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West German Protestants and the Campaign against Nuclear Technology

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By the early 1970s, the West German Protestant churches became involved in the increasingly bitter conflict surrounding the production and use of nuclear energy. While the nuclear issue remains as controversial and divisive as ever in Germany today, no historical analysis has yet been offered to explain the reasons that the churches especially in West Germany have become avid participants in this debate for decades.

To be sure, leaders and members of the Protestant churches had taken part in quite a number of public controversies since the foundation of the Federal Republic. Early in the 1950s the church was drawn into the rearmament debate and was struggling with the concept of a just war. It was divided on the issue of nuclear arms, but critical voices were growing stronger.[1] Momentous changes in the country's social and political fabric affected the church just as any other institution. The student revolt and the major shift in cultural outlook and political self-understanding after 1968 affected teachers and students of theology alike.[2] The first major economic crisis of West Germany, the Vietnam War, and the reception of Critical Theory (i.e., the surge of Neo-Marxism), created an atmosphere of cultural pessimism among the educated elite, while a new form of left-wing terrorism (especially by the so-called *Rote Armee Fraktion*, "Red Army Faction") contributed to a general feeling of insecurity. All this, however, did not yet destabilize the country's overall faith in the predictability of modern civilization. It was really the energy crisis of 1973 that made many people seriously reflect upon their future, whether they could continue a comfortable lifestyle, or

I wish to thank the archivists in the archives of the *Landeskirchen* in Hannover, Kiel, Düsseldorf, Darmstadt, and Karlsruhe. I would also like to thank Stephan Linck from the Nordelbisches Kirchenarchiv for the interesting conversations, Paul Listen for thoroughly editing the text, and especially my former students from the University of California, Berkeley, for all their good questions.

[1]Marc Cioc, *Pax Atomica: The Nuclear Defense Debate in West Germany during the Adenauer Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). In 1957, the famous theologian Helmut Gollwitzer published a small book with the title *Die Christen und die Atomwaffen* (*The Christians and The Atomic Weapons*), in which he decried the fact that some physicists were more outspoken against nuclear weapons than the German Protestant churches. See Helmut Gollwitzer, *Die Christen und die Atomwaffen* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1957), 8.

[2]Volkmar Wittmütz et al., eds., *1968 und die Kirchen* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2008).

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whether an economy heavily reliant on automobile production could be sustained. It is clear that the Protestant church in West Germany could not have avoided these pressing issues even if they had wanted to do so.[3] The peace movement that permeated its ranks grew louder and stronger. Discussions within the church about industry, the environment, and energy became more frequent around 1970; by the mid-1970s the churches had already created the position of environmental officers (*Umweltbeauftragte*), usually pastors, whose task it was to do research, inform the congregations, and act as mediators.[4]

In this article, I will attempt to explain the role of the West German Protestant church between 1970 and 1990 in the conflicts that surrounded the nuclear industry by looking at three aspects of the issue. The first comprises the intersections of environmental activism and motifs of faith. I use the term "motif" to describe repetitive elements within a narrative that constitute a pattern of recognition and carry with them a deeply symbolic meaning.[5] I will then, in a second step, analyze how the issue of nuclear technology in particular pertains to these motifs and how through these the church became both stage and actor in environmental politics. In the third step, I will try to answer the question of why these conflicts were so bitter and vehement, and I will offer the thesis that this can be derived from the specific German historical experience. For the time being, and merely for practical reasons, I will not attempt a comparative perspective with respect to the Catholic Church or the situation in other European countries, as useful as this may eventually prove to be. It needs to be mentioned, however, that in East Germany environmental deprivation and the fear of nuclear power were important items on the list of many grievances East German pastors and parishioners expressed in their protests against the SED regime.[6] Yet these

[3]Klaus Fitschen et al., eds., *Die Politisierung des Protestantismus. Entwicklungen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland während der 1960er und 70er Jahre* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011); Wilhelm Damberg, ed., *Soziale Strukturen und Semantiken des Religiösen im Wandel. Transformationen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2011).

[4]From 1973 to 1992, the Umweltbeauftragter for all Protestant churches on the federal level was Kurt Oeser. Oeser had started out as an environmental activist against noise pollution while pastor of a congregation near Frankfurt am Main International Airport. He published widely and was honored in 1974 with the Federal Order of Merit. His life's work is commemorated in the following monograph: Carmen R. Hecht and Cornelia Rühlig, eds., *Kurt Oeser. Gemeindepfarrer und erster "Umweltpfarrer" Deutschlands* (Bad Homburg: VAS Verlag für akademische Schriften, 2008); Konrad Barner and Gerhard Liedke, eds., *Schöpfungsverantwortung konkret. Aus der Arbeit der kirchlichen Umweltbeauftragten* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986).

[5]Spencer Weart offered an innovative approach in his pioneering study about the cultural representations of antinuclear resentment by calling his narrative "a history of images." This, I believe, is worth exploring further within the field of environmental history. See Spencer R. Weart, *Nuclear Fear: A History of Images* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1988).

[6]For example, see John P. Burgess, *The East German Church and the End of Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Gregory Baum, *The Church for Others: Protestant Theology in Communist East Germany* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996); Mary Fullbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR, 1949–89* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); or Charles S. Maier, *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

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concerns had become a vehicle for a growing frustration with the political system in East Germany as such, with its appalling mismanagement and corruption, and thus had a different significance and meaning than in the open and affluent society of the Federal Republic. Therefore my analysis focuses on the specifity of the West German case until the fall of the wall.

