According to Goethe, “writing history is a way of getting the past off your back.”¹ In the twentieth century, Protestant theology has a heavy burden on its back—the readiness of some of its most distinguished representatives to embrace totalitarian regimes, notably Adolf Hitler’s “Third Reich.” In this matter the historian’s task is not to jettison but to ensure that the burden on Protestants is not too lightly cast aside—an easy temptation if we imagine that the theologians who turned to Hitler did so with the express desire of embracing a monster. On the contrary: they did so believing their choice was ethically correct. How could this come to pass in the homeland of the Reformation?

To begin with, let me reassure you that the original core of the Nazi movement was not made up of distinguished theologians and church leaders. Professors Gerhard Kittel and Friedrich Gogarten did not run in Nazi circles until the spring of 1933. The most brilliant of the group, Emanuel Hirsch, an old friend of Tillich’s and a famous professor of church history, did not support Hitler until

¹Lecture given to the faculty of the Divinity School, Harvard University, 9 January 1986.

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¹ “Geschichte schreiben ist eine Art, sich das Vergangene vom Halse zu schaffen.” Text according to Horst Günther, ed., Goethe Erfahrung der Geschichte (Frankfurt: Insel, 1982) 9 = Maximen und Reflexionen, no. 105, according to Ms. Christa Sammons, Curator of the Yale Beinecke Library Collection of German Literature.
April of 1932, later going on to join the party and even to enter the auxiliary of the SS as a supporting member.2

Despite this relatively late turn to Naziism, each did have long-standing ties to wider conservative circles. This point holds in detail for the Göttingen church historian Hirsch (1888–1972), whose turn to Naziism can be properly grasped only against the backdrop of contemporary currents. Thus some attention to these currents must precede a look at Hirsch himself as political theologian and diagnostician of secularizing decadence.

Although most conservative thought in Germany after 1918 was well rooted in respectable traditions far more attractive than the vulgarity of the rowdy Nazis, nevertheless conservatism took every conceivable shape. In Weimar conservatism there was something to appeal to every critic of democracy, from the most educated to the most violent. Outmoded and pseudo-scientific racism, sophisticated cultural history, occult antiquarian movements, Romantic nostalgia, prophecies of the future, Nordic neopagan rune religions, academic research on the so-called problem of “Late Judaism” in antiquity, right-wing appropriation of Marxist denunciation of “Late Capitalism,” elitist sociology and literature, and crackpot theories linking the world’s fate to Hyperborean ice ages all mingled together to nourish resentment against liberalism, democracy, capitalism, socialism, and Judaism, and to foster hopes for a rebirth of the medieval Reich, the old German Empire so unsatisfyingly revived by Bismarck. Conservatives yearned for authority, hierarchy, true allegiance, salvation from communism, and for a strong central state and strong traditional values in the world of urban industrialization and pluralism.3

While this chaos appeared without form, and void, a basic fundament or morphology did underlie conservative diversity. According to Kurt Sontheimer, Armin Mohler, and H. Stuart Hughes, the common element was the tendency to think in eternal cycles of historical decay and regeneration. Careful scholars readily detect a foundation for such cyclical thinking behind the vestigial


3 Hans Kohn, The Mind of Germany (New York: Scribner’s, 1960). For bibliography and documentation on these points see Appendix A below on Weimar conservatism. The works cited in appendices will be referred to in text footnotes in shortened form derived from first citations in the appendices.
survival of linear or arrow-like apocalyptic terminology in the cycle-fixated conservatism of the Weimar period.\textsuperscript{4}

While such cyclical thinking goes back to Polybius and Vico, it became a Germanic obsession only with the popularization of cyclical interpretations of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence of all things. Nietzsche's \textit{Birth of Tragedy} from 1872 argues that the ironic distance of modern historical criticism is part of an eternal cycle known already in ancient Greece, where unhistorical, primordial myth, health, and creativity had originally unified the culture. Myth in its immediate, irrational,\textsuperscript{5} enthusiastic power had helped the individual to endure the horrors of life, even as it had provided a necessary religious foundation for the state. Individuals, the state, art, and all branches of culture by means of myth had put the "stamp of the eternal" on daily life and thus "desecularized" (\textit{entweltlicht}) life by removing it from the "relativity of time."\textsuperscript{6}

For Nietzsche the artistic power of myth convinces us that even the ugly and horrible are part of an artistic game which we sense only dimly—life becomes a "comedy of art" prepared as a "perpetual entertainment for itself" by whatever power animates the world. Only by somehow mythically sensing this do we attain to eternal dignity; in Nietzsche's famous phrase, "it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified."\textsuperscript{7}

Here Nietzsche the future Antichrist chooses the inner-worldly and amoral aesthetic salvation of Dionysos conferred in recurring cycles. He thus anticipates his later explicit choice of Dionysos over the otherworldly salvation

\textsuperscript{4} Sontheimer, \textit{Denken}, 43–50; Hughes, \textit{Consciousness}, 375–76; Mohler, \textit{Revolution}, 78–90. Mohler (\textit{Revolution}, 85, 111) argues convincingly that, since the temporal linearity of Christianity had deeply marked language for two thousand years, Weimar conservatives at times used "linear" or "arrowlike" terms to express what at bottom were concepts of cyclical recurrence; hence the occurrence of "apocalyptic" or "eschatological" rhetoric of catastrophic decadence among conservatives need not signify anything more than linguistic inertia, without in any way denaturing their basic adherence to the premise of eternal recurrence. Cf. Norman Cohn, \textit{The Pursuit of the Millennium} (2d ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Will-Erich Peuckert, \textit{Die Grosse Wende}: \textit{Das apokalyptische Saeculum und Luther} (Hamburg: Claassen und Goverts, 1948); Knoll and Schoeps, \textit{Zeiten}; Karl Löwith, \textit{Nietzsches Philosophie der ewigen Wiederkunft des Gleichen} (Berlin: Verlag Die Runde [], 1935).

\textsuperscript{5} On the dubious utility of the ambiguous concept of "irrationalism" as a key for unlocking the political and intellectual mysteries of German history, see Rücker, "Irrational," who concludes (587) that—since Karl Popper finds it in the Left and Lukács in the Right—therefore: "Fazit des neueren Begriffsgebrauchs: Irrational denken und des Im. schuldig sind—die anderen."


\textsuperscript{7} Nietzsche, \textit{Birth}, §§ 5, 24, pp. 52, 141.
offered by the Crucified. At the same time Nietzsche believes that every culture is fated to lose touch with the mythic sources of its eternal youth. Abstract criticism and historical distance must gain the upper hand. It happened to the Greeks, even as it happened to the Germans. Abstraction and historical distance gained power over “native myth,” with baneful results for individuals, for education, for law, for the state, for art, for religion. So arose the necessity for dead, historicizing imitation of the styles and thoughts of departed ages.

With this “destruction of myth” came “the loss of mythical home, the mythic maternal womb.”8 For, when a people begins to comprehend itself historically and to smash the mythical works that surround it, there is found a corresponding “degeneration and transformation” of the people’s character, “which calls for serious reflection on how necessary and close are the fundamental connections between art and the people, myth and custom, tragedy and the state.” Once this degeneration begins in a people, writes Nietzsche, “we generally find a decisive secularization (Verweltlichung), a break with the unconscious metaphysics of its previous existence, together with all its ethical consequences.”9

Yet with the passage of time there is hope for rebirth. The cycle turns round, even as it did in the German Middle Ages, when from the “abyss” there awakened the chorale of Luther’s Reformation, for Nietzsche a “first Dionysian luring call breaking forth from dense thickets at the approach of spring,” an anticipation of the later beauties of the music of Wagner. Likewise, in Nietzsche’s own time of decadence, there is still concealed a “glorious, intrinsically healthy, primordial power” that dreams of a “future awakening. . . . Toward this perception . . . all our hopes stretch out” with longing.10

Here are all the components in this system of cultural criticism: first, a cycle of cultural decay and rebirth, youth and age fluctuating according to closeness to the timeless eternity of irrational and ecstatically compelling myth (a view which fosters elitist hostility to rationality); second, the premise that all domains of culture—art, government, religion—are linked together and hence bound to flourish or decay according to a culture’s place on the eternal roller coaster of closeness to and separation from the eternal, mythic springtime; third, ultimate significance given to aesthetic criteria at the price of moral absolutes; fourth, salvation conceived of as within the world rather than coming from outside it—Dionysos versus the Crucified. This paradigm for cultural criticism became

10 Ibid., § 23, pp. 136–37. Let me stress that here I do not present a full interpretation of Nietzsche’s eternal return, but rather its possibilities for legitimating a cyclical pattern as basis for “conservative rebirth” after “liberal decay” as that pattern came to be used after Nietzsche’s death.
popular, especially after the German defeat in 1918. It moved from Swiss exile to become the stock-in-trade of mainline thinkers such as Thomas Mann. Those who looked back now lived in an "Old Culture," a "Late Culture," one too weak to survive the challenge of proletarian revolution unless old Europe were somehow reborn—a theme already popular before the war. Right-wing youth movements, the cult of Jugendstil, the Italian Fascist liking for songs about youth (Giovanezza) all testify to unease about life in a Spätkultur. And after all, a swastika is a revival of the ancient solar sundisk, eternally revolving in a circle.11

Crucial in all this is the emphasis on linkage of all branches of culture within a given epoch and on aesthetic amoralism that are corollaries of the more basic tendency to think in cycles. Such tendencies, summed up in Nietzsche, actually have roots reaching back to German Idealism and Romanticism. These deep roots help explain the all-pervasiveness of Weimar fondness for sine wave cycles of rebirth, a fondness even detectable in Max Weber, despite his concentration on the unilinear rationalization or secularization of life in the Western world. In truth, Weber's doubts about the primacy of the West suggested to some that Western secularization was but one part of a worldwide pattern of sine waves.12

The grand statement of these themes came in Oswald Spengler's Decline of the West, a bestseller at the close of World War I. Emphasizing the biological growth and decay of cultures and the interlinking of cultural branches at each stage of the lifecycle, Spengler predicted (as Hughes citing Talcott Parsons put it) that

the era of "individualism, humanitarianism, intellectual freedom, skepticism" was nearing its end; the new era that was dawning would be characterized by "restrictions on individual freedom . . . , a revival of faith . . . and an increase in the use of force."13

Here was a prophecy of return to primitive and barbaric vigor once decadence had intensified into decay.

II

The relation of this paradigm of cultural criticism to Christianity was an ambiguous one, simultaneously comforting and disturbing the anxious theolo-

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11 For documentation on these points see Appendix B on cultural criticism in the wake of Nietzsche.
12 Hughes, Consciousness, 376.
gian trying to tell friend from foe in the age of Bolshevik revolution. Take, for example, the conservative perception that Weimar Germany stood for pluralism, relativism, and opposition to both religion in the schools and the church tax. Given such perceptions, theologians could easily find much to like in the conservative rhetoric of decadence inspired by Nietzsche and Spengler. Between 1928 and 1937 a variety of international and German ecumenical conferences made "secularism" or the "general secularization of life and thought" a buzzword, thereby canonizing perceptions given various labels by writers during the previous century—writers ranging from Auguste Comte (1798–1857) to the recently deceased Max Weber. Yet the ambiguity remained. What exactly had been lost in this process of cultural decay and growing secularism? Was it supernatural Christianity, which then represented the primordial wellspring of European vigor, a source of transcendent remedies to Bolshevism, atheism, barbarism, and mass society? How could this be reconciled with Nietzsche's death of God and the runic neopaganism of the folkloristic conservatives? They looked for the source of eternal immanence and mythic rejuvenation and found it in Greek temples, Latin and Canaanite sacred groves, and Teutonic forests, even atop Babylonian ziggurats, but emphatically not atop Mount Sinai or Golgotha. To be sure, some followers of Nietzsche tried to make the ambiguity disappear by prescribing myth in general. This became increasingly hard as the 1930s wore on and National Socialism emerged as overtly neopagan. At length it became crucial to ask precisely what kind of a soul Jung's modern man was in search of.

