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The future of the Reformation in nineteenth-century German historical consciousness

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This thesis is submitted in requirement for
the degree of Ph.D. at the University of
St Andrews on 19 July 2006



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Abstract

The historical discipline in nineteenth-century Germany developed around two main questions which were basic to its existence and purpose. The first was how to comprehend how God, through religion, was the foundation of intellectual life, of which history became the principal expression. The second asked what meaning historical knowledge had for the present. For historians, the two problems were linked by the belief that each was the key to understanding the other and taken together constituted the reality of human existence. History's epistemological function was thus its service to the present whose defining characteristic was the progress of the German community from religious and cultural to political identity. G W F Hegel, Leopold von Ranke, Ignaz von Döllinger, Johann Gustav Droysen, Heinrich von Treitschke, Heinrich von Sybel, and Adolf von Harnack, among many other historical thinkers, took for granted that the Reformation was the beginning of the intellectual and political world they inhabited. The present, therefore, was the 'future' of the Reformation which they sought to complete in various ways compatible with the changing political needs of the German community. For these individuals, the Reformation was two things. Objectively, it was the *explanandum*: the thing which history enabled them to understand. Subjectively, it was the *explanans*: the intellectual 'language', way of life, and 'being in' the historical 'left overs' of the Reformation.

To
Karen and Ed Kushner
and Ad Brugger,
Truly

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Prologue

This dissertation approaches the complex of historical events referred to by the term ‘the Reformation’ as a conceptual problem whose change in meaning over time can be studied, among other contexts, in nineteenth-century German historical writing. Traditional historiography comes up short when put to explain the dynamic processes of historical thought in the past, their relation to the present, and their contingency on the subsequent assertions historians, as historical agents and thinkers, make about the past. The approach taken by the dissertation gravitates, therefore, towards the notion of historical consciousness under the persuasion that history is not external to humanity, but rather its essence, its ontological basis. It does so in the hope of showing how the underlying complexities of historical thought can be brought to the center of historical analysis without rendering the idea of the past implausible or the possibility of its representation quixotic. To this end, I have tried to formulate a kind of historical analysis which adds to our understanding of how in nineteenth-century German historical thought the concepts of the nation and the Reformation developed self-referentially and how in some fundamental ways this correspondence still informs contemporary thought on the matter.

To understand how the history of ‘the Reformation’ has been written, we must come up with a kind of epistemological apparatus which is receptive to the change in meaning of these concepts within the nineteenth-century understanding of the ‘historical

time' of the-then present. In the writing of that history, the concept of the Reformation assumed many forms and performed many functions. Objectively, it was the *explanandum*: an event or constellation of events in the past that historians sought to understand, a river they believed they could cross without jumping in. Subjectively, it was the *explanans*: a way of life and 'being in' the historical 'left overs' of the Reformation. What remained of the Reformation furnished the conceptual terms on which its understanding relied, was made to rely, was construed as a cause for subsequent rise or fall, or was perceived and acted upon as a moral imperative. This study proceeds from the premise that the object and subject of historical study substantially overlap. Where they do is where we should begin if we hope to understand how the relationship between historical objectivity and subjectivity has changed over time in nineteenth century German historiography and in relation to the ever-evolving concept of the Reformation. Having been established as a legitimate and autonomous field of study in the 1970s and 80s, the history of concepts, in which the Reformation is central, is now ripe for integration into its cultural contexts. It is my hope that this study contributes to that end.

As a point of contrast, it may help to note that some historians of the Reformation deflect these historiographical issues categorically. They allude to progress made towards the recovery of the Reformation's initial completeness (since lost to time, we are to suppose). Behind a polite, secular veil lies history's old promise of a better future and the redemption of the historians' intellectual soul through the 'completion' of the Reformation's historical narrative. Still other historians lament the passing of a better, more organic and harmonious past for whose rupture they blame the Reformation. Not

unrelated is the frequent perception that theoretical reflection cripples history through crises of confidence or that bands of nefarious metaphysicians have cut it from its anchorage in the secure bay of fact. These fears are as old as the discipline itself and arose in part through historians' attempt to make sense of what the future of the Reformation had become and what it meant to the historical present.

Today, we are largely disabused of the confessional strife and yearning for or loathing of the promise of German nationhood which so indelibly imbued nineteenth and much of twentieth-century German historical writing. Historians have not lost, however, their ethical commitments to the processes and outcomes of historical change. Chapter one and the Epilogue suggest how some of these changes have occurred since 1918 and 1945, and also how they show important continuities from the nineteenth century. The notion of Protestantism as an historical force, and the belief it entered world history in the sixteenth century and was completed – or at least promised completion – in the nineteenth century, has also diminished in conceptual power. Chapters two and three discuss how the world-historical idea of the Reformation figured in Hegel and Ranke's conception of history and German nationality and how they understood Protestantism as a moral force which allowed them to see the completion of the Reformation within their nineteenth-century ideological commitments. Chapter four considers Ignaz von Döllinger's conception of the Reformation which he experienced as the incommensurable problem of the decline and fragmentation of the Christian Church, on the one hand, and history's promise for the redemptive creation of a political and moral realm in which the German nation could be built upon for the protection of religious plurality. Chapter five

turns to Johann Gustav Droysen, Heinrich von Treitschke, and Heinrich von Sybel, among other members of the so-called Prussian School, and examines two different tendencies: the construction of the Reformation as a tool of political advocacy; and the development of an historical hermeneutics built on what Droysen (and later Dilthey) understood to be the humanistic-intellectual project begun in the intellectual approach of the reformers. Chapter six, the last, focuses on the period 1871-1918 and examines the various interpretations of the Reformation in Wilhelmine historiography, through *Kulturkampf*, into *Kulturgeschichte*, and as a justification for the war that so many historians sought to vindicate their sizable claims on world history. The Epilogue reflects on the historians' *Standort* since 1918.

This is a work of intellectual and cultural history which concentrates on a wide swathe of nineteenth-century German historical works which in some way deal with the topic of the Reformation and inquires into their authors' religious, political, and cultural foundations. Both practical and conceptual interests guided my unnatural selection. Chief among the practicalities was my decision to focus on nineteenth-century historians who were recognised as major figures in their own time and whose secondary literature is large. This alone does not justify their elevation into 'key' figures. Many indeed already were that through what they had achieved through academic and national-political institutions, elevations of career which often correlated to a decline in their intellectual originality. Because these historians wrote both 'histories' and about history, we are able to discern how they engaged with the actual stuff of the past. This is the conceptual content of the argument. The nominal distinction between 'substantive' and 'reflective'

history collapses when we ask *why* they wrote what they did about the Reformation *when* they did. These transferences help to jostle the routine practice of bibliographical apartheid which imposes an unhelpful rigidity on historiographical interpretation.

I also rely on more recent literature to fill some large gaps in my knowledge of the major themes of nineteenth-century intellectual history including German Idealism and Romanticism, church history, theology, liberalism, and imperialism. A more detailed treatment of how historians construed these issues in writing on the Reformation would produce several large books indeed. These volumes, I believe, would not contradict the present argument. At a minimum, I hope to have indicated what the major nineteenth-century German historical thinkers understood historical thought to mean and how they became historically conscious of those issues and their relation to them. A measure of this project's success will be to have shown that the understanding of the subjectivity of historical consciousness, manifested in the experiences of hope and disillusionment, are as much a part of our human experience today as we perceive them to have been to others in the past. Historical study of the Reformation continues: *this* is the future of the Reformation. For that and other reasons, our search for a methodology to explain these processes in ways meaningful to us and to the past as we attempt to know it on its own terms remains a legitimate and urgent project of human understanding. This work attempts to show one way this might be achieved.

Chapter 1: Historiography of the Reformation in the Historical Present

1.1 'Re-form' as 'Pro-gress'

The arguments put forward in this dissertation originate in a view of the writing of history as an interpretative act in time which can be regarded as a historical process and examined as such. Enquiring into the concepts employed, knowingly and unknowingly, in the construction of historical arguments and the representation of meaning, and the influence exerted on these processes by the historian's theoretical understanding and subjective participation in their practice, helps illustrate some of the subtler complexities of historical thought and writing.

The German nineteenth-century historical enterprise was unparalleled in other European contexts because of its background in philology and philosophy, the relatively precocious large-scale institutionalization of the *Geisteswissenschaften* in the 1810s and 20s through to history's definitive professionalisation in the 1850s, and the overwhelming ideological power and moral faith which the cultural and political nation-state invested in its historians. The German context, for these reasons, exemplifies how a particular historical 'event', the Reformation, could be never only that to historians, but could be also a means and end for a cultural, and later, a political conception of national existence for whose development *in the historical present* the historians were largely responsible.

The essential project of this dissertation is to attempt to understand how the historians expressed this moral, subjective responsibility to their historical present by connecting it to an objectified past through the ligaments of historical narration. As the

nature of their contemporary responsibilities changed, so too changed the 'kind' of past which was appropriate to the present. The future of the Reformation was never decided because the present itself was in constant flux. Part of the foundation from which the historians worked was an awareness that the intellectual genealogy of their politically-orientated historiography, even if several of them rejected categorically history's utility to politics, led back to an elusive constellation of theological and localized cultural assertions, none of which defined the nation in a national-political sense until they were given a collective meaning by nineteenth-century intellectuals. Fichte and Hegel *made* philosophical Idealism historically engaged by showing how it culminated necessarily in the Protestant state; Schleiermacher *made* theology political because that was the kind of spirituality his present demanded of him. Lastly, the nineteenth-century German conception of history *made* Luther political. Leopold von Ranke, to whom so many nineteenth-century historians owed so much, understood the Reformation *through* this nineteenth-century filter. 'His' Reformation, therefore, took place in large part in the present.

We are quite right to wonder whether when Ranke, Ignaz von Döllinger, or Heinrich von Treitschke discussed Luther's political understanding of the nation they were not in fact discussing a nineteenth-century view of Luther's understanding of the nation. The twentieth-century and twenty-first-century views of the German past have their own peculiarities. Germany's defeat in 1945 and the ethical defeat of a specific kind of historical consciousness have forced intellectuals concerned with relevant matters to understand 'what went wrong'. Defeat became part of reality; as Raymond Aron wrote, 'the historian is to some extent both a spectator and an actor; he seeks in the past both

himself and another than himself. [...] The subjective mind, present in me, creates the common bond which makes it possible for me to communicate with others; it determines the collective reality the development of which interests the historian'¹. When we make the historian and the historical work the object of our study, it seems necessary that we move the two themes, separated by over four centuries but connected by the mode of their interpretation, into closer proximity. The conceptual value of this dissertation lies in its intention to show why, in nineteenth-century historical thought, historical subjectivity and objectivity lay so close together. The dissertation, then, might be considered an intellectual history what 'the Reformation' meant to nineteenth-century German historians and how that meaning functioned in their more general conception of history.²

The future of the Reformation became an instrument for the emergence of the nation-state. England, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and Sweden had all surged ahead of 'Germany' long before the *klein-deutsch* solution to German nationality lent ideological form to the idea of removing the weak tissue of Catholic Austria from the otherwise strong body of 'Germany'. The German Confederation was national in every

¹ Raymond Aron, *Introduction to Philosophy of History: An Essay on the Limits of Historical Objectivity*, George J Irwin, trans. (London, 1961) p. 48; first published as *Introduction a la philosophie de l'histoire* (Paris, 1938).

² In the 'Foreword' to a collection of essays by Reinhart Koselleck [*The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, Todd Samuel Presner and others, trans., (Stanford, 2002)] Hayden White reviews Koselleck's meaning of the term 'concept of history'. In so doing, he distinguishes between 'figures of history' (Clio, the Fates or Destiny, Machiavelli's 'fortuna' ...or the classical 'historia magistra vitae'), 'idea of history' ('an intuition (or perception) of historical phenomena submitted to rationalization by the application of categories of thought deemed adequate to their analysis. ...[Each historian] brings to his labors a different 'idea' of history – considered as a sequence of actions and events occurring in a given space over a given span of time'). White continues: 'What none of these purveyors of 'ideas' of history provides, Koselleck suggests, is a proper 'concept of history', by which he means a model of a structure of logical relationships by which to distinguish between a properly historical account of reality and a non-historical or a-historical or anti-historical account thereof. A concept of history will specify the common content of all of those ideas of history informing the works of the master historians of the world: the content of the history's subject matter, on the one hand, and the content of the forms of historical writing, on the other. A concept of history will identify the shared contents of all the ideas of history that have contributed to the definition of a distinctively historical way of knowing reality as history', pp. xi-xii.

sense – cultural, *völkisch*, linguistic, and geographic – but the political. The Confederation came to be understood by politicians and intellectuals as a flimsy pretender to bolder political forms more in keeping with what was held to be necessary and right given the historical continuity and authority *an sich* of German spiritual and intellectual life. All that was wanting was the nation's realisation. Austria's defeat at Königgrätz in 1866 and its immediate exclusion from the future of the nation confirmed that the plan had been right all along. The founding of the Second Reich in 1871 and Kaiser Wilhelm I's coronation at Versailles gave cause for celebration because *Realpolitik* had at last vindicated much of the German Idealist tradition. Buoyed by history's promise of fulfillment, the intellectuals drew selectively on early-modern history and divined its greater meaning. This turned out to be fairly simple: the German nation began with the Reformation. But rather than understanding its sixteenth-century usage and literal meaning, absorbed into early-modern German from a Latin root, for these intellectuals, by the early nineteenth century, 're-form' had become 'pro-gress' encrypted. Once this fundamental conceptual step had been taken, Germany as a national-political form could be envisaged and realised as function of its own historical construction.

Within this conceptual shift, the present had by no means been clipped from its roots. Indeed it grafted roots where some had withered and created others where none had been. Seen as it was through the lens of historiography to have picked up where Athenian civilisation left off and where the early Church had (d)evolved into an institution of temporal concern, the German *Geist*, manifested in the historical-philosophical conception and practice of its idea, defined and refined itself in the nineteenth-century

present as a function of its own history. The concept of the Reformation became integral to this projection of German historical self-consciousness. The profound historical agency granted to the concept secured its place in the historiographical narrative and in the discourse of political action. Whether as reason for pious pride in the nation and belief in its greater future, or cause for fear that Germany's completion of world history had passed before it had ever 'become', the significance of the Reformation was in both cases pivotal.

Thus, these historian's works cohere in addition to a shared language around a common awareness that the terms of their intellectual discourse descended from a common ancestor. That, at any rate, was the founding myth of all Protestant intellectual and political activity. Indicating the power of cultural Protestantism, Catholic historians, to varying degrees disenfranchised from powerful institutions such as the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität in Berlin (shortly after 1945 renamed more palatably the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), felt themselves distanced from the nuclei of intellectual-political life. They were put on the defensive. Typical was Döllinger's response to Ranke's claim that the workings of a new religious conviction underlay the rise of Germany in the sixteenth century. To Döllinger, who could not deny that very real religious and political changes had taken place, some of which he championed, the problem became where to draw the line between historical understanding and protecting the faith.

The conviction was unanimous among the historians studied here that the Reformation's meaning for European politics, the German nation, and the *geisteswissenschaftliche* tradition had yet to be fully realised. All, in fact, worked from the common premise that the Reformation was not finished and would remain in the flux

of Becoming so long as the German intellectual tradition, in which they all participated consciously, lived on. All were also conscious of contributing to that historiographical tradition in the present and developing its idea through the institutionalization and the refinement of historical method, theory, and practice. There was no doubt that the true nature of the past could be determined by asking the right questions, employing the right methods and bringing them to bear on the right ends. This truth – or better, truths – were prefigured in the present and meant something different to everyone, and for various reasons: the questions predetermined the answers. This dissertation examines these differences, their interrelations, and outcomes.

Confidence never waned among the figures studied and it is astonishing to realize that nowhere in that discipline of history was there place to admit that one did not have the answer. There was one important exception: what man did not know, God did, but withheld that knowledge from mortals. Confidence in the divine was consolation enough to carry on without formulating a consciously epistemological critique of history until Droysen's *Historik* of 1857. There is something to be said for the notion that Ranke was at his most theoretical when he least intended it. Had the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV on 29 April 1849 accepted rather than refused the imperial crown of a united Germany, and had the Liberals and Socialists not left the various congresses of 1848-49 disappointed and defeated, it is entirely likely that Droysen and his peers would not have had the critical perspective on their own history to ask 'what went wrong?' and to attempt to resolve the failure of historical understanding to bring about the outcome desired by returning to method of that understanding and its epistemological function. The central question for Droysen and other historians, of course, was whether the future of the

Reformation had also failed because the intellectual tools they used were unsuited to the kind of historical problem they faced³.

1.2 Uncertainty and contestation within the discipline

Methodological uncertainty has increased since Droysen's time, particularly over the last forty years. One result has been historians' attempts to integrate into their works a critical awareness of their use and understanding of conceptual conventions in the object of study, and the how these inform the study itself. Quentin Skinner's critiques have helped define this problematic, alerting us to how the use of such notions as 'spirit of the age', its 'eternal truths', and trust in the clarity of hindsight - that we know better what its thinkers really meant to say - can blind the investigator to the multi-dimensionality and self-referential nature of the past⁴. Thankfully, these critiques have joined the list of mainstream concerns many historians call up when introducing their histories of the Reformation: 'Even in the age of reform, if would seem, there was no single notion of what was meant by the term Reformation. Can we then hope to capture the essence of the movement standing, as we are, so many centuries removed from the event?': No, the author concluded⁵. Another wrote: 'In the present, we enjoy the chance to break up the

³ In this regard, Johann-Gustav Droysen's work was particularly novel. As Hayden White summarises it, 'A claim to originality can be advanced for his recognition that 'history' was a discourse, rather than absolute ground of being, an objective process, or an empirically observable structure of relationships - a discourse capable of inserting its readers within the circle of moral conceptions which defined their practical social horizons'. Hayden White, review of Droysen's *Historik*, in: *History and Theory* XIX (1980), p. 92.

⁴ Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols., (Cambridge, 1978), vol. 1, p. ix; for a synopsis of Skinner's theses, see James Tully, 'The Pen is a Mighty Sword', in James Tully, ed., *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics* (Princeton, 1988).

⁵ Robert Scriber and C Scott Dixon, *The German Reformation* (2nd ed., Basingstoke, 2003), p. 5; on the futility of deriving the Reformation's essential meaning, Dixon cites Hans-Christoph Rublack,

multiplicity of meaning which ‘the Reformation’ could not acknowledge [and] to test the content of its particular offerings’⁶. And finally, another historian remarked that the question of causality predicates connection and coherence: ‘it is thus inappropriate to isolate one event or another in the Reformation and to regard this as the event’s particular cause: ...The Reformation can only be represented as a *mixtum compositum* of religious, political and social aspects’⁷.

