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Introduction by Brandon Bloch

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Introduction by Brandon Bloch, Harvard University

As a vibrant field of scholarship has demonstrated, the history of commemoration of, reckoning with, and debate about the Third Reich in post-1945 Germany may be as complex as the twelve-year history of National Socialist rule itself. In his new book *The Battle for the Catholic Past in Germany, 1945-1980*, Mark Ruff offers an original and richly researched contribution to our understanding of (West) Germans' postwar engagement with the Nazi past, highlighting thirty-five years of debate about Catholic complicity with the Nazi regime.

The significance of Ruff's study is twofold. The work offers a fresh interpretation of the political culture of the postwar Federal Republic of Germany, casting new light on themes of confessional conflict, transatlantic networks, the transformation of the media landscape, and the fragmentation of religious milieus. Just as importantly, *The Battle for the Catholic Past* is a prehistory of our own historiographical moment. For scholars and students of modern German history, in particular those interested in the intersections of Christianity and Nazism, Ruff's book serves as a reminder of the field's politicized origins, and of the ways in which historical writing about churches during the Third Reich has frequently been inextricable from questions about the place of Christianity in postwar German society. Illuminating the political and material factors that shape historical writing, Ruff's study should spur historians, and not only of Nazi Germany, toward reflection on their own methods and perspectives. Ruff's concluding chapter on the 1970s controversy between the Protestant church historian Klaus Scholder and his Catholic counterpart Konrad Repgen is especially fascinating as a study of historical epistemology. Ruff shows how Repgen, by appealing to the archival document as the ultimate source of historical knowledge, obscured important but more elusive questions of interpretation regarding the motivations behind Catholic responses to the Nazi state. This lesson still seems pertinent for historians today.

The Battle for the Catholic Past deserves a wide audience, and the reviews collected in this forum will provide readers with a guide to the work's main themes. All four reviewers recognize the archival rigor, vivid prose, and novel insights of Ruff's study, while posing questions for further exploration.

Maria Mitchell's review elucidates Ruff's core argument, that "West German memory battles were ultimately ideological wars waged between stake holders frequently driven more by identity than evidence." Mitchell points out the centrality of confessional tensions in Ruff's study, which makes an important contribution to ongoing debates about the extent to which the postwar Christian Democratic Union succeeded in overcoming longstanding interconfessional rivalries.¹ Indeed, Ruff claims that crucial to the disproportionate accusations leveled against the postwar Catholic Church were efforts by Protestant politicians and intellectuals, such as the Social Democratic jurist Adolf Arndt and the playwright Rolf Hochhuth, to challenge the expansive role claimed by Catholic clergy to shape postwar law and social policy.

Demonstrating the importance of Ruff's study as a work of historiography, Kevin Spicer reflects on how his own histories of the Catholic Church in Nazi Germany fit into the scholarly lineages Ruff describes. Ruff

¹ For other recent studies that engage with this question, see Maria D. Mitchell, *The Origins of Christian Democracy: Politics and Confession in Modern Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012) and Noah Benezra Strote, *Lions and Lambs: Conflict in Weimar and the Creation of Post-Nazi Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

exposes the dubious maneuverings of one historian “whose work [Spicer has] admired,” and Spicer’s critical histories have provoked reactions from German church historians similar to those Ruff portrays. Spicer also wonders whether Ruff might have paid greater attention to Catholic anti-Semitism, and to the theological definitions of the Catholic Church underlying competing interpretations of its role under National Socialism.

Noah Strote’s review is perhaps the most critical, while still recognizing the achievement of Ruff’s book. Strote poses the crucial question of Ruff’s own perspective on the contested history of the Catholic Church during Nazism. That is, while Ruff faults participants on all sides of postwar debates for elevating polemics above a more nuanced account of the Catholic Church during National Socialism, the reader is given few examples of what such an account might look like. To build on Strote’s question, I would ask how the turn toward social history and *Alltagsgeschichte* (the history of everyday life) in the historiography of Nazi Germany during the 1980s and 1990s, after Ruff’s study concludes, shaped continued debate about the role of the Catholic Church. The controversies Ruff describes centered on individuals such as the Cardinal Secretary of State Eugenio Pacelli (beginning in 1939, Pope Pius XII) and the Center Party politician Franz von Papen (Chancellor during the late Weimar Republic and Vice-Chancellor under Hitler from 1933-1934). These figures’ prominence under the Nazi regime made them easy targets for postwar charges of complicity or collaboration. Does *Alltagsgeschichte* offer an avenue toward the “shades of gray” that Ruff calls for? Or have histories of Catholic life at the local level contributed toward the “normalization” of the Nazi era and exaggerated narratives of persecution and resistance?

Finally, Albert Wu praises Ruff for highlighting the interconnections between the individual episodes detailed in the book, while asking whether Ruff might have further explored cross-confessional and transnational comparisons. In particular, Wu suggests that the very ambiguity of the Catholic Church’s response to National Socialism made the Catholic hierarchy vulnerable to postwar polemicists seeking black-and-white accounts of heroes and villains. In contrast, “the more total complicity of Protestantism with Nazism” allowed at least some Protestants to confront the Nazi past earlier and more openly. Wu’s question might also be reversed, however, to ask whether there are important parallels between postwar Catholic and Protestant memory politics, in particular regarding the role of generational change and transatlantic networks in calling both churches to account for their actions during the Nazi years. After all, the first critical histories of German Protestantism during the Third Reich were written not by Confessing Church veterans but in the 1970s and 1980s by younger scholars such as Wolfgang Gerlach and Robert Ericksen.² Ruff convincingly explains why the Catholic Church bore the lion’s share of criticism during the early postwar decades, but the question of why representatives of the Protestant churches were more successful in staving off similar charges remains open for further research.

The range of questions posed by the four reviewers is a testament to the significance of Ruff’s study. Scholars, students, and a broader public interested in the history of Christian churches under dictatorships will find

² Robert P. Ericksen, *Theologians Under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Wolfgang Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews*, trans. Victoria J. Barnett (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000). Gerlach’s study originally appeared as a dissertation in 1970 but was not published until 1987. On myths about Confessing Church resistance that governed the writing of Protestant church history during the early postwar decades, see also Robert P. Ericksen, “Wilhelm Niemöller and the Historiography of the *Kirchenkampf*,” in Manfred Gailus and Hartmut Lehmann, eds., *Nationalprotestantische Mentalitäten: Konturen, Entwicklungslinien und Umbrüche eines Weltbildes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), 433-451.

much in this book to ponder about the politics of historical memory, and about ongoing contestations over the place of the Catholic Church in the modern world.

Participants:

Mark Edward Ruff is Professor of History at Saint Louis University. He is the author of *The Battle for the Catholic Past in Germany, 1945-1980* (Cambridge University Press, 2017) as well as *The Wayward Flock: Catholic Youth in Postwar West Germany, 1945-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). He has co-edited volumes on Christian Workers' Movements in Europe and the Catholic Church in the Third Reich. He is beginning work on a monograph comparing German reactions to allegations of collective guilt after the First and Second World Wars.

Brandon Bloch is a College Fellow in Modern European History at Harvard University. He received his Ph.D. in History from Harvard University in May 2018, with a dissertation on the role of Protestant intellectual networks in the reconstruction of constitutional law and the emergence of human rights politics in postwar West Germany. His work has appeared in *Modern Intellectual History*.

Maria Mitchell is a Professor of History at Franklin & Marshall College, where she chairs the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies program.

Kevin P. Spicer, C.S.C. is the James J. Kenneally Distinguished Professor of History at Stonehill College. Most recently, Spicer and Martina Cucchiara (Bluffton University) translated and edited *The Evil that Surrounds Us: The WWII Memoir of Erna Becker-Kohen* (Indiana University Press, 2017).

