

Zeitschrift: Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte = Revue suisse d'histoire religieuse et culturelle = Rivista svizzera di storia religiosa e culturale

Herausgeber: Vereinigung für Schweizerische Kirchengeschichte

Band: 100 (2006)

Artikel: Catholic Youth Work and the Dialogue with the Past after 1945

Autor: Ruff, Mark Edward

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-130386>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 28.04.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Catholic Youth Work and the Dialogue with the Past after 1945

Mark Edward Ruff

More than two decades ago, historians questioned whether the year 1945 represented a «new beginning» or a «restoration» for what was to become the Federal Republic of Germany.¹ Many of these inquiries sought to establish the extent to which structures and values from the Nazi era persisted in the society and culture of the Federal Republic. Over time, new investigations into historical memory have sharpened these inquiries, as historians have focused on how the memory of the past was instrumentalized and politicized by various groups in German society in the postwar era.² These studies have made clear that the study of memory reveals the negotiating of conflicts between various pasts. Remembering the past frequently entails prioritizing which pasts to examine, weighing competing versions of the same past, adopting some and forgetting others.

This article will examine the intersection of historical memories, politics and gender in one case study: the debates over how to reconstruct Catholic youth work between 1945 and 1947. In their heyday in the late 1920s and early 1930s,

¹ For an early summary of this debate, see Jürgen Kocka, *1945: Neubeginn oder Restauration?* in C. Stern und H.A. Winkler (eds.), *Wendepunkte deutscher Geschichte, 1949–1945*, Frankfurt a.M. 1986. For such debates within German Catholicism, see Thomas Grossmann, *Zwischen Kirche und Gesellschaft: Das Zentralkomitee der deutschen Katholiken, 1945–1970*, Mainz 1991. See also Alon Confino, *Traveling as a Culture of Remembrance: Traces of National Socialism in West Germany, 1945–1960*, in: *History and Memory*, 12, no. 2 (2000), 92–121; Konrad Jarausch, *Die Umkehr: Deutsche Wandlungen, 1945–1995*, München 2004.

² In recent years the literature has become voluminous. See Reinhard Alter and Peter Montheath, eds., *Rewriting the German Past: History and Identity in the New Germany*, New Jersey 1997; Jan Aassman, *Collective Memory and Cultural Identity*, in: *New German Cultural Critique*, 65 (1995), 125–133; Ian Buruma, *Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan*, London 1995; Alon Confino and Peter Fritzsche, eds., *The Work of Memory: New Directions in the Study of German Society and Culture*, Illinois 2002; Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1997; Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories*, Princeton 2003; Konrad Jarausch and Martin Sabrow, *Die historische Meistererzählung. Deutungslinien der deutschen Nationalgeschichte nach 1945*, Göttingen 2002.

Catholic youth organizations had brought together more than 1.5 million men and women.³ True to the spirit of the waning years of the Weimar Republic, many of the organizations for men were *bündisch*, overtly political and militant in their outlook.⁴ The Nazi state gradually dissolved many of these organizations in the course of the 1930s, and the youth groups that took their place – the so-called *Pfarrjugend* – were forced to turn inward and retreat to the sanctuary of the churches. The end of the war brought about an intense discussion over how to resurrect these organizations. Some argued that the old youth organizations should be rebuilt; others argued for the persistence of the *Pfarrjugend*. Efforts to rebuild Catholic youth organizations culminated in the creation of the *Bund der deutschen katholischen Jugend* (BDKJ) at a Cistercian monastery in Hardehausen.

The BDKJ, of course, continues to exist today but its functions and purposes have shifted greatly from the visions that its founders invested in it in Hardehausen in 1947. Today, it exists largely as an umbrella organization for various Catholic youth organizations, such as the CAJ and Kolping.⁵ At the time, however, it was specifically created to unite the many Catholic youth that had once existed independently into one giant organization – or in the phrase from the time, «*Einheit in der Vielfalt*». It turned the *Pfarrjugend* groups into the so-called *Stämme* of the Bund, the other youth organizations into the so-called *Gliederungen*. The leaders at the time then strove to imbue the new edifice with the ideals of the Catholic youth movement from the 1920s and the 1930s.

The creation of the BDKJ might seem to be but an arcane organizational history were it not for the manner in which it brought to light disagreements over the understanding of the past. In bringing together the men's youth organization, Catholic leaders sought to overcome the Weimar past and, in particular the political failures, at the close of the era. Similarly, disagreements over how much

³ On the Catholic youth movement and youth organizations, see Christoph Kösters, *Katholische Verbände und moderne Gesellschaft: Organisationsgeschichte und Vereinskultur im Bistum Münster, 1918–1945*, Paderborn 1995; Barbara Schellenberger, *Katholische Jugend und Drittes Reich: Eine Geschichte des Katholischen Jungmännerverbandes 1933–1939 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Rheinprovinz*, Mainz 1975; Irmtraud Götz von Olenhusen, *Jugendreich, Gottesreich, Deutsches Reich: Junge Generation, Religion und Politik, 1928–1933*, Köln 1987; Bernd Börger, ed., *Sie Hielten Stand: Sturmschar im Katholischen Jungmännerverband Deutschlands*, Düsseldorf 1989; Karl Hofmann, *Eine Katholische Generation zwischen Kirche und Welt: Studien zur Sturmschar des Katholischen Jungmännerverbandes Deutschlands*, Augsburg 1992; Bernd Börger, *Sie hielten Stand: Sturmschar im Katholische Jungmännerverband Deutschlands*, Düsseldorf 1989; Paul Hastenteufel, *Katholische Jugend in ihrer Zeit*, Vol.1, Bamberg 1988; Georg Pahlke, *Trotz Verbot nicht Tot: Katholische Jugend in Ihrer Zeit, 1933–1945*, Paderborn, 1995.

⁴ Walter Lacqueur, *Die Deutsche Jugendbewegung*, Köln 1962, Peter Stachura, *The German Youth Movement, 1900–1945: An Interpretation and Documentary History*, London 1981.

⁵ For two accounts of the BDKJ, see Martin Schwab, *Kirchlich, Kritisch, Kämpferisch. Der Bund der Deutschen Katholische Jugend (BDKJ), 1947–1989*, Würzburg 1994; Martin Schwab, *Kirche leben und Gesellschaft gestalten: Der Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend (BDKJ) in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Diözese Würzburg, 1947–1989*, Würzburg 1997; Bernd Börger und Karin Kortmann (eds.), *Ein Haus für Junge Menschen*, Altenberg 1994.

attention to give to women's youth work exposed not only different visions of the extent to which questions of morality and values were to be emphasized in the women's youth work but also over the impact of the Weimar era and the Nazi years on morality. The answers church leaders gave to certain questions were not always the same. They could not agree whether the Nazis accelerated a process of sexual emancipation that had begun during the Weimar years and if so, whether the liberalism of the Weimar Republic led to National Socialism, both part of an ongoing process of secularization.