Religious Motifs in Antinuclear Protests

As the West German Protestant church was drawn into the conflict over nuclear energy, it essentially faced two challenges. First, it was struggling to find both a theological and political position on the matter. Second, it was confronted with new problems concerning pastoral care in parishes located near nuclear-industry sites. As the public became increasingly concerned about the perceived dangers of environmental pollution and energy shortages, the church leadership was unprepared to offer solutions or even solace. The congregations most affected by the construction of nuclear facilities eagerly awaited some sort of guidance. They demanded a clear and unambiguous episcopal statement (*ein bischöfliches Wort*).[7] How were Christians to deal with this set of new challenges? The congregations, as can be discerned from letters to the bishops, felt abandoned with their worries.[8] Over time, however, new strategies emerged from the political activists among the pastors, along with the intellectual leaders in theology at the universities. Their aims were vehemently stated in pamphlets, leaflets, and other forms of public discussion. Archival sources suggest that by the middle of the 1970s new spheres of public discourse had come into being without central coordination. They bundled together a distinct group of religious motifs, connected to a set of recurring arguments and rhetorical strategies.[9]

First, there was the tendency to bolster political arguments with prophetic visions. Religious perceptions are always molded by the confrontation with death and the fundamental human experience of contingency. In technologically advanced societies, the achievements of the thermo-industrial revolution pushed elementary fears of scarcity, poverty, and death toward the margins of human existence.[10] Public safety, health, hygiene, mobility, comfort, and affluence

[7]On December 1, 1976, a pastor from Bremen wrote to Bishop Eduard Lohse of the State Church of Hannover, "thousands of alert Christians have waited for your episcopal word." This came after witnessing violent clashes near the construction site of the Brokdorf nuclear power plant. Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, II 104/2 Lohse (Dienst), Verhältnis Staat/Kirche "Atomenergie," Dec. 1975-April 29, 1977.

[8]For example, in a letter from around 1979 from a parishioner to the church administration in Hannover, stating that it was not the task of the church simply to "placate" concerns in connection with an "inhuman" technology. Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, L5e, gen 180, Bd. V (Gorleben).

[9]Günter Altner, ed., *Atomenergie. Herausforderung an die Kirchen. Texte, Kommentare, Analysen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977).

[10]The late Detlev J. K. Peukert identified a *logodicy,* which replaces the older *theodicy* in modern times. Referring to Max Weber, he claimed, "At the turn of the century [i.e., circa 1900], then,

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rested on the availability of energy and the technologies of its transformation. Around 1970, however, the notion of crisis was gripping the imagination of many West Germans. It was nurtured by a new insecurity concerning the predictability of modern civilization's path, especially relating to the availability of resources.[11] The diagnosis that permeated the public sphere was that of a crisis of growth. The Club of Rome's "The Limits to Growth" came as a shock and immediately became a best seller in 1972.[12] It was perceived as a Malthusian nightmare in which the reading public was confronted with the vision of an unsustainable lifestyle that would deplete the world's resources, ultimately leading to a global disaster. The authors of the study have always resisted being seen as prophets of doom.[13] Nevertheless, the prognosis carried with it an element of secular prophecy, which became a powerful tool in the environmental discourse. The underlying motive was the wish for the prophecy to destroy itself by bringing about the political decisions that in turn would help to undermine its premises. Dire warnings and forceful pleas were strategies to undermine the prognosis itself.[14] It did not take long until voices within the congregations made themselves heard, reminding the public of the "prophetic calling" of the church (*Prophetisches Amt*).[15] In times of crisis and affliction the church should assume the role of the voice in the wilderness and exercise the old tradition of penance.

This has, of course, been a central and venerable motif of religious self-awareness for centuries, and indeed, the church was well prepared to apply this old

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the gap created by the decline of religious influence on everyday life in industrial society was so great, and the conquest of the world by secularized, scientific rationality was so overwhelming that the switch from religion to science as the source of a meaning-creating mythology took place almost without resistance. The result, however, was that science took upon itself a burden of responsibility which it would soon find a heavy one." Detlev J. K. Peukert, "The Genesis of the Final Solution from the Spirit of Science," in *Nazism and German Society 1933–1945*, ed. David F. Crew (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 274–299, here 284.

[11]Konrad Jarausch, ed., *Das Ende der Zuversicht? Die Siebziger Jahre als Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008); Patrick Kupper, "Die '1970er Diagnose.' Grundsätzliche Überlegungen zu einem Wendepunkt der Umweltgeschichte," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 43 (2003): 325–348; Anselm Doering-Manteuffel and Lutz Raphael, *Nach dem Boom. Perspektiven auf die Zeitgeschichte seit 1970* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008).

[12]Dennis H. Meadows et al., *The Limits to Growth: A Report for The Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (New York: Universe Books, 1972).

[13]See the online interview with Dennis Meadows, December 12, 2009, http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,666175,00.html (accessed December 23, 2010).

[14]The American sociologist Robert K. Merton first described the effects of self-destroying and self-fulfilling prophecies. Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 477.

[15]Several employees of the church in Hamburg had issued a pamphlet in December 1976 reacting to the official stance of the leaders of the Nordelbische Landeskirche (State Church of North of the Elbe, i.e., the city of Hamburg and the state of Schleswig-Holstein) asking whether the church should not exercise its *prophetisches Wächteramt* (prophetic calling of the custodian). Archiv der Nordelbischen Kirche, 10.01, Nr. 11.

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rhetorical exercise when it faced new threats and dangers. The prophetic experience as a fundamental part of religious life could be found in the early Christian congregations as well as in the chiliastic hopes of salvation in Reformation Europe. The sociology of religion as developed by Max Weber introduced the concept of the prophet as a social critic and identified the central rhetorical act as the Jeremiad.[16] The rhetorical arsenal of the church was boundless in that respect. This is the reason that activists within the church eventually found their own voice, which, on closer inspection, proved to be an old and time-tested one.

The second religious motif that comes into play is that of the secular apocalypse. My thesis is that the specificity and peculiarity of nuclear technology itself engendered an impetuous rhetoric of protest within the church, which feared the technological reality of total annihilation.[17] Conflicts within the church over nuclear armaments were intense but inconclusive.[18] Yet the technological possibility of a secular apocalypse, devoid of any redemptive meaning, remained a challenge and would resurface with ever more intensity after the political unrest in the late 1960s. While no one in the church went so far as to justify the use of nuclear weapons, the issue at hand was whether it was acceptable even to own them. More importantly, though, by the end of the 1970s the protest against nuclear arms and against the civil use of nuclear technologies had merged. Images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were projected onto the issue of nuclear energy at a time when the distinction between military and peaceful uses of nuclear technologies was called into question. In that sense, the "new social movements" joined forces and gained strength, as there was a significant overlap between groups against nuclear war and those against nuclear energy.[19] Although the proponents of the latter insisted that nuclear power plants were certainly not constructed to harm anyone, the technological connection, both in a concrete and in a historical sense, was obvious. The first nuclear reactors had been constructed to produce weapons-grade material.[20] While the Federal Republic of Germany was officially not pursuing ownership of nuclear weapons, the 1950s had seen avid proponents of this idea (e.g., the conservative politician Franz

[16]Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, vol. III (Munich: UTB für Wissenschaft, 1983 [1920]), 285 ff.

