The Catholic Church

The Papal Encyclical
‘Mit Brennender Sorge’ – With Burning Anxiety. Issued by Pope Pius XI in 1937 against the Nazi
regime. It condemned the breaches of the Concordat by the Nazi Party. It declared that race was a
valuable part of human communities but the exhalation of another race was wrong, that the worship
of the State was idealistic and false, and that the Old Testament should be defended (as it had been
destroyed by Hitler and the Reich Church). Pius claims in the encyclical that "that man as a person
possesses rights he holds from God, and which any collectively must protect against denial,
suppression or neglect." 300,000 copies were printed and sent to pastors in secret so that it could be
read without Nazi influence. The next day the Gestapo raided the churches to find all copies and all
presses that had printed the statement were closed down.

This statement was a response to the ill treatment of the Catholics in Germany as a result of the Nazi
Party – though it does not mention National Socialism, Hitler, or the Nazi Party. It only refers to the
Reich Government. The Nazi Party had violated the Concordat on many terms, including:

- The closure of Catholic schools, denying their right to their own free education.
- The attack on the Old Testament.
- The pressure on Catholic youth groups in the face of the compulsory Nazi youth groups.
- The Nazi persecution of Catholics.
- The suppression of the Catholic press (not being allowed to call themselves 'Catholic').

Bishop Clemens von Galen
Opposed the Nazi Party very openly – specifically Alfred Rosenberg.

In 1935, Galen issued a leaflet directly against Rosenberg and his
idea of the ‘racial soul’. This leaflet gained mass support from the
Catholics, as 19,000 attended the annual July processions – twice the
normal amount. Galen was considered as too important to be
arrested as a result, as it would upset too many of the German
People. Galen campaigned against the totalitarian (dictatorial and
requiring complete subservience to the state) approach of the Nazi
Party, and hated the fact that the Old Testament was largely
dismissed because of its Jewish authorship. He equated loyalty to
the Third Reich with slavery and spoke out against the idea of the
purity of German blood.

As a response to his criticism of the regime, Galen was visited by two
SS officers that threatened him with the confiscation of Church
property and an anti-Catholic campaign unless he voiced approval of
Rosenberg. Galen refused this on the grounds that the Nazis had
recently euthanized and sterilised the disabled. Galen was part of the five-member commission that
prepared the papal encyclical issued in 1937.

Breakdown! Alfred Rosenberg.

A leading ideologist of the Nazi Party
– he provided the party with its anti-
Semitic and racial ideologies, based
around what Hitler had written in
Mein Kampf. He was one of the first
editors of the Nazi newspaper in
the 1920s (the Völkischer Beobacte).
After the failed Munich
Putsch he became the temporary
leader of the Nazi leader. His focus
was on the ‘Jewish Question’ and
created the idea of ‘Jewish-
Bolshevism’. His job in the Third
Reich was to prove Aryan superiority
and Germans to be the ‘Master
Race’.