In this confusing situation, some critics of mythic neopaganism took note of the conservative fondness for cyclical thinking and thus turned to the conceptualization of time in a somewhat misdirected effort at sorting out what was Christian and what pagan in contemporary cultural criticism. From the time of Lessing and Hölderlin, the Germans had strongly identified with the ancient Greeks, an identification that reached astonishing dimensions with Leni Riefenstahl's film of the Berlin Olympics, where Greek statues merge into a Greek torch-bearer running from Greece to Germany with animated map superimposed (the

16 For documentation on these points see Appendix C on paganism and religiosity.
future route of the Wehrmacht in reverse). German conservatives in particular had long identified with the Greeks. Moreover, Nietzsche himself had proclaimed that the life-loving, myth-intoxicated Greeks “during the period of their greatest strength kept a tenacious hold on their unhistorical sense,” rightly fearing that historical distance and criticism would destroy the mythic illusions necessary to fullness of life. By the turn of the century Wilhelm Windelband had taken up Nietzsche’s theme of Greek unhistoricality. In 1922 it was enshrined in an article by Ernst von Dobschütz, an opponent of the popular obsession with comparative religion approaches to New Testament study.

From there it was but a short step to the dogma that Greeks and pagans always thought in circles or cycles, even as Hebrews and Christians always thought in unilinear arrows—a misleading over-simplification canonized in the 1940s by Oscar Cullmann and Romano Guardini, only to be branded as dubious by the work of James Barr and Araldo Momigliano later on.

However mistaken Cullmann and Guardini may have been, their circle-arrow time dichotomy testifies to a very accurate theological perception that something was seriously wrong with the contemporary effort in some quarters to marry Nietzsche, Spengler, and the cyclical “unhistoricality” of mythical paganism with Christianity. Those looking for points of contrast would have done better to ask whether salvation can or cannot break in from outside time and space; the latter possibility had been excluded by Nietzsche.

Equally ambiguous was the linkage of an epoch’s departments of culture, especially the link between religion and government. German thinkers in the wake of Weber and Troeltsch corrected Marx’s materialism to allow plenty of

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17 The latter phrase I owe to Prof. John Murrin of Princeton. Note that Riefenstahl’s film of the Berlin Olympics seems to have been entitled “Olympia” in German and in French “Les Dieux du Stade.” See Charles Ford, Leni Riefenstahl (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1978) 188.


causal importance to mental and spiritual factors. Obviously, then, politics and religion affected each other in a spiral of causation. But did this mean that Christianity ought to persuade the state to help it out? When ancient Christianity had come onto the scene, it had found ready-made the term “political theology” for the god of the polis, and Augustine had not hesitated to question it. Yet ambiguity in the relation of theology to politics had grown up already with the Constantinian alliance of throne and altar. The results of modern thought on these matters were to be unpredictable.

Modern self-conscious reflection on the political use of sociology in the aftermath of 1848 brought with it an approving revival of the term “political theology.” Its Sitz im Leben was the conservative French Roman Catholicism taking its cue from the Spanish diplomat Juan Donoso Cortés (1809–1853). For his


followers, “political theology” signified a reactionary theology of history taking into account the most modern sociology—a mixture of viewpoints that eventually was to open perspectives on the possibilities of cynical self-deception as a way of synthesizing mythical antidotes to decadent unbelief.

Donoso Cortés knew the Saint-Simonians and may have been acquainted with Comte’s sociology, which paralleled intellectual with political evolution. Comte’s evolutionary scheme proceeded from theological illusion (personification) through metaphysics (legal abstraction) culminating in the descriptive positivism of modern science that renounces causes behind phenomena. The Spaniard Donoso’s political theology put such evolutionary thinking at the service of Catholic reaction, paralleling religious and political ideas. Thus “every affirmation respecting society or government ... necessarily resolves itself” into “an affirmation” about God.24

Donoso Cortés saw Europe heading for catastrophe after 1848. Deism had brought with it the weakening of monarchs into constitutional figureheads. Then the pantheist denial of a personal God in German Idealism had led to the

24 Juan Donoso Cortés, An Essay on Catholicism, Authority and Order Considered in Their Fundamental Principles (1925; trans. Madeleine Vincent Goddard; reprinted Westport, CT: Hyperion, 1979) 4. Cf. Fiorenza, “Religion und Politik,” 77: “In ihrem Eintreten für einen Parallelismus zwischen religiösen und politischen Ideen nahm die politische Theologie der katholischen Restauration mit umgekehrten Vorzeichen die marxistische Analyse von Staat und Gesellschaft vorweg. Der Marxismus kann nämlich als eine Umkehrung der zentralen These der katholischen Restauration interpretiert werden. Diese wollte den Parallelismus zwischen politischen und religiösen Ideen hervorheben, um dann zu argumentieren, dass eine Veränderung von theologischen und religiösen Ideen zu einer Veränderung politischer und gesellschaftlicher Muster führe. Der Marxismus hingegen will mit seiner Ideologiekritik das Umgekehrte betonen, nämlich dass Veränderungen in den politischen und gesellschaftlichen Mustern die religiösen Überzeugungen beeinflussen.” It is not arguable that the “real” existence of “society” or “class” or “self” is as philosophically problematical as that of “God”? Is there then any philosophical necessity for preferring as a solid point of departure any one of these ideas over any other?

Clearly after 1750 or so there occurred some analogous shift in theology and politics, in that (among “advanced” thinkers) transcendence and divine right political hierarchy gave way to Idealistic panentheism and ideas of sovereignty immanent within the “people.” Whether these analogous shifts “prove” that ideas about “God” are “really” projections of our ideas about “society,” “self,” and “politics” is, however, not immediately evident. Instead, what we may see here could simply be the triumph of a belief in the inevitability of such analogous linkage accompanied by corresponding mental labors among theologians. To be sure, a vague sense that ideas about deities and ideas about earthly orders were linked was widespread and can be found in antiquity; but with Feuerbach, Durkheim, etc., claims to illuminate these matters were put into a new sharpness, so that they became a weapon against religious belief, or (otherwise viewed) a weapon against “revolution.”
claim that political power is immanent within the electorate, so that monarchy could only be abolished. Next, out of the atheistic dethroning of any God developed the anarchistic claim that there is no divine authority to be embodied in institutions. The only remedy was dictatorship based on willpower.25

Donoso himself still operated within the framework of believing Tridentine Catholicism. The post-World War I revival of his thought occurred in a far less Christian context, strongly suggesting that theology was an ideological mask knowingly adopted by cynical proponents of political reaction.

The early 1920s were years of parallel crisis in Weimar theology and constitutional law. In theology the threat was summed up in Ernst Troeltsch, whose battle for the absoluteness of Christianity had ended with the total crisis of historical relativism. The rise of Marxism and the appearance of Freud gave new weight to Feuerbach's claim that God was merely a human projection.

In law and political science of the Weimar period the threat took shape in the crisis of state sovereignty within the dominant neo-Kantian school of jurisprudence. The major figures were Rudolf Stammler (1856–1938) and Hans Kelsen (b. 1881).26 Stammler's relativistic skepticism attacked the concepts of state and national sovereignty by making “the idea of law logically prior to the idea of the State” (Rupert Emerson's words). Having weakened the traditional state, Stammler argued that “the self-inclusive legal system” was itself sovereign. “Law creates itself by establishing the conditions under which the will of the people, the monarch, or the State is legally valid.” Stammler prohibited any


metajuristic appeal to sources outside law—at a time of chronic governmental crisis of political legitimacy.\textsuperscript{27}

Neo-Kantianism was brought to its definitive legal crisis by Kelsen. He decisively contributed to the further weakening of the notions of state and sovereignty. Kelsen held that the state as an entity is merely a fiction. Although for Kelsen the state originally was an emanation of a power political act, once established it is absorbed "wholly in the formalism of law." The state is a fiction: "The will of the state is ... a juristically constructed attribution point. Thus the person of the state, like all other legal personality, is merely the personification of legal norms."\textsuperscript{28} For Kelsen, even as the Weimar state has no "real existence in the world of causation," so likewise must the notion of sovereignty "be radically repressed."\textsuperscript{29}

In 1922, within the context of an elaborate parallel between law and theology, Kelsen asserted that the concepts of God and the state were both fictitious personifications—a claim which he supported by invoking Feuerbach, Durkheim, Freud, and Cassirer. To Kelsen, God personified socio-political systems, and the sovereign state personified legal systems. Even as Feuerbach had rightly regarded God as superfluous wish-fulfillment, so Kelsen believed he rightly could now see the state as superfluous to a modern democratic legal order no longer requiring appeal to divine right or absolute monarchy, being instead grounded in a system of closed legal norms.\textsuperscript{30}

In response to Kelsen, and in general to neo-Kantian efforts to drown the state in legal norms, conservative political theology received an impulse to further development. For example, in 1922 the controversial German jurist Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) revived Donoso Cortés’s connection of political theology

\textsuperscript{27} All quotations are from Rupert Emerson, \textit{State and Sovereignty in Modern Germany} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1928) 165 (cf. 254). See 166–67: Stammler contributed to the theory of sovereignty by pointing to "a means of escape from what the Neo-Kantians customarily called metajurisprudence. This side of the Kant-Stammler teachings was given special emphasis by later members of the school such as Julius Binder, Hans Kelsen, and Fritz Sander. The term metajurisprudence is used to include any theoretical procedure which finds the sources of law outside law itself. If the law is to be regarded, argue the Neo-Kantians, as a system of thought complete in itself, then it must be wrong to go beyond law in the search for its sources. . . . Not the spirit of the people, the monarch, or the State creates law, but law creates itself, establishes the means by which it is to be changed, and lays down the conditions under which the will of the people, the monarch, or the State is legally valid. Thus the self-inclusive legal system comes itself to be sovereign."\textsuperscript{28} All quotations from Emerson, \textit{State}, 170, 72.


\textsuperscript{30} Kelsen, "'Gott und Staat,'
\textit{Logos} 11 (1922/23) 261–84; cf. Kelsen, \textit{Staatsbegriff}. 
with secularization. Schmitt’s transformation from pre-World War I neo-Kantian to decisionist and defender of the Weimar state in some form during the 1920s and early 1930s to the self-appointed political theorist of the Third Reich between 1933 and 1936 has aroused great controversy.

Though it is true that Schmitt’s decisionism culminated in a legitimation of the emergent right-wing tendency toward dictatorship, one must be very careful regarding Schmitt’s own understanding of dictatorship; he plainly distinguished more than one type of dictatorship in his system and his own efforts before Hitler assumed power were directed toward saving the Weimar state by strengthening the powers of the president and by severely limiting the chances of a legal assumption of power by extremist parties who avowedly aimed at an irreversible subversion of the Weimar constitution.

Within such a context, Schmitt’s revival of the term “political theology” in a celebrated book of that title in 1922 did not mean an unambiguous return to supernatural revelation. Rather did Schmitt take Donoso Cortés to mean that, since belief in God as a transcendent source of state sovereignty for absolute monarchy had died out, therefore dictatorship based on mass enthusiasm was the only alternative to anarchy. Using Kelsen’s own arguments, and invoking the secularization hypotheses of Comte and Schmitt’s teacher Max Weber, Schmitt argued that the weakening of the legitimacy of the Weimar system on account of


33 For documentation on these points see Appendix D on Carl Schmitt.
secularization required an appeal to metajuristic sources. In the crisis of the Weimar Republic, one must go outside the neo-Kantian system of pure law to sociopolitical sources: at this point one must turn to the popularly elected president, the sovereign, for it was he according to Article 48 of the Weimar constitution who could decide on the exception—and according to Schmitt, "sovereign is he who decides on the exception." In short, it was Schmitt’s own clear belief that in response to the “challenge of the exception” what was in order was a temporary and limited type of dictatorship. This response Schmitt called “commissarial dictatorship,” distinguishing it from “sovereign dictatorship” resting upon the pouvoir constituant of the people. In Schmitt’s view, order had to be reestablished before constitutional revisions could be brought about; these revisions, had they followed Schmitt’s line of thought, would have eliminated what Schmitt saw as fundamental contradictions in the constitution.