[17]For a critical theological interpretation of apocalyptism, see Ulrich H. J. Körtner, *Weltangst und Weltende. Eine theologische Interpretation der Apokalyptik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 18 ff.

[18]Cioc, *Pax Atomica*.

[19]Karl-Werner Brand, "Transformation der Umweltbewegung," in *Neue soziale Bewegungen—Impulse, Bilanzen und Perspektiven*, ed. Ansgar Klein (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1999), 237–256; Siegfried Hermle et al., eds., *Umbrüche. Der deutsche Protestantismus und die sozialen Bewegungen in den 1960er und 70er Jahren* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

[20]An exhaustive listing of literature on the history of the Manhattan Project cannot be given here. For one of the most convincing narratives, see Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986).

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Josef Strauss and the physicist Pascual Jordan).[21] Thus the antinuclear movement had a truly monolithic agenda, ranting against all things nuclear, in spite of the diverse motives and plans of the industry. Among church activists, too, there was indeed a twofold opposition against both nuclear weapons and nuclear energy. In both cases, as suggested above, the peculiar nature of both technologies accounts for the vehemence of the protest. Just as nuclear warfare was interpreted as fundamentally different from so-called "conventional weapons," nuclear radiation or pollution was seen as an "unconventional" environmental hazard. While environmental activists were equally opposed to war and to pollution as such, the nuclear dimension of these modern threats added a sense of desperation and urgency. Both nuclear wars and nuclear accidents brought with them an aspect of apocalyptic irreversibility and finality.[22] Quite different from complaints about polluted streams or mountains of industrial and household waste, the nuclear threat determined the fate of generations in an unforeseeable future. These were the deeper roots of fear and this was why some members of the church found the way back to its prophetic calling. The temporal dimension, where human technological agency seemed to reach into eternity, where contamination could not be cleaned up for a long time to come, was one of the main reasons that church members felt validated in arguing from the point of view of faith.[23] The temporal dimension, reflected in agitated discussions concerning the half-lives of radioactive substances and long-term genetic damage, revealed fears of a future that would ultimately be squandered and a planet that would be uninhabitable. No scientist was able to find the language to accommodate or dispel such consummate fears. As a matter of fact, the scientists and engineers themselves shied away from apodictic defense tactics, and not one of them dared to suggest that a nuclear accident was impossible. Still, the prevailing attitude among many experts that a modern society would have to live with a calculated risk was widely regarded as cynical.[24]

A third religious motif, closely connected to the first two, is that of reversion.[25] This, too, belonged to the rhetorical arsenal of the Jeremiad. In the Book of Jonah, the God of the Old Testament reprieved the city of Nineveh after its

[21]Pascual Jordan, *Wir müssen den Frieden retten* (Cologne: Verlag Staat und Gesellschaft, 1957).

[22]Making the case for future generations is an omnipresent argument in the archival sources. A parishioner to the Landeskirche in Hannover in a letter dated July 16, 1976, Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, L 6 (Landesbischof Lohse), no. 104/02 vol. 1.

[23]Mankind is endangered for "hundreds of generations" wrote a pastor to a critical parishioner after 150 pastors had held a service near the Brokdorf nuclear power plant construction site in January 1977. Archiv der Nordelbischen Kirche, Nachlass Hübner, 98.08, 125 II.

[24]"What remains of the credibility of our language when the euphemism *Restrisiko* describes a universal threat of apocalyptical proportions?" From a reader in a letter to the editor of the Protestant newspaper *Evangelische Kommentare* 19 (1986): 367.

[25]See the draft of a speech manuscript by Kurt Oeser, Commissioner for Environmental Affairs of the German Protestant Church, around 1973. Archiv der Evangelischen Kirche Hessen Nassau, 155, 3584.

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inhabitants demonstrated the will to repent. The prophet as social critic not merely foresees the future, but he also acts as an agent of God and as a leader to the path to forgiveness. Should the prophet fail—this is another, more sinister, biblical motif—generations to come must pay for the sins of their fathers.[26] The motif of reversion then not only pertained to individual lifestyles but also to questions of societal responsibilities, just as prophecies addressed the entirety of God's people, who had lost their way and needed guidance on the path back to virtue and trust. In short, what connects ancient and modern forms of the Jeremiad is the assessment that "it can't go on like this." The implication of church activists was, of course, that the experience of an ancient Middle Eastern civilization could be transferred to the problems of the modern world, which seems a bit of a stretch for an agnostic observer. One should not forget, however, that from the church's perspective the narratives of the Bible have always had and will always have immediate and concrete relevance beyond their historical bounds.

Related to reversion, and connected to it in manifold ways, lies a fourth motif, that of renunciation. Here, too, questions of individual lifestyle are linked with societal aberrations. Accordingly, the church was able to interpret the excesses of a consumerist society with older notions of Mammon, against which a more modest and careful way of living could be brought into the discussion.[27] The church never really argued in favor of new vows of poverty, nor would it argue for a culture of asceticism that involved complete renunciation of the amenities of modern technology. But even those within the church leadership who shied away from a condemnation of nuclear technology insisted on renewed reflection on individual lifestyles. Before one could call for political activism against a specific technology, so the argument went, one should certainly be able to find ways of modest consumption in a world of excesses.[28] Wherever the church was divided in terms of a concrete stance that favored or opposed nuclear technology, common ground was found when it came to rejecting the false gods of greed and profusion.

It is interesting in this context that the church was able to achieve this modest consensus due to its experience with the fight against global poverty.[29] Here, too, similarities with the perception of a technological culture in crisis appeared. As western societies increasingly found ways to ensure cheap energy and wealth for their populations, it also became clear that this was possible only through a

[26] Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, 340.

