



Divided Devotion: A Historical Exploration of Bismarck's Kulturkampf and its Impact on German Society

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Abstract: This study examines the Kulturkampf, a major 19th-century German event in which Otto von Bismarck fought to limit Catholic influence in politics. Catholicism remained a powerful influence in German society despite Bismarck's efforts, posing a difficult challenge to the mid-1800s political scene. Start with the Kulturkampf, the Catholic Church's fight to adapt to liberal ideals, democracy, nationalism, socialism, and the industrial revolution. Liberal Catholicism's answer to modernity is analyzed, focusing on Ignaz von Dollinger, who strove to reconcile faith with intellectual currents. The paper discusses the First Vatican Council in 1870, which introduced papal infallibility, and liberal Catholicism's downfall. Germany is highlighted because Catholicism suffered ideological struggles and gained academic support as a secular, Protestant-influenced religion. Bismarck's Catholicism onslaught from 1853–54 to the Kulturkampf of the 1870s is examined. Bismarck's fears of Catholic violence and a Catholic plot are examined in the study. The issue deepened in 1873 when the May Laws sought state control over the Catholic Church. The Prussian bishops' resistance to the May Laws led to incarceration, penalties, and institution closures. Bismarck's authoritarianism failed to suppress Catholicism despite overwhelming opposition. Conclusions highlight the Kulturkampf legislation's impact on church-state relations and the reduction of anti-Catholic measures. This paper analyzes historical events to reveal Bismarck's political maneuvers, the Catholic Church's struggles, and the Kulturkampf's lasting effects on 19th-century Germany's religious and political landscape.

Introduction

In the turbulent environment of Germany during the 19th century, there was a significant battle between political ideologies and religious institutions, which culminated in a conflict that was known as the Kulturkampf. Otto von Bismarck, a great statesman who aimed to lessen the impact of Catholicism on the political arena in Germany, was at the center of this conflict throughout its entirety. Through the investigation of its historical context, ideological foundations, and the long-lasting impact it had on the religious and political fabric of Germany, this research strives to disentangle the complexity that surround the Kulturkampf (Gross, 2004)

A period of dramatic societal development occurred in Germany throughout the middle of the 1800s. throughout this time, old institutions struggled against the forces of liberalism, democracy, nationalism, and socialism, as well as the vast changes brought about by the industrial revolution. In this context, the Catholic Church was confronted with the task of adjusting to a society that was undergoing change. During the time of absolutism, the Church's revenues were severely damaged as a result of the process of secularization. The advent of liberal Catholicism, which was exemplified by intellectuals such as Ignaz von Dollinger, was an attempt to reconcile

traditional beliefs with the shifting intellectual currents of the time. (Dalton, 2005).

The story then moves on to the significant First Vatican Council that took place in 1870. It was during this council that the concept of papal infallibility was first adopted, which ultimately led to the demise of liberal Catholicism. The Catholic faith in Germany found itself embroiled in ideological battles, despite the fact that it presented itself as a secular religion that was influenced by Protestant tradition. The observations that Bismarck made in the 1850s about what he believed to be a Catholic conspiracy laid the groundwork for his later attacks on the Church during the process known as the Kulturkampf.

Between the years 1866 and 1870, Bismarck's concerns regarding Catholic violence and the perceived threat represented by the Church expressed themselves in the form of opposition from the Catholic caucus of the Landtag to important initiatives made by the government. The dispute became more intense after the May Laws, which were a set of regulations that were enacted in 1873 with the intention of bringing the Catholic Church under the supervision of the state, were put into effect. The strength of the Catholic Church in the face of political opposition was demonstrated by the fact that Bismarck's authoritarian strategies were not successful in completely suppressing Catholicism, despite the considerable opposition they faced (Conway, 1992).

The purpose of this study is to provide a full knowledge of the Kulturkampf by investigating the historical events that led up to Bismarck's attack on Catholicism, the response of the Church, and the long-term effects of this ideological conflict. Through an in-depth examination of the complexities of this war, we are able to acquire significant insights into the intricate relationship that existed between religion and politics in Germany throughout the 19th century, as well as the long-lasting impact that the Kulturkampf had on the religious landscape of the nation.