Schmitt’s work on political theology and related themes overlaps with university theology. Schmitt’s nontheological use of the Kierkegaardian theme of decision played on the current popularity of the Dane among university figures inventing existentialism. Equally fashionable was Schmitt’s use of theories of secularization with their suggestion of cultural decline, and the vague, yet ever-lurking sense that his thought probably had some positive relation to contemporary theories of cyclical turning. Schmitt suggested that the all-caring modern democratic welfare state in its Weimar form was in danger of becoming inwardly illegitimate and weak, but that it could be transformed into a strong “total” state in which all aspects of life would be suffused with political

34 See (in addition to Politische Theologie) Schmitt, Die Diktatur (Munich/Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1928); idem, Die geistesgeschichtliche Lage des heutigen Parlamentarismus (2d ed. 1926; reprinted Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1969); idem, Der Huter der Verfassung (Beiträge zum Öffentlichen Recht der Gegenwart 1; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1931); idem, Legalität und Legitimität (1932; reprinted Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1968); idem, Der Begriff des Politischen (1932; reprinted Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1979); Peter Schneider, Ausnahmezustand und Norm (Quellen und Darstellungen zur Zeitgeschichte 1; Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1957).


36 This phrase comes from Prof. George Schwab.

37 See Schwab, “Introduction,” in Schmitt, Political Theology, xxiv, a passage kindly called to my attention by Prof. Schwab.

38 Schwab, Challenge, 32–33, 86–89; Bendersky, “‘Carl Schmitt in the Summer of 1932.’”


Important in interpreting Schmitt's intent was his distinction between a "quantitative total state" (one so weak that it was at the mercy of all kinds of political parties, including ideologically subversive ones that avowedly had no intention of ever relinquishing power once it was attained, and the weakness of which was manifested in the state's being forced by the parties to be active in all domains of life) and a "qualitative total state" (one in which the state possesses enough support and legitimacy to resist both demands to support special interest groups by regulating numerous aspects of life and claims to perduring power by extremist parties).\footnote{See n. 40 above; Schwab, \textit{Challenge}, 77–79, 85–89, esp. 86, 145–49; Schmitt, \textit{Der Hüter der Verfassung} (Beiträge zum Öffentlichen Recht der Gegenwart 1; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1931).} Here we see how Schmitt's thought could readily be interpreted by popularizers as being in accord with conservative revolutionary thought about intensification of current conditions as a means of causing the cycle to revolve from decrepitude to youthful vigor.\footnote{Cf. Muth, \textit{``Carl Schmitt in der deutschen Innenpolitik,''} 145–46.}

Schmitt's indebtedness to contemporary cultural criticism emerges in his discussion of secularization and cultural linkage. His famous phrase in the memorial volume for Weber was that "all significant concepts of the modern doctrine of the state are secularized theological concepts."\footnote{Schmitt, \textit{Politische Theologie} (2d ed. reprinted as 4th) 49: \textit{``Alle pränignanten Begriffe der modernen Staatslehre sind säkularisierte theologische Begriffe.'''} The translation here departs only slightly from that of Blumengberg, \textit{Legitimacy}, 92. For a similar version, see Schmitt, \textit{Political Theology}, 36. Cf. Andreas Marxen, \textit{Das Problem der Analogie zwischen den Seinsstrukturen der grossen Gemeinschaften} (Phil. diss. Bonn, 1937).} This implied first a historical\footnote{Here and throughout this article the author's original text using "an" before unaccented syllables starting with h has been suppressed by the editorial staff. The author, in order to gain publication of this article, has had no alternative: he has given in here in order to get the work into print. He is neither persuaded by arguments and authorities advanced in favor of the change nor gladdened by the progress of linguistic barbarism. As Jacob Burckhardt wrote, \textit{``My mental picture of the terribles simplificateurs who will overrun our old Europe is not a pleasant one''} (cited by James Hastings Nichols, \textit{``Jacob Burckhardt,'''} in Burckhardt, \textit{Force and Freedom: Reflections in History} [ed. Nichols; New York: Pantheon, 1943] 43).} development of gradual secularization as a diachronic process. Schmitt traced the crisis of sovereignty and governmental legitimacy in Weimar
back to a deep rooted Western crisis of governmental legitimacy. This was really a process of “neutralization,” which had begun with the removal of religion from public life after the Counter-Reformation wars of religion. Second, Schmitt’s dictum implied a structural synchronicity or systematic analogy between politics and religion, in that both derived from the metaphysics predominant in a given epoch. According to Schmitt, the move from earlier political absolutism to modern mass democracy corresponded to the shift from Orthodox and Deist theologies of transcendence to modern theologies of immanence as developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Specifically fascinating are Schmitt’s correlation of human sovereignty with divine transcendence and his analogy of the Deist watchmaker God who allows no miraculous intervention with the enlightened monarch who eschews any intervention that would disrupt the orderly operation of a rational code of law. All these synchronous correlations Schmitt set within a diachronic yet cyclical framework of Western decline or secularization since 1648.46


Schmitt's historical arguments deriving political form from theological or metaphysical substance were challenged at the time by the patristics scholar Erik Peterson. Schmitt's theological critics found unpalatable his conclusion that the erosion of divine right made inevitable a choice between anarchy and dictatorship. To be sure, Schmitt during the Weimar years accepted the validity of the constitutional assembly's creation of the Weimar constitution and chose to operate within its framework. Yet, as Schmitt saw matters, by the 1920s the liberal parliamentary system had begun to lack the basis for legitimacy in the eyes of a divided and paralyzed population. Schmitt remained, however, truly conservative: during the Weimar years he offered no revolutionary alternative to the Weimar state; his efforts were rather directed at rescuing the German state by revising the Weimar constitution. In his view the latter urgently required revision to make it workable because it contained a contradiction. On the one hand were the principles of direct democracy in the sense of direct election of the president; on the other was a liberal democracy of arithmetical procedure according to which an ordinary and qualified majority may subvert the constitutional foundation of the existing state by technically correct parliamentary methods. Schmitt saw the danger of reliance on mere rules of the game in a situation in which several players vowed to use the rules against the game itself, and hence tried to exclude these politically extremist players from the game altogether. Once he had failed in this attempt by saving the Weimar state, he compromised himself by throwing in his lot with Hitler—but after the Reichstag had given Hitler an unprecedented enabling act.

Schmitt's first suggestions for revision during the crisis of Weimar were aimed at strengthening the executive; these Weimar moves have been read subsequently in the light of his later opportunistic embrace of the Hitler regime to the detriment of a clear understanding of Schmitt's documentable efforts to prevent ideological subversion of the entire Weimar state by radical extremists of the Left or Right. Schmitt's opportunistic decision to participate in the Nazi venture has, it would seem, also led many writers to pay insufficient attention to his experiments with the application of the theory of institutions to political theory; in this connection, Schmitt suggested supplementing the decisionistic legitimacy of a strong executive branch with a turn to greater reliance on the legitimation provided by the traditional prestige of concrete, historically rooted institutions. Their authority was, Schmitt hoped, not something upon which the sovereign could easily infringe.
Though Schmitt had begun his career as an advocate of Roman Catholic supernatural revelation as the best source of governmental legitimacy, and though he was heavily influenced by Hans Vaihinger’s philosophic claim that we are entitled to use deliberate fictions to get out of religious and legal dilemmas (philosophy of the als-ob), Schmitt did not ever even begin to elaborate a theory of how divine monarchy could be reinvented in modern terms to legitimate Hitler. This lack may at first seem surprising, in the light of Schmitt’s enduring perception of a close link between decay in general acceptance of supernatural religious revelation stemming from a divine monarch and the decay of political authority in the sovereign state. In explanation of this lack of an application of the Schmittian theory of secularization and political theology to the specific issues raised by Hitler, one may offer first Schmitt’s dissatisfaction with institutional Roman Catholicism during the Weimar years and, perhaps even more important, Schmitt’s professional frame of reference as a jurist and political theorist rather than as a theologian dabbling in politics. Nonetheless, studies by Schwab is much of the work of Ellen Kennedy, which shows that the kinship between the work of Schmitt and that of other political theorists, including those in the Frankfurt School, has been obscured by writers after 1933; in the interest of covering over these similarities, the complexity of Schmitt’s thought has often been ignored in order to turn him into a simple precursor of Hitler. See Ellen Kennedy, “Carl Schmitt und die ‘Frankfurter Schule’: Deutsche Liberalismuskritik im 20. Jahrhundert,” Geschichte und Gesellschaft 12 (1986) 380–419; cf. Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987); Joachim Perels, ed., Recht, Demokratie und Kapitalismus: Aktualität und Probleme der Theorie Franz L. Neumanns (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1984). However, there are writers aware of such recent scholarship who nonetheless see every reason to assess the Weimar Schmitt in extremely harsh terms; Muth (n. 32 above) still can speak of Schmitt’s “Unterminierung der Reichsverfassung”; see also Volker Neumann, “Verfasstheorien politischer Antipoden: Otto Kirchheimer und Carl Schmitt,” Kritische Justiz (1981) 235–54 esp. 252, which can be taken to suggest that some of the Weimar moves made by Schmitt and those associated with him left openings utilized by the Nazis, however contrary that may have been to Schmitt’s intentions (“Entworfen für autoritäre Herrschaft einer staatstragenden Elite wurde die Theorie und Praxis des starken Staates zum Einfallstor für nationalsozialistische Machtgeliiste”). See also 254 n. 105: “Die antisemitischen Ausfälle [Schmitt’s—J.S.] waren nicht bloss ‘lip service to the terminology of National-Socialist propaganda’, wie George Schwab, The Challenge of the Exception, Berlin 1970, S. 101, allzu wohlmeinend schreibt.” On Schmitt’s shameful and opportunistic anti-Semitism, see, e.g., the comments in Schwab, Challenge, 138: “His recently acquired anti-Semitism was certainly opportunistic in so far as no traces of this pernicious, parochial and provincial attitude can be detected in his writings prior to 1933.” See also Muth, “Carl Schmitt in der deutschen Innenpolitik,” 138, and Günter Maschke, “Im Irrgarten Carl Schmitts,” in Intellektuelle im Bann des Nationalsozialismus (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1980) 204–41. Cf. also Lothar Gruchmann, Nationalsozialistische Grossraumordnung: Die Konstruktion einer ‘deutschen Monroe-Doktrin’ (Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 4; Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1962) 20–27, 121–45. For background on the theory of institutions as it touches Schmitt’s thought, see Maurice Hauriou, Die Theorie der Institution (ed. Roman Schnur; trans. Hans and Jutta Jech; Schriften zur Rechtslehre 5; Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1965).

50 For documentation on these points see Appendix D on Carl Schmitt.
the link between politics and theology was not so much the property of Schmitt that no German ever got around to constructing a theory of divine legitimation for Nazism. On the contrary: such a theory was in effect provided by one of the very greatest Protestant theologians to remain in Hitler’s Germany, Emanuel Hirsch.

III

Karl Barth described his Göttingen colleague Hirsch as “a notable phenomenon”; Barth is said to have regarded Hirsch as “an opponent who had to be taken with utmost seriousness.” Hirsch’s fame rests on his treatment of cultural linkage and secularization in his unsurpassed five-volume “history of modern Protestant theology in connection with the general movements of European thought.” His brilliance is as unquestionable as his diligence. He treated an astonishing variety of topics: Luther’s view of God and conscience, Fichte’s philosophy, Kierkegaard’s development, Schleiermacher’s view of the Reformation, the New Testament’s Greek text, Christianity’s essence, Weimar Germany’s fate, Hitler’s Reich, juristic neo-Kantianism’s political weakness, and Hirsch’s own systematics.

