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### **'ONE PEOPLE, ONE REICH, ONE GOD'** THE VÖLKISCHE WELTANSCHAUUNG AND MOVEMENT\*

by Uwe Puschner

The *völkisch* movement is generally regarded as the 'immediate precursor' of National Socialism.<sup>1</sup> It is usually seen as a phenomenon of the Weimar Republic, and is thus considered almost exclusively in the context of National Socialism. The first notion is wrong, and while there is much to support the second, both statements are only partially relevant. To cast an analytical glance at the literature reflecting a *völkische Weltanschauung* dating from the 1920s reveals that the Weimar perspective is far too limiting. The *völkisch* movement is not a 'product of the post-war years'. Its origins lie in the period 'twenty, thirty years before the [First] World War'.<sup>2</sup> And we can answer questions about connections, continuities, and discontinuities with National Socialism—the most frequently asked question about the *völkisch* movement—only after we have addressed another question. What was the *völkische Weltanschauung*? And what was the *völkisch* movement itself?

The *völkisch* movement has hardly been researched to date, and even now we know almost nothing about it. This is because it presents itself to the observer as an impenetrable tangle of the most

\* This article is based on a lecture given at the German Historical Institute London in March 2001. It draws on my *Habilitationsschrift*, which has now been published as *Die völkische Bewegung im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich: Sprache – Rasse – Religion* (Darmstadt, 2001). For this reason, footnotes are used only to indicate the source of quotations, and to refer to recent publications, mostly studies that have appeared in the last two years. I should like to thank Angela Davies of the GHIL for preparing the translation.

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Meinecke, *Die deutsche Katastrophe: Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen*, 2nd edn (Wiesbaden, 1946), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Max Robert Gerstenhauer, *Der völkische Gedanke in Vergangenheit und Zukunft: Aus der Geschichte der völkischen Bewegung* (Leipzig, 1933), p. 2.

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diverse organizations and currents. Moreover, scholars have not generally seen it as an independent movement to be distinguished from Nazism.<sup>3</sup> So, what were the political goals and contents of the *völkisch* movement? What social groups did it involve? What political 'successes' did it have? What was its impact?

<sup>3</sup> On the *völkisch* movement and ideology see, in general, George L. Mosse, *Ein Volk – Ein Reich – Ein Führer: Die völkischen Ursprünge des Nationalsozialismus* (Königstein/Ts., 1979), a new edition has been published as *Die völkische Revolution: Über die geistigen Wurzeln des Nationalsozialismus* (Weinheim, 1991); Jost Hermand, *Der alte Traum vom neuen Reich: Völkische Utopien und Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt/M., 1988); Uwe Puschner, Walter Schmitz, and Justus H. Ulbricht (eds), *Handbuch zur 'völkischen Bewegung' 1871–1918* (Munich, 1996; paperback 1999) focuses mainly on the Wilhelmine Kaiserreich; Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung; Actes du colloque organisé à Strasbourg par le Centre d'Études Germaniques les 21 et 22 janvier 2000 sous la direction scientifique de Louis Dupeux et Michel Fabréguet = Revue d'Allemagne et des Pays de Langue allemande*, 32/2 (2000), concentrates on the *völkisch* religious movement; Stefanie von Schnurbein and Justus H. Ulbricht (eds), *Völkische Religiosität und Krisen der Moderne: Entwürfe 'arteigener' Religiosität seit der Jahrhundertwende* (Würzburg, 2001); Bernhard Giesen, Kay Junge, and Christian Kritschgau, 'Vom Patriotismus zum völkischen Denken: Intellektuelle als Konstrukteure der deutschen Identität', in Helmut Berding (ed.), *Nationales Bewußtsein und kollektive Identität, Studien zur Entwicklung des kollektiven Bewußtseins in der Neuzeit*, 2 (Frankfurt/M., 1994), 345–93 on the genesis of the *völkisch* world view in the 19th century; Stefan Arvidsson, *Ariska idoler: Den indoeuropeiska mytologin som ideologi och vetenskap* (Stockholm, 2000); Klaus von See, *Freiheit und Gemeinschaft: Völkisch-nationales Denken in Deutschland zwischen Französischer Revolution und Erstem Weltkrieg*, revised new edn of *Die Ideen von 1789 und die Ideen von 1914: Völkisches Denken in Deutschland zwischen Französischer Revolution und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt/M., 1975); Rainer Kipper, *Der Germanenmythos im Deutschen Kaiserreich: Formen und Funktionen historischer Selbstthematization* (Göttingen, 2002); for context in terms of the history of ideology, see Armin Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918–1932: Ein Handbuch* (Darmstadt, 2nd revised and expanded edition, 1972; reprinted 1989); id., *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918–1932: Ergänzungsband* (Darmstadt, 1989); Günter Hartung and Hubert Orłowski (eds), *Traditionen und Traditionssuche des deutschen Faschismus*, 4 conference volumes (Halle/Saale, 1983, 1987, 1988, and Poznań, 1988); Stefan Breuer, *Grundpositionen der deutschen Rechten (1871–1945), Historische Einführungen*, 2 (Tübingen, 1999); id., *Ordnung der Ungleichheit: Die deutsche Rechte im Widerstreit ihrer Ideen 1871–1945* (Darmstadt, 2001); Diethart Kerbs and Jürgen Reulecke (eds), *Handbuch der deutschen Reform-*

The personal, institutional, and ideological links and inter-connections between the *völkisch* movement and Nazism are clear. Nazism appropriated the adjective 'völkisch'. It used many elements of the *völkische Weltanschauung*, including its symbols such as the swastika. Yet relations between adherents of the *völkisch* movement and the Nazis were tense, and despite their ideological proximity and even occasional co-operation, the fundamental rivalry between them was unmistakable to contemporaries.

For adherents of the *völkisch* movement, National Socialism was 'one member of the wider *völkisch* movement'.<sup>4</sup> The Nazis, for their part, vehemently rejected this classification and insisted that, on the contrary, the National Socialist movement should be regarded as the 'pioneer and thus the representative' of *völkisch* ideas. After all, it claimed, it was 'the work of the NSDAP' that had first made *völkisch* a political slogan and an ideological battle cry.<sup>5</sup> Let us take a closer look at what appears to be a quarrel between the chicken and the egg.

We will start with the Nazis. While rebuilding the Nazi Party from 1925 on, Hitler repeatedly treated the leaders of the *völkisch* movement with utter scorn. He rejected the diffuse 'collective term *völkisch*', as did the representatives of the *völkisch* movement themselves, whom he described as 'fantasizing-naïve academics, professors, government officials, teachers, and legal officials', and 'unworldly wandering scholars' enthusing about 'the heroic days of the ancient Germanic tribes, prehistoric times, stone axes, spears and shields'.<sup>6</sup> And he particularly warned against 'so-called religious reformers on a Teutonic basis'.<sup>7</sup> In 1934, finally, in a speech to cabinet

*bewegungen 1880–1933* (Wuppertal, 1998); Kevin Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity: Anti-Politics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890–1914* (Cambridge/Mass., 2000); and Kai Buchholz, Rita Latocha, Hilke Peckmann, and Klaus Wolbert (eds), *Die Lebensreform: Entwürfe zur Neugestaltung von Kunst und Leben um 1900*, 2 vols (Darmstadt, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Theodor Fritsch, 'Völkisch – oder national-sozialistisch?', *Hammer* (1925), no. 544, pp. 66–69, quotation at p. 68.