Problem Statement

The Kulturkampf, an important event in German history that occurred throughout the 19th century, presents a complex historical conundrum. It is characterized by the conflict between the authority of the state, which was embodied by Otto von Bismarck, and the influential role that the Catholic Church continues to play. This time of ideological conflict raises concerns about the reasons for Bismarck's uncompromising approach, the tenacity of the Catholic Church in the face of state-sponsored persecution, and the long-term influence of the Kulturkampf on the religious and political fabric of Germany. These questions are raised because of the presence of these conflicts.

Research Objective

- To explain the social, political, and religious factors that led to Bismarck's Kulturkampf against Catholicism.
- To examine liberal Catholicism's intellectual reaction to modernity and religious inquiry in the mid-1800s.
- To study the First Vatican Council in 1870 and its effects on Catholicism, particularly the demise of liberal Catholicism and papal infallibility.
- To examine Bismarck's reasons, his 1850s and 1866-70 views, the Kulturkampf, and the Catholic Church's perceived threats.
- To analyze the Catholic Church's response to the Kulturkampf, including bishops' resistance, clergy imprisonment and penalties, and the Church's ability to withstand state-sponsored repression.
- To examine how the May Laws of 1873 affected church-state relations, education, and the Catholic Church in Germany over time.
- To examine how the Kulturkampf changed state-church relations in 19th-century Germany and its effects on Europe.

Methodology

This study explores the complex Kulturkampf in 19th-century Germany using multiple perspectives. Primary sources—archival papers, political speeches, and current publications—provide the historical context for Otto von Bismarck's government's ideological conflict with the Catholic Church. The First Vatican Council proceedings and the works of major people like Ignaz von Dollinger reveal Catholic Church intellectual currents throughout this time. A complete analysis of Bismarck's observations, political maneuvering, and Kulturkampf policies uses primary and secondary sources. The qualitative study uses historical interpretation and critical analysis to understand this historical episode's motivations, responses, and effects. This conceptual framework seeks to contextualize the Kulturkampf in 19th-century Germany's socio-political setting.

Historical background (*Kulturkampf*.f)

Otto von Bismarck failed to eliminate Catholicism as a substantial influence in German politics in the 1870s, Bismarck experienced his first massive political failure. His assault on political Catholicism occurred with an attack on Catholic Church, and because of this, the event gained the name "Kulturkampf." The Catholic Church faced the challenge of adjusting to a dramatically evolving society during the mid- 1800s. Church revenues were devastated by the secularization of its property throughout absolutism (Ross, 1995)

Liberalism, democracy, nationalism, and socialism were innovative ideas that competed with religion for proponents. As science became more accepted, Catholic doctrine's authenticity was questioned, and historical analysis undermined the church's spirituality. The social issues caused by the industrial revolution called for new regulations and rules to prevent the church from losing the lower classes. The church experienced a number of these issues. Liberal Catholicism was a political and intellectual movement in Europe that encouraged the church to accept modernity while arguing that modernity

and orthodox beliefs were not contradictory. But the clergy and the papacy had a harsh response. The Church institution had been under continuous assault for centuries. "The First Vatican Council" introduced the notion of infallibility¹ on 18 July 1870. Liberal Catholicism suffered its eventual downfall. The papacy made its strongest assertion to spirituality. The assertion that the pope was not liable to mislead when addressing ex-cathedra on issues of faith and the moral principles. Immediately after the decline of its secular control. Specifically, in Germany, there was a conflict in the Catholic Church. Catholicism had to struggle with competing ideologies and affiliations. Catholicism came across as a secular, Protestant based religion in German idealism that had acquired massive support from the intellectual class. To show how their faith was compatible with German idealism and, later, with the new research, Catholic scholars and preachers worked hard at "University of Tubingen and Munich." Ignaz von Dollinger was a prominent theologian and historian who wrote "three volume history of the church" that viewed Christianity as an outstanding historical development rather than spiritual manifestation. Dollinger's political views were very conservative, yet he recognized how constitutionalism might protect the church's sovereignty from the state. He saw that the church had to provide others' freedom as a fundamental right to maintain its own (Root, 2019).

