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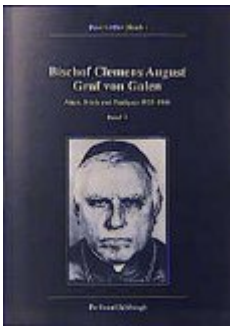

Friedrich Loeffler, ed.. *Bischof Clemens August Graf von Galen: Akten, Briefe und Predigten, 1933-1946.* Paderborn: Ferdinand SchÖ¶ningh Verlag, 1996. 1476 pp. DM 98,-, paper, ISBN 978-3-506-79840-4.

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These two volumes are a second, revised and enlarged edition of a work first published in 1988 (also in two volumes), and edited by the former archivist of the Muenster diocese, Friedrich Loeffler. The enlargement, in fact, consists only of twelve additional documents, amounting to forty-two pages in all, none of which substantially changes the picture we already have. Although admirably edited, as before, to the commendably high standards of the Catholic Commission for Contemporary History, the cost of this work, despite undoubted subsidies from the Catholic Church in Germany, will make it unlikely to be a best-seller. But, presumably for the sake of completeness, it now appears a second time in order to include a few more items that have turned up since 1988, as well as to add an updated bibliography of the most recent publications relating to the career of the subject. Given the enormous initial task of reconstructing this material, much of which was lost when the diocesan archive was almost totally destroyed by British bombing during the war, the editor's perseverance is to be commended.

Bishop Galen is now best remembered for his outspoken sermons of July and August 1941 denouncing the crimes of the Gestapo, especially the murder of thousands of German mentally handicapped patients in specially controlled mental hospitals during the so-called euthanasia programme. These sermons were delivered at the very moment when the Nazi course of military aggression was at its peak, and, if Joseph Goebbels had had his way, would have led to the Bishop's being strung up on a lamp-post outside his own cathedral. He survived only because Hitler decided to delay vengeance until the war was won. It was presumably this act of defiance that led Pope Pius XII to make Galen a Cardinal at his first Consistory after the war in late 1945--the first time the diocese of Muenster had been so honoured. Unfortunately, Galen died suddenly only a few weeks after returning from receiving his red hat in Rome.

Clemens August Graf von Galen came from a highly aristocratic Westphalian family, which had been accustomed to holding high office in both church and state. As such, Galen could not be de-

scribed as having sympathies for the democratic Weimar Republic, and was even more staunchly opposed to the threat of communism. His disdain for Adolf Hitler and his mob of rowdy thugs was equally obvious, though in 1933, when the Nazis achieved power, Galen's antipathy was tempered by the fact that a fellow Westphalian aristocrat, Franz von Papen, was to become Vice-Chancellor. Neither of them could foresee how rapidly Papen's influence was to be eroded.

Galen was appointed bishop, at the age of fifty-five, in September 1933 (which is where the documents in these volumes begin), and set himself the task of building up his diocese, with the result that Muenster became even more the heartland of "black reaction," as his Nazi opponents viewed it. Nazi ideologues like Alfred Rosenberg were determined to challenge this citadel, and many of the documents provided here outline the fierce controversies caused by Rosenberg's provocative appearance in Muenster in 1935. They also show how soon and how vigorously the Nazis' campaign to dominate the public scene, especially all aspects of education, was launched, in the expectation that their frothy brew of ultra-nationalist, racist, anti-communist and anti-clerical rhetoric would capture the hearts and minds of most Germans. Galen's untiring and energetic responses to this flagrant attack are here fully documented.

It is clear that Galen saw himself as the defender of traditional Catholic doctrine and of the autonomy of the Church, which he mistakenly thought had been safeguarded by the newly signed Concordat of July 1933. His stature as a Prince of the Church and his family background led him to tireless attempts to reject any interference by the Nazi upstarts seeking to control or limit the operations of the church. He was especially vigorous in upholding the heritage of the Christian past of Muenster and Westphalia against the pseudo-pagan ideology of the Nazi extremists. But at the same time this appeal to the rich heritage of Germany's saints and heroes of the past led him to susceptibility to the allurements of other, more political, aspects of Nazism, such as the restoration of Germany's dignity and honour after the humiliation of the Versailles Treaty. Hitler's promise to restore Germany's national honor therefore met with his warm approval.

One clear trend is evidenced from many of the internal documents covering his correspondence with other members of the Catholic hierarchy. In defence of the Church's position, Galen found the conduct of his superiors, especially the aged Presiding Bishop, Cardinal Bertram of Breslau, to be far too reticent and diplomatic. He never shared the Cardinal's belief that the Nazi government would willingly uphold the terms of the 1933 Concordat if sufficiently lengthy remonstrances were forwarded to Hitler's office. Instead, Galen insisted, this kind of secret negotiation only baffled the ordinary Catholics suffering from the innumerable pin-pricks of Nazi officialdom, while unable to see that any improvements were forthcoming. Galen wanted a much more forceful and public confrontation against these encroaching impertinences, and sought to rally the faithful of his diocese to be on their guard against all such attempts to strangle Church life and institutions. But his advice was not accepted by Bertram, and every time he urged a stronger line to be taken, the Cardinal backed down. Clearly Galen, who rather enjoyed the epithet of "The Lion of Muenster," was frustrated by such pusillanimity, and even courted persecution in order to defend his diocesan territory. But he was unsuccessful in getting a more challenging line adopted.

When war broke out in 1939, Galen, like so many other German conservatives, was prepared to believe that Germany was only attempting to break the stranglehold imposed on her by encircling foes, and was quite ready to endorse the war effort in religious terms, being anxious not to allow the Nazis to accuse Catholics of displaying

less fervour for the war effort than other members of the community. But at the same time, he was not at all prepared to allow wartime necessity to be used as an excuse to cripple the Church by further curtailing its activities or associations, or commandeering its buildings. The confiscations of monasteries and nunneries, the closing of Church schools, and the refusal of paper supplies for church publications were, as we now know, all part of the Nazis' deliberate plot to demolish the Church's bastions, and it is clear that Galen was very much aware of the damage being done. Still he went on believing that such actions were just the work of underlings in the Nazi Party, and that Hitler, had he known of them, would have corrected these excesses--again a very typical attitude found among German conservatives.

But by 1941 Galen had had enough. He decided to ignore the advice of his colleagues and to launch a very public demonstration in defence of the rights of the Church. His feelings of outrage were only strengthened by the growing number of representations made to him by parishioners concerned about the fate of their relatives in mental hospitals, whose sudden and mysterious deaths shortly after being transferred in Gestapo-organised buses from Church hospitals to those run by the state, aroused waves of panic and alarm. Unfortunately these volumes do not give us any indication of the sources of information about these murderous policies that Galen was receiving at the time. Nevertheless he resolved to "go public" in the most demonstrative manner, even if this brought about his immediate arrest, or even banishment from his diocese. He therefore prepared three sermons of protest, which included full details of the Gestapo's lawless iniquities, and ordered them to be secretly printed and circulated even before he spoke. To gain effect, he delivered these sermons in his own cathedral, dressed in the full insignia and vestments of a bishop, so that, if arrested as he stepped down from the pulpit and taken away by the Gestapo, the whole town would know of this insult to the majesty of his office. In fact, the Nazis were taken by surprise, and were unable to prevent the very wide circulation of these outspoken denunciations of the regime, which were quickly spread from hand to hand, and even appeared in other parts of Europe, and also were used as very effective propaganda by the BBC. But, of course, Galen denied having any political intentions. He still apparently thought that the Nazis could be recalled by fervent exhortations to uphold the concepts of German law and traditional Christian moral values.

Courageous as these actions were in defence of the Church's traditional concerns for its flock, it has to be noted that these documents contain not a single instance of Galen's being ready to make similar protests against the even more heinous Nazi crimes against the Jews. Indeed it would seem clear that Galen, like so many other German conservatives, shared much of the prevalent antisemitic attitudes of his day, especially the widespread assumption that the Jews were powerfully represented in the Communist leadership of the Soviet Union. Consequently, his ardent support for the Nazis' war of liberation against the "godless atheism" of the Bolsheviks, as expressed in a pastoral letter of September 1941, no doubt influenced him in remaining silent on the events of the Holocaust. Such was the ambivalence, or the dilemma, of this section of the German populace. His national loyalties remained firm to the end. Germany's defeat by the Allies was a major disaster, and in no way could be celebrated as a liberation. In fact, as the American troops advanced into his diocese Galen withdrew to a remote country convent to avoid the coming of the "barbarians."

Subsequently, after May 1945, he was at pains to make it clear to the officials of the British Military Government installed in Muenster that he was not prepared to collaborate in this renewal of Germany's shame. He denied any idea of German collective guilt, readily enough supported the

view that the Catholic Church had been the first victims of the Nazi onslaught, and sought to retrieve all the Church's privileges and possessions from earlier days. Not surprisingly, he was highly critical of the whole de-Nazification process, and caused all sorts of difficulties for the British, who in return tried to block his being allowed to go to Rome for his installation as a Cardinal. While these documents provide us with Galen's side of the story, it is not difficult to see how intransigent a conservative nationalist he remained, despite all. In this stance, he was not untypical of his class and caste, and his legacy was in fact to be reflected in the stubborn defence of these clerical positions during the immediate postwar years when the new German government was established.

The value of these documents will be to allow a clearer picture of the extent to which Catholic apologists are justified when they argue that the bishops' stance during the Nazi years was successful in preventing the whole-scale apostasy of the Catholic population, or that any more open protest would have endangered needlessly the lives of millions of Catholics. On the other hand, they also show how the bishops' illusions about the character of the Nazi regime prevented any mobilization of Catholic resistance, especially on the most vital issue of the persecution of the Jews. When it came to the rights of the Catholics, Galen showed what could be achieved, and his stance has been fully lauded by Catholic historians ever since. But his upbringing and experience did not lead him to recognise that, under the demonic rule of Nazi racial totalitarians, a much broader sense of compassion and commitment was called for. This was the tragedy of German Catholicism, which it is only now seeking to overcome.

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