[3] They included members of the Kirchenausschuss like R. Mumm, who was indefatigable in his work for the church,[4] and

1. E.K.D., A 2/255: Kapler to the Landeskirchen, 16 March 1928, describing the dispute.
2. The importance of this record of service to the church was emphasized by Dr. Karnatz, a senior official of the Berlin Oberkirchenrat from 1919-1933, in an interview in Berlin on 20 Oct.1965.
3. H.Christ, Der politische Protestantismus, pp.281-2.
4. See R.Mumm, Der christlich-soziale Gedanke (Berlin,1933), pp.98-102, 109-14, 117-32.

F. Behrens, a Christian Trade Union official; both of these were regular members of the Reichstag party until 1930. The chairman of the DNVP in the Prussian Landtag until 1928 was Winckler, the President of the Kirchensenat of the Old Prussian Union. In 1919, four Prussian Generalsuperintendenten sat for the DNVP in the Prussian Landesversammlung. This was not repeated, but Pastor Koch, who became President of the Westphalian provincial synod in 1927, represented the DNVP in the Prussian Landtag throughout the Republic and from 1930-1932 in the Reichstag as well.[1] Other church leaders who served as DNVP deputies included T. Wurm, who became President of the Württemberg Landeskirche in 1929 (in 1933 he was given the title Bishop); he sat for the local equivalent of the DNVP in the Württemberg Landesversammlung in 1919 and in the first Landtag.[2] In Hessen, Professor Diehl, who was President of the Landeskirche from 1923, was also a DNVP deputy in the local Landtag.[3]

In 1922 a Protestant Reich Committee of the DNVP was formed with financial support from von Arnim-Kröchlendorff and von Berg (members of the Kirchensenat of the Old Prussian Union).[4] R. Mumm invited church leaders to join the committee.

1. W.Niemöller, Karl Koch, Präses der Bekenntnissynoden (Bethel,1956), pp.15-8.
2. T.Wurm, Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben (Stuttgart,1953),pp.65-7
3. Handbuch des Landtags des Volksstaates Hessen, I.-III. Landtag 1919-1927 (Darmstadt,1926), p.148.
4. D.Z.A. Potsdam, Evangelischer Reichsausschuss der DNVP, 455: Mumm to Kähler, 20 Nov,1922.

Some like O. Dibelius and von Pechmann did, although others, including Bishop Bernewitz of Brunswick and Bishop Ihmels of Saxony refused because of their official position in the church; Bernewitz added that he always voted DNVP.[1] Kirchenbundesamt officials occasionally attended meetings of the committee and at least one was held in the Kirchenbundesamt.[2] A confidential information sheet was issued giving details of DNVP service to the church.[3]

If the DNVP had been strong enough to implement the wishes of the church, the Protestant leadership might have been content to remain an unofficial partner of the party. Since, however, for most of the Republic the DNVP was a minority opposition group, it became important for church leaders to find a wider political base. This, in turn, made it necessary for them to come to terms with the Republic and to dissociate the church from the accusation of counter-revolution, to which the DNVP was liable.

The church leadership, in any case, rejected the use of violence. It took no part in the Kapp putsch. Pfarrer Traub who agreed to be Kapp's Kultusminister held no position in the church leadership although he had been a member of the

1. D.Z.A. Potsdam, Evangelischer Reichsausschuss der DNVP, 456: membership list in Deutsch Nationale Korrespondenz, No.266, and Mumm to von Pechmann, 10 April 1922; to Bernewitz, 11 Dec.1924; Ihmels to Mumm, 8 Nov.1924.
2. ibid., 459: Hosemann to Mumm, 23 Oct.1929; Mumm to Barthelheimer, 21 Oct.1929; ibid., 455: invitation 28 April?1925.
3. The Vertrauliche Mitteilungen des evangelischen Reichsausschusses der DNVP.

Vertrauensrat of the Old Prussian Union in 1918-1919.[1] The church leadership did not comment on the murder of Erzberger but when this was followed by Rathenau's assassination, it joined the general condemnation of the act. Like other conservative groups, it felt some sense of responsibility for the climate of opinion which led to the murder and it was anxious to clear its name. Chancellor Wirth's outspoken condemnation of 'the enemy on the right' and the legislation against anti-Republican groups which followed, may have acted as a further incentive.[2] Nevertheless, it was important that the church leadership spoke out and that it did not mince its words.

The declaration of the Kirchenausschuss, issued in July 1922 read:

> 'The Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs has fallen a victim to wicked assassination.
> This atrocious outrage shames the German name. And while our unhappy nation, fighting for its life, needs inward peace and mutual understanding on the basis of respect for the law more than ever, we see passions inflamed to boiling point and our nation nearly at the brink of civil war .....
> The murder is equally the worst violation of the absolute command of the eternal and holy God: "Thou shalt not kill" .... The murder and what we have

1. See above, p.48.
2. On the background to the Rathenau assassination and its consequences, see A.Brecht, Aus Nächster Nähe. Lebenserinnerungen 1884-1927 (Stuttgart,1966), pp.347-9, 382-94.

> experienced since then illuminate in a glaring way the inner situation of our nation. We blame our enemies for thrusting our nation through their delusion into humiliation and crisis, from which the spirit of chaos comes .....
> Above all, however, we call for self-examination .... We fulfil a holy task of the Protestant church .... when we brand sin as sin .... and constantly do our part to decontaminate political life and thus to prevent unthinkable disaster. The way to recovery is by loyalty to duty, and work, by order and discipline, never by hate and murder. That is demanded by obedience to God and discipleship to Jesus Christ of all who with us confess the Protestant faith.
> May God bless our warning ..... .'[1]

Only two Landeskirchen opposed a declaration, one because it feared a declaration would be taken as evidence of guilt and the other (Mecklenburg-Schwerin) because it would help 'Jewish and Communist agitation'.[2] The declaration was widely reported in the church and national press. The liberal journal, Christliche Welt, welcomed it as a 'liberating word'.[3]

Although it condemned violence, the church leadership had great sympathy for its lower middle class members who were driven to right radical movements by economic despair. On

1. J.Hosemann, Der Deutsche Evangelische Kirchenbund, pp.161-2.
2. E.K.D., A 2/477: replies from the Landeskirchen of Saxony and Mecklenburg-Schwerin to a Kirchenausschuss circular of 5 July 1922.
3. ibid.: note about the press reception. Die Christliche Welt, 3 Aug.1922, No.31.

several occasions it intervened with the Reich Government on their behalf. In 1924, President Moeller warned Chancellor Marx that an inadequate revaluation settlement would undermine the national virtues of 'hard work, thrift, perseverance and a sense of justice'.[1] The Kirchentag of 1927 issued a public declaration on behalf of those who had lost by the revaluation settlement.[2] This came after the church had been criticized by savers' organizations for publicly defending the title of the royal houses to their property but remaining silent about the small savers who had already been 'beggared' by revaluation.[3] In 1929 the Kirchenausschuss asked the Government to arrange a separate welfare scheme for pensioners, so that they should not be placed on an equal footing with those receiving public assistance.[4] In July 1932, the Kirchenausschuss wrote to the Chancellor, describing the terrible conditions of pensioners and warning that if they suffered further through the austerity measures, a dangerous increase of radicalism would result.[5]

The church leadership believed, however, that the Versailles Treaty and reparations were primarily responsible

1. Bundesarchiv, R 431/2195: Kirchenausschuss to the Reich Chancellor, 1 Aug.1924.
2. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1927, pp.323-6.
3. E.K.D., B 3/122[A]: the file contains numerous protests from the Ortsgruppen of the Sparervereine.
4. E.K.D., A 2/26: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 28-9 Nov.1929.
5. Bundesarchiv, R 431/2196: Kirchenausschuss to the Reich Chancellor, 28 July 1932.

for economic distress, not the German Government.[1] In general, its public statements on this subject were aimed at foreign churches not the German authorities. In this, it differed from the anti-Republican Right, which exploited national grievances as part of its campaign to overthrow the Republic. The church leadership regarded the movement of 'national opposition' as an understandable but wrong-headed reaction to an impossible situation imposed from outside.

Unlike the anti-Republican Right, the church leadership also never completely lost its respect for the authority of the state. Despite its many objections to the Republic, an attitude of continuous and general opposition did not come naturally to it. The election of Hindenburg as President of the Republic in 1925 restored a personal symbol of authority in the Reich towards which the Protestant church felt a strong attachment. The Protestant leadership had treated Ebert with reserve. When he died a few Landeskirchen ordered that church bells should be tolled in sympathy, but the Kirchenausschuss did not send an official message of condolence to the Government and even a personal message from Kapler to Chancellor Marx contained no word of appreciation of Ebert.[2] In contrast, in

1. See below, Chapter 4.
2. H.Christ, Der politische Protestantismus, p.368, and E.K.D., A 2/427: Oberkirchenrat, Karlsruhe, to Baden parishes ordering a funeral peal, 3 March 1925. E.K.D., A 2/477: Kapler to Oberkirchenrat, Stuttgart, 3 March 1925; Kapler to Marx, 3 March 1925.

1925, Hindenburg enjoyed great popularity in the church. During the Presidential election campaign, the few Protestant liberals who had the courage to campaign for Marx (a Roman Catholic) aroused bitter local opposition.[1] The DDP accused the church of restricting the freedom of Protestant liberals by taking official steps against Marx supporters.[2] There was, in fact, little evidence to support this allegation.[3] It was probably true, however, that many pastors indirectly supported Hindenburg. Martin Rade, the editor of Christliche Welt, reported that in the Berlin church he attended on polling day, the pastor said, 'Today is a day of decision for the German people. Today it must show if it will return to its old faith', and during the church notices, 'Today is election day. Every Protestant Christian knows whom he has to vote for'.[4]

To the pleasure of the Protestant leadership, Hindenburg held a reception for representatives of the Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish churches. The Kirchenbundesamt itself suggested the idea.[5] At the ceremony, Kapler spoke first.

1. J.Rathje, Die Welt des freien Protestantismus, pp.355-63; O.Baumgarten, Mein Lebensgeschichte (Tübingen,1929), pp.464-75; A.von Zahn-Harnack, Adolf von Harnack (Berlin,1936), pp.527-9. An example of the opposition they aroused is C.Ringwald, Offener Brief an Seine Exzellenz Dr. Adolf von Harnack (Berlin) von einem badischen Laien (Freiburg,1925).
2. Verhandlungen des Reichstages. III.Wahlperiode 1924, vol.401; No.959; ibid., vol.386, 2300C-2304D (speech of T.Heuss).
3. E.K.D., A 2/477: Kapler to Mumm, 15 Sept.1925; E.K.U., Gen.I. 61: Oberkirchenrat to the provincial authorities of the Old Prussian Union, 17 June 1925, and their replies.
4. Die Christliche Welt, 1 June 1925, No.22/3.
5. E.K.D., A 2/477: notes of the Kirchenbundesamt official, Troschke, 14 and 16 May 1925.

He said that the occasion had great symbolic importance as it showed the value which the President attached to religion. He continued,

> 'The Reich President is a loyal Protestant Christian and it would be unnatural if I omitted to say here - intending no offence to anyone - with what proud joy the Protestant church counts the Reich President among its members'.

The President had said that his office belonged to no one class, party or denomination; nothing, said Kapler, was further from their intentions than to ask for special favours for the Protestant church because the President was a Protestant. Hindenburg had asked the churches to help in the work of national recovery; Kapler promised the full support of his church for the achievement of the President's goal that the nation should be gathered, united and led again from the depths to the heights.[1]

By the time the next Kirchentag met in June 1927, the Republic seemed to have become a stable régime and the church was secure within it. The DVP was a regular member of Reich coalition Governments and even the DNVP took office for a time in 1925 and again in 1927. By 1927 the Prussian church leadership was also beginning to consider the advantages of a treaty with the Prussian Land. It was therefore natural for it

1. E.K.D., A 2/477: copy of the speech, 12 June 1925.

to attempt to clarify its relationship with the state. The Kirchenausschuss appointed one of its members, Wilhelm Kahl, to give a formal lecture to the Kirchentag on 'The church and the Fatherland'.[1] The choice of Kahl was significant. He was a leading DVP politician, a close colleague of Stresemann and the first to coin the term Vernunftrepublikaner.[2] He was himself approaching eighty and knew how to appeal to a conservative audience. His fondness for describing the struggle he had with his conscience before accepting the Republic led a colleague to retort, on one occasion, that it was remarkable how often he struggled with his conscience but always came out on top.[3]

In his lecture to the Kirchentag, which was held in Königsberg, Kahl expressed his gratitude to the monarchy for what it had given the church.[4] He then considered various sources of guidance for Protestants in finding the proper attitude to adopt to the state. From the Bible, he mentioned Christ's love for Jerusalem, the dictum 'Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's', and the Pauline doctrine of obedience to authority. In Luther, Kahl also found the principles of respect for the secular arm and love of the German people.

1. E.K.D., A 2/24: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 3-5 June 1926.
2. H.A.Turner, Stresemann and the politics of the Weimar Republic, pp.112, 254.
3. E.Schiffer, Ein Leben für den Liberalismus (Berlin,1951), p.212.
4. The lecture is in Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1927, pp.234-50.

He mentioned that Luther had been dismayed that 'in all the world Germans are called beasts, who can do nothing except make war, guzzle and booze'.

Kahl went on to discuss the stand taken by the church on national problems. He mentioned its co-operation in the 'war of defence', its protests against the oppression of Germany by her former enemies, and the condemnation of Rathenau's murder. Kahl argued that, although the church should be politically neutral, for individual Protestants participation in political life was 'the most conspicuous form of patriotic activity'. A basic withdrawal from the state, he warned, would destroy Christian influence on the Fatherland.

Kahl then came to the heart of his message - the conflict of conscience with the existing authority. He mentioned the heroic resistance of the early Christians but also the command, in the first epistle of Peter, for Christians to be subject to all human authority. He added that Luther had taught submission even to tyranny, once every legal method of resistance had been exhausted. Kahl argued that there was no doubt of the legal right of successful revolution. This, he acknowledged, was not a complete solution, 'for the conflict is between present patriotism and historical loyalty, and loyalty comes first ...'. He then quoted from a speech he had made in 1895 with reference to the war of 1866. He had recognized that loyalty to a particular dynasty was part of patriotism but also that,

> 'the original dynasty is not a divinely guaranteed possession ..... Legitimacy is not an eternal concept but a legal relationship of human devising and historical development'.

Either the progress of world history was not in the hand of God or He allowed revolutions and the rise and fall of Stuarts, Bourbons, Napoleons, Vasas and Guelphs. Kahl said that he believed that this argument now applied to a throne closer to their hearts since, 'I do not find in the Holy Scriptures a distinction based on natural emotions of attachment or aversion, or political attitude'. At the same time the freedom of others to believe differently should be respected.

The Vaterländische Kundgebung adopted by the Kirchentag was less specific than Kahl's speech. The original draft, prepared by a committee of the Kirchenausschuss, had mentioned the duty of Protestants to submit to the present state.[1] In the final version, the present state was not mentioned. The declaration affirmed that,

> 'The church stands above parties. It serves all its members, whatever their party, with the same love, and it gives them all equal rights in its midst. It has the task of applying the principles of God's Word. It allows and gives the state what belongs to the state. The state is, we believe, ordained by God with its own important tasks. True to the instructions of Scripture the church prays for nation, state and authority (Obrigkeit).

1. E.K.D., A 2/489: extract from the minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting, 14-5 June 1927.

> Equally the church makes certain moral demands on the state. In particular, the church cannot renounce the right to apply in independence and candour eternal moral standards to legislation and administration and to represent the demands of Christian conscience in all public life. The church makes three demands of its members: It wants each according to the best of his ability and conscience to serve the whole and to make sacrifices for the common welfare. It wants each to be subject to the state for the sake of the Word of God. It wants each to be aware of his share in responsibility and to side with everything that strengthens, improves and advances the nation and the state.
> Such service of the Fatherland is also service of God. We ask all church members to do their duty everywhere and at all times with Christian conscientiousness and not to despair of the Fatherland ....'.[1]

The Kundgebung was accepted by an overwhelming majority of the Kirchentag.[2] There were thirteen dissentients from over 200 delegates. The minority included von Arnim-Kröchlendorff, Winckler, Pechmann and his successor as Kirchentag President, Graf Vitzthum. They objected that the declaration would bind them 'to recognize the decrees of a Government hostile to the church ....'.[3] Pechmann noted that he was prepared to accept the existing state, but not any state. However, he later criticized Kahl's speech and said that Protestants should only be subject to the Republic 'for the present'.[4]

1. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1927, pp.338-40.
2. ibid.
3. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1930, pp.353-4 and E.K.D.,A 2/489: declaration to the protocol of the agenda of 21 June 1927.
4. ibid., and Süddeutsche Monatshefte, March and Sept.1929, in E.K.D., C 3/207.

Despite its cautious and involved language, the Kundgebung was an important achievement. It made it possible for church leaders to claim that the church was a loyal body and it gave it a basis both for resisting the anti-Republican Right and for moving further towards the Republic. Although the Republic had not been mentioned, the church had accepted by the almost unanimous decision of its greatest representative body that it had a duty to obey the state and to take part in public life. The idea of counter-revolution had been rejected. The Kundgebung was given wide coverage in the national and church press.[1] Martin Rade welcomed it and praised the Kirchenausschuss and President Kapler. He said that Kahl's speech had been an 'avowal of the Republic' in sharp contrast to Kaftan's speech to the Kirchentag only six years before.[2]

The question of loyalty to the Republic was also raised by requests from Reich and Land authorities that the church should hold special services as part of the celebrations of the Weimar constitution on its anniversary. In 1924, as President of the Kirchenausschuss, Moeller had written to the Landeskirchen supporting a request of this kind from the Reich Minister of the Interior, Jarres (DVP).[3] His action

1. E.K.D., A 2/25: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 8-9 Dec.1927. It was reported that there had been 913 notices in 288 daily newspapers, including the 54 most important ones.
2. Die Christliche Welt, 21 July 1927, No.14.
3. E.K.D., A 2/480: Moeller to the leaders of the Landeskirchen, 17 July 1924.

aroused considerable opposition from the right wing within the church.[1] In addition, the Prussian church leadership was offended by the organization of a secular celebration, attended by the Chancellor and President Ebert, at the same time as the church service.[2] Between 1925 and 1928 the church leadership simply passed on state requests to the parishes without comment.[3] In 1926 and again in 1928, Protestant leaders felt further slighted by the poor seats reserved for them at state functions in Berlin in honour of the constitution, in contrast to the respect accorded the Roman Catholic church.[4] During the same period, the church avoided the controversy about the Republican flag by inventing a flag of its own.[5]

In 1929, the tenth anniversary of the constitution, the question was raised again and the church leadership decided to take a more active part. Severing, as Reich Minister of the Interior, was responsible for organizing the celebrations and

1. E.K.D., A 2/480: summary of the replies of the Landeskirchen; letter from Landrat a.D. von Brockhusen to Moeller, 23 Aug. 1924, published in the Neue Preussische Kreuzzeitung and Der Reichsbote; E.K.U., Gen.IX, 54/1: minutes of a meeting of the joint committee of the Oberkirchenrat and General Synod executive of the Old Prussian Union, 16 Sept.1924.
2. E.K.U., Gen.IX, 54/1: Moeller to the Berlin Police President, 9 Aug.1924.
3. E.K.U., Gen.IX, 54/1: Oberkirchenrat to Landeskirchenamt Frankfurt, 31 Aug.1927. During these years the requests came from the Länder not the Reich.
4. E.K.D., A 2/480: note by Schreiber, 21 Aug.1926; E.K.U., Gen.IX, 54/1: note by Hosemann, 14 Aug.1928. A further dispute arose in 1928 because of public criticism of the church by the Mayor of Berlin, see above pp.109-11.
5. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1927, pp.94,333, and ibid., 1930, p.121. E.K.D., A 3/91: minutes of the Kirchenbundesrat meeting of 11-2 June 1928.

he wrote to the Kirchenausschuss asking for its co-operation.[1] His request may have been given added weight by the fact that he was one of the few prominent SPD politicians who had not left the Protestant church.[2] The Ministry suggested that the constitution should be remembered in the normal Sunday services (since its anniversary fell on a Sunday), that special services to which Land officials would be invited should also be held in the cities, and that church bells should be rung.[3] The Kirchenausschuss discussed the request at the end of May 1929.[4] Kapler told it that they had to decide whether to refuse altogether, which he regarded as impossible, or to pass the request on to the Landeskirchen either without comment or with some form of recommendation.

Kahl was prominent in the discussion. He believed that they should recommend church celebrations since, whatever their views about the Republic, the constitution had provided the state with a legal basis again. He also welcomed the fact that they had been approached by the Government. President Veit, a Bavarian church leader, said that Kahl's words at the

1. E.K.D., A 2/480: Severing to Kirchenausschuss, 28 Feb.1929; cf. C.Severing, Mein Lebensweg (Cologne,1950), ii, 206-8.
2. C.Severing, Mein Lebensweg, i, 12-16, 28. This was noted by the Preussische Zeitung, 9 July 1924, No.318, in E.K.D., A 2/477.
3. E.K.D., A 2/480: note by Scholz, 23 March 1929, about a meeting with officials of the Reich Ministry of the Interior on 19 March 1929.
4. ibid.: extract from the minutes of the meeting.

Königsberg Kirchentag had made a deep impression and he agreed with Kahl's views on the constitution. He thought that where the Land authorities and the Roman Catholic church held celebrations, the Protestant church should as well. He pointed out, however, that, in Bavaria, neither paid any attention to the anniversary.

The President of the Rhine provincial synod, Wolff, was doubtful about the wisdom of church celebrations. He said that the Land authorities considered the occasion as something more than the anniversary of the return to legality after the revolution. He thought that the Republic was becoming more absolutist than the monarchy had been. Kahl replied that they had the constitution to thank for the freedom of the church. He also thought that celebrations would assist reconciliation between church members. If they did not join in, it would look as though they did not want to have anything to do with the constitution.

Kapler and other church leaders agreed with Kahl. Kapler added that the church had many reasons for gratitude to the Reich: church work abroad depended to a great extent on funds supplied by the Government and they had also received considerable support for their work within Germany from the Reich Ministry of the Interior.[1] The Kirchenausschuss decided by a very large majority

1. On the support from the Auswärtiges Amt, see below, p.185. The money from the Reich Ministry of the Interior came through a fund to support German Kultur. It was intended, especially, for the areas under foreign occupation. Bundesarchiv, R 431/2194: Reich Minister of the Interior to Kirchenausschuss, 14 July 1923. The Protestant church received 600,000 marks p.a. for 2 years from the fund; E.K.U., Gen.IX, 54/2: Kapler's notes for his report to the Kirchensenat on 22 June 1929.

to ask the Landeskirchen to meet the wishes of the Government, in a form appropriate to local conditions.

In some notes which he prepared for a speech to the Kirchensenat of the Old Prussian Union, Kapler developed some further arguments.[1] He said that celebration of the constitution was in line with the Vaterländische Kundgebung and that it would be an act of service to Obrigkeit with which he bracketed the name of Hindenburg. In case objections were raised by members of the Kirchensenat he also prepared a reply, which in fact he did not have to deliver, but which illuminates his motives further. This mentioned the friendly messages of various Government officials to the Kirchentage and on other occasions. It also raised the question of the damage which would be done, particularly with regard to the negotiation of a treaty, if the church took a negative line. 'Will the Protestant church renounce the goodwill of the Reich and the Land?', Kapler wrote; 'How should one conduct negotiations? Will it (the church) sulk in the corner and exclude itself further from public influence?'

Most Landeskirchen followed the instructions of the Kirchenausschuss and ordered some form of celebration for the anniversary.[2] At the same time, they avoided any political commitment to Republicanism or democracy. The Kirchenausschuss

1. E.K.U., Gen.IX, 54/2.
2. E.K.D., A 2/480: collection of decrees of the Landeskirchen.

had suggested simply that they should consider their attitude to the Fatherland and to the Volksgemeinschaft, which the state comprised, using the Vaterländische Kundgebung as a basis.[1] Nevertheless, it was important that the church publicly acknowledged the anniversary of the constitution. In Berlin, a service was held in the Dreifaltigkeitskirche where Hindenburg normally worshipped; as well as the Reich President, it was attended by representatives of 7 Reich Ministries and 9 Prussian ones and other officials.[2] The Generalsuperintendent who gave the sermon, stressed the importance of the law which alone made people a Volk.[3] Similar services were held in Frankfurt, Hamburg, Dresden and several parts of Baden with satisfactory results. Elsewhere, including the provinces of Brandenburg, West Prussia and Silesia and the Landeskirchen of Schleswig-Holstein, Lübeck and Hesse-Kassel, it was reported that the attendance of state officials had been poor. In Hanover, the result was pathetic as no state official appeared and a section of the regular congregation stayed away.

The church celebrations also received a mixed reception from the press. The extreme right wing Deutsche Zeitung spoke

1. E.K.D., A 2/480: Kirchenausschuss to Landeskirchen, 17 June 1929, reported by Evangelischer Pressedienst, 11 July 1929, No.27.
2. ibid.: report on the celebrations throughout the Reich, 29 Aug.1929.
3. Vossische Zeitung, 12 Aug.1929, No.377.

of 'deep shame' at church policy and added that the tortuous language used by church leaders for the occasion was hardly in the vein of Martin Luther.[1] The less extreme Reichsbote, which was influential in conservative church circles, said it would have been better for the church to show reserve; it suggested that the church had been playing politics and that Minister President Braun would not be impressed.[2] From the other end of the political spectrum, the Religious Socialist leader, Piechowski, also accused the church of opportunism saying that the celebrations were a purely tactical manoeuvre to assist the conclusion of a treaty.[3] Some of the democratic newspapers reported favourably on church measures; others simply noted them without comment.[4] One indication that the action of the church leadership had not passed unnoticed by the SPD was that Vorwärts reported that DNVP circles were bitter about the church celebrations.[5] It was rare for

1. Deutsche Zeitung, 31 July 1929, No.177.
2. Der Reichsbote, 31 July 1929, No.182.
3. Zeitschrift für Religion und Sozialismus, Heft 5 (Marburg,1929)
4. The Berlin Morgenpost, 31 July 1929, No.181, and the Berliner Allgemeine Zeitung, (ibid.), welcomed the church celebrations.
5. Vorwärts, 31 July 1929, No.354. The Berlin Oberkirchenrat received about 50 protests against its measures from bodies like the Nationaler Verband deutschen Offiziere; E.K.U., Gen.IX, 54/2. In addition, Hugenberg wrote to the Kirchenausschuss suggesting that it should use the anniversary to protest against the refusal of the Prussian Government to grant a treaty together with the concordat; E.K.D., A 2/480: Hugenberg to Kirchenausschuss, 20 June 1929, 1 July 1929.

Vorwärts to mention the Protestant church without attacking it.

Soon after the 1929 anniversary of the constitution, the church leadership was faced with a new test of its policy of rapprochement through the decision of the DNVP under Hugenberg to join with the NSDAP and groups like the Stahlhelm in a campaign against the Young Plan. The Plan was made the pretext for a general attack on the Republic. A law was proposed threatening any Government which accepted the Plan with imprisonment for treason and a referendum was called to decide on it. The proposed law forced a division within conservative circles between the Vernunftrepublikaner and the anti-Republican Right.

The church leadership adopted a neutral position. Kapler refused to sign a circular, sent to him by Severing, condemning the referendum. He explained that he did not want the Protestant church to be drawn into the bitter political battle.[1] In this, he was more reserved than the Roman Catholic episcopacy which did sign the circular. In order that the silence of the Protestant leadership should not be misinterpreted, Kapler gave an interview to the Republican Vossische Zeitung in October 1929.[2] He said that the law propposed by the referendum was a political question which should be left to individuals. At the same time, he declared that he deplored the lack of moderation

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 32/Beiheft II: Kapler to Severing, 14 Oct.1929.
2. Vossische Zeitung, 20 Oct.1929, No.496.

shown in the referendum campaign and that church leaders wanted truth, justice and mutual understanding to prevail. The Vossische Zeitung pointed out that the silence of the church leadership should not be taken as support for the proposed law and that Kapler's criticisms should serve as a warning to those who accused Ministers of treason and declared that German youth would be enslaved if the Young Plan were adopted.

The Oberkirchenrat of the Old Prussian Union followed up this interview with a public address to the parishes on Repentance Sunday, a month before the referendum vote.[1] This spoke of the moral and economic disruption of Germany which had intensified party hatred. It urged church members to take a responsible part in political life observing the Christian principles of truthfulness, respect for the honour of an opponent and preservation of the national community. The address provoked an angry letter of protest from G. Traub, who had become a supporter of Huggenberg.[2] He accused the Oberkirchenrat of echoing the sentiments of the Christian Social Volksdienst, one of the small parties which had taken up the tradition of DNVP moderates and stood for co-operation with the Republic.

The attitude of the church leadership did not prevent

1. Kirchliches Gesetz-und Verordnungsblatt, 1929, No.11.
2. Bundesarchiv, Nachlass Traub, 26: Traub to Kapler, 26 Nov.1929,

individual Protestants supporting the campaign against the Young Plan. The Reichsbote even interpreted the neutrality of the church leadership as meaning that it had no moral objection to the proposed law.[1] One member of the Kirchenausschuss publicly supported the campaign, saying that to accept the Young Plan would be to accept a lie as the nation knew it could not pay the debts which the Plan imposed.[2] O. Dibelius also supported this argument and condemned Government pressure on civil servants to prevent them voting for the law.[3] Participation by individual clergymen in the campaign against the Plan was noted by Republican newspapers.[4] It seemed to bear out the criticism, made by an SPD deputy in the Hauptausschuss of the Prussian Landtag in March 1929, that although church authorities had made friendly gestures towards the Republic, there was no evidence that a large number of pastors had followed this lead.[5]

The policy of rapprochement with the Republic achieved

1. Der Reichsbote, 22 Oct.1929, No.253.
2. The statement was reported in ibid., 23 Oct., No.254.
3. Articles by Dibelius in Der Tag, 27 Oct.1929, No.257, and Evangelisches Gemeindeblatt für die Dreifaltigkeitsgemeinde zu Berlin, 3 Nov.1929, No.44.
4. Vossische Zeitung, 24 Oct.1929, No.254; Sonntagsblatt des arbeitenden Volkes, 3 Nov.1929, No.44.
5. Preussischer Landtag, Stenographische Berichte des Hauptausschusses 1928/29, vol.2, 10-13, 21-6, 32-3.

its greatest success in 1931 with the conclusion of the Prussian church treaty. Its basic assumptions, however, were by then already threatened by the growth of the 'national opposition'. The policy of the church leadership had been based on enlightened self-interest. It believed that the Republic had come to stay and that it would be best for the church and for the nation if Protestants accepted it and were accepted by it. Given the conservative tradition of the church, this required skill and courage. The Vaterländische Kundgebung, the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the constitution and the Prussian treaty of 1931 were considerable achievements. They could have formed the basis of a stable relationship with the Republic.

The policy remained one of Vernunft, however. The objections of the Protestant leadership to many aspects of Republican life and institutions continued unchanged. This made it difficult to impress the doctrine of loyalty on church members, many of whom stood further to the Right than the leadership. Men like Kahl and Kapler were sincere, but their views did not have the straightforward appeal of the anti-Republican Right. The Vernunftrepublikaner were always in danger of seeming half-hearted and even hypocritical. The leadership did win large majorities for its policy in the Kirchentag of 1927 and in the General Synod of the Old Prussian Union (which accepted the treaty) in 1931. Impressionistic surveys of the Protestant press and Protestant literature

designed to show that the church was consistently and overwhelmingly anti-Republican should be treated with caution.[1] The accusations of SPD spokesmen were also sometimes based on isolated instances used for political effect.[2] There is no doubt, however, that the policy of rapprochement with the Republic, cautiously advanced by the church leadership, failed to take root in the church as a whole, in the same way that it failed to take root in the German Mittelstand in general. As the church leadership was aware, after 1929 many church members followed the national trend to the parties of the anti-Republican Right.

1. For instance, K-W.Dahm, Pfarrer und Politik (Cologne,1965). An important critique of Dahm by Superintendent Cordes appeared in the Hannoversches Pfarrerblatt, 74.Jg. (1967), 78-99. On the basis of a study of the Hanover church newspapers of the Weimar Republic and a questionnaire to pastors who were active at the time, Cordes argues that the Hanover-Lutheran Landeskirche was not overwhelmingly anti-Republican. Until there have been a series of systematic local studies, it will be impossible to know the extent of the Vernunftrepublikaner element in the church.

2. An example was an attack on the political attitudes of Protestant clergy made by Minister President Braun in the Prussian Landtag in May 1930. It was, he said, based on a series of incidents, but he gave only one example. Under pressure from the Oberkirchenrat, he partially withdrew, saying that his remarks were not meant to be a complaint against the attitude of clergy or church bodies. E.K.U., Gen.VI, 16/3: Oberkirchenrat to Braun, 21 July 1930, and Braun's reply, 15 Sept.1930. Das Evangelische Deutschland (18 May 1930, No.20) commented that if attacks of this kind continued, they would be a greater threat to good relations between church and state than odd blunders by individual clergymen.

Chapter 4

Foreign Policy, 1918-1932

The Protestant church thought of itself as a national church. During the 19th century German Protestants, on the whole, welcomed the achievement of national unity and the creation of a powerful Reich - although particularist sentiment lingered in some Länder like Hanover. Protestants felt they had a special claim to be seen as a national church in contrast to international Roman Catholicism under a foreign Pope. This was vividly illustrated by Hofprediger Adolf Stoecker, who wrote in 1871, 'The holy, Protestant Empire of the German nation is brought to completion .... in this we can see God's hand from 1517-1871'.[1] During the First World War, the Protestant church was gripped by the patriotic fever of the time. It threw itself into the war effort, recruiting subscribers for the war loan and preaching at the front and at home in support of the national cause.[2] The church leadership shared the general enthusiasm. On 11 June 1918, the Kirchenausschuss congratulated the Kaiser on the thirtieth anniversary of his reign in a telegram which expressed,

1. W.Frank, Hofprediger Adolf Stoecker (2nd.edn., Hamburg, 1935), pp.27-8.
2. The Kirchenausschuss sponsored its own official account of the Kriegserlebnis: M.Schian, Die deutsche evangelische Kirche im Weltkriege (Berlin,1921,1925). See also G.Mehnert, Evangelische Kirche und Politik 1917-1919,pp.30-8; W.Pressel, Die Kriegspredigt 1914-1918 in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands (Göttingen,1967).

'most submissively, warmest and most respectful wishes for blessing on the occasion of the wonderful successes which our incomparable troops have won daily in new victories'.[1]

Under the Weimar Republic, the church leadership continued to believe that it was its duty to promote German interests abroad. It protested against the 'injustice' of the Versailles settlement. It maintained links with German Protestants in separated areas. It identified itself with the aims of German foreign policy in meetings with foreign church leaders, especially in the new ecumenical movement. This activity was deeply nationalist. It was not, however, anti-Republican. The church leadership seems to have been careful to keep its foreign policy in line with the wishes of the German Government of the time. Some direct evidence of co-operation with the Auswärtiges Amt has survived and there were probably other private meetings of which no record was made. As in its policy at home, the church leadership resisted extreme nationalist pressure. It did not take part in the exploitation of nationalist sentiment against the Republic; for instance, as we have seen, it remained neutral in the Young Plan referendum.[2] In its relations with foreign Christians, the German Protestant leadership also preferred appeasement to a continuous propaganda battle. After 1929, however, it was

1. E.K.D., A 2/18: draft of the telegram.
2. see above, pp. 174-6.

gradually forced back into isolation by criticism from the anti-Republican Right and despair at the economic crisis. It is anyway difficult to see how the extensive revision of the Versailles treaty which the church leadership desired could have been achieved by negotiation.

The immediate post-war years were dominated by national grievances. The Kirchenausschuss and the first three Kirchentage issued declarations protesting against the 'hunger blockade', the retention of German prisoners of war by the Entente powers, the 'monstrous' claim to sit in judgment on the Kaiser and the German High Command, the expropriation of German foreign missions, the Versailles treaty - especially the war guilt clause - the separation of Upper Silesia from Germany, the use of negro troops by the French and the occupation of the Ruhr.[1]

These protests were expressed in passionate language. An example was the declaration of the Kirchenausschuss condemning the use of negro troops, which it described as the 'Black Outrage' (Schwarze Schmach), issued on 23 June 1920. It spoke of primitive races being let loose on the German people. No military discipline could contain their wild instincts, it said;

'Outrages which cry out to heaven are being inflicted

1. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1919, pp.238, 308-12; ibid., 1921, pp.24-6; ibid., 1924, p.18.

