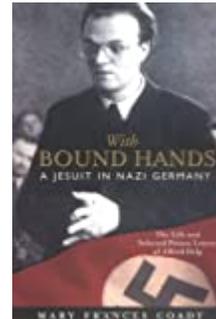


Mary Frances Coady. *With Bound Hands: A Jesuit in Nazi Germany: The Life and Selected Prison Letters of Alfred Delp.* Chicago: Loyola Press, 2003. xv + 238 pp. \$13.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8294-1794-4.



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Sixty years ago, on February 2, 1945, the Jesuit priest Alfred Delp, one of the most prominent and gifted members of the Kreisau Circle, was executed in Berlin. The sixtieth anniversary of Delp's execution has seen the publication of a number of important works on Delp.[1] Given the significance of his writings and work in the Kreisau Circle, it is indeed strange that Mary Coady's work is the first English-language biography of Delp. Coady presents a very well written and moving account of Delp's short life. For those who specialize in the area of church and state in Nazi Germany, the work does have certain shortcomings in terms of the limited references and the lack of an in-depth analysis of certain aspects of his thought and work. However, for the interested layperson and the advanced undergraduate this is certainly a highly commendable study of Delp.

Alfred Delp was born in Mannheim in 1907 as the son of a Catholic mother and Lutheran father. In 1921, he was confirmed in the Lutheran Church in Lampertheim near Frankfurt am Main. He was a close friend of the Catholic parish priest. After a falling out with his authoritarian pastor, Delp left the Lutheran Church and in the same year was confirmed in the Catholic Church. In 1922 he commenced his theological studies at a seminary in Dieburg and became an enthusiastic member of the Catholic youth movement Neudeutschland. He resolved

to join the Jesuit Order and in 1926 commenced his studies at the Novitiate at Tsis in Austria. Delp completed the first stages of his studies in 1931 and emerged as a gifted scholar with a passion for history and a particular interest in Catholic Social Teaching. By all accounts Delp was a rather headstrong character and found conformity to the disciplined life demanded by the Jesuit Order somewhat difficult, which led to difficulties with his Head Prefect and the Provincial Superior of Upper Germany, Augustin Roesch.[2]

Delp completed his theological studies in 1936 and was ordained in Munich in June, 1937. After the National Socialist seizure of power, Jesuit priests were regarded as particularly dangerous and wily opponents of the regime and were frequently the target of harassment and intimidation.[3] Delp had wished to enroll at Munich University to commence his doctoral studies in philosophy in 1939. However, undoubtedly because of his religious affiliation, the application was denied. Instead, Delp worked for the famous Catholic periodical *Stimmen der Zeit* in the area of Catholic sociology until the journal was closed down by the Gestapo in April, 1941. Thereafter, Delp became the Rector of St. Georg's Church in the plush Munich suburb of Bogenhausen. It was from this time that Delp used his parish church to assist Jews wishing to flee to Switzerland (p. 38).

Coady could have enhanced her study had she devoted a chapter to Delp's philosophy of history and his passionate commitment to Catholic social teaching. This is an important area which helps elucidate Delp's fundamental antagonism to National Socialism. Coady correctly points out that Delp's philosophy of history and metaphysics were greatly influenced by Martin Heidegger's *Tragic Existence* (pp. 23-24). However, it has to be understood that Delp was an outstanding representative and interpreter of the great German tradition of Social Catholicism which had developed from the mid-nineteenth century, when Bishop von Ketteler recognized the threat posed to Christian culture by the rapacious and inhumane aspects of the Industrial Revolution. This tradition suggested that human dignity was violated when people were used as mere tools in what were frequently appalling working conditions for the amassing of profits by large industrial conglomerates. This intellectual strain was further developed by distinguished scholars such as Georg von Hertling, Viktor Cathrein, Joseph Mausbach, Theodor Meyer, and above all, by the Jesuit scholar Heinrich Pesch (1854-1921). In contrast to the so-called "laws of economics" as an autonomous force in both Marxist and liberal economic theory, Pesch believed that a durable system of political economy could only be achieved by grounding it upon a system of Christian ethics. That is, the concept of solidarism was founded upon a Christian universalist conception of humanity and society. Most importantly, Pesch restated the centrality of the Thomist organic conception of humanity and society and the binding nature of Christian natural law. For this reason, Pesch placed humanity at the heart of his system. This is not the autonomous individual of liberal political economy, but rather "man as master of the world—man as worker and again man in the midst of society." [4] It has to be remembered that the Catholic intellectual renaissance in the Weimar Republic was, in large part, made possible by the Renaissance of Jesuit Scholasticism in nineteenth-century Germany, which postulated a personalist and voluntarist conception of the human relationship with God in history.