When we survey the contemporary historiography of the Reformation, we find a proliferation of specialised monographs exploring particular issues in the vast stores of (in some cases, newly catalogued) primary sources and ranging over of a topography of the Reformation re-mapped and enlarged between the mid-1970s and the early 1990s. More general works (oftentimes published as edited volumes, reflecting the diversification and specialisation of research in the early-modern period) have moved from the Great Man approach, exemplified by the English historian (German-born then exiled) G R Elton’s *Reformation Europe 1517-1559* in which the test of will between Charles V and Luther set the mood, to the Great Man plus much baggage⁸. Recent works on Luther reflect historians’ appreciation of the fact that Luther must be placed in the complex social, cultural, and theological contexts of the early sixteenth century⁹.

‘Reformation und Moderne. Soziologische, theologische und historische Ansichten’, in: *Die Reformation in Deutschland und Europa: Interpretationen und Debatten*, Hans R Guggisberg and Gottfried G Krodel, eds., (Gütersloh, 1993).

⁶ Luise Schorn-Schütte, *Die Reformation: Vorgeschichte, Verlauf, Wirkung* (Munich, 2000), pp. 7-11.

⁷ Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Umgang mit Geschichte: Eine Einführung in die Geschichtstheorie* (Hamburg, 1995), pp. 118-125.

⁸ For a recent and sympathetic interpretation of Elton, see Andrew Pettegree’s ‘Afterword’ to the second edition of Elton’s *Reformation Europe 1517-1559* (London, 1999).

⁹ The literature on Luther is understandably massive, but tends to focus on Luther in a specific thematic context. Paul Althaus, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers* (Gütersloh, 1973); Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther im Spiegel der deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (Göttingen, 1965); Hans Campenhausen, ‘Reformatorisches Selbstbewußtsein und reformatorisches Selbstbewußtsein bei Luther 1517-1522’, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 37 (1940) pp. 128-150; Bernhard Lohse, *Luthers Theologie in ihrer*

Additionally, Luther and the notion of the Lutheran Reformation share the field with other themes including art, architecture, literacy, dissemination of text and its availability and meaning to strata of the population other than the educated, studies of social structures including demographics, economy, *Alltagsgeschichte* and micro-history. Theology, personal belief, and the historical agency of religious conviction have also merged into the mainstream political bent with A G Dickens and John Tonkin pastorally advising to give religion its due or ‘commit folly’, among several others who see the matter less in terms of choice than as a matter of course¹⁰. Collaboration and cooperation have become incumbent on scholars of the early-modern period if anything approximating general knowledge is to be gleaned¹¹.

historischen Entwicklung und in ihrem systematischen Zusammenhang (Göttingen, 1995); Heiko A Obermann, *Luther: man between God and Devil*, Eileen Walliser-Schwartzbart, trans. (New Haven, 1989); Wolfgang Reinhardt, ‘Martin Luther und der Ursprung der historischen Geschichtswissenschaft in Deutschland’. *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*. Sonderband: *Die Reformation in Deutschland und Europa: Interpretationen und Debatten* (Heidelberg, 1993) pp. 371-409; Ernst Schäfer, *Luther als Kirchenhistoriker: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Wissenschaft* (Gütersloh, 1897); Ernst Schulin, ‘Luther’s Position in German History and Historical Writing’, U Watson, trans. *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 30 (1984) pp 85-98; Ernst Walter Zeeden, *Martin Luther und die Reformation im Urteil des deutschen Luthertums. Studien zur Selbstverständnis des lutherischen Protestantismus von Luthers Tod bis zum Beginn der Goethezeit* 2 vols. (Freiburg i.B., 1950-1952).

¹⁰ A G Dickens and John Tonkin, *The Reformation in Historical Thought* (Cambridge, MA, 1985). Starting strong, they note on p. 1: ‘Historians who exclude theology from their inquiries are usually committing a supreme act of folly, an act even more perverse than the exclusion of individual human motivation from the list of historical causes’. Bruce Gordon edited a two-volume collection of chapters dealing with the intersection of religion, belief, culture and historical consciousness; his introductions to both volumes can be placed in the tradition of Heiko Oberman’s long-standing position that the history of thought remains more valid than ever to the discipline of history: Oberman writes: ‘It tells the story of how people come to grips, both intellectually and emotionally, with the circumstances and conditions of their life’. Heiko A Oberman, *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications*, Andrew Colin Gow, trans., (Edinburgh, 1994), here, p. 1; Bruce Gordon, *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, 2 vols., (Brookfield, 1996).

Of course the historian’s own religion and life-experience can also be a factor in choice of topic and its analysis. See Brad Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1999); and Steven Ozment’s later works which do for family values what Gregory does for the power of religious conviction: Steven Ozment, *Ancestors: the loving family in old Europe* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2001); *The Bürgermeister’s daughter: scandal in a sixteenth-century German town* (New York, 1997); *Flesh and Spirit: private life in early modern Germany* (New York, 1999).

¹¹ This cohesion of intention and approach, insistence on collaboration and self-identification as a community of scholars distinguished by the collective belief that no matter how distinct their respective methods and objects of study, they deal nevertheless in the common currency of Reformation studies. See

Building on these aggregate studies, the leaders of an entire generation of early-modernists have begun to see the Reformation as a Europe-wide event spanning two centuries, from 1400 to 1600, and sometimes reaching beyond 1648¹². This perspective nullifies the usual confessional and national implications of the Rankean periodisation of 1517-1555. Additionally, with the focus relocated from Luther to the wider spectrum of issues outlined above, the question of causality has tended to shift from the agency of particular individuals to a more diffuse interaction of social processes: the formative power of political structures and the involvement – conscious and not - of individuals and society therein¹³. Neither have historians of the Reformation responded to Fernand Braudel's vision of a total history in which specific human agents play little if no role, the past and present having been welded together by *longue durée*, 'those great underlying currents which so often run silently, and whose true significance emerges only if one can observe their workings over great spans of time'¹⁴.

Instead, a plurality of approaches defines the field. We find some trends in recent historiography of the Reformation upholding rather traditional, in many ways Rankean, interpretations, particularly in the realm of politics, political structures, and what Gerhard Masur calls the 'most basic assumption to the Christian tradition, namely that the

the wide-ranging and impressive series of publications in the St Andrews Reformation Studies Institute published by Ashgate. For a controversial analysis of the development of scholarly communities (the publication of which angered many historians and derailed the author's career) see Wolfgang Weber, *Priester der Klio. Historisch-sozialwissenschaftliche Studien zur Herkunft und Karriere deutscher Historiker und zur Geschichte der Geschichtswissenschaft 1899-1970* (Frankfurt a.M., 1994).

¹² See especially Thomas A Brady, Heiko A Oberman and James D Tracy, eds., *Handbook of European History, 1400-1600*. 2 vols. (Leiden, 1994); Heiko A Oberman, *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications*. Andrew Colin Gow, trans. (Edinburgh, 1994); Steven Ozment, *The age of reform (1250-1550): an intellectual and religious history of late medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven, 1980).

¹³ The same questions about interpretation occur elsewhere: the debate about whether Hitler's personal pathology or the pathology of the society which allowed him to rule is a classic example.

¹⁴ Fernand Braudel, extract from the preface of *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1949). In: *On History*. Sarah Matthews, trans. (Chicago, 1980; first edition *Écrits sur l'histoire*. Paris, 1969), pp. 3-5.

meaning of history is one, that it cannot be manifold, but must be single and unique'¹⁵. Considered on this level, these political interpretations reassert the notion that the object of study referred to as the 'Reformation' (or even 'reformations') derives from 'modern' analytic categories such as the state, the nation, freedom, the increase of knowledge as a (potential) means of self-determination and definition of community, and, not least, the conflation of European history with world history and the belief that fortune has brought real progress towards recovering a lost but formerly unified historical reality. Thus, Andrew Pettegree views the collapse of Eastern European Communism in 1989 as the lifting of the 'rude division' of post-war Europe. He continues: 'The integration of these Eastern Reformations into the general narrative is the final crucial element in a new presentation of the world of the Reformation', plainly implying that political changes in our own time enable the progressive increase of knowledge. This positivistic faith further testifies to his belief in history's power in the present to restore a lost unity to a veiled past'¹⁶.

It is worth keeping in mind the question whether this clear testimony of belief in the advance of the present over the past connotes progress, in a temporal sense of change and a political-ideological conception of what those changes mean, or a teleological conception of progress in the sense of working towards an objective totality of knowledge. In either case, what we see here is evidence for the restoration of two concepts' legitimacy which had waned since the nineteenth century: on the one hand, the

¹⁵ Gerhard Masur, 'Distinctive Traits of Western Civilization: Through the Eyes of Western Historians', *The American Historical Review* 67 (Apr., 1962) pp. 591-608, here pp. 592-593.

¹⁶ He continues: 'The recent destruction of these artificial barriers has allowed scholars to use the last ten years of the twentieth century to rediscover an Eastern European Protestant Reformation which was extensive, individual and extremely successful'. Andrew Pettegree, ed., *The Reformation World* (London, 2000), p. 5.

notion that all history's threads can be woven together, and on the other, the belief that this can be accomplished without methodological implications which would force a reexamination of project's initial premise. It is one thing to take a 'wide slice', as Stuart Clark has done, and quite something else to claim the whole cake without methodological defense or reflection on the means and implications of doing so¹⁷.

While history's supernatural cladding has sloughed off and its messianic hopes and eschatological tendencies have been replaced by more modest epistemological claims, shedding their explicit theological connotation and sporting now a new spread of 'secular' means and objectives, the structure of the argument remains in many ways unchanged. Building on the work of Owen Chadwick and Wolfgang Hardtwig, the theme of the 'secularisation' – or not - of history's ways and means will be a constant point of reference throughout the dissertation¹⁸. Reflecting again on the theme of 1989, one is struck by a contradiction arising between two interpretations of the Reformation, both of which are political insofar as they attribute the timeliness of their appearance to the jostling of the contemporary European political order during and now after *die Wende*. Pettegree sees 1989 in practical terms of great relevance to archival research: the opening to western historians of a treasure-trove; but he also celebrates what it symbolises for western historians: the chance to widen the scope of historical inquiry from the mode of Elton to the multifaceted mode of the present. Multifaceted, because the project of realising the newly-recovered totality of sixteenth-century sources requires new

¹⁷ See Stuart Clark's provocative and excellent *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early-Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997). For a treatment of this problem and an introduction to the breadth of theoretical approaches which constitute it, see Quentin Skinner, 'Introduction: the return of Grand Theory', in: *idem*, ed., *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences* (Cambridge, 1985).

¹⁸ Owen Chadwick, *The Secularisation of the European mind in the nineteenth century* (Cambridge, 1975); Wolfgang Hardtwig, 'Geschichtsreligion – Wissenschaft als Arbeit – Objektivität', *Historische Zeitschrift* 252 (1991) pp. 1-32.

approaches. ‘In fact there have been few fields of history where historians have so radically adjusted their approach to the subject in the space of a generation. Their terms of reference, intellectual preoccupations, the geographical scope of their enquiries – all these have changed out of recognition’¹⁹. On top of this, to make the comparison that ‘when Elton wrote, the Reformation world was a much smaller place’, demonstrates this historian’s guiding belief in the correlation between the quantity of source material and the possibility of understanding it in its completeness, like counting trees in a forest from which a fog has lifted. Surely Elton would not have thought himself inhabiting a lesser world than ours: different perhaps, but not inferior.

Concepts labeled variously structuralism, post-structuralism, post-modernism, and narrativism, to name a few, have shown the theoretical content of historical thought; these are critical voices within the discipline – if some of them would want their names attached to that word anymore – which urge us to imagine what there was and is beyond the paradigm of classical historicism. Historicism’s claim to represent lived reality as a function of a particular understanding of the experience of time unique to ‘historical understanding’ has been questioned for some time²⁰. It seems the least we can do is to

¹⁹ Pettegree, *The Reformation World*, p. 1.

²⁰ On the notion of Historicism I refer to Herbert Schnädelbach who identifies three aspects of the term: ‘(1) *Wissenschaftspraxis*: a complex of conventions and norms from which follows the scientific treatment of history, that is, the referential equivalence of criticism to fact; (2) a *Denkform*, which is best described as the opposite of the ‘systematic thought’. It represents a thoroughly historical relativity in relation to knowledge and morality. Treated together, points 1 and 2 render all concepts and norms as historical data. This has the result of making historical data a factual matter rather than a conceptual and normative one. Thus the concept (3) *Historismus* in the positive sense, as an alternative to *Naturalismus*, as espoused by Troeltsch’. Herbert Schnädelbach, *Geschichtsphilosophie nach Hegel. Die Probleme des Historismus* (Freiburg i.B. and Munich, 1974) pp. 20-23. See also Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Entstehung des Historismus*, vol. 3, *Werke*. Carl Hinrichs, ed. (Munich, 1959); Jörn Rüsen, ‘Friedrich Meineckes ‘Entstehung des Historismus’. Eine kritische Betrachtung’, in: Michael Erbe, ed., *Friedrich Meinecke heute* (Berlin, 1981) pp. 76-100.

The list is long of those who have pushed and questioned the notion. Ernst Breisach provides a useful bibliography in his *On the Future of History: The Postmodernist Challenge and its Aftermath* (Chicago, 2003).

appraise ourselves of the issues. In light of these challenges to the idea and practice of history, a strong case can be made for the relative orderliness, tameness and stability of the field of Reformation studies, buoyed as it is for a number of historians by a happy belief in the transparency of historical representation and the promise of better days ahead. Hence the bold pronouncement of the world-historical opportunity to write the Reformation's 'general narrative'²¹. Dominick LaCapra's observations here are not entirely irrelevant: 'The very idea of a 'total history' has often been little more than a blind behind which social history could be transformed into the mother hen of historiography in general'²².

We find some of these themes reflected in Thomas Brady's approach to studying early-modern Imperial politics. He navigates the realm of post-1989 Reformation studies by triangulating early-modern history via nineteenth-century historiography rather than dead reckoning from the Reformation to the present. He too regards 1989 as a turning point in the nature of historical consciousness. To his mind, however, the outcome has resulted in tumult, not epiphany. 'The events of 1989-90 have unhinged [the] refabricated, modernized narratives [of German historiography's previous two centuries] by casting doubt on any thesis about continuity and identity in German histories'. This rupture is a good thing, for it reveals the opportunity in the present moment to 'think about the place of the German Reformation in the histories of the German-speaking peoples' now that 'all accounts of the Central European past are fraught with

²¹ Whether this heads in the direction of 'Grand Narrative' of the kind the suave Simon Schama lavishes on BBC audiences is a delicious question worth asking.

²² Dominick LaCapra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca, 1989) p. 10.

uncertainty'²³. Brady is concerned with 'rethinking', not just 'thinking', 'how the German Reformation might be integrated into a narrative of political history'. Instead of asking, as he interprets Ranke as having done, why the Reformation failed to produce a Protestant German nation-state, historians today must 'unite political structures with social movements, and it must operate simultaneously on several levels – local, provincial, regional, and Imperial'²⁴.

In the two-volume *Handbook* co-edited with Heiko A Oberman and James D Tracy, Brady outlines the familiar issue of the decline in explanatory power of the concepts 'the Reformation' and 'the Renaissance' since they reached an apex in Troeltsch's proclamation in 1912 that they explained 'the course of past events to the complex of effects which lies before us in the present'²⁵. Now, the authors write, the two concepts indicate broad structural transitions taking place over two centuries. Since Burckhardt's 'invention' of the Renaissance in 1860 and its tendency to down-play the idea and function of final purposes in the philosophy of history (and all history, for that matter), the nineteenth century furnished us with the first major example of cultural and political pessimism. The tendency towards historical relativism began here as well, and in its expression through cyclical conceptions of history would wind its way into the worldview espoused by the *Annales* school from the late 1920s. Here, cycle stalled,

²³ Thomas A Brady, Jr, *Protestant Politics. Jacob Sturm (1489-1553) and the German Reformation* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1995) p. 2.

²⁴ Brady, *ibid.*, p. 8. Manfred Jacobs, whom Brady does not cite, had argued the same point somewhat earlier: 'Luther's starting point is the point at which God intervened in history. There is now way to get to Hegel's philosophy of history from Luther and also no way to Friedrich Julius Stahl's effort to legitimate the Christian state... The Reformation qualified volk, nation and Fatherland theologically... by means of the rehabilitation of the word of God, not national emancipation'. Manfred Jacobs, 'Die Entwicklung', in: Horst Zilleßen, ed., *Volk, Nation und Vaterland. Der deutschen Protestantismus und der Nationalismus*. (Gütersloh, 1970) p. 57, 70.

²⁵ Ernst Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress: The Significance of Protestantism for the Rise of the Modern World* (Philadelphia, 1986 [1912]), p. 17; Cited in Thomas A Brady, Jr, Heiko A Oberman, James D Tracy, eds. 'Introduction' to the *Handbook of European History, 1400-1600*, 2 vols., (Leiden, 1994) p. xiii.

becoming simply continuity. Concerning Braudel's *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen*, Jacques Le Goff remarks that 'political history... which is far from being the culmination of the work is more like bits and pieces left over. Once the backbone of history, political history has sunk to being no more than an atrophied appendix: the parson's nose of history'²⁶.

Strategically speaking, we have no trouble understanding why Brady did not set out to rethink the position of the Renaissance in the German political narrative. No doubt this choice allowed him to save face, but there is a more substantial reason than that. The first articulation of the concept of the Reformation arose within the language of theology richly marbled with conviction that it was speaking to a distinct cultural community which shared some political interests and concerns. No preacher preached the Renaissance, and in this sense it was the product of imagination, but the Reformation began in its own terms and was remembered as such over the course of the nineteenth century. Nor did the Renaissance adhere so forcefully to a concept of the nation in the nineteenth century as the Reformation was riveted to Germany²⁷. After discussing Ranke's premise, which Brady encapsulates as 'To be Protestant... was to be truly and fully German', he states that the events of 1933, 1945, and 1989 'have simply reconfirmed the obsolescence of Ranke's confessional-national interpretation of German history in the age of the Reformation. ...Both terms of the Rankean teleology –

²⁶ Jacques Le Goff, 'Is politics still the Backbone of History?', in Stuart Clark, ed., *The Annales School: Critical Assessments*, 4 vols., here, vol. 2., (London, 1999), p. 165. Orig. pub. in *Daedalus* 100 (1971) pp. 1-19.