> on our fellow countrymen. Pure women and innocent children are being contaminated in body and soul ... The mind boggles at describing the horror which surpasses all the atrocities of war'.[1]

The Kirchenausschuss was supplied with confidential information by the Auswärtiges Amt, describing cases of murder, rape and assault. The Prussian Kultusministerium also encouraged the church to protest and sent it a pamphlet entitled 'Coloured Frenchmen on the Rhine. A shout for help of the German woman'.[2]

The attempts of the Entente powers to enforce reparation payments by Germany provoked further bitter protests. In February 1921 the Kirchenausschuss declared that it was no longer possible to doubt that the Entente aimed to destroy the whole basis of Germany's existence. The Kirchenausschuss protested, especially to foreign Protestants, against this maltreatment of 'a great, Christian civilized people' under the pretext of peace.[3]

In November 1922 a second declaration aimed at foreign Protestant churches was drawn up. It described Germany as a sinking ship. Human eyes could not see, it said, how she

1. E.K.D., A 2/18: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 23-5 June 1920.
2. The relevant documents are in E.K.D., A 2/539. See, especially, Kirchenausschuss to the Württemberg Landeskirche, 15 June 1920; Oberkirchenrat to Kirchenausschuss, 12 Oct.1920.
3. Allgemeines Kirchenblatt für das evangelische Deutschland, 15 March 1921, p.230.

could be prevented from going under. It protested against the 'injustice' and 'untruth' of Versailles. It spoke of the milliards upon milliards to be extorted from Germany by new threats and the ruin, hunger and deprivation which were the result. The danger existed, it said, that in the end a wild outburst of despair would destroy everything. The justification for this treatment was the assertion that Germany was guilty for the war and should therefore be punished; 'But this assertion is through and through untrue: that we declare solemnly before God and our consciences'. The confession of guilt, it argued, had been forced on a defenceless people; gradually unimpeachable witnesses would make clear who was really guilty and Germany did not need to be shy of the full truth. The treatment of Germany was in flagrant contradiction to the idea of applying Christian principles to international relations, of which Germany's opponents made so much. The declaration expressed gratitude for help received from foreign churches but added that what Germany needed was the chance to make her own bread.[1]

At the request of the German Government, the declaration was not sent out at once.[2] This was probably because at

1. AKfdED, 2 Jan.1923, pp.1-3. For a description of the aid from abroad see Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 48.Jg.(1921), 361-6; ibid., 49.Jg. (1922), 453-61; ibid., 50.Jg. (1923), 392-402; ibid., 51.Jg. (1924), 485-9.
2. E.K.D., A 2/21: report to the Kirchenausschuss, 27-8 Feb.1923.

that time the Government hoped to reach a settlement of the reparations problem with the Western powers.[1] Once the negotiations had failed, however, the declaration was published and, after the occupation of the Ruhr on 11 January, a new appeal was issued to foreign Protestants. In it, the Kirchenausschuss declared that if it had seen any other nation exposed, defenceless, to such an act of violence, it would have considered it its duty to protest. It thanked the Swedish Bishops, who had condemned the occupation, and asked other Protestant churches to follow this lead. A further appeal was issued in December 1923 which thanked churches abroad for the help they had given and said that it would never be forgotten.[2]

The existence of Protestant communities in areas separated from the Reich by the treaty of Versailles gave the church leadership an opportunity to serve national and Protestant interests simultaneously. The rights of German Protestants in Poland, Memel and Danzig were protected by special laws and they were allowed to maintain a connexion with the Old Prussian Union.[3] The least favourable settlement

1. E.Eyck, A history of the Weimar Republic (Engl.transl., London,1962,1964), i, 225, 229-32.
2. AKfdED, 15 March 1923, pp.131-2 and ibid., 15 Dec.1923,p.244.
3. The rights of the German Protestants in Upper Silesia were protected by the German-Polish Treaty of 15 May 1922, in Memel by a Treaty between the Oberkirchenrat, the Lithuanian Government and the Memel administration, concluded on 31 July 1925, and in Danzig by a law of the Free City, 7 June 1921; G.J.Ebers, Evangelisches Kirchenrecht in Preussen (Munich,1932), i, 148-76.

from the German point of view was with Poland, where a rival pro-Polish Protestant church was formed.[1] The church received considerable financial assistance from the Government for its work abroad. The Kirchenbund was given 450,000 marks p.a. until 1930 when the grant was reduced with the austerity programme.[2] Government support was part of its general programme of maintaining German Kultur abroad, especially in the territories it hoped to regain.[3] The Government also assisted propaganda work with foreign Christians on behalf of the German Protestants in Poland. This was conducted by O. Dibelius with the connivance of the Oberkirchenrat.[4] The church leadership showed no hesitation in acknowledging the political side of its work, indeed it was proud of it. In a letter to Hindenburg, on 19 May 1930, asking that the church should be allowed a share of the benefits of the Osthilfe programme, Kapler stressed that the church would not only preach the gospel but also 'keep alive the awareness of the inseparable connexion ... with the German Fatherland'.[5]

1. F.Siegmund-Schultze, Ekklesia, v, Die evangelischen Kirchen in Polen (Leipzig,1938).
2. A.A., Kult.Pol.Abt.VI.A., 18/4,4: summary of payments, 19 Jan.1934.
3. cf. C.M.Kimmich, The Free City. Danzig and German Foreign Policy, 1919-1934 (New Haven and London,1968), pp.40-1, 49-51, 88-91, and passim.
4. A.A., Kult.Pol.Abt.VI.A., 18/4,1: Dibelius reports, 15 Feb.1921, 2 April 1925; ibid., 10/1,1: Dibelius to Auswärtiges Amt, 21 April 1921; cf. Dibelius to Kultusminister Rust, 28 Aug.1933, photostat copy in Hier spricht Dibelius (Berlin,1960), pp.81-2.
5. D.Z.A. Potsdam, Präsidialkanzlei, 281/1: Kapler to Hindenburg, 19 May 1930.

The development of the international, Christian ecumenical movement after 1918 created another opportunity for combined religious and political activity. The bitterness of the immediate post-war period prevented the German Protestant church attending the first meetings. At the conferences at Oud Wassenaar in September-October 1919 and Geneva in August 1920, Germany was represented only by private individuals. In 1919 the French delegates made their participation conditional on the Germans condemning the violation of Belgian neutrality in 1914. In 1919 the German delegates agreed to this, but demanded that the French and Belgians should work for revision of the unjust parts of Versailles. In 1920 the French and Belgians demanded official German acceptance of war guilt.[1] No action was taken as the German delegates were not official representatives of the German church, but the church was, of course, totally unwilling to accept the accusation of war guilt.

The German church leadership did not, however, condemn the ecumenical movement outright. It was prepared to join as soon as the international situation and national feeling within Germany allowed it to do so. At the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 23-5 June 1920 careful consideration was given to an invitation to attend a meeting of the dogmatic section of

1. N.Karlström, Movements for International Friendship and Life and Work, 1910-25 in A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948, ed. R.Rouse and S.C.Neill (London,1954), pp.530-7.

the movement, known as 'Faith and Order'. The invitation from the organizing committee had mentioned that many Americans did not sanction the Versailles Treaty. President Moeller argued that the invitation should be refused because of the international situation and the use of black troops by the French, although he acknowledged that some things had improved - the question of the trial of the Kaiser, for instance, had faded into the background - and that Germany had received help from groups in previously enemy countries. The majority agreed with him but a few members of the Kirchenausschuss spoke in favour of accepting the invitation. One of these, Professor Titius, asked that their reply should say that they thought of the Gospel as supra-national and that they hoped the time would come when they would be able to join.[1]

During 1921-1922, when the German Government, under Chancellor Wirth, tried to reach agreement with the Allies by a 'fulfilment' policy, the Kirchenausschuss decided to take part in the movement. In September 1921 President Moeller spoke in favour of accepting an invitation from the section concerned with 'practical Christianity', known as 'Life and Work'.[2] In May 1922 the Kirchenausschuss agreed and Germany became officially represented.[3]

1. E.K.D., A 2/18: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 23-5 June 1920.
2. ibid., A 2/20: minutes of 8-9 Sept.1921.
3. ibid.: minutes of 26-7 May 1922.

The effect of the occupation of the Ruhr on German opinion created a new obstacle to co-operation. The European executive committee of Life and Work was to have met in Wittenberg in 1923. On 5 February, President Moeller wrote to the Chairman of Life and Work, the Swedish Archbishop, Söderblom, thanking him for the choice of Wittenberg as a meeting place, but asking that a resolution should be adopted condemning the occupation of the Ruhr. If, said Moeller, it was impossible to secure a resolution of this kind, it would be better either not to meet at all or certainly not in Wittenberg; otherwise the result would be fatal for the reputation of the ecumenical movement in Germany.[1] Söderblom at first held to the plan of meeting in Wittenberg and was prepared to have a resolution, as suggested by Moeller, but eventually the meeting was switched to Zürich. Moeller then wrote explaining that the Germans would not attend because they no longer expected a resolution on the Ruhr; in these circumstances the only way to keep open the possibility of future co-operation was for them to stay away on this occasion.[2]

There were strong reasons against the German Protestant church excluding itself from the ecumenical movement. Unlike the League of Nations, to which it was sometimes compared, it was not the brainchild of Germany's former enemies but of the Archbishop of neutral Sweden, the land of Gustavus Adolphus.

1. A.k.A., C.1.1/1: Moeller to Söderblom, 5 Feb.1923.
2. ibid.: Moeller to Söderblom, 12 April 1923.

Söderblom had much to recommend him to German opinion: he had been a Professor at Leipzig before 1914;[1] one of his sons had been a German officer in the war; in the Autumn of 1922, at a Congress of the Inner Mission in Munich, he had likened Germany to the man fallen among thieves; the Swedish Bishops had issued a joint protest against the occupation of the Ruhr and Söderblom had preached against the use of black troops.[2] In these circumstances there was every reason to suppose that the German church would be treated as a full partner by the ecumenical movement and that it would be able to serve the national cause within it. The movement was also an important new development in Protestantism in which the German church had an interest as a religious organization.

The improvement of the international atmosphere after 1924 provided the opportunity for which President Moeller had hoped. In August 1925 a German delegation of 78 attended the great Stockholm conference of Life and Work, which drew 661 delegates from 37 countries. The decision of the German church leadership to attend the conference had the support and approval of the German Government. President Kapler

1. Nathan Söderblom (1866-1931), 1912 Professor of religious history at Leipzig University, 1914 Archbishop of Uppsala; see B.Sundkler, Nathan Söderblom (London,1968).

2. Bundesarchiv, R 431/2194: report on Söderblom for Chancellor Luther, after Söderblom had invited him to address the Stockholm conference of 1925, c.April-May 1925.

(who succeeded Moeller in 1925) had contacted the Auswärtiges Amt and the Reichskanzlei to obtain a subsidy to cover the costs of the German delegation and to ensure that the delegation's attitude on political questions would be in accord with Government policy.[1] Kapler explained to the Auswärtiges Amt that the English and American churches would be strongly represented at the conference; Protestant Germany, numbering 40 million people, had a great task to fulfil which was also in the national interest; without their presence Anglo-Saxon influence would be dominant. The Auswärtiges Amt agreed to a subsidy 'in view of the cultural and general political importance' of the conference.[2] An official of the Kirchenbundesamt, Scholz, met Ministerialdirektor Heilbron of the Auswärtiges Amt to confirm agreement on the handling of political issues.[3]

Some Landeskirchen raised objections to German participation at the conference; they feared that the Ruhr and Cologne, which had been due to be evacuated by the Entente powers in mid August, when the Stockholm conference was to meet, would not be evacuated; under these circumstances

1. A.k.A., C.1.1/2: Kapler to Auswärtiges Amt, 10 Feb.1925; Bundesarchiv, R 431/2194: Reichskanzlei note of July 1925, recording Kapler's visit to explain the policy for Stockholm.
2. ibid.: Auswärtiges Amt (Heilbron) to Kirchenausschuss, 26 Feb.1925; ibid., C.1.1/4: Auswärtiges Amt to Kirchenausschuss, 24 July 1925 and 26 Aug.1925. The subsidy eventually totalled 40,000 marks.
3. ibid., C.1.1/3: report of Scholz, 20 June 1925, of a conversation with Heilbron in the Auswärtiges Amt on 19 June.

they believed the German church should stay away from Stockholm. The church leadership also came under pressure from nationalist circles to raise the war guilt 'lie', the minority question and school propaganda at the conference. The final decision was taken at a meeting of the Kirchenausschuss in June 1925. President Kapler spoke in favour of attending the conference and opposed raising matters like war guilt, since nothing would be gained and it might destroy the conference; however, if the question of war guilt were raised by another delegation, he said, then the Germans must be ready to reply. Kapler added that he believed he had Government approval for this attitude. He argued, characteristically, that scarcely anyone was going to Stockholm with a glad heart, but not the heart but the understanding must decide. The answer to 'Do we go to Stockholm?' was, he said, 'Despite all the difficulties, yes'; if they did not go they would destroy the international contacts they had made and again expose Germany to the reproach of being a disturber of the peace.

In the discussion, the President of the Synod of the Rhine province, Wolff, supported attending the conference because the Germans were not to be preached at; they were not asking for gifts, nor were they being asked for repentance. Other members pointed out that the political position was still tense and difficulties could arise at any time. Bishop Ihmels of Saxony said that many Protestants, who demanded a discussion of war guilt, would not understand a conference

on the application of Christian principles to international questions which did not discuss the most burning one of all. Nevertheless, the Kirchenausschuss decided to attend the conference. It also decided to observe party discipline under Kapler's leadership on national questions so that there should be no division of opinion for others to exploit. Söderblom's request for official prayers for the Stockholm conference was, however, refused.[1]

The German contribution to the conference was a mixed one. Kapler expressed warm support for the ecumenical movement in a speech which stressed Europe's need for ecumenical work to repair the damage of war.[2] There was also a message of greeting from Hindenburg and a short paper from Chancellor Luther, who had considered attending in person.[3] Other Germans struck a more nationalist note, particularly Dr. Klingemann, Generalsuperintendent of the Rhine province; he was critical of the praise given by some delegates to the League of Nations and said that Germany could not share the equanimity of countries who were satisfied

1. E.K.D., A 2/22: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 24-5 June 1925.
2. G.K.A. Bell, The Stockholm Conference, 1925 (London,1926), pp.52-4.
3. ibid., pp.119-20, 421-5. Luther was invited by Söderblom to address the conference and was keen to do so, but after a warning from the German ambassador in Stockholm that he would probably be the only statesman there, he declined; Bundesarchiv, R 431/2194: note by Luther, 20 April 1925; Rosenberg to Luther, 6 July 1925; Luther to Söderblom, 16 Aug.1925.

with the status quo.[1] The German delegation accepted the final declaration of the conference but expressed reservations about certain passages, including Section II, Point 8, which read, 'We have also set forth the guiding principles of a Christian internationalism, equally opposed to a national bigotry and a weak cosmopolitanism'.[2] The Germans were, however, encouraged by the conference. The President of the Kirchentag, Baron von Pechmann, a strong patriot and monarchist, admitted that he had come to Stockholm with very modest expectations and that they had been far surpassed. In another context, he expressed pleasure that Germany was making itself heard and added, 'Let us work together; let us work together as brothers while it is day'.[3]

The same satisfaction was evident in the report on Stockholm given to the Kirchenausschuss by the Kirchenbundesamt official, Scholz. He pointed out that German influence had prevented pacifist ideas and glorification of the League of Nations being included in the final declaration of the conference. 'Without exaggeration the German delegation could say of itself that it had done its duty to the best of its ability ... and performed a good service for German Protestantism and the German nation'.[4]

1. G.K.A. Bell, The Stockholm Conference, pp.450-2.
2. ibid., p.712.
3. ibid., pp.719, 638-40.
4. E.K.D., A 2/22: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 4-5 Nov.1925. Cf. a rumour that the German Government was afraid that Kapler would allow the Stockholm conference to give religious backing to the League: W.Göbell, Kirche, Recht und Theologie in vier Jahrzehnten (Munich,1967),ii,905-6.

The usefulness of the ecumenical movement to the national cause was demonstrated in the year following the Stockholm conference when, at Kapler's request, the question of war guilt was considered. The matter had already been raised in 1924 at a meeting of the German section of the 'World Alliance for promoting International Friendship through the churches', another organization similar to Life and Work, but in which Germany was represented only by private individuals.[1] In 1925, the Auswärtiges Amt official, Heilbron, had mentioned to Scholz that he attached importance to this initiative.[2] Immediately after the Stockholm conference, Kapler raised the matter officially with the Continuation Committee of the conference. He said that when it had become known in Germany that they would be taking part in the conference, it was expected that they would raise the question of war guilt which was a tremendous obstacle to ecumenical co-operation. It had been technically impossible to raise the problem at the conference, he said, but he asked the Continuation Committee to regard its solution as a primary, moral duty.[3]

1. For the relationship between the two, see, R.Rouse and S.C.Neill, A History of the Ecumenical Movement, pp.509-96, and, further, D.Hudson, 'The Ecumenical Movement and World Order' (Ph.D. thesis, L.S.E., 1965).
2. A.k.A., C.1.1/3: report of Scholz, 20 June 1925, of a conversation with Heilbron in the Auswärtiges Amt on 19 June.
3. The whole correspondence was printed in Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1927, pp.119-49. Kapler's letter was sent from Stockholm on 29 Aug.1925; the reply from the World Alliance was dated 9 March 1926; Kapler replied to the World Alliance on 8 July 1926 and the Stockholm Continuation Committee replied to his original letter on 28 Aug.1926.

The first reply came from the American section of the World Alliance to which his letter had been referred by the Stockholm Continuation Committee. This reply expressed sympathy with the German attitude and recognized that public opinion had been influenced by war censorship and propaganda; the American committee believed that an investigation would show that 'all have sinned'. The letter continued,

> 'Surely no sane person today believes that the entire responsibility for that awful catastrophe rests exclusively upon any one nation and that all the other nations are absolutely guiltless. All fair-minded persons now realize that Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles was dictated by the war spirit at a time when passion ran high and that such an article would not be framed today ...'.

However, the committee argued, an investigation was not possible in the existing circumstances, nor was it desirable as it might inflame passions which were beginning to cool. The letter expressed appreciation of the courteous and Christian behaviour of the German delegation at Stockholm.

In his reply, Kapler thanked the Americans for their concessions to the German attitude but argued that the point about war guilt was not that 'we have all sinned', which no one would deny, but that the German people had been damned as criminals by a purely political degree. Article 231, he said, was not just a legal basis for reparations but talked of Germany causing and forcing the war on the world; this

accusation was especially clear in Clemenceau's note of 16 June 1919 and the reply of the allies to Germany's objections to the treaty, which referred to Germany's desire for war, her scheming to produce the particular war which broke out and her barbarous conduct during it. This, said Kapler, was the most terrible moral condemnation ever to have been pronounced against a Christian people in the history of the world; it was this which Germany could not accept without accepting a lie; they would fight against it and all those interested in the co-operation of Christian churches should oppose it as well.

Under pressure from Kapler, the Continuation Committee of the Stockholm conference agreed to answer his first letter itself. After hard negotiations between German and French representatives[1] a reply acceptable to both was sent from Berne in August 1926. It declined to treat political issues but it asserted that a confession imposed by force had no moral value; it also spoke in favour of a general inquiry into war guilt.

The decision of the Continuation Committee was a victory for the German view, particularly when it is compared with the French attitude of the immediate post-war years. Most important, the victory was recognized within Germany. The church leadership was delighted. The correspondence over

1. E.K.D., A 2/24: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 8-9 Dec.1926.

war guilt was published in full in a central position among the proceedings of the 1927 Kirchentag. The German Government was informed and expressed its thanks. Kapler was warmly congratulated in the Kirchenausschuss and in the General Synod of the Old Prussian Union. President Winckler described the concessions made to the German view in the Berne letter as 'the greatest step which has yet been achieved in the defence of our nation against the war guilt lie'.[1] Even the liberal journal, Christliche Welt, which had criticized the German delegation to Stockholm for being unduly nationalist, welcomed the settlement of the war guilt issue.[2] The way now seemed clear for the German church to give uninhibited support to the ecumenical movement.[3]

The foreign policy adopted by the church leadership under Kapler showed a clear similarity to that pursued by Stresemann in the Locarno agreements and subsequently in the League of Nations. Both tried to win the maximum benefit for Germany by co-operation with the West.[4] In particular, Kapler's policy of persuading foreign churches of the need to revise the Versailles treaty was closely in line with Stresemann's

1. E.K.D., A 2/24: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 8-9 Dec.1926, and Verhandlungen, Generalsynode, 1927,i,11-12.
2. J.Rathje, Die Welt des freien Protestantismus, pp.341-5.
3. See the optimistic article in Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 54.Jg. (1927), 534-58.
4. On Stresemann's policy, see H.L.Bretton, Stresemann and the revision of Versailles (Stanford, 1953) and, on his motives, see A.J.Nicholls, Weimar and the Rise of Hitler (London,1968), pp.120-3.

general propaganda effort and may have been the result of personal contact with him. When Stresemann died, Kapler expressed the warmest sympathy of the Kirchenausschuss to the German Government and praised Stresemann for his incessant work for the Fatherland and for his promotion of church work abroad. (Kapler was probably referring to the financial support for German Protestants outside the Reich.) In a message to Stresemann's widow, Kapler also mentioned the repeated friendliness which Stresemann had shown him.[1] Before he died, Stresemann had paid a similar tribute to Kapler. On 23 June 1929, after he had been informed of a new protest of the Kirchenausschuss to mark the tenth anniversary of the Versailles treaty, he wrote to Kapler thanking him for the measures taken by the church which, he said,

> 'in a most effective, dignified and appropriate way support those attempts which, as you know, have always been the object of special attention on the part of the Reich Government'.[2]

Kapler's
/~~This~~ policy, like Stresemann's, contained dangers and possibilities. The emphasis on the national benefit which had been derived from the ecumenical movement suggested that German Protestants might regard it simply as a forum for national propaganda; participation would then feed nationalist

1. E.K.D., A 2/478: Kapler to the Reich Government, and a personal message to Frau Stresemann, 30 Oct.1929.
2. E.K.D., A 2/545: Stresemann to Kapler, 23 June 1929.

appetites rather than further the cause of appeasement. On the other hand the correspondence about war guilt had shown that national grievances could be discussed with success in an international body. This was the most effective way to popularize the Stockholm movement within Germany and to silence its critics. It was a first step towards breaking free of isolation and the unthinking rejection of any form of international co-operation, which was the automatic inclination of many Germans after Versailles. There were moments at Stockholm and later when it looked as though the ghost of national grievances might, in time, be laid. This was a personal success for President Kapler, made the more impressive as it had been achieved without forfeiting the respect of foreign church leaders.[1]

Kapler's policy remained unopposed until 1929, except by a few extremists.[2] The tenth anniversary of the Versailles Treaty, however, was a natural opportunity for the revival of nationalist sentiment. The aggressive tactics of the DNVP under Hugenberg's leadership and the Young Plan controversy also encouraged hostility to the ecumenical movement. At a meeting between representatives of the Vaterländische Verbände and Generalsuperintendent O. Dibelius, in January 1929, the church leadership was sharply criticized.

1. N.Karlström, Movements for International Friendship and Life and Work, p.541.
2. E.K.D., A 2/25: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 14-5 March 1929.

One of the targets was the ecumenical movement. The spokesman of the Vaterländische Verbände, Pfarrer Wilm, said they missed among the church leadership a sense of enthusiasm for the national struggle for freedom; co-operation in the ecumenical movement and the League, he added, were irreconcilable with a sense of national self-respect so long as the question of war guilt had not been eliminated.[1] In 1931, the Bundesführer of the Stahlhelm, Duesterberg, criticized the church leadership in a public speech, saying that only in Germany were the church leaders not champions of their nation's interests as a matter of course.[2]

This type of criticism found increasing sympathy within the Kirchenausschuss after 1929. In March 1929 Pechmann expressed reservations about the ecumenical movement. The question under discussion was whether the Kirchenausschuss should seek a closer connexion with the World Alliance for promoting international friendship through the churches which was more closely associated with pacifism than Life and Work.

1. An account of the meeting was given to the Prussian Oberkirchenrat by Dibelius; E.K.U., Gen.VI, 2/1: Bericht über die Tagung der vaterländischen Verbände am 24.Jan.1929. Cf. below, pp. 215-7.
2. The speech was reported in Der Tag, 31 May 1931, No.130. The Oberkirchenrat arranged for Duesterberg to be supplied with literature, explaining the work of the church in the national cause, through the Feldprobst of the German army. Duesterberg modified his criticism in private letters as a result; E.K.U., Gen.IX, 67/1: Duesterberg to the Feldprobst, 25 July 1931 and 20 Oct.1931.

Pechmann argued that it would be wrong for Germany to join as this would strengthen two errors: the ideology of pacifism and the belief that Germany could accept the status quo. He asked for a new Kirchenausschuss resolution against the war guilt 'lie' to mark the tenth anniversary since it had been imposed on the German people 'with the highest degree of unprincipled lunacy'. Kapler argued that despite the dangers of the World Alliance's connexion with pacifism, its aims were unobjectionable and that closer contact would be useful to Germany because of the World Alliance's international influence. The Kirchenausschuss agreed to closer contact.[1]

At its next meeting, 31 May to 1 June 1929, the Kirchenausschuss passed a declaration condemning the Versailles Treaty anew. Objections were raised on the grounds of the futility of such declarations and the danger of being identified with the political parties which led the agitation against Versailles. Several Landeskirchen, however, favoured a declaration. It was felt that wide circles expected the church to say something, and that it had a duty to speak out on the moral issues involved. In addition, it was possible that protests would be ordered by the Reich and Länder. The declaration spoke of the immeasurable political and economic damage done by the Versailles Treaty; impoverishment had led

1. E.K.D., A 2/25: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 14-5 March 1929.

to embitterment; belief in human and even divine justice had been shaken. The declaration repeated the German position on war guilt and the demand for an investigation and added that the Life and Work movement had accepted the German argument. This was a clever way of associating the ecumenical movement with national demands, perhaps in order to protect it from nationalist criticism. A day of mourning with bells tolling and flags at half-mast was recommended to the Landeskirchen. Kapler said that he would point out to the Stockholm Continuation Committee, which was due to meet in Eisenach in September 1929, that the progress of the ecumenical movement in Germany was being retarded by the position Germany still occupied ten years after the war.[1]

The Eisenach meeting was considered a great success and concessions to the German view of the international situation continued to be won from foreign churches.[2] Nevertheless the

1. E.K.D., A 2/26: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 31 May - 1 June 1929. The declaration is published in J.Hosemann, Der Deutsche Evangelische Kirchenbund (2nd.edn., Berlin,1932), pp.171-2.

2. Sympathetic declarations came from: the Federal Council of the churches of Christ in America, which said that it did not consent to the theory of Germany's exclusive responsibility for the war; the World Federation of the Y.M.C.A. and the General Conference of the Episcopal Methodist church also on war guilt; and the Archbishop of York, Dr. Temple, who preached against reparations. See the minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meetings of 28-9 Nov.1929, 27-8 Nov.1930, 22-3 Oct.1931, 24-6 May 1932 and 24-5 Nov.1932; E.K.D., A 2/26-8. A counter example was provided by a Swedish bishop who spoke of the need to free Germany of her 'innocence psychosis'; E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 24-6 May 1932.

ecumenical movement came under mounting criticism, as Germany's economic position deteriorated. At the Kirchenausschuss meeting of March 1931 President Wolff raised the question of unemployment on behalf of the social subcommittee. He stressed the importance of reparations, and said that revision of the Young Plan was being prevented by the strong opposition both of the public and of the governments in the other countries concerned. He asked whether the German churches should not weigh the importance of their relations abroad against their mission to their own people. Pechmann was more direct. He acknowledged what had been achieved through the ecumenical movement but argued that the only effective attitude to take was that so long as the German people remained under the subjection of Versailles, it was impossible for the German church to continue to participate in the movement. This attitude alone, he said, would match the feelings of a great part of the German Protestant population. Kapler said that they were all constantly affected by ideas like Pechmann's but that he would have the strongest objections to giving up ecumenical work. Press criticism of German participation was noted, including a particularly bitter, personal attack in Wilhelm Stapel's Deutsches Volkstum, entitled 'The God of President Kapler'. This had been occasioned by Kapler's telegram of congratulations to Söderblom when he was awarded a Nobel prize. Stapel wrote that the true God recognized martyrdom; the progressive and lying, humanitarian God recognized fat

Nobel prizes. It was time, he said, that someone was sent to drive Kapler and the whole ecumenical crew out of the temple.[1]

At the next meeting of the Kirchenausschuss in June 1931 it was clear that opposition to Kapler's policy was growing. Two leading theologians, Althaus and Hirsch, had accused those who sought understanding with Germany's former enemies of contributing to the hypocrisy of the international situation. This statement found considerable support in the Kirchenausschuss. One member described it as 'liberating' and added that there was widespread concern that the church had overstepped the limits of co-operation. Kapler said that the effect of the theologians' remarks would be to discredit the ecumenical movement and he pointed out that one could not always talk only about the injustice done to Germany. The Kirchenausschuss agreed to a resolution against any change in its policy towards the ecumenical movement. It also passed a resolution in favour of pressing for armaments parity through the ecumenical movement and it was suggested that continued failure by the

1. E.K.D., A 2/27: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 12 March 1931. The Stapel article appeared in Deutsches Volkstum, February 1931. An official defence of the church leadership's work in the ecumenical movement was published by the Evangelischer Pressverband: D.W.Zoellner, Die Ökumenische Arbeit des Deutschen Evangelischen Kirchenausschusses und die Kriegsschuldfrage (Berlin,1931). For Stapel, see K.von Klemperer, Germany's New Conservatism (2nd.edn., Princeton,1968), pp.100-2.

other nations concerned to honour disarmament obligations would be serious for the future of the movement.[1]

Kapler did not attend a meeting of the executive committee of the Life and Work Council in Cambridge, in August 1931, as a concession to feeling in Germany and to underline the gravity of the German situation to foreign church leaders.[2] At the suggestion of the Prussian Kirchensenat and against Kapler's advice, the Kirchenausschuss issued a further declaration on war guilt in October 1931 which spoke of the crisis driving men to despair and violence; 'our people is near the limit of its moral and physical strength'.[3] This was followed by a declaration on the 'Present Crisis' in May 1932 which emphasized the damage done by the international system established by the Versailles Treaty and demanded 'deeds not fruitless negotiations'.[4] In August 1932, as Chairman of the

1. E.K.D., A 2/27: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 6 June 1931. The article by Althaus and Hirsch is described in Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 58.Jg. (1931), 479. On the disarmament problem, cf. E.Eyck, A history of the Weimar Republic, ii, 301, 347-9.
2. See Schoell's report to the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 22-3 Oct.1931; E.K.D., A 2/28.
3. E.K.U., Gen.IA, 67/1: extract from the minutes of the Kirchensenat meeting of 9-10 Oct.1931; E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 22-3 Oct.1931; the text of the declaration is given in J.Hosemann, Der Deutsche Evangelische Kirchenbund, pp.173-4.
4. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 24-6 May 1932. It is printed in J.Hosemann, Der Deutsche Evangelische Kirchenbund, pp.189-90.

continental European section, Kapler attended a meeting of the Life and Work Council in Geneva. He painted a grim picture of the situation in Germany. He thanked foreign churches for their sympathetic declarations but added that these could not alter the actual situation. He warned that as a result of the discrimination still maintained against Germany the demand for withdrawal of the German church from the ecumenical movement had penetrated responsible church circles.[1]

By 1932 German participation in the ecumenical movement which had seemed well established in 1927 was again seriously threatened; the situation was comparable to 1923. The immediate cause was the economic crisis for which the Versailles settlement was held responsible; the demand for withdrawal from the movement was a natural, if irrational, response to despair. Even without the economic crisis, however, it is unlikely that the process of appeasement begun in 1926 would have succeeded. In the period 1925-32, the German church raised the questions of war guilt, reparations and disarmament in the ecumenical movement. Had these been satisfied earlier, other demands might have followed. The church leadership certainly regarded the Polish frontier and the prohibition

1. Nachlass Kapler contains a copy of the speech.

against Austria joining the Reich as unjust,[1] although unlike the DNVP it did not protest against the Locarno settlement of the Western frontier, and it did not raise the question of the Sudetenland.[2] The Polish frontier was, however, the key issue and it is difficult to see how any negotiated settlement acceptable to German opinion could have been reached on it.[3]

The foreign policy of the church leadership between 1918 and 1932 shows that it was not, in German terms, an intransigent body. Its policy was in the spirit of Stresemann, not of the 'national opposition'. However, like Stresemann's policy, it was ambiguous. More important, like him, the church leadership did not face up to the fact that negotiated revision on the

1. The Kirchenausschuss protested against the separation of Upper Silesia, see above p.181 ; feelings about the exclusion of Austria were clear from the exchange of greetings between the German Kirchenbund and the Austrian Kirchentag of 1919; Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1919, pp.71-2. In 1926 the Austrian Protestants joined the Kirchenbund and at the 1927 Kirchentag President Rechmann commented that they belonged together by blood and history, divine providence and justice; Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1927, p.185.
2. Like most Germans, however, it did not show much enthusiasm for Locarno. When American church leaders sent the Kirchenausschuss a telegram of congratulations on the Locarno Treaty and asked for it to be published, the Kirchenausschuss decided that there was no reason for publication and simply thanked the Americans for their message; E.K.D., A 2/22: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 4-5 Nov.1925. cf. A.J.Nicholls, Weimar and the Rise of Hitler, pp.118, 120-3.
3. cf. C.M.Kimmich, The Free City, pp.160-2.

scale it wanted was extremely unlikely. There are therefore few grounds for thinking that it would have been appeased, even if the depression had not intervened and made it desperate. It is, however, possible that, in time, national grievances would have come to seem less urgent than they did in the years after 1918.

Chapter 5

The 'national opposition', 1927-1932

Both in its attempt to come to terms with the Republic and in its co-operation with Republican Governments in foreign policy, the Protestant leadership resisted the influence of the anti-Republican Right. The attitude of the church leadership to the 'national opposition' was a mixture of sympathy, dislike and fear. Church leaders shared many of the political convictions of the 'national opposition' but they thought that its inability to compromise with the Republic was short-sighted and damaging to the nation. They also disliked the violence and racialism of some groups within the movement and in 1932 they became afraid that the most powerful group, the NSDAP, would seek to interfere in the life of the church. On the other hand they did not view the 'national opposition' with the same hostility as the socialist movement. Church leaders regarded the 'national opposition' as basically sound; they blamed its 'faults' on the suffering imposed on Germany by her former enemies, not on the movement itself. Church leaders were also afraid that the church would be isolated if it rejected a mass movement of 'national people' and they saw it as a powerful defence against Communism. As the 'national opposition' gathered strength and attracted the support of many church members - while the Republic seemed unable to meet the challenge of the economic crisis - so church leaders became increasingly vulnerable to its propaganda. The NSDAP made concessions to the church and exploited its weaknesses. As a result, although church leaders were aware of some of the dangers

of the movement, they did not condemn it.

The proper attitude for the church to adopt towards the national movement was the subject of a major lecture in June 1927 to the Königsberg Kirchentag.[1] It was delivered by Paul Althaus, a Professor of theology at Erlangen, and the ideas he developed subsequently formed the basis of the policy of the church leadership. Althaus saw the national movement as a response to modern, urban civilization, which he described as 'rational organization instead of a growing organism, disintegration into a mass instead of membership of a national stem .... in many respects one could say "fatherless, motherless, without a family tree"'. The solution of rebirth through a return to national roots - 'Family, vocation, work, soil, home' - had stimulated a great, new secular movement, second only to socialism, 'infused with a burning love of almost religious intensity'. Its origins were to be found in the 'exalted, stirring, national experience of August 1914' and further back in the youth movements. It was more than a matter of party politics; among the young it stretched from the Völkisch in the narrow sense to socialists. Important elements were blood, kinship, shared experiences and a common

1. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1927, pp.204-24.

destiny, but Volkstum was more than these - essentially it was a spiritual reality; the spiritual quality was to be seen in language and even more in 'poetry and thought, art and building, songs and legends, myths and fairy tales, morals and customs, law and constitution'.

The church, Althaus argued, had a responsibility to this movement as both had a mission to the whole nation; both made an absolute demand on each individual; both aimed at cleansing and rebirth; both recognized the judgement on the old world and wanted a new one. The church, however, said Althaus, asserted final claims and it should make clear its relationship to those who presented commitments of secondary importance. Althaus explained that Volkheit, a term coined by Goethe, should be understood as 'the will of God over a people'; the reverse belief that the Volk was divine in itself 'deified unholy Volkstum - it made something earthly and fallible unconditionally binding'. Althaus ridiculed the idea of a pagan, Germanic religion and attacked the belief that a new revelation could be found in the depths of Volkstum; he defended the Old Testament against anti-semitic critics and affirmed the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith (not racial pedigree). At the same time, Althaus argued, the Volk should be recognized as a gift of God and the church should be a Volkskirche, not the preserve of particular classes or parties. The church should co-operate in the task of

national recovery, he said, but it should be free of nationalist illusions. The service the church should perform for the national movement was to understand the movement better than it understood itself. There was a danger, he concluded, that the national movement would be lost to the church and that the church would no longer find the nation; that would represent a death sentence for the nation and the failure of the church to carry out its mission.

The Vaterländische Kundgebung issued by the Kirchentag accepted the view put by Althaus. It recognized that God was the God of all nations and that his cause could not be identified with any particular one. On the other hand, it affirmed that Volkstum was a gift of God and that Protestants had a duty to uphold it. 'We are Germans and we want to be Germans', it said.[1]

In September 1927, General Ludendorff declared that he intended to leave the Protestant church. He said that he no longer believed in the Protestant faith and that he resented Protestant indifference towards his campaign against ultramontanism and freemasons.[2]

1. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1927, pp.338-40.
2. E.K.D., A 2/493: copy of Ludendorff's letter declaring his exit from the church, 31 (sic) Sept.1927; also Ludendorff to Pfarrer Langenfass, Munich, 14 Oct.1927.

Under the influence of his wife, Dr. Mathilde Ludendorff, the General turned to a pagan Germanic religion and their Tannenbergbund spread anti-Christian propaganda.[1] Although Ludendorff had become an eccentric figure in Germany, his action created a stir in Protestant circles. It seemed to lend weight to Althaus's fear that the national movement might be lost to the church.

In February 1928, President Kapler sent a circular to the Landeskirchen asking about their attitude to freemasons.[2] He also commented on the increasing concern of nationalist groups with questions of Weltanschauung and religion. Although he welcomed this process of 'deepening' (Verinnerlichung), he pointed out that these groups might become spiritually self-sufficient and thus a substitute for the church. To prevent this, Kapler was anxious that the church should be ready to respond to the national movement when it showed an interest in the church. Kapler also believed that the SPD was behaving increasingly like a religious organization.

1. D.J.Goodspeed, Ludendorff (London,1966), pp.235-6, 245-6; K.Witte, Der Tannenbergbund, in W.Künneth and H.Schreiner, Die Nation vor Gott (3rd.edn., Berlin, 1934), pp.416-63, and H.Buchheim, Die organisatorische Entwicklung der Ludendorff-Bewegung und ihr Verhältnis zum Nationalsozialismus in Gutachten des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte (Munich,1958), pp.356-70. In 1933 the Tannenbergbund was prohibited both because it attacked the national socialist state and because it opposed Christianity and the 'Christian basis of the state': E.K.D., A 2/491: Reich Ministry of the Interior to the Reichskirchenregierung, 14 Nov.1933.
2. E.K.D., A 2/493: Kapler to the leaders of the Landeskirchen, 14 Feb.1928.

He asked the Landeskirchen whether they considered the Deutschkirche,[1] a small, völkisch group within the church, and the 'religious socialists'[2] suitable for evangelizing the national and socialist movements respectively. At the same time the Inner Mission (the Protestant charitable organization which was independent of the Landeskirchen) established a committee to make contact with nationalist groups and the Kirchenausschuss appointed a representative to it.[3]

The replies of the Landeskirchen to Kapler's circular did not show any very clear attitude.[4] Some had reservations about freemasons; some favoured them; none considered them a real threat as Ludendorff did. On the völkisch movement, the reports from the Old Prussian Union and Württemberg spoke of its lack of clarity but the Anhalt and Hanover-reformed Landeskirchen commented on the interest shown by nationalist groups in the church. Several Landeskirchen favoured contact between the church and these groups but, of those who referred to them, none thought that the Deutschkirche (or the 'religious socialists' for the SPD) were suitable organizations for the church to support.

1. On the Deutschkirche, see H.Buchheim, Glaubenskrise im Dritten Reich (Stuttgart,1953), pp.45-8.
2. See above, p.117, n.2.
3. E.K.D., A 2/495: Kapler to the Central Committee of the Inner Mission, 22 Feb.1928.
4. E.K.D., A 2/493.