<sup>5</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 2 vols (in one volume) (78th–84th edn.; Munich, 1933), pp. 514–16.

<sup>6</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen: Februar 1925 bis Januar 1933*, ed. Institut für Zeitgeschichte, vol. 1 (Munich etc., 1992), p. 3, and id., *Mein Kampf*, pp. 395 f. On this see also Barbara Zehnppennig, *Hitlers Mein Kampf: Eine Interpretation* (Munich, 2000), pp. 165 f. and 175–7.

<sup>7</sup> Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 397.

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ministers, Hitler counted 'the small group of *völkisch* ideologues who believe that the nation can only be happy if it destroys the experiences and results of two thousand years of history and sets out on new migrations wearing bearskins' among the countless 'enemies of the new regime'.<sup>8</sup>

Hitler, Goebbels, and Gregor Strasser regarded the older *völkisch* leaders from pre-war days as political rivals of National Socialism who had to be taken seriously because they refused to join the Nazi movement and had their own claim to leadership. Given the potential competition, the Nazi leaders adopted the tactic of flattering the old *völkisch* leaders as pioneers. Younger members of the *völkisch* movement, such as Darré, Himmler, and Rosenberg were already among Hitler's faithful companions. To be sure, because of their visions of a greater Germanic *Reich* built on 'peasants and a religious-Germanic basis', Hitler dismissed them as 'crackpot apostles of the beyond'.<sup>9</sup>

As far as the *Völkische* were concerned, we cannot speak of a uniform attitude toward National Socialism. Some were passionate supporters, while others, after an initial period of euphoria, cooled off and wanted to keep their distance. This tells us less about the difficult and differentiated relationship between the Nazis and the *Völkische*, than about a generational conflict within the *völkisch* movement itself. After the First World War the older generation was increasingly sidelined politically, which gave rise to complaints about the 'new leaders', 'who never mention those who prepared the ground for them, and to whom they owe their ideas'.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Max Domarus (ed.), *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen 1932–1945*, vol. 1 (Würzburg, 1962), p. 354.

<sup>9</sup> Ekkehard Hieronimus, 'Von der Germanen-Forschung zum Germanen-Glauben: Zur Religionsgeschichte des Präfaschismus', in Richard Faber and Renate Schlesier (eds), *Die Restauration der Götter: Antike Religion und Neo-Paganismus* (Würzburg, 1986), pp. 241–57, quotation at p. 241, and Henry Picker, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier* (unchanged new edn.; Frankfurt/M., 1989), p. 44. In this context see Michael Rissmann, *Hitlers Gott: Vorsehungsglaube und Sendungsbewußtsein des deutschen Diktators* (Zurich, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> Theodor Fritsch, 'Neu-Christentum? — oder Deutscher Glaube? Offener Brief an Herrn Dr. Artur Dinter', *Hammer* (1930), no. 663, pp. 53–9, quotation at p. 58.

These complaints indicate that there were quarrels and ruptures within the *völkisch* movement during the 1920s. These manifested themselves in a change of leadership and, something that has yet to be investigated, a paradigm shift. One striking change in the 1920s as compared to the pre-war period was an increased commitment to party politics and the parliamentary system among the *Völkische*, who now held seats in the *Länder* parliaments and in the *Reichstag*. Yet a strong faction in the *völkisch* movement continued to reject political parties as an organizational form for the dissemination of *völkisch* ideas, arguing that they were concerned not with 'party politics', but with 'educating the people towards a *völkisch* awareness'.<sup>11</sup> The *Völkische* regarded political parties as less strategically significant, and the movement saw itself as an 'extraparliamentary power'. This was essentially connected with the history of the movement's origins and helps to explain its later organizational disadvantages by comparison with an aggressive, hierarchically structured National Socialism.

The *völkisch* movement was an over-arching collecting point for, in particular, those who aspired to reform culture and lifestyles, for anti-ultramontanists, anti-Semites, eugenicists, and many more. The lowest common denominator was the shared political goal of a 're-birth of the German *Volkstum*' defined in terms of race and religion.<sup>12</sup> The ideological breadth of the movement as a whole was matched by the diversity of its organizational forms. These ranged from informal social groups and loosely organized societies which formed around journals to registered associations and sect-like orders and lodges. The eclecticism of the movement's character had implications for the diffuse image of the *völkisch* movement. A large number of ambitious leaders who often fell out with each other meant that all attempts to create a *völkisch* umbrella organization failed, as did the cartels that were created in preparation for such an organization, and which did have some short-term successes.

<sup>11</sup> Hans Paul von Wolzogen, 'Der Begriff Völkisch', *Völkischer Beobachter*, 12 Dec. 1925. In this context, see also Martin Döring, *'Parlamentarischer Arm der Bewegung': Die Nationalsozialisten im Reichstag der Weimarer Republik*, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der politischen Parteien, 130 (Düsseldorf, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> Ernst Hunkel, 'Deutschvölkische Arbeit', *Heimdall*, 9 (1904), pp. 122 f., quotation at p. 122.

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Aware of these weaknesses, the *Völkische* adopted a strategy of infiltrating all social classes and groups, long before the slogan 'march through the institutions' was coined. In terms of organizational history, this phase gave rise to *völkisch* segments within the reform movements already mentioned. The *völkisch* movement thus showed itself to be a 'fellow traveller'. According to an insider's estimate, on the eve of the First World War the hard core of the movement numbered no more than 10,000 predominantly male supporters, including many teachers, journalists, writers, professionals, clergy, and state officials. Despite this small number the movement managed, with its strategy of infiltration and the assistance of a large-scale propaganda machine using such techniques as popular lecture series, mass leafleting, and the mass dissemination of journals, to interest a wide section of the public in the *völkisch* ideology.

The term 'völkische Bewegung' first appeared in 1901, in an article in the journal *Heimdall*.<sup>13</sup> Subtitled *Zeitschrift für reines Deutschtum und Alldeutschtum*, it was one of the two main organs of the *völkisch* movement. The other was *Hammer*, edited by Theodor Fritsch. Adolf Reinecke, editor of *Heimdall*, was one of the founding fathers of the *völkisch* movement. His intellectual origins lay in the language movement of the 1880s, to which Hermann von Pfister-Schwaighusen also belonged. He, in turn, gave the movement a name when he coined the word 'völkisch' as a synonym for 'national' in 1875.<sup>14</sup> Reinecke and Pfister-Schwaighusen worked together in the Allgemeiner Deutscher Sprachverein, whose goal was to purify the German language. Both left this association of worthies in disgust early in the 1890s because neither its work in Germanizing the language nor its ideological basis were radical enough for their taste. In 1898 they created the Alldeutscher Sprach- und Schriftverein which, like Reinecke's *Heimdall*, was closely connected with the Austrian Pan-German movement.