²⁷ As Ernst Cassirer reminds us, one fundamental aspect of the concept of the Renaissance was that it forces a re-examination of the relationship of the individual and the particular to the universal. Burckhardt wrote of human individuals – he saw theoretical reflection on history as futile and useless - but the obvious parallel here is to the epistemological questions Ranke poses and the distinct realms of general and particular historical knowledge, the one being God's, the other man's. See Ernst Cassirer, 'Some Remarks on the Question of the Originality of the Renaissance', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4,1 (1943) pp. 49-56, here pp. 53-54.

confessional and national – have lost their grip on Reformation history'²⁸. 'The changes of sensibility after 1918', as well, weakened the concepts, making them 'controversial, disputed, and ambiguous'²⁹.

Brady's argument requires the hidden premise that the 'Rankean teleology' held sway until Germany experienced the kinds of defeat which could unsettle it, that is, defeats of confession and nation. In consequence, its confidence trampled, the discipline of history opened itself to alternative forms of explanation suited to the spheres of economy and social life. Implied here is that history once amounted to nation and confession, and does no longer. Two problems immediately arise from this thesis: whether Ranke's thought was in fact teleological (his concept of the divine in history and the eternal secret of history's total meaning seem to suggest otherwise); and whether 'confession' in its nineteenth-century usage in historical Idealism had acquired a more elusive, cultural meaning which to Ranke, and more explicitly to Droysen and Treitschke, imbued the life of the nation and all forms of service to it – including the writing of history – with an ethical purpose comparable to the metaphysical connotation of an orthodox understanding of 'confession'. These two points will be addressed at length later on in the dissertation.

There is a third problem – that of discontinuity in the political narrative (its 'unhinging', leaving the 'present moment' 'fraught with uncertainty') – which arises from the tightness of Brady's interpretation of the nineteenth-century political narrative and its ill-fit with his thesis that it has died several cruel deaths. The issues it raised, the terms on which it did so, and the outcomes of the assertions still matter to many

²⁸ Brady, *Protestant Politics: Jacob Sturm (1489-1553) and the German Reformation* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1995) pp. 3-5.

²⁹ Brady et al., eds., *Handbook*, vol. 1, p. xv.

historians, not least some prominent German historians who continue to publish for that insatiable historical audience the kind of narrative Brady describes; that of politics served on a rich bed of culture and social structures. Within all this, we might be reminded that there was never solely a political narrative in nineteenth-century German historical thought. Nietzsche, Burckhardt, Lamprecht, Dilthey, and the Catholic historians Janssen and Döllinger, questioned the explanatory power of the political narrative exactly during the time in the latter nineteenth-century when the line between history and advocacy blurred the most (excepting the worst examples of Nazi-era historical writing which in fundamental ways is not that at all but rather crassly revised mythology).

Burckhardt's distaste for politically-focused historical writing arose from his rejection of a Christian world-view, and particularly its conservative Lutheran variant in which he was raised. The theological and cultural implications of Burckhardt's work cannot be separated from the political consequences of the assertions they contain³⁰. To make the subsequent claim that the validity of the political narrative declined during the 'crisis of historicism' in which, it was feared, a radical relativism emptied history of explanatory power to which social-scientific explanation had laid claim. This implies either of two things: that historical explanation in the political tradition came to an end, which it did not, or that what assumed power following political history's dethroning had been gaining coherence and institutional legitimacy well before its institutional succession. Clearly something like the latter has taken place, but as Leonard Krieger draws to our attention, even when historians in the post-War period purport to turn away from political history to explore social-historical sources and methods, they 'have not

³⁰ Lionel Gossman, *Basel in the age of Burckhardt: a study in unseasonable ideas* (Chicago and London, 2000); Walter Kaegi, *Jacob Burckhardt: eine Biographie* (Basel, 1947-1982).

been entirely able to escape the ubiquitous magnetism of the German state – or more precisely, the German states – in history³¹. ‘One of the paradoxes of our discipline is that politics should be the persistent focus of the historical enterprise in Germany, the traditional locus of a non-political culture’³².

On these shifting sands of German national historiography, a strong argument can be made that at no time since the defeat of Napoleon has the German historical consciousness *not* been characterised to some degree by uncertainty. Where one detects this depends on the questions one asks and how one reads the answers. Of course Brady intends neither to resuscitate Ranke’s concept nor rehabilitate the political tradition which claims its inheritance from it. His starting point, rather, is this: ‘Our response to the loss of the national narrative... need not be to speak of ‘all coherence gone’. There is coherence, intelligibility, in the larger story of the German Reformation, but it cannot be grasped in developmental terms, either confessional or national’³³. Here the different foci of his approach and the present one come into relief. Brady seizes the moment to move beyond Ranke and re-enter into the ‘multi-layered’ complex of early-modern German political structures, inseparable as they are now known to be from ‘popular presence’.

³¹ Leonard Krieger, Review article: ‘German History – in the Grand Manner’, *American Historical Review* 84 (Oct, 1979), p. 1008. Krieger reviews Gordon A Craig, *Germany. 1806-1866* (Oxford, 1978); James J Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1978); Fritz Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder, and the Building of the German Empire* (New York, 1977); Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Das deutsche Kaiserreich, 1871-1918* (Göttingen, 1973); further examples include: Heinrich August Winkler, *Revolution, Staat, Faschismus* (Göttingen, 1978); Heinrich August Winkler, *Mittelstand, Demokratie, und Nationalsozialismus: Die politische Entwicklung von Handwerk und Kleinhandel in der Weimarer Republik* (Cologne, 1972); Reinhart Koselleck, *Preussen zwischen Reform und Revolution: Allgemeines Landrecht, Verwaltung, und soziale Bewegung von 1791 bis 1848* (Stuttgart, 1967). Some historians regard the ‘new social history’ – code for the ‘social upheavals of the 1960s’ - as an alternative to the political narrative in the style of nineteenth-century historiography (and Elton). The resulting view ignores the conclusion of Peter Hans Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the rise of historicism* (Berkeley, 1975) who argues that historians of the late-Aufklärung were also engaged in socio-cultural historical analysis.

³² Krieger, *ibid.*, p. 1007.

³³ Brady, *Jacob Sturm*, p. 8.

Precisely those developmental terms, their reference to the past, employment in the present, promise for the future, and the perception that they failed are the terrain that this dissertation hopes to cover³⁴.

A further example may help clarify the point. In a recent study of the 'theological origins of nineteenth-century historical consciousness', Thomas Albert Howard's study of the theologian W M L de Wette and his student Jacob Burckhardt follows Owen Chadwick in tracing the emergence of the philosophical, and to a lesser extent, professional, context of nineteenth-century historicism from its theological 'origins'. Howard outlines the limitations of the conventional thesis that history 'triumphed' over theology, opting instead to understand 'the cognitive situation of its emergence, its prior rootedness in deep-seated religious *Weltanschauungen*', what, in other words, he cites Cassirer as having called religion's 'transcendental justification and foundation'. With respect to the themes of secularization and historicism', Howard continues, 'I interpret Burckhardt's transition from theology to history as a paradigmatic event in the nineteenth century'³⁵. In the project as he envisages it, however, Thomas leaves virtually untouched the fundamental issue of what historical idea, event, or influence was of concern to de Wette and Burckhardt's historical argument (and more broadly, historical consciousness), and why the particular treatment of *that issue* might possibly be as equally paradigmatic as the two figures he studies. That influence of course was the Reformation and the

³⁴ The cue is taken here from an aphoristic essay by Rudolf Vierhaus, 'Coming to Terms with the Past? Die Historiker und das 20. Jahrhundert', in Peter Schöttler, Patrice Veit and Michael Werner, eds. *Plurales Deutschland: Festschrift für Étienne François* (Göttingen, 1999) pp. 364-368: 'What one suggests today when one speaks of 'coming to terms with the past' is not only the past, but that the present and future also must be taken into consideration. The question-mark on the end of formulation indicates, at the same time, the doubt whether this task can be carried out' (p. 365).

³⁵ Thomas Albert Howard, *Religion and the Rise of Historicism: W M L de Wette, Jacob Burckhardt, and the Theological Origins of Nineteenth-Century Historical Consciousness* (Cambridge, 2000) pp. 1-22; Howard cites Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, Fritz C Koelln and James P Pettegrove, trans., (Princeton, 1951) p. 134ff.

common 'knowledge' in the nineteenth century that its historical influence was more relevant than ever. Thomas makes only passing reference to this object and subject of historical consciousness: 'To a certain extent, the intellectual legacy of the Reformation already carried the seeds of secularization'. We are not given a more nuanced integration of the Reformation as the origins of the cultural, historical, philosophical and theological Protestantism so central to nineteenth-century intellectuals. The effect is to neglect an important point Dominick LaCapra made in 1982: 'It is not enough to establish influence or the existence of a shared 'paradigm' through the enumeration of common presuppositions, questions, themes, or arguments. One must elucidate in a more detailed way how the borrowed or the common actually functions in the text'³⁶.

1.3 That special German experience

Fifteen years now after the *Wende* and sixty years after defeat, German society is not exactly spilling over with optimism for a brighter future (Germany's political commitment to Europe, however, is greater than its neighbours' because its ethical commitment is different). Former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt recently reiterated a familiar pattern of self-loathing typical of his generation: 'The Germans developed their national identity and national consciousness very late; they are a people emotionally at-risk. They wind themselves up. They did this at the time of Wilhelm II and they let

³⁶ Dominick LaCapra, 'Rethinking Intellectual History', in in Dominick LaCapra and Steven L Kaplan, eds., *Modern European Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New Perspectives* (Ithaca, 1982) p. 70.

Treitsckhe excite them...; today, to the contrary, the Germans have turned to lamentation'³⁷.

In much the same fashion, the historiography of Germany – written by German and non-German historians alike – shows little indication of rehabilitating the dynamic, forward-looking spirit it once exuded. Ludolf Herbst, for instance, predicates a book about historical method on his 'impression that the world has become steadily more complex since the nineteenth century, and becomes more so every day', citing as evidence a panoply of possible 'catastrophe scenarios', not least the acute matter of *internationale Terror*. These 'complexities', interpreted through 'pragmatic reflection on the Babylonian language confusion', lead him to 'a general point of departure towards a kind of historical theory which is appropriate to analysis of the catastrophes of the twentieth century: the alternating relationship between chaos and order'³⁸.

A related, if not as pessimistic, mood can be detected in the study of contemporary European historical consciousness. Stefan Berger and co-authors have recently emphasized the connection between historical writing and the 'complex process of becoming national', motivated by the topic's 'rather haunting contemporary relevance'. France, Germany, Italy, and Great Britain have 'witnessed attempts to renationalise their respective national identities in the 1980s and 1990s'. This news is not exactly new: one thinks of the Left's reaction to Thatcher's education policy. Also not new is the author's understanding of the cause of renationalisation. 'The most recent

³⁷ Interview with Helmut Schmidt, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 'Feuilleton' (9 April, 2005), p. 36. My own experiences in Germany, particularly in the context of persons born to parents who were no older than young children at the time of Germany's surrender, do not resonate with Schmidt's remarks. This can be attributed to the transfer of guilt from the individual level to that of society at-large, and further into the dynamics of historical consciousness, by which time it is wrong to speak of guilt or 'lamentation' at all.

³⁸ Ludolf Herbst, *Komplexität und Chaos: Grundzüge einer Theorie der Geschichte* (Munich, 2004) pp. 11-24, 211.

attempts to construct and reaffirm the beleaguered principle of the sovereign nation-state are clearly related to a deep-seated sense of crisis'³⁹. This crisis – one of whose manifestations, the authors write, is German reunification - is born of the impression that social and political structures, their meaning, and how that meaning is decided, have undergone changes which outpace an ideal conception of what kind of change is appropriate to the European historical experience. 'Crisis' is everywhere in German newspapers; French voters pulled the brake-lever on Europe when they declined to ratify the European Constitution. With every step in retreat from the idea of a common Europe, commentators cringe at what appears to be the return of a particularist form of European nationality and the rise of specific nationalist tendencies which, seen through the prism of history, have been called 'rather haunting'⁴⁰.

We might surmise that the word 'haunting' here alludes to the decline of European society into something it has already been, and a lesser, baser something at that. Reinhart Koselleck reflects on this in an analysis of the relationship between historical and social reality, on the one hand, and on the other, his 'reconstruction' of the 'linguistic formation of the concept' of progress itself. 'The experience of a new time condensed into a word' – progress, that is – 'in contrast to decline, is a modern category whose content of experience and surplus of expectation was not available before the

³⁹ Stefan Berger, with Mark Donovan and Kevin Passmore, 'Apologias for the nation-state in Western Europe since 1800', in *idem*, *Writing National Histories: Western Europe since 1800* (London, 1999), pp. 3-13.

⁴⁰ See Georg G Iggers 'Nationalism and historiography, 1789-1996', in Stefan Berger, et al, eds., *Ibid.*, pp. 22-25. He reviews the post-war controversies and personages central to the *Historikerstreit*, declaiming the 'renationalisation of German identity' present the works of Ernst Nolte, Karlheinz Weißmann, Peter Schwartz, Klaus Hildebrand, Michael Wolffsohn, and Thomas Nipperdey. Iggers, however, (one of the few remaining members of the generation of mid-century German exiles) ends on an up-note: 'I believe that these are minority positions and that the years since 1989, if anything, have seen a strengthened identification with Europe'.

eighteenth century'⁴¹. Koselleck suggests that sixteenth-century intellectuals had no concept of progress other than progress in the eschatological sense of movement towards salvation and the end of time. It was not movement within experiential time. He notes that this focus on final causes meant that the distance between the present and the end of time was relatively insignificant. This observation makes a related point all the more striking. Nowhere in the historiography of the Reformation which this dissertation considers is there mention of the possibility that intellectuals in the sixteenth century did in fact *not* have a concept of progress at their disposal. That they did was simply accepted as an *a priori* truth which legitimated the greatest world-historical significance of the Reformation – which by the nineteenth century had become an umbrella term: that it began a *pro*-cess of *pro*-gress which would soon culminate in the objective historical expression of German national destiny⁴².

Belief in linear progress and its moral self-justification in western thought became implausible for some intellectuals already in the mid-1930s, and for most others, together with a broad swathe of society generally, by 1945. In his philosophy of symbolic forms, Cassirer espouses a theory of mind which has its progress from animism to abstraction, but readily accepts historical counter-examples. The deeds of Nazism are the most halting

⁴¹ Reinhart Koselleck, 'Progress' and 'Decline': an appendix to the history of two concepts', in *idem, The Practice of Conceptual History* Todd Presner et al., trans., (Stanford, 2002) pp. 219, 225.

⁴² Treitschke captured the matter in a letter to his father in which he discussed the state of his doctoral dissertation (a genre of correspondence unto its own): 'For several days now I have sat here at work on my dissertation and recognise that the usual way of writing history – picking through historical facts – is a much easier task than producing a cultural-historical portrait. You know that my plan is to show how the concepts of the state and economy developed in theory and practice in sixteenth-century Germany. My wish would have been to trace the further development of these concepts into the present. That of course is too wide a topic for a doctoral work. I'll restrict myself thus to the time where the modern concept of the state began to form: the sixteenth century. That will give me more than enough to do'. Heinrich von Treitschke to his father, 21 May 1854. In: *Briefe*, vol. 1., Max Cornelius, ed., (Leipzig, 1912) p. 224. The issue recalls Eric Hobsbawm's thoughts concerning the invention of tradition. Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Invention Traditions', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

of these regressions⁴³. The meaning of defeat to post-war German historical consciousness raises anew the question of whether Germany developed differently than other western cultures. The conventional thesis holds that the German state and national consciousness developed later than its neighbours, 'causing' the development of savage forms of nationalism and racism. This broad thesis is now more broadly refuted, not by denying what happened but questioning why it happened and to what extent the what and why of the issue were inherently European matters which, under multiple influences, branched out into national forms⁴⁴. Whether German history veered off on a *Sonderweg* before the war is a different issue from coming to terms with the fact that German historians, and historians of Germany, are students of a nation and an historical consciousness whose experience of defeat is categorically unique in the context of the world⁴⁵. The question 'what went wrong?' resonates in the context of Germany in a tone not heard elsewhere.

⁴³ See John Michael Krois, *Cassirer: Symbolic Forms and History* (New Haven, 1987).

⁴⁴ See Beatrice Heuser and Cyril Buffet, 'Nur Sonderwege: Gedanken zur Nationalstaatlichkeit und Europa', in Peter Schöttler, Patrice Veit and Michael Werner, eds., *Plurales Deutschland – Allemagne Plurielle: Festschrift für Étienne François* (Göttingen, 1999) pp. 337-344; The following, whom Heuser and Buffet cite, are some of the central texts in the new spirit of comparative history: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 1991); Étienne François and Hagen Schulze, 'Das emotionale Fundament der Nationen', in Monica Flacke, ed., *Mythen der Nationen: Ein europäisches Panorama* (Berlin, 1998); Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (Paris, 1984-1992); Étienne François, H Siegrist, J Vogel, eds., *Nation und Emotion* (Göttingen, 1995); Rudolf Speth, Edgar Wolfrum, eds., *Politische Mythen und Geschichtspolitik: Konstruktion – Inszenierung – Mobilisierung* (Berlin, 1996); Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La creation des identités nationales* (Paris, 1999); Kevin Wilson, Jan van der Dussen, eds., *The History of the Idea of Europe* (London, 1995).

⁴⁵ At least one man held his ground. For a tangential but possibly amusing example, consider the case of Henry Kissinger's 'The Meaning of History: Reflection on Spengler, Toynbee and Kant', unpublished BA Hons dissertation (Cambridge, MA, 1951). Inoculated against error by a kind of belief and power which was somewhat behind the times of its writing, he adjusts the mood of his undergraduate dissertation downwards with an affected opening sentence: 'In the life of every person there comes a point when he realizes that out of all the seemingly limitless possibilities of his youth he has in fact become one actuality' (p. 2). The philosophy of history, he continued, 'testifies to humanity's yearning to understand the fatedness of life, to a mystic drive for an absolute, to an attempt to give meaning to the basic question of existence. For this reason, the philosophy of history is indissolubly connected with metaphysics, indeed metaphysics of a very high order' (p. 4).

For these reasons and others it is no surprise to find that when Hans-Ulrich Wehler lists some historically significant commemorative dates, 1983 marks the 50th anniversary of Hitler's seizure of power, not Luther's 500th birthday. Luther and the Reformation, in fact, were not even listed⁴⁶. When we speak of cultures or places of memory, we must keep in mind that what is remembered today may disappear tomorrow in what seem like methodological acts of oblivion. This is not to suggest that memory functions similarly to Marx's notion of the rise of one entity and the necessary fall of another. Rather, we come back again to the idea of the continuity of the process of rise and decline and the intelligible changes among different modes of interpretation. Nietzsche's attack on theories of continuity and development and his critique of historicism as a symptom of decline have been shown to be rather an attempt to strengthen historical consciousness amidst what he took to be a weak and parasitic cultural ambient⁴⁷.

