

■ ABSTRACTS

Andrea Strübind, Nazi Religious Policy Regarding the Free Churches

The Nazi dictatorship's religious policy exhibited a very broad spectrum of approaches, actions and strategies, especially with regard to the Free Churches. From advocacy through to dissolution reaching across the entire empire, and including calculated persecution measures, the various courses of action for different party and state organs served more than adequately on the different levels of the ruling hierarchy. In this article, some of the characteristics and guiding principles of the Nazi religious policy will be analysed and presented in detail, covering the different phases of the dictatorship and with regard to the Free Churches and smaller religious communities. In the process, the Free Churches' reaction to the multiple facets of the religious policy measures will also be included in the comprehensive presentation.

Astrid von Schlachta, To Live United or to Perish Individually? The Mennonites in the Nazi Era, Between Unified Church and Congregationalism

In the early 1930s, the Mennonites engaged in very active discussions as to whether their communities could allow themselves to be subsumed under a common faith or confession for the first time in their entire history – a development that had already been previously initiated, and which now, however, intensified in the course of the Nazi policies. Would this be necessary, in order to be present in political terms and be able to have a voice in political affairs and, ultimately, to enable the church to preserve its independence? These discussions shed light on not only the very diverse styles of spirituality among the Mennonites, but also on the expectations, hopes and doubts experienced towards the new government.

Thomas Nauerth, »All the best for Hitler«. The Rhön Bruderhof and the problem of authority after 1933

What is to be done when state and government authority become dictatorial? How might obedience, love of enemy, and true ›Sermon on the Mount‹ discipleship be lived out in the midst of a state order rooted in violence? Several answers to these questions, as found by the Hutterian Rhön Bruderhof community from 1933–1937, will be presented and analysed in this article.

Johannes Hartlapp, Proclamation of the Gospel at all costs – German Free Churches in the National Socialist era

The Free Churches and small denominations in Germany were largely and unexpectedly overwhelmed by developments at the beginning of the National Socialist dictatorship. Within the one year of 1933, almost all of them had been »gleichgeschaltet«

(politically brought into line), thus losing their freedom of action, or they were even banned, like the Jehovah's Witnesses. Since they had no experience in political discourse, it took longer for them to recognize the dangers of the dictatorship. They developed a strategy of adaptation, with the aim of allowing the state the least possible scope for attack. At the same time, they tried to prevent restrictions and to keep their own freedoms, especially in the proclamation of the gospel. The experiment largely failed. Contrary to their intention, they were exploited by the Nazis to extend the fragmentation of the entire ecclesiastical spectrum in Germany and, by means of their international contacts, to spread Nazi values and propaganda abroad. Such behaviour can be explained by historical experience and the traditional mentality of smaller denominations. They saw themselves as being apolitical. Therefore, after the end of National Socialism, it was very difficult for them to deal with the past and to honour their very few own martyrs.

Andreas Liese, We were always able to proclaim the Gospel: Baptists and Brethren Congregations in the »Third Reich«

The article describes and analyses the path of the biggest German Free Church, the Union of Baptist Congregations, during the Nazi dictatorship. On the basis of an extensive source analysis, attitudes towards Nazism and the different church-political measures are examined and presented in the light of the totalitarian nature of the Nazi state and relating to the different phases from 1933 to 1945. Individual characteristic areas of conflict (such as youth employment) are also included in the study. In addition, the tumultuous history of the Brethren Congregations is taken into consideration, given that they were disbanded across the entire empire in 1937, and then readmitted under stringent supervision from the Nazi state as the Federation of Free Church Christians. A final section addresses the political, church-political and theological reasons behind the merger of the two Free Churches into the Union of Evangelical Free Churches (BEFG) in 1941.

Herbert Strahm, The Methodist Church in the »Third Reich«. Theses on the path to a Free Church under National Socialist rule

The Methodist Church was not able to establish itself on German soil until the middle of the 19th century. The Free Church's attitude toward the National Socialist state in the early years of the Third Reich was largely the result of previous negative experiences, especially with the state and the national church. In 1933, the ›Nationale Erhebung« [*National Uprising*] raised expectations for Hitler's ›positive Christianity‹, in which the Methodists saw a new opportunity for missionary activity. – The Methodist Church leadership took the threat of ecclesiastical ›Gleichschaltung« [*enforced conformity*] very seriously. German-Christian slogans and the events surrounding the intended Reich Church led the Methodists – also at the level of the Association of Protestant Free Churches (VEF) – into discussions with exponents of the Reich Church about ways of unifying the Free Church, in order to oppose integration of the Free Churches into the Reich Church. The Reich Church authorities were mainly concerned with the ›Aufklärungsarbeit« [*educational work*] favouring the Reich, which was to be carried out abroad by the Methodist side. In the wake of the ideological and statutory adjust-

ment, the German Methodists gave their church a new legal basis. With the formation of the German Central Conference and the election of a German bishop in 1936, the path to national independence was consistently pursued within the framework of the overall Church, independent of Reich Church claims and removed from confessional church groups. The Methodist Church remained within the confines of the Nazi way of thinking, for the very reason that it lacked effective theological work. In conduct conforming to the state, the Methodist Church leadership's rhetoric and activities were oriented to the absolute Hitler state. Free Church concessions, which often caused a wearisome struggle in the communities, were manifested in such areas as the preaching service, in silence over the Jewish question, in the Free Church Nazi propaganda at the 1937 World Church Conference in Oxford and in the Methodist press. Well before the outbreak of war in 1939, the Methodists – like other Germans – were not able to form even a remotely objective picture of true events; they only listened to and read what German propaganda served. Although the Methodist Church was in a position to save itself by way of the Third Reich, it proceeded on a path to theological, religious and ecclesiastical decline as a result of its moral failure, fear, opportunism and lack of faith.

Detlef Garbe, Assurance, Obedience and God's Impending Judgement. The Jehovah's Witnesses' Conscientious Objection and Resistance as a Response to Nazi Moral Constraints, Bans and Relentless Persecution

With their origins in the USA, the »special Christian community« of the »Bible Students« (from 1931 »Jehovah's Witnesses«) incurred the hatred of nationalistic circles in Germany long before the »Third Reich« as a consequence of its message of the imminent apocalypse and its agitation against the authorities of »Politics, Capital and Church«, which it believed to be under the dominion of Satan. The Nazis vilified Jehovah's Witnesses as the »Forerunners of Jewish Bolshevism«, and so, as early as 1933, they were the first of many religious communities to be prohibited from practising their religion, in what was seen a contribution to the fight against »Sectarianism«, a move that was also supported in part by the mainstream churches. Nevertheless, well over 10,000 Jehovah's Witnesses continued to hold their meetings, to print their pamphlets and to pursue their missionary activities. The Regime responded with all severity. Thousands were condemned in the so-called Bible Student Proceedings before special courts. From the mid-1930s, particularly uncompromising believers were sent in their hundreds to concentration camps, where the SS marked and labelled the »Bible Students« with a »purple triangle« to signify an autonomous group of prisoners. At the outbreak of the war, the Wehrmacht judiciary had 270 Jehovah's Witnesses executed as conscientious objectors. Seen as a whole, no other religious community resisted Nazi oppression with a comparable level of uncompromising determination. And yet, even today, their motives remain contentious.

Uwe Puschner, The *völkisch-religiöse Bewegung* in the long fin de siècle and National Socialism

The *völkisch* religious movement had a diverse organization and ideology and a *völkisch* sub-movement developed in the process of its establishment around 1900. It reflected the religious pluralism evidenced in the long fin de siècle from the 1880s to the 1930s,

which contemporaries observed with considerable suspicion. German Christendom [Deutschchristentum] and Germanic New Paganism [Germanisches Neuheidentum] represented two wings of the *völkisch* religious partial movement. Racial ideology and anti-Semitism, two essential elements of *völkisch* ideology, laid the foundation for their common ideology. Both groups constructed a so-called distinctive German religion (arteigene Religion), a racial religion, with these elements. German Christians propagated an Aryanised Christianity disengaged from its Jewish roots. New Pagans constructed a religion that professed to renew the pre-Christian beliefs of the alleged Germanic ancestors. While German Christendom established itself through the belief movement of German Christians [Glaubensbewegung Deutsche Christen] after the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, the New Pagans failed to see their hopes to be acknowledged as a »third confession« realized. The *Völkisch-religious* were willing helpers in the consolidation phase of Nazi rule and they were used as an agency for disciplining the churches and to co-opt Christians for the regime's war preparations. However, they were also a serious interference factor in the totalitarian regime, and were accordingly marginalized from the mid-1930s. The New Pagans, in particular, disappeared from public life.

Daniel Heinz, »... You were just like one of them«: Free Churches and Jews in the »Third Reich«. A Sad Result and Late Confession

The conduct and attitude of the Free Churches in Germany towards the Jews in the Nazi era can undoubtedly be equated to the passive role of a »bystander«. Mistaken obedience, anti-Semitic prejudices, and efforts to save their own church organisations from the grasp of the State, prevented the Free Churches from expressing their solidarity with their racially persecuted neighbours, or even with a Jewish-Christian brother in their own community. The Free Churches' characteristic distance with regards to the State, and their overall higher ethical requirements, mean that their guilt and failure come to light all the more significantly with regard to the »Third Reich«. If and when resistance to the antisemitism and hostility towards the Jews was ever demonstrated, then it came from individual Christians who could not count on any support from their Free Church. Any admission of guilt at the end of the World War proved to be a difficult process.

Andreas Schmoller, »A voice in the wilderness« of Austrian Social Catholicism. Biographical and Biographical-historical Commentary on Anton Orel

Anton Orel (1881–1959) belongs to that group of Catholic intellectuals from Austria whose main period of creativity lies in the time between the two World Wars. Ever since his youth, Orel had been politically and journalistically active, and he repeatedly fell afoul of the Austria's Christian Social Party and the Catholic Church. His uncompromising moralistic concepts and sketches regarding a strictly anti-capitalist Catholic social order pushed him institutionally, as well as discursively, to the verges of the Catholic intellectual milieu. At the same time, his determined anti-modernist and anti-democratic attitude facilitated bridge building with Austria's Marxist and Socialist ideologues. This article prompts and encourages the assumption of new perspectives regarding Orel's biography, on the basis of biographical-historical resources and research. In this way it becomes clear how Orel, in spite of his political and academic

marginalisation, attracted admirers by means of his orthopraxy in his way of life and, thus, had a significant effect on others.

Nadezda Beliakova and Elena Beliakova, »Sovietization« of Russian Orthodoxy

In this article, the concept of »Sovietization« is introduced, concerning the phenomena of the existing Christian Church in the atheistic state. It includes multidirectional processes: the Soviet authorities' policy, directed to look for instruments and institutions to bring the Church under its control and to take advantage of it; the dissemination of Socialist ideas in the Church circles; the process of adaptation by Church leaders and structures of the new Soviet reality; the translation and export of Socialist ideas by the Church leadership; the transfer of the Soviet models of relations between state and Church into other countries; and the adoption and adaptation by Orthodox believers of the existing institutions, practices and values of the Socialist state and Soviet society.

Uwe Grelak and Peer Pasternack, Academic and Quasi-Academic. Religious-Based Institutions for Academic Training and Research in the GDR

In 1949, at the beginning of the GDR, there were 45 institutions and working contexts on East German territory where religiously-based academic training and research were undertaken. In 1989, at the end of the GDR, this landscape consisted of 94 institutions and working contexts. This means that the extent of these had more than doubled in the four decades of the GDR regime. Within this landscape, there were church-operated Theological Colleges, Protestant theology faculties at state universities, seminaries for the education of preachers and pastors, seminaries for the second phase of theological education, tertiary-equivalent training in canon law, academic Archive/Library systems and community education, and church-music training at church and state institutions. Furthermore, there were student communities and theological seminaries, as well as institutes without specific educational functions. The state universities in the GDR were charged with the mandate to generate a »Socialist intelligence«. In direct contrast, it can reasonably be said, that a »non-Socialist intelligence« was actually trained at the religious-based institutions.