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CHRISTIANITY AND MARXISM: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON
THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY IN THE THOUGHT OF HANFRIED MÜLLER

by

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ABSTRACT

CHRISTIANITY AND MARXISM: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY IN THE THOUGHT OF HANFRIED MÜLLER

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This work examines, critically, an East German theologian, Hanfried Müller, professor of theology at the Humboldt University in East Berlin and a committed Marxist. Specifically, the role of political ideology in Müller's theology, in general, and his views of the church, in particular, are explored. While the influence of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Karl Barth on Müller are of major importance to Müller, it is argued here that his use and interpretation of them is shown to rest, in large part, on his ideological convictions.

It is argued that Müller's Marxist perspective reflects a new direction in the Christian socialist tradition that began in the nineteenth century.

Finally, this dissertation maintains that Müller's ideology replaces the traditional notion of ecclesiology, not only in Bonhoeffer and Barth, but for most of his contemporary theologians.
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INTRODUCTION - THE SETTING AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In November 1989 the Berlin Wall came down. In addition to a new political and economic openness, albeit fraught with a new set of problems and frustrations, that event opened the door wider for outsiders to examine the church in East Germany and, more specifically, the kind of theology that was being developed there.

To be sure, life in the former German Democratic Republic was not an unknown quantity during its 40-year existence. Even ecclesiastical and theological life was not completely hidden from the west. However, the opening of the Wall and the subsequent reunification of East Germany with the Federal Republic have released and revealed, in greater completeness and complexity, voices and perspectives which had heretofore been relegated to life behind the Iron Curtain. (1)

The non-violent revolution, or "Wende" as it is called, has revealed a theological world that, in large part, struggled with establishing its integrity, independence, and acceptance in a totalitarian Communist state. There were churchmen and theologians who opposed the regime. (2) There were many who sought to find a position of co-existence and mutual acceptance, if not respect. (3) And there were some who embraced and supported the kind of ideology and socialism represented by the Communist state.

In this dissertation I intend to look at one representative of the last group mentioned, Professor Hanfried Müller.
To be sure, Müller cannot be considered one of the more popular churchmen or theologians in the former GDR. Indeed, it might be far more interesting for some to examine someone who struggled more with the tensions that existed between the Christian faith and a Communist state. Nor can Müller be considered a "major" thinker in the field of Christian theology. Again, there are others in the former GDR who probably have more to offer theologically and who have certainly influenced that field more than Müller.

Why then study and examine Müller and what he has written? There are three principal reasons. First, it is precisely Müller's own position of sympathy with, if not explicit commitment to, Communist ideology while, at the same time, claiming a commitment to Christianity that I find fascinating. Müller claims a dependence on the theology and legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Karl Barth, among others, for the development of his views. For a variety of reasons, the thought of Bonhoeffer and Barth (along with, one might add, Rudolf Bultmann) played a crucially important role among theologians of all stripes in the GDR. (4) But unlike many of his colleagues, Müller supported the socialism practiced by the East German governmental authorities. This, of course, raises at least two questions: (a) What is the relationship between Müller's theological convictions and his political convictions? and (b) Is he warranted in his understanding of the theology of Bonhoeffer and Barth?

In a study of Bonhoeffer's theology, Ernst Feil notes the
one-sided, political character of Müller's appropriation of Bonhoeffer. Feil writes:

Hanfried Müller's work, *Von der Kirche zur Welt*, was the first to develop an interpretation of Bonhoeffer based on such a prior position; Müller set out to legitimate his own Marxist position through the theological statements which Bonhoeffer made in the final period of his life. (5)

A second reason for choosing to look at Müller is my interest in the history of Christian socialism. While there has been a broad diversity of representatives in this movement throughout its relatively brief history, the movement itself had always existed within the context of democratic, capitalist societies. Indeed, it was the rise of industrialism in the democratic, capitalist societies that, in large part, gave rise to Christian socialism. With the establishment of Communist states in Europe following World War II there arose the opportunity to test some of the basic tenets of Christian socialism in a society and under a government that gave at least nominal endorsement to those tenets. While there are a variety of emphases in different Communist governments (just as there are a variety of emphases among Christian socialists), one might justifiably ask how Müller, a Christian theologian who embraced both Christianity and the brand of socialism of the former GDR, developed his peculiar perspective. Because he remains, even today, steadfast in his commitment to Communist ideology, Müller is at least one representative of one brand of Christian socialism that not only has been tested, but did not, apparently, die with the fall of Communism in Europe in 1989.
What distinguishes Müller from other Christian theologians in eastern Europe, it seems to me, is that he not only embraces Marxist Communism, but he does so in such a way that he refuses to maintain a certain distance, as a theologian, from this political ideology and system. In contrast, for instance, Josef Hromádka, the Czechoslovakian theologian and churchman, may have decided to try to accept the Communist system and live within it, but it was not, I think, at the expense of theological integrity. He was able to see all political systems and ideologies as flawed, and yet as necessary. (6) While the same can be said of many Christian theologians and churchmen in the GDR, it cannot be said of Müller.

The third reason for choosing Müller is a practical one. More open access to the GDR has brought greater access to more information and materials, including information about Müller and materials he has published over the past 35 years. His dissertation on Bonhoeffer, Von der Kirche zur Welt, was published in 1961. In 1978 he published an introduction to theology, Evangelische Dogmatik im Überblick. And, finally, he has published many articles to which I gained access during a visit to East Germany in May 1991. He continues to edit a left-wing theological journal, Die Weißenseer Blätter, to which he frequently contributes. This journal is distributed free of charge and ostensibly depends on voluntary contributions to cover publication costs. (7)

In this dissertation I intend to demonstrate that Hanfried
Müller is one illustration of what Karl Bracher calls an intellectual's delusion by "ideologization." (8) Furthermore, I will maintain that, for Müller, his commitment to Communist ideology supersedes his Christian theology and thus, in my view, renders the latter bankrupt. I will also argue that he misappropriates the thought of Bonhoeffer and Barth and subordinates his (mis)-interpretation of their thought to his political ideology. While I recognize that there are ambiguities in both Barth and Bonhoeffer that have given rise to dispute and controversy, Müller seems either to oversimplify those ambiguities or to dismiss them altogether. Particular attention will be given to Müller's understanding of Bonhoeffer's later view of the church as it is outlined in Letters and Papers from Prison, and then to Müller's appropriation of Barth's influence with regard to the relationship between the church and state.

Perhaps a word is in order about what I am not seeking to do in this dissertation. First, this is not necessarily intended to be a defense of the church in western capitalist societies, for surely this critique of Müller and his commitment to Communist ideology can be equally applied to the church in the west and the prominence there of civil religion. Indeed, much of Müller's own critique of western Christianity as a "religion" strikes me as legitimate (in the same way that Bonhoeffer's and Barth's critique of "religion" does). However, as valid as such a critique of the church in the west may be, I do maintain that there is greater room for honesty and self-
criticism in the west than is found Müller's thought. Second, this study does not claim any pretense of expertise in Marxist thought, although clearly a basic familiarity with Communist theory is required. It is an attempt, instead, to look at Müller as someone who, representing a seemingly minority point-of-view, has attempted to formulate a convergence of Christian theology and a Communist totalitarian system. That this attempt fails, in my view, does not prevent the examination of it from being legitimate, interesting, or instructive.

Finally, while a limited biographical sketch of Müller is provided in Chapter Two, by no means does this study claim to examine Müller's life in any comprehensive manner. As much information about Müller as possible was secured - from him, from his writings, and from recently published government documents of the former German Democratic Republic. Professor Müller is retired and continues to live in (East) Berlin. While as much biographical material as possible has been included, one can only hope that, with time, more about him, his activity in the former GDR, and his relationship with the Communist government, will come to light. (9)

In order to understand something of the political context in which Müller lived and worked, and because, as an adult, he was a witness to, supporter of, and, to a certain degree, an active participant in, the growth of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), a brief review of the rise of two German states and subsequent important developments (particularly in the GDR) is
in order.

Following the defeat of Germany in World War II, the Allied powers (France, Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union) divided Germany into four occupational zones and Berlin into four sectors, an idea that was discussed at Teheran in November 1943 and agreed upon at Yalta in February 1945. Details were revised and refined at Potsdam in the summer of 1945.

In July 1945 the Soviets insisted that the other three powers withdraw from the area designated for Soviet occupation. Terms of occupation as well as the issue of reparations were only two matters that led to early friction among the Four Powers and prevented any peace agreement. This deadlock laid the foundation for a divided Germany and the beginnings of the Cold War. (10) While the Soviets socialized all industry and instituted radical agrarian reforms in their zone in the east, the three western powers cooperated in planning for democratic elections in the western zones. (11)

Tensions escalated when, in March 1948, the Soviets attempted to prevent all access to Berlin by the Allied powers. The immediate causes were threefold: (a) the desire to halt introduction of western currency into Berlin, (b) objections to steps being taken in the west to form a government in the three western zones of occupation, and (c) the desire to make the entire city of Berlin a part of the Soviet occupied territory. (12) The Berlin blockade lasted until May 1949. The airlift of food and other supplies by the western powers prevented the realization
of any of the Soviets' short-term goals. In that respect the blockade had failed. Berlin had become the focal point, both literally and symbolically, of the Cold War.

The division between East and West Germany became solidified when the western powers instituted monetary reform in their zones of occupation, i.e., they established the German Mark as the legitimate currency. The Soviet Union countered by instituting their own monetary reforms in the eastern zone. The division was formalized in 1949. Following a six-nation conference in London in the spring, the Federal Republic of Germany was proclaimed in Bonn on May 24, 1949. (13) A parliamentary democracy would be the form of government and a Basic Law (Grundgesetz) was adopted (the word "constitution" was avoided, apparently, in recognition of the fact that Germany was divided and in the hope that this would not be a permanent division). (14) In response, on May 30, 1949, the Soviet representatives proclaimed the establishment of the German Democratic Republic with Berlin as its capital. In contrast to the Bonn government, in October 1949 a constitution was adopted in the East. In name, it was "democratic" and a "republic." In fact, however, it was based on the Soviet form of government. (15)

For the first 22 years of the GDR, the central figure was Walter Ulbricht, the son of a tailor in Saxony. At the age of nineteen years (1912), Ulbricht joined the Social Democratic Party. Henry Turner offers this brief biographical sketch of Ulbricht's early years:
Following service in the army in the First World War, he joined the communist Party shortly after its formation at the end of 1918. Unswerving in his belief in a simplistic Marxist view of the world and unfailingly subservient to the Soviet Union, Ulbricht rose in the KPD's ranks as a full-time functionary and sat as one of the party's deputies in the Reichstag of the Weimar Republic from 1928 until 1933. After exile in the Soviet Union during the Third Reich, he returned to Berlin under Russian auspices in the spring of 1945 to oversee reestablishment of the party in Germany. (16)

Several factors combined to make the early years of the GDR even more difficult than they might otherwise have been:

the imposition of war reparations by the Soviet Union, the Soviet requirement that the GDR purchase its coal from Siberia instead of from the West (which would have been cheaper), a shortage of food, a planned economy (based on the Soviet model) which demanded output quotas. (17) Nevertheless, the East German economy proved to be fairly progressive in its early years. For example, Turner observes,

Annual output of steel, which in 1936 had amounted to 1.2 million tons in the parts of Germany that became the GDR but which had stood at only about 10 percent of that level in 1946, increased to 2.1 million tons by 1953. Similarly dramatic advances were achieved in other basic industries, such as chemicals and energy generation. At the end of 1952 the regime announced that overall production had reached 108 percent of the 1936 level. (18)

In the face of protests from his own labor force, Ulbricht sought to accommodate the labor unions. However, in July 1952 new production quotas were imposed and worker income was reduced. In order to insure compliance, "the regime instituted a number of show trials at which supervisory workers in government-owned plants were found guilty of sabotage for failing to meet the new
production goals." (19) Many began to flee to the west. By the end of 1952, "nearly 15,000 farmers and their families had fled, leaving about 13 percent of the GDR's arable land untended. As a consequence, food shortages developed." (20)

Flight led to more government threats which led to further flight. The crisis came to a head in the spring of 1953. (21) Disregarding advice to the contrary from Moscow, Ulbricht and his colleagues decided to take a hard line toward the workers, increasing the work quotas by 10 percent in May. Although Ulbricht did, finally, accede to Soviet demands that he soften his approach, the quota increase remained in place. On the morning of June 16, many construction workers in East Berlin laid down their tools. Others joined them and the crowd soon numbered 10,000 persons. They marched to the Council of Ministers building and demanded to speak with Ulbricht and Minister President Otto Grotewohl. An official appeared and offered an ambiguously-worded statement. Somewhat confused as to whether the quotas had been rescinded or not, the crowd dispersed.

Turner describes what followed the next day, June 17:

On the morning of June 17, many workers in East Berlin declined to take up their tools. Instead, they gathered at their places of employment, elected strike committees, and marched to the government district, where they took over the city hall and surrounded the headquarters of the regime with a mass of humanity. On the way into the city, they tore down the regime's ubiquitous propaganda posters and billboards. Through Western news broadcasts, workers elsewhere in the GDR learned of developments in East Berlin and joined the strike, which quickly spread to over 200 localities throughout the GDR, especially
those where industrial workers were numerous. (22)

Calling for free elections and for Ulbricht and Grotewohl to resign, the demonstrators set fire to the headquarters of the political police in East Berlin. But because there was no coordinated leadership, the uprising had begun to die down when Soviet troops arrived. The next day the government was back in control.

The 1953 uprising is important for several reasons. First, both the economic demands and the handling of the uprising demonstrated the dependence of the Ulbricht government on the Soviet Union. While over the course of its life the GDR economy would prove to be among the strongest in the eastern bloc, clearly it, along with its eastern neighbors, depended on Moscow economically, politically, and militarily. Second, the flight of East Germans to the west would continue, to varying degrees, until, finally, on August 13, 1961, Ulbricht erected a wall separating East and West Berlin. Many who fled were farmers who were responding to a policy of mass collectivization of farmland by the government. The result was another severe food shortage. Third, the heavy-handed response of the government to the 1953 uprising had a chilling effect on anyone, including the church, who might wish to register a protest regarding governmental policy.

In March 1954 the Soviet Union officially declared the GDR to be a sovereign nation. In May of the following year, in response to the admission of West Germany to the North Atlantic
Treaty Organization (NATO), East Germany was included as a charter member of the Warsaw Pact. (23)

In 1969 Willy Brandt was elected as the first Social Democratic chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. Until then, the Christian Democratic Union chancellors (Konrad Adenauer, Ludwig Erhard, and Kurt Kiesinger) had maintained a distant, if not hostile, view of the GDR. With Brandt came a new policy of "détente" toward his eastern neighbors. This was marked by Brandt's March 1970 meeting with Willi Stoph, the chairman of the GDR Council of Ministers, in Erfurt in East Germany as well as Brandt's visit to Warsaw, Poland in December 1970. (24)

In May 1971 Ulbricht was removed from power. His successor was Erich Honecker, a faithful Communist Party member who, in 1961, had had the immediate responsibility of erecting the Berlin Wall. (25) Under Honecker, Willy Brandt's overtures were not reciprocated. Honecker sought to integrate the GDR even more into the Soviet bloc. However, in 1972 the Brandt government proposed, and both countries signed, a Basic Treaty which included mutual recognition as sovereign states. Until this treaty, only nineteen countries had given the GDR diplomatic recognition. (26) This new international status and prestige led to less hostile relations between the two Germanys, although by no means could one call those relations warm. Indeed, in spite of, or perhaps because of, increased travel opportunities for some between East and West Germany, GDR authorities went to
great lengths to stress to its own people the differences between the two. Turner writes:

The regime's response to the problem of increased exposure to the West came to be known as Abgrenzung, or "delimitation." At the propaganda level it took the form of a campaign to emphasize the differences between the GDR and the Federal Republic. The two were irreconcilable, East Germans heard, not merely because of differences in their economic and political systems but, more basically, because they belonged to entirely different phases of history in the Marxist scheme of analysis. The GDR belonged to the progressive, proletarian future, whereas West Germany was rooted in a decaying bourgeois order condemned to death by inexorable historical forces. By way of illustrating the gulf that purportedly separated the two parts of Germany, prominent attention was accorded in the press and electronic media to unemployment, crime, inflation, and other social problems in West Germany. (27)

This policy of "Abgrenzung" had an interesting effect. From the time of the formation of the two German states, each had indicated a hope for eventual reunification. Now, however, Turner notes, the SED (the Socialist Unity Party, the official Communist Party in East Germany)

sought systematically to deemphasize those links. The GDR was now described not merely as a separate state but also as a separate "socialist nation" quite distinct from the "bourgeois nation" of the Federal Republic. [. . .]

This denial of an overarching German nationhood found its most striking expression in a set of constitutional revisions enacted in 1974. [. . .] The most notable change involved, however, the virtual elimination from the constitution of the word "German" (Deutsch) except in the combination German Democratic Republic. The 1968 constitution had declared the GDR to be "a socialist state of the German nation." By the revision of 1974 it became "a socialist state of workers and farmers." References to the "German people" were systematically eliminated, as was the old constitution's pledge to seek reunification. By contrast, an inseparable link with the Soviet Union was now asserted, as the revised constitution pro-
claimed the GDR to be "forever and irrevocably allied with" the USSR. (28)

The 1970s and 1980s brought economic difficulties which included food, housing, and labor shortages. The relationship between East and West Germany alternated between chilly and thawed. In 1981, West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt visited Erich Honecker in a suburb of East Berlin. (29) That visit, while cordial, occurred while Russians were fighting Afghans. The Soviets had also installed missiles aimed at Western Europe. In Poland, the Communist government was suppressing the Solidarity movement and imposing martial law. And any hope for improving relations between the superpowers lost momentum with the election of a new American president, Ronald Reagan, in 1980. And yet, economic relations between the GDR and the FRG did intensify in the 1980s. Travel restrictions were eased. In the fall of 1987, Erich Honecker travelled to Bonn, West Germany and met with Chancellor Helmut Kohl. (30)

The 1980s, however, also brought increased dissent and a growing peace movement in the GDR. (31) The occurrence of more openness of expression in the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev seemed only to encourage such tendencies in the eastern bloc, including East Germany. Tensions between the government and dissidents increased. One wondered if the growing desire for freedom of expression and movement would be met with the kind of force exhibited in 1953 in Berlin, or in 1956 in Hungary, or in 1968 in Prague. Demonstrations grew throughout 1988 and 1989. People fled on trains when border restrictions were
lifted between the GDR and Czechoslovakia. (32)

In November 1989, the tension reached new heights. It was also in that month that the government-planned celebration of the GDR's fortieth anniversary was to be celebrated. Soviet President Gorbachev had been invited to attend. The result was hardly what Honecker and his colleagues had expected. Turner writes:

In his official speech Gorbachev made clear that the days of the monolithic Soviet bloc were over and that each country must work out its own policies. In informal utterances to the press and to crowds in the streets he indicated sympathy for those demanding reforms. In return, the crowds appealed to him to support reform of the GDR and accorded him spontaneous cheers denied to Honecker and the other SED leaders. Gorbachev's visit left East German dissidents bolstered by the belief that they need not fear a repetition of the Soviet repression of June 1953. (33)

On November 4, a million persons demonstrated in East Berlin for democracy. On November 6, several hundred thousand persons demonstrated for unrestricted travel and for free elections. On November 7, the GDR government resigned. On November 8, the Politburo resigned. On November 9, all East German and East Berlin borders were removed, and the Wall came down. (34)

With this brief overview of the history of the GDR, we have a glimpse of the political events and environment in which Hansfried Müller chose to live and work. But what of the ecclesiastical and theological environment? Some of this will be described in the chapters which follow, but a brief overview will be offered here.

In the structure of the GDR hierarchy, the Department of
Church Questions of the Secretariat of the Central Committee was the government organ that oversaw the life and work of the church. Established in 1958, this body "communicated state policy and negotiated directly with the churches." (35) There were, however, other governmental agencies that oversaw various aspects of the church's life. For example, Robert Goeckel notes,

[the Ministry of Health dealt with church hospitals and other service agency institutions; the Ministry of Higher and Technical Education was responsible for the theology sections at the state universities; the Ministry of Construction affected construction of churches; and the Ministry of Culture oversaw church publications. The Ministry of the Interior also played a large role in the Kirchenpolitik, since relations with the churches on the local and district levels were handled by the respective deputy chairman of the interior. [. . . ] Of course, the Ministry for State Security maintained a special oversight role vis-à-vis the church establishment and individual Christians. (36)

There was also a political party, the CDU (Christian Democratic Union), the main target group of which was Christians. This party served as a conduit through which the government could often communicate its policies to the church. Conversely, the CDU also served the state by trying to mobilize support for state policies, especially when the state wanted to undermine the church leadership.

Goeckel maintains that the government "had four basic tactics at its disposal in pursuit of its goals in the Kirchenpolitik: atheistic propaganda, political mobilization, administrative measures, and cadre policy." (37) Atheistic propaganda revolved around educational and mass media practices in the pro-
motion of Marxism-Leninism. Political mobilization, designed to limit criticism of the state by the church, promoted political support and activity among Christians. Administrative measures consisted of constraints and rewards, depending on the political climate and the degree of cooperation of the church. Finally,

[c]adre policy refers to the personnel files on individuals, which were used in decisions regarding educational and career advancement. These often contained information on the individual's participation in mass organizations and state activities, such as the youth dedication ceremony (or Jugendweihe), and even on participation in confirmation and church membership. By using this cadre policy to limit the advancement of individual Christians, the state exerted pressure on the church adherence and political stance of individual Christians. (38)

In summarizing the structural relationship between the East German church and the state, Goeckel observes:

The state faced a church that has historically been characterized by a decentralized yet democratic structure and by a theology that has stressed deference to the authority of the state. [. . .] The church in turn faced a Communist party guided by an ideology that both affirmed scientific atheism yet allowed a certain tactical flexibility. The church also confronted a strong state which, despite its rather liberal constitution, was armed with various levers of influence over the church and believers. (39)

For the first twenty years of the GDR, the Protestant Church had maintained organizational ties to the Protestant Church in the West. This caused a good deal of tension between state authorities and the church. This tension was exacerbated by the fact that the bishop of Berlin-Brandenburg from 1945 to 1966, Otto Dibelius, not only held ecclesiastical authority in both East and West Berlin, but was staunchly anti-Communist. (40)
In 1969, however, the Protestant church acceded to the government's wishes and severed all formal ties with the church in West Germany. Informal ties remained through underground financial support from the West. Dibelius was succeeded by a more conciliatory bishop, Albrecht Schönherr, who had studied under Dietrich Bonhoeffer in 1935 at the Finkenwalde seminary. (41) While not an enthusiast for the GDR regime, Schönherr demonstrated a willingness to try to work more cooperatively with the government. In 1971, he "held out an olive branch to the regime by proclaiming the clergy's readiness to serve as a 'church within socialism.'" (42) The state accepted this offer and, as a result, the church was able to achieve the right to participate in international conferences and some degree of tolerance from the state, while the state obtained a pledge from the church to restrain its criticism of the state.

Despite the apparent growing rapprochement, within two or three years frustration in the church began to grow again. The sources were several: (a) the state's youth policy which limited the free time of young people, (b) discrimination in the education of church workers, and (c) the issue of the possibility of unarmed military service, or alternative forms of national service, for Christians. (43)

Some in the church became skeptical of Schönherr's policy of accommodation toward the state. This skepticism and frustration was graphically demonstrated in the town square of Zeitz by Oskar Bruesewitz, the local pastor, on August 18, 1976. Robert
Goeckel describes the gruesome incident:

After unrolling a banner that decried the ruination of the youth and proclaimed a battle between darkness and light, Bruesewitz doused himself with gasoline and set himself afire. He died four days later. (44)

The Bruesewitz suicide led to an unprecedented summit meeting on March 6, 1978 between Honecker, Schönherr, and the Executive Board of the Kirchenbund. (45) The concessions to which Honecker agreed included greater church access to East German television, greater access to imprisoned ministers, building new churches, including clergy and other church workers in the state's pension system, and assistance in facilitating church congresses. However, Goeckel notes,

the primary import of the summit lay not in these concrete agreements and expanding international opportunities but rather in ratifying the basis of the new relationship between church and state that had developed since 1971. [...] It is important to underscore that the March 6 summit did not represent a concordat between church and state, nor did it produce a communiqué with binding character on the participants. (46)

During the next twelve years when political dissent increased, the church served "as both an umbrella for the expression of oppositional views and a channel for and domesticator of such views." (47) One interesting indication of the new relationship between the church and the GDR government occurred on the occasion of Martin Luther's 500th birthday in 1983. The government "not only revised its negative interpretation of Luther's role but also extended unprecedented assistance to the church in its celebration." (48) Unprecedented publicity accompanied plans for the celebration. Honecker himself
chaired the official Martin Luther Committee of the GDR.

The church was somewhat ambivalent to this sudden enthusiasm by the state. Robert Goeckel describes this ambivalence:

It knew of Luther's negative side and the cloud over pre-1945 Luther anniversaries, which had been demonstrations of anti-Catholicism, German internationalism, and fascism. Many felt that the true needs of the church would be overlooked in this euphoria and that the issues of contention with the state, such as discrimination and militarization of society, should be addressed. Yet the church could hardly ignore the international attention of world Lutheranism, and the increased contact between Marxist and church historians argued for cooperation with the state. (49)

Tensions arose with the state when the church leadership tried to exert some independence in planning the Luther celebration. In response to a more balanced view of Luther presented by the church's planning committee, in November 1982 the GDR decided to proclaim 1983 as Karl Marx Year. (50)

In 1987 Berlin celebrated its 750th anniversary. Again, the church was included in this celebration. In June of that year the church hosted a convention, "the first since the construction of the Berlin Wall." (51)

In the 1980s there was increased attention, especially within the church, to issues of peace and the environment. In 1982 the church employed the motif "Swords into Ploughshares." Although this biblical motif "had been the subject of a Soviet sculpture presented to the United Nations and had long been officially accepted in the GDR" (52), the church was now using it to protest increased militarization of the GDR as well as of the Soviet-Afghan war. In addition, a grass roots peace
movement began meeting in churches in the early 1980s. Prayer meetings began being held on Monday evenings in the Nicolai-kirche in Leipzig as well as in other churches around the country. (53) It was out of these Monday evening gatherings in churches that the massive protests emerged in 1989 that immediately preceded the fall of the GDR.

Who were some of the churchmen and theologians who played an important role in the life of the church from 1949-1989? Who were those who, like Müller, were concerned with state policies toward the church, but who were not, as Müller was, sympathetic with the Marxist state? In addition to Albrecht Schönherr, one would include, among many others, Johannes Hamel, Heino Falcke, Friedrich-Wilhelm Krummacher, Werner Krusche, and Gottfried Noth. Brief descriptions of them follow in order to provide something of the political-ecclesiastical-theological climate during the forty-year life of the GDR.

Johannes Hamel (b. 1911) is perhaps best known, at least in the West, as the author of A Christian in East Germany and co-author (with Karl Barth) of How to Serve God in a Marxist Land. (54) Following World War II, Hamel served as pastor to students at the University of Halle, and from 1955 until his retirement in 1976 he was a lecturer in practical theology in Naumburg. In the spring of 1953 he, along with seventy other churchmen, was imprisoned by the State Security (Stasi).

Heino Falcke (b. 1929) studied in Berlin, Göttingen, and Basel, but earned his doctorate in the east at the University
of Rostock. Active in the "Federation of Protestant Churches in the GDR," Falcke also served as dean ["Propst"] at Erfurt. According to Goeckel, he was especially active in the environmental movement in the 1980s. In 1972 Falcke earned the displeasure of the state in an address to the Kirchenbund synod. Goeckel writes:

In it he rejected the state's view that faith may provide the motivation but that socialism alone can provide the normative content for social action. But he also rejected an introverted, apolitical religion. To Falcke, Christians are freed by Christ to pursue ruendige Mitverantwortung (mature coreponsibility). [. . . ] Socialism exists under the promise of Christ, according to Falcke. As a result, even when disappointed, Christians "with engaged hope of an improved socialism" can remain active in society.

While endorsing socialism in the Third World and distancing himself from liberal notions of pluralism, he addressed many taboo topics of GDR socialism. He discussed the existence of suffering in socialism, alienation in the workplace, and the pressure to perform. [. . . ] He called for greater openness and information in GDR society. He rejected Abgrenzung as an attempt to stabilize society internally by fostering distance from outsiders. (55)

State officials attempted to have Falcke's address stricken from the synod's records, but failed in this attempt. However, the state "discredited Falcke's advice on the improving of socialism as 'modernization of bourgeois positions with the help of revisionist vocabulary.'" (56)

Friedrich-Wilhelm Krummacher (1901-1974) was elected bishop of the Pomeranian Protestant Churches in 1954 and lived in Greifswald. He also served as chairman of the Eastern Conference of Churches from 1960-1968. During the mid-1960s dispute over whether or not institutional ties with the Protestant church
in the West should be maintained, Krummacher drew the ire of the GDR state for his part in the drafting of what became known as the Fuerstenwalde Declaration. Goeckel summarizes the contents of this Declaration:

First, it maintained that separation from the EKD [Protestant Church of Germany] was required only in the case of false teaching or disobedience to God, which was not the case in the EKD. Second, the declaration maintained that there were good reasons to maintain organizational unity: the churches' guilt in the Third Reich, acknowledged in the Stuttgart Confession of 1945, and responsibility toward history and the German people in this regard; the imperative of the ecumenical movement; and the need to uphold human contacts between the two Germanies. (57)

Goeckel goes on to observe that Krummacher was openly charged in the Communist Party newspaper Neues Deutschland with being used by the West German "military church." Krummacher retired in 1972 and died in 1974.

Werner Krusche (b. 1917) became bishop of Saxony in 1968 and remained in that position until his retirement in 1983. Although he was raised in the east, Krusche was educated in the west (Heidelberg, Göttingen, Basel). He returned to East Germany in 1953 because of a shortage of pastors there. During the period 1969-71, Goeckel notes, Krusche was viewed by the state as "the most threatening" churchman. This was largely due to Krusche's unwillingness to accept the state uncritically. According to Goeckel, he was willing to accept socialism in order to change it:

Although he accepted the socioeconomic basis of socialism, Krusche saw the churches' role in terms of cooperating to improve the "real existing socialism" along the lines of a democratic socialism. For example,
he criticized the lack of free elections and argued for greater democratic freedoms. (58)

In 1990, a collection of Krusche's sermons from the 1980s was published under the title *Und Gott redete mit seinem Volk*. These sermons reflect Krusche's boldness in his critique of the state.

Gottfried Noth (1905–1971) became bishop of Saxony in 1953. With the exception of a time in Erlangen, his theological education took place in the eastern part of Germany. His pastorates were, for the most part, in or around Dresden. From 1954–1971 Noth was a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, and he attended the WCC conferences in Evanston and New Delhi. (59)

Noth's participation in international ecumenical activities inevitably involved him in governmental skirmishes due to the GDR's skepticism about international contacts by its citizens. On the other hand, participation in international events by GDR citizens did provide prestige and credibility to the GDR state. Tension over this issue arose in the late 1960s when the government wanted the church to dissolve its institutional relationship with the church in West Germany and establish its own independent identity. Goeckel describes an event occurring in 1969 which reflects both the ambivalence of the state in such matters as well as the friction between the church and the state:

In November 1969 the WCC [World Council of Churches] invited representatives of the Kirchenbund to Geneva to negotiate the termination of the EKD's responsibility for the representation of the eight GDR churches and the transfer of this responsibility to the Kirchen-
bund. A delegation composed of Chairman Schoenherr, Deputy Chairman Noth, and President Braecklin was scheduled to travel in December 1969, but the visit was canceled at the last minute when the state refused a visa to Bishop Noth. Although Noth was no longer a member of the EKD Council, he remained barred from travel by the state for domestic political reasons: the incarceration of his son for aiding an escape attempt, Noth's bitter criticism of the state's harsh three-and-one-half-year sentence, and Noth's uncompromising opposition to the youth dedication ceremony and other policies of the GDR. Thus, the GDR, seeking to foster its international standing without sacrificing the goals of its domestic Kirchenpolitik, granted visas to only Schoenherr and Braecklin. (60)

None of these persons supported the GDR regime in the way Hanfried Müller did. Some were more outspoken than others in their opposition to policies of the government. But all seemed to understand themselves to be churchmen first and citizens of the GDR second. There was a distance between their theological and ecclesiastical perspectives, on the one hand, and their views of the state, on the other. They stand in stark contrast to Hanfried Müller to whom we will turn following an examination of the issue of ideology. (61)

Endnotes


3. Cf. especially Albrecht Schönherr, bishop of Berlin-Brandenburg during the early Honecker years and author of the conciliatory formula "Kirche im Sozialismus."


6. In a brief tribute to Hromádka in the journal Standpunkt in 1978 Müller wrote the following:

   He was not simply a theologian, an ecumenist, a church politician, or — as he has subsequently been described — a Christian historical philosopher, but rather, much more comprehensively, both typically Czech-thinking and typically worldwide responsible human being and Christian. (Standpunkt, 1978, p. 163)

   In 1990 the World Council of Churches published Christian Existence in Dialogue: Doing Theology in All Seasons. In Memory and Appreciation of Josef L. Hromádka. In addition to several essays about Hromádka, including "Hromádka's Understanding of Communism" by Masaru Sato, there are two articles by Hromádka himself: "Gospel for Atheists" and "On the Threshold of Dialogue." Collections of some of Hromádka's sermons and addresses are also available in English.

7. It is not clear who or what provided the funds for the publication of this journal. Although it solicits contributions, even today it is provided without charge. The mysteriousness of its financial backing suggests at least the possibility of funding by an international socialist or Marxist group or groups.


9. With the recent publications of documents regarding the relationship between the church in the GDR and the Stasi (GDR secret police), more light is being shed on the role Müller, and others, played in that relationship. In particular, such publications as "Pfarrer, Christen und Katholiken". Das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit der ehemaligen DDR und die Kirchen (Gerhard Besier and Stephan Wolf, Editors); Der SED-Staat und die Kirche, 1969-1990. Die Vision vom "Dritten Weg" (Gerhard Besier, Editor); and Christen, Staat und Gesellschaft in der
DDR. Vorträge, Diskussionen und Bibliographie 1994/95 (Gert Kaiser and Ewald Frie, Editors) reflect the most recent and most available documents in this regard. Cf. also D. Linke, Theologiestudenten der Humboldt-Universität. Zwischen Hörsaal und Anklagebank. This collection of documents from the East German secret police files (Stasi) not only makes mention of Müller several times, but has several extensive sections on him (and his wife).


11. Details regarding postwar Germany and issues related to its occupation can be found in a multitude of sources. Two that focus on the history of the German Democratic Republic are: Martin McCauley's The German Democratic Republic since 1945 (1983) and Henry Ashby Turner's Germany from Partition to Reunification (1992). For an emphasis on the history of the Federal Republic of Germany, cf. Alfred Grosser's The Federal Republic of Germany: A Concise History (1964) and Germany in Our Time: A Political History of the Postwar Years (1971); cf. also Dennis L. Bark and David R. Gress, A History of West Germany in two volumes (1989, 1993).