Whether Nietzsche sought to change that ambient, which raises the tantalizing issue of whether he sought to reform it through the recovery of a kind of antique morality or whether he eyed the more radical possibility of opting out of history altogether, is a dilemma worth mentioning insofar as it raises some old themes still relevant to the present argument. Not least among these is the fact that any historian dealing with the past five hundred years of German history and historiography and who, in doing so, insists on the

⁴⁶ Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Die Gegenwart als Geschichte* (Munich, 1995) p. 215.

⁴⁷ See Bernhard Lypp, 'Über drei verschiedene Arten Geschichte zu schreiben', in Reinhard Koselleck and Paul Widmer, eds., *Niedergang: Studien zu einem geschichtlichen Thema* (Stuttgart, 1980) pp. 191-213. It has been argued recently that Nietzsche abandoned the initial claims he had made in his *Unzeitmäßliche Betrachtung* and later adopted a more sympathetic view of the importance of historical study to human thought and existence. See Thomas H Brobjer, 'Nietzsche's View of the Value of Historical Studies and Methods', in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65 (2004). Brobjer's position challenges the conventional view espoused by many including Friedrich Meinecke already in 1918. See his essay 'Persönlichkeit und geschichtliche Welt' (1918), *Schaffender Spiegel* (Stuttgart, 1948) esp. pp. 39-40.

legitimacy – factual and ethical – of his product yet ignores the moral and political mores of the discipline in which he works or society in which he lives, is quickly denounced as a quack. Quack of quacks is David Irving. Such is the study of German history – and I would argue *all* history – that part of the condition required for its practice is to accept that a critical engagement with the subjective content of historical thought is now inherent to the historical argument itself. Quentin Skinner came to a similar conclusion during the hot debates of the late 1960s. ‘The allegation that the history of ideas consists of nothing more than ‘outworn metaphysical notions’, which is frequently advanced at the moment...as a reason for ignoring such a history, would then come to be seen as the very reason for regarding such histories as indispensably ‘relevant’, not because crude ‘lessons’ can be picked out of them, but because the history itself provides a lesson in self-knowledge. To demand from the history of thought a solution to our own immediate problems is thus to commit not merely a methodological fallacy, but something like a moral error’⁴⁸.

Telling the story of the meaning of the Reformation in nineteenth-century Germany is integral to this process, mainly because it shows how reflection on the ‘content’ and ‘idea’ of historical knowledge has specific histories of its own. The value of the story lies in its telling. One of these stories begins with the widely-accepted conviction in nineteenth-century Germany that Protestantism was an historical force which could be appealed to, channeled, and appropriated to help unite the fragmented German confederation into the nation to which its history had destined it.

⁴⁸ Skinner, ‘Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas’, in James Tully, ed., *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics* (Princeton, 1988), p. 67.

Chapter 2: Hegel and the future of the Reformation as the Protestant Spirit

2.1 The conditions for a Protestant historical hermeneutic

The term ‘the Reformation’ is used in this argument at a level of analysis somewhat different from that on which historians usually operate. The reasons for this are many but tend towards Lorenz Krüger’s circumspect sense of the discrepancy between the number of ‘often excellent’ historical studies, on the one hand, and the amount of understanding about these studies, on the other. ‘This imbalance would be minimally important if philosophers did not investigate history with the consciousness that the professional study of that history demands. This consciousness is certainly anything but clear and fixed: it itself is a philosophical problem’⁴⁹. ‘The Reformation’ is seen here as one such problem, one powerful conception of which G W F Hegel formulated in the first decades of the nineteenth century⁵⁰.

In the context of the present argument, the dichotomy inherent to the notion of formulating a *philosophical* understanding of various *historical* understandings of the

⁴⁹ Lorenz Krüger, ‘Warum Studien wir Geschichte als Philosophie?’, in Hans Jörg Sandkühler, Hans Heinz Holz and Lars Lambrecht, eds., *Dialektik: International Beiträge zu Philosophie und Wissenschaft*, vol. 18 (Cologne, 1989), p. 11.

⁵⁰ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770 Stuttgart – 1831 Berlin) entered the seminary at the University of Tübingen in 1788 where he became friends with Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling and Friedrich Hölderlin. Having completed a course of study in philosophy and theology and decided against entering the Lutheran ministry, Hegel became in 1793 a private tutor in Berne. In 1801, he moved to the University of Jena and in 1806 relocated to Nuremberg where for eight years he was headmaster of a Gymnasium. He accepted a professorship in philosophy at Heidelberg in 1816 and moved two years later to Berlin where he remained until his death of cholera, occupying at the Friedrich Wilhelm University the most prominent chair in philosophy in Germany. Among his principal works are: *Die Phenomenologie des Geistes* (1807); *Wissenschaft der Logik* (1812); *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundriß* (1817); *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (1821); *Geschichte der Philosophie* (posthum. 1833); *Philosophie der Religion* (posthum. 1832) *Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (posthum. 1837).

Reformation is no longer tenable once we accept two things: first, that Krüger's point is valid in the context of the intellectual history of the concept of the Reformation; and second, that Heidegger's critique of philosophical tradition's ways of knowing and assertions about being are relevant to our own study of the problem. He regards philosophic tradition as the sclerosis of a kind of category error which separates mind from substance, idea from reality, subjectivity from objectivity, and being from time. To separate philosophy from history – which is to say temporality - commits the same mistake. One critic describes Heidegger's project as suggesting how the history of western philosophy is 'one extended misinterpretation of the nature of reality'. Heidegger's corrective takes the form of an inquiry into 'the conditions for the possibility of having any understanding whatsoever'⁵¹. This chapter lunges into this problem's historical development by showing how Hegel turned the event of the Reformation into an idea which created the possibility of arriving at a particular kind of understanding about Germany's place in world history and the unfolding of the World Spirit.

Unlike some of the major tendencies of western Enlightenment thought, Hegel's historically conscious Idealism sought to save the cultural forms and intellectual content of German religiosity by arguing the positive proposition that reason and spirit have meaning only because they reside within something. And this thing, as was generally held by German intellectuals of the period – with the possible exceptions of certain Catholic Romantics – was the variously manifest but nevertheless shared 'German' and 'Protestant' historical experience which the German philosophical tradition had

⁵¹ Charles B Guignon, 'Introduction', *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge, 1993) p. 5.

assimilated. Johann Gottfried Herder, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and most forcefully Hegel, for example, did not understand philosophical reflection in the Cartesian sense of withdrawal from or transcendence of reality to achieve a pure philosophical standpoint⁵². Rather, they tended to understand themselves as historical thinkers *in time* in which Reason, present in the principle of Spirit, gave universal, absolute expression to the temporal and the Real⁵³. Hegel argued that *Weltgeschichte* revealed the relationship between history (in the sense of *Ereignis* rather than *Geschichte*) and its object, an example of which he found in the relationship between Rome and the decline to which it was fated by history. ‘It requires minimal reflection to understand that this a-priori purpose is the foundation of the historical occurrence itself’⁵⁴. Elsewhere, however, he conceived of history (*Geschichte*) as a process whereby a single, unifying foundation carried both the language in which history is conveyed: the subjective, *historia rerum gestarum*: ‘actual telling of history’; and the objective, the *res gestae*: ‘the facts and occurrences themselves’. That ‘interior, shared foundation’, he wrote, ‘pushes along the telling of history’⁵⁵.

⁵² On Herder and Humboldt, see Georg Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown, CT, 1968); Schiller’s inaugural lecture ‘Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte?’ summarises the essence of his conception of history. Reprinted in Wolfgang Hardtwig, ed., *Über das Studium der Geschichte* (Munich, 1990) pp. 18-36; Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (Berlin, 1821).

⁵³ ‘Philosophical reflection is only appropriate and justified in taking up history where its sensibleness had entered into worldly existence, not where it is merely a possibility in and of itself’. Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, Johannes Hoffmeister, ed., (Hamburg, 1994) p. 162. As Karl Löwith observes, ‘What Hegel meant by *Geist* was not the Kantian notion of *Verstand* and the *res cogitans* [...], but rather the two realms of nature and history which make the one and eternal principle of Spirit’. Karl Löwith, ‘Mensch und Geschichte’ (1960); *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen. Zur Kritik der Geschichtsphilosophie*, Sämtliche Schriften II, (Stuttgart, 1983), p. 363.

⁵⁴ G W F Hegel, ‘Die Weltgeschichte’, in: ‘Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse’ (1827) *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 19., Wolfgang Bonseprien and Hans-Christian Lucas, eds., (Hamburg, 1989), p. 386; and ‘Teleologie’, *ibid.*, p. 161.

⁵⁵ Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, p. 164.

2.2 Spirit as the future completion of the Reformation

To gain any kind of historical understanding of Hegel's philosophical statements it had become imperative to study, by the time of his death in 1831 no less than it is now, the philosophical-historical content of those statements as they are *set within* the ideological context of their intention and expression. When the holder of arguably the most prominent chair in philosophy in the German-speaking world from 1818 to 1831 spoke and wrote about religion, politics, and history, those claims were received and understood by fellow individuals who somehow shared or rejected Hegel's religious, political and historical-philosophical project. Even when those ideas were contested, the contestations occurred within a shared intellectual milieu. One of the main ideological issues focused on what kind of society must be created in order for it to accept, and develop in harmony with, its own history. Hegel's philosophy can be read as an historical argument that 'Germany' had reached that harmonious stage. To study Hegel's reception within this cultural milieu would entail a project significantly different in scope and focus than the present one. The issue is raised, however, to point out that the kind of understanding sought here does not purport to establish external standards to determine some absolute coherence, lucidity, and consistency of the 'essence' of his thought, but rather to take his basic philosophical claim and ask how it related to his cultural context⁵⁶.

⁵⁶ Contextualists such as Quentin Skinner have long argued this and related points: to understand what a text means historically it is insufficient to understand the text in itself; the further step must be taken to understand what the author held to be the point of the argument, how that argument is worded, what those words mean, to whom and when (what Skinner calls the 'illocutionary dimension of utterances' [see his 'A reply to my critics', *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics*, James Tully, ed., (Princeton, 1988) p. 282. Skinner's classic formulation is his 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *History and Theory* 8 (1969) pp. 3-53.

This, beyond the geographical sense, should be taken to mean a frame of mind with clear links to an historical experience in a Protestant culture.

His claim was that his culture during his own lifetime, like never before in world history, had reached the point in its historical development that real life not only enabled, but actually *was*, the absolute philosophical standpoint. Hegel's reference to, and understanding of, the Reformation did much more than 'serve' his philosophical objectives, though it did this to a high degree indeed. It also contributed to shaping the historical-philosophical consciousness of 'Germany's' place in the world: without the Reformation as he conceived of it, neither the world nor 'Germany' nor consciousness of the absolute itself. This, of course, had been the point Hegel hoped to convey about philosophy's task of reconciling the incongruity between coming into historical self-consciousness and realizing that that consciousness is already 'at home' in the communal realm of historical experience. In this context, the Reformation, and its 'spirit' carried on to Hegel's present in the doctrines and historical idea of Protestantism and political and cultural existence of Protestant communities in his own time. These furnish him with an essential point of reference which confirm his propositions about the progress of self-consciousness through history and the existence of the philosophical and cultural conditions appropriate to that history for that progress to occur.

There was no simple correspondence between 'the Reformation' and Hegel's claims. Rather, what must be sought is how the meaning of the Reformation functioned as a kind of connective tissue between Hegel's involvement in a cultural and philosophical way of being which saw itself as still experiencing the effects of what it understood the Reformation to have become. Hegel captured the notion in a famous

passage from his *Philosophy of Right* when he proposed that whenever a philosopher expresses the essence of the actual history of his own time, then the opening in that history which gave the philosopher his view of it has closed⁵⁷. The historical experience of life itself, after all, has enabled the philosopher to rise to the absolute philosophic standpoint. The central question then became: is it possible for a non-philosophic form of life to make the rise to the philosophic level possible, and if, as Hegel claimed, that form is to be found in nineteenth-century German historical consciousness, then why had it become actual?⁵⁸

The world which Hegel sought to make philosophically meaningful had undergone a number of radical and inspiring changes in his own lifetime. He first had to deal with these before he could argue that they were historical phenomena whose idea had been prefigured in the world-historical event of the Reformation. The French Revolution and Napoleonic conquests had convinced many of his generation that their 'present' was a potent example of historical progress; the spectrum of reaction to the reign of pure, unchecked reason during the Revolution and the ensuing military defeats ranged from Metternich-style conservatism in Austria and Prussia, nationalist agitation in the juvenile *Burschenschaften*, and called for the establishment of constitutional monarchies to prevent despotic rule⁵⁹. Despite the variety and incongruity of these

⁵⁷ Hegel writes, 'As the thought of the world, [philosophy] appears only when actuality is already there cut and dried after its process of formation has been completed. The teaching of the concept, which is also history's inescapable lesson, is that it is only when the actuality is mature that the ideal first appears over against the real and that the ideal apprehends this same real world in substance and builds it up for itself into the shape of an intellectual realm', *Philosophie des Rechts* (1820).

⁵⁸ See E Fackenheim, *The Religious dimension in Hegel's Thought*, p. 35.

⁵⁹ The literature on this is obviously overwhelming. For a bibliographic summary, see Dieter Langewiesche, *Europa zwischen Restauration und Revolution 1815-1849* [Oldenbourg Grundriss der Geschichte 13] (Munich, 2004).

changes within the pre-national German context, the highly-charged present remained connected to certain historical experiences through knowable – *rational* - philosophical understanding. Hegel formulated one of the most ‘modern’ of these insofar as his initial project amounted to a critique of Kant’s belief that humans are able to come to a pure understanding of the normative concepts within human experience which underlay human judgment. Hegel historicised the idea that there is a pure understanding of the process of understanding itself by arguing that the possibility for a-priori knowledge was dependent on understanding that the norms referred to when people make judgments are prefigured by the processes of making assertions, conceiving of the self in relation to the other, making a place in the world in the contingent project of being and becoming.

He questioned the foundation of the supposed authority and autonomy of normative concepts themselves in his first major work, the *Phenomenologie des Geistes* published in 1807. In the book, he disputed the possibility of an a-priori universal self-consciousness by asserting that the human mind cannot conceive of itself as a member of the human community in any way other than through the community’s own hopes and fears, beliefs and knowledge. He reconceived of the Absolute Spirit as a temporal phenomenon. Its way of life constitutes the historical terms on which a conception of humanity could possibly occur⁶⁰. To this extent philosophy is possible only if it is historical; not specifically historical, but universally historical: philosophy enables the understanding of *all* forms of past, present and future human experience. If in the divine was manifest total, a-priori understanding of all of creation which believers sought through religious experience, then the *Geist* expressed in rational, philosophical

⁶⁰ Terry Pinkard is especially cogent on this: see his ‘Hegel’s *Phenomenology* and *Logic*: an overview’, in Karl Ameriks, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (Cambridge, 2000) p. 164.

understanding enabled humanity to understand the divine within itself as expressed by the individual to itself and the community in its own time through philosophical understanding⁶¹. Philosophical understanding is contingent on the possibility and reality of this freedom to come into understanding. The philosophy of religion, Hegel wrote in some lecture notes on the concept of religion, is the ‘thinking, comprehending cognition of religion in which the absolute substantial content and the absolute form (cognition) are identical’⁶².

To understand the historical development of religious experience as the foundation for human understanding, Hegel posed some broad questions about what kind of consciousness and what possibilities for its understanding are possible within the historical moment of philosophical understanding ‘available’ to him in the context of historical experience. Revealing the nature of the individual’s belonging to the human community was paramount to Hegel’s project. He turned to the history of religion as a speculative-philosophical problem, in *history*, to provide the kind of universal understanding which was meaningful to man. Religious understanding, like philosophical understanding, demanded the highest possible level of understanding of the highest hopes, beliefs, and experiences shared by individuals within the human community. ‘I lift my thinking [*Denkend*] self to the Absolute, above all finitude, and am at the same time infinite consciousness and infinite self-consciousness’, he wrote in 1821. ‘The *relationship* of this with my whole empirical setting is the essential unity of my infinite

⁶¹ Karl Löwith remarks that the ‘tendency towards the historicisation of our thought occurs philosophically because philosophic Truth has the tendency to undergo development, and because the Spirit, in order to be able to unfold, falls within the time of history’. Karl Löwith, ‘Mensch und Geschichte’ (1960), in *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen. Zur Kritik der Geschichtsphilosophie*, Sämtliche Schriften II, (Stuttgart, 1983), p. 363.

⁶² Hegel, ‘Vorlesungsmanuskripte’, ‘Begriff der Religion’, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 17, p. 30.

knowledge. I am its holding-together'⁶³. That relationship was located in time and was thus shaped by its historical context and its function therein. The extent to which the promise of understanding inherent in that relationship could be reached depended on to what extent the individual is free to realise and express it within the structures of the historical human community and within that individual's philosophical understanding.

Here, the Reformation, and its philosophical realisation as the fullest expression of the world-historical *Geist*, became the defining historical moment which cleared the way for the recognition of the eternal knowledge Hegel believed was possible, and even inevitable, given the right historical and philosophical conditions. The Reformation itself did not cause this but *enabled* it because of the historical location of the Reformation in Spirit's development. The philosophical mission appropriate to early nineteenth-century German culture is *vorhanden* – 'at-hand' – in philosophical realization of the Reformation's cultural-historical meaning. When Hegel wrote that 'our present standpoint requires us to recognize the true consciousness in all religions and philosophies, and that this can occur in no other way but scientifically', he showed the kind of cultural leadership he believed was historically and ideologically suited to the cultural world he knew⁶⁴.

A distracting habit shared by many historians of Hegel, and German cultural and intellectual history, more generally, has been to argue that Hegel 'led to' Marx and Nietzsche who, taken together, gave authoritarianism philosophical legitimacy and furnished Nazism with its ideological foundation⁶⁵. Arguing this view so dissipates their

⁶³ Hegel, *Ibid.*, p. 52 (emphasis mine).

⁶⁴ Hegel to Duboc, 30 July 1822, in *Briefe*, vol. 2, pp. 327-328.