This article will look first at how historical memory shaped the conflicts that emerged between 1945 and 1947 over how to bring unity to the Catholic youth work. Secondly, it will examine why the solution proposed by the Bavarian Monsignor, Ludwig Wolker, won the day.⁶ Thirdly, it will analyze the conflicts over women's youth work in the late 1940s and early 1950s and argue that some of these fissures reflected diverging understandings of when norms on sexuality and gender had begun to change. It will argue that disagreements over how to organize the youth exposed the difficulties in prioritizing different understandings of the past with which church leaders were wrestling in the immediate post-war era. These difficulties resulted in a series of compromises that produced the unwieldy structure of the BDKJ. In turn, this organization could not live up to the lofty expectations invested in it by those who saw it as the vehicle through which they could overcome the less salutary aspects of the recent Roman Catholic past in Germany.

Memory and youth work

The capitulation in 1945 brought to the fore contradictory assessments of the damage wrought by the war and Nazi years. To many, it appeared that the Catholic milieu had crumbled under the pressures of war and systematic persecution. Thousands of priests had perished, a once thriving network of ancillary organizations had been forcibly disbanded by the Gestapo and many leaders of youth organizations had died on the front or were languishing in POW camps. Although roughly 20% of Catholic youth, at best, remained «organized» within parish groups and, in many regions, youth work had ceased to exist as a result of the war.⁷ Yet for much of the leadership, the end of hostilities gave way not to

⁶ On Wolker, see Barbara Schellenberger, Ludwig Wolker, in: Jürgen Aretz, ed., *Zeitgeschichte in Lebensbildern: Aus dem deutschen Katholizismus des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Bd.5, Mainz 1982, 134–146, Georg Thurmair, *Ein Priester der Freude: Das Leben des Prälaten Ludwig Wolker*, Buxheim 1957, Hans Schroer, Ludwig Wolker, in: Bernd Börger, ed., *Sie Hielten Stand: Sturmschar im Katholischen Jungmännerverband Deutschlands*, Düsseldorf 1990, 215–220.

⁷ Most parish groups in the archdiocese of Cologne, for instance, never again attained the membership figures of the 1930s, even long after the war had ended. These figures are based on my own rough calculations of data compiled from approximately 200 parishes from four statistical handbooks from the Archdiocese of Cologne from the years 1933, 1954, 1958 and 1965. For each parish, the number of members for male and female youth groups are listed. This information, however, is extremely unreliable; wild fluctuations appear throughout, pastors submitted false information or (in many cases) none at all. One can still grasp general

the sobering reality that youth work lay in tatters, but to a surprising mood of triumphalism.⁸ Many church leaders took great pride in the fact that the church had survived the trials of the «church struggle» with its institutions largely intact. It is difficult to imagine that the top brass of the church perceived the end of the war as anything resembling a «ground zero».⁹ The disruption of the war notwithstanding, their world was marked by continuity, not the radical change that characterized other German institutions at this time.

Following this logic, the bishops sought to maintain a strict continuity in youth work. The *Jugendbischof*, Albert Stohr, of Mainz, urged Josef Frings, chair of the Fulda Bishops' Conference, to put back at the helm, Monsignor Ludwig Wolker, a charismatic Bavarian who had commanded the *Katholischer Jungmannverband* during its glory days in the late 1920s and 1930s.¹⁰ With him came Hermann Klens, the former leader of the women's youth work.¹¹ In youth work, one can safely say that «the men of the last hour were the men of the first hour».

The bishops urged Wolker and Klens to stay the course. This meant operating under the guidelines that had been developed in 1936 in response to Nazi persecution. As it became clear that the Gestapo and SS were likely to dissolve the national *Jungmännerverband*, church leaders created a template under which youth work had become organized strictly along diocesan, deanery, and parish lines.¹² According to these *Richtlinien*, the center of youth work was no longer to

trends from this data. For other reports of the state of youth work, see Kommission für Zeitgeschichte, Bonn (KZG) NL Ludwig Wolker, I a 1, «Über Lage und Aufgabe der Jugendseelsorge», August 1944. See Archiv des Jugendhauses Hardehausen, 1.2201.3 Katholische Jugendführung: Überlegungen und Vorschläge für das katholische Jugendwerk, Referat ca. 1945.

⁸ On this mood see Joachim Köhler/Damian van Melis, eds., *Siegerin in Trümmern. Die Rolle der katholischen Kirche in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft*, Stuttgart 1998; Konrad Repgen, *Die Erfahrung des Dritten Reiches und das Selbstverständnis der deutschen Katholiken nach 1945*, in: Victor Konzemius/Martin Greschat/Hermann Kocher, eds., *Die Zeit nach 1945 als Thema kirchlicher Zeitgeschichte*, Göttingen 1988, 127–179; and Karl-Joseph Hummel, *Schuldbekenntnis, organisierte Erinnerung und Versöhnung: Zum Umgang der deutschen Katholiken mit dem Dritten Reich*, in: Ulrich Wagener, ed., *25 Jahre Kommission für kirchliche Zeitgeschichte im Erzbistum Paderborn*, Paderborn 2004, 11–40.

⁹ Many of the bishops who had been appointed prior to 1934 remained on their thrones in 1945. The most influential of these were Clemens August von Galen, the so-called «Lion of Münster», Michael Faulhaber of Munich and Konrad Graf von Preysing of Berlin. Even the «newcomers» during this time – Joseph Frings of Cologne, Albert Stohr of Mainz, Lorenz Jaeger of Paderborn, were in their forties or fifties when appointed to the bishop's throne.

¹⁰ There was one caveat: Frings, obviously astute enough to recognize the potential for a power struggle between the bishops and a figure as powerful as Wolker, informed Wolker in no uncertain terms that this post was subject to his authority, that of the archbishop of Cologne. Historisches Archiv des Erzbistums Köln (HAEK), Gen 23.11.3, Frings an Wolker, 23.9.45.

¹¹ On Klens, see Ingeborg Rocholl-Gärtner, *Anwalt der Frauen: Hermann Klens: Leben und Werk*, Düsseldorf 1978.

