



From Christ to Odin

The Mythic Undercurrent of German Nationalism (1800–1933)

Myth, Religion, and the Sacralization of Volk and Heimat

Presentation for the course German Nationalism

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The Religious Vacuum of Unification

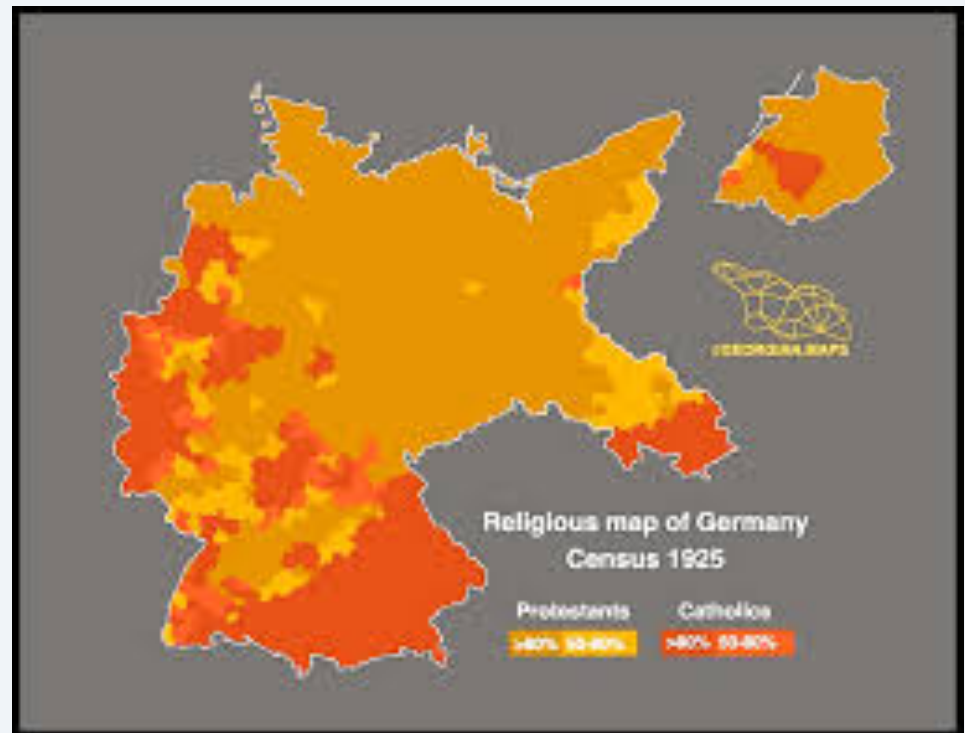
- Germany lacked a single confessional identity
- Catholic–Protestant division blocked symbolic unity
- Nationalism required a new unifying myth

Why Christianity Appeared Problematic

- Universalism conflicted with ethnic particularism
- Roman and Judeo-Christian origins framed as 'foreign'
- Confessional conflict weakened cohesion

Kulturkampf (1870s)

- State–Church conflict politicized religion
- Catholic loyalty to Rome framed as anti-national
- Religion became a boundary of belonging



Anchor I: Hermann / Arminius

- Pre-Christian myth of resistance to Rome
- Romantic nationalism reimagined Hermann
- German identity before Christianity



Anchor II: Romantic Myth Recovery

- Folklore treated as Volkskultur
- Jacob Grimm reconstructs Germanic antiquity
- Myth supplies historical depth



Anchor III: Wagner & Bayreuth

- Germanic myth becomes national culture
- Bayreuth as ritualized pilgrimage
- Art supplies emotion and destiny



Anchor IV: The Völkisch Turn

- Myth becomes worldview
- Volk, Blut, Boden, Heimat sacralized
- Nature religion replaces universalism

Institutionalization (1890–1918)

- Völkisch ideas enter organizations
- Langbehn and List systematize myth
- Symbolism moves toward politics

Christianity vs Paganism (1900–1933)

- Germanized Christianity vs neo-paganism
- Shared rejection of universalism
- Ethnic particularism as core

Conclusion

- Paganism did not replace Christianity
- It acted as a mythic undercurrent
- Nationalism became sacralized

Selected Bibliography

George L. Mosse – The Crisis of German Ideology

Helmut Walser Smith – German Nationalism and Religious Conflict

Uwe Puschner – Völkisch-Religious Movements

Stefanie von Schnurbein – Norse Revival

Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke – The Occult Roots of Nazism