Noah B. Strote is an Associate Professor of European history at North Carolina State University. He is the author of *Lions and Lambs: Conflict in Weimar and the Creation of Post-Nazi Germany* (Yale University Press, 2017). His current research projects include a study of recent anti-leftist discourse in the United States and Germany as well as a study of intellectual exchange between African-Americans and European immigrants in the nineteenth century.

Albert Wu is an Assistant Professor in the Department of History at the American University of Paris. He is author of *From Christ to Confucius: German Missionaries, Chinese Christians, and the Globalization of Christianity, 1860-1950* (Yale University Press, 2016).

Review by Maria Mitchell, Franklin & Marshall College

Based on prodigious research in nearly eighty archives in six countries, *The Battle for the Catholic Past, 1945-1980* is a model of intellectual history. Written in a lively style replete with dramatic tales and colorful personalities, this landmark publication—the first coherent account of postwar German Catholic memory—offers much more than a reckoning with complicity with a murderous dictatorship, as valuable as that is. Ruff's analysis of debates about Catholicism's relationship to the Third Reich sheds light on numerous larger phenomena, including the dynamics of German *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung*, the integration of Catholics into mainstream German society, dechristianization and the dissolution of the Catholic milieu, social and political tumult in the early Federal Republic, West German civil liberties and freedom of press, the relationship of Church and State, the transnationalism of German memory wars, and—most broadly—the democratization of a post-dictatorial society. By expertly integrating Catholic memory into the history of the Federal Republic, Ruff makes a compelling case for incorporating religion in general and Catholicism in particular into larger narratives about German and postwar history.

Disputes about the culpability of Catholic political and clerical leaders were hard-fought on their own terms, but, as Ruff persuasively demonstrates, West German memory battles were ultimately ideological wars waged between stake holders frequently driven more by identity than evidence. The wars revolved around the place of Catholics in the Federal Republic, the first German state with a near confessional balance, governed by Catholic elites acting on claims to moral leadership grounded in assertions of Catholic resistance to and persecution by the Nazis. Questions about Catholics' past relationship to democracy necessarily had implications for a Federal Republic led by Catholics, many of whom had been active in the pre-1933 Center Party. In framing his study, Ruff poses the cardinal question—why, when the historical record reveals greater complicity on the part of the Protestant population and Churches, did the question of Catholic guilt dominate West German public discourse? To be sure, Catholics' centralized institutions and leadership provided an easier target; at the same time, Protestants acknowledged their failings in the September 1945 Stuttgart Confession of Guilt and public perceptions of the Protestant role in the Third Reich were shaped by the Confessing Church. But the most powerful dynamic at play, Ruff argues, was resistance on the part of Protestants and left-wing Catholics to conservative Catholic political power, a form of partisanship that elevated memory controversies into affairs of the state.

Unlike the Social Democratic Party, which contributed to the stability of the early Federal Republic through its participatory opposition, the Catholic-dominated Christian Democratic Union imprinted its ideology upon the new body politic. If Christian Democrats failed to realize fully their goal of forging a Christian state, West German culture, domestic and international policies, and public discourse in the 1950s nonetheless clearly reflected the desiderata of conservative Catholic authorities. While some Protestants regarded land reform and co-determination as attacks on Protestant rights and wealth, for example, others saw Christian Democratic Cold War strategy as a Catholic crusade designed to sacrifice Protestant eastern Germany. For their part, Christian Democrats heralded the arrival of Catholics at the helm; with the appointment of such cabinet members as conservative Catholic lawyer Franz-Josef Wuermeling and Catholic insistence on confessionally segregated public schools, the widespread association of the Christian Democratic Union with the Catholic Church became a truism of German politics.

This unprecedented assertion of German Catholic political power provides the backdrop to Ruff's detailed examination of seven case studies of West German memory politics—early postwar histories stressing Catholic victimization; the West German Constitutional Court's ruling on the validity of the Concordat

between the Third Reich and the Vatican; Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde's attack on Catholic conduct in 1933; American Gordon Zahn's charge that German Catholics violated Catholic teachings to support Nazi war policy; the staging of Rolf Hochhuth's blockbuster play, *The Deputy*; the publication of Guenter Lewy's critical history, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*; and finally the public debate between Klaus Scholder and Konrad Repgen about the "linkage theory," according to which Center Party politicians bartered their support of their Enabling Act for the Concordat's protection of confessional schools.¹

These complex stories fascinate both for their particularities and for their resonance with broader trends and issues of postwar German life. The controversies concerning the Concordat, for example, challenged the legitimacy of confessional schools, the most divisive confessional issue in an ostensibly interconfessional postwar German democracy. Böckenförde's bombshell article accusing Catholic leaders of entreaties to the Nazis exploded with force in part because it appeared on the eve of the Second Vatican Council and at the denouement of Konrad Adenauer's chancellorship. The publication of *The Deputy* involved complicated business calculations (and the rescue of page proofs from a Rowohlt Theater Publishing Company trash can) while reflecting the emergence of a robust public sphere ripe for contestation. Gordon Zahn's and Guenter Lewy's interventions remind us of the transnational nature of German negotiations with the past, whereas Scholder's and Repgen's dispute underscored the entrenched confessionalism of the German professoriate as well as the "confessional asymmetries" of West German public life that still favored Protestants in the late 1970s and 1980s (242).

Indeed, each episode of *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung* occasioned distinctive dramas, all the while underscoring the shifting dynamics of a Catholic elite's diminishing influence over mainstream press coverage and public discourse. If in the wake of the Zahn controversy historians succeeded in institutionalizing sympathetic scholarship by founding the Association for Contemporary History, Catholic authorities' attempts to contain criticism by denying access to documents and silencing critics, including those from within the Church, reinforced impressions of an authoritarianism. This was especially fateful in an era of robust democratization driven by an increasingly assertive press corps hostile to Catholic assertions of truth authority. As early narratives of Catholic resistance, reinforced by Allied occupiers, gave way to narratives of papal antisemitism and cowardice, the arc of historical judgment bent steadily against Catholic claims to moral steadfastness. That arc was undergirded by compelling questions of morality: Gordon Zahn's provocations about the continuities of Church policies on war and peace into the Cold War era, for example, remained as cutting as Böckenförde's probing queries about the relationship of Catholicism to liberal democracy.

Ruff's account of these bitter flare ups of confessionalized tension is admirable for its clear and fair assessment. Without shying away from trenchant analysis or criticism where due, Ruff's detailed intellectual biographies of the protagonists shed valuable light on the contours of twentieth-century German and American history. From the "chain-smoking, fast-talking journalist-priest" Walter Adolph, who "maintained his postwar defense of the church with the delicacy of a heavyweight fighter dishing out rapid-fire punches" (36), to the "obscure American professor" Gordon Zahn, "nicknamed Professor Somnax by his students [who became] a pacifist warrior crusading against Catholic teachings on war and peace" (123), Ruff paints a vivid portrait of institutional elites arguing about more than the details of a doorbell that historian Klaus Scholder claimed

¹ Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, "Der deutsche Katholizismus im Jahre 1933. Eine kritische Betrachtung," *Hochland* 53 (1961): 215-239; Rolf Hochhuth, *The Deputy* (New York: Grove Press, 1964); Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964).

announced future Pope Pius XII's emissary as he began Concordat negotiations with Center Party leader Ludwig Kaas. Ruff's dissection of networks among both establishment and renegade left-wing Catholics underscores the importance of the generational divide within German Catholicism, exemplified by Böckenförde as the "poster child for the young rebel insurgency" (98-99) that decried the Church's unabashed support for Christian Democracy—a tension reflected in the rise in the late 1950s of a new generation of increasingly secularized editors of the West German mainstream press, many of whom had lived in Great Britain or the United States and were committed to investigative journalism.

The implications of all of this are manifold. Ruff makes clear that histories of German memory must take religion and confessional culture into account; indeed, Catholic battles about the past presaged the larger debates about Nazism that roiled West German society beginning in the 1960s. More broadly, the story of German judgments about the Catholic past constitutes a crucial chapter in the estimation of Catholicism's and specifically Pope Pius XII's relationship to fascism, the Holocaust, and Judaism. In 2002, for example, Daniel J. Goldhagen, following the publication of *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair*, undertook an ambitious speaking tour in Germany to call on the Vatican to make restitution to family members of Jewish Holocaust victims.² Documents released in 2005 revealed that the Vatican ordered French Catholics who had hidden and baptized Jewish children during the Holocaust not to return them to their families.³ Many more chapters in this story could be recounted and will continue to be written. In this way, we see that the fundamental questions underlying Ruff's study—"about the church's place in the world" (259)—continue to resonate, underscoring the significance and achievement of this outstanding work of history.

² Daniel J. Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002).

³ Elaine Sciolino and Jason Horowitz, "Saving Jewish Children, but at What Cost?," *The New York Times* (9 January 2005).

Review by Kevin P. Spicer, C.S.C., Stonehill College

In *The Battle for the Catholic Past in Germany, 1945-1980*, Mark Edward Ruff has produced a tour de force examination of the behind-the-scenes historiography of the Catholic Church in Nazi Germany. A deeply and richly researched study, it will enable both specialists and non-specialists alike to comprehend the complex and tempestuous writing of the history of the Catholic Church's choices during Nazi leader Adolf Hitler's years in power. My review will consist of observations on the following six points: the storm before the publication of Rolf Hochhuth's *The Deputy*;¹ the extent to which Church leaders would go to protect the Catholic Church; the failure of 'protecting' the Catholic Church; access to archival documents; the termination of denominational rivalry; and broader acknowledgement of theology and its anti-Semitic underpinnings.

The Storm before The Deputy

Hasia R. Diner's 2009 *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962* revealed that contrary to the view of some scholars, there had been considerable early post-war discussion about the Holocaust and memorialization of the Jews who perished.² Though it concerns a completely different topic, Ruff's book analogously parallels Diner's point to show that amid the persistent post-war heroic and martyrologic narratives of the Catholic Church's persecution and resistance to National Socialism, critical counter-narratives could be heard. As early as January 1947, Johannes Fleischer, writing in the German newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel*, challenged the resistance narrative of the German bishops by describing it as consisting only of "paper protests" (43). In January 1949, the Free Democratic Party (FDP) delegate, Hermann Höpker-Aschoff, spoke against the alleged validity of the Reich-Vatican Concordat and by doing so harshly criticized the actions of the German Catholic Church and the Vatican in concluding a treaty with Hitler's government (60-61). In September 1959, Gordon Zahn, a Catholic pacifist and sociology professor at Loyola University and the University of Massachusetts-Boston, unleashed what Ruff characterizes as a "transatlantic" controversy (122) by delivering a fifteen-page paper that criticized the Catholic bishops' supportive stance of Germany in the Second World War—a critique that he would broaden into a scholarly book-length study.³ Finally, in February 1961, the legal expert and historian, Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, a practicing Catholic, punctured holes in the Church's resistance narrative in an insightful and devastating essay that appeared in both German and English.⁴ These controversies took place before Hochhuth's *The Deputy* appeared on the stage of Berlin's Freie Volksbühne in February 1963. Despite these public critiques of the Church, the heroic combative narrative seems to have prevailed, both in the public eye and in historical

¹ Rolf Hochhuth, *The Deputy* (New York: Grove Press, 1964).

² Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

³ Gordon Zahn, *German Catholics and Hitler's Wars* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962).

⁴ See Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, *Der deutsche Katholizismus im Jahre 1933. Kirche und Demokratisches Ethos* (Freiburg: Herder, 1988) for a republication of the original essay and the responses to it. For an English translation, see Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, "German Catholicism in 1933," translated by Raymond Schmandt, *Cross Currents* 11 (1961): 283-304.

memory in the first two decades following the Second World War. Historians and journalists alike point to *The Deputy* as a key paradigm shift in which historical analysis and popular opinion turned against the assertions of the Church's ecclesiastical leaders. Of course, the key difference between these diametrically opposed historical views rests both on Hochhuth's focus on Pope Pius XII's silence during the Holocaust as a motif for his drama and on greater change in western society and religious culture. In some ways, Hochhuth's play galvanized the Church to vindicate the Vatican during the Holocaust and focus less on the resistance narrative of the German Catholic Church. Perhaps Ruff's presentation of earlier controversies will help contextualize the contentious 'Pius Wars' and elevate them to a broader exploration of the universal Catholic Church during this annihilative historical period.

The Extent to Which Church Leaders Would Go to Protect the Catholic Faith

Early in his work, Ruff informs us of the changing denominational landscape in post-war Western Germany, as Catholics now comprised almost 45 percent of the population, a rise from the previous 36 percent recorded in 1937. Catholic interests and concerns took on a greater emphasis than they did in the past. The German federal government in Bonn and the German Foreign Office were willing to work with Catholic ecclesiastical leaders on issues of similar interest, primarily those that impacted western Germany's image at home and abroad. Chapter four on Zahn's critique of German Catholic bishops during the Second World War describes just how far Church leaders would go to protect their Church and, in turn, the image of Germany. This 'resistance' network existed not only in Germany but extended abroad. Though extensive, the deterrent efforts had minimal impact. For example, in 1960, through the intercession of Cardinal Augustin Bea, an editor at *America* magazine apologized to Cardinal Julius Döpfner, bishop of Berlin, for positively praising Zahn's worth in the pages of the Jesuit publication (145). Likewise, Cardinal Josef Frings, archbishop of Cologne, prevented the Helicon publishing house from releasing a German translation of Zahn's work (148). In the end, such efforts were only minor deterrents and failed to produce the anticipated results.

The Failure of "Protecting" the Catholic Church

In chapter four, Ruff concludes, "Had he [Zahn] been left to his own devices, his work would have appeared in niche Catholic publications, where it would likely have raised a few eyebrows but never generated anything approaching a scandal" (150). Ruff draws similar conclusions in almost every chapter, namely that any apologetic defense of the Church to support its choices under National Socialism primarily resulted in failure and cast an even greater spotlight on the historical works. For example, the meticulous post-war editing of auxiliary bishop Johannes Neuhäusler to remove controversial phrases from reprinted primary documents in *Cross and Swastika* ended in controversy in the 1960s when Hans Müller discovered the "selective" edits and published his findings in *Politische Studien*.⁵ Likewise, Berlin diocesan leaders appeared as medieval censors when they attempted to deny high-school students subsidized tickets to *The Deputy*. Only the Catholic Action Committee of the Munich-Freising archdiocese was insightful enough to see that silence or contrived indifference in the face of *The Deputy* robbed the play of publicity that created a significant audience. If only Church leaders could have earlier followed the biblical verse, "the truth will make you free."⁶ Portraying the

⁵ Hans Müller, "Zur Behandlung des Kirchenkampfes in der Nachkriegsliteratur," *Politische Studien* 12:135 (1961): 474-481. See Ruff, pp. 97-98, n. 63.

⁶ NRSV JN 8:32.

grey reality of the Church's history under National Socialism may have allowed the Church to have avoided such controversies. But in the eyes of Church leaders and zealous Catholic faithful there was more at stake than merely historical truth.

Access to Archival Documents

Chapter six should be read by any historian attempting to access restricted records. It is priceless to read how Gunter Lewy's research was first "blessed" by Johannes Neuhäusler and the budding Association for Contemporary History (Bonn), only to be thwarted a short time later. Fortunately for Lewy, he could keep one-step ahead of his would-be-foilers to complete the research of his seminal study of the German Catholic Church under National Socialism.⁷ It is tragic, too, to learn how fine and impartial scholars such as Ethel Mary Tinnemann and Stewart Stehlin were prevented from accessing pertinent archival sources. Father Ludwig Volk, S.J., an individual whose pioneering work I have admired, emerges on the scene as a selfish historian willing to resort to the most conniving measures to prevent fellow-historians from accessing sources. Ruff shows that Volk's efforts even limited access to a collection in the United States.

I am confident that all of us have experienced one of the most feared words—at least in German speaking lands—in archival research: *gesperrt* (closed or inaccessible). Over the course of my twenty-plus years in the field, I, too, have encountered this word on many occasions. At times, it is quite justified due to normal archival guidelines. At others, it is mystifying. Generally, however, a great change in Germany has taken place over the past few decades in accessing documents. Government and state-archives have become more forthcoming in making their collections available. Diocesan archives as privately-owned entities fall into a different category, though they follow established norms. Nevertheless, accessing sensitive documents can still be challenging. Change continues to take place, bringing with it new horizons for archival research.

The Termination of Denominational Rivalry

Throughout Ruff's book, denominational rivalry and tensions are present. Such tensions today have generally ended in Germany. This past summer I had the opportunity to witness and partake in the annual Corpus-Christi Mass and procession in Berlin. A huge crowd gathered on the city's *Gendarmenmarkt* in front of a beautifully constructed altar. A mobile organ was even present. At the beginning of the Eucharist and at the invitation of the Berlin Catholic archdiocese, Dr. Markus Dröge, bishop of the Evangelical Church of Berlin-Brandenburg, addressed the congregation with warm and welcoming words that emphasized the common goals and friendship between Berlin Protestants and Catholics. Humorously, he joked that he had not received a similar invitation while a Rhineland pastor. Yet such events reveal a final reckoning of peace between the two major Christian denominations in Germany, especially as secularism and a lessening in religious practice have become more feared than a rival denomination.⁸

Broader Acknowledgement of Theology and its Anti-Semitic Underpinnings

⁷ Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

⁸ On this point, see Thomas Großbölting, *Losing Heaven: Religion in Germany since 1945*, translated by Alex Skinner (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017).

In his conclusion, Ruff writes, “Was the church’s purpose, then, primarily sacramental, its task ensuring that the faithful would continue to receive the seven sacraments during an era of tribulation? If so, the Catholic Church would by definition be held to different standards than the Protestant churches, which had few or no sacraments to administer and accordingly different ecclesiastical structures. Or was it to live the life of Christ at the time of trial, even unto death, a sacrifice for all humanity?” (256-257). Such questions to me reveal that perhaps such theological issues deserve greater exploration. As my own work has shown, the continuation of the sacramental life of the Church was an essential aspect of its response and/or resistance to National Socialism, which sought to limit the Church’s influence in German society and the world.⁹ Reception of the sacraments was the means for faithful Catholics to receive the grace of eternal life. The sacraments nourish Catholics to live out the grace of God experienced in their lives and the world around them. Unfortunately, under National Socialism, Catholics too often limited how they lived out their faith. Their outlook on the world restricted whom they recognized as neighbor. The horrors of the Second World War and the Holocaust forced the Church and its leaders and theologians to reexamine the Church’s ecclesiology and soteriology. While Ruff reveals the linkage between the political and cultural history of Germany and the writing of German Catholic history, he might say more about the role of antisemitism and the Church’s tenuous relationship with Judaism. At the same time, Ruff correctly observes, “no amount of historical evidence could shake deep and genuine moral convictions since the moral and historical categories used were not designed to accomplish the same tasks.... Many have thus wanted a different story – one either of perfect resistance or a ‘church that failed’.... And that is why the battles over the Catholic past during the twelve years of the Third Reich are unlikely to ever be completely resolved, even if all questions of historical evidence were miraculously to be answered once and for all through the release of documents from the pontificate of Pope Pius XII” (255, 259).

The Controversy Continues

In 2009, Ferdinand Schöningh, a publishing house in Paderborn favored by the Association for Contemporary History, published *Die Katholiken und das Dritte Reich: Kontroversen und Debatten* (The Catholics and the Third Reich: Controversies and Debates), a collection of essays dedicated to Konrad Repgen, the Association’s co-founder, on his eighty-fifth birthday.¹⁰ The recently deceased Repgen is also a central figure in chapter seven of Ruff’s work. In the essay, “Kirche im Bild: Historische Photos als Mittel der Irreführung,” (Images of the Church: Historical Photos as Means of Deception), Karl-Joseph Hummel, at the time, the director of the Association, defends his Church (and mine, by the way), by strongly attacking what he perceives to be the misuse of historical photographs in books on Church history. Among the works attacked is my *Hitler’s Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism*.¹¹ Evidently, the controversies and debates continue to this day, though, I should point out that Hummel and several of his colleagues in the Association are now retired and have been replaced by scholars more willing to confront the past. Still, we

⁹ For example, see Kevin P. Spicer, *Resisting the Third Reich: The Catholic Clergy in Hitler’s Berlin* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Karl-Josef Hummel and Michael Kißener, eds. *Die Katholiken und das Dritte Reich: Kontroversen und Debatten* (Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009).

¹¹ Kevin P. Spicer, *Hitler’s Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2008).

must now wait for Ruff's second volume to bring us up-to-date and conversant with the post-1980 historiographical controversies.

Review by Noah B. Strote, North Carolina State University

The Federal Republic of Germany is often held up as a model for how post-conflict nations can overcome brutal legacies by “working through the past.” Beginning in the late 1950s, the story goes, young (West) Germans who had grown up in the shadow of Adolf Hitler began asking uncomfortable questions about the complicity of their parents and grandparents in the rise of the Nazi regime and the murder of millions of innocent people during the Second World War. Then, as these probing young people became full-fledged adults and raised a new generation of their own, they taught their children never to shy away from historical self-criticism. “Archives were opened; studies made; lessons learned,” wrote the Oxford historian Timothy Garton Ash, who in 2011 was far from alone in bestowing upon Germany the “gold standard for dealing with a difficult past.”¹

Mark Edward Ruff’s fantastic new book, *The Battle for the Catholic Past in Germany*, helps disrupt this triumphal narrative. His starting point is the important observation that the people who led the truth-finding movement—a generation that included the celebrated novelists Günter Grass and Heinrich Böll as well as the lesser-known figures Ruff goes on to explore in his study—did not rush to open and draw lessons from all archives equally. Far from it: they singled out for particular scrutiny the records of one institution, the Catholic Church, and, by extension, the sizable minority of Germans living in the Federal Republic who identified as Roman Catholics. Looking back, this constitutes a real historical puzzle, because we now know (from research conducted since the 1980s) that the church leadership of Germany’s majority Protestant population was far more closely connected to the Nazi Party than its Catholic counterpart.² One would not have gotten that impression reading the German media of the late ’50s and early ’60s, Ruff argues. Instead of causing reflection or collective healing, the gotcha-histories directed at the Church prompted defensive responses and what Ruff calls ferocious “conflagrations” (7) that remobilized fronts in the long history of Protestant-Catholic struggle in Germany.

To show that the critical generation dedicated “undue” (i) and unsalutary energy to uncovering the sins of the Church, Ruff mines seven different controversies that broke out after war’s end. The book begins by arguing that German Catholics, primarily in response to “criticism from Communists” and “probing journalists” in the period just after 1945, often adopted a “defensive, if not apologetic” tone in telling the history of the Church’s behavior under Hitler, emphasizing persecution and downplaying accommodation (45). A second chapter shows how Catholic leaders in the 1950s then mobilized those narratives of martyrdom as morality tales to defend their communal interests, which were under threat in parts of Germany.

The following five chapters move to the battles caused by the critical generation’s efforts to destroy what it regarded as the myth of Catholic innocence under Nazism: a “firestorm” (88) over a journal article penned by a young scholar named Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde about the Catholic parties’ support of dictatorship in

¹ Timothy Garton Ash, “Germany can Show Reborn Arab Nations the Art of Overcoming a Difficult Past,” *The Guardian* (16 March 2011).

² Among the works Ruff cites as having initiated this dawning realization are Robert Ericksen, *Theologians under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel/Paul Althaus/Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), and Almuth Meyer-Zollitsch, *Nationalsozialismus und evangelische Kirche in Bremen* (Bremen: Staatsarchiv der freien Hansestadt Bremen, 1985).

1933; a “blow-up” (122) over American research on German Catholic support for Hitler’s war; an “explosion of surprising violence” (156) in reaction to Rolf Hochhuth’s play *The Deputy*, about the Vatican’s tepid response to the Holocaust; the erection of “barricades” (211) around Catholic archives prompted by a German-Jewish émigré’s book on Church anti-Judaism; and finally, the “torrent of words” (237) unleashed by continued efforts into the 1970s to undermine the moral legitimacy of the Church despite apparent reluctance to do the same for the Protestant past. Ruff holds that the battle seems to have petered out after 1980, but not before leaving significant social-psychological damage.

The conclusions of Ruff’s wonderfully textured, archivally rich study seem to be (at least) two-fold. First, as he explains in his introduction and proves throughout the book, the persistent fuss over Catholic complicity under Nazism was never purely a matter of uncovering facts, but at root a battle site “for a larger set of conflicts over how the church was to position itself in modern society – in politics, international relations, the media and the public sphere” (2). In other words, the West German critics’ real concern was that the Catholic hierarchy had acquired too much influence over the policy-making of the Federal Republic and the individual German states: they perceived it first in the preferential treatment Western authorities seemed to give to Church officials in the various occupation zones from 1945 to 1949, and they saw it again in the country’s long-serving chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, a devout Catholic who led the federal government from 1949 to 1963. Weaponizing the discipline of history, they used research into the Nazi past to fight “proxy wars” (119) against the contemporary Church. The thesis is overwhelmingly persuasive, one of those arguments that appears intuitive once articulated. Indeed, it makes one wonder whether there would have been as much West German engagement with the Nazi past *overall* had the Catholic-dominated Christian parties (the Christian Democratic Union and the Christian Social Union) not achieved national power in the reconstruction years.

The second main finding, which Ruff comes to only in the conclusion and provides far less documentary evidence to support, is that there was an “irony behind the efforts of these ... fellow travelers to diminish the moral legitimacy of church and party”: namely, he claims that the critical generation overestimated the power of the Catholic clergy in the post-Nazi period. Choosing to focus on the “overheated rhetoric” of “hardliners,” Ruff claims, they failed to recognize that moderate party leaders such as Adenauer were in fact seeking to *reduce* the influence of the church hierarchy; that a new generation of Catholic theologians were softening their conservative views, as evidenced by the Second Vatican Council, 1962-1965; and that younger Catholics were increasingly ignoring the dictates of the clergy anyway (248). Ruff further argues that the critics’ misperception of clerical power was detrimental to public discourse in a democracy. Drawing on recent research in social psychology and invoking today’s polarized American culture, he suggests that the attacks against the Church caused many Catholics to dig in their heels, ignore evidence that contradicted their views, and strike back against their opponents with increasing force: “the more sweeping and unsparing the criticisms, the less likely the combatants were to change their minds,” he writes (253).

Recognizing the great achievement of this piece of scholarship and being grateful for the opportunity to engage with its arguments, I’d like to raise three sets of questions. They are not so much criticisms as invitations to provide insight into specific decisions Ruff made in organizing and writing the book in the way that he did.

Ruff tells the reader in the introduction that one of the main reasons to “historicize these thirty-five years of strife over the church’s conduct during [the] twelve years of revolution, dictatorship, war and genocide” is to allow “a past so often painted in black and white to be restored to the shades of gray that better correspond to the messiness of the religious experience under a brutal and ultimately anti-Christian dictatorship” (12). But

in the ensuing book, we do not get a sense of what the author believes a more balanced accounting might look like in practice. How should we be explaining to students, for example, why German Catholic parties decided in 1933 to enable the Nazi-led dictatorship? He shows convincingly that the “linkage theory” advanced so belligerently by critics of the Church such as Klaus Scholder—according to which Catholic politicians traded loyalty to the regime for the narrow protection of Catholic interests—lacked concrete evidence to back it up, as did the outright denials of the theory offered by Catholic defenders such as Konrad Repgen.³ But is there something better besides studied agnosticism? The same might be asked about Ruff’s stance on Pope Pius XII’s reticence in speaking out against Jewish persecution. Without the author’s own interpretation of the Catholic experience under Nazism or his recommendations for better historical questions, it is difficult to understand the baseline “gray” from which Ruff judged the arguments of his protagonists to be “black and white.”

I would also like to hear more about how Ruff came to the conclusion that the critics of the Church overestimated clerical influence in the early Federal Republic. He alludes to documents from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and diocesan archives opened since the 1980s that allegedly reveal a distancing between the two institutions in the postwar period, including documents showing that Adenauer, as chancellor, “sought to reduce the [party’s] dependence on church and clergy” (248). When, where, and why did this separation, to which Ruff also alluded in the conclusion to his first book, *The Wayward Flock: Catholic Youth in Postwar West Germany, 1945-1965*, take place?⁴ Was it not true, at least for most of the 1950s, that there was significant overlap between the agendas of the Christian parties and the German Catholic hierarchy on issues from rearmament to schools to sex—especially when it came to the Christian Social Union (CSU), the Bavarian sister party upon which the CDU depended for its success in federal elections? Even if there were fewer priests serving as government ministers for the CDU/CSU than there had been for the Weimar-era Center Party, did not many Christian politicians still consult with clerical and lay Catholic leaders before introducing legislation?

Finally, I wonder if Ruff, in light of his meticulous and important research, agrees with Garton Ash’s contention that Germany should hold the “gold standard for dealing with a difficult past.” If yes, when and how did West Germans get better at uncovering and discussing each other’s (parents’ or grandparents’) complicity without descending into the kind of polarizing discourse he wants to highlight in the 1950s and ’60s? Or should Ruff’s conclusion that the Catholic Church was singled out for undue scrutiny because of its imagined power in society change our view of Germans’ much vaunted *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*? Could a similar study of discursive breakdown be written about the 1968 generation and a “battle over Germany’s capitalist past”?

³ Klaus Scholder, *Die Kirchen und das Dritte Reich*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1977); Konrad Repgen, “Konkordat für Ermächtigungsgesetz? Gegen die Hypothese von einem Tauschgeschäft zwischen Hitler und dem Vatikan,” in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (24 October 1977), 10-11.

⁴ Mark Edward Ruff, *The Wayward Flock: Catholic Youth in Postwar West Germany, 1945-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 195.

Review by Albert Wu, American University of Paris

Mark Ruff accomplishes a remarkable feat in his extraordinary book, *The Battle for the Catholic Past in Germany, 1945-1980*. He takes what on the surface could appear as dry academic controversies—historical debates over the complicity between German Catholics and the Nazi regime—and turns it into captivating, high drama. Through meticulous and tireless research drawing on sources from seventy-seven archives, Ruff introduces us to an incredible cast of characters. Among his main actors: a spy-priest jailed in Dachau who penned the first definitive history of Catholics in the Third Reich; a journalist-priest raised on street brawls with Communists; a pacifist academic embroiled in a transatlantic controversy; a German-Jewish émigré who doggedly sought to gain access to Catholic archives in Germany; a playwright who dug around in the archives and found what he believed to be incontrovertible evidence of the Pope’s complicity with the Nazi regime. In each case, Ruff conveys the thrill of archival discovery, while never losing sight of the broader historical questions of church-state relations, historical memory, and post-war German political culture.

The heart of Ruff’s book grapples with the question as to why the issue of Catholic complicity garnered so much attention and controversy after the Second World War. Ruff offers a series of compelling answers. For one, he points to the new-found dominance of Catholics in the post-war landscape. In 1945, in a partitioned Germany, Catholics accounted for forty-five percent of the population, much less of a minority than before. More importantly, after 1949, the Catholic-dominated Christian Democratic Union (CDU) became the leading political party in the Federal Republic. The CDU’s critics seized upon the historical record as a central platform of their political critique.

On the other hand, German Catholics saw an opportunity to assert their moral authority in the wake of the ruins of the Second World War. Seeing the denazification policies of the Allies as overly punitive, “the German churches stepped forward as spokesmen for the defeated German nation” (15). The initial documentary histories omitted “stories of collaboration, cowardice or internecine strife,” and instead focused on German Catholics as martyrs who had been persecuted and resisted the Nazi regime (34).

But one inconvenient fact dogged this narrative of Catholic resistance: the *Reichskonkordat* signed by Cardinal Secretary of State Eugenio Pacelli, later Pope Pius XII, and Franz von Papen, Vice Chancellor of Germany under Hitler in July 1933. Defenders of the *Reichskonkordat* claimed—and still claim—that it protected a church that was being persecuted by a dictatorial regime. Critics, on the other hand, saw the *Reichskonkordat* as a public acknowledgment of collusion between the Roman Catholic Church and the Nazi regime. Moreover, the *Reichskonkordat* offered moral legitimacy to the Hitler dictatorship. These battles over the historical legacy of the *Reichskonkordat* spilled into the public arena. In a high-profile 1956 court case over ‘denominational schools’ and school segregation, the question of the legitimacy of the *Reichskonkordat* occupied center-stage. Ruff brilliantly shows how Catholics, hoping to retain their tradition of independent schools, rallied to a defense of the *Reichskonkordat*. But their defense had an unintended consequence: Catholics “unwittingly helped demythologize the narratives of resistance so carefully crafted between 1945 and 1949” (85).

The landmark 1956 case opened up a collective space to discuss the Church’s complicity with the Nazi regime, and a new generation of left-wing Catholics emerged to criticize the church. In 1961, Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenforde—later one of Germany’s most influential legal scholars—wrote an article in the influential Catholic magazine *Hochland* that was critical of the Catholic Church during the Nazi era. Böckenforde’s

critique further catalyzed the creation of the Association for Contemporary History, which included not only professional historians but also politicians, diplomats, and journalists who were interested in the question of the Catholic Church's relationship to Germany. These debates garnered further international attention. American academics in the field of sociology and political science became interested in studying the American Catholic sociologist Gordon Zahn, the controversy generated by Rolf Hochhuth's play *The Deputy*, and the work of the American political scientist Guenther Lewy.

Most excitingly, Ruff shows how the web of players remained entangled in these debates from 1945 all the way until the 1970s. For instance, Johannes Neuhäusler, the spy-priest and primary force behind perpetuating the narrative of Catholics as forces of resistance to the Nazi regime, sought to restrict Guenther Lewy's access to diocesan archives when he visited Germany in 1961 (201). The Association for Contemporary History continued to shape the public debates well into the late 1970s, the moment when Ruff ends his narrative. By bringing to light these entangled webs and networks, Ruff also shows how the battle was waged in a diverse set of locales, among them theaters, classrooms, universities, and newspapers. Ruff thus revises our notion of the 1950s as a period of relative calm. He convincingly demonstrates the extremely fragmented and contested nature of the post-war German landscape, and the centrality of Catholicism within it.

In his conclusion, Ruff asks why German Protestants received less scrutiny when compared to German Catholics. Protestants were far more complicit in Hitler's regime—between 10 and 20 percent of Protestant clergy joined the Nazi Party, while only about one percent of Catholic clergy joined the National Socialists (244). For one, ecclesiological differences made it easy for post-war critics to find a target of attack. The Catholic Church had a central figure (the Pope) and hierarchal structure, while on the Protestant side, there “was no Protestant pope to command public attention” (245). Protestant theologians argued that since the Catholic Church had a central organizing hierarchy, and could mobilize the faithful more easily, they deserved far greater blame than the decentralized Protestant church. Ruff further argues that German Protestantism's decentralized structure and opaque structure protected it from further examination.

The more salient reason for the extra scrutiny on Catholics, Ruff posits, is the “fractured political landscape of the Adenauer era,” which “asymmetrically focused” on the Catholic Church's complicity with the Nazis (249). Drawing on the work of the psychologist Daniel Kahneman, Ruff further points out that the hyper-partisan Adenauer era created an atmosphere where “rational” arguments were neglected in favor of “emotions” (253). Thus, even Catholics who had lived through Nazi persecution and had seen friends and colleagues collaborate with the Nazis were entrenched in their own positions of defending the Church: “the more sweeping and unsparing the criticisms, the less likely the combatants were to change their minds” (253). As such, Ruff's book serves as a warning for the deleterious effects of partisanship.

While I find Ruff's foregrounding of the broader political culture of the 1950s compelling, I wished that he had engaged in a more extended comparison with the Protestant counterexample. Ruff refers only passingly to the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt of 19 October 1945, the German Protestant Church body's official declaration that it had erred in not opposing Hitler's regime. He sees it as a convenient political cover that allowed Protestants to turn their attention on their Catholic adversaries. “Protestant churchmen, politicians and intellectuals sounded theological chords of sin, confession, absolution and forgiveness,” Ruff writes, because they knew the same claims “would not—nor could not—be as easily directed against their own churches” (245). In short, German Protestants come off as insincere players, eager to criticize the Catholic Church as a way to deflect attention away from their own complicity with the Nazi regime.

In an excellent dissertation, Benjamin Carl Pearson has shown that at least publicly, German Protestants did take the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt seriously. At various public gatherings after 1949, including the annual *Kirchentag* and in their publications, Protestants repeatedly invoked the Stuttgart Declaration, exhorting Protestant believers to re-consider their relationship with the longer strands of German history. After the war, at least publicly, they engaged in an extensive process of self-critique, and as a result, German Protestantism transformed itself in a span of twenty years. By 1969, Pearson argues, “German Protestants had reinvented themselves and transformed their tradition to an almost unbelievable degree,” as liberal and radical Protestants began to call for “democratic political participation, political and ideological self-criticism, and dialogue,” as well as “social justice and world peace” (451-452).¹

Theologically, the Catholic Church also transformed itself after the Second World War. But as James Chappel has shown in his new book, *Catholic Modern*, while a vibrant movement of anti-fascist Catholics (what Chappel calls fraternal Catholicism) existed throughout the interwar years, in the post-war era that group did not capture the Christian Democratic movement after the Second World War. Instead, post-war Christian Democracy was infused by what Chappel calls “paternal Catholicism”—interwar Catholics who saw traditional family values as a bulwark against the spread of Communism. Rather than reimagining their churches in new ways to the transformed political landscape, Christian Democrats in the 1950s re-emphasized the importance of traditional family norms: “A Catholic modernity, it was presumed in the long 1950s, would be made up of prosperous and hygienic families following traditional gender norms and obeying Church precepts in their sexual lives.”²

Both Ruff’s and Chappel’s account points us to the dogged continuities that marked the post-war church, and how the anti-Communist wing of the Church continued to control the levers of power within it. As Ruff shows, the Church cleaved to the narrative of Catholic martyrdom and rejected the narrative of Catholic complicity well into the late 1950s. The narrative of Catholic martyrdom helped bolster the legitimacy of Catholics as bulwarks against Communism in the context of the Cold War. In comparison, the more total complicity of Protestantism with Nazism ironically opened up the possibility for its complete transformation. As liberals and radicals came to dominate the German Protestant landscape, German Protestants moved leftwards in more rapid and total ways than their Catholic counterparts. German Protestantism was forced to reckon with its past much earlier. The comparatively cautious approach reform could help to explain why the Catholic Church came under much more scrutiny than German Protestantism.

But these comments offer only small counter-narratives and suggestions to Ruff’s central account. Through his careful reconstruction of the historical debates over German Catholicism’s complicity with the Nazi regime, Ruff demonstrates that the historical controversies over Catholicism in Germany intersected with numerous facets of post-war German society and history. In the process, Ruff excitingly blends social history, intellectual history, cultural history, and legal history. The result is a masterful piece of historical scholarship that deserves to be widely read and cherished.

¹ Benjamin Carl Pearson, “Faith and Democracy: Political Transformations at the German Protestant Kirchentag, 1949-1969” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007), 451-452.

² James Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 185.

Author's Response by Mark Edward Ruff, Saint Louis University

I would like to begin by extending my profound thanks for the five reviewers, all recognized experts and rising stars in the field, for taking the time to engage with the arguments and methodology in my book and to produce such generous commentaries. It is truly humbling to receive such thoughtful comments from such distinguished historians and scholars, particularly since this book took seven years to write. Not only did I discover significant holes in the research that precipitated more than a dozen return trips to European archives; the dense and interwoven nature of its multiple narratives also forced me to rewrite the entire manuscript no fewer than four times in order to make it comprehensible not just to lay readers but even to those working in the field. And so it was particularly gratifying to read that the book came alive to the readers. Or as Albert Wu put it, “dry, academic controversies” were turned into “captivating, high drama.”

The four commentaries all center on the theme of historical narratives—how they are constructed, bolstered, and contested. Narratives of the Catholic Church’s past, including those in competition with each other, correspond to a surprising degree with narratives of the Federal Republic of Germany. Axel Schildt speaks of five often competing major narratives—the Federal Republic as a success story, as a story of failure, as the story of modernization, as the story of Westernization, and as the story of historical burden (*Belastungsgeschichte*).¹ It is not at all difficult to see how narratives of the Church’s past, which were instrumental in shaping the self-identity of the CDU/CSU (Christian Democratic Union/Christian Socialist Union), proved so contentious: they went to the core of the Federal Republic’s self-definition and the construction of its master narratives.

What made these master narratives of the Federal Republic and of the Church’s past so contentious was the fact that each contains a grain of truth. It is easy to dismiss narratives out of hand when they bear little to no correspondence to lived experience or documentary records. But the master narratives of the Church’s past, including the critical and triumphalist narratives, as one-sided and doctored as they were, do contain elements of truth. For this reason, Noah Strote’s request for elaboration of my claim that we need to view the Church’s past in shades of grey rather than of black and white is of utmost importance. What would a more balanced accounting look like, he queries.

In my book, I did not probe this question for several reasons. Most fundamentally, I wanted to keep my focus on how these narratives were constructed. Devoting energies to summary verdicts about the actors and their conduct during the Nazi era would not only have required another book-length manuscript. It would have diverted readers’ focus from the postwar era and redirected it to the Nazi years, thereby undercutting the very premise of the book. My work would have been seen as yet another sequel in a seemingly unending string of contestable and often polemical literature instead of as an effort to historicize narratives and chronicles.

But these exculpatory justifications do not yet answer Strote’s query. I suspect that my “grey” in the aggregate would have looked something like the person of Cardinal Michael Faulhaber, a man equally capable of

¹ Axel Schildt, “Fünf Möglichkeiten, die Geschichte der Bundesrepublik zu erzählen,” in: Frank Bajohr, Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, Claudia Kemper, and Detlef Siegfried, eds., *Mehr als eine Erzählung: Zeitgeschichtliche Perspektiven auf die Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2016), 15-28.

resistance and collaboration, and one with affinities for significant portions of the National Socialist agenda.² At the heart of our conundrum is the fact that the conservatism and patriotism strikingly evident in many—but crucially not all—church leaders led to a distinct but partial overlap between the Nazis’ and the Church’s ideological and political agendas. They shared a hostility to Communism and to secularism. But there were also significant areas of disagreement triggered by the Nazis’ paganism, Social Darwinism, and more permissive attitudes on sexuality. But above all it was the Nazis’ war against the churches, one pursued in fits and starts, and which led to one violation after another of the Reichskonkordat, that tempered but did not wholly erase ecclesiastical support for the National Socialist state. It thus becomes increasingly difficult to reduce the story of the Catholic Church under National Socialist rule to a simple common denominator because it differed from person to person, month to month, and era to era, depending on how and when the Nazis launched their offensives. Faulhaber was a monarchist and conservative, but of course not all Catholics fit these categories. There were conservative Catholics like Fritz Gerlich who were implacably opposed to National Socialism.³ Almost every societal group over a certain size, even if it attempts to present itself as homogeneous, evinces differences of opinion over tactics, strategy, and ideology, and Catholics were of course no exception. Is it nonetheless possible to discern dominant strands? Certainly, but even these prove complicated.

This pattern holds true on the local level, as Brandon Bloch suggests. An attention to *Alltagsgeschichte* exposes divisions within parishes and communities over how best to respond to the threats and opportunities posed and offered by National Socialism. I had the opportunity to examine Gestapo documents on the Catholic clergy housed in the diocesan archive of Würzburg, which bore out this pattern and added new wrinkles. Unpopular clergymen could be denounced by parishioners; popular clergymen found support. In sum: communities are complex. So too are human beings.

How did Catholic struggles to work through the past compare to the Protestant experience? Did Protestants work through their pasts in a similar manner? This question is at the heart of Albert Wu’s commentary, and he intimates that more fully developed parallels with Protestantism would have modified my picture of Protestants as “insincere players, eager to criticize the Catholic Church as a way to deflect attention away from their own complicity with the Nazi regime.” In support of this claim, he cites Benjamin Pearson’s excellent and sadly still unpublished dissertation which shows how Protestants reinvented themselves as “liberal and

² Andreas Wirsching, the director of the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich, recently published a critical article on Faulhaber, drawing on the powerful Cardinal’s journal entries recently made available to scholars, or at least to those capable of working through his torturous stenography. See Andreas Wirsching, “Mehr Nähe als Distanz? Kardinal Michael von Faulhaber und der Nationalsozialismus,” in: Friedrich Wilhelm Graf and Hans Günter Hockerts, eds., *Distanz und Nähe zugleich? Die christlichen Kirchen im „Dritten Reich“* (Munich: Schriftenreihe des NS Dokumentationszentrums, 2017), 199-224.

³ See Rudolf Morsey, *Fritz Gerlich (1883-1934): Ein früherer Gegner Hitlers und des National Sozialismus* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2016).

radical Protestants” began to call for greater democratic political participation, ideological self-criticism, political rethinking, social justice, and world peace.⁴

Wu is, of course, correct that my parallels with the Protestant experience of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* remain on the surface. Developing these parallels more fully require another monograph and many additional years of research, and I hope that I can be forgiven for not having undertaken this mammoth project. But his use of the phrasing “liberal and radical Protestants” is telling. It rightly implies that Protestants were also divided during the postwar era about how to approach their past. Younger and liberal Protestants, like their Catholic counterparts in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council and in the 1970s, could call for a critical reappraisal. But others, especially elder orthodox Lutherans, did and would not. Wolfgang Gerlach’s dissertation from 1970 probing antisemitism within the ranks of the Confessing Church, *Als die Zeugen Schwiegen*, would not find a publisher until 1988. Many seminal revisionist works come from the western shores of the Atlantic. Amid the controversies raging over Hochhuth’s play, *The Deputy*, Protestants split ranks. Some like Albert Schweitzer seized on the opportunity to criticize their confessional rival. But others, like the Berlin Bishop, Otto Dibelius, who had delivered proudly anti-Semitic utterances in the 1920s, not only refrained from criticism of Pope Pius XII: he defended Pius’ response.⁵

This highly complex picture notwithstanding, I would disagree with the claim that the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt found widespread acceptance among Protestants, at least in its early years. As Martin Greschat’s scholarship has in my estimation definitively shown, many Protestants resolutely opposed its message and breadth; local parishes wrote angry letters to church leaders.⁶ Over time, this would change and its message, however diluted it appears to contemporary sensibilities, gradually took hold. But pointing to the Stuttgart Confession of Guilt allowed Protestant leaders to stave off allegations of guilt, to use Bloch’s phrase. They also benefited from important ecumenical contacts in organizations like the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation which was established in 1947. Over time, as a result, the resistance of Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Confessing Church’s two best-known names, came to be regarded as emblematic of Protestant resistance and of the churches’ stance towards National Socialism as a whole. Both, of course, were exceptional figures, and Niemöller’s own past had proven far more complex and problematic than many of his well-intentioned American supporters were aware.