After the defeat of 1918, German Catholic publicists sought to re-examine Catholic culture and its relationship to the German Reich and to Europe. In 1916, Max Scheler (1874-1928) published *Krieg und Aufbau*, a scathing critique of the spiritual lethargy of German Catholicism in the *Kaiserreich*. Under the formula "Repentance and Rebirth," Scheler called for a revival of basic Christian virtues such as the idea of love and of Christian Solidarity, both within Germany and Europe. [5] Scheler

urged Catholics to turn their backs upon the capitalist order and to render assistance to all those who were suffering through economic exploitation. He also suggested a form of partnership with the Social Democratic movement. The Catholic sense of form, harmony and realism had to assert itself over the "ceaseless striving" and disharmonies of the subjectivist inner-worldly piety (*Innerlichkeit*) of Protestant romanticism with its wild oscillations between protest and servitude. Scheler's work opened up new perspectives and set new challenges for Germany's leading Catholic publicists. By 1924, the philosopher Peter Wust could write of a "return to metaphysics" in German Catholicism. Scheler asserted the existence of an a priori moral order: "The existence of an objective material hierarchy of values which makes it possible for us to become discerning is supposed to make possible the grounding of a rigorous ethical absolutism and objectivism." [6] From this ontological foundation, Scheler derived his concept of the person: "as a ... self-conscious, self-responsible but also a co-responsible conscious reality ... [an] individual and a real member [of society] (*Gliedwirklichkeit*). Person and [man as a social] component are not mutually exclusive but enhance each other. Man is essentially Person and social man, man as I and man as We (*Ichmensch und Wirmensch*)." [7]

Scheler's personalism was to have a far-reaching influence in inter-war Europe and provided an important new dimension for the neo-Thomist schools of Western Europe. In contrast to Gerhard Ritter's assertion in his 1933 Luther biography that "human destiny was dominated by ineluctable forces," the new German Catholic metaphysics asserted that the individual was a constant participant living in a productive tension with the objective world. [8] This doctrine of personalism was thus a Catholic "counterattack" against German historicism and statism. In summary then, the three essential principles of Catholic Social Teachings are: the dignity of man, solidarity, and subsidiarity (the recognition of the rights and responsibilities of the smaller social groups, especially the family). [9]

Only against this background can we understand Delp's contribution to Catholic philosophical and sociological thought. Delp believed that every generation of mankind finds itself confronted by a specific constellation of forces, possibilities, circumstances, and world views. [10] It is mankind's God-given responsibility to ensure that this constellation is confronted and mastered by man so that God's divine order prevails on Earth. Delp echoed Meinecke's observations on the problems of achieving a balance between Culture and Nature. [11] In-

so far as man holds the more barbaric aspects and potentialities of nature at bay, Christian culture could be preserved. However, Delp believed that his age represented one of the darker chapters of mankind's history. In the spiritual crisis of the twentieth century, mankind had degenerated into a mere object of nature. In such a society humanity had completely lost contact and consciousness of transcendent values. Because of the radical and totalitarian power of nature, culture is totally depleted and human spiritual life is robbed of any chance of cultivation or genuine expression.[12] While Delp saw religion as the highest manifestation of culture, modern man had come to see religion as either irrelevant or a nuisance. Mankind had surrendered to a godforsaken *Weltanschauung* that sees history as a mere struggle for survival; that history is thereby pre-determined. As Delp wrote in his *Prison Diaries* in 1944, "Western humanity today is spiritually homeless, naked and exposed" (p. 132).