Born in 1888, Hirsch lived until 1972 and published 515 books and articles. His father had been pastor of the Golgatha congregation in Berlin. While still young he went blind in one eye; the other was accidentally injured by a barber’s razor, and Hirsch lived with the growing threat of complete retinal detachment. Called to Göttingen as a church historian in 1921, he assumed the chair of systematics in 1936. He retired in 1945 to fend off denazification proceedings.

In 1934, during a bitter controversy over Naziism with Tillich, Hirsch referred to himself as a “political theologian.” He did not use the term loosely. In 1923 and 1924 Hirsch reviewed approvingly three separate books by Carl Schmitt. Hirsch liked Schmitt’s theory of dictatorship, his “Kierkegaardian” and metajuristic emphasis on personal decision of conscience in politics, and his theory of secularization. As Hirsch put it, Schmitt’s work on secularization and sovereignty furnishes “a decisive point for the argument with the

51 Eberhard Busch, Karl Barth (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 134; the second quotation comes from Busch himself.
54 For documentation on these points see Appendix E on Emanuel Hirsch.
55 Hirsch, Christliche Freiheit und politische Bindung (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt) 6.
enlightened and Kantian doctrine of law." He endorsed Schmitt’s dictum that “all significant concepts in the modern doctrine of the state are secularized theological concepts.” However, Hirsch indicated that Schmitt had taken the wrong road in applying his principles by ignoring the notion of organic community or Gemeinschaft as the point of intersection between theology and constitutional history. Here, especially in the related notion of the Kingdom of God (Reich Gottes), was the key area.

In 1934 Hirsch labeled himself a political theologian. At that moment he explained what this implied for the months since Hitler’s coming to power:

I have sought to teach about the way everything connected with the Volk borders on the hidden [verborgenen] divine Majesty; I have tried as a thinker and preacher to express as seriously ... as possible the Gospel ... on the basis of divine judgment. ... Not once have I had ... the feeling of being in conflict with the will of the Führer to build up a Volk united in worldview [Weltanschauung] and order of life [Lebensordnung]. On the contrary, there, in the place where it was proper for me to be, I understood myself as a helper in the work now going on among us Germans.

To cooperate in building a people united in worldview and order of life—these two phrases re-echo in Hirsch’s work, signifying the strictly theological and juridico-political aspects of political theology. This double task of the political theologian corresponds to the kind of challenge symbolized by Kelsen’s double fictionalism.

Hirsch’s career thus shows a step by step logical progress from Weimar conservatism to enthusiastic support of Hitler. Hirsch at all stages agreed with other conservatives that secularizing decay had been at work. Hirsch repeatedly affirmed that politics, religions, mores, and culture were intertwined, so what one did in one branch had to affect the other. And, added Hirsch, since the nineteenth-century theologians had been too weak to unite the Germans behind a healthy worldview, it was only right that Hitler should lend a political hand where the liberal theologians of cultural Protestantism had failed.

Hirsch’s lifework was designed to meet such a double challenge: the crisis of atheism symbolized by Feuerbach and Nietzsche, and the crisis in legitimacy of the state embodied in Weimar neo-Kantian jurisprudence. Yet Hirsch’s political theology ended by assimilating so much from Nietzsche, Spengler, and Idealism that he parted company with Christianity without realizing it.

57 Hirsch, Review of Politische Theologie, 524.
58 Ibid.
59 Hirsch, Christliche Freiheit, 53.
60 Hirsch, Der Weg der Theologie (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1937) 24–25.
Hirsch had analogous aims and methods in his theology and in his metajuris-
tic appeal to divine legitimation for the state. His theological aim was one he
ascribed to "all the more serious German thinkers" from Leibniz on—"out of
philosophical reflection freely to produce the essential content of Christian piety
and morality." Thus human and divine truth would be seen to coincide. An
analogous correlation of what one could perhaps call "autonomy" and
"heteronomy" was the goal of Hirsch's treatment of the state. In his lectures
on systematics between 1938 and 1940, Hirsch stated that the "true" sanction
of legitimacy would emerge when one made it "clear, by what means a
specified act of government by the state acquires the holiness that causes us
inwardly to honor it as a divine action and work."  

In this staggering double enterprise of theology as political theology,
Hirsch's starting point came from his heritage in the so-called Luther-
Renaissance of his teacher, the Berlin church historian Karl Holl
(1866–1926). Here was the Lutheran counterpart to the dialectical theology
of Karl Barth. Holl made, however, a less definite break with cultural Protestant-
ism than Barth. Holl unfolded everything from the doctrine of justification.
God's command, written in the heart, allows the sinner to experience divine
wrath in the conscience as an immediate proof of God's existence. In contrast
to Ritschl, Holl stressed this experience of wrath, but he also brought out how,
in Luther's theology, comfort came in clinging to the divine Word of promise
and the accompanying forgiveness that alone could still an accusing conscience.

Holl thus took up a live issue and gave a plausible answer. In Holl's view,
God's omnipotence was for Luther behind the entire world. What then was the
nature of this world order and this God? Is the Hidden Sovereign capricious and
amoral in His awesome majesty? Holl's Luther denied this. He indeed recog-
nized a hidden aspect of God, one mysterious and wrathful; but even with
regard to such hidden divine purposes, what was called for was trusting faith.

61 Hirsch, Die Reich-Gottes-Begriffe des neueren europäischen Denkens (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck
& Ruprecht, 1927) 20.
62 See Böbel, Wahrheit; also idem, "Allgemein menschliche und christliche Gotteserkenntnis bei
Emanuel Hirsch," Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie 5 (1963)
use "autonomy" and "heteronomy" for want of better expressions; cf. R. Pohlmann, "Autono-
64 For documentation see Appendix F on Karl Holl.
65 Here and in the remainder of this paragraph I paraphrase Bornkamm, Luther, 114–17, and Dillen-
berger, God, 18–27. Cf. Holl, "Was verstand Luther unter Religion?" in idem, Gesammelte
führte Gott selbst ganz unmittelbar im Gewissen den Beweis für sein Dasein." See also in this
connection the two treatments of Holl by Rückert cited in Appendix F on Karl Holl.
For God’s wrath was purposeful, necessary as a breaking up of the old and preparation for the new in God’s creation. For Holl, God’s wrath turns out to be “the mask under which God hides himself. It belongs to God’s essence that He reveal Himself in His opposite. But He does this not because of a mood, but according to a plan.”66 So: Holl’s Luther resolves the tension between deus absconditus and deus revelatus; that is to say, Luther found that trust eliminated any ethical problem in affirming God’s Alleinwirksamkeit, or sole and complete causation of everything.67

Given this view, Holl then had to show how the afflicted conscience is comforted by ethical action. Holl identified forgiveness with conscience. Morality emerges reborn and reactivated from forgiveness. Only by recourse to such Ritschlian claims could Holl cope with his view that in conscience we encounter the wrath of God. Holl’s approach necessarily ethicizes, moralizes, and regularizes the spontaneous omnipotence of the sovereign Majesty of the Hidden God. Here is the full individual sense of interpreting Luther’s as what Holl labeled a “religion of conscience.”68

For Holl this was no abstruse game. Holl had good reason to worry about the caprice and amorality of human affairs. His wartime sermons show how concerned he was to find a pattern in the meaninglessness of the German defeat. His Berlin sermons stress the necessity of faith and ethical involvement. Only thus would it become plain that a blessing for Germany was hidden in defeat. God was good, and mysteriously planned somehow to bless the nation yet—if only it kept faith. God’s big wartime Nein of wrath concealed the promise of a Ja to those who trusted. Holl here begins subtly to shift from Luther’s emphasis on the Hidden God’s Law/Gospel pattern as something primarily concerning individuals to a post-Enlightenment stress on the Hidden God’s Law/Gospel pattern as a way for individuals as a part of a national community to find purpose and meaning by identification with the nation-state.69

Holl’s sermons, later edited by his student Hirsch, join alarm at secularization with belief in the linkage of religion and politics. It was clear that only firm

66 Holl, Luther, 41 cited in Dillenberger, God, 22; cf. Dillenberger, God, 19.
religious faith could provide the moral strength for national rebirth—a faith threatened by growing estrangement from the church. Now was the hour of decision for the conscience of the German Volk. (Yes, Holl had pioneered in teaching Kierkegaard as early as 1908).70

Holl applies Luther concretely by proclaiming that the dialectic of wrath concealing the promise of ultimate grace to those who trust is a dialectic for nations as well as individuals. Only in view of such trust could those in the pew see God’s morality and reject the suggestion of a capricious, amoral god.71

Holl’s Luther-Renaissance is, then, very ambiguous. Is it reviving Lutheran Christianity or German patriotism, or both? Holl and Hirsch after him read into Luther “the Neoprotestant [and Idealist] thought of the presence of God in human moral and religious experience” (Karl-Heinz zur Mühlen).72 Hence Holl’s stress on conscience ironically parries Luther’s original thrust against a Stoic or Neoplatonic divine spark of ethical inclination innate in the human person. Fichte had reintroduced into Protestant philosophy what Luther had thrown out, that is, the old notion that conscience is “an oracle of the eternal world.” Such an ontology of conscience ultimately needs no biblical revelation.73

This Idealist heritage in Holl, if not checked by a strong doctrine of revelation, lacks any principle of falsification—a recipe for disaster. That disaster occurred with Hirsch. He took from Holl God’s omnipotent Alleinwirksamkeit as historical theodicy along with Fichte’s notion of conscience innately


72 Zur Mühlen, Vernunftkritik, 199; cf. Tilgener, Volksnomothologie, 141.

73 Ernst Wolf, “‘Gewissen,’” RG 2 (3d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1958) 1550 – 57, esp. 1553 – 54; cf. idem, Peregrinatio (2 vols.; Munich: Kaiser, 1962, 1965) 1. 81 – 112; 2. 52 – 118. See in particular the remarks in Dillenberger, God, esp. 48 n. 32 (on “the lack of a decisive doctrine of revelation in [Hirsch’s] interpretation of Luther” so that divine hiddenness is pertinent to theodicy but not to ethics as human responsibility); also ibid., 19 (Holl on caprice in God), 25 (conscience), 42, 48 – 56.
grounded in God, then added the emotional volatility of Nietzsche’s appeal to myth, and turned this into divine legitimation for Hitler.

IV

Hirsch starts where Holl left off. Behind the world is God’s sole causation, All- und Alleinwirksamkeit. It is knowable in the human conscience both as condemnation and as hidden grace. From this point of departure, Hirsch “proves” what he sets out to show: that God exists and is in history despite Feuerbach and Nietzsche, and that God’s shaping of history allows the conscience of the German people a metajuristic criterion for delegitimizing Weimar democracy and for legitimating Hitler’s total state. How can Hirsch simultaneously reconcile “autonomy” with “heteronomy,” his announced task?

Starting from the principle that Luther’s God works “all things in all” according to an incomprehensible standard, Hirsch holds that thus we cannot escape God. Luther’s use of the hiddenness of God means that only trusting faith can see God’s unity and truthfulness of benevolent purpose in apparent evils as a continuity of purpose reaching to the core of God. God’s revealed goodness and unknown purpose can only thus come into ethical unity. Hirsch is chiefly interested in continuity of purpose in God: what is hidden in God is affirmed to be ultimately good in intent for us. Hirsch has little concern with the possibility of a logical split between morality and caprice inside God, denying that Luther took over such a split from Late Scholasticism’s ordained and absolute powers of God. Hirsch is interested in theodicy from the human point of view: trusting faith sees that even God’s wrathful No contains a hidden Yes. The enemy is not God, but failure to trust the hidden divine purpose.74

Hirsch treated Luther’s view of God in 1918, under the immediate impact of his studies with Holl. Two years later, in the Luther-Jahrbuch, he published an article on “Luther und Nietzsche.”75 Here Hirsch begins a gradual incorporation of the image of Nietzsche as conservative cultural critic into Christian theology of a proto-Nazi variety. The dimensions of this theological assimilation of Nietzsche and “irrationalism” are a topic which demands further investigation.76

Hirsch’s treatment of Nietzsche and Luther in 1920 inaugurates an ill-understood theological development that culminated in two claims made or sug-

76 For documentation see Appendix G on “irrationalism” and Schicksal.
gested by some theologians supporting Hitler: (1) the various “irrational,”77 conservative currents summed up in National Socialism really belong inside Christianity and should not separate from it; (2) the appeal of raw, ecstatic emotional power and amoral aestheticism which these groups found in Nietzsche is an appeal that can legitimately be domesticated and incorporated into a Christian worldview for Christian purposes, and (at least for Hirsch) all the more so since that appeal derives ultimately from the Hidden God of Luther.78

In moving toward this use of the Hidden God, Hirsch’s 1920 article on Nietzsche unwittingly brought out the ambiguity of the Luther Renaissance. By 1920 Nietzsche’s cultural criticism had become a weapon for the Right to use against Weimar democracy. Holl himself had often referred to Nietzsche, arguing that Nietzsche’s great thoughts were merely de-ethicized, amoral distortions of Pauline and Lutheran themes—here he enumerated “‘dancing in chains,’” hardness as love, “‘and the notion that the divine goes about in a mask.’”79 Hirsch continued by bringing to light Nietzsche’s near total dependence on misunderstood Luther. Nietzsche’s Dionysos was more than mere ecstatic divine Rausch or enthusiasm. He was in fact a “‘naturalistic duplicate of the Lutheran concept of God.’”80 Hirsch claimed that the “Dionysiac union of a Nein and Ja’” was derived from Hegel’s dialectic, which itself descended directly from Luther’s simul justus et peccator.81 Behind all this was Luther’s God, simultaneously “‘judge and Father, highest wrath and highest love.’”82 This union of Nein and Ja allowed Nietzsche to arrive at the “‘Dionysian theodicy of life,’” according to which “‘a moment of joy justifies all the woe in the world.’”83 Hirsch then argued that Nietzsche’s problem—other than his atheism—was his failure to arrive at an absolute morality capable of

77 For documentation on these points see Appendix G on “irrationalism” and Schicksal. 78 The second of these claims in its strongest (Hidden God is behind Hitler) form is the implication of a synoptic reading of the following works by Hirsch: “Luther und Nietzsche”; “Vom verborgenen Suverän,” in Paul Althaus, Emanuel Hirsch, Walter Wilm, and Heinrich Rendtorff, eds., Glaube und Volk 2:1 (Küstretin: Verlag Deutscher Osten, 1933) 4–13; Die gegenwärtige geistige Lage im Spiegel philosophischer und theologischer Besinnung: Akademische Vorlesungen zum Verständnis des deutschen Jahrs 1933 (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1934); Christliche Freiheit und politische Bindung (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1935). I cannot explore here the position of theologians such as Althaus, Werner Elert, and Friedrich Gogarten with regard to Hirsch’s political use of the theme of divine hiddenness, nor can I look at such figures as Arno Deutelmoser. 79 See esp. Holl, “‘Die Kulturbedeutung der Reformation,’” in idem, Gesammelte Aufsätze (3d ed.) 1. 533. 80 Hirsch, “‘Luther und Nietzsche,’” 83: “‘Dionysos ist ein natürliches Nachbild des lutherischen Gottesbegriffes, das Dionysische ein naturalistisches Nachbild der lutherischen Frömmigkeit.’” 81 Hirsch, “‘Luther und Nietzsche,’” 83 – 85. 82 Ibid., 84. 83 Ibid., 84 – 88.
domesticating the amoralism implicit in the Dionysiac God.\textsuperscript{84} In other words, where Nietzsche failed, Luther, Holl, and Hirsch succeeded: only trusting faith could perceive the benevolent unity of God's plan hidden under the changes and chances of this mortal life.

With the passing of time, Hirsch more and more saw Nietzsche as a secretly, one who had sensed the superficiality of liberal religion and by intuitive instinct had opened up a tunnel to the emotional force of the Hidden God—even though Nietzsche himself was so constrained by the narrow horizons of an age of decadence that he failed to understand what he had begun to rediscover. By 1934, in showing how Weimar decadence had undergone metamorphosis into Hitlerian rejuvenation, Hirsch explained that Nietzsche's will to power had been the suicide of all modern philosophies of progress, freedom, and autonomous reason.\textsuperscript{85} Here in Nietzsche had occurred the paradoxical intensification (Steigerung) of conditions necessary to bring about the crisis from which there could be no retreat, only advance to the rejuvenation of all areas of life in a senile Spätkultur. For in religion, as in politics and art, crises rejuvenate ("Krisen machen jung") in that all branches of culture are forced to seek out the basis of faith, the mythic and metaphysical substrate on which culture finally rests. As Hirsch sees it, God is present in the created particularities of the existence of historical communities and in the crises of the historical process; the Logos is a fountain of youth for cultures caught up in the aging process of secularizing separation from divine life; thus it is the function of theologians to proclaim where the true source of youth is to be found, so that the Volk can remain jung and geschichtsmächtig, potent and youthful in its shaping of history. In this way, argues Hirsch, the Germans can avoid becoming a weak, vegetating people unfit for history (geschichtsuntauglich); instead, close to God's power, they can experience through rejuvenation in crisis the truth that "All that is great stands in the storm" (Heidegger's 1933 rendering of Plato Republic 497d, 9: τὰ...μεγάλα...ἐπισφοράς).\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 85 -97.
\textsuperscript{85} Hirsch, Lage, 15 –16; cf. 11 –12, 16, 28 –29, 71, 91, 97, 98, 130, 135, 136, 141; also 117.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 16, 29; for Heidegger and Hirsch's crises, see ibid., 72 ("Alles Grosse steht im Sturm"), 52, 51, 101, 71, 77, 73. For the notion that peoples are "verjüngt" by "Krisen" see Hirsch, Deutschlands Schicksal (n. 93 below) 35, 36 ("Krisen machen jung"). Cf. Heidegger, "The Self-Assertion [Selbstbehauptung] of the German University," 480; Hirsch, Lage 52 ("Geheimnis des Seins") 46 ("Entschlossenheit"). Ibid., 52, contends that, if existential philosophy does not agree with him in a Christian interpretation of 1933 as a Gottesbegegnung in the "boundaries" of national particularity so that one perceives "das Rauschen der verborgenen göttlichen Gnad," then instead it must identify G5d with μὴ ὄν, a chaos of meaninglessness: "Dann versteht sie das Geheimnis des Seins, welches in der schicksalsumringten Existenz ihr sich künden möchte, als Sorge und Selbstbehauptung." The Anglo-Saxon may perhaps be excused from exegesis or even translation of this passage, since, as a well-known philosopher has argued, philosophy is possible only in Greek and...
Having turned the anti-Prussian Nietzsche into a critic of Weimar and having transformed Nietzsche the Antichrist into a prophet of the rediscovery of the lurking emotional force of Luther’s Hidden God, Hirsch was now in a good position to reveal Luther’s Hidden God of history as the benevolent power behind Hitler.

In that same year, 1934, Hirsch went on to argue that the divine obedience of Romans 13 had not prohibited revolt against Weimar democracy, and to draw the concrete implications of his long-standing concession to Troeltsch concerning Luther’s dualistic doctrine of the Kingdom of God (what we now call Two Kingdoms, with the Troeltschian corollary that Luther had glorified sheer power)—namely, that this doctrine needed reinterpretation. Hirsch conceded to Troeltsch that Luther’s thoughts on the Kingdom of God and the state must not be taken to allow the autonomous operation of a secular state. Rather must the state be hallowed by a divine religious mission, in accord with the proper interpretation of Luther’s doctrine of God’s Kingdom in relation to state and church, Law and Gospel. The importance of this ethical mission in German politics had first become clear to the Lutheran tradition in the age of Idealism, a time when intellectual and moral force had been summoned up to aid the anti-Napoleonic transition to the national state. What did Hirsch’s religio-ethical reinterpretation of political order and the Two Kingdoms imply, and how did it operate?

The logical starting point in Hirsch’s project was in theology itself, where necessity required retrieving the doctrine of God from the difficulties into which Feuerbach had placed it. Hirsch takes Luther and Schleiermacher to be in fundamental agreement. Schleiermacher’s Dialektik is called upon along with Hirsch’s distinctive theory of language to support the claim that God is “simultaneously the thought of scientific reflection that establishes the ground . . . of reflection and the ground . . . of religious experience, present to us in feeling and raised to definitive consciousness by reflection.” Otherwise, without God, “all must dissolve into nothingness.”

German. In any event, it cannot be said that Hirsch gained transparency by his encounter with Heidegger. “Was bleibet aber, stiften die Dichter” (Hölderlin, “Andenken,” IV, 63, vs 59).

87 For documentation on these points see Appendix H on the “Two Kingdoms” and Hirsch.


89 Hirsch, Gottes-Reich-Begriffe, 23.

90 On the young Hirsch’s personal encounter with Feuerbach’s claim that God is mere human self-perception, see Lage, 82.

91 See, from the 1930s and 1940s, Hirsch, Werke, III. 1. 2, 198–220 on revelation, esp. 210: “Der erste, der die beiden Urbeziehungen am Gottesbewusstsein begrifflich sauber unterschieden hat, ist Schleiermacher in seiner Dialektik gewesen.” Hirsch’s defense of “revelation” rests on his theory of language (III. 1. 2, 196–204), a topic which needs further investigation. The quotations are from Hirsch, Geschichte (1949–54) 5, 283, 287; cf. 291 and Böbel, Wahrheit, 81–82. Hirsch,
God, God can be known in the conscience as defined by Holl/Luther/Kierkegaard/Fichte. As Hirsch will allow revelation only in psychological or historical categories, no miracles, divine preexistence, or physical resurrection can be allowed; God is simply History as general revelation—and otherwise present in conscience as an encounter with the boundary and ground of being. Kierkegaard's extreme subjectivity here merges with heavy reliance on German Idealism. A chain of individual consciences realigned according to the Nein/Ja dialectic extends from Jesus down to Hirsch himself, consciences encountering God in the ethical decision of history. So in brief did Hirsch refute the charge that God was merely our own wish-fulfilling construction.92

That revelation is behind history is for Hirsch the sense of Luther's claim that the world is a mask of God. As a practicing historian Hirsch had to reject Hegel's willfulness;93 yet as a theologian he fought against the amoral skepticism of Nietzsche and Spengler.94 During the Weimar era he sought refuge in conscience: God is affirmed to be behind all of history and to meet us in its events, in that we are constantly called upon to shape events by decision.95 Only thus can Hirsch ward off the possibility that it is all a meaningless jumble.

Despite his critique of Hegel, Hirsch as practicing historian liked the Idealism of Fichte's Staatslehre of 1813. He agreed with Fichte against Spengler that

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Werke, III. 1. 2 is a reprint expanded with full lecture notes of his Leitfaden zur christlichen Lehre (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1938).

92 See esp. Böbel, Wahrheit.


94 See Hirsch, Deutschlands Schicksal; cf. the treatments by Böbel, Schweer, and Schneider-Flume; but see Tilgner, Volksnomos-theologie, 136-45.

95 See, e.g., Hirsch, Deutschlands Schicksal, 49-63 ("Die Gemeinschaft der Gewissen") 68; cf. Böbel, Wahrheit, 43, 81-83; on decision in Hirsch, see Schneider-Flume, Theologie, 13-53; cf. Ericksen, Theologians, 127-33 on the refutation of meaninglessness and relativism and Hirsch's sympathy with the notion of "the life cycle of civilizations" (131).
Christianity must remain the "heart" of history, for Jesus meant an objective turn to human events. Hirsch in his 1939 lectures on the essence of Christianity made very clear use of Fichte's claim that the true rhythm of history lies in the destruction and rebirth of faith in forms autonomously appropriated by free human insight—a cycle of tearing down superstition and building up a free faith without end. Though Hirsch could lightly criticize Spengler's mechanical reliance on cycles, Hirsch's periodization shows a fondness for cycles that harmonizes well with his growing certainty that the entire age from 1648 to 1933 constituted an era of increasingly individualistic decadence and separation from God. Hirsch's radical immanentization of apocalyptic in his theology and his liking for the Fourth Gospel helped this tendency along by, as it were, "blunting" the arrow of traditional eschatology.

Hirsch often labeled the Weimar Republic and the late nineteenth century a Late Culture, implying its decadent separation from the rejuvenating vigor of faith in God and what the turn-of-the-century Fichte revival had come to see as the God-appointed historical mission of Germany. Thus Hirsch readily saw in 1933 a great turning point, even as he labeled all pro-Hitler elements as "young" in their closeness to the divine, mythic source. Hirsch's diagnosis of the moribund Spätkultur saw the era before 1933 as ruled by self-destructive autonomous reason and freedom that dissolved into atomistic and rootless

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96 The clearest statement on this point is Hirsch, Geschichte (1945–54) 4, 402 ("Herz"); but see the works by Hirsch listed in n. 82 above for his use of Fichte in his period of concern with Spengler.
97 Cf. Hirsch, Deutschlands Schicksal, 32–35, 92 (cycles); n. 84 above; idem, Christentum (1920) 22; idem, Geschichte (1949–54) 4, 404–5 (on Fichte, 1813): "Also Religions- und Staatsengeschichte gehören zusammen und geben erst zusammen und geben erst mit ihrem Ineinander ein verständliches Bild des Geschichtsverlaufs." Then (404–5) follows Fichte's historical rhythm of "Glaube" and "Verstand" and the destruction of the superstitious, "unechten Glaubensinhalt" by "Verstand." This Fichtean scheme appears to be the plan behind Hirsch, Das Wesen des Christentums: Weimar: Verlag Deutsche Christen, 1939).
98 Cf. Hirsch, Deutschlands Schicksal, 35–36 may imply such criticism. Here I do not claim that Hirsch shows a consistent and unthinking ("mechanical") reliance on cyclical thought. I do claim that one ought to examine Hirsch's works keeping in mind the currency of cyclical patterns among conservatives of his time. Like some other educated conservatives, Hirsch did not adhere rigidly to a doctrine of cycles; what seems to have appealed to him was a pattern of ("cyclical") ebb and flow that could somehow explain how Weimar "decadence" bears an inevitable connection with subsequent national "rebirth." The distance from God of the epoch 1648–1933 as a result of individualistic, rationalistic freedom is the central point of all sections in Hirsch, Lage, that deal with the years before Hitler. Immanentization: Hirsch, Werke, III. 1, 2, 97, 112; cf. Rudolf Bultmann, "Hirschs Auslegung des Johannes-Evangeliums," EvTh 4 (1937) 115–42; Hirsch, Studien zum vierten Evangelium (BTh 11; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1936); idem, Das vierte Evangelium in seiner ursprünglichen Gestalt verdeutscht und erklärt (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1936) esp. 5: "Im Anfang war das Wort, und das Wort war bei Gott, und Gott von Art (sic) war das Wort."
99 E.g., Hirsch, Lage, 29 ("Spätkultur").
100 E.g., ibid., 71, 114.
random chaos; here the real cause was the individualistic refusal to recognize the binding force (Bindung) of God-given limits in religion, politics, and race.\footnote{E.g., ibid., 7 – 16, 97.}

Therefore in 1934 Hirsch came to agree that true freedom must consist in bringing to consciousness the hidden harmony of human truth and human destiny with God’s binding order. By psychologizing and subjectivizing revelation, Hirsch had established a theological harmony of divine revelation and critical thought. Likewise, Hirsch’s political theology would make a bizarre claim to preserve an illusion of freedom even as it reasserted binding authority.\footnote{Cf. ibid., passim: the point is that true German freedom requires authoritative Bindung. On revelation see Böbel, \textit{Wahrheit}, 85; Hirsch, \textit{Freiheit}; and idem, \textit{‘Suverän.’} See also Friedrich Gogarten, \textit{‘Säkularisierte Theologie in der Staatslehre,’} \textit{Münchner Neueste Nachrichten} 86 (2. März 1933) 1 – 2 and (3. März 1933) 1 – 2; idem, \textit{Politische Ethik} (Jena: Diederichs, 1932) 185 – 86.}

VI

Hirsch’s specifically political theology was conceived as apologetic for the contemporary relevance of theology. As he declared in 1938, “The living location of the God-question is in the human being’s relation to politico-social reality.”\footnote{Cited as a sentence of Hirsch from 1938 by Schneider-Flume, \textit{Theologie}, i.} Hirsch declared that Germany would leave Christianity behind if the church failed to show awareness of God’s hand in the religious revival accompanying the National Socialist revolution.\footnote{A frequent theme in much of Hirsch, \textit{Lage}; see also idem, \textit{Das kirchliche Wollen der Deutschen Christen} (Schriftenreihe der Deutschen Christen 6; Berlin-Charlottenburg, 1933); also idem, \textit{Deutsches Volkstum und evangelischer Glaube} (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1934).}

Behind such views was Hirsch’s interpretation of Luther on the world as God’s mask. During the 1930s Hirsch held that the conscience of the individual must try to discern God’s created source of revelation in the givenness of national life: the transhistorical German \textit{Volk} was taken as a divinely instituted order of creation. God had given the \textit{Volk} a mission to which conscience must respond.\footnote{Cf. Tilgner, \textit{Volksnomostheologie}, 144, 139, 128; Schneider-Flume, \textit{Theologie}, 58.}

As Wolfgang Tilgner and John Dillenberger have noted, here the lack of a clear doctrine of biblical revelation became important.\footnote{Cf. Tilgner, \textit{Volksnomostheologie}, 144 – 52; Dillenberger, \textit{God}, 48.} Hirsch’s stress on meeting God in the ethical demand of conscience required a source of revelation more concrete than his affirmation of the New Testament as witness to Jesus’ liberation of the conscience from Jewish legalism\footnote{Cf. Hirsch, \textit{Wesen}; Moore, \textit{‘Christian Writers.’}} and separation from God. Thus Hirsch mistakenly but enthusiastically perceived a divine mission given to the \textit{Volk} and already recognized by contemporary conservatives—as he saw it, a...
mission of advancing Protestant inwardness and freedom from Catholic and Jewish "legalism." For Hirsch in the 1930s, God spoke, not only in Jesus Christ as Savior, but as Creator in the orders, blood, and law of the various nations. According to his critics, Hirsch assigned God’s Law to the nation-state and the Gospel to the church.108

This concept of revelation and divine mission of the Volk permitted Hirsch to reassert binding conservative state authority even in the face of mass politics capable of choosing social democracy or something worse. By reworking Luther’s doctrine of a God hidden (verborgen) behind the world, and combining it with Carl Schmitt’s rhetoric of sovereignty, Hirsch could rush an article into print in mid-January of 1933 (two weeks before Hitler came to power) entitled "Vom verborgenen Suverän," "Concerning the Hidden Sovereign."109 Thus Hirsch gave metajuristic—that is, theological or divine—legitimation to conservative regimes while denying legitimacy to liberal or socialist successors of the Weimar Republic.

The earliest hint of this doctrine had come in 1921. In discussing German versus non-German ways to secularize the Kingdom of God, Reich Gottes, Hirsch had rejected the Troeltschian charge that what we now call Luther’s Two-Kingdoms doctrine had simply turned the state loose from divine moral authority, allowing it to go its own way. Rather, Hirsch insisted that for the German Idealist prolongation of Luther, the state had been bound to serve a higher moral goal in the service of humanity and the Kingdom of the Moral (Reich der Sittlichen) as known in the presence of the eternal in the conscience.110

In Hirsch’s 1933 article, conscience must trust that God’s historical Nein at Versailles implied a secret Ja of blessing to the divine mission of the German Volk in its laws and orders of life. Thus, “Das Volk . . . ist der verborgene, und damit der wahre Suverän.”111 (The Volk . . . is the hidden, and thus the true Sovereign). Of course this referred only to the Volk whose consciences had been instructed about their divine mission, and not to just any accidental democratic “visible” majority at the polls.112 With this transhistorical proviso, Hirsch was entirely prepared to recognize the binding authority of Romans 13 in government by the Volk, since any unpalatable government was by definition open to revolutionary overthrow in view of its disagreement with the divine mis-

108 Tilgner, Volksnomos-theologie, 151.
110 See n. 86 above.
112 Ibid., 7; cf. 5–6, 8–13.
sion of the *Volk*. It is noteworthy that after 1933 Hirsch claimed to have espoused such a right of revolution during the Weimar Republic.

After 1933 Hirsch used his doctrine of hidden sovereignty to emphasize the benevolent continuity between God’s plan and the work of Hitler. Like his doctrine of the hiddenness of God, Hirsch’s doctrine of the Hidden Sovereign affirmed continuity of blessing despite occasional appearances to the contrary. Like the doctrine of divine hiddenness, hidden sovereignty could always be used to indict lack of trust.

At the same time, since the state created by the action of human choice corresponded to the divine mission of the *Volk*, Hirsch could claim that the state was not its own goal but a servant of a higher purpose. Hence it deserved “to be honored inwardly as a divine action and work”; thus autonomy and heteronomy (socio-political and individual as well as divine and human demands) were reconciled in the “free” coincidence of the religious feelings and external duties.

Without doubt Hirsch intended for his political theology to serve a metajuristic function in response to the crisis of neo-Kantian jurisprudence. This aspect has been ignored by most scholars, notably by Robert Ericksen in his recent study of *Theologians Under Hitler*. In 1936 Hirsch was invited to contribute to the *Festschrift* for the neo-Kantian constitutional and legal theorist Rudolf Stammler. In his article Hirsch vehemently argued that the entire neo-Kantian reliance on a closed system of law was completely outmoded in the New Germany. Its defect lay in its failure to see the need for a metajuristic appeal to the *Volk* as the source and goal of law. Having thus insulted the recipient of the honorary volume, Hirsch contended that law must work with the religious category of divine judgment ultimately known only to individual faith questing after the eternal and the hidden.

Such were the results of interpreting 1933 as a God-given turning point in the cycle of European history. As Hirsch’s old friend Tillich wrote to him in an open letter from Union Seminary in 1934, “You have moved the year 1933 so close to the year 33 that it has acquired salvation-historical significance for

113 Cf. Schweer, “Ethik,” 86–89; as Schweer notes (86 n. 2) Hirsch does not here undertake an explicit discussion of Rom 13:1–7—though the meaning is clear enough. Schweer says (89 n. 1) that Hirsch here prepares a “knife” for use against the Weimar Republic.

114 Hirsch, *Lage*, 117. See also the articles by Rendtorff and Nowak cited in n. 76 above.


116 Ibid., III. 1. 2, 280. For Hirsch’s own concept of “Autonomie” see *Lage*, 41 and Werke, III. 1.


117 Cited in n. 2 above; cf. on Stammler, Hirsch, *Deutschlands Schicksal*, 73.

you."  Another result of this approach was Hirsch’s historical-critical argument in favor of a non-Jewish ancestry for Jesus. Likewise he found that God’s revelation in the *Volk* required that only those sympathetic to Hitler be fully supported as church leaders.