⁶⁵ Most famously, see Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, especially volume 2, 'The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx, and the Aftermath' (London, 1945); see also Karl Popper, *The*

analytic energy that the communal and historical-ideological content of Hegel's thought - that of defining philosophically the timeliness of using historical self-consciousness to create a historically self-conscious and spiritually free human community - disappears entirely. Some critics thus portray Hegel as the author of a doctrine of submission to an authoritarian state which offered its subjects a chimerical transcendental freedom in trade for their actual political submission⁶⁶. Other critics fault Hegel's conception of world history which they hold to be a totalizing, providential view of history in which World Spirit prefigures, subsumes, and gives meaning to individual historical entities as it comes into full consciousness of itself⁶⁷.

When we consider that Hegel proposed in his *Phenomenology* a history of European civilization's progress towards, or into, consciousness of Absolute Spirit, it should be noted, following Robert Pippin, that Hegel interpreted the issue as one of acquiring knowledge about what it *means to be free* (in terms of religion, aesthetics and politics) through becoming the free subjects which individuals implicitly already are⁶⁸. If indeed the substance of Spirit was freedom, and if total freedom could be equated with the fully self-conscious Spirit, then the course that development would take would seem to be inseparable from the history of European civilization. It became incumbent on the

Poverty of Historicism (London, 1957); see also Jürgen Gebhardt, *Politik und Eschatologie: Studien zur Geschichte der Hegelschen Schule in den Jahren 1830-1840* (Munich, 1963), as cited in Toews, *Hegelianism: The Path toward Dialectical Enlightenment 1805-1841* (Cambridge, 1980) p. 370.

⁶⁶ A J P Taylor attributes this view to Luther: 'Hegel performed for [...] especially the Prussian state the same service in political theory which centuries before Luther had performed in terms of theology. He argued that true freedom was to be found in working in line with the trend of history; that the Prussian state was the culmination of the historic process; and that therefore submission to the Prussian state should be the choice of every free man'. A J P Taylor, *The Course of German History* (London, 1945) p. 60. Isaiah Berlin's work is also deeply coloured by his suspicion of metaphysics which he accuses of divorcing humanity from the terms of thought and decision and erecting laws which supplant human will. See, for example, his 'Historical Inevitability', in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford, 1969) pp. 41-117; 'The Sense of Reality', in *The Sense of Reality*, Henry Hardy, ed., (New York, 1996) pp. 1-39.

⁶⁷ For a dispassionate discussion of these two common objections, see Robert Pippin, 'Hegel's Practical Philosophy', in Karl Ameriks, *ibid.*, pp. 181-183.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

philosopher – in fact all participants in cultural, political and social communities - to internalize and transform the presuppositions of historical tradition which determined the realm of his knowledge of the world into a philosophical appropriation of those presuppositions through integrating them into the philosophical consciousness of the human community. Philosophy was commissioned therefore to make the human community – as Christians, as members of nations and families – self-conscious of the world spirit which already united them in actual historical communities. Philosophy's task was thus both religious and historical. Given a suitable philosophical understanding, the 'real' event of the Reformation could be placed in an ideological context which would transform the theological message of the Reformation into an historical message to the human community itself.

A flurry of impressive cultural-historical monographs since the early 1980s have interpreted Hegel in a manner more respectful of his own understanding of philosophy as cultural and historical self-expression: that he saw his task as a philosopher of human consciousness to express to his contemporaries why the world-historical course of philosophical thought had ended in modern Germany, why he believed he was justified in declaring its end, and why and how that declaration had universal meaning. These provide a background for the more pertinent issue of how the Reformation and Protestantism function in his philosophy⁶⁹.

⁶⁹ Some of these demanding and lucid studies include: Walther Jaeschke, *Hegel-Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Schule* (Stuttgart and Weimar, 2003); Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge, 2000); Horst Althaus, *Hegel und die heroischen Jahre der Philosophie* (1992); Lawrence Dickey, *Hegel: Religion, Economics, and the Politics of Spirit 1770-1807* (Cambridge, 1987); John Edward Toews, *Hegelianism: The path toward dialectical humanism, 1805-1841* (Cambridge, 1980). To this list should be added some older contributions to *Hegel-Studien*: Karl Rosenkranz, *G W F Hegels Leben* (Berlin, 1844); Gustav E Müller, *Hegel: Denkgeschichte eines Lebendigen* (Berlin, 1959); Franz Wiedmann, *G W F Hegel*

Hegel was not unique in having been born outside, and then been drawn towards, the major metropolises and intellectual hubs of the politically ambiguous Holy Roman Empire and subsequent German Confederation. His arrival in Berlin in 1818 was not unlike a pilgrim's arrival in Rome: the place, its history, promise, spirit and power, changed the traveler forever. The idea of the place he arrived with, and refashioned by being there, became the terms by which he conceived of reality. Hegel's calling to the University of Berlin to accept the chair vacant since Fichte's death in 1814 meant that he entered into a world in which he could activate the ideological-political potential of intellectual thought which he, his colleagues, state, and students would transform into one of the defining institutions of western intellectual and cultural life. The journey from *ancien régime* Altwürttemberg, where he spent his childhood in Stuttgart and school years at the Tübingen *Stift*, to Berne, Frankfurt, Jena, Bamberg, Nuremberg, Heidelberg, and finally to Berlin is not an inappropriate metaphor for the transformation of the human spirit he sought to explain in his philosophy⁷⁰.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was born in 1770 to a Protestant family which, according to its tradition, had fled to the duchy of Württemberg from Kärnten, shortly after the 1555 Peace of Augsburg assured the right of local rulers to decide the creed of their lands. They had reason to escape persecution. The duchy of Württemberg emerged from the Reformation with a unique experience of the transformation from Roman

(Hamburg, 1965); Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel: A Reinterpretation* (Garden City, NY, 1965). See also the 'Preface' and 'Introduction' to Lawrence S Stepelevich, ed., *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. ix-xiii and 1-15 for additional sources on what Stepelevich describes as a 'Hegel renaissance' since the late 1950s.

⁷⁰ Two magisterial studies in cultural history are indispensable in this regard: Lionel Gossman, *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt: A Study in Unseasonable Ideas* (Chicago and London, 2000); and John E Toews, *Becoming Historical: Cultural Reformation and Public Memory in Early Nineteenth-Century Berlin* (Cambridge, 2004).

Catholicism to Lutheranism⁷¹. Its experience had differed from Prussia's already at the time of the Reformation and the distinct paths of development continued right up through Hegel's lifetime. Württemberg was never ruled by a competent absolutist monarch (though the intention was there); nor did other parts of the Holy Roman Empire understand the French Revolution and Napoleonic advance in quite the same way as these relatively cut-off cities and towns in the Black Forest⁷². The establishment of the Lutheran Church, as well, followed a significantly different course. Rather than being divided up between the estates when the Württemberg rulers adopted Lutheranism, the holdings of the Catholic Church were taken over by the Lutheran Church; it substituted its creed for the Roman Catholic and did very little else to disrupt the socio-political status quo exerted by a largely independent ecclesiastical power. The Protestant Church controlled as much as one third of the land in the duchy by 1555 and had the revenue to support itself and its cultural commitments. The Reformation altered the structures of life in Württemberg in ways it did not elsewhere⁷³.

Following John E Toews's argument in *Hegelianism*, we can note three main aspects to the historical relationship between state and society in the Württemberg of Hegel's youth. First, much of the aristocracy of the duchy had opted during the Reformation to become subjects of the emperor rather than the duke; the duke, as a result,

⁷¹ See Gerald Strauss, *Law, Resistance, and the State: the Opposition to Roman Law in Reformation Germany* (Princeton, 1986).

⁷² Some of these tendencies persisted until much later in the nineteenth century. See Alon Confino, *The Nation as Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997). On Württemberg during Hegel's lifetime, see the now-dated studies by Erwin Hölze, *Das Alte Recht und die Revolution. Eine politische Geschichte Württembergs in der Revolutionszeit, 1789-1850* (Munich and Berlin, 1931); and Karl Müller, *Die religiöse Erweckung in Württemberg am Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen, 1925).

⁷³ See Thomas A Brady, Jr., 'Settlements: The Holy Roman Empire', in *The Handbook of European History 1400-1600*, Vol. 2: 'Visions, Programs, and Outcomes', Thomas A Brady, Jr., Heiko A Oberman, James D Tracy, eds., (Leiden, 1995) pp. 349-378; Thomas A Brady, Jr., *Protestant Politics: Jacob Sturm of Strasbourg and the German Reformation*, Studies in German Histories (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1995).

was the only landed aristocrat in the duchy. The territorial diet (*Landtag*), then, was a relatively homogenous collection of the 'corporate *Bürgertum*' of urban centres. This group, called the *Ehrbarkeit*, should not be confused with the French concept of *bourgeoisie* nor the nineteenth and twentieth-century German concept of *Bürgertum*⁷⁴. The political make-up of the *Landtag* bore great similarity to the social and cultural reality of life in the duchy: a cohesive, urban, self-defining Protestant class set against a more diffuse aristocracy with obligations to Empire and Church. The social differences made it plausible for the *Ehrbarkeit* to exercise decisive cultural influence in Württemberg society.

Second, the constitutional dualism between prince and *Landtag* brought a high degree of stability – which also at times meant stasis - to political processes and isolated the duchy from the absolutism which fundamentally altered political and social structures of neighbouring states. In 1770, a resolution was finally reached to fifty years of litigation pressed by the *Ehrbarkeit* against the ducal power. The charges were almost as old as the Reformation itself: the *Ehrbarkeit* sued to uphold rights on which the bureaucracy of the Catholic duchy had encroached. The settlement can be seen as the assertion of political power by the members of the already socially and culturally powerful Protestant establishment.

The third point Toews raises concerns the Protestant elect in which Hegel was born and educated. Württemberg was unique in having retained, well into the late eighteenth-century, an independent Protestant spiritual elite which cooperated closely with the *Ehrbarkeit* oligarchy. The entire educational system in Württemberg was administered by the Protestant Church until the mid-1770s when, following a settlement

⁷⁴ Werner Conze, 'Mittelstand', in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 4 (Stuttgart, 1978) 49-92.

of 1770, Karl Eugen detected political advantage in aligning himself with the *Ehrbarkeit's* interests by fashioning himself into an enlightened educational reformer. By transforming the Stuttgart Karlsschule from a military academy into a university, he encroached on the established cultural domain of the *Ehrbarkeit*. From shortly after the Reformation, theological training in the pietistic tradition had been a *de facto* requirement for entrance into the professional echelon of the *Ehrbarkeit*. While Hegel's family did not belong to its uppermost stratum, they pursued *Ausbildung* generation after generation as church officials and bureaucrats in service to the Württemberg professional establishment and bore all the usual appearances of intellectual, spiritual, and material respectability.

The social, cultural, and intellectual mores, in the sense of *Bürgerlichkeit*, which arose in these circumstances cultivated in its public institutions a curriculum of cultural *Ausbildung* for life which not only trained students for their professional lives, but formed their social identity and defined their place in the culture which shaped them. This was accomplished through the inculcation of a sense of ethical obligation to serve the community's political, cultural, and spiritual values⁷⁵. The cultural and intellectual

⁷⁵ Toews, *ibid.*, pp. 15-29, who cites the following works: The classical study on pietism is Albrecht Ritschl, *Geschichte des Pietismus in der lutherischen Kirche des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, 3 vols., (Bonn, 1886). On the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century period generally, see Reinhart Koselleck, *Preussen zwischen Reform und Revolution: Allgemeines Landrecht, Verwaltung und soziale Bewegung von 1791 bis 1848* (Stuttgart, 1967); Erwin Hölzle, *Das Alte Recht und die Revolution: Eine politische Geschichte Württembergs in der Revolutionzeit 1789-1850* (Munich and Berlin, 1931); Hans-Martin Decker-Hauff, 'Die geistige Führungsgeschichte in Württemberg', in Günter Franz, ed., *Beamtenum und Pfarrerstand, 1400-1800* (Limburg am Lahn, 1972); Alexandra Schlingensiepen-Pogge, *Das Sozialethos der lutherischen Aufklärungstheologie am Vorabend der industriellen Revolution* (Göttingen, 1967); Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom: History of a Political Tradition* (Boston, 1957). See also Elisabeth Fehrenbach, *Vom Ancien Régime zum Wiener Kongreß* [Vol. 12, *Oldenbourg Grundriss der Geschichte*] (Munich, 2001); J Gagliardo, *Reich und Nation: The Holy Roman Empire as Idea and Reality 1763-1806* (Bloomington and London, 1980); K Epstein, *The Genesis of German Conservatism* (Princeton, 1966); C J Friedrich, 'The Continental Tradition of Training Administrators in Law and Jurisprudence', *Journal of Modern History* 11 (1939) pp. 129-148; H Rosenberg, *Bureaucracy, aristocracy and autocracy; the Prussian experience 1660-1815* (Cambridge, USA, 1958); G Parry, 'Enlightened government and its critics in eighteenth-century Germany', *Historical Journal* 6 (1963) pp. 178-192; T C W Blanning, *The French Revolution in Germany* (Oxford, 1983); E

assertions of Hegel's philosophy expressed this vision for a human community whose historical existence actually *is* the *Aufhebung* of the dialectic between man and God, subject and object.

This position had obvious ramifications for the Christian conception of a transcendent deity. Hegel's thought showed not only the atheism of historical philosophy, but by elevating man to the absolute standpoint, once the domain of God alone, the transformation of the non-philosophical, historical foundation into the absolute philosophical life in the early nineteenth century illuminated the historical progress of everyday-ness towards the endpoint of philosophical 'deification'. Historians diverge when they account for what this means: on the one hand, the *telos* as described here can demonstrate the progressive *Entgötterung* of history's content; on the other, it can show the spiritualization of the knowable, historical realm, and assert the autonomy and particularity of historical experience⁷⁶.

Winter, *Der Josephinismus. Die Geschichte des österreichischen Reformkatholizismus 1740-1848* (Berlin, 1962); E Kovács, ed., *Katholische Aufklärung vor Josephinismus* (Munich, 1979).

⁷⁶ Three classic formulations of the secularization thesis include: Gerhard Masur, 'Distinctive Traits of Western Civilization: Through the Eyes of Western Historians', *The American Historical Review* 67:3 (1962) pp. 591-608; Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1975), and somewhat off the topic but illustrative of the idea of the decline of one form of thought as precedent for the rise of another, see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Harmondsworth, 1978). For the 'autonomy' thesis, see the literature review by John E Toews, 'Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn: The Autonomy of Experience and the Irreducibility of Experience', *American Historical Review* 92:4 (1987) pp. 879-907; Wolfgang Hardtwig, 'Geschichtsreligion – Wissenschaft als Arbeit – Objektivität', *Historische Zeitschrift* 252 (1991) pp. 1-32; Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschichte', in Reinhart Koselleck et al, eds., *Geschichte Ereignis und Erzählung* (Munich, 1973); Finally, in his monumental *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997), Stuart Clark cites Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Rationality and the Explanation of Action', in *idem*, *Against the Self-Images of the Age* (London, 1971) p. 250: 'To say that a belief is rational is to talk about how it stands in relation to other beliefs'. Clark continues: 'It soon became apparent that demonology was a case in point, and that witchcraft beliefs at this level were sustained by whole range of other intellectual commitments. This is because the theoretical arguments clustered around particular issues [...]. In effect, demonology was a composite subject consisting of discussions about the workings of nature, the processes of history, the maintenance of religious purity, and the nature of political authority and order' (p. viii).

The secularization theses tend to focus on the progression of history from the past to the present and suggest that present ways of knowing are the products of a past which is no more. As Owen Chadwick writes, ‘There is no history which is not secular. If it is not secular it is not history; [...] no statement that a fact of the past is ‘sacred’ can exempt it from the ordinary process of historical enquiry’⁷⁷. Wolfhart Pannenberg, on the other hand, argues that that ‘ordinary process’ draws the enquiry both into the past – because that is where the historical nature of the enquiry is directed – and into the present ‘because the entirety of existence, *das Heil*, always transcends what already is [...] making it necessary to see history (*Geschichte*) as the path to freedom, happiness and peace’⁷⁸. In this latter form, the present subsumes the past *en route* to a necessary outcome. This was the human realisation of absolute freedom on earth and in time. One neither opts in to nor out of freedom’s progress; by being human at the right time, one is part of freedom itself.

Hegel expressed this history as an ordinary way of being when, in a letter of 1826 to the theologian August Tholuck, he alluded to the terms of his Lutheranism: ‘Is knowledge of God through the Trinity owed to the exterior processes of history? Nowhere in your entire book⁷⁹ have I found a single trace of this notion. I am Lutheran and am entirely grounded in Lutheranism through philosophy. I do not let myself get carried away by any such external [*äußerlich*] historical explanation. There is a higher

⁷⁷ Chadwick, *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁷⁸ Wolfhart Pannenberg, ‘Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschichte’, in Reinhart Koselleck, et al, eds., *Geschichte: Ereignis und Erzählung*, pp. 314-315. Pannenberg notes further that ‘man as active subject [...] is not the creative subject of all of history. Neither is he merely the stuff of history, insofar as world of history is always the history of humanity. For man himself is a theme of his own history. All history, in this sense, is *Heilsgeschichte*. [...] It is clear that the term *Heil* suggests unity within human understanding’, *ibid.*, pp. 311-313.

⁷⁹ Hegel refers to August Tholuck’s *Die speculative Trinitätslehre des späteren Orients. Eine religiös-philosophische Monographie aus den handschriftlichen Quellen der Leydener, Oxforder und Berliner Bibliothek bearbeitet* (Berlin, 1826).

spirit at work in there than merely human tradition'⁸⁰. Because history had achieved the historically necessary abstract standpoint, thus making the 'external' superfluous, what we might mistake for a parallel between the *telos* of philosophical history and the historically 'real' goal of Luther's doctrine, were in fact one and the same. In a letter to Hegel in 1820, Nikolaus von Thaden advised the philosopher that he should avoid making a commotion over his disagreements with Schleiermacher: 'Do what you can to dampen the students' conflicts with the theologian', he wrote. 'Just as our opponents do, we must band together in our own time even more than was done in Luther's: band together even tighter than the mystics, zealots, and the purest of the Jesuits, otherwise all will be lost for a long, long time'⁸¹.

This was a plea, first of all, to maintain the appearance of harmony in the halls of the Friedrich Wilhelm Universität. Thaden revealed his concerns about the threat that Hegelian historical pantheism posed to the pietistic beliefs of the conservative 'Throne and Altar' movement. Moreover, if we understand Thaden's plea in the broad terms of Hegel's understanding of history, he also suggests that an open conflict with Schleiermacher would pose the much graver risk retarding or stalling historical progress itself. The underlying ideal of progress towards absolute freedom subsumed the 'actual' meaning of Luther to the ideal meaning of Spirit's progress. Thus in the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel argued that Luther's doctrine of freedom was the first human expression of Spirit in which humanity became conscious of history's necessary movement. This occurred because man and history's progress had become one: 'natural man is not what he should be; he must overcome his naturalness through his own inner intellectuality [...]': it

⁸⁰ Hegel to August Tholuck, Berlin, 3 July 1826. *Briefe von und an Hegel*, vol. 3, 1823-1831, Johannes Hoffmeister, ed., (Hamburg, 1953) pp. 28-29.

