



si si no no

"But let your speech be, 'Yes, yes,' 'No, no'; and whatever is beyond these comes from the evil one. (Mt. 5:37)"

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The Catholic Church In Germany After The Consistory

The Holy Father loves Germany very much. What else can explain the fact that this very country was honored with four fine new cardinals nominated at the consistory of February 21, 2001, unless the appointments are treated not as an honor but as a symptom of a particularly acute crisis in the land of Luther, Lehmann, and Kasper?

In reality, the situation of the Church in Germany, a nation of 84 million people, is very serious, even though the number of *nominal* Catholics has recently surpassed that of Protestants.



A Tormented Church

Germany thrives on fragmentation, tensions and divisions. In 1871, the united national movement, representing internal Prussian colonialism (the German Piedmont), elevated the Hohenzollern monarchy to German Empire. It then quickly burst out of the wings as *Kulturkampf*—a struggle for culture—which weighed heavily on Catholics, and continued to make waves. And even before this, the 1701 elevation of the Prussian dynasty to monarchy, on the secularized *corps* of the Teutonic Order, was not recognized by the Holy See for a long time. A hundred years later, the monarchy avenged itself when the Holy Roman Emperor was buried and the ecclesiastical state was secularized. The consequences of this theft of ecclesiastical goods—perhaps the most remarkable in the entire history of the Church—are making themselves felt again today.

The Prussian king, who also added "*Summi Episcopus*" to his title reinforced the subordination of religion to the State. A note on this is that the last Prussian king, William II, even delivered sermons in Church on Sunday. By order of the monarchy, Calvinism and Lutheranism were unified, and this is why German Protestantism desisted from dogmatic controversy, so as to transform itself into simply a bulwark, in the sense of its being obliged by the monarchy to be a civic, bourgeois decoration.

Only much later, in the 19th century, did the Catholic Church rally from blows inflicted on it by secularization. Statist rewards conferred on parishes and bishops ought, in effect, to have made up for it, but this always brought with it a considerable dependency on the state. Moreover, the Catholic Church was always suspect because it was governed by an ultramontane entity [Rome-Ed.]. Thus, "*Kulturkampf*" was only a reflection of the secularized Protestant point of view, which saw the Pope as Antichrist (Luther). Because it is the Prussian-Protestant surrogate for God, the German state tolerated no dissidence, and so the Catholics were culturally marginalized. Today, when the Catholic Bishops are constantly and vigilantly on guard against "ghettoization," it is because there was a time when our Holy religion was defamed as the religion of female servants and obscurantists.

And, Today, a Church That Is Too Rich

Today, the Catholic Church and Protestant confessions, each comprising a third of the population with another third made up of atheists, particularly the German communists or ex-DDR [former East Germany-Ed.], have a high level social organization:

1. pastors are paid very well by the state; they make more than a Cardinal of the Curia;
2. a separate Faculty of Theology in state universities, with paid assistants, libraries, and funds for study;
3. princely incomes thanks to a State-imposed tax. For instance, the annual budget of just the Archdiocese of Cologne is around half a million dollars; this is why there are funds to pay professionals, even to maintain a school of liturgical dance;
4. well paid lay theologians who are adjuncts in such a way as to constitute a second hierarchy;
5. state financing of schools, hospitals, etc.

In Germany, after the state, the Catholic Church and the Protestant churches are the largest employers. There's a bad joke in circulation that says the Church in Germany would be able to survive for ten years or more after the death of the last Catholic. In the Protestant community, there is another sort of reality. I myself know an evangelical pastor who attends the Catholic Mass on Sundays because no one in his community comes to hear his sermons.

Because of all of this, extrinsic criteria, particularly economic ones, predominate in the Catholic Church's government. Not long ago, the Bishop of Trier, whose antecedents were at one time among the main electors of the Holy Roman Emperor, was called into court as a witness. The director of a huge organization of the Episcopal *Caritas* to had been sentenced to seven years in prison because he had financed the strangest projects, diverted funds, and corrupted politicians. The Bishop, who was the president of a related checks and balances organization of *Caritas*, was saved by the miracle of being a witness for the prosecution. This case is significant as an illustrative symptom of the problems of a Church that is too rich.

The "License to Kill"

The situation becomes really difficult when morality is a factor, and even more so when the Roman Curia is involved. Many have noted the problem.

In Germany, after the horrors of the Nazi era, the federal constitution or "fundamental law" strongly suppressed the influence of Catholic natural law. But Germany also has a strong juris-positive tradition that was reinforced after the unification of the two Germanys via the welcoming reception for "the defeat of socialism."

Let's take the example of abortion. German jurisprudence on abortion is unique in the world. The Court has ruled that the unborn are human beings and have the right to life from the moment of conception; therefore abortion is a crime. But, then, at this point, enter the Hegelian dialectic: crime yes, but non-punishable when the abortion occurs following counseling. In fact, this represents the abolition of all limitation on abortion, because the only impediment favors abortion. This impediment—a veritable fig leaf—can be easily eliminated by obtaining a certificate from an approved counselor that proves the consultation took place, and so, favors abortion.