God hidden in the historical mission of the *Volk*—this is the message of Hirsch’s political theology. As Tillich in effect suggested in 1934, Hirsch and the pro-Nazi Lutherans were illegitimately conferring a “priestly-sacramental consecration” on Hitler. This can be taken to imply that Hirsch was wrongly applying the anti-Nestorian and anti-Zwinglian thrust of Lutheran christology of the hypostatic union to politics: for Hirsch the visible finite is so capable of encompassing the invisible infinite that Hitler becomes the visible sign of the invisible grace of the divine mission of the transhistorical *Volk*. So is attained a theodicy of history rooted in Luther’s hidden God, conflated with Schleiermacher’s theology of consciousness, perverted by Fichte’s view of the conscience, and made explosive by resort to Nietzsche’s emphasis on the power of irrational myth. Hirsch’s indebtedness to cultural Protestantism gave him so pallid a doctrine of revelation that he could see no obstacle to casting his lot with the Nazis; that is, he mistakenly thought that his ritual incantation of words like “God,” “Gospel,” and “conscience” could ethicize and domesticate the amoral aestheticism and nihilistic politics that were in Hitler not hidden but fully revealed.

Hirsch undertook a pseudo-ethicizing of politics; in so doing he ended by


120 Hirsch, *Wesen*, 158–65; Gösta Lundström, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus: A History of Interpretation* (trans. Joan Bulman; Richmond: John Knox, 1963) 125–26, 131 n. 7; Martin Lehmann, *Synoptische Quellenanalyse und die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus* (BZNW 38; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1970). This is not the place to follow the trail of this notion backward; suffice it to say that it would lead us back to Paul Haupt and beyond.


123 Writers on Holl and Hirsch frequently speak of their “ethicizing.” “Pseudo-ethicizing” is the better term, unless one concede that ethics is merely rationalization of inclination and self-interest. Note Holl’s review of Hirsch, *Deutschlands Schicksal* (Appendix F), with approval of Hirsch’s
ascribing sacral significance to Hitler as fulfillment of God’s promise to bless. Hirsch embarked on this road in 1921 in response to Troeltsch’s criticism of what we know conventionally as the amoral reliance on untamed force in Luther’s Two Kingdoms Doctrine. Does this mean that there is not only a road from Luther to Hitler, but also a road from Troeltsch to Hitler, and perhaps even a road leading from Troeltsch’s proto-democratic Reformation Spiritualists to Hitler?\textsuperscript{124} Both no and yes to all questions. Far more important to us is another question: Having seen the motivation and results of Hirsch’s abandonment of the separation of religion and politics, can contemporary non-Nazi political theologians avoid comparable disasters? Or will future historians be forced to conclude that any mixing of theology with politics must lead to enthusiastic fanaticism, zealotry, and the sanctification of ideological holy war?\textsuperscript{125}


This sentence has aroused some comment. By way of clarification I would add that I certainly do not question Troeltsch’s hearty support of the Weimar Republic. I rather mean to imply that the ‘‘ethicizing’’ of politics supported by appeal to Troeltsch and the ‘‘Left Wing’’ of the Reformation (in opposition to the Two Kingdoms position and the Enlightenment separation of religion and politics) is an extremely ambiguous matter. I see no good reason to suppose that ‘‘ethicizing’’ politics by injecting religion into it can guarantee protection against fanaticism, intolerance, and persecution. Even those who persist in claiming that the so-called Two Kingdoms doctrine somehow caused Hitler’s rise (in the face of evidence that the ‘‘Third Reich’’ represents an outgrowth of a mania which is quasi-religious in essence), must admit that religion has something to do with recent events in, for example, Iran.—Yes, but that is the wrong religion and not the one I had in mind.—Precisely my point. The great achievement of the English Enlightenment lay in its (temporarily successful) effort to exclude as many religious passions as possible from politics. Alas, the Reign of Terror illustrates the difficulty of the problem.

\textsuperscript{125} For documentation on these points see Appendix I on the world-political context of ‘‘secularization’’ and ‘‘political theology.’’
Appendix A: Weimar Conservatism: A Bibliographical Appendix

As early as 1927 the forms “Frühkapitalismus,” “Hochkapitalismus,” “Altkapitalismus,” and “Feudalkapitalismus” were documented. The form “Spätkapitalismus” may have appeared only somewhat later. Nonetheless, the evidence strongly suggests that many earlier writers on the Left applied a dynamic of temporalization to the concept of capitalism to imply its eventual disappearance; the analogy with the notion of “Spätjudentum” ought not to be overlooked. See Marie-Elisabeth Hilger and Lucian Hölscher, “Kapital/Kapitalist, Kapitalismus,” in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, eds., Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982) 450, citing Richard Passow, “Kapitalismus,” (2d ed.; Jena, 1927) 34; Bracher, “Ende des bürgerlichen Zeitalters?” in idem, Europa in der Krise (Frankfurt, 1979) 112ff., cited in idem, Age, 39 n. 1; cf. Reinhart Koselleck, “The Historical-Political Semantics of Asymmetric Counterconcepts,” in idem, Futures Past (trans. Keith Tribe; Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985) 159–97, and idem, “‘Neuzeit,’” in Futures, 265: “Ideological criticism ... argues with concepts of movement whose burden of proof can only be summoned up in the future.” So arises the necessity to “make” History Itself so as to validate one’s position—a necessity that can bring world-wide civil war.

Appendix B: Cultural Criticism in the Wake of Nietzsche

On cultural criticism, decadence, and the völkisch attitude, see Mohler, Die Konservative Revolution, 24, 78–129, 138–41; Mosse, Culture of Western Europe, 219, 279. Here I should like to acknowledge a debt to the penetrating analyses of the völkisch mentality in the works of Mosse and of Michael Ledeen. The notion of “old” versus “young” peoples or cultures was popularized by the original (1922) propagandist for a “Third Reich,” Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, who in Stern’s words (Politics, 191), asserted that “the peoples of the world were divided into young and old peoples—roughly, those that still had a future and those that did not.” See Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, Sturm- und Kampflieder für Front und Heimat (Berlin: Propaganda-Verlag Paul Hochmuth, 1939) 6 (“Jugend kennt keine Gefahren. . . Jugend! Jugend! wir sind der Zukunft Soldaten.”); 16 (“Eine junges Volk steht auf, zum Sturm bereit!”); 18 (“Es zittern die morschen Knochen der Welt vor dem roten Krieg. Wir haben den Schrecken gebrochen. . . Und mögen die Alten auch schelten . . . wir werden doch Sieger sein”).
It would be morbidly fascinating to linger here, dwelling on the suicidal nihilism implicit in this paradigm of conservative revolution, with its notion that the cycle can be moved on from decay to rebirth only by an intensification of current decadence. One could look at links between the notion of decadent separation from eternal myth and the rise of that elitist anti-Semitism so despised by Nietzsche. Here we could take our cue from Harvard’s George Foot Moore, who in 1921 indicted the heritage of Erlangen scholarship on Judaism for its acceptance of the absurd notion that postexilic Judaism made God totally inaccessible and hence doomed to concentrate on law at the expense of attention to the love and life that came from closeness to God (see Moore, “Christian Writers,” 228–54). Or we could look at turn-of-the-century figures like Georges Sorel and the notion of rejuvenating deeds of violence in their association with elitist opposition to parliamentary democracy and modern Spätkapitalismus, Late Capitalism (see Hughes, Consciousness, 91, 162–66, 170–75; Hock, Antikapitalismus). For our purposes, though, the popularization of Nietzschean cultural criticism after 1918 means the emergence of three interconnected tendencies among conservatives: (1) the tendency to think in historical cycles of decay and rebirth or of ebbing and flowing; (2) the tendency to see all branches of culture as linked within a given epoch, so that the health of religion and the health of the state are somehow intertwined; (3) the tendency to favor aesthetic over morally absolute categories in evaluating historical events.

Appendix C: Paganism and Religiosity


**Appendix D: Carl Schmitt: A Bibliographical Note**


For Schmitt and Vaihinger, see Schmitt, “‘Juristische Fiktionen,’” *Deutsche Juristenzeitung* 18 (1913) 804–6. Schmitt’s historical critique of parliamentary democracy seems to end in the claim that, since political form is derived from a metaphysic or theology underlying the epoch, and since divine right had eroded, the choice was between anarchy and dictatorship. The issue would seem to be, then, the following: as Schmitt seemed to accept the conservative rhetoric of decadence and improvement by intensification of the decay of liberalism (thus his claim that the “total,” omnicompetent welfare state born of weakness in surrender to all factions is precursor of a total state strong in its own right), did he then at any point see in Hitler a cyclic rebirth of some newly instituted divine right? I cannot claim to give an answer. A negative answer might be detected in Schmitt’s claim that, before Hitler came to power, he worked to prevent that event. Moreover, I am hard pressed to see in Schmitt’s Nazi period any clear resumption of his claims for Catholic divine right politics from the early 1920s. Key texts in this connection include: Schmitt, “‘Die Sichtbarkeit der Kirche,’” *Summa* 2. Viertel (1917) 71–80; idem, *Römischer Katholizismus und politische Form* [with imprimatur] (2d ed.; Der katholische Gedanke 13; Munich/Rome: Theatiner Verlag, 1925); idem, *Verfassungslehre* (Munich/Leipzig: Duncker & Humboldt, 1928) 16; see esp. “‘Die zwei Prinzipien politischer Form: Identität und Repräsentation’” (204–16) and 22, 282–92; Fijalkowski, *Wendung*, 174–81. See esp. Scholz, “‘Theologie,’” 164: “In dem
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rechtsbegrifflich noch unbestimmten Aufsatz von 1917: Die Sichtbarkeit der Institution Kirche entspricht des Sichtbarwerdung Gottes in der Inkarnation.” Ibid., 165: “Dieser... Souveränitätsbegriff wird aber juristisch erst praktikabel, ... als Schmitt 1923 die... Figur der ‘Repräsentation an der Katholischen Kirche ablöst... [als] der... Vorgang, der eine nicht präsente Autorität durch einen Stellvertreter für einen... Autoritätsunterworfenen. ... Dritten verbindlich darstellt. ... In der Konstruktion des... Repräsentationsbegriffes bei Schmitt liegt aber eine Dynamik beschlossen, die den... Repräsentierten löst.” Ibid., 166: “Schmitts Rechtstheorie ist Theologie—aber eine... nachgemachte und... kaum christlich.’”

Yet certain texts in Schmitt could perhaps be taken to imply a quasi-divine legitimation for Hitler, though one devoid of derivation from Schmitt’s Catholic “representation.” Note the use of “‘realer Präsenz” and “‘unmittelbarer Gegenwart” to signify “‘eine unbedingte Artgleichheit zwischen Führer und Gefolgschaft” by Schmitt, Staat, Bewegung, Volk (Der deutsche Staat der Gegenwart 1; Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1934) 42; also note the sacral overtones in Schmitt, ‘‘Der Führer schützt das Recht (1934),’’ in idem, Positionen, 200: ‘‘Das Richtertum des Führers entspringt der-selben Rechtsquelle, der alles Recht jedes Volkes entspringt. ... Alles Recht stammt aus... dem Lebensrecht des Volkes.” Here all depends on how “‘divine” Schmitt meant Volk and Führer to be. Equally ambivalent (and crucial) are Schmitt’s original intentions in his notoriously difficult Der Leviathan in der Staatslehre des Thomas Hobbes (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1938); cf. Schmitt, ‘‘Die Vollendete Reformation,’’ Der Staat 4 (1965) 51–69; Helmut Rumpf, Carl Schmitt und Thomas Hobbes (Berlin: Düncker & Humblot, 1972); Martin Jänicke, ‘‘Die ‘abgründige Wissenschaft’: Zur Hobbes-Deutung Carl Schmitts im Dritten Reich,’’ Zeitschrift für Politik n.s. 16 (1969) 401–15. At all events, I see no evidence that Schmitt provided positive arguments for a... renewal of divine right in Hitler, and I read Schmitt’s embrace of Hitler as an act of... opportunism made easier for Schmitt by Hitler’s claim to serve the rejuvenation of Germany. However this may be, Schmitt received a Catholic burial; see Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (Samstag, 13. April 1985) 28. On Vaihinger’s relation to Schmitt, see the perceptive comments in Muth, ‘‘Carl Schmitt in der deutschen Innenpolitik,’’ 143–44.