⁸¹ Nikolaus von Thaden to Hegel, 22 Jan. 1820, *Briefe*, vol. 1, pp. 223-224.

is not the consciousness of something sensorial as being *of* God [...] but consciousness of God's *actuality*'⁸². Gone were the priests, for everyone was now in possession of the truth. Realizing where history was going was just a matter of allowing it to reveal the form it would take. That form would be, therefore, necessarily and absolutely true.

2.3 The Reformation as the moment of historical self-transformation

In his *Enzyklopädie*, Hegel stated quite plainly that the mode of 'mere abstract philosophical reflection' known to the ancient Greeks had 'blossomed in *neueren Zeit*. Philosophy has now thrown itself into the boundless matter of the world'⁸³. He narrowed the claim somewhat in his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* when he speculated that 'it seems that on the outside, the Germanic world is merely a continuation of the Roman world. But a completely new spirit was alive in the Germanic world with which it must regenerate itself: this spirit was the Free Spirit, entirely unto itself, the absolute stubbornness of subjectivity'. Two things opposed the Free Spirit: the Church (*Theocratie*) 'which forms itself as the *Dasein* of absolute Truth, for its subject is consciousness of this truth itself', and the state (*Feudalmonarchie*), 'the realm of worldly consciousness in which reside the objectives of the world'⁸⁴. The history of Europe, as Hegel and his contemporaries experienced it, was the account of the synthesis of this dialectic. Until that synthesis occurs, 'the greatest good of man is in other hands': 'only

⁸² Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, vol. 4: *Die germanische Welt*, Georg Lasson, ed., (Hamburg, 1988; 1918) p. 878.

⁸³ Hegel, *Briefe*, p. 33.

⁸⁴ Hegel, *Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, vol. 4, p. 759.

the workings of *Wissenschaft* over time can combine the kingdom of God and the moral world into one idea'⁸⁵. Not every lecture attempts so much.

Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history do not stand out as profoundly creative statements when we consider their content in light of the more systematic claims he made about the historicity of human consciousness. In the *Phenomenologie* of 1807, he proposed an account of human consciousness in which he refuted the notion of Cartesian and Kantian transcendental subjectivity and offered instead what one critic characterises as an understanding of subjectivity holding 'experience and action as necessarily self-transforming in time, [which is] necessarily social'⁸⁶. This notion of subjectivity, of course, arose *within* a particular time and place: the *germanische Welt* in *Neueren Zeit* ('early modernity') whose defining moment was the Lutheran Reformation.

To understand where and how Hegel located this event 'philosophically', we should consider the larger picture for a moment. When we retrace the chronological order of his thought, it becomes apparent that the first assertion he made was the historicity of subjective consciousness in his own time (that is, as he portrays in his system), and then only later did he attempt to explain what world-historical changes had enabled the resolution of what had been the dialectic of consciousness and reality. In the order of his intellectual development, then, he first asserted the existence of the World Spirit well before he developed the world itself. The 'historical' content of the system is already somewhat peculiar. The crucial moment occurred at the transition between the second and third sub-periods of the third world-historical epoch, the shift from mediaeval time to

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 827.

⁸⁶ See Robert B. Pippin, 'You can't get there from here: transition problems in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*', in Frederick C Beiser, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge, 1993) p. 55.

modernity within the 'Germanic world'. Spirit knew itself only through external reference: the Church, 'administrator of the holy', had sunk to 'all worldliness', while the worldly 'appeared just as loathsome as that to which the Church had entitled the passions'⁸⁷. The transitional period coincided with the early period of Charles V's reign in which Spirit had yet to become free. The relationship of the European powers was merely political, a 'unity of subordinate importance' to the 'truth and reality' lent by the Reformation to the *christliche Prinzip*: 'the destiny of the Germanic peoples is to furnish itself as the carrier of the Christian principle'⁸⁸. While the discovery of America demonstrated the expanse of the exterior world and the relative world-historical advancement of European civilisation over the rest of the world, the Reformation enabled this advanced people to carry out its task of revealing the place of the inner Spirit *in the world* itself through the 'revival of concrete consciousness'⁸⁹. That task fell to the Germans; they were unique within Europe itself. Spirit was now at home in the realm of human experience; Spirit demonstrated the sanctity of the social institutions of every-day life. It broke the Church's control of the terms on which the individual could claim to know spirituality.

Hegel could not be more precise about when and where this transition occurred: the Reformation closed the mediaeval period and inaugurated modernity. Luther's writings demonstrated man's agency in the world-historical process, Hegel wrote, but he promptly subordinated Luther's power to effect change, as an individual historical agent, to the power of the historical moment itself. The reformer was a cog in the wheel of history. Against the background of the late-mediaeval Church's 'ruination', Lutheran

⁸⁷ Hegel, *Philosophie der Geschichte*, p. 764.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 763-765.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 765, 871.

doctrine freed humanity from the materiality of Catholic ritual and presented man's relationship to Christ as an 'immediate relationship within Spirit'. 'Man is ready to know the divine; this is the freedom of knowledge and insight, for the Lutheran conception of truth is not a construct but rather the spirit of Truth taken up in the subjective Spirit'. 'The true reconciliation of the world with religion had been achieved'⁹⁰. What remained was for the political structures of Europe to 'ripen' by growing into and acknowledging the historical meaning of the Reformation⁹¹.

Teleology was also apparent in the order and meaning of historical events. Hegel grounded this argument about the necessary occurrence of the Reformation in the nineteenth-century present by posing some questions about why the Reformation was German and why it 'spread' to other Germanic lands but not elsewhere. He responded to these questions with a tautology which demonstrated his tenacious belief that only 'Germany' had the requisite *Grundcharakter* to let the Reformation happen. Only 'Germany' had swept away the hindrances which impeded every other nation's spiritual readiness for the world-historical mission of the Reformation: 'The pure depth of the Germanic nation was the true ground for the liberation of the Spirit'⁹². The argument follows Luther's vision of ecclesiastical reform as a problem of recognizing and acting

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 880-893.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 884.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 886. Hegel is not concerned with the question of whether the single event he calls the Reformation may have been the expression of a long-standing tradition of reform rather than a sudden, novel expression world-historical development. On this notion of the transition from *reformatio* to Reformation, see Berndt Hamm, 'Einheit und Vielfalt der Reformation – oder: was die Reformation zur Reformation machte', in Berndt Hamm, Berndt Moeller and Dorothea Wendelbourg, eds., *Reformationstheorien. Ein kirchenhistorischer Disput über Einheit und Vielfalt der Reformation* (Göttingen, 1995); Berndt Hamm, 'Von der spätmittelalterlichen reformatio zur Reformation. Der Prozeß normativer Zentrierung von Religion und Gesellschaft in Deutschland', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 84 (1993) pp. 7-82.

on the subjective freedom Christianity had introduced to the world⁹³. Luther, however, had held God alone to be the essence of freedom; Hegel argued somewhat differently that transcendental subjective consciousness *is* freedom. Following a cultural habit familiar already to the sixteenth-century Reformation historian Johann Sleidan, he pointed to the depravity of the late-mediaeval Church but disregarded the idea of reform as a return to or recovery of a purer form of the *Christian* subjective consciousness of freedom. He looked to the *future*, not the past, and in so doing used conceptual categories which Luther would scarcely have recognized: ‘Since the Reformation, Spirit has become conscious of how the objective processes of the essence of the divine mediate the relationship between man and God’⁹⁴. The issue was where the Reformation was taking history, not where history was and had been.

Given all this, a contradiction seems to arise between the view of progress towards Christian revelation – the appearance of the absolutely free and ‘unnecessary’ Spirit in history – and Hegel’s striving to transcend his personal historical perspective as he attempted to make the idea of a universal historical understanding meaningful to himself and to his contemporaries⁹⁵. On a universal level, he substituted the self-

⁹³ ‘Ecclesia indiget reformatione, [but] non est unius hominis Pontificis nec multatorum Cardinalium officium, [...] sed totius orbis, immo solius dei, Temous autem huius reformationis novit solus ille, qui condidit tempora’. Martin Luther, ‘Resolutiones disputationum de indulgentiarum virtute’ (1518), *Weimar Ausgabe* vol. 1 (1883), p. 627. See Eike Wollgast, ‘Reform/Reformation’, in Otto Brunner, et al, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 5, (Stuttgart, 1984) pp. 325-326; Eike Wollgast, ‘Reform-Reformation-Revolution. Versuch einer historischen Standortsbestimmung’, in Siegfried Hoyer, ed., *Reform-Reformation-Revolution* (Leipzig, 1980); Adolf Laube, ‘Überlegungen zum Reformationsbegriff’, in Rainer Postel and Franklin Kopitzsch, eds., *Reformation und Revolution. Beiträge zum politischen Wandel und den sozialen Kräften am Beginn der Neuzeit* (Stuttgart, 1989).

⁹⁴ Hegel, *Philosophie der Geschichte*, pp. 886-888. It is striking that Hegel nowhere suggests that the Lutheran movement found success among intellectuals because its doctrines resonated deeply with Ockhamism and humanism, nor that Lutheranism was aided by non-Lutheran reform movements whose means and objectives were often more threatening to political structures than anything Luther had envisaged.

⁹⁵ Gadamer captures the idea when he writes, ‘To understand one’s self is to understand one’s self in something’; ‘[...] World history is that great dark book, the collected works of the human spirit written

conscious individual for the Christ-figure as the being which made the idea of spiritual autonomy real within the historical world. More locally, however, Hegel's own experience in a specific part of that world located him within cultural-historical commitments and contingencies from which no dialectical synthesis could lift him. Even if we thought it would yield a desired understanding, it is not at all clear that we could read Hegel as a philosophical expression of Christian revelation: the supposedly supra-historical Christian eschatology was never cut loose from the imperfect political reality of European history. Had Luther's doctrine of freedom actually rectified the imperfection by uniting religion and worldliness, 'Lutheranism' as doctrine would have sufficed as the necessary and sufficient condition for the possibility of conceiving of the complete philosophical system itself. This is nothing less than the Christian belief in the single meaning of history within an historical reality which demonstrated the inevitability of contingency⁹⁶.

The complication turns out to be about politics because politics was the historical-experiential reality in which philosophy resided. The Reformation did not end with Luther, for the 'cunning of reason' made the world-historical consequences of Luther's deeds far greater than he could possibly have foreseen, intended, or understood. He gave world history a spiritual impetus which acquired political form in European Protestant

in the languages of the past whose text is to be understood'. *Wahrheit und Methode*, pp. 181-183. To this might be added Georg Iggers' thesis that the 'belief that the world was a meaningful process' underlay the project of nineteenth-century German historical idealism. He argued that thesis in his *The German Conception of History* (Middletown, 1968).

⁹⁶ As Gerhard Masur and others have pointed out many times, Christian thought has influenced historical thinking in two principal ways. First, human history was seen to progress with unity of purpose and direction; second, it was believed to mean one thing. Gerhard Masur, 'Distinctive Traits of Western Civilization: Through the Eyes of Western Historians', *American Historical Review* 67:3 (1962) pp. 591-608; Masur cites Hans Freyer, 'Die Systeme der weltgeschichtlichen Betrachtung', *Propyläen der Weltgeschichte*. 11 vols. (Berlin, 1929); On Hegel's demonstration of the inevitability of historical contingency, see Dieter Henrich, 'Hegel's Theorie über den Zufall', *Kant-Studien* 50 (1958-1959) p. 131.

civilization during the time between the Reformation and Hegel's lifetime. Because Hegel never really accounted for whether Luther was conscious of the historical significance of his work, it was left up to Luther's inheritors, the human community most conscious of the presence of the World Spirit in its everyday existence, to express Spirit in its necessary historical form. 'At the time of the Council of Trent, the world was not yet ripe for a political transformation'; the Treaty of Westphalia ended the period of religious strife and 'completed the nations of Europe [...] which had awakened to their individuality' through the emergence of national-monarchical governments. [...] The Lutheran Church continued to develop through the history of the Spirit'⁹⁷.

Hegel elaborated on this progression in a public address he gave in Berlin in 1830 in commemoration of the three-hundredth year of the Augsburg Confession. The Confession, he stated, was Germany's Protestant leaders' official proclamation of their and their subjects' liberation from the 'servitude' to which Roman Catholicism had subjected them. The task of rescuing not only the Church from its despoiled state, but religion more generally, befell this community of believers. This was not a 'coincidental and external arrangement' between princes and theologians, but rather the joining together of the principles of religion and the state within the 'essence of their true freedom'⁹⁸. Elsewhere in the same speech, he argued that Luther's feat should be

⁹⁷ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*. Vol. 4: *Die germanische Welt*. Georg Lasson, ed. (Hamburg, 1988; 1918) pp. 884, 908, 910.

⁹⁸ Hegel, 'Augsburg Confession Rede' (1830), *Sämmtliche Werke* XI, pp. 53, 35-37, 43-45. Historians, philosophers and cultural critics have routinely intoned that it underlies the German disasters of twentieth century. Leonard Krieger, to take one example, writes in 1957 that 'the juxtaposition – indeed, even the connection – of one conception of liberty that could be realized only within the authoritarian state and of another that could be realized only in an absolute realm, beyond all states is a commonly remarked German phenomenon. It has been traced back to Luther and up to Hitler'. Unfortunately, Krieger does not document the remark. Other historians, however, share his discomfort. In a study written during his active service in the Royal Air Force, Geoffrey Barraclough remarks that 'German history [...] is a story of discontinuity, of development cut short, of incompleteness and retardation. [...] The essential requirement

understood not in terms of how it began, that is, as the creation of a new religious doctrine, but rather what it became in light of subsequent history, ‘a charge against the existing system of law’⁹⁹.

Hegel’s vagueness over who received this freedom must be placed in the context of where this conception of freedom arose and for whom or what it actually functioned in order to understand the basis for his claim that the Reformation was being completed as he spoke: ‘The power inherent to the renewed religious life to improve the laws and customs of *bürgerliche* life first became apparent at the beginning of the Reformation, but is clearest in our own time’¹⁰⁰. The context for this two-layered conception of freedom is the assertion his philosophy had made all along, illustrated by another underlying ‘ambiguity’: why he did not really distinguish between a ‘western’ conception of the individual as the embodiment of the state and an absolute notion of the state as the embodiment of the individual. The reason for this was that by his death, Hegel had shown how two distinct ways of historical experience could coexist within two teleological paths and had shown, moreover, that each was historically realistic within its appropriate – that is, necessary - historical context.

There was, on the one hand, what Walker calls a ‘teleology of ultimate ends’¹⁰¹. The context for this was absolute Spirit’s realization within the historical world; it resembled but is not itself the traditional Christian notion of divine revelation at the end

of the present is to diagnose this problem, to examine its symptoms and uncover its causes [...]. Accurate diagnosis is the first step towards cure, and accurate diagnosis of the causes of maladies in the body politic is an essential function of the historian’. ‘There has been a ‘German problem’ since at any rate the beginning of the sixteenth century; and although inevitably in a twentieth-century environment that problem has taken new shape, it is assuredly true that no attempt at a solution can succeed which, treating it in a purely modern context, ignores its long-standing causes and the enduring factors which have governed its history’. *The Origins of Modern Germany* (London, 1946; 1984 edition cited) pp. 456, ix-x.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁰¹ Walker, *ibid.*, p. 81.

of history, for Spirit's entrance into the world was merely the end of historical development, not the end of life in history. Whereas Luther understood the individual within this teleological corridor, seeing human knowledge, truth, and the historical experience of spiritual freedom as being prescribed *within* the language of Scripture and *beneath* the absolute authority of God and the secular rulers whose faith and legislative power the Reformation synthesized, Hegel followed the more *Aufklärerisch* view of seeing truth as residing in the mind of the individual. The world-historical achievement which he believed his society had achieved was to be able to conceive of this absolute teleology in terms of human experience. On the other hand, Hegel also conceived of an immanent or embodied teleology which is the human experience of its own place in history. In the absolute teleology, Spirit comes to the individual; in the immanent teleology, the individual comes to Spirit through coming into self-consciousness of its, the individual's, own historicity. As Karl Löwith argues, Hegel developed this double conception of historical movement to translate the process of expectation, hope and belief, and the human social institutions, practices and traditions which made this possible, into human terms. These terms are the means to acquire knowledge, to know truth in human experience, and to be able to understand this process in philosophical terms¹⁰².

The habitual shallowness of so many historian's readings of Hegel's philosophy has led them to make the routine claim that the philosopher's greatest achievement was to have justified philosophically a culture of political authoritarianism. The intention of this

¹⁰² Karl Löwith, 'Vom Sinn der Geschichte' (1961), *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen. Zur Kritik der Geschichtsphilosophie*, Sämtliche Schriften II (Stuttgart, 1983) p. 379.

present argument has been to show why we require a deeper understanding of what the Reformation means historically and philosophically to Hegel enables us to understand his thought on its own terms¹⁰³. Even if Hegel did provide a high degree of philosophical legitimacy to the state he served, and even if that state was authoritarian, the most basic premises of his thought prevent us from stopping there, and most certainly compel us to do more than insinuate that he planted the philosophical seeds for various subsequent manifestations of what Geoffrey Barraclough denounced as the ‘German problem’. The ‘Germany’ of Hegel’s experience, after all, saw revolutionary and Napoleonic *France* as the gravest danger to human freedom, the institutions of the human and national community, and the ideals and means of national autonomy. His lifetime coincided with the restoration of the Prussian monarchy; his task was to make the contemporary experience of that project philosophically meaningful in terms which he and his contemporaries could recognize in their own lives and which were true to the kind of historical understanding which was inherent to their experience as intelligent beings.

One of Hegel’s greatest accomplishments was to show that *historical* understanding was one of the possible ways of communal self-understanding. A greater accomplishment, however, was to argue that historical understanding was the only kind appropriate to his age. In the next chapter we will turn to another intellectual giant at the University of Berlin, Leopold von Ranke. Ranke was a self-professed disdainer of Hegel, but arguably the greatest practitioner of Hegel’s proposition that the historical perspective was spiritually and culturally necessary to understanding the historicity of the early nineteenth-century present. What Schleiermacher, Stein, Wilhelm and Alexander von

¹⁰³ Terry Pinkard, for example, sums up the more intellectually useful view in his ‘Hegel’s Phenomenology and *Logic*’, *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (Cambridge, 2000) pp. 161-179.