[27] Bishop for Hamburg in the Nordelbische Kirche in a letter to pastors and parishioners, May 4, 1979. Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, L5e, gen 180, vol. IV.

[28] For an example of this argument in a letter dated March 23, 1976, from Bishop Eduard Lohse to a critical parishioner, see Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, L6 (Landesbischof Lohse), no. 104/02 vol. 1.

[29] Winfried Hohlfeld, Commissioner for Environmental Questions in the Nordelbische Landeskirche, described this in his book *Umweltkrise. Herausforderung der Kirche* (Stuttgart: Quell Verlag, 1974), 15.

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ruthless appropriation of resources in other parts of the world. At least two decades before the catchphrase "globalization" caught on, the church, with its long tradition of caritative and missionary activities, had made the observation that there was a connection between poverty in one part of the world and affluence in another. As much as local activities and concrete regional problems carried the environmental movement in Germany, the perception of a crisis of growth was always seen from a global perspective, a dimension the church had within its scope for decades leading up to the 1970s. The limits to growth were a problem of all mankind, and these constraints were set in part by the limits of planetary resources.[30] Consequently, alongside a broad temporal perspective, a spatial dimension of prophecy was added to the church's self-understanding. On both levels, the church was able to formulate universal claims of validity. The discourse on responsibility was globalized and was perfectly compatible with the pathos for humanity as expressed in religion. With its knowledge of the "last things" and the temporal and spatial limits of human agency, the church was potentially able to claim societal relevance in a crisis of modernity; however, that depended on whether it wanted to become a truly political church after all.

I have so far shown the various motifs of prophecy, apocalypse, reversion, and renunciation in connection with the religious stance against nuclear technology. Yet another aspect must be considered, however. The church tended to refer to the environment as the "creation," thus offering its particular view of the value of the animated world.[31] From a theological point of view, the dictum *Dominium terrae*, as stated in Genesis 1:28, was increasingly seen as a burden. As it establishes the legitimacy of mankind's rule over the earth derived from the idea of its creation in the image of God, it became controversial in a time of environmental destruction. Voices within the church denounced a vision of human dominance. This formula had to be changed, since it was made partially responsible—in an anthropocentric natural world—for the crisis of modern civilization.[32] Furthermore, the very notion of preserving nature for the benefit of mankind alone came under scrutiny. The dangers of nuclear technology affected not only humankind but all other living beings as well, to which people were now willing to ascribe value in their own right. The notion of humankind as a shepherd instead of a ruler thus became popular.[33] In connection with the biblical

[30]One pastor wrote of the "madness of growth" in a letter dated December 1, 1976, to his bishop. See Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, II 104/2 Lohse (Dienst) Verhältnis Staat/Kirche "Atomenergie," 88, Dec. 1975-April 29, 1977.

[31]Sigurd M. Daecke, "Friede mit der Natur," *Evangelische Kommentare* 19 (1986): 8.

[32]Ibid., 8; Carl Amery, *Das Ende der Vorsehung. Die gnadenlosen Folgen des Christentums* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1972).

[33]Work group on the theology of the creation (a temporary committee of concerned parishioners and pastors in Lüneburg) in a memorandum dated July 2, 1980, for the Landeskirche Hannover. Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, L5e gen 180, vol. VII (Gorleben). For a sophisticated theology

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tradition and apart from Dominium terrae, other passages were cited, in the Psalms, for example, where nature was praised.[34] All these interpretations remained vague and imprecise. In any case, attempts to derive from Scripture any mandates that were more concrete in terms of their attitude toward technology eventually proved to be rather far-fetched.

The Political Church

The aforementioned motifs relate to the discursive spheres within the church, not necessarily to the internal political reality. The evocation of religious motifs in connection with a skeptical stance toward nuclear technology doesn't tell us anything about their popularity or indeed the attitude of all parishioners. As a matter of fact, the political divide within German society as such was more or less mirrored on the level of the church. Wherever pastors or parishioners argued that the church should come forth with a theological assessment of nuclear technology, others insisted that this might be altogether impossible.[35]

Thus a great portion of the internal debate was actually about whether the church was competent or indeed authorized to make such a statement. And if so, what would be the appropriate way to proceed? Conflicts arose between the church leadership and the base, as well as between progressive and conservative members. It is notable, first, that the initiative for such a debate did not come from the top. The protest against nuclear technology was always local and emanated from sites at the focus of conflict, generally a good distance away from the metropolitan centers where the church leadership resided. The senior leadership of the church—a group of seasoned statesmen and administrators—was taken completely by surprise by the pitch of the protest. The reaction from the top made them appear unprepared and sometimes ill informed.[36] To complicate matters further, bishops and administrators soon saw themselves confronted by parishioners who rejected the competence of the church on the matter and who complained about their congregations being politicized.

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of creation, see Jürgen Moltmann, *Gott in der Schöpfung. Ökologische Schöpfungslehre* (Munich: Kaiser, 1987).

[34]Famous theologian Dorothee Sölle in a talk given in 2001, "Beherrschen und Besitzen (Descartes)—oder Hüten und Bewahren—was wollen wir?," http://www.lebenshaus-alb.de/magazin/001698.html (accessed December 23, 2010).

[35]According to a commentator in the *Lutherische Monatshefte*, around 1977. See manuscript in Archiv der Nordelbischen Kirche, Nachlass Hübner, 98.08, 125 l.

[36]That is why one parishioner felt the need to describe the potential risks and unresolved problems of nuclear technologies in a lengthy letter dated June 25, 1976, to Bishop Eduard Lohse of Hannover. Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, L6 (Landesbischof Lohse), no. 104/02 vol. 1.

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What's more, there were also quite a few who simply favored nuclear technology and considered the protest within the church to be unfounded and reckless.[37] It is clearly evident from the correspondence among pastors, bishops, and parishioners that the church leadership was anxious to maintain unity and civility. Very soon it became apparent, however, that the leaders risked losing support from both sides of the divide if they insisted on remaining impartial. Opponents of nuclear technology, with their notions of immediacy and danger, would be just as reticent to accept the bishops' neutral evenhandedness as those who feared that the ecclesiastical dignitaries would idly stand by while the church was instrumentalized for political purposes. The debate took on ever more aggressive characteristics, to which the leadership reacted with hapless platitudes and sententious admonitions.[38] Above all, the bishops wanted unity and harmony and not further polarization, especially in an age of secularism and dwindling membership. It needs to be stated that within the time frame of this study, millions of Germans were still on church rolls.[39] Not all were active or in any meaningful way committed to communal work, but certainly concerned enough to fear the sight of the church veering off a mainstream course. It comes as no surprise then that the church never collected or kept any data concerning its members' political attitudes. Such activities would have been outside the church's purview, given its claim of universality and inclusiveness in its attitude toward the flock. After all, all humans were equal in the eyes of God, and it was the church's mandate to welcome every soul. The opponents of nuclear technology, on the other hand, maintained that the nuclear issue was not just a question of political positions or political day-to-day business, but also a rather urgent problem that concerned all humanity. Those who expressed their concerns with anxiety and desperation deemed compromises in the matter impossible if not altogether dangerous.[40]

One is tempted to see in these protesters the stereotypical figure of a protestant agitator, prone to moralistic hyperbole. Indeed, the rhetorical habits were more often those of the megaphone. Some of the pamphlets circulated were sprinkled with several exclamation marks and double or triple underscores.[41] When activists

[37]Engineers and managers of nuclear facilities, however, met with church officials on several occasions to try to understand each other. Protocol of a meeting of pastors on December 4, 1976, Archiv der Nordelbischen Kirche 98.120, no. 78.

[38]Bishop Karlheinz Stoll of the Nordelbische Landeskirche complained about the amount of "impatience" and "intolerance" he encountered on both sides of the conflict in a letter from around March 1981 to several pastors. Archiv der Nordelbischen Kirche, 10.01, no. 12.

[39]Despite a dwindling membership, the Nordelbische Landeskirche (Hamburg and Schleswig Holstein) today still has more than two million members in 594 congregations, according to statistics given on the Web site http://www.nordelbien.de (accessed December 23, 2010).

[40]Researchers at the FEST Institute in Heidelberg claimed that questions of nuclear technology were too dangerous to be decided by a simple majority. See Forschungsstätte der Evangelischen Studiengemeinschaft, ed., *Tschernobyl—Folgen und Folgerungen* (Heidelberg: Fest, 1986), 13.

[41]The so-called *Arbeitskreis Lebensschutz* (Committee for the Protection of Life) in Tübingen published a pamphlet in March 1975 that used alarmist and agitated language, declaring the protest against

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dealt with political problems with Protestant rigor, the debate became noisy. That can be said for the other side as well, however. Confronted with outspoken progressive or even left-leaning church members and pastors, conservatives were infuriated. Some even mounted a weapon that the church leadership feared the most: secession from the church. A political church is not "my church" is the way many parishioners put it, and the diction and style of their letters suggest they belonged to an older generation. These writers felt excluded from an institution that had accompanied them from early childhood and that now seemed to be veering to the left. In truth, the church had actually only followed the general trends in German society in the 1970s and 1980s (i.e., it had become socially more liberal and tolerant).[42] The generational tension is evident in the words of a retired clerk, who in 1980 found the time to complain about "communist pastors," when he wrote:

> For a decade now I've observed with anguish that men and women of the church are engaged with matters directed against this state, foreign nations, and several public institutions: the program against racism of the World Council of Churches, the boycott of fruit from South Africa by the Council of Women [not a church organization], the participation of pastors in robes in clashes around the Brockdorf [*sic*] nuclear power plant, the participation of pastors in the occupation of the *Petrikirche* [Peter's Church] in Hamburg, and finally the presence of Prof. Gollwitzer [a famous liberal theologian] at the funeral of terrorists or, just recently, at the funeral of the former revolutionary Rudi Dutschke.[43]

We might speculate as to the mentality and political attitudes of this man. He was probably born around 1915 or earlier, and was some thirty years of age at the end of World War II, a soldier if not officer in Hitler's army, leaning toward Christian Democracy in the early days of the Federal Republic. He may have seen his contribution to the era of the economic miracle and reconstruction (*Wirtschaftswunder und Wiederaufbau*) being put into question as early as 1968, when a youth revolt shook the country. It is impossible to know these things with any certainty—yet the rasping voice sounds familiar. One can also sense disappointment and bitterness in his statements. It is unclear how many parishioners left the church

nuclear technology an act of self-defense and justifying the illegal occupation of the construction site in Wyhl. The author was most likely Hartmut Gründler (a teacher, radical activist, and son of a pastor), who set himself on fire publicly in Hamburg on November 16, 1977. The date was significant as well: the German Protestant Church's day of repentance. See the document in Archiv der Evangelischen Kirche in Baden, 83.2, GA 9623.

[42]Christian A. Widman, "Der 'Linksprotestantismus' und die evangelischen Kirchen in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren," in *Linksalternative Milieus und neue soziale Bewegungen in den 70er Jahren*, ed. Cordia Baumann et al. (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2011), 211–236.

[43]From a letter to Bishop Karlheinz Stoll of the Nordelbische Kirche. Archiv der Nordelbischen Kirche, 10.01, no. 12. The anger was also directed at the symbols of an uneasy time and left-wing terrorism, and referenced the passing of popular student leader Rudi Dutschke.

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precisely because of the conflict surrounding the nuclear issue. But it is unlikely that a large number of members unsettled by radical protesters would actually leave an institution that baptized their children, buried their parents, helped the elderly, and comforted the dying. As an institution, the church was still omnipresent to many Germans in the 1970s and 1980s. It was there at the turning points in almost everyone's life to offer guidance and consolation. Were the threats to leave the church altogether empty? The church leadership in any case took the concerns seriously and asked for patience and dispassion.[44]

There was another group of skeptics who followed the antinuclear activities of church members with unease. While conservative church members feared a politicized church in general and a left-wing subversion in particular, church leaders had also come under attack from technical experts and scientists. This group happened to mingle in the debate time and again, some pointing to their own membership in the church.[45] First, there were those who felt the whole discussion was based on a lack of technological expertise. They thought that the more people knew about nuclear technology, the less frightening it would appear. According to this position, the things people needed to fear instead were economic stagnation, unemployment, and supply shortages.[46] This argument could backfire, of course, especially when it became clear that the individuals arguing along those lines were indeed employed by the nuclear industry; hence, it became easy to counter them *ad personam*.