A second root of the *völkisch* movement, organized anti-Semitism, also went back to the 1880s. Theodor Fritsch came from the same origins. After the anti-Semitic parties had lost their voters in the 1890s and rowdy anti-Semitism had frightened off their clientele, Fritsch

<sup>13</sup> Cf. 'Völkische Mahnung', *Heimdall*, 6 (1901), pp. 86 f.

<sup>14</sup> On Pfister-Schwaighusen see *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 20 (Berlin, 2001), pp. 338–40.

attempted to give anti-Semitism a new platform as part of a racially motivated ideology of Germanness.<sup>15</sup> With the publication of *Heimdall* starting in 1902, Fritsch became one of the most influential leaders of the *völkisch* movement, a fact that is still largely unacknowledged today. Fritsch is generally known as the chief ideologue of anti-Semitism, but not of the *völkische Weltanschauung*. The undeniable links to organized anti-Semitism, the innumerable anti-Semitic articles in *Hammer* and other *völkisch* journals, the Aryan regulations in the *völkisch* organizations discriminated not only against Jews, and especially the *völkisch* chroniclers all contributed to the fact that in the Kaiserreich the *völkisch* movement and the *völkisch* ideology disappeared, as it were, behind anti-Semitism.

Anti-Semitism was undoubtedly an essential element in the *völkische Weltanschauung*, but it was neither the only one nor the most important. *Völkisch* anti-Semitism can be understood and explained only with, and in terms of, the *völkisch* racial ideology. Often, scholars researching anti-Semitism have completely overlooked these connections. Yet by focusing on racial anti-Semitism alone, the complexity of the *völkisch* racial ideology (and thus the dimensions of the *völkische Weltanschauung*) cannot be grasped.

The *völkische Weltanschauung* was fully formed before the First World War. The slogan 'one people, one Reich, one God', which was adopted by the *Völkische* among the *Deutsch-Nationale* Austrian students, can be seen as marking out the co-ordinates of the movement's system.<sup>16</sup> The slogan was so striking that it served the movement as a political goal. However, this slogan was short on content, rather describing a vision of the future which the movement hoped to achieve. The three concepts which make it up are based on a single

<sup>15</sup> For the state of research on the journal and its editor see Uwe Puschner, 'Deutschvölkische Europakonzeptionen am Beispiel des *Hammer. Blätter für deutschen Sinn*', in Michel Grunewald (ed.), *Der Europadiskurs in den deutschen Zeitschriften (1933–1939)*, *Convergences*, 11 (Berne, 1999), pp. 353–67, at pp. 353 and 355.

<sup>16</sup> Lothar Albertin, *Nationalismus und Protestantismus in der österreichischen Los-von-Rom-Bewegung um 1900* (unpubl. Ph. D. thesis, Univ. of Cologne, 1953), p. 93, and Iro's *Deutschvölkischer Zeitweiser* 1911, p. 250. For the *Los-von-Rom-Bewegung* from the perspective of church history see Karl-Reinhart Trauner, *Die Los-von-Rom-Bewegung: Gesellschaftspolitische und kirchliche Strömung in der ausgehenden Habsburgermonarchie* (Szentendre, 1999).

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element, namely, racism. The *völkisch* racial ideology can be seen as a general key to the understanding of the *völkisch* ideology and movement.

The majority of the organizations which considered themselves part of the loosely defined *völkisch* movement therefore demanded that their members take the 'blood oath'. According to the *völkisch* doctrine of salvation, race determined the fate of the individual as well as of the racially defined *Volk*. In the case of the Germans, this meant that 'we are of holy German descent, of the blood from which will grow the salvation of the world. We go forth from the great homeland as Germans, and this is our task, to fulfil the destiny of our birth. ... Wake up, German *Volk*, your home is in danger ... ! Rub the sleep out of your eyes, the deed wants doing! It is waiting for you! You are descended from God: set up your law in the world! The law of your blood! The law of your heart! The freedom and power of your God!' <sup>17</sup>

According to *völkisch* views, this racial doctrine with religious trimmings could explain the past and the present as much as dictate the future. The *Völkische* assumed that 'common blood and common history form a common state' and that the community they aspired to had to be a racial state built on a racial basis. <sup>18</sup> They therefore called for 'a thorough German renewal ... in the service of our own race'. <sup>19</sup> This gave rise to a comprehensive Racial Renewal Programme, whose aim was to create *deutschvölkische* people. These would typically be tall, long-headed, blond-haired, and blue-eyed.

Like all *Völkische*, the religious prophets of the movement also worked from the notion of 'race and blood'. <sup>20</sup> In calling for a German religion, or one that was *arteigen* ('true to type'), they were in fact calling for a religion of race. Religion provided the justification for the movement's apocalyptic doctrine of salvation, which was believed in fanatically. Moreover, it gave the *Völkische* a reason for their anti-egal-

<sup>17</sup> Ernst Hunkel, 'Vom Deutschen Orden', *Heimdall*, 19 (1914), p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> 'Was ist deutschvölkisch?', *Thüringer Landes-Zeitung*, 14 April 1914, no. 86.

<sup>19</sup> Dietwart [= Philipp Stauff], 'Regierung und völkische Bewegung', *Bismarck-Bund: Monatsschrift des Deutschen Bismarck-Bundes*, 10 (1912), pp. 115–18, quotation at p. 117.

<sup>20</sup> Ludwig Fahrenkrog, 'Die Germanische Glaubens-Gemeinschaft', *Allgemeiner Beobachter*, 3 (1913), pp. 227–9, quotation at p. 229.



itarian, racist intellectual construct in the first place. In essence, this was that 'the salvation of the world will come from German blood'.<sup>21</sup>

*Völkisch* racial ideology was based on the ideas of Gobineau and social Darwinism, and was influenced by contemporary eugenics. It postulated an almost irreversible process of 'Aryan decline'. This degeneration of the Germans was partly their own fault and partly caused by foreign influences. It culminated, in *völkisch* ideology, in pessimistic visions of decline and imminent racial death. The *völkisch* ideology assumed that the Aryans were the highest of all the human races, and that among the Aryans, the Germanic or Nordic race was the most highly developed but also the most under threat. The uneasiness which the *Völkische* felt at the upheavals and changes of the modern age in the economy, in society, and culture led them back to a process of racial degeneration, which they explained as the consequence of racial miscegenation and the influence of foreign races. They saw this alleged process of degeneration as beginning in Antiquity when the Romans came over the Alps. These non-Germanic peoples, Roman civilization, and Christianity began to deprive 'the Germanic tree of rising spring sap', as they saw it.<sup>22</sup>

The 'anti-Romanism' that accompanied both the German reception of Tacitus and the expression of Teutonic ideology since Humanism is at the bottom of this *völkisch* view.<sup>23</sup> Anti-Romanism was a constituent element of the *völkisch* ideology, and especially of the *völkisch*-religious movement. As far as its prophets were concerned, the *völkisch* idea began to spread with the Reformation in Germany. Luther, therefore, features as a German-*völkisch* hero, whose achievement was to have freed 'the Germanic world of Rome's domination'.<sup>24</sup> Arminius and the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest enjoyed the same veneration as Luther

<sup>21</sup> Hunkel, 'Vom Deutschen Orden', p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> Quotation from a letter written in October 1911 in Munich-Pasing by a supporter of the *völkisch* movement to his sister-in-law; original in the private ownership of the author. The main part of the letter is reproduced in Uwe Puschner, 'Grundzüge völkischer Rassenideologie', in Achim Leube (ed.), *Die mittel- und osteuropäische Ur- und Frühgeschichtsforschung in den Jahren 1933–1945* (Heidelberg, 2001), pp. 39–60.

<sup>23</sup> Klaus von See, *Deutsche Germanen-Ideologie vom Humanismus bis zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt/M., 1970), p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> Ernst Wachler, *Über die Zukunft des deutschen Glaubens: Ein philosophischer Versuch*, Irminsul. Schriftenreihe für Junggermanische (eddische) Religion

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and the Reformation. To the present day, the *Deutschgläubige* use a calendar that begins with the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest (AD 9).

Anti-Romanism, anchored in religious and cultural sub-groups of the *völkisch* movement, found a firm place in the *völkisch* ideology of race in the form of anti-Catholicism. In a theory of conspiracy and encirclement, interpreted in a racist way, this ideology postulated a pact between Rome, the Romance nations, and the Slavs whose aim was 'to put a big circle ... around the German *Reich*, starting from the Adriatic and going via Austria to Poland on the one side, and via Switzerland and Lorraine as far as Belgium on the other'.<sup>25</sup> But this was not all. The anti-Slav feeling displayed here fed into a pernicious *völkisch* racial apocalyptic vision in which anti-Slavism merged with anti-Semitism and the Yellow Peril, heralding a battle of the races. This construct saw the Jewish and the Slavic people living in the German Reich as the vanguard of the threatening Yellow Peril.

These comments point to conclusions which the *völkisch* camp drew from the pessimistic evidence of racial degeneration, alienation, and inundation by foreign elements (*Überfremdung*). From the start, the *Völkische* were not prepared simply to stand by and watch the 'twilight of the Aryan race'.<sup>26</sup> Referring to the demands of life-style reformers and eugenicists, they drew up a Racial Renewal Programme touching on all areas of life. In 1913, the *Deutschbund*, one of the most influential organizations of the *völkisch* movement, summed all this up in its 'racial working plan'. As far as the *Deutschbund* was concerned, 'maintaining and cultivating the race' was the 'most urgent' of all '*völkisch* tasks'. The 'racial working plan' encouraged more research on racial history, racial biology, and eugenics, and promoted a comprehensive educational campaign which aimed to disseminate the *völkisch* racial ideology among the German people and give it a firm popular grounding. Above all, however, it prescribed 'practical measures', including abstinence and support for the temperance movement, a vegetarian diet, and physical exercise in the form of sport, or at least regular doses of fresh air.<sup>27</sup>

und Weltanschauung, 44 (Freiberg i. Sachsen, 1930; 1st edn, Berlin, 1901), p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> Albrecht Wirth, *Männer, Völker und Zeiten: Eine Weltgeschichte in einem Bande* (Hamburg, 1912), pp. 317 f.

<sup>26</sup> This term is attributed to Otto Ammon.

<sup>27</sup> 'Arbeitsplan des Deutschbundes in der Rassenfrage', Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde, Friedrich Lange Papers, N 2165/17, p. 136. On the *Deutschbund*

The emphasis on nature and a natural lifestyle in the *völkisch* ideology was matched by a strong anti-urbanism. The city was regarded as the 'graveyard of the race'.<sup>28</sup> The *völkisch* argument against cities was that the unhealthy environmental and living conditions of the urban population made it incapable of maintaining itself. It therefore required a constant influx of people from the country, the 'physiological store-room of racial strength'.<sup>29</sup> This conviction, the racial ideological variant of conservative agro-romantic ideas, gave rise to a catalogue of measures designed to 'maintain as large a rural population as possible, consisting of physically and mentally healthy people to serve as the source of the power of our *Volk*, and from which the urban population will repeatedly be supplemented'.<sup>30</sup> The flight from the land was to be countered by internal colonization, by infrastructural measures as well as measures to protect nature and foster regional values and traditions, by policies favourable to agriculture, and finally, by land reform. The efforts of the *Völkische* were unmistakably directed towards creating an agrarian society and a state based on status groups (*Ständestaat*), they sang paeans to the authenticity of life on the land and to the myth of the eternal peasant, and repeatedly called for people to leave the big cities and move to the country. Yet they did not aspire to create a purely agrarian state; nor did they aim for total re-agrarianization or the demolition of industrial complexes and big cities. Rather, they sought for solutions which compromised between the agrarian social basis of the *völkische Weltanschauung* and the industrial capitalist economic system in the sense of an 'alternative modernity' – as opposed to 'an alternative to modernity'.<sup>31</sup> Although the medium-sized production sector of the economy was, in principle, favoured over large-scale enterprises and

during the Wilhelmine period, see now Stefan Kuhn, 'Der Deutschbund' (MA thesis, Friedrich Meinecke Institute at the Free University of Berlin, 2001), and Ascan Gossler, 'Friedrich Lange und die "völkische Bewegung" des Kaiserreichs', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 83 (2001), pp. 377–411.

<sup>28</sup> Rolf Peter Sieferle and Clemens Zimmermann, 'Die Stadt als Rassengrab', in Manfred Smuda (ed.), *Die Großstadt als 'Text'*, Bild und Text (Munich, 1992), pp. 53–71.

<sup>29</sup> 'Arbeitsplan des Deutschbundes'.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Uwe Justus Wenzel, ' "Konservative Revolution": Ideengeschichtliche Reminiszenzen aus Anlaß einer neuen Studie [Rolf Peter Sieferle, *Die Konserva-*

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big industry, nobody, declared a *völkisch* spokesman, thought of reorganizing heavy industry into small-scale enterprises. None the less, in the interests of 'racial improvement', the *Völkische* tried to stem the further expansion of big industry and large cities.

As early as 1896 Theodor Fritsch, generally known as a perfidious anti-Semite and an 'early planner of the Holocaust',<sup>32</sup> proposed the concept of the garden city as an alternative to urban industrial social developments, and as a synthesis between town and country. To Fritsch's annoyance, these ideas entered the popular consciousness not through his own publications, but through those of a Briton. The founding of the Deutsche Gartenstadt-Gesellschaft and the garden city movement in 1902 looked to *The Garden-City of Tomorrow* by Ebenezer Howard, published in 1898. This book, like Fritsch's publications, was based on notions of agrarian and lifestyle reform. The garden cities created in Germany were not built according to Fritsch's plans, and their builders certainly did not subscribe to the *völkisch* dogma of common ownership of the land. None the less, they were very popular as places to live among the prominent members of the *völkisch* community. While the *Völkische* preached the benefits of living in the country, they themselves lived in garden cities because their clientele was urban.

Most members of the *völkisch* movement saw garden cities as 'an important method of ensuring the health and welfare of the Germans' in the struggle against 'racial deterioration'.<sup>33</sup> But the *völkisch* racial breeders had doubts as to whether the 'new *Mensch*' could be brought forth, and a 'racial economy' successfully be based on 'garden cities, the cultivation of fruit and vegetables, and other small-scale means'.<sup>34</sup>

The 'racial working plan' already mentioned above sums up, in a shocking and concise way, what a *völkisch* racial economy was, and

*tive Revolution: Fünf biographische Skizzen*, Frankfurt/M., 1995], *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, no. 28, 3 Feb. 1996.

<sup>32</sup> Günter Hartung, 'Vor-Planer des Holocaust', *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg*, 41 (1992), pp. 13–20. On the following, see the case study by Michael Mann, 'Gartenstadt Hellerau oder die Verbürgerlichung der urbanen Idylle', *Historische Anthropologie*, 9 (2001), pp. 405–31, which sums up the state of research.

<sup>33</sup> *Iro's Deutschvölkischer Zeitweiser* 1913, pp. 158 f.

<sup>34</sup> Willibald Hentschel, 'Rassen-Ökonomie', *Hammer* (1906), no. 91, pp. 190–6.

how 'population policy and breeding policy' were to be conducted 'according to the doctrines of looking after the race': 'The eradication of those of inferior worth is to be aimed for, while the industrious and noble sections of the population are to be encouraged to reproduce ..., and the already very dangerous decline in the rate of population increase is to be combated (by higher tax relief for families with more children, a military service exemption tax, a tax on unmarried men, laws protecting mothers and babies, bonuses for breast-feeding etc.).' Further, contraception was rejected while 'the establishment of a German foundation for the support of racially valuable progeny' was demanded. Calls were made for partners to be selected 'according to racial criteria', and finally, 'for mothers of large families to attain their proper position of respect and honour in public opinion'.<sup>35</sup>

For a small group of *Völkische*, these plans and ideas for reforming lifestyles did not go anywhere near far enough. The ultimate *völkisch* goal of 'racial purity' and the ideal of the tall, long-headed, long-faced, blond-haired, and blue-eyed *völkisch* person of the future, they believed, could hardly be realized by means of the measures described. They put their hopes on planned 'selective breeding for Germanic racial purity'.<sup>36</sup>

The biologist Willibald Hentschel was the originator of this idea. In his programme, first published in 1904 as *Mittgart: Ein Weg zur Erneuerung der germanischen Rasse*, Hentschel put forward a detailed plan for his utopia of racial breeding; indeed the *völkisch* racial mania for the 'new man' peaked in his project. Mittgart was a code-name for ascetic rural co-operative settlements in which private property would be unknown, so-called human gardens where men and women, selected by experts, would live in a ratio of one man to ten women. Groups numbering one hundred men and one thousand women were to live in separate areas, even during temporarily concluded marriages. These were to end with the beginning of a pregnancy. After two or three years, women would be permitted to marry again. In line with *völkisch* principles, the education of the children was to emphasize the physical. Boys, in groups of a hundred, were to be brought up in Spartan simplicity whereas the girls were to be left

<sup>35</sup> 'Arbeitsplan des Deutschbundes'.

<sup>36</sup> Max Robert Gerstenhauer, *Rassenlehre und Rassenpflege*, ed. by Deutschbund (2nd edn.; Zeitz, 1920), p. 48.

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in the care of their mothers. Only the boys and girls 'selected to establish a new generation' were to stay in Mittgart. All the rest, those of 'inferior racial worth' would have to 'be released ... into the world when they reached the age of sixteen'; there, with the so-called Minus Variants (*Minusvarianten*) who were not considered suitable for the Mittgart project, they would form the urban population that was 'condemned to die'. Hentschel's plan was built on the assumption of rapid success. He counted on the existence of three hundred Mittgart settlements, which would send 'an unbroken stream of one hundred thousand human children of superlative hereditary stock into the cultural areas ... who would effect an immediate transformation across the whole breadth of national experience'.<sup>37</sup>

Hentschel's proposal produced a heated controversy in the ranks of the *Völkische*. The majority doubted that the project would be successful, in particular, the vague possibility of breeding humans with 'long heads' and true 'Germanic qualities'.<sup>38</sup> Even greater difficulties were caused by the so-called Mittgart marriage, which ran counter to the general morality not only of the *Völkische*, who saw 'lifelong monogamy [as] the ideal form of human mating' and 'permanent marriage ... as the most suitable ... for the raising of children'.<sup>39</sup> None of the compromise solutions put forward, such as the proposal to allow the Mittgart marriage only for a transitional period, found any more favour than did references to Tacitus and *Germania*, otherwise recognized as sacrosanct sources for the values and norms to which the *Völkische* were to aspire.

Apart from financial difficulties, the Mittgart marriage was the biggest obstacle to the acceptance of Hentschel's plans, and despite several attempts, they remained unrealized before the First World War. To be sure, Mittgart and the *völkisch* settlement projects associated with it, such as Heimland, a settlement near Rheinsberg which existed from 1909 to just after the First World War, were firmly rejected by the female members of an otherwise male-dominated move-

<sup>37</sup> Willibald Hentschel, 'Ist Mittgart "erdacht"?', *Hammer*, 1928, no. 636, pp. 609–12, quotation at pp. 611 f., and id., *Mittgart: Ein Weg zur Erneuerung der germanischen Rasse* (5th edn.; Leipzig, 1916), quotation at pp. 25 f.

<sup>38</sup> Gerstenhauer, *Rassenlehre*, p. 49.

<sup>39</sup> Theodor Fritsch, 'Die rechte Ehe: Ein Wort zum Züchtungs-Gedanken und Mittgart-Problem', *Hammer* (1913), no. 255, pp. 57–64, quotations at pp. 57 and 61.

ment. But there were exceptions, such as Margart Hunkel, who invoked the 'German motherhood of God' and founded the *Deutsche Schwesternschaft* in 1917.<sup>40</sup> This, in turn, gave rise to Donnershag, a *deutschgläubige* outdoor settlement founded near Sontra in Upper Hesse in 1919, where it is alleged that Hentschel's ideas on breeding were put into practice for a short time.

Although these extreme *völkisch* proposals for racial renewal failed either at the planning stage or were hindered by external conditions, it would be wrong to dismiss them as misguided, unrealistic ideas, for the prophets of the *völkische Weltanschauung* and their followers took them very seriously indeed. Their goal was for 'a people with *völkisch* ideas to aspire to racial purity'.<sup>41</sup> They actually wanted 'to replace Adam ... with their own, Germanic Adam who contained all the glory of the human spirit within himself', as Theodor Mommsen wrote derisively, misjudging the fanaticism of the movement.<sup>42</sup>

Ultimately, the aim of the *Völkische* was to create 'new', racially pure human beings who, with others of their kind, that is, racially pure Germanic-Aryan individuals, would form the new *Volk* of the 'one Reich'. This greater German Reich was to be predominantly agrarian and to have a constitution based on professional status groups. According to the slogan of the *völkisch* journal *Heimdall*, it was to stretch from Scandinavia to the Adriatic, from Boulogne to the Narwa, and from Besançon to the Black Sea. The *Völkische* used these ideas to justify their hate campaigns directed against the Slavs and Jews who lived in the German Reich, and to legitimize their demands for *Lebensraum* in the East, and their call for discriminatory measures against Jews and Slavs in the Reich. The measures they demanded ranged from deprivation of civil rights, expulsion, resettlement, and deportation, to extermination, which was already being openly discussed at the turn of the century.

Yet from the start, the *Völkische* were unanimously agreed that the 'race question' could not be allowed to be the only content of the *völ-*

<sup>40</sup> Margart Hunkel, *Von deutscher Gottesmutterschaft, Deutscher Glaube: Beiträge zur religiösen Erneuerung unseres Volkes*, 5 (Sontra, 1919).

<sup>41</sup> Georg Girke, 'Rassen, Völker und Staaten', *Deutschvölkische Hochschulblätter*, 4 (1913/14), pp. 17-20.

<sup>42</sup> Theodor Mommsen, 'Deutschland und England', *Die Nation: Wochenschrift für Politik, Volkswirtschaft und Literatur*, 21/2 (1903), pp. 20 f., quotation at p. 21.

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*kische Weltanschauung*. This is where their concern with religion comes in. Religion and religiosity were the driving forces behind all thought and action in the *völkisch* spirit. This did not indicate a renunciation of the racial dogma; rather, the idea of a religion which was inherent in and innate to the race was built upon it.

In the *völkische Weltanschauung*, action that was considered responsible in racial terms presupposed ethical-religious action dictated by race. The 'loss of religion among the people' was seen as a threat to the 'existence of state and society' and as significant evidence for the *völkisch* thesis of degeneration, racial deterioration, and 'decline of the Aryan race'.<sup>43</sup> By the same token, religion was regarded as guaranteeing a moral, *völkisch*, and thus also racial rebirth.

*Völkisch* religion was always orientated towards this world rather than the next. Thus it was a logical demand that 'saving the soul' had to start with 'saving the body' – which referred to the comprehensive programme of racial regeneration.<sup>44</sup> There was agreement that 'natural characteristics and qualities' could only develop fully in a racially pure *Volk*.<sup>45</sup> The path which the *Völkische* publicized and themselves trod towards a 'German rebirth' thus necessarily had to start from a specific 'German religion'. The lack of a religion specific to their race was seen as the 'greatest danger for the future of the Germanic people; that is its Achilles heel; whoever hits it there will bring it down'.<sup>46</sup>

One principle was common to the various concepts for a Germanic religion that were drawn up. This was expressed by a *völkisch* ideologue when he confessed that he wanted 'real religion,

<sup>43</sup> 'Zur Religions-Frage', *Hammer* (1910), no. 188, pp. 197–201, continued in no. 191, pp. 281–4, main statements at pp. 200 f., quotation at p. 281 (no author credited). For the context see Gerd Krumeich and Hartmut Lehmann (eds), *'Gott mit uns': Nation, Religion und Gewalt im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte, 162 (Göttingen, 2000), and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Dieter Langewiesche (eds), *Nation und Religion in der deutschen Geschichte* (Frankfurt/M., 2001). For the background see Hugh McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848–1914* (London, 2000).

<sup>44</sup> 'Zur Religions-Frage', p. 200.

<sup>45</sup> Max Robert Gerstenhauer, *Der Führer: Ein Wegweiser zu deutscher Weltanschauung und Politik* (Jena, 1927), p. 132.

<sup>46</sup> Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2 (5th edn.; Munich, 1904), quotation at p. 750.



not just a *Weltanschauung* with religious elements'.<sup>47</sup> According to *völkisch* views, ideology did not have a religious character. It was not seen as a substitute religion, a political religion. In my opinion this, in addition to the rejection of the status of a party and of a hierarchical party organization, is an important difference between the *völkisch* movement and National Socialism.

Christianity in its traditional form could not provide the religion specific to their race sought by the *Völkische* because it did not fulfil two fundamental demands of *völkisch* religiosity. In sharp contrast to Christian teaching, the *völkisch* notion of a religion specific to their race was decidedly not other-worldly. It was directed towards this world rather than the next, and towards race, which was the determinant of all being.

Up to this point there was agreement among the members of the *völkisch* movement. Where they differed was on what form this religion should take. The proposals put forward ranged from a Germanized Christianity to a total rejection of Christianity in favour of pagan religions. However, only a minority of adherents turned away from Christianity completely. Most clung to a Christian religion that had been Germanized to varying degrees, but like all *völkisch* religious concepts, was strongly anti-Semitic and, especially, anti-Catholic. Luther and the Reformation were significant. In the *völkisch* awareness, *völkisch* ideas had begun to spread through Germany since the Reformation. This is where the roots of the *völkisch* veneration of Luther, which came out of national Protestantism, lay. But in *völkisch* Christian thinking, Luther's doctrine was 'not the highest stage of knowledge', and the Reformation was considered 'half-finished'.<sup>48</sup> In the general *völkisch* view, the work begun by Luther and Bismarck, that other German reformer, was awaiting completion in the establishment of the greater Germanic Reich described above.

The breeding ground of *völkisch* religion and, in particular, so-called *Deutschchristentum*, was unmistakably the combination of

<sup>47</sup> Adolf Bartels, *Der deutsche Verfall* (3rd edn. Zeitz, 1919; 1st edn., 1913), p. 37. On the context see Wolfgang Hardtwig, 'Political Religion in Modern Germany: Reflections on Nationalism, Socialism, and National Socialism', *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute*, no. 28 (Washington, 2001), pp. 3–27.

<sup>48</sup> 'Unsere Stellung zum Katholizismus', *Hammer* (1905), no. 71, pp. 241–6, quotation at p. 244.

nationalism and Protestantism during the Kaiserreich.<sup>49</sup> *Deutschchristentum*, however, saw 'the Protestant church as only a transitional stage towards a *deutschvölkisch* faith'.<sup>50</sup> The *völkisch* ideologue Adolf Bartels coined the term 'Deutschchristentum' (German Christianity) in 1913, when he issued the slogan: 'More *Deutschchristentum*; less Jewish Christianity.'<sup>51</sup> It is clear that Bartels's *völkisch* origins lay in anti-Semitism. Just as obvious is the key significance of anti-Semitism for the *völkisch* movement, the *völkisch* religious movement, and, in particular, for the *deutschchristlich* movement. In fact, the *völkisch* dogma of the inseparability of race and religion made anti-Semitism a necessary precondition. Christianity, however, God's 'new bond' with mankind, is based on God's first bond with his chosen people, the Israelites. Jesus Christ, the founder of the religion, was himself a Jew, and Luther the reformer was a Catholic monk.

This led the *völkisch* supporters of Christianity to conclude that 'in continuation of the first reformation and purification effected by Luther', Christianity now needed 'another, up-to-date purification in a free and Aryan spirit'.<sup>52</sup> The precondition for the Germanization of Christianity was 'Entjudung' (getting rid of the Jews).<sup>53</sup> 'From now on we can recognize only those parts of the Bible that to some extent agree with the Aryan and Germanic spirit', went the slogan.<sup>54</sup> These

<sup>49</sup> On the context see Barbara Stambolis, 'Religiöse Symbolik und Programmatik in der Nationalbewegung des 19. Jahrhunderts im Spannungsfeld konfessioneller Gegensätze', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 82 (2000), pp. 157–89, and now on the more differentiated relationship between Protestantism and anti-Semitism, Wolfgang E. Heinrichs, *Das Judenbild im Protestantismus des Deutschen Kaiserreichs*, Schriftenreihe des Vereins für Rheinische Kirchengeschichte, 145 (Cologne, 2000). In this context see also Justus H. Ulbricht, 'Klänge "deutschen Wesens": Feiern, Rituale und Lieder deutschreligiöser Gruppierungen', in Richard Faber (ed.), *Säkularisierung und Resakralisierung: Zur Geschichte des Kirchenliedes und seiner Rezeption* (Würzburg, 2001), pp. 129–44.

<sup>50</sup> 'Vom deutschen Glaubenstume', *Heimdall*, 19 (1914), pp. 4–6, 17–29, 41–4, quotation at p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> Bartels, *Verfall*, p. 38.

<sup>52</sup> Adolf Reinecke, *Deutsche Wiedergeburt: Grundlegende Bausteine zur Jungdeutschen Bewegung*, ed. by Alld deutscher Sprach- und Schriftverein (Lindau, 1901), p. 183.

<sup>53</sup> Alfred Heil, 'Vom neuen Glauben', *Hammer* (1911), no. 222, pp. 477–9, quotation at p. 478.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 479.

included neither the Old Testament, nor the epistles of St Paul in the New Testament.

At the hub of *Deutschchristentum* lay the doctrine of Christ. The *Deutschchristen* simply declared Christ to have been an Aryan. This made original Christianity an 'Aryan religion' which, according to their racial ideology was appropriate for the Germanic soul. All that had to be done was for Christianity to be restored to its original form and purified of foreign 'influences'. The 'German Christ' – or rather, the *völkisch* idol – formed by this thinking was the model and likeness of the *völkisch* figure of light which it was the goal of all visions of racial renewal to create: a 'Christ of life', of this world rather than the next, a Christ of action, a stubborn, death-defyingly courageous and heroic fighter and leader who was ready to make sacrifices.<sup>55</sup> This heroic so-called Christianity, which had been totally stripped of its true contents and filled with new ones, was held up as the historical religion of the Germans, the one appropriate to their nature, and the 'German Christ' was seen as the 'one God'.

The *völkisch* pagans made entirely different choices. This large minority within the *völkisch* religious movement found any religious idea based on Christianity unacceptable in principle. Their main criticism of *Deutschchristentum* was that it was an Aryanized version of Christianity, and they strongly rejected the anti-Semitic motives of the *deutschchristlich* demagogues. The pagans believed that *Deutschchristentum* could not be the *völkisch* religion appropriate to the Germanic people because Christianity made no sense without Judaism. Ultimately, Christianity would always be a Jewish religion. The orthodox members of those segments of the *völkisch* religious movement who believed in the Germanic peoples thus saw *Deutschchristentum* as a striking contradiction to the principles of *völkisch* racial doctrine. They demanded a truly 'German religion' which

<sup>55</sup> Josef Ludwig Reimer, *Grundzüge deutscher Wiedergeburt: Ein auf wissenschaftlicher Basis ruhendes neudeutsches Lebensprogramm für die Gebiete der Rassenpflege, Staats- und Sozialpolitik, Religion und Kultur* (2nd expanded edn.; Leipzig, 1906; 1st edn. published as *Ein pangermanisches Deutschland*), quotation at p. 89. On the 'German Christ' in art see now Eva-Maria Kaffanke, *Der deutsche Heiland: Christusdarstellungen um 1900 im Kontext der völkischen Bewegung*, Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 28: Kunstgeschichte, 383 (Frankfurt/M., 2001).

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should build on 'what our fathers believed, looked at, and thought about, so that we can use it and cherish it'.<sup>56</sup>

For the *völkisch* pagans, *Erberinnerung* (racial memory), the subconscious retention and liberation of traditional knowledge of the Germanic past, so far still buried, was the central construct. Taking recourse to it smoothed the way for the pagan *Völkische* to demand a 'hereditary religion' for the Germans. 'After all, the belief appropriate for our people once existed in a wonderful form', explained one of the leading pagans. 'It is not dead, just buried; is it not possible to uncover the soil whence it sprang? Let us try to find a way into the world of our fairy-tales and myths, to the lost shrine of our *Volk*.' Just as 'spiritual rebirth' presupposed becoming aware of and declaring a commitment to Germanic pre-history, German *Heimat*, and thus to *völkisch* uniqueness, the only 'fountain of youth' for religious renewal was 'our own *Volkstum*'. In the view of the pagans, the 'true belief of the Germans', which was essentially a natural, that is, racial, religion, survived essentially in traditional customs and, in particular, in fairy-tales, sagas, and myths. Artists, and especially writers, in whose medium, the mother-tongue, the 'ancient inheritance' had largely been preserved, were therefore called upon 'to sow the seeds of a new belief' like 'visionaries'.<sup>57</sup>

It would be precipitate to see this programme merely as a sort of religion of art or literature, a 'religion of *Germanisten*', as one *deutsch-christlicher* opponent of the pagans accused it of being.<sup>58</sup> In fact, this proposed religion, which was undoubtedly fixated on national culture, covered up a racism which was fundamental to the *völkische Weltanschauung* and culminated in the ideology of the 'master race', as well as efforts to renew the religious cults of the ancient Germanic tribes.

One of the places in which pagan ideas were put into practice was the Harzer Bergtheater, an open-air theatre near Quedlinburg, which

<sup>56</sup> Paul Hartig, *Die völkische Weltanschauung: Wege zum völkischen Werden* (Bad Berka, 1924), p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Wachler, *Zukunft*, pp. 18 and 21.

<sup>58</sup> Heinrich Driesmans, 'Über die religiöse Aufartung der Deutschen', *Allgemeiner Beobachter*, 3 (1913), pp. 199 f., quotation at p. 199. On the significance of literature for the *völkisch* and in particular, the *völkisch* religious ideology, see Günter Hartung, *Deutschfaschistische Literatur und Ästhetik: Gesammelte Studien, Gesammelte Aufsätze und Vorträge*, 1 (Leipzig, 2001).

was opened in 1903. Conceived as a temple to fire, its aim was 'to radiate and express Aryan efforts in the spiritual life of the nation'.<sup>59</sup> Before the First World War, this open-air theatre, which is still in use today, functioned as a pagan cult site, where groups who believed in a German religion would gather with their sympathizers.