Humboldt, and Johann and Jacob Grimm did for theology, law, the natural sciences, the discipline of history and its institutionalisation, and *Germanistik*, respectively, Ranke did for Hegel's understanding of the world-historical force of Protestantism. He transformed the idea that the Reformation had reached its fullest and final expression into the actual spiritual-political language of historical argument, and therefore showed the world-historical necessity of that, as well. Thus began the *Verwissenschaftlichung* of the discipline of history.

CHAPTER 3. Leopold von Ranke and the spiritual impetus of Protestant historiography

3.1 From the rational to the moral standpoint in history

The previous chapter attempted to come to terms with Hegel's understanding of the Reformation and how it functioned in his historical philosophy. This was necessary to show that his philosophy can be read as an historical argument for the necessity and truth of that philosophical understanding itself. When the German Reformation occurred, Spirit intervened into history and enabled German culture to develop towards a more complete realization of the world-historical meaning of Spirit for the human community whose fullest expression had been reached in Hegel's time and place. Hegel claimed that by his own lifetime the philosophical understanding had become the only kind of knowledge appropriate to and capable of satisfying the individual's yearning to understand his historical position within the human community and its relation to the absolute Spirit. Theology no longer sufficed and history had become more a condition of philosophy than a distinct kind of knowledge. Historical consciousness was at the base of human self-understanding. 'The profound thing about the modern world', he wrote in his *Philosophy of Religion*, 'is the deepening of the subject into itself'¹⁰⁴.

What this view of modernity means in light of Hegel's historical argument made sense only when one accepted that the historical event of the Reformation established the terms on which that process of 'deepening into the self' could happen and could be understood. The historical event of the Reformation intervened, ruptured, and redefined

¹⁰⁴ G W F Hegel, *Philosophie der Religion*, SW, Part 3.1, p. 46.

Germany's world-historical existence. The Hegelian historical perspective worked from the conviction that the Reformation had begun a new historical age in which, as never before, Germany's connection to the universal Spirit could be shown through philosophical reason and cultural community to underlie the common German historical experience. Germans knew this because their culture itself was the culmination of this historical process. Hegel conceived of his philosophy itself through a transcendent historical interpretation of the Reformation. His philosophical claims proved the Reformation's on-going development within human consciousness. The Reformation, therefore, having given way to the philosophical understanding at hand, changed how nineteenth-century intellectuals were able to be conscious of and relate to the historical world around them. Hegel made it his task to complete the Reformation as the rational philosophical achievement of the historical moment which remained historically appropriate to and rooted in his and his culture's intellectual, historical inheritance.

This chapter turns from Hegel to Leopold von Ranke, the patriarch of nineteenth-century historiography who has been credited with having established a concept of the limits of historical knowledge, of how the historian could acquire that limited knowledge, and of how those limitations impinged on the epistemological status of his beliefs about the nature and meaning of that which he could not know¹⁰⁵. The issue was not how to

¹⁰⁵ Leopold von Ranke (1795 Wiehe – 1886 Berlin) studied theology and philology at the University of Leipzig from 1814-1818. Between 1818 and 1825 he was *außerordentlicher* professor at the University of Berlin, traveled widely between 1827 and 1831 conducting research in the archives of the former Holy Roman Empire. He became a member of the Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in 1832 and a full professor in 1834; in 1841 King Wilhelm IV named him historiographer of the Prussian state in which capacity he wrote what was later published in 1878-1879 as the *Zwölf Bücher preußischer Geschichte*. His principal works include: *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker 1494 bis 1514* (1824); *Die römischen Päpste im sechzehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhundert* (1838-1839); *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation* (1839-1842); *Neun Bücher preußischer Geschichte* (1847-1848);

trace the progress of the subject into itself, as with Hegel, but how to show the ontological status of the subject in relation to the external world around it through which, through the proper kind of reflection, it could understand the objective truth of its position in history and its relation to the Other. The Other was both God and historical reality. Both were external to the subject but were also constitutive of it. Subjective belief in the existence of God and reality was experienced as moral obligation and informed the subject's position on how reality could be known and what that knowledge meant. Because realistic access to the metaphysical was impossible, the search for the meaning of God remained a matter of belief¹⁰⁶. No amount of cultural or philosophical development could convince Ranke that this might be otherwise. Subjective-religious access to God was the only available avenue, for 'man has God at the foundation of his consciousness'; 'God lives within him', Ranke surmised during the late 1830s at the time he was writing his history of the Reformation¹⁰⁷.

Ranke's experiences in the early nineteenth century were different from those of his social and cultural peers. He kept his distance from the 'Throne and Altar' Pietists gathered around Karl Hengstenberg and the Gerlach brothers, Hegel and his 'Right' and 'Left' inheritors, the romantic nationalists of the Wartburgfest (with whom Ranke's brother Heinrich sympathised), and later, the moderate liberals so active at the Frankfurt Parliaments. The relation of the ideological content of Ranke's historical-philosophical

Französische Geschichte, vornehmlich im sechzehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhundert (1852-1861); *Die deutschen Mächte und der Fürstenbund* (1871-1872).

¹⁰⁶ In his article 'Gute Beschränkung: Die protestantischen Wurzeln der analytischen Philosophie' (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 4 Jan 2006, p. N3), Alexander Grau argues that the distinction drawn by logical empiricists between what can be known and what cannot, can be traced back to some of Protestant theology's basic tenets. Grau cites A J Ayer: 'The expression 'God exists' is a metaphysical expression which can be neither true nor false' because the conditions by which religious expressions can be verified or falsified cannot be known.

¹⁰⁷ Ranke, [Gott im Menschen, late 1830s] *Tagebücher*, in: *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, Walther Peter Fuchs, ed., vol. 3, (Munich and Vienna, 1964) pp. 127-128.

position to the ideological stance of the Prussian regime remained consistent and favourable after Austrian Chancellor Metternich's conservative reaction in 1819 to the stirrings of nationalism of the previous decade. This can be attributed in large part to Ranke's culturally-unassailable and historical-based conception of power which solidified Prussia's political and historical legitimacy by revealing its moral rightness and historical necessity. Prussia's historical foundation was the Protestant Reformation; the basis of the historical narrative which constructed that connection was God.

Ranke's advance into professional historiography was thus achieved with equal certainty that these interrelations were morally right and factually true. He followed the argument the Berlin theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher's outlined in his *Über die Religion* that the task of religion was not to determine the nature of the universal and to explain it in metaphysical terms, but to use religious understanding to distinguish between what can and cannot be known¹⁰⁸. Ranke accepted his contemporary theologians' focus on religion as an expression of human existence, but widened the question of the limits of epistemology to include the real evidence of political, cultural, and religious activity in history. With this sense of reality informing his epistemological project, he moved towards a position in which he sought to understand the foundation of

¹⁰⁸ Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768 Breslau – 1834 Berlin) was the son of a reformed clergyman and was educated in the pietist tradition in schools of the *Herrnhuter* (The Moravian Brotherhood). He became sceptical of some Christian teachings, turned towards the humanities, and left the school for the University of Halle where he studied theology and philosophy. He sympathised with the French Revolution. His academic writings addressed Kant, Spinoza, and Moses Mendelssohn; his most important work in theology he wrote in 1799: *Über die Religion*. He sought in the work to argue that religion is a cultural form, separate from God and human immorality, and distinct from the historical interpretation of religion which Hegel would argue shortly thereafter. Schleiermacher left Berlin in 1802 after several illicit and failed romances and ended up at Halle where he lectured on ethics and hermeneutics. He returned to the newly-opened University of Berlin in 1810 where he accepted the university's first chair in theology. By 1811 he was a member of the Berlin Akademie der Wissenschaften. His lasting intellectual significance has centred on the philosophy of religion and theology, which he approached from a secular position in *Aufklärung* philosophy.

his belief that true history was possible in terms of the specific historical realities he encountered. Religion was one of these, but not the defining one; neither was politics. For what Ranke found in the archives was proof of the existence of God in the form of religious and historical documents. *Geschichte* was the way forward and the political outcomes of the *historical* event of the religiously-motivated Reformation were the defining reality of that epistemological project. Without the *geschichtliche* understanding of the Reformation there could be no religious perspective, for the political, cultural, and religious changes ushered in by the Reformation were *preconditions* for historical understanding itself. Although in a different way from Hegel, Ranke, too, was already subjectively ‘in’ the Reformation by the time he began to develop a methodology to understand it on the terms he believed it demanded.

Ranke defined the historian’s task in terms of historically-conscious and morally-informed source criticism. His propositions about the possibility of objective historical knowledge and the historian’s involvement in arriving at that knowledge have spawned debates about the interdependence of historical objectivity and the historian’s cultural and religious stand-point¹⁰⁹. Ranke turned to the study of history to grapple with the epistemological and theological problem that the contents of belief cannot be fully

¹⁰⁹ Friedrich Meinecke, *Leopold von Ranke*, in *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (Munich, 1936); Theodore von Laue, *Leopold von Ranke: The Formative Years* (Princeton, 1950); Carl Hinrichs, *Ranke und die Geschichtstheologie der Goethezeit* (Göttingen-Frankfurt-Berlin, 1954); Theodor Schieder, *Das historische Weltbild Leopold von Ranke: Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* (Darmstadt, 1954); Georg G Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middleton, 1968); Helmut Berding, *Leopold von Ranke*, in H-U Wehler, ed., *Deutsche Historiker*, vol. 1., (Göttingen, 1971); Rudolf Vierhaus, *Ranke und die soziale Welt* (Münster, 1957); Rudolf Vierhaus, *Ranke und die Anfänge der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft*, in B Faulenbach, ed., *Geschichtswissenschaft in Deutschland* (Munich, 1974); Rudolf Vierhaus, ‘Rankes Begriff der historischen Objektivität’, in Reinhart Koselleck et. al., eds., *Objektivität und Parteilichkeit in der Geschichtswissenschaft* (Munich, 1977); Leonard Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History* (Chicago, 1977).

deduced from experiential reality, and therefore could not have resulted from cognition. To Ranke's mind, the Reformation was the first time this problem appeared in history. Because it was historical, the truth about the matter was available and intelligible to humanity, given the right approach. Without acknowledging it, Ranke used what he inherited from the Reformation to understand the Reformation itself. The self-referential nature of Ranke's understanding of the Reformation makes it unique among his writings because it enables us to see the overlap between the moral-subjective perspective he brought to historical understanding and the thing he sought to understand.

This revision of the objective-scientific perspective held by the 'neo-Rankeaner' Alfred Dove, Max Lenz, and Friedrich Meinecke, for example, attempted to understand Ranke in light of what he took to be his intellectual inheritance from Luther and Fichte. Meinecke took Ranke's historical realist method and called it historicism. A doctrine was born which is virtually unchanged in contemporary realist historical interpretation. The tendency to see Hegel and Ranke as polar opposites places too much importance on their professed mutual disregard and neglects the more important issue that both participated in the shaping of a communal historical consciousness based largely on the common belief that their respective conceptions of history upheld and furthered the intellectual and cultural force of the Reformation¹¹⁰. By the time of Hegel's death in 1831, Ranke had returned to Berlin from a three-year sabbatical and had been appointed editor of the state-sponsored *Historisch-Politisch Zeitschrift*. He was called to a Chair in 1834 and began to

¹¹⁰ Hegel and Ranke's professed coolness toward each other manifest itself on a non-intellectual level. Hegel: 'He is merely a normal historian'; Ranke (in a letter to Karl Varnhagen von Ense, 10.03.1828): 'Of course I am slightly familiar with Hegel's *Enzyklopädie* [...]. Deep thoughts, to be sure, but as Schlegel said, merely the melody of deep thoughts, and no doubt also a great deal of false, ugly material. He pulls me in and then repulses me'. As cited in Hermann Oncken, *Aus Rankes Frühzeit* (Gotha, 1922) pp. 16-17.

write the two works which synthesized all his previous thoughts about the nature of history, and did so in the context of sixteenth-century European history: *Die römische Päpste* (1838-1839) and *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation* (1839-1843). The institutional clout and intellectual assuredness he gained through practising the conception of history which had been gestating for two decades moved him far beyond the philosophical differences with Hegel and the ‘Hegelian’ historians. More urgent, political issues had arisen. More than any other historian of his generation, Ranke was summoned by the young Friedrich Wilhelm III to contribute to the construction of a Prussian historical consciousness.

This chapter is informed by Leonard Krieger’s interpretation which attends to Ranke’s ‘conscious absorption’ of intellectual influences and how that consciousness informed his subjective historical outlook. Following Krieger and the excellent chapter on Ranke in John E Toews’s recent work¹¹¹, this chapter will be more concerned with Ranke’s attitude toward history than the ‘history’ his histories contain. Special attention will be paid therefore to what might tentatively be called Ranke’s ‘non’ and ‘pre-historical writings’. Luther, Lutheranism, the Reformation, and the Reformation’s impact on European religious and political life were immensely formative of his historical attitude. He never questioned their importance. His consciousness of his historical connection to the events of the sixteenth century predates his emergence as a professional historian by at least two decades. Rather than replace this subjective consciousness, his application of scientific historical method to understand those influences as historical

¹¹¹ John E Toews, ‘Ranke and the Christian-German State: Contested Historical Identities and the Transcendent Foundations of the Historical Subject’, in *Becoming Historical: Cultural Reformation and Public Memory in Early Nineteenth-century Berlin* (Cambridge, 2004)

events in and of themselves strengthened his subjective commitment to revealing the common ground between his personal sense of historical belonging and the actual, national political institutions in which that belonging would be realised and enacted.

Ranke's fifty-four volume *oeuvre* and subsequently published letters and *Nachlässe* can be read as a sustained criticism of German *Aufklärung* philosophy's basic claims that history's purpose is to reveal reason in the world, its unity of meaning and purpose, and that reason's increase leads to greater human self-knowledge. His thought did resonate, however, with the dominant tone of the *Aufklärung*'s historical understanding when he sought to strengthen religion by showing how historical consciousness and the reality of divine agency in history are complimentary and to what extent and on what terms that interrelation can be known. Ranke came to the study of history a believer and the right study of history confirmed that belief.

Long before he had become a professional historian, Ranke had made up his mind about the place of reason and belief in history. In his 'Luther-Fragment' of 1817, written while he was studying philology and theology at the University of Leipzig, he argued that the basis of history is moral, not rational. 'It is a lie when one says that the Reformation paid homage to the understanding [*dem Verstand*], or even more, that the understanding was its principle. Much more than this, [its principle] was morality'¹¹². This juxtaposition is untypical of the rest of 'Fragment' which departs on a biographical and sometimes hagiographical tangent. The 'Fragment' is relevant here particularly because it can be read in a revisionist light as one of the earliest pieces of his writing which shows the

¹¹² Ranke, [Lutherfragment, 1817] 'Frühe Schriften', in *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 3, Walther Peter Fuchs, ed., (Munich and Vienna, 1973) p. 395.

thematic prominence of abstract themes and interrelations in his conception of historical consciousness.

From almost the first of his earliest writings, Ranke believed that the way to an understanding of historical problems lay in studying the overlap of their general and particular characteristics. This was the central claim of his 1824 work which alerted the intellectual powers at the University of Berlin that the young historian, then a history teacher at a *Gymnasium* in Frankfurt a.O., had something original to say and an original way to say it. Ranke wrote in the preface to his *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1514* that ‘the book in no way encompasses the entire modern histories of these nations, but only happenings [*Geschichten*], not the history itself [*Geschichte*]. On the one hand, it addresses the founding of the Spanish Monarchy and the decline of Italian independence, on the other hand, the emergence of a two-part opposition, one side of which is political, arising in the French context, and the other side of which is ecclesiastical, through the Reformation, which sufficed to divide our nation into two incommensurable parts on which all new history is based’¹¹³. Ranke came to this belief through his own subjective involvement in the subject matter itself, which began with study of antiquity – Herodotus was the subject of his doctoral dissertation – but approached the past as a whole through his experiences as a young man with deep-rooted Lutheran religious convictions and concern about how the experiential world could validate those convictions. Between 1819 and 1822, when he began writing the *Geschichten*, he became increasingly convinced that God’s presence could only be

¹¹³ Ranke, preface to *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1535* (Frankfurt a.O., 1824), reprinted in Wolfgang Hardtwig, ed., *Über das Studium der Geschichte* (Munich, 1990), here pp. 44-45.

known through *a posteriori* understanding of the traces of God existing in forms intelligible to man¹¹⁴.

While Krieger argued that only once Ranke had convinced himself about the method and function of history could he put his mind at rest about the role of religion, the place of God, and the ethical foundation of historical reality, it is equally plausible to argue that Ranke constructed his conception of history within the religious-ethical beliefs he held, without any substantial change, for the duration of his life. For two reasons, this chapter therefore pays special attention to Ranke's 'coming into history' which took place in his pre-1848 writings. The first reason is conceptual. It concentrates on the confluence of Ranke's religiosity with his choice of subject matter and kind of history which ensued from those investigations from the beginning of his career to the late 1840s when a younger generation of liberal historians challenged his conservative views on the nature and kind of history appropriate to German historical life. The manner in which Ranke connected these views to the spiritual and political historical foundation of the state he served embodied the hopes of the Prussian reformers of the restoration. They, broadly speaking, created a Prussian historical-cultural consciousness to locate the nascent Prussian state's political, cultural, aesthetic and spiritual dimensions within an historicised conception of the actual community¹¹⁵. Wilhelm von Humboldt, for example,

¹¹⁴ Leopold Ranke to Heinrich Ranke, 25 April 1823 and 28 Dec. 1823, in *Briefwerk*, pp. 39, 51 (as cited in Krieger, *Ranke*, p. 70). When Ranke edited the book fifty years later for publication in his collected works, he tended shift the emphasis in certain passages from the intelligibility of divine will to the less obviously theological context of historical change. See Werner Conze, ed., *Deutschland und Europa: historische Studien zur Völker- und Staatenordnung des Abendlandes. Festschrift für Hans Rothfels* (Duesseldorf, 1951) pp. 337-354; Hans Liebeschütz, *Ranke* (London, 1954), p. 9, draws attention to the same point.

¹¹⁵ Toews's cultural-historical study of the rise of Prussian historical consciousness captures the extent to which historical consciousness had imbued all forms of cultural and political life. John E Toews, *Becoming Historical: Cultural Reformation and Public Memory in Early Nineteenth-Century Berlin* (Cambridge, 2004).

wrote in 1822 that the whole historical truth has not been told until the historian has climbed to the 'invisible idea' which 'reveals itself in every happening'. Historical events and facts are the 'necessary foundation and material of *Geschichte*, but do not on their own constitute *Geschichte*'¹¹⁶.