Appendix E: Emanuel Hirsch: A Bibliographical Note

Trillhaas, “Hirsch,” 39; Wilhelm and Marion Pauck, Paul Tillich: His Life and Thought, vol. 1: Life (New York: Harper & Row, 1976) 30–31; Ericksen, Theologians, 123. Ericksen’s treatment of Hirsch is a pioneering effort in English, usually correct in its nar- rative and an excellent synthesis of a variety of materials (though stylistically flawed). Yet Ericksen as an intellectual historian does not do an altogether satisfactory job of plac- ing Hirsch in his Sitz im Leben. He shows no sign of awareness of Hirsch’s interest in Carl Schmitt and would have benefited by taking into account Mohler (Revolution, 401, 426, 138–42), who puts Hirsch during his earlier Weimar days into a Protestant sub- group of the ‘‘Jungkonservativen”: not purely reactionary, not violently revolutionary, but oriented toward a further, ‘‘sober” development of the ideal of the Reich as political form, an ideal that was combined with a definite interest in both Christianity and juridical argumentation. For Reich in Hirsch, see his Das Wesen des Christentums (Weimar: Deutsche Christen, 1939) 83–84, 89, 140, 157. In accord with Mohler’s assessment of
Hirsch is the report that the Deutsche Christen at one point accused the Glaube und Volk circle (Heinrich Rendtorff, Paul Althaus, and Hirsch) of having too “preussischkonservativ” a notion of the Volk (i.e., one insufficiently racist); see Wennemar Schweer, “Die theologische Ethik des Politischen bei Emanuel Hirsch” (Th.D. diss., Heidelberg University, 1969) 95. Schweer’s dissertation is, to be sure, the best intellectual biography of Hirsch to date; however, it, like the work of Ericksen, fails adequately to make the central point that Hirsch and other pro-Nazi intellectuals cannot be adequately understood if they are treated simply as part of a Right treated in isolation from other attackers of liberal democracy and liberal economics. The great failure of most writers on these topics is a failure to see that Right and Left share an indebtedness to a common continental heritage of antipluralism and antiliberalism. While individual figures among critics of “bourgeois” democracy varied in the degree to which they approached the ideal type of a total repudiation of parliamentary democracy, free market economics, and societal pluralism, these empirical deviations from the ideal type of antiliberalism in no way justify the customary failure of scholars to register the existence of a tradition of antiliberalism shared by extremes of Left and Right. This claim is one that I hope to argue in detail by means of a comparison of Hirsch the Nazi with Tillich the Religious Socialist in a book-length manuscript now in preparation; cf. Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987) 142, 157; Ellen Kennedy, “Carl Schmitt und die ‘Frankfurter Schule’: Deutsche Liberalismuskritik im 20. Jahrhundert,” Geschichts und Gesellschaft 12 (1986) 380–419; Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, Theonomie: Fallstudien zum Integrationsanspruch neusittlicher Theologie (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1987); Norman Podhoretz, The Bloody Crossroads (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986) 119 n.: “In Europe opposition to the rising power of industrial capitalism came (at least until 1945) from the Right as well as the Left, taking the form of fascism and of literally reactionary political movements which advocated the restoration of monarchy or of an essentially feudal social organization.” Cf. James Nuechterlein, “Neoconservativism & Irving Kristol,” Commentary 78:2 (August 1984) 43–52. See also Müller, ed., Christliche Wahrheit; Friedrich Böbel, Menschliche und christliche Wahrheit bei Emanuel Hirsch (Th.D. diss., Erlangen-Nürnberg University, 1963); Gunda Schneider-Flume, Die politische Theologie Emanuel Hirschs 1918–1933 (Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe XXIII, vol. 5; Bern/Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1971; Jens Holger Schjørring, Theologische Gewissensethik und politische Wirklichkeit (Arbeiten zur kirchlichen Zeitgeschichte, Reihe B, Band 7; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979); Wolfgang Tilgner, Volksnomosetheologie und Schöpfungsglaube (Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Kirchenkampfes 16; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966); Scholder, Die Kirchen, 1. 127–33, 213–15, 211–23, 402–4, 528–47; Michael Weinrich, Der Wirklichkeit begegnet . . . (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980) 265–331; Friedrich Mildenberger, Geschichte der deutschen evangelischen Theologie im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert (Theologische Wissenschaft 10; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1981) 26, 182, 184, 250–51. For details of Hirsch’s early years (including the onset of his retinal detachment in 1917) see Hans-Walter Schütte, ed., Emanuel Hirsch/Paul Tillich Briefwechsel 1917–1918 (Berlin/Schleswig-Holstein: Die Spur, 1973) esp. 9; Jean-Loup Seban, “The Theology of Nationalism of Emanuel Hirsch,” Princeton Seminary Bulletin n.s. 7 (1986) 157–76.
Appendix F: Karl Holl: A Bibliographical Note

In the pursuit of Holl bibliography I have been greatly assisted by Prof. Dr. Robert Stupperich and Prof. Dr. Johannes Wallmann, to whom I extend my thanks.


Appendix G: ‘Irrationalism’ and Schicksal

JOHN STROUP


Moreover, any historian trying to take account of “ecstatic” and “irrational” currents in German theology of the period 1918–45 must come to terms with the ambiguities of the very concept of “irrationalism” itself. As Ricker has shown (see n. 3 above), both conservatives and followers of Marx charge each other with “Irrationalism.” See Rücker, 587–88; cf. K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (2 vols.; 5th ed.; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966); Georg Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft: Der Weg des Irrationalismus von Schelling zu Hitler* (East Berlin: Aufbau, 1953, 1955). Likewise, Schnädelbach (*Philosophy*, 140–41) points out that today’s Green Party owes much to Lebensphilosophie and “Irrationalism,” even as Lukács himself has a debt to Simmel and Lebensphilosophie; moreover, it is a “tautology” to classify an age as “imperialistic” and then to argue that any philosophy in it is bad because of its “imperialistic” tendency. See Schnädelbach, *Philosophy*, 141: “Why then is ‘irrationalism’ a reproach? Could it not be the truth?”

Making matters more difficult is the fact that some Nazi sympathizers explicitly rejected the “irrational” along with “bourgeois capitalism”; see Theodor Odenwald, “Die heutige Krise des Christentums,” in *Luther, Kant, Schleiermacher*, 361, 358. To be sure, in some sense Hirsch in his mystic individualism and obsession with Schicksal, intuition, Fichte, and Nietzsche is rightly labeled “irrational” by Schweer, “Ethik,” 24–26 and elsewhere. After invoking Lukács, Schweer concludes that the real problem in Hirsch’s view of history is his historicizing dedication to individuality and his resultant rejection of any “Rationalisierungsprozess” (leading to “irgendeinen Idealzustand”) in favor of unpredictable self-unfolding (Schweer, “Ethik,” 24). This analysis will not do: the monads and Meinecke differ so much from Hitler and Hirsch that nothing is gained.
by lumping them together; besides, are all who doubt "progress" to be labeled "irrational" and Fascist?

The real issue here is whether "rationality" can be predicated only of central, governmental planning of the economy, or whether true "rationality" does not rather pertain to a vast process too large and complex to be supervised by any finite set of "rational" individuals. See Friedrich A. Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society," in idem, Individualism and Economic Order (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948) 77–91; idem, "Was ist und was heisst 'sozial'?" in Masse und Demokratie (Volkswirtschaftliche Studien für das Schweizerische Institut für Auslandforschung; Erlenbach Zürich: Rentsch, 1957) 71–84. Lest anyone think that most German conservatives and the National Socialists advocated pure Adam Smith, allow me to cite Oswald Spengler, Preussentum und Sozialismus (Munich: Beck, 1935); Hock, Deutscher Antikapitalismus (Appendix A, above); Hayek, "The Socialists Roots of Nazism" (in Appendix A above). There is, however, a German tradition of anticentralism with roots in Montesquieu. See Geraint Parry, "Enlightened Government and its Critics in Eighteenth-Century Germany," The Historical Journal 6 (1963) 178–92; John Stroup, The Struggle for Identity in the Clerical Estate (Studies in the History of Christian Thought 33; Leiden: Brill, 1984).

We must then ask whether the concept of "Irrationalism" is useful. I cannot answer the question here; I can only suggest that, just as right-wing fondness for cycles responded to a left-wing monopoly on linear "progress," so perhaps did "irrationalism" respond to a left-wing monopoly on "Reason" in History. Cf. Trutz Rendtorff, "Christentum," Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe, 1. 790–814; Reinhart Koselleck, "Neuzeit: Remarks on the Semantics of the Modern Concepts of Movement," in idem, Futures Past, 231–66. All this says nothing about what it "really" means to be "irrational." See also F. A. von Hayek, Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967) esp. 66–105.

Appendix H: The "Two Kingdoms" and Hirsch


Appendix I: The World Political Context of "Secularization" and "Political Theology"

We must consider the possibility that—as a final result of the longstanding "secularization" of public life in the Christian West—in the twentieth century we have experienced a pagan "resacralization" of "secular" politics. Corollary to this phenomenon is the "secularization" ("'paganization'") of "Christian" theology, which in the twentieth century has undergone an emptying of traditional, sacral content even as it has been filled with the neosacrality of ideological politics (Deutsche Christen thought. Neomarxism). Signs of this development include Nazi and Communist ideology, worldwide civil war, the breakdown of classic European limited war as a legal "duel" between legal equals, the criminalizing of initiation of hostilities, the spread of ideological "'holy wars'" aiming at the extinction of political and economic systems, the spread of guerrilla wars of international and ideological partisanship that do not distinguish combatants or peace from hostilities, the growing tendency to regard theology as an epiphenomenon of worldly politics justifiable only as a further arena of ideological conflict, and the growing tendency to use nonmilitary pressures to achieve socio-political changes at the expense of classic national sovereignty—or, the movement toward a unified world-state, a movement powered by "'moral force'" and accompanied by the end of both the Two Kingdoms doctrine and the separation of Christian orthodoxy from politics. It is too soon to say whether all this represents the triumph of values over tyranny, or rather simply Carl Schmitt's "'tyranny of values.'" See Julien Freund, "'Politik als Heilslehre.'"
on ‘‘the shipwrecked illusion of a combination of Marxism and Christianity,’” citing R. Banks, ‘‘The Intellectual Encounter between Christianity and Marxism,’’ Journal of Contemporary History 11 (1976) 309–11, 316–17, ‘‘who sees the significance of Tillich more in a future relaxation of the understanding of Marxism by emphasis on the pre-materialistically prophetic Marx’’; Bracher, Age, 134 n. 3, citing Rudolf Vierhaus, ‘‘Die Ideologie eines deutschen Weges der politischen und sozialen Entwicklung,’’ in Rudolf von Thadden, ed., Die Krise des Liberalismus zwischen den Weltkriegen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978) 96–98; cf. Bracher, Age, xi–xii: ‘‘Intellectuals, young people and the churches in particular are emerging as exponents of revived crisis thought, with the threat of nuclear annihilation overshadowing everything. These are ideas which carried a good deal of weight before and after the First World War, in the slogan of the ‘Decline of the west’. . . Ideological flight from reality can acquire pseudo-religious features; it can lead to the undermining of an open society and weaken its resistance to right-wing or left-wing dictatorships. . . . The new ideological movements . . . [typically employ] persuasive ‘empty formulas’ such as we encounter at present in the peace concept of the eponymous movements; their function is dramatization and emotional mobilization. In the role of alternative movements, of ecological, anti-nuclear and anti-American colouring, they touch upon the foundations of the western concept of democracy whenever they see themselves as a fundamental opposition . . . and whenever . . . they . . . have one foot outside parliamentary democracy. Operating as they do in the boundary zone between democracy and dictatorship they might provide a nutrient for the incubation of totalitarian ideologies.’’ On Bracher see ‘‘The Persistence of Political Faiths,’’ in Richard John Neuhaus, ed., The Religion & Society Report 3 (March 1986) 3–4. I am indebted to this article for calling my attention to Bracher, Age.