

New Religions and the Nazis

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Chapter 1

Introduction

General remarks

It took thirteen years to make National Socialism a major political and religious force in Germany. How it became a political force is well understood and brilliantly analyzed by historians; how it became a religious force is not. Religion is the weapon par excellence of revolutionaries, and how else can we explain the abject moral failure and dead end that Nazism represents? And just as religion represents the failure of Nazism, religion also tells the story of how its leaders captured the imagination of millions of young Germans for National Socialism.

This book is about gifted intellectuals who simply would not accept, as Bonhoeffer had, “that the world had come of age,” meaning that Germans, like all suffering humankind, had to recognize their true situation and manage their lives in weakness and with grace (Bethge 1970:773). Instead, these self-appointed intellectual guardians of the defeated saw themselves as an elite determined not only to shape and usher in new myths and religions, but to use these to underpin National Socialism—indeed, to be its sacred, religious center.

Most academics assume that German pagan faiths, expressed in countless new religions, by diverse leaders and adherents both inside and outside of the official church, were too small in number to make an impact on National Socialism. This book dispels that myth. The religious elite of the twenties and thirties found a new form for their ideas that would then be disseminated to, and acted out by, young radicals—a technique still practiced today by the New Right.

Jakob Wilhelm Hauer (1881–1962), Mathilde Ludendorff, Ernst Bergmann (1881–1945), Johannes von Leers, Dietrich Klagges, best-selling novelist Hans Grimm (1875–1959), and popular anthropological writer Hans F.K.Günther (1891–1968), their millions of followers, listeners, and readers, not to mention many other intellectuals, writers and propagandists, had occasional problems with the crude, indeed brutal, tactics of the National Socialist Party (NSDAP). Several did not become Party members.



1.1 Jakob Wilhelm Hauer, founder of the German Faith Movement

But more than disliking the NSDAP on occasion, they despised the decadence of nineteenth-century liberalism, the shameful defeat of World War I, the imposition of an unwanted Weimar democracy, and the postwar punishment in the form of the Treaty of Versailles.

What they wanted was national regeneration. Clumsily at first, they contributed to creating what the sociologist of western secularization, Colin Campbell (1972:122–3), called a “cultic milieu,” namely, that “cultural underground of society” that is kept alive by everything from mysticism to unorthodox science, to new religions, to new literature and the propagandists who propagate it. Although they meant different things by it, Hauer, Grimm, Günther, and other hard-nosed Social Darwinists wanted to shape this milieu into a new, genuinely German (Nordic) faith-based political community, a community of one *Volk* that would privilege, in their view, the almost lost Germanic or Nordic culture and ancestry. What emerged was a totalitarian political religion known as National Socialism and an ultranationalist press that supported it.

Most historians of German history prefer the term *völkisch*¹ to that of cultic milieu. They do so for at least three reasons. First, it was used in the pre-Nazi environment by Germans themselves and constituted a regenerative movement. Second, the term *völkisch* served to uphold the belief that what happened in Germany, specifically the Holocaust, was unique to that country. Thirdly, *völkisch* referred to the fact that, especially after 1930, race and religion were fused in popular thought and propaganda. Indeed, race, which then meant a specific cultural, historical, territorial, and in some sense biological

and ancestral identity, became the buzzword of the thirties. While the term *völkisch* is retained in this book, we should not lose sight of the fact that the concepts of cultic milieu and political religion are useful and apply both to the German and other situations (Payne 2002).

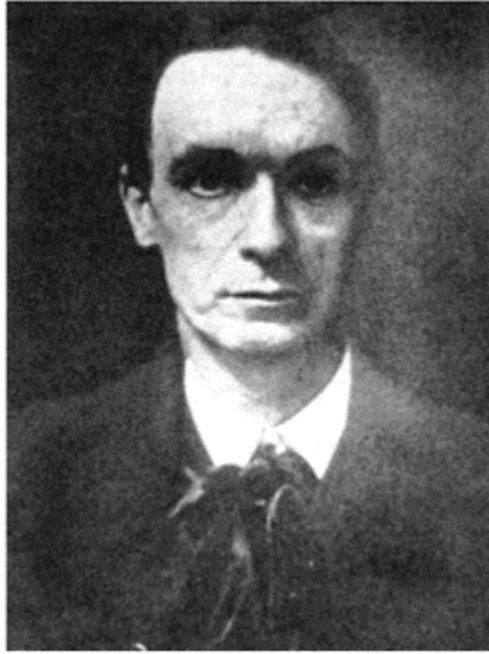
Generally speaking, political religions or cultic milieus were and, where they occur today, continue to be eclectic (Burleigh 2000:8; Hexham and Poewe 1986:xi).² Its leaders take or reject opportunistically bits and pieces from Yogic and Abrahamic traditions, justify their selective appropriations and rejections on the basis of diverse epitomizing experiences (defeat or other severe deprivations), and mix into it popular notions of science—or rather pseudo-science—such as the concept of “race,” “eugenics” or “evolution” (Hexham and Poewe 1997:99; Black 2004:28). These eclectic religious ideas and epitomizing experiences are the underground that nourish new mythologies of would-be totalitarian regimes, in this case National Socialism.