In 1914 the Germanische Glaubens-Gemeinschaft and its associated Germanische Gemeinschaft of sympathizers were members of the church. In addition there were the Wodan-Gesellschaft, and the lodges Große Germanen and Nornen, the Deutsche Schafferbund and the Wandervogel Völkischer Bund für Jugendwandern. Other participants were members of the occult Germanenorden, delegates from the Fahrende Gesellen, a youth organization of the Deutschnationale Handlungsgehilfen-Verband, the Deutschbund, and the Deutschvölkischer Lehrerverband; and finally, a delegation from the Bund Deutscher Wanderer, including members of the Deutsche Vortrupp Bund, a life-style reforming youth group led by Friedrich Muck-Lamberty. Early in the 1920s, Muck-Lamberty caused a great stir when he travelled through Franconia and Thuringia with his Neue Schar, calling on young people to mobilize. Muck-Lamberty saw his destiny as 'to beget the German Christ with a blonde girl'.<sup>60</sup> This list of *völkisch* groups, or groups that were close to the *völkisch* movement, points up the *völkisch* strategy of advertising their ideas among young people and the youth movement in particular, and recruiting new members there, successfully as it appears. It also illustrates the confusing spectrum of *völkisch* religious communities.

The first *völkisch* religious community was the Aryosophical Ordo Novi Templi. Modelled on the Knights Templar, it was set up in 1900 by the former Cistercian monk and mystic of race, Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels (i.e. Adolf Lanz). Three years later the Deutschreligiöse Bund was established at the Hermann Memorial in the Teutoburg Forest. This organization can be seen as an early precursor of the organized form of the *deutschchristlich* movement, which came into being after the First World War with the founding of the Bund für deutsche Kirche in 1921. The pagans began to organize themselves in

<sup>59</sup> Ernst Wachler, 'Vom Sinn und Zweck des Harzer Bergtheaters: Ein Wort an die arisch-religiösen Verbände', *Reichswart*, 17 (22 Feb. 1936), p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted from Ulrich Linse, *Barfüßige Propheten: Erlöser der zwanziger Jahre* (Berlin, 1983), p. 121.

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1910. The two most significant organizations were the Deutschgläubige Gemeinschaft and the Germanische Glaubens-Gemeinschaft, constituted in 1911 and 1912 respectively. They either still exist today, or have been reconstituted.

The foundation history and the early years of these two organizations was deeply marked by the claims to leadership of their founding fathers: Otto Sigfrid Reuter and Ludwig Fahrenkrog. Both believed that the defining features of 'German religion' were a 'common race' and a 'common religious will'.<sup>61</sup> The aim of both was a unified 'community of blood and religion'; both therefore restricted membership to Aryans and called for freedom of the church.<sup>62</sup> Fahrenkrog and Reuter believed that 'the Germanic race' harboured the divine within itself.<sup>63</sup> 'German religion is the religion innate in German people', one of the *deutschgläubige* prophets declaimed.<sup>64</sup> From this point of view, the claim to be the elect, a willingness to act and make sacrifices, and 'breeding the race up' constituted the essence of *völkisch* religion.<sup>65</sup> This is the source of the fanaticism and aggressiveness of the *Völkische*, and of their view of themselves as the 'elect'.

The consequences of this sort of thinking are well known. They have given rise to three theses which underlie research on the *völkische Weltanschauung* and movement. First, the *völkische Weltanschauung* was completely formed before the First World War. The same applies to the *völkisch* movement. It also existed long before the First World War. Since the mid-1890s, in the Wilhelmine period, the *Völkische* had created the ideological breeding ground, the organizational prerequisites, and the propaganda instruments for National

<sup>61</sup> Ludwig Fahrenkrog, 'Germanisch-deutsche Religion', *Upland*, 1 (1912), p. 21.

<sup>62</sup> Otto Sigfrid Reuter, *Die große Stunde: Deutsche Religion, Deutscher Orden, Deutschreligiöse Gemeinschaft*, Mitteilungen der Kanzlei des Deutschen Ordens (Berlin, 1912; reprinted Hamburg, 1981), p. 5.

<sup>63</sup> Fahrenkrog, 'Religion', p. 21.

<sup>64</sup> Ernst Hunkel, quoted from *Deutschgläubig: Eine Geschichte der Deutschgläubigen Gemeinschaft unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Beziehungen zu den zeitgenössischen völkisch-religiösen Gründungen des XX. Jahrhunderts*, supplement to *Ring der Treue*, ed. by Deutschgläubige Gemeinschaft, vol. 1 (no place, 1968), p. 129.

<sup>65</sup> Fahrenkrog, 'Religion', p. 61.

*'One People, One Reich, One God'*

Socialism and modern right-wing extremism in the form of a network of institutions covering Germany, and aggressive and focused agitation.<sup>66</sup> Secondly, the relevant concepts, motives, patterns of thought, and enemy images were shaped during this twenty-five years of *völkisch* agitation before the First World War. The Nazis drew on this fund of *völkisch* sympathizers and on their propaganda arsenal. While they regarded much as eccentric, diffuse, even as counter to their beliefs, they took over one thing in its entirety. This was, thirdly, the *völkisch* racial ideology, comprised in the slogan 'one people, one Reich, one God', the constituent element of the *völkische Weltanschauung*. All three *völkisch* demands were destined to fail in the social and political reality of Germany after the First World War. Yet the Nazis made use of the *völkisch* programme of 'one God', which was ready to be drawn upon in the minds of many people. The heroic German saviour figure, familiar from the *völkisch* programme for earthly salvation, could be transformed into a charismatic *Führer* figure. Thus 'one people, one Reich, one God' became 'one People, one Reich, one *Führer*'.

<sup>66</sup> Traditional elements of *völkisch* thinking can also be found in contemporary fantasy literature, in alternative movements, and in the Black Metal segment of the Gothic movement; on this, e.g., Stefanie von Schnurbein, 'Kräfte der Erde—Kräfte des Blutes: Elemente völkischer Ideologie in Fantasy-Romanen von Frauen', *Weimarer Beiträge*, 44 (1998), pp. 600-14; Justus H. Ulbricht, 'Die Heimat als Umwelt des Volkes: Ökologische Denkfiguren in Ideologie und Programmatik "neurechter" Organisationen', in Richard Faber, Hajo Funke, and Gerhard Schoenberger (eds.), *Rechtsextremismus: Ideologie und Gewalt*, Publikationen der Gedenkstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, 5 (Berlin, 1995), pp. 221-40; and Daniela Tandeci, *Nachtsaiten der Musik: Grauzonen und Braunzonen in der schwarzen Musikszene* (no place, no year [Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2000]).

## Article

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