¹² «Wir bauen die Arbeit nicht auf dem Boden von Verbänden, sondern auf die im Wesen der Kirche gelegene Ordnung (Diözese, Dekanat, Pfarrei), das entspricht dem neu erwachsenen Kirchenbewußtsein und gewährleistet die Einheit der ganzen Katholischen Jugend.» Frings even intervened at one point to insist that plans being considered by unidentified youth lea-

be in the hands of national *Vereine*, whose power base ran independent of the church hierarchy and were often perceived by the hierarchy as a potential rival for power. Instead, power was to be vested in the hierarchy itself – in parish priests and the local bishops.¹³ In a conference held in Werl in June 1945, the West German bishops insisted that it was necessary to keep the forms of youth work in accord with the principles of Catholic Action they had adopted in the 1930's that also emphasized order and hierarchy.¹⁴ Very practically, this meant keeping groups arranged in only two columns, one for boys, one for girls (not dispersed amongst dozens of potentially competing and quarreling *Vereine*). Two months later, the Bishops stipulated that the Catholic youth, the body of all active young Catholics, was to be built as a well-ordered unity of male and female youth. Youth leaders argued that it was far more important to keep the parish – and not the *Verbände* – as the basis for Catholic unity. This position came to be known as the *Pfarrprinzip*, which invested a higher spiritual quality in structures centered around the individual parish.

Unfortunately for church leaders, many of the old *Vereine* reconstituted themselves with astounding speed, «wie Pilze aus der Erde», according to reports from the time.¹⁵ Groups like Bund Neudeutschland, Quickborn, the DJK, Kolping and the Pfadfinder St. Georg all announced their return to the public arena, sometimes in defiance of the bishops' orders to adhere strictly to the *Richtlinien* of 1936. Some of these groups had operated underground during the years of war and state persecution. Not surprisingly, all of these groups doggedly resisted calls by Altenberg to dismantle their organizations and align themselves according to parish and diocese.¹⁶ Quite naturally, their reappearance led to much

ders in the summer of 1945 went well beyond the guidelines of 1936. HAEK, Gen 23.11.3, Frings an Stohr, 29.9.45.

¹³ For the «Richtlinien» from 1936, see «Richtlinien und Leitsätze zur Katholischen Jugendseelsorge und Jugendorganisation», aus den «Altenberger Dokumenten», Düsseldorf: Verlag Haus Altenberg and «Richtlinien für die katholische Jugendseelsorge 1936», in: Franz Schmid, Grundlagentexte zur katholischen Jugendarbeit (Handbuch kirchlicher Jugendarbeit, Bd. 3), Freiburg 1986, 105–108.

¹⁴ KZG, NL Wolker, III, 4a, «Beschluß der Westdeutschen Bischöfe in Werl am 4.–6. Juni 1945». For the best account of Catholic Action in Germany, see Doris Kaufmann, *Katholisches Milieu in Münster, 1928–1933: Politische Aktionsformen und Geschlechtsspezifische Verhaltensräume*, Düsseldorf 1984; Angelika Steinmaus-Pollack, *Die als Katholische Aktion organisierte Laienapostolat: Geschichte seiner Theorie und seiner kirchenrechtlichen Praxis in Deutschland*, Würzburg 1988 and Wilhelm Damberg, *Abschied vom Milieu? Katholizismus im Bistum Münster und in den Niederlanden, 1945–1980*, Paderborn 1997, 52–68.

¹⁵ See Mark Edward Ruff, *The Wayward Flock: Catholic Youth in Postwar West Germany, 1945–1965*, Chapel Hill 2005.

¹⁶ The conflicts with Kolping proved to be particularly acrimonious. See KZG, NL Willy Bokler, D II, 2, «Kolpingsfamilie und Katholische Jugend», and Wolker an die Hochwürdigsten Herren Diözesan-Jugendseelsorger, Schondorf, 22 October 1945. The Bishops were eventually forced to put a halt to misconceptions which had arisen from their conference at Salmünster in 1945. «Durch irrtümliche Berichterstattung über die Stellungnahme der Salmünster-Konferenz zum Kolpingswerk war eine Mißstimmung eingetreten, die wir gerade im Zeitpunkt des neuen anfangs besonders bedauerten [...] Die jugendlichen Mitglieder des katholischen Gesellenvereins zwischen 18 und 25 Jahren gehören als Kolpingsgruppen zum Ganzen «katholische Jugend» in Pfarrei bzw Dekanat und Diözese. Für junge Handwerker aus pfarrlichen Jungmännergruppen

wrangling, both publicly and privately, that lasted for several years, until a more permanent solution could be achieved in 1947. But even after 1947, such skirmishes continued, frequently defying the best efforts of the church leadership at resolution.

On the most superficial level, the struggles that emerged can be seen as part of a larger conflict over ecclesiastical power. Should power be centralized in the hands of the bishops or dispersed through various *Vereine*, who might be led by priests, members of other orders or laity? Even as well-known a figure like Wolker was forbidden from appearing publicly in several dioceses by the bishops («*Auftrittsverbot*»), including, most notably, Conrad Gröber in Freiburg.¹⁷ This struggle for power, involving accusations of «*Vereinsmeierei*», was hardly new. It dated back as far as the 19th century and was a recurrent theme of the Catholic landscape in the 1920s, especially in the Rhineland and Westphalia, where the *Vereine* were much more developed than in most of Southern Germany.¹⁸

But what distinguished these organizational struggles from those earlier in the century was the understanding of the recent past. The struggles over how best to organize the men's youth work featured competing understandings of the past and above all, over which lens to use when viewing the past. The men at the helm of youth work, and in particular, Wolker, cast their eye not on the travails of the Catholic youth under the yoke of National Socialism but on the political mobilization during the waning years of the Weimar Republic. On one level, this should hardly surprise. The late 1920s and early 1930s were the heyday of the organized Catholic youth. More than any other individual, Wolker embodied this spirit of militancy, which manifested itself in strident marches, forceful processions and displays of masculinity directed against Communists, Socialists and other non-Catholic opponents. It did not take much imagination for Wolker and others to expect that the post-war climate would strongly resemble the highly polarized political climate of the late 1920s and early 1930s, except that the likely opponent would come from the left and not from the right. These fears were not unrealistic even through the mid-1950s. In 1954, youth leaders sponsored a national youth festival, a mass spectacle involving nearly 100'000 young men and women, which began with a procession through the center of this industrial center in the Ruhr in which individual Catholic organizations – Kolping, the CAJ, ND, diocesan organizations from Swabia, Lower Franconia, Münster – proudly carried their banners (most of which were twice as large as the boys) and waved their pennants. During the subsequent speeches and rallies, «ambassadors» from the FDJ took the podium to extend greetings from the Soviet zone and were promptly escorted out of the pavilion by Catholic guards.¹⁹ Showing

soll es auch eine Verbandsmitgliedschaft zum Kolpingswerk geben». Archiv des Jugendhauses Düsseldorf (JHD), Haus Altenberg, «Dezember-Bericht», 1945, an die Diözesen.

¹⁷ Interview with Josef Rommerskirchen, Bonn, November 1995.

¹⁸ Heinz Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken, 1918–1945*, Paderborn 1992, 131.

¹⁹ Catholic University of America Archives, NL Alois Muench, HM 149/7, «Jugend in Dortmund: Erlebnisbericht unserer nach Dortmund entsandten Mitarbeiterin, Angelika Merkelbach-Pinck.»

how the spirit of the 1920s and 1930s continued to permeate the thinking of youth leaders, one Catholic youth worker explained that the «Catholic youth must be a movement which appears before the public and makes an impact on the public».²⁰

As a result, Wolker emphasized unity in youth work to ward off future enemies. Like many political leaders at the time, he asked where the mistakes had been made in 1933. He concluded that the fragmentation within the Catholic milieu had prevented Catholics from joining ranks in the critical days of 1933. Had there been a single youth organization in 1933, and not a motley array of over thirty separate *Bünde*, *Verbände*, and *Kongregationen*, youth leaders might have rebuffed the attacks by the Hitler Youth. As Willy Bokler, Wolker's successor as the leader of Catholic youth, put it in a speech from 1954: «And the mistakes lay in the fact that everything was side by side. The pennants were defended in front of one another, instead of swinging together in the great war against the one common enemy and for the one great goal, namely, the deliverance of German youth. And there a formulation was found which has since remained authoritative: unity of the youth ministers, unity of action, a united body under a united leadership. Whereby, however, leadership is – obviously – bound to the central leadership and not to the individual persons and the «Lebensgemeinschaften». Who today doubts that this was the case in 1945, I ask that person to come to me to receive the manuscript (from that time).»²¹ Only the creation of a giant *Bund* – the return to *bündisch* forms intended to cement loyalty and obedience – could instill in all Catholic youth a united sense of identity and purpose – in short, to overcome the perennial problem of fragmentation within the Catholic milieu.

This position explains Wolker's scarcely veiled antipathy towards the associations which were on the verge of reestablishing themselves. Although he was proud of proclaiming the slogan, «*Einheit in der Vielfalt*», a slogan which would have granted the other associations a place within the ranks of Catholic youth, it is doubtful whether Wolker truly intended to live up to his own promises. «Not everything that once was, shall exist again,» he warned those who might be considering reviving old organizations. «Not all groups still have a right to exist.»²²

These smaller organizations, however, naturally took issue with this *Einheitsprinzip*. Many of them brought with them an understanding of the past which differed substantially from that of Altenberg, based as it was on their unique experiences under the Nazis. Romano Guardini, one of the earlier pioneers in the

²⁰ Diözesanarchiv Würzburg, BDKJ-Ausstellung-Material (1989), «Zur Lage der Jugend in Würzburg und in der Diözese. Berichte über die Verwilderung der Jugend in und von Würzburg,» no date, but probably 1947.

²¹ Archiv des Jugendhauses Düsseldorf (JHD), Bokler, Referat zum Jahreskonferenz der Führerschaft, April 1954, 20.

²² KZG, NL Willy Bokler, D II, 2, Wolker an alle, Freiburg, 19 July 1945, Dr. A. Stiefvater an Wolker, Freiburg, 30 July 1945. Other *Verbände* complained in the years to come, often bitterly, that Wolker was shortchanging them.

Catholic youth and liturgical movement and associated with the *bündisch* group, Quickborn, prefigured the direction the debates were to take in a letter to Albert Stohr in the summer of 1945, even before his Quickborn groups had been able to reconstitute themselves.²³ He was of course concerned with the forthcoming plans for youth work which threatened to leave little or no room for smaller organizations like his. To Guardini, the manner in which youth leaders intended to implement their directives was eerily reminiscent of the coercion of the Nazi regime. He, in a paragraph which undoubtedly incurred the wrath of the bishops, implied that the church had appropriated some of the techniques of the Nazis: «And it is perhaps not unnecessary to consider that the personalities working in the church remain products of their time. I want to say that the methods of force which were practiced for over twelve years and which disregarded the problems, rights and needs and which wanted to achieve everything through dictates and prohibitions, also could have rubbed off on us. I have heard pronouncements by spiritual leaders which distinguished themselves from those of National Socialists only by the fact that they took place in a religious environment and from religious offices. The warning of perspicacious men about the «National Socialism» in the church, this way of treating one's fellow human beings, seems not to be taken lightly.»²⁴

Guardini was one of the few prominent Catholics who described the tragedy of the preceding twelve years overwhelmingly in terms of the loss of individual freedom and dignity. He decried the overemphasis upon, and perversion of authority – the subsuming of the individual in larger collectives. Most other accounts by churchmen, in contrast, painted a picture of apostasy (how the Nazi doctrine of race – the «new heathendom» – had replaced Christian theology) or demonstrated outrage (the Nazi regime had dared to wage an all-out struggle for control over the church). Some church accounts did bemoan the loss of civil liberties generally, but tended to focus upon the encroachments on the churches' freedom of action. Guardini left the conclusion of his letter to Stohr unstated, but unmistakably clear: every Catholic organization had the right to exist freely.

Such battles led, ultimately, to a compromise. Wolker finally provided the delegates at Hardehausen with the architecture which finally won acceptance. After two days of little progress, Wolker abruptly withdrew from conference proceedings and reappeared hours later with a blueprint in hand for an organization which he called the *Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend* (BDKJ).²⁵ This

²³ Guardini an Stohr, Mooshausen, 14 August 1945, in: Ludwig Volk, Akten deutscher Bischöfe über die Lage der Kirche, 1933–1945, Bd. 6, Mainz 1985, 646–649.

²⁴ Ibid, 649.

²⁵ Aktenkeller der Christlichen Arbeiterjugend (CAJ), CAJ-M 1947, Deutsche Kolpingsfamilie, «Tagungsbericht von der Hauptkonferenz der Führerschaft der kath. Jugend in Hardehausen vom 24.3. – 28.3. 1947.» This is the only surviving account of the conference at Hardehausen that I have been able to locate. For an account written much later, see Augustinus Reineke, *Jugend zwischen Kreuz und Hakenkreuz: Erinnerungen und Erlebnisse, Ereignisse und Dokumente*, Paderborn 1987, 238–241. For another detailed account of the struggles to shape youth work after 1945, see Matthias Schulze, *Bund oder Schar – Verband*

plan offered concessions to all sides. The bishops were pleased by the fact that the parish groups (*Pfarrjugend*) were to be kept intact and that the diocesan youth offices were to retain their hold on local groups. Only on the highest administrative level were these groups to be brought together in the form of two large «columns» (*Stämme*). One of these pillars, the so-called «*Mannensäule*», was to be for male youth; the other the «*Frauensäule*» for young women. Wolker envisioned these two columns as the foundation of the *Bund* – they were to unify Catholic youth and provide it with a common ideology and sense of purpose. The assortment of independent *Bünde* and *Verbände* were to be placed adjacent to these pillars, as appendages («*Gliederungen*», as they were called within the German context). These groups – the CAJ, Kolping, Heliand, Bund Neudeutschland, the Pfadfinder St. Georg, among others – were to retain their own administrative apparatus, but were expected to participate as full-fledged members within the *Bund*. Wolker anticipated that young people would develop a lasting allegiance to the *Bund* (hence his choice of the word «*Bund*»). The BDKJ was to be endowed with its own ceremonies, uniforms, oaths, medals, pledge-words and guardian angels. Wolker even levied annual dues upon the members in the expectation that this «sacrifice» as he called it, would inspire loyalty towards his brainchild – a giant Catholic youth kingdom on earth.

Wolker's pan wins the day

Why did Wolker's plan win the day? The sheer force of Wolker's personality provides the most obvious explanation. For the younger members present, he assumed an almost legendary presence – he had endured several arrests and interrogations by the Gestapo, but had never given up hope for the future of Catholic youth. The proceedings from the conference also make it clear that there were no viable alternatives. Father Johannes Hirschmann, a Jesuit priest associated with Bund Neudeutschland, called for the right of all organizations to coexist freely. But this plan was not entertained seriously by the majority of the delegates.²⁶ Wolker's plans also paid lip-service to Catholic Action; the two *Stämme* sufficiently resembled the two main columns of Catholic Action to appease some potential critics.

These explanations only scratch the surface, however, for Wolker's plans, as shaky as they might be, resonated with the delegates at a far deeper level. They resolved the difficulty with which Catholics had wrestled for years over how to position themselves within the modern world. Wolker's solution attempted to place Catholic institutions at the forefront of power and influence. «Break open the ghetto,» he cried, spurring his fellow-travelers to action: «advance into the

oder Pfarrjugend? Katholische Jugendarbeit im Erzbistum Paderborn nach 1945, Paderborn 2001.

²⁶ Reineke, *Jugend zwischen Kreuz und Hakenkreuz* (as footnote 25), 240.

ranks of the German people.»²⁷ Observers noted that one of his arguments proved most convincing to delegates – the strength of Catholic youth lay in numbers. «If we all stand together, then we are 750'000, the largest youth organization that exists in Germany.»²⁸ Wolker and Rommerskirchen were already involved in serious discussions with non-Catholic youth leaders from throughout Germany – with Erich Lindstädt (the leader of the Falcons), with Erich Honecker (the head of the FDJ), with representatives from the Protestant youth organizations. They hoped to create an umbrella organization for all German youth organizations (a *Bundesjugendring*). A similar organization had existed during the Weimar Republic, when its mission had consisted largely of distributing largesse from the national state to its members. Wolker and Rommerskirchen hoped that the *Bundesjugendring* would play a more extensive role and, indeed, chart the larger course for all German youth organizations. It was a significant triumph for Catholic youth leaders when they succeeded in kicking out the FDJ from the *Bundesjugendring*. In a contentious political and cultural climate not unlike that of the 1920s and 1930s, it was thus necessary to go «into the world» to defend one's own interests – the same cry from the 1920s and 1930s to «win influence» in secular society that had justified many calls to work with the new Nazi regime in 1933.

On the other hand, Wolker's plans allowed individual youth leaders the option of keeping the boys and girls under their charge cut off from the outside world almost entirely. The *Pfarrjugend*, based on the so-called *Pfarrprinzip*, was in many ways a reflection of the notion of the «*Heimat*», a theme which came to dominate discussions of post-war German society. Those who emphasized this motif hoped that German youth, after years of upheaval, would rediscover the healing power of the familiar – of home and hearth. Wolker's proposals appeased many conservatives by promising to keep youth untainted from corrupt influences – prostitution, licentious films – that they might encounter in the world.²⁹ Wolker's plans, in short, offered the best of both worlds: interconfessionalism at the highest echelons of youth work, a strict sectarianism at the local level.³⁰

More importantly, Wolker and many others at the time equated building the BDJ with reconstructing post-war German society. Wolker saw his task in Manichean, even apocalyptic terms. He evoked images of light and darkness, of the struggle between Christians and Satan, of despair and hope. «Everything is at stake, the existence or non-existence of our people – one could almost say, all of

²⁷ CAJ, CAJ-M 1947, «Tagungsbericht von der Hauptkonferenz der Führerschaft der kath. Jugend in Hardehausen vom 24.3. – 28.3. 1947,» 5.

²⁸ Reineke, *Jugend zwischen Kreuz und Hakenkreuz* (as footnote 25), 240.

²⁹ For Gröber and others of like mind, an emphasis on the *Pfarrprinzip* represented a continuation of their war against the secularizing tendencies they believed to be present within the church itself – secularization from within.

³⁰ A parallel might be drawn to the CDU, an organization which was officially interconfessional, but in reality, relied heavily on the own sectarian base of support of the Center Party. See Markus Köster, *Katholizismus und Parteien in Münster 1945–1953: Kontinuität und Wandel eines politischen Milieus*, Münster 1993.

humanity.» In this context, he saw the Bund as a source of light (symbolized in the torches, hikes by candlelight, the candles within chapels) which would counter the overwhelming darkness in German society (many homes lacked power and heat). These utterances should not be dismissed as inflated rhetoric, for Catholic leaders sincerely hoped to rebuild German society with Christian values and traditions. Just as they attributed the hardships of the preceding decades to the curse of secularization, so too did they argue that rechristianizing German society would place German society back on the right and proper path – they had to instill the Catholic values of the «Christian West» in the hearts and souls of all Germans. The commitment to the *Pfarrjugend* – which formed the cornerstone of the *Bund* – may have represented nothing less than the resolve to rebuild Germany from the parish upwards and to place the parish at the center of village and city life. Rebuilding the Catholic youth – and the *Bund* in particular – was a precondition for the «rebirth of the soul of the German people».³¹ And through the interconfessional work of Catholic leaders, Catholic values could be transmitted to all organized German youth. Rebuilding the Catholic youth work and spreading its values to the German nation ultimately represented a particular form of overcoming the past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*).

Youth work for women

Yet Catholic efforts to rebuild youth work for women reflected a different set of understandings of the past.³² Here, however, the understanding of the past emerged as a bundle of contradictions that were linked to a set of assumptions about the nature and roles of women which were not always immediately congruous. These leaders molded their understanding of the past around the church's long antipathy towards liberalism and materialism.³³ They argued that the moral impotence, spiritual flabbiness and political strife that were the hallmark of Weimar had driven many Catholics from the church and left a collapse of some sort inevitable. Secularization, of which sexual emancipation, political turmoil, and atheistic socialism were but symptoms, was now identified as the culprit behind the national misfortunes of the preceding two decades. Many leaders ascribed the twelve years of National Socialism to divine retribution for secularization, just as the children of Israel were repeatedly punished for having turned their backs

³¹ KZG, NL Wolker, I, 3b – II 1a, «Besondere Aufgaben der Jugendseelsorge in der Gegenwart.»

³² On the efforts to rebuild women's youth work, see Mark Edward Ruff, *Katholische Jugendarbeit und junge Frauen in Nordrhein-Westfalen, 1945–1962: Ein Beitrag zur Diskussion über die Auflösung des katholischen Milieus*, in: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 38 (1998), 263–284 and Ruff, *The Wayward Flock* (as footnote 15), Chapter 2.

³³ As Maria Mitchell has noted, the church's critique of materialism allowed Catholics to broaden their base politically and attract Protestant recruits. See Maria Mitchell, *Materialism and Secularism: CDU Politicians and National Socialism, 1945–1949* in: *Journal of Modern History*, 67 (1995), 278–308 and Noel Cary, *The Path to Christian Democracy: German Catholics and the Party System from Windthorst to Adenauer*, Cambridge 1996.

upon the Lord.³⁴ For some clergy, the lesson was obvious. Women's emancipation during Weimar had played a disastrous role in secularizing culture and society.

Yet it would be a mistake to assume, however, that many church leaders viewed the Nazi era (as did many New Lefters in the 1960s) as an era of sexual repression for women. Though certainly hostile to calls for emancipation coming from the left, even the most conservative church youth leaders recognized that the greater challenge to the gender norms they sought to uphold had come from the National Socialist state.³⁵ Catholic leaders and Nazi publicists alike recognized at the time that changed understandings of sexuality was at the core of secularization.³⁶ By the mid 1930s, the regime made participation in the League of German Girls (BDM) mandatory. In many locations, BDM leaders deliberately set out – as Catholic leaders were all too aware – to drive a wedge between young women and the clergy and, as a result, dissolve traditional allegiances to the church.³⁷ The BDM, moreover, frequently sponsored enticing activities which church leaders might otherwise have forbidden: swimming, gymnastics, and hiking. To no surprise, Catholic leaders claimed that the BDM had led to a masculinization of women. The Nazi regime had openly mocked church teachings on sexuality, abstinence, and virginity.³⁸ It pursued policies that promoted premarital and extramarital heterosexual sex with the aim of increasing the population of healthy Aryans.³⁹ And so, girls who hoped to enter a Catholic order, or who sought to delay marriage and child bearing, for instance, were often the target of brutal abuse. Although church leaders were not unsympathetic to the Nazi state's campaign for family values, they were alarmed by the state's willingness to sponsor co-ed activities for youth in the hopes of raising fertility rates.

³⁴ See quotes by Joseph Godehard Machens, Bishop of Hildesheim, in: Günter Baadte/Anton Rauscher (eds.), *Dokumente deutscher Bischöfe*, Würzburg 1985, 137–138; Michael Buchberger, the Bishop of Regensburg, to some extent, put forward a contrary interpretation. «Hat nicht der Kampf gegen Christus, den der Unglaube und der Kirchenhass, den der Unglaube und der Kirchenhaß in unserem deutschen Vaterland seit langer Zeit führte und den der Nationalsozialismus auf die Spitze trieb, weite Kreise unseres Volkes entchristlicht.» 135.

³⁵ Martin Klaus, *Mädchen im Dritten Reich: Der Bund Deutscher Mädel*, Cologne 1983; Jost Hermand, *All Power to the Women: Nazi Concepts of Matriarchy*, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19 (1984), 649–667; Gabriele Kinz, *Der Bund deutscher Mädel: Ein Beitrag zur Außerschulischen Mädchenerziehung im Nationalsozialismus*, Frankfurt 1990; Dagmar Reese, *Straff aber nicht Stramm: Herb aber nicht Derb: Zur Vergesellschaftung von Mädchen durch den Bund Deutscher Mädel im Sozialkulturellen Vergleich Zweier Milieus*, Weinheim 1989; Birgit Jurgens, *Zur Geschichte des BDM von 1923 bis 1939*, Frankfurt a.M. 1994.

³⁶ The American historian Dagmar Herzog makes this point especially emphatically in her recent book. *Dagmar Herzog, Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany*, Princeton 2005, 30.

³⁷ KZG, NL Wolker, II 1e, *Ehe und Familie* (no date, but probably directly after the war.)

³⁸ Archiv der Katholischen Frauengemeinschaft (KFG), NL Hermann Klens, #570, Dr. Schuldis an die Schriftleitung der Zeitschrift «Der Fährmann», 13 August 1947.

³⁹ See Herzog, *Sex after Fascism* (as footnote 36), 10–63. Herzog successfully challenges the notion that the Third Reich was sexually repressive, arguing that the Nazis actually promoted the pursuit of individual sexual pleasure for healthy, racially pure heterosexual Germans.

Some referred to the BDM with derisive nicknames, as «*Bubi Drück mich!*» (Boy, Hold me Tight) or «*Bund deutscher Milchkühe*» (League of German Milk-cows).⁴⁰ After the war, many Catholic leaders were determined to reeducate Catholic girls along traditional lines. As one youth leader declared: «The word maiden (*Jungfrau*, which also means virgin) must be allowed to be said again without inducing sneers, as was the case in the preceding decades.»⁴¹

Some church leaders went still further and argued that the rise of National Socialism, and the outbreak of the Second World War, were the direct results of female emancipation. According to this interpretation, which was fairly widespread amongst conservative leaders, women were the embodiment of love, motherhood, and service to others, and normally counterbalanced the more barbaric impulses of men. In giving up their roles as carers and nurturers, German women had caused society to become masculinized and barbarized. Otilie Mosshammer, a youth worker from Regensburg who compiled several training manuals for youth leaders, stated in one of her books: «Much of what took place in these years – the mass murders and the concentration camps, the tragedy of Stalingrad, a war waged in utter disregard of the civilian population – would have been unthinkable, if women in the appropriate places had exerted their moderating and soothing influence upon men. Men, at this time, became so degenerate, their manhood so out of control, because of the absence of women and because women had failed in their womanhood.»⁴²

These convictions led to debates over where to place the women's youth work in relation to the work for young men. Some young women who had been inspired by the Liturgical and Youth Movements, sought to instill a renewed sense of Catholic conscience within young women – of pride in being Catholic, of independence of action and thought, and even a certain militance (even if only to reinforce traditional values). They set out to replicate the activities of male youth organizations – theater, hikes, sporting events, *Heimabende*, fun activities which entered Catholic groups only with the onset of the Catholic youth movement. In light of the lessons that church leaders had drawn from the NS years, their views were unlikely to carry the day. One young woman, Christel Beilmann, carried out her leadership role with such zeal that she aroused the suspicion of conservative male church leaders.⁴³ One leader described the attitudes and disposition of Beilmann as, «symptomatic of the confusion, and unfortunately, for the lack of reverence of many of our youth and female youth leaders (thank God, however, of only a small proportion.)»⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Interview with Felix Raabe, Bad Godesberg, November 1995.

⁴¹ KFG, NL Klens, # 470, Klens an Schneider, 17 August 1946.

⁴² Otilie Moßhammer, *Werkbuch der katholischen Mädchenbildung: Erster Teil: Leben in der Zeit, Zweiter Teil, Wege der Frau*, Freiburg 1951, 147; Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics*, New York 1987.

⁴³ Christel Beilmann, *Eine katholische Jugend in Gottes und im Dritten Reich: Briefe, Berichte, Gedrucktes, 1930–1945, Kommentare 1988/89*, Wuppertal 1989. Beilmann, who later moved to the left politically, provides a critical, first-hand account of her experiences within the Catholic youth at this time.

⁴⁴ KFG, NL Klens, #570, Schneider an Vikar Stockman, 21 July 1948.

The most conservative youth leaders, including most notably Hermann Klens, sought to keep women's youth work completely distinct from male youth work. They strove to assist young women in the transition from childhood to adulthood, to «develop the full, mature Catholic personality», as they called it. They saw their task as «protecting» young women from the corrupt, seductive world around them. Church leaders even established agencies (*Jugendschützämter*) explicitly charged with keeping young persons, and in particular young women, safe from corruption and vice. By the mid 1950s, their list of potentially dangerous influences grew to include dancing, cinema, co-ed camping, beauty pageants, co-ed sporting events, gymnastics meets, provocative advertisements and billboards, alcohol, circuses, Carnival, and dirty comics.⁴⁵

Ultimately, however, Wolker's plans won out over the hopes of men like Klens for separation. After a series of hard-fought battles, Klens acceded to Wolker's plans, but not because he believed that his female youth organizations would profit from these steps. Rather, Klens assumed that the presence of women within the top leadership of the Bund would benefit male youth leaders. He too believed that the worst atrocities of the preceding decade had come about because women had failed in their mission to counteract the barbaric behavior of men. By integrating Catholic youth organizations, he envisioned that the BDKJ might restore feminine virtues to male institutions – and serve as a beacon of light for all German institutions. «It is a question of the proper ordering of the youth in the basic structure of human life.»⁴⁶

Conclusions

In conclusion, conflicting memories of the past decisively shaped the creation of the BDKJ. As a compromise, the resulting organization, however, suffered from these contradictory goals and impulses. On paper, it was a mass organization with over one million members by 1954, resembling the mass organizations of Weimar. But in reality, it became an organization marked by in-fighting and bickering between the various members, the *Stämme* and the *Gliederungen*. Almost immediately, representatives from the individual *Verbände* almost immediately set out either to reduce their dependence on the central administration in Altenberg and to increase their share of power within the BDKJ.⁴⁷ Nor were many of the female leaders of the Bund satisfied with the outcome. Within the BDKJ, women continually played second fiddle to the men, the realization of the fears of Klens, who presciently grasped that integration would inevitably lead to

⁴⁵ HAEK, Gen 23.30.6. Clemens Busch, «Reklameauswüsch – Bekämpfung dieser Jugendgefährdung,» stamped, 15 March 1955, NL Böhlcr, Zeitschriftensammlung, »Unheil über Schönheitsköniginnen?» Katholische Nachrichten-Agentur, Nr. 48, 17 April 1956. Joseph Frings, «Kirmesfeiern,» in: Kirchlicher Anzeiger, 1947, 202–4.

⁴⁶ Ingeborg Rocholl-Gärtner, Hermann Klens: Anwalt der Frauen, 74–77.

⁴⁷ Kolping, in particular, led an acrid campaign against the BDKJ in the 1950s, but other organizations – Die Schar, a small bündisch organization from Westphalia and the CAJ – had their own grievances against Altenberg.

a loss of autonomy for women.⁴⁸ Although the number of women enrolled in the Catholic youth organizations in 1950 was still substantially larger than that of men, the women's organization received considerably less money than its male counterpart.⁴⁹ Still more irksome to the women in the BDKJ was the fact that the men ran the show. The female leaders of the *Bund* complained that they had been «steamrolled» by the male leaders of the *Bund*, and in particular, by Wolker. «Our hopes for the possibility of a fair treatment for the women's organizations have completely disappeared within the Bund,» they wrote in an angry letter to Frings.⁵⁰ They urged the bishops to grant them a greater role not just within the *Bund* – to hire and fire their own personnel – but within public life in general. The situation, however, did not improve after Wolker's death. Years later, the women at the helm of the BDKJ noted that Wolker's successor, a priest from Limburg, Willy Bokler, treated women as subordinates and not as co-workers.⁵¹ One woman stated bluntly that years of being surrounded exclusively by male colleagues had left Bokler incapable of interacting successfully with women.

And so, the BDKJ evolved into that which Wolker had sought to avoid – a mere amalgamation of individual *Verbände* with little remaining of the elan of the youth movement or a unified Catholic consciousness, a loose confederation of individual organizations including Kolping, the CAJ, the Katholische Junge Gemeinde (the new name for the parish youth groups). Accordingly, the attendance at national gatherings plummeted. A national festival in Düsseldorf in 1954 brought together over 100'000 young men and women. By 1959, the number had dropped to 80'000 and by 1965, a meager 30'000.⁵² The membership of the BDKJ as a whole fell from over one million in 1954 to less than 500'000 by the mid 1960s.

By the late 1960s, the whole system of Catholic youth work – the uniforms, system of leadership – fell like a house of cards. The last vestigial ties to the youth movement were cut. The «*Jungführer*» model was abandoned, youth

⁴⁸ Archiv des Jugendhaus Hardehausen (JHH), 1.2201.3, München-Fürstenriedkonferenz, 26 April 1947. See Klens' comments: «es ist die Sorge, dass die Anliegen der Mädchenseelsorge nicht genügend zu ihrem Recht kommt Die Gründe liegen vielleicht darin, dass man die Anliegen der Mädchenseelsorge nicht ernst genug nimmt. Ein zweiter Grund ist, dass verschiedene Schwierigkeiten entstanden sind durch Uebergriffe der Mannesjugend in die Frauenjugendarbeit.»

⁴⁹ HAEK, Gen 23.11.2, Ausgaben – Etat Hauptstelle. According to these figures, the male organizations were to receive 100'000 RM, the female organizations 84'000, although numerically the male organizations – «Mannesjugend» were in the minority. This document has no date, but probably stems from 1948. Others noted that male youth organizations received special subsidies from the Bishops – perks which the female youth organizations, as of 1952, had apparently not received. HAEK, Gen 23.6.2, Seelsorge- und Jugendamt der Erzdiözese Köln, Josef Querbach, an das Generalvikariat, Köln, 25 January 1952.

⁵⁰ HAEK, Gen 23.6.1, Schneider (Seelsorgeamt für Jungmädchen und Jungfrauen) an Stohr, 16 February 1950.

⁵¹ JHD, #10, «Mädchen und Frauen im BDKJ: Gesichtspunkte aus einem Treffen mit Ehemaligen, 1984, Frauenforum.» Within the BDKJ, the 2 female leaders, the 2 male lay leaders, and the 2 clerics (one for the male youth, one for the female youth) each had one vote.

⁵² Schwab, Kirchlich, Kritisch, Kämpferisch (as footnote 5), 61–4.

groups became co-ed, and youth work became increasingly professionalized. The BDKJ evolved into an umbrella organization, The *Bund*, as the leaders from 1947 had envisioned it, had ceased to exist.⁵³

Already by the late 1940s, it was quite clear that the generation gap between those who had come of age prior to the Second World War and those whose formative years lay in the subsequent era of upheaval, scarcity, and dislocation spelled the death-knell for the youth movement.⁵⁴ The young men and women of the mid to late 1940s neither took part in the creation of the BDKJ nor bought into its vision. While many historians have called into question the sociologist Helmut Schelsky's old dictum that the youth of the late 1940s and early 1950s represented a «skeptical generation», it cannot be denied that the young men and women of the time did maintain a more skeptical attitude towards authority when they did not play an active role in creating and shaping their own institutions and immediate environment. The focus on the past had blinded an older generation of youth leaders in the late 1940s to the changed needs of the present.

Catholic Youth Work and the Dialogue with the Past after 1945

This article will examine the intersection of historical memories, politics and gender in one case study: the debates over how to reconstruct Catholic youth work between 1945 and 1947. The creation of the «Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend» (BDKJ) might seem to be but an arcane organizational history were it not the manner in which it brought to light disagreements over the understanding of the past. In particular, it will examine how the diverging understandings of the politicization and mobilization of the waning years of the Weimar Republic, the political collapse of 1933 and the impact of changing values on sexuality and gender decisively shaped the debates over how to rebuild the Catholic milieu after 1945. This paper will look first at how conflicting historical memory shaped the struggles that emerged between 1945 and 1947 over how to bring unity to Catholic youth work. Secondly, it will examine why the solution proposed by the Bavarian Monsignor, Ludwig Wolker, won the day. Thirdly, it will analyze the conflicts over women's youth work in the late 1940s and early 1950s and argue that some of these fissures reflected diverging understandings of when norms on sexuality and gender had begun to change.

Katholische Jugendarbeit und der Dialog mit der Vergangenheit nach 1945

Der Aufsatz untersucht die Schnittbereiche von historischer Erinnerung, Politik und Gender in Bezug auf die Debatten über den Wiederaufbau der katholischen Jugendarbeit zwischen 1945 und 1947 in Deutschland. Die Errichtung des Bundes der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend (BDKJ) könnte als schlichte Institutionengeschichte betrachtet werden, wäre nicht die Art und Weise, wie diese Geschichte Differenzen hinsichtlich des Verständnisses der Vergangenheit zum Vorschein bringt, von besonderem Interesse. Der Vortrag untersucht vor allem, wie unterschiedliche Interpretationen der Politisierung und Mo-

⁵³ On the changes in the BDKJ, see Schwab, *Kirchlich, Kritisch, Kämpferisch* (as footnote 5), 74–87 and Schwab, *Kirche leben und Gesellschaft gestalten* (as footnote 5).

⁵⁴ Catholic leaders were all too aware of this growing generation gap and frequently expressed feelings of guilt and shame about their inability to bridge this gap. *Zwischen den Generationen*, in: *Der Führer*, April 1947, 10 and *Nochmals: Zwischen den Generationen*, in: *Der Führer*, September 1947, 7; *Haben wir die Gelegenheit verpasst? Brief an die Deutsche Katholische Jugend von 1939, von einem, der dazu gehört, und der nach Gründen sucht*, in: *Michael*, September 1951, 47 and *Zwischen Restauration und neuer Jugendbewegung? Das Fürstenecker Gespräch des Deutschen Bundesjugendringes*, in: *Deutsche Jugend*, 1954, 491–508.

bilisierung der späten Weimarer Republik, des politischen Kollapses von 1933 und der Auswirkungen sich wandelnder Wertvorstellungen über die Sexualität und Geschlechterrollen in zentraler Weise die Debatten darüber bestimmten, wie das katholische Milieu nach 1945 wieder aufzubauen sei. Das Paper konzentriert sich zunächst darauf, wie einander entgegen gesetzte historische Erinnerungskonstruktionen die Auseinandersetzungen prägten, die zwischen 1945 und 1947 darüber entstanden, wie die katholische Jugendarbeit zu vereinheitlichen sei. Zweitens untersucht es, warum der vom Bayrischen Prälaten Ludwig Wolker vorgeschlagene Lösungsansatz sich durchsetzte. Drittens werden die Konflikte um die Frauenjugendarbeit in den späten 1940er und frühen 1950er Jahren analysiert, wobei die These vertreten wird, dass einige dieser Konfliktlinien unterschiedliche Interpretationen in Bezug auf den Zeitpunkt, als Normen über Sexualität und Geschlechterrollen sich zu wandeln begannen, spiegelten.

Oeuvres pour la jeunesse et le dialogue avec le passé après 1945

Cet article se propose d'examiner l'intersection de la mémoire historique, de la politique et du genre à travers une étude de cas: les débats portant sur la manière de reconstruire le travail social catholique auprès des jeunes entre 1945 et 1947. La création du Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend (BDKJ) pourrait être considérée comme une simple histoire institutionnelle, si la manière avec laquelle cette histoire mettait en lumière les désaccords relatifs à la compréhension du passé n'était pas une thématique particulièrement intéressante. On examinera en particulier comment les compréhensions divergentes de la politisation et de la mobilisation des années de déclin de la République de Weimar, l'effondrement politique de 1933 et l'impact des valeurs changeantes sur la sexualité et le genre ont modelé de façon décisive les débats sur la manière de reconstruire le milieu catholique après 1945. Cette présentation examinera premièrement la façon conflictuelle avec laquelle la mémoire historique a façonné les luttes qui ont émergé entre 1945 et 1947 à propos de la manière de donner une unité au travail social catholique auprès des jeunes. Deuxièmement, on examinera les raisons du succès de la solution proposée par Mgr. Ludwig Wolker de Bavière. Enfin troisièmement, seront analysés les conflits à propos du travail social auprès des jeunes femmes à la fin des années 1940 et au début des années 1950, et l'on arguera que certaines de ces fissures reflètent des états de compréhensions divergents quant au moment où les normes sur la sexualité et le genre ont commencé à changer.

Keywords – Schlüsselbegriffe – Mots clés

Youth, memory, catholicism, *Verbände*, youth work, Ludwig Wolker, Hermann Klens, Germany

Mark Edward Ruff, Assistant Professor of History, Saint Louis University