The Kirchenausschuss discussed the matter in June 1928. Some members stressed the difficulty of making contact with nationalist groups until they had worked out a clearer position of their own; at the moment, they said, the church could expect little understanding for its Christianity from these movements. Others recommended that the church should stand by, ready to help where it could, and that it should give thought to how to preach the Gospel to the present generation.[1]

The differences between the political attitudes of the 'national opposition' and the church leadership came out clearly in a meeting between church leaders, including Generalsuperintendent O.Dibelius, and the leaders of the Vaterländische Verbände which contained organizations like the Stahlhelm and belonged to the DNVP section of the 'national opposition'. The meeting was held in Berlin on 24 January 1929.[2] Dibelius was probably invited because he had annoyed anti-Republican groups by publishing a Nachspiel to his book, Das Jahrhundert der Kirche. In the Nachspiel, he criticized the Republic and condemned the revolution of November 1918, but, at the same time, he

1. E.K.D., A 2/493: extract from the minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 8-9 June 1928.
2. E.K.U., Gen.VI, 2/2: report of the meeting sent by Dibelius. The leaders of the Vaterländische Verbände included von der Goltz, von Arnim-Boitzenburg, von Arnim-Kröchlendorff (a member of the Kirchensenat of the Old Prussian Union), Vice Admiral von Trotha, von Kleist-Schmenzin and Prince August Wilhelm of Prussia.

affirmed that the church should be 'above' parties and that pastors should work for neither the Stahlhelm nor the Reichsbanner.[1] In his memoirs, Dibelius explained that although he 'felt attuned' to 'aristocratic circles' he clashed with them because he believed that the church 'must not become an auxiliary of the German National Party'.[2] The spokesman for the Verbände, a nationalist Pastor called Wilm, criticized the church for its lack of appreciation of its debt to the past, especially to the Hohenzollerns; he said that the revolution should not be seen as a 'liberating storm' (a phrase used by Dibelius)[3] and that the national opposition should receive the full moral support of the church. Dibelius explained that the church could not become identified with nationalist, middle class ideology as the church also had a responsibility to the rest of the nation; 'the church must stand above parties and somehow come to a positive relationship with the new state'; he added that the Vaterländische Kundgebung of the Königsberg Kirchentag was the unalterable basis of this policy. Nevertheless, Dibelius said, the church did approve of the spirit of the national movement to a great

1. O.Dibelius, Nachspiel (Berlin,1928).
2. Dibelius, In the service of the Lord, pp.117-9.
3. Dibelius, Das Jahrhundert der Kirche, p.75.

extent but it could not sanction incitement to hatred and revenge. The church should certainly be open to nationalist groups but they should not exploit the church politically as a means to an end; they should educate their members to 'silent churchmanship'. In the discussion, Stahlhelm pastors complained about difficulties made for them by the church and demanded that the Vaterländische Kundgebung be withdrawn. The church was accused of having found its way to the Republic 'peculiarly fast'. Dibelius remained firm and said that a Generalsuperintendent who could not agree to the Kundgebung should resign; he added that he could not denigrate a state led by Hindenburg in the way in which members of the national opposition did. It was also pointed out to the Vaterländische Verbände, by one of the other church representatives present, that the Christianity of some of their members was suspect in view of attempts for a return to German paganism.

In the Reichstag elections of September 1930 the NSDAP won 18 per cent. of the votes and 107 seats. The 'national opposition' had become a serious challenge to the Republic and the NSDAP the most important group within it. In December 1930, President Kapler sent a second circular to the Landeskirchen asking for information because of the increasing activity of those groups, like the Deutschkirche, which wanted to change the Protestant church into a

'German Christianity'.[1] He asked for details of the demands of these groups and of the effect of the rapid rise of National Socialism upon them. The information was to be used for a meeting of the Kirchenbundesrat.

The Oberkirchenrat of the Old Prussian Union replied that a few members of the Deutschkirche belonged to the synods in five provinces.[2] They opposed collections for missions to the Jews, wished to reduce the importance of the Old Testament in religious education and to 'cleanse' religious language of Hebraisms. They also made eugenic suggestions and wished to prohibit Jews holding positions in the church and prevent clergy joining the freemasons. Unlike this movement, the Tannenbergbund was hostile to the church and Christianity as such. Some of the racialist ideas of both groups had found a wide response especially in rural districts and among youth. The National Socialist movement was in mood, though not in organization, connected with these groups; it had not as yet formed a party within the church but it was expected to at the next elections. The Oberkirchenrat recommended that clergy and parish members should be provided with suitable material to help them to resist the propaganda of these groups.

1. E.K.D., A 2/493: Kapler to the leaders of the Landeskirchen, 17 Dec.1930.
2. E.K.D., A 2/493: Oberkirchenrat to Kirchenausschuss, 18 April 1931.

The replies from the other Landeskirchen were less detailed.[1] There was one striking difference from the report of the Berlin Oberkirchenrat. Four Landeskirchen, Bavaria, Schleswig-Holstein, Baden and Anhalt, spoke favourably of the National Socialists and contrasted them with groups like the Deutschkirche or the Tannenbergbund. The National Socialists, they said, did not share the critical attitude towards the church found in the other movements and were, indeed, a check on them. Two Landeskirchen also reported favourably on the Stahlhelm.[2]

The Kirchenbundesrat considered the Deutschkirche and allied movements in June 1931.[3] The result was a restatement of the policy outlined by Althaus at the Kirchentag of 1927. Bishop Mordhorst of Schleswig-Holstein, who introduced the discussion, said that the church should welcome co-operation with the national movement where possible. He spoke warmly of the movement's ethos - its nationalism, its concern with physical health, its impatience with party slogans - and he defended anti-semitism. At the same time he criticized the

1. E.K.D., A 2/493: Oberkirchenrat to Kirchenausschuss, 18 April 1931.
2. Saxony and Anhalt. In Anhalt, a Pfarrer Friedrich of the Inner Mission was Chairman of the Stahlhelm. He presided over a Bund of 500 Protestant and Catholic clergy who were Stahlhelm members; E.K.D., A 2/493: copy of a report of an Inner Mission conference, 1928.
3. E.K.D., A 2/491: extract from the minutes of the Kirchenbundesrat meeting of 8-9 June 1931.

theological shortcomings of the movement which resulted from making a God of race; he quoted Rosenberg's Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts as an example. The Kirchenbundesrat accepted his analysis but rejected two of his proposals which would have committed the church clearly against the Deutschkirche. The first said that the church would not tolerate clergy in the Deutschkirche infringing the creed or the church constitution; Mordhorst quoted a case of a clergyman substituting 'I long for Walhalla' for 'I long for Sion'. The second proposal said that the Deutschkirche must be rejected on the basis of the Gospel. Mordhorst explained that these proposals were necessary to preserve the political neutrality of the church so that all parties and classes could meet within it; the church should refuse to play the part of the Maid of Orleans (for the national movement). The majority of the Kirchenbundesrat, however, felt that the proposals would look too hostile towards the Deutschkirche and would frustrate hopes of co-operation with the völkisch movement. The Chairman, President Veit of Bavaria, concluded that the discussion had shown that they felt warmly towards the völkisch movement and that they rejected only those parts of its programme which were in contradiction with their faith.

This attitude was extremely vulnerable to Nazi propaganda which professed friendship for the Christian churches. Hitler was responsible for this policy. It is

reported that Ludendorff on one occasion criticized him because the programme of the NSDAP expressly accepted 'positive Christianity' as its basis in religious affairs. Ludendorff tried to convince Hitler that Christianity would bitterly oppose a racialist movement. Hitler agreed but said that whereas the General could afford to tell his opponents in advance that he would kill them, 'I need Bavarian Catholics as well as Prussian Protestants to build up a great political movement. The rest comes later'.[1]

In Mein Kampf Hitler argued that, 'The religious teaching and institutions of his nation must always be sacrosanct to a political leader ...'. He criticized the Austrian pan-German movement for attacking the Catholic church. He admitted that the church in Austria had not been sufficiently nationalist, but he argued that this was a general weakness in German society and that the churches had shown by their contribution to the war effort that they could overcome it. In any case, Hitler said, it was not the task of a political movement to carry out a religious reformation and the two should not be confused. The attack on the Catholic church, he said, had cost the pan-Germans the support of countless of the best elements in the nation from the lower middle class.[2] Elsewhere, Hitler expressed 'deepest disgust' for the advocates of German paganism. He accused them of being anachronistic, failures

1. See the memoirs of Ludendorff's adjutant, W.Breucker, Die Tragik Ludendorffs (Oldenburg,1953), p.107.
2. A.Hitler, Mein Kampf (Munich,1925), i, 112-22.

and cowards - 'völkisch comedians' who side-tracked the movement from its primary aim of combating the Jews.[1] He was equally forthright with those who opened denominational disputes by attacking 'ultramontanism'. This too, he declared, simply served Jewish interests and split the National Socialist movement.[2]

The behaviour of the NSDAP until 1933 provided evidence which suggested that the views expressed by Hitler in Mein Kampf were genuine. The full text of point 24 of the party programme, adopted in 1920 and declared unalterable in 1926, read,

> 'We demand liberty for all religious denominations in the state, so far as they are not a danger to it and do not militate against the morality and moral sense of the German race.
> The Party, as such, stands for positive Christianity, but does not bind itself in the matter of creed to any particular confession. It combats the Jewish-materialist spirit within and outside us, and is

1. A.Hitler, Mein Kampf (Munich,1925), pp.381-3.
2. ibid., (Munich,1927),ii,209-14. This is probably a reference to Ludendorff's speech at the trial after the Munich Putsch. It is interesting to note that the speech threatened to produce the denominational division Hitler feared. The Evangelischer Bund, at a conference in Munich in 1924, warmly supported völkisch attacks on ultramontanism. This attitude was criticized by the Catholic press and the Völkische Kurier thereupon said that the völkisch movement would not be exploited by either denomination and that the movement was not bound by Ludendorff's statements. Bundesarchiv, R 431/2195: reports of the representative of the Reich Government in Bavaria to the Reichkanzlei, 4,5,6,9, and 12 Sept.1924.

convinced that our nation can achieve permanent health from within only on the principle:

THE COMMON INTEREST BEFORE SELF-INTEREST.'[1]

When he was released from prison in 1925 Hitler dissociated himself from Ludendorff's attacks on the Roman Catholic church and again emphasized that religious disputes should be kept out of the party. Hitler had a special motive for doing this as he had to persuade the Bavarian Minister President, a member of the BVP, to lift the ban on the NSDAP.[2] In 1928 when the Thuringian Gauleiter, Artur Dinter, refused to obey Hitler's policy and propagated his own brand of Aryan religion which he called Geistchristentum, Hitler expelled him from the party. Gregor Strasser wrote to all party members saying that Hitler had explained the attitude of the party to religious questions and rejected Dinter's demands for a change. Dinter had not bothered to attend the meeting although specially summoned and had subsequently implied that only Hitler and not the other leaders of the NSDAP disagreed with him. Strasser denied this and asked all members to sign a form declaring their support for Hitler's religious policy and rejecting Dinter.[3] The ban on religious

1. Hitler's Official Programme and its Fundamental Ideas (Eng. transl., London, 1938), p.43.
2. A. Bullock, Hitler, a study in tyranny (Revised edn., London, 1967), pp.128-9.
3. NSDAP Hauptarchiv, Reel 23, Folder 487: Gregor Strasser to all Parteigenossen, 8 Oct. 1928.

discussion did not prevent the NSDAP attacking the Centre Party for misusing religion for political purposes, especially after the formation of the Brüning Government.[1] This caused concern to the Roman Catholic church but increased the popularity of the NSDAP among Protestants.

There were also examples of Nazi hostility to the Christian churches. The most important were the works of Alfred Rosenberg. In his commentary on the party programme, published in 1923, he made it clear that the purpose of point 24 was electoral and that its main emphasis was anti-semitic. He added that it was deplorable that denominational loyalties should be put first; only a völkisch Weltanschauung could overcome the differences.[2] Der Mythus des 20.Jahrhunderts, first published in 1930, contained much that was offensive to the churches and was frequently criticized by them. Rosenberg had, however, been careful to explain in the preface that the book contained only his personal views not the programme of the NSDAP.[3] Unlike Dinter, he made no attempt to make his views official. This enabled the NSDAP to dismiss criticism of the book as irrelevant to the question of the religious policy of the party. Rosenberg was, however, the editor of the Völkischer Beobachter.

1. H.Buchheim, Glaubenskrise im Dritten Reich (Stuttgart,1953), pp.64-5. Hitler had already developed this argument in Mein Kampf,i, 284.
2. A.Rosenberg, Wesen, Grundsätze und Ziele der Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiterpartei (Munich, 1923), pp.41-3.
3. A.Rosenberg, Der Mythus des 20.Jahrhunderts (1st.edn., Munich,1930), pp.22-3.

The first official contact between the church leadership and the NSDAP took place on 4 March 1931. With the approval of President Kapler, the Kirchenbundesamt official Scholz met Franz Stöhr, a member of the executive of the NSDAP Reichstag party. In his report on the meeting, Scholz explained that its purpose was to establish the sort of contact with the NSDAP which the Kirchenausschuss already had with other parties and to clarify the character of the party.[1]

Stöhr made it clear that the NSDAP adopted the form of a parliamentary party simply as a means to reach its goal which he described as 'the creation of the real German Reich of German men'. Stöhr explained that the NSDAP as a secular, political movement rejected, in principle, the form of a Christian party but that it was led by Christians who intended to carry out the ethical bases of Christianity in legislation and to make them an effective part of national life. Of the 107 members of the Reichstag party, he said, two thirds were Protestant and one third Catholic; only one member did not belong to a church and that was because he had quarrelled with a clergyman, not because he was a freethinker. Stöhr emphasized that 'The party is far from hostile to the church'. In evidence he cited the case of Dinter whom, he said, Hitler

1. E.K.D., A 2/490: confidential report of the conversation by Scholz.

had unhesitatingly dismissed from the party because he refused to give up his 'odious campaign against the church'.

In view of its goal of a united Volkstum, Stöhr continued, the party put denominational differences in the background. This did not prevent the leadership being 'Protestant in direction' (protestantisch bestimmt). The leaders who belonged to the Catholic church were in their outlook on life and attitude towards the faith inclined towards Protestantism even if for particular reasons they did not leave their church. There was no danger, as had been suggested, that the movement would be captured by Catholics; it was a German movement and it rejected the claims of the Catholic episcopacy over German law and secular matters. In education the National Socialist ideal was a single school for both Catholics and Protestants with even religious education held in common. The party realized, however, that such a school was impracticable and it would therefore support the denominational school while resisting Catholic attempts at domination; 'The German state should be the master of the German school'. Freethinkers and Jews would have their own schools and would not be allowed to teach in denominational schools.

The conversation then turned to the question of whether the National Socialist party would be able at some time to fulfil a similar task to that of the English Labour party, which was national and essentially Christian in attitude,

and on this basis a social party.[1] Stöhr rejected this comparison as 'apart from many similarities in the personal composition of both parties' they were basically different. The Labour party started from the system of production and from there went on to consider man whereas the National Socialist party started with man and approached social conditions from there. The National Socialist party was governed by a 'spiritual idea'. It opposed the individual man of Liberalism, the collective man of Marxism and the hierarchically controlled man of Catholicism. Their man came from the community educated to be an independent German man but he came not to live for himself but to serve the community. Stöhr said in conclusion that his views could be taken as official party statements.

Stöhr's remarks were an interesting mixture of truth and jargon calculated to win Protestant support. His description of the general ethos of the party as national - aspiring above party politics and spiritual not materialistic - would have appealed to any conservative group. He was clearly at pains to allay fears that the NSDAP was under pagan or Catholic influence. On the first count he was able to produce the evidence of membership of one of the Christian churches by

1. Scholz's comparison with the British Labour party seems bizarre but it reflected the envy felt by German churchmen for England's freedom from an anti-clerical, socialist movement and the corresponding hope for a Christian social party.

almost all the Reichstag party and the case of Dinter's expulsion; on the second count his argument about the party's opposition to the encroachments of clericalism was convincing. In education he made an important, tactical concession which was repeated by Hitler in 1933 and subsequently dishonoured.

The Kirchenbundesamt official, Scholz, was not convinced by Stöhr's assurances. In a note written a few days after the interview, he suggested that because of the importance of the NSDAP and the great confusion within it, a file of press cuttings should be kept to see whether the party in practice followed the principles Stöhr had outlined.[1] After the September 1930 elections a similar file had been started for the use of the Prussian Oberkirchenrat.[2] These files are a useful pointer to the type of information about the NSDAP known to the church leadership.[3]

Criticism of the NSDAP, directed particularly at the Protestant church, came from the Religious Socialists and

1. E.K.D., A 2/490: note by Scholz, 12 March 1931.
2. E.K.U., Gen.VI, 27/1 (Beiheft). The file was probably started to provide material for a report on the NSDAP to the Kirchensenat which had been requested by one of its members after the September 1930 elections. The report was made but no account of it appeared in the minutes. E.K.U., Gen.VI, 27/1: minutes of the Kirchensenat meetings of 3-4 Nov.1930 and 12-3 Feb.1931.
3. In a few cases in the following section I have used material from files in the church archives apart from the two mentioned.

the Christian Social Volksdienst. The Religious Socialists attacked the racial principle, demagogy, authoritarianism and violence of the party.[1] The Volksdienst press also attacked the racialism of the party, instancing Rosenberg's Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts, and pointing out that he was the official interpreter of the party programme and the editor of its main newspaper.[2] A Reichstag deputy of the Volksdienst wrote of the 'tasteless scorn' for religion shown by National Socialists like Göring and Goebbels.[3] Another article criticized Hitler's religious views: it admitted that there were passages in Mein Kampf friendly to the churches but argued that it was clear throughout the book that the Aryan race was Hitler's highest ideal; the rest, it said, was simply clever tactics.[4] The Volksdienst warned the Protestant church of the danger that the Nazis would carry the political battle into the church and that if they came to power they would re-establish the Staatskirche system.[5]

The church leadership had information showing that

1. Sonntagsblatt des arbeitenden Volkes, 30 Nov.1930, No.48.
2. Tägliche Rundschau, 23 Dec.1930, No.182; ibid., 29 Jan.1931, No.24.; Christlichsozialer Volksdienst, 5 Sept.1931, No.36.
3. Tägliche Rundschau, 25 Oct.1931.
4. ibid., 28 May 1931, No.121.
5. ibid., 13 Nov.1930, No.149 and 4 Dec.1931, No.283.

parodies of hymns and prayers had been used in Nazi propaganda, that a pagan festival had been organized in Hamburg in its name, and that it employed disreputable clergymen.[1] In the liberal Vossische Zeitung, Konrad Heiden exposed the unsavoury background of the party and its lack of scruple about murder.[2] The same paper reported a Reichsgericht decision upholding the ban on a Nazi paper because of the illegal, revolutionary aims of elements in the party; the Government Heimatdienst provided more evidence of the same nature.[3] The Völkischer Beobachter itself published details of the Nazi programme for the Jews: they were to have an inferior status as Reichsinsassen instead of Volksgenossen; they were to be disenfranchized and, if necessary, lose other civil liberties like freedom of movement, assembly and the right to conduct a business and, in return, Jews would only have the duties

1. Tägliche Rundschau, 13 Aug.1932, No.51: Der Freidenker, 16 Feb.1932 (E.K.D., A 2/491); Tägliche Rundschau, 31 Dec.1931, No.304; E.K.D., A 2/491: Hamburg Kirchenrat to Kirchenausschuss, 14 April 1932; Völkischer Beobachter, 2/4 April 1932, No.94/5 and Kapler's marginal note (E.K.D., A 2/492); ibid., 20 July 1932, No.202; Tägliche Rundschau, 12 June 1932, No.161. Ost Holsteinisches Tageblatt, 19 Nov.1932, No.272; Berichtigungsdienst des evangelischen Pressverbandes, 22 Nov.1932 and 29 Nov.1932, Nos.17,18; cf. Völkischer Beobachter, 23 Feb.1933, No.54.
2. Vossische Zeitung, 11 Nov.1932, No.541.
3. ibid., 26 Feb.1931, No.97; Der Heimatdienst, 2 Sept.1930, No.18. cf. Hitler's decree forbidding party members to carry weapons, despite Reichsbanner 'attacks', because otherwise 'the system' would have a pretext to ban the party; Völkischer Beobachter, 18 Feb.1931, No.49.

of non-combatants in national defence; there were to be stronger legal restrictions on mixed marriages and a 'positive' racial policy using eugenic and educational ~~measures~~ methods was to be introduced.[1]

Several papers criticized the vulnerability of the Protestant church to Nazi propaganda. Emil Fuchs, one of the leaders of the Religious Socialists, accused the church of no longer knowing what Protestantism was because it took the slogan of 'positive Christianity' seriously. What is left of Christianity, he asked, when it can be combined with warmongering, coercion, and denial of the dignity of man to foreigners, Jews and the weak? He predicted that if the Protestant church fell to the Nazis it would be a force for evil in the following years and then 'finished'.[2] In the Christliche Welt, H. Mulert warned of the danger that the Nazis would try to take over the church although he 'gladly allowed' that Hitler himself understood that politics and religion were different in kind. To the argument that the church must not alienate the new movement as it had earlier alienated the socialist movement, he replied that one did not set earlier mistakes right by making the opposite ones.[3] The Centre Party newspaper, Germania, argued that

1. Völkischer Beobachter, 28 Jan.1931 (E.K.D., A 2/495).
2. Vorwärts, 15 May 1932. In 1945 Fuchs became a Professor of theology in Leipzig; he retired in 1950. Wer ist Wer (14th edn., Berlin,1965),ii,79.
3. Die Christliche Welt, 16 April 1932, No.8 (E.K.U.,Gen.VI,16/4). Mulert was a Professor of theology in Kiel and from 1932 editor of the Christliche Welt; see,M.Mulert,Hermann Muler' (Berlin,1954).

Protestantism had become to a considerable extent a 'party church'; this, it said, was a grave setback after the progress to independence since 1918. Germania thought the cause of the regression was despair (following the economic crisis) which had led Protestants to turn to Hitler's substitute religion.[1]

The right wing Protestant press was more sympathetic to the NSDAP although it too expressed doubts about aspects of the movement. The Reichsbote rejected the criticism of the Protestant church made by Fuchs: the paper said that the church had not missed a single opportunity of questioning the NSDAP about its attitude to religion and had always rejected extreme völkisch theories; the church recognized the dangers of the NSDAP but thought it right to try to win influence over the movement, not to condemn it; the NSDAP contained sound elements and had saved Germany from Bolshevism.[2] The leading Lutheran journal praised the Nazis' nationalism, courage and integrity and their desire to build a 'Christian, German nation' but it also asked them about their educational programme and said that there was no such thing as an Aryan God, that a break with the Bible was a break with God and that Jesus had been a Jew. It added

1. Germania, 7 July 1932, No.187.
2. Der Reichsbote, 19 May 1932, No.120; cf.ibid., 11 May 1932, No.113 and 31 May 1932, No.130.

that though many Christians agreed that the influence of the Jews must be broken they agreed less with the hatred of the Jews propagated by the Nazis.[1] Even Pfarrer Traub, the former Kultusminister of the Kapp régime, warned Protestants against the Nazi programme and asked whether alcoholics and the mentally sick were to be allowed to be sterilized and incurable patients killed.[2]

The NSDAP defended itself energetically against its critics in both Christian churches.[3] The leader of the NSDAP in the Bavarian Landtag, Buttmann, explained that 'positive Christianity' meant rejection of both paganism and Jewish materialism in favour of a Christian attitude. The purpose of that part of the programme, he said, was simply to limit the freedom for any sect allowed by the Weimar Constitution. He denied that the party had ever rejected the Old or the New Testament and cited the case of Dinter's expulsion as proof.[4] Professor Stark, a physicist and Nobel prize winner, wrote a short apologia for the NSDAP, primarily intended to counteract the criticism of Roman Catholic bishops, but also read by Protestants. He maintained

1. Allgemeine Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, 13 March 1931, No.11. This article is not in the files but it was quoted extensively in the Völkischer Beobachter, 1 May 1931, No.121, which is there.
2. Eiserne Blätter, 11 Sept.1932, No.37.
3. For an account of Roman Catholic press criticism of the NSDAP, see L.Volk, Der Bayerische Episkopat und der Nationalsozialismus 1930-1934 (Mainz,1965), pp.40-2.
4. See, Völkischer Beobachter, 1 May 1931, No.121. On Buttmann, L.Volk, Der Bayerische Episkopat, p.65.

that on the basis of the party programme, its official statements and its behaviour, the NSDAP was 'not an enemy but a friend of Christianity'.[1] Individual lapses were admitted and regretted but party officials argued that they could not be held responsible for everything party members did.[2] The Völkischer Beobachter emphasized that Rosenberg's Mythus was a private work.[3] In another article, it rejected the suggestion that there was a conflict between the swastika and the Christian cross; the swastika went back to the third century, it said, and had always been a symbol against the powers of darkness.[4] An enthusiastic account

1. J.Stark, Nationalsozialismus und katholische Kirche (Munich,1931).
2. Völkischer Beobachter, 1 May 1931, No.121. An example was the parody of Silent night which appeared in the National Socialist Blatt der Niedersachsen in 1932. It read:
   'Stille nacht, heil'ge Nacht,
   Reichstag schläft, Brüning wacht,
   Notverordnungen aus lächelndem Mund,
   Deutscher trag ruhig du wirst gesund;
   Hitler, der Retter ist da!'
   The Inner Mission complained to the NSDAP Reichsleitung and were told that they 'of course' dissociated themselves from the parody. E.K.D., A 2/491: Inner Mission to Kirchenbundesamt, 6 May 1932.
3. Völkischer Beobachter, 17 Feb.1931, No.48.
4. Ibid., 25 April 1931.

was printed of a service in Magdeburg Cathedral, packed with S.A. and S.S. in uniform, where the clergyman described Hitler as a gift of God and praised him in blasphemous language.[1] The accusation of violence was turned against the critics by emphasizing the Totenliste as the party's proud record of sacrifice to the nation.[2] When Dibelius criticized the subjective legal norms of the party and insisted that 'murder is murder', Der Angriff rounded on him and said that it was easy for fine people like Dibelius to stand aloof - they risked nothing.[3]

The NSDAP not only defended itself against criticism of its religious and moral outlook but also produced an aggressive political propaganda to appeal to Protestants. The Centre Party was repeatedly attacked as an improper mixture of religion and politics and for its alliance with the SPD.[4] The Völkischer Beobachter suggested that condemnations of the NSDAP by Catholic bishops had been issued at the request of the Minister of the Interior,

1. Völkischer Beobachter, 6/7 Nov.1932.
2. See, for instance, the dedication of Mein Kampf. An article in the main Lutheran journal illustrates the effectiveness of this propaganda. It said of the National Socialists, 'Even their enemies must admit that they stand up for their ideals with manly courage; they shun neither death nor wounds .... One judge said: when Communists stand before the court they lie; when National Socialists, they confess';AELKZ, 13 March 1931, No.11, quoted in Völkischer Beobachter, 1 May 1931, No.121.
3. Der Tag, 4 Sept.1932; Der Angriff, 14 Sept.1932, No.184.
4. Völkischer Beobachter, 19 Feb.1931, No.50 and ibid. passim in B.K.U., Gen.VI, 27/1 (Beiheft).

Wirth, who was a member of the Centre Party.[1] For the Prussian Landtag elections of April 1932, Der Angriff carried a full page notice to 'Protestant Christianity' warning it of the plight of the church in Russia and Spain under Marxist rule, blaming the Centre Party for not resisting the growth of atheist Marxism in Germany, and claiming that the National Socialists had been the first to appreciate the danger and to resist it suffering bloodshed, scorn and persecution in the process.[2]

An indication of how much this propaganda meant in practice was given by the behaviour of the NSDAP in the Reichstag and Landtage, and of their ministers in Länder where they gained power or a share in power before 1933. The NSDAP voted against the DNVP proposal for a Reichsschulgesetz and against concordats and church treaties.[3] This was consistent with their objection to clericalism and should have served as a warning to the Protestant church that this objection would not be confined to Catholic demands. In the Länder the NSDAP had a patchy record. In Thuringia, an NSDAP motion that the church should surrender part of its subsidy for unemployment relief was passed with the support

1. Völkischer Beobachter, 27 March 1931, No.86.
2. Der Angriff, 19 April 1932, No.77 (see Plate 3).
3. See, E.K.D., A 2/479: Moeller (the son of the former President) to Kapler, 3 Nov.1932.

of the SPD and some liberals against the wishes of the church.[1] In the same state, the Minister for Education, Frick, introduced strongly nationalist school prayers against which the Landeskirche protested.[2] In Oldenburg relations between the Protestant church and the Nazi Government were bad. A Catholic was appointed to the Kultusministerium although two thirds of the population were Protestant; the protest of the Landeskirche was rejected on the grounds that in the NSDAP what mattered was not a man's denomination but his national outlook.[3] When the Landeskirche invited a negro Pastor to speak, the Nazi Minister President, Röver, described it as a provocation worthy of the death penalty. The Landeskirche initiated slander proceedings against Röver but the case was dropped.[4] In Brunswick, on the other hand, the NSDAP took measures calculated to please the church:

1. Das evangelische Deutschland, 16 Nov.1930, No.46 and 14 Dec.1930, No.50.
2. E.K.D., C 3/143: Kapler to Reichardt, 12 April 1932; Reichardt to Kapler, 23 April 1932. The Landeskirche protested on the grounds that the prayers should be free of politics. They are printed in Hitler's Official Programme and its Fundamental Ideas, pp.122-3.
3. Nachrichten für Stadt und Land, 20 Sept.1932, No.257, Beilage No.1.
4. Evangelischer Pressedienst, 30 July 1932, No.77; Oldenburgische Generalpredigerverein, 21 Sept.1932; Völkischer Beobachter, 5 Nov.1932, No.310. E.K.D., A 2/479: Moeller to Kapler, 3 Nov.1932.

freethinkers in the teaching profession were dismissed and the 'Christian character' restored to education, though separate, denominational schools were not set up.[1] In Anhalt, according to the Völkischer Beobachter, the NSDAP made it more difficult to leave the church and again restricted the activity of freethinkers among teachers.[2]

The files in the church archives show that the church leadership did not lack information about the NSDAP. If the party had officially identified itself with the Tannenbergbund or the philosophy of Rosenberg, church leaders would have been forced to prohibit clergymen joining it (as they did with the KPD because atheism was part of its programme). Hitler was too clever to do this. The result was that the party made a confused impression and Hitler was seen as holding radical elements in check. The confusion enabled the political opponents of the NSDAP to point out the weaknesses in the party's propaganda and to warn the church of dangers which later materialized. The NSDAP replied that these warnings were signs of political prejudice and that the

1. Völkischer Beobachter, 21 July 1932, No.203; ibid., 11 Aug.1932, No.224. The Bishop of Brunswick nevertheless thought that the educational plans of the NSDAP were 'thoroughly objectionable'; E.K.D., A 2/249: Bernewitz to Kirchenausschuss, 16 April 1932.
2. Völkischer Beobachter, 19 July 1932, No.201.

official position of the party on religion was impeccable.[1] This created sufficient doubt about the way the party would develop for churchmen, who were well-disposed towards it, to surrender to wishful thinking about its future and to discount the aspects of it they disliked.

The receptiveness of some Protestant clergy to Nazi propaganda is illustrated by the case of Friedrich Wienecke, Dompfarrer in Soldin, founder of the National Socialist Pastorenbund and later one of the leaders of the Deutsche Christen. In an article entitled 'Can a Pfarrer be a National Socialist?' he described how he had become disillusioned with the 'materialism' of the DNVP and how he had been offended by socialist insults against clergymen.[2] When he read Mein Kampf (he knew Hitler's name since the putsch of 1923), Wienecke had been struck by how clearly Hitler rejected pagan völkisch groups and also by Hitler's concept of race. Wienecke explained that he had been trained

1. When the President of the Reichsgericht, Simons, attacked Nazism for replacing Christianity with a German faith, the NSDAP Reichstag deputy, Fabricius, ridiculed him and said he must have confused the NSDAP with the Deutsch-Völkische Freiheitspartei; Das Evangelische Berlin, 1 Jan.1932, No.1; Frankfurter Volksblatt, 6 Jan.1932, No.4. In a marginal comment on Simons' article, Scholz wrote that it contained nothing new and was to his knowledge mistaken.
2. Die Reformation, 22 March 1931, No.6. The issue over which Wienecke broke with the DNVP was its attitude to the Dawes plan.

in liberal theology and this had led him to minimize the importance of racial differences. By reading Karl Barth, however, he was converted to the idea that man should not base himself on human enlightenment but on the reality given by God. This seemed to him parallel to the way Hitler talked of race as a 'thing of the Lord' and as the 'purpose of creation'. In another article Wienecke criticized the middle class for coming to terms with the religionless, Marxist state and added that even the Prussian Protestant church was in danger of being fettered to the system by the church treaty. He explained this degeneration of the middle class by the activity of cosmopolitan, Jewish humanitarianism, with its dogma of reducing man to monotonous similarity on the basis of the animal-biological sensuality common to all men; 'It is a holy Christian duty to overcome this racially damaging spirit of humanitarianism', he concluded.[1] Wienecke admitted that the NSDAP suffered from many faults of immaturity and that there was a danger that it would make a god of race but, he argued, there was an important distinction between Hitler and Rosenberg and wide circles of the NSDAP rejected Rosenberg's views. Wienecke claimed that the experience of his Pastorenbund, working in close co-operation with Schemm's Lehrerbund, showed that the

1. Der Märkische Adler, 15 Aug.1930.

National Socialist press wanted their advice.[1]

Not many clergymen and none of the church leadership followed Wienecke and became members of the NSDAP before 1933.[2] It would have been difficult for church leaders to have reconciled membership of the party with their acceptance of a general obligation of loyalty to the Republic and political neutrality. Some voted NSDAP, however, and many others probably continued to support the DNVP which was also fiercely anti-Republican. Most Landeskirchen did issue decrees in 1931-2 intended to keep party warfare out of the church and some condemned violence, but the church leadership deliberately avoided explicit condemnation of the NSDAP.[3] Kapler dismissed evidence of the illegal, revolutionary aims of the party as inconclusive and, unlike certain Roman Catholic bishops, Protestant church leaders

1. Deutsches Pfarrerblatt, 20 Oct.1931, No.42. Hans Schemm was an NSDAP deputy in the Bavarian Landtag, 1918-32; he was also Gauleiter of the Bavarian Ostmark and later Kultusminister of Bavaria; L.Volk, Der Bayerische Episkopat, p.65.

2. Pastor Hossenfelder, the leader of the Deutsche Christen, estimated that in 1932 there were only about 50 Pfarrer in the whole Reich who were members of the NSDAP. (Interview, 16 Jan.1968). This is probably, however, an underestimate since there is a record of 17 pastors belonging to the party in one Lower Saxon Gau; J.D.Noakes, 'The NSDAP in Lower Saxony 1921-1933: A Study of National Socialist Organisation and Propaganda' (D.Phil.thesis, Oxford,1967), p.279.

3. see below, pp. 264-72.

did not condemn the NSDAP on religious grounds.[1] There was no change in the policy suggested by Althaus in 1927 - general sympathy for the movement combined with criticism of its 'excesses', an attitude common to most right wing groups in the last years of the Republic.

This tolerance towards the NSDAP would not have been possible if the church leadership had not basically shared the nationalist, anti-liberal, and anti-semitic prejudices of the party. Secondly, after September 1930, church leaders knew that there was strong support for the NSDAP among their parishioners. The position was explained by an official of the Berlin Oberkirchenrat to two American visitors (representing the Federal Council of the Christian churches of America) on 11 July 1932.[2] The visitors were anxious to know the attitude of the church to the Jewish question. The official replied that he could give only his

1. In the provinces of Paderborn and the Upper Rhine, Roman Catholics were forbidden to support the NSDAP, and in Bavaria Catholic priests were forbidden to take part in the Nazi movement. In addition, the errors of Nazism were condemned by Cardinal Bertram of Breslau and the Bishops of the province of Cologne. Bishop Schreiber of Berlin, however, indicated that Catholics could be members of the NSDAP and the Bishops conference at Fulda in 1931 decided not to condemn Nazism as hostile to Christianity. G.Lewy, The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany (London, 1964), pp.8-15; cf. L.Volk, Der Bayerische Episkopat, pp.22-49.
2. E.K.D., C 3/170: account of the meeting.

personal opinion: one had to remember that at the last Reichstag election the National Socialists had won 13 million votes; unlike the Communists and Socialists - who, together, had been equally successful and who were hostile to the church - the National Socialists were overwhelmingly Protestant and the majority of them belonged to the Old Prussian Union. This created special difficulties for church officials. He added that there was much that was welcome to the church about the National Socialist movement and that he believed that the German nation should be protected from damaging Jewish influence, although legally and not violently. Where, however, the National Socialists idolized race, the church had to 'raise its warning voice'. Another church representative present gave a long defence of anti-semitic attitudes and spoke with approval of the Nazis' published programme for the Jews.[1]

It is not clear to what the Oberkirchenrat official referred when he spoke of the church raising 'its warning voice'. In general the church leadership refrained from public statements and left the discussion to private individuals. There were several important private publications but no progress could be made because of the

1. His remarks were similar in several respects to a memorandum sent by the Kirchenbundesamt to foreign church leaders in June 1933, see below, pp. 303-8.

deliberate ambiguity of the NSDAP.[1] The views of the more critical members of the church leadership were probably represented by a book, produced under the auspices of the Inner Mission, which was widely distributed and may have had financial support from the Landeskirchen.[2] It argued forcefully that, despite the ambiguity of National Socialism, it was a religion of blood, irreconcilable with the Gospel. It emphasized statements of Rosenberg like, 'A sense of sin is the necessary accompanying phenomenon of physical bastardy'. It admitted that Hitler's philosophy was different but argued that the Nazi press showed that Rosenberg's views were more widely held in the party than Hitler's.

A much more friendly tone was struck by the Christlich-Deutsche Bewegung for which one of the church leaders, Bishop

1. See, for instance, L.Klotz, Die Kirche und das dritte Reich (Gotha,1932); G.Wünsch, Reich Gottes, Marxismus, Nationalsozialismus (Tübingen,1931); W.Künneth, Pf.Wilm, H.Schemm, Was haben wir als evangelische Christen zum Rufe des Nationalsozialismus zu sagen? (Dresden,1931); H.Strathmann, Nationalsozialistische Weltanschauung? (Nuremberg,1931); H.Sasse, Kirchliche Zeitlage in Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 59.Jg. (1932), pp.65-74; von Kleist-Schmenzin, Der Nationalsozialismus eine Gefahr (Berlin,1932).
2. H.Schreiner, Der Nationalsozialismus vor der Gottesfrage (Berlin,1931). In a critical review Wienecke asked who had paid for it to be sent to so many clergymen; Deutsches Pfarrerblatt, 20 Oct.1931, No.42. In reply to an enquiry from a German clergyman in Brazil, the Kirchenbundesamt sent a copy or Schreiner's book and recommended it; E.K.D., A 2/491: Kirchenbundesamt to Propst Francke, 11 April 1931.

Rendtorff of Mecklenburg-Schwerin was directly responsible. The Christlich-Deutsche Bewegung originated with a group of Stahlhelm and DNVP supporters within the church, although Wienecke was also a member for a time and Goebbels addressed one of its meetings.[1] The movement was later eclipsed by the more radical, exclusively Nazi, Deutsche Christen. Rendtorff tried to influence the NSDAP towards an orthodox religious attitude while expressing the greatest sympathy for the party. He praised Nazism for seeking to rouse the nation to meet its fate and because, unlike most modern movements, it stood for 'positive Christianity'. He believed that the Volk was a gift of God which required 'unconditional obedience' from Protestants. At the same time, he argued that if the party took the phrase 'positive Christianity' seriously it would be subject to God and not exploit Christianity for human ends. The 'German freedom movement' was, he said, sent by God to enable the German nation to fulfil its mission but, if it did not recognize God, it would miscarry.[2]

1. H.Buchheim, Glaubenskrise im Dritten Reich, pp.60-2. F.Wienecke, Die Glaubensbewegung 'Deutsche Christen' (1st edn., Soldin,1932), p.10, and Die Kampf-und Glaubensbewegung 'Deutsche Christen' (Soldin,1936), p.5.

2. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 184: Rendtorff to Kapler, 29 Sept.1932, enclosing the programme of the Christlich-Deutsche Bewegung; E.K.D., A 2/492: Unser Werk, Feb.1932, vol.2. Rendtorff joined the NSDAP in May 1933 but was soon disillusioned; see below, p.344.

In December 1931, the chairman of a group of Nazi clergy in Saxony suggested that the Kirchenausschuss should arrange a meeting with Hitler, so that Hitler would have an opportunity to explain his attitude to Christianity in view of the contradictory opinions which were circulating. Kapler replied that he would be willing to meet Hitler if Hitler suggested it, just as he met other political figures who came to him on special business. The chairman of the Nazi clergy reported this to Schemm but suggested that Hitler could hardly take the initiative, because of the effect this would have on the Catholic church. Nothing came of the proposed meeting.[1]

In January 1932, however, a meeting did take place in Munich between church representatives and a member of Hitler's staff, known to be a loyal parishioner.[2] The meeting was authorized by Kapler and kept secret. The church representatives commented on a newspaper article hostile to the church written by Kube, the chairman of the NSDAP in the Prussian Landtag.[3] Kube had attacked a Generalsuperintendent Vits who, in a private meeting, had referred to the Nazi movement as in its 'adolescence'.[4] Kube also criticized the church treaty

1. E.K.D., A 2/491: Bishop Ihmels (reporting the suggestion) to Kapler, 2 Dec.1931 and 31 Dec.1931; Kapler to Ihmels, 28 Dec.1931.
2. A report of the meeting by one of the church representatives, dated 26 Jan.1932, is in E.A.O., Pr.II, 46/4. The member of Hitler's staff is unidentified but might have been Schemm.
3. Völkischer Beobachter, 10/11 Jan.1932.
4. Archiv des evangelischen Konsistoriums, Berlin-Brandenburg, Nachlass Wienecke: Rundschreiben of Vits, 15 Jan.1932.

and an Oberkirchenrat decree which restricted the attendance of political organizations in church services, and raised the matter of a scandal involving a subsidiary organization of the Inner Mission. He demanded a Reichskirche and instructed his readers to conquer their church by voting in the 1932 parish elections. The church representatives at the Munich meeting accused the NSDAP of violating its own principles by indulging in a denunciation of this type, which, they said, was no different in tone to the left wing press. They added that if the NSDAP organized a separate list in the parish elections it would contradict the principle of non-intervention in church affairs, which Hitler had repeatedly proclaimed, and the church would be reduced to an instrument of politics. The Nazi representative promised to raise the matter at the February policy meetings.

The church representatives then criticized Kube's demand for a Reichskirche as unhistorical and senseless. They added that all the declarations of the NSDAP were products of the most insipid Kulturliberalismus in which no Protestant influence could be detected. The Nazi representative replied 'judiciously' that one should not overestimate the theoretical bases or give individual remarks too much weight; so far-reaching a movement could not be assessed by the frequently inadequate methods of its propaganda. He criticized Schreiner's book for taking secondary manifestations in a doctrinaire way. He opposed the idea of the church asking Hitler for a meeting

because the political position would prevent him accepting, but he promised on the basis of repeated confidential conversations with Hitler that the Protestant church could expect the best from him if he came to power. The Protestant church should remember, he continued, that the enormous number of Catholics in the party were mostly only nominal Catholics, more Protestant than Catholic in their thinking (a statement confirmed by one of the church representatives!). Arrangements were made for keeping in contact and the church representatives won the impression that, if it became necessary, the church would not lack contacts in the National Socialist movement.

The report noted that one had to use a special vocabulary in negotiating with National Socialists; one had to master a very odd habit of saying something quite different to what was meant. One of the churchmen present, who claimed to know most members of Hitler's staff, thought they were very respectable and well-intentioned but mostly just beginning to think about the problems and therefore childish in their outlook. This made a very curious combination with their complacent claim to perfection. Throughout the four-hour discussion, the report concluded, the church representatives had found understanding for their views, which had been put emphatically, but they did not overestimate the importance of the interview because the only thing that counted in the end was what Hitler himself said.

The meeting was not, apparently, followed up and little

had been gained by it. The report is, however, of interest for the mixture of perception and blindness it reveals on the part of the church representatives concerned. They recognized the crudeness of the Nazis and were outspoken in their criticism, but they did not suspect bad faith. Like most conservative Germans, they failed to appreciate the revolutionary potential of Nazism, classifying it as an unsophisticated 'national' movement which could be rebuked for using language similar to the left wing press. For his part, the Nazi representative simply repeated the usual assurances.

Just how little attention was paid to the wishes of the church leadership was shown by Nazi participation in the parish elections of the Old Prussian Union in November 1932. Previously the church had been exempt from the Nazi system of specialized groups to penetrate professional associations, like Schemm's Lehrerbund. Wienecke's Nazi Pastorenbund had worked with the Lehrerbund, but remained a private affair. In 1931, an increasing number of Protestants became dissatisfied with the existing church parties and felt the need to form a party sympathetic to the aims of the NSDAP. This was not a new idea - the existing church parties had loose connexions with political parties like the DNVP, DVP and DDP. In the elections to the Hessen-Nassau Landeskirchentag in 1931, the first Nazi-oriented church party won 15 of the 60 seats. In November 1931, the first group to call themselves Deutsche

Christen contested the parish elections in Altenberg in Thuringia.[1]

In 1932 the connexion with the NSDAP became closer. A Nazi church party was organized at Reich level with the approval of the Reichsleitung of the NSDAP and Gauleiter were instructed to appoint Kirchenfachberater to co-operate with it. The initiative for this development seems to have come from Protestant Nazis and Kube (the leader of the NSDAP in the Prussian Landtag). Hitler may have been doubtful about becoming involved in church affairs. He opposed the original name taken by the group, Evangelische Nationalsozialisten, as it would commit the party too blatantly. Instead the title Glaubensbewegung 'Deutsche Christen' was adopted. Hossenfelder, the Reichsleiter of the new movement and later Bishop of Brandenburg, gained the impression that Gregor Strasser, the head of the NSDAP political organization, was keener on the formation of a church party than Hitler. Strasser told Hossenfelder that, unlike Hitler, he did not believe that a political movement could succeed without metaphysics, and when Hossenfelder asked him what Hitler thought of the new church party, Strasser shrugged as though Hitler's opinion was of no importance.[2] Lipservice continued to be paid to

1. K.Meier, Die Deutschen Christen (Göttingen,1964), pp.2-17.
2. Interview with Hossenfelder, 16 Jan.1968.

the principle of non-intervention in the church: ostensibly the German Christians remained independent of the NSDAP although they enjoyed the support of its organization.

The first signal for Nazi participation in the elections of the Old Prussian Union was given in January 1932 in the article by Kube in the Völkischer Beobachter, against which the church representatives protested at the meeting in Munich. In February 1932 the Berlin Oberkirchenrat received a copy of a circular from the NSDAP Gau Silesia which provided unmistakable evidence of the party's intentions.[1] It said that the NSDAP Reichsleitung had given permission for a Nazi church party called 'Protestant National Socialists' to be formed to compete in the church elections which were of the greatest importance for the Third Reich. The programme was to be 'positive Christianity in the spirit of Martin Luther'. This meant rejection of the liberal spirit of Jewish-Marxist enlightenment with humanitarianism, pacifism and Christian cosmopolitanism, emphasis on a warlike faith, preservation of the race, and the struggle against Marxism and its Christian-Social 'train-bearers'. The programme called for a new spirit in the church leadership which had disappointed by concluding a church treaty with the black-red coalition by appointing people who were unreliable by völkisch criteria to many

1. The document was sent confidentially to the Oberkirchenrat by the Westphalian Konsistorium; E.K.U., Gen.III, 51/1 (Beiheft): Westphalian Konsistorium to Oberkirchenrat, 26 Feb.1932. In April it was published in the Christliche Welt (2 April 1932, No.7).

central positions, by the decree which restricted the attendance of the S.A. at church services, and by their reserve over the Young plan and other issues. The programme repeated Kube's demand for the creation of a single, strong Reichskirche. Party members were to reject the reproach that the NSDAP wanted to bring politics into the church: they were to explain that they were acting not as a party but as Protestants following a call of faith which came from their 'national' movement; as loyal church members they had a right to demand that their movement should receive proper consideration in the life and administration of the church. Local party organizations were to appoint experts for church affairs; these were to report to the Gauleitung the names of any party members who were active church members or clergymen. Participation in the church elections was to be obligatory for all party members; the local experts for church affairs would see that party members were properly registered. Agreements with other church parties on a single list of candidates (making an election unnecessary) were only to be concluded if the National Socialists were given two thirds of the seats. Suitable literature was recommended.

The Berlin Oberkirchenrat at once wrote to the provincial church authorities of the Old Prussian Union asking them whether they knew of similar plans in their provinces.[1] The

1. E.K.U., Gen.III, 51/1 (Beiheft): Oberkirchenrat to the Konsistorium, 2 March 1932.

replies showed that evidence as clear as the Silesian circular had not come to light elsewhere but that in all the important provinces National Socialist organization for the elections in some form had started or was expected; only the province of Saxony hoped it would be able to avoid a separate National Socialist list by personal contacts with the people concerned.[1]

By June 1932 it was clear that the February Silesian circular did represent part of a general Nazi plan to contest the church elections. At the beginning of June the programme of the movement, under its new name Glaubensbewegung 'Deutsche Christen', was made public and Pastor Hossenfelder's appointment as leader was announced.[2] The programme was very similar to that of the Silesian circular but it was more detailed on the application of racialism. With reference to the charitable work of the Inner Mission it demanded protection of the race from the incapable and the inferior. The mission to the Jews was described as a serious danger for the nation because it might open the way to intermarriage, 'racial bastardy'; the mission was to cease so long as Jews had full civil rights in Germany and intermarriage with Jews was to be prohibited. It is interesting to note that the East Prussian German Christians under Wehrkreispfarrer, subsequently Reich Bishop,

1. E.K.U., Gen.III, 51/1 (Beiheft): Oberkirchenrat to the Konsistorium, 2 March 1932.
2. J.Hossenfelder, Die Richtlinien der Deutschen Christen (Berlin,1932); Völkischer Beobachter, 2 June 1932.

Ludwig Müller issued a separate programme which did not have the same racialist emphasis and was little different to the programme of the combined, traditional church parties, who in some areas formed a common front against the German Christians.[1]

True to their instructions, the German Christians denied that they were bringing politics into the church although they admitted that they had close contact with the NSDAP and used its propaganda organization.[2] The German Christians tried to select candidates who were members of the NSDAP although they were allowed to have people who simply voted for the party.[3] No German Christian could be a member of any other church party and German Christian candidates had to give a written undertaking promising to obey the party leadership.[4]

1. An East Prussian German Christian programme is printed in Buchheim, Glaubenskrise im dritten Reich, p.93. The programme of the traditional church parties, combined under the name 'Gospel and Nation', was printed in Die Reformation, 4 Sept.1932. It was most closely representative of the church policy of the DNVP. It demanded freedom for the church from interference by the state or political parties; at the same time it was strongly nationalist, anti-communist and anti-semitic. The Calvinist Reformierte Kirchenzeitung, 25 Sept.1932, criticized the 'Gospel and Nation' group for not living up to its claim to be unpolitical.
2. E.K.U., Gen.III, 51/2: report of a German Christian meeting, 29 Sept.1932; ibid., 51/1 (Beiheft): Vossische Zeitung, 25 Oct.1932.
3. ibid., 51/1 (Beiheft): Merkblatt, No.1, for the church elections, Gau Cologne-Aachen; L.K.A. Hamburg, Deutsche Christen, Rundbriefe 1932/33: Rundschreiben No.8, 31 July 193[illegible]
4. ibid., Merkblatt, No.1.

One Protestant NSDAP member in Gau Düsseldorf rebelled against the underhand way in which the party was bringing politics into the church; he denounced Hossenfelder in an open letter and refused a summons to the local Gau leadership, saying that he did not accept party discipline in matters of faith.[1] The election campaign was fought with typical Nazi élan: one German Christian meeting in Berlin had to be dispersed by the police.[2]

The church leadership tried to meet the German Christian threat by instructing the clergy and parishes to keep the elections free of political issues. In May 1932 the Oberkirchenrat wrote to the Generalsuperintendenten of the provinces saying that, in view of the National Socialist campaign and a rival Religious Socialist one, there was the gravest danger that the elections would be deprived of their proper character. The Generalsuperintendenten were told to resist this development by stressing the primacy of religious issues within the church and rejecting the intrusion of political ideals even if they were in themselves desirable. Every opportunity was to be taken through local church meetings and the press to spread an awareness of what was at stake. The

1. E.K.U., Gen.III, 51/1 (Beiheft): Pg. D. Schlickum, open letter to Hossenfelder, 5 Sept.1932, and correspondence between Schlickum and Gau Düsseldorf; cf. Christlichsozialer Volksdienst, 29 Oct.1932.
2. ibid., 51/2: Deutschvölkische Freiheitsbewegung, 30 Sept.1932; copy of a parish council meeting of the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche, 28 Sept.1932.

parishes were to be organized into small units with a reliable representative to distribute pamphlets to each house. The clergy were to be made to observe political neutrality and to put church issues first.[1] In June 1932, the Oberkirchenrat fixed the elections for 12-14 November in a public decree which reminded electors and candidates that the elections were for a church office and asked them to show a non-party attitude.[2] Several suggestions were made to postpone the elections until the political atmosphere became less heated. In October 1932 the Oberkirchenrat issued a further statement, in the name of the Kirchensenat, refusing a postponement but repeating in strong terms that the purpose of the elections was unpolitical. Only candidates who could be guaranteed to promote the spiritual, moral and social welfare of the parish on the basis of the Gospel should be elected, it said. The statement was to be circulated to all clergy, read from the pulpit and published in the local church press.[3] Although the German Christians were not named, it was clear that these statements were aimed primarily against them.[4]

1. E.K.U., Gen.III, 51/1 (Beiheft): Oberkirchenrat to Generalsuperintendenten (confidential), 24 May 1932.
2. ibid.: decree, 18 June 1932.
3. ibid., 51/2: Oberkirchenrat to Konsistorien, 14 Oct.1932.
4. ibid.: protest of German Christian Ortsgruppe, Wittenau, to Kapler, 28 Oct.1932; ibid., 51/1 (Beiheft): Vossische Zeitung, 16 Sept.1932; Montagspost, 24 Oct.1932.

The church leadership failed, however, to condemn the content of the German Christian programme despite its pronounced racialism. The church leadership adopted the same attitude to the German Christians as to the NSDAP, an attitude of critical sympathy. This ignored the difference between the two and the special responsibility of the church leadership in face of a movement which claimed to be a Protestant church party. The senior spiritual authority of the Oberkirchenrat, Vice-President Burghart, met Hossenfelder in August and September 1932. Burghart objected to the declaration demanded of German Christian candidates binding them to obey the party leadership; members of parish bodies, he said, were bound only by their oath to the church constitution and their conscience. Hossenfelder gave way and an alternative declaration was substituted which was allowed by the Oberkirchenrat although it was ambiguous.[1]

1. E.K.U., Gen.III, 51/1 (Beihert): Burghart to Hossenfelder, 6 Aug.1932; reports on discussions between Burghart and Hossenfelder, 19 Aug.1932 and 9 Sept.1932. The second declaration explicitly accepted the terms of the church constitution though it also acknowledged loyalty to the leadership of the movement. Hossenfelder explained that this meant simply attending meetings of the movement and that there was no question of interfering with freedom of conscience.

When Burghart, not in his official position but as an 'elder Christian', criticized parts of the German Christian programme, Hossenfelder replied that nothing more could be altered, whereupon Burghart said that further discussion was futile.[1] Burghart's failure to condemn the German Christians was repeated throughout the church leadership. The discussions of the provincial Superintendenten show that although there were strong objections to the movement, there was also a general feeling that the German Christians contained 'healthy' elements and that the church should show, as one official put it, friendly receptiveness not careworn defensiveness.[2]

In the elections the German Christians won about a third of the seats: in the Western provinces they were least successful, winning only about a fifth, but in East and West Prussia and in Pomerania they won about half the seats.[3] The results are difficult to interpret.[4] The German Christians

1. E.K.U., Gen.III, 51/1 (Beiheft): letter 6 Aug. and report 19 Aug.1932; also Burghart to Wienecke, 8 Aug.1932.
2. ibid.: minutes of meeting of Oberkirchenrat and General-superintendenten, 10 March 1932, and minutes of the meetings of the provincial Superintendenten.
3. See the analysis by O.Dibelius in Der Tag, 20 Nov.1932, No.279.
4. One of the main difficulties is to estimate the level of participation in the elections. The statistical office of the Kirchenbund reported that despite the excitement in Berlin, in some parishes only 75 per cent. voted, in many not over 60 per cent., in some not 50 per cent. This probably represents a percentage of those registered to vote, not of all those entitled to register. What percentage registered to vote out of the total Protestant population is not reported, although there were reports of increases in registration because of the activity of the German Christians. E.K.U., Gen.III, 51/2: report of the statistical office, 23 Feb.1933; Evangelischer Pressverband für Deutschland to Karnatz, 1 Nov.1932.

had not reached their goal; they had not conquered the church.[1] They had also done less well than might have been expected on the basis of the political elections in 1932.[2] This may indicate that the warnings of the church leadership against bringing politics into the church had some effect and that a significant number of Protestants who voted NSDAP in political elections did not want to see the party invade the church. Even the third of the seats won by the German Christians may give an exaggerated impression of the support for them among church members. The German Christians had the advantage of the NSDAP organization and the obligation laid on all party members to vote, regardless of whether they were regular church members. These tactics were likely to be especially effective in areas where church elections were not normally contested but settled by agreements between the parties.[3] Another factor in the German Christian gains was the special attitude taken by the East Prussian branch of the movement, where a moderate programme and agreements with other parties to share the seats produced one of their most successful results.[4] To summarize, the first German Christian attack had been contained within

1. This did not prevent them claiming success; L.K.A. Hamburg, Deutsche Christen, Rundbriefe 1932/33: Rundschreiben No.14, 8 Dec.1932; Evangelium im dritten Reich, 27 Nov.1932.
2. see below, pp.272-5
3. see Dibelius in Der Tag, 20 Nov.1932, No.279, and report on a meeting of the Superintendenten in Silesia, 4/5 Nov.1932 in E.K.U., Gen.III, 51/1 (Beiheft).
4. Königsberger Anzeiger, 14 Oct.1932.

modest limits but, as a report from the statistical office of the Kirchenbund pointed out, a church party had never before achieved such a high vote in so short a time.[1]

The Protestant leadership did not join the 'national opposition' before 1933 but it also did not condemn the movement. Church leaders resisted the attempt of the German Christians to make the church an instrument of the political ambitions of the NSDAP. They also supported warnings on religious grounds against aspects of the movement especially its racialism. The church leadership failed, however, to direct its criticisms publicly, officially and unambiguously at the NSDAP. Church leaders hoped that if the movement were treated with understanding it would grow out of the faults they disliked in it. Their attitude was patronizing, unrealistic and unimaginative but they were victims of skilful propaganda. As a result the church leadership, like other German conservative groups, failed to appreciate the nature of Nazism before it became subject to Nazi rule.

1. E.K.U., Gen.III, 51/2: report of 23 Feb.1933.

Chapter 6

The crisis of the Republic

The trend towards an authoritarian, right wing Government in Germany, which developed after the formation of Brüning's cabinet in March 1930 and became blatant with von Papen's illegal coup against Prussia on 20 July 1932, destroyed the basis of the policy pursued by the Protestant leadership from 1925 to 1931. The future of the Republic was jeopardized and it was uncertain what was to replace it. The rival ambitions of Hugenberg and Hitler in the 'national opposition' appeared to make it impossible to form a stable Government of the Right. Meanwhile the Communist vote increased. The political crisis unfolded against a background of severe economic depression, violence and lawlessness. It seemed that Germany might sink into civil war.[1]

The church leadership responded to the situation by condemning violence and proclaiming the ideal of a civilized community. It tried to keep the church free of political strife and stressed the duty of the church to set an example to the rest of the nation. It failed, however, to condemn those who were responsible for violence by name, preferring general exhortations. On the political front, the Protestant

1. W.Conze and H.Raupach, Die Staats-und Wirtschaftskrise des Deutschen Reichs 1929/33 (Stuttgart,1967), especially R.Vierhaus, Auswirkungen der Krise um 1930 in Deutschland Beiträge zu einer historisch-psychologischen Analyse and W.Conze, Die politischen Entscheidungen in Deutschland 1929-1933.

leadership watched the subversion of parliamentary government without comment and probably without regret. It was anxious, though, that the sections of the Reich constitution which guaranteed the privileges of the church should be upheld, and it feared that the rule of law might be undermined. It hoped to protect its rights by personal contact with individual Reich authorities.

The Kirchentag which met in June 1930 declared that the duty of the church in the existing crisis was,

> 'to offer a torn and divided nation a discernible and living community in the strength of faith and love, stronger than all class and professional sectional interests, stronger than the conflict of power groups, stronger than economic compulsion'.[1]

The Kirchenausschuss considered a further, similar declaration in October 1931 but this was opposed by some members who felt that a proliferation of declarations would make them ineffective and others who thought that it would be taken as criticism of the 'national opposition'.[2] In May 1932, the Kirchenausschuss did issue a new declaration which criticised the hatred, lust

1. Verhandlungen, Kirchentag, 1930, pp.312-3.
2. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting, 22-3 Oct.1931.

for power, injustice and untruth which were prevalent. However, its main emphasis was on the responsibility of foreign Governments for the crisis.[1]

The internal threat to peace was highlighted, however, in declarations by individual Landeskirchen. In April 1931, the Hesse-Kassel Kirchentag warned against the increasing savagery of political life. It demanded respect for law and order and accused those who threatened violence and civil war of playing with fire. Similar declarations were issued by the Thuringian Kirchentag and by Bishop Rendtorff of Mecklenburg-Schwerin.[2] Other church leaders followed in 1932 after Kapler had written to them supporting a request from Groener, in his capacity as Reich Minister of the Interior, that the church should help him combat political violence. Groener wrote that the problem had reached proportions which one would not have thought possible in a nation of Germany's historical and cultural importance.[3] In a New Year address the Bishop of Saxony referred to the terrible statistics of Germans murdering each other, and the Bishop of Brunswick

1. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the meeting of 24-6 May 1932. The declaration was printed in J.Hosemann, Der Deutsche Evangelische Kirchenbund, pp.189-90; cf. above, p.205.
2. Copies of the declarations in E.K.D., A 2/478.
3. ibid.: Groener to Kapler, 5 Dec.1931; Kapler to the Landeskirchen, 31 Dec.1931. On Groener, see F.L.Carsten, The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933, pp.333-50.

asked how political parties could consider it an achievement to attack defenceless members of rival groups; Germany's enemies were laughing at her, he added, - did the nation want to destroy itself?[1] Kapler wrote to the Landeskirchen again in July 1932 after 17 people had been murdered in Altona on Sunday 17 July, some of them during church services. Some Landeskirchen issued fresh appeals warning against civil war.[2]

These measures were sincere and salutary but their effect was blunted because church leaders avoided condemning particular groups. In October 1931, the Kirchenausschuss even decided against a general condemnation of violence partly because a Nazi attack on Jews and Jewish shops had just taken place on the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin. The Kirchenausschuss was afraid that its statement would look like direct condemnation of the NSDAP.[3] The Frankfurt Landeskirche was in favour of a statement - the Quakers issued one - but the Anhalt and Hamburg Landeskirchen did not want this particular

1. Copies of the declarations in E.K.D., A 2/478.
2. ibid.: Kapler to the Landeskirchen, 26 July 1932. The Old Prussian Union, Württemberg, Thuringia, Hesse-Kassel, Anhalt and Bremen took action as a result; ibid.: replies of the Landeskirchen. The pastors of Altona issued their own declaration, which anticipated principles later adopted by the Protestant opposition in the Third Reich. It is printed in K.D.Schmidt, Die Bekenntnisse des Jahres 1933 (2nd.edn., Gottingen,1937), pp.19-25; cf. the memoirs of one of its authors, H.Asmussen, Zur jüngsten Kirchengeschichte (Stuttgart,1961), pp.27-31.
3. E.K.D., A 2/478: Kapler to Graf Vitzthum, 18 Jan.1932. cf. K.D.Bracher, Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik (4th edn., Villingen,1964), p.376.

incident singled out for comment.[1] The Berlin Oberkirchenrat also refused a request from Jewish circles that it should condemn acts of desecration against Jewish cemeteries, on the grounds that there was no reason to believe that Protestants had been involved.[2] This evasion was consistent with the policy of political neutrality, but it was less forceful than the attitude previously adopted by the Kirchenausschuss on the occasion of the murder of Rathenau.

Similar measures with similar limitations were taken to prevent exploitation of the church by political groups and to restrain clergy from party political activity. The problem of 'Stahlhelm pastors' taking part in demonstrations against the Republic had embarrassed the Prussian church leadership since 1928. Fearful of the consequences of this activity for the negotiation of the Prussian treaty, the Oberkirchenrat and Generalsuperintendenten decided to bring private pressure to bear on the pastors concerned, whom they described as a few trouble makers. In 1929 the Oberkirchenrat issued a decree restricting the access of political groups to the church to purely religious occasions and recommending that, even then, they should attend the normal parish service.[3]

1. E.K.D., A 2/478: letters from the Landeskirchen and copy of the Quakers' declaration, Oct.1931.
2. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 46/1: extract from the minutes of a meeting of the Oberkirchenrat and the Generalsuperintendenten, 26-7 Feb.1931.
3. E.K.U., Gen.VI, 16/2: extract from the minutes of a meeting of the Oberkirchenrat and the Generalsuperintendenten, 28 Sept.1928; E.K.D., A 2/478: copy of the decree, 23 April 1929.

The increasing political bitterness of the years 1930-1932 made the problem more serious. In January 1931, the Prussian Kultusministerium approached the Oberkirchenrat about complaints that had been received concerning the activity of Nazi pastors. A Kultusministerium official mentioned Government measures against civil servants joining the party and asked what the attitude of the church would be towards its pastors. Kapler said that the church would not consider mere membership of the NSDAP an offence, but pastors who belonged to the party would have to obey the usual restrictions on political activity laid down by the church. When pressed by the Kultusministerium official on the question of whether the NSDAP was a violent, revolutionary organization, Kapler said that he did not think that it had been proved that it was; he did not consider remarks attributed to individual Nazis, or particular newspaper articles, sufficient evidence. Kapler added that the Prussian Government would not accept all the remarks attributed to the SPD - such as threats to sabotage national defence and a speech by Grzesinski, the Police President of Berlin (who had said he would like to see the enemies of the Republic hanged) - as responsible statements of that party.[1]

1. E.K.U., Gen.VI, 2/2: note by Kapler on a discussion with Trendelenburg, 30 Jan.1931. On Grzesinski, see V.R.Berghahn, Der Stahlhelm. Bund der Frontsoldaten 1918-1935 (Düsseldorf, 1966), p.166.

By the summer of 1931, the Landeskirchen of Thuringia, Württemberg, and Bavaria (right of the Rhine) had taken special precautions against party political exploitation of the church.[1] Following a request from the Kultusministerium that it should do the same, the Old Prussian Union issued a new decree in November 1931.[2] This laid down that church buildings, the pulpit and church services (including those reserved for particular groups) were to be kept free of politics. The decree warned against the attendance of groups with their insignia at church services and said that the parish councils must ensure that the church did not thereby become involved in a political demonstration.

The decree was criticized by the Kultusministerium because it gave no indication of the basic attitude of the church to the NSDAP.[3] It was also attacked by the Stahlhelm and the NSDAP who saw it as a threat to their propaganda.[4] In fact, it was a meak measure. Uniformed groups were still allowed to attend church services provided that local parish councils decided that they did not threaten the peace of the

1. On Thuringia, see K-W.Dahm, Pfarrer und Politik, pp.81-7. Copies of the measures taken in Württemberg and Bavaria are in E.K.D., A 2/478.
2. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 231/1: Kultusministerium to Oberkirchenrat, 19 June 1931; copy of the Oberkirchenrat decree of 21 Nov.1931 in E.K.D., A 2/478.
3. ibid.: Kultusministerium to Oberkirchenrat, 5 Jan.1932.
4. Der Stahlhelm, 6 Dec.1931, No.49, and Die Brennessel, 16 Dec.1931, No.28 (see Plate 4).

church.[1] The sympathy for the 'national opposition' within the church meant that, in most parishes, the decree was likely to be interpreted generously in favour of anti-Republican groups. When the Stahlhelm tried to obtain precise clarification of the decree from the Oberkirchenrat, the Oberkirchenrat insisted only that party flags could not be erected within the church except at special services for the group concerned; otherwise, the Stahlhelm was told, it would have to make ad hoc arrangements with the local parish authorities.[2]

Most Landeskirchen took comparable measures in 1931-1932.[3] Detailed restrictions were imposed in Thuringia, Württemberg, Schleswig-Holstein, Oldenburg, Bavaria (right of the Rhine) and Lübeck. Other Landeskirchen simply recommended restraint by the clergy or condemned political violence in general. Some small Landeskirchen said that measures were unnecessary in their areas. Nowhere were clergy forbidden to join the NSDAP. Württemberg imposed the greatest restrictions and prohibited its clergy taking part in the campaign for the Reichstag

1. The spiritual Vice-President of the Oberkirchenrat argued that the church leadership had to be cautious because technically the matter came within the autonomy granted to individual parishes by the constitution of the Old Prussian Union. Church leaders were, however, anyway anxious not to offend the 'national opposition'. E.K.U., Gen.VI, 16/4: minutes of a meeting of Burghart and the East Prussian Superintendenten, 22-3 Feb.1932.
2. E.K.U., Gen.VI, 16/4: Der Stahlhelm - Bundesamt to Oberkirchenrat, 5 April 1932; Oberkirchenrat reply, 22 April.
3. Copies are in E.K.D., A 2/478; see also, Kirchliches Jahrbuch 59.Jg. (1932), 133-64.

election of November 1932.[1]

Some church leaders may have been prevented from taking firmer action by doubts about the legality of restricting political activity. In Thuringia, the Landeskirche had to withdraw part of its decrees when Religious Socialists complained to the Reich Minister of the Interior that their constitutional rights had been infringed.[2] A more important motive, however, was fear of alienating the NSDAP. In a report to the Kirchenausschuss in November 1932, President Wurm of Württemberg said that the measures showed the desire of church leaders to preserve the neutrality of the church but also

> 'to bring to a mighty national movement, like National Socialism, even though it is objectionable in many respects, the greatest possible measure of understanding for its motives. The mistake of the church towards socialism should not be repeated'.[3]

It is difficult to assess the contribution of the Protestant church to the anti-Republican Right. Political exploitation of the church certainly caused concern to the Protestant leadership in most parts of Germany during 1930-1932. The number of political agitators among Protestant clergy, however, was probably small. In 1931 the Prussian

1. E.K.D., A 2/479: text of a report by President Wurm of Württemberg to the Kirchenausschuss in November 1932.
2. K-W.Dahm, Pfarrer und Politik, pp.81-7.
3. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the meeting of the Kirchenausschuss, 24-5 Nov.1932.

Kultusministerium reported 32 cases of anti-Republican activity; the church authorities took some action in 15 of these; in one, the public prosecutor instituted legal proceedings which failed: in several cases the Oberkirchenrat reported that its investigation had shown that the accusations were tendentious. The Kultusministerium did not always agree with the decision of the Oberkirchenrat, but it recognized that the incidents involved only a small minority of the 9000 Prussian Protestant clergy. The evidence in 1932 produced a similar conclusion.[1]

A small group of dedicated pastors, however, could be used to great effect. The most famous example was 'Pastor' Münchmeyer, whose parish had been the anti-semitic seaside resort of Borkum until he was expelled from the Hanover-Lutheran Landeskirche for immorality; thereafter he became one of the most successful Nazi orators in Lower Saxony.[2] In most Landeskirchen there were some pastors who were willing to campaign for the NSDAP. Wurm wrote that in Württemberg the Nazis had derived 'great benefit' from this type of support before the Landeskirche prohibited it.[3] Even where a

1. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 231/2: draft by a Kultusministerium official for a statement to the Landtag, 19 Feb.1932; ibid., 231/1: Oberkirchenrat to Kultusministerium, 19 Nov.1931; Kultusministerium to Minister President Braun and Oberkirchenrat, 5 Jan.1932.
2. J.D.Noakes, 'The NSDAP in Lower Saxony 1921-1933: A Study of National Socialist Organisation and Propaganda' (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford,1967), pp.160-3, and E.K.U., Gen.XII, 46/1.
3. E.K.D., A 2/479: Wurm to Kapler, 19 Oct.1932.

Landeskirche imposed specific restrictions on its clergy, these could be evaded by bringing a pastor from another Landeskirche.[1]

Perhaps even more important was the degree of tolerance shown to the 'national opposition' by the church leadership. Religious Socialists alleged that the Landeskirchen connived at the political activity of anti-Republican groups but were hostile to the Social Democrats.[2] Even if these accusations were not wholly true of the practice of the church leadership, they accurately reflected its sympathies. Despite their general warnings against the type of behaviour commonly associated with the NSDAP and the KPD, the attitude of the church leadership was deliberately permissive. This must have

1. E.K.D., A 2/479: Evangelischer Pressverband für Bayern to the Landeskirche authorities in Munich, 24 Nov.1932, reporting that the DNVP and NSDAP had made use of this loophole.

2. Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 59.Jg. (1932), 41-51. E.A.Suck, Der religiöse Sozialismus in der Weimarer Republik (unpublished Diss.Phil., Marburg,1953), pp.152, 201-2 et segg. See also the criticism of the church leadership by a left wing Professor of theology, Günther Dehn, who had a reputation as a pacifist and was driven from Halle University by a campaign of obstruction and intimidation organized by Nazi students. Dehn argues that the church leadership should have supported him but it remained silent. G.Dehn, Die alte Zeit, Die vorigen Jahre (Munich,1962), pp.247-85; cf. Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 59.Jg. (1932), 77-113, and E.Bizer, Der Fall Dehn in W.Schneemelcher, Festschrift für Günther Dehn (Neukirchen,1957), pp.239-61.

helped the NSDAP which drew most of its support from the Protestant Mittelstand and had a considerable following among church members.[1]

Despite the indulgence shown to the 'national opposition' by the Protestant leadership as a body, some church leaders had strong reservations about the movement. At the Reich Presidential election of March-April 1932, Kapler and a number of other church leaders signed public declarations in support of Hindenburg.[2] They followed the small group of German conservatives who remained loyal to Hindenburg against the candidates of the 'national opposition' - Hitler and Duesterberg - although this meant voting with the Republican parties, the Centre and SPD. This was an unprecedented step for Kapler, since he had previously avoided public political commitment. He may have been persuaded that it was necessary because of Hindenburg's reluctance to stand again, and the value that the Reich President was known to attach to the support of individual leaders from all walks of German public

1. H.Christ, Der politische Protestantismus, pp.30-52.
2. The others included the spiritual Vice-President of the Oberkirchenrat, Burghart; another member of the Oberkirchenrat, Domprediger Richter; the Generalsuperintendenten of Berlin and East Prussia; two members of the Konsistorium of the province of Brandenburg; the Bishop and President of the Landeskirche of Hessen-Nassau; the Bishop of Mecklenburg-Strelitz; Prälat Schoell and the President of the Württemberg Synod from the Württemberg Landeskirche. E.K.D., A 2/485: Kapler to Ministerialrat Doehle, 5 April 1932.

life - especially those from conservative institutions.[1]

Kapler's action provoked criticism from church circles close to the 'national opposition'. Bishop Rendtorff of Mecklenburg-Schwerin wrote to the Kirchenausschuss and all the Landeskirchen saying that the signatures of the Prussian leadership would be widely considered as representing the attitude of the church. This was particularly regrettable, he said, since 'precisely the Prussian Oberkirchenrat has so far shown and demanded the utmost reserve towards the German freedom movement'. Rendtorff suggested that as a result the church would find it harder to perform the service which it owed to the nation.[2]

Rendtorff's criticism was the first sign of a challenge developing within the Protestant leadership to Kapler's moderate conservative policy. Most church leaders did not commit themselves, but some apart from Rendtorff were known to oppose Hindenburg.[3] A section of the Protestant press and the right wing Evangelischer Bund also opposed Hindenburg. Der Reichsbote implied that his candidature was linked with the forces of 'Godlessness', a favourite tactic of the 'national

1. On the background to the election, see A.Dorpalen, Hindenburg and the Weimar Republic (Princeton,1964), pp.268-71.
2. E.K.D., A 2/485: Oberkirchenrat Schwerin to Kirchenausschuss, 4 March 1932.
3. See the reports in Vossische Zeitung, 31 March 1932 in E.K.U., Gen.I, 61, and Die Reformation, 6 March 1932, No.5 in E.K.D., A 2/479. Also Kapler to the Kirchensenat of the Old Prussian Union; E.K.U., Gen.I,61: minutes of a meeting of 9 March 1932.

opposition' designed to appeal to Protestants.[1] The evidence for Protestant opposition to Hindenburg led to a complaint from one of the Reich President's officials, Ministerialrat Doehle. He wrote to Kapler pointing out that the only real alternative to Hindenburg was Hitler (a Catholic) and asked Kapler to consider measures to halt the anti-Hindenburg movement within the church. Kapler replied that like himself, a large number of leading Protestants had come out in support of Hindenburg, but those who thought differently must be free to act as they thought right. Official influence in favour of a particular candidate would be against the nature of Protestantism and anyway probably counter-productive, he added.[2]

It is difficult to estimate the extent of support among church members for Hitler.[3] About 75 per cent. of Hitler's vote in the second ballot probably came from Protestants. This

1. E.K.U., Gen.I, 61: copy of an advertisement for Der Reichsbote aimed at Protestant readers. H.Christ, Der politische Protestantismus, pp.379-80.
2. E.K.D., A 2/485: Doehle to Kapler, 21 March 1932; Kapler's reply, 5 April 1932.
3. The following figures are a rough calculation based on a comparison of the Presidential election results of 10 April 1932 with the Reichstag elections of 31 July 1932 and the figures for the denominational division of the Reich at the census of 1925 and the estimated number of Protestant communicants at the same time. A.Milatz, Wähler und Wahlen in der Weimarer Republik (Bonn,1965), pp.137-44. Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 54.Jg. (1927), 144-5, 223.

represented only 35 per cent. of Protestants entitled to vote; however, on the assumption that most of the SPD Protestant vote (which went to Hindenburg) came from nominal Protestants and not those who went to church, the proportion of active Protestants who voted for Hitler may have been as high as 60 per cent., with 25 per cent. voting for Hindenburg and 15 per cent. (about the national average) abstaining. This suggests that the views of Kapler and the other church leaders who rejected the 'national opposition' were shared by only a minority of church members.