By contrast with the above-mentioned individuals, some National Socialists intended to force (although they gave lip service to the word ‘grow’) a new Germany into existence immediately. To this end, Joseph Goebbels added with missionary zeal a propaganda strategy that proclaimed the “positive” qualities of *Kampf*, intolerance, and speakers capable of “convincing” audiences with their “sermons.” He preferred hard-hitting terse texts on placards, terror and brutality in halls and on the streets, and an army of what he called “*völkisch* apostles and revivalists” who strategically, but unobtrusively, especially weeks before and after rallies, distributed flyers, brochures, and slogans. This painstaking detail work he called *Kleinarbeit* (Goebbels 1927:18–28).

Hauer too saw his religious work and Grimm his political poetics as propaganda, but they adapted it to their more sophisticated audiences. Be this as it may, by the late 1920s all were clear that their faith in the Third Reich had to triumph over those who had different views. As Goebbels wrote, “if you are not for me, you are against me” (*Wer nicht für mich ist, der ist wider mich!*) (ibid.: 14).

Looking for examples of a new beginning (*Anfang*)

Hauer was already aware of the political force of new religious phenomena in the early 1920s, when he studied the then very popular anthroposophical movement of Rudolf Steiner (Hauer 1922b:59). He saw anthroposophy as an outgrowth of the theosophy of Blavatsky and Besant. They mixed occult ideas (that is, Spiritualism, or according to Hauer, Egyptian, Jewish, and medieval magic) with old sagas, natural science hypotheses such as that of human evolution, elements of Greek and Egyptian hermetic philosophy, and Jewish Kabbala (ibid.: 7–9, 16–17, 21, 56, 61). While he saw anthroposophy as moving things in the right direction, he had three disagreements with it: anthroposophy was an occult science (*Geheimwissenschaft*) (ibid.: 26–27),³ it contained Jewish and, generally, Near Eastern elements (ibid.: 27); and it lacked the profound religious emotion (*religiöse Ergriffenheit*)⁴ that Hauer regarded as part of all great and old (pre-Christian) cosmogonies (ibid.: 27, 50). Despite these disagreements, Hauer saw anthroposophy as the beginning of a new era, an epoch of new and powerful intellectual and spiritual creation (ibid.: 30).



1.2 Rudolf Steiner, founder of Anthroposophy

By contrast with anthroposophy, Hauer based his own movement on the concepts of being grasped by the sacred (*Ergriffenheit*) and of having a powerful personality (*kraftvolle Persönlichkeit*) capable of experiencing and understanding the needs of a time (ibid.: 5). Such a person was a religious genius who experienced himself as grasped by the living intellectual heritage of his country that empowered him to solve his people's needs.

Hauer's core concepts are rooted in a pre-Christian past from which they are carried forward by a line of heretics. This notion is not too different from that of Grimm, for whom the sacred past is carried forward in the form of sagas. According to Hauer, his alternative religion was established by his society's great romantic and idealistic literary figures and philosophers. The same is true for Ernst Bergmann, the protagonist of German Faith, who during the First World War looked for empowerment in German Idealism. By contrast, Grimm deemed himself a political poet in a new sense, whose task it was to give shape to that which had been destroyed, ruined, dissolved, and upset by, specifically, the First World War and Versailles (Grimm 1938:79).⁵

The motivation of men like Hauer, Bergmann, and Grimm was regeneration of their people following the defeat and denigration of the Great War. From present grimness and the hardening experiences that came with working in other parts of the world, they turned to the roots of an assumed authentic Germanic and therefore pre-Christian past. This

return to roots justified seeing their actions as destined.⁶ Both Grimm and Hauer, like Heidegger, believed that the *Volk* (meaning the new German existence) could only become authentically what it is by struggling to retrieve its roots in history, literary works, language, and landscape. But rather than being mere imitators, they intended to create a form and fiction that addressed the painfully experienced present. And these respective activities they saw as destined. Their revolutionary work began during and after the Great War and was completed in 1933.

When Rudolf Hess (1894–1987) said at the 1933 Party conference in Nürnberg, “All force emanates from the Volk,” (*Alle Gewalt geht vom Volke aus*) (Schmitt 1933:9), he underlined that the German Revolution (*deutsche Revolution*) was legal and authentic (ibid.: 8). It had transitioned from a religious movement to a political religion.