As Coady observes, an essential component of Delp's philosophy of history and metaphysics was the fundamental respect for human rights and human dignity. Humanity is made in the image of God and Christ identified himself with mankind through the incarnation. The totalitarian National Socialist state was therefore a blasphemy against God's divine order as it subordinated and corrupted the individual who had become nothing more than a helpless tool in a pagan state. It was therefore an intolerable affront to the Christian ethos, which demanded a courageous response from all true and responsible Christians.[13]

Coady could also have gone into more detail concerning the circumstances which led to Delp's involvement in the Kreisau Circle (pp. 45, 48). The Roman Catholic episcopate in Germany had become increasingly divided on how best to confront the Nazi challenge. The Episcopate was headed by the conservative Cardinal Adolf Bertram from the Archbishopric of Breslau. Although Bertram had joined the Catholic hierarchy's critique of National Socialism in 1930, once Hitler was "legally" appointed Chancellor, he held firmly to the view that the Church must seek to work with the state. Bertram's refusal to confront Hitler on the persecution of the churches and the immoral nature of the regime led to an open rift within the Bishops' Conference. Bishop Preysing (Berlin) had always been a staunch opponent of National Socialism. At the 1940 Bishops' Conference he demanded that the bishops adopt a more aggressive and publicly critical stance against the state. However, with the support of the majority of the bishops, Bertram refused to consider von Preysing's request. The confrontation led to

the formation of the Ausschuss für Ordensangelegenheiten (committee for matters concerning clerical orders).[14] Aside from von Preysing, the members of the Committee included Augustin Roesch and the Bishop of Fulda, Johannes Dietz. The official role of the Committee was to devise some form of defense and support for monasteries the state wished to confiscate. However, the committee was secretly dedicated to making contact with other opponents of the Nazi regime.

Through the work of this committee, Delp became a member of the Kreisau Circle, to which he undoubtedly would have been immediately attracted. Coady quotes Delp's famous declaration: "Whoever doesn't have the courage to make history is doomed to become its object. We have to take action" (p. 48). In a series of meetings, Delp elaborated on the need to restore man's religious sensibility and on the need to implement what Delp called "the third way." This was a state founded on the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity as opposed to capitalism or Bolshevism (p. 59). Coady also could have elaborated on the significance of Delp's contribution to the Kreisau Circle and the Committee for Clerical Orders. For example, in an address to the Committee in 1941, Delp called on the Church to review and rethink its responsibility to speak out clearly and courageously on the Christian world-view and the fundamental human rights anchored in it. He asked, "How will the Church rescue the Christians when they have abandoned all Creation which should become Christian?"[15] Here, a reference to the work of Michael Pope and Antonia Leugers would have been appropriate.

One matter which did divide the members of the Kreisau Circle was the question of tyrannicide. Whereas Moltke and Roesch were opposed to any support for an assassination of Hitler, Delp supported the idea in principle, although he had no knowledge of the preparations for the failed July 20 plot. Because of his connections to some of the conspirators and dissidents, however, he was arrested and detained from July 1944, until January 1945. In his trial on January 9, 1945, Delp replied to the Judge of the People's Court, Roland Freisler: "I can preach forever, and with whatever skill I have I can work with people and keep setting them straight. But as long as people have to live in a way that is inhuman and lacking in dignity, that's as long as the average person will succumb to circumstances and will neither pray nor think. A fundamental change in the conditions of life is needed" (p. 162). This response ensured Delp's death sentence, and he was executed in Ploetzensee on February 2, 1945. Thanks to friends who concealed writing paper in his laundry, we

have Delp's *Prison Diaries* and *Meditations*. In a letter to these two friends, Delp summed up the reasons for the death sentence, which included hostility to his Christianity as an attack on Nazism and Germany, hostility to the Jesuits, and resistance to Catholic social teaching. Delp also predicted a harsh judgment for the Churches at the end of National Socialism, writing "at some future date the honest historian will have some bitter things to say about the contribution made by the churches to the creation of a mass-mind, of collectivism, dictatorships, and so on" (p. 220).

Delp worked tirelessly for the re-Christianization of Germany and the restoration of a legitimate state based on a Christian foundation. Delp fulfilled his own wish for the work of a Christian: "If a man can bring a little more love and goodness, a little more life and truth in the World, then his life has had some meaning." [16] We are indeed indebted to Mary Coady for this perceptive and well-written account of Delp's life.

Notes

[1]. Rita Haub and Friedrich Schreiber, *Alfred Delp—Held gegen Hitler* (Wrzburg: Echter Verlag, 2005); Christian Feldmann, *Alfred Delp—Leben gegen den Strom* (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 2005); Franz B. Schulte, ed., *Alfred Delp—Allen Dingen gewachsen sein* (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht Verlag, 2005).

[2]. Roman Bleistein, ed., *Augustin Roesch: Kampf gegen den Nationalsozialismus*, (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht Verlag, 1985).

[3]. C. Vincent A. Lapomarda, *The Jesuits and the Third Reich* (Lampeter: Mellen Press, 1989), pp. 9-86.

[4]. Heinrich Pesch, *Lehrbuch der Nationalökonomie*, Vol. 2 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder Verlag, 1909), p. 215.

[5]. Cited in Heinrich Lutz, *Demokratie im Zwielicht—Der Weg der deutschen Katholiken aus dem Kaiserreich in die Republik, 1914-1925* (Munich: Koesel Verlag, 1963), p. 36.

[6]. Max Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* (reprint, Bern: Francke Verlag, 1954),

pp. 13-14.

[7]. Max Scheler, *Christentum und Gesellschaft*, (Leipzig: Der Neue Geist, 1924), p.10.

[8]. Gerhard Ritter, *Luther der Deutsche*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Bruckmann Verlag, 1933), p.182.

[9]. Cf. Joseph Hffner, *Christliche Gesellschaftslehre* (Kevelaer: Verlag Butzon & Bercker, 1997).

[10]. Michael Pope, *Alfred Delp S. J. im Kreisauer Kreis: Die Rechts- und Sozialphilosophischen Grundlagen in seinen Konzeptionen fr eine Neuordnung Deutschlands* (Mainz: Matthias Grunewald, 1994), pp. 4-7.

[11]. Friedrich Meinecke, "Kausalitäten und Werte in der Geschichte," (1925); and *Schaffender Spiegel: Studien zur deutschen Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsauffassung*, (Stuttgart: Koehler Verlag, 1948), p. 82.

[12]. Cf. Robert A. Pois, *National Socialism and the Religion of Nature*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986); and Heinrich Kautz, *Das Zerschlagene Menschenbild—Prinzipien und Ideen zur Wirklichkeit und ideologie des Nationalsozialismus—Christentum und Mythos*, (Sankt Augustin: Verlag Wort und Werk, 1977), pp. 79-88.

[13]. Antonia Leugers, *Gegen eine Mauer bischflichen Schweigens—Der Ausschuss fr Ordensangelegenheiten und seine Widerstandskonzeption 1941 bis 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Josef Knecht, 1996), pp. 109-136.

[14]. Cf. Ger van Roon, *German Resistance to Hitler: Count von Moltke and the Kreisau Circle* (London: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1971).

[15]. Quoted in Georg Denzler, *Widerstand ist nicht das richtige Wort: Katholische Priester, Bischfe und Theologen im Dritten Reich* (Zurich: Pendo Verlag, 2003), p. 243; see H-German review by Kevin Spicer at <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=184561078916867>.

[16]. Cited in Franz von Tattenbach and Roman Bleistein, "P. Alfred Delp SJ," in *Das Erzbistum Mnchen und Freising in der Zeit der nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft*, Bd. 2, ed. Georg Schwaiger (Munich and Zurich: Verlag Schnell und Steiner, 1984), p. 226.

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