13. Ibid., p. 36.


15. Ibid., pp. 50-53.

16. Turner, Germany from Partition to Reunification, pp. 55-56.

17. Ibid., p. 68.

18. Ibid., p. 69.

19. Ibid., p. 73.

20. Ibid., p. 74.

21. The events of the uprising are described in Turner, Germany from Partition to Reunification, pp. 73-80.

22. Ibid., pp. 76-77.


26. Turner identifies these countries only as "those of the Soviet bloc plus some in Africa and Asia"; *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, p. 194.

27. Ibid., pp. 195-6.

28. Ibid., p. 197.


34. For a complete list of dates of significant events in the life of the German Democratic Republic, cf. Hermann Weber's *DDR. Grundriss der Geschichte, 1945-1990*. It must be said that the immediate fall of the GDR was due to the collapse of the economy. Ideological issues must be considered secondary.

35. Robert Goeckel, *The Lutheran Church and the East German State: Political Conflict and Change Under Ulbricht and*
36. Ibid., p. 35.

37. Ibid., p. 38ff.

38. Ibid., p. 39. Ironically, the youth dedication ceremony (Jugendweihe) of the GDR has its roots in the similar practice of indoctrination in the Hitler Youth. For more information on that movement, cf. George L. Mosse's *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, pp. 171-189, and *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich*, pp. 263-318.

39. Ibid., p. 39.

40. For more information regarding Dibelius, see Chapter Three, Footnote 25.


42. Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification* p. 199. The notion of the "church within socialism" will be examined more closely in Chapter Six.


44. Ibid., p. 239.

45. Goeckel provides an account of this summit meeting in pp. 241-6 of his volume. Schönberg himself provides an account in an address delivered on February 10, 1986 before the Christian Democratic Union in Berlin. This address was re-printed and published in *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, Volume 7, No. 2 (April 1987), pp. 19-34. The address is entitled "A Contribution to the Direction of the Evangelical Church in the German Democratic Republic." It will be examined more closely in Chapter Seven of this dissertation.


47. Ibid., p. 247.

48. Ibid., p. 248.

49. Ibid., p. 249.

51. Ibid., p. 250.

52. Ibid., p. 262.


55. Goeckel, p. 175.

56. Ibid., p. 176.

57. Ibid., p. 67.

58. Ibid., p. 143.


60. Ibid., p. 120-1.

61. None of Müller's writings has been translated in published form. Therefore, all quotations from Müller's works have been translated by me. This is also true for all other articles and sources in German that have not been translated and published.
CHAPTER ONE - IDEOLOGY

Because this study focuses on the way in which Hanfried Müller's theology is not only influenced, but indeed is governed, by his ideological convictions, some understanding of the history and meaning of the term "ideology" is in order.

What follows is a historical overview of the notions of ideology and fascism. It is important to note that it is difficult, if not impossible, to find neutral or universally accepted definitions of such covering concepts as "ideology," "fascism," and "totalitarianism." For example, are the terms being used or understood in a social-scientific sense, in a political sense, or in a theological sense, or perhaps in some other sense? Or can there be a concomitant use of such terms? In a very narrow sense, the term "fascism" usually refers to the government established in 1919 in Italy by Mussolini. Later, the term is also used by Marxists (including Hanfried Müller) in a derogatory way to refer to western, capitalistic, imperialistic societies.

Similarly, theologians might distinguish theology from an ideology such as Marxism. Marxists, on the other hand, might not only see their own views as constituting an ideology, but they might also see theology as a form of ideology. In what he calls "Disciplinary Dominoes" Kenneth Minogue discusses the breakdown of academic disciplines in the development of ideology by ideologists:

In ideology, all academic signposts are uprooted and
pointed in some other direction. Confusing remarks are tossed up only to be reinterpreted. Thus Lefebvre quotes from The German Ideology the remark: 'We recognize only one science, the science of history,' and goes on to consider whether some form of academic fundamentalism is involved. His conclusion seems to me applicable to any ideological theory: "Mankind's "socio-economic formation" (as Marx calls it) simply has too many aspects, exhibits too many differences and goes on at too many levels to be treated by a single discipline.' (1)

Minogue goes on to observe:

One way of stating the dialectical asymmetry between ideological and academic intellectualty would be to say that ideologies like Marxism are combinations of a scientific research programme with a political action programme. Such a combination would not in itself be unusual, but Marxism does more than combine these two things: it combines them across the logic of different disciplines as well. (2)

He concludes this particular discussion of the relationship between ideology and academic disciplines with the following observation:

The ideologist monopolizes change by virtue of the assumption that he alone represents it, and everything and everyone else, including competing ideologists, is in one way or another, an instrument of reaction. (3)

Because of the variety of ways in which the term "ideology" can be used and understood, it should be noted here that in this dissertation it is sharply distinguished from "theology." The former, as will be seen below, is understood here as a system of social and political goals that make certain claims about human nature and the means by which those goals may be achieved. In this dissertation the term "theology" is used in the traditional sense, that is, the study of God and God's relationship to humanity. That having been said, we will proceed with what others have said regarding these covering concepts.
In her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Hannah Arendt writes:

Iadies - isms which to the satisfaction of their adherents can explain everything and every occurrence by deducing it from a single premise - are a very recent phenomenon and, for many decades, played a negligible role in political life. Only with the wisdom of hindsight can we discover in them certain elements which have made them so disturbingly useful for totalitarian rule. Not before Hitler and Stalin were the great political potentialities of the ideologies discovered. Ideologies are known for their scientific character: they combine the scientific approach with results of philosophical relevance and pretend to be scientific philosophy. (4)

Arendt goes on to point out the discrepancy between ideology and reality, between ideology and history. Ideology has its own logic which need not correspond to reality. She writes:

An ideology is quite literally what its name indicates: it is the logic of an idea. Its subject matter is history, to which the "idea" is applied; the result of this application is not a body of statements about something that is, but the unfolding of a process which is in constant change. The ideology treats the course of events as though it followed the same "law" as the logical exposition of its "idea." Ideologies pretend to know the mysteries of the whole historical process - the secrets of the past, the intricacies of the present, the uncertainties of the future - because of the logic inherent in their respective ideas. (5)

According to Arendt, the ideologies of the nineteenth century were not totalitarian. And yet, she argues that all ideologies have totalitarian elements in them. Those elements are simply more fully developed in the twentieth century ideologies of racism and communism than in other ideologies. Arendt identifies three elements that are unique to ideological thinking:

First, in their claim to total explanation, ideologies have the tendency to explain not what is, but what becomes, what is born and passes away. [... ]
Secondly, in this capacity ideological thinking becomes independent of all experience from which it cannot learn anything new even if it is a question of something that has just come to pass. [. . . ]

Thirdly, since the ideologies have no power to transform reality, they achieve this emancipation of thought from experience through certain methods of demonstration. Ideological thinking orders facts into an absolutely logical procedure which starts from an axiomatically accepted premise, deducing everything else from it; that is, it proceeds with a consistency that exists nowhere in the realm of reality. (6)

Hence, the logic of the idea in the ideology becomes tyrannical, according to Arendt.

The relationship between ideology and reality is crucial to an understanding of ideology, be it the ideology of fascism or communism or western liberal democracy. Kenneth Minogue maintains that there are contradictions and paradoxes inherent in ideological movements. He writes that

the most remarkable fact about ideology is its attempt to demonstrate that what by most ordinary tests - an end of hunger and the heavier burdens of labour, respect for human rights - has been a giant leap forward by mankind, is actually a monumental retardation. (7)

Minogue goes on to say the problems of these movements are problems of contradiction between what ideology is, and what it seems to be. It advances the banner of change against a conserving establishment, yet its telos is a purely static condition. It is a political movement bent on the destruction of the very condition of politics. It appeals to our moral responses, yet denies the reality of the moral life. The proletarians of ideological theory are first emptied of any real thought and feeling they might have, and then supplied with the propositions of the ideology. While affirming freedom, it envisages a community in which only the one right type of act will be even conceivable. It attacks inequalities, yet aims at the destruction of the only entities - individuals - which could in any serious sense be taken as equal. It affirms real democracy, but envisages a unanimity which would
make democracy unnecessary. It claims the rubric of criticism only to declare its own truths incontestable. (8)

The supreme paradox, however, according to Minogue, is that ideology, which purports to break out of theoretical mystifications into the liberation of praxis, entails the entire destruction of practice. For practice is a transaction in which a desiring agent distinguishes itself from the rest of the world, embarks upon an activity in search of satisfaction, and thereby accepts the risk of frustration. After the ideological transformation, however, man would no longer be separated from man (or from woman either), and humanity would no longer be separated from nature. (9)

This resolution, or abolition, of all conflict is clearly seen, according to Minogue, in the following statement by Marx:

This communism [. . .] is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man - the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species. Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution. (10)

However, Minogue also notes that any ideology should be viewed critically in light of the notion of "the unintended consequences of human action."

In most early versions of the idea the rôle of cause is taken by human action, and the consequences are distinguished into intended and unintended. Now it often turns out that the unintended consequences are very much more significant than the intended. (11)

Any ideological program, Minogue argues, must be tempered by an awareness of unforeseen, or unintended, consequences. This question must at least be raised when such statements as those by Marx are made with such confidence.

In light of these modern views of ideology, it is well
worth inquiring into the origin and history of the term. Hans-Joachim Lieber and Hellmuth G. Bütow observe that the word "ideology" was originally coined by DeStutt DeTracy (1754-1836) and "designated a philosophical discipline concerned to examine the methodological foundations of all sciences and to guarantee their impartial application." (12) Lieber and Bütow trace the basic conception to Francis Bacon (1561-1626) "who maintains that progress in science can be guaranteed only if scientific thought can be secured against fallacious ideas." (13) They go on to observe that

[the term 'ideology' originally connotes [. . . ] both the Enlightenment's mistrust of man's cognitive capacity and the hope that errors can be eliminated through the correct use of reason. (14)

During the Enlightenment, then, "ideology" was a term used as "an irreverent denunciation of all metaphysics." (15) Lieber and Bütow note that during the French Enlightenment there occurred a shift "from the epistemological to a social and political analysis of the problem of ideology." (16) Following the Enlightenment, however, it

became a term of abuse, and ideological thought was rejected as destructive. Napoleon saw "ideologists" as isolated worshippers of reason, lacking in common sense. He saw himself as enlightened because he understood the stabilizing and power-securing function of fallacious ideas. (17)

Alexander Haardt observes that the use of this term as "a polemical slogan of political argument" can be traced to Napoleon:

In Napoleon's polemic the expression "ideology" refers to a theory concerning society that - based on reason and non-practical logic - has no real relationship to political reality. (18)
According to Lieber and Bülow, Karl Marx maintained that the forms of the intellectual superstructure (e.g., philosophy, science, law, religion, art) correspond to those of the socio-economic basis. Human thought is ultimately determined by these material circumstances and is, in its entirety, ideological. Here 'ideology' indicates the false consciousness resulting both from its connection with the material basis and from the lag of social consciousness behind the development of society's material needs. (19)

For Marx, religion is representative of "the necessarily false form of consciousness."

For Marx critique of ideology implies more than mere negation of religion, since the latter constitutes privation for man: it is the reflection of characteristic human traits which have emerged under specific socio-historical conditions. Religion is understood as an "expression" of the social order and as a "protest" against it. [. . . .] For Marx critique of religion becomes critique of the social conditions of religious alienation. (20)

Lieber and Bülow elaborate:

In Marx's critique of ideology the alienation in human consciousness is only the intellectual reflection of man's alienation under existing economic conditions, which have reached a critical state in capitalist society. Consequently, the task of overcoming ideological consciousness presupposes the practical revolutionary transformation of antagonistic class society. The ideological veil cast over the real relations can only be ripped away by changing those conditions in society which determine the false theoretical structures. According to Marx the ideological nature of thought is in no way an immutable attribute of human reason; rather it is the result of false social relations. (21)

The irony, of course, as Minogue has pointed out, is that Marx's critique of ideology has not only become itself an ideology, but one filled with internal contradictions. Furthermore, despite the power of ideology in general, and Marxist ideology in particular, attempts to move from theory to prac-
tice (in the case of Marxism) have failed - even in "Marxist"
governments. Indeed, as Minogue has also observed, in an attempt
to "liberate" praxis, it has destroyed it.

In his essay "The Ideas and the Failure of Socialism" Karl
Bracher has stated the same thing somewhat differently:

Criticism of Marxism has focused on three points
in particular, which have remained relevant to this
day.
1. Marxism employs a number of quite unproved and
vague basic concepts, yet at the same time, contrary
to its own principles, it exempts itself from any ide-
ological criticism.
2. What appear to be very empirical and revealing
analyses and prognoses do not square with the increas-
ingly complex reality and subsequent development of
the Western industrial societies, to which those analy-
ses and prognoses refer.
3. The simplification into a theory constitutes
the strength, cohesiveness, and impact of Marxism as
socialism but also its weakness: as a "science," which
is what it wants to be, it repudiates the basic, com-
parative, and pluralistic approach and the questioning
that are part of any science. It rejects the openness
and freedom of science, thus losing the ability to
control and correct itself. (22)

While the focus of this dissertation is on the role Commu-
nist ideology plays in the thought and writings of Hanfried
Müller, clearly other ideologies have arisen. A certain kind
of ideology seems to accompany the economic system of capitalism.
Hitler promoted the ideology of National Socialism. Indeed,
Karl Bracher has written that we live "in a century of ideolo-
gies." (23) In his book The Age of Ideologies Bracher writes:

Optimistic talk of an imminent 'end of the ideologi-
cal age' has proved a delusion of the fifties, as
has the prediction of the decline of the intelligen-
tia. Not an 'exhaustion' or an 'ageing' of political
ideas in the period following the Second World War,
but a recharging of ideological energies and intel-
lectual allurements marks the age of the post-European
modernization of the world. This links the second half of the century to the eruptions and errors of its early decades; these have indeed been undergoing a revival since the sixties. The talk now is of neo-Marxist, neo-liberal and neo-conservative movements: 'new' or not, the ideological thirst has certainly not been quenched. (24)

Bracher goes on to describe and define the basis for "ideologization":

Fundamentally, however, ideologization is based on a conglomerate of deception and self-deception: pseudo-religious needs, idealism, and perfection mania ultimately support even the 'ideological self-authorization for power.' Added to this religious-moral legitimation is a claim to 'scientific character' and simultaneously to the elimination of all conflicts through the magic formula of dialectics. From the idea of possessing the ultimate truth there follows eventually not only the justification but indeed the necessity of self-deceit and lie, of persecution and terror, in order to make that idea finally prevail. (25)

This process of "ideologization," Bracher argues, involves a tendency towards an extreme simplification of complex realities: the claim that they can be reduced to one truth and, at the same time, divided into a dichotomy of good and evil, right and wrong, friend or foe, that the world can be grasped with a single explanatory model in bipolar terms, in the manner attempted more specifically by the Marxist class theory or the National Socialist racial theory. [...] The assurance of absolute truth not just later in heaven but now on earth invests ideology with the character of a secularized redemption creed, one which excludes any ideological alternative by discrediting it in advance as 'bourgeois' or 'objectivist' without having to adduce any proof in support of such a truth. (26)

Toward the end of his introductory remarks, Bracher observes that the intellectual elite of a society in the twentieth century is no less susceptible to the delusion of an ideology than are the masses. Indeed, he writes, that fact distinguishes our century from others. "It has become the century
of totalitarian seduction because it was, and has remained, an
age of ideologies." (27)

In an important and fascinating essay entitled "Totalitarian-
ism as Concept and Reality" (28), Bracher addresses the issue
of the relationship between totalitarianism and ideology in the
twentieth century. As different as the three major totalitari-
anism movements in the twentieth century - Communism, Fascism, and
National Socialism - may be, Bracher finds three common threads
in them:

1. Fundamental is the striving for the greatest possible
degree of total control of power by a single
party (organized in a totalitarian fashion) and its
leadership, the leadership being endowed with the
attributes of infallibility and the claim to pseudo-
religious veneration from the masses. [. . . ]

2. The total one-party state bases itself on a
militant ideology. As an ersatz religion, a doctrine
of salvation with a claim to political exclusivity,
this ideology seeks to justify the suppression of
all opposition and the total Gleichschaltung ["syn-
chronization"] of the citizenry in historical terms
as well as with reference to a future utopia. The
historical background, political designs, and ideolo-
gical doctrines of the various totalitarian systems
might be very different, yet Russian Bolshevism, Italian
Fascism, and German National Socialism have in common
the techniques of omnipresent surveillance (secret
police), persecution (concentration camps), and massive
influencing or monopolizing of public opinion. [. . . .]

3. They all shared an essential component of the
ideology of totalitarian rule: the myth that a total
command state is much more effective than the complex
democratic state based on the rule of law and limited
by numerous controls and checks. The totalitarian
ideology invokes the possibility of total economic
and social planning (Four- and Five-Year Plans), the
capacity for quicker political and military reaction,
and the Gleichschaltung of political-administrative
processes and increased stability by means of a dicta-
torial running of the state. However, the reality of
totalitarian governing bears only a very qualified
resemblance to this widely held notion. [. . . ](29)
But in this essay Bracher goes on to explore the relationship between totalitarian ideology and democracy in the latter half of the twentieth century. Having fought three major forms of totalitarianism in this century, western democracies found themselves the object of criticism. One of the results, according to Bracher, is, paradoxically, the seductive rise of totalitarianism again. Concerning the 1960s and 1970s, he writes:

As the deterrent experience of the old totalitarianism was waning, the new generation of 1968 considered it not only possible but virtually necessary to dismantle Western society's antitotalitarian defenses as such. Even when it didn't go so far as to question the need for authority itself, this revisionist trend suppressed or trivialized, in any case, the fundamental difference between the political systems of democracy and dictatorship. (30)

Thus, the 1970s brought a controversy not over the idea of totalitarianism, but over democracy. Bracher continues:

The conflict with totalitarian forces and tendencies was displaced by the euphoria of détente. Another phase began toward the end of the decade, when an intensifying economic crisis coincided with the final climax of terrorism and the appearance of ideologies and movements critical of Western civilization. The upsurge of alternative and ecological convictions, together with pacifist and neutralist movements and the revival of a supposed third way between the fronts, beyond parliamentary democracy and industrial society: all this brought to the fore a "whiff of totalitarianism," as Kurt Sontheimer has said, a political and moral rigorism that was to some extent reminiscent of the self-destructive currents of the twenties and after. (31)

Finally, in this essay Bracher notes three "topical points of departure" that, he says, "make clear the enduring relevance of the totalitarian temptation." The first is the way in which improved technicalization has perfected
the techniques of surveillance and manipulation: mass media and information technology in the computer age can endanger liberty in the bureaucratic welfare state, which is taking on rising expectations and thence also greater authority. Therefore, more than ever before, everything hinges on the political system. [. . . ](32)

Second, there is a residue, Bracher maintains, of totalitarianism from the Communist system, "despite challenges to the ideology," which still manages to suppress "any opposition from dissidents should it wish to." Political rights remain endangered:

Rigorously restricted freedom of opinion, secrecy of judicial acts, the duty instead of the right to participate, acclamation instead of election, the absence or perversion of the concept of human rights, a glorification of state power instead of its limitation, restrictions on religion or its monopolization by the state, psychiatric clinics for dissidents instead of habeas corpus, threat of the Gulag instead of fair trials, the extreme inequality of the privileged class, and the terrorist persecution of dissidents: instead of civic rights what exists is a state of submissive subjects, a state that continues to be dominated (in quite a totalitarian fashion) by the party's monopoly on truth and the demand for complete dedication to the system. [. . . ](33)

Third, the one-sided, enthusiastic, missionary-style commitment to an objective undermines "pluralistic democracies and their methods of free parliamentary politics based on mutual tolerance." Bracher continues:

Democracy is self-constraint, ideology is presumption — and unfortunately the latter repeatedly gains the upper hand over the former, for time and again the ideology of "true" democracy brings about a disastrous "turnabout from emancipation to despotism" (Klaus Hornung). The decisive, doubtful question that remains is whether people truly possess an urge for freedom and are able to cope with freedom, or whether they continually look for leaders, systems, and ideologies that relieve them of freedom and take them into their service. In other words, does humankind seek a political religion that will take away the uncertainty about good and evil, meaning and meaninglessness? (34)
For Bracher, then, ideology - of whatever stripe - can be one of the contributing, seductive factors that might lead a people to embrace totalitarianism.

In addition to Marxism, there are, of course, other forms of ideology. One form, which is often mentioned but rarely defined, is fascism. Because the central figure of this dissertation, Hanfried Müller, makes occasional reference to this term, it is particularly important to examine it in its ideological context.

In a volume of essays he edited, Walter Laqueur wrote the following about the confusion surrounding the term:

Despite the three decades that have passed since the end of the second world war, fascism remains a subject of much heated argument. In daily usage it is hurled as an invective against political enemies. It is frequently invoked in the media; in the universities it attracts more students of history and political science than almost any other subject; and on the loftiest level, it has become the topic of metaphysical speculation. It also continues to be a subject of controversy, partly because it collides with so many preconceived ideological notions, partly because generalizations are made difficult by the fact that there was not one fascism but several fascisms. While these fascisms have certain features in common, the differences between them are not negligible. It would be surprising if there were unanimity on such issues as the relevance of ideology to the understanding of fascism, its social character, the importance of the leader, to name but a few aspects; many issues more distant in history remain unresolved to this day. (35)

In his lengthy essay "Fascist Ideology" Zeev Sternhell examines the historical background to the rise of twentieth century fascism and the various forms it has taken. At the outset Sternhell writes:

Fascism has no sound and obvious footing in any par-
ticular social class, and its intellectual origins are in themselves confusing. In its most restricted sense the fascism applies simply to the political regime in Italy in the period between the two world wars; at the other end of the scale, the 'fascist' epithet is used, and particularly by left wingers of various hue, as the term of abuse par excellence, conclusive and unanswerable. (36)

While acknowledging that other ideologies can be equally complex in their definition, Sternhell argues that it is possible to discern not only the history of fascism, but also peculiar characteristics that will aid in a definition of this rather term.

Maintaining that fascism is, in fact, an ideology, Sternhell defines "ideology" as "the sets of ideas by which men explain and justify the ends and means of organized social action, with the aim of preserving or reconstructing a given reality." (37) But as is true for other ideologies, a "crucial distinction in a discussion of fascist ideology," Sternhell observes, "is that between fascism in power and fascism in opposition, between movements and regimes, between origins and maturity." (38) The distinction is between what a party puts forth as its principles and aims when out of power, on the one hand, and how those principles and aims may change once the party comes to power, on the other. Sternhell maintains that

[deviations from the fundamentals are a universal phenomenon: fascist movements and fascist regimes cannot be considered more unprincipled than any other movement or regime, especially where these are revolutionary. (39)]

Because, according to Sternhell, fascism came to power in only two countries (Italy and Germany), in the history of ideas it
is much more interesting as a political movement than as a regime.

Sternhell traces the origins of fascism to what he calls the "intellectual crisis" of the 1890s, an intellectual revolution which was a revolt against the world of matter and reason, against materialism and positivism, against the mediocrity of bourgeois society, and against the muddle of liberal democracy. To the fin-de-siècle mind, civilization was in crisis, and if a solution were possible it would have to be a total one. (40)

This "revolt" had representatives in several European countries: Italy (d'Annunzio and Corradini), France (Barrès, Drumont, and Sorel), and Germany (Paul de Lagarde, Julius Langbehn, and Arthur Moeller van den Bruck). These, and others, inveighed violently against the rationalistic individualism of liberal society and against the dissolution of social links in bourgeois society. In identical terms sometimes, they one and all deplored the mediocrity and materialism of modern society, its instability and corruption. They decried the life of the great cities, which was dominated by routine with no room for heroism, and to the claims of the individual's powers of reason they preferred the merits of instinct, sometimes even of animality. Such is the soil to which Giovanni Gentile traces the root-origins of fascism, which he defines as a 'revolt against positivism' and against the way of life fostered by industrial society, which with Darwinian biology and Wagnerian aesthetics, Gobineau's racialism, Le Bon's psychology, as well as the black prophecies of Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky, and, later, the philosophy. (41)

This revolt against reason and the individual was accompanied by a revolt against liberal democracy and parliamentary democracy. In addition, according to Sternhell, the failure of international socialism led to a new wave of nationalism, another characteristic of fascism.
John Milbank maintains that the restlessness that manifested itself in various forms of socialism, including fascism, was more radical than Marx and his theory of communism. In his book *Theology and Social Theory*, Milbank observes that

unlike Marxist and Fabian socialism, which have proved unable to resist capitalist modernity, most nineteenth-century socialisms were 'postmodern', in the sense that they had absorbed some measure of a romantic, Counter-Enlightenment critique. They did not, like Marxism, locate socialism (or for Marx, 'communism') as the next stage in a narrative of emancipation, or the genesis of human autonomy. On the contrary, the enlightened goal of a self-regulation of the will, according to its own natural, finite desires and capacities, was seen as of one piece with the operation of political economy. The rejection of the latter could not, then, involve a 'dialectic of enlightenment', or an immanent critique of the present ideas of freedom. (42)

Fascism, then, as one of the various forms of socialisms of the late nineteenth century, can be included in this "romantic, Counter-Enlightenment critique."

In the early years of the twentieth century there arose in France a national socialist party which, in opposition to the red socialism of Marxists, was known as "yellow socialism."

Sternhell writes that Yellow Socialism

preached national solidarity in lieu of the class struggle, and advocated the accession to property rather than expropriation, as well as workers' participation in company profits and a form of trade unionism in which workers' unions and management unions would exist side by side, which structure would be topped by a strong State, with an assembly of national and regional representatives sponsored by the trades and corporations. It goes without saying that the Yellow Movement was violently opposed to Marxism, while at the same time promoting the personality cult of the leader, who was in effect its mini-dictator; it was equally anti-Semitic. (43)
The anti-Semitism of the French Yellow Socialists, combined with a strong sense of nationalism, became a tool "with which to appeal to the working classes and to arouse the masses," and, Sternhell notes, "the anti-Jewish riots of the closing years of the century bear a curious resemblance, by their violence and scale, to the riots of the Nazis." (44)

In addition to an appeal to the working classes, there was an element of elitism in fascism. Not only did this take the form of nationalism, but it also is reflected in the notion of leadership, both of an individual and of the party. (45) Clearly, the idea of the superiority of the wisdom of one party over that of another is not unique to fascism, for other ideologies share the same conviction. Sternhell writes:

For inasmuch as they were opposed to liberal democracy and to bourgeois society, syndicalists and nationalists were of one mind; they evaluated the mechanisms of bourgeois society in much the same terms, and both conceived of society as being dominated by a powerful minority, with the apparatus of State serving their will. When material conditions were no longer propitious to one particular minority, then another elite rose to the top, in accordance with a process of continuous rotation of elite groups, each of which stirred up the masses to its own purpose. Each minority advanced a sustaining myth, to act as a goad to rebellion during times of transition from the rule of an established elite to the rule of a contending elite, and as a legitimizing fiction once the contending elite had established its dominance. Behind the facade of representative institutions and parliamentary procedures, the bourgeois government was just such an established elite. (46)

In general, then, according to Sternhell,

[f]ascist ideology[. . .] took on the character of an anti-intellectual reaction which pitted the powers of feeling and emotion, and irrational forces of every kind, against the rationality of democracy. It was the rediscovery of instinct, the cult of physical
strength, violence, and brutality. This is, of course, what explains the attention paid to scenarios, the care lavished on décor, the great ceremonies, the parades—taken together, they made up a new liturgy where deliberation and discussion were supplanted by song, torches, and march-pasts. Viewed in this way, fascism appears as the direct descendant of the neo-romanticism of the 1880s and 1890s, only now the revolt had taken on dimensions commensurate with a mass society whose advent the fin-de-siècle generation had scarcely even foreseen. (47)

Of the two forms of fascism that actually came to power in Italy and Germany in the twentieth century, how did they differ? One of the distinctions Sternhell notes is in their view of the state. Both glorified the state, but each saw the state somewhat differently:

Italian fascism took its glorification of the State so far as to identify it with the nation. For Gentile, the State—and the nation—was not 'a datum of nature' but a creation of the mind; for Mussolini 'it is not the nation which generates the State; that is an antiquated naturalistic concept which afforded a basis for nineteenth-century publicity in favour of national governments. Rather it is the State which creates the nation, conferring volition and therefore real life on a people made aware of their moral unity.' This view of the State is a perfect illustration of the difference between the Italian—one is tempted to say Western—version of fascism and nazism, which saw the State as the emanation of the Volk and the servant of the community and the race. (48)

Another difference between the fascism of Italy and that of Germany was their view of race. Sternhell observes:

Only in Central and Eastern Europe did racialism form an integral part of fascist ideology; in Western Europe, it was very often a foreign import, as the various fascisms developed in the late thirties under the shadows of nazism and rapidly organized themselves on its lines. Although the key-stone of Nazi doctrine, biological racialism cannot therefore automatically be considered integral to fascism at all times and in all places. (49)

Finally, Sternhell notes that once fascists came to power
their revolutionary zeal for structural reform seemed to subside. Once in power, fascists found themselves contending with opponents on the left. Paradoxically, its aim of uniting the body politic led to internal strife. Sternhell observes:

As the successor of national, anti-Marxist socialism, fascism constituted an extremely violent attempt to return to the social body its unity, integrity, and totality. And here we find the great internal contradiction which fascism was never able to escape: it wanted to be a movement of reunification, yet it became an agent of civil war. But, we may well ask, is that not the fate of any revolutionary movement? (50)

This analysis of fascism as an ideology and as a twentieth century political movement sets in relief something of the post-World War II Marxist attacks on German fascism. As will be seen, these attacks, including those by Manfried Müller, were also ideological in nature. Indeed, Marxist attacks on fascism include not only Nazism, but also western capitalism. Karl Bracher acknowledges this in one of his essays:

A Marxist theory of fascism had already been developed immediately after Mussolini's seizure of power in 1922/23 in those characteristically pithy simplifications that employed the term "fascism" to refer not only to authoritarian dictatorships, but also to unpopular, non-Communist parties and regimes. (51)

From a Marxist perspective, then, the term "fascism" encompasses a broader range of ideologies than the traditional understanding of the term. In fact, it may seem to some that any view that is not Marxist is considered by Marxists to be fascist. This is particularly true of the Marxist view of western bourgeois capitalism.

With this overview of the notion of ideology, and as we
prepare to turn to the case of Müller, it is important to note at least one theologian's perspective on the relationship between ideology and theology.

In his important book, *Communism and the Theologians: Study of An Encounter*, Charles West examines the thought of Paul Tillich, Nicholas Berdyaev, Emil Brunner, Josef Hromák, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Karl Barth, among others, in relationship to Communism. In one passage dealing with Barth, West writes the following about ideology:

Both men [Marx and Barth] regard the depth of the crisis in which man stands as only visible to the eyes of faith, in the light of revelation. But for Barth this crisis is not primarily social. It does not involve some particular historical form of human living which enslaves man. The revelation is not some new science and the decision of faith not some new programme by which man will bring himself out of his self-estrangement. In Christ every such attempt to give meaning to life from some human perspective - all philosophy, and all natural theology, along with these 'sciences' which are covert philosophies and religions themselves - is revealed as ideological. Ideology is characteristic of man-centered thinking as such, not only of the thought of certain social groups. Man, seeking the meaning of life apart from Christ, is the very type of the ideologue. (52)

This notion of ideology as "man-centered thinking," along with Bracher's idea of the seductive nature of ideology, lies at the crux of the difference between theology and ideology.

It is the tension between, for example, Ludwig Feuerbach, a nineteenth century thinker and author of *The Essence of Christianity*, who maintained that theology was only another form of anthropology, a projection of subjective human desires and hopes onto a longing for the divine, and Karl Barth who,
while agreeing with Feuerbach that there is a human tendency to project oneself onto the divine (what Barth calls "religion" or what could also be called "ideology"), maintains that the gospel of Christianity is something quite different.

In *The Essence of Christianity* Feuerbach writes:

Religion, at least the Christian, is the relation of man to himself, or more correctly to his own nature (i.e., his subjective nature); but a relation to it, viewed as a nature apart from his own. The divine being is nothing else than the human being, or, rather, the human nature purified, freed from the limits of the individual man, made objective - i.e., contemplated and revered as another, a distinct being. All the attributes of the divine nature are, therefore, attributes of the human nature. (53)

For Feuerbach, man is both the subject and the object of "religion." Man is the measure of all things.

Arguing that God has a freedom, an existence, and an objectivity apart from any human projection, and that all human self-understanding is discovered only in the light of God's self-revelation, Barth writes:

The man freed by the truth for the truth might make only a partial or halting use of his freedom. His use of it might leave much to be desired in the way of clarity and consistency. Hence he is not merely asked whether, but also how, he will prove himself. Yet however that may be, the question which is put to us in respect of our presupposition and assertion that the life of Jesus Christ is as such light, truth, revelation, Word and glory, is the question of our authentication in face of the fact that He is this, of our right conduct in face of the content of this presupposition and assertion, of our obedience to the voice of Jesus Christ. To this question there can be no possible answer in the spirit and along the lines of Feuerbach. (54)

In spite of his sharp disagreement with Feuerbach, Barth clearly believes Feuerbach has raised important and serious
issues for theologians. In an "Introductory Essay" to The Essence of Christianity, Barth understands Feuerbach's question as being "whether the theologians of the modern age are not planning on an undercover apotheosis of man." (55) Barth goes on to write:

If I see the matter correctly, there are three reasons that make the Feuerbach question important and pressing, regardless of whether it was heard and pondered by the theology of his century or not. First, Feuerbach's question illuminates not only the modern theology represented by Schleiermacher and mysticism of the older theology. (Indeed, one must say that the shadow of the Feuerbach suspicion obviously increases much more than proportionately with the depth of the mystical element in any theology. [. . . ]

The second point is more important: this has to do with the doctrine of the incarnation and what is connected with it. If Feuerbach has laconically restated this Christian doctrine with the formula "God becomes man, man becomes God," this admittedly crude interpretation is after all not simply impossible and meaningless - under the presupposition of the specifically Lutheran Christology and of the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper. [. . . ]

In order to construct an adequate defense against Feuerbach, one would have to be sure that along the whole line the relation to God is one that is in principle uninvertible: actually, however, German theology itself has not been sure of this, since it has for century after century vigorously defended itself against the Calvinist corrective. [. . . ]

The third strong "plus" of Feuerbach's teaching is its unconscious but evident affinity to the ideology of the socialist workers' movement. Feuerbach, first given this role by Engels, became the philosopher of religion of modern, so-called "scientific" socialism in contrast to the "Utopian" socialism of the turn of the century. [. . . ] (56)

Barth concludes this essay with both a critique and grateful acknowledgment of Feuerbach's thesis. Barth calls Feuerbach's theory "a platitude" and "shallow." But he goes on to write:

Whether or not we stand on this ground will be tested by our answer to this question: are we capable of
admitting to Feuerbach that he is entirely right in his interpretation of religion insofar as it relates not only to religion as an experience of evil and mortal man, but also to the "high," the "ponderable," and even the "Christian" religion of this man? Are we willing to admit that even in our relation to God, we are and remain liars, and that we can lay claim to His truth, His certainty, His salvation as grace and only as grace? Then we know what we are doing when, in contrast to Feuerbach, we remember evil and death. If "Yes" is the answer, then one speaks as "a solitary individual" and has done with Feuerbach's impertinent theology of identity. So long as this nail is not firmly in, so long as the talk about "God in man" is not cut out at the roots, we have no cause to criticize Feuerbach, but are with him "the true children of his century." (57)

It is this tension between theology and anthropology, between Christianity and ideology, between God-centered thinking and man-centered thinking that makes an examination of someone such as Hanfried Müller so interesting, and it is this tension that lies at the heart of this study.