In the midst of widespread anxieties across Europe, both among Catholic and Protestant authorities, regarding the potential effects of Vatican Council judgements on the already strained relationship between the state and the church, a one-of-a-kind scenario took place across the country of Prussia. During the turbulent years of 1837–1841, the Catholic Church was able to achieve a greater degree of freedom in Prussia than it did in the rest of Germany. This was accomplished in spite of the constant challenges that it faced. A previous history of discord between the church and the government, which was defined by fights over problems like as marriages and heresy, was resolved with the

accession to power of Friedrich Wilhelm IV in the year 1840. His decisive measures included putting an end to conflicts, abolishing restraints from the age of absolute control, and establishing an office dedicated to Catholic concerns that served as the government's champion for Catholic aims. All of these actions were taken in order to achieve his goals. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the bishops were given the ability to present Catholic doctrine in public institutions. It would appear that the constitution of Prussia, which was enacted between the years 1848 and 1850, strengthened the relatively independent position of the Catholic Church. Bishops were given the authority to exercise disciplinary control over priests who served as teachers since they had the right to accept or reject sacred scripture (Sperber, 1986).

In the beginning, Bismarck's government took a non-interventionist stance, which meant that they disregarded the Vatican's assertion that they were infallible and avoided disagreements with resolute bishops and professors. Despite the fact that this intervention technique was successful in a number of different situations, it was unsuccessful in Braunsberg. The bishop pursued the problem with a great deal of zeal, which established a precedent for the monarchy and escalated tensions between the church and the state. Because of the presence of other factors that contributed to the escalation of the conflict, it is not possible that the debate on religious education was the only factor that led to the imminent Kulturkampf.

Bismarck's Attack

In 1853 and 1854, Bismarck observed a dispute between the Baden government and bishops and concluded that it was not simply a local issue. It was an indication of the "violent, restless, and unforgiving mentality." to seek control over all Protestant rulers for a decade. As soon as the clergy achieved their prime goal of "unlimited control," new demands would replace them. Ludwig so angered Bismarck von Gerlach's support of the bishops in the Kreuzzeitung that he

was frightened by the ferocity of his un-Christian sentiments. Because of his intense dislike of political Catholicism. Bismarck was unable to accurately predict the Center party's approach at the outset of the constitutional dispute. The Center felt split over the army bill. According to Bismarck, who made this claim in a dispatch to Rome. He might detest having to attack the party for a variety of reasons, but especially due to its religious nature. The rights guaranteed by the church underneath the constitution of 1848-504, Rome should also avoid engaging in such a conflict. Prussian Catholics were supposed to be motivated by their political partisanship, and this expectation was fulfilled. Bismarck concluded that it was evident that Polish priests needed to respect this instruction. The administration thought Rome would not support or promote the bishops if he were to blend politics and religion (Britannica, 1998).

Catholic Concern of Bismarck

Bismarck's concern about Catholic violence and hatred emerged in 1866-70. In the final emergence in the fall of 1866, the Catholic caucus of the Landtag ended up voting against some important government proposals, including the indemnity bill, territorial expansion, substantial government loan, bill recognizing and rewarding Bismarck and other military leaders for a dominant win. Although they were unable to stop any of these ordinances, Bismarck's attempt to represent internal unity in southern Germany was undermined by the Catholic delegates. In December 1866, he protested to Rome that the Catholic caucus was unfriendly. The conflict over civil freedoms in the Reichstag's founding, the alliance of Catholics and Particularists. And the role performed by the Catholic clergy in fostering Polish nationalism. All these events, both actual and imagined, strengthened Bismarck's idea that a broad Catholic conspiracy existed and constituted a risk for European policy.