The coalescence of ideas from intellectuals in diverse disciplines during the 1920s and 1930s is remarkable. Coming from the legal profession, Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) talked about National Socialism as being the essence of a *völkisch* totality (*völkischen Totalität*), which was a people’s consciousness of itself and of the whole of its own political existence (1938:614; 1934; 1936). Hauer said the same thing differently. What we might see as terror of the mind is approved by Carl Schmitt (1933:42). He argued that the *Führer* (Leader) concept, which Hauer saw foreshadowed in Rudolf Steiner, was a unique product of the National Socialist movement; only with the *Führer* concept that emerged naturally from the movement could a totalitarian *Führer-state* be maintained. It was based on an unconditional cospecificity or racial identity of *Führer* and followers.

According to Schmitt, cospecificity (*Artgleichheit*) rests on the continual unflinching contact between *Führer* and followers as well as their mutual loyalty. Only this absolute biological-cum-spiritual identity could prevent, so Schmitt argued (1933:42), the *Führer*’s power from becoming tyrannical and despotic. It is this *Artgleichheit* that justifies the differentiation of National Socialism from every foreign power no matter how intelligent or advantageous (ibid.: 42). Law would no longer be bound to norms, but to race and, therefore, to type of judge and administrator—to a powerful personality. According to Schmitt the link between law and abstract words in legal paragraphs had been overcome. Instead law was bound “to ourselves and our own race” (ibid.: 46). Schmitt coming from law, Hauer from religion, Heidegger from philosophy, Grimm from Icelandic sagas, and others from different disciplines, were incapable of seeing that cospecificity assumed unquestioning loyalty and silenced criticism. It could only do what it did do, namely, lead to disaster.

National Socialism

National Socialism is in fact a relatively coherent worldview and practice determined to erupt, by radical and violent means, through an existing regime to a new one. The political scientist Carl Schmitt, who became a Nazi in 1933, saw Weimar democracy as bent on becoming a totalitarian state. According to him, only an authoritarian state, which Germany was before the defeat of World War I, would have been able to counteract the unstoppable democratic tendency toward totalitarianism (1938:613). Furthermore, it may well be that, as Schmitt argues, the totalitarian state is not so much a state as it is a moment in the life of a state. That is, in the life of any state it is a potential moment that

results when the state has to exert itself in a specific direction. Potentially, therefore, each form of state is total and in specific dangerous situations moves through totalitarianism (ibid.: 614). According to Nationalists and Nazis, the Weimar Republic, with its structurally flawed constitution and enforced liberal tolerance, was a cultural morass. Goebbels (1927:14) spoke about Weimar's rotten spirit of Liberalism that made the Republic slide into the mud.⁷ And there were no authoritarian institutions, except perhaps the Catholic Church, that could or would stop its slide.

For those who need an image, one could characterize National Socialism as a Hydra, a multi-headed serpent from Greek mythology. Its neck, so to speak, consisted of three vertebrae: *Volk*, *Volksgemeinschaft*,⁸ and *Führer*. Its body was movement (*Bewegung*). Its various heads represented variations of the National Socialist worldview that were controlled and propagated by the movement's predominant ideologues in charge of diverse offices (*Ämter*). Thus Alfred Rosenberg (1893–1946), the chief ideologue of the NSDAP and the *Führer's* Delegate for the Supervision of the Entire Intellectual and World View Education and Training of the NSDAP, gave preference to myths and medievalism (Hutchinson 1977). His view and anti-Christian attitude overlapped with Jakob Wilhelm Hauer. Both grounded German faith in the line of Christian heretics starting with Meister Eckhart.

Where Hauer differed from Rosenberg is in Hauer's greater emphasis on Hinduism and Buddhism, which, as part of the Indo-Germanic tradition, were particularly popular among Heinrich Himmler's SS and specifically his Research Institute called *Ahnenerbe* (Ancestral Heritage). Hauer belonged to



1.3 Alfred Rosenberg, Nazi ideologue

the SS and, like the head of *Ahnenerbe*, Walther Wüst (1900–1991),⁹ worked Indo-Germanic ideas into National Socialism, especially its ethics—or rather lack thereof.

As head of the propaganda ministry, Joseph Goebbels (1897–1945) exercised enormous influence on the media and those engaged in the cultural sector. Like Rosenberg and Hauer, Goebbels also became increasingly anti-Christian, anti-Catholic, and with it anti-Semitic (Bärsch 1995; Reuth 2000). Nevertheless, by contrast with the above, he used Christian images and symbols to express distinctly aggressive National Socialist ideas. For example, he characterized the spirit of the resurrection as yearning for the *Führer* (*Führersehnsucht*) (Bärsch 1995:81). As Bärsch points out, like many German *Bildungsbürger* who experienced genuine despair, Goebbels followed the stations of political ideologisation from Catholicism toward freer forms of a Christian view of the world and self (as in liberal theology) and then National Socialism (ibid.: 81). He mixed Christology with Vitalism and directed his adoration not toward God or Christ but toward the Führer (ibid.: 85). National Socialists knew that being against Christianity was the most authentic and deepest form of anti-Semitism, and how better to denigrate someone than to use their form against them. Turning the Christian office of preacher into a political one, Goebbels loved to say that there are two kinds of political speakers: parliamentarians and preachers. The parliamentarian defends the swamp. The preacher destroys in order to rebuild (ibid.: 87, quoting from Goebbels 1926).

Controversies

According to Bärsch (2002:18), arguing that National Socialism is a political religion is controversial. Today scholars quarrel over this question.

There are several reasons, some rational and others a matter of faith, why this question comes up. The topic of National Socialism always, no matter how sound the empirical evidence on which certain works may sit, pushes against three articles of historical faith. First, historians are loath to accept that the Weimar Republic was a failure as a democracy. Second, it is also an article of faith, ferociously held against all evidence to the contrary, that anti-Semitism has its source in Christianity (Goldhagen 2002; Rychlak 2003). Third, to say that National Socialism is a political religion is to besmirch the word “religion.” When these faith boundaries are crossed, many people become very nervous for fear of relativizing the Holocaust.

Nevertheless, this research shows that the new religionists or paganists, as Steigmann-Gall (2003:76) prefers to call them, were decidedly anti-Christian because they saw Christianity as a Jewish phenomenon and as fundamentally un-German. As some of the correspondence in this book will show, it is not going too far to say that in the 1920s to 1940s to be anti-Semitic meant being anti-Christian and vice versa. Steigmann-Gall (ibid.: 84, 86) goes out of his way to minimize Rosenberg’s popular influence and Ludendorff’s determined paganism just to preserve the argument that Nazi anti-Semitism is rooted in Christianity. His argument amounts to saying that Ludendorff’s early Protestant upbringing and sectarianism are the source of his various anti-internationalisms, including anti-Semitism. The notion that these people learned their anti-Semitism outside of the church, then hated the church because it would not affirm their anti-Semitism, and finally developed their outright rejection of Christianity over

time, is ignored. Yet it is precisely this process of development that is carefully traced by Bärtsch (1995) and Reuth (2000) vis-à-vis Goebbels. Likewise, these studies, and those about *Deutsche Christen* who, as Hauer knew, were not Christians but pagans, show just how powerful a force anti-Christianity and paganism was. Most important in this regard is Germann's (1995) study of the political religion of Dietrich Klagges.

Youths against Weimar

Hauer and Grimm, among others, motivated by such young radical Right intellectuals as Carl Schmitt, Wilhelm Stapel, Edgar Jung, Moeller van den Bruck, Joseph Goebbels, Alfred Rosenberg, and Werner Best (1903–1989), portrayed Weimar as having been forced on Germany by its international enemies. Although some eventually quarreled, right-wing ideologues, including Hitler, Himmler (1900–1945) and Heydrich (1904–1942), were also friends. Hauer was particularly close to the SS ideologue and legal mind Werner Best, and met and corresponded with Himmler, especially about his propaganda to establish German Faith instruction within the whole Reich.¹⁰ Stapel, but also Goebbels, corresponded or met with Hans Grimm, who worked with and shared experiences on the front in World War I with Moeller van den Bruck. Grimm met personally with Hitler and Goebbels, although his relationship with them later soured, while Hauer wrote Rosenberg, met with Rudolf Hess, and attempted meetings with Hitler. All knew of one another's works and opinions.

Their radical perceptions began and hardened with two events: (1) the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, which placed sole responsibility for the Great War on Germany, even after Germans themselves revolted against the existing regime, causing the abdication of the Kaiser, and (2) the occupation by the French of the Ruhr in 1923 (see also Brady 1969). Versailles and the occupation of the Ruhr came to be seen as a war against the vanquished by other means (Müller 2003).

To make sure that the denigration stuck, Versailles—as both Jan Smuts and John Maynard Keynes observed—sanctioned the allies plundering Germany of its resources, territory, colonies, and self-respect. Not surprisingly, many German youths soon saw themselves as the victims of liberal modernism. As Müller (2003:11) points out, young conservative Germans made it their business to “unmask liberal universalist claims”, seeing behind it the play of power politics in a very present and concrete situation of despair. For Hauer, too, looking reality in the face became as sacred an activity as uncovering the godliness within. He and the Ludendorffs saw German Faith as having been trapped (*verschüttet*) under Jewish-Christianity.

Müller (2003:11) calls young radicals such as Schmitt and his cohorts “anthropological conservatives.” They were not focused on preserving centuries-old universalist traditions. Rather their focus was on present action (*Tat*) to reshape the immediate needs of their co-sufferers—of those, in other words, who belonged to their specific, one might say primordial, nation. Such anthropological categories as *Volk*, *Volksgemeinschaft*, *Volkstum*, and *Kampf* captured the reality that they thought they experienced on their home ground. Among these youths was Hauer's later friend in the SS, Werner Best (Herbert 1996:40) and of course the propagandist Joseph Goebbels (Steuckers 1990:61). No fledgling local national movement could have been handed

better tools than those of deprivation, denigration, and occupation with which to take revenge on their global liberators.

Unpublished sources, especially letters, as well as published brochures and books written by Hauer and other determined founders of a *deutsch*-Germanic Faith show what they wanted to unmask, destroy and replace. Marked for destruction was what Hauer called “Jewish-Christianity.” Given that religion was assumed to be culture- and race-specific, what National Socialist sympathizers wanted in Weimar’s place was a Faith-based community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) that was seen to be connected directly to its original (*Ur-*) religious inspiration, on the one hand, and to the *Führer*, a German version of an Indo-Germanic guru, who embodied people, nation, and faith, on the other. There were variations on the theme of what each “propagandist” meant by *Ur*-religious inspiration and *Führer*, but their intent to destroy Weimar and replace it with a *Volksgemeinschaft* was as constant as it was lethal.

Although the book concentrates on Hauer, it shows more broadly how young intellectuals and founders of new religions shaped the ideology and organizations of an emergent National Socialist state. First, young Germans, many of whom had lost their middle-class moorings, gathered in little groups (*Bünde*) to listen to self-appointed political-religious leaders teach the importance of honor, heroism, sacrifice, godliness, and struggle (*Kampf*). Soon members of these little groups were drawn into petty street wars and formed or joined private militias to defend themselves against other ideologues and their followers. And sooner than anyone anticipated, a ruthless Party built the war machinery that destroyed uncountable millions of lives.

Clash of cultures and faith-worlds

To this generation of British and North American students who have read Huntington’s (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations*, it should not be surprising that Hauer, and the Nazi leadership generally, pictured a structurally analogous scenario. But it was not a clash between Western civilization and culturally assertive non-Western civilizations such as Islam and Chinese Communism that Hauer saw. To begin with, the word civilization had negative connotations for Germans of the 1920s and 1930s and was commonly equated with a general Europeanization and Americanization. These stood for leveling and atomizing processes that were seen to be effacing the specific national character of distinct peoples (Braun 1932). Gutmann (1928:12) and Knak (1931), both missionaries with anthropological interests in Africa, equated civilization with secularization, commercialization, and mindless imitation, with denial of existing cultural practices, loss of values and self-worth, and Spenglerian decline. Civilization was culture hardened into administration. Even scientific creativity was subjected to the demands of industry and profit (Spengler 1920:43–4).

By contrast, culture was conceived as an organism, subject like all organisms to the four seasons of life. Each culture was characterized by a specific spirit and a distinctive sense of space. In short, since civilization was a culture’s old age, it was hardly worth clashing with. Rather, from the beginning, global politics were configured along cultural lines. The clash was one between cultures and therefore, depending on where one was in the

National Socialist spectrum, between faiths, ethnicities, and/or races. By 1934, Hauer equated religion with race.



1.4 Dietrich Klagges, Nazi ideologue and founder of the Working Community of German Christians

The picture of the world that Hauer sold his followers was one of a fundamental clash (*Kampf*) between two faith-worlds (*Glaubenswelten*), the Near-Eastern Semitic and the Indo-Germanic. Of these he experienced negatively and rejected the former, and experienced positively and affirmed the latter. Hauer's category of a Near-Eastern Semitic faith-world included Judaism, "Jewish-Christianity,"¹¹ and Islam. The Indo-Germanic faith-world included Hinduism, Buddhism, and a pre-Christian Germanic Faith. Having been a missionary to India before he became Professor of Religious Studies in Tübingen and the founder of the German Faith Movement, he personally experienced Hinduism and Buddhism directly and wrote about them professionally. His enchantment with the latter two faiths contributed to his intense, if in his pre-1930 works discreetly expressed, dislike of things and thoughts Jewish. He worked hard behind the scenes to remove Jewish and—what to him amounted to the same thing—Christian scholars from university positions.

By contrast, Hinduism and Buddhism were compatible with National Socialism. Together they blended into an ideological mix that dazzled not only the anthropologists and indologists of the *Ahnenerbe*,¹² people such as Walter Wüst, Ernst Schäfer, Bruno

Beger, Ludwig Ferdinand Clauss (1892–1974), and of course Wilhelm Hauer, but pervaded the SS generally from Heinrich Himmler (1900–1945) on down (Kater 2001).

Germans who lacked contact with countries that Hauer placed into the respectable Indo-Germanic culture circle or who did not work with the anthropological imperative of using the non-West to destroy the West, used liberal theology, a religiosity that sanctioned free reflection, to divest Christianity of its Jewish elements. For example, Dietrich Klagges (1891–1971) was an important ideologue of National Socialism. Unfortunately, he is known primarily for having called a stateless Adolf Hitler to the position of Senior Executive Officer of the Brunswick Legation in Berlin, thereby making him a German citizen in 1932. Important here, however, is the fact that the free religious Klagges blended politics and religion to postulate that the Gospel of Mark was the *Ur-gospel*.¹³ As the original gospel, Mark appeared to be innocent of Jewish distortion, is therefore *artgemäß*,¹⁴ and worthy of being the foundation of a new German Faith (Klagges 1926). In a manner analogous to Hauer, Klagges then founded the Working Community of German Christians (DCA) who sought to show that the real Jesus was not Jewish but Indo-Germanic and whose true identity was distorted by later apostles who were under the spell of Jewish intellectual power (*jüdischen Geistesmacht*) (Germann 1995:37–9).

The ‘other’ as tool to attack the ‘own’

The route taken by Hauer and most of his students and followers, namely, from being students of theology to becoming determined enemies of Christianity had been mapped out for them by many of their intellectual mentors, including most prominently Nietzsche. While a student in England, Hauer claims to have been deeply affected by Plato. Upon his return to Germany, Nietzsche’s works played an important role in Hauer’s thought and that of his circle (Junginger 1999:268–76).

Within Hauer’s first major *Bund* founded in the 1920s,¹⁵ called the *Köngener*, a select Nietzsche circle was formed, consisting initially of twelve people. In one of her letters to Hauer, Lene Rukwied mentions that Nietzsche is presented to them in a lively fashion and that he reminds her of Hauer.¹⁶ Hauer’s assistant, the doctoral student of the Nazi pedagogue Ernst Krieck, published on Nietzsche in Hauer’s journal *Deutscher Glaube*.¹⁷ To Nazi scholars Nietzsche was the prophet of National Socialism for the obvious reason that he undermined (*zersetzen*) Christianity and justified eugenics. A sick man, Nietzsche idolized life by equating salvation with religious, political, ethical, and social anarchy (Hofer 1934:252). No Nazi would fail to recognize that Nietzsche’s psychology of salvation was opposed to that of the Jew Paul. Even the Zionist Martin Buber, who was a friend of Hauer and participated in his conferences, shared Hauer’s interest in Nietzsche. To both of them, guilt, sin, and Jewish-Christianity were tools to destroy a natural human vitalism.¹⁸



1.5 Friedrich Nietzsche



1.6 Jakob Wilhelm Hauer; liked comparison with Nietzsche

The epistemological function that the Bhagavad Gita had for Hauer, Islam had for Nietzsche. Thus Nietzsche used Islam as a tool for attacking the “‘European disease’ of Judaeo-Christian modernity,” especially its “universalist claims” (Almond 2003:43, 44). Hauer and other Nazis who had read Nietzsche understood correctly that the latter’s virulent anti-Christianity meant that Nietzsche was passionately anti-Semitic or, if one might say, anti-Jewish. Usually the blame is put on Nietzsche’s sister. At any rate, Hauer used the *Bhagavad Gita* and Nietzsche used Islam to express their respective dislike of things Jewish-Christian. More importantly, they used these to conjoin the holy with the bellicose, the *Sakralgemeinschaft* with the *Kampfgemeinschaft* (Almond 2003:48; Hauer 1934a:1).

Hauer (1932a; 1934a:1) talks about wars of male defiance and male pride (*männertrotzige Kriege*) just as Nietzsche swooned about “the virility” of “Persian warrior-monks, unchained to any principle or ethic” (Almond 2003:48). Both emphasize a life of tension between self-communion and self-surrender as in the self-communion with the creative depth of one’s soul-cum-world from whence comes one’s knowledge that one is doing right versus the self-surrender to a life of action and war (Hauer 1934a:3). Like Nietzsche, from whom he probably took the idea, Hauer fuses mystic and warrior. In other words, mysticism or faith is the ultimate sanction for war, not “womanish Christianity” (Almond 2003:48). Thus to Hauer there is no such thing as a deed that is only good. Each deed shelters guilt (1934a:14). But guilt, like tragedy to which it belongs by its very nature, is “beyond good and evil” (*Bhagavad Gita* II, 50, quoted in Hauer 1934a:21).

In sum, whatever Nietzsche found in Islam, Hauer found in the *Bhagavad Gita*. For them these faiths bypass moral prescription. Instead of obeying moral prescriptions, the Bhagavad Gita turns to the metaphysical foundations of all happening and these foundations are *Brahman* and god (ibid.: 25). Assigning such non-Western notions as “elite religious warriors” an epistemological function of knowing the enemy, Hauer and Nietzsche not only intended to destroy “womanish” Christianity so that a new knowledge might emerge but they were instrumental in creating that new knowledge. We know it as Nazism.¹⁹

Anti-Semitism

By blaming anti-Semitism on Christianity, scholars have badly misled their readers. In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany it was not Christianity that was, nor Christians who were by virtue of their faith, anti-Semitic. Rather it was neo-pagans both within and without the church, who had an intense dislike of Christianity precisely because it is Semitic. By Semitic Hauer meant Jewish. Sometimes he used the term Jewish-Christianity; at other times Israelitic-Christianity or Israelitic-Jewry (1934e: 98, 102). As for neo-pagans, many remained officially in the church although they hated Christianity and were members of alternative religions such as Hauer’s German Faith Movement.

The source of anti-Semitism lies elsewhere than with religion. It lies in a fundamental human divide between those people who love culture, by which I mean the poetics and politics that grew out of a very specific local condition and history, and those who love

civilization, by which I mean the poetics and politics that are rooted in non-specific, universal laws meant to protect any civilian, local or foreign. Hauer's fight against Jewish-Christianity is based on this divide. Curiously enough, so is Hans Kohn's and Martin Buber's fight for Zionism. They saw the salvation of Jewry in the return to a more holistic, organic culture, and pictured a Jewish spiritual regeneration through a "return to the homeland—to the Orient" away from the corruption and cultural decadence of the Occident (Moore 2003:31). Buber's and Kohn's interests in Hauer's German Faith ideas have their source in their respective *völkisch* notions of reclaiming the original cultural character of "their" respective peoples (Moore 2003:30; Golomb 2004:166).

The fundamental human divide, the fault line of human antagonism, is that between culture and civilization. Religion is the (cultural) weapon with which to fight the enemy. Huntington (1996:125) is wrong when he sees this divide as new. The essence of National Socialism and fascism generally is that it draws its political boundaries to coincide with cultural ones. Huntington is correct in recognizing that this process is going on now, although the geographical centre is not Germany but the Middle East.

The culture-civilization game is more simple and general than the elaborate ideological deceptions spun by totalitarians. A simple analogy shows the human aspect of the divide. A house owner lives in a specific locality of which he is very fond and which he romanticizes. One day he receives an interesting worldly visitor whom he duly welcomes. Initially the visitor gives pleasure with his new ideas about how to improve this or that, and it is appreciated. But in due course the host notices that the guest has taken over the administration, as it were, of the host's house. The guest's knowledge has metamorphosed into power and the host does not like it. Soon he sees his guest as representing a foreign world which, if he accepted it, would mean the destruction of life as he knew it. Conflict is inevitable.

Anti-Semitism, then, is something that many people with strong local loyalties and attachments see personified in the concept of Jews. Increasingly, as also happened during the 1920s, they see it personified in America. In Indonesia, the Chinese are its Jews. Religion, ethnicity, and sexual orientation are weapons used to defend or gain something. Above all, they are what they were in Nazi Germany; powerful tools of propaganda and terrorism, especially terrorism of the mind.

Morality is another source of the intense dislike of Jewish-Christianity. To Hauer, Christianity hindered the natural growth of an "organic morality" that alone could produce the proper attitude to the "great realities of life," namely, the body, reproduction and love (1935:101). According to Hauer the first book of Moses destroys an aristocratic conception of work and the Sermon on the Mount alienates the human being from earth.

Hauer finds particularly irritating that the morality of Christianity is captured in a holy scripture that enforces moral precepts first laid out by an Israelitic-Jewry. To him, these moral precepts are un-German. Furthermore, German morality has its own sources; first, its own people's will and nature and, second, the example of its own great men and women who are the embodiment of that nature. Importantly, German Faith finds anathema the notion of Ten Commandments chiseled in stone or of a word-based Confession signed by all. To Hauer's mind, morality and *deutsch*-Germanic Faith shape themselves continually like an allegory of lived life (ibid.: 103). There is no dogma, word or Scripture. German morality is not rigidly chained to words but changes as reality changes and as the original nature adapts to new conditions. It is a convenient moral

relativism that Hauer and his cohorts developed. In the final analysis it is, as Herbert (1996:98) points out, a fighter ethic that negates all moral ties except those with respect to the interests of one's own *Volk*.

Finally, the myth that Hauer perpetuated, namely, that scripted law is un-German, is belied by the deliberate efforts on the part of Werner Best, among others, to re-script law especially pertaining to human and people's rights or the rights of nations. Best rejected every form of codified rights of nations that was in some way based on universal values (Herbert 1996:277). To Nazis universalism is abstract and therefore ineffective, even effete. What they valued was reality (*Wirklichkeit*), by which was meant the existence of actual power differences within society and among nations. And on these actual power differences they based their morality of "might is right."

Method

This book rests on years of work in German archives. Since 1995 I have spent four months of each year in Marbach, Berlin, Koblenz, or Leipzig reading, taking notes, or copying innumerable letters and other unpublished documents.

The method of this research and writing was informed by a question that burned in my mind for decades, namely, how did Germans come to embrace National Socialism? The answer to that question throws all the light one needs on the consequences of having held such a worldview—a disastrous war, millions of people dead, the Holocaust, and the post-war German generations burdened with guilt, an inadequately explained history, and unending quarrels about reparations. Only recently has a new generation of scholars embarked on the task of writing carefully researched and detailed biographies not only of the top Nazi leaders but, importantly, of the middle-rank Nazi ideologues. Among them are Ulrich Herbert (1996), Ralf Georg Reuth (2000), Holger Germann (1995), Claus-Ekkehard Bärsch (1995, 2002), Wolfgang Dierker (2003), Barbara Zehnpfennig (2000), and Fritz Heinrich (2002). The work of the Canadian historian Michael H.Kater (2001) is outstanding. They and others inspire this work. These scholars give us a clearer picture of what happened to a nation after a devastating defeat and a punishing peace. The aftermath of World War I should have provided clear lessons how not to treat defeated people. It should have taught us that ex-combatants and disaffected intellectuals make virulent politics and that their fanaticism inevitably takes hostage the hearts and minds of young men uprooted by war. But it did not.

This book is not a smoothly written history. As careful readers know, the latter tend to sit on published secondary sources, many of them being interpretations of interpretations, bringing little new food for thought. While analytical chapters play an important role, there are several chapters that primarily show how, especially, Jakob Wilhelm Hauer and those associated with him thought, changed, and deceived themselves and others.

I have no illusions about the limitations of the unpublished documents that their authors bequeathed to the archives that are studied here. Some papers, such as those of Ludwig Klages (1872–1956), for example, were clearly tampered with to remove evidence of his enthusiasm for the Nazi regime. Furthermore, a researcher who wants to quote from archived documents requires family approval. In the case of Hauer some significant documents are missing and, given what they likely contained, one doubts that

it is accidental. Nevertheless, unpublished documents are “experience-near” (that is, they closely reflect real experiences) and this, in conjunction with published sources and recent scholarly work, gives the researcher and reading audiences a good sense of a man’s development and motivations. It also puts us in touch with the unfolding catastrophe.

Organization

The various chapters of this book describe the gathering storm of resistance to Versailles under the banner of what was broadly called German Faith. It is the construction of this faith by diverse radical co-plotters that helped usher in National Socialism. Most chapters are centered on the intense time from 1919 to 1932 when National Socialism invaded the hearts and minds of Germans and from 1933 to 1936 when National Socialism became established and sloughed off those it had once needed. The last chapter links what became the political religion of National Socialism to similar ideas, differently worded, of the New Right today. While the book does not discuss anti-Semitism directly or deliberately, it is of course present throughout.

Following this Introduction, Chapter 2 gives an overview of Hauer’s life and work based on published literature, Hauer’s own accounts, and archival research. Chapter 3 describes the takeover of popular politics by the young during the *Bünde* phase and shows Hauer’s own politicization. The fiery dialectic between *Bünde* leaders, Nationalists, and National Socialists is illuminated in Chapter 4. Hauer’s German Faith is described in Chapters 5 and 6. Here the Hindu influences on Hauer’s movement and on the SS are highlighted. Chapter 7 describes how the *Wehrwolf Bund* and SS helped to organize the German Faith Movement on the ground.

Hauer’s war of attrition against Church and Christianity and the activities of the *Deutsche Christen* are discussed in Chapter 8. Chapter 9 looks at the SS intellectual Werner Best. It is to him that Hauer addresses his concerns about Catholicism, Zionism, and the free religious who, within his movement, were to be the bulwark against the power of the Roman Catholic Church. Chapter 10 discusses the “new faith” of novelists, especially that of Hans Grimm. It is here that the maleness of National Socialism is seen most clearly. Chapter 11 looks at Mathilde Ludendorff’s scientific neo-paganism and, by describing the works of Sigrid Hunke, takes the diverse ideas of German Faith believers, whom we shall call Faithlers, forward to the New Right today. What Hauer called German Faith is now called Europe’s own religion. A brief Conclusion links past to present.