Endnotes


2. Ibid., p. 116.

3. Ibid., p. 117. In his book, Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time, Reinhart Koselleck examines the ways in which the meaning and the use of various concepts change not only over the course of time, but also depending on the user of such concepts.


5. Ibid., p. 469.

6. Ibid., pp. 470-1.
7. Minogue, p. 221.
8. Ibid., p. 221-2.
9. Ibid., p. 222.
10. Quoted in Minogue, p. 222.
11. Minogue, p. 16.
13. Ibid., p. 200.
15. Ibid., p. 200.
16. Ibid., p. 201.
17. Ibid., p. 200.
18. "Ideologie/Ideologiekritik" in Theologische Realenzyklopädie, Band XVI, Lieferung 1, p. 32.
19. Lieber and Bütow, p. 203.
20. Ibid., p. 203.
21. Ibid., pp. 203-4. In his essay "The German Ideology" Marx discusses and criticizes the basis of German philosophy and religion:

   In direct contrast to German philosophy, which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their
thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. (On Religion, The Karl Marx Library, Edited by Saul K. Padover, p. 67)

For a philosophical study of the intellectual underpinnings of social and political discontent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, cf. Bernard Yack's The Longing for Total Revolution: Philosphic Sources of Social Discontent from Rousseau to Marx and Nietzsche (Princeton University Press, 1986). Yack has a lengthy chapter on "Marx and Social Revolution" (pp. 251-309). In addition to Marx, Yack also examines Montesquieu, Rousseau, Kant, Schiller, Hegel, and Nietzsche.


24. Ibid., p. 2.

25. Ibid., p. 4.

26. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

27. Ibid., p. 6.


29. Ibid., pp. 146-7.

30. Ibid., pp. 147-8.

31. Ibid., p. 148.

32. Ibid., p. 149.

33. Ibid., pp. 149-150.

34. Ibid., p. 150.


37. Ibid., p. 318.

38. Ibid., p. 318.
39. Ibid., p. 319.
40. Ibid., p. 321.
41. Ibid., p. 322.
42. Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason, p. 197.
43. Sternhell, pp. 326-7.
44. Ibid., p. 327.
45. Cf. pp. ff. of this dissertation on the Nazi notion of "leadership principle."
47. Ibid., p. 349.
48. Ibid., p. 356.
49. Ibid., p. 357.
50. Ibid., p. 359.
53. The Essence of Christianity, p. 14. In his book Theology and Social Theory (1990), John Milbank points out that Feuerbach's work does not represent a retreat from religion, but rather "another example of the nineteenth century post-Enlightenment reaction in favour of religion, albeit in this case in the form of a search for a 'religion of humanity.' [ . . . ] Feuerbach's goal was precisely to exhibit man as truly and in essence the subject of the divine predicates, the worthy object of worship." (p. 180)
55. The Essence of Christianity, p. xxii.
56. Ibid., p. xxii-xxv.
57. Ibid., pp. xxix-xxx.
CHAPTER TWO - AN INTRODUCTION TO MÜLLER

Arguably, the two most influential twentieth century theologians, in Protestant and Catholic circles, have been Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Remarkably, together, their influence has not only spanned most of the century, but has also held steadfast during, and has even transcended, the revolutionary political changes that took place between 1920 and 1990.

It is fair to say that the thought of Barth and Bonhoeffer had a profound impact on the church in the Communist world of eastern Europe following World War II. Clearly, this was the case among theologians and churchmen in the German Democratic Republic, including Hanfried Müller. This impact was due both to the depth of their theological insights and, equally important for our purposes, to their interest and involvement in the social and political movements of the day. Thus, as we consider the thought of Müller, it is appropriate and essential to do so in light of the influence of these two prominent theologians.

In September 1919 a conference on religion and social issues was held in Tambach, Germany. The historian, Klaus Scholder, quotes Georg Merz's recollection of the participants in this conference:

Those who met in Tambach came together more or less by chance. They belonged to none of the major, influential schools of thought, inclined to no political party, heeded the word of no leader. If they were united in one point it was that they wanted "something
else." Because they suspected rather than knew that the social question was the problem of the time, they devoted themselves to questions which arose out of this problem and asked themselves about the position of Christians in church, state and society. Because they had heard of the Religious Socialist Movement in Switzerland, and because the names of Hermann Kutter and Leonhard Ragaz were familiar to them in this context, they invited these leaders to the conference. (1)

However, both Kutter and Ragaz, the founders and early leaders of the religious socialist movement in Switzerland (2), declined invitations from the two organizers of the conference, Otto Herpel and Heinrich Schultheis, two pastors from Hesse. (3) Instead, Karl Barth, a young Swiss pastor who was unknown in Germany, was suggested as a possible speaker. Barth was asked to give the final address at this conference and he accepted the invitation.

In spite of Merz's characterization of the participants as having no commitments to a political ideology, party, or leader, it seems that they had certain hopes and expectations for this conference. Scholder notes that Günther Dehn, the center of a later controversy in Germany which also involved Karl Barth, "is surely right in thinking that those who were at Tambach expected something quite specific from Barth, namely 'a sharp rejection of the capitalist economic and social order that was still in control [...] and an urgent challenge to contribute vigorously to the coming new socialist order.'" (4) It should be added that these expectations were not only influenced, at least in part, by the experience of World War I, but also by the ill-fated attempt at a revolution by Communists.
which began in a naval shipyard in Kiel in November 1918, the latter event seen by many as a sign of hope for radical social and economic change.

Barth's lecture, "The Christian's Place in Society" (5), while causing disappointment and consternation among those present, in Scholder's view, "belongs with Karl Holl's 1917 speech on Luther and Rudolf Bultmann's 1941 lecture on demythologizing as one of the most important testimonies of twentieth-century Protestant theology." (6) In this lecture Barth attacked the liberal theology of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on which he had been reared. He set in sharp distinction human society, however it may be organized and however noble its aims may be stated, from God and his kingdom: "The kingdom of God does not begin with our movements of protest. It is the revolution which is before all revolutions, as it is before the whole prevailing order of things." (7) While arguing that protest against the prevailing order of things may indeed be part of the kingdom of God, Barth warns against identifying any particular ideology, be it conservative or revolutionary, with the kingdom of God. Such an identification would amount to a betrayal of Christ:

Today for the sake of social democracy, or pacifism, or the youth movement, or something of the sort - as yesterday it would have been for the sake of liberal culture or our countries, Switzerland or Germany - we may very well succeed, if the worst comes to the worst, in secularizing Christ. But the thing is hateful to us, is it not? We do not wish to betray him another time. (8)

The temptation to identify human causes with God's cause
or kingdom is a dangerous one, according to Barth, because the
two are quite different:

Clever enough is the paradox that the service of God
is or must become the service of man; but that is not
the same as saying that our precipitate service of man,
even when it is undertaken in the name of the purest
love, becomes by that happy fact the service of God. (9)

Barth himself, no doubt, sympathized with the political
views of many of those in his audience. After all, as pastor
in Safenwil he had helped organize factory workers there and
had antagonized industrial management by his actions and much
of what he said. Among some he became known as "the red pastor."
Indeed, in 1911 he presented a lecture with the title "Jesus
Christ and the Social Movement." But the Tambach lecture re-
flected not only the new direction Barth's own theology had
taken and would follow in general for the rest of his life,
but it also reflected a challenge even to those with whose
political views he may well have agreed. Eberhard Busch,
Barth's biographer, notes that this lecture

was so to speak a farewell to a theology which Barth
himself had followed for some time, and especially
to Religious Socialism. [. . .] At the same time,
however, the lecture also announced a new programme:
one can say that it contains in germ ideas which Barth
was then to develop in detail in subsequent years. (10)

Barth's interest in the relationship between church and
society, church and state, continued throughout the rest of his
life. He was the principal author of the Theological Declara-
tion of Barmen which articulated the Confessing Church's posi-
tion regarding the relationship between church and state and
which represented its resistance to Hitler's demand for abso-
lute obedience from the church. At various points in his Church Dogmatics as well as in separate letters, articles, and books Barth continued to address this issue (11), although it must be added that his interest was always in the context of his larger theological perspective. (12)

Similarly, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's influence came about, in large part, in response to his experience with, and involvement in, the political world and events of his day. In the letters he wrote during the last year of his imprisonment, beginning in April 1944, Bonhoeffer began a new direction in his theological thought from that which he had developed in his earlier writings such as Sanctorum Communio (1927), Act and Being (1930), Creation and Fall (1933), The Cost of Discipleship (1937), Life Together (1938), and his incomplete writings on ethics.

In the letters and writings while in prison Bonhoeffer began to consider the present and future condition of Protestant Christianity. His thought focused on the place of the church in "a world come of age," a world that no longer needed God to explain heretofore mysterious phenomena, a world where religion was not only dispensable but also harmful in terms of perpetuating unnecessary myths about God and God's relationship with the world.

In addition to "world come of age," we find in Bonhoeffer's letters such language as "religionless Christianity," "a world without God," "God as a stop-gap," "the powerlessness of God in the world," and "the church for others." Because Bonhoeffer
died before he was able to develop these ideas further, it is not clear in what direction these thoughts would have taken him. In contrast to some interpreters of Bonhoeffer, Eberhard Bethge, Bonhoeffer's friend, colleague, and biographer, sees a continuity between Bonhoeffer's earlier writings and his prison writings rather than a discontinuity:

People's surprise led them to get out again the early works of Bonhoeffer that had not received much attention hitherto and to discover with astonishment that there was a broad continuity between the Berlin beginnings and the Tegel period. Formulations and theological hints in *Letters and Papers from Prison* that people found shocking proved not to be as new as had been thought and were to be found, even literally, in *Sanctorum Communio* or *Act and Being*, as well as in various other writings. (13)

However, since the publication of *Letters and Papers from Prison* serious attention has been given to them as representing a new trajectory in Bonhoeffer's thought, and some have sought to find in them a description of the relationship between Christianity and society in the modern and post-modern world as well as a prescription for the life of the church in this world.

Thomas I. Day has written that

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's theology has been a Ouija board. As many as have put their hand to it have read different messages, pertinent and crucial but mutually contradictory and generally confusing. As Lenin suggested in another case, the plethora of interpretations and revisions reflect not so much the weakness of Bonhoeffer's work as the fact that his theology impinges on the lives of those who take it up. If geometric axioms affected human interests, attempts would certainly be made to refute them. (14)

From John A. T. Robinson's *Honest to God* to the "death of God" theology in the 1960s (15) to American black theology (16)
to various forms of liberation theology found, for example, in South Africa and Latin America (17), the theological seeds in Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers* have taken root and his influence is unquestionable. However, it is impossible to say whether or not Bonhoeffer himself would have endorsed these trends which claim a debt to his thought, including those who deliberately chose to live in a Communist society.

Although the attempt at a Communist takeover that began in Kiel following World War I was short-lived, Communism became a reality for eastern Germany and most of eastern Europe following World War II. And the thought of Barth and Bonhoeffer came to be a powerful influence there as well as in the rest of western Christianity. For the first time since the rise of Communism a land that was predominantly Protestant would face the challenge of existing under a Communist system.

Because the thought of Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer exercised such a profound influence on the theology and the church in what became the German Democratic Republic, and because Barth's 1919 lecture in Tambach was addressed to and was critical of religious socialists who sought to find some kind of synthesis between socialism and religion (especially Christianity), it is appropriate and timely to consider the writings of an East German theologian who claimed a debt to Barth and Bonhoeffer and who, at the same time, was an ardent supporter of the Communist regime. (18)

This dissertation will examine the writings of Hanfried
Müller, a retired professor of theology at the Humboldt University in Berlin, and particularly his understanding of the relationship between church and state and between church and society. Because of his professed debt to Barth and Bonhoeffer, among others, special attention will be given to his interpretation of these two theologians, and I will attempt to show that Müller's commitment to Marxism reflects a prior commitment to that ideology and that Barth's Tambach lecture could very well have been addressed to him as well as to the religious socialists of 1919. (19) I will also try to demonstrate that this commitment to Marxist ideology not only colors his understanding of Barth and Bonhoeffer, but leads to possible misinterpretation of both.

Müller was born in Celle (near Hannover) in 1925. He was baptized in the Lutheran church and grew up and was confirmed in the "united" church in the Rhineland. His "reformed" tendencies originally derived, at least initially, not so much from confessional convictions as from a relationship he and his wife enjoyed with a Reformed pastor in Berlin, Heinrich Grüber. One source identifies Grüber as "since 1949 the authorized agent ["Bevollmächtigter"] of the EKiD [Evangelical Church in Germany] in the government of the DDR. (20) Müller describes his parents as having been "anti-Nazi." As a youngster he came into contact with the Confessing Church through a "Schülerbibelkreis." He served in the German army during World War II in Italy and was, for a brief time, an American prisoner-of-war. (21)
In November 1945 Müller began his theological studies at the University of Bonn. In 1947 he pursued his studies at the University of Göttingen under Hans Iwand and Ernst Wolf. His (unpublished) dissertation on the "Influence of Existentialism on Evangelical Theology Today" ("Einfluß des Existentialismus auf die evangelische Theologie der Gegenwart") was not approved due, in his words, to "disciplinary proceedings that were politically motivated." (22) Müller attributes this action to his participation in proscribed demonstrations against military re-armament in western Germany. Because of these charges against him, Müller was arrested and not permitted to take his doctoral exams. (23) In 1952, he and his wife moved to East Berlin (illegally, he acknowledges, because the British authorities denied him permission to move). Both Müller and his wife applied to the state for graduate study and, in 1952, both were "assigned" ("zugewiesen") to the theological faculty of Humboldt University. (24) Müller completed his doctoral exams there and wrote his dissertation on Dietrich Bonhoeffer (later published as Von der Kirche zur Welt). From 1959-1964 he was a lecturer at Humboldt. In 1964 he became professor there, and was appointed full professor of systematic theology in 1966. (25)

In his volume of collected documents detailing the influence of the Communist authorities on the theological faculty at Humboldt University, Dietmar Linke has written the following regarding Hanfried Müller and his wife, Rosemarie Müller-Streisand:
The situation of the Müller couple was distinguished from that of other colleagues on the faculty in that, by emigrating, they had demonstrated a conscious decision for the GDR. In their "baggage" they had no negative experiences from the discussions between state and church. Unencumbered, they were able to use their "good" relationship to the state for their own interests. Consistent with their own background, they were interested in recruiting students to work with them in the FDJ [Free German Youth]. From the perspective of the state, there was enthusiastic interest in them both, in building and advancing the "most positive forces on the faculty" in order to repress the influence of the "reactionary forces." (26)

Linke also documents the fact that the promotion of both the Müllers to positions of professor was not greeted with unanimous agreement among members of the theological faculty. Walter Elliger, professor of church history and director of the Institute for Christian Archaeology and Church Art, along with Professor Erich Fascher, opposed the appointment of Hanfried Müller to professor. (27) Elliger, who had been at Humboldt since 1950, and against whom the University had taken disciplinary measures in 1961 because he had stated that "as a Christian, he no longer had any confidence in our state" (28), was allowed to accept a position in Bochum (West Germany) in 1963.

Apparently, Müller found himself often at odds with members of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), a political party that sought to represent the church and church-related interests.

In this regard, Linke writes:

It is obvious that the opposition between the Müller-faction and the CDU-faction essentially defined the situation of the Berlin theological faculty/section up to the Wende in 1989. It is equally obvious that in these decades H. Müller repeatedly made use of students in order to advance his interests, to procure information, to stifle other lecturers, and to guide
disciplinary proceedings against students. (29) Linke also notes that, beginning in the mid-1960s, Müller was the theological faculty representative to the Synod of Berlin-Brandenburg, a position that allowed him also to represent the government's positions to the church. (30)

The construction of the Berlin Wall on August 13, 1961 had its impact on the theological faculty at Humboldt University. On October 4 of that year a theological faculty meeting took place in which Müller and his wife, lecturers at the time, participated. Dietmar Linke has published the minutes of that meeting. (31) The record summarizes the comments and exchanges of the participants. According to the scribe, the two central issues under discussion were: (a) the strengthening of socialism, and (b) service in the army. (32) Müller's contributions to the discussion are revealing. Early on, the conversation revolved around war and peace with the issue of reunification in the background. In response to Prorektor Naumann's observation that peace was more important than reunification and that atomic weapons had been forced on the DDR, Müller concurred: "The battle against the rearmament of West Germany is lost. The strengthening of the GDR is the only means of preventing atomic war." (33)

Later in the same meeting, after it was agreed that theological students had a military responsibility (pacifism was unacceptable), the issue of the church arose. The following is the clerk's summary of an exchange involving Müller:
Vogel: Our task is not to provide a theological agreement ["Plazet"] to a particular policy.  
Strasser: (inquires about the formulation Naumann had begun)  
Fessen: The issue is not a theological agreement, but rather a political ["staatsbürgerlich"] declaration.  
Müller: The question of those refusing military service is not the central question. The central question is the actual internal recognition of the GDR. (read the proposal of a longer declaration).  
Rose: Müller always talks of the church generally. But what is at stake has nothing to do with general appearances. It is gradually becoming intolerable that Müller always apostrophizes the church.  
Müller: Whatever I say against the church, I always say against myself. But I hate Dibelius, Lilie and their consorts.  
Schneider: Where does Müller cooperate with the church?  
Müller: The church will not let me! (a vigorous dispute with Schneider in the course of which Müller compared the outsider character ["das Nicht-Gehörtwerden"] of his message to that of a prophet.) (34)  

In a remarkable way, this exchange reveals something of Müller's view of his own relationship to the East German church - not accepted by the church and, as such, a view of himself as a prophet. Incidentally, the declaration that was finally adopted by the theological faculty was one that, according to Linke, was based on a draft composed by Müller. It affirms the right of the GDR to defend itself and to work toward peace in Europe. In the penultimate paragraph one finds the following statement:  

The theological faculty deeply regrets that developments since 1945 have not led to the establishment of an undivided, militarily neutral, democratic and peace-loving German republic as a whole. However, their responsibility for this unfortunate development as well as for the present danger of war and the resulting painful effects of our situation rests with all those who, in an uninformed way, refused to recognize German guilt and its consequences, and did not abandon their militaristic and aggressive West German policy, as required by the Potsdam Agreement. (35)
Linke observes that the adoption of this declaration by the theological faculty represented a victory for the "progressive forces," a victory that was in accord with the views of the leadership of the university. (36)

Müller remained at Humboldt University in East Berlin until his retirement in 1990. He still lives in Berlin and continues to edit and write for the left-wing theological journal, Die Weißenseer Blätter. (37)

In 1995 Müller maintained that he "never formally studied Marxism," that in this regard he was "self-taught" ("Autodidakt"). (38) He goes on to write:

Having grown up without any contact with Communists or Marxism, during the war while recovering in the hospital in Bethel I came across in the church library there Marx's "Kapital," which apparently had been overlooked in the purging of the library by the Nazis; as something forbidden, it was attractive to me. I was completely surprised by the theoretical depth of the work - I had not thought that Communists could think, but I honestly understood very little of what I read. Then as a Wehrmacht soldier in Italy, I had some practical encounters with some partisans who were certainly, in large part, Communists. In 1945/46 in Bonn I became interested in the emerging political parties, including especially the Communists, as they, along with the German Jews, were for us those to whom we bourgeois opponents of Hitler had failed to offer solidarity. With this perspective, in 1948/9 I participated in Göttingen in a "working group for the study of Marxism" in which under the leadership of the Social Democrat sociologist, Dieter Goldschmidt (later at the "free" University in West Berlin) we read the Communist Manifesto. Then there was the FDJ-Hochschulgruppe [Free German Youth-College Group] which we founded in 1949/50 in Göttingen, a Marxist independent study group; later at the Humboldt University in Berlin there was the opportunity to participate in further Marxist studies. What certainly influenced me even more was reading the works of Marx and Engels in connection with a growing awareness of the presence in church history of class struggles in every period. But I have never "studied" Marxism either
in fact or even systematically. (39)

Published documents in the East German Secret Police (Stasi) files also indicate that Müller served as an informant to the Stasi from November 1954 until the fall of the East German regime in 1989. (40) Those files reveal the theological graduate student to be eager and willing to inform on churchmen and university faculty members. Müller's code name with the Stasi was "Hans Meier" (sometimes referred to simply as "M"). The following excerpt is from the initial Stasi report on the recruitment of Müller. It is dated December 13, 1954 and is recorded by a Second Lieutenant Kullik:

M. has scholarly ambitions in theology at the Humboldt University in Berlin. We became aware of him through the GI [Geheimer Informant, "secret informant"] "Anton", who spoke with Müller and his wife regarding preparations for the church conference ["Kirchentag"] in Leipzig. In this conversation Müller and his wife expressed a negative attitude toward all the speakers and other church leaders with the exception of Heinemann and Niemöller. After a thorough explanation and description of the proposal to enlist Müller as a secret informant, he was visited by Gen. Sgraja and Gen. Kullik on 29.10.1954 for the first conference in his home. The introduction took place there as representatives of the MdI [Ministry of the Interior] and then later as representatives of SfS [State Secretary of State Security]. In the discussion we explained to Müller that as an organ of security we would like for him to inform us about the situation of the theological faculty. M. demonstrated a complete understanding of that and began to report to us. In this account he inquired as to whether it might be possible to publish a German theological journal. He was very interested in this and would be happy to work, together with his wife, on it. M. described to us the particular professors on the theological faculty and told us about his studies in Göttingen where he also enjoyed the full support of Prof. Wolf and Prof. Iwand in his work in society ["in gesellschafflicher Arbeit"]. Prof. Wolf and Prof. Iwand belong to his close circle of friends in West Germany. Because of time constraints, another discussion with
M. was scheduled for 3.11.1954 at the MdI. M. appeared on time for the scheduled meeting at the MdI and was then asked to sign an agreement to work with the MdI. Both in prior conversation with him as well as in the written agreement, he demonstrated a very open attitude. He explained to us that we needed to treat his statements with great confidentiality because otherwise news of certain things among the church leadership could have negative consequences for him. It was explained to him that everything he shared with us would be held in the strictest confidence. M. signed the written agreement without any objection. M. himself suggested the cover name "Hans Meier." On the day of the agreement he delivered to us the entire exchange of letters between him and Niemöller for examination.

Brief evaluation:
In his conduct Müller is very open, talkative, and forthcoming. His attitude toward democratic development is good. Because of connections to, and knowledge of, ecclesiastical, theological issues, he will be able to report to us concerning many matters, including events in church politics; he will also be able to provide proposals regarding some issues. His wife also has scholarly aspirations and also opposes Adenauer's politics and the views of the leading church people. Besides connections with theologians, M. has connections to CDU functionaries like (...) and (...). Working in cooperation with M., we will, over time, be able to develop a good informant. (41)

When asked, in 1995, to comment upon Müller's connections with the East German authorities, Michael Beintker, a contemporary of Müller and a professor of theology at the University of Halle (an der Saale), made reference to this collection of Stasi documents and clearly considered them authentic. While in Halle, Beintker, now at the University of Münster, had actively opposed the East German regime and found himself under surveillance by government informants. (42)

In May 1993 in Frankfurt am Main Müller addressed an organization called Wissenschaft & Sozialismus. The title of his address was "Congratulations from an Outsider on the 175th
Birthday of Karl Marx: On the Encounter of a Dialectical Theologian with Scientific Socialism" ("Gratulation eines Außenseiters zum 175. Geburtstag von Karl Marx: Von der Begegnung eines dialektischen Theologen mit dem wissenschaftliche [sic] Sozialismus.") (43) In this presentation Müller recalls the internal conflict and contradiction he felt as a 20-year-old at the end of World War II. On the one hand, he had not subscribed to Nazism; indeed he had become active in the Confessing Church as a youth. On the other hand, he had participated in the war and, therefore, shared the guilt of war crimes and crimes against humanity. "And out of this question of guilt arose the question of how fascism and war are made and how they can be prevented." (44)

In his 1993 attempt to address this question, Müller maintains that he found answers from the church unsatisfactory. The Confessing Church, while being anti-Nazi and anti-Hitler, had succumbed to "genuinely clerical fascism" - not only in its opposition to the Nazi Party and its support for Franco in the Spanish Civil War, but also in taking the middle road "against 'National Socialism and Stalinism' with their call to struggle against all 'totalitarianism.'" This middle position, which opposed both the nationalist extremists on the right and the Communist extremists on the left, reflected the church's desire to protect its own interests, according to Müller. (45)

Müller also found no help in answers provided by "bourgeois democrats" ("bürgerliche Demokraten"). After all, National So-
cialism had arisen "from an order in state and society [...] which had almost seemed to be a model democracy and whose 'Weimar constitution' was idolized at the time no less than the 'Basic Law' of the FRG.'" (46) It gave Müller great pause to think that a Social Democrat friend of his parents felt he had to respect the decision of the people to choose a government under Hitler ("if the majority of the German people indicated in a free election that they desired a government under Hitler, he would have to respect it as such"). (47)

Only the Communists were able to answer satisfactorily the question that had plagued Müller and his friends at the end of World War II. Writing in 1993, Müller maintained:

Thus to my surprise it was the Communists who were able to answer our question. They were able not only to explain who, why, and by what means war and fascism were evoked, but they were also able to show that they had warned of this ahead of time: "Whoever votes for Hindenburg, votes for Hitler; whoever votes for Hitler, votes for war." And they had an understanding of democracy which not only permitted but demanded extra-parliamentary opposition to the German-national-National Socialist coalition government which was constituted according to all rules of Parliament - even at the risk of one's own life. (48)

While Müller found clericalism and "bourgeois democrats" lacking in being able to answer his questions satisfactorily, it is interesting that he found answers to his questions in Communism and Communist ideology and not, for example, in theology. At the very least, this fact raises the question as to which, for him, came first. His critique of the church and of western democracy may well be valid, but, among other things, it ignores, for example, the refusal of the Communists to make com-
mon cause with the opponents to Hitler. Clearly, his Marxist leanings have influenced his theology more than his theology has informed his Marxist tendencies. He identifies himself as an "outsider" to his audience, presumably because he considers himself a theologian first and a Marxist second. And yet, his closing words in this 1993 address in Frankfurt suggest at least an equal commitment to Marxist ideology as to Christian theology:

I wish for you and us that you will not retract or surrender the historical-dialectical-materialistic consciousness, that you will not capitulate after the defeat but will use the time of counterrevolutionary crisis to re-establish and develop further this consciousness, and that as those who are now defeated you will rise again with the proud statement: 'And the revolution continues!' - not only the earth around the sun, but with the punishment of the loss of all civilization and culture also human society to Communism! (49)

In 1958 Müller published an essay in the form of a pamphlet that bore the title "Der Christ in Kirche und Staat" ("The Christian in Church and State"). (50) Using the Barmen Declaration as his basis, particularly the fifth thesis (51), Müller sets forth his understanding of the the proper relationship between church and state and the role of the Christian in society. A brief examination of this paper will demonstrate two characteristics of Müller's thought: first, his language reveals a Marxist view of history; and second, his view of church and state is what Robert Goeckel describes as "a radical separation of the worldly and spiritual kingdoms" (52), a view that was mentioned and described in the Introduction to this dissertation.
At the outset Müller sets the issue in a twofold manner: (a) the Christian in the state and the political ethics of the Christian, and (b) the Christian in the church and the discipleship of the true church. (53) He then defines the nature of each:

The church is a matter of faith and proclamation. In its essence it is hidden to human science and natural understanding; it is appropriated only in faith where human perception is able to see nothing other than a religious community. On the other hand, the state is a matter of scientific investigation and ideological knowledge; in contrast to the church it is precisely an entity that is evident and not hidden, one that is accessible to knowledge and not faith. (54)

In distinguishing between the two, Müller also makes a point that he will pursue throughout his writings, namely, that the church is only rightly understood when it is in the service of Jesus Christ, a point which in itself may be indisputable, but which will lead Müller to a somewhat more controversial view of the church:

This distinction between state and church, however, postulates that one can speak of the state only in objective terms because it speaks scientifically and rationally and therefore in the name of and in obligation to rational understanding, whereas with regard to the church one can only speak appropriately in the name of Jesus Christ himself and thus in testimony to the faith. But neither here nor there may one speak in the name of the church. [ . . . ] (55)

The state, then, can be viewed as a matter that is subject to scientific human reason, while the church can only be discussed in terms of faith that seeks to serve Jesus Christ. In short, the state and its purpose are objective and visible, while the church and its mission are subjective and hidden, or at least
not as readily evident to those outside the church as to those inside the church.

But then Müller, in this 1958 essay, discusses the way in which the view of the state has changed since New Testament times. Of particular significance and interest is the language he uses to do so:

The first significant change in the view of the state occurred when the bourgeois revolution understood the state in terms of the sovereignty of the people ["Volks-souveränität"] - and thus burdened every person, every Christian also, whether he wished it or not, with civic "staatsbürgerlich", and therefore, public ["staatlich"] responsibility. The second important shift in the view of the state was brought by the proletarian revolution which understood the state as an organized political power of the ruling class over the oppressed class - and therefore revealed the utopian-illusionary character of the bourgeois sovereignty of the people, but at the same time provided an historical perspective to the realization of the principle "All power proceeds from the people"; this also burdened substantively every person with political responsibility for which he takes part in the class struggle.

If the view of the state brought by the bourgeois revolution contributed, above all, the formal and individual and only apparent participation of all citizens in political responsibility, then the socialistic view of the state contributed the substantive and collective and real involvement of the masses in the political responsibility vis-à-vis the state or for the state. (56)

Müller's understanding of the history of the development of the state is couched in terms of "bourgeois," "class struggle," "proletariat," "masses," "oppressed class," and "socialism."

His use of language will be explored further in Chapter Three.

Furthermore, he argues that not only has class struggle been a perennial problem of the state, but it has been one for the church as well. Müller sees an opportunity for this problem to be addressed, if not altogether resolved, in a modern
socialist state:

All of church history shows us how in the church's class ties the gospel became repeatedly untrustworthy ["unglaubwürdig"]. But what is new, in fact, is the awareness of this problem in light of the class struggle. The resolution of this problem might be a crucial task of dogmatics and ethics in our generation. (57)

Noting that both church and state are part of "the yet unredeemed world" (language of Barmen 5) (58), Müller argues that

[t]he church of forgiven sinners stands in complete solidarity with this world in as much as God's grace is meant for this world and it is meant for the church in so far as the church belongs to this world. [. . .] In the church's relationship with the state, with which it exists together in the still unredeemed world, the church can never claim a greater righteousness or dignity. (59)

The task of the just state is to work for justice and peace. It may employ force only in the service of that objective. Interestingly, Müller does not define what he means by justice and peace. But the church, because it is part of the still unredeemed world along with the state, has no right to interfere with the state's responsibility to preserve justice and peace. However, the Christian does have a responsibility not only to support the state in its responsibility, but also to be engaged politically:

Along with the criterion of the just state in its concern for justice and peace there is also the criterion of the Christian's political role in the class struggle. [. . .]

It is impossible to demand neutrality in the class struggle from the Christian who acts responsibly in political matters because every political or indirectly political activity is participation in the class struggle. The church, however, must be neutralized ["muß . . . neutralisiert werden"] in the class struggle for the sake of the freedom of the Word of God. (60)
So Christians must be politically engaged in the class struggle because they belong to the same unredeemed world as non-Christians, but the church, for the sake of the freedom of the Word of God, must be neutral (or "be neutralized"). This takes place, Müller explains,

in that in Barmen the political role is tied to the understanding and ability of the individual in obedience to the gospel, but not directly to the gospel itself which would then, in fact, become law. It is a narrow path that is walked - the limits described here cannot be explicated in detail here. (61)

The distinction Müller seems to be making is that the Christian, out of obedience to the gospel, has a political responsibility to the state, society, and the world, but that that responsibility is not to try to make the world conform to the gospel. Or, to put it another way, the church is not to dominate or clericalize the state, society, or the world.

What, then, is the task of the church? Müller writes:

If the criterion for a just state is the concern for justice and peace, the true church finds its criterion in the freedom of God's grace: "With her faith as well as her obedience, with her message as well as her ordinances, she has to witness in the midst of the world of sin as the church of forgiven sinners . . ." (Barmen 3). "The commission of the church," according to Barmen 6, "in which her freedom is founded, consists in this: in place of Christ and thus in the service of his own word and work, to extend through word and sacrament the message of the free grace of God to all people." Wherever it departs from this charge or goes beyond it, it ceases to be the true church. (62)

Consequently, the church "may neither clericalize the state nor secularize itself." (63) Although Müller fails to define what justice and peace mean in terms of the responsibility of the state, he finds Barmen's definition of the responsibility
of the church satisfactory, namely, "to witness in the midst of the world of sin as the church of forgiven sinners." (64)

Interestingly, Müller makes only passing reference to the conclusion of Barmen 5, namely, "We repudiate the false teaching that the church can turn over the form of her message and ordinances at will or according to some dominant ideological and political convictions." (65) Although this may have originally referred to Nazi ideology, and although Müller concedes that Barmen does not require a socialist perspective (66), we will see in what follows that by his own commitment to Marxism, Müller has not only misunderstood and misinterpreted Bonhoeffer and Barth, but has also allowed that commitment to dominate his theology.

Finally, Müller's program inevitably causes him to succumb, no doubt unwittingly, to the temptation to synthesize socialist ideology and Christian theology, something Barth condemned in his address at Tambach in 1919. Thus, when for the first time Christianity could be tested in a Communist-dominated state, Müller's perspective reflects the failure of this synthesis. While he would, no doubt, reject this interpretation of his work, it seems to me that his writings, at the very least, leave themselves open to this interpretation, and, at the most, confirm it.

In the Introduction we saw that there were, and are, many theologians in the former German Democratic Republic who were equally influenced by the thought of Barth and Bonhoeffer and
who struggled mightily with what it meant to be the church in a socialist and totalitarian state. However, they did not share Müller's commitment to Marxist ideology. Indeed, that was part of their struggle — how to be the church under an ideology with which they disagreed or which, at the very least, limited their ability to be the church. Even if some may have sympathized with Marxist socialism, that does not necessarily mean subjugating their theological and faith convictions to that particular ideology. Müller found himself more at odds with the church than with the East German Marxist state and its ideology.

Endnotes


   It should be noted that there are many strands in the history of Christian, or Religious, Socialism. Stoecker, for example, had a social conscience and was concerned about economic and social inequities. But he was also a nationalist and an anti-Semite. Ragaz, on the other hand, held a more internationalist perspective in his concern for the poor of the world. What these various views have in common is a tendency toward a communitarian perspective and away from pious individualism.

   For a comprehensive treatment of Religious Socialism in Weimar Germany, including a comparison of Paul Tillich and Karl Barth in this regard, cf. Renate Breipohl's *Religiöser Sozialismus Weimarer Republik* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag,
1971). Also, during the Weimar years, there appeared a publication, *Zwischen den Zeiten*, that held importance for a young group of theologians who not only subscribed to dialectical theology, but who also had been influenced by, and were sympathetic with, Christian Socialism. Appearing from 1923-1933, it was published by Georg Merz and edited by Karl Barth, Friedrich Gogarten, and Eduard Thurneysen. Over the span of its life several articles on socialism and Christianity appeared as well as on church and state. E.g., cf. "Sozialismus und Christentum" by Thurneysen in the first issue in 1923; "Hermann Kutter" by Thurneysen in the fourth issue of 1923; "Christentum und Marxismus" by Fritz Lieb in a 1929 issue; "Staat und Kirche" by Friedrich Gogarten in a 1932 issue; "Konfessionalität und politische Haltung" by Hans Asmussen in a 1933 issue; and "Theologisch-politischer Diskurs" by Hinrich Knittermeyer in the same 1933 issue.


7. The Word of God and the Word of Man, p. 299.

8. Ibid., p. 277.


11. E.g., Church and State; Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings, 1946-52; and, of course, at various points in the Church Dogmatics (e.g., cf. II/2, pp. 720 ff.; III/4, pp. 455 ff., among others). For an extensive and helpful analysis of the relationship between Barth's own theology and his view of Communism, cf. Charles C. West's *Communism and the Theologians*, pp. 177-325.

12. In contrast to the thesis of Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt who sees Barth, first and foremost, as a political theologian; cf. Marquardt's *Theologie und Sozialismus. Das Beispiel Karl Barths*; cf. also various reactions to Marquardt's thesis in Karl Barth and Radical Politics (edited and translated by George Hunsinger). Marquardt's perspective and his critics will be examined in Chapter Six of this dissertation.


18. In his article "Truth Telling in Eastern Europe: The Liberation and the Burden" (Journal of Church and State, Autumn 1991, pp. 701-729), Walter Sawatsky distinguishes between the ideology of Marxist countries, on the one hand, and truth and liberty, on the other. The memory of East European thinkers, he writes,

is of a society so ideological that truth and liberty became casualties. In order to sustain the rightness of party policy - and the Marxist view was that the Party was following the immutable dictates of historical determinism - it became increasingly necessary to declare as real what was patently untrue. (p. 707)

19. In a letter to me, dated October 12, 1993, Müller writes that he does not wish to be characterized as a part of the Christian Socialist tradition. If labels must be used, he prefers that of "linke Orthodoxie." Although he does not say whether this is to be understood in theological or political terms, presumably Müller intends it theologically. Müller writes that he hopes "daß meine Theologie auch so stehen könnte wie sie steht, wenn ich niemals ein politisches Wort hätte sagen müssen."

In assessing the place of his own theological perspective and political activity in East Germany, Müller writes:

Meine politische Aktivität war, ist und bleibt ein "opus alienum", ein "Notamt", so wie man eben, auch wenn man weder Arzt noch Sanitäter ist, sofern man bei einem Verkehrsunfall dazukommt - und in heutiger Politik gibt es ja neben Verkehrsunfällen fast nur noch die Fälle vorsätzlicher Verkehrsgefährdung - jedenfalls erst einmal die Arterie abbinden muß, aus der der Verletzte zu verbluten droht, um sich dann im
The Marxist language which penetrates and dominates his theological writings is but one indication that it is his Marxist perspective that influences his theology rather than his theology that underlies his political point-of-view.

20. In Dietmar Linke, Theologiestudenten der Humboldt-Universität. Zwischen Hörsaal und Anklagebank, p. 16. In "Pfarrer, Christen und Katholiken", Besier and Wolf provide additional biographical information about Grüber. His dates are 1891-1975. He studied theology and philosophy in Bonn, Berlin, and Utrecht, participated in World War I as a metal worker, and was ordained in 1920. He served several pastorates during the Weimar and early Hitler years. From 1940-43, he was in concentration camps in Sachsenhausen and Dachau. Among other activities following World War II, he was one of the founders of the Evangelische Verlagsanstalt in Berlin. From 1949-58, he was "the authorized agent of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany in the government of the GDR" ("Befördmächtigter des Rates der EKD bei der Regierung der DDR"). In 1970, he became an honorary citizen of Berlin. (p. 810)


22. Ibid.

23. Linke, p. 41.

24. Ibid., p. 41.

25. Ibid., p. 44.

26. Ibid., p. 42.

27. Ibid., p. 43.

28. Ibid., p. 33.

29. Ibid., pp. 45-6.

30. Ibid., pp. 44-5.

31. Ibid., pp. 153-161.
32. Ibid., p. 153.
33. Ibid., p. 154.
34. Ibid., p. 156.
35. Ibid., p. 159.
36. Ibid., p. 159.
37. Begun in 1982, this journal is an outgrowth of a group of left-wing theologians known as the Weißenseer Arbeitskreis (WAK) which, although having its roots in the Confessing Church during the Hitler period, was revived and reorganized in 1958. A review of its history and perspective can be found in the 4/1988 issue of Die Weißenseer Blätter. In a letter to me, dated October 12, 1993, Müller writes the following about this group:


zusammen und beriefen zur Artikulation eines allgemeinen "Unbehagens" unter den nicht Dibelius-hörigen Pfarrer der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Kirche einen "Arbeitskreis" in dem Berliner Stadtteil Weißensee (daher der Name) zu einer Zusammenkunft. [. . . ]


Müller goes on to note that the Weißenseer Blätter originated in 1982 to bridge the sense of discontinuity that arose from the relatively calm relations between church and state following the March 6 meeting between Honecker and church authorities (led by Schönherr). Müller has served as editor and publisher since 1990.


39. Ibid.

40. Linke, p. 450.

41. Ibid., pp. 451-2.

43. Printed in Die Weiβenseer Blätter, 2/1993 (April/May), pp. 30-54.

44. Ibid., p. 31.
45. Ibid., p. 31.
46. Ibid., p. 31.
47. Ibid., p. 31.
48. Ibid., pp. 31-2.
49. Ibid., p. 54.


51. The fifth thesis is based on I Peter 2:17: "Fear God, honor the king!" Cf. Leith, Creeds of the Churches, p. 521.

52. Goeckel, The Lutheran Church and the East German State, p. 98, Footnote 36.


54. Ibid., p. 6.
55. Ibid., p. 6.
56. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
57. Ibid., p. 9.
58. The first paragraph of Barmen 5 reads:

   The Bible tells us that according to divine arrangement the state has the responsibility to provide for justice and peace in the yet unredeemed world, in which the church also stands, according to the measure of human insight and human possibility, by the threat and use of force. (Leith, Creeds, p. 521)

60. Ibid., pp. 15-16.
61. Ibid., p. 16.
62. Ibid., p. 19.

63. Ibid., p. 19. The original reads: "Die Kirche hat weder die Möglichkeit, den Staat zu clerikalisieren, noch sich selbst zu säkularisieren."

64. Leith, Creeds, p. 521.

65. Ibid., p. 521.

66. Der Christ in Kirche und Staat, p. 17.
CHAPTER THREE - MULLER'S LANGUAGE

In the May 1991 issue of Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte Michael Beintker, professor of theology at the University of Halle (ander Saale) and an activist in opposition to the government of the former German Democratic Republic, published an article under the title "Die Idee des Friedens als Waffe im Kalten Krieg" ("The Idea of Peace as a Weapon in the Cold War"). (1) In this article Beintker takes to task those theologians and churchmen in the former GDR who in their perspectives superimposed their Marxist-Leninist ideology on their theology. Specifically, he notes the way in which the biblical notion of peace is transformed to suit their purposes and how those who disagreed with their perspective must have been against peace, socialism, and the GDR. He writes:

The infamy of the process of accumulating all peace-loving powers for "our cause" consisted in the clumsy, but effective elimination of critical consciousness, the expressed renunciation of a free way of thinking of the ideological model of the East-West conflict, and in the imposition of guilty consciences: If socialism = peace, and if the GDR = socialism, then you must be ashamed of yourself if as a Christian you are critical of the GDR, for you are then against peace (and, in effect, for imperialistic politics of aggression). (2)

Beintker goes on to observe that those who adopted such a perspective saw themselves as being on the only correct theological course; they made reference to that which [. . . ] was a most cunning political domestication of theology, namely, to the Barmen Declaration, to Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Niemöller and Hans-Joachim Iwand; as the majority they saw themselves as the rightful heirs to the Confessing Church and charged with carrying out the legacy "obstructed by the EKD." (3)
He refers to this approach as "pseudo-theology" and includes Hanfried Müller (and Müller's wife, Rosemarie Müller-Streisand, a church historian) among those who engaged in it. Noting how the Barmen Declaration was used to justify support for the SED (4) government in the GDR, Beintker writes:

In effect, the position in the "anti-imperialistic struggle" became a current confessional question, grounded in orthodox terms and following the party line. "The great question in theology," wrote Hanfried Müller in 1974, "appears to me today - as it has always been - to be the question: Do we rely on our Christian self-understandings, world relations, or theologies which in their appended genitive reveal the gods whom they serve in addition to Christ." Such theological clarity, which Hanfried Müller also intended for the adamant opponents of the East-CDU, had to be unveiled in the same context as theological docetism, as a purposeful explanation of the incompetence of theology in the service of peace when Müller then continued, not without reference to the "need to learn" ["Lernbedarf"] in the churches in the DDR: "And the great political question is the class question, the question of socialism, peace, and progress or imperialism, war, and barbarism." (5)

Beintker does not object to critiques of imperialism by theologians such as Müller or by anyone else. Rather, his objection is twofold: first, the adoption by Müller (and others) of critical language that has become clichés, and second, the absence of any critical objective analysis of the party line they defend:

Theologically, defeat of imperialistic powers, especially those which threaten peace, cannot be objected to. Imperialistic powers are always dangerous. But those also played with fire who attacked the "bourgeois" societies of the West with a nebulous cliché of imperialism and at the same time were unable to cultivate the slightest trace of criticism for the imperialism of the socialism, Moscow style, which understood itself as being constantly on the march, as if one were always living in the kingdom of "eternal peace," the perfected democracy
where human rights were fully realized. (6)

Beintker's observations are particularly pertinent to the contention of this work. As we examine Müller's appropriation of the life and work of Bonhoeffer and Barth, it should become increasingly clear that Müller's views are predicated on a particular political-ideological perspective. (7)

In considering Müller's treatment of Bonhoeffer and Barth, it is essential that we see in concrete terms how Müller's Marxist language is reflected in his theological perspective, thus lending credence to Beintker's analysis. This will make our examination of Müller's view of Bonhoeffer and Barth clearer, for this view is based on some subtle, and some not so subtle, presuppositions that are reflected in his use of language.

In 1977 Müller published an introduction to theology under the title Evangelische Dogmatik im Überblick. (8) While parts of this work will be examined later, it is the two-page Foreword that draws our attention here. After explaining the purpose and background of this effort, Müller notes that he had the impression that some persons hoped, while others feared, that his would be a "more political Dogmatics." He continues:

In the meantime I can imagine that there are also some readers for whom this outline might sound too "political" in many ways. A few observations are in order as to how, in my opinion, evangelical dogmatics must adhere to the right path of theological and political responsibility vis-à-vis a false politicization of theology and vis-à-vis a false apolitical Christianity.

Of course dogmatics - even in outline - can be carried out only in an environment which corresponds to the liveliness of evangelical theology and is therefore certainly based on the existence of the theologian which
is concretely defined in the here and now and, therefore, is also political. At the same time, the political existence of Christians is constantly the this-worldly, the "non-religious" interpretation of their theological existence today. But this political component can be enjoined directly or indirectly, and it would be wrong—especially political—to make the political the main theme. (9)

Claiming that one's political existence may inevitably be part of one's theological reflection, but that one's politics should not be mistaken for theology, Müller so mixes the language of both, as will become evident in this and subsequent chapters, that it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish the two.

In this same Foreword he writes that he does not want to write a political theology or a socialistic theology, but rather precisely in view of the ecumenical discussion to conduct good, true evangelical theology in the GDR, in political cooperation with non-Christians, in everyday respect to the tasks, achievements, and problems of socialistic society. I consider this to be precisely a—by the way, the only Christian specific—politicum. ["übrigens das einzige Christen spezifische! — Politicum." ] (10)

Even if Müller's intent is to write a theology which contributes to the ecumenical discussion by addressing life in the GDR, one must ask the extent to which he can do this fairly without a critical eye toward the very society in which he lives. In other words, while he may deal with the "tasks, achievements, and problems of socialistic society," can he do so without at least calling into question the presuppositions of that society?

Müller's attribution to his anticipated critics of "imperialism" of one form or another betrays his own (political) ideological commitment, thus rendering his theological assertions,
whatever they may be, suspect - at least in terms of their theological integrity, independent of any ideological or political convictions. In reading what Müller has written, for example, one soon discovers that "imperialism" almost always is a reference to western capitalism. Furthermore, theology as practiced in the western world, as a rule, inevitably reflects an unconscious adherence to, and implicit support of, capitalism and all the sins that accompany it (anti-socialism, anti-Bolshevism, civil religion, exploitation of the poor for economic gain, among others). Thus, Michael Beintker's observation begins to ring true, namely, that Müller reflects the East-West mentality which finds everything wrong on the other side, but refuses to exercise the same kind of critical judgment toward one's own political ideology or system.

How, then, are these ideological tendencies and convictions reflected in Müller's own writings? In the following samples we will be able to discern the prominence of Müller's political ideology in his thought, both by means of his language as well as by the substance of that language.

Müller's Evangelische Dogmatik im Überblick (1977) is structured in the form of a catechism. At various points Müller cites Marx and Engels approvingly. In the section "The Existence of God" we find Question 38: "What does the question of God's existence mean in terms of one's view of the world?" In the fourth paragraph of his answer, Müller writes:

[Karl Marx] does not criticize religion as an intellectual-individual error of believers or a deception
by priests, but rather he demands the revolutionary change of its underlying conditions. Thus, in this respect he deals with the question of God's existence by understanding and overcoming it in historical terms. "To abolish religion as the illusory happiness of the people is to demand their real happiness. The demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the demand to give up a state of affairs which needs illusions. The criticism of religion is therefore in embryo the criticism of the vale of tears, the halo of which is religion." (11)

Müller continues this line of thought in a subsequent excur- sus on "religion and religionlessness." Müller's own Marxist perspective becomes increasingly evident in his references to Feuerbach and Marx. Müller writes:

On the basis of the historically contradictory role of the bourgeoisie there developed in the bourgeois Enlightenment not only plebeian-revolutionary-democratic forms of critiques of religion, as, for example, they found their crowning conclusion in Ludwig Feuerbach, but also aristocratic forms which corresponded to the enlightened absolutism and served to distinguish themselves from all religious demands in order to be able to manipulate religion all the more as an instrument of suppression. Atheism is not indifferent to class. Besides a plebeian atheism, there is also an aristocratic atheism against which Robespierre's protest, with some justification, was aimed: "There are persons who make atheism a kind of religion under the pretext of destroying superstition. But atheism is the business of the aristocracy ["Aber der Atheismus ist Sache der Aristokratie"]: the idea of a supreme being that watches over the oppressed innocence and punishes the triumphant crimes for the people. If God did not exist, one would have to invent him." (12)

Müller goes on to repeat his earlier citation of Marx's "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie" which is quoted above. Following this lengthy list of citations from Marx, Müller writes:

The critique of religion by scientific socialism distinguishes itself from the preceding - and continuing in decline - bourgeois critique of religion with a
statement that it no longer sees religion as an open individual and theoretical problem before it, but rather as a practical socially resolved problem essentially behind it. Therefore, the atheism that is established by scientific socialism - so undeniable that it belongs to the scientific world-view of socialism - is not the central issue, but rather the accompanying shadow of its materialistic and, therefore, non-religious world-view: "As regards the German Social-Democratic workers," writes Engels in 1874, "it can be said that atheism has already outlived its usefulness for them; this pure negation does not apply to them, since they no longer stand in theoretical, but only in practical opposition to all belief in God: they are simply through with God, they live and think in the real world and are, therefore, materialists." That means neither that for Marxism the question of theism is unimportant[...] nor does it mean that Marxism wanes in the theoretical interest of critique of religion. On the contrary, Engels notes almost simultaneously: "German Protestantism is the only modern form of Christianity that values criticism.[...] It alone has a theology and thus an object of criticism - historical, philological, and philosophical.[...] A religion such as Christianity cannot simply be destroyed by ridicule and invective; it will be overcome scientifically, that is, explained historically, and natural science alone cannot do that. (13)

In an article appearing in the Weißenseer Blätter in 1982 (14) Müller takes up the issue of "dissidents" in Communist countries to address the relationship between the church and culture. It will be recalled that it was at this time that the peace movement was beginning to take hold in East Germany, and that many, both in the church and outside the church, were protesting the increase of Soviet missiles in eastern Europe aimed at the West.

The "dissidents" to whom Müller refers are those who rejected socialist and Communist ideology and sought refuge in the church. But, as will be seen, Müller's analysis is itself driven by an ideological streak which defends socialist soci-
eties and condemns capitalistic, imperialistic ones.

At the outset Müller's language makes clear his contempt for those who desert the socialist cause:

There have always been renegades in socialism. They openly deserted to the bourgeois camp. There they were used for purposes of propaganda - and then forgotten.

There have always been deviations from the party line. In the course of history they were dialectically dissolved ["aufgehoben"] and, viewed as a whole, served objectively the political and theoretical maturation of socialistic ideology in the process of differing opinions within the party.

But renegades and those with varying opinions rarely came to church. And the bourgeois church saw in them - not without malicious joy ["Schadenfreude"] that the revolution devours its own children - Communists who remained suspect, even if they were disappointed in, devastated, and failed by their party. The progressive past of such deserters was understandable as a sin of youth which one could jointly forget with them. (15)

Having said that, however, Müller goes on to observe that the "dissidents" were more than "renegades" and "those with varying opinions" within the party. "Dissidents" Müller defines as those who enjoy the support of anti-Communists and serve them by naming Communists and attacking true socialism by attacking them as comrades of their party. Some of these dissidents have not only run away from their party, but they have run to the church - or have been captured by it. Furthermore, their perspective on life ["Lebensgefühl"] finds an echo at the edges of some of our young congregations. (16)

Thus, Müller finds fault both with "dissidents" and with the church which provides them refuge.

Müller argues that the critique of socialism offered by dissidents "shoots up like weeds in a field and claims an authority which is not warranted." He sees it as a sign of the human strength of our socialist society that many of those wanting out, who at one time became Robin Hoods in the decaying feudalism and who would
have become terrorists under capitalism's law of the
wolf, seize only the pen among us and do not, for the
sake of notoriety, resort to bombs and blackmail of
their party and state by hostage-taking. (17)

Müller's language not only reflects his commitment to socialism
and his contempt for capitalist society, but it also once again
reveals his unwillingness or inability to see any critique of
socialist society as being valid or legitimate. Was it, for
example, only because the socialist society of the GDR was of
a higher human order that dissidents resorted only to a pen
and not to bombs and other acts of terrorism? Might not the
power of the GDR state have had something to do with the hesi-
tation some dissidents might have harbored? And if the social-
ist state was of such a higher and more noble character, why
did the dissidents want to leave? These questions do not come
into the purview of Müller's analysis.

Later in the same 1982 essay Müller describes the virtues
of Communism as it is practiced in Marxist societies:

To be sure, the structure of Communism is also built
in order to provide every member of society the social
possibility of becoming, according to his personal
abilities, a Marx or an Engels; this, however, is im-
possible under the conditions of capitalism and the
period of transition. [...] Only under socialism do
the conditions exist under which the socialist con-
sciousness can be developed independently and in a
disciplined way as an objective ["sachbezogen"] pro-
grammatic way of thinking for everyone. (18)

In the conclusion of this essay Müller argues that, while
bourgeois society has achieved certain successes in science
and technology, it has been at the expense of the workers' de-
pendence on the means of production. This increasingly materi-
alistic society has led to a world-view that is equally materi-
alistic and behind which indeed a religious self-understanding
has arisen. The result is the gradual death of objective relig-
ion (presumably, true Christianity) "with its absolute claim to
truth in dogma and ethics" and the rise of a subjective religion
(presumably, pseudo-Christanity) which has led to "a supposedly
Christian theology which reveals itself to be illusion and, at
times, religious demagogy." (19)

He concludes his essay of 1982 with three reasons the
socialist society of the GDR is preferable to the capitalist
West:

First, we also live in and with our socialist soci-
ety in a world and a time that is fundamentally charac-
terized by the transition from imperialism to social-
ism. At the same time, however, the basic contradic-
tion of capitalism and the anarchy of its production
still governs world economic relations as a whole, and
the imperialistic attempts at expansion influence,
directly and indirectly, international relations. [. . . ]
Here the exploitation of persons by persons persists,
here the class struggle rages on, here the imperial-
istic war still is a threat. [. . . ]
Second, imperialism is engaged even today in a mer-
ciless campaign of destruction with its pressure for
armaments and economic war against the socialist camp
in order to escape, in an expansive way, its own crisis
situation. This complicates the effectiveness of a
socialist planned economy and the uninhibited self-
image of the socialist democracy in its collective
responsibility for all citizens.
Third, our own ideas which govern us do not go un-
attacked. From beyond our borders the ideas of the
ruling class resound in charming variety through our
ether, artfully packaged and virtuously shaped, a
propaganda which [. . . ] truly reflects the art of
calm and peace. [. . . ] Socialism has become too
strong to be attacked from the outside only in a fla-
grant anti-Communism. (20)

Müller not only addresses what he sees as the misguided
notions of "dissidents" in socialist societies, but goes on the offensive in attacking the vices of imperialism and capitalism of the West and in defending the virtues of Marxist socialism in which he has chosen to live.

In 1984 Müller wrote an article for Standpunkt, a Protestant monthly periodical that was published in the GDR from 1973 through 1988. (21) The article was entitled "Der Kirchenkampf - Reformation im 20. Jahrhundert" "The Church Struggle - Reformation in the 20th Century". (22) In this essay Müller compares and contrasts the Reformation of the sixteenth century with the "church struggle" of the twentieth century. Traditionally, he argues, "reformation" in the church has been an attempt to reform the church from within. He writes:

[A reformation] attacks a church which by means of its entire social existence does not bear witness to the gospel, but rather denies it: a church that "seeks its own", from the most sublime longing for its own salvation to the strenuous desire to rule the world as God's representative on earth. It encounters a church that does not reflect its commission to live for others, but rather seeks to secure its own existence and win a place for itself as it interprets and satisfies social needs in a religious way in order to achieve a social basis and function. Therefore, it opposes a church that (in the same act) falsely adapts itself to society and falsely confronts that society, just as selfish as the world, a kind of secularized church that would like to clericalize the world.

Müller then goes on to observe:

And this secularization of the church and clericalization of society takes many forms historically: from caesaropapism of the Roman imperial church to the corpus christianum of western feudalism and the "Christian state" of early bourgeois absolutism to the bourgeois "Christian world" that is sublimated in Christian-humanistic education. (23)
In contrast to the sixteenth century church, Müller writes:

the bourgeois church certainly played the role of a "moral-religious" support of the capitalistic society, but more as a lackey than as a leader. Correspondingly, the Protestant "reformatorisch" attack on it did not have the effect of an incendiary spark, but rather of a symptom of the beginning socialist revolution. Therefore, from a social perspective this reformation has a much narrower significance, but from a purely church historical perspective its significance is much broader. (24)

It soon becomes clear that Müller's view of the church and of church history are colored by a Marxist interpretation of history and society. Not only is capitalism seen as evil, but the church in a capitalist society inevitably succumbs to the values and drives of that society, thus becoming its "lackey," according to Müller. Even the church's missionary efforts are a reflection of capitalism's imperialistic tendencies. Thus, historically, the choices before the church have been either to become worldly, like the society in which it exists, or to try to exercise its influence on the worldly powers and thus "clericalize" the world. Hence, for Müller, a third alternative is required and he finds it in a Marxist view of society and the world, a view which, at least in theory, is concerned with the exploited, rejected, dispossessed of the world. In this view the church shares the same concern as the (Marxist) state, and neither sees itself nor is seen by the state as a rival for power. The church sees itself as sharing the same concern as the state for the powerless, but expresses this concern in the name of Jesus Christ.

After examining and comparing the social and theological
crises in 1525-6 and 1917 in which the response first by Luther and later by the German Protestant church was to retreat to a national and social conservatism, Müller goes on to look at the German church in the years of National Socialism. His critical analysis, once again, reveals a prior political influence. He writes:

This Protestant clericalism, as Otto Dibelius especially viewed it, was based on the social consequences that had been demonstrated in Luther's ties to the princes and his separation from patricians, plebeians, and revolutionary peasants, his pilgrimage from reformation to restoration. The Protestant churches were confined socially to the "other classes" ["Restschichten"] of the Middle Ages. Their class character was typified by a close association with the nobility. They found support among the masses in the peasant class and in those petit bourgeois circles that lived by production and trade of simple wares. But they were precisely the important reserves in the class struggle. The ruling class used them not only as cattle in warfare, but also as an unthinking electoral herd in peacetime. The church was able to manipulate them in the interest of the ruling class and was honored for doing so. On this rested the new political clericalism. Dibelius expressed this quite openly: "Unhindered, the church was able to develop its extraordinary gift of ruling the masses." (25)

Müller's critique of "Protestant clericalism" may, in fact, be a legitimate one. But he betrays any pretense to objectivity by arguing with language that reflects his own political bias, namely, "petit bourgeois" ("kleinbürgerlich"), "class struggle" ("Klassenkampf"), and "ruling class" ("herrschende Klasse"). Even if his critique is considered to be legitimate, it loses much of its force due to the subtle suggestion that there is an ideological agenda behind it. Moreover, one is forced to ask how critical Müller is, or can be, toward his own ideological agenda. In short, how honest is Müller in evaluating his own
perspective as well as that which he critiques? This is precisely the question Michael Beintker raises. Müller's objections to Christian nationalism and Christian clericalism are based not so much on theological honesty as on a Marxist interpretation of history and of the contemporary world.

Finally, in 1989, the year of the GDR's downfall, Müller published a remarkable essay in the Weißenseer Blätter entitled "Offener Brief an meine Freunde in der SED" ("Open Letter to My Friends in the SED") in which he offers his critique, as an "outsider," of the faulty Communist leadership that led to the demise of the GDR. As will be seen, this is not a critique of socialism or Communism, but of the leadership within the Communist Party of East Germany which, Müller claims, betrayed the ideals and aims of that Party. Müller's claim on being an "outsider" is threefold: as a Christian, as a churchman who has had to live with much anti-Communism within the church, and as a member of no political party. Thus, Müller ostensibly seeks to maintain some distance between himself and those whom he addresses, namely, former Communist leaders and functionaries in the GDR. And yet, as will soon become evident, in this role as an "outsider" Müller clearly reveals a prior commitment to Marxist socialism. It is as if Müller's understanding of Christianity can only be rightly practiced in a Marxist socialist society.

In this "open letter" Müller addresses three issues: (a) the attack on the GDR by enemies of socialism, (b) the question of followers, renegades, and deserters "in view of
your party and the cause of socialism," and (c) the "question of trust" which "is now raised among you, against you, and throughout the whole of society in the GDR." (26)

Under the first issue Müller considers the condition of the current struggle between "imperialism" and the Communist movement. He writes:

In its anti-Communist struggle imperialism has achieved a success. The socialist camp and the international workers movement in most of the imperialist countries have suffered defeats. The revolutionary world movement as a whole is seriously affected by this. I at least am not yet able to ascertain the scale of these losses; but it is also not yet clear [. . .] how we all will react to these losses. In any case, in light of them we may neither close our eyes nor be resigned to them if we do not want definitively to lose the struggle against imperialism, fascism, and war. [. . .] The engine of contradictions of class and competition in imperialism will not stand still; it continues to move toward a revolutionary world process, but it can also lead to incalculable catastrophes of imperialistic wars, devastation of the earth, and despair in deadly poverty. Many persons who have nothing to do with socialism correctly see that the consolidation of socialism fulfills a function of security for the whole world - whoever does not wish to listen to Communists and their friends would like at least to test carefully such arguments. (27)

Müller's defense of the GDR as a Marxist-Leninist socialist society has more political ideological roots, it seems, than theological ones. The difficulty with this, of course, is that, despite his claim to the contrary, he writes not as an outsider, but as one who quite clearly is inside the Marxist-Leninist circle and that inevitably colors his theology. This insider status is confirmed when one recalls his willingness, and even his desire, to serve the Communist government as a secret informant on his colleagues, and to represent the government's
policies and wishes within the church structure (cf. Chapter Two of this dissertation).

Regarding the second issue of those within the Party who may have surreptitiously undermined the cause of socialism or abandoned it altogether, Müller reveals either remarkable naiveté or disingenuous self-righteousness when he writes:

Apparently - and here I must confess that this surprises and disappoints me - among you there are some who had lost the feeling that one should not serve oneself with privileges. I find it particularly painful that among them are also some who because of their courage in the anti-fascist struggle acquired an authority which was their due.

Noting then his own admiration, as a young man, for the ideals of the GDR in its early years, particularly its ostensible tolerance and acceptance of the weak, the poor, the disenfranchised, those rejected by the West, Müller expresses his sense of betrayal with a biblical parallel:

But then some of your leading comrades behaved like Ananias and Sapphira in Acts (5:1ff.) who gave the appearance of sharing all their wealth with the community, but then secretly withheld some for themselves. I honestly do not wish for these comrades the same end that came to Ananias and Sapphira, but I would hope for shame and remorse - not because they wanted to allow themselves a comfortable retirement (which they had surely earned!), but rather because they acted secretly. (28)

Throughout his writings Müller points to the evils and temptations of power, wealth, and materialism, especially as they are evident in capitalist societies in the West. And yet, somehow he is unable to imagine political leaders who are committed to Marxist socialism succumbing to the same temptations and evils. Again, either he naively believes so strongly in the
purity and rightness of socialism that no one would be tempted to betray it, or he presumes, disingenuously, that his faith in socialism is more authentic than even that of its leaders. In either case, Müller's critique of the Party leadership is not theological, but politically ideological.

Müller concludes this 1989 article with remarks on his third issue, that of trust. The closing paragraph reflects as clearly as elsewhere his ideological priorities:

I will trust you if in good as well as in difficult days you remain true to your cause: solidarity with the "condemned of this earth," solidarity with the "third" in the "two-thirds societies," solidarity with the poor in the backyards of the imperialistic economic system in the "third world," solidarity (not with those unwilling to achieve but) with those who are incapable of achieving especially in the future in our country and with the rationality of your historical-dialectical analysis of society which must be restored again from ideology of legitimation to a theory which establishes tasks and guides activity; and if, in all of this, you are prepared to stand or fall with the socialist character of the GDR! The Paris Commune was conquered, but it did not recant. It thereby encouraged the revolutionary process which continues. Guard your dignity ["Würde"]! What we need (if we are able in the leadership of the GDR, otherwise in the opposition) is an anti-imperialistic united front in all of Europe.

Will you join me, comrades? (29)

The sample of writings provided here not only offers insights into Müller's views, but by the language he employs also reveals the priority of his commitment to Marxist socialism over theology. His theological perspective can only be seen and properly understood from the vantage point of his ideological convictions.

This will become more evident as we turn to Müller's
appropriation of the thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Karl Barth.

Endnotes


2. Ibid., p. 255.

3. Ibid., p. 256.

4. Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany), the official Communist Party of the GDR which governed the GDR.


6. Ibid., p. 257.

7. See Note 19 in Chapter One.


10. Ibid., p. 16.


13. Ibid., pp. 252-3. The first quotation is from Frederick Engels' "Programme of the Blanquist Commune Refugees" in Karl Marx-Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, Volume 24, pp. 15-16. (Emphasis is in the original.)

15. Ibid., p. 37.

16. Ibid., p. 37.

17. Ibid., p. 38.

18. Ibid., p. 44.

19. Ibid., p. 45.

20. Ibid., p. 46-47.

21. I believe that this periodical ceased publication in 1988 because it merged with another. In any case, in what was, apparently, its final issue one finds the following description of the publication's aim by the editors:


Mit theologischen Aufsätzen und Rezensionen ist der STANDPUNKT für Lehrer und Studenten der theologischen Wissenschaften ein Forum des Gedankenaustauschs und Meinungsstreits.


23. Ibid., p. 20.


25. Ibid., p. 24. Otto Dibelius (1880-1967) was a Lutheran pastor and cousin to the New Testament scholar, Martin Dibelius. Otto Dibelius supported the Confessing Church in the 1930s. In 1945 he became bishop of Berlin and remained in that position until 1966. In 1949 he became the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). In 1954 he became president of the World Council of Churches. He is the object of much of Müller's scorn and wrath because of his staunch opposition to Communism in postwar Germany. In 1945 Dibelius helped establish the CDU (Christlich-Demokratische Union), the conservative political party in western Germany. For Müller, Dibelius embodies the church as a selfish institution which not only has self-perpetuation as a principal aim, but which also has become one of the pillars that supports capitalist imperialism.


27. Ibid., p. 30.

28. Ibid., p. 33.

29. Ibid., p. 38.
CHAPTER FOUR - MÜLLER ON BONHOEFFER AND THE CHURCH

As was indicated in Chapter Two, the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer lend themselves to a variety of interpretations. This is due, in part, to his premature death at the hands of the Nazis, and, in part, to internal ambiguities in the works themselves. This chapter will examine (a) how Müller has interpreted Bonhoeffer, and (b) at what point Müller's interpretation assumes an ideological tint and, thus, raises questions as to the legitimacy of his appropriation of Bonhoeffer.

Albrecht Schönherr, a leader in the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and bishop of Berlin-Brandenburg from 1972-81, was a student of Bonhoeffer's in the Finkenwalde seminary in the 1930s. He has written that following World War II there were two major thrusts of interest in Dietrich Bonhoeffer. First, out of fear that the martyrs under the Third Reich might have died in vain and be forgotten many returned to Bonhoeffer's earlier published writings, particularly his Nachfolge, or The Cost of Discipleship (1). Schönherr writes that this book was the book in which one could understand what authentic Christianity meant. For many Bonhoeffer became the model, the man "who, having written on discipleship, was ready to achieve it in his own life, and did in his own way achieve it even to the point of death" (Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics IV/2, p. 534). (2)

The second wave of interest came in 1951 with Eberhard Bethge's initial publication of the letters and papers Bonhoeffer wrote while in prison, Widerstand und Ergebung, or Letters and Papers from Prison. (3) Schönherr recalls the impact this
volume had on the church in East Germany:

The book was so liberating because the problem of secularization had become particularly noticeable in the socialist society of the GDR. Earlier we had mostly only to do with "de-clericalization," religious indifference. Now we encountered Marxism-Leninism as the radical explanation of the world's having come of age. Into that came Bonhoeffer's reference to the "this-worldliness" of Christianity. He freed us from the creeping fear that the church, and perhaps even faith in God, could be at an end. (4)

In this same essay, published in 1985, Schönhrerr also notes that the first comprehensive work on Bonhoeffer's theology that appeared in the GDR was Hanfried Müller's Von der Kirche zur Welt (From the Church to the World). (5) Regarding this book, published in 1961, Schönhrerr writes:

Not everyone will agree with all the emphases and conclusions of this book. Some of its deficiencies will be noted. Nevertheless precisely in its oneness is it an unavoidably important contribution to the discussion and helpful in overcoming the problem of "secularization." (6)

In Von der Kirche zur Welt (1961) Müller's treatment of Bonhoeffer's writings is comprehensive. He treats them chronologically, beginning with Bonhoeffer's dissertation, Sanctorum Communio, his second dissertation (Habilitationsschrift), Act and Being, and continuing with The Cost of Discipleship and Life Together, and concluding with Ethics and Letters and Papers from Prison. Early on, Müller makes his agenda clear, writing that Bonhoeffer's pilgrimage is the contradictory, yet purposeful pilgrimage of a Christian who, as scarcely any other intellectually open-minded Christian of this period, is conscious of the binding heritage of the "Christian West" but was able to survey the future development in which Christianity would no longer be the defining religion, but
rather the word of forgiveness alone would be the witness of God's grace for a world come of age. It is the contradictory, yet purposeful pilgrimage of a citizen who knows he is indebted to a conservative tradition, but who reached the point from which he envisioned a new time when there would no longer be a bourgeois period ["keine bürgerliche Zeit mehr"]. (7)

Müller goes on to describe Bonhoeffer as one who, as a member of the bourgeoisie, does not reject the bourgeoisie ("Bürgertum") altogether, but rather opens their "eyes to new, great opportunities." Hence, Müller writes, his work on Bonhoeffer has more to do with the depiction of the development than with the depiction of the system of a theology. Thus, the new in Bonhoeffer will be more strongly emphasized than the old. For here a Christian, who was consciously bourgeois, pursued a direction which serves as an example for a church which, with all the guilt that it entails, is a bourgeois church.

This church cannot subject the gospel to the critique of its bourgeois standards, but rather must subject its middle class standards to the critique of the gospel with the result that, in spite of its bourgeois character, the church can project the message entrusted to it into the future. In this task it can learn from Bonhoeffer as from scarcely any other. It is the intent of this work to point to this possibility in a most modest way. (8)

In this same Introduction Müller anticipates criticism of his approach. He writes:

I believe that the critical tendency of this portrayal is substantiated in the spirit of Bonhoeffer and in Bonhoeffer's own development. I am well aware of the fact that on account of this bias I must confront the label by some of "faith in progress" ["Fortschrittsgläubigkeit"]; I can only respond that it is not a matter of "faith", but in fact a matter of a - critical - Yes to becoming and to growth, to human development. I am also aware of the fact that I will be accused of interpreting Bonhoeffer's theological development too profanely, too "historically", from the historical circumstances of his time. (9)

Although this statement regarding "progress" and "human devel-
opment" could be understood in terms of Bonhoeffer's theology, in light of Müller's own admitted Marxist bias it lends itself to being understood more in terms of progress toward socialism and anti-clericalism.

While Müller has his own peculiar perspective on Bonhoeffer, his treatment of *Sanctorum Communio*, *Act and Being*, and *The Cost of Discipleship* is not radically different from subsequent treatments by others. As will be seen, what intrigues Müller most and what influences him most are the writings in *Letters and Papers from Prison*. This is also true for many other interpreters of Bonhoeffer, such as John A. T. Robinson, James Cone, and liberation theologians. But Gerhard Krause suggests that such a view can be dangerous:

To absolutize the Bonhoeffer of the letters and fragments threatens to degrade the much more unequivocal Bonhoeffer of the Bible commentary and the church struggle to an elementary first step ["auf eine überwundene Vorstufe zu degradieren"]. (10)

As Bethge does in his biography of Bonhoeffer (11), Müller divides Bonhoeffer's theological development into three periods. But, as Gerhard Krause also notes, unlike Bethge who sees a consistency throughout Bonhoeffer's works, Müller saw Bonhoeffer's theology of the "objective" history arranged dialectically and his development in three periods (qualitative leaps) "from the church to the world" as a liberation of bourgeois consciousness to socialism. (12)

The first period consists of "the young Bonhoeffer" when he wrote *Sanctorum Communio* and *Act and Being*. These works were written during the Weimar Republic in Germany, a time Müller
describes as the first period of the general crisis of capitalism,
a time of extreme intellectual confusion and simultaneously an intellectually vibrant period that was open to new ideas. It was a time that was approaching its end, an end that theologically was turning away from philosophical and toward biblical thought due to the newly discovered and interpreted Reformed views of dialectical theology. (13)

It is not insignificant for Müller that in the two books by Bonhoeffer in this period the corporate or communal aspect of the church is stressed at the expense of the role and place of the individual. Müller is in fact correct in noting this emphasis in Bonhoeffer, but one must also be aware of how this feature conveniently resonates with Müller's own socialist convictions, whether or not Bonhoeffer himself would sympathize with those convictions. Nevertheless, Müller seems to see this stage as one of early development in a movement toward greater maturity.

The second period of Bonhoeffer's theological development, according to Müller, encompasses the writing of The Cost of Discipleship and Life Together. This period during the 1930s represents the movement away from Bonhoeffer as a theologian reflecting on the church to a theologian "who labors for the church not so much to interpret it, but to try aggressively to change it." (14)

The assumption of power by Hitler and the rise of National Socialism, according to Müller,
is an indication of the weakness - based on terror - of the ruling class and [ . . . ] leads to a split in the ruling class itself. In this division within the ruling class the crucial issue above all is that which is the
ethical question for the bourgeois opponents of the Hitler regime, the question of responsible daily life and activity in the community. Corresponding to his own individual life, this question for Bonhoeffer is set in the framework of the church - more precisely in the framework of the church struggle, which, in addition to many others, was an expression of the fact that the split in the ruling class led to a split in the churches which were closely tied to it. If the church struggle seen purely from a profanely historical perspective - can be understood in the framework of this split in the ruling class, later it also occasionally referred to a direct, anti-fascist struggle in the middle class. (15)

Müller maintains that the ethical issues with which Bonhoeffer deals in *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together* must be seen in light of the threat posed to the church by National Socialism. Whereas in his first period Bonhoeffer was concerned with the nature and structure of the church, here he is concerned with the ethical life of the church - and not in an abstract way, but in the face of a very concrete threat to its life and faith. Müller takes Bonhoeffer's terms "cheap grace" and "costly grace" as a reflection of the choices before the church in the face of the threat before it.

Müller is aware of Luther's influence on Bonhoeffer's thought. Müller recognizes, for example, that Luther's theology of the cross plays an important role in Bonhoeffer's interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount in *The Cost of Discipleship*. Müller writes:

[What is crucial for Bonhoeffer's theological development in *Cost* is the fact that here the theologica crucis, as with Luther, is not simply a particular doctrine, a substantive doctrine of theology, but rather provides a methodological importance for the entire theology: "... the basis, the content, and the goal - i.e., the fulfillment - of the commandment is always the Lord, and in fact the Lord as the Cruci-
fied." (16)

While Müller clearly acknowledges Bonhoeffer's debt to his own Lutheran heritage (and does so again in his treatment of the four mandates in Ethics), Müller perceives in Bonhoeffer a slow, but steady movement toward a worldly theology which finds expression, at least in fragmentary form, in Letters and Papers.

In the third period of Bonhoeffer's development Müller includes both Ethics and Letters and Papers from Prison. These works reflect a crucial step forward in Bonhoeffer's thought, according to Müller. Ethics might be considered a transitional period from The Cost of Discipleship to Letters and Papers, Müller acknowledges, but because it was written between 1940 and 1943 when Bonhoeffer himself was going through the struggle of the extent to which he should actively participate in resistance to Hitler and thus examining his own understanding of ethics, Müller sees it as the genesis of a new way of thinking in Bonhoeffer which is expanded upon in Letters and Papers. Müller argues:

Ethics reflects the attempt to struggle with National Socialism not primarily from the perspective of a future to be desired, but rather from the perspective of a past that is affirmed in an almost unlimited, if not uncritical, way. With extraordinary clarity Bonhoeffer is able, out of his conservative tradition, to point to the collapse under fascism, but the weapons drawn from that conservative tradition are not sufficient to overcome fascism as a whole - beyond its National Socialist form. (17)

Müller's evaluation of what Ethics represents in Bonhoeffer's theological development contrasts sharply with that of Bonhoeffer's friend and colleague, Eberhard Bethge. Bethge
writes:

Exclusiveness of Christ's lordship — that is the message of *The Cost of Discipleship*; the wide range of his lordship — that is the new emphasis of *Ethics*. The exclusiveness, unless it is misunderstood to mean a self-erected ghetto, presses on to freedoms, permissions, responsibilities, discoveries, and to legitimate secularization. (18)

But even if one were to grant Müller's position as legitimate, one must call into question his understanding and use of the term "fascism." Clearly, he understands it only in its right-wing, nationalist form (as in National Socialism). But as was noted in Chapter One, just as ideologies can emerge from any point on the political spectrum, and just as totalitarian states can be either right-wing or left-wing, ideologically, so also can fascism be embodied in a variety of forms. Müller's use of the term here is consistent; for him, fascism always refers to the totalitarianism that was practiced by and under National Socialism. He seems to ignore other forms of fascism.

Theologically, his Lutheran heritage remains quite evident, as Müller concedes, for example, in his treatment of the ethical mandates of the church, the state, labor, and marriage. Müller writes: "Bonhoeffer's doctrine of the mandates corresponds in its function to the doctrine of the three orders in Luther." (19) But equally clearly is Bonhoeffer's willingness to move in new and different directions. One illustration of this is his distinction in *Ethics* between the "ultimate" and the "penultimate," a distinction that occurs in his discussion of justification. (20) This notion is important for several reasons, not
the least of which is the role it plays in allowing Bonhoeffer to alter, or at least provide a nuance to, Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms and, therefore, justify his participation in an attempt to overthrow the state.

Eberhard Bethge sketches the distinction in the following way:

The last word of justification includes the beginning and the end, and, while limiting the last but one, puts it into force. It prepares the way for the end, but has its time and place before it - and yet receives from it its complete and far-reaching autonomy. Christ, representing the structure of the ultimate and the penultimate, 'neither renders the human reality independent nor destroys it, but He allows it to remain as that which is before the last, as a penultimate which requires to be taken seriously in its own way, and yet not to be taken seriously, a penultimate which has become the outer covering of the ultimate.' The cross is the ultimate, and is the judgment and the pardoning of the penultimate. Christian life is 'neither a destruction nor a sanctioning of the penultimate . . .[ it] is participation in the encounter of Christ with the world'. (21)

Müller notes that the roots of Bonhoeffer's distinction go back to the Reformation distinction in function between law and gospel as well as between the two kingdoms. Müller goes on to discuss and describe this important distinction, observing that Bonhoeffer's introduction of the term "natural" (for "penultimate") is significant in terms of his own theological development:

It is a clear anticipation of the problems of the theological basis of ethics in a world come of age. What functions here as the "natural" is already essentially the "world come of age" of his final papers. (22)

Elsewhere Müller writes that during this time period Bonhoeffer was
in fact something like the last honest Christian westerner. For him the Christian West was not a cheap propaganda means of reaction, no demagogic ideology of uniformity concealing imperialistic aims, but rather an arduously sustained adherence to the inheritance of the fathers. Bonhoeffer knows that without roots in the past there is no lasting growth into the future; he is aware of the dangers of a nihilistic romanticism as well as of a nihilistic heroism. (23)

The events of 1940-45, including his imprisonment, Müller maintains, led Bonhoeffer not only to become aware of the limits of his earlier, more traditional approach to ethics ("Christian" ethics as presented in Cost), but also to become directly involved in the plans to assassinate Hitler on July 20, 1944. This new awareness compelled Bonhoeffer to see the "Christian-Western tradition" as a political tradition in Christianity and, therefore, as having limits in its application. For those who embraced that tradition not only claimed Christianity as their own, but also were those who normally held power. Indeed, this reflects a kind of "corpus christianum" view of the world which existed prior to the Reformation and which collapsed with the Reformation and Luther's doctrine of two kingdoms. And yet, this "corpus christianum" view had experienced a resurrection of sorts in the West.

At this point a more specific word is in order regarding Bonhoeffer's views of the traditional two kingdom doctrine as well as regarding Müller's views of the same. In his Ethics Bonhoeffer writes that since New Testament times there has been
Christian. This view becomes dominant for the first time in the Middle Ages, and for the second time in the pseudo-Protestant thought of the period after the Reformation. (24)

In this discourse Bonhoeffer attempts to break free from this dichotomy. He writes:

It may be difficult to break the spell of this thinking in terms of two spheres, but it is nevertheless quite certain that it is in profound contradiction to the thought of the Bible and to the thought of the Reformation, and that consequently it aims wide of reality. There are not two realities, but only one reality, and that is the reality of God, which has become manifest in Christ in the reality of the world. Sharing in Christ we stand at once in both the reality of God and the reality of the world. The reality of Christ comprises the reality of the world within itself. The world has no reality of its own, independently of the revelation of God in Christ. [. . . ] There are, therefore, not two spheres, but only the one sphere of the realization of Christ, in which the reality of God and the reality of the world are united. Thus the theme of the two spheres, which has repeatedly become the dominant factor in the history of the Church, is foreign to the New Testament. (25)

Bonhoeffer goes on to describe Luther's use of the two realm doctrine as a polemical device, a notion that could be seriously questioned.

In contrast, Müller understands the two realms in different terms. Question 138 in his Evangelische Dogmatik im Überblick asks, "As a witness of the Ultimate, how does the church of Jesus Christ understand its relationship to the world in the Penultimate?" In paragraph 4 of the response Müller writes:

Because the church itself lives "in the still unredeemed world," the dialectic, which is reflected theologically-historically in the doctrine of the two realms, does not consist primarily outside of the church or outside of us in the relationship between church and state, but rather within us and within the church in the struggle of the law of the Spirit and of the coming
kingdom vis-à-vis the law of sin in our own members (Rom. 7, esp. v. 13) and vis-à-vis the church's self-identification with the kingdom of this world." (26)

According to Müller, then, the two realms consist not of church and state, or sacred and secular, but rather of this world and the next. It is an eschatological issue. Both the church and the state exist in this, the "still unredeemed world," each with different functions. Therefore, the church may not presume to clericalize the world, but must respect the authority of the state; and the state may not presume to govern the church and its affairs, but must respect its function and authority. While Müller acknowledges the ultimate Lordship of Christ over both realms, one of the implications of this view is both an identification of the church with the world (since the church is part of the world) and an emphasis on the subordination of the church to the authority of the state in worldly matters. For Müller, this perspective dovetails nicely with his interpretation of Bonhoeffer's notions of "religionless Christianity" and living in "a world come of age," notions which will be examined below.

Bonhoeffer's development from Cost to Ethics, Müller maintains, is reflected in the move from an ethic for the church or a peculiarly Christian ethic to one that is "universally binding" ("allgemeinverbindlich"). This development assumes fuller shape in Letters and Papers:

The real progress, certainly anticipated in the Ethics, becomes apparent only in the final letters when the distinction between "ultimate" and "penultimate", worked out in Ethics, is used to set beside the church ethic a universally binding ethic of the world come of age, an ethic which can no longer be seen as peculiarly
Christian, but as a doctrine of right and good conduct which is binding on Christians and non-Christians. (27)

Müller understands Letters and Papers as containing Bonhoeffer's developing theological thoughts and reflections, fragmentary and informal as they may be, on living in a world come of age, a religionless world, a world in which

[the question of the relationship of the Word of God to society] finds its final, universal interpretation no longer as a question of the relationship of the Word of God to the church alone or to a Christian world of the corpus christianum, but rather to the present world in its entirety, both Christians and non-Christians. (28)

Of central importance is no longer God's relationship to the church or even a peculiarly Christian perspective on the world, but the relationship of God to all of human society. It is a shift from the church to society, or from the church to the world (hence, the title to Müller's book).

Bonhoeffer's Letters and Papers form the basis of much of Müller's own thought, especially with regard to the church. And it is at this point that Müller seems to exert, in his own writings, more interpretative independence and liberty. Much of what Müller has to say about Bonhoeffer's development and movement toward something new and different, especially in terms of the relationship between the church and the world, may be considered legitimately consonant with the trajectory of Bonhoeffer's own thinking. The question becomes, at what point does Müller interject his ideological bias, thus giving it a higher priority than legitimate interpretation of Bonhoeffer.

Bonhoeffer's emphasis in his Letters on God's suffering
in Jesus Christ, for example, resonates with Müller's thesis that the church's purpose is neither to exist as an institution to serve itself nor as an agent to "Christianize" the world, but rather to identify with and plead the cause of the poor, the suffering, the powerless, the oppressed. In short, to quote Bonhoeffer, "[t]he church is the church only when it exists for others." (29) But the church engages in this way of life not as the church distinguished from the world, but as part of the world. As Bonhoeffer writes, "[i]t is not the religious act that makes the Christian, but participation in the sufferings of God in the secular life." (30)

The thoughts on the church and the world that Bonhoeffer presents in Letters and Papers convince Müller that Bonhoeffer is not only saying something important, but something new theologically:

What is qualitatively new is that Bonhoeffer eliminates the pessimistic elements from his world view and stresses much more strongly the optimistic ones, and that, at the same time, he commits himself completely to the theologia crucis and eliminates all elements of a theologia gloriae.

The connection of the theologia crucis with immanent optimism thus appears to us to be the new path that Bonhoeffer unlocks for us in his final letters. It appears to me to be the first time in this history of theology that a Reformation theology not only testifies to the freedom of the Christian in the world in its de-secularization ["Ent weltlichung"] of the church and its de-clericalization ["Ent kl erikalisierung"] of the world, but furthermore uses this freedom in a positive, optimistic, and immanently forward-looking way instead of escaping the responsibilities of this world[ . . . ] by inner-worldly resignation. (31)

Eberhard Bethge has observed that Müller understands Bonhoeffer's optimism as "the optimistic liberation of autonomous
reason in a world come of age." (32)

In an "Excursus on Religion and Religionlessness" in his Evangelische Dogmatik im Überblick Müller writes the following about Bonhoeffer's optimism: "With the optimism that belongs to this worldview that becomes non-religious Bonhoeffer has engaged, objectively-historically, in the struggle against fascism and increasingly on the side of social progress." Müller maintains that Bonhoeffer goes beyond the legacy of social pessimism left by the Lutheran Reformation:

But Bonhoeffer now addresses the religion-critical legacy of the Reformation insofar as he increasingly distances himself from its socially conservative, ecclesiastically restorative, and worldly pessimistic traditions. Simultaneously, he takes up the legacy of the early bourgeois revolution insofar as he separates himself from the religious traditions which accompany this legacy, namely, enthusiasm, utopianism, legalism, ethicism, skepticism, and historical theology. Thus, for the 20th century he actualizes what characterized the high point of the theology of Luther in the Reformation: the connection of faith alone with the Word of the cross, and therein the freedom of thought and action for the neighbor and vis-à-vis the world. With that Bonhoeffer has begun, in a way that is progressively free from a religious worldview, to reflect on the non-religious message: "Everything is yours - but you are Christ's." (33)

The optimism expressed by Bonhoeffer, then, according to Müller, is one that is based on a departure from the "religious", other-worldly perspective of the church and an affirmation of human autonomy and a commitment to social progress in the secular world.

Clearly, for Müller the ideas Bonhoeffer discusses in his letters in the last year of his imprisonment form the springboard for much of Müller's own thoughts, especially regarding
the church. Two further themes which are crucial for Müller and are implied in the above must be understood as running parallel to each other, namely, the world come of age ("die mündige Welt") and the religionless age ("die religionlose Zeit"). The first involves "the departure from an irrationalistic, mythological view of history" while the second has to do with "the critical overcoming of a transcendental view of history - transcendental in the sense of transcending the immanent experience of history - which presupposed that the history of the West could be understood as the formation of Christ ("Gestaltwerdung Christi")." (34) Bonhoeffer first mentions these notions in his letter of April 30, 1944.

Clifford Green has observed that these terms, but especially that of "Mündigkeit", reflect not only a new ingredient in Bonhoeffer's thought but a new emphasis on anthropology. Green writes:

The essence of the category Muendigkeit is the autonomy of modern man. More particularly, this autonomy is one which involves the strength and competence of all those human activities of the unified and conscious self specified in our working definition of the "ego." The man who has "come of age" is, above all, the man with a healthy, strong, and well developed set of "ego skills." This is obvious in Bonhoeffer's account of the historical development of increasing human autonomy, man's "coming of age." (35) Green goes on to state that Mündigkeit and autonomy are interchangeable terms. (36) But Green also argues that Mündigkeit "does not imply a doctrine of human ethical progress or an optimistic doctrine of history, even though it does involve a change in psychic posture." (37) It is an anthropological cate-
gory, not a theological one, and as such it has two critical functions: it removes a false understanding of God and it "clarifies the situation of man before God." (38) The false understanding of God is one that understands God as a mythical power that explains otherwise inexplicable events and phenomena ("the God of the gaps"). The situation of man before God is not the traditionally religious one of the weak and dependent person, but rather the one whose view of the world is guided and informed by science, reason, technology, and an awareness of human responsibility for the condition of the world. This notion of the autonomy of human beings fits neatly into Müller's Marxist perspective which stresses an anthropological and secular view of history.

Bonhoeffer's apparent movement away from the traditional theological view of a transcendent God that has been used and defined in mythological terms ("deus ex machina") and toward an emphasis on the "this-worldly" ("Diesseitigkeit"), the suffering and crucified Christ, and human beings as rational creatures is very attractive to Müller. He writes: "The yes to the 'world come of age' signifies the recognition of an immanent rational understanding of history and of an immanent optimism which affirms this history." (39)

The commitment of the Christian and of the church then is not to the church and its own self-interests (clericalism), but to the world, a mature and rational world, a world come of age that no longer depends on a mythological view of God but on the
presence of the crucified Christ in the world:

Corresponding to the coming maturity of the world is the this-worldliness of Christianity - Christ stands in the midst of this world come of age, not in a religious beyond. 'The question is: Christ and the world that has come of age.' Corresponding to the passing religiosity of the world is the suffering of God in the world. Man cannot discover the power of God in the transposition of desires, longings, and hopes into the beyond, but only in the humiliation of God and in his suffering; and in his powerlessness in this world God lets himself be discovered as the rejected, the impotent, and the crucified. (40)

Thus Müller maintains, the Christian and the church should identify themselves more and more with the world and its suffering - precisely because that is where Christ is. Indeed, paradoxically, the Christian becomes a kind of atheist:

The mature person, the religionless person is therefore nothing other than a scientific, worldly, theoretical atheist. [...] The atheist who believes in Jesus Christ is not compelled by means of this faith to return to a religious world view, to cut himself off from this world, but rather in the message of the powerless God in the world he receives the freedom for a theoretical, scientific atheism as view of life. (41)

Müller closes his volume on Bonhoeffer with a series of definitions of "non-religious interpretation" of the gospel. The gospel is not to be understood metaphysically, but rather as the Word of a God who suffers in this world. It is not to be understood individualistically, but as the Word of God, whose Son felt forsaken on the cross, to persons who live in a society. Finally, non-religious interpretation of the gospel means

the hiddenness of the wisdom of God in the foolishness of the cross, the hiddenness of the righteousness of God in the scandal of the cross, the hiddenness of the power of God in the suffering of the cross, the hiddenness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in his death and under the sign of the empty grave. [...]
Non-religious interpretation arises without thought wherever the maturity of the world and the this-worldliness of God in the suffering of Jesus Christ are simultaneously recognized in this world. It arises wherever the hiddenness of God in his revelation, the powerlessness of God in his glory is believed. (42)

The hiddenness of God is a persistent theme in Christian theology since the Reformation. (43) So, in one respect both Bonhoeffer and Müller are pursuing a traditional feature of Reformation theology. However, Müller seems to transfer this theme having to do with God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ to an ecclesiology which identifies the church with the world. To the extent that it represents Jesus Christ in the world and bears witness to his suffering in the world, the church is hidden in and to the world - not in any surreptitious way or as an underground movement, but in a way that identifies with those who suffer and are oppressed by unjust social, political, and economic structures and institutions.

In 1963 there appeared in the journal Die mündige Welt an article by Müller under the title "Zur Problematik der Rezeption und Interpretation Dietrich Bonhoeffers" ("On the Problematic of the Reception and Interpretation of Dietrich Bonhoeffer"). (44) In that article Müller argues that it is futile to ask, "Where would Bonhoeffer stand today?" Instead, the responsible question to ask is, "Who has interpreted Bonhoeffer correctly?" (45)

While Müller's reformulation of the question acknowledges correctly the impossibility of determining how Bonhoeffer would have developed his theology had he lived beyond the end of World
War II, it points precisely to the difficulty of Müller's own position, namely, How is one to determine what is a "correct" interpretation of Bonhoeffer beyond his own writings? Clearly, the attempt is to try to discern the logical trajectory of Bonhoeffer's thought beyond his death. In an article published in 1981 under the title "Dietrich Bonhoeffer - Witness to Jesus Christ in the Confessing Church for the World Come of Age" (46), Müller offers some biographical material, material which, while accurate, is presented with a peculiar slant:

In Bonhoeffer's life, encounters with Communists were only coincidental and peripheral. During the Depression, his work with the proletariat youth in Berlin-Wedding, his temporary imprisonment with a Soviet pilot (a nephew of Molotov's), his reading of Lenin and Clara Zetkin (quite unusual for a theologian with his background) led him neither to a practical cooperation nor to a theoretical involvement with the socialist worker's movement.

His resistance against Hitler's fascism was not carried out in the context of an anti-fascist, revolutionary, democratic popular front, but rather was limited to preparation for the putsch of July 20, 1944.

Through the struggle against the same enemies and through suffering under the same persecutors, Bonhoeffer was tied to those forces that were socially and politically engaged in the anti-fascist struggle; but he was not yet connected to them through any organized common activity. Indeed, he died the same death on the gallows as communist resistance fighters, but he had lived a different life than they.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer came from a family which reflected the dominant social class of the Wilhelminian empire in the marriage between the academic, bourgeois father, the later professor of psychiatry at the Charity Hospital, and the mother who came from nobility and was related to Paul von Hase, the commander of Berlin who was executed in 1944. (47)

While acknowledging Bonhoeffer's "dominant social class" background, nowhere does Müller recognize the aristocratic background of others who were involved in the July 20, 1944
attempt to assassinate Hitler. Regarding Bonhoeffer himself, John Conway writes the following:

[t]he character of this rather elitist, sometimes arrogant, and often priggish Prussian intellectual was, to be sure, appreciated by his small but influential circle of friends in the ecumenical movement abroad, such as Bishop George Bell of Chichester, as by the devoted but limited number of pupils whose studies he had directed at the Confessing Church's illegal seminary at Finkenwalde in Pomerania. (48)

In addition, Claus Stauffenberg, the one who actually placed the bomb in the meeting room where it was detonated, came from a south German aristocratic background. In a recent biography of the Stauffenberg family, Peter Hoffmann mentions "three distinct elements in their background" as being particularly influential:

First there was the family, with its traditional forms and values, its estates in Swabia and Franconia, its connections with the royal court of Württemberg in Stuttgart, its tradition of service to the state. Second, the spirit and teaching of their school, with its emphasis on the classics; third the world of poetry and poets. Before all else came the service of the fatherland. [. . .] (49)

Hoffmann goes on to describe the character of this family. He writes:

The Stauffenbergs were not governed by a 'world view', but rather by the rejection of thought systems. Claus Stauffenberg never inclined towards any political party. A close friend said that if Claus had ever thought in earnest about political parties he would have formed one himself. But at the end of his life he insisted that a document be drawn up containing the fundamental tenets of what it meant to be German, as he saw them.

The principal motives of the Stauffenberg brothers were rooted in their awareness of belonging to a noble family with a tradition of service to the state, and in the intellectual and political history of their country. These motives were family honour, adherence
to the ideals Stefan George had taught them, and the military code. All three led to the recognition of the criminal nature of Hitler's war. All three can be discerned again and again from their early youth. From about April 1942 they emerged and dominated all else. (50)

Müller seems unwilling to see the same kind of heroic efforts against Hitler by those from aristocratic backgrounds as he sees in the "communist resistance fighters." While he does acknowledge Bonhoeffer's own "bourgeois" family legacy, is it possible to say without equivocation that Bonhoeffer's thought, especially that which is expressed in Letters and Papers, can justifiably be seen as supportive of, or sympathetic with, a particular ideology, especially one that is foreign to Bonhoeffer himself, without running the risk of doing violence to Bonhoeffer's thought? Is it fair to use as an argument for one's own political and theological position the projection of preliminary and incomplete thoughts expressed in Letters and Papers as if Bonhoeffer himself would have agreed with such a position? In short, has Müller not only tried to extend the trajectory of views outlined in Letters and Papers, but in fact attributed his own interpretation to what Bonhoeffer would have written had he lived? Does Bonhoeffer, for example, reject (as Müller seems to do) the transcendent character of God? Müller's ideology virtually dictates such a rejection. In fact, Bethge argues that, even in Letters and Papers, Bonhoeffer is not thinking in terms of 'immanence-transcendence', in order then to eliminate transcendence in favour of immanence. On the contrary, he is concerned here in
particular to regain a genuine transcendence, in con-
trast to a now valueless metaphysics, as an 'extended
world' and as a necessary prerequisite to any faith. (51)

Apart from asking whether Müller's view is harmonious with
Bonhoeffer's own thoughts or is simply one person's extension
of it into the post-World War II world, one might reasonably
inquire as to the place and role of the gospel and the church
among those who may not share the institutional or structural
oppression of Third World countries, but whose concerns are no
less genuine than those in poor countries and whose commitment
to the faith is no less authentic than Müller's or that of any-
one else. In other words, does Müller's view include those
who may disagree with his political and ideological convictions?
Would Müller argue that there is in the gospel a preferential
option for the poor and the powerless? (52) If the answer is
yes, as Müller's writings suggest, one must also ask if, in
Müller's view, Jesus would be anti-capitalist. At the very
least, one must surmise that Müller's answer would also be yes.

In his "Outline for a Book" Bonhoeffer writes that "[t]he
church is the church only when it exists for others." (53) The
failure of the church is its preoccupation with itself and its
unwillingness to exist for others - in its language as well as
in its actions. The church must not simply give the appearance
of identifying with the world; it must, in fact, become one with
the world. Müller observes:

For Bonhoeffer the issue is not an apparent sacred
declaration of solidarity with the world come of age:
Paul did not appear to be a Gentile to the Gentiles
in order to win them more easily; rather, in the love
of Christ he **became** a Gentile to them in that he was able to disregard the highest goods of his life heretofore (Ph. 3:7f.). Bonhoeffer also appears not only as a religionless person to the religionless [...], but to a considerable extent he becomes a religionless person without also becoming conscious of it. (54)

Both Bonhoeffer's notion of the church being the church "only when it exists for others," and Müller's acceptance and extension of that idea to a virtual identification of the church with the world, reflect a debt both owe to the critique of religion, first by Ludwig Feuerbach, and then, later and from a different perspective, by Karl Barth (discussed above in Chapter One, pp. 50-53). This debt is also evident in Bonhoeffer's notion of "Mündigkeit," or what Green calls "autonomy of modern man," which is more of an anthropological category than a theological one.

Müller incorporates and develops these themes further in other writings. Many of his articles, as the ones already cited here, demonstrate not only the pursuit of these ideas of the later Bonhoeffer, but also the way in which Müller accommodates them to his own ideological agenda.

In his volume *Politics and Protestant Theology* René Williamson examines the thought of four twentieth century theologians - Paul Tillich, Karl Barth, Bonhoeffer, and Emil Brunner. (55) His chapter on Bonhoeffer offers a helpful and balanced perspective, especially in light of Müller's interpretation. Without denying the innovative ideas Bonhoeffer sets forth in *Letters and Papers*, Williamson maintains, first, that one must examine them in light of Bonhoeffer's thought as a whole, that
is, the ideas expressed toward the end of his life must be viewed as preliminary and incomplete and in light of all of his earlier writings, and, second, that Bonhoeffer cannot be viewed apart from his own German Lutheran background.

In some respects, Williamson argues, Bonhoeffer reflects his traditional Lutheran heritage. For example, in spite of his involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler, Bonhoeffer maintained throughout his life the traditional Lutheran separation of the roles of the church and government. Mindful of Bonhoeffer's notion of "mandates", that is, the idea of marriage, labor, government, and the church as being divinely mandated for the purposes of ordering society, Williamson writes the following regarding at least one limitation placed on the church in its relationship to government:

For the Church to issue pronouncements on political and social questions requires "detailed knowledge" which the Church does not possess and, for that reason, the pronouncements lack secular validity and Christian authenticity.

Williamson then quotes from Bonhoeffer's *No Rusty Swords*, that the Church

"has no right to address the state directly in its specifically political actions. It has neither to praise nor to censure the laws of the state, but must rather affirm the state to be God's order of preservation in a godless world; it has to recognise the state's ordinances, good or bad as they appear from a humanitarian point of view, and to understand that they are based on the sustaining will of God amidst the chaotic godlessness of the world." (56)

Later in his analysis Williamson concludes:

All in all, Bonhoeffer is a typical Lutheran and accurately reflects Lutheranism's well-known political
and social passivity. As we have seen, even in the case of the persecution of the Jews, he did not feel that the Church should speak to the government, even indirectly! Thus, in the matter of the involvement of the institutional church in political activity, it would be difficult to find a theologian who is more conservative than Bonhoeffer. (57)

Furthermore, while Bonhoeffer would, no doubt, agree with Müller's criticism of religion in general, and more specifically the institutional church as being, at least at times, self-serving, and while in Letters and Papers Bonhoeffer clearly suggests a radical re-examination of the nature of the church, Williamson maintains that Bonhoeffer nevertheless saw a positive, constructive, and needful place for the church in the world:

A deep love for and faith in Jesus Christ are the very core of Bonhoeffer's thinking. Where are such a love and such a faith to be found and, once found, how can they be communicated?

The traditional answer has always been: in the Church. In spite of his much celebrated criticism of the institutional church, Bonhoeffer never offered any other answer than the traditional one, and indisputable evidence can be gathered to prove it from works written at different periods in his life. (58)

Finally, in light of Müller's diminution, if not outright rejection of any notion of the transcendence of God, Williamson reminds us not only of the Christocentric character of Bonhoeffer's thought, but also of the fact that, for Bonhoeffer, "the political and social crisis is but a manifestation of a deep spiritual crisis. Without a solution of the spiritual crisis, nothing else can be solved." (59) The point is simply that, ultimately, Bonhoeffer's hope rested in Jesus Christ. Ideals and ideologies - of all kinds - only reflected human efforts
which inevitably fail in their attempts to address and resolve what, for Bonhoeffer, is a spiritual crisis that transcends political and social crises. While there are points of agreement between Bonhoeffer and Müller, Müller's appropriation of Bonhoeffer is clearly colored by his own Marxist ideological convictions, thus attributing to Bonhoeffer, or Bonhoeffer's legacy, views which are not warranted.

Eberhard Bethge has observed that, while Müller "at no point claims that Bonhoeffer is a progressive theologian," he does claim to have "liberated unsuspected possibilities" in Bonhoeffer's thought. (60) It is precisely this notion of "liberating unsuspected possibilities" that has led to controversial and varied interpretations of Bonhoeffer. Unfortunately, in doing so, the possibilities Müller has "liberated" seem also to be ones that have suited his politically ideological purposes.

In the next chapter we will examine Müller's appropriation of a second major theological influence not only in the twentieth century world, but particularly in post-World War II East Germany. Although Barth's thought, like that of Bonhoeffer, is also not without its ambiguities and complexities in issues of church and state, politics and theology, and the place of the Christian in society, it is possible to discern the degree to which Müller has appropriated Barth responsibly.
Endnotes


It should be noted that it was Schönherr who in 1971 in an effort to achieve some kind of modus vivendi between the church and the government coined the phrase "Kirche im Sozialismus". In the essay cited above Schönherr refers to the formula agreed upon at the Synod in Eisenach in 1971 and reported to the 1973 Synod in Schwerin:


4. Schönherr, p. 149.

5. This was Müller's dissertation which was published in 1961.


8. Ibid., p. 10.


11. Bethge's division of Bonhoeffer's life and work into three parts, using similar time periods, are: theologian, Christian, and man of the world. However, as will also become clear, Müller’s divisions are not only theological, but also political. Cf. Bethge’s Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Man of Vision, Man of Courage (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).


13. Von der Kirche zur Welt, p. 34.


15. Ibid., p. 39.

16. Ibid., p. 216.

17. Ibid., p. 44.


19. Von der Kirche zur Welt, p. 317. Although the number of orders varied in Luther's writings over the course of his lifetime, the "mature" Luther seems to have settled on three: family, temporal government ("Obrigkeit"), and church; cf. Luther's Works, Volume 41, p. 177.


22. Von der Kirche zur Welt, p. 315. Müller's discussion of the "ultimate" and the "penultimate" is found in pp. 311-316.


25. Ibid., pp. 197-8.


27. Müller, Von der Kirche zur Welt, p. 47.
28. Ibid., p. 49.
30. Ibid., p. 361. Emphasis is mine.
34. Von der Kirche zur Welt, p. 357-8.
36. Ibid., p. 303.
37. Ibid., p. 305.
38. Ibid., p. 307.
40. Ibid., pp. 376-7.
41. Ibid., p. 402.
42. Ibid., pp. 418-420.
44. Die mündige Welt, IV, 1963, pp. 52-78.
45. Ibid., p. 53.
47. Ibid., pp. 28-29.


50. Ibid., p. xv.


52. This perspective and this kind of language is found most commonly in liberation theology; cf., e.g., Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation.


56. Ibid., p. 85.

57. Ibid., pp. 96-7.

58. Ibid., pp. 86-7.

59. Ibid., p. 84.

CHAPTER FIVE - MÜLLER ON BARTH AND CHURCH AND STATE

Like the writings of Bonhoeffer, those of Karl Barth enjoyed wide dissemination and influence among Protestants in the German Democratic Republic. Barth's popularity in East Germany was due, as elsewhere, in large part to his rejection of liberal theology and his emphasis on the centrality of Jesus Christ and the radical character of the freedom of God. Therefore, there was a universal aspect of Barth's theology, at least among Protestant Christians, in that it transcended national and political boundaries.

And yet, while his theology transcended such boundaries, Barth was always interested in politics and world affairs and often gave voice to his views, sometimes becoming actively involved. From the early years of his pastorate in the Swiss village of Safenwil where he worked with and encouraged workers in trade unions against unfair labor practices of factory owners, to his participation in the Confessing Church's resistance to the Hitler regime and his central part in writing the Theological Declaration of Barmen, to his post-war writings on the Cold War, Barth remained interested and active in the public issues of the day. Often his writings caused no small degree of controversy.

While Barth understood his interest in and comments on public issues to be an extension of his theological thought, and while his importance as a systematic theologian transcended the politics and issues of the day, attention here will focus
on his statements and writings that pertain particularly to the relationship between the church and politics and, even more specifically, to the post-World War II division between East and West.

It should be noted here that not everyone agrees that Barth's political thought was an extension of his theology. In 1972, Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt published his Habilitationsschrift, *Theologie und Sozialismus: Das Beispiel Karl Barth*. (1) In it Marquardt argues that Karl Barth's socialist views, especially as they developed during his pastorate in Safenwil and in his writing of his commentary on Romans, strongly influenced and guided his theological thought. While acknowledging Barth's anti-ideological claims in his works, Marquardt maintains that

the instances both of Barth's positive explanations of socialism and Marxism and of the use of socialist and Marxist means of argumentation in Barth's theology are so numerous that they require a compilation and a more precise examination. (2)

Later in his Introduction Marquardt writes:

Barth once said that the acceptance of Marxist elements still does not make one a Marxist. So we must guard ourselves against stamping him as such against his own self-testimony. Hence, this work is not entitled "Theology and Marxism," but "Theology and Socialism." Socialism with unmistakable "Marxist elements" is the decisive characterization of Barth's political position as demonstrated here. (3)

In an article summarizing the views expressed in his book, Marquardt writes:

My thesis is this: The Church Dogmatics subjects the dogmatic tradition of Christianity to the canon of a socially reflected concept of God. Those who
think that it establishes a theological ontology of transcendence are wrong. Those who see that it is essentially political even in its theological details are correct. (4)

According to Marquardt, Barth's theology was rooted in his experience with the labor strife during his Safenwil pastorate. Marquardt argues that Barth had an "anarcho-socialist profile." The Russian revolution, of course, took place during these years and played no small role in Barth's thinking at the time. Marquardt writes:

Barth describes himself as "more than Leninist," because he rejects Lenin's notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead, he adopts the anarchist position attacked by Lenin in State and Revolution, that is, the position of "left-wing socialism," which Lenin was later to call "a childhood disease." Barth did not reject the dictatorship of the proletariat because of the violence that necessarily went with it - of a Christian rejection of violence he at that time could only have spoken ironically - but because Lenin was insufficiently radical and wanted merely to replace the state with the state. (5)

In an article that seems to resonate with Marquardt's thesis, Paul Lehmann describes Barth as a "Theologian of Permanent Revolution." (6) Lehmann writes:

With steadfast single-mindedness, Barth has challenged our post-Hegelian weariness exactly at that point of no return at which Troeltsch drew the line between failure and hope. In doing so, Barth has made possible a future, not only for the doing of theology, but for involvement in a revolutionary world without loss of Christian identity. Troeltsch's wistful glimpse of the possibility of overcoming history by history has begun to happen in the overcoming of history within history through the history of the people of God. Barth's unyielding and undeviating preoccupation with the reality of this people - their center, their election, their charter, their mission in the world, and their destiny - makes his theology not a reaction-theology, i.e., a reaction to cultural, historical, and theological impotence, but an archimedean theology,
i.e., the source and matrix of an unhinging (liberating), forming, and transforming perspective which is concrete for our revolutionary time, concrete for the permanent revolution always going on in human affairs. (7)

In response to Lehmann's article, Frederick Herzog has asked a most pertinent question, namely,

What kind of revolution does Professor Lehmann have in mind when he speaks of Karl Barth as 'theologian of permanent revolution'? Does he mean permanent change of a good kind? He certainly does not mean the soft revolution. But does he have in mind a hard and bloody one? (8)

Herzog goes on to write:

Of course, one also needs what Professor Lehmann calls the archimedian perspective. But this, I thought, some of us had all along tried to take into account, in fear and trembling in the present Babylonian captivity of our churches. At least I thought I had tried to say it in the spirit of Karl Barth: it is God's liberation we are pointing to, not our self-liberation. God liberates. (9)

There is indeed a political character to Barth's theology. That is to say, his theology is informed by the political world, has consequences for the political world, and even occasionally addresses the political world. But political ideology is not Barth's starting point, nor does it determine his theology. Political issues had always been important to Barth, and, in his early years, they were of particular importance. However, to reduce his theology to a "political theology," or to claim that political revolution was the driving force behind his theological perspective would be, in my view, to misunderstand Barth and his thought. In response to Marquardt's thesis, Dieter Schellong distinguishes between the young Barth and the more mature Barth. He writes:
A first difficulty arises through the fact that Barth's understanding of himself was ambivalent. On the one hand, Barth saw his theological beginnings completely in connection to the social conditions and political events from 1911 to the First World War. At the same time he saw them in the perspective of the exploited working class, which (according to Barth's own view) he really confronted for the first time in Safenwil. Barth's autobiographical sketch from 1927, which has meanwhile become available as an appendix to the volume of his correspondence with Bultmann shows this clearly.

On the other hand, Barth no longer saw his matured theology in such a context; rather, he saw it as demanded strictly by the subject matter and developed solely on the basis of the Biblical witness. Therefore, Barth is associated with the strictly self-contained objectivity of theology, which appears to disallow Marquardt's way of posing questions as something alien. (10)

In another response to Marquardt's thesis, Clifford Green writes the following:

Marquardt is right in drawing attention to Barth's socialism, and in reinforcing the point that his critique of liberalism was a move in a radical, not conservative, direction; but he is wrong in arguing that socialism is the ground of Barth's theology. Rather, the reverse is true: theology is the ground of Barth's socialism - and the basis of his critique of practical socialist (and capitalist!) politics. The Kingdom of God is true socialism, not the reverse. Another way to make the point is to say that socialism is one of the parables of the Kingdom of God, as are other social forms such as the relation of man and woman, and the church. In other words, community comes first, then socialist politics; socialism is a consequence of community which is theologically grounded, rather than the hermeneutical key to the theology; socialism is in the service of, and measured by, the Kingdom of God, not vice versa. (11)

Still another scholar of the works of Karl Barth, Eberhard Jüngel, offers a strong dissent from Marquardt's thesis:

The view that Barth's socialism constituted the theoretical framework of his theology is untenable. It is rather the case that socialism and liberal theology found themselves together in a crisis and yet emerged
from it separately. What was constitutive for the development of a proper theology was a new style of biblical exegesis, from which the socialist option was by no means excluded. (12)

Finally, Karl Barth's son, Markus, a New Testament scholar and professor, offered a response to, and an analysis of Marquardt's book at a 1972 colloquium on Karl Barth in Toronto. (13) In expressing appreciation for Marquardt's bold thesis, especially in stressing the important role the thought of Feuerbach and Marx, for example, played in the early Barth as well as Barth's keen interest in political socialism in his early years, Markus Barth also revealed serious reservations about Marquardt's thesis and his methodology. But more remarkable than anything Markus Barth says about Marquardt's contentions in this article is the way in which he seeks to bring some sense of reconciliation between the two groups of "Barthians" that have become polarized by the whole matter: left-wing Barthians (Helmut Gollwitzer and George Casalis, for example) and right-wing Barthians (Eberhard Jüngel, Hermann Diem, and Frederick Herzog, among others).

What is Hanfried Müller's evaluation of Marquardt's thesis? When asked, Müller wrote the following:

[. . .] I still think today that Marquardt sees Barth as being too close to Lenin - Barth was much "more social democratic" in the sense of Bebel's party, that is, that SPD which had not yet committed the betrayal of August 1914, and thus which did not yet face the choice between social democracy or Communism. He certainly distanced himself from the SPD in that he had no fear of contact ["Kontaktsangst"; with Communists, and he never fell into a stupid hatred of Communists. But in contrast to Marquardt and to Marquardt's view of Barth, as far as I have understood and understood
him, neither socialism nor Marxism nor Leninism nor Communism were ever his theme; rather, his theme was — and while it was substantive, it was never central — anti-Communism (especially in the church) which he struggled against as a presumably Christian and yet profoundly incredulous fiction. Insofar as Marquardt appears to me to attribute to Barth something [. . . ] that he reads into Barth, namely, his specific "political theology," which is more characteristic of Gollwitzer than of Barth, for me this has historical-theological implications: I have the same reservations about that as about Religious Socialism in the past and the theology of liberation in the present, which do not at all limit my political solidarity with persons who think like that. But, theologically, I cannot agree with them; does not the gospel also become there an instrument for the improvement of the world — the hand of human beings, the church, Christian movements — and not in the hand of God? The counter-argument is naturally "Müller's doctrine of two kingdoms." Of course, the issue is not so simple. [. . . ] (14)

In this respect, I believe Müller's view of Barth is correct.

However, as we shall see, he himself tends to read into Barth, especially Barmen, what resonates with his own political, ideological predisposition.

Noting the similarity between Barth and Marx in their critique of "religion" as a sign of human pride (the profound influence of Feuerbach on Barth's early and life-long critique "religion" has been mentioned) (15), Charles West writes:

In all this Barth has shared Karl Marx's rebellious spirit most completely, and has expanded far beyond the narrow limits of Marx's political purposes. He has shared the rebellion also of Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and the modern existentialists. Yet their systems as well have proved too man-centered, too much concerned with the subject 'man' and his experience, to express in human thought that reality by which our ideological circle, our enclosure in our own sin and complacency, is broken, and our new being is constituted. This must come from without. This is God made man for us in Jesus Christ. Everything, for Barth, starts here. For this act of God there can be no human preparation;
not even the negative one whereby man exposes himself as sinner and hypocrite about his sin. Nothing short of this complete and absolute object in whom everything begins and whom no human thought or act can qualify, will satisfy as an answer to the question contained in the fact of ideology. (16)

While West seems to be generally sympathetic with Barth's theological perspective, he is not oblivious to both the ambiguities in Barth and critiques of his position. For example, after noting some of Paul Tillich's criticisms of Barth, West observes:

The valid question to Barth in this attack does not lie in the strength of Tillich's alternative to Barth's doctrine of authority. [. . .] It lies rather in the fact that Tillich voices here the most general criticism of Barth's theology, out of a real concern for the way in which it seems to violate the basic canons of human relations in the intellectual world. The question is real, even to Barth's theology of grace, which indeed Tillich has not even taken into account in his criticism: has Barth cleared the ground of all human approaches to God's revelation, only to erect a 'positivism of revelation', an arbitrary structure of Biblical ideas and dogmas whose design is Barth's and not God's, in its place? (17)

West notes that this criticism of Barth was first lodged by Bonhoeffer in Letters and Papers. As a way of illustrating the importance of the issue of ideology to Barth, West then quotes Tillich's observation (which is intended as a critique of Barth, but which may be seen as a virtue) that

[f]undamentally [Barth's] entire theology is contained in the first commandment, 'I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt not have any Gods before me.' Every single sentence of his writing can be understood as the application of this notion to a particular phase of the relation between God and the world. (18)

Finally, West writes:

We must say however that Barth has successfully raised
one question for all other theologians, concerning the ideological nature of their thought. Can any theology successfully avoid justifying one group of men against another, and do full justice to the variety and concreteness of human relations, if it defines God the creator and lawgiver, love, justice, the relations of Church and State, and above all sin and the means of its control, otherwise than by the light which Christ sheds upon them? (19)

With this, Barth calls into question not only the ideology that often governs the world, but also the role of ideology in the work of many theologians. One would include in the latter the work of Hanfried Müller.

As is the case in other aspects of his theology, Barth's political views were not without their ambiguities. (20) It is precisely because of such ambiguities that, perhaps for different reasons and different interpretations, his thought is embraced so warmly by persons of a wide variety of political persuasions. Hence, a devout Communist Christian such as Hanfried Müller as well as those who actively detested and opposed Communism can both claim a debt to Barth and his thought.

Clearly, Karl Barth's own political sympathies were socialist. At two different times, 1915 in Switzerland and in 1931 in Germany, he joined the Social Democratic Party. (21) In his formative years Barth was greatly influenced by the Christian socialist views of Hermann Kutter, Leonhard Ragaz, and Johann Blumhardt and his son, Christoph (their views will be outlined in Chapter Six). But with the outbreak of World War I and the positive response by many of his own theological professors to Germany's participation in it, Barth called into question the
identification many prominent churchmen made between the gospel and the war effort, and between the gospel and an ideological agenda, including Christian socialism. He made this view abundantly clear in his lecture at the Tambach conference in 1919 (which is cited in Chapter Two of this dissertation).

In May 1934 the first Confessing Synod of the German Evangelical Church was held in the Reformed church of Barmen-Gemarke near Wuppertal. This assembly of German Protestants opposed Hitler and wished to separate themselves from what became known as the German Christian Church. The latter came into existence in April 1933 as a result of Hitler's desire to consolidate his support in the church. Klaus Scholder maintains that Hitler formulated three basic principles which reflected his aims for controlling both the Catholic and Protestant churches:

1. to prevent the church from having any influence in politics; 2. to avoid Kulturkampf, i.e. an open confrontation between church and state; 3. to treat the two confessions in strict parity. (22)

A Catholic himself, Hitler was much more confident in asserting himself with the Catholic Church and worked toward gaining control with relative ease. His goal with the Protestants was to consolidate all the regional bodies ("Landeskirchen") into one Reich church. He was able to move toward that end with the aid of a former Army chaplain, Ludwig Müller, whom Hitler named as his advisor on matters having to do with the Protestant Church. Scholder writes that

convinced that a great period was now dawning for the Reich, for the church and above all for himself, in a declaration on 26 April [1933] Ludwig Müller affirmed:
'The confidence of the Reich Chancellor has called me to a great and difficult task. I am going to work with trust in God and in consciousness of my responsibility before God. My goal is the fulfilment of the longings of Protestant Germany since the Reformation.' This is how he saw the situation: 'The "German Christians" want an Evangelical German Reich Church. They have considerably shaken the people of the church. The church governments also want a great "Evangelical Church of the German nation." This church must now be built.' The declaration left no doubt that from now on its architect was to bear the name of Ludwig Müller. 'It is the wish and the desire of the Reich Chancellor that Protestant Christianity should begin the great work with cheerful trust in God and complete it in trustful co-operation with the Reich.' Then came the pious encouragement, 'May the Lord of the church give us all the spirit of unanimity', accompanied by the pious threat that the same Lord might also give the power 'inexorably to suppress all attempts at interference'. (23)

Ludwig Müller became Reichbishop in June 1933.

Many German Protestants had feared government intervention in church-related matters. Appeals for support for the Reich church were made to the various church administrative bodies. Initially, it appeared that supporters of Hitler and Müller were joining already-existing German Protestant churches. However, it soon became clear that the reverse was the case. Something of the popular response to, and expectations of the German Christian movement can be gleaned from a letter, quoted in Scholder, from a young pastor, Heinz Kloppenburg, after a visit from National Socialist regional leader:

What you said in yesterday's meeting with Pastor Meyer in your capacity as Kreisleiter [regional leader] moved me very much. What struck me more than ever before was the utter earnestness and profound responsibility with which National Socialism is fighting for the soul of the German people as a Christian people. To this I would add that the attitude of the Reich Chancellor and Führer towards the Protestant church, as indicated
in the nomination of Pastor Müller, seems to be truly pioneering, so I really see no further possibility of avoiding the logic of joining the NSDAP [National Socialist German Workers Party]. (24)

Kloppenburg later joined the Confessing Church movement. Under Müller's leadership, German Protestantism experienced what one historian has called "a reign of terror": "Clergymen were arrested and churches closed; gradually most of the territorial churches, with the exception of those in Bavaria and Württemberg, toed the line." (25)

These developments within the church clearly had theological repercussions. Scholder notes that "one of the most astonishing developments of the year 1933" was the rise of political theology. (26) He describes the dilemma of many in the church:

[Political theology could not simply be opposed by another political theology - in which the place of National Socialism was taken, for example, by Western democracy or Marxism. An argumentation on this level, of the kind the Religious Socialists had attempted in the 1920s, would not have affected political theology one way or the other. Here one ideology would merely have stood over against another, perhaps a theologically interpreted Marxism. There was little to be gained from this, the more so, since in summer 1933 this ideological confrontation seemed to have been settled for the time being][...]

So if one could not argue against political theology in principle or non-politically, all that was left was theological argumentation, namely the question whether the political judgment of political theology withstood the test of theology as having an essentially theological basis. So it was not a question whether the political decision of German theology for National Socialism was correct, nor even whether theology might make political judgments at all. The key question was simply whether this political judgment had been arrived at in a theologically correct manner. The man who made this question the key to all church controversies was Karl Barth. (27)

Under the leadership of Martin Niemöller, a Protestant
pastor in Berlin-Dahlem, a Confessional Front consisting of Lutheran and Reformed pastors, elders, and theologians was organized in opposition to the Reich church. An invitation to meet in Barmen on January 4, 1934 was issued. Conditions for admission were carefully stated:

'Only those will be admitted to the synod who can show that they are preachers or elders . . . of their community and on solemn oath to the synod affirm that free of any control from outside the community in matters of faith without reservations they hold completely to the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments as the only source of revelation for our faith.' (28)

At this meeting Barth delivered a lecture addressing the issue, "The Confession of a Free Church Synod." Over 300 pastors and elders from 167 communities were present at this meeting. (29)

Five months later, in May, the first Synod of the Confessing Church met, again in Barmen, to strengthen the Confessing Church movement and to address the issue of adopting a confession. Two Lutherans, Thomas Breit and Hans Asmussen, met with Barth, representing the Reformed church, on May 16 in Frankfurt to prepare several theological theses for the Synod to consider. According to Barth's biographer, Eberhard Busch,

[the theses then came into being in a remarkable way. Barth described it like this: 'The Lutheran Church slept and the Reformed Church kept awake.' While the two Lutherans had a proper three-hour siesta, 'I revised the text of the six statements, fortified by strong coffee and one or two Brazilian cigars.' 'The result was that by that evening there was a text. I don't want to boast, but it was really my text.' (30)

Barth's recollection is not only amusing, but his claim that it was "really my text" also warrants viewing Barmen as a glimpse of his theological perspective.
The first two theses of this "theological declaration" affirm the centrality of Jesus Christ as the unique revelation of God and that to him alone may absolute allegiance and obedience be rendered. In the third thesis we find the following statement which is reminiscent of Barth's Tambach address and is of particular relevance to this study: "We repudiate the false teaching that the church can turn over the form of her message and ordinances at will or according to some dominant ideological and political convictions." (31)

The fourth thesis rejects the "Führerprinzip" ("leader principle") as an appropriate principle within the church itself. At various points in his book, The German Dictatorship, Karl Bracher characterizes this principle which was used so effectively by Hitler. Bracher writes:

Among the special factors of the early days of National Socialism was the tremendously important part played by the spectacular rise and near-religious veneration of a Führer. The organizational structure and activities of this new type of movement were based completely on the leader principle. In the center stood the figure of Adolf Hitler. In terms of social psychology, he represented the disenfranchised little man eager to compensate for his feelings of inferiority through militancy and political radicalism. (32)

And again:

This was the beginning of the myth of the "Leader" Hitler, at first consciously promoted by Eckart in the Völkische Beobachter and already hinting at the mystical idealization typical of the future. Rudolf Hess, a student of the Munich geopolitician Karl Haushofer, furnished the first example of these panegyrics. Hitler's proud assertion that he had won the "position of first chairman with dictatorial powers" made the "leader principle" into the central organizational principle of the party. (33)
And finally:

The Führer stood as the absolute unifying point in and above the movement. As sole authority, as the "charismatic leader" (in Max Weber's sense), as the acme of the hierarchic structure and focal point of all action and ideas, he directed the organization, course, and tactics of the entire movement down to the personnel policies of regional offices. The fact that the centralized, militarily structured machinery was split into numerous rival centers held together only by the figure of the Leader merely helped to strengthen the power position and manipulative scope of Hitler within as well as outside the party. (34)

Theses five and six deal with the issue of the proper relationship between church and state, each fulfilling its own role, but neither having the prerogative of assuming the responsibilities of the other.

Obviously, this document held great significance for the Confessing Church and those involved in the resistance to Hitler. Barth described its significance in the following way:

At that time we were concerned with fixing certain Christian truths in connection with a definite and necessary action: it was necessary at that time for all the Evangelical churches and congregations in Germany to resist and attack the assimilation and alienation threatened by the German Christians. The church had to be strengthened by a reconsideration of its presuppositions and summoned to join battle boldly and confidently. With its back to the wall, so that it just could not fall, it had to "confess" by saying either yes or no. (35)

However, its importance transcended its immediate context. It became one of the benchmarks and guides for many in the church in the German Democratic Republic. As indicated above, those on both sides of the issue of whether or not to support a Communist regime found in Barmen grounds for their position. Those opposing the Communist regime could point to the Declara-
tion's emphasis on the supremacy and centrality of Jesus Christ (in theses one and two) as well as to its rejection of any subjection of the gospel to any "dominant ideological and political convictions" (thesis three). Those sympathetic with the East German government could point to thesis five which acknowledges the appropriate roles of both church and state, neither of which should infringe on the responsibilities of the other. (36)

But following World War II when Communism seemed to be on the rise and became an established form of government in eastern Europe as well as in China, many in the West wondered if Barth's opposition to fascism in Nazi Germany should not now also be accompanied by an equally ardent opposition to Communism which at least in theory professed atheism. Reinhold Niebuhr and Emil Brunner, to name two, criticized Barth for his unwillingness to denounce Communism. (37)

In 1948 Brunner published "An Open Letter to Karl Barth" in which he expressed his disagreement with Barth and his position regarding Communism. (38) Brunner maintains that both Nazism and Communism are to be rejected because of their totalitarian nature. He charges that Barth "hardly ever attacked the fundamental illegality and inhumanity inherent in the very nature of totalitarianism as such." (39) To try to distinguish between two forms of totalitarian states is to split hairs. Brunner goes on to write:

The totalitarian State is based on, is in fact identical with, the denial of those rights of the person vis-à-vis the State which are usually called human rights. That was the situation in Hitler's
State, and it is the same now in the Communist totalitarian State. The individual has no original rights conferred on him as a creature of God. Only the State can establish rights, and the individual only has the rights the State gives him and can take away from him at any time.

The totalitarian State is therefore a State of basic injustice. It is therefore also fundamentally inhuman and a fundamental denial of personal dignity. It is therefore intrinsically godless even though it may, like the Nazi State, tolerate the Church within certain narrow limits, or like Communist totalitarianism, for reasons of expediency keep its openly declared war on religion within certain bounds which just make it possible for the Church to exist. (40)

Brunner does not deny that there is social injustice in the West. "The crucial point, however, is that we must never forget that in the countries not under totalitarian control it is still possible to fight against social injustice, that the fight is being waged and has already achieved a great deal, though nothing like enough." (41) For Brunner,

[t]he question which confronts the Church today is therefore not whether or not it should adopt a fundamentally negative attitude towards 'Communism', but whether it can say anything but a passionately fundamental NO to the totalitarian State which, to be consistent, must also be communistic. (42)

Barth's response, which Müller (among others) used to his advantage, can be found in writings assembled in the volume Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings, 1946-1952 (which also includes Brunner's letter). (43) In his direct response to Brunner, Barth writes:

Let us begin with a general statement. A certain binding spiritual and theological viewpoint in accordance with its creed is demanded of the Church in the political realm in certain times of need, i.e. when it is called upon to vindicate its faith in the carrying out of its duty according to God's Word, or when it is called upon to give an explanation regarding a definite
occurrence. The Church must not concern itself eternally with various 'isms' and systems, but with historical realities as seen in the light of the Word of God and of the Faith. Its obligations lie, not in the direction of any fulfilling of the law of nature, but towards its living Lord. Therefore, the Church never thinks, speaks or acts 'on principle.' Rather it judges spiritually and by individual cases. For that reason it rejects every attempt to systematise political history and its own part in that history. Therefore, it preserves the freedom to judge each new event afresh. If yesterday it travelled along one path, it is not bound to keep to the same path today. If yesterday it spoke from its position of responsibility, then today it should be silent if in this position it considers silence to be the better course. The unity and continuity of theology will best be preserved if the Church does not let itself be discouraged from being up-to-date theologically. (44)

A second response appeared in the summer of 1949 in Barth's article, "The Church Between East and West." In it Barth attempts not only to articulate the positions of both East and West, but also to explain the differences in his views of Nazism and Communism.

Barth opens by acknowledging that the conflict between East and West is a real conflict and cannot be ignored. But he wants to approach it from a Christian perspective, that is, not, in the first instance, as a Westerner or as an Easterner. Although we are many things in addition to being Christians, Barth argues, the problem should be addressed by acknowledging "our own greater or lesser hardheadedness and our own greater or lesser softheartedness". (45) At least part of what Barth means by examining the conflict from a Christian perspective is to look honestly and critically at the claims of both sides. In doing so, Barth maintains that part of the Christian response
is "not to take part in the conflict. For Christians it is not their concern at all. It is not a genuine, not a necessary, not an interesting conflict. It is a mere power-conflict." (46) Again, the theme of the Tambach address of stripping Christiani-
ty of any human ideological bias is Barth's starting point.

In addition to acknowledging the fear each side (especi-
ally the leading powers, the Soviet Union and the United States) has of the other, Barth outlines the arguments of each side - about itself and about the other. And then he addresses the issue that aroused the ire of many of his Western contemporaries and the confusion of some in the East, namely, the difference between his attitude toward Communism and his attitude toward National Socialism, and why he does not see the former as the threat that the latter was. While Communism may be deplored for its totalitarian system and atrocities against humanity, Barth argues that there are distinctions to be made:

But please note that, in its relationship to Christi-
anity, Communism, as distinguished from Nazism, has not done, and by its very nature, cannot do, one thing: it has never made the slightest attempt to reinterpret or to falsify Christianity, or to shroud itself in a Christian garment. It has never committed the basic crime of the Nazis, the removal and replacement of the real Christ by a national Jesus, and it has never committed the crime of anti-Semitism. There is nothing of the false prophet about it. It is not anti-Christian. It is coldly non-Christian. It does not seem to have encountered the gospel as yet. It is brutally, but at least honestly, godless. (47)

While one might dispute some of Barth's claims (for in-
stance, the notion that Communism did not practice anti-Semi-
tism), his essential claim is that, while Nazism attempted to
co-opt the Church by cloaking itself in Christian language, Communism made no such pretense. What then is the appropriate and responsible Western response to Communism? It is not to create another confession such as Barmen, Barth maintains, because confessions are declared "when it has to defend itself against a temptation." (48) And Communism poses no such temptation to the Church. Nor should the response be a call for its destruction as a false prophet because it does not represent a false prophecy.

The appropriate and responsible response of the Church in the West, Barth argues, is to concentrate on its own "reconstruction":

The Christian Church stands for reconstruction. It cannot therefore agree with one side and disagree with the other. It can only take both sides at their word. It believes in, and it proclaims, the justice of God which does not cancel out human freedom but establishes it in its inviolable dignity and sacredness. But it also believes in, and proclaims, the freedom of God, namely the majestic freedom of His grace which does not make human justice superfluous, but which in fact impetuously demands the rule of human justice. It believes in, and proclaims, the peace of God, which is beyond all human understanding and therefore comprehends all human understanding, and keeps it intact, and which sees to it that we do not fall upon one another on the pretext of unreasonable reasonings, and which therefore cares for human peace. The Christian Church can therefore stand neither against the West nor the East. (49)

Barth does not call for neutrality or non-involvement in the power struggle between East and West, between Communism and capitalism. Rather, he warns against self-righteous judgment or condemnation of one against the other. Because he lives in the West, and because western critics of Communism are vocif-
erous and call for condemnation of Communism, Barth calls for "reconstruction" in the West, that is, examination of its own understanding of the gospel and the degree to which it stands under God's judgment (as do those who support and live under Communism).

In 1946, Barth wrote an essay, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community", in which he articulates, in a more theoretical way, his understanding of the proper relationship between church and state. This essay also appears in Against the Stream. (50) Barth employs a visual image to describe the relationship between the church and the state. One may think of two concentric circles. The inner circle represents the Christian community, and the outer circle represents the civil community. Christ is at the center of both. The Christian belongs to both and, therefore, has responsibilities to both. While both church and state are part of "the still unredeemed world," the purpose and function of each are different. The civil community is defined as "the commonalty of all the people in one place, region or country in so far as they belong together under a constitutional system of government that is equally valid for and binding on them all, and which is defended and maintained by force." (51) The Christian community, on the other hand, is "the commonalty of the people in one place, region or country who are called apart and gathered together as 'Christians' by reason of their knowledge of and belief in Jesus Christ." (52)
Barth maintains that there is a positive relationship between the two communities. The Christian community recognizes the need for the civil community, "[f]or it knows that all men (non-Christians as well as Christians) need to have 'kings', that is, all persons need to be subject to an external, relative and provisional order of law, defended by superior authority and force." (53)

The Christian community recognizes the existence of the civil community, as well as its own existence, as ordained by God. Barth avers:

However much human error and human tyranny may be involved in it, the State is not a product of sin but one of the constants of the divine Providence and government of the world in its action against human sin: it is therefore an instrument of divine grace. The civil community shares both a common origin and a common centre with the Christian community. [.....] Its existence is not separate from the Kingdom of Jesus Christ; its foundations and its influence are not autonomous. It is outside the Church but not outside the range of Christ's dominion - it is an exponent of His Kingdom. (54)

Because both communities are under the sovereignty of God and are subject to his rule, and because the Christian is a member of both communities, Barth says, one thing is impossible, namely, "a Christian decision to be indifferent; a non-political Christianity." (55)

What is the responsibility of the church in its relationship to the state? One of its responsibilities is to pray for the state. Another is to fulfill its own task of being the church. (56) By engaging in both of these activities the church acknowledges its own responsibility for the state before God
as well as proclaims the ultimate authority of God over both itself and the state. A third responsibility of the church, according to Barth's interpretation of Romans 13:1ff., is that the Christian community and the Christian should offer the blindest possible obedience to the civil community and its officials. What is meant is (Rom. 13:6f.) that Christians should carry out what is required of them for the establishment, preservation and maintenance of the civil community and for the execution of its task, because, although they are Christians and, as such, have their home elsewhere, they also live in this outer circle. Jesus Christ is still its centre: they too are therefore responsible for its authority. (57)

Barth maintains that there is "no such thing as a Christian State corresponding to the Christian Church; there is no duplicate of the Church in the political sphere." (58) Barth also argues against the existence of "Christian" political parties. (59) The purpose of the church vis-à-vis the state is not to take the Kingdom of God itself into the political arena. The Church reminds men of God's Kingdom. This does not mean that it expects the State gradually to become the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom where God is without shadow, without problems and contradictions, where He is All in All: it is the rule of God in the redeemed world. (60)

In the political sphere the church must stand for social justice. In doing so, it will inevitably have as its primary concern the condition of the poor, the powerless, the economically weak and threatened. The church also stands for peace, but never for "peace at any price." At the same time, however, the church

must and will do all it can to see that no price is considered too high for the preservation or restora-
tion of peace at home and abroad except the ultimate price which would mean the abolition of the lawful State and the practical denial of the divine ordinance. May the Church show her inventiveness in the search for other solutions before she joins in the call for violence! (61)

The views offered by Barth in this essay are echoed in various places in his Church Dogmatics. The Christian has a responsibility to support the state and to be actively engaged in the issues of the day. In accepting such responsibility, the Christian renders service to God. In II/2, Barth writes that Christians are not simply to tolerate the state, but are enjoined to offer it, even in this form, a free and willing obedience, to affirm it sincerely, actively and completely. It is just because and as they render to God what is God's that they will also - unreservedly - give to Caesar what is Caesar's - every personal service required of them and necessary for the maintenance of the state (Rom. 13:6f.), and therefore share in the responsibility for the continuation of this dispensation. (62)

While loyalty to, and support of, the state are components of Christian discipleship, they do not form the whole definition of discipleship. But they are part of that definition.

Finally, in the first of three essays in the little book, *How I Changed My Mind*, Barth discusses the specific issue of the church's struggle with National Socialism. He addresses the issue in terms of the First Commandment in the Decalogue: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The themes noted above of the particular tasks of the church and the state, the place of both church and state under the reign and authority of God, and the circumstances under which resistance to the state may be offered are all present. Barth writes:
What was and is at stake? Simply this, to hold fast to and in a completely new way to understand and practice the truth that God stands above all gods, and that the church in Volk and society has, under all circumstances, and over against the state, her own task, proclamation, and order, determined for her in Holy Scriptures. [. . .] A political decision, namely, against a state which as a totalitarian state cannot recognize any task, proclamation, and order than its own, nor acknowledge any other God than itself, and which therefore in proportion to its development had of necessity to undertake the oppression of the Christian church and the suppression of all human right and freedom. (63)

The influence of Barth's thought on Müller can be seen in several of the latter's own writings. Particularly persistent in their appearance are references to the Theological Declaration of Barmen, the substance of which, as noted above, came largely from Barth's pen. Of specific interest to Müller is the fifth thesis which opens with I Peter 2:17: "Fear God. Honor the emperor." Müller's 1958 treatise, "Der Christ in Kirche und Staat," discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation, is but one illustration of his preoccupation with this document. One of his concerns there, as elsewhere, is that of the church's temptation to "clericalize" the state and society and to "secularize" itself.

In a lecture, part of which was published in Standpunkt in 1984, Müller picks up this theme again. (64) He asks whether or not the church has misused Barmen. He writes:

[. . .] Barmen is misused whenever it serves as the church's justification of itself. And it is used correctly whenever it forces us to repent - not to regret our confession, but rather to regret that we have not adhered to it. (65)

He then proceeds to go through each of the Barmen theses and
ask the degree to which the church has taken them seriously.

When he reaches the fifth thesis, he asks:

Do we find the right way vis-à-vis a secularization of the church and a clericalization of society? Do we guard against measuring the power of the state by its conduct toward the church instead of whether and how it works for justice and peace? Are we sober enough to respect the state's monopoly on power insofar as it is responsible for justice and peace and represents human judgment? Or, do we enthusiastically provide a space in which the church itself becomes a protective force and - a state within a state - assumes for itself "the tasks and dignity of the state"? (66)

Toward the conclusion of this 1984 address Müller takes up the matter of natural theology, and specifically as it relates to the first thesis in Barmen which asserts Jesus Christ as "the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death." (67) This thesis rejects the notion of natural revelation. Müller subscribes to the Barmen thesis, and writes:

Barmen I states what the doctrine of justification means in terms of revelation theology: Just as God loves his enemies, he also reveals himself to non-believers. By no means is the rejection of natural theology in contrast to Reformation theology; rather, it is an extension of it. [...] (68)

But then Müller goes on in a peculiar way. He addresses the issue of ideology. He writes:

And finally there is the temptation in the opposite direction. Hans Iwand once said: "I believe that human beings cannot live without an ideology ['Ideologie'] because we are not animals. [...] I see no way for us to address important questions if we reject all ideologies from the outset. We would then not have the basis for thought on which to engage in conversations with others."

I am certain that many in our church find such statements in opposition to Barmen I. But that only shows that our understanding of Barmen is ecclesio-
logically-centered, and not Christocentric - I could even say that that view is one with blinders. Barmen I does not say that events and powers, forms and truths outside of and beside the one Word of God are bad: That would mean wanting to honor the Creator while rejecting his creation! In order for us to see the world which he has created good, God has given us eyes - why should we then have no ideology ["Weltanschauung"]? (69)

The issue, of course, is not whether or not human beings should or should not be guided by some human philosophical or ideological perspective, whether it has to do with politics or economics or something else. The crucial issue is the relationship of any such philosophy or ideology to one's theology, to one's understanding of God. And it is here that a statement in the third thesis of Barmen is most pertinent: "We repudiate the false teaching that the church can turn over the form of her message and ordinances at will or according to some dominant ideological and political convictions." (70) Müller seems to find those parts of Barmen that support his perspective, whether theological or political, while ignoring other statements that may call that perspective into question.

Toward the end of his Evangelische Dogmatik im Überblick (published in 1970) Müller includes an excursus on "Religion and Religionlessness." (71) In a footnote to a paragraph in which he criticizes the hypocrisy of "religion," Müller takes up the issue of ideology and the impossibility of a neutral position. Again, he brings Barth into the discussion.

Naturally, the real social basis of neutrality is, above all, the situation of the petite bourgeoisie ["Kleinbürgertum"] in the general crisis of capitalism: it seeks its perspective in the monopoly of capitalism
where it has none, and as a rule it does not look for it in socialism where [ . . . ] it would find a genuine perspective. Therefore, in the fundamental questions of our time it tends to vacillate and legitimate its vacillation, at times, with an ideologically grounded neutrality which it likes to misunderstand as "freedom from ideology." That has particularly distinct consequences in Protestant theology because a) historically, Protestant churches have been closely tied to the petite bourgeoisie in a social sense, and b) theology is especially well-suited to maintain the illusion of the "freedom from ideology" of neutral ideology; that evangelical faith is no world-view, that it can be misunderstood or misinterpreted in the sense that it is absorbed from all world-views and releases believers to a splendid isolation beyond all ideologies. If Barth understands revelation [ . . . ] simultaneously as an alternative to and a synthesis of religion, mysticism, and atheism, then that socially determined neutrality is reflected here in the attempt to address the basic question of philosophy with a simultaneous "neither-nor" and "both-and." However, this ideological expression of neutrality is a naturally stimulating reaction to its social basis - and my objection is that, formulated theologically in such a central way, it appears to occur with the meaning of direct political instruction in the name of God. Out of the neutral political attitude comes the Christian political attitude - and with it the *discrimen evangelii et legis* (distinction between gospel and law), the distinction between *justitia dei* (justice of God) and *justitia civilis* (social justice) is called into question. But with that, the freedom of Christians to see the world as it is and to change it in the sense of the *mandatum dominii terrae* is also limited because Christians are thrown back into a religious world-view out of which they are about to come. [ . . . ] Barth cannot be judged as a "neutralist." His "neutrality" would be characterized by a much too active anti-fascist and anti-imperialist bias. [ . . . ] (72)

In this passage Müller objects to the notion that one can be ideologically-neutral - in any field of study, but especially in the field of theology. He argues that even in wishing to remain neutral, inevitably one reveals his or her own ideologi-cal tendencies and presuppositions. The irony, of course, is that by arguing from his own Marxist ideological perspective,
Müller demonstrates the same narrowness of perspective that he accuses others of having. Furthermore, that narrow political perspective which dominates his thought diminishes the integrity of his theology and suggests that no theology can stand on its own apart from some political-social ideology.

Clearly, even in this passage, Müller reveals the extent to which his own Marxist convictions determine, perhaps even dominate, his theological perspective. But must it be so? In my view, Müller has made a conscious decision in this regard. Therefore, all interpretations are colored by this decision.

Finally, in the 1989 article "Offener Brief an meine Freunde in der SED" (cited in Chapter Two), Müller quotes a passage Barth wrote following the surrender of the French at Compiègne, the site Hitler chose to have the surrender papers signed because the Germans had been forced to sign armistice papers there in 1918. Müller writes:

I am a Christian - and therefore hear and believe (unlike you) what [...] Karl Barth wrote following the tragedy in the forest of Compiègne in France. (Perhaps it would help you read it if you substitute "socialist circles of today's DDR" for "Christian circles of today's (at the time) France.")

"If I am rightly oriented and if I understand correctly, there is much talk of humility ["Demut"] now in Christian circles of today's France by which one is supposed to understand and take the 'total defeat' suffered as divine judgment. And beyond repentance, which is now necessary. [...] Humility is a wonderful thing. There is really no place for pride ["Hochmut"], and if we were arrogant heretofore, then we have paid for it mightily for the past half year. However, [...] is it not almost too convenient to preach today of humility? So be it then! But then it should have to do with humility before God, and not with humility before facts and circumstances, before forces and powers, before human beings and human authorites.
It can have nothing to do with humility before God with resignation: not with the glare of astonishment at a fate to which we would have to attribute - if only provisionally - a kind of irreversibility. [. . .] And if the issue were humility before God, there would really not even be any mention of 'total defeat.' Is this term not painfully reminiscent of the 'total' intentions and claims of the other side? How then do we as Christians employ the word 'total' for something other than God's almighty grace? When and how, then, could a human defeat become 'total' differently than if the participating Christians were to lose faith in God's almighty grace and thus the joy and the courage to bear witness? It is precisely this that is not permitted to happen! [. . .] The necessary repentance would certainly not then remain in a fruitless general bowed position, in a passive regret of mistakes committed, and be manifested even less in such supposed innovations with which one would now help the 'old man' toward complete triumphs." (73)

The presence of this lengthy passage by Barth in this 1989 essay, which is aimed at his friends in the Communist Party in the GDR, reflects precisely the way in which Müller can embrace Barth's theology, but then use it for his own purposes. His preface to the quotation confirms this. He calls his readers to substitute "socialist circles in today's DDR" for the phrase "Christian circles of today's France." Müller is not inviting his Communist friends to engage in a theological discussion. Rather, he is criticizing them (just as Barth criticized the French Christians) for a warrantless humility which accepts defeat as a sign of fate. Müller uses theology, and specifically Barth's theology, to serve his own ideological and political agenda.

As has been indicated here, the relationship between Barth's politics and his theology has led to much discussion, controversy, and disagreement. However, as much as Hanfried
Müller claims a debt to Barth and his theology, his reading of Barth, as has been demonstrated in this chapter, is colored by his own Marxist convictions. As was true for his appropriation of Bonhoeffer, Müller seems to agree with Barth, theologically, in most respects. But, from a theological perspective, it must be said that, as Christocentric as both Barth and Müller are, Barth clearly sees an important place for the church (and it is understood Christocentrically), whereas Müller seems to replace ecclesiology with his ideology. For him, the church represents clericalism which seeks only its own self-interest.

But Müller cannot contain his own political and ideological convictions. Those convictions overshadow, and seize control of, his theological appropriation of Bonhoeffer, Barth, and others. We will now seek to understand Müller's perspective in the larger historical context of Christian socialism.

Endnotes


2. Ibid., p. 15.

3. Ibid., pp. 33-34. This quotation is also found in Hermann Diem's response to Marquardt's book under the title "Karl Barth as Socialist: Controversy Over a New Attempt to Understand Him" in Karl Barth and Radical Politics, edited and translated by George Hunsinger (Philadelphia, 1976), p. 125.


5. Ibid., p. 56.

7. Ibid., pp. 76-77.


9. Ibid., p. 85.


15. Cf. also Barth's *Church Dogmatics I/2*, pp. 297-325 where Barth discusses "Religion as Unbelief."


17. Ibid., p. 221.

18. Ibid., p. 221.

19. Ibid., p. 238-239.

20. At least some of these ambiguities are reflected in Barth's interpreters and are summarized by David L. Mueller in his Introduction to a collection of lectures Barth gave in 1939 entitled *Church and State* (published in 1991). Mueller cites George Hunsinger's three categories of critics of Barth's political positions in light of his theology:

One group of critics contends that Barth's theology is "inherently inadequate to the political realm" due to his excessive stress on God as "Wholly Other" and transcendent. Reinhold Niebuhr is representative in remarking that Barth views the political arena from "an eschatological airplane" making it impossible for
him to provide guidance in the complexities of ethical and political decision making.

A second group of objectors follows Charles West in maintaining that Barth's "political judgments" are made without reference to any serious "empirical analysis." This inattention to the "facts of human experience" stems from an excessive preoccupation with God's grace as the resolution to all ethical and political issues.

Barth's third group of critics contends that the gap between his theology and politics is so great that he cannot relate them consistently. Thus he relates the two in "ad hoc, and finally arbitrary" ways. This inconsistency is attributed either to his personal experiences with various political and social forces such as socialism, German National Socialism, democracy, capitalism, and communism or to his personal psychological make-up marked by a consistent desire to go "against the stream" of prevailing theological and political opinion. (pp. ix-x).

23. Ibid., p. 310.
24. Ibid., p. 314-5.
27. Ibid., p. 430-1.
28. Ibid., p. 580.
29. Ibid., p. 580.
30. Busch, p. 245.
33. Ibid., p. 92.
34. Ibid., p. 148.
36. Thesis five reads in part: "We repudiate the false teach-
ing that the state can and should expand beyond its special re-
sponsibility to become the single and total order of human life, and
also thereby fulfill the commission of the church.

"We repudiate the false teaching that the church can and
should expand beyond its special responsibility to take on the
characteristics, functions and dignities of the state, and
thereby become itself an organ of the state." (Leith, Creeds,
pp. 521-2.

37. For an excellent comparative analysis of Barth's views of
Communism with the views of Niebuhr and of Brunner, among others,
Cf. Charles C. West's Communism and the Theologians: Study of
an Encounter, esp. pp. 257-325.

38. Barth, Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings,


40. Ibid., p. 110.

41. Ibid., p. 109.

42. Ibid., p. 109.

43. Ibid., pp. 113-118.

44. Ibid., p. 114.

45. "The Church between East and West" in Against the Stream,
p. 128.

46. Ibid., p. 131, 136. Barth also writes:

That is the first element in our Christian political
attitude: our refusal to fight one way or the other
in this conflict. We are not saying that merely as
an edifying truth in the quietness of the study; we
are saying it to the West, to all of you: The cause
of the West may be our cause because we happen to live
in the West, happen to inherit Western traditions, but
it is not necessarily God's cause - just as the cause
of the East is certainly not God's cause either. (p. 136)

47. Ibid., p. 140.

48. Ibid., p. 142.

49. Ibid., p. 144.

50. "The Christian Community and the Civil Community" in
Against the Stream, pp. 15-50.
51. Ibid., p. 16.
52. Ibid., p. 15.
53. Ibid., p. 19.
54. Ibid., p. 21.
55. Ibid., p. 22. But, as will be seen, the impossibility of a non-political Christianity does not necessarily mean "Christian" answers to political issues. Christians may be engaged in the public arena, but not for the purpose of imposing "Christian" answers.
56. Ibid., pp. 23-4.
57. Ibid., p. 24.
58. Ibid., p. 25.
59. Ibid., pp. 44-46, 49.
60. Ibid., p. 31.
61. Ibid., p. 41.
62. Barth, Church Dogmatics, II/2, p. 723.
65. Ibid., p. 183.
66. Ibid., pp. 183-184.
67. Leith, p. 520.
69. Ibid., p. 184.
70. Leith, p. 521.
71. Müller, Evangelische Dogmatik im Überblick, Band I, pp. 245-263.
72. Ibid., Band II, pp. 400-401. The references to Barth are taken from Church Dogmatics, I/2, Par. 17 ("The Revelation of God as the Abolition of Religion"), Section 2 ("Religion as Unbelief"), pp. 297-325.
73. "Offener Brief an meine Freunde in der SED" in Weißeenseer Blätter, 1989, No. 5, pp. 27-28. Müller does not provide the source of this quotation by Barth. Thus, the translation is my own.
CHAPTER SIX - MÜLLER AND CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM

It is my contention, and in this chapter I will seek to show, that, from a historical perspective, Manfried Müller represents one extension of the Christian socialism movement that had its origins in the nineteenth century. It is not the only possible extension, but it is one. As will become evident, few, if any Christian socialists were Marxists. However, many were influenced by Marx's thought. Müller's perspective is necessarily different from a Christian socialist viewpoint for a variety of reasons, the most paramount of which is that, as a committed Marxist, Müller could develop his peculiar combination of Marxism and Christian theology in a legitimately Communist-governed country. Prior to 1917, this had not been possible for anyone, regardless of one's views of Marxism. And prior to 1948, this had not been possible in Europe.

As will be seen, Müller does not claim to be in the tradition of Christian socialism. My contention, however, is that his perspective, while different from that of earlier Christian socialists, is, in fact, a part of that tradition. Müller simply has the opportunity to give it a new trajectory and his own meaning. Furthermore, Karl Barth's own socialist leanings (and the debate over the role they played in his theology) as well as Müller's putative theological debt to Barth make this line of inquiry worthwhile. The overview of Christian socialism that follows is an attempt to demonstrate this historical framework.

As was noted in Chapter Two, those who heard Karl Barth's
address in Tambach in September 1919 were either religious socialists or persons disenchanted with the capitalist economic and social order and looking for some alternative. The terms "religious socialism" and "Christian socialism" are often used interchangably. However, "religious socialism" (which would include Jewish socialists and other non-Christian socialists) is often used in the German context, while "Christian socialism" seems to have a narrower, Swiss focus. While it is certainly not always the case, many representatives of this movement also had a familiarity, if not sympathy, with Marxist thought. The movement itself had its roots in the early nineteenth century with the rise of industrialism.

Ronald Massanari notes that with industrialization came a challenge to the church's traditional emphasis on individualistic pietism. In nineteenth century Germany, Massanari writes:

Protestantism tended toward individualism. While romantic organicism or corporatism may have had its influence in political and social spheres, its impact in theology and ethics was almost non-existent. What was absent was the prophetic and social dimension of Christian faith. Not unique to nineteenth century German Protestantism, this absence can be noted as far back as the institutionalization of the Constantinian Church. What was unique about the later nineteenth century situation was that the Church confronted a breakup of established forms of social organization, a dislocation of life and thought patterns, and an emergence of new structures and forms in a way probably more aggravated than it had faced since the collapse of the Roman empire. (1)

In Chapter One of this dissertation note was taken of how this "breakup of established forms of social organization" also led to the rise of fascist ideology.
Among those in Germany who began to address social needs and social issues from a theological and ecclesiastical perspective were Johann Wichern (1808-1881), who established the Inner Mission in Hamburg, and Adolf Stoecker (1835-1909), who founded the Christian Socialist Workers' Party in 1878. While Wichern, and others, attempted to meet the immediate needs of those who suffered the social and economic consequences of industrialization, they saw no need to address the institutional causes of such dislocation. Revolutionary socialism, epitomized by the Paris Commune, aroused fear of going any farther than they did. Massanari writes:

Accordingly, to deal with the social problem, Wichern outlined measures that did not threaten Christian faith or individual integrity, both of which he saw undermined in the socialist program and activity. For Wichern, the moral and religious aspects of human misery remained uppermost. Part of his proposal linked the social responsibility of Protestantism with the German state, seemingly on the assumption that the state could regulate social problems. Although modifying the more traditional approach, charity remained the basis of his program. He assumed that those on higher rungs of the political, social, or economic ladder would and could help those beneath them, thus affirming the hierarchical assumptions of the charity. His proposal, then, addressed itself primarily to symptoms of the social problem and not to the social problem itself. (2)

In contrast, Adolf Stoecker, the court preacher in Berlin, maintained that the gospel not only had a social dimension, but that it belonged in the economic, social, and political life of society. Like Stalin, also an anti-Semite, Stoecker quite consistently, according to Massanari,

believed that social reform contained a force with the potential to transform the laissez-faire economic
system and the consequent social structures that emerged with industrialization. Where the established church and the Inner Mission generally considered the plight of the common man in terms of individual problems, Stoecker understood that many of these problems were social and structural. (3)

Massanari goes on to observe that, in Stoecker's view,

"[t]rue socialism [. . .] must be Christian. [. . .] The Christian message could not be understood simply as saving souls but rather as the healing of the whole man-in-community." (4) It is worth noting that, even though Stoecker advocated an evolutionary change in social, economic, and political structures, his social activism caused Chancellor Bismarck much consternation and nervousness, and in 1890 he was dismissed as court preacher in Berlin by Kaiser Wilhelm II. (5)

Paul Tillich, an ardent religious socialist himself during the years of the Weimar Republic, identifies Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805-1880) and his son, Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt (1842-1919), as among the "fathers of Continental religious socialism." (6) The Blumhardtts combined a concern for the effects of modern industrial life with a commitment to the spiritual life as exemplified in the Gospels and the New Testament. Having become frustrated with the institutional character of the church (and, in fact, having encountered skepticism and hostility in the church), the elder Blumhardt set up a retreat center first in Möttlingen, and later in Bad Boll (in Württemberg).

William O. Shanahan summarizes the influence of the Blumhardtts in the following way:

[Johann] Blumhardt, together with his son, Christoph
(1842-1919) effected the transition from a simple piety expressed in missions and charity to a modern chiliasm resting on the promise of socialism and the natural sciences. Bad Boll [... ] symbolized the fragile, but nonetheless real continuity between the German-Swiss Awakening and another German-Swiss spiritual upheaval, centering around religious socialism and the dialectical theology, which occurred about the time of the First World War. (7)

The younger Blumhardt, Christoph, joined the Social Democratic Party in Germany in 1899. According to John Cort, he was the first Lutheran pastor to do so. In the same year "he committed the unforgivable sin of expressing public support for picketing strikers in Würtemberg, in the face of a new law that imposed severe penalties on picketing." (8) He went on to represent the SPD in the Stuttgart Landtag for six years. Finally, he was repudiated by his church. The Blumhardts had a profound influence on such future socialists as Karl Barth, Eduard Thurneysen, and Leonard Ragaz. (9)

As was true for many Christian socialists of the time, the emphasis of the Blumhardts was on the notion of the kingdom of God and how it may be present in this world. An excerpt from Christoph's sermon "Joy in the Lord" reflects his perspective:

Thus the Kingdom of Heaven first comes in a small flock free from anxiety. From the beginning, ever since Christ was born, people have sought such a society, a fellowship of the Kingdom of Heaven, free from cares and worries. There is an enormous strength when people stand together, when they stand together in a communal way. The idea of private property falls away, and they are so bound together in the Spirit that each one says, "What I have belongs to the others, and if I should ever be in need, the others will help me." This firm and absolute standing together in the common life where each is responsible for the other is the society in which you can indeed say to a man, "Don't worry!" Men tried it at the time of the apostles.
Later it was attempted in all kinds of ways, but it has always failed. This social order which is to come from Christ, this community of men loving and sacrificing for one another, has never come into being. And this is the reason why Christianity has become weak among the nations where it penetrated. [...] Many wealthy people, many property owners, have helped many poor, here and there. Yet you can see clearly that this was not what Jesus Christ meant. Just the opposite! What worries are caused by the charitable institutions nowadays! Thousands of poor people have to think how they can get a little here and a little there. Often they are turned away by charity itself. [...] This is not the way. This way people cannot possibly come to the point where they need not worry; and if they have to worry, they cannot work for the Kingdom of God. Therefore we must join together; a united company of Jesus must come about. (10)

Blumhardt's words regarding the failure of Christianity are puzzling. While one might read them as a case against Christianity, it is also possible to read them as a call to true Christianity - as if all attempts to carry out Christ's command to love and care for each other heretofore had good intentions behind them, but not genuine sincerity and commitment.

Two dynamics, or themes, which will continue to pervade the evolution of Christian socialism, must be recognized here. The first is the influence, either consciously or subconsciously, of Marxist thought on this movement or, put another way, the tension between Marxism and the gospel. While many Christian, or religious, socialists espoused greater equality and fairness between the wealthy and the poor, even calling for structural societal and economic changes to address such disparities, clearly not all embraced the Marxist strategy to bring such changes about. One example of such a person is Adolf Stoecker. Ronald Massanari writes:
One of the central themes in the socialist message was a call to freedom, equality and brotherhood. Stoecker also recognized these to be dynamic forces in the humanization process, but he would not admit their validity within a revolutionary and atheistic context. What he heard being propagated was a freedom without social responsibility and order, an impossible attempt to make all men equal and brotherhood based on the hatred of one class for another. He concluded from his examination of history that neither the German people nor a particular class was the bearer of authentic freedom, equality and brotherhood. Christianity alone was the cause and sole bearer of these humanizing forces. Accordingly, just as such a call must be made from within a Christian context, the actualization of true freedom, equality and brotherhood would be possible only as a result of religious-ethical renewal of mankind.

It is evident, then, that from Stoecker's Christian socialist perspective Marxism was inadequate or in error on several counts, including its anthropology, analytical premise of socio-economic determinism, strategy of internationalism and revolution, goal of a perfect society and its atheistic Weltanschauung. In part his critique grew out of the fact that he personally had found the real and necessary impetus for social change in Christianity. And from his vantage point, this was being seriously challenged and threatened by Marxism and the social movement. (11)

The second dynamic, or theme, that is exemplified in the Blumhardts, among others, is the relationship of Christian Socialists to the institutional church. Christoph, his views, and his political involvement were repudiated by the Lutheran Church. As already noted, Stoecker was dismissed from his post as court preacher in Berlin by the Kaiser. This tension between Christian socialism and the church, as we shall see, continues into the twentieth century.

Two Swiss figures should also be mentioned as being significant and influential in the formative years of Christian socialism: Hermann Kutter (1869-1931) and Leonard Ragaz (1868-
1945). Kutter served as pastor in Zürich while Ragaz was at the cathedral in Basel. Between 1908 and 1921 Ragaz also served as professor of systematic theology at the University of Zürich. Both Kutter and Ragaz were involved in labor disputes in their respective cities. For the first time, in 1906, they used the term "religious-socialist" to describe their movement. There were, however, differences between the two. John Cort writes that Ragaz "was more activist, political, union-oriented, Kutter more spiritual, religious, church-oriented." (12) Karl Barth, who was clearly influenced by both men and who experienced the tension between the emphases of both, recorded the differences between them in a letter to his friend and colleague, Eduard Thurneysen:


KUTTER: Experience of God. Insight into the enslaved condition of man without God. The Social Democrats can never understand us! Religious responsibility in the church in continuity with the pietistic tradition. Circles of friends for spiritual deepening and for work. Concentration primarily on the pastors. (13)

Janos Pasztor describes the contrast between Kutter and Ragaz in the following way:

Kutter wanted to be primarily a preacher who stressed the radical, immediate God-centeredness of Christianity. In Jesus Christ that radical centeredness broke through in a unique way. For Kutter, then, the Church is to preach that God is real and present in history, and that He is always ready to break through into life and history through man's repentance and obedience. The Gospel has a radical this-worldliness and its effects are not only personal but also social and
historical. In other words, God's involvement in history calls for man's responsibility in terms of social action. God is at work in history, even outside the Church, and in social movements and revolutions. And even force may sometimes be necessary to bring about social changes. Kutter's God-centeredness had a profound effect upon Barth and Thurneysen, even though they did not always agree fully with him. Kutter also influenced Ragaz, but the latter turned more and more towards politics and farther away from theology proper. Kutter remained a preacher; Ragaz chose to move in another direction, although the two remained friends. (14)

As is true for those already mentioned in this chapter, the central theme in Ragaz's thought was the kingdom of God.

Pasztor writes that in order to understand Ragaz's perspective, one must first understand his view of history:

For him [Ragaz], history is an open book of revelation which is illustrated and interpreted by the Scriptures. But history also is a source of revelation in itself. As there is progress in history in the events in which God reveals Himself, history is a progressive revelation. Ragaz regarded Darwinism as a great divine gift, for it helps man to understand that life proceeded from God and that, in its culmination, it returns to Him. (15)

With respect to Ragaz's understanding of the relationship between the kingdom of God and society, Pasztor writes:

Corresponding to the nature of the Kingdom, the activity of the community created by it must not be limited to the religious realm; social-political responsibility is an organic part of it. This responsibility is to recognize the mainstream of God's action in social life and to stand by His action, support it, and thus transform society. Like Blumhardt and Kutter, Ragaz was convinced that God was at work in the socialist movement. He never grew weary of proclaiming that the new kairos was approaching through the efforts of socialism. Therefore, socialism was not the cause of a party; it was God's cause. In the pulpit and in his writings, Ragaz readily assisted the cause by, for example, supporting strikes. At the same time, he attempted to bring the cause of socialism under God's rule. In his view, political life has no autonomy
Again in Raaz, we note the dual tension between socialism and the church, and between socialism and Marxism.

With the end of World War I there was a growing interest in socialism among many persons, including theologians. We have mentioned Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen in Switzerland. In Germany, the Weimar years brought political, social, and economic instability.

Renate Breipohl has examined religious socialism in Germany during these tumultuous years. (17) In this treatment she confines her study to German religious socialists - a broad spectrum in and of itself. Breipohl writes that the end of the Kaiserreich and the birth of a parliamentary democracy, with all the political and social uncertainty that that brought with it, also gave rise to a growing interest in "God's working people." Leaders included Otto Herpel, Heinrich Schultheiß, Otto Roth, Georg Flemmig, and Eberhard Arnold. Later known as the "Schlüchternen Kreis," on March 29, 1919 this group adopted the name "Association of Friends of Christian Democrats" ("Ver-einigung der Freunde des Christlichen Demokraten"). In April 1919 this group began publishing a weekly newspaper called The Christian Democrat. (18) This group was one of several, including some Swiss religious socialists, who gathered at Tambach in the fall of 1919 and heard Karl Barth speak.
Breipohl examines the thought of several religious socialists of the Weimar period, including those who emphasized Christianity and rejected Marxism (Hans Müller, Eberhard Lempp, and Hans Ehrenberg) as well as those who were not only open to Marxist thought, but were sympathetic with it (Emil Fuchs, Hans Hartmann, Paul Piechowski, and Erwin Eckert). She then looks at the thought of Georg Wünsch, who sought to combine a commitment to Christianity (with the Sermon on the Mount as a model) with a commitment to capitalism out of which a kind of socialism would evolve. Without embracing Marxism, Wünsch believed that Marx's notion of class struggle had something to say to Christian socialism. What makes Wünsch even more peculiar is the element of nationalism he adds to this mixture, an element that led him to support the German state under Hitler. (19)

Breipohl then examines the socialism of Paul Tillich during the Weimar years, and concludes by comparing Tillich's socialism with that of Karl Barth during the same period. Tillich's philosophical existentialism clearly set him apart from Barth's Christocentric theology. This fundamental disagreement in approaches to theology, Breipohl argues, reflects an equally fundamental difference in their understanding of socialism:

Behind Barth's "objectivity" and Tillich's "believing realism," behind Barth's "exoteric" and Tillich's "esoteric" socialism lies an occasionally different understanding of reality, which with Barth is made sensible by the emphasis on the real incarnation of God, and which with Tillich relies on his historical-philosophical presuppositions which also determine his Christology. (20)

Breipohl is cautious in her closing remarks regarding how
the diverse theoretical/historical approaches to religious socialism in Germany during the years of the Weimar Republic are evaluated:

The historic service of religious socialism of having attempted within German Protestantism, for the first time without polemic intention, an acquaintance with, and analysis of Marxism and, beyond that, of having taken up the necessary task in the Weimar Republic of dealing with the important issue of the socialistic work force and the questionableness of the attitude of the Protestant churches toward it, remains legitimate. However, in my view care must be taken in offering the results of the theoretical discussion regarding a connection between religion and socialism. [ . . . ] The question must be asked whether the philosophical presuppositions in the debate with Marxism can be affirmed, presuppositions whose origin was never reflected on - with the exception of Tillich - by religious socialism, and which, as the unquestionable basis, in form, of a more or less developed theory of history, definitively determined the result of the debate with Marxism and the formulation of a new religious-socialist program. [ . . . ] (21)

Breipohl's interest is in the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of the various religious socialist perspectives during the Weimar years. At least part of what is at stake in her study is precisely what is at stake in this examination of Hanfried Müller, namely, determining his theoretical and ideological presuppositions and the role they play in his thought.

While someone like Werner Sombart (see Footnote 19 above) embraced socialism without finding any inherent Scriptural warrant for it, at least in the New Testament, Müller takes no interest in, and makes no reference to, Sombart. There may be several reasons for this, not the least of which would be Sombart's eventual movement away from Marxist sympathies toward support for National Socialism.
With this overview of the development of Christian, or religious, socialism, one may legitimately ask not only what Müller's own views of religious socialism are, but also where he himself might fit in this matrix. These two questions will now be examined.

The investment of Communism with legitimacy following World War II in governments in the Soviet Union, eastern Europe, and China clearly altered the dynamics of the relationship between religion and socialism. While lip service might be paid to tolerance of religion in official constitutions (22), in practice religious activity was discouraged. (23) Marx and Engels held that Christianity and the church were a part of the established order that needed to be overthrown. Even Christian socialism had no redeeming value. In The Communist Manifesto they wrote: "Christian Socialism is but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heartburnings of the aristocrat." (24)

So, in this newly-legitimated Communist order, religion in general, and Christianity in particular, had no autonomy. And yet, it was not entirely prohibited either. The choices seemed to be either to adhere to the official doctrine of the state, in which case one's Christianity was subordinated to the will of the state, or to adhere to the priority of one's Christian convictions, in which case one became an outcast.

For the first twenty years of life in the GDR the Protestant Church there had maintained ties with the Protestant Church
in the Federal Republic. After much pressure from their government, in 1969 the East German churches agreed to break all organizational ties to the West and, in the words of John Conway, formed

the Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR, or Kirchenbund, a federation of the eight East German Protestant churches.[ . . .] At the same time the East Germans still affirmed their desire to retain a special but undefined relationship with their western colleagues. (25)

Conway describes the tensions within the church over this development:

Such an accommodation to the pressures of the G.D.R. government was, of course, strongly resisted by staunch anti-Communists, such as Bishop Dibelius, who went so far as to question the moral authority of the G.D.R. state in terms of Romans 13. But Dibelius' wholehearted support for the Bonn Federal Republic, including its policies of remilitarization and its plans to install military chaplaincies had led to his being banned from the eastern half of his diocese. Resentment against his authoritarian style of leadership also added to the belief of many East German pastors that the time had come to seek a new style of Christian witness in circumstances which appeared irreversible for years to come. The need was now apparent for some new arrangement between the churches and the Communist authorities. (25)

The 1960s saw increased activity by the Stasi with regard to churches within the borders of East Germany. This activity was not without its ambiguities. Conway observes:

On the one hand it (the Stasi) insisted on strict political control and was quick to suppress any open opposition. On the other hand it also sought to encourage so-called 'progressive elements' in the churches and to foster those church activities which might enhance the policies of the regime, especially abroad. Selected and compliant individuals were allowed to travel to ecumenical meetings in foreign countries. Appointments to theological schools and faculties were given to those demonstrably loyal to the regime.
Organizations such as the Christian Peace Conference were secretly subsidized in an attempt to support those Christians who opposed the western policies of remilitarization and nuclear rearmament and whose deliberations were blatantly exploited for propagandistic purposes. By such means the Stasi and its political masters played cat and mouse with the church authorities, alternating between repression and seduction, but never abandoning the determination to make the churches subservient to its overall goal of consolidating the 'socialist identity' of the German Democratic Republic. (27)

Over the next several years, many in the East German church sought a middle way. One of the church leaders, Albrecht Schönherr, became bishop of East Berlin and Brandenburg in 1967. The strength of the church led the government to seek a "summit" meeting with church leaders in 1978 in an attempt to address some of the complaints of the church. In the first meeting ever held between the leader of the GDR and a leader of the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD), Erich Honecker met with Bishop Schönherr on March 6, 1978. Out of this meeting came the phrase "church in socialism" ("Kirche im Sozialismus"), a term which allowed the government to acknowledge the church's right to exist without also endorsing the church or its views, but which also reflected the church's affirmation of "the allegedly humanistic goals of Marxism." (28) Although many in the church later questioned the wisdom of this rapprochement between church and state, there can be little doubt that, at the time, it represented, for most in the church, a step in the direction of mutual recognition and respect.

Conway notes that the position taken by Schönherr, one of Bonhoeffer's first students at Finkenwalde, was influenced by
Bonhoeffer's thought. In the 1950s he was also a member of the Weißensee Study Group. Conway writes:

Theologically this group accepted Bonhoeffer's insight that "Christendom" in its traditional form was no longer a valid option. Instead, the East German churchmen saw that new patterns of discipleship were called for in what was likely to remain - at least for the foreseeable future - a Marxist-controlled and indoctrinated society. The churches could no longer rely on their traditional sources of authority, backed by the power of the established government. Nor could they expect to play their well-known role as the guardians of the nation's conscience in matters of public morality. Nevertheless they were determined to seek to remain a relevant and creative minority and rejected the temptation of becoming a pietistic sect, concerned only with its own personal salvation or preaching only about the world to come. Instead they wanted to be actively engaged as Christians in an atheistic state without surrendering the traditions of their faith. They were called, they believed, to be "there for the world, just as Christ was there for the world," not merely for their own members, but for non-Christians as well. (29)

The preposition "in" was a deliberate choice in the phrase "Kirche im Sozialismus." According to Conway,

[. . .] the churches sought to adopt a position of critical solidarity within their particular socialist society, not beside it, not against it, but certainly not endorsing it. The short slogan Kirche im Sozialismus - or as Schönherr later preferred 'The Christian in a world come of age' - became the benchmark of this movement, seeking to stress its political contribution through service to the welfare of the whole community. This stance involved a deliberate refusal to adopt a ghetto-like existence or the mentality of a diaspora. It also meant refusing the idea that the state would impose its totalitarian goals on the whole of society. Instead it sought to adopt a thoughtful concept of how Christians should take their place as citizens in a post-Christian society. Schönherr was clear that this entailed steering a course between the twin dangers of a total acceptance or a total rejection. (30)

How does this notion of "church in socialism" relate to
the larger historical notion of religious, or Christian, socialism? The line of continuity between Christian socialism and the "church in socialism" proposed by Schönherr breaks somewhat because of the radical economic, social, and political structures brought about by Communist governments. But this radically new form of government attempted, at least nominally and only in response to pressures from the East German church, to address many of the concerns of some of the early religious and Christian socialists. It is instructive to see how the church, led by Bishop Schönherr, among others, responded.

If we maintain that the East German church, whether wittingly or not, represented an extension of the tradition of Christian socialism, admittedly in a new form, how did Müller see himself in this new context? In response to the question of whether or not he saw himself within the tradition of religious socialism, Müller wrote, in 1991, the following:

By no means do I stand "within this tradition," for that would mean going back beyond the young Barth and Kutter. What differentiates me from religious socialism, first and foremost, is the issue of the "religion question" and, with it, its oddity vis-à-vis the liberal-theological tradition in religious socialism and hence the basis of the political option on so-called "Christian responsibility"; in addition, there are, for many religious socialists, the demonstrable intellectual moorings in philosophical-irrationalistic ideologies, appropriately criticized by Susanne Breiöhl. Politically, differences consist in the fact that most of the religious socialists - throughout, in connection with their equally criticized theological-philosophical perspective -, if they opted for socialism, chose its revisionistic variants, and few for its Marxist ones. On the other hand, I have increasingly recognized that many religious socialists warned of fascism in a timely and decisive way, and that the conservative-clerical circles of the Confessing Church
often discredited them for this and did a bitter injustice against them. More and more, therefore, I have recognized that I owe them a glaring debt for my theological heritage. Of course, this admission cannot mean a retraction of my own views or simple agreement with them on a global basis. Rather, it means examining, very self-critically, whether the fathers of my tradition, and I myself in their footsteps, tended to put forward theological explanations when it was really the political option of the religious socialists that was so displeasing. (31)

In light of everything else Müller has written, it must be observed that Müller demonstrated a greater willingness to engage in self-criticism following the fall of the Communist regime in East Germany than before.

Although we have examined Müller's views of the relationship between the church and the state from a theoretical and theological perspective, how do his writings reflect the rapprochement between Honecker and Schönherr, specifically of the notion of "church in socialism"?

In 1983, five years after the "summit" between Honecker and Schönherr and the coining of the slogan "Church in Socialism," Müller published eight "theses" under the title "Church in the Revolutionary World Process; Church in Socialism." (32) Appearing without explanation, presumably these statements summarize Müller's views of the place of the church in this Marxist society. They are worth quoting in their entirety:

I.

The task of the church must determine its existence. The possibilities and difficulties of its existence must not determine its existence if the desires of the church are not to take the place of the will of God.
II.

The political existence of the church is the non-religious interpretation of its proclamation. Therefore this existence must not be defined by the love of the church for itself or by its own concerns, but rather only by love for its neighbors and its enemies and by concern for life, justice, and peace. For only so is the church a witness to that one who "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, . . . ."

III.

The sanctification of the church occurs not in sacredness, religiosity, or the "Christianity" of its existence, but rather in its profaneness, materiality, and rationality. It allows neither for the church to separate itself from the society in which it exists nor for it to adapt itself to its order; instead, it is to be responsible in its tasks to advance the common good. For only thus does the church live in discipleship to the holy one who came "in the likeness of sinful flesh" in the profaneness of this world, bound to us, and distinguished from us in that love "which seeks not its own."

IV.

Even in socialism the church is so to exist, politically, that in freedom it recognizes and supports the social power in its concern for justice and peace without striving for its own power and social assurance of its existence.

V.

If the church reflects itself, in an introverted way, as "church in socialism" (be it more critically or less critically, in solidarity or distance), then in every longing for the "fragrance of the great wide world" it will succumb to a narrow-minded provincialism. It will then judge all problems of justice and peace in the world only with a view toward what it itself has of those. Such self-reference contradicts its charge, and in this contradiction, it will shrivel up as the church, even if it is considered by those for whom it is useful as a "cheap church."

VI.

Only if the church, selflessly in the socialist
society, confirms its political existence in relationship to its task by thinking, speaking, and acting responsibly in the revolutionary world process, will it also correspond to its environment and its age vis-à-vis its charge because it will interpret, secularly, its faith indirectly by its love and its proclamation indirectly by its works.

VII.

If the church understands its existence in socialism as a "fate" that it must "accept in any event as God's judgment" instead of as a task to be seized and accomplished, then by such political existence it testifies indirectly to fear and concern for itself instead of liberation from them, and politically becomes a brake in the revolutionary world process because it fruitlessly complains about it and in it instead of acting responsibly in it.

VIII.

The content of the revolutionary world process is the removal of the power of capital over human beings, the termination of the exploitation of human beings by human beings, the abolition of slavery to wages. The revolutionary world process does not lead back to a paradise and not forward to the kingdom of God. It simply brings a relative, temporary, and external improvement to human, social, historical justice in the boundaries of human selfishness, freedom, and power, and remains burdened with every dialectic of desired effects and undesired side-effects which belong to human activity. It does not lead to the justice that God gives, but it does promote the justice required by the weak and the poor in this life. Therefore, the church is to accompany this process sympathetically; it is not to hinder it by its political existence or to comment upon it religio-historically: it is to proclaim God's kingdom and not the revolutionary world process. But for the sake of the love that is grounded in God's justice, it is to labor for earthly peace and social justice, and not to conduct itself toward them neutrally. (33)

In these statements Müller subordinates the task of the church to the "revolutionary world process" in which socialism is engaged. If one were to ask what the distinctive features of the church are, at least as reflected in Müller's theses,
one would be hard-pressed to find them. The church is to join other bodies in working for "the common good" (Thesis III). And if the church were not to subordinate itself to this common good, or if it were not to agree with Müller's understanding of what the common good is, then the only other possible interpretation, for Müller, is for the church to be concerned solely for its own self-interests.

The church is to "confirm ["bewährt"] its political existence by thinking, speaking, and acting responsibly in the revolutionary world process." One finds oneself asking if, according to Müller, the church has a charge, a task, an identity, apart from this "revolutionary world process" called socialism. Indeed, does anyone or any institution in this society have an identity apart from the cause of Marxist ideology?

In the final thesis Müller specifies three features of the content of this process, all of which are integral parts of the Marxist agenda: "the removal of the power of capital over human beings, the termination of the exploitation of human beings by human beings, the abolition of slavery to wages."

Müller goes on to acknowledge that this revolutionary process neither leads to the kingdom of God nor is identical with it. The church is to proclaim God's kingdom, but Müller never helps the reader understand the substance of that kingdom. Instead, one is told simply that the church "is to accompany this process sympathetically; it is not to hinder it by its political existence or to comment upon it religious-historical-
Müller has replaced ecclesiology with ideology. Any appreciation for the church and its uniqueness is dismissed with the charge of protective self-interest and clericalism. The church is seen positively only when it serves the larger ideological purpose of Marxism. And this view of the church certainly distinguishes Müller from most earlier Christian socialists. Others seem to have had a higher view of the church that saw the church as having both an independence from, and yet also an integral role in, attempts at social justice. Clearly, Müller's views also set him apart from many other churchmen even in East Germany. One need only consider those mentioned in the Introduction of this dissertation - Johannes Hamel, Albrecht Schönherr, Heino Falcke, Friedrich-Wilhelm Krummacher, Werner Krusche, Gottfried Noth, among others. These were persons who not only held different political views from Müller, but they also saw the church as something more than a self-serving institution.

Hanfried Müller represents a radical extension of the social justice others before him had sought. What is radical is the subordination of the church's authority to that of the state and its ideology. Using the language of Bonhoeffer, he couches his perspective in terms of "religionless Christianity" and "service to others." But, in fact, he has replaced the church's authority with Marxist ideology.
Endnotes


While the focus here will be on religious or Christian socialism in Germany and Switzerland, the rise of industrialization in England and the United States quickened in some church circles a heightened awareness of social displacement and the need to address this issue. In England, the names most often associated with the movement are John Ludlow and F. D. Maurice. In the United States, Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch are perhaps the most well-known social gospel activists of the late 19th century. For a comprehensive, historical overview of Christian Socialism, cf. John C. Cort's Christian Socialism: An Informal History (Orbis Books, 1988).

2. Ibid., p. 20.
3. Ibid., p. 23.
5. Ibid., p. 22.
7. William O. Shanahan, German Protestants Face the Social Question, Volume I, p. 64.
9. The influence of the Blumhardt's continues today in the United States in the Society of Brothers community in Rifton, New York. This community operates its own publishing firm, The Plough Publishing House, which has produced many of the Blumhardt's works in English translation as well as works having to do with related themes.

15. Ibid., p. 28.

16. Ibid., p. 31. Ragaz’s notion of "kairos" foreshadows its use by, and importance for, Paul Tillich and his theology.

17. Religiöser Sozialismus and bürgerliches Geschichtsbewusstsein zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik (Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1971).


19. Ibid., pp. 144-166. The combination of socialism and nationalism is also seen in the peculiar figure of Werner Sombart (1863-1941). The son of a wealthy landowner, Sombart was enamored with Marxism early in his academic career. As he grew older, he became disenchanted with Marxist ideology. Interestingly, however, Sombart rejected the notion of "Christian" socialism. In his book, A New Social Philosophy, published in 1937, Sombart wrote:

To those Christians and (Christian-) religious Socialists it may be replied that to base their socialist demands upon Christianity is, it seems to me, an inadmissible interpretation of this doctrine, in so far as it claims to rest upon the holy scriptures. So far as the alleged 'Communism' of the original Christians is concerned, it has been proved often enough that, at the first beginnings, there were only small groups of the faithful who wandered about with a common travel-fund, that these groups soon disbanded, and that out of the communal life of the Communists, there soon sprang a purely festive cult, while the practice of common meals became a service for the poor.[. . .] (pp. 67-8)

Sombart continues this line of argument against a kind of Protestant Christian socialism, but allows for the possibility of Jewish and Catholic socialism:

We must admit that, through a scrupulous examination of the sources, we are led to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a Socialism that is based upon the gospel - that is, a Christian Socialism, or an evangelical Socialism. One could conceivably construct a Jewish, but not a Christian Socialism. . . . Christian Socialism (evangelical, religious) as such,
came not as a full-fledged performance of Socialism, but precisely as a degenerate "variety." It misunderstands either Christianity or Socialism, or both, and serves in most cases merely as a veil, wrongly adopted, under which a very definite and very worldly endeavor lies concealed.

The problem of Catholic Socialism is entirely different. In fact there is such a Socialism and it is the only sacred form that exists today. Sacred Socialism, so far as the Catholic doctrine demands a socialistic communal life and an order erected upon it, has a divine origin. But this order, in which the highest legal norms, acknowledged by the state as such, are contained, is not the gospel, but the natural law. The law of nature which, however, the evangelical church does not recognize, had its origin in a welding together of the Biblical doctrine of the Old and New Testaments, above all, the Decalogue with the Aristotelian and Stoic philosophy, in which the eternal law became recognized. This natural law contains a complete plan of a social order which is to be realized here on earth. According to this plan the living together of human beings will not be determined by an arbitrary transaction of individual persons or groups of persons, but will be put under objective norms. The aim is a socially ordered common life in our sense; it is a social normativism. Particularly true in the field of economics." (pp. 69-70).


22. For example, Article 20 of the Constitution of the German Democratic Republic, passed under Walter Ulbricht on April 6, 1968, reads:

(1) All citizens of the German Democratic Republic have the same rights and responsibilities regardless of nationality, race, philosophical or religious confession, social background and position. Freedom of conscience and belief are guaranteed. All citizens are equal before the law.


23. In East Germany, for example, young people were discouraged from participating in church-sponsored Confirmation classes and encouraged to participate in state-sponsored "Jugendweihe" activities. The consequences for the decision
were often severe, both for the youngster and for his or her parents. If one opted for Confirmation, educational opportunities could be denied the young person and occupational advances were seriously limited for the parents. The reverse would be true if the Jugendweihe option was chosen. Ironically, a similar practice of indoctrinating, and cultivating the support of, the youth, originated under Hitler.


26. Ibid., p. 6.

27. Ibid., p. 7.


29. Ibid., p. 8.

30. Ibid., p. 9.

31. Letter to me from Hanfried Müller, received October 9, 1991.


33. Ibid., pp. 12-14. The original in its entirety reads as follows:

I.

Der Auftrag der Kirche muß ihre Existenz bestimmen. Die Möglichkeiten und Schwierigkeiten ihrer Existenz dürfen nicht ihren Auftrag bestimmen, wenn nicht die Wünsche der Kirche an die Stelle des Willens Gottes treten sollen.

II.

Die politische Existenz der Kirche ist die nicht-religiöse Interpretation ihrer Verkündigung. Darum darf diese Existenz nicht von der Liebe der Kirche zu sich selbst und von ihrer Sorge um sich selbst
bestimmt sein, sondern nur von der Liebe zu ihren Nächsten und zu ihren Feinden und von der Sorge für deren Leben, Recht und Frieden. Denn nur so ist die Kirche Zeugin dessen, der "es nicht für einen Raub hielt, Gott gleich zu sein, sondern entäußerte sich selbst und nahm Knechtsgestalt an..."

III.

Die Heiligung der Kirche geschieht nicht in Sakralität, Religiosität oder "Christlichkeit" ihrer irdischen Existenz, sondern in deren Profanität, Materialität und Rationalität. Sie läßt weder zu, daß die Kirche sich von der Gesellschaft, in der sie lebt, absondert, noch daß sie sich ihrer Ordnung anpaßt, wohl aber, daß sie sich verantwortlich an deren Aufgaben zur Förderung des Allgemeinwohls beteiligt. Denn nur so lebt die Kirche in der Nachfolge des Heiligen, der uns "in der Ähnlichkeit des Sündenfleisches" in der Profanität des Diesseits gleichförmig wurde, mit uns verbunden und von uns unterschieden in derjenigen Liebe, "die nicht das Ihre sucht".

IV.

Auch im Sozialismus soll die Kirche politisch so existieren, daß sie in Freiheit die gesellschaftliche Macht in deren Sorge für Recht und Frieden anerkennt und unterstützt, ohne nach eigener Macht und nach gesellschaftlicher Sicherung ihrer Existenz zu trachten.

V.

Reflektiert die Kirche introvertiert sich selbst als "Kirche im Sozialismus" (sei es kritischer oder weniger kritisch in Solidarität oder Distanz), dann wird sie bei allem Fernweh nach dem "Duft der großen weiten Welt" einem spießigen Provinzialismus verfallen. Sie beurteilt dann all Probleme der Gerechtigkeit und des Friedens in der Welt nur noch im Blick darauf, was sie selbst davon hat. Solche Selbstbezogenheit widerspricht ihrem Auftrag, und in diesem Widerspruch wird sie als Kirche verkümmern, auch wenn sie gerade so von denen, denen sie nützlich ist, als "wohltätige Kirche" geschätzt wird.

VI.

Nur wenn die Kirche selbstlos in der sozialistischen
Gesellschaft ihre politische Existenz im Zusammenhang der Aufgabe bewährt, mitverantwortlich im revolutionären Weltprozeß zu denken, zu reden und zu handeln, wird sie auch ihrer Umwelt und Mitwelt gegenüber ihrem Auftrag entsprechen, indem sie ihren Glauben indirekt durch die Liebe und ihre Verkündigung mittelbar durch ihre Werke weltlich interpretiert.

VII.

Wenn die Kirche ihre Existenz im Sozialismus als ein "Schicksal" versteht, das sie "allenfalls als Gericht Gottes annehmen" muß, statt als Aufgabe, die sie zu ergreifen und zu bewältigen hat, dann bezeugt sie durch solche politische Existenz indirekt Angst und Sorge um sich selbst statt der Befreiung davon, und wird politisch zu einer Bremse im revolutionären Weltprozeß, indem sie unfruchtbar über ihn und in ihm räsoniert, statt in ihm verantwortlich zu handeln.

VIII.

Inhalt des revolutionären Weltprozesses ist die Aufhebung der Macht des Kapitals über die Menschen, die Beendigung der Ausbeutung von Menschen durch Menschen, die Beseitigung der Lohnklavery. Der revolutionäre Weltprozeß führt nicht zum Paradies zurück und nicht vorwärts zum Reich Gottes. Er bringt lediglich eine relative, vorläufige und äußere Verbesserung menschlicher, gesellschaftlicher, historischer Gerechtigkeit in den Grenzen menschlicher Selbstsucht, Freiheit und Macht und bleibt belastet mit aller Dialektik erwünschter Wirkungen und unerwünschter Nebenwirkungen, die menschlichem Handeln eignet. Er führt nicht zu der Gerechtigkeit, die Gott schenkt, aber er fördert die Gerechtigkeit, derer die Schwachen und Armen zum diesseitigen Leben bedürfen. Darum hat die Kirche diesen Prozeß mit Sympathie zu begleiten, ihn nicht durch ihre politische Existenz zu behindern und ihn nicht religiös-geschichtstheologisch zu kommentieren: Gottes Reich und nicht den revolutionären Weltprozeß hat sie zu verkündigen. Aber um der Liebe willen, die in Gottes Gerechtigkeit begründet ist, hat sie sich für irdischen Frieden und gesellschaftliche Gerechtigkeit zu engagieren und sich ihnen gegenüber nicht neutral zu verhalten.
CHAPTER SEVEN - CONCLUSION

This dissertation has tried to deal with the two themes of ideology and theology, and how the two are related, specifically in the thought of Hanfried Müller for whom both seem to be very important. Central to this study is the way in which the one accommodates itself to the other. Even more to the point is the question of the degree to which Marxist ideology can co-exist with Christian theology.

Perhaps Hans Iwand was correct when he maintained that "human beings cannot live without an ideology." And perhaps Hanfried Müller is correct when he argues that the church, at times, has replaced Christology with ecclesiology - its own form of ideology. Maybe none of us is free from the influence of ideology, whether we live in a democracy or in a totalitarian state. As was evident, both under National Socialism and Communism, even the church is not immune from the influence of the political powers of this world. This is also true for the church in the western democracies. One sees ideological influences in the development of Christian Socialism, whether that influence is from the left, as in Ragaz, or has a nationalist and anti-Semitic twist, as in Stoecker and Wünsch.

But if it is the case that no one can live without an ideology, at least we can live with it critically. If Hannah Arendt is correct in defining ideologies as "isms" that "to the satisfaction of their adherents can explain everything and every occurrence by deducing it from a single premise," then
Kenneth Minogue is also right in pointing out their dangers and contradictions, their inherent fault-lines.

In Hanfried Müller this dissertation has sought to demonstrate some of those dangers and contradictions. The effort is complicated by the fact that Müller is a theologian (rather than, for example, a politician). He maintains an allegiance to Marxism while, at the same time, claiming to maintain an allegiance to the theological legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Karl Barth. The political and the theological need not always be in competition with each other. But when political ideology garners one's first commitment, theology not only becomes subject to ideology's demands, but may even become its victim, or at least so it seems in Müller's case.

Several observations are in order in reviewing Müller's thought and writings. First, we noted the significant influence of Ludwig Feuerbach on twentieth century theologians, particularly Karl Barth. Feuerbach's anthropological notion of "religion" aided Barth in distinguishing between "religion" and Christianity. If one were to ask what the relationship might be between Feuerbach's anthropological approach, on the one hand, and Müller's theology, on the other, one might find significant parallels. For example, Müller's novel doctrine of the two kingdoms posits not a distinction between church and society, but rather between the present and the future. (1) In this paradigm, the church is part of "the still unredeemed world" just as are society, government, and the world. From
that perspective, the church loses many of its otherwise distinctive characteristics. Indeed, the church may be separate from the state in terms of function, but it is very much subject to the state in terms of authority. As was observed in Chapter Five, Müller seems to sacrifice ecclesiology at the altar of ideology. For Müller, the church is part of the problem to which Marxist socialism seems to be the answer.

Bonhoeffer's thoughts in *Letters and Papers* provide much of the grist for Müller's mill. Many of the notions Bonhoeffer considers there, and which were discussed in Chapter Four, lend themselves to Müller's purposes. Whether Müller is faithful to Bonhoeffer's intentions is a different matter. But after *Von der Kirche zur Welt*, in which Müller treats Bonhoeffer's works comprehensively (albeit still from a Marxist point-of-view), Müller confines himself, almost exclusively, to *Letters and Papers from Prison*. Is this because he believed Bonhoeffer himself had moved beyond the earlier works and they, therefore, were no longer of interest, or is it because the ideas in *Letters and Papers* best suited Müller's ideological purposes, or both?

Similarly with Barth, Müller's emphasis is virtually restricted to the Barmen Declaration and he rarely, at least in the writings available, examines any of Barth's other works, including the *Church Dogmatics*. Almost all of his articles in *Die Weißenseer Blätter* are a political analysis of one kind or another, often employing rhetoric which condemns "the
imperialist West" and extolling the virtues of socialism. Perhaps Barmen best suits those purposes.

A second observation has to do with the very ambiguities that make clear and certain understandings of both Bonhoeffer and Barth often impossible. Dieter Schellong's claim that Barth's own self-understanding, at least with regard to the relationship between church and society, was an ambivalent one rings true. It is not so much that Barth vacillated on such matters as it is that he seemed to see each situation differently. Nevertheless, one can understand Brunner's exasperation with Barth over the latter's refusal to condemn Communism with the same vehemence with which he condemned Nazism. But Barth's audience seemed, in the post-World War II years, to be the west and its complacency and self-righteousness. To have taken sides, as he did against Nazism, would have reinforced a sin in the west that was equally as egregious to Barth as that of political ideology, namely, self-righteousness. Perhaps Barth was wrong. But whether right or wrong, he was ambiguous. He was elusive in this regard. However, I would also maintain that, as frustrating as that can be, such ambiguity is a reflection of the priority he gave to theology and the church. That may be a generous reading, but I think that it is possible.

Third, if there are ambiguities in Bonhoeffer and Barth, there seem to be none whatsoever in Müller. Indeed, in reading Müller's writings, one is struck by the consistency of his perspective from his early years through his retirement. He was
such a staunch Marxist that he emigrated to East Berlin in 1952 and enthusiastically became an informant for the secret police there. Thirty-five years later, after that system had failed, he wrote an "open letter" to former leaders and party members in which he called into question their faithfulness to the system and the principles they had represented. As Michael Beintker has observed, there is an amazing inability in Müller to engage in any self-criticism. It could well be asked if this could be a characteristic of ideologues.

One need not simply compare Müller's thought to that of Bonhoeffer and Barth. What of Müller's contemporary churchmen and theologians in East Germany, some of whom were mentioned in the Introduction? Most claimed no less of a debt to Barth and Bonhoeffer than Müller claimed. Indeed, Albrecht Schönherr had been a student of Bonhoeffer's in the Confessing Synod seminary at Finkenwalde. And many of Müller's colleagues in the East German church could be critical of capitalism, just as Müller had been. The difference was that their theological perspective did not seem to be guided by any ideology; if anything, their theology guided their social and political thought. They were able to maintain their critical perspective, often trying to get along with the state while, at the same time, maintaining their integrity as Christians.

This critique of Müller, while attempting to demonstrate the priority of his own ideology, has sought not to be ideological itself. Müller, who seems unable to look at Marxist
society critically or to look at western societies without criticism, becomes not so much an object of scorn, but an archetypical ideologue.

One of the fatal flaws of ideology, Minogue reminds us, is that, in trying to "break out of theoretical mystifications into the liberation of praxis," it "entails the entire destruction of practice." The twentieth century has witnessed the truthfulness of that observation in a variety of forms: nationalism, National Socialism, Communism, and, one might even add, capitalism—all the isms which, according to Hannah Arendt, "to the satisfaction of their adherents can explain everything and every occurrence by deducing it from a single premise."

Were there other alternatives either to Müller's view of the church or to his solution of replacing the church with an ideology? Clearly, as was seen in the Introduction, many of the leading theologians in East Germany did not sympathize with, let alone support Marxist ideology or the Marxist government. But that did not necessarily mean that they advocated western views of the church or society.

Albrecht Schönherr is one clear example of someone who sought for the church a middle way between the alternatives of the western model of clericalism (as Müller puts it), on the one hand, and the model of absolute commitment to Marxist socialism, on the other. His formula of the "church within socialism" was a compromise that found acceptance to the Honecker regime as well as to most East German churchmen.
In his article, "A Contribution to the Direction of the Evangelical Church in the German Democratic Republic" (2), first an address that was delivered in February 1986, Schönherr traces the course of the relationship between the church in the GDR and the state as well as his own struggle to influence that relationship and come to terms with it. In the mid-1950s he began to approach the issue theologically. He writes:

I asked myself whether I seriously believed in God's ordering of the world. Can there be empty places on God's globe? Must God not also be at work here among the people of the German Democratic Republic? Must it not also be true for the government of the GDR, as Paul said of worldly authority, that whether governments know it or not, they are God's servants for the good of people (Romans 13:4)? So I betook myself to the Potsdam district, which was the office in my area, and said to the official for church matters there, "Please be aware that we are not partisans for the West. We want to stand with both feet in the GDR, but as Christians." Others felt similarly. Many found their way to such a stance, and, in addition, the Synod of the Evangelical Churches of the Union verified as early as 1957 the fact that the government of the GDR was indeed to be accepted as a worldly authority in the Biblical sense. (3)

At the insistence of the GDR government the structural ties with the church in West Germany were broken and on June 10, 1969 the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the German Democratic Republic was established. In 1972 Schönherr became the bishop of the Protestant Church in Berlin-Brandenburg. It was in this capacity that he met with Erich Honecker in the important and well-known summit of March 6, 1978. Reflecting on the significance of this meeting, Schönherr writes:

The declarations which resulted from this meeting are of fundamental importance inasmuch as the religiously inimical beliefs of the Marxist-Leninist Party, with-
out taking them back, are evidently no longer to determine the course of the relationship of the government and the SED - Paul Verner, a member of the Politburo, was present at this conversation - to the church and to individual Christian citizens. Only when respect for the fundamental beliefs of the other person and the attempt actually to understand his/her thinking remain palpable can the dialogue be a truly firm basis of mutual understanding and remain so. (4)

Schönherr continues:

Thus, separation of church and state does not have to mean a cold, reluctant having to tolerate one another, but it includes the "autonomy" of the church. One does not have to subscribe to Christian beliefs to understand that genuine Christian faith and a truly Christian church cannot be an instrument in the hands of class enemies and do not exist for human damnation. The church strives to demonstrate that as "God's possession" (see Thesis 3 of the Barmen Theological Declaration), it emulates God in God's service for the healing and salvation of human-kind and of the world. (5)

Clearly, both as a theologian and as a church official, Schönherr's view of the church is one that sees it not simply as an institution in society that is separate from the state but has responsibilities to the state, but also as a body that has responsibilities to God. He defines the task of the church in the following way:

The church's task is not to represent its own interests or those of a specific class or group, but, to the best of its knowledge and conscience, the church is to "reveal the free grace of God to all people" (Barmen, 6) and, by this means, to validate the "strong claim (of God) to our whole lives" (Barmen, 2). (6)

Schönherr argues that it should be possible for the church to carry out its charge to both even in a society governed by an ideology that espouses atheism. He sees the development of the church in the GDR as an experiment:

People and countries on the verge of Socialism will
observe with great interest how this experiment succeeds. A large church in a Socialist state, a church without external power or governmental privileges in an environment determined by a Marxist political party. [sic] The development of a free church in this country is the best means to refute worldwide anti-Communism. (7)

Schönherr's position contrasts sharply with that of Müller. Not only does Schönherr distance himself from any political ideology (although he seems to have no aversion to socialism), but he embraces and defends the cause of the church and sees it as having a mission apart from whatever responsibilities it may also have to the state. In contrast, Müller not only embraces and defends the Marxist ideology of the state, but sees the aims of the church as coinciding with those of that ideology.

Closely related to this alternative is that which is found in the views of the Czech theologian, Josef L. Hromádka (1889-1969). Noting the criticism Hromádka received for his support of socialism in general, and the Communist state in particular, criticism that came both inside his own country as well as from outside, Milan Opocensky offers the following observation:

One cannot speak about 1968 (8) without mentioning Hromádka's attitude to the historical reconstruction in Czechoslovakia 22 years ago. He welcomed this development, because he believed that he too had been working for this renewal and had shared in preparing the way for it. He stood firmly on the grounds of socialism. According to him this was a further stage of socialism and not a return to capitalism. (9)

Opocensky continues:

According to Hromádka the development between January and August 1968 was a real revolution - an expression of the longing for a genuine, creative and more humane socialism. In his view it was a step forward, not backwards. He felt his conviction confirmed that socialism was capable of a renewal and that humanistic values would
gain acceptance. He welcomed and defended the programme of A. Dubček and his colleagues with enthusiasm. (10)

Hromádka embraced many of the tenets of Marxist socialism, but he did so without relinquishing his commitment to Christianity and the church. It was not simply a matter of finding a way for the church to survive in a Marxist society, according to Hromádka. He found admirable features in that ideology that were compatible with Christianity.

Masaru Sato, a Japanese Protestant theologian, questions the extent to which Hromádka correctly understood Marxism. He writes:

Hromádka understood communism as collectivism. I think that this collectivism is not collectivism in its English sense, but "Sobornost" (true unity in belief), in its Russian meaning. I understand Hromádka's view on communism to be as follows:

1) Hromádka understood communism as an issue of self-criticism of Christianity.

2) In the situation of Czechoslovakia after the events of February 1948, it was necessary for Czechoslovakian Christians to support socio-political programmes of communism.

3) Communism, however, can solve only in part the problems of human beings.

4) So a Christian should commit him/herself to communism, positively and critically as a human being. (11)

Sato goes on to write:

In my opinion, this view of communism was based on Hromádka's understanding of history: "the end of the Constantinian era" or "the doom of corpus christianum". This concept however, was not based on a certain philosophy of history or ideology. It was based on a simple belief in Jesus Christ, as the incarnate and resurrected Lord of history. I would like to underline that Hromádka's understanding of the incarnation is the reason why
he participated in the real process of history. (12)

If Sato is correct, then we find a most interesting comparison between Hromádka and Müller. They are similar in that both recognize the end of the corpus christianum, the era of the virtually universal acceptance of Christianity in a society or endorsement by a state. A further similarity is their sympathy, to varying degrees, with Marxist socialism. But at least two crucial distinctions separate Hromádka and Müller.

The first is the basis for their sympathy with socialism: Müller has an ideological commitment to Marxism that informs his view of everything, including his theology. Hromádka's commitment is to Christianity and the church, but he sees validity in some of Marxism's criticisms of church and society. The second distinction is the related fact that, whereas Müller saw the church as becoming absorbed into Marxist goals and having little or nothing to distinguish itself from the rest of society, Hromádka saw distinguishing features of the church that were worth maintaining.

Still another alternative model to Müller's ecclesiology (or lack thereof), in practice if not in theory, is found in the interesting figure of Manfred Stolpe. A lawyer by training, Stolpe began working for the Protestant Church of Berlin-Brandenburg in 1959. From 1962 through 1990 he held various positions of leadership in the church in East Germany, particularly in the area in and around Berlin. (13) In 1990 Stolpe became minister-president of Brandenburg, one of the new federal states
after the 1989 Wende.

Stolpe's role in church-state relations in East Germany came under scrutiny when the Stasi files were released following the fall of the East German regime in 1989. John Burgess describes the charges against Stolpe of conspiring with government officials and undermining church policy. (14) Stolpe claimed to have been seeking "to protect and advance church interests." A supporter of Schönherr's "church in socialism" approach, he maintained that his contacts with the Stasi never harmed anyone, though, Burgess notes, it is less clear how helpful they were. (15)

While it is questionable as to the extent to which Stolpe himself has an ecclesiology, his role reflects an attempt (however faulty or misguided) to serve as an intermediary between the institutional church and the state. Even if one assumes that Stolpe had the best interests of the church at heart, his attempts may have been doomed from the start because of the lack of trust between the church and the state in the first place. Burgess asks several questions of Stolpe's intentions in terms of the exercise of power:

The Stolpe case [. . .] raises questions about the church's exercise of power. When, if ever, can the church justify policies whose primary end is to promote its position in relation to the state? To what degree does such a politicizing of the church represent a capitulation to an alien ideology? To what degree is power politics a necessary and even desirable consequence of a church that seeks to be active in, and transformative of, society? (16)

Other alternative views to that held by Müller could be
examined as well. One could look at the church and theologians in West Germany as well as in other western democracies. But Müller seems to see the church outside Marxism as inevitably influenced by capitalist imperialism and thus holding a kind of ecclesiological triumphalism. Müller's two-kingdoms doctrine is clearly one attempt to avoid what he views as the egregious path taken by the church in the west. Because Müller's view of the two kingdoms differentiates between the present and the future (and not between church, on the one hand, and society, on the other), it fits neatly into his Marxist perspective which also contrasts present (economic and social) reality with a future (also economic and social) "kingdom."

It has been inevitable that this work has incorporated both theological and historical features to it. Essentially, I have tried to maintain a historical perspective. However, in analyzing a theologian whose principal theological influences have been two other theologians, I have found it impossible to divorce theology from history.

Endnotes


3. Ibid., pp. 22-3.
4. Ibid., p. 28.

5. Ibid., p. 28.

6. Ibid., p. 32.

7. Ibid., p. 29.

8. "1968" is a reference to the attempt in Czechoslovakia, particularly by Alexander Dubcek, the leader of the government, to remove something of the harshness of the Soviet style of government. "Communism with a human face" was a phrase that was coined to describe Dubcek's movement. In August 1968 this movement was crushed by Soviet tanks in Prague and the removal of Dubcek from office.


10. Ibid., p. 115.


12. Ibid., p. 12.


15. Ibid., p. 1125.

16. Ibid., p. 1126.
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