These counseling centers are maintained by very diverse organizations, including those within the Church. Thanks to state recognition, they receive public funding. But the condition for being recognized and state-funded is the distribution of the certificates. And to do this is nothing less than to be complicit in decriminalized abortion.

Vatican Intervention Nullified

This gross behavior has been occurring since 1994. The Vatican has criticized this practice, and at the start, even criticized Bishop Lehmann since he is president of the German Episcopal Conference. Various letters from the Secretary of State, Cardinal Ratzinger and even from the Pope were sent prohibiting the distribution of this license to kill. But Bishop Lehmann, as president of the German Episcopal Conference, interpreted these letters according to his own light, made distinctions, and changed the perspective of the Pope's clearly expressed directive until it had nothing to do with this homicidal system. Then he turned to the laity. The question, "What do you think of the certificate system?" became the litmus test of the Catholic conscience.

As of the beginning of the year, the Bishops had stepped away from the murderous system, except for one, Kamphaus, the Bishop of Limburg. In the past, the "parallel hierarchy" set up by the Central Commission of German Catholics, a co-opted web of associations and politics, among them many influential socialists, Greens and Christian Democrats, was openly ranged against the Pope. Thanks to Bishop Lehmann's latitude, it put into place a veritable network of counseling centers which still distribute the notorious certificates, cynically called "*donum vitae*" [gift of life-Ed.].

The fact is that Catholics, through their professional occupations, notably the state-subsidized lay theologians, who are often open unbelievers and who also work for the Church, have known perfectly well that the State would not maintain a Church which contradicts it in moral matters. A Socialist minister often made it clearly understood that Germany needs a Church that makes abortion acceptable.

The Trauma of Good Catholics

The Bishop of Limburg still hesitates from exiting the system, and in the Limburg Diocese there is still abortion, covered by the certificate, and with the Episcopal stamp of approval; and so abortion can be obtained by interested mothers, or better, by their husbands.

In recent years, having lost faith in the German hierarchy, many good Catholics, and "Pro-Life" advocates have looked to Rome. At the moment, the Vatican has given the Bishop of Limburg another year, notwithstanding the months during which Cardinal Sodano had raised the problem of the certificate system's incompatibility with the Magisterium's position, and Cardinal Ratzinger had spoken of schismatic tendencies implicit in the ongoing distribution of the "*donum vitae*."

This concession has traumatized honest German Catholics. The Vatican is not acting because it fears a schism. But now it has even elevated the two principal protagonists in this case, Kasper and Lehmann, to Cardinals. But whoever believes that the Cardinal's hat makes someone faithful to Rome is grossly mistaken.

The nominations of Cardinals Lehmann and Kasper seem a farce. Some say that, in both cases, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, presided over by Cardinal Ratzinger, may not have been consulted. It also struck one as strange to see Fr. Leo Scheffczyk, a meritorious German theologian who has written decisively against the Catholic-Protestant Declaration on Justification, a product of "ecumenical consensus" approved by Cardinals Lehmann and Kasper, in the pre-chosen list. Probably this choice would say to the few true German Catholics, "We have not forgotten you after all."

Cardinal Lehmann was named by the Secretary of State only after massive pressure was applied by the German State, not only by ex-Chancellor Kohl, but also by the national president, the Protestant, Rau, and by Thierse, President of Parliament. *SiSiNoNo* has reported indiscrete leaks from the Holy Father's circle, according to which this pressure was applied just a few days before the second announcement of nominations.

We have already illustrated in previous issues of *SiSiNoNo* the nature of the "theology" of Cardinal Kasper, Küng's ex-assistant, and of Cardinal Lehmann, Rahner's ex-assistant. Here, two notes suffice. For Cardinal Kasper, dogma is for the stupid, superficial and authoritarian; for Cardinal Lehmann, Luther is a "master" of the Faith, above all in his catechesis.

In the eyes of German Catholics, the nomination of these two individuals is an auto-diminution of papal authority. Even Cardinal Meisner, who, like Cardinal Ratzinger, is Pope John-Paul II's man, sought, even two weeks before the event, to stop Lehmann's nomination. In an interview, Cardinal Meisner conveyed to the public that for years Lehmann has opposed the Pope's expressed wish that the German bishops revise their so-called "Declaration of Konigstein," which *de facto* authorizes German Catholics to use the birth control pill.

Too, Kasper and Lehmann take the side of those German Bishops who would like to give Holy Communion to the remarried divorced. And this long, scandalous, obstinate rebellion against the Church is now rewarded with the purple biretta! This is a misfortune for the Catholic Church in Germany, which in the last decades Cardinal Lehmann has yoked to the anti-Catholic path. It is also a misfortune for the defense of life in today's debate on bioethics, since the "Pro-Life" movement has lost reliable supporters not just in the German Bishops, but also in the Vatican.

(Translated exclusively for Angelus Press by Suzanne Rini from the Italian edition of *SiSiNoNo*, No.9, May 15, 2001.)

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