The bifurcation between morality and reason exposes the nucleus of Ranke's attitude to history. He located the moral-rational debate in the historical context of early sixteenth-century Germany because he believed the Reformation still had intellectual purchase on nineteenth-century German philosophical issues. It had enough purchase, in fact, to promote a great deal of overlap between nineteenth and sixteenth-century historical life of the individual and the state. The Reformation, because its essence was moral, connected humanity to God. In 1816-1817, while he was composing the 'Fragment', he reflected in his *Tagebuch* that historians cannot explain all historical events in entirely human terms. He implied that Hegel's notion of the transcendent self-consciousness of the rational perspective was not only philosophically impossible, but contradicted what reality suggested about the true relationship between human subjectivity and the real world. 'There has to be something that rules [the individual] from above, whatever one calls it, fate, Providence, God, just as historical events stand above him. Man does not produce these. He consciously or unconsciously contributes to them'¹¹⁷. We learn more about this from Ranke's disagreements with the Berlin historian Heinrich Leo, which centered on the problem of the context in which historical judgment was appropriate. In his *Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtsschreiber* (1824), Ranke interpreted

¹¹⁶ Wilhelm von Humboldt, 'Die Aufgabe des Geschichtsschreibers: Rede gehalten am 12. April 1821 in der preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften' (1822), in W von Humboldt, *Werke*, vol. 5, Andreas Flitner and Klaus Giel, eds. (Darmstadt, 1981) p. 362.

¹¹⁷ Ranke, 'Tagebücher', §245, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1, p. 234.

the 'a-moral' political beliefs Machiavelli expressed in the works he wrote after his fall from power in the context of the statesman's actual situation. Machiavelli's *Prince* lacked the objectivity and stability of the statesman's earlier writings because its author had become alienated from Florentine politics. Ranke faulted him for offering a conception of political power disconnected from the actual moral contingencies of Florentine politics. Machiavelli had lost his political power; his political writings therefore lacked immediacy. Leo took a different view and interpreted the doctrines as the beginning of a new historical-political epoch based on a universal political doctrine¹¹⁸.

Ranke's criticism centred on his conviction that the reality of the individual, unique and local – in Machiavelli's context, the actual political life of Florence – obliged the historian to remain focused on the historical material contained therein. That reality was God-given. In being true to context, one was true to God. Ranke therefore understood his contribution to historical knowledge also as a contribution to knowledge about God. He was not just an historian *and* a believer, he was an historian and *therefore* a believer, a believer and *therefore* an historian. He had claimed that the transcendent and the imminent had been joined before in world history¹¹⁹. The Reformation was unique, however, in that it was the origin of his own civilisation and his own subjective historical consciousness, and therefore the foundation of his historical works. For this reason, he found that history in general and the events and meaning of the Reformation, in particular, were inseparable. It is also why what the study of the Reformation told Ranke

¹¹⁸ Ranke, *Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtschreiber*, in Ranke, *Werke*, vol. 34; Heinrich Leo, review of Ranke in *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik* (1827); see also Ernst Simon, *Ranke und Hegel* (Munich, 1928), p. 101.

¹¹⁹ See the fragment 'Europa und Asien' (1823) in which Ranke alludes to the shift of world-historical power from Ancient Greece and Rome to civilisation north of the Alps. *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 3: *Frühe Schriften*, pp. 597-602.

about the nature of God and politics imbued his understanding of all history. ‘God lives and can be recognised in all history [*Geschichte*]; each blink of the eye preaches his name, but most of all, shows the coherence of history. He stands there like a holy hieroglyph, viewed from the outside. Wohlan! That we historians might unveil this holy hieroglyph! And thus we serve God, and thus are we made priests and believers’¹²⁰.

Already as a young man, Ranke was deeply concerned about how he could know that the past is real and that knowledge of the past is true. How he was to read that ‘hieroglyph’ became a central part of knowing how he was to bring his moral existence into line with the moral lessons of history, which to him were an expression of the existence and moral agency of God. In an outline of a sermon written in 1816 during his study of theology and history at Leipzig, he wrote that ‘truth is not that which is faithful to us in word and deed alone, [...] it is the innermost foundation and support of life. It encompasses all virtues and is the inner independence on which rests the everlasting essence of humanity’¹²¹. By studying the past, the historian could enlighten the present about how the historical search for truth in the sources encountered reveals the one constant, absolute truth of the transcendent divine. The search for that unity, however, was not simple. The sermon shows Ranke grappling with several ‘wondrous conflict[s]’ whose interrelation, rather than resolution, figured centrally in all his historical works. Between the late-1810s and mid-1840s, he pointed to such ‘conflicts’ in history between, for example, the spiritual and the intellectual, divine and worldly, and ‘inner’ and ‘outer’. He gave these interrelations historical meaning only when he could show how they function, and to what end, in historical context.

¹²⁰ As cited by Hermann Oncken, *Aus Rankes Frühzeit* (Gotha, 1922) pp. 4-5.

¹²¹ Ranke, [Entwurf einer Predigt (1816)], ‘Frühe Schriften’, p. 247.

One of Ranke's objectives through study of the past was to set out not only how the divine hieroglyph could be read, but how it *should* be read to preserve the 'immediacy' to God of the historical context by affirming the ethical content and nature of that relationship. The following section of this chapter discusses Ranke's understanding of the moral status of the historian as the revealer of God's presence in history. It will attempt to argue that Ranke's conception of the power of the divine, manifest in the forces of history which shape historical reality, can be read as a parable for his moral-religious obligation to gain a particular kind of historical knowledge. What that knowledge turned out to be allows us to reconstruct the moral-religious worldview he brought to the professional study of history in general, and particularly the Reformation and its religious-political impact. The final section builds on this by reading Ranke's conception of the Reformation as an argument for his moral commitment to building a cultural-political community founded upon and guided by that historical knowledge of God and its bearing on the German-Protestant community. It proposes, therefore, that Ranke's search for the historical-ethical foundations of the political interrelations of Protestant Germany and Europe prefigured his conception of the Reformation.

3.2 Protestant subjectivity and the moral-historical perspective

The American historian Charles A Beard asked the Italian historiographer Benedetto Croce in 1933 to comment on the present state of Western historiography. Croce's comments echoed Ranke almost to the word and suggest what this section

intends to draw out of Ranke's attitude to history. 'The nature of historical interpretation is closely linked with the nature of intellectual life and moral life, and is in a certain sense identical with these', Croce wrote. 'In its eternal essence, history is the story of the human mind and its ideals insofar as they express themselves in theories and works of art, in practical and moral actions. [...] It is the record of the human *ethos*, which I have chosen to designate as *ethico-politics* in order to make it clear that, as distinguished from mere political history, it has a life-germ in the moral consciousness...' ¹²².

Moral consciousness, in this sense, referred to the realm of understanding and action, the experience of development and decline, and hope and disappointment. For Ranke, morality and historical reality were related because the moral will of the individual not only carried history with it by connecting the past to the present via the human mind, but *was* the realm in which the human mind and the external history which informed it came together. Humanity carried with it the forms of its own existence and sought knowledge of where those forms came from, at which points in the history of human existence those forms changed, and where the source of the energy to bring about those changes lay. Ranke dealt with these questions over his entire career and they served the common purpose in his historical thought of leading to an understanding of the process of history itself. 'If not from moral energy', he asked in his *Deutsche Geschichte*, 'then from where does everything which has real life come?' ¹²³.

¹²² Benedetto Croce to Charles A Beard, Naples, 24 June 1933; Appendix to Beard, 'Written History as an Act of Faith', *The American Historical Review* 39, 2 (Jan 1934) pp. 219-231, here pp. 229-230.

¹²³ Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation*, Willy Andreas, ed., vol. 1, bk. 3 (Hamburg, 1957) p. 300; Sylvia Backs emphasises the moral foundation of Ranke's construction of the Reformation when she concludes that 'the reflection of the spirit onto itself' reveals its divine and free origins. 'In Spirit's turn back onto itself – the bringing of itself into self consciousness – Spirit completes an essentially free act, an act which is pure energy': Backs pays little attention to Ranke's conviction that it was impossible to arrive at a pure understanding of Spirit except within theological discourse. Historical

Through his focus on the moral underpinning of historical events, Ranke was able to show how the *Tendenzen* of his own civilisation hinted at the presence of the absolute, timeless divine and why the actual interrelation between the political and the divine was both historically and morally necessary. By showing the interrelated but conflicting processes of history - the *Wechselwirkungen* on which Jaroslav Pelikan placed so much weight¹²⁴ - Ranke could reveal why moral energies had been focused in Germany in the early sixteenth century and how the moral energies which had then been active continued to influence the historical existence of the institutions, cultures and morality of the present. Ranke's purpose was to identify the correct historical perspective by which to reveal what that interrelation meant to the human community. That pursuit made Ranke a *Gottsucher*, as Lothar Kettanacker has referred to him, who gained knowledge about God through the study of historical sources as they had become known to him. One consequence of this was that particular, contemporary truths about God which the sources revealed could also be read as faint glimpses of the timeless and the universal. That context, located outside of world history, was the only one appropriate to understanding why God's existence was true and historically necessary. Ranke's historiography thus mediated between the temporal and the timeless, the human and the transcendent. Possessing the right kind of knowledge and the right methods to acquire it, the divine idea at the nucleus of historical reality could become known to man given the right

discourse, in contrast, brought Spirit into a *Wechselwirkung* with contingent and constructed reality. Sylvia Backs, *Dialektisches Denken in Rankes Geschichtsschreibung bis 1854* (Cologne and Vienna, 1985) pp. 253-254.

¹²⁴ Jaroslav Pelikan, 'Leopold von Ranke as Historian of the Reformation', in Georg G Iggers and James M Powell, eds., *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline* (Syracuse, 1990) pp. 89-98.

methods. The historian could then dispense that knowledge to the human community as a form of ideological-cultural self-knowledge.

The problem with this, which becomes more apparent as one traces the development of Ranke's sense of moral obligation to reveal knowledge of the divine, is that Lutheran doctrine denied that man has access to that kind of knowledge. Humanity could do nothing save wait and believe; if knowledge came at all, it would be given, not found. Either Ranke misunderstood the basic Reformation doctrines of inherent sin and unconditional forgiveness through faith alone, which separated the divine from temporal, or he conceived of the Reformation from the perspective of nineteenth-century God-fearing historicism which guided his early studies into an imbalanced *Wechselwirkung* between blind faith in the existence of the *deus absconditus* and a cultural-historical moral obligation to decipher the intelligible historicity of God.

Neither *rein Evangelium* itself nor a biographical understanding of Luther the theologian satisfied the 'pre-conditions' of Ranke's conception of historical knowledge. Instead, he turned to Luther because he believed the reformer's philological work led to an understanding of humanity's relationship with God which could be both timeless and historical because it revealed the timeless and the historical in God. Luther never *intended* to force the events of the Reformation into historical existence. Rather, the political and social changes were outcomes which appeared in particular historical contexts, not further manifestations of the absolute moral standpoint which guided Luther. Ranke's preoccupation with the Wittenberg reformer centred on the external significance of his historical presence, through which Ranke sought further knowledge of divine agency in historical reality. He turned to study of the reformer's language to

understand the inner thought-process of the Reformation on its own terms, to which he would then contribute his own historical understanding to make Luther's thought 'present' in the nineteenth century. There is a profound similarity between Ranke and Luther's belief that a transcendent God rather than intelligible reason created the world and are the key to its historical understanding. Indeed two claims that Luther made in 1524 dominated Ranke's thought: first, that the language of God's word and promise of mercy is forever changing; and second, that the hand of God rather than reason determines the course of the world¹²⁵.

On the occasion of the celebration in 1867 of the fiftieth year of his doctoral dissertation, Ranke reflected that 'at my time at Leipzig, there was no study of history as I understand it. There was only one true study, and that was philology, to which I belonged and from which I began'¹²⁶. Deciphering Luther's historical meaning and showing the overlap between the events of the Reformation and their moral-spiritual meaning enabled Ranke to think about the Reformation in terms of a *Wechselwirkung* between its meta-historical, moral significance, and the bearing of that on the historical reality available to the historian. In 1816, Ranke excerpted some passages from one of Fichte's later works, *Das Wesen des Gelehrten* (1806). His selections show quite clearly how he used contemporary philosophical notions to come to his his own conception of historical understanding. 'The idea of God lies at the foundation of all life appearances; a

¹²⁵ Luther, 'An die RATHERREN aller Staste deutsches Lands, da sie christliche Schulen aufrichten und halten sollen' (1524), WA vol. 15 (1899) p. 32: 'Gotties wort und gnade ist ein farender platz regen, der night wider kompt, wo er eyn mal gewesen ist [...] Und yhr deutschen durfft nicht denken, das yhr yhn ewig haben werdet, Denn der undanck mit verachtung wird yhn nucht lassen bleyben'; Luther, 'Der 127 Psalm ausgelegt an die Christen zu Riga und Liefland' (1524), WA vol. 15 (1899) p. 373: 'Das man wol mag seyn, der welt laufft und sonderlich seyner heyiligen wesen sey Gottes mummerey, darunter er sich verbirgt und ynn der welt so wunderlich regirt und rhumort'. As cited in Reinhart Koselleck, 'Geschichte, Historie', *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart, 1975) pp. 631-632.

¹²⁶ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*

certain part of that idea can be known. To know that and to expand upon that knowledge is the task of the educated. [...] The root of human existence lies in God. This consciousness is to be expanded upon and preserved'¹²⁷. By the early 1830s, Ranke had made the 'Fichtean' perspective his own. 'One of the greatest tasks [of the historian], would be to penetrate the terms of existence, as they are known to us, to the core of their spirituality and to juxtapose their spiritual elements'¹²⁸.

In fact, Ranke 'found' those elements already juxtaposed in the historical situation of pre-Reformation Europe, for the changes brought about by the Reformation had their origin in a Church and Empire which had lost their unity of purpose. It became possible to conceive of 'German history' among other histories and of the Reformation within German history. Already in the opening paragraph of his *Deutsche Geschichte* he made the fragmentation of Europe's former unity a central theme. 'The time was long passed in which an all-powerful will led our general concerns, yet neither had political life retreated into the individual lands of Europe'. After consulting *political* archives in Frankfurt a.M., Dresden, Berlin, Weimar, and Dessau Ranke felt prepared to complete what he had merely hinted at in *Die römische Päpste*: the origin and progress of the Reformation. 'Over the state of affairs which prepared the religious-political movement of that time, the moment of our national life through which it was promoted, the origin and workings of the resistance it faced, yielded teachings to me with every step. One cannot approach

¹²⁷ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Das Wesen des Gelehrten* (1806), as cited by Ranke, *Tagebücher*, pp 493-494.

¹²⁸ Ranke, [Durchdringung der vorhandenen Existenzen, §252 (early 1830s)] *Aus Tagebücher*, p. 238.

events of such intensive spiritual-intellectual [*geistigen*] contents and world-dominant meaning without being seized through and through'¹²⁹.

The 'spiritual contents' of the Reformation grabbed Ranke in a rather different way than they had Hegel. Ranke, sixteen years Hegel's junior, was born in the Thüringian village of Wiehe an der Unstrut. Geographically, Ranke's home lay at the heart of the territory of the German Reformation. In an out-dated *völkisch* sense, it could be said that its blood and history coursed in his veins. The temporal, geographical, and religious differences from Hegel's childhood environment in Altwürttemberg, together with a communal identity based on Reformation-era traditions of humanistic pedagogy practiced at *gymnasia* and universities founded at that time, highlight basic differences in Ranke and Hegel's cultural worlds. Hegel used humanism to enlighten the present and allow the community defined thereby to be synthesized with and then transcend its past; Ranke's employed humanism to uphold the traditions and anchor the present where it already was. His deepest political allegiances and cultural sentiments lay with Saxony and Thuringia, not Prussia; following the wars of liberation, the latter encroached in much the same way as the Napoleonic armies had on the independence of locality. Ranke and his three brothers were educated at the cloister school Donndorf and the Saxon humanistic *Gymnasium* Schulpforte which enjoyed the patronage of the Saxon court. The court was historically significant not least of all because of the support and protection it offered to Luther in the early 1520s when Charles V first detected the political implications of the reformer's theological claims. Be it the encompassing school walls, the insular village up-bringing, traditional familial respect for the theological profession,

¹²⁹ Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte*, Andreas, ed., vol. 1, pp. 1-2.

or the arguably more formative experience of demonstrating through word and deed his unconditional respect and allegiance to a school and its teachers whom Walther Peter Fuchs characterised as ‘stalwart [*gravitatische*] originals of the eighteenth century’, Ranke sought to maintain the stable world of his upbringing before he had come to represent that world¹³⁰.

Ranke’s childhood environment was minimally exposed to the impact of the French Revolution and remained cloistered from the brunt of its more lasting influences: he would later blame the Revolution for inspiring the dangerous struggles for *Volkssouveränität*. But during his school and university days, the Revolution occurred at a distance, save the advance and retreat of the Napoleonic armies and its indirect consequence of causing politically-minded persons to admit the paradoxical nature of their attitude to the French conqueror. Ranke ruminated to himself in his journals over this paradox as early as 1813. One must remember, paraphrasing Ranke, that all those who now castigate Napoleon as the traitor of the people had earlier heralded him as a wonder¹³¹. But the current wonder, for Ranke, was the Saxon King Friedrich August who, upon his return from French imprisonment for Saxony’s support of the wars of liberation before the French had been defeated, the young man extolled as ‘the returning father’ who had ‘shown patience like Christ’ and ‘endured like a man’. ‘The lost Brotherland, the loud opinions of the army, the outfitting for new battles, the tension with Prussia, the hindsight into a fleetingly happy time, the state of Germany and the

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, Willy Andreas, ‘Einleitung: Der Junge Ranke’, p. 15.

¹³¹ Ranke, [Napoleon § 285], *Tagebücher*, p. 257.

Fatherland and apprehension about an unpleasant future: all this brought forth an opaqueness in the mores of the Land. But love of the King prevailed'¹³².

Recognising the differences between Ranke and Hegel's early years is essential, but not mono-causal, in understanding how their experiences of Prussian civil service – which overlapped, for almost seven years, in the Schinkel-designed university building on *Unter den Linden* – could have followed such divergent intellectual courses. For what these men brought to their understanding of history emerged from two dissimilar, almost foreign corners of the labyrinthine but omnipresent political and cultural structures of the Holy Roman Empire. Ranke was born neither into the Revolution's pan-European promise nor the perils that it posed but into the German lands' *reaction* to the political, philosophical and cultural assertions the Revