

National Socialism as Religion

by Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher

Chalcedon Report 1992

Copyright © 1992 Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher

Let us have a look at one of the two political religions that have been in power on German soil and attempted to bring salvation by the state: National Socialism and communism.

It is impossible to count how many billion times the Germans said 'Heil Hitler' during the Third Reich. To greet with 'Heil Hitler' was a strict law, and people were put into concentration camps because they refused to use this greeting. But only a few non-Germans realise that 'Heil' is the German word for 'salvation', which is extensively used in the German Bible translations. 'Salvation Hitler' or 'Salvation through Hitler' was the daily message that every German, including nearly all the Christians, preached to his neighbour daily. Although some tried to explain 'Heil Hitler' as wishing salvation for Hitler,¹ the official meaning was clear: Hitler is the salvation for Germany and for the world.

That there was nearly no resistance to use this 'German greeting' among Christians shows the condition of the German churches after hundreds of years being influenced by the humanistic philosophy of Freemasons like Lessing, Hegel and Goethe² and by the aggressive theology of higher criticism started by Freemasons like Reimarus, Strauss and Renan.³ The so-called free churches—including the dispensationalist churches—cried 'Heil Hitler', removed the converted Jews from their churches and took over the 'Führer'-principle which Hitler forced on all organisations. Most free churches merged into one big denomination by the order of the Nazis. The Lutheran churches did not want to get involved in politics. The mainly Lutheran so called 'confession church' was a mixture of Bible believing Christians like the Reformed Heinrich Jochums and strong

1 For example the professor of German literature in Bonn Hans Naumann, *Rede zum Geburtstag des Führers, Bonner Akademische Reden 27* (Bonn: Scheur, 1937), p. 17; see my dissertation *Hans Naumann als Volkskundler im Dritten Reich*, PhD-Thesis (Los Angeles: Pacific Western University, 1990), p. 291, in preparation for print (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 1991)

2 I am not referring to some theory of conspiracy, but to the historical fact that more German humanistic philosophers and thinkers were Freemasons than not. I only count those thinkers whose belonging to a lodge is not doubted by historians. See my book mentioned above.

3 Again I refer to the historical fact that nearly all leading higher critics in the beginning were Freemasons. They were not critically in general, but only critical against Christianity, because they believed in a rival religion. See beside my mentioned book

liberals like Rudolf Bultmann.

The only real resistance came from neo-orthodox Reformed theologians in Germany and from Reformed Christians in the Netherlands. Karl Barth was the only professor of theology who continued to start his lecture with a prayer instead with 'Heil Hitler'. He was also not willing to swear an oath to Hitler,⁴ even though he later changed his mind, when it was already too late.⁵ But Barth was left alone by the 'Confession Church', which told the Nazi state that it would not be a problem to swear an oath to Hitler. Only then was the Nazi state ready to dismiss Barth!⁶ Even though Barth is to be rejected because he denies biblical history,⁷ he argued for resistance to the Nazi state because he saw Jesus from a Reformed perspective as Lord over every area of life, which is the clear message of the otherwise mixed Declaration of Barmen. Please do not misunderstand me. I am not advocating Karl Barth. But to understand the situation in Germany you have to understand that until the end of the sixties Barth was offering the most conservative theology you could buy on the open market.

(Incidentally the attitude of the Dispensational and Lutheran churches toward Hitler and the Jews compared to those of the Reformed Christians is a striking argument against Hal Lindsey's rude attack that Christian Reconstructionism will lead to a second holocaust.⁸ Normally it is the dispensationalists who will not step in for others, because this would mean becoming involved in politics or economics. Lindsey has to be reminded that love in the Bible is to be measured by deeds, not by nice words, proclamations and best selling books: see 1John 3,18).

That 'Salvation Hitler' was only a small, while revealing part of the socialistic message and practice of a new anti-Christian religion can be demonstrated in several ways. We could discuss the roots of Hitler's thinking, which are in occult orders and sects.⁹ We could discuss the parallels between the salvation history of orthodox Christianity and of National Socialism. But surely the most impressive argument is the everyday songs, the poems, official rituals and lectures of the Third Reich. The Nazis never hid the religious character of their actions. Take for example the following statement:

National Socialism is a religion, born out of blood and race, not a political world-view. It is the new, alone true religion, born out of a Nordic spirit and an Aric soul. The religions still existing must disappear as soon as possible. If

4 Hans Prolingheuer, *Der Fall Karl Barth 1934-1935: Chronographie einer Vertreibung* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977)

5 Ibid. This is often neglected, also Prolingheuer proves it from Barth's own writings.

6 Ibid. See also my dissertation *Hans Naumann als Volkskundler im Dritten Reich*, pp. 197-202

7 I agree with the judgment of Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace* (Tyler: Institute for Christian Economics: Tyler, 1987), p. 151, that Barthianism believes together with antinomianism that God does not speak to any süecific problems in history.