As the political conflict over nuclear technology engaged church members with increasing intensity, the authority of political and scientific leaders waned. In general, functionaries and experts underestimated the public's willingness to be informed and educated about all things nuclear. In April 1986 in particular, when the Chernobyl accident terrified all of Europe, the general public could not avoid technical discussions even if they wanted to. In the pubs and schools, on the news, and in the newspapers, the public discussed the details of radiation protection and reactor types. The disaster demonstrated once more the problematic relationship between laypeople and experts that had loomed over the public sphere ever since the triumph of science-based industries. This particular

[44]Sometimes the church had to reassure parishioners who felt excluded and who asked whether as proponents of nuclear technology they were still considered members of the Christian community. For the correspondence between the *Landeskirchenamt* (State Church Office) and several parishioners, see Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, Generalakten des Landeskirchenamts, B 1, no. 888, vol. IV.

[45]From a "dedicated nuclear engineer" in a letter dated February 23, 1977, to Bishops Hübner and Petersen. See Archiv der Nordelbischen Kirche, 10.01, no. 11.

[46]Several activists, among them members of the scientific advisory board of the Protestant Church in Germany (*wissenschaftlicher Beirat*), met with managers and engineers of the energy giant Rheinisch Westfälische Elektrizitätswerke (RWE) in April 1978, which proved that dialogue was possible. The arguments of the representatives of RWE also brought the notion of dangerous greenhouse gases into the discussion, which is remarkable given the date. For the minutes of that meeting, see Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, Generalakten, B 1, no. 888, vol. III.

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crisis of trust created new public interest in the matter, so that even a popular German television program for children explained in simple terms why after the Chernobyl accident the kids were not allowed to play in their sandboxes for the time being.[47] Rising public skepticism may have been disappointing for those who had initially believed that an enhanced interest in and knowledge about nuclear technology would subsequently produce more support. Especially within the church it is easy to observe how the dialogue with experts and the quest for a deeper understanding of the nuclear issue actually exasperated the participants rather than reassured them.[48] In the years between 1976 (first violent clashes at Brokdorf) and 1986 (the Chernobyl disaster) the topic had at any rate been thoroughly politicized and had managed to hamper unity and peace within the Protestant church to a considerable degree.

Discipline, Violence, and the Shadows of History

The emerging forms of public protest were as polarizing as the issue itself. As the positions hardened and the adversaries tried to impose their respective points of view, paramilitary police units became more visible in the countryside. The first significant protest against a nuclear power plant proved to be an initial triumph for the young movement, as protesters successfully blocked construction near the village of Wyhl in Baden in 1977. This event reinforced the assumption that strong and unwavering civic unrest could actually achieve results. The case was widely celebrated as a test of stamina and proof of a healthy democracy. It was easily forgotten, however, that a court ruling had decided the outcome and that the protesters could succeed only when the law was on their side.[49] Discussions on legality and legitimacy later became more bitter. As was the case in 1968, some saw the only solution in the establishment of a political sphere of protest outside the boundaries of representative democracy.[50] Again, this is clearly connected to the very character of nuclear technology itself. To be sure, this can be to some degree understandable if one keeps in mind the resentment

[47]The program was called "Sendung mit der Maus." See *Westdeutscher Rundfunk*, 1988, online archive of programs at http://www.wdrmaus.de/sachgeschichten/abisz (accessed December 23, 2010); on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnlwllqOVVU (accessed January 30, 2012).

[48]Several state churches formed committees and advisory boards to gather information and seek a dialogue with other parts of German society. Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, L5e Gen 180 Gen 180b (Gorleben) Jan. 1977-Oct. 1978.

[49]See Jens Ivo Engels, "Geschichte und Heimat. Der Widerstand gegen das Kernkraftwerk Wyhl," in *Wahrnehmung, Bewusstsein, Identifikation. Umweltprobleme und Umweltschutz als Triebfedern regionaler Entwicklung*, ed. Kerstin Kretschmer (Freiberg: Technische Universität Bergakademie, 2003), 103–130.

[50]An activist among the German pastors felt the need to remind his bishop in 1980 that some of the major achievements in the field of human rights had to be asserted against the ruling powers, and he specifically referred to the civil rights movement in the United States. Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, L 5e, Lohse (Dienst), Gen 180 vol. VII (Gorleben).

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felt against the sister technology (i.e., nuclear weapons). But there's more to it than that. In point of fact, nuclear technology was identified by some as a threat to democracy itself.[51] Since an accident or even a terrorist attack could not be ruled out with absolute certainty, the amount of technical and social control required on the path to an "atomic state" was perceived as a threat to civil liberties.[52] It didn't matter then that the decision to build the facilities had been reached through a democratic process. The law was seen as a means to protect the interests of an industry in disregard for the well-being of the population it claimed to serve.[53] Whoever saw nuclear technology as a threat to democracy—as the state would inevitably become a police state to protect the facilities—acquired a rhetorical arsenal that made acrimonious confrontation unavoidable. This tendency also deeply affected the church.

As early as the first protests against the power plant in Brokdorf in 1976, both sides had lost a sense of proportionality in choosing their means of confrontation. Both claimed to have justice on their side, and the protests quickly became violent. The most turbulent incidents occurred between 1976 and 1986. We have to remember that apart from a small minority, most protesters were peaceful and came from all walks of life, young and old, and most of them had never faced a heavily armed policeman. The sound of helicopters circling over small villages, sometimes during the night, was unnerving for many. And during bad weather, protesters drank hot tea to keep warm and ate pastries provided by local bakers, as they stood and watched in amazement while water cannons from nearby large cities sank deep into the mud, accompanied by much yelling and swearing.[54] The church leadership was shocked, and the local pastors were desperate. The consensus was, of course, that protests had to remain peaceful, but it was surprisingly unclear what that actually meant. Was the occupation of the construction site by protesters an act of violence? Breach of the peace—both in public and on private property—was certainly punishable by law, and thus the police were

[51]A concerned parishioner to the church leaders in Hannover, March 21, 1977, Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, L 6 (Landesbischof Lohse), Nr. 104/02, Bd. II.

[52]This thesis was brought forth prominently in Robert Jungk's *Atomstaat* (*Atomic State*), a widely read and scathing book about the technological and political risks of nuclear technology. See Robert Jungk, *Der Atomstaat. Vom Fortschritt in die Unmenschlichkeit* (Munich: Heyne, 1977); and Thomas Dannenbaum, "'Atom-Staat' oder 'Unregierbarkeit'? Wahrnehmungsmuster im westdeutschen Atomkonflikt der siebziger Jahre," in *Natur und Umweltschutz nach 1945. Konzepte, Konflikte, Kompetenzen*, ed. Franz-Josef Brüggemeier et al. (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus, 2005), 268–286.

[53]One pastor maintained in June 1980 that the state acted without regard for the will and well-being of its citizens because of its dependence on an industry that supported it, according to a note by one of his superiors. See Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, Generalakte no. 888, Atomfragen, vol. V, Dec. 1980.

[54]For one pastor's vivid account of a demonstration turned violent near the construction site of the nuclear power plant in Grohnde, Lower Saxony, in March 1977, see Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, Generalakten des LKA, B 1, no. 888, vol. III.

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legally authorized to use force. And what about destruction of property? It was against the law to be sure, but was it indeed an act of violence that could be justified when no person was harmed?

Although the church always tried to mediate between violent protesters and the police, in 1976 a staggering forty pastors in Lower Saxony made a public appeal for the occupation of the construction site in Brokdorf. This infuriated the church leaders and a good number of parishioners.[55] The law left no room for interpretation here. In addition to this, some pastors held services on or near the construction site, ineptly deciding to call the meetings "field services" (i.e., open-air services), in disregard of the militant associations this might evoke. In Germany, the term *Feldgottesdienst* implies a clear connotation to trench warfare. Some pastors held these services, complete with sermons and Eucharist, in gown attire. This was too much even for the church administrators who had up to now observed the activities of their congregations with patience or sympathy. Disciplinary measures were discussed, and abuse of office was the charge.[56] In legal terms, pastors who held open-air services were not officially obliged to register the event with the police, as they were in the case of political demonstrations.[57] The police saw through this tactic immediately, to be sure, and a church official notably commented that the church's calling for propagation of the faith (*Verkündigungsauftrag*) was put into jeopardy.[58]

The church leadership was puzzled by the blurring of lines between service and demonstration. An official consensus was reached whereby pastors as citizens also had every right to protest, but in civil attire. That much was clear. But as bearers of office, they had to consider the needs of all parishioners and shy away from political protest.[59] This approach was vindicated by the fact that, as was the case in Grohnde, Lower Saxony, not all parishioners were willing to offer shelter for protesters on church premises, provide them sandwiches and coffee, or even have them set up an organizational office in the parish hall.[60] All in all, there was a growing and discomforting impression that some environmental activists were trying to take advantage of the church's infrastructure without ever having

[55]Collection of newspaper articles in Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, I 104/02 Lohse (Dienst) Verhältnis Staat/Kirche "Atomenergie," June 1976-November 1976.

[56]This had a sobering effect on some of the more outspoken pastors, who reached out and sought personal conversation with their bishop. See Archiv der Nordelbischen Kirche Kiel, Nachlass Hübner, 98.08, 125 I.

[57]See the article about demonstrations in Brokdorf, *Schleswig-Holsteinische Landeszeitung*, December 1, 1976.

[58]See the police report printed in *Schleswig-Holsteinische Landeszeitung*, Dec. 1, 1976. See also the letter dated Nov. 26, 1980, from the office of the Landeskirche to a pastor, in Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, L 5e, Lohse (Dienst), Gen 180 vol. VII (Gorleben).

[59]In an article in the *Evangelische Sonntagsblatt für Westfallen Lippe* from Dec. 5, 1976.

[60]A note in the files of the Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover stated on March 30, 1977, that the offices of a congregation were misused. See Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, Generalakten, B 1, no. 888, vol. III.

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been close to matters of faith. On the other hand, environmental activists among the pastors pointed toward the protest culture in the American civil rights movement or the stance of the Polish union *Solidarność*, whose activities were not always technically legal either.[61]

Following these conflicts, the political language of protest changed. On the one hand, activists resorted to forms of emotionalism and cheap effects that even sympathizers found objectionable. Some of the songs and pamphlets, especially when children were involved, approached kitsch. On the whole, opposition to nuclear technology was mounted with an air of self-righteousness that made rational debate impossible. The ultimate rhetorical weapon was used when protest was referred to as resistance. Below are the lyrics of a song that was actually sung by parishioners during a Christmas celebration at the building site of the power plant in Brokdorf in 1977:

> We will not give up our struggle
> Despite what happened in Schleswig, Kiel, and elsewhere [i.e., violent clashes with the police]
> For resistance is our duty
> Where our rights are being trampled on.
> In spite of all this
> Despite the barbed wire
> Despite all of this
> You will not take our courage
> With tear gas and such things.[62]

The term "resistance" would seem a bit overstated, with its obvious connotations of National Socialism. Then again, this was clearly the movement's intention. As with so many other debates in postwar Germany, especially within the church, the ultimate reference point was that of National Socialism and the Holocaust.[63] The proximity to, and indeed, partnership of the Protestant church with the state dates way back to the sixteenth century. It was only after 1945, however, when the church was found to have been complacent, even complicit, during the time

[61]A critical parishioner in a letter to the church administration in Hannover, August 20, 1980. See Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, L 5e, Lohse (Dienst), Gen 180 vol. VII (Gorleben).

[62]The original reads "Wir geben unseren Kampf nicht auf / trotz Schleswig, Kiel und alledem / Denn Widerstand ist unsere Pflicht / wo man das Recht mit Füßen tritt / Trotz alledem und alledem / Trotz Stacheldraht und alledem / Ihr treibt uns unseren Mut nicht aus / Mit Tränengas und alledem." The provenience of this text is unclear. A copy of the lyrics was archived in the church administration's file in Hannover. See Archiv der Nordelbischen Kirche, Nachlass Hübner, 98.08, 125 II.

[63]For an understanding of the politics of history within the German Protestant churches, see Matthew D. Hockenos, *A Church Divided: German Protestants Confront the Nazi Past* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004). For more on German environmentalism's link with Germany's past, see Thomas Rohkrämer, "Contemporary Environmentalism and its Links with the German Past," in *The Culture of German Environmentalism: Anxieties, Visions, Realities*, ed. Axel Goodbody (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2002), 47–63.

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of National Socialism, that this partnership was confronted with a substantial deficit of legitimacy. Prominent church leaders felt that the churches' stance toward worldly authority should be more skeptical and distanced. Time and again, in letters and articles, pastors and bishops were reminded of the ultimate moral failure and degree of complicity on the part of the church under the National Socialists. Moderate church leaders were accused of the very same sort of complicity and silence as their predecessors between 1933 and 1945. The heroism of the "confessing church" during National Socialism was evoked, and now the church was to side with the oppressed and desperate.[64]

These references may appear somewhat paranoid and historically inappropriate, if not actually objectionable. Moderate participants in the discussion asked their colleagues not to equate two completely different political systems and to refrain from accusations that no one in his right mind would believe reflected the true intentions of the nuclear industry.[65] On a side note, during the same period the peace movement had already brought about the rhetorical conflation of genocide and what came to be termed "omnicide" (the killing of everything) in notions such as "atomic holocaust," which was probably more than yet another flashy catchphrase. It dates back to 1961 and was coined by Erich Fromm, a German-American émigré psychoanalyst, who enjoyed enormous moral authority in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s.[66]

The notion brought deeper issues of a traumatic past to the surface. And popular authors such as Robert Jungk added some respectability to these connotations by stating that the state's concern for the security of nuclear facilities would turn the states into concentration camps.[67] Others referred to their personal experience within National Socialism. Below is an excerpt from a letter by a woman to her bishop in Hannover, Lower Saxony, from June 1980:

> When, in such a situation, the church denies support and the gospel to the powerless, the desperate, the helpless, it reminds me fatally of its stance during the last war, which I witnessed as a child. Back then, in our church people prayed for the *Führer*.[68]

[64]The allusion to the confessing church did not please all parishioners. One of them wrote in a letter dated December 12, 1980, to his parish council, "Evoking the tradition of the confessing church should come with the recognition that our political system is fundamentally different from that of the Third Reich." See Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, Generalakten des Landeskirchenamts, B 1, no. 888, vol. IV.

[65]This was the opinion of an unknown participant of a conference in Loccum (at the Evangelische Akademie) as noted in the minutes of that meeting, Jan. 18, 1978. See Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, L5e Gen 180 Gen 180b (Gorleben), Jan. 1977-Oct. 1978.

[66]The term was used in an article titled "Russland, Deutschland, China—Bemerkungen zur Außenpolitik," http://www.erich-fromm.de/data/pdf/1961h-d.pdf (accessed January 10, 2010).

[67]Jungk, *Atomstaat*, xii.

[68]From a parishioner in a letter dated June 1, 1980, to Bishop Lohse. See Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, IV 104/2 Lohse (Dienst) Verhältnis Staat/Kirche, "Atomenergie," "Umwelt," beginning March 15, 1979.

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One pastor had gone even further three years earlier:

> if we continue plundering our planet like this, the following generations will not remember Auschwitz anymore, they will remember what we have done to our Earth.[69]

Following this rather dubious prediction, many activists argued that if the *Atomstaat* became reality, then it would be a moral duty to fight against it. The historical analogies were problematic for several reasons. The use of excessive force by the authorities was certainly not a systematic or persistent violation of human rights. The German states acted within the framework of the German constitution. And it is one thing to argue that the nuclear industry was overly optimistic, profit-oriented, or even negligent, but quite another to evoke parallels to an ideology that led to the murder of millions of people for the alleged "betterment" of a superior race.

As the rhetoric grew more extreme, ever more drastic forms of protest emerged: people began hunger strikes, church buildings were seized, and pastors had to call the police to have protesters removed.[70] Throughout all this, one could continue to hear references to prior moral failure and appeals to the conscience of upright citizens. As the state did not back down while protecting nuclear facilities, the locals close to the facilities in particular felt that things were being done against their will, and they saw this as a danger for the stability of West German democracy. On the other side of the spectrum, people maintained that the church had neither the authority nor the competence to get involved, and that the actions of some activists represented a disturbing level of moral rigidity and lack of compromise, and thus, lack of appropriate Christian humility. In any case, the conflict surrounding nuclear technology had become a debate over if and how the West German church saw itself as a political entity, evoking lessons from the past and the wish to be, for once, on the right side of history.

Conclusion

My central thesis is that nuclear technology brought about a time of fear in West Germany that evoked associations far beyond the actual problem. The biblical scale of the perceived threat, prophecies of doom and damnation, the loss of pastoral landscapes, the fear of complicity, and political guilt stemming from historical trauma: the church was challenged by this degree of existential fear, which was linked to the material aspects of nuclear technology as well as the German political

[69]From a pastor in a sermon given on June 16, 1976. The manuscript is archived in Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover, L6 (Landesbischof Lohse), no. 104/02 vol. 1.

[70]From a statement by Winfried Hohlfeld in the *epd* (Protestant Press Service, an official periodical), May 10, 1980. Archiv der Nordelbischen Kirche, 98.08, no. 169, Nachlass Hübner.

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culture. The church could not avoid becoming a stage for these conflicts. Environmental activists within the church wanted even more, based on the alleged lessons of history: they wanted the church to act. These fundamental differences were not resolved within the period under consideration here. There are, however, some tendencies within today's church that, I believe, originated in that period. The conservative members who viewed the political activities of environmentalists with discontent have lost ground. If one looks at official statements of the church today, one can find a moderate yet explicit skepticism concerning nuclear technology.[71] The church remains vigilant in a German landscape where the cooling tower still overshadows the tower of the village church.

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[71]Press release: "Umweltbeauftragter der EKD warnt vor Gefahren der Atomenergie," http://www.ekd.de/aktuell_presse/news_2010_09_07_umweltbeauftragter.html (accessed December 23, 2010).

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