But Wu is correct: Protestantism witnessed a massive theological, cultural and political transformation in the 1960s and 1970s. But so too did the Catholic Church, as a wave of recent scholarship is making clear.⁷ Even

⁴ Benjamin Carl Pearson, *Faith and Democracy: Political Transformations at the German Protestant Kirchentag, 1949-1969*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2010.

⁵ See Ursula Büttner, ““The Jewish Problem becomes a Christian Problem:” German Protestants and the Persecution of the Jews in the Third Reich,” in: David Bankier, ed., *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism: German Society and the Persecution of the Jews, 1933-1941* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 431-459, and especially, 438-439.

⁶ See Martin Greschat, ed, *Im Zeichen der Schuld: 40 Jahre Stuttgarter Schuldbekennntnis, eine Dokumentation* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1985).

⁷ The literature is enormous. For two examples, see Claudia Lepp, Klaus Fitschen, Siegfried Hermle, Katharina Kunter und Antje Roggenkamp, *Die Politisierung des Protestantismus. Entwicklungen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland während der 1960er und 70er Jahre* (Arbeiten zur Kirchlichen Zeitgeschichte B 52) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und

storied ancillary organizations changed their focus and platforms, while some closed for good. But the ground for at least some of this transformation was laid in the 1950s. Strote accordingly asks for a fuller picture of how the CDU distanced itself from the Catholic hierarchy. I rely heavily on the scholarship and a line of interpretation laid out by Norbert Trippen, Ulrich von Hehl, Maria Mitchell, and Frank Bösch⁸. This distancing took place for a host of reasons, including the *Reichskonkordat's* prohibition on clerical involvement in politics, criticism from the SPD and FPD, and as Maria Mitchell has shown, the desire not to endanger the CDU's hard-won but sincere interconfessionalism, however imperfect it had proven to be in practice. To secure its electoral gains, the CDU needed to retain its hold on at least a small percentage of German Protestants, many conservative. The renewed confessional strife of the mid-1950s, manifested in battles over segregated public schools, actually proved to be an irritant and embarrassment for many Catholic CDU leaders. Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, though on more than one occasion bowing to pressures from his militant Catholic base, continuously sought to defuse confessional conflicts.

But what also distinguished the trajectory of Catholic and Protestant research into their own pasts was Catholic understandings of sacramentality. Kevin Spicer is absolutely correct in pointing to its absolute centrality. God was and could be found in all things. For Johannes Neuhäusler, receiving a communion kit so that he could celebrate the mass with fellow prisoners in Dachau was not only a moment of tremendous grace; it was a spiritual high point during his incarceration at Dachau, and one that had to be painstakingly negotiated by Cardinal Faulhaber with the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*.⁹

The implication for the writing of Catholic history is obvious. It is naturally more difficult for secular or Protestant historians to comprehend what Catholic historians like Konrad Repgen, a defender of the pre-Vatican Council order, intuitively grasped. In his exchange with Klaus Scholder, Repgen pointed to Catholic fears of endangering millions of souls who would be denied the sacraments in the event of mass arrests of priests. Not only did the legacy of the *Kulturkampf* loom large in the Catholic imagination. A sacramental world view shaped the response to National Socialism.

Spicer wonders what it would be like to carry through the story found in *The Battle for the Catholic Past in Germany, 1945-1980*, through the 2000s. Doing so would require years of intense labor and scores of special permissions (*Sondergenehmigungen*) from diocesan authorities to review collections less than forty years old. But portions of this story would look familiar, since many of the participants in the historical clashes of the 1950s and 1960s like Konrad Repgen, Rudolf Morsey, and Rolf Hochhuth continued their research or voiced

Ruprecht, 2011); Claudia Kepp, Siegfried Hermlé and Harry Oelke, ed., *Umbrüche. Der deutsche Protestantismus und die sozialen Bewegungen in den 1960er und 70er Jahren* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2007).

⁸ See Ulrich von Hehl, ed., *Adenauer und die Kirchen* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1999); Frank Bösch, *Die Adenauer CDU: Gründung, Aufstieg und Krise einer Erfolgspartei, 1945-1970* (Munich: DVA Verlag, 2001); Norbert Frings, *Josef Kardinal Frings (1887-1978) Band 1: Sein Wirken für das Erzbistum Köln und für die Kirche in Deutschland* (Paderborn: Schöningh Verlag, 2003). Maria Mitchell, *The Origins of Christian Democracy: Politics and Confession in Modern Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012).

⁹ Archiv des Erzbistums München und Freising, NL Michael Faulhaber, Kardinal Faulhaber Archiv, Faulhaber to Wienken, 20 November 1941, Nr. 605; Betreff: Meßkoffer für Präl. Neuhäusler und Dr. Höck im Lager Dachau; Wienken to Faulhaber, Berlin, 6. December 1941; Neuhäusler to Faulhaber, 29 December 1941.

their opinions well into the first two decades of the new century. The Pius Wars of the late 1990s and early 2000s naturally fit into well-established pattern of polemics, even where participants and sources were fresh. But in the last several years, the template has also started to change. Scholarship published from the ranks of the Association for Contemporary History is far less apologetic (if at all!) than that of decades earlier.¹⁰ To no small extent, this transformation is the result of a generational change. Many warriors in the battles over the Church's past from the latter third of the twentieth century—Heinz Hürten, John Conway, Norbert Trippen, and Konrad Reppen—have passed away during the last two years.¹¹ The generation of German scholars succeeding them—ranging in age from the thirties through early sixties—is for multiple reasons less concerned with mounting a defense of its church. The ferocious confessional loyalties displayed by devout Catholics like Konrad Reppen simply are no longer present for most scholars writing on the Church's past.

I would like to conclude my reflections by turning to Timothy Garten Ash's dictum that Germany remains the gold standard for working through a traumatic past. On the one hand, this statement is absolutely true. The West German state invested significantly money and personnel in its historical enterprises—and not just through now storied institutions like the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich. Publicly funded organizations like the Humboldt Foundation and like the DAAD provided funds for researchers from all over the world to probe the German past. No European nation's past has been as exhaustively explored and publicly discussed as the Nazi past in Germany, and no government has shown such a remarkable willingness to allow these historical excavations to proceed.

On the other hand, it would be a mistake to see this German experience of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* as either normative or preordained. This experience followed no necessary track. It did not unfold neatly along generational lines, even if some rough generational patterns can be discerned. It did not necessarily take place for purely altruistic reasons or because perpetrators repented. Rather, the engagement with the past often began in response to complex political and cultural stimuli. The Nazi past was often weaponized against political and ideological opponents, former victims found powerful political allies, or the course of international relations dictated historical exploration. Not least, the existence of a hostile East German state certainly spurred on historical reassessment. Competition frequently fuels innovation. As Maria Mitchell astutely points out, moreover, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* was never solely about Germany and German identity. It was about Catholic identity, French identity, and Christian identity, all of which were challenged and impinged by National Socialism and Fascism. These right-wing forces put traditional cultural, national, and confessional identities to the test – and new self-understandings had to be wrested out of the wreckage of the Second World War.

Once again, I would like to thank the commentators for their high level of thought and reflection as well as their tremendous generosity. May such thoughtfulness continue to extend into what has been a contentious scholarly field.

¹⁰ For recent examples, see Stefan Voges, *Konzil, Dialog und Demokratie. Der Weg zur Würzburger Synode 1965–1971* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2015); Klaus Große Kracht, *Die Stunde der Laien? Katholische Aktion in Deutschland und im europäischen Kontext, 1920-1960* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2016); Jens Oboth, *Pax Christi Deutschland im Kalten Krieg 1945–1957. Gründung, Selbstverständnis und »Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (Paderbon: Schöningh, 2017).

¹¹ Conway, Trippen, and Reppen all died in 2017, Hürten in 2018.