8 Hal Lindsey, *The Road to Holocaust* (New York: Bantam, 1989). See the refutations of Lindsey's theories on Christian Reconstruction in Gary DeMar, *The Debate over Christian Reconstruction* (Ft. Worth: Dominion Press, 1988); Gary DeMar, Peter Leithart, *The Reduction of Christianity* (Ft. Worth: Dominion Press, 1988); Greg L. Bahnsen, Kenneth L. Gentry, *House Divided* (Tyler: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989); Steve Schlissel, David Brown, *Hal Lindsey and the Restoration of the Jews* (Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books: Edmonton, 1990)

9 See the literature in my article "Adolf Hitler und kein Ende", *Factum* 6/1989, pp. 252-255

they do not dissolve themselves the state has to destroy them.¹⁰

The Nazi-chief of the united trade unions proclaimed openly:

Adolf Hitler! We are united with you alone! We want to renew our vow in this hour: On this earth we believe only in Adolf Hitler. We believe that National Socialism is the alone saving faith for our people. We believe that there is a Lord - God in heaven, who created us, who leads us, who directs us and who blesses us visibly. And we believe that this Lord—God sent Adolf Hitler to us, so that Germany become a fundament for all eternity.¹¹

The high SS officer Schulz stated in a lecture called “Ours is the kingdom and the power and the glory”:¹²

I do not want to become guilty of blasphemy, but I ask: Who was greater, Christ or Hitler? By (the time of) His death Christ had twelve disciples, who even did not stay faithful. But Hitler today has a people of 70 million behind him. We cannot tolerate that another organisation, which has another spirit than ours, should come into existence. National Socialism seriously lays this claim: I am the Lord, your God, you shall have no other Gods beside me ... Our is the kingdom, because we have a strong army ("Wehrmacht"), and the glory, because we are a respected people again, and this, of God wants it, 'in eternity'. Heil Hitler.¹³

In Cologne, the children receiving meals from the Nazi state during the Second World War prayed before the meal. The prayer follows typical German Christian prayers before meal and is originally written in rhyme:

Fold your hands, bow your head and think about Adolf Hitler. He gives us our daily bread and helps us out of every misery.¹⁴

Because of our short time I cannot go on to quote further examples.¹⁵ You have to believe me that there are hundreds and thousands of documents like this. I also want to assure you also that the religious overtone does not come from my translation. The case is just the opposite: I found it difficult to translate the strongly religious language into English. These shocking songs, prayers and confessions were no secret, but part of everyday life in Nazi Germany. For comparison the last example will be taken from a real secret

10 Lecture at a course for the few leaders of the youth of the German states, quoted from Johann Neuhäuser, *Kreuz und Hakenkreuz*, part 1 (München: Verlag Katholische Kirche Bayerns, 1946), p. 261.

11 *Confession of Faith of the "Reichsarbeitsführer" Robert Ley*, quoted from NS-Schulungsbriefe, Heft 4/1937.

12 Taken from and put against the liturgical ending of the Lords prayer “Our father in heaven ...”, which is found from the second century on and taken partly from 2Chr 29,11-12.

13 SS-Obergruppenführer Schulz, quoted from Johann Neuhäuser, *Kreuz und Hakenkreuz*, p. 255.

14 Quoted from Gerhard E. Stoll, “Gebete in publizistischer Umgestaltung”, *Publizistik* 3(1958): 337-352, here p.346. The article discusses the 'secular' forms of German prayers used in press and propaganda.

15 See 14 documents in my article “Die Religion des Nationalsozialismus”, *Factum* 11/12/1989: 506-511

document, which shows that the documents already quoted were a mild version for the public. The text is a secret document from 1943, written only for Hitler.¹⁶ The signature of Hitler shows that the text was approved by Hitler with the words “the first useful outline” and then sent to Goebbels.

Immediate and unconditional abolition of all religions after the final victory ('Endsieg') not only for the territory of Greater Germany but also for all released, occupied and annexed countries ..., proclaiming at the same time Hitler as the new messiah. Out of political considerations the Muslim, Buddhist and Shintoist religion will be spared for the present. The 'Führer' has to be presented as an intermediate between a redeemer and a liberator, yet surely as one sent by God, who has to get godly honour. The existing churches, chapels, temples and cult places of the different religions have to be changed into 'Adolf-Hitler-consecration places'. The theological faculties of the universities have to be transformed into the new faith. Special emphasis has to be laid on the education of missionaries and wandering preachers, who have to proclaim the teaching in Greater Germany and in the rest of the world and have to form religious bodies, which can be used as centres for further extension. (With this the problems with the abolition of monogamy will disappear, because polygamy can be included into the new teaching as one of the statements of faith.)¹⁷

If the Christian churches in Germany (and in many other countries) did not realise that they have been taken over by a rival religion called National Socialism, explicitly called itself a religion, how can you convince them that they are taken over by rival religions which deny that they are religions, such as socialism and Marxism,¹⁸ Freemasonry,¹⁹ Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy²⁰ or other forms of humanism?

We can see this also when we look at Marxism, which ruled part of Germany until recently. The Germans in the former GDR (East Germany) lived first under National Socialism and after 1945 under communism. They lived under tyranny for 56 years! But few see a religious and ethical problem here. Most, including most evangelicals, consider this to have been a political problem, which only troubles fundamentalist churches, because they were persecuted. (The most liberal churches think in socialistic terms anyway.) People do not realise and do not want to realise what National Socialism and communism had and have in common.

Incidentally, some of the concentration camps in the territory of the former GDR were

16 Also called “Führervorlage”.

17 Quoted from the photo of the original in Wilfried Daim, *Der Mann, der Hitler die Ideen gab* (Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1985), pp. 216-218. p. 299 discusses the genuineness of the document.

18 For arguments for the religious character of Marxism see my book *Marxismus—Opium für das Volk* and my article (together with my wife Christine): “Der Kommunismus als Lehre vom Tausendjährigen Reich”, *Factum* 11/12/1986: 12-19

19 For arguments for the religious character of Freemasonry see my book Jochen Neuer, *Die Freimaurer*

20 For arguments for the religious character of anthroposophy see my article “Reinkarnation und Karma in der Anthroposophie”, *Factum* 11/12/1988: 473-482

just taken over from the Nazis by the Communists. They even left communists in the camps if they were not communists of the party line. We visited the cruel concentration camp Buchenwald while it was still under communist rule. It was near Weimar, the city of Goethe, Schiller and other so called humanist thinkers. It was one of those camps, which were taken over by the Russians. The camp was liberated by American soldiers, but then given over to the Russians who used it for another decade.

The German atheistic philosopher Ernst Topitsch has shown²¹ that National Socialism and Marxism are only the best known examples of the right and left wing totalitarian state ideas that followed Hegel's philosophy which saw the Prussian state as the final outcome of the spirit governing world history. Hegel's philosophy was heavily influenced by the French revolution and Freemasonry, as some of his followers have shown to relieve him from of responsibility for the Prussian and German idea that the state is above everything and that the people should live for the state. But they did not understand that the left and right revolutionists understand the same message of Hegel as the Prussian kings and the Marxists and national socialists after they had come to power: salvation comes through the state. And this message is still at work in reunited Germany, which is now attempting to get all of Europe under a even greater—European—state, since this is believed to bring even more salvation. If this plan, the United State of Europe, does not succeed, it will be because the religion of nationalism in the European states, which also believe in salvation through the state, is too strong. These two rival static religions can only be overcome by the “*kingly law of freedom*”, as James calls it. Only if Christian Reconstruction takes place being based 1) on the presupposition of an creator, 2) who revealed himself in His infallible book, which contains 3) His laws as theonomic ethics for the whole world, 4) the salvation according to Calvinistic understanding and 5) the hope and faith that this earth at large will one day serve God.

21 Ernst Topitsch, *Die Sozialphilosophie Hegels als Heilslehre und Herrschaftsideologie* (München: Piper, 19812); Ernst Topitsch, *Gottwerdung und Revolution*, UTB, (Pullach: Verlag Dokumentation, 1973). On Hegel religious background in Freemasonry and his influence on right und left totalitarianism see also: Jacques D'Hondt, *Verborgene Quellen des Hegelschen Denkens* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 19832) (from the French); Jacques D'Hondt, *Hegel und seine Zeit* (Beerlin: Akademie-Verlag, 19842) (from the French); Gerd-Klaus Kaltenbrunner (ed.), *Hegel und die Folgen* (Freiburg: Herder, 1970); Karl R. Popper, *Die offene Gesellschaft und ihre Feinde Vol 2* (Tübingen: Francke, 19806) (title of English original: *The Open Society and Its Enemies II*)