Ground-breaking research into the courageous life of the seventeen-year-old Mormon boy who dared to expose Hitler's lies and atrocities and was beheaded for it.

**THE FUHRER'S NEW CLOTHES: Helmuth Hübener and the Mormons in the Third Reich**

*This essay is part of a book on the same subject which the authors are writing. Material has been drawn from a variety of sources: 1) The Helmuth Hubener file compiled by the Gestapo and made available to us by the American Document Center—Berlin (Citations are from our own pagination of the file. A film copy of these documents is in the BYU Library); 2) Extensive interviews over several years with Helmuth's co-conspirators Rudolf Wobbe, Karl-Heinz Schnibbe, and Gerhard Düwer. We are especially grateful for their interest and information. 3) Extensive interviews in October 1974 with Otto Berndt, acting District President in Hamburg at the time; 4) Interviews with Helmuth's brothers Hans and Gerhard Kunzle, his friend 'Aunt' Maria Sommerfeldt and nearly a dozen other German Saints in Germany and in the U.S. who knew about and were affected by the case; 5) Interviews with missionaries—some of whom wish to remain anonymous—whose diaries give valuable insight into the policies pursued by West German Mission leaders. Copies of obscure documents and transcripts of taped interviews are available from the authors upon request.*

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In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus drew the division between secular and religious life with a single sentence: “Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.” But the precise location of that boundary has proved to be a continuing problem for members of the Mormon church. Whereas earlier Latter-day Saints often faced the challenge of anarchic violence unchecked by civil authorities, in our own time Saints have more often faced the opposite dilemma: how should they respond to a totalitarian government’s demands for total, exclusive allegiance? Nowhere has this problem been posed with greater clarity than in Nazi Germany, where a young man named Helmuth Höbener was one of many Saints who struggled to sort out their conflicting loyalties. His decisions as a devout Latter-day Saint ultimately led to his execution for high treason against the German state.

Helmuth Höbener was born in Hamburg on January 8, 1925, the illegitimate son of Anna Emma Guddat Kunkel and a man named Vater, her co-worker at the Hamburg Mint. Höbener’s mother had two sons, Hans and Gerhard, from a previous marriage to Johann Kunkel. Höbener also bore the Kunkel surname during his early life, although a few members of the Church in Hamburg preferred to call him Helmuth Guddat, from his mother’s maiden name. In 1940 Emma married a non-Mormon construction worker named Hugo Höbener. Hugo Höbener legally adopted Helmuth, thus giving him the name by which he is remembered today.

But Höbener did not live with his new stepfather for long. Gerhard, the younger of the two Kunkel boys, was strongly opposed to Nazism and detested his new stepfather, a Party member and a Rottenführer (file leader) in the local Storm Trooper battalion. This friction, and the fact that his mother worked long hours away from home, led Gerhard to move in with his maternal grandmother at 137 Louisenweg, a few blocks from the Höbener apartment at 42 Sachsenstrasse. When Gerhard left Hamburg early in 1941 to join the para-military Reichsarbeitsdienst (National Work Corps), Helmuth moved to his grandmother’s house shortly thereafter and settled into Gerhard’s old room there.

All sources agree that Höbener was a gifted, intelligent student, who was promoted to the most accelerated course of studies soon after he entered school. His teachers reported that he especially loved history and geography, and that he showed an early interest in politics. But Höbener’s appetite for knowledge extended to many other areas. He spoke fluent English, loved music, and even took extracurricular courses in stenography and typing—“women’s work” in pre-war Germany. When he left school to begin an apprenticeship with the Civil Service he continued to read voraciously, relishing access to the administrative archives of his new office. These archives held material that Helmuth could have seen nowhere else, including forbidden books about Russia, the United States, and other topics, books that the Nazis had banned.

Although Höbener apparently got along well with most people he met, his two closest friends were two young Latter-day Saints, Rudolf Gustav Wobbe and Karl-Heinz Schnibbe. The three had grown up together, taking the same Sunday School classes, the same Primary classes before Primary was banned, and joining the same Scout troop before Scouting, too, was banned in 1934. It was through his activities with Rudi and Karl in the St. Georg Branch that Höbener first began to notice the dark side of German life under Hitler. Like many Germans, Höbener initially welcomed the Nazis’ rise to power as a sign that Germany had recovered a sense of national purpose after the political chaos and economic collapse of the Weimar years. But this early enthusiasm faded as Höbener and his friends began to see the racism and brutality of National Socialism. All three of them, for instance, were disturbed when in 1938 a sign went up on the door of their branch meeting-house reading “JUDEN IST DER EINTRITT VERBOTEN!” (Jews not allowed to enter.) The boys realized that the sign had been put up by Branch President Arnold Zollner, known by members to be sympathetic to Nazism. Zollner apparently wanted to discourage visits by a Jewish convert, Salomon Schwartz, a member of the Barmbeck Branch, to the combined monthly priesthood meetings held at St. Georg. Höbener also had heard that Zollner had warned Schwartz—who eventually died in the Theresienstadt concentration camp—to stay away from his branch.

Later Rudi Wobbe saw Zollner reprimand another member of the branch for reading a propaganda leaflet dropped from a British plane. Sister Emma Hase had found the leaflet on her way to church, and she was showing it to some other members of the branch when

* fictitious name
Zollner came up to her. Tearing the leaflet from her hand, he allegedly said, “If you ever bring anything like that in here again, I’ll personally see to it that you’re sent to a concentration camp.” Too, there was the case of Heinrich Worbs, another branch member, who had been denounced for making disparaging remarks about a new statue in honor of “another Nazi butcher.” Worbs was sent to a concentration camp where he suffered various tortures. At one point Worbs was placed in the camp's outdoor stocks while freezing water dripped onto his hands. When his hands were encased in ice, a guard pounded the ice away with a length of rubber hose, cheerfully explaining that this was done “to keep your hands warm.” Worbs returned to Hamburg emotionally and physically ruined; he died a few months later. He described his ordeal to a few branch members and the rest heard about his story through whispered rumors. Hubener heard these rumors as well, and he began to form his own opinion of Germany’s Nazi renaissance.

There were other irritations. It was reported that Zollner brought his radio to church whenever Hitler or Goebbels were scheduled to speak. Some recall that during these broadcasts the chapel doors were locked so that no one could leave. On occasion a swastika was displayed outside the building, but the suggestion that branch members use the “Hitler greeting” among themselves had been rejected by a majority vote. Whatever the precise annoyances, it was not long before Hubener and his two friends found themselves united in their growing dissatisfaction with Nazism. Of the three boys it was Karl-Heinz, the oldest and the most brash, who first made his dissatisfaction public. He invited Karl and Rudi up to his room, where they listened at low volume to one of the BBC broadcasts. After it was over, Hubener presented his plan: he would use his typing and shorthand skills to take notes on the broadcasts and work the material into handbills. After he had typed duplicates with carbon paper, the boys would undertake together the dangerous job of distribution: dropping the leaflets into mail boxes, posting them on public bulletin boards (some were to be disguised as official Party announcements by using a fake letterhead bearing a swastika), leaving them in phone booths, and so on.

Hubener produced a wide variety of leaflets during the months that followed. Through the diligence of the Gestapo twenty-nine different pamphlets have been preserved, including those the police labelled “leaflet p” and “leaflet w”. These two leaflets indicate the tone of the rest. In the first, after discussing sarcastically the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hubener composed seven verses of doggerel (given here as closely as possible in the original meter and with similarly forced rhymes) that satirize the propaganda of Josef Goebbels. “Leaflet p” goes on to address “the working soldier on the home front” as well as the military forces in the field, assuring them that the Allies are as serious as the ancient Swiss in their struggle against the aggressor. Next Hubener quotes six lines from the end of Act II, Scene 2 of Schiller’s William Tell which make up the historic oath sworn by the Swiss Confederates at Rutli. The pamphlet concludes by denying that the attack on Pearl Harbor has removed America’s ability to interfere in the European Theater and predicts that Allied deeds on the battlefield will soon give the lie to Axis propaganda (see sidebar). Hubener’s own title for “Leaflet w” was “The Voice of the Homeland.” The Gestapo regarded this pamphlet as an “attempt to involve theological issues in behalf of the enemy’s sedious efforts.” The pamphlet does indeed seem to show that Hubener saw his opposition to Nazism as a necessary consequence of his religious beliefs (see sidebar).

Hubener drew the inspiration for his pamphlet campaign from his own perception of the meaning of Mormonism, combined with a precocious interest in politics and a child-like faith in the eventual triumph of good over evil. All the evidence indicates that the boys were acting entirely on their own, with no guidance or assistance from any adult.

But if Hubener’s naive confidence in the basic goodness and educability of mankind was a major factor in
motivating him to begin his pamphlet campaign, it was also the fatal flaw that led to his arrest and subsequent beheading. Early in 1942, after the three boys had been distributing leaflets for eight or nine months, Hübener decided they should expand their operations. He approached a few other young Mormons—which was logical, if he did indeed believe that some of his own insights were based in Mormon doctrines. Although a few came to his room and listened to the BBC broadcasts, none were willing to take the risk of actually distributing the leaflets. From there he turned to his circle of friends in the Civil Service, with whom he had often discussed the war and other current events, although he never revealed to them the source of his “inside information.” (Still, some of them must have guessed that he was involved in illegal activities, for they called him “the man with connections.”)9 One apprentice, 18-year-old Gerhard Düwer, agreed to take a few pamphlets home and show them to some friends. Helmuth also approached another apprentice, Werner Kranz, and asked him to translate one of the pamphlets into French, ostensibly so that he could show it to French prisoners of war working in Hamburg. But Kranz wanted nothing to do with the idea. A few days later Hübener tried to press a piece of paper into Kranz’ hand. When Kranz refused to accept the paper and both Hübener and Düwer left the room, supervisor Heinrich Mohns questioned Kranz about the mysterious episode. Next he called in Düwer; when Düwer was finally persuaded to produce a leaflet, the whole case was turned over to the Gestapo.

On Thursday, February 5, 1942, Gestapo Commissioner Wangemann and Officer Müssener arrived at the Civil Service office to question the two boys. Afterwards they searched their homes. Düwer’s home naturally yielded nothing, but Hübener had had no warning. They found the radio, a pile of assorted leaflets, and some notebooks with manuscripts for handbills written out in longhand and shorthand. The typewriter—loaned to Hübener by Branch President Zollner for the purpose of typing letters to LDS servicemen at the front—held seven half-finished carbon copies of Leaflet 1, “Who’s Inciting Whom?”10 At five o’clock that afternoon Düwer and fellow conspirators. But at their own interrogations several weeks later, both boys admitted enough to be arrested. On March 25th the High Court of the State of Hamburg turned the files on the four boys over to the Attorney-General of the Reich at the feared “Blood-Court,” the Volksgerichtshof in Berlin. Such a procedure was required for serious crimes. On May 28th they were formally charged with conspiracy to commit high treason; the trial was set for Tuesday, August 11, 1942. For ten weeks the boys sat waiting in their cells.

Back in Hamburg Hübener’s arrest set off another chain of events. On the Sunday after the arrest, Karl, Rudi, Hübener’s mother, and grandmother all attended the St. Georg branch, where they heard Brother Friedrich Jakobi say: “I’m glad they caught him. If I’d known what he was doing, I’d have shot him myself.”13 The next Sunday, February 15th, President Zollner wrote “Excommunicated” on Hübener’s membership record. He did this with the apparent consent of Interim West German Mission President, Anton Huck, although there is no evidence that a Church court was convened.14 Nor is it clear that external threats to the survival of the Church necessitated the excommunication.15 (At least one other branch president felt that Hubener’s actions created no immediate danger to the Church’s well-being.)16

These events, however, can only be understood in the context of a tense, suspicion-filled situation. Gestapo-men had been attending branch meetings, contributing to the long-standing fears of some members for the continued existence of the Church as well as for their very lives. Additionally, there were no American Church authorities available to whom the local German leaders could turn for counsel in this time of near-panic. Having had little previous experience in Church government, some now tended to see Hubener’s actions, not as the religious and patriotic idealism he claimed, but as an almost criminal disregard for Mormon doctrine.

Even District President Otto Berndt, considered by most to be a liberal and therefore under close scrutiny by the Gestapo, did not wish to compromise himself by openly opposing or even overturning this
membership record. (Neither Schnibbe nor Wobbe suffered similar excommunications, although Schnibbe assumed during his more than six years of Nazi and then Russian imprisonment that he too had been cut off when he heard of Hübener's fate.)

Throughout their investigation of the case, the Gestapo strongly suspected that Hübener had been acting as a "front" for some mysterious agent. Hugo Hübener, the Storm Trooper who had always distrusted the Mormons, told the police that he suspected "that liberal" Otto Berndt of corrupting his stepson. Berndt was picked up for questioning and held for four days at Gestapo headquarters. As president of the Hamburg District, Berndt knew that the Gestapo's judgment of him could affect every Church member in Germany. He prayed earnestly for guidance and, as he reports, the Lord supplied the right words throughout his four days of detention. Finally, at the end of that time, the Gestapo apparently satisfied, he was released. Although Berndt remembers nothing he said or did during those four days, he does vividly recall his release, when a Gestapo officer accompanied him from his cell to the exit. "Make no mistake about it, Berndt," the man told him. "When we have this war behind us, when we have the time to devote to it and after we have eliminated the Jews, you Mormons are next!" The statement brought home to Berndt an idea often forgotten or misunderstood: the jealously religious nature of National Socialism, and its ultimate intentions.
toward competing religious systems. Thereafter, when Church members hoped for victory in the war, Berndt would reply: "You be grateful to God that we will not win it."19

National Socialism was not a simple political, economic, or social phenomenon. It was an entirely new world-view based on an eclectic conglomeration of astrological, gnostic, millennialist, Christian, and Teutonic cults and myths. The Nazi inner circles were steeped in this collage of mystical lore. Albert Speer, for example, writes in Inside the Third Reich that Hitler and a few colleagues were celebrating his greatest diplomatic coup—the signing of the non-aggression pact with Russia—on the scenic mountain peak of the Obersalzberg, when they looked across to the Untersberg, a place associated with many Germanic legends. There, say the legends, the Emperor Charlemagne sleeps in a cave until he shall be called forth to usher in the millennial Reich. As Hitler and his party watched, the Untersberg was bathed in a brilliant red light, which Speer later decided was a rare and remarkably vivid southern display of the Aurora Borealis. The light shone on the assembled faces like a divine show of approval for the historic events of that day. Speer reports that Hitler was deeply moved. Watching the light, he said: "It looks like this time much blood will be shed."20

When we have this war behind us, after we have eliminated the Jews, you Mormons are next.

Soldiers on the home front! Soldiers on all fronts! The Führer has promised you that 1942 will be decisive and this time he will stop at nothing to keep his promise. He will send you by the thousands into the fires in order to finish the crime he started. By the thousands your wives and children will become widows and orphans. And for nothing! The European Front stands fast and the Röthi-oath is unanimous, unanimous the promise—the promise of all Allied peoples:

We want to be united now as brothers, Not separate in danger or in need! We wish to live in freedom like our fathers Preferring death to living servitude! We place our highest trust in God Almighty And fear no kind of wicked human power.

The European Awakening has begun: in reply to the laughably audacious contention of the Axis propagandists that in a month or so the U.S. has already been badly damaged by the Japanese attack and that "Roosevelt's dream of having a say on the continent of Europe is nothing more than a dream", American air, land and sea forces have now taken up positions in the north of Ireland. Berlin, Rome and Tokyo may try to veil the dimensions of this landing and may gloss over it with sneering gestures, but time will tell who spoke the truth. And then, when the Allied and American forces set foot on the continent, when American and British squadrons bring death and destruction over the Reich, when the Allied and U.S. fleet enters the battle of the Atlantic with fresh reserves; then deeds will speak a more eloquent language; then with Hamlet, our only reply to the illusionary soap bubble-blowers in the Wilhelmsbrasse will be:

"Words, words, words!"17

During the months of confinement and torture before his trial, Hübener and his friends were forced to think about the implications of their actions. The boys' responses varied considerably. Düwer flatly denied any involvement with the others, while Schnibbe tried to portray the whole episode as a childish prank. But Hübener became steadily more convinced that he had chosen the right course. His first suspicions of the brutality that hid

LEAFLET W

"The Voice of the Homeland"

"The Bible not God's word, Merely a scheme of the Jewish world to enslave mankind. The product of an overactive fantasy!"

This is the red thread which is found in each of the "free-spiritual" or "neo-heathenistic" filth-pamphlets. "The Bible not God's word." That is the title of one of the filthiest and most intemperate brochures of the great Anti-Christ, General Ludendorff.

Why all this campaign against the Bible, holy writ? The answer to this question should not be too difficult if one knows the contents of the Bible, especially the many prophecies which pertain mostly to the latter days, to the days when heathenism and idolatry will take the upper hand, when the great Anti-Christ will arise in the midst of a peaceful period and will conquer with power or with cunning one country, one kingdom after another.

This time has now come, the Anti-Christ has established his "Reich." Ludendorff knows this just as Hitler does, and they are attempting to take the Bible away from the German Volk, so that it will not be able to see through the insidious plans of Hitler and his followers in advance.

Christians, arise, open the Bible, read what it says in the Book of the Prophet Daniel, 11:20:

And in his place shall Stand up a vile person, to Whom they did not intend to Give the honor of the kingdom, But he shall come in the midst of peace, And obtain the kingdom by flatteries.

To whom does that apply better than to the Führer: by means of bold phrase-mongering and grandiose promises he and his comrades succeeded in winning the majority in the Reichstag.8
chosen the proper course:

that letter he continued to express certainty that he had

vive the Allied bombing raids of the following year. In

son. Sister Sommerfeldt's letter was the only one to sur-

Hidbener was allowed to write three letters. He wrote one
to his mother, one to his grandmother, and one to Sister

Hidbener was the only one who spoke. He

stood before the judges, who sat on their high bench in

their famous blood-red robes, and told them, "Wait.

The leadership of the Hitler Youth even appealed to the Führer on his behalf. In many

ways, Helmut Hübener would seem perfectly suited for success under the Nazi regime. Ironically, the Nazis per-
ceived Hübener as a danger precisely because of his

many positive qualities. Hübener was a thoroughly in-

doctrinated schoolboy who had little to fear and much to
gain by conforming to the system. Instead, he freely
chose to search out the lies beneath the facade of Nazism,
and to show others the truth. If Nazism could not hold a
Helmuth Hübener, it could hold no one. And so it was
necessary that Helmut Hübener be tried, convicted,
deprived of his citizenship, and condemned to death.

At first sight, Hübener looks like an odd choice for a
Nazi scapegoat. He belonged to a family officially ad-
judged "Aryan" by the party; his stepfather was a lead-
ing Storm Trooper; and his family members conducted
themselves "perfectly." The character of the Hitler
Youth even appealed to the Führer on his behalf. In many
ways, Helmut Hübener would seem perfectly suited for
success under the Nazi regime. Ironically, the Nazis per-
ceived Hübener as a danger precisely because of his

moral regime was not enthusiasm, apathy, or violent re-

tol; instead, he made a sincere attempt to change things
by educating his fellow citizens. And precisely because
these principles of nonviolent, democratic, individual
political initiative and a sense of personal moral respon-
sibility failed before 1945, these writers believe they must
succeed now. If Hübeners are common in postwar Ger-
man literature, it is precisely because there were so few in
real life before.

Hübener's significance for Latter-day Saints has been
more ambiguous. Many German Saints who would have
given their lives for the gospel believed that Hübener was
a heretic, for he had violated the Twelfth Article of Faith:
"We believe in being subject to Kings, presidents, rulers,
and magistrates, and in obeying, honoring, and up-
holding the law." These people found support for their
attitude in the admonitions of the New Testament. Jesus
himself had counseled: "Render therefore unto Caesar
the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things
that are God's." Peter exhorted his friends to "submit your-
selves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." Fi-
nally, Paul admonished the Romans: "Let every soul be
subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.”

But the German Saints had other reasons for viewing Hübener as a traitor. For decades they had been stigmatized as members of an “American sect,” the implication being that someone who did not belong to the established churches was not a real German. This ostracism on the part of the major churches persisted through the Weimar period. Indeed, when the Nazis came to power it may not be going too far to say that some Saints enjoyed a certain amount of thoughtless Schadenfreude (malicious enjoyment of others’ misfortune) at the treatment they meted out to the established churches. Now the Protestants and Catholics were receiving the same treatment they had given the “sects.”

Hitler enjoyed at least as much popularity among German Saints as he did among the population in general. His apparent dynamism and self-confidence seemed to show a way out of the chaos and weakness of the Weimar years. Moreover, as “good Germans,” the Mormons were acutely aware that Hitler had risen to power through legal channels. The Nazi Party had won a plurality—although by no means a majority—in the last general election, and Hitler had been appointed Chancellor by the ancient and venerated President Paul von Hindenburg. And although the Weimar Reichstag had voted Hitler extraordinary powers on both February 28 and March 23, 1933, Hitler never formally abrogated the Weimar Constitution. In the years before the death-camps, the terrible food shortages, and the massive casualties of late World War II, many Germans saw the Nazis as a major force for good in German society.

So, for that matter, did many Americans. The unfairness of the Versailles Treaty was generally recognized, and in isolationist America of the thirties few Americans were concerned as Hitler overturned one provision of the treaty after another. If anything, they felt a degree of sympathy for some of the Nazis’ goals.

This sympathy was apparently shared by some members of the Church leadership. The Church’s German magazine, Der Stern, reminded its readers in 1935 that Senator Reed Smoot had long been a friend of Germany, and this attitude seemed to receive official sanction during President Grant’s 1937 visit. The message to the German Saints was clear: Stay here. Keep the Commandments. Try to get along the best you can, even under some limitations. We want to keep the Church intact and the missionaries working.

The German Saints were not eager for a confrontation with their national government, and they were happy to follow President Grant’s advice. By and large, the Mormons and the Nazis coexisted comfortably. Some Church members even saw Hitler as God’s instrument, preparing the world for the millennium. Superficial parallels were drawn between the Church and the Nazi Party, with its emphasis on active involvement by every member. The women’s auxiliary of the Party and the Hitler Youth were regarded by some as secular equivalents to the Church’s Relief Society, MIA, and Scouting programs. The vital importance of “Aryan” ancestry gave new significance to genealogical research. And the Führer himself, the non-smoking, non-drinking vegetarian who yielded to no one in his desire for absolute law and order, seemed to embody many of the most basic LDS virtues.

In their eagerness to coexist with the government, American officials of the German Church resorted to public relations efforts which suggested all of the above. Probably the clearest example of this tendency is an article by West German Mission President Alfred C. Rees entitled “In the Land of the Mormons.” The article appeared in a special issue of the Nazi Party organ Der Volksbeobachter dated April 14, 1939. In the Editor’s Preface to the article, President Rees is called “the representative of the Church in Germany,” who “paints for our readers a portrait of Mormonism today, a church which views the New Germany with sympathy and friendship.” Whether President Rees originally wrote the article in German or not, the language of the piece abounds in such loaded terms as Volk and Rasse (race); and a picture of Brigham Young bears the caption, “Führer der historischen Mormonenpioniere.” But the significance of these linguistic gaffes is magnified by hindsight. More disturbing is the way President Rees blantly parallels Mormonism with Nazism. As Rees warms to his topic, Mormonism begins to sound like a fulfillment of Nazi teachings, providing “the practical realization of the German ideal: ‘the common good takes precedence over the individual good.’” Rees concluded by assuring his readers that “Mormons are people who put this healthy doctrine into action.” Reading articles such as this, it would have been easy for a German Saint to mistakenly conclude that the seal of official Church approval had been placed on the Nazi regime.

This policy of appeasing the Nazis worked well until the war broke out. Despite the classification of Mormonism as a sect “dangerous to the state…” according to Gestapo reports, the Church was not summarily dissolved as many others were. The missionaries remained; the Church continued. Even during the war, Mormon life was disrupted more by bombing raids, supply shortages, and travel restrictions than by official harassment. By and large, the German Saints lived through the Thousand-Year Reich much like the rest of their countrymen.

But among those Germans who recognized the true nature of Nazism were a few Latter-day Saints. Many
were simply tired of the war (Germany’s second in twenty-five years); others, like Hübener, began to see through the pervasive Nazi propaganda. Rosa Böhringer, Johannes Kindt, Walter Krause, and President Willy Deters of Bremen were among the Saints who either overtly opposed the regime or else dragged their feet while praying for German defeat in the war and the regime’s early demise,\textsuperscript{32} basing their position in part on Mormon scripture. In Section 98 of the Doctrine and Covenants, for example, it reads:

And now, verily I say unto you, concerning the laws of the land, it is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatsoever I command them. And the law of the land which is constitutional, supporting the principle of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges, belongs to all mankind, and is justifiable before me. Therefore, I, the Lord, justify you, and your brethren of my church, in beholding that law which is the constitutional law of the land; and as pertaining to law of man, whatsoever is more or less than this, cometh of evil. I, the Lord God, make you free, therefore ye are free indeed: and the law also maketh you free. Nevertheless, when the wicked rule, the people mourn. Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold; otherwise whatsoever is less than these cometh of evil.

And in Section 34 one reads:

We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society. We believe that no government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life.

These verses clearly state the duty of Latter-day Saints to diligently seek out good and wise leaders and outline their moral responsibility in the governing process.

Hugh Nibley, commenting on the universal character of the rights of man guaranteed by the American Constitution, observed:

The Founding Fathers were convinced that their liberal teachings were for the benefit of all men, not only for their own times, but for endless generations to come, ensuring the blessings of liberty not only to themselves but especially to their posterity, and not only in this land but eventually to the whole world.

He then continues: “Note the sweeping language of D&C 101:77ff:

The laws and constitution of this people... I have suffered to be established, and should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh according to just and holy principles. That every man may act... according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment. Therefore, it is not right that any man should be in bondage to another. And for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land; by the hands of wise men whom I raised up for this very purpose.

After emphasizing “every” and “all” as key words, he offers a statement by the Prophet Joseph Smith:

My Father in Heaven knows that I have done nothing wrong. He will be the proper judge of this matter.
Helmut Hubner. Courtesy of the LDS Church Archives

Notes


2. Teacher August Meins. Sander, 326. See comments before the Gestapo by Hubner and his mother, Hubner File, p. 34. Interview with Mary Patnisch in Hamburg, April 1974.


4. Such signs were not common on Mormon meeting places. There were few Jewish members and even fewer investigators. Views of the local Church authorities and pressures on the Church by local Nazi party officials varied. A wide spectrum of political opinion existed in the St. George branch. Paul Hase, counselor in the branch presidency, was a member of the SA (Sturm Troopers) and came to meetings in uniform. Some members favored the Social Democratic party. Some members believed the branch was “punished” during the war for the way it had treated its Jewish members. Hans Gurtler, Hamburger Gemeinde Geschichte, p. 33.


6. The Gestapo file lists twenty-nine different compositions; there may have been over sixty. Ahrens, p. 10.


8. Ibid., pp. 284, 287.

9. Hubner File, p. 34.

10. Ibid., p. 12.


12. Hubner File, pp. 33-42, 61-62, 322. According to Schröbelle and Wobbe, a letter of “recantation” to Helmut’s parents calling his work “a foolish mistake” was primarily a means of communicating with his family and was extorted through torture.


14. Manuscript History of the West German Mission, LDS Historical Archives, Salt Lake City.

15. Some witnesses believe President Anton Hack was a party-member, others that he was sympathetic to National Socialism but had not officially joined. In 1943 the Gestapo conducted a thorough investigation of the West German mission home in Frankfurt/Main and found nothing incriminating. Douglas Alder, “German-Speaking Immigration to Utah 1850-1900,” MA thesis, University of Utah, 1969, p. 38.

16. According to Mrs. Rudolf Wobbe, whose father Alfred Schmidt was president of the Barmbeck Branch.


18. Hitler’s personal attachment to his German Catholic heritage and the Nazi party platform promise to support “positive Christianity” measured many. But Hitler made his real intentions clear on many occasions.

As far as Churches go, they’re all the same. They have no future. Not among the Germans, at any rate. Italian fascism can go ahead and make its peace with the church. I’ll do it too. Why not? That won’t prevent me from exterminating Christianity in Germany, with all its roots and branches, lock, stock, and barrel. See Hermann Rauschning, Gespräche mit Hitler (New York: Europa, 1940), p. 50.


22. Wobbe received ten years, Schnibbe five, and Döwer four. Ibid. 191, 192, 201, 202. When asked why by the government prosecutors, Hubner replied, “I know others to know the truth.” The prosecution then taunted, “Are you suggesting we are lying?” Hubner answered, “Ja, wolh, ihr legt” (using the somewhat contemptuous form of the familiar “you”).


24. Helmut plays significant roles in Günter Grass’s novel, literally called (Local Anaesthetic), his play Davor (Up Tight), and Paul Schäffl’s radio play, Helmut. Helmut Hubner (both plays have been widely performed). Huschel types also occur in works by Bü, Rolf Hochbaum, and others. Visitors to Berlin’s Plötzensee prison, where Hubner was beheaded, are given a booklet which contains a picture of him and a short sketch of his life.

25. An article entitled “A Friend of Germany” chronicles Smoom’s “unremitting and energetic work” for the freeing of Germany from the unjust and unfutile demands of the Versailles Treaty. According to Smoot, “France was acting like the Jew, Shylock, in demanding the last pound of flesh . . . of Germany.” Der Stern 67 (1935): 338-342. Just after Hitler had come to power, Der Stern had editorialized against the “sandorous news reports” from the American press and assuaged the German-Mormons in America that the majority of the people supported the regime and traditional German law and order. Der Stern 65 (1933): 109.

26. In addition, many Mormons believed that Hitler had read the Book of Mormon and that the Nazi party local organizations derived from the Mormon block-teaching programs. There is no evidence to support such claims. Dr. Max Haenel from Tübingen, a non-Mormon, visited Utah in the late twenties and became a friend of Anthony W. Ivins. In 1936 he traveled throughout Germany speaking to District Conferences on “Utah, Land of the Mormons.” Der Stern reported that in Dresden on 16 May 1936 Haenel made “comparisons . . . throughout the whole lecture between the Mormon state founded 86 years ago by Brigham Young in Utah and Adolf Hitler’s Third Reich . . . . In its political productivity, its organization forms, and in its unswerving success in the various areas of governmental, social, and communal life,” he proclaimed, “Utah bears a really striking similarity to our Germany of today. Here as well as there, the unshakable faith in and willingness to die for their Führer [respective leaders] is the foundation and prerequisite for all further development.” Der Stern 68 (1 September 1938): 172-172.

27. The Millennial Star also commented on Josef Goebbels’ plan announced in September 1933 that the German population “fast” monthly for the poor.

It is indeed singular that a comparison of the details of the two systems of organized fasting shows them to be so nearly identical. Perhaps that part of the message of the Restored Gospel may have been either directly or indirectly the inspiration and the model for the new scheme adopted by the German Government—perhaps not. But evident, at least, is the fact that consciously or unconsciously, the people of the world are discovering the Lord’s way is best. The leaves of the Gospel is spreading. “All Germany Will Fast!” Millennial Star, vol. 95, (Sept. 28, 1933): 638-39.


29. Alfred C. Rees, “In Lande der Mormonen,” Volksblatt Böblachter (April 14, 1899): 1-7. President Rees, who had achieved some prominence in the United States as head of various business administurations, undoubtedly believed he had a special “calling” to work with the Nazi government on behalf of the Church.

30. President Heber J. Grant had visited Germany in 1927. German Saints were calmed by his assurances. He discouraged emigration and between 1933 and 1939 only 91 members from the German-speaking missions did so. In the decade prior to 1933, 2683 left Europe for America, and after 1945 many more did. Alder, p. 76.

31. Smoot, “A Friend of Germany.” No official response was made by the German government on behalf of the Church.

32. Letter from Rosa Bohringer to Albert R. Bowen, 19 June 1948; Max Zimmer File, LDS Historical Archives, Interviews with Johannes Kindl and Walter Krause.


34. Report of First Area General Conference held in Munich, Germany, August 24, 25, 26, 1973 (Salt Lake City, 1974), p. 111.

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