Throughout the years 1868-70, Bismarck called the pope to use his authority to put an end to this ongoing secretive war between the Catholic

Church towards Prussia. In such an unusual alliance, the clergy joined forces with Liberals and Extremists to overthrow the National Party in the current "Zollverein elections." They were determined to engage in any attack, defamation, or deception. Printing this trash had become a battle among Catholic newspapers. France newspapers and Belgium newspapers as well as the southern newspaper had battled each other to publish this trash. However, Prussia and north Germany endowed the Catholic Church with a level of freedom across the whole of Germany and Europe. He worried that in the wake of certain opposition, he could no longer sustain state interests. It was impossible to achieve a sustainable peace with the Catholics and Catholic Church might acquire power. Rome may indicate its intentions to collaborate with Berlin by utilizing its power. (Stuchtey, 199)

The conflict primarily began when liberals helped Bismarck and he dissolved the Roman Catholic bureau under the ministry of education and ecclesiastical affairs of Prussia in 1871.⁶ This notion banned the clergymen from expressing their political beliefs in the church in November of the following year. All of Prussia's religious institutions came under governmental oversight and administrative inspection in March 1872. The Jesuit religious order was outlawed from Germany in June, and all religious educators were barred from teaching in public schools. And the Jesuits were prohibited from Germany. And their diplomatic ties with Vatican were smashed in December 1872. Adalbert Falk who was appointed as the minister of culture and education for Prussia in 1872. He primarily wanted to make the Catholic Church's clergies and bishops reliant on the State. He attempted to establish a Catholic Church that might be governed by the state rather than the Vatican. He wanted to make sure that the "May Laws" were passed in May 1873 (Smith, 2008).

Following the May Laws:

- The state was given control over education, including religious schools and religious education.

- The State was given control over clergy formation, laying down required subjects and criteria for ordination and instituting a state qualifying examination.
- Appointments of Bishops were made subject to civil authorities.
- Disciplinary authority over the Church was given to state agencies.

After the adoption of the May Laws, the Prussian bishops published a collective memorandum that explained to the public, that why everyone was required to express peaceful opposition to these laws. They informed the Prussian Ministry on May 26 that they would not assist in conducting the Falk Laws. Catholic clergymen and bishops were imprisoned because of the coercive imposition of fines. The Ministry of Prussia witnessed that the seats were vacated soon after the new May Laws were introduced. In 1878, almost 50% of Prussia's institutions had been shut down because the government took over the responsibilities for clerical training and recruitment. As a result, there were many churches without priests, putting Catholics with no access to regular spirituality in many regions. Almost two hundred and ten persons were found guilty of violating the May Laws in the starting months of the imposition of the laws in 1875, and the priests who tried to prevent these laws. They were subjected to prosecution, fines, and imprisonment (Lougee, 1954).

Most of the German bishops, priests, and laypersons disagreed with the new laws' legitimacy and refused to submit to Bismarck's government's ever-increasing fines and prison terms. And in 1876, a quarter of the Catholic churches lacked a clergy, and all of Prussia's Catholics were either imprisoned or banished. The Bismarck government raised sanctions and assaults in reaction to widespread resistance. Any Bishop or Catholic who obeyed the Prussian law would be excommunicated, The Prussian laws were illegitimate. Although there was no aggression, Catholics still coordinated their support, founded several community organizations, gathered money to cover penalties, and supported their Church and Centre Party.⁸ A

separate Old Catholic Church was established by the government, although it only garnered a small number of adherents. When liberal and socialist forces started utilizing the opportunities to denounce every religious institution, undoubtedly this impacted the Catholic supporters' mobilization and unwavering passion to defend their church. Bismarck understood that the Kulturkampf was indeed a failure (Lougee, 1954).

Kulturkampf Laws

It is undeniable that some Kulturkampf laws helped to keep church and state separate. Especially the laws requiring civil marriages and institution supervision. The institution supervision ordinance of 1872 defined the state's power to regulate education in public and private institutions. It stopped the conventional, financially beneficial, process of assigning priests to administrative and teaching jobs without payment by reinforcing the state's authority to appoint and dismiss the local institution's inspector. On the demand of Reichstag liberals, mandatory civil marriage was first instituted in March 1874 in Prussia. And then throughout the German Reich in February of 1875. Bismarck was a strong advocate of the institution supervision statute but opposed the imposition of civil marriage (Kraus, 2017).

The majority of Kulturkampf laws extended the dominance of state authority over the church authority. In 1871, the Bavarian government introduced a change to the Empire's legal code that declared clerics liable to a two-year prison sentence for their political remarks. Because the Bavarian government was Anti-clerical at that time. The Jesuit order was evicted from the Empire by imperial legislation passed in July 1872. The Prussian constitution underwent two legislative changes in April 1873 that declared the Catholic and Evangelical churches to be legally established and grant the state authority to enact laws governing the training, hiring, and dismissal of the clergy as well as the scope of the church's disciplinary authority. The constitutions of Prussia underwent two legislative changes in April 1873 that declared the authority of the state to

enact rules concerning the training, hiring, and exclusion of clerics as well as the church's discipline authority. The laws were ineffective for the Prussian clergy.¹⁰ They strongly opposed these laws. The bishops shut down the institutes rather than permit state regulation of priest training. The bishops left clerical offices empty rather than proposing their candidates for state approval. There was too much local and low-level state resistance to be penalized or threatened. They rejected commands from the state and declared open support for the priests (Pflanze, 2014).

The Centre party won fifty percent of the votes in the 1874 elections, which shot it to the top of the national parliament and cemented its domination for the next sixty years. The lack of support from the Centre party presented Bismarck with significant obstacles in his efforts to create a government. But a lot had changed by the time Pope Leo XIII ruled that the controversy was over in 1887. A large number of anti-Catholic laws had been repealed or much reduced. Even though the battle eventually subsided, it had a long-lasting effect on the government's authority over official marriage records and the educational system (Berdahl, 1972).

Through multiple authoritarian methods that violated the constitution, Bismarck crushed and liquidated his opponents and perpetrated several war crimes. He engaged in dispute in the Landtag earlier in the politics, indicating his inclination toward violence and conflicts. In a speech addressing his delegates on 27 January 1863, he expressed his views on constitutionalism.

The domestic policies of Bismarck were extremely difficult to implement because they involved countless complexities, unresolved issues, and clashing interests. He was required to make decisions based on everything he learned. His absence of definite principles, and the considerations of politics, commerce, economic regulations, civil laws, as well as the infrastructure of modern governments were more problematic in the domestic policies. He decided to make things more difficult for himself by

advocating for Kulturkampf while also inflaming opposition from the nationalists and liberals. He used his authoritarian methods to protect monarchy as well as the rights of all Junkers who disliked all nationalists, including *i.e* the Jews, Liberals, Catholics, Socialists, and Democratic parties. In 1863, he declared that all citizens of Germany would be granted the right to vote. He manipulated the population to destabilize the German government. Because he did not understand how the Prussians had transformed over the years, he mostly undervalued their power (Meerhaeghe, 2006).

Conclusion

Examining the Kulturkampf in 19th-century Germany shows an intricate interaction of political, religious, and societal influences that influenced a crucial period in the nation's history. Otto von Bismarck tried to reduce the power of Catholicism in a changing German society where established institutions were facing new and difficult situations. The study examined the historical context, focusing on the Catholic Church's efforts to adjust to societal changes and ideological conflicts throughout the mid-1800s. Liberal Catholicism arose as an intellectual reaction, aiming to harmonize faith with modernity. The First Vatican Council of 1870 represented a turning point by initiating the decline of liberal Catholicism and paving the way for Bismarck's assertive strategy. Bismarck's apprehensions regarding Catholic influence, especially between 1866 and 1870, led to the enactment of the May Laws in 1873. Although Bismarck employed authoritarian methods, the Catholic Church showed tenacity as bishops resisted governmental influence and clergy members endured incarceration and penalties. Bismarck's May Laws aimed to limit Catholic authority but did not succeed in eliminating the Church's impact.

The Kulturkampf was essentially a power struggle between the state and the church, mirroring the larger conflicts in a transforming Germany. The aftermath of the battle had a

substantial effect on the relationship between the church and the state, leading to long-lasting consequences for official marriage records and education. Bismarck's inability to completely eradicate Catholicism highlights the lasting impact of religious organizations despite facing governmental challenges. The Kulturkampf is a complex historical event that sheds light on the intricacies of 19th-century German politics. The text explores the intricate connection between religious organizations and the state, providing valuable perspectives on the difficulties of harmonizing tradition with modernity. Reflecting on this historical era provides insight into the lasting impact of religion on molding societies and the delicate equilibrium between political authority and spiritual sway.

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