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Is the term "Catholic fascism" necessary? On the historiographical classifications of post-World War I religious-fascist ideology

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Abstract: In den historiographischen Debatten über die verschiedenen Ideologien der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts wird der Begriff „katholischer Faschismus" gelegentlich verwendet, um eine spezifische Version des Faschismus in den 1920ern, 1930ern und 1940ern Jahren zu bezeichnen. Im vorliegenden Aufsatz wird dieses Konzept in historischer und historiographischer Perspektive analysiert. Dabei geht es v. a. um den religiösen Hintergrund, die verschiedenen begrifflichen Unterscheidungen, die wichtigsten Ereignisse und die ideologischen Zusammenhänge. Der protestantische Faschismus sowie das Konfliktfeld zwischen Katholizismus und faschistischer Ideologie werden auch thematisiert.

In the historiographical debates about the different streams of ideology in the first half of the 20th century, the term "Catholic fascism" has been used on occasion to refer to a specific version of fascism and Catholicism in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. The following article analyzes this concept in historical and historiographical perspective, drawing attention to the religious background, the various conceptual distinctions, key events and ideological interrelationships. Protestant fascism is also addressed along with the ideological conflict between Catholicism and fascist ideology. Before turning to these themes, however, the critical role of papal theological and cultural analysis will be addressed.

Keywords: Roman Catholicism, fascism, religious ideology, Protestantism, World War I

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1 The role of papal encyclicals

Traditional Catholic resistance to the Enlightenment and modernity in the 19th century was a critical background dimension in the emergence of new forms of radical anti-liberalism in the early 20th century. Pope Gregory XVI’s encyclical *Mirari Vos* (1832) set the stage for this opposition. There he criticized the “destruction of the public order” and the “absurd and false viewpoint, or better the delusion [*deliramentum*], that the freedom of conscience [*libertatem conscientiae*] is to be granted to everyone.” This “delusion” was prepared by the errors of an “immoderate freedom of opinion [*libertas opinionum*]”.[1] This opposition to trends of modern thought and liberalism carried through the 19th century. New forms of anti-modernism and neo-Thomism, such as the 24 Theses of Thomism and the “Anti-Modernist Oath” (1910, *Sacrorum Antistitum*), built on these older traditions of anti-liberalism and anti-modernism.[2] Some of the leading intellectuals of neo-Thomism, such as Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange O.P., also drew upon this anti-liberalism and anti-modernism in their theology. According to Richard Peddicord, Garrigou-Lagrange was “the most prominent Dominican Neo-Thomist theologian of the first half of the twentieth century.”[3] Peddicord sees a clear connection between Garrigou-Lagrange’s neo-Thomism and his anti-democratic thought: “His fidelity to St. Thomas [...] kept him from being friendly towards democracy.”[4] Indeed, Garrigou-Lagrange reacted “favorably”[5] to Charles Maurras’s fascist *Action Française*: “The call to restore the monarchy [...] and to restore the Catholic Church’s traditional position in French society made it easy for him [Garrigou-Lagrange] to overlook Maurras’s own atheism and his purely pragmatic use of the symbols and ethos of Catholicism.”[6] Indeed, “Having had no love for the Third Republic, Garrigou was moved to support Vichy.”[7]

Pope Pius XI’s *Ubi Arcano* (1922) is another important background feature in the emergence of radical anti-liberal thought in Catholicism in the 1920s

1 *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 4 (1868), 336–345, here 338, 341.

2 On this history see Detlef Peitz, *Die Anfänge der Neuscholastik in Deutschland und Italien (1818–1870)*. Bonn: Nova & Vetera, 2006; Hubert Wolf and Judith Schepers (ed.), *“In wilder zügelloser Jagd nach Neuem”. 100 Jahre Modernismus und Antimodernismus in der katholischen Kirche*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2009; Claus Arnold, *Kleine Geschichte des Modernismus*. Freiburg im Br.: Herder, 2007; and my “Der autoritäre Thomas.” *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* 11/2 (2017): 45–52.

3 Richard Peddicord, *The Sacred Monster of Thomism. An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.*. South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005, 1.

4 Peddicord, *The Sacred Monster of Thomism*, 93.

5 Peddicord, *The Sacred Monster of Thomism*, 93.

6 Peddicord, *The Sacred Monster of Thomism*, 93.

7 Peddicord, *The Sacred Monster of Thomism*, 99.

and 1930s. With this encyclical the "Pope of Catholic Action" tried to mobilize Catholics to influence society and thus called for "Catholic Action." As John F. Pollard claims, "Catholic Action was to be the instrument for nothing less than a Christian reconquest of a society corrupted and enslaved by the evils of the modern world. In his scheme for this Christian reconquest of society Pius XI was not so naive as to neglect the political dimension. But even in Catholic countries he preferred a non-political Catholic Action organisation working *indirectly* to influence politics in a Christian direction rather than an autonomous, avowedly Catholic party exercising *direct* political influence with all the risks that such a policy carried for the Church."[8] He continues: "Acquiescence in the demise of the P.P.I. [the dissolution of the Partito Popolare Italiano in 1926, PSP] implicitly involved acceptance of the demise of Italian democracy. Its passing went unmourned in a Vatican still strongly influenced by traditional Catholic prejudices against the Liberal State whose authoritarian, Fascist successor offered such a promising future to the Church in Italy."[9]

Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* is another example of a bridge between Catholicism and a specific form of fascism. Robert Pyrah writes: "The principle of corporatism, for instance, however contradictory its implementation was to the letter of *Quadragesimo Anno*, mirrors anti-modern Catholic thinking about the social order. By re-organising society according to seven corporate estates defined along professional lines [*Berufsstände*], the system sought to short circuit the modern, capitalist ordering of society along class lines by harking back to medieval structures, when the church played a more clearly defined role in society and politics."[10] A good example of this is found in remarks from Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss from 1933: "We intend to build a Christian-German state in our homeland! [...] We will take corporatist forms and corporatist bases, as the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* so beautifully announces to us, as the foundation of our constitutional life. We have the ambition of being the first country in which the life of the state genuinely complies with the call of this glorious encyclical."[11]

8 John F. Pollard, *The Vatican and Italian Fascism, 1929–32: A Study in Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, 5.

9 Pollard, *The Vatican and Italian Fascism*, 6.

10 Robert Pyrah, "Enacting encyclicals? Cultural politics and 'clerical fascism' in Austria, 1933–1938." In *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe*, ed. Matthew Feldman, Marius Turda, with Tudor Georgescu. London: Routledge, 2008, 157–170, here 162.

11 *Allgemeiner deutscher Katholikentag*, Vienna, 7–12 Sept. 1933 (Vienna, 1934), 111; as cited in Ernst Hanisch, "Der Politische Katholizismus als ideologischer Träger des 'Austrofaschismus'." In *Austrofaschismus. Politik – Ökonomie – Kultur 1933–1938*, ed. Emmerich Tálos and Wolfgang Neugebauer. Wien: LIT, 2005, 68–86; as cited in Pyrah, "Enacting encyclicals?", 157. Cf. Klaus-Jörg

Many Jesuits also followed Pius XI’s call and embraced the vision of a “Christian reconquest” after World War I. In the Irish context, in which over 90 % of the population was Catholic, there was also a flirtation with fascism. As Mark Cronin explains: “The church had supported moves toward Irish independence since the late nineteenth century, and threw its full weight behind the independent state that was created by the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921.”[12] Specifically, there was a Jesuit journal called *Studies* that provided a forum for intellectual reflection on various themes related to fascism in the early 1930s. Cronin writes: “the Blueshirts’ embrace of ideas, theories and ideologies presented in the pages of *Studies*, whether supported by the authors of such articles or not, does suggest a potential fascist movement in Ireland that was heavily influenced by the intellectual and ideological ideas emerging from within Catholicism.”[13] The Irish fascists, the Blueshirts, read the journal regularly and cited it in some of their own publications. From 1932 to 1936, the Jesuit journal focused on themes related to fascism, committing nearly 25 % of its content to discussions of the new movements and theories.[14] The Jesuits were not unaware of the broad cultural, social and political assault on liberalism in the early 20th century. The Jesuit Angelo Brucculeri, for example, supported fascism and published his views in “the authoritative Jesuit fortnightly, *La Civiltà Cattolica*.”[15] The motor behind the movement joined various groups together in the hopes for a rebirth of European culture in the wake of liberalism. This was the program of Pius XI who “set forth his comprehensive vision of a Christian ‘reconquest’ of a society vitiated by secularism and anti-clericalism in his first encyclical of 1922, *Ubi Arcano Dei*.”[16]

Siegfried, *Klerikalfaschismus. Zur Entstehung und sozialen Funktion des Dollfussregimes in Österreich. Ein Beitrag zur Faschismusdiskussion*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1979; Robert Kriechbaumer (ed.), *Österreich! und Front Heil! Aus den Akten des Generalsekretariats der Vaterländischen Front. Innenansichten eines Regimes*. Wien: Böhlau, 2005.

12 Mark Cronin, “Catholicising fascism, fascistising Catholicism? The Blueshirts and the Jesuits in 1930s Ireland.” In *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe*, ed. Matthew Feldman, Marius Turda, with Tudor Georgescu. London: Routledge, 2008, 189–199, here 189.

13 Cronin, “Catholicising fascism, fascistising Catholicism?”, 190.

14 Cronin, “Catholicising fascism, fascistising Catholicism?”, 192.

15 John F. Pollard, “‘Clerical fascism’: Context, overview and conclusion.” In *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe*, ed. Matthew Feldman, Marius Turda, with Tudor Georgescu. London: Routledge, 2008, 221–234, here 221. On the term “fascism” and its usage in historiography see also Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, “[Art.] Faschismus.” In *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 4th ed., ed. Hans Dieter Betz, et al., volume 3. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000, 36–39. He introduces the Italian movement and helpfully explains the misuse of the term in some contemporary political discourses.

16 Pollard, “‘Clerical fascism’”, 223.

2 On the varieties of religious fascism

Not all of Western Civilization adopted fascism to the degree that central and southern Europe, and especially Catholic Europe, adopted it. When it comes to the idea of Catholic fascism, especially when considering the movements and regimes, there is a fundamental question at play: Why did so many Catholic countries embrace fascism? Of course, fascist ideology also took hold in some Protestant dominated and Orthodox dominated countries. In the Protestant case, Germany was dominated by Protestantism in 1933, even though around one third of the population was Catholic. In the Orthodox case, the fascist Iron Guard was very influential in Romania.[17] For the most part, however, Catholic countries were the ones that embraced the ideological swing to authoritarianism in the 1920s and 1930s. This affinity may have to do with the fact that the Catholic Church was opposed to liberal political and social theory in the 19th century. The Catholic Church also resisted the progressive forces of the Enlightenment and the liberal theories regarding human autonomy. It saw these things as a threat to the Catholic Church and Catholic teaching because they were, to a certain degree, a challenge to the traditionalism and authoritarianism within Catholicism. This dynamic tension from the 19th century (which was closely related to papal encyclicals, as addressed above) was probably one of the main reasons why many Catholic countries were so susceptible to fascist rejections of the Enlightenment, democracy and liberalism in the post-World War I context. There were, however, multiple kinds of fascism, including Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant expressions of the political ideology, as well as a clerical form advanced by theologians.

2.1 Catholic fascism

Richard Griffiths of King's College London has drawn attention to the interrelationship between Catholicism and fascism. Griffiths shows that "There are a number of movements and regimes that would seem to fall under the definition of 'Catholic fascism' in the late Thirties: Franco's unitary party, Salazar's Estado Novo, Belgium's Rexism, Ireland's 'Blueshirts' and 'Greenshirts', and even (in some interpretations) Mussolini's Italy."[18] As he explains, "Elements of 'Catholic

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17 See Radu Ioanid, "The Sacralised Politics of the Romanian Iron Guard." In *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion*, ed. Roger Griffin. London: Routledge, 2005, 125–159.

18 Richard Griffiths, *Fascism*. London: Continuum, 2005, 117. See also his *Patriotism perverted: Captain Ramsay, the Right Club and English Anti-Semitism 1939–40*. London: Constable, 1998.

fascism' were to be found in most countries with a Catholic majority, even when the 'fascist' movements concerned were small and ineffective."[19] He points to Ireland as one example of this. Yet in some cases, Catholics also distanced their versions of fascism from National Socialism. For example, Griffiths emphasizes that Ernesto Giménez Caballero encouraged the Spanish youth to "distinguish between the pagan fascism of the Nazis and Mussolini's 'Christian fascism.' It is significant that most of the observers who distinguished between the movements in this way were Catholics who did so on a religious basis […]."[20] This symbiotic relationship between religion and ideology was not unique to Catholicism. Fascist ideology was especially influential in societies that had deeply entrenched authoritarian traditions with complicated social hierarchies. These social systems thrived on a respect for authority and social order "from above." This pathos of authority and order was central to the emergence of fascism. Catholic Europe tended to reflect this social hierarchy in the early 20th century, and especially in the church structure itself. Of course, this pathos of authority and order can also be found in some parts of Protestant Europe, and especially in some Lutheran sectors. All these authoritarian cultures were the natural seedbeds for fascism after the cultural, social and economic upheavals of the early 20th century during and following World War I.

2.2 Protestant fascism

The fusion of ideology and religion was not unique to Catholicism. Many leading Protestant theologians, such as Emanuel Hirsch, embraced fascist ideology.[21] Major Protestant movements took hold before and within National Socialist Germany that looked to Martin Luther as their great German leader who taught them to love Germany and despise the Jews, democracy and liberalism. This was embodied in the German Christian Protestant ecclesial movement, and especially on the rightwing of this movement (which called for the Aryanization of the faith and the church, and the "cleansing" of the Bible from Jewish influences). A specific form of religious ideology also emerged within the ideological apparatus

19 Griffiths, *Fascism*, 120.
20 Griffiths, *Fascism*, 84.
21 See Robert P. Ericksen, "Emanuel Hirsch: Intellectual freedom and the turn toward Hitler." *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 24/1 (2011): 74–91; Keisuke Yoshida, "Der Schatten der Kierkegaard-Renaissance. Eine rezeptionsgeschichtliche Studie über die dezisionistisch-irrationalistischen Kierkegaard-Interpretationen zwischen den Weltkriegen in Deutschland." *Kierkegaard Studies* 20/1 (2015): 279–300.

of National Socialism that sought to transcend the confessional identities in a radical rightwing ecumenism. Many National Socialists propagated this idea which they called "Positive Christianity." Although this was officially ecumenical, Richard Steigmann-Gall has explained the special status of nationalistic Protestantism in this religious ideology:

> "The Nazi approach to confessionalism displayed a general disregard for doctrine. Positive Christianity was not an attempt to make a complete religious system with a dogma or ritual of its own: it was never formalized into a faith to which anyone could convert. Rather, this was primarily a social and political worldview meant to emphasize those qualities in Christianity which, it was said, could end religious sectarianism in Germany. Even while the inner logic of positive Christianity demanded that neither religious confession [Protestantism or Catholicism] be officially privileged over the other, there was a clear ideological preference for Protestantism over Catholicism."[22]

This special place for Protestantism in German fascism flowed from the deep history of Protestantism in northern Europe. It was also closely related to the

22 Richard Steigmann-Gall, "The Nazis' 'Positive Christianity': A variety of 'clerical fascism'?" In *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe*, ed., Matthew Feldman, Marius Turda, with Tudor Georgescu. London: Routledge, 2008, 103–115, here 113. Many traditional conservative Protestants were also deeply involved in the ideology of the period. Paul Althaus, for example, was critical of parliamentarian democracy in the 1920s and early 1930s and, on many occasions, supported Emanuel Hirsch. Althaus did not become a member of the NSDAP but he supported anti-Semitism in the church, as well as nationalistic and *völkisch* ideas. Regarding the Erlangen Faculty, and its post-World War II denazification, see Clemens Vollnhals, *Entnazifizierung und Selbstreinigung im Urteil der evangelischen Kirche. Dokumente und Reflexionen 1945–1949*. München: Kaiser, 1989, 170 ff.; regarding Paul Althaus and Werner Elert see also Wolfgang Tilgner, *Volksnomostheologie und Schöpfungsglaube. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Kirchenkampfes*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966, 179 ff.; Christoph Weiling, *Die "Christlich-deutsche Bewegung". Eine Studie zum konservativen Protestantismus in der Weimarer Republik*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998. The British Union of Fascists is another example. It included various religious groups. Reverend E. C. Opie remarked: "As to Fascist Policy, there is nothing whatever inconsistent with Christian teaching; rather between Christianity and Fascism there is a harmony of ideals." *Action*, 2 April, 1936, 11, as cited in Thomas Linehan, "'On the side of Christ': Fascist clerics in 1930s Britain." In *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe*, ed. Matthew Feldman, Marius Turda, with Tudor Georgescu. London: Routledge, 2008, 75–89, here 75. Linehan remarks: "It remains to say, finally, that history should be grateful that these 'rogue clerics' of the BUF [British Union of Fascists] only made up a very tiny minority of the clergy in the Church of England." (86) See also Manfred Gailus, "Die kirchliche Machtergreifung der 'Glaubensbewegung Deutsche Christen' im Jahr 1933." In *Täter und Komplizen in Theologie und Kirchen 1933–1945*, ed. idem. Göttingen: Wallstein-Verlag, 2015, 62–80; Thomas Fandel, "Deutsche Christen und nationalkirchliche Bewegung." In *Protestanten ohne Protest. Die evangelische Kirche der Pfalz im Nationalsozialismus*, volume 1, ed. Christoph Picker, Gabriele Stüber, Klaus Bümlein and Frank-Matthias Hofmann, with Christine Lauer and Martin Schuck. Speyer: Verlagshaus Speyer, 2016, 292–309.

older traditions of German Protestant nationalism of the 19th century. Especially after the establishment of the German Empire in 1871, many German nationalists viewed Catholicism as an enemy of the Empire. Yet Protestant nationalism was much older than the German Empire. Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s very influential nationalistic *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1808) is only one example of the deep rooting of German nationalism in older Enlightenment-era thought.[23] The special status of Protestantism in National Socialism is unimaginable without these older traditions which kept forms of German nationalism alive. The special status also had to do with the fact that many Protestant church leaders supported nationalism and National Socialism in the 1930s. Of course, the new forms of nationalistic socialism in the 1920s and 1930s were in many regards radicalized expressions of the older nationalism. In this sense, there is a point of discontinuity within the continuity.

With regard to the German history of fascism, the National Socialists (NSDAP) were clearly the primary representatives of the ideology. Yet there were also elements within the German National People’s Party (DNVP) that promoted radical racist and anti-Semitic ideology with a strong mixture of radical anti-Marxist nationalism. In this sense, there were also Protestant fascists outside the NSDAP. At the election in 1924, 88 % of the DNVP electorate was Protestant.[24] It was the most important political representative of the Protestant church in the Weimar Republic.[25] While it was not as radical as the NSDAP, there was a radical wing within the DNVP that continually pushed it in this direction. Recent research has drawn attention to the inner struggle within the DNVP in the 1920s and early 1930s as the party sought to hold ground against the popular advance of the NSDAP. As Larry Eugene Jones explains, “the DNVP’s position on the Jewish question was neither constant nor consistent. Just as there was no consensus on the Jewish question between the various factions that had come together in the fall and early winter of 1918 to found the DNVP, so did the party’s embrace of antisemitism rise and ebb with the vicissitudes of the German economy and

23 See Gerd Schmalbrock, *Nationalvergiftung. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Fichtes Reden an die deutsche Nation*. Gladbeck: Verlag IKC-Pr., 1982; Bernd Fischer, *Das Eigene und das Eigentliche. Klopstock, Herder, Fichte, Kleist: Episoden aus der Konstruktionsgeschichte nationaler Intentionalitäten*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1995; Christoph Mährlein, *Volksgeist und Recht. Hegels Philosophie der Einheit und ihre Bedeutung in der Rechtswissenschaft*. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2000, esp. 249 ff.

24 Bastian Scholz, *Die Kirchen und der deutsche Nationalstaat. Konfessionelle Beiträge zum Systembestand und Systemwechsel*. Wiesbaden: Springer, 2016, 269.

25 Scholz, *Die Kirchen und der deutsche Nationalstaat*, 269.

the stability of the Weimar Republic."[26] In this regard, it was different than the NSDAP, in which anti-Semitism was a core feature of the ideological constitution. The racist wing of the DNVP was, however, very influential, especially in the May 1924 election, after Hitler's failed Beer Hall Putsch. The party won a "smashing victory" in this election (with 19.5 percent of the popular vote); and the racist wing of the party took credit for the victory.[27] From 1924 to 1928, however, there was both retreat and resurgence of anti-Semitism. The party's racist wing celebrated as Alfred Hugenberg was elected chairman of the party in 1928. After Hugenberg took control of the agenda, some conservatives and moderates even left the party.[28] Yet Hugenberg "was not an ideological racist but a radical nationalist".[29] His central agenda for unifying the party was not racism and anti-Semitism but anti-Marxism.[30] He saw this as the greatest danger to the German nation.[31] As Jones holds, "What is perhaps most striking about the public statements of Hugenberg and other DNVP leaders in the last years of the Weimar Republic was the absence of almost any reference to the Jewish question."[32] Of course, the party leaders may have simply thought that emphasizing anti-Semitism and racism would not advance their political position against the National Socialists in the early 1930s. This may have been one of the reasons why they did not emphasize anti-Semitism and racism, as that it may have been presumed by their supporters that they agreed with the National Socialists on this issue.[33] By the 1932 elections, the party received only 5.9 percent of the popular support, "the DNVP had come under heavy attack from the Nazis for its lack of a strong and consistent position on the Jewish question […]."[34] Even at the very end of the Weimar Republic, in the campaign in the fall of 1932, the DNVP was primarily concerned with social and economic issues, being driven by the "fear of socialism, whether in its Marxist or Nazi iterations".[35] While they did not confront the National Socialists on racism or anti-Semitism, their anti-Marxist agenda was, nevertheless, "framed in the discursive context of German

26 Larry Eugene Jones, "Conservative Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic: A Case Study of the German National People's Party." In *The German Right in the Weimar Republic: Studies in the History of German Conservatism, Nationalism, and Antisemitism*, ed. idem. New York, N.Y.: Berghahn, 2014, 79–107, here 79.
27 Jones, "Conservative Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic", 88.
28 Jones, "Conservative Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic", 91.
29 Jones, "Conservative Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic", 91.
30 Jones, "Conservative Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic", 91.
31 Jones, "Conservative Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic", 92.
32 Jones, "Conservative Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic", 92.
33 Jones, "Conservative Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic", 93.
34 Jones, "Conservative Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic", 93.
35 Jones, "Conservative Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic", 94.

racism."[36] In March of 1933, after Hitler's rise to power, the party rejected Jews who were seeking membership in the party. They did this on the basis of ethnic background.[37] At this point, however, the DNVP was under assault from the National Socialists and "was in no position to protect its own officials, let alone Jews who were looking for sanctuary from the Nazis."[38] The anti-Semitic attitudes in the DNVP were drawn from different sources, religious sources, the view that the Jews were too influential, the "Stoeckerite tradition" (which saw the Jews as corrupt capitalists), fear of bolshevism, and a "racial theory of history" which saw the Jews in a conspiracy to subject or destroy the German nation.[39] In general, racism and anti-Semitism in the party was stronger at the local level than at the national level.[40] Even if anti-Semitism was not his primary concern, all this did not prevent Hugenberg from forming a government with Hitler.[41]

2.3 Clerical fascism

While Protestantism had a special status in National Socialism, many Catholics were also deeply connected to the German fascist ideology of the early 20th century, and also to the official government in National Socialist Germany. As Steigmann-Gall writes: "the leadership cadre of the Nazi movement contained a disproportionate number of Catholics."[42] Many Catholic theologians and intellectuals also embraced some form of the fascist ideology of the time, such as Carl Schmitt, Erich Przywara, Karl Adam, Karl Eschweiler, Hans Barion, Michael Schmaus, Joseph Lortz (the author of *Katholischer Zugang zum Nationalsozialis-*

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36 Jones, "Conservative Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic", 94.
37 Jones, "Conservative Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic", 95.
38 Jones, "Conservative Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic", 96.
39 Jones, "Conservative Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic", 96. Adolf Stoecker (1835–1909) was a radical anti-Semitic Lutheran pastor and leader of a conservative Christian Socialist Movement. He was also a preacher of the imperial court at the Berlin Cathedral. See Martin Greschat, "Protestantischer Antisemitismus in Wilhelminischer Zeit – Das Beispiel des Hofpredigers Adolf Stoecker." In *Antisemitismus. Von religiöser Judenfeindschaft zur Rassenideologie*, ed. Günter Brakelmann and Martin Rosowski. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989, 27–51; on the conflict about anti-Semitism in Berlin at this time, and the challenges to Stoecker from Theodor Mommsen and others see Stefan Rebenich, *Theodor Mommsen und Adolf Harnack. Wissenschaft und Politik im Berlin des ausgehenden 19. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997, 346 ff.
40 Jones, "Conservative Antisemitism in the Weimar Republic", 97.
41 See Larry Eugene Jones, "'The Greatest Stupidity of My Life.' Alfred Hugenberg and the Formation of the Hitler Cabinet, January 1933." *Journal of Contemporary History* 27 (1992): 63–87.
42 Steigmann-Gall, "The Nazis' 'Positive Christianity'", 103.

mus: Kirchengeschichtlich gesehen[43]) and Joseph Mayer.[44] I have used the term "Catholic fascism" to describe this intellectual framework of various Catholic theologians from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, especially in the Jesuit journal *Stimmen der Zeit*.[45] Some clerical fascists, such as Domenico Sorrentino, even used the term "Catholic fascism" to describe their agenda.[46] This is a different sense of the term "Catholic fascism" than the one suggested by Griffiths. His use of the term is concerned with the "movements and regimes" that were closely connected to Catholicism. Yet alongside the political movements there was also a form of theologically intellectualized Catholic fascism that reflected and in many cases supported – or sought to improve – the political movements. This is the second sense of the term "Catholic fascism." This second sense has to do with the intellectual and theological interrelationship between traditional religion and new political ideologies. In some cases, the fascist movements were more sympathetic to Catholicism, in other cases, such as the case of German National Socialism, the relationship was more conflicted.

The intellectualized theological expressions of Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic fascisms are all expressions of the general concept of "clerical fascism." This term is usually used to refer to a specific religious-ideological pattern of thought of post-World War I Europe. As an *ideal type*, "clerical fascism" has been defined by Roger Griffin in the following manner: "The ideology and political praxis of clerics and theologians who *either* tactically support fascism as a

43 Münster: Aschendorff, 1933.

44 See Thomas Forstner, "Braune Priester. Katholische Geistliche im Spannungsfeld von Katholizismus und Nationalsozialismus." In *Täter und Komplizen in Theologie und Kirchen 1933–1945*, ed. Manfred Gailus. Göttingen: Wallstein-Verlag 2015, 113–139; Lucia Scherzberg, *Karl Adam und der Nationalsozialismus*. Saarbrücken: Universaar, 2011; Thomas Marschler, *Karl Eschweiler (1886–1936). Theologische Erkenntnislehre und nationalsozialistische Ideologie*. Regensburg: Pustet, 2011; Gabriele Lautenschläger, *Joseph Lortz (1887–1975). Weg, Umwelt und Werk eines katholischen Kirchenhistorikers*. Würzburg: Echter, 1987; Georg Denzler, *Widerstand ist nicht das richtige Wort. Katholische Priester, Bischöfe und Theologen im Dritten Reich*. Zürich: Pendo-Verlag, 2003; Dominik Burkard and Wolfgang Weiß (ed.), *Katholische Theologie im Nationalsozialismus, volume 1/1: Institutionen und Strukturen*, *volume 1/2: Institutionen und Strukturen*. Würzburg: Echter, 2007/2011.

45 Paul Silas Peterson, "Erich Przywara on *Sieg-Katholizismus*, bolshevism, the Jews, Volk, Reich and the analogia entis in the 1920s and 1930s." JHMTh/ZNThG 19 (2012): 104–140; idem, "Once again, Erich Przywara and the Jews: A response to John Betz with a brief look into the Nazi correspondences on Przywara and *Stimmen der Zeit*." in JHMTh/ZNThG 21 (2014): 148–163. On the historical background of the German case, see also my monograph, *The Early Hans Urs von Balthasar: Historical Contexts and Intellectual Formation*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2015, 7–22, 184–227.

46 See John Pollard, "Fascism and Religion." In *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. António Costa Pinto. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 141–164, here 155.

movement or regime while maintaining a critical distance from its totalising, revolutionary, and basically secular objectives, *or* integrate elements of fascist values and policies into the way they conceptualise their mission on earth as devout believers in a divinely ordained world.”[47] Here Griffin draws attention to the cooperative relationship between fascist ideology and representatives of established religious traditions. In fact, this cooperative relationship was often encouraged by both sides. For example, on the side of political ideology, Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* was deeply engaged in inner-Catholic debates. He drew upon themes from the Catholicism of his time. Hitler saw Luther as a true German but viewed the liberal Protestantism of his day as influenced by the Jews. In his *Mein Kampf* he made himself attractive to conservative rightwing Catholics that were critical of the Center Party’s instrumentalization of Catholicism. Christoph Hübner has analyzed this dynamic interplay between Hitler and Catholicism, and has shown how conservative rightwing Catholics were also in critical dialog with Hitler’s ideas.[48] Further dimensions of this specific form of Catholic clerical fascism will be addressed below. Before turning to these themes, some of the major historical events will be addressed that deeply influenced the intellectual discourse.

3 Two key historical events

The ideological swing of Catholic intellectual discourse in the post-World War I era towards new rightwing ideology took various forms depending on the specific historical context, whether this was the French, Austrian, German, Italian or Spanish case. The rise of Italian fascism and the Spanish Civil War were two critical events, among others, that attracted a great deal of Catholic intellectual reflection. These events are in themselves examples of the rise of fascism as a political force. At the same time, however, they also functioned as intellectual catalysts for the advancement of fascist ideology in traditional Catholic contexts in the 1920s and 1930s.

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47 Roger Griffin, “The ‘holy storm’: ‘Clerical fascism’ through the lens of modernism.” In *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe*, ed. Matthew Feldman, Marius Turda with Tudor Georgescu. London: Routledge, 2008, 1–15, here 5. He adds: “As such, clerical fascism can never be a movement in its own right with a clerical leadership, independent ideology, and autonomous organisational structure, though it may operate as a discrete faction or constituency within a fascist regime with which it enters a symbiotic relationship.”

48 Christoph Hübner, *Die Rechtskatholiken, die Zentrumspartei und die katholische Kirche in Deutschland bis zum Reichskonkordat von 1933. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Scheiterns der Weimarer Republik*. Münster: LIT, 2014, 596 ff.

3.1 Fascism in Italy

The Italian case of fascism was critical in the historical development of the new ideology in early 20th century Europe. As Pollard has explained,

> "The first fascist movement to come to power, Italian fascism, did so in a country that was 99 per cent Catholic and the seat of the papacy, and 'clerical fascist' movements came to power in another two overwhelmingly Catholic countries, the first Slovak Republic and the Croatian Independent State. Fascist movements and regimes in other European countries also entered into relations with the Roman Catholic Church, and in broader terms, many Catholics, individually and collectively, were closely involved with fascist movements and regimes in the inter-war years."[49]

Much of the Catholic youth movement of Italy, such as the university federation of the Catholic Action movement, was sympathetic to or supported Italian fascism. As Jorge Dagnino writes: "By 1929, 50 % of the *fucini* [members of the *Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana*] were also members of the Fascist University Groups and the numbers continued to rise throughout the period. It is, therefore, difficult to define the FUCI [*Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana*] as anti-Fascist even during the Montini-Righetti administration."[50] In Olaf Blaschke's analysis, especially after the Lateran Treaties of 1929 (which brought a compromise in various areas in Italian politics, including the issues of education, marriage law, official national religion and the sovereign state of the Vatican), Italian fascist ideology became an attractive option in comparison to the "nightmares of communism and republican laicism." As he remarks, "Christianity and fascism were by no means incompatible."[51] Indeed, in many regards Italian fascism and the Catholic Church reflected one another. As Pollard has written, "To some extent, Pius XI's increasingly 'totalitarian' view of the nature of the Church and its relationship with the world was a response to the rise of the totalitarian regimes in Europe, and he openly admitted this. For example, Mussolini alleged that, during his meeting with Pius XI in 1932, the latter declared that 'This totalitarianism is in the circle of the State but, be-

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49 John Pollard, "Fascism and Catholicism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, ed. R. J. B. Bosworth. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 166–184, here 166.

50 Jorge Dagnino, *Faith and fascism: Catholic intellectuals in Italy, 1925–43*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 3.

51 Olaf Blaschke, *Die Kirchen und der Nationalsozialismus*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2014, 38: "Spätestens seit den Lateranverträgen bot das italienische Modell eine attraktive Alternative zu den Schreckgespenstern Kommunismus und republikanischer Laizismus. Mitnichten waren Christentum und Faschismus unvereinbar." Cf. Robert P. Ericksen, *Complicity in the Holocaust: Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

sides material interests, there are also spiritual ones and it is here that Catholic totalitarianism enters.'"[52] Yet the pope was not in full agreement with everything the Italian government did. Especially in the later 1930s there was more tension between them. For a time period after the Lateran Treaties, however, there was significant common ground and overlap. As Jan Nelis, Anne Morelli and Danny Praet remark, Pope Pius XI saw fascism as an ally in the struggle for "the establishment of an anti-liberal and anti-socialist, authoritarian and hierarchical State."[53] Catholic theologians across Europe saw this new political order in Italy as evidence of the fact that official Catholicism could work with the new fascist ideology. This had a significant impact on the developments of the 1930s as theologians reconsidered their positions with regard to nationalist

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52 John Pollard, *The Papacy in the Age of Totalitarianism, 1914–1958*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 471.

53 See Jan Nelis, Anne Morelli and Danny Praet, "The Study of the Relationship between Catholicism and Fascism, beyond a Manichean Approach?" In *Catholicism and Fascism in Europe 1918–1945*, ed. idem. Hildesheim: Olms, 2015, 9–14, here 9. Capitalization in the original. Graf remarks: "Das faschistische Regime [in Italien] war weniger terroristisch als die NS-Herrschaft." Graf, "Faschismus", 38. See also Wolfgang Schieder (ed.), *Faschismus als soziale Bewegung. Deutschland und Italien im Vergleich*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, ^{2}1983. There were, of course, significant differences between the Italian fascism of Mussolini's official Fascist Party (*Partito Nazionale Fascista*, founded in 1921), which was unable to establish the desired total control over every realm of human life in Italy, and the form of fascism realized in German National Socialism, which systematically eliminated resistance to its totalizing agenda in the 1930s. However, both were radically anti-liberal and anti-parliamentarian. Furthermore, they both advanced anti-Semitism (while the National Socialists were clearly more radical and violent in this regard); and both were willing to use violence and radical rhetoric to achieve their goals. Regarding the Race Laws in Italy see Michael A. Livingston, *The Fascists and the Jews of Italy: Mussolini's Race Laws, 1938–1943*. New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 1 f.: "From 1938 to 1945, the Italian and then the German governments launched an assault on the Italian Jewish community from which it has never entirely recovered. The most violent part of this assault took place between 1943 and 1945 when German occupation forces, with not insignificant Italian help, deported and killed about seven thousand Jews from Rome and other Italian cities and towns. But the assault on the Italian Jews did not begin in 1943. From 1938 to 1943, the Italian government, led by Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, imposed a series of laws that excluded Jews from the country's schools, armed forces, and large sectors of public and quasi-public employment; placed severe limitations on their real and personal property; prohibited marriages between Jews and 'Aryans' even where both partners practiced the same religion; and generally attempted to separate Italian Jews from the economic, social, and cultural life of the Italian nation. Some Italians protested or simply ignored these laws, or else resisted them in a more passive manner. But many others observed them, and over time – even before the German occupation – the laws tended to become more rather than less rigorous in application. Although the Race Laws (at least until 1943) were not themselves genocidal in nature, the laws helped to facilitate the Italian Holocaust by weakening the Jewish community and gathering extensive information about its membership and characteristics."

movements. Of course, the prehistory of this reconsideration of the relationship between nationalism and Catholicism can already be seen with the nationalistic, anti-republican Catholic integralist movement Action Française under Charles Maurras.

3.2 The Spanish Civil War

Another major event in the emergence of Catholic fascism was the Spanish Civil War. In the summer of 1936 a group of rightwing conservative forces tried to overthrow the republican government in Spain. This led to a civil war. The nationalistic anti-republican forces were supported by Italy and Germany while the republican forces were supported by the Soviet Union and other volunteer forces from the United States and various European countries. The fascist and nationalistic forces won the war in 1939. In effect, and in the minds of many Catholic intellectuals, the war embodied the ideological struggle between fascism and communism, religion and atheism. The foreign conflict was used by political authorities and also by ecclesial leaders across Europe. For example, in the German context the war played a key role in the negotiations between the Catholic Church and National Socialist authorities. On the 4th of November, 1936, Adolf Hitler met with Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber to discuss the relationship between the church and the regime and their common enemy in bolshevistic communism. As Beth A. Griech-Polelle remarks, "As a result of this three-hour meeting, the German bishops agreed to mend their disagreements with the National Socialist state."[54] In this meeting, Hitler stated:

> "Think about all this, Cardinal, and consult with the other leaders of the Church how you can support the great undertaking of National Socialism to prevent the victory of Bolshevism and how you can achieve a peaceful relationship to the state. Either National Socialism and the Church are both victorious or they perish together. Rest assured, I shall do away with all those small things that stand in the way of a harmonious cooperation. [...] I do not wish to engage in horse trading. You know that I am opposed to compromises, but let this be a last attempt."[55]

The fear of bolshevism and the Spanish Civil War played a key role in these negotiations. As Gerhard Besier has argued: "While the Episcopal conference

54 Beth A. Griech-Polelle, "The impact of the Spanish Civil War upon Roman Catholic clergy in Nazi Germany." In *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust*, ed. Kevin P. Spicer. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2007, 121–135, here 128.

55 As cited in Griech-Polelle, "The impact of the Spanish Civil War upon Roman Catholic clergy in Nazi Germany", 129; see Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*. New York, N.Y. : MacGraw-Hill, 1964, 208.

at Fulda had carefully avoided explicitly accepting the anti-semitic element in Nazi anti-Bolshevism, it now accepted it, implicitly and tacitly."[56] Griech-Polelle adds that as the ecclesial hierarchy moved to agree with "the National Socialist portrayal of the war, the Catholic hierarchy gave further legitimacy to fears of a 'Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy.'"[57] Following this meeting, the German bishops issued their pastoral letter to the faithful, "On the defense against Bolshevism," which was to be read from pulpits on the 3rd of January, 1937. This condemned bolshevism as demonic and praised Hitler's opposition to it. It also made reference to the Spanish Civil War.[58] Griech-Polelle writes:

> "Through this letter, Faulhaber had now lived up to his promise to Hitler. The German Catholic Church now publicly endorsed the German government's interpretation of the Spanish Civil War and confirmed the Church's willingness to fight against the spread of Bolshevism. Although the letter did not contain any outwardly antisemitic statements, it did reinforce the National Socialist interpretation of the events in Spain, namely that the Nationalists fought a valiant battle against Bolshevism that was a 'product of Jewry intent on destroying Christian European culture.'"[59]

Of course, there were some priests who criticized the bishops' words of appreciation for the National Socialist regime (and their failure to address the concentration camps), such as Friedrich Muckermann.[60] For most of the German Catholic hierarchy, however, a different evaluation of the events prevailed. As Griech-Polelle explains, many of them thought, "if the Nazi government would halt its anti-Catholic attacks, Germany could be made stronger with the full weight of the force of Catholic ideology there to join in the state's battle against the Bolshevik threat."[61] While they were critical of the National Socialist persecution of the Catholic Church and its institutions, they were silent about the "persecution of minorities, the general assault on human rights, and the deadly issue of Jewish persecution."[62] With the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland, the German Catholic population of the Reich was raised to nearly 43 percent. Cardinal

56 Gerhard Besier, "Anti-Bolshevism and Antisemitism. The Catholic Church in Germany and National Socialist Ideology 1936–37." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 43 (1992); 447–456, here 453; as cited in Griech-Polelle, "The impact of the Spanish Civil War upon Roman Catholic clergy in Nazi Germany", 129.
57 Griech-Polelle, "The impact of the Spanish Civil War", 129.
58 Cf. Griech-Polelle, "The impact of the Spanish Civil War", 130.
59 Griech-Polelle, "The impact of the Spanish Civil War", 130 f.; here Griech-Polelle cites Besier, "Anti-Bolshevism and Antisemitism", 456.
60 Cf. Griech-Polelle, "The impact of the Spanish Civil War", 131.
61 Griech-Polelle, "The impact of the Spanish Civil War", 131.
62 Griech-Polelle, "The impact of the Spanish Civil War", 132.

Adolf Bertram held that “Now we are truly a People’s Church.”[63] After Francisco Franco won the war in 1939, this was celebrated by many Catholic leaders, such as Bishop Clemens August Graf von Galen.[64] The next anti-bolshevist war was to be fought against the Soviet Union. In this the “Catholic Church leaders believed they could move closer to Hitler’s government, united in their fear and hatred of the common foe.”[65] Griech-Polelle summarizes:

> “The imagery of the Spanish Civil War fell easily into the black and white categories of ‘Fascism versus Democracy’ and ‘Catholicism versus Communism’ for many people, including members of the Roman Catholic Church in National Socialist Germany. Ignoring the complexity of the war, the German Catholic episcopacy supported the fight against the forces of Bolshevism wholeheartedly, and by doing so, they implicitly accepted the National Socialist definition of what was supposedly behind the atheistic system. They accepted Hitler’s portrayal of the ‘Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy,’ aimed at world conquest […].”[66]

For many Catholic theologians, the military conflict in Spain seemed to be a conflict between Christian civilization and bolshevist anarchy. In many cases, they sympathized with the fascist cause. In some cases, some held it to be the lesser of two evils. In other cases, fascism seemed to be a positive movement, one with a respect for tradition and authority. Although it may have needed some improvement, the overall direction was right.

4 Catholicism and fascism in agreement and in conflict

The dynamic relationship between Catholicism and fascism can be understood in the simple paradigm of agreement and conflict. This paradigm is helpful for analyzing the diverse phenomena in tension. At the same time, however, this paradigm can be problematic if it necessitates a binary schema. That is, it can fail to capture the many gray areas of tension and hermeneutical debate. In some of these intellectual discourses, there is no longer any identifiable conceptual instance of “Catholicism” which can be clearly differentiated from the alternative conceptual instance of “fascism,” and vice versa. In these cases there is rather

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63 Griech-Polelle, “The impact of the Spanish Civil War”, 132. See Richard Grunberger, *The twelve-year Reich: A social history of Nazi Germany 1933–1945*. New York, N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart Winston, 1971, 449.
64 Griech-Polelle, “The impact of the Spanish Civil War”, 132. See also idem, *Bishop von Galen: German Catholicism and National Socialism*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002.
65 Griech-Polelle, “The impact of the Spanish Civil War”, 132.
66 Griech-Polelle, “The impact of the Spanish Civil War”, 133.

something like an echo-chamber that holds together a new instance of religion and ideology in a fusional state. Nevertheless, the paradigm of agreement and conflict is also helpful for those many cases when distinction can still be made between these conceptual instances.

4.1 Shared enemies and interests

In many cases common enemies united Catholics and fascists. The Swiss Catholic People’s Party showed some support for the fascist National Front movement, which was in deep opposition to liberalism.[67] The obvious example of shared enemies is the Spanish Civil War, as addressed above. As Pollard remarks, “Because of the appalling anti-clerical violence of some Republican forces and the support of anticlerical Mexico and the atheistic Soviet Union for the Republic, most Spanish Catholic forces – including the Church – lined up on the side of Franco and the Nationalists.”[68] Pollard argues that in the later 1930s, as the conflict between National Socialism and the Catholic Church became more hostile, the enthusiasm for Catholic fascism in this sense waned.[69] He states, “Well into the 1920s, Erich Ludendorff, German military hero of the First World War and one of Hitler’s companions in the abortive ‘beer cellar Putsch’, led the *Los von Rom* (‘away from Rom’) movement decrying Roman Catholicism as a subversive, anti-German phenomenon.”[70] This sentiment encouraged many Catholic theologians to establish a new path of meditation that was not anti-German. According to Pollard, by the late 1920s in Italy, and especially after 1929, the Roman Catholic Church was “a useful prop to the fascist regime […].”[71] Of course, some fascists and some Catholics were not entirely pleased with this relationship. Furthermore, the Catholic Church did not “completely identify itself with fascism […].”[72] Pollard holds that “the phenomenon of ‘Catholic fascism’” was fundamentally challenged by the emergence of National Socialist military power in the later 1930s.[73] In the later 1930s, he also sees the Vatican moving to restore ties with the Western democratic powers. In summary, “Fascism and

67 Pollard, “Fascism and Religion”, 155.
68 Pollard, “Fascism and Religion”, 155.
69 Pollard, “Fascism and Religion”, 155.
70 Pollard, “Fascism and Catholicism”, 168.
71 Pollard, “Fascism and Catholicism”, 171.
72 Pollard, “Fascism and Catholicism”, 171.
73 Pollard, “Fascism and Catholicism”, 173.

Catholicism were brought together by common enemies and common interests, and chief among the enemies were liberalism and communism."[74]

Something else brought many of them together, including many Protestants as well. It was the sense of a new beginning, the emergence of a new humanity, purified from the errors of the Enlightenment ideals. In this sense, there was a great deal of convergence between Catholics and fascists.[75] Another major area of convergence was anti-Semitism.[76] While some criticized the Italian laws against the Jews in 1938, many Catholics viewed them positively, for, as Pollard writes, "they saw nothing wrong with imposing restrictions upon and discrimination against Jews, in order to 'protect' Christians."[77] Of course, there were some cases of resistance to fascism.[78] Yet, as Pollard argues, even after 1945 "Pius XII continued to see Salazar's Portugal and Franco's Spain as the ideal models for post-Fascist Italy."[79] Of course, most Catholics did not want "the radical extremism of fascism but the kind of Catholic, conservative, corporatist, and authoritarian state postulated by Charles Maurras and Action Française for decades before 1914, whose best expression was probably the military dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera in Spain or the Vichy regime of Marshal Henri Pétain in France."[80] In the later 1930s, many Catholics realized that "by allying with fascism they were riding a 'tiger' of extreme nationalism and racialism with anti-Christian tendencies, not only in National Socialism but also in Italian Fascism as it was radicalized in the late 1930s."[81]

4.2 Catholic resistance: The German case

Many local histories of this period are still being written, such as the history of the pro-fascist British Catholics.[82] Yet there is also a story of resistance that is central to many accounts of the history of Catholicism and fascism. Of course, the desire to resist was made problematic by the fears of isolation. Regarding the German case, Kevin P. Spicer writes:

74 Pollard, "Fascism and Catholicism", 175.
75 Pollard, "Fascism and Catholicism", 176.
76 Pollard, "Fascism and Catholicism", 178 f.
77 Pollard, "Fascism and Catholicism", 180.
78 Pollard, "Fascism and Catholicism", 180 f.
79 Pollard, "Fascism and Catholicism", 182.
80 Pollard, "Fascism and Catholicism", 182.
81 Pollard, "Fascism and Catholicism", 182.
82 Tom Villis, *British Catholics and Fascism: Religious Identity and Political Extremism between the Wars*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

> "As National Socialists gradually took over national and local political positions, Catholics feared even more that they would be left out of the political process and labeled traitors by the new government. No practicing German Catholic desired a resurgent *Kulturkampf,* which under Otto von Bismarck's chancellorship in imperial Germany had attempted to suppress the Catholic Church for the broader purposes of the state. This worry repeatedly surfaced in Catholic publications in the years immediately before and after Hitler's rise to power."[83]

Thus, the normal posture was not resistance, but negotiation and compromise. Olaf Blaschke holds that the "zones of mixing" between the Christian churches and National Socialism were larger than is often assumed.[84] Indeed, the dominant paradigm was not "resistance" ("Resistenz") when it comes to the churches – both Catholic and Protestant – under National Socialism, but "adjustment" ("Anpassung"). To this, Blaschke remarks, "if not even more [than adjustment]."[85] According to Spicer, the relationship between Catholicism and National Socialism changed over the period from 1933 to 1945. From 1930 to 1933, the bishops opposed the new party. From 1933 to 1934, "the German bishops jointly reversed their stance towards National Socialism, while holding on to the delusion that they could work with the state".[86] In the later 1930s, the relationship became more adversarial. There were many cases of persecuted priests and many examples of courageous resistance on the part of Catholics.[87] Pius XI even offered a criticism of racism (overlooking Hitler and National Socialism) in his *Mit brennender Sorge* (1937). Similar exceptions to the rule can be found among Protestants. Yet these exceptions were not the norm. In his description of "Catholic life under Hitler," Spicer provides a description of this norm:

> "The majority of Catholics viewed themselves as loyal, patriotic Germans who supported their country, especially the economic and global revitalisation that they believed Adolf Hitler was offering to their country. Catholics were boldly willing to support National Socialism, at least in the beginning, as if it were the greatest asset a government could provide. There were few who questioned its racial policy. Nevertheless, Catholic support of the National Socialist state had its limits evidenced often when the state encroached in an area that was traditionally occupied by the Church. In such cases where specific Church interests were at stake, Catholics, both lay and clergy, could forcefully raise their voices in opposition. Rarely, however, were such voices raised against any state measure or action that did not

83 Kevin P. Spicer, *Hitler's priests: Catholic clergy and National Socialism*. DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008, 7.

84 Blaschke, *Die Kirchen und der Nationalsozialismus*, 248: "Die Zonen der Vermischung [...]."

85 Blaschke, *Die Kirchen und der Nationalsozialismus*, 248.

86 Kevin P. Spicer, "Catholic Life under Hitler." In *Life and Times in Nazi Germany*, ed. Lisa Pine. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016, 239–262, here 240.

87 See Theodore S. Hamerow, *On the road to the Wolf's Lair: German resistance to Hitler*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997.

> directly affect Catholics and their religious ethos. At this point, the Catholic Church's sphere of concern was quite narrowly focused on the parochial. Anyone or anything outside of its canonical domain could easily be overlooked or ignored. It had not yet become a Church that completely embraced the gospel command to love one's neighbour, whoever that might be or however much despised."[88]

5 Anti-Semitism

One of the central ideological features of Catholic fascism was anti-Semitism.[89] Of course, this was common to both Protestants and Catholics in the various streams of fascist thought. As Pollard writes, some

> "have tried to make a distinction between the *racial* antisemitism of National Socialism and other fascist movements as opposed to what they regard as the 'anti-Judaism' of Catholicism. Comparing Christian antisemitism to the mutual suspicions and hostility between Catholics and Protestants, they argue that it was an essentially *religious* phenomenon. This does not make sense in the context of interwar Europe. For example, for decades the Jesuit fortnightly, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, had waged a violently antisemitic campaign, one riddled with the usual accusations of ritual murder, economic exploitation of Christians and other conspiracy theories, including the *Protocols of the Elder of Zion*. This made it very difficult for its editor, Father Rosa, to disassociate it from Mussolini's introduction of the Racial Laws in 1938."[90]

David Cymet has also drawn attention to the disregard for the persecution of the Jews. At a distance of "885 feet from the Vatican," under the Pope's window,

88 Spicer, "Catholic Life under Hitler", 255.

89 See Robert Michael, *A History of Catholic Antisemitism: The Dark Side of the Church*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, esp. 75 ff.; Richard J. Golsan, "Antisemitism in Modern France: Dreyfus, Vichy, and Beyond." In *Antisemitism: A History*, ed. Albert S. Lindemann and Richard S. Levy. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2010, 136–149; Ulrike Ehret, *Church, Nation, and Race: Catholics and Antisemitism in Germany and England, 1918–1945*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012, esp. 36 ff.; for an example of the new Catholic anti-Semitism and religious nationalism in German rightwing Catholicism, which drew upon Fichte, see Kurt Ziesché, *Das Königtum Christi in Europa*. Munich, Regensburg: Manz, 1926. Ziesché was very influential in the 1920s, even in the Catholic youth movements, see Hübner, *Die Rechtskatholiken*, 585 ff. In the English context, the authors G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc were both very influential in the Catholic intellectual world. See Belloc's *The Jews* (London: Constable, 1922); and on Chesterton and Belloc as a unified ideological program in deep opposition to liberalism at this time see Bryan Cheyette, *Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society Racial Representations, 1875–1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 150 ff.

90 John F. Pollard, "'Clerical fascism': Context, overview and conclusion." In *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe*, ed., Matthew Feldman, Marius Turda, with Tudor Georgescu. London: Routledge, 2008, 221–234, here 225.

the Roman Jews were deported to their death. Pius XII and the "Church stood calmly at the sidelines."[91] Cymet calls it "silent complicity".[92] Susan Zuccotti explains: "Pius XII, the head of the Roman Catholic Church during the Second world War, did not speak out publicly against the destruction of the Jews. This fact is rarely contested, nor can it be. Evidence of a public protest, if it existed, would be easy to produce. It does not exist."[93] Yet much has changed since the military defeat of fascism in Europe. In the second half of the twentieth century, the Catholic Church was able "to radically change its position and become a strong defender of the democratic form of government."[94] The Catholic Church's stance on Judaism and its relationship with Jews has also undergone a massive revision since Vatican II.

6 Is the term "Catholic fascism" necessary?

As addressed above, the term "Catholic fascism" signifies in the first sense specific movements and regimes that stood in close connection to the Catholic Church. In the second sense, it refers to a specific intellectualized form of religious ideology, a fusion of fascism and Catholicism. In some cases, these ideological expressions are so politically and ideologically charged that the religious themes appear only as secondary motivations. In other cases, however, religion and politics are so deeply integrated that new terminology is required to describe the phenomenon. On the political side, there are figures such as Franz von Papen. His Reich ideology had a religious dimension that seems to be a kind of borderline case of Catholic fascism. After Heinrich Brüning's resignation, Papen became Reich Chancellor in 1932. As Stephen J. Lee explains, Papen was once "on the conservative wing of the Centre Party," but he eventually "evolved away from the Centre altogether and now stood closer to the DNVP, even though

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91 David Cymet, *History vs. Apologetics: The Holocaust, The Third Reich, and the Catholic Church*. Lanham, Mar.: Lexington Books, 2010, 387.

92 Cymet, *History vs. Apologetics*, 387.

93 Susan Zuccotti, *Under His Very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust in Italy*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002, 1.

94 Carsten Anckar, *Religion and Democracy: A Worldwide Comparison*. London: Routledge, 2011, 43. For the most part, this is still the case today. While some radical Catholics still see democracy as a problem, these groups are marginal phenomena. They do not represent official teaching or even the broad opinion among most Catholics in the Western world. Pollard writes: "In Europe, latter-day 'clerical fascism' is to be found largely among traditionalist Catholics, like the supporters of the French Archbishop Lefebvre, who broke away from Rome in the 1960s." Pollard, "'Clerical fascism,'" 230.

he refused to assume any direct party allegiance." He "differed from Brüning in his willingness to compromise with the Nazis; he rescinded the ban imposed by Brüning on the SA and, more than anyone else, prepared the way for the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor in January 1933." As Lee clarifies, "Papen openly despised the democratic institutions of the Weimar Republic and looked forward to a time when the multi-party system gave way to a broad conservative front wielding permanent authoritarian power."[95] This general sentiment is found with many of the Catholic and Protestant fascists in the German context in the early 1930s. As Heinrich August Winkler has explained, Papen was one of the key figures who advanced the new political discourse about the Reich in the early 1930s:

> "The idea of the empire, the *Reichsidee*, experienced a supra-confessional renaissance in the early 1930s. It was usually accompanied by an assertion of the *grossdeutsch* idea and also, frequently, by a trans-national view of the German *Volk*. Both Protestant and Catholic imperial ideologues considered the opposition between *kleindeutsch* and *grossdeutsch* obsolete anyway, now that the Habsburg empire no longer existed, and they saw themselves in agreement with current German historiography on this point. One could, in order to give a 'positive' answer to the west and the Weimar Republic, invoke the idea of a supra-national German empire as a force for order in central Europe, or the Prussia of Frederick the Great, or even both myths together. Most authors of the 'conservative revolution', as well as well-known German historians, did just that. The mystical grand narrative of the *sacrum imperium*, on the other hand, belonged primarily to the Catholic right of which Papen was a member."[96]

The emphasis on a holy empire was certainly one of the key theoretical anchors of Catholic fascism in the German context.[97] Yet there is a need to distinguish

95 Stephen J. Lee, *The Weimar Republic*. London: Routledge, 1998, 62.

96 Heinrich August Winkler, *Germany: The Long Road West, volume 1: 1789–1933*, transl. Alexander Sager. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 466. See also Karl-Heinz Roth, "Franz von Papen und der Faschismus." *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 51/7 (2003): 589–625.

97 In most all cases, the Catholic intellectuals were not hoping to return to the Middle Ages, for example, as described by Pope Boniface VIII's Bull "Unam Sanctam" where he called for temporal authority to be submitted to ecclesial rule: "And we learn from the words of the Gospel that in this Church and in her power are two swords, the spiritual and the temporal. For when the apostles said, 'Behold, here' (that is, in the Church, since it was the apostles who spoke) 'are two swords' – the Lord did not reply, 'It is too much,' but 'It is enough.' Truly he who denies that the temporal sword is in the power of Peter, misunderstands the words of the Lord, 'Put up thy sword into the sheath.' Both are in the power of the Church, the spiritual sword and the material. But the latter is to be used for the Church, the former by her; the former by the priest, the latter by kings and captains but at the will and by the permission of the priest. The one sword, then, should be under the other, and temporal authority subject to spiritual." See Lk. 22:38; Jn. 18:11; "Unam Sanctam," 1302, *Corpus Juris Canonici* ii. 1245 Mirbt, 372; as cited in *Documents of the Christian Church*, ed. Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder. Oxford: Oxford University Press, [4]2011, 121. In the wake of the *Kulturkampf*, many Catholic intellectuals wanted to go a different direction. They wanted

this ideological mix from forms of secular neo-pagan fascism, as found with Alfred Rosenberg. In the German Catholic context, there was a strong form of intellectual ideology that was faithfully Catholic and theologically astute. It advanced the new radical rightwing ideology, promoted the Reich theme and encouraged anti-democratic authoritarianism, anti-Semitism and a virulent anti-liberalism. Nevertheless, it still appeared to its readers to be deeply Catholic, and a cultured, careful and differentiated alternative to the vulgar forms of fascist ideology.[98] The question here is what this specific ideological mix should be called? Was it just “rightwing Catholicism,” “authoritarian Catholicism” or simply another expression of the “conservative revolution”? Many historians use the term “conservative revolution” to refer to the post-World War I intellectual scene in the German language context.[99] This term can certainly be used to describe this unique ideological mix of Catholicism and fascism. Yet the term “conservative revolution” usually signifies both Catholics and Protestants. Furthermore, it is usually concerned with a specific form of anti-liberal and anti-democratic thought in the Weimar era. The Catholic ideological mix addressed above was clearly anti-liberal, anti-democratic, “rightwing” and “authoritarian,” but it was also more than this. It entailed a religious substratum of symbols and theologies that gave it a unique texture and force. It had a strong intellectual appeal

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recognition of the Catholic Church from the political authorities, as well as cultural, social and political influence.

98 For my definition of the term Catholic fascism see Peterson, “Once again, Erich Przywara and the Jews”, 162; idem, “Erich Przywara on Sieg-Katholizismus”, 139.

99 Traits of this can also be identified in the United Kingdom at this time. See Bernhard Dietz, *Neo-Tories. Britische Konservative im Aufstand gegen Demokratie und politische Moderne (1929–1939)*. München: Oldenbourg, 2012, 11: “Gemeint ist damit die ‘Konservative Revolution’, also jene antiliberale Denkrichtung in der Weimarer Republik, die in ihrer Radikalität über den klassischen Konservatismus hinauswies, aber andererseits keineswegs deckungsgleich mit dem Nationalsozialismus war.” Heinrich August Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, *Band 1: Deutsche Geschichte vom Ende des Alten Reiches bis zum Untergang der Weimarer Republik*. München: C. H. Beck, 2000, 463 f.; cf. Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik. Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus zwischen 1918 und 1933*. München: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1962; Stefan Vogt, *Nationaler Sozialismus und Soziale Demokratie. Die sozialdemokratische Junge Rechte 1918–1945*. Berlin: Dietz, 2006; on the theme of the New Conservatives in the German Protestant theology of the early 20th century cf. Manfred Jacobs, *Vom Liberalismus zur Dialektischen Theologie*, 2 volumes [paginated as one volume], Habilitationsschrift, Univ. Hamburg, 1966, 286–297. See also Stefan Breuer, *Anatomie der konservativen Revolution*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993; see also Armin Pfahl-Traughber, *Konservative Revolution und Neue Rechte. Rechtsextremistische Intellektuelle gegen den demokratischen Verfassungsstaat*. Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1998, 51 f. Armin Mohler coined the term in historiography, although it actually goes back to the early 20th century. See Armin Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918–1932. Ein Handbuch*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972.

because of this deeper religious quality. It was perhaps most sympathetic to Austro-fascism in the 1930s and the corporative theories of social and political order. This form of the ideological mix was clearly distinct from the fascist National Socialism of Alfred Rosenberg. It was embedded in Catholicism and sought to mediate between Catholicism and fascism. To call this thinking "Catholicism" misses the dynamic interplay of these authors, for examples those in the German context of the 1920s and 1930s, as they were working in their ideological contexts of fascism. For this reason, the term "Catholic fascism" seems to be the most accurate description of this ideological mix and especially the sense of mediation. This was, of course, simply another distinct subset of clerical fascism. Orthodox and Protestant fascism are the two other subcategories of clerical fascism in this context.