Kapler's public support for Hindenburg in the presidential election was the last Vernunftrepublikaner gesture of the Protestant leadership. The appointment of von Papen as Reich Chancellor, on 30 May 1932, presented church leaders with a new challenge. Instead of the problems of adjusting to a parliamentary Republic, the church leadership was faced with the prospect that ~~the~~ Republican democracy would disappear. It had to decide which parts of the Weimar constitution it wished to see preserved and how it should respond to a régime which again proclaimed the ideal of a 'Christian state'.

The problem of Reichsreform had been considered by the church leadership since 1930, as the result of ~~the~~ public debate about reorganizing the division of responsibilities between the Reich and Länder.[1] In April 1932, Bishop Mahrahrens

1. E.K.D., A 2/344: minutes of the meeting of the legal subcommittee of the Kirchenausschuss, 25 Nov.1930.

of Hanover became concerned because the church had not been represented in official discussions of the problem.[1] At the same time, Kapler engaged an authority on church law, Professor Heckel, to prepare a report on the consequences of Reichsreform for the church.[2] The legal subcommittee of the Kirchenausschuss considered the question in May 1932 and Kapler said that the church should demand the preservation of the ecclesiastical guarantees in the Reich constitution and that if a second chamber of parliament were created, the church should have a place in it.[3] In another meeting, he added that the Reich constitution was not faultless and that the Kirchenausschuss should therefore oppose only 'fundamental upheavals'.[4] The Kirchenausschuss accepted Kapler's recommendations; it also declared that it would prefer that no change should be made in the existing structure of the Reich and Länder during the national crisis. This met the wishes of von Pechmann, in particular, who believed strongly in Länder autonomy.[5] Kapler had also said that the Old Prussian Union would oppose, with all its strength, the disintegration of Prussia.[6]

1. E.K.D., A 2/483: Marahrens to Kapler, 18 Feb.1932.
2. ibid.: Kapler to Heckel, 26 April 1932; Heckel's reply, 30 April.
3. E.K.D., A 2/344: minutes of the meeting of the legal subcommittee, 22-3 May 1932.
4. E.K.D., A 2/484: minutes of the Kirchenbundesrat meeting of 26-7 May 1932.
5. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 24-6 May 1932.
6. E.K.D., A 2/344: minutes of the legal subcommittee meeting, 22-3 May 1932.

In June 1932, Kapler wrote to von Papen and the Reich Minister of the Interior, von Gayl, informing them of the views of the Kirchenausschuss.[1] The church leadership did not protest against the overthrow of the Prussian Government on 20 July; it was apparently content that a separate Prussian administration had been maintained. Indeed, it had reason to be pleased when the new Reichskommissar, Bracht, promptly issued a decree restoring to the church some influence over religious education in schools. The Berlin Oberkirchenrat had worked for this since 1927 and had been involved in a bitter dispute with the last Prussian Kultusminister, Grimme, because, under pressure from the school teachers' association, he repeatedly deferred a decision.[2]

In October 1932, von Papen promised in a speech in Munich that constitutional reform would be introduced during the next session of the Reichstag.[3] Kapler wrote again to the Chancellor and to von Gayl, demanding that the views of the church should be heard. Von Gayl replied that the interests of the church would be taken into account and that this applied particularly

1. E.K.D., A 2/483: Kapler to von Papen and von Gayl, 15 June 1932.
2. Details of the dispute are to be found in: D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76 VII neu, Sekt.1 B Gen., Pt.I, 2/26 and E.K.U., Gen.XIV, 32/2-3. There is also a collection of press cuttings about it in E.K.U., Gen.XIV, 32/Beiheft, Pressestimmen.
3. The speech was reported in the Vossische Zeitung, 12 Oct. 1932; (E.K.D., A 2/484).

to the possibility of creating another chamber of parliament. He added that the Government did not intend to alter the structure of the Reich or the clauses of the constitution which dealt with religious societies.[1]

Professor Heckel presented his report on Reichsreform to the legal subcommittee of the Kirchenausschuss on 14 November.[2] The main interest of the report was that it argued that the church should be concerned not only with the ecclesiastical guarantees of the constitution but also with proposals for political reform. Heckel said that the church 'would have to express its interest in the maintenance of stable, constitutional, Government and the prevention of one-sided, "authoritarian" party rule'. He added that reform of the constitution should be introduced legally not by revolutionary or "dictatorial" methods. This was a reference to the views of certain right wing groups who demanded that, if necessary, reform should be

1. E.K.D., A 2/484: Kapler to Papen and von Gayl, 28 Oct.1932; Gayl's reply, 19 Nov.1932.

2. ibid.: copy of Hosemann to Marahrens, 18 Nov.1932, with a statement of the main points of Heckel's report. This is the only version of the report which has survived.

introduced by unconstitutional means.[1]

Von Papen's Government fell before the next meeting of the Kirchenausschuss on 24-5 November. The legal subcommittee recommended that because of the renewed uncertainty, the Kirchenausschuss should maintain an attitude of reserve. The committee had decided that it was not their task to comment on the methods by which reform might be introduced. The committee also considered such comment futile: there was very little prospect of reform by constitutional methods (because of the opposition of the Reichstag), and the threat of unconstitutional action would not be affected by any comment of the Kirchenausschuss. Similarly, despite Heckel's arguments, the committee felt that the Kirchenausschuss should make no decision about proposals for political reform since, 'the danger of slipping into political territory .... must be avoided at all costs'. On the whole, the report expressed

1. The best known statement of their case was Carl Schmitt, Legalität und Legitimität (Munich and Leipzig,1932). In his regular 'Sunday mirror' article for the DNVP newspaper, Der Tag, on 2 Oct.1932, O.Dibelius argued that it might be necessary in the national interest for the highest authority of the Reich to break with the letter of the constitution. Dibelius argued that Luther had been prepared to sanction action of this kind, and that although the church could take no part in it, it could give those responsible a good conscience. The article was attacked by the Vossische Zeitung, 7 Oct.1932, which said that Dibelius had expressed the ideas of Carl Schmitt in the language of the church. Copies of the articles are in E.K.U., Gen.I, 61.

satisfaction with the measures that had been taken by the Government and the assurances which it had given. It suggested that the only point which still needed to be clarified was the right of the church to appeal to the Staatsgerichtshof if it came into conflict with the Land Government. The Kirchenausschuss simply took note of the report and asked Kapler to see that the interests of the church were protected.[1]

The attitude of the Kirchenausschuss shows that the church leadership was not prepared publicly to defend parliamentary government or even the rule of law. It did not acknowledge that the guarantees of the Reich constitution, which it wished to see preserved, themselves depended on the continuance of constitutional government. There is also no evidence that it felt under an obligation because of its previous declarations of loyalty to the constitution. It sheltered behind the argument that political issues lay outside its competence and that to comment on them would be futile. The political confusion and atmosphere of crisis in 1932 made it natural for the church leadership to avoid public controversy. At the same time, its attitude clearly demonstrates the limits of the commitment felt by the church leadership to the Republican constitution.

1. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 24-5 Nov.1932.

Some church leaders were tempted to go further and to support von Papen's authoritarian, 'Christian' programme. In October 1932, President Wurm of Württemberg suggested that the Kirchenausschuss should consider whether it could not take a more active part in political life and he introduced a discussion of the subject at the next Kirchenausschuss meeting on 24-5 November 1932.[1] Wurm referred to the work of several theologians who had argued that the liberal state with its doctrine of the sovereignty of the individual was coming to an end and had implied that this might create an opportunity for the church.[2] Wurm also mentioned the revival of the phrase 'Christian state' by von Papen and von Gayl.[3] He said that this caused him some uneasiness and that of course there was no question of forcing people to be Christian again, but, he continued,

'a state which makes it possible to be a Christian

1. E.K.D., A 2/479: Wurm to Kapler, 19 Oct.1932, and the text of his speech to the Kirchenausschuss, which he sent to Kapler on 15 Jan.1933.
2. Wurm referred to F.Gogarten, A. de Quervain, W.Stapel, P.Althaus and H.Gerber. For the titles of their books, see the bibliography. For a general discussion of the type of political theory to which they subscribed, see K.Sontheimer, Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik (Munich, 1962).
3. The Centre Party newspaper, Germania, 7 July 1932, No.187, commented on the use of this phrase by the Government and pointed out that it was meant to be a critique of Brüning's so called 'alliance with Godlessness'. See also, F. von Papen, Memoirs (London,1952), p.160.

> because it at least puts it (Christianity) in its programme should be welcome to us and we should gladly allow "politics based on faith"[1] to be commended .... These are signs of a way of thought, which until recently was not considered possible any longer, a seeking after lost values, which it would be unjust to call reaction or restoration, even though one will bear in mind that it can border on this'.

The Kirchenausschuss treated Wurm's views with caution.[2] In the discussion it was emphasized that the church should not allow itself to be attached to any political front. Wurm himself did not propose that the Kirchenausschuss should take any particular initiative. It decided simply to discuss the subject again at its next meeting and a committee was set up to prepare a report.

This attitude of reserve was in line with the principle of political neutrality. The Protestant leadership may also have felt some suspicion of von Papen because he was a Roman Catholic. On the other hand, his Minister of the Interior, von Gayl, was a Protestant and when von Gayl resigned, Kapler thanked him in a private letter for his 'strong personal and statesmanlike confession of Christianity'.[3] The most important

1. A phrase used by von Papen to contrast his 'conservative politics based on faith' with Nazi 'faith based on politics'; reported in Vossische Zeitung, 12 Oct.1932, No.490.
2. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting, 24-5 Nov.1932.
3. E.K.D., A 2/484: Kapler to von Gayl, 29 Dec.1932. On von Gayl, see W.Schotte, Das Kabinett Papen Schleicher Gayl (Leipzig,1932), pp.85-6, and Degeners Wer ist's (10th edn., Berlin,1935), pp.473-4.

reason for the reserve shown by the church leadership was probably fear that the 'new course' in German politics rested on unsure foundations and might end in disaster. When the Kirchenausschuss met in November 1932 von Papen's Government had already fallen after widespread fear that his plans would lead to cávil war. Under these circumstances it would obviously have been unwise for the church leadership to commit itself publicly to his régime.

Kapler maintained the same attitude towards the next Government under General von Schleicher. He intervened twice on specific matters of importance to the church. On 25 November, he wrote to Hindenburg, asking that in any change of Government, the Reich Minister of the Interior should be a Protestant since this office was of particular importance to the church. Meissner, Hindenburg's head of department, replied that the Reich President had gladly taken note of the suggestion.[1] In fact, von Schleicher appointed the Roman Catholic Reichskommissar in Prussia, Bracht, to the post.[2] On 10 January 1933, Kapler wrote to Bracht expressing his concern about public criticism of the Staatsgerichtshof (which had been under attack from right wing circles for its partial condemnation of von Papen's coup against Prussia), and saying that the court must be

1. E.K.D., A 2/484: Kapler to Hindenburg, 25 Nov.1932; Meissner to Kapler, 29 Nov.1932.
2. K.D.Bracher, Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik, pp.583, 677.

preserved since it was 'the one above-party, independent authority for disputes between church and state which, as is well known, have unfortunately often arisen in past years'. An official in the Ministry telephoned to say that he was offended by the letter and that Christian conviction was so strongly represented in the Ministry that the churches were in no danger.[1]

One church leader, Bishop Bernewitz of Brunswick, felt so anxious about the continuing threat to the rule of law that he demanded that the church leadership should take a clear stand against his own former political party, the DNVP, which he considered chiefly guilty. In a letter to Kapler, on 27 January 1933, he pointed out that although the DNVP claimed to be loyal to the church, it had also become the main enemy of the Staatsgerichtshof. He warned that if the policy of the DNVP succeeded it would lead to chaos. He argued that 'the small clique of politicians with vested interests', who were trying to gain power by pushing aside the constitution and the Staatsgerichtshof, might prepare the way for a soviet dictatorship by breaking down all the constitutional safeguards against it. In addition, if this clique tried to establish its own rule on the basis of

1. E.K.D., A 2/484: Kapler to Bracht, 10 Jan.1933 and note, 16 Jan.1933 about the telephone conversation. On the criticism of the Staatsgerichtshof, see K.D.Bracher, Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik, p.642, n.183.

arbitrary power, the result would be civil war. Bernewitz stressed that the church had a duty to condemn anyone - however exalted their position - who exploited power for sectional advantage. The letter closed with an appeal for the Protestant leadership to speak out; otherwise, Bernewitz predicted, it would lose all importance.[1]

Kapler took no action on the letter. Bernewitz's views were probably much more extreme than those of the majority of church leaders. Nevertheless, it is likely that the fears he expressed, particularly of civil war, were common to most of them. As a result the church leadership avoided public, political commitment until the formation of Hitler's coalition Government and the quick assertion of its authority in the state seemed to offer a solution to the national crisis.

1. E.K.D., A 2/484: Bernewitz to Kapler, 27 Jan.1933.

Chapter 7

The 'national revolution', January-July 1933

Hitler's assumption of power came as a relief to the Protestant leadership after the uncertainty of 1932. However, the intentions of the NSDAP towards the church remained unclear. The contradictions within the party on religious questions were not resolved by the conquest of power; they simply became more alarming. As a result, church leaders remained uncertain in their attitude towards the new Government. They were filled with a mixture of hope and fear - hope that a 'Christian state' with strong leadership would be restored, fear that the Nazi revolution would not respect the independence of the church.

Neither the Nazi party nor the Protestant leadership preserved a united front towards the other. Within the Nazi party, Frick and Buttmann at the Reich Ministry of the Interior showed restraint in church matters but at the Prussian Kultusministerium Rust and Jäger adopted a policy of aggressive interference.[1]

1. W.Conrad, Der Kampf um die Kanzeln (Berlin,1957), pp.12-31. Conrad was a senior official in the Reich Ministry of the Interior who had had responsibility for church affairs since 1922. In the Prussian Kultusministerium the chief official for Protestant affairs, Ministerialdirektor Trendelenburg, tried to restrain his minister until he was dismissed at the end of June and replaced by Jäger. D.Z.A. Potsdam, Reich Min.f.d.kirchl.Angelegenheiten, 23463: memorandum by Trendelenburg, 22 June 1933; Conrad, op.cit. pp.13-4.

Hitler allowed both policies. His own attitude is uncertain.[1] In a private conversation in April 1933 he explained that the churches had to be destroyed but that an indirect approach would be more effective than an open conflict.[2] At the same time he appointed a personal representative for the affairs of the Protestant church, Pfarrer Ludwig Müller, and encouraged Müller's attempt to take over the leadership of the church.

The Kirchenausschuss was split by the multiple challenge of Nazism. The majority of church leaders followed Kapler in a policy of co-operation with the Government in its 'national' aims combined with defence of the independence of the church as an institution. A minority, however, felt that Kapler's concept of church independence was out of date and that the church should accept a closer relationship with the new state. The position was complicated by the activity of the 'German Christians' who considered themselves the representatives of the NSDAP within the church and who were themselves divided between moderate and extreme groups.

The tensions between church and state and within the church led to an open conflict in May-June 1933 over the appointment of the first Reich Bishop, a post created as part of an extension of the Kirchenbund to give the central

1. See K.Scholder, Die evangelische Kirche in der Sicht der nationalsozialistischen Führung, Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 16.Jg.(1968), pp.15-26.
2. H.Rauschning, Hitler Speaks (London,1939), pp.55-65.

organization of German Protestantism greater authority. The conflict led to Kapler's resignation and ended in defeat for his policy. This defeat marks the beginning of the Kirchenkampf and the end of an era in the history of the church leadership.

1. The Kirchenausschuss met on 2-3 March 1933 and decided to continue the same policies as it had adopted before 1933.[1] President Wurm reported on the work of the committee set up in November 1932 to consider the attitude of the church to political questions. The committee suggested that a confidential circular should be sent to the Landeskirchen emphasizing that the church should serve the whole nation regardless of political change. The circular said that the whole Gospel should be preached and that the church should see that it commanded the loyalty of all its clergy, especially those in organizations whose activity within the church was determined by secular considerations (a reference to the German Christians). The circular welcomed the new Government's aim to cleanse the life of the nation and promised the co-operation of the church in this task; in return, it said, the church leadership would demand that the Government should respect the wishes of the church. The circular was approved by 17 votes to 11. Several members of the Kirchenausschuss thought that its tone was too

1. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 2-3 March 1933.

cool towards the new state; the Vice-President of the Berlin Oberkirchenrat, Hundt, spoke for the National Socialists and asked whether it would not be right for the church to express its 'gratitude, joy and trust' at the change which had been 'given by God'. In addition to the confidential circular to the Landeskirchen, the Kirchenausschuss issued a short public declaration for the Reichstag elections on 5 March exhorting church members to practise love, truthfulness and unselfishness.

Despite its undertaking to serve the whole nation the Protestant leadership did not oppose any aspect of the political revolution carried out by the Nazis between March and July 1933, except where the independence of the church was directly threatened. Protestant leaders were sympathetic towards some of the changes - those which they regarded as 'cleansing the life of the nation'. They ignored, for instance, the destruction of trade unions and political parties and the purge of Catholic, Socialist and Jewish civil servants. They did not try even to protect Protestant Professors of theology with liberal or socialist sympathies from being dismissed.[1]

1. Oberkirchenrat officials simply reported to the Generalsuperintendenten that they had heard from official sources that several Professors would be dismissed on political grounds; E.K.U., Gen.III, 17/3: minutes of a meeting of the Oberkirchenrat and the Generalsuperintendenten, 11 April 1933.

They also turned a blind eye to the violence which accompanied the revolution.[1] Even where Protestant leaders felt misgivings about Government reforms - for instance they were concerned that the Ermächtigungsgesetz could be used to nullify the religious guarantees of the Weimar Constitution - they felt too weak to risk intervention.[2] They also accepted the destruction of Länder autonomy without protest.[3]

In an important sermon at the ceremony in Potsdam on 21 March to mark the opening of the new Reichstag, General-superintendent O. Dibelius defended the right of the Government to take harsh measures to restore order but added a plea for mercy and a warning against arbitrary rule. He said,

> 'We have learned from Dr. Martin Luther that the Church must not oppose the lawful public authority when that

1. One case of a retired Pastor belonging to the Religious Socialists being taken away and assaulted by the S.A. was reported to Kapler personally and he informed the police but he did not raise the matter in public; E.K.D., Gen.VI, 27/1: note of Kapler, 13 May 1933.

2. E.K.D., A 2/426: Hosemann to Seetzen, 22 March 1933, arguing that it would certainly be futile for the church to intervene and that it might jeopardize future co-operation with the Government; Seetzen (acting for Kapler) replied on 23 March agreeing with Hosemann's argument. Kapler did write to Hindenburg about the rumours of a Reich Concordat in connexion with the Ermächti gungsgesetz. He asked Hindenburg to see that parity was observed with the Protestant church; E.K.D., B 3/240: Kapler to Hindenburg, 23 March 1933.

3. The Kirchenbundesamt just asked for information about the future organization of the German states to help the church in remodelling its own constitution; E.K.D., A 2/484: Hosemann to Pfundtner (Reich Ministry of the Interior), 12 April 1933.

> authority does what it is called upon to do - not even when it governs sternly and ruthlessly .... But we also know that Luther adjured the Christian nobility .... not to debase its God-given office by vindictiveness and arrogance, and that he urged justice and mercy as soon as order had been restored .... If the State uses its office against those who undermine the foundations of public order, against those, especially, who seek with gibes and coarse language to destroy marriage, to make a laughingstock of religion, to besmirch the idea of laying down one's life for the fatherland - then let it use its office in God's name! But we would not be worthy to be called an Evangelical Church did we not add with the same candor as Luther that public office must not be confused with private arbitrary power'.[1]

At the same time, in confidential circulars to his clergy, Dibelius warned that the church should preserve its neutrality and not become a political appendage of the new Government; otherwise, he said, the church would become a Staatskirche to a much greater degree than it had been even under the Empire.[2]

1. Dibelius, In the Service of the Lord, p.138.
2. Der Märkische Adler, 2 April 1933, No.14 printed Dibelius' confidential circular of 8 March 1933, cf. his further circular of 2 April; E.K.U., Gen.II, 42/1. Dibelius was attacked by Kube and the German Christians for his reserve; ibid.: Kapler to Kultusministerium, 5 April 1933 and Fort mit Dibelius! by Alfred Bierschwale, a German Christian leader, in Neue Zeit, 23 April 1933, No.113.

Church leaders were encouraged by Hitler's speech of 23 March explaining the Government programme to the new Reichstag. In order to win the votes of the Centre Party for the Ermächtigungsgesetz Hitler had promised to make certain public assurances to the churches. He said,

> 'The national Government sees in both Christian denominations most important factors for the preservation of our Volkstum. It (the Government) will respect the treaties concluded between them and the Länder. Their rights will not be infringed. It expects and hopes, however, that the work for the national and moral renewal of our people, which the Government has made its task, will in turn be treated with equal esteem .... The national Government will give the Christian denominations the influence due to them in schools and education ....'.[1]

However, the value of Hitler's assurance was almost at once thrown into doubt by the first Reich conference of the German Christians which met in Berlin from 3-5 April.[2] In a speech of welcome as leader of the NSDAP in the Prussian Landtag, Kube (who had become Oberpräsident of Berlin and Brandenburg) declared that the party would ruthlessly exploit state rights in the budget and the Prussian church treaty, to bring the revolution to the church. Kapler at once protested against

1. Sitzungsberichte, Reichstag 23 March 1933, in E.K.U., Gen.VI, 27/1.
2. J.Hossenfelder, Volk und Kirche (Berlin,1933) contains the official record of the conference.

the speech to the Prussian Kultusministerium, declaring that it was irreconcilable with Hitler's Reichstag speech of 23 March - the first protest of the church leadership against the Third Reich.[1] The German Christian conference also aired schemes for a radical Gleichschaltung of the church; Reichsleiter Hossenfelder declared that the possibility of appointing a Staatskommissar for the church had not been excluded by Hitler's speech and the conference passed a resolution proclaiming the right to revolt against church officials who did not accept the national revolution unconditionally.[2]

The church leadership under Kapler reacted to this situation with a triple policy. First it resisted the attempt of the German Christians to force revolution on the church. Second it undertook a major reform of the church constitution to make it more centralized and authoritarian. This reform met the main objections of the German Christians to the existing constitution. Third it responded to Hitler's appeal to co-operate in the 'national and moral renewal of our people'.

In a report to the Kirchensenat of the Old Prussian Union, on 21 April, Kapler explained the reasons for this policy.[3]

1. Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger, 4 April 1933, No.159; E.K.U., Gen.II, 42/1: Oberkirchenrat to Kultusministerium (represented by the Reich Kommissar, von Papen), 5 April 1933.
2. Tägliche Rundschau, 5 April 1933, No.81.
3. E.K.U., Verhandlungen des Kirchensenats, 21 April 1933.

He spoke approvingly of the revival of national consciousness, the rejection of materialism and the emergence of a state leadership with enormous will-power seeking to build a united nation rooted in Christianity. He described Hitler's guarantee of the freedom of the churches in return for church support of the Government programme as the central fact in the political scene so far as the churches were concerned. On the other hand, Kapler said, there was concern about the independence of the church and its freedom to preach the Gospel because of

> 'the desire to draw all spheres of life including culture and the church into the power of a totalitarian state, which frequently becomes apparent in the National Socialist movement'.

Nevertheless Kapler concluded that the church should see the situation as a whole and not get involved with objections of detail. It should take a favourable attitude towards the new state and respond to the appeal for co-operation.

The Berlin Oberkirchenrat had already issued an address, read from the pulpits on Easter Day 16 April, which illustrates both sides of Kapler's policy.[1] The address said that God had spoken to the nation by a great change. It talked of the upsurge of patriotism, the sense of Volksgemeinschaft and religious renewal, and it said that the church was ready

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 42/1: Oberkirchenrat to Superintendenten, 11 April 1933.

joyfully (to co-operate in the national revival. It added, however, that to do this the church needed to be free to develop its life and work and that it trusted the solemn guarantee of this freedom given by the Government.

A striking example of the willingness of the church leadership to serve the new régime was the official church celebration for Hitler's birthday on 20 April. Kapler wrote to the Landeskirchen on 10 April saying that he believed it was appropriate for the Protestant church to share in the national celebrations. A prayer was recommended asking for divine protection and strength to help the Chancellor with the difficult work of restoring the Fatherland 'for the welfare of the whole people and the glory of Your Name'.[1] Such a prayer would have been unthinkable during the Weimar Republic.[2] The churches were to fly the church flag and other church buildings could in addition fly the state flags which included the swastika.[3] On 19 April Kapler wrote

1. E.K.D., A 2/426: Kapler to the Landeskirchen, 10 April 1933.
2. In 1932 the spiritual Vice-President of the Oberkirchenrat, Burghart, had even refused a request that the church should pray for the Reichspräsident. H.Michael and K.Lohmann, Der Reichspräsident ist Obrigkeit (Hamburg,1932), pp.21-5.
3. E.K.D., A 2/426: Kapler to the Landeskirchen,10 April 1933; Oberkirchenrat to the Old Prussian Konsistorien, 12 April 1933; Kirchenausschuss to Landeskirchenamt, Darmstadt, 18 April 1933. The swastika had been declared a Reich flag by decree of the Reichspräsident, 12 March 1933. On 13 April the Kirchenausschuss warned the Landeskirchen in a second decree only to fly flags if state buildings did; ibid.

Hitler a personal letter to mark the occasion, saying that since the Reformation the Protestant church had honoured and obeyed the authority of state (Obrigkeit) and that at the beginning of the 19th century the church had led the campaign to free the German nation. He declared that the church would now serve the nation in new joy with the shield of faith and the sword of the Word and he added that a genuine national revival would draw strength from bowing humbly to God's will. Kapler also mentioned the work of the Kirchenbund for German Protestants abroad and claimed that in this work for the German race, the church had helped to prepare the way for the new Reich.[1] The Völkischer Beobachter reported the Protestant celebrations and Kapler's letter.[2]

The most extreme case of co-operation by the church in Government policy was its decision to defend the measures taken against Jews. In March and April 1933 the first dismissals of Jewish civil servants, lawyers and university teachers took place and difficulties were placed in the way of Jewish doctors. On 1 April an official boycott was organized against all Jewish businesses throughout the Reich.[3] Individual Jewish Christians and representatives of the Jewish

1. E.K.D., A 2/426.
2. Völkischer Beobachter, 16-8 April, No.106/8 and 20 April (ibid.))
3. K.D.Bracher, W.Sauer, G.Schulz, Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung (Cologne and Opladen,1962), pp.172-5, 277-81.

community appealed for help to the church leadership. The anti-semitic measures of the German Government provoked hostile comment abroad and foreign church leaders considered making a public protest.

A few German Protestants, including Baron von Pechmann from within the church leadership, demanded that the German church should protest. They were overruled by the majority of church leaders, however, and instead Kapler defended the Government's measures to church circles abroad and used his influence to prevent them condemning German actions. He subscribed to the official view that foreign criticism was an example of 'atrocity propaganda'[1] (a phrase which carried overtones from the First World War). Kapler no doubt feared that criticism of Germany from foreign churches, especially those within the ecumenical movement to which the German church belonged, would have an adverse effect on Government policy towards the church at home. Kapler tried to use the Jewish question to show the Government how useful the church could be in defending official policy, provided the church retained its independence without which it would not be believed. At the same time Kapler admitted to severe pangs of conscience and he asked Government officials to show humanity and moderation.

1. E.K.D., C 3/207: Kapler to the Landeskirchen, 1 April 1933.

The efforts of German leaders to counter foreign criticism seem to have been spontaneous in origin. Generalsuperintendent O. Dibelius, in an article on 26 March, sharply criticized an American bishop for joining with American Jews to protest against German actions and later he defended the Government in a broadcast to America.[1] On 27 March Kapler sent a telegram to the President of the ecumenical council in New York, asking him to prevent false reports resulting in a public condemnation of Germany and inviting him to visit Germany to see conditions at first hand. A similar telegram was sent to other American church bodies.[2] The German Government was informed of the action taken by the church and Kapler received a message of thanks from Hitler.[3] To a request from the Reich representatives of the German Jews for 'a word soon' Kapler replied on 1 April simply that he was following developments with the greatest vigilance and that he hoped that the boycott would end that day.[4]

Kapler's policy did not go unchallenged. On 30 March Pechmann telephoned the Director of the Kirchenbundesamt,

1. Der Tag, 26 March 1933, No.27. The text of the broadcast is printed in J.S.Conway, The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933-45 (London,1968), pp.342-4.
2. E.K.D., D 1/29 (formerly C. 1/22): copies of the telegrams of 25 and 27 March.
3. ibid.: Reichskanzlei to Kapler, 8 April 1933.
4. E.K.U., Gen.XII, 46/2: telegram to the Prussian Oberkirchenrat from the Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden and Kapler's reply, 1 April 1933.

Hosemann, saying that he had received a request that both Christian churches should condemn the boycott. Hosemann objected that this would conflict with the work of the church to combat foreign atrocity propaganda; Pechmann replied that the boycott itself was likely to frustrate church efforts in this direction. Hosemann added that the position was very difficult since Hitler had the day before said that the boycott was necessary. Pechmann acknowledged the difficulties but said that a stand by the Protestant church, which would also serve to underline its independence, would be widely welcomed. Pechmann subsequently sent a telegram saying that he was convinced that it would be fateful for the church to be silent in such an hour.[1] President Wurm also telephoned Hosemann and reported that church people in Württemberg 'in no way agreed' with the boycott campaign but Wurm accepted Hosemann's explanations of why Kapler had not protested.[2] In addition, Kübel, a member of the Frankfurt Oberkirchenrat, expressed strong doubts about the church remaining silent. He wrote that not only were Christian principles at stake in the measures taken against all Jews but that it was intolerable when families which had belonged to the Protestant church for three generations were treated in the same way. The church

1. E.K.D., C 3/207: note of Hosemann and telegram from Pechmann, 30 March 1933.
2. ibid.: note of Hosemann, 31 March 1933.

too appeared guilty if it did not protest, he said, and he added that even people who were not especially active churchmen had expressed their shame at the behaviour of Germans and Christians.[1]

Pechmann raised the matter at the next meeting of the Kirchenausschuss, held on 25-6 April.[2] He described the appeals from Jewish Christians he had received and the spiritual turmoil they revealed. He said he felt sure that the church owed its Jewish members protection; the Kirchenausschuss could not disperse without having said a word on their behalf: Pechmann found no support for a public statement. Several members of the Kirchenausschuss approved Government measures to reduce the Jewish share in particular professions where it was considered to be too large and a danger to the German race. President Kapler was one of these, though he added that he had had a heavy conscience about many of the measures taken and that he had raised the matter in his conversations with state representatives. During his interview with Hitler on the previous day he had asked that wherever possible harsh measures should not be enforced, though he had not felt it advisable to mention the Jewish question specifically at their first encounter. He had also tried to help a number of

1. E.K.D., C 3/207: letter from Kübel, 4 April 1933.
2. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the meeting.

individual Jewish Christians - in some cases he had had no success, in some the outcome was still uncertain.[1]

Members of the Kirchenausschuss feared that a statement on the Jewish question would be harmful to Germany as it would be exploited by her critics abroad. There were also objections to a statement specifically on behalf of Jewish Christians including the danger that it might lead to a mass nominal conversion. Kapler doubted whether the church had the right to ask the state to make exceptions on religious grounds to a racial policy in appointments to the civil service, though he said that the church would certainly have to object to any attempt to exclude Jewish Christian children from Christian schools.[2] Others argued against a statement on theological grounds. Bishop Rendtorff thought it would be wrong for the Kirchenausschuss, which was grateful that

1. Requests for help from Jewish Christians appear in E.K.D., C 3/170 and E.K.U., Gen.XII, 46/2. The files do not contain details of how Kapler tried to help in individual cases. Some petitioners seem to have received no reply from the church; others were told that it was not possible to get exceptions to the law.

2. The Vatican, in contrast, did intervene for Jewish Catholic civil servants. See G.Kent, 'Pope Pius XII and Germany', Am. Hist. Rev., 70 (1964), 61. The reaction of the German Roman Catholic episcopate, however, was very similar to that of the Protestant church leadership. See L.Volk, Der Bayerische Episkopat und der Nationalsozialismus 1930-1934 (Mainz,1965), pp.76-82.

there was again an Obrigkeit, to oppose the secular arm - especially as the matter was a central point of the Government programme. He warned the Kirchenausschuss not to call the present climate of opinion about the Jews un-Protestant. He said that for 1700 years the Jews had lived under an exceptional legal status with the full approval of the church and Jewish emancipation had been connected with the progress of the Enlightenment; 'the progressive idea ought not to be identified with Protestant norms'.

On 17 May 1933 George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, wrote to Kapler on behalf of the council of the ecumenical movement saying that recent events, especially the actions taken against Jews and the serious restrictions on freedom of thought and expression, had caused the council anxiety and distress. In a private accompanying letter Bell assured Kapler that the council wanted to help him in any way possible. He added that the council would like to publish its letter if Kapler did not object. Kapler replied briefly, asking that the letter should not be published.[1]

On 23 May Kapler and another church official met Baron von Reibnitz, who was described as a representative of the Foreign Office and the Reich Propaganda Ministry.[2] Reibnitz

1. A.k.A., C.I. 1a/12: Bell to Kapler, 16 and 17 May 1933; Kapler to Bell, 29 May 1933.
2. E.K.D., D.I.29 (formerly C.I.22): report of the meeting.

asked the church leaders to intervene against foreign church criticism of German measures against the Jews. He explained that foreign hostility to Germany in this matter was damaging and that there was a danger that Germany would be isolated with Italy turning more to France. Kapler declared that, of course, the church leadership would do what was useful to the German Reich, but he added that he found the indiscriminate treatment of the Jews oppressive. Kapler accepted that action was necessary against the inundation of Germany's intellectual life by Jews and against their attacks on Christianity. He said, however, that the way in which no distinction had been made between old-established Jewish families and recent immigrants from the East - and, in addition, the sudden unemployment inflicted on thousands of Jews - could not be reconciled with Christian standards. For this reason it was difficult for the Protestant church to use its influence with Christians abroad in Germany's favour.

Despite Kapler's doubts the church continued to defend the Government. On 7 June foreign church leaders were sent a long memorandum. It argued that a revolution or, rather, a process of 'national regeneration' was taking place in Germany. The change, it said, had come about legally but it was to be far-reaching. Briefly it meant the rejection of liberalism and Marxism which had not proved fruitful and had not succeeded in overcoming the political and social divisions of Germany. This failure had given the National

Socialist movement its raison d'être. One of its main tasks had been to subdue the threat of Communism. The fate of the church in the event of a Communist victory did not require explanation. The church shared the Government's view that, by taking power, it had prevented a catastrophe. There had been some violence but in comparison with the gruesome events of 1918 it had been nothing. Unlike 1918, too, the new leaders had declared their support for Christianity and the church.

The memorandum then turned to the Jewish question. It said that during and after the war large sections of the population had found the attitude of many Jews ambiguous or hostile. Then, under the Republic, because of their good relations with Marxist parties Jews had been appointed to a disproportionate number of public positions. In addition the Republic had allowed unlimited immigration and 'countless, culturally inferior Eastern Jews' had settled in Germany and even acquired civic rights. At the same time Jews penetrated the worlds of scholarship, the press, literature, theatre and cinema, pushing German competitors into the background. Statistics were quoted in support of these allegations.[1] There was increasing recognition, the memorandum argued, that 'the Jewish spirit' in public life undermined Christian and national

1. See H.Silbergleit, Die Bevölkerungs-und Berufsverhältnisse der Juden im Deutschen Reich (Berlin,1930), which was quoted by the memorandum.

values. All this not only brought latent anti-semitism to a head but forced 'calmer minds' to realize that something should be done. Other reasons for anti-semitism, the memorandum suggested, were the 20 years oppression of Germany by her former enemies which had created the need for some psychological outlet, and a more positive factor, the strength and comparative newness of German nationalism. This German nationalism was clearly expressed in National Socialism whose leader had learnt from experience to see in Jewry the spiritual author of Marxism.

The memorandum criticized the 'exaggerated' foreign reaction to the anti-semitic measures. In retaliation the Government, convinced that foreign 'atrocity propaganda' had been engineered by Jews, had ordered a one-day boycott of Jewish shops. The boycott had been carried out in an orderly fashion and it had forestalled more violent outbursts: 'The affair can be regarded as settled'. Of the purge of the civil service the memorandum said that this often happened with a change of Government and that earlier Governments had dismissed Nazi civil servants. With reference to the Aryan clause the memorandum stressed the exceptions to it and said that it should be seen against the background of the general level of unemployment in Germany, especially among graduates. Other Government measures it described as designed simply to reduce the Jewish share in, for instance, higher education to the Jewish proportion of the total population. Other countries,

it said, had taken similar measures. There was no question of persecution of the Jews. There had been no attack on Jewish religion.

On the duty of the church, the memorandum said that it was self-evident that the Protestant church would condemn any crime against fellow countrymen of a different race. Because of the complexity of the problem, however, it was scarcely possible to make a general criticism of Government policy. It was also doubtful whether this was the task of the church. In addition in the present circumstances, when a national catastrophe had been prevented and national unity was required, the church had to take account of the enormous task facing the Government. The church had asked the Government to show as much moderation as possible in applying difficult legislation and it prayed that strife and harshness would soon be replaced by peace and reconciliation. Church leaders had been active on behalf of Jewish Christians and their status within the church had not been affected by Government measures. The memorandum suggested that the churches had not considered the Jewish question deeply enough in previous decades; their attitude had been 'humanitarian' rather than biblical; this must be put right if the church were to be equal to the problem in the future, it concluded.

The memorandum was an unqualified apologia for the Third Reich. It is the most extreme example of support for Government policy from the church leadership before the German Christians

came to power. Even the language of the memorandum was heavily influenced by Nazi jargon. It is therefore especially important to note the way in which it was used and to assess to what extent it represented the real views of the church leadership. In an accompanying letter sent with the memorandum to foreign church leaders, Hosemann (the Director of the Kirchenbundesamt) explained that they were too occupied with the new church constitution to be able to give a thorough picture of the Jewish question. Instead, he said, they were sending a memorandum which had been put at their disposal by a churchman and they asked foreign church leaders to take account of the difficulty of the situation.[1] The President of the American Federal Council of Churches, who had asked in March about the attitude of Christians in Germany towards the anti-semitic measures, was told that the memorandum answered his question 'implicitly' and that a joint condemnation of anti-semitism by the German and American churches, which he had suggested, was not expedient.[2] In short, the Kirchenbundesamt avoided taking direct responsibility for the memorandum but at the same time implied that the memorandum had the approval of the church leadership.

The church leadership did not show similar reticence

1. E.K.D., D.I.29 (formerly C.I.22): copy of the memorandum and Hosemann's letter of 7 June 1933.
2. E.K.D., D.I.30: Beaven to Kirchenausschuss, 24 March 1933; ibid., D.I.29: Kirchenausschuss to Beaven, 7 June 1933.

about taking responsibility for the memorandum in correspondence with the German Government. On 21 June copies of the memorandum were sent to the German Foreign Office and other Reich Ministries to demonstrate the usefulness of the church in defending the Government abroad. The accompanying letter pointed out, however, that the German church would be believed by foreign churches only if it were known to be independent.[1]

The memorandum cannot be taken without qualification as a statement of the view of the church leadership. It served a tactical purpose - to underline to the German Government the importance of preserving the independence of the church, which was gravely threatened by June 1933. The memorandum did not mention the doubts expressed by Kapler and thus went further in support of the Government than he did personally. On the other hand the defence of the 'national' aims of the Government contained in the memorandum was in line with the views of the church leadership, and these views included approval of the reduction of the Jewish share in public and professional life. The memorandum was partly tactical but also partly genuine and its effect was to aid Government propaganda.

1. E.K.D., D.I.30: President of the Kirchenausschuss to Auswärtiges Amt, Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda, and Reichsministerium des Innern, 21 June 1933.

ii. By June 1933 the Protestant church was preoccupied with its own problems. The conflict between church and state and between the majority of the church leadership and the German Christians developed in three phases. The first phase lasted from the Reich Conference of the German Christians at the beginning of April until 25 April. It was marked by Kapler's assumption of special powers to carry out a reform of the central church constitution. This reform was undertaken partly in response to German Christian demands, but Kapler intended that it should be carried out by the church leadership. The threats made against the church leadership at the German Christian conference caused anxiety that the state would interfere in church matters. This anxiety was intensified when on 22 April the Minister President of Mecklenburg appointed a Staatskommissar over the Landeskirche of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. The incident proved, however, to be the result of isolated, local action without the support of the Reich authorities. The Staatskommissar was withdrawn after a few days and it looked as though the affair had been a false alarm.

This impression was strengthened in the second phase which lasted from the end of April until 25 May. It was marked by greater confidence between the church leadership, the state and the German Christians. This was shown in the co-operation of the church leadership with Ludwig Müller in preparing the new church constitution. Müller had become Hitler's personal representative for Protestant affairs; he was also the chief

representative of a 'moderate' group of German Christians. During this second phase it seemed possible, even likely, that the new church constitution would come about by agreement between the church leadership and the German Christian 'moderates' and that a conflict with the state would be avoided.

This development was reversed during the third phase, which lasted from 23 May until the end of June. A bitter conflict arose over the appointment of the first Reich Bishop, the highest authority under the new constitution. The majority of church leaders supported Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, the director of the Inner Mission's work for epileptics at Bethel near Bielefeld. The German Christians and a minority of church leaders supported Müller. Ostensibly Hitler did not interfere, though Müller enjoyed the advantage of his special relationship with the Führer. The Prussian Kultusministerium, however, decided that the church leadership was unreliable and in need of reform; at the end of June Staatskommissare were appointed over all Prussian Landeskirchen. The conflict resulted in the disintegration of the church leadership and victory for Müller.

Several reasons prompted Kapler to undertake a major reform of the organization of the church. The weakening of the authority of the Länder meant that power was concentrated in the Reich. This made it desirable that the Protestant church should have a central organization which could speak

and act for the Landeskirchen. The Kirchenbund provided a basis but under its terms the independence of the creed, constitution and administration of each individual Landeskirche was guaranteed. It was now felt that a more centralized structure was necessary to represent Protestant interests effectively. An immediate incentive was provided by the rumours of a Reich Concordat with the Catholic church; it was felt that the Protestant church should have a central organization of sufficient standing to be able to secure a parallel Reich Treaty with the Protestant church. On 29 March Professor Heckel, the authority on church law whom the Kirchenausschuss had consulted in 1932 about the problems of Reichsreform, wrote to Kapler pointing out the new dangers to the church and suggesting a strengthening of the Kirchenbund. Kapler accepted his offer to prepare a report on the reform of the Kirchenbund.[1] In a circular to the Landeskirchen on 1 April Kapler referred to the activity of the Catholic church and said that it would have to be opposed by an equally powerful counterweight in the Kirchenbund. He added, however, that any steps in 'this stormy period of transition' would have to be considered carefully.[2]

The demands and threats of the conference of German Christians held between 3 and 5 April in Berlin gave new

1. E.K.D., B.3/240: Heckel to Kapler, 29 March 1933, and Kapler note.
2. E.K.D., C.3/207: Kapler to the leaders of the Landeskirchen, 1 April 1933.

impetus to the cause of reform.[1] The German Christian demand for a Reichskirche was not new, but the threat to use the power of the NSDAP to force revolution on the church made it urgent. On 7 April Kapler met the leaders of the larger Landeskirchen and they agreed that the Kirchenbund should be strengthened by setting up an 'Action Committee' and that an extraordinary meeting of the Kirchenausschuss should be summoned to do this.[2]

On 11 April Kapler explained the position to the Generalsuperintendenten of the Old Prussian Union.[3] He referred to the danger of state interference in church affairs exemplified by the threats at the German Christian Conference. On the other hand he was able to report favourably about conversations he had had with Frick, the Reich Minister of the Interior, and other state representatives. Kapler had told Frick that the church was prepared to co-operate if its freedom were guaranteed; he had also discussed the problems of a Reichskirche and a Reich Concordat with the Minister. Kapler said that the answers he had received from state officials were 'satisfactory'. Kapler also reported reassuringly on a discussion with the German Christian leaders; they had explained that the phrase

1. see above, pp. 292-3.
2. E.K.D., A.2/28: minutes of Kirchenausschuss meeting, 25-6 April 1933; report of Kapler.
3. E.K.U., Gen.III, 17/3: minutes of the meeting of the Oberkirchenrat and the Generalsuperintendenten, 11 April 1933.

about revolution against the church leadership was used metaphorically to mean 'a spiritual encounter'. The most interesting part of Kapler's report concerned a conversation with Ludwig Müller, whom Kapler described as the Chancellor's adviser in Protestant matters.[1] Müller had told Kapler that Hitler found the division of the Protestant church into 28 Landeskirchen 'incomprehensible' and that Hitler wanted a 'viable Protestant bloc' as a counterweight to the Catholics.

The position in mid-April was that the church leadership considered a reform of the Kirchenbund necessary. Church leaders knew that the German Christians and Hitler wanted to see a Reichskirche established and they feared that the state might be prepared to interfere in church affairs to secure the reforms it desired. On the other hand it did not seem that the threats made at the German Christian conference would be carried out at once. The church leadership therefore had the chance to introduce reform under its own direction. This is what Kapler set out to do. He may have had the parallel of 1918-1919 in mind when the Oberkirchenrat had taken charge of the process of adjustment to a new era and averted the threat of state intervention.[2]

There was one further important factor in Kapler's calculations. The desire for a major reform of the church

1. Müller was not formally appointed Hitler's representative until two weeks later.
2. see above, chapter I.

constitution was not confined to the German Christians or to church leaders concerned about the possibility of a Reich Concordat. There was a widespread desire among Protestants for a more united church grouped around the different creeds. There was also a general hostility to 'parliamentism' in the church. It was felt that the church constitutions drawn up under the Republic had made concessions to democracy which were now outdated. The old church parties seemed increasingly irrelevant; they had grown up as a result of theological disputes of the 19th century which now seemed less important than questions about the place of nation and race in theology. There was also criticism of the church leadership, especially that it was too old and that lawyers had too much power. It was argued that the time had come to choose new leaders, men from the generation which had fought at the front in the First World War and therefore belonged to the modern world. There was enthusiasm for the general introduction of bishops, except in the Calvinist provinces. The argument used was that the church needed spiritual leaders in authority not mere administrators, but it is difficult to believe that the demand for bishops was not also inspired by the Führerprinzip prevalent in politics. In the spring of 1933 there was a general feeling, especially among young theologians, that a new era had dawned which offered the church great opportunities after a long

period of retreat.[1] If the church were to reap the harvest, however, it needed to be open to new ideas and new men.

This mood of reform was shared by people of different convictions. Some, including the eminent Lutheran theologian Emanuel Hirsch, joined the German Christians.[2] Those who did not want reform forced on the church by the state, however, were suspicious of the German Christians even when they agreed with parts of the German Christian programme. On 9 May the Young Reformer movement was founded to support reform introduced by the church leadership.[3] The Young Reformers accepted the German Christian programme except for its racialist

1. The change in the religious climate is dramatically illustrated by statistics for Berlin. In 1932 the Protestant Landeskirche suffered a net loss of nearly 45,000 members; in 1933 it had a net gain of over 52,000. Part of the 1933 figure is due to Jewish 'converts' but there is no doubt that religion had again become fashionable. F.Zipfel, Kirchenkampf in Deutschland 1933-1945 (Berlin,1965), pp.17-24.
2. Emanuel Hirsch, Professor at Göttingen University 1921-45; RGG, iii, 363-4. Hirsch's right wing political views are clearly stated in his book, Deutschlands Schicksal (3rd.edn., Göttingen,1925). In May 1933 he joined the 'moderate' German Christians and became one of Müller's main advisers. See, E.Hirsch, Das kirchliche Wollen der Deutschen Christen (Berlin,1933).
3. See Denkschrift der Jungreformatorischen Bewegung über ihre Stellung zur Reichsbischofsfrage (Göttingen,1933); K.D.Schmidt, Die Bekenntnisse des Jahres 1933 (2nd.edn., Göttingen,1937), pp.145-6.

demands, but they rejected the use of political pressure to coerce the church. The policy of the Young Reformers had been anticipated during April in a series of articles in the Tägliche Rundschau.[1] These articles criticized both the German Christians and the existing church organization; the Tägliche Rundschau insisted that there should be reform but that it should come from the church not the state. This was also the view of Generalsuperintendent Zoellner who appealed for a Protestant church of the German Nation in a widely publicized declaration.[2] In an article in the Tägliche Rundschau Pastor Asmussen urged the same goal on church leaders and asked them to follow the example of Hindenburg and to show real greatness by allowing the reform of the church to take place under their protection.[3]

Kapler was sympathetic to these views. He read the Tägliche Rundschau and agreed with it.[4] On 11 April he told the Generalsuperintendenten that the nation and the church were entering a new period which required not only a new

1. Tägliche Rundschau, 5 April 1933, No.81; 6 April, No.82; 8 April, No.84; 11 April, No.86. The Tägliche Rundschau had been a Volksdienst paper; in 1932, it was taken over by a more extreme, right wing conservative group. K.von Klemperer, Germany's New Conservatism, p.131.
2. ibid., 16 April, No.90.
3. ibid., 13 April, No.88.
4. Copies of the Tägliche Rundschau articles were kept in the Presidential file, E.K.U., Pr.II, 63/1. Several passages have pencil marks beside them, probably Kapler's own.

organization but new leaders and he gave a clear indication that he intended to retire shortly.[1] It was Kapler's aim to see the reform of the church accomplished smoothly first. As the demand for reform released by the Third Reich was much wider than the German Christian movement, Kapler could hope that he would be able to hand over a reformed organization to new men without surrendering the church to the German Christians. It is not surprising that some German Christians were not anxious for him to succeed.

Kapler's first task was to secure special powers from the existing church authorities to introduce reform. The leaders of the larger Landeskirchen had already agreed that the Kirchenausschuss should set up an action committee at its next meeting. Within the Old Prussian Union Kapler needed to secure similar powers from the Kirchensenat. On 21 April the Kirchensenat agreed to set up a committee but it was larger than Kapler wanted and it was not clear that he would be able to control it.[2] Both the Kirchensenat committee and the plan for a Kirchenausschuss committee were, however, almost at once eclipsed by a new initiative which Kapler took on his own authority out of fear that the German Christians were about to strike.

On 15 April Hossenfelder wrote to Kapler asking him to summon German Christian representatives to all responsible

1. E.K.U., Gen.III, 17/3: minutes of the meeting of the Oberkirchenrat and the Generalsuperintendenten, 11 April 1933.
2. E.K.U., Verhandlungen des Kirchensenats, meeting of 21 April 193

bodies within the Old Prussian Union.[1] On 19 April the Tägliche Rundschau reported a declaration by Bierschwale, a radical German Christian leader, in which he dismissed the idea that the old church leadership could introduce reform without the German Christians and demanded immediate elections.[2] On 21 April the Tägliche Rundschau reported under the headline 'Kirchenkommissar for Prussia?' that Hossenfelder had been given a post in the Prussian Kultusministerium.[3] The paper speculated that this meant retrospective approval for the German Christian conference. It also suggested that Hossenfelder would advise the ministry about the use of its powers over church appointments under the 1931 Treaty. On 22 April the Tägliche Rundschau reported a rumour that if the Kirchensenat did not agree to the German Christian demand for representation 'the revolution of church people would take its course'.[4] On the same day Kapler heard that a Staatskommissar had been appointed in Mecklenburg.

At this point Kapler decided that it was necessary for him to take immediate action to keep the initiative with the church.[5] On 23 April he issued a notice to the press which

1. E.K.U., Gen.II, 42/1: Hossenfelder to Kapler, 15 April 1933.
2. Tägliche Rundschau, 19 April 1933, No.91.
3. ibid., 21 April, No.93.
4. ibid., 22 April, No.94.
5. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting, 25-6 April 1933; report of Kapler.

said that reform of the church constitution with the goal of a federal German Protestant Church was imperative.[1] The notice added that Kapler, as President of the Kirchenausschuss, had summoned to help him in this work Bishop Marahrens of Hanover to represent Lutheran interests and Pastor Hesse from Elberfeld to represent the Reformed (Calvinist) churches.[2] Other leading church representatives would be asked to give their advice. On 25 April Kapler's action was sanctioned by the Kirchenausschuss and on 26 April the Kirchensenat committee agreed that Kapler should be free to act as he thought best; Kapler threatened the Kirchensenat with his resignation if they refused.[3]

Kapler's fear of losing control of events to the German Christians seems to have been exaggerated. The German Christians

1. E.K.D., A 2/28; and Vossische Zeitung, 24 April 1933, No.194; Tägliche Rundschau, 25 April, No.96.
2. For Marahrens see, E.Klügel, Die lutherische Landeskirche Hannovers und ihr Bischof 1933-1945 (2 vols., Berlin and Hamburg, 1964-5). Pastor Hesse was a Calvinist theologian, who had been chosen by a meeting of the Reformierter Bund to represent their interests in the negotiations for a new church constitution; Bielefelder Archiv des Kirchenkampfes im Dritten Reich, Sammlung Hesse, 1,21: Hesse to his family, 8 June 1933. Hesse later took a leading part in the Bekennende Kirche; he was interned in Dachau in 1943 and his son was executed there. RGG, iii, 290.
3. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of Kirchenausschuss meeting, 25-6 April 1933; E.K.U., Pr.II, 63/1: Kapler note on a letter from Arnim-Kröchlendorff, 25 April 1933.

continued to demand and threaten until 25 April.[1] On the other hand the German Christians and the Reich authorities, including Hitler, disowned the Mecklenburg incident and the Staatskommissar was withdrawn when the church protested against it.[2] On 25 April, in a meeting which had been arranged before the Mecklenburg incident, Kapler warned Hitler against interfering in church affairs and Hitler reaffirmed the promises he had given to the churches in his Reichstag speech of 23 March.[3]

After the meeting with Kapler, Hitler appointed Müller as his representative for Protestant affairs with special

1. In a statement printed in the Tägliche Rundschau on 23 April, Hossenfelder declared that the enemies of the Third Reich were sheltering behind the church and added that any reform of the church in which the German Christians did not participate would be a dead letter. On 25 April the Tägliche Rundschau reported that the German Christians were planning a march in Berlin with the slogan 'Peasants and workers conquer the churches'.

2. Bundesarchiv, Reichskanzlei, R 43 II/161 contains the protests, and notes by Lammers (22 April and 25 April) giving Hitler's instructions. Frick arranged a face-saving compromise whereby the Staatskommissar was withdrawn but the church admitted defects in its system of church dues; ibid.: letter from Frick, 29 April. The local bishop, Rendtorff, gave a full report on the incident to the Kirchenausschuss on 25 April. See, further, K.D.Schmidt, Eine folgenreiche Episode in Evangelische Theologie, Jg.22 (1967), pp.379-92.

3. see above, p.292. The minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 25-6 April 1933 do not contain details of Kapler's report on the interview. Notes made on the report during the Kirchenausschuss meeting by Pechmann, however, survive in Lk. A., Nuremberg, Pechmann XXIII, 101/54. The Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (28 April, No.197) also contains a report based on information from the Kirchenausschuss meeting. These both confirm the accuracy of the account given to me by Kapler's son, Pfarrer Kapler, from memory of what his father told him at the time (Interview, 13 October 1965).

responsibility to advance the preparation of a Reichskirche.[1] Ludwig Müller, who was 49 when he became Hitler's representative, had served as a naval chaplain during and after the war.[2] In 1926 he became Wehrkreispfarrer to the East Prussian army corps based on Königsberg. His office prevented him becoming a member of the Nazi party but his public statements brought him to the attention of the Prussian Ministry of the Interior; Severing attempted to restrict his political activity but without much effect.[3] In 1933 Müller claimed to have known Hitler for about 6 years; Hitler had stayed with the Müllers when visiting the army corps at Königsberg. Müller may have been influential in helping to convert his commanding officer, General von Blomberg, to Nazism and thus providing Hitler with a supporter in the army command who was of considerable

1. Bundesarchiv, Reichskanzlei, R 43 11/161: copy of Hitler's appointment of Müller, 25 April 1933.
2. For biographical details of Müller see W.Ullmenried, Die Reihe der deutschen Führer, Heft 7 (Berlin,1933). Also Evangelischer Pressedienst, 3 May 1933, No.18. Müller died in Berlin in 1945 - according to Hossenfelder from a heart attack not, as is rumoured, by suicide (Interview with Hossenfelder, 16 Jan.1968).
3. Severing passed on material about Müller's activities from the Oberpräsident Königsberg to Reichswehrminister Groener. In one reply Groener said investigation had shown that the allegations against Müller were false and that Müller had only opposed un-christian and un-German Wesen, especially Kulturbolschewismus. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.XVII, 231/1: Severing to Prussian Kultusminister, 6 Aug.1931; Groener to Severing, 15 Dec.1930.

importance in the conquest of power.[1] He certainly acted as an intermediary between Hitler and Blomberg's Chief of Staff, Colonel von Reichenau.[2] It was rumoured in Protestant circles that Müller was very close to Hitler in spiritual matters.[3] Müller was also considered to be a moderate. In 1932 he became leader of the East Prussian German Christians, whose programme was significantly more conservative than Hossenfelder's programme for the Reich.[4] When Hitler appointed Müller his representative in April 1933 church leaders were quite pleased.[5] Müller at once declared his readiness to co-operate with them and in a press interview he explained that Hitler expected him to see that the battle for the future of the Protestant church was not fought like the political battle.

1. J.W.Wheeler-Bennett, The Nemesis of Power (2nd.edn., London, 1967), p.296; Bracher, Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik, p.712.
2. See Hitler to Reichenau, 4 Dec.1932; the letter is printed in Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 7.Jg. (1959), pp.429-37.
3. For example Pastor Hesse wrote to his family on 8 June 1933, 'Müller is Hitler's spiritual adviser (Seelsorger) and would appear to have been instrumental that now Hitler reads Luther and has been drawing away from Rome'; Bielefelder Archiv, Sammlung Hesse, I, 21.
4. see above, pp.253-4.
5. An official information sheet of the Oberkirchenrat said that Hitler had appointed Müller in a form which deliberately avoided giving the impression of a Staatskommissar; a way had thus been found 'for confident and orderly co-operation between the church leadership and the Reich'; Kirchliche Wegweisung, No.I (Berlin, 15 May 1933), p.7.

'Adolf Hitler does not want to start a religious war', he said.[1]

The Kirchenausschuss approved the goal of creating a Protestant Church of the German Nation in its meeting on 25-6 April 1933 and gave Kapler very wide powers.[2] He was authorized to take 'all measures occasioned by the reconstruction of the state which are necessary for the welfare of German Protestantism'. Kapler's powers included the right to make decisions which affected the constitutions and administration of individual Landeskirchen, though not their creeds.[3] Some members of the Kirchenausschuss pointed out that strictly they had no right to grant such powers, as the independence of the constitutions and administration of individual Landeskirchen was guaranteed by the Kirchenbund constitution. Hosemann, the director of the Kirchenbundesamt, admitted that there might be legal objections but insisted that the powers were necessary. Kapler explained that the purpose of the powers was not to give him the right to interfere arbitrarily in the affairs of the Landeskirchen; it was simply to enable him to take decisions for the church with respect to outside bodies, primarily the Reich, even

1. Kirchliche Wegweisung, pp.5-6; Tägliche Rundschau, 10 May 1933, No.106.
2. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the meeting.
3. ibid.: speech of Hosemann.

when these decisions had repercussions on the Landeskirchen. He added that changes in the Kirchenbund constitution (which might be necessary as a result) would be introduced in the proper way. The only dissentient vote came from Pechmann. With all due respect to the word of the Chancellor, he said, who would guarantee the freedom of the church when thousand year old rights of the Länder could be swept aside with a stroke of the pen? He added that he could not overlook the danger that it would appear as though the Kirchenausschuss had acted under pressure from outside.

During the next four weeks it seemed that Pechmann's warning had been misplaced and that a settlement would be reached by agreement. The committee of Kapler, Marahrens and Hesse started on the preparation of a new church constitution and issued a public declaration of support for the new state.[1] It said,

> 'A mighty national movement has gripped and raised up our German people. A comprehensive reshaping of the Reich is taking place in the awakened German nation. To this turn of history we say a thankful Yes. God has given it to us. To Him be the glory!'

The committee of the three church leaders was joined by Müller and both sides soon reported their satisfaction at

1. Kirchliche Wegweisung, pp.4-5.

the way the work was progressing.[1]

If a settlement were to be reached, it was essential that Müller should win over or defeat Hossenfelder and the radical German Christians. On 6 May Hossenfelder gave Kapler a list of German Christian demands which showed little inclination to compromise.[2] It said that the German Christians did not want a state church but equally that they did not want a church which was a state within the state. It also said that the new Protestant Reichskirche should be the church of Christian Aryans and that the Reich Bishop should be a German Christian, proposed by the German Christians. It added that the whole Protestant population, excluding non-Aryans, should decide on the new constitution and the first bishop in elections to be held on 31 October. To prepare and supervise the elections Hossenfelder named a committee on which the German Christians would have had decisive influence. In contrast to these demands the East Prussian German Christians (who were led by Müller) supported a joint declaration of East Prussian clergymen expressing their confidence in Kapler's committee.[3] In his press interview, reported on 10 May, Müller stressed the East

1. Müller in Tägliche Rundschau, 10 May 1933, No.106; Kapler to the Landeskirchen, 8 May and 10 May in E.K.D., A 4/2.
2. Kirchliche Wegweisung, pp.11-2.
3. Preussische Zeitung, 4 May 1933, No.103; Mitteilungen der Glaubensgemeinschaft Deutscher Christen, Königsberg, 7 May 1933, in E.K.D., A 4/4.

Prussian German Christian programme and in answer to a question about his co-operation with Kapler's committee, he said that their relations were developing 'beyond all expectation .... extraordinarily well, just as the Reich Chancellor had desired'.[1] A few days earlier the Prussian Kultusminister Rust, who had been suspected of favouring Hossenfelder, had publicly denied that he had any connexion with the German Christians; Rust said that the dispute between the German Christians and the church leadership was an internal church matter in which he would not interfere, not even with his little finger.[2]

Hossenfelder appeared to accept Müller's policy and, in effect, to withdraw the demands of 6 May. On 13 May it was reported that Hossenfelder had instructed the German Christians to show full confidence in Kapler's committee.[3] At the same time Hossenfelder appointed Weichert, the most moderate of the German Christian leaders, to keep in contact with Kapler's committee for the German Christians.[4]

Müller now attempted to establish his authority over the German Christian movement by imposing a new programme on it

1. Tägliche Rundschau, 10 May 1933, No.106.
2. Kreuzzeitung, 7 May 1933, No.125.
3. Der Reichsbote, 13 May 1933, No.111.
4. K.Meier, Die Deutschen Christen (Göttingen,1964), p.21.

and formally taking over the leadership. With the help of Professors Fezer[1] and Hirsch, he drafted a programme which was published on 17 May. The programme was moderate, similar in tone to the East Prussian demands, though it made some concession to the racialism of the radical German Christians in its comments on missionary work overseas.[2] At a meeting with Kapler's committee on 17 May Müller explained that he attached great importance to the new programme as until then the German Christians had regarded the church leadership as their opponents and had been carried away by hubris as a result of the conference at the beginning of April; he implied that the new programme would put this right.[3]

On 17 May the Tägliche Rundschau gave details of the new, moderate programme and reported that Müller had taken over the movement under the headline 'The march of the German Christians ended'.[4] In fact Hossenfelder did not surrender

1. Fezer was a Professor at Tübingen University and had been elected by the combined Protestant theological faculties of Germany as their representative for the work of church reform. Like Hirsch he believed that intellectuals should not stand aloof from the National-Socialist movement. It was of considerable importance to Müller that he could count two respected theologians among his personal circle of advisers. E.K.D., A 4/1: Chairman of the Fakultätentag to Kapler, 30 April 1933, and information from Pfarrer Fischer (Reutlingen), official historian to the Württemberg Landeskirche for the Kirchenkampf in Württemberg (Interview, 12 Dec.1967).
2. H.Hermelink, Kirche im Kampf (Tübingen,1950), pp.37-9.
3. Lk. A. Hanover, Nachlass Marahrens, Die werdende evangelische Kirche deutscher Nation, Verhandlungen der 3 Bevollmächtigten: minutes of the meeting.
4. Tägliche Rundschau, 17 May 1933, No.112.

as easily as this report suggested and as was at first believed. The exact sequence of events is uncertain. It seems that Müller submitted the new programme to Hitler who approved it and authorized him to take over the leadership of the German Christians.[1] According to Hossenfelder, Müller sent a member of his staff to tell the German Christian leaders that Hitler wanted him to have the leadership of the church and that therefore he wanted to take over the German Christians. Hossenfelder records that he and Weichert replied in writing that they were unable to give Müller the leadership.[2] In the week following the Tägliche Rundschau report, on the evening of 23-4 May, however, a meeting of German Christian leaders agreed to give Müller a special position as 'Protector' (Schirmherr) but it was unclear what this meant and whether the old programme had been replaced by Müller's new one.

The final meetings between Kapler's committee and Müller took place in a former monastery near Hanover, called Loccum, between 17 and 20 May. These meetings produced an outline of the future church constitution, known as the Loccum manifesto, and a private agreement on procedure for introducing the new

1. This is according to Fezer's account given in a lecture in Tübingen on 7 June 1933; Lk. A. Stuttgart, Nachlass Wurm, D.I/42: transcript of the lecture.
2. Hossenfelder to Dibelius, 7 July 1945. (Pastor Hossenfelder kindly gave me a copy of this important document which gives his account of events.)

constitution.[1] The proposed constitution, drafted by Professor Heckel, foresaw a German Protestant church[2] based on the German Protestant creeds. At the head of the church there was to be a Lutheran Reich Bishop with a 'spiritual ministry' to help him and to represent the non-Lutheran creeds. There was also to be a German National Synod which would take part in legislation and the appointment of church leaders. It was to consist of prominent church people, some elected and some chosen. The suggested procedure for introducing the constitution was first to hear the wishes of different church movements (in practice, primarily the German Christians and the Young Reformers) about the constitution and the person of the first bishop; then there was to be a meeting of the representatives of the Landeskirchen who would authorize Kapler's committee to put the constitution into force and would also agree confidentially on the person to be bishop. Subsequently Kapler's committee would be received by Hitler and would tell him the result of the negotiations

1. The manifesto is printed in Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 60-71.Jg. (1933-44), pp.15-6. A copy of the so-called Modus procedendi survives in Lk. A., Nachlass Marahrens, Die werdende ev.e Kirche, Verhandlungen.
2. The expression Reichskirche was not used for fear it would sound too much like Staatskirche and have adverse repercussions on links with the German Protestant communities in the separated territories.

and the name of the bishop. Afterwards the committee would issue a proclamation giving the main outline of the constitution and special services would be held throughout the Reich to celebrate. There would be no elections though objections could be registered in writing after the services. The constitution was then to be finalized and decreed after consultation with the Reich Ministry of the Interior. This was to be followed by the formal induction of the Reich Bishop.

During the meetings between Kapler's committee and Müller there were two incidents which indicated that Müller's intentions differed from those of the committee. On 18 May in a discussion of how the constitution was to be introduced, Müller suddenly declared 'the state must be involved somehow'. The church leaders pointed out that under Article 137 of the Weimar constitution the state had no right to interfere and that the Prussian treaty of 1931 with its political clause did not apply to the Kirchenbund. Müller accepted the correction.[1] On 20 May, however, he objected to the form of proceeding which had been agreed the previous day and proposed that they should first await the reception with Hitler, which

1. Lk. A. Hanover, Nachlass Marahrens, Die werdende ev. e Kirche, Verhandlungen: minutes of the meeting and copy of the official explanation of events leading to the nomination of Bodelschwingh sent on behalf of Kapler's committee to the Landeskirchen, 2 June 1933.

was planned for 22 May, and only then consider how to proceed in the question of the person to be bishop. Müller assured the committee that Hitler would not himself suggest a candidate - at the most he might express certain general considerations which he wished to be taken into account. On this basis Kapler's committee accepted Müller's suggestion.[1]

The choice of the first Reich Bishop was crucial for the future of the new constitution and it was natural that tension should build up around this issue. In their demands of 6 May the German Christians claimed the office of Reich Bishop for themselves.[2] In their first programme of 9 May the Young Reformers replied with the demand that the Reich Bishop should be nominated at once by Kapler's committee.[3] The moderate course which the German Christians appeared to adopt during May raised hopes that a conflict could be avoided. On 18 May, however, it was made clear to the Young Reformers by Professor Fezer that Müller was the only candidate acceptable to the German Christians. The Young Reformers at once named an alternative candidate at a press conference held on 19 May.

1. Lk. A. Hanover, Nachlass Marahrens, Die werdende ev. e Kirche, Verhandlungen: minutes of the meeting; E.K.D., A 4/24: memorandum by Kapler, 25 May 1933.
2. see above, p. 325.
3. Denkschrift der Jungreformatorischen Bewegung über ihre Stellung zur Reichsbischofsfrage, p.3.

They said that the first bishop should be appointed by the church alone and that they were thinking of a man like Friedrich von Bodelschwingh.[1] At this point Müller may have feared that he was being outmanoeuvred: he had been persuaded by Kapler's committee to agree to a form of procedure which would minimize state influence; on the same day a rival candidate to himself had been proclaimed by a movement which stressed that the choice should be made by the church alone. Fear of this kind would explain Müller's demand on 20 May that nothing further be done until there had been a meeting between Kapler's committee and Hitler.

There is no evidence that Kapler's committee and the Young Reformers acted in collusion to frustrate Müller. Müller would have been right, however, to suspect that Kapler's committee did not intend that he should become the first bishop. Paradoxically it was Müller's position as the personal representative of the Chancellor for Protestant affairs, which he thought gave him a special claim to be bishop, to which Kapler chiefly objected. Kapler argued that if they appointed Müller who had become well known only through his connexion with Hitler, it would look as though the church was allowing its leadership to be determined by the state.[2] Kapler may also have felt that Müller was

1. Denkschrift der Jungreformatorischen Bewegung über ihre Stellung zur Reichsbischofsfrage, pp.3-4.
2. E.K.D., A 4/24: memorandum by Kapler, 25 May 1933.

personally inadequate for the highest office in the church. Kapler's objections were shared by the other members of his committee. They hoped that Müller could be persuaded to accept some lesser position than the Reich Bishopric, possibly the senior military chaplaincy (Feldpropst) or a special position for evangelism in the Reich Bishop's 'spiritual ministry'. When these proposals were put to Müller on 25 May he neither accepted nor rejected them.[1] His behaviour strongly suggests, however, that he planned to become bishop. There can be little doubt that he had hoped that his commission from Hitler, the comparative moderation of his policies and the control which he claimed to exercise over the German Christians would lead the church leadership to nominate him of its own accord. This solution, which would have avoided an open conflict with the church, would probably have been welcome to Hitler. When the church leadership did not choose Müller, however, his tactics changed and the détente which had been gathering momentum since 25 April ended abruptly.

The week following the Loccum meetings, starting Monday 22 May, was of crucial importance.[2] First Müller telephoned

1. Memorandum from Pastor Hesse (received by Marahrens 13 June 1933) in Lk. A. Hanover, Nachlass Marahrens, Die werdende ev.e Kirche, Verhandlungen.

2. The following account is based on Kapler's memorandum of 25 May 1933 in E.K.D., A 4/24 and the official explanation issued on behalf of Kapler's committee to the Landeskirchen, 2 June 1933 (see above, p.330,n.1).

to say that the meeting with Hitler, planned for 22 May, had been postponed to 24 May and that the Chancellor did not want unrest to be created by the announcement of the person to be bishop. (Kapler's committee had consented not to do anything further about the person to be bishop until the meeting with Hitler had taken place.) On 24 May Kapler received confidential information that at a meeting the previous evening Müller had failed to consolidate his authority over the German Christian radicals. It was reported that he had been given the title 'Protector' and adopted as the German Christian candidate for the Reich Bishopric but that Hossenfelder remained in control of the movement's organization. As soon as Kapler had received this information a deputation of German Christians, led by Hossenfelder, arrived to see him. They said that they had come to give him the results of the German Christian meeting before communicating them to the press. They reported that the German Christian meeting had resolved that the bishop should be a German Christian, that he should have the confidence of the Chancellor and that he should show within three or four weeks that he had the support of the majority of church people. Hossenfelder added that Müller had been elected unanimously as their candidate. Kapler treated this news as an ultimatum and replied that the churches were already united about the person to be bishop. In between news had been received from Müller that for reasons of foreign policy Hitler had cancelled all meetings that afternoon. Müller later telephoned Kapler

to tell him about the German Christian meeting himself. Müller said that the German Christian deputation had not been authorized to mention his candidacy and that he would see that nothing appeared in the press about it; Kapler said he doubted whether this would be possible.

Kapler suspected that the German Christians intended to create a fait accompli in favour of Müller while the church leadership was waiting for the meeting with Hitler to take place. A campaign for Müller, presenting him as the candidate of the Third Reich and suggesting that his election was a foregone conclusion, might quickly have created a public situation in favour of Müller which the church leadership would have been unable to reverse. Kapler therefore decided that, as in April, he would again have to take extraordinary measures to retain the initiative for the church. With the agreement of the other members of his committee, he issued a notice to the press which said simply that the churches were already united over the person to be bishop. News received during the afternoon of 24 May indicated that this would not be enough to forestall the German Christians. It was reported that German Christians, returning from the meeting in Berlin, had proclaimed that Müller had been elected bishop. Further enquiry revealed that the semi-official Conti bureau had told the press that Kapler's committee had agreed to elect Müller. Kapler's committee now felt forced to go further and to issue

a name. With Bodelschwingh's consent they therefore released a second notice to the press which appeared in the morning newspapers of 25 May and said that Bodelschwingh had been selected as the future Reich Bishop.

It is possible that the German Christians were not responsible for the report that Müller had been elected, issued by the Conti bureau. Hirsch claimed later that the report had been caused by Kapler's committee's own press notice saying that the churches were united over the person to be bishop; the Conti bureau, Hirsch argued, had assumed that this meant that Kapler's committee had chosen Müller.[1] Nevertheless, Kapler's fear that the church leadership might lose control of the situation was reasonable. The German Christians intended to secure Müller's election and Kapler's committee intended to try to thwart them. A dispute was therefore inevitable. Delay by the church leadership would have allowed the German Christians to mount a campaign for Müller which would have weakened the ability of the church leadership to resist him. Although the evidence is not conclusive, the behaviour of Müller and the German Christians gave reason to suspect that this was their intention. Kapler's decision to act was therefore justified even though the German Christians may have been innocent of the Conti bureau report which prompted Kapler to name Bodelschwingh.

1. E.Hirsch, Das kirchliche Wollen der Deutschen Christen (Berlin,1933), pp.31-2.

The German Christians were angered by the news of Bodelschwingh's nomination. Hirsch accused Kapler's committee of 'sin' because Müller had not been told of the nomination before the news had been given to the press. Hirsch threatened the church leadership with an open conflict in which church 'scandals' would be exposed.[1]

Kapler's committee allowed Müller to address a meeting of representatives of the Landeskirchen held in Berlin on 26-7 May.[2] The meeting had originally been summoned as part of the procedure for introducing the new constitution which had been agreed at Loccum. Although Müller had been invited to speak at his request as the representative of the Reich Chancellor, he used the opportunity to make an election speech for himself. He suggested that only the German Christians could win the masses and he claimed that he had control of the German Christian movement. He added that the German Christians would conquer the church in the same way as the Nazi party had conquered the state. He estimated that only a third of the church population supported the church leadership and he indicated that he was ready for a conflict should the church leadership choose to fight.

After the meeting of Landeskirchen representatives had endorsed the choice of Bodelschwingh by a majority, Müller

1. Memorandum of Pastor Hesse (see above, p. 333 n.1).
2. E.K.D., A 4/24: detailed account of the meeting (unsigned).

repudiated their decision in a radio broadcast saying that they had failed to match the need of the hour and that their decision had been taken against the will of the German Christians.[1] The German Christian propaganda department sent out a circular calling for an intensive campaign for Müller and asking Nazi party organizations like the S.A. and S.S. to send telegrams of protest against Bodelschwingh's nomination to Kapler, Hindenburg and Hitler.[2] On 29 May Hossenfelder wrote to Kapler threatening to prove that a majority of the church population supported the German Christians and demanding that the bishop be elected by the people.[3]

There were several indications that Müller would receive official support. On 27 May Kapler received an autographed letter from Hitler, ostensibly thanking him for his congratulations on Hitler's birthday (20 April).[4] The letter was dated 10 May but Kapler noted that the postmark was 26 May. Hitler wrote that he had been delighted to learn from Kapler that the church intended 'to co-operate energetically

1. Völkischer Beobachter, 28-9 May 1933, No.148-9.
2. Copy of Rundschreiben No.4 of the D.C. propaganda department (Kessel), end of May 1933, in Lk. A. Hanover, Nachlass Marahrens, Die werdende ev.e Kirche, Verhandlungen.
3. D.Z.A. Potsdam, Reich Min. f. d. kirchl. Angelegenheiten, 23463: copies of Hossenfelder to Kapler (two letters), 29 May 1933.
4. see above, pp. 295-6; the letter is in E.K.D., A 2/426.

in the reconstruction of the Fatherland'. Müller was received by Hitler on 30 May and the press was informed that they were in full agreement on all questions.[1] It was also rumoured that Hitler had said that although he would not interfere in church questions, he would not desert his old comrades.[2] At the beginning of June the German Christians circulated a copy of instructions issued by Ley, the leader of the Labour Front, saying that the Führer wanted the German Christians to drive the 'reactionaries' from their last positions and that the NSDAP was to support the German Christian campaign in every way.[3]

Kapler was in a critical position, probably a hopeless one. The German Christians with their special claim to be the representatives of the 'national revolution' had a strong following in the parishes. It would have been difficult in any circumstances to override their demand for an election and with support from the Nazi party organization the German

1. Vossische Zeitung, 31 May 1933, No.257; K-H.Götte, Die Propaganda der Glaubensbewegung 'Deutsche Christen' und ihre Beurteilung in der deutschen Tagespresse (Diss.Phil., Münster,1957), p.72.
2. This is mentioned by Trendelenburg (the chief official for Protestant affairs in the Prussian Kultusministerium) in a memorandum of 22 June; D.Z.A. Potsdam, Reich Min. f. d. Kirchl. Angelegenheiten, 23463. It also occurs in the memoirs of one of the Hanover church leaders; P.Fleisch, Erlebte Kirchengeschichte (Hanover,1952), p.165.
3. Lk. A. Hamburg, Deutsche Christen Rundbriefe: Rundschreiben No.19, 7 June 1933.

Christians would almost certainly have won a majority.[1] If the church leadership had given Kapler its united support, however, his policy might have had a chance of success. Hitler seems to have wanted to avoid the appearance of direct interference in church affairs; he might, therefore, have preferred that Müller should accept a position under Bodelschwingh to a conflict with an united church leadership.[2] Bodelschwingh was a popular choice as Reich Bishop - he received some 600 messages of congratulation on his nomination from individuals and church organizations.[3] Even a few German Christians supported him and the most moderate of the German

1. In the meeting of Landeskirchen representatives on 26 May Kapler said that they would have to hold elections; Lk. A. Nuremberg, Rep.101, XXXVI Meiser, 96: record of the meeting. In the new elections to the representative bodies of the Landeskirchen on 23 July (see below, pp.367-8) the German Christians won an overwhelming majority. By this time, however, Bodelschwingh had withdrawn his candidacy and there was no real alternative to Müller around whom the opposition to the German Christians could gather.

2. There are indications that Bodelschwingh was not completely unacceptable to Hitler. One of Bodelschwingh's personal friends, Stratenwerth, reported from Berlin on 15 July 1933 that three conservative members of the new administration (Seldte, Schwerin-Krosigk and von Papen's political subordinate, von Tschirsky) all agreed that Hitler had said on 14 July that he was quite indifferent as to who became Reich Bishop. According to the same source Hitler had told Schwerin-Krosigk ten days previously that he would be pleased if Müller were elected because Müller was the only representative of the Protestant church whom he knew, but that Bodelschwingh would also be acceptable to him and that he would not interfere in the matter. Hauptarchiv Bethel, Reichsbischof 1933, 2: Stratenwerth to Bodelschwingh, 15 July 1933. On the other hand before the elections of 23 July Hitler came out openly on the side of the German Christians; see below, p. 367.

3. E.K.D., A 4/7.

Christian leaders, Weichert, resigned from the movement in protest against its opposition to Bodelschwingh.[1] At least if the church leadership had been united, even if an election had been held, Hitler might have remained neutral and this would have deprived the German Christians of some of their appeal.

Kapler had assumed that he would receive united support from the church leadership. The meeting of representatives of the Landeskirchen on 26-7 May showed that he had badly miscalculated.[2] A motion in favour of Müller was defeated by a majority of only two churches (13 against, 11 in favour),[3] though following the usual practice of the Kirchenbundesrat and weighting the votes according to the size of the Landeskirchen, there was a majority of 55 to 31 against Müller. When Bodelschwingh's candidacy was put to the vote he received a majority of 11 churches to 8 (52 votes to 28) though in a second vote on the following day (27 May) only Württemberg, Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Hamburg maintained their opposition to him. The disunity of the church leadership had decisive consequences: Kapler was so shaken by it that he decided to resign at the earliest opportunity;[4] the German Christians

1. Vossische Zeitung, 31 May 1933, No.257.
2. E.K.D., A 4/24: record of the meeting.
3. ibid. These figures agree with two other records of the meeting - one in E.K.D., A 3/93 and another in Nachlass Marahrens. The Bavarian record, however, reverses the order and gives 13 churches in favour, 11 against; Lk.A. Nuremberg, Rep.101, XXXVI Meiser, 96.
4. Lk. A. Hanover, Nachlass Marahrens, Die werdende ev.e Kirche, Verhandlungen: memorandum from Pastor Hesse.

were able to exploit the division and Bodelschwingh's position became untenable. The church leadership as an effective body ceased to exist and the last hope of resisting Müller and the German Christians in the central church organization disappeared.

The opposition to Bodelschwingh had both denominational and political motives. The Landeskirchen concerned were almost exclusively Lutheran.[1] The Bavarian leadership, in particular, was suspicious that the new German Protestant Church would be insufficiently Lutheran. This suspicion was directed partly at the leadership of the Old Prussian Union, a United church, which as the largest of the Landeskirchen had always had a major influence on the central church organization. On 14 May the Bavarian leaders had called a special meeting of Lutheran Landeskirchen in Würzburg to strengthen the position of Bishop Marahrens who represented Lutheran interests in Kapler's committee.[2] When Bodelschwingh was nominated it was suggested that he was the candidate of the Old Prussian Union and (absurdly) that Müller was more of a Lutheran.[3] These arguments were partly responsible for

1. Of the 11 which voted for Müller only Waldeck was not Lutheran.
2. Lk. A. Nuremberg, Rep.101, XXXVI Meiser, 77: minutes of the meeting.
3. Lk. A. Nuremberg, Rep.101, XXXVI Meiser, 96: notes on meetings in Berlin, 23-5 May and ibid: minutes of a meeting of Lutheran church leaders, 26 May; opening speech of Meiser.

the opposition to Bodelschwingh. The senior Lutheran Bishop, Marahrens, however, was not impressed by denominational considerations of this kind. As a member of Kapler's committee he had negotiated with Müller and was suspicious of his intentions. It was Marahrens who persuaded Bodelschwingh to stand and remained his staunchest supporter within the church leadership until Bodelschwingh was forced to resign. The Lutheran leaders who opposed Bodelschwingh at the same time rejected the policy of their own representative on Kapler's committee.

The main motives of the Lutheran opposition to Bodelschwingh were political. Two of the opposition leaders, Bishops Meiser of Bavaria and Schöffel of Hamburg, were newcomers to the church leadership.[1] Both were elected in May 1933 in response to the 'national revolution' and given exceptional powers. Both were anxious to cultivate good relations with the new state authorities and with the German Christians.[2] Another

1. They were also both Bavarians and old school friends; H.Kressel, Simon Schöffel, Heft 7 of Veröffentlichungen des Historischen Vereins und Stadtarchivs Schweinefurt (Schweinefurt,1964), p.37. On Meiser see J.Schieder, D. Hans Meiser (Munich,1956). Both are only short appreciations.

2. 160. and 161. Sitzung der Synode der Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche im Hamburgischen Staate, 16 March 1933 and 29 May 1933, (cyclostyled copies in Lk. A. Hamburg); Verhandlungen der Landessynode der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche im Bayern r. des Rheins, 1930-6, Ausserordentliche Tagung in Bayreuth 3-5 May 1933 (Bayreuth, n.d.).

of the opposition leaders, Bishop Rendtorff of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, the leader of the 'Christian-German movement', had been sympathetic to the 'national opposition' before it gained power. He was now carried away by enthusiasm for the new régime and hoped that it would provide a great opportunity for evangelization.[1] Bishop Wurm of Württemberg, though more cautious than Rendtorff, was also anxious that the church should be accommodating towards the new régime. He was influenced by Professor Fezer, who as Professor at Tübingen was well known to the Württemberg church leadership.[2] Wurm also resented the fact that the South German churches had not been consulted before Bodelschwingh's nomination.[3]

The attitude of these church leaders is not surprising. The whole church leadership had, after all, welcomed the 'national revolution' as did most of the Protestant population. There was also reason to hope that the Third Reich would honour its promises to the churches. The Bavarian deputy, Buttmann,

1. see above, pp.244-5. Like the other Lutheran opponents of Bodelschwingh Rendtorff later came into conflict with Müller and the German Christians; he resigned on 6 Jan.1934. Meier, Die Deutschen Christen, p.85.
2. see above, p.327.
3. See Wurm's remarks to the meeting of representatives of the Landeskirchen, 26 May 1933; Lk. A. Nuremberg, Rep.101, XXXVI Meiser, 96: record of the meeting. Also Wurm's account of Bodelschwingh's election sent by him to the provincial authorities of the Württemberg Landeskirche; Lk. A. Stuttgart, D I, 118: Wurm to the Dekanatämter, 30 May 1933. Cf. T.Wurm, Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben (Stuttgart,1953), pp.84-8.

whose statements had reassured the churches before 1933, joined the Reich Ministry of the Interior in May;[1] the Bavarian Kultusminister, Schemm, coined the slogan 'Our religion is Christ; our politics, Germany'.[2] Both in Bavaria and Hamburg the state took part in the inauguration of the new bishops though in Hamburg the Bürgermeister exerted pressure on the church leadership in return for his recognition of it.[3] In Mecklenburg-Schwerin Bishop Rendtorff had experienced the imposition of a Staatskommissar but it had been quickly withdrawn after the intervention of Hitler and Frick.[4] It was possible to argue as did the Bavarian leader, Dekan Langenfass, that there was a group within the Nazi party which was friendly to the church and that the church should

1. This was noted by Meiser in his speech to the Würzburg meeting of Lutheran leaders on 14 May 1933; Lk. A. Nuremberg, Rep.101, XXXVI Meiser, 77: minutes of the meeting.
2. K.Schwend, Die Bayerische Volkspartei in E.Matthias and R.Morsey, Das Ende der Parteien (Düsseldorf,1960), p.492.
3. A copy of the inauguration ceremonies for Meiser in the Lorenzkirche in Nuremberg and at the Rathaus on 11 June 1933 survives in Lk. A. Hamburg, A.IV.i. Schöffel was inaugurated on the same day. For details of the ceremony and the pressure exerted on the church leadership by Bürgermeister Krogmann, see Lk. A. Hamburg, B IX b.10, Nos. 1, 2 and 3. Schöffel later came into conflict with the German Christians and, on 1 March 1934, he resigned and was replaced by a German Christian; Meier, Die Deutschen Christen, pp.86-7.
4. see above, pp.318, 320.

encourage it.[1] Similarly it was possible to be optimistic about the German Christian movement, to assume that Müller had the radical wing under control and to accept the assurances which he gave that he would not 'deliver the church up to the state'.[2] In many parts of the Reich the local German Christian movement seemed less threatening than Hossenfelder and the radicals in Berlin.[3] The leaders of the opposition to Bodelschwingh succumbed to the illusion that they could ride the tide of revolution by expressing confidence in the new régime and the 'moderate' German Christians. More realistically several Lutheran leaders were also fearful of the consequences of resisting Müller. The Bishop of Schleswig-Holstein predicted that a public conflict would lead to closer control by the state; there was little prospect of the church opposing Müller successfully, he said, as behind Müller stood the whole Nazi party apparatus. The Bishop of Brunswick said that it would be impossible to oppose Müller there and Rendtorff said that Müller's rejection by the church leadership would probably be a catastrophe for him (Rendtorff) in Mecklenburg.

1. Lk. A. Nuremberg, Rep.101, XXXVI Meiser, 77: minutes of the Würzburg meeting of Lutheran leaders, 14 May 1933.
2. ibid. 96: Meiser to the meeting of Lutheran leaders, 26 May 1933.
3. Schöffel, for instance, told the meeting of Landeskirchen representatives on 27 May 1933 that 'the German Christians in the country are 100 per cent. different to Berlin'; E.K.D., A 4/24: record of the meeting.
4. Lk. A. Nuremberg, Rep.101, XXXVI Meiser, 96: meeting of the Lutheran leaders, 26 May 1933, and Meiser-Rendtorff conversation, 25 May.

The debates about Bodelschwingh's nomination sharply illustrate the division within the church leadership. In a meeting of Lutheran leaders on 26 May, Rendtorff praised Müller's fight for the church within the German 'freedom movement' and described the Reichskirche as a symptom of the new movement of Adolf Hitler who had been 'sent by God'. He argued that if Müller were rejected 'young Germany' would feel that it had been rebuffed by the churches. Müller, he said, would be able to restrain the radicals and he enjoyed a close spiritual relationship with Hitler. Later Rendtorff declared that 'Yes to Müller was yes to the Will of God'. Marahrens, on the other hand, appealed for unity to defend the individuality of the church, according to the norms of the Gospel, against powers which worked partly behind the scenes. He sketched the events which had led to Bodelschwingh's nomination and pointed out that Bodelschwingh was a Lutheran and a man of recognized qualities. Marahrens admitted that Müller was a sincere Christian but suggested that his ultimate aims were unclear, that he was theologically inadequate for the leadership and that it was doubtful whether he was in control of the German Christians. If Müller took the tiller, Marahrens said, he would certainly steer the church towards the state. The election of Bodelschwingh would mean a conflict but one should not shirk it, he added.[1]

1. Lk. A. Nuremberg, Rep.101, XXXVI Meiser, 96: minutes of the meeting.

The same division was repeated in the meetings of the whole church leadership which followed.[1] Schöffel described the idea of church-state relations held by Kapler and Marahrens as 'obsolete'. The church was no island, he said, and he urged church leaders to free themselves from the concepts of the 19th and 20th centuries and to return to the ideas of the Reformation and Carolingian periods. This attack undermined Kapler's will to continue the fight for Bodelschwingh. He said,

> 'Our best watchword would have been that with the nomination of Müller the independence of the church would have been surrendered. If, however, a whole series of churches decidedly represent another standpoint, which diverges from the one I have represented for many years, then the assumption no longer holds'.

Dibelius rejected the arguments of the Lutheran opposition: 'I cannot accept that Müller is the liberation', he said and added, 'If we collapse before the revolver pointed at us, I do not know who should still respect the church'. Rendtorff replied,

> 'Not the revolver but the outstretched hand is offered us. .... Our vote is not a step of fear. The real question is: trust or mistrust? Daring deed or preservation .... of the past?'

In view of the disunity of the church leadership it would have been natural for Bodelschwingh to decline the nomination.

1. E.K.D., A 4/24: record of the meeting, 26-7 May.

If he had declined Müller might well have been elected; many church leaders would have been relieved to have been spared a conflict with the German Christians. Bodelschwingh, however, accepted the nomination even on the basis of the slender majority he had gained in the voting on 26 May (13 to 11 churches against Müller; 11 to 8 churches for Bodelschwingh); it was only after Bodelschwingh's willingness to accept the nomination was known that in a second vote on 27 May the opposition to him dwindled to three churches - several church leaders who had previously supported Müller withdrew their opposition to Bodelschwingh for the sake of unity.[1]

Bodelschwingh's decision to accept the nomination probably saved the central church organization from immediate German Christian control. Bodelschwingh came from a Westphalian aristocratic family; his father founded the great charitable organization based on Bethel and through the fame of this organization the family name had become a household word in Germany associated with Christian social work and particularly the care of epileptics. Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, who was 55 at the time of his nomination to be bishop, succeeded his father as director of Bethel in 1910.[2] He was a good choice

1. E.K.D., A 4/24: record of the meeting.
2. See W.Brandt, Friedrich von Bodelschwingh 1877-1946 (Bethel,1967).

to set against the aggressive, heroic concept of Christianity represented by the German Christians. When he heard the first rumours that he might be nominated, Bodelschwingh wrote to Marahrens saying that no one who knew him could consider him for such a task. 'I am here the pastor of epileptics and the brother of tramps', he wrote. He claimed to understand nothing of church politics, to be inadequate theologically for the position, and, he added, 'I belong neither to the German Christians nor to the National Socialist Party and I would also see no possibility of undertaking an outer or inner obligation in that direction'.[1] When, in the crisis of 24 May, Marahrens telephoned Bodelschwingh to secure his agreement to being nominated by Kapler's committee, he had to urge Bodelschwingh for an hour not to 'leave the church in the lurch' before Bodelschwingh consented to his name being mentioned provisionally. Even then Bodelschwingh stipulated that Müller should be consulted first.[2]

Bodelschwingh travelled to Berlin on 25 May and spoke with Müller that evening and the following morning.[3] Bodelschwingh was disturbed by Müller's plans to organize

1. Lk. A. Hanover, Nachlass Marahrens, Die werdende ev.e Kirche, Verfassungsvorschläge: Bodelschwingh to Marahrens, 23 May 1933.
2. E.K.D., A 4/24: memorandum of Kapler, 25 May 1933; Hauptarchiv Bethel, Reichsbischof I: memorandum by Bodelschwingh, entitled 'Thirty days at a turning point of German church history', composed in 1935.
3. The following account is taken from Bodelschwingh's memorandum.

the church on principles borrowed from the army and the Nazi party. Bodelschwingh came to the conclusion that Müller was 'highly mobile but inwardly unreliable' and that to give him the leadership would be an experiment dangerous to both church and state. According to his own account, much as he would have preferred a different solution, Bodelschwingh began to feel that he should not leave the way open to Müller. At the same time a stream of messages of congratulation suggested that he would have a basis of popular support among the Protestant population.

On the evening of 26 May, Bodelschwingh was informed of the division within the church leadership and its narrow majority against Müller. Bodelschwingh's first reaction was to withdraw, but a small group of personal friends (including Martin Niemöller who 'passionately' opposed the idea of withdrawal) persuaded him to think it over. During the night of 26-7 May Bodelschwingh decided to accept the nomination. He realized that he could not expect firm support from the church leadership and that he would have to contend with the opposition of the German Christians. He also realized that it would suit many church leaders if he refused the nomination so that they could feel they had no alternative but to elect Müller. He decided, however, that it was his duty to the church as a whole not to give in to 'short-sighted church politics' of this kind. He wrote later about this decision,

> 'If the undertaking seemed hopeless, it was not a question at that time of success or failure but rather that a flag should be raised for the future under which a new troop could gather'.

After his election by a large majority of church leaders in the second vote on 27 May, Bodelschwingh issued a public statement which emphasized the idea of service. He said that his previous work for the poor and the sick would provide the pattern for his future activity and that, if the decision had been his, he would have preferred to be called Reich Deacon rather than Reich Bishop.[1]

Bodelschwingh understood from Kapler that he should start work at once, on the basis of the nomination of the church leadership, although the office of Reich Bishop could be finally conferred on him only when the new constitution (of which the office of Reich Bishop was part) had itself been enacted. Bodelschwingh was anxious to show that he was a reforming leader and a loyal citizen as well as the candidate of 'the church' in contrast to the 'political' candidate Müller. Bodelschwingh's policy was close to the programme of the Young Reformers. His public statements stressed the need for the church to be united and free if it were to serve the nation aright.[2] At the same time Bodelschwingh praised the

1. The text is given in Bodelschwingh's memorandum. The word '<u>Diakon</u>' preserves the sense of the original Greek, meaning servant, and '<u>Diakonie</u>' was the idea to which Bethel was dedicated.
2. Brandt, <u>Friedrich v. Bodelschwingh</u>, pp.24-30.

Government for its work for a better future for the country and for restoring the qualities of discipline, loyalty and sincerity to their traditional place in German life.[1] Work was continued on the draft of the new constitution providing for a more centralized church structure with a strong leadership[2] and Bodelschwingh asked two of the older officials of the Kirchenbundesamt to resign to make way for younger men.[3]

The German Christians were not prepared to accept Bodelschwingh's leadership. Müller refused to become Feldpropst under Bodelschwingh and made it clear that a conflict was inevitable.[4] A national campaign was mounted against Bodelschwingh with the help of the Nazi party machine. The pro-Government press was instructed to support the German Christians and after 20 June the freedom of other papers was restricted by an order prohibiting discussion of Protestant affairs. Müller alone had access to the radio.[5] Bodelschwingh and Kapler's committee were refused an audience with Hitler.

1. For instance, in his public statement of 27 May.
2. E.K.D., A 4/87 contains minutes of the meetings.
3. Bodelschwingh's memorandum and Vossische Zeitung, 29 May 1933, No.254.
4. Bodelschwingh's memorandum.
5. Götte, Die Propaganda der Glaubensbewegung 'Deutsche Christen', pp.53-75.

The German Christians argued that the nomination of a Reich Bishop was an alteration of the Kirchenbund constitution and that legally this required a special church law. They admitted that the reorganization of the church might make it necessary to depart from the constitution but they insisted that in this case the agreement of the state should be secured first. The action of the church leaders, the German Christians said, had been 'neither strictly constitutional nor genuinely revolutionary' and it was therefore 'neither legal nor legitimate'.[1] On 15 June Müller wrote a letter to Kapler's committee, which he subsequently released to the press, in which he said that the Reich Chancellor had expressed his great regret that the reform of the church was developing in 'a difficult and thoroughly undesirable way'.[2] Müller said that Hitler had refused to receive Bodelschwingh and that an audience with Hindenburg was also impossible. Müller added that in his opinion Bodelschwingh was the candidate of the Landeskirchen for the bishopric but that the post did not exist so long as the new constitution had not been introduced. The new constitution, he said, required the agreement of the church population and of the Reich. Müller

1. Legal memorandum from Müller's staff published in Der Reichsbote, 8 June 1933, No.131 and a Müller press interview of 10 June with the Telegraphen-Union, quoted by Conrad, Der Kampf um die Kanzeln, pp.26-7.
2. Copy of Müller's letter in Lk. A. Hanover, Nachlass Marahrens, Die werdende ev.e Kirche.

proposed that there should be negotiations for new elections in the Landeskirchen or for some other way out of the difficulties.

Bodelschwingh's authority was also questioned by the minority of Lutheran Landeskirchen which had opposed his nomination. The three churches which had voted against the nomination on 27 May - Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Württemberg - were joined by the church leaders of Bavaria, Schleswig-Holstein and Thuringia.[1] Like the German Christians these Landeskirchen raised legal objections to the nomination, ignoring the fact that they had themselves tried to secure Müller's nomination in the same way. They demanded a meeting of the Kirchenausschuss to clarify the position and they refused to allow a Whitsun message from Bodelschwingh to be read out in their churches.[2] In Bavaria the Pfarrverein passed a resolution calling for the end of the conflict even if it meant personal sacrifice. It was made clear to Bodelschwingh that the sacrifice was intended to be his.[3]

In answer to the legal objections to Bodelschwingh's nomination Kapler's committee issued an official explanation.[4]

1. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting of 23-4 June 1933, appendices 3-7.
2. Lk. A. Hanover, Nachlass Marahrens, Die werdende ev.e Kirche, Verfassungsvorschläge: Meiser to Marahrens, 3 June 1933; A 2/28: minutes of Kirchenausschuss meeting of 23-4 June 1933 speech of Schöffel.
3. Brandt, Friedrich v. Bodelschwingh, p.131.
4. Lk. A. Hanover, Nachlass Marahrens, Die werdende ev.e Kirche, Verhandlungen: copy of the explanation sent to the Landeskirchen, 19 June 1933.

This said that Bodelschwingh's nomination came within the terms of the special powers granted to Kapler by the Kirchenausschuss in April. These powers authorized him to take all measures necessary for the welfare of German Protestantism occasioned by the reform of the state. The official explanation maintained that the nomination was not in itself an alteration of the Kirchenbund constitution and that discussion of whether Kapler was empowered to alter the constitution was therefore irrelevant. In other words the nomination was defended as an executive action made necessary by events; the nomination did make a change in the constitution necessary but that was to follow subsequently. There were two weaknesses in this position. When the special powers had been conferred on Kapler in April, doubts had been expressed as to whether the Kirchenausschuss was competent to grant such powers and the Director of the Kirchenbundesamt had admitted that there might be legal objections.[1] More important, there remained the problem of how the new constitution was to be introduced, and in particular, whether the German Christian demand for an election could be refused.

Together with the Young Reformers Bodelschwingh tried to rally support against the German Christians. A cyclostyled news-sheet was distributed which described the work of the

1. see above, p. 323.

new Bishop.[1] It explained that the conflict with the German Christians was about whether the church would submit to the totalitarian claims of a movement which relied on the Nazi party apparatus; it was about whether the church would remain a church or become a cultural institute (Kulturanstalt) of the state.

Of the former members of Kapler's committee only Marahrens remained firmly and actively behind Bodelschwingh. Kapler took little further part in events; on 7 June he sent in his resignation as President of the Oberkirchenrat and this took effect officially on 1 July.[2] The representative of the Calvinist Landeskirchen on the committee, Hesse, had originally accepted the idea of a Reich Bishop only reluctantly. He had agreed to the nomination of Bodelschwingh but, because of the disunity of the church leadership, he was pessimistic about the outcome. On 26 May he offered to stand by Bodelschwingh 'for better or worse'; on 27 May he said it would be

1. Kirchlicher Aufklärungsdienst, 14 and 20 June 1933, in E.K.U., Gen.XII, 185/1. Also Informationsdienst für das kirchliche Reformwerk in Lk. A. Hanover, Nachlass Marahrens, Die werdende ev.e Kirche, Verhandlungen.

2. Kapler had reached the retiring age and was in poor health. He also felt out of touch with the world of the Third Reich and believed that the church needed new leadership. He had hoped to complete the transition to the new constitution before retiring but the disunity of the church leadership and the attack on his policy at the May meeting of representatives of the Landeskirchen led him to resign at once. E.K.U., Präsidialia, Personalia Lit. K., No.16: Kapler's letter of resignation to the Kirchensenat, 7 June 1933 and Kapler to Kultusminister Rust, 6 July 1933; E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting, 23 June 1933, Kapler's speech of resignation.

'for worse'.[1] On 21 June he wrote to Bodelschwingh suggesting that he should agree to ask a future National Synod for a vote of confidence, a solution suggested by Frick. In effect, as Bodelschwingh realized, this would have played into the hands of the German Christians.[2] Marahrens, on the other hand, showed a clear understanding of what was at stake. On 17 June he wrote to Hitler complaining about the triple position of Müller as the Chancellor's representative, a leader of the German Christians and an opposition candidate for the bishopric, and about the support Müller received from the Nazi party and even state sources.[3] Marahrens explained to Hitler that this had given rise to the fear that the independence of the church (which the Chancellor had guaranteed) was endangered and, he indicated, this fear would prevent the development of good relations between church and state. In private letters Marahrens wrote that the decisive point to make a stand had been reached and that the decisive battle would be fought at the next Kirchenausschuss meeting.[4]

1. E.K.D., A 3/93: memorandum of Hesse on his attitude to the Reich Bishop question; Lk. A. Hanover, Nachlass Marahrens, Die werdende ev.e Kirche, Verhandlungen: memorandum by Hesse on the events which led to the nomination of Bodelschwingh; E.K.D., A 4/24: record of the meeting of Landeskirchen representatives, 27 May 1933, speech of Hesse.
2. Brandt, Friedrich v. Bodelschwingh, pp.132-4.
3. Printed in Klügel, Die lutherische Landeskirche Hannovers, ii, 14-6.
4. Marahrens to v. Issendorf, 22 June 1933 in ibid., 16-7; Marahrens to Heckel, 20 June 1933, in Lk. A. Hanover, Nachlass Marahrens, Die werdende ev.e Kirche, Verhandlungen.

The Kirchenausschuss met in Eisenach on 23-4 June. On 22 June there was a private meeting of the Lutheran Landeskirchen.[1] Marahrens tried to win over the opposition to form a united front behind Bodelschwingh. Marahrens argued that the German Christians had purely political motives, that the church must stand firm and that it would win. On the basis of negotiations with Frick, who had been extremely friendly, Marahrens believed that the Ministry of the Interior was not committed to Müller. Marahrens complained of the difficulties caused for church representatives in negotiations by the disunity of the church leadership. He appealed for unity and suggested that the church leadership should demand an audience with Hitler and an end to the triple position held by Müller. Marahrens' policy was not adopted; most of the other Lutheran leaders upheld their opposition to Bodelschwingh and demanded that he should submit to an election.[2]

A personal appeal for support by Bodelschwingh to the Kirchenausschuss on 23 June was equally unavailing.[3] The meeting was interrupted when it was learnt that Professor Fezer

1. Lk. A. Nuremberg, Rep.101, XXXVI Meiser, 254/1: record of the meeting from Meiser's diary. (I am grateful to Dr. Baier of the Landeskirchliches Archiv, Nuremberg, for providing me with transcripts of extracts from the diary.)
2. Record of the meeting in Meiser's diary and an account by Wurm, 30 June 1933, in Lk. A. Stuttgart, D.I.119.
3. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting, 23-4 June. These form the basis of the following narrative.

and another representative of the German Christians were available for negotiations on behalf of Müller. In a meeting which lasted until 3 a.m. on 24 June the German Christian representatives indicated that if Bodelschwingh agreed to submit to the terms of a future constitution perhaps in the form of an election, they would abstain from coercion and the Nazi party machine would be withdrawn (incidentally a striking admission!). On 24 June a committee of the Kirchenausschuss agreed to make the offer. Before the next meeting with the German Christians in the afternoon, however, news reached Eisenach that the Prussian Kultusminister Rust had appointed a Staatskommissar over the Prussian Landeskirchen.[1] The German Christian representatives in Eisenach now raised their demands and indicated that Bodelschwingh should resign the commission he had been given at the end of May. He could still remain a candidate for the bishopric but he was to take no part in the preparation of the new constitution and he was to renounce any authority as bishop designate. Bodelschwingh's position was hopeless. The threat of state intervention, far from uniting the church leadership, had increased the opposition of Lutheran leaders to him. On the evening of 23 June, after receiving information from German Christian circles in Berlin that unless Bodelschwingh

1. O.Söhngen, Wie es anfing. Die Einsetzung des Staatskommissars und die Usurpierung des Evangelischen Oberkirchenrates in Berlin im Juni 1933 in H.Kruska, Gestalten und Wege der Kirche im Osten (Ulm,1958), pp.176-89. See appendix, below pp.372-3.

resigned the state would intervene, the Lutheran leaders had decided to demand Bodelschwingh's resignation and to refuse obedience if they were outvoted.[1] At 7 p.m. on 24 June after considering the report of the negotiations with the German Christians, Bodelschwingh read out a statement to the Kirchenausschuss in which he said that the appointment of the Staatskommissar had made it impossible for him to carry out the task he had been given and that he therefore gave back the commission he had received from the Kirchenbund.[2] After a bitter exchange between the President of the Kirchensenat, Winckler, and the Lutheran leaders, the Kirchenausschuss dispersed. As Winckler foresaw, it had met for the last time.

1. Lk. A. Nuremberg, Rep.101, XXXVI Meiser, 254/1: record in Meiser's diary of a telephone message from Meiser's German Christian contact (Pfarrer Klein) in Berlin, 23 June 10 p.m., and meeting of Lutheran leaders subsequently.
2. E.K.D., A 2/28: minutes of the Kirchenausschuss meeting, 23-4 June. Although Bodelschwingh did not in theory renounce his right to be a candidate for the Reich Bishopric, in fact this became a dead letter and on 7 July he wrote to Marahrens saying that he should not be considered as a candidate any longer; Hauptarchiv Bethel, Reichsbischof 2. There is no doubt from his correspondence that Bodelschwingh would not have resigned if he had had the united support of the church leadership: Hauptarchiv Bethel, Ki 37: Bodelschwingh to Rade, 11 July 1933. This was confirmed to me by G. Stratenwerth, Bodelschwingh's closest adviser at the time (Interview, 15 Sept.1966).

iii. The June meeting of the Kirchenausschuss destroyed the last hope that the church leadership would offer concerted resistance to the German Christians. In the following week the Prussian Landeskirchen were subjected to the ruthless rule of Staatskommissar Jäger, a former Landgerichtsrat.[1] He dismissed members of the Oberkirchenrat, appointed his own officials, dissolved elected church bodies and ordered his subordinates to appoint new members to these bodies without elections. Opposition was declared to be treason which would be suppressed at once.[2] The leaders of the Prussian Landeskirchen and the acting President of the Kirchenausschuss protested to Hindenburg, Hitler and Frick and former officials of the Oberkirchenrat opened legal proceedings against the Prussian Land before the Staatsgerichtshof.[3] The General-superintendenten of the Old Prussian Union also protested and

1. August Jäger seems to have been universally disliked, see for instance, Conrad, Der Kampf um die Kanzeln, p.14. Jäger came from a church background (his father was a Generalsuperintendent in Wiesbaden) but he is alleged to have harboured a grudge against the church (Interview with Hossenfelder, 16 Jan.1968). Jäger later achieved notoriety as deputy Reichsstatthalter in the Warthegau. In 1948 he was condemned to death for war crimes by a Polish court.

2. Kirchliches Gesetz-u. Verordnungsblatt, 27 June 1933, No.9. In a meeting with his subordinate officials on 26 June, Jäger said he did not want a 'blood bath' and that 'it should not look like persecution'; in areas like Westphalia, however, where there was strong support for Bodelschwingh, Jäger instructed his subordinates to make use of 'revolutionary justice' and to 'stamp on' the opposition. D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep.76, III Sekt.1, Abt.II, Ldes. Sachen 49/1(Beiheft H).

3. D.Z.A. Potsdam, Präsidialkanzlei, 281/3; Bundesarchiv, Reichskanzlei, R 43 II/161. D.Z.A. Potsdam, Reich Min. f.d. kirchl. Angelegenheiten, 23463: copy of the action brought by the Oberkirchenrat, 26 June 1933.

asked the parishes to observe the following Sunday as a day of prayer and repentance.[1] Hossenfelder, whom Jäger had appointed provisional spiritual Vice-President of the Oberkirchenrat, retaliated by threatening supporters of the Generalsuperintendenten with disciplinary measures and ordering a day of thanksgiving on the same Sunday.[2]

The leaders of the Lutheran Landeskirchen who had opposed Bodelschwingh were shocked by the action of the Prussian Kultusministerium particularly as one of their number, the Bishop of Schleswig-Holstein, came under the Staatskommissar. The appointment of Hossenfelder also alarmed the Lutheran leaders who had assumed that Müller would prevent the radical German Christians gaining power.[3] In a meeting with Müller on 27 June the Lutheran leaders made clear their indignation at what had happened and demanded that Hossenfelder should be removed.[4] Meiser warned that a mood of Kulturkampf was gathering strength. Müller said that he had not known in advance of the plan of the Prussian Kultusministerium to

1. H.Hermelink, Kirche im Kampf, p.42.
2. ibid., p.43.
3. Lk. A. Nuremberg, Rep.101, XXXVI Meiser, 96: records of a meeting between South German church leaders and German Christian representatives, 26 June 1933, and of a meeting of Lutheran leaders, 26 June 1933.
4. ibid.: record of the meeting (held in the Reich Ministry of the Interior).

appoint a Staatskommissar and added that he had told Jäger that the present situation was intolerable. Müller proposed tb the Lutheran leaders that he should reassert his authority by taking over the Kirchenbund. He claimed that this action was justified because of the crisis and covered by his powers as the Chancellor's personal representative. The Lutheran leaders were assured by Jäger (who made a brief appearance at the meeting) that the Staatskommissar would remain limited to Prussia and would soon be withdrawn and Müller promised that Hossenfelder would be given a different job. The Lutheran leaders then acquiesced in Müller's plan. On the evening of 28 June the Kirchenbundesamt was occupied by S.A. men and on the same day Jäger relieved Hossenfelder of his duties in Prussia and asked him to assist Müller instead. On 29 June, Müller declared that he had taken over the Kirchenbund 'for the sake of the church and the Gospel'. The former Director of the Kirchenbundesamt, Hosemann, was dismissed and replaced by an Admiral.[1]

The progress to power of the German Christians was interrupted by the intervention of Hindenburg.[2] On 30 January

1. D.Z.A. Potsdam, Präsidialkanzlei, 281/3: copies of protests from the acting President of the Kirchenausschuss to Frick, 29 June 1933, and from the successors to Kapler's committee, 30 June 1933. Tägliche Rundschau, 30 June 1933, No.150, giving Jäger's decree transferring Hossenfelder, and Müller's decrees.
2. O.Söhngen, Hindenburgs Eingreifen in den Kirch enkampf 1933 in Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Kirchenkampfes (Göttingen,1965) xv, 30-44.

he wrote to Hitler expressing his concern at the conflict and suggesting that negotiations should be held between all the parties concerned in the dispute so that a peaceful settlement could be reached. According to Conrad, the Reich Ministry of the Interior also intervened with Hitler and proposed that the Staatskommissar (whose appointment they considered illegal) should be removed and that new church elections should be held. Conrad says that Hitler accepted this solution although the Staatskommissar was not to be withdrawn until the newly elected bodies could take over. This, nevertheless, represented a defeat for Rust and Jäger who had hoped to nominate new members to the church bodies without new elections.[1] Hitler authorized Frick to arrange new negotiations to complete the work for the new church constitution and Frick asked the church leaders to co-operate with Müller in doing this.[2] Meanwhile Frick asked them to set aside a consideration of the legality of Müller's actions and, in return, Frick offered that once agreement had been reached on the new constitution, he would help to arrange a solution to the problems of the Prussian churches. These

1. Conrad, Der Kampf um die Kanzeln, pp.16-7 and A.Jäger, Kirche im Volk (Berlin,1937), p.36.
2. Bundesarchiv, Reichskanzlei, R 43 11/161: note of Lammers, 30 June 1933; Lk. A. Nuremberg, Rep.101, XXXVI Meiser, 96: letter from Frick, 4 July 1933. Klügel, Die lutherische Landeskirche Hannovers, pp.60-2.

terms weighted the negotiations heavily in Müller's favour; there was to be no withdrawal of the Prussian Staatskommissar until agreement had been reached between the church leaders and Müller. In addition, at a meeting on 8 July, Müller declared that unless the constitution were ready within a few days the Government would be forced to impose one.[1]

The constitution proposed by Müller was an authoritarian version of the draft agreed at Loccum in May; it gave the Reich Bishop acting with his advisers the right to decree laws without the participation of the National Synod.[2] Although former opponents of Bodelschwingh, like Meiser and Schöffel, now joined Marahrens in criticizing the power foreseen for the Reich Bishop, the church leadership decided it had no alternative but to accept Müller's terms.[3] The constitution was approved by the Landeskirchen on 11 July and confirmed by a Reich Law of 14 July. The Reich Law also ordered new elections to be held in all Landeskirchen on 23 July. In return for the settlement the Staatskommissar and most of his subordinates were withdrawn.[4]

1. E.K.D., A 4/87: minutes of the meeting.
2. Text in Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 60-71.Jg. (1933-44), pp.17-20.
3. E.K.D., A 4/87: minutes of the meetings of 8 and 10 July; E.K.D., A 3/93: minutes of a Kirchenbundesrat meeting, 11 July 1933.
4. Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 60-71.Jg. (1933-44), pp.20-1.

The new settlement gave the church leadership only temporary respite. In the elections of 23 July the German Christians won an overwhelming victory. Despite Government assurances that the elections would be fairly conducted, the Nazi party machine was ruthlessly exploited for the benefit of the German Christians.[1] The Völkischer Beobachter on 19 July instructed all Protestant party members to vote German Christian.[2] On the same day Hitler sent Müller a personal message of thanks and assured Müller and the German Christians of his special confidence for the future and, on the night before the elections, Hitler broadcast in favour of the German Christians.[3] The German Christians themselves made full use of their connexion with the Nazi party: Hossenfelder declared, 'The German Christians are the S.A. of Jesus Christ' and opponents were accused of being disloyal to the new régime. In the short time allowed by the Government to prepare for the elections the Young Reformers could do little to resist the German Christians. Only in Westphalia did their campaign for a free and unpolitical church win a majority, though that in itself was a remarkable achievement. The church leadership observed the neutrality which was normal

1. G. van Norden, Kirche in der Krise (Düsseldorf,1963),pp.81-92.
2. ibid., p.82.
3. Bundesarchiv, Reichskanzlei, R 43 11/161: Hitler to Müller, 19 July. The relevant extract from Hitler's broadcast is printed in Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 60-71.Jg. (1933-44),pp.21-2.

practice in elections; their failure to unite behind Bodelschwingh had shown that they were in any case unable to give a clear lead against the German Christians. In many areas united lists were agreed between the church parties giving German Christians about 70% of the seats; where elections were held the German Christians won on average about 75%.[1] These results concealed, however, a distinction between moderate and radical German Christians which later became important.

The elections had immediate consequences for the church leadership, particularly in the Old Prussian Union and in the new central organization. On 4 August the Kirchensenat of the Old Prussian Union elected Müller President of the Oberkirchenrat with the title Landesbischof.[2] This was in voluntary anticipation of the will of the General Synod which met on 5 September and confirmed Müller's election. Ten bishoprics were created within the Old Prussian Union to replace the system of Generalsuperintendenten and Hossenfelder became Bishop of Brandenburg and resumed the office of spiritual Vice-President of the Oberkirchenrat.[3] The new National Synod met in Wittenberg on 27 September and Müller was elected Reich Bishop unanimously. 'The church struggle is over; the struggle

1. van Norden, Kirche in der Krise, pp.83-8.
2. ibid., pp. 92-3.
3. ibid., pp.96-9.

for the soul of the nation has begun', he declared.[1]

In fact the church struggle was just beginning. The story of the Kirchenkampf starts with the reaction to the German Christian victory. That victory also marks the final disruption of the church leadership of the Weimar Republic. It may be that Hitler would not have tolerated an independent church leadership, if he had been faced by one. As it was the church leadership did not oppose a clear or united front to the Nazis. Its failure in 1933, like its failure to denounce Nazism before 1933, was primarily due to wishful thinking. This was particularly evident in the attitude of the Lutheran minority which was ready to give Müller and the 'moderate' German Christians the leadership of the central church organization. The attitude of this minority, however, was only an extreme form of the general welcome which the whole church leadership extended to the Third Reich. The false optimism of church leaders was assisted by the guile of the Nazis and the deception (perhaps also self-deception) of Ludwig Müller. The Government and the German Christians insisted that they believed in the independence of the church; even Staatskommissar Jäger was careful to reject the

1. van Norden, Kirche in der Krise, p. 99, and Kirchliches Jahrbuch, 60.-71. Jg. (1933-44), p. 27.

idea of a Staatskirche.[1] Müller astutely dissociated himself from Hossenfelder as Hitler had earlier dissociated the NSDAP from Dinter. These tactics were enough to undermine a church leadership which was in part only too willing to be won over and feared the cost of resistance.

The failure of the Protestant church leadership in 1933 was followed by comparable failures during the Kirchenkampf. Although the initial illusions of men like Wurm and Meiser were soon dispelled and both stoutly resisted interference in their Landeskirchen, the willingness to attempt new compromises with the Third Reich remained.[2] The Weimar church leadership also left a more positive legacy, however. Kapler's attempt to uphold the principle of ecclesiastical independence with the election of Bodelschwingh brought to the fore, as Kapler had hoped, men of a younger generation. Although they did not succeed to the leadership of the official church, former members of the Young Reformer movement and of Bodelschwingh's personal circle of advisers were later active in the Bekennende Kirche. The most important was Martin Niemöller, who had worked with Bodelschwingh in Berlin during his period as Reich Bishop designate. Niemöller had then anticipated the need for a clear break. On 21 June he wrote to Bodelschwingh urging him

1. See the official explanation of the Kultusministerium for the appointment of the Staatskommissar printed in Tägliche Rundschau, 28 June 1933.
2. For a recent summary see, K.Kupisch, Die deutschen Landeskirchen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert (Göttingen,1966) pp.141-76.

to be firm at the forthcoming meeting of the Kirchenausschuss in Eisenach. Niemöller argued that the choice was simply whether a schism would be forced on those who preached an alien Gospel or on those who stood on the basis of the Reformation creed. If the Kirchenausschuss should bring about Bodelschwingh's fall, Niemöller wrote, Bodelschwingh must then take on the leadership of those who would be excluded from the church either by force or by the silencing of the biblical message. 'Then', Niemöller predicted, 'the last word will not be spoken in Eisenach'.[1]

1. Hauptarchiv Bethel, Reichsbischof I: Niemöller to Bodelschwingh, 21 June 1933. Bodelschwingh seems at first to have considered the idea of remaining the unofficial leader of a 'free church'; Brandt, Friedrich v. Bodelschwingh, p.138. It was, however, Niemöller himself who emerged as the leader of an uncompromising church opposition.

Appendix[1]

The pretext for the appointment of the Staatskommissar was that the Kirchensenat had broken article 7 of the treaty of 1931 by appointing a successor to Kapler without first asking the Kultusministerium whether it had any political objections to the new President. In fact the Kirchensenat only appointed a provisional President because of uncertainty about how the new central church constitution would affect the post. It had been agreed at the time of the 1931 treaty that provisional appointments would not come under the 'political' clause. In any case according to article 12 of the treaty the Prussian Land should first have tried to find a friendly solution to the dispute before resorting to the appointment of a Staatskommissar.

The Kultusministerium officials seem to have believed that the Kirchensenat deliberately made a provisional appointment in order to evade the political clause and also that the natural successor to Kapler, the secular Vice-President, Hundt, had been excluded because he was a National Socialist. These considerations may have influenced some members of the Kirchensenat. Hundt himself, however, maintained that it had acted both loyally and legally, and when he was offered the leadership of the Oberkirchenrat by Staatskommissar Jäger, Hundt declined (to Jäger's fury). According to his own account, Hundt was

1. This account is based on the following sources:
E.K.D., Nachlass Hundt, F2/2: chronological memorandum, 1932-3; Die Ereignisse von 24. Juni 1933 (dated 25-8 June 1933); account of his meeting with Jäger on 23 June; text of Rust's broadcast, 29 June; memorandum of a telephone conversation between Professor Heckel and Karnatz, 19 Dec. 1929.
E.K.U., Verhandlungen des Kirchensenats, 2: minutes of the meeting of 8-9 June; E.K.U. Gen. III, 48/2: minutes of 21 June 1933.
D.Z.A. Potsdam, Präsidialkanzlei, 281, 3/1: Amtliche Preussische Pressedienst, 27 June 1933, containing Göring's letter to Rust.
D.Z.A. Merseburg, Rep. 76, III Sekt. 1, Abt. II, Ldes. Sachen 49/1 (Beiheft H): record of Jäger's conversation with Hundt, 23 June 1933, and minutes of a meeting of Jäger with his subordinate officials, 26 June 1933.

bypassed by the Kirchensenat for a number of reasons. These included his disagreement with Kapler's policy in the Reich Bishop question, but there was also a general feeling that the Old Prussian Union should have a clergyman as leader and not another administrator. The new provisional President, Generalsuperintendent Stoltenhoff, had been selected partly because he was thought to be on good terms with the German Christians and the National Socialists.

Internal Prussian considerations were, however, only part of the reason for the intervention of the Prussian Kultusminister, Rust, (supported by Göring). In a broadcast on 29 June, Rust made it clear that he thought the Reich should have been asked for its approval of the person chosen to be Reich Bishop. When this did not happen, Rust said, it became his job to prevent the growth of an 'opposition centre' and when Kapler resigned without telling him, he saw his opportunity to intervene. In his letter of support for Rust, Göring laid the whole emphasis on the Reich Bishop problem.

There is no evidence to support the suspicion that Hitler directly encouraged the appointment of the Staatskommissar.[1] The surviving documents suggest rather that Rust, Jäger and Göring were alone responsible and that Hitler, Müller and even Hossenfelder did not know about it in advance.

1. See, for instance, K.Scholder, Die evangelische Kirche in der Sicht der nationalsozialistischen Führung bis zum Kriegsausbruch, Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 16. Jg. (1968), p.19.

Conclusion

Between 1918 and 1933 the Protestant church leadership followed an erratic course in its relationship with the secular authorities. Despite its close association with the ancien régime in Germany before the revolution of November 1918, it did not adopt a consistently anti-Republican attitude once the monarchy had been overthrown. In the years of relative political stability after 1925 the church leadership seemed to have gone a long way towards accepting the position of the Vernunftrepublikaner, but the critical period of 1932-1933 saw it swing over rapidly to support for the Third Reich. One reason for this unsteady behaviour was the desire to obtain security for the church whatever the Government in power. However, it also reflected Protestant leaders' views of the state and their interpretation of German history.

The ideal of the Protestant leadership remained the authoritarian 'Christian' state which was presumed to have existed at some time before 1848. By the end of the 19th century, however, it seemed clear that this ideal was utopian and that the general trend lay towards an independent church in a secular, liberal state. In November 1918, this expectation appeared to have been dramatically realized. The church leadership soon decided that it should come to terms with the new situation especially since the Republic did not fulfil its worst fears. It therefore followed a policy of rapprochement

with the Republic which probably went further than most church members were themselves prepared to go.

The swift rise of the NSDAP, apparently reversing the whole development of German history since 1848, shattered the calculations of the church leadership. Through the NSDAP, the ideal of an authoritarian state became the programme of a mass movement. It even seemed possible that the Hohenzollern dynasty would be restored.[1] As Reich Chancellor, Hitler announced that he attached the greatest importance to the two Christian churches and demanded their co-operation. The Protestant leadership responded by stifling its doubts about aspects of the 'national revolution' and declaring that the change had been sent by God. To understand this reaction, it is important to realize what an astonishing turn of events the Nazi victory seemed to men who had long regarded the growth of democracy as inevitable. The surrender of the Protestant leadership to the Third Reich in 1933 was a result not only of its basic antipathy to the Republic and its relief that the national crisis had been overcome. It sprang also from the shock of Vernunftrepublikaner who had been proved wrong.

1. O.Dibelius said that there seemed to be a real possibility that Hitler would restore the monarchy when Hindenburg died (Interview, 23 Oct.1965); cf. K.D.Bracher, Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik, pp.715-6.

Bibliographical note

This thesis relies mainly on manuscript sources. The most important collections are those of the Kirchenbund, in the archive of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland in Hanover, and of the Old Prussian Union, in the archive of the Evangelische Kirche der Union in West Berlin. Both these are comprehensive and intact. The files of other Landeskirchen and the private collection of Friedrich von Bodelschwingh provided further material for the last chapter. The policy of Republican Governments towards the church is less well documented. At Reich level, the appropriate files of the Reichskanzlei are useful and help to fill the gap caused by the loss of the records of the Reich Ministry of the Interior. They also contain references to important disputes at Land level. The records of the Auswärtiges Amt complement the Kirchenbund collection on foreign affairs in the archive of the Kirchliches Aussenamt in Frankfurt am Main. The most important state collection for the thesis, however, was the surviving records of the ecclesiastical section of the Prussian Kultusministerium (later incorporated in Hitler's Reich Ministerium für die kirchlichen Angelegenheiten) in the Deutsches Zentralarchiv at Potsdam and Merseburg. The files of the Prussian Staatsministerium in the Geheimes Staatsarchiv in West Berlin were also valuable.

The newspaper references in the thesis, other than those from publications cited in the bibliography, were taken from press cuttings in the archives. The church archives, in particular, contain a rich collection of this kind. It has not always been possible, however, to determine the Number as well as the date of the reference.

I was fortunate to be able to interview a number of survivors. This was always interesting though only in a few cases did it yield substantial information.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

Church Archives

1) Archiv der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (E.K.D.)

A 1 Eisenacher Konferenz

A 2 Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchenausschuss 1918-1933

Kirche und staatspolitisches Leben
Repräsentation und Apologetik der Kirche
Schulakten
Okumenische Arbeit

A 3 Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchenbund 1922-1933

A 4 Deutsche Evangelische Kirche - Kirchenkanzlei 1933

B 3 Kirchenbundesamt

Miscellaneous files including Nachlass Hundt

2) Archiv der Evangelischen Kirche der Union (E.K.U.)
(formerly Old Prussian Union)

Generalia

Trennung von Kirche und Staat
Konkordat und Kirchenvertrag
Miscellaneous files on political topics

Präsidialia

General Synode

Kirchensenat

3) Archiv des kirchlichen Aussenamts (A.k.A.)

Stockholmer Weltkirchenkonferenz

Kriegsschuldfrage

4) Archiv der Evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche im Hamburgischen Staate

Miscellaneous files on the Deutsche Christen and the policy of the Landeskirche in 1933

5) Bielefelder Archiv des Kirchenkampfes im Dritten Reich

Sammlungen Hesse, W. Niemöller, L. Müller

6) Hauptarchiv Bethel

Reichsbischof files

7) Landeskirchliches Archiv, Nuremberg

Nachlass Meiser

Miscellaneous files on the policy of the Landeskirche in 1933

8) Landeskirchliches Archiv, Stuttgart

Nachlass Wurm

Miscellaneous files on the policy of the Landeskirche in 1933

9) Landeskirchliches Archiv, Hanover

Nachlass Marahrens

Newspaper archive

10) Archiv des Evangelischen Konsistoriums Berlin-Brandenburg

Nachlass Wienecke

11) Nachlass Kapler, in possession of Pfarrer A. Kapler, Berlin

State Archives

1) Deutsches Zentralarchiv, Potsdam (D.Z.A.)

Reichsministerium für die kirchlichen Angelegenheiten - Miscellaneous files including Trennung von Staat und Kirche, Neuregelung des Kirchenregiments, Deutsche Christen, Neuordnung der evangelischen Landeskirchen (Reichskirche)

Evangelischer Reichsausschuss der DNVP

Präsidialkanzlei

Reichsinnenministerium

Reichsjustizministerium

2) Deutsches Zentralarchiv, Merseburg (D.Z.A.)

Rep.76 / Preussisches Ministerium für Wissenschaft Kunst und Volksbildung

Rep.77 / Preussisches Ministerium des Innern

Rep.90a Staatsministerialprotokolle

3) Bundesarchiv, Koblenz

R 431 Reichskanzlei

R 135 Preussisches Justizministerium

Nachlass Traub

4) Das politische Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (A.A.)

Kulturpolitische Abteilung VI A-B

Schuldreferat

5) Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Berlin (G.St.A.)

Rep.90 Preussisches Staatsministerium

6) Nachlass Becker, in possession of Professor H. Becker, Berlin

7) NSDAP Hauptarchiv (Film)

Reel 53, Folder 1240 Verschiedenes

Reel 23, Folder 487 Evangelische Kirche

B. PRINTED SOURCES

(1) Primary Sources

Allgemeines Kirchenblatt für das evangelische Deutschland (Stuttgart, 1918-1933).

P.Althaus, Staatsgedanke und Reich Gottes (3rd.edn., Langensalza,1926).

P.Althaus, Die deutsche Stunde der Kirche (3rd.edn., Göttingen,1934).

H.Asmussen, Reichskirche (Hamburg, n.d.,1933).

H.Asmussen, Zur jüngsten Kirchengeschichte (Stuttgart,1961).

K.Barth, Quousque tandem in Zwischen den Zeiten 8.Jg. (Munich,1930).

O.Baumgarten, Mein Lebensgeschichte (Tübingen,1929).

G.K.A.Bell, The Stockholm Conference, 1925 (London,1926).

M.Berner, Das Kirchenregiment in der altpreussischen Landeskirche (Berlin,1919).

O.Braun, Von Weimar zu Hitler (New York,1940).

A.Brecht, Aus Nächster Nähe Lebenserinnerungen 1884-1927 (Stuttgart,1966).

J.V.Bredt, Die Rechte des Summus Episcopus (Berlin,1919).

J.V.Bredt, Neues evangelisches Kirchenrecht für Preussen (Berlin,1921-1927).

W.Breucker, Die Tragik Ludendorffs (Oldenburg,1953).

Die Christliche Welt (Marburg,1919-1921; Gotha,1922-1932).

W.Conrad, Der Kampf um die Kanzeln (Berlin,1957).

G.Dehn, Die alte Zeit, Die Vorigen Jahre (Munich,1962).

Denkschrift der Jungreformatorischen Bewegung über ihre Stellung zur Reichsbischofsfrage (Göttingen,1933).

Deutscher Reichsanzeiger und Preussischer Staatsanzeiger (Berlin, 1918).

O.Dibelius, Das Jahrhundert der Kirche (1st.edn., Berlin,1927).

O.Dibelius, Nachspiel (Berlin,1928).

O.Dibelius, Friede auf Erden? (Berlin,1930).

O.Dibelius, Ein Christ ist immer im Dienst (Stuttgart,1961). English translation, In the Service of the Lord (London,1964).

Documenta. Unsere Pfälzische Landeskirche innerhalb der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirche in den Jahren 1930-1944 (Speyer,1960), vol.1.

G.J.Ebers, Reichs-und preussisches Staatskirchenrecht (Munich,1932).

G.J.Ebers, Evangelisches Kirchenrecht in Preussen (Munich,1932).

Entscheidungen des Reichsgerichts in Zivilsachen (Berlin,1921-29).

P.Fleisch, Erlebte Kirchengeschichte. Erfahrungen in und mit der hannoverschen Landeskirche (Hanover,1952).

O.Friedrich, Der evangelische Kirchenvertrag mit dem Freistaat Baden (Lahr,1933).

J.Gauger, Gotthard Briefe. Chronik der Kirchenwirren (Elberfeld,1934).

H.Gerber, Die Idee des Staates in der neueren evangelischen theologischen Ethik (Berlin,1930).

Gesetzes und Verordnungsblatt für die Vereinigte Evangelisch-protestantische Kirche Badens (Karlsruhe,1919,1932).

F.Giese, J.Hosemann, Die Verfassungen der Deutschen Evangelischen Landeskirchen (Berlin,1927).

F.Giese, J.Hosemann, Das Wahlrecht der Deutschen Evangelischen Landeskirchen (Berlin,1929).

W.Göbell, Kirche, Recht und Theologie in vier Jahrzehnten. Der Briefwechsel der Brüder Theodor und Julius Kaftan ii,1910-1926 (Munich,1967).

F.Gogarten, Politische Ethik (Jena,1932).

F.Gogarten, Wider die Achtung der Autorität (Jena,n.d.)

K.Haenisch, Neue Bahnen der Kulturpolitik (Stuttgart and Berlin,1921).

Handbuch des Landtags des Volkstaates Hessen, I.-III. Landtag 1919-1927 (Darmstadt,1926).

Handbuch über den Preussischen Staat (Berlin,1928,1929).

L.Heine, Geschichte des Kirchenkampfes in der Grenzmark Posen-Westpreussen 1930-1940 (Göttingen,1961).

H.Hermelink, Kirche im Kampf (Tübingen,1950).

F.von der Heydt, Gute Wehr, Werden, Wirken und Wollen des Evangelischen Bundes (Berlin,1936).

Hier spricht Dibelius (Berlin,1960).

E.Hirsch, Staat und Kirche im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert (Göttingen,1929).

E.Hirsch, Deutschlands Schicksal (3rd.edn., Göttingen,1925).

E.Hirsch, Das kirchliche Wollen der Deutschen Christen (Berlin,1933).

A.Hitler, Mein Kampf (Munich,1925,1927).

Hitler's Official Programme and its Fundamental Ideas (London,1938).

J.Hosemann, Der Deutsche Evangelische Kirchenbund (2nd.edn., Berlin,1932).

J.Hossenfelder, Die Richtlinien der Deutschen Christen (Berlin,1932).

J.Hossenfelder, Volk und Kirche (Berlin,1933).

J.Hossenfelder, Unser Kampf (Berlin,1933).

A.Jäger, Kirche im Volk (Berlin,1937).

W.Kahl, Lehrsystem des Kirchenrechts und der Kirchenpolitik (Freiburg,1894).

Kirchliches Gesetz-und Verordnungsblatt (Berlin,1918-1933).

Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelischen Landeskirchen Deutschlands, 44.-71.Jg. (Gütersloh,1917-1945).

Kirchliche Wegweisung, No.1 (Berlin,1933).

von Kleist-Schmenzin, Der Nationalsozialismus eine Gefahr (Berlin,1932).

L.Klotz, Die Kirche und das dritte Reich (Gotha,1932).

W.Köhler, Ernst Troeltsch (Tübingen,1941).

J.Kübel, Die politische Einstellung der evangelischen Kirche in Der Zusammenschluss, 1.Jg. (Berlin,1926-1927).

J.Kübel, Der Vertrag der evangelischen Landeskirchen mit dem Freistaat Preussen (Berlin,1931).

Kulturpolitische Aufgaben edited by Arbeitsgemeinschaft für staatsbürgerliche und wirtschaftliche Bildung (Berlin,1919).

W.Künneth,Pf.Wilm,H.Schemm, Was haben wir als evangelische Christen zum Rufe des Nationalsozialismus zu sagen? (Dresden,1931).

W.Künneth,H.Schreiner, Die Nation vor Gott (3rd.edn., Berlin, 1934).

W.Landé, Die Schule in der Reichsverfassung (Berlin,1929).

H.Michael,K.Lohmann, Der Reichspräsident ist Obrigkeit (Hamburg,1932).

C.Mirbt, Das bayerische Konkordat vom 29. März 1924 in Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift, 36.Jg. (Leipzig,1925).

Mitteilungen aus der Arbeit der dem Evangelischen Oberkirchenrat und dem Generalsynodalvorstand beigeordneten Vertrauensmänner der Evangelischen Landeskirche, Nos.1-12 (Berlin,1918-1919).

H.Mulert, Die politische Haltung der deutschen evangelischen Landeskirchen in Der Zusammenschluss, 1.Jg. (Berlin, 1926-1927).

R.Mumm, Der christlich-soziale Gedanke. Bericht über eine Lebensarbeit in schwerer Zeit (Berlin,1933).

F.von Papen, Memoirs (London,1952).

Preussische Gesetzsammlung (Berlin,1919).

A. de Quervain, Die theologischen Voraussetzungen der Politik (Berlin,1931).

A. de Quervain, Theologie und politische Gestaltung (Berlin,n.d.)

H.Rauschning, Hitler Speaks (London,1939).

C.Ringwald, Offener Brief an Seine Exzellenz Dr. Adolf von Harnack (Berlin) von einem badischen Laien (Freiburg,1925).

A.Rosenberg, Wesen, Grundsätze und Ziele der Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiterpartei (Munich,1923).

A.Rosenberg, Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts (1st.edn., Munich,1930).

M.Schian, Die deutsche evangelische Kirche im Weltkriege (Berlin,1921,1925).

E.Schiffer, Ein Leben für den Liberalismus (Berlin,1951).

K.D.Schmidt, Die Bekenntnisse des Jahres 1933 (2nd.edn., Göttingen,1937).

C.Schmitt, Legalität und Legitimität (Munich and Leipzig,1932).

P.Schoen, Das neue Verfassungsrecht der evangelischen Landeskirchen in Preussen (Berlin,1929).

W.Schotte, Das Kabinett Papen Schleicher Gayl (Leipzig,1932).

H.Schreiner, Der National-Sozialismus vor der Gottesfrage (Berlin,1931).

C.Severing, Mein Lebensweg (Cologne,1950).

H.Silbergleit, Die Bevölkerungs-und Berufsverhältnisse der Juden im Deutschen Reich (Berlin,1930).

Sitzungsberichte der Verfassunggebenden Preussischen Landesversammlung und des Preussischen Landtags (Berlin, 1919-1932).

R.Smend, Protestantismus und Demokratie (1932), reprinted in Staatsrechtliche Abhandlungen und andere Aufsätze (Berlin,1955).

W.Stapel, Sechs Kapitel über Christentum und Nationalsozialismus (Hamburg,1931).

W.Stapel, Der christliche Staatsmann (Hamburg,1932).

J.Stark, Nationalsozialismus und katholische Kirche (Munich,1931).

Statistisches Jahrbuch für den Preussischen Staat (Berlin,1920), für den Freistaat Preussen (Berlin,1929).

Stenographische Berichte des Hauptausschusses des Preussischen Landtags (Berlin,1928-1929).

H.Strathmann, Nationalsozialistische Weltanschauung? (Nuremberg,1931).

F.Thimme,E.Rolffs, Revolution und Kirche (Berlin,1919).

G.Traub, Das bayerische Konkordat und was es für Volk und Staat bedeutet (Munich,1925).

G.Traub, Erinnerungen (Munich,1949).

E.Troeltsch, Spektatorbriefe (Tübingen,1924).

W.Ullmenried, Die Reihe der deutschen Führer, Heft 6, Hossenfelder (Berlin,1933), Heft 7, Müller (Berlin,1933).

Verhandlungen des Deutschen Evangelischen Kirchentags 1919, 1921, 1924, 1927, 1930 (Berlin,1920,1921,1925,1928,1931).

Verhandlungen der ausserordentlichen Kirchenversammlung und der Generalsynode der evangelischen Landeskirche Preussens 1920, 1921-1922, 1925, 1927, 1929, 1930, 1931 (Berlin,1920-1931).

Verhandlungen der Landessynode der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche im Bayern r. des Rheins, 1930-1936, Ausserordentliche Tagung in Bayreuth 3.-5. Mai 1933 (Bayreuth, n.d.).

Verhandlungen der verfassunggebenden Nationalversammlung (Berlin,1920).

Verhandlungen des Reichstags. III. Wahlperiode 1924 (Berlin,1924).

F.Wienecke, Christentum und Nationalsozialismus (2nd.edn., Küstrin,1931).

F.Wienecke, Die Glaubensbewegung 'Deutsche Christen' (6th.edn., Soldin,1933).

F.Wienecke, Die Kampf-und Glaubensbewegung 'Deutsche Christen' (Soldin,1936).

W.Wolff, Die deutschen evangelischen Kirchen in H.Müller and G.Stresemann, Zehn Jahre Deutsche Geschichte 1918-1928 (Berlin,1928).

G.Wünsch, Reich Gottes, Marxismus, Nationalsozialismus (Tübingen,1931).

T.Wurm, Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben (Stuttgart,1953).

A.von Zahn-Harnack, Adolf von Harnack (Berlin,1936).

Zentralblatt für die gesamte Unterrichtsverwaltung in Preussen 1918, 1919 (Berlin,1918-1919).

D.W.Zoellner, Die Ökumenische Arbeit des Deutschen evangelischen Kirchenausschusses und die Kriegsschuldfrage (Berlin,1931).

(2) Secondary Sources

I.Arndt, Die Judenfrage im Licht der evangelischen Sonntagsblätter von 1918-1933 (unpublished Diss.Phil., Tübingen,1960).

S.Bahne, Die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands in E.Matthias, R.Morsey, Das Ende der Parteien (Düsseldorf,1960).

V.R.Berghahn, Der Stahlhelm Bund der Frontsoldaten (Düsseldorf,1966).

E.Bizer, Der Fall Dehn in W.Schneemelcher, Festschrift für Günther Dehn (Neukirchen,1957).

K.D.Bracher, Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik (4th.edn., Villingen,1964).

K.D.Bracher, W.Sauer, G.Schulz, Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung (Cologne and Opladen,1962).

W.Brandt, Friedrich von Bodelschwingh 1877-1946 (Bethel,1967).

E.von Bremen, Die Preussische Volksschule (Stuttgart,1905).

H.L.Bretton, Stresemann and the revision of Versailles, (Stanford,1953).

H.Buchheim, Glaubenskrise im Dritten Reich (Stuttgart,1953).

H.Buchheim, Die organisatorische Entwicklung der Ludendorff-Bewegung und ihr Verhältnis zum Nationalsozialismus in Gutachten des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte (Munich,1958).

K.Buchheim, Geschichte der christlichen Parteien in Deutschland (Munich,1953).

A.Bullock, Hitler, a study in tyranny (Revised edn., London,1967).

F.L.Carsten, The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933 (Oxford,1966).

H.Christ, Der politische Protestantismus in der Weimarer Republik. Eine Studie über die politische Meinungsbildung durch die evangelischen Kirchen im Spiegel der Literatur und der Presse (Diss.Phil., Bonn,1967).

J.S.Conway, The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933-1945 (London,1968).

W.Conze, H.Raupach, Die Staats-und Wirtschaftskrise des Deutschen Reichs 1929/33 (Stuttgart,1967).

C.Cordes, Hannoversche Pfarrer und Politik 1918-1929 in Hannoversches Pfarrerblatt, 74.Jg. (Hanover,1967).

K-W.Dahm, Pfarrer und Politik. Soziale Position und politische Mentalität des deutschen evangelischen Pfarrerstandes zwischen 1918 und 1933 (Cologne,1965).

E.Deuerlein, Das Reichskonkordat (Düsseldorf,1956).

A.Dorpalen, Hindenburg and the Weimar Republic (Princeton,1964).

W.Elben, Das Problem der Kontinuität in der deutschen Revolution (Düsseldorf,1965).

W.Elliger, Die Evangelische Kirche der Union (Witten,1967).

J.G.Eriksen, The Political role of church leadership resistance to the rise of National Socialism in Germany, 1930-1933 (Ph.D. thesis, Minnesota,1957).

E.Eyck, A history of the Weimar Republic, English translation (London,1962,1964).

F.Fischer, Der deutsche Protestantismus und die Politik im 19. Jahrhundert in Historische Zeitschrift, 171 (Munich,1951).

E.Förster, Adalbert Falk (Gotha,1927).

W.Frank, Hofprediger Adolf Stoecker (2nd.edn., Hamburg,1935).

O.Friedrich, Einführung in das Kirchenrecht unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Rechts der Evangelischen Landeskirche in Baden (Göttingen,1961).

F.Giese, Deutsches Kirchensteuerrecht (Stuttgart,1919).

K.H.Götte, Die Propaganda der Glaubensbewegung 'Deutsche Christen' und ihre Beurteilung in der deutschen Tagespresse (Diss.Phil., Münster,1957).

G.Goyau, L'Allemagne religieuse. Le Protestantisme (Paris,1898).

D.J.Goodspeed, Ludendorff (London,1966).

W.Hartenstein, Die Anfänge der Deutschen Volkspartei 1918-1920 (Düsseldorf,1962).

R.Heberle, Landbevölkerung und Nationalsozialismus. Eine soziologische Untersuchung der politischen Willensbildung in Schleswig Holstein 1918-1932 (Stuttgart,1963).

H.Hermelink, Geschichte der evangelischen Kirche in Württemberg von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart (Stuttgart and Tübingen,1949).

L.Hertzman, DNVP. Right-Wing Opposition in the Weimar Republic, 1918-1924 (Lincoln,1963).

T.Heuss, Friedrich Naumann (2nd.edn., Stuttgart,1949).

E.R.Huber, Dokumente zur deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte (Stuttgart,1966).

D.Hudson, 'The Ecumenical Movement and World Order' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, L.S.E.,1965).

R.Jasper, George Bell. Bishop of Chichester (London,1967).

E.Jonas, Die Volkskonservativen 1928-1933 (Düsseldorf,1965).

T.Karg, Von der Eisenacher Kirchenkonferenz zum Deutschen Evangelischen Kirchenbund (Diss.Recht, Freiburg,1961).

N.Karlström, Movements for International Friendship and Life and Work, 1910-1925 in R.Rouse, S.C.Neill, A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948 (London,1954).

G.Kent, Pope Pius XII and Germany in American Historical Review, 70 (1964).

C.M.Kimmich, The Free City. Danzig and German Foreign Policy 1919-1934 (New Haven and London,1968).

K.von Klemperer, Germany's New Conservatism (2nd.edn., Princeton, 1968).

E.Klügel, Die lutherische Landeskirche Hannovers und ihr Bischof 1933-1945 (Berlin and Hamburg,1964-1965).

E.Kolb, Die Arbeiterräte in der deutschen Innenpolitik 1918-1919 (Düsseldorf,1962).

H.Kressel, Simon Schöffel (Schweinefurt,1964).

G.Kretschmar, B.Lohse, Ecclesia und ResPublica (Göttingen,1961).

K.Kupisch, Zwischen Idealismus und Massendemokratie. Eine Geschichte der evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland von 1815-1945 (Berlin,1955).

K.Kupisch, Die deutschen Landeskirchen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert (Göttingen,1966).

G.Lewy, The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany (London,1964).

G.Mehnert, Evangelische Kirche und Politik 1917-1919 (Düsseldorf,1959).

K.Meier, Die Deutschen Christen (Göttingen,1964).

K.Meier, Kirche und Nationalsozialismus in K.D.Schmidt, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Kirchenkampfes, vol.15 (Göttingen,1965).

A.Milatz, Wähler und Wahlen in der Weimarer Republik (Bonn,1965).

R.Morsey, Die Deutsche Zentrumspartei 1917-1923 (Düsseldorf,1966).

W.Mosse, Entscheidungsjahr 1932. Zur Judenfrage in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik (Tübingen,1965).

M.Mulert, Hermann Mulert (Berlin,1954).

A.J.Nicholls, Weimar and the rise of Hitler (London,1968).

J.Niedner, Die Ausgaben des preussischen Staats für die evangelische Landeskirche der älteren Provinzen (Stuttgart,1904).

W.Niemöller, Karl Koch, Präses der Bekenntnissynoden (Bethel, 1956).

J.D.Noakes, 'The NSDAP in Lower Saxony 1921-1933: A Study of National Socialist Organisation and Propaganda' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford,1967).

G.van Norden, Kirche in der Krise: Die Stellung der evangelischen Kirche zum nationalsozialistischen Staat im Jahre 1933 (Düsseldorf,1963).

H.G.Oxenius, Die Entstehung der Verfassung der Evangelischen Kirche der altpreussischen Union von 1922 (Diss. Phil., Cologne,1959).

W.Pressel, Die Kriegspredigt 1914-1919 in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands (Göttingen,1967).

J.Rathje, Die Welt des freien Protestantismus (Stuttgart,1952).

Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (3rd.edn., Tübingen, 1957-1965).

E.von Rittberg, Der Preussische Kirchenvertrag von 1931. Seine Entstehung und seine Bedeutung für das Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche in der Weimarer Republik (Diss.Phil., Bonn,1960).

K.Rothenbücher, Die Trennung von Staat und Kirche (Munich,1908).

Ruf und Antwort. Festgabe für Emil Fuchs zum 90. Geburtstag (Leipzig,1964).

W.Runge, Politik und Beamtentum im Parteienstaat (Stuttgart,1965).

J.Schieder, D. Hans Meiser (Munich,1956).

K.D.Schmidt, Eine folgenreiche Episode in Evangelische Theologie, 22.Jg. (1967).

K.Scholder, Die evangelische Kirche in der Sicht der nationalsozialistischen Führung in Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 16.Jg. (1968).

W.Schwarz, August Hinderer (Stuttgart,1951).

K.Schwend, Die Bayerische Volkspartei in E.Matthias, R.Morsey, Das Ende der Parteien (Düsseldorf,1960).

F.Siegmund-Schultze, Ekklesia, v, Die evangelischen Kirchen in Polen (Leipzig,1938).

O.Söhngen, Hundert Jahre Evangelischer Oberkirchenrat der Altpreussischen Union (Berlin,1950).

O.Söhngen, Wie es anfing. Die Einsetzung des Staatskommissars und die Usurpierung des Evangelischen Oberkirchenrates in Berlin im Juni 1933 in H.Kruska, Gestalten und Wege der Kirche im Osten (Ulm,1958).

O.Söhngen, Hindenburgs Eingreifen in den Kirchenkampf 1933 in Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Kirchenkampfes, vol.15 (Göttingen,1965).

K.Sontheimer, Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik (Munich,1962).

G.E.Stoll, Die evangelische Zeitschriftenpresse im Jahre 1933 (Witten,1963).

G.Stoltenberg, Politische Strömungen im schleswig-holsteinischen Landvolk 1918-1933 (Düsseldorf,1962).

M.Stürmer, Koalition und Opposition in der Weimarer Republik 1924-1928 (Düsseldorf,1967).

E.A.Suck, Der religiöse Sozialismus in der Weimarer Republik (unpublished Diss.Phil., Marburg,1953).

B.Sundkler, Nathan Söderblom (London,1968).

P.Toaspern, Arbeiter in Gottes Ernte. Heinrich Rendtorff. Leben und Werk (Berlin,1963).

W.Treue, Deutsche Parteiprogramme 1861-1961 (3rd.edn., Göttingen,1961).

H.A.Turner, Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic (Princeton,1963).

R.Vierhaus, Die politische Mitte in der Weimarer Republik in Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht, 15.Jg. (1964).

L.Volk, Der Bayerische Episkopat und der Nationalsozialismus 1930-1934 (Mainz,1965).

K.Weller, Die Staatsumwälzung in Württemberg 1918-1920 (Stuttgart,1930).

E.Wende, C.H.Becker (Stuttgart,1958).

Wer ist's? (10th edn., Berlin,1935).

Wer ist Wer (14th edn., Berlin,1965).

Westermanns Atlas zur Weltgeschichte (Berlin,1956).

J.W.Wheeler-Bennett, The Nemesis of Power (2nd.edn., London,1967).

F.Zipfel, Kirchenkampf in Deutschland 1933-1945 (Berlin,1965).

C. INTERVIEWS

(Personal details refer first to the time of the interview and then to the period covered by the thesis)

O.Dibelius, Bishop of Berlin; member of Oberkirchenrat 1921-1925, Generalsuperintendent 1925-1933; Berlin, 23 Oct. 1965, 19 Aug. 1966.

J.Hossenfelder, Pastor; Reichsleiter der Deutschen Christen 1932-1933; Ratekau (nr. Lübeck), 16 Jan. 1968.

M.Niemöller, Kirchenpräsident i. R.; member of Bodelschwingh's staff 1933; Wiesbaden, 18 Jan. 1968.

G.Stratenwerth, Vizepräsident i.R.; member of Bodelschwingh's staff 1933; Frankfurt, 15 Sept. 1966.

A.Kapler, Pfarrer i.R.; son of President Kapler; Berlin, 13 Oct. 1965.

W.Conrad, Oberregierungsrat a.D.; senior official in Reich Ministry of the Interior with responsibility for church affairs; Berlin, 24 May 1966.

T.Heckel, Dekan; member of theological staff of Kirchenbundesamt; Munich, 2 May 1966.

B.Karnatz, Oberkonsistorialrat i.R.; member of Berlin Oberkirchenrat 1919-1933; Berlin, 20 Oct. 1965.

O.Söhngen, Vizepräsident der Kanzlei der Evangelischen Kirche der Union; junior member of Oberkirchenrat 1932-1933; Berlin, 16 Aug. 1968.

R.Smend, Professor Emeritus, Göttingen; member of executive committee of the middle party in the General Synod of the Old Prussian Union; Göttingen, 3 Dec. 1966.

H.Lilje, Bishop of Hanover; member of Jungreformatorische Bewegung 1933; Hanover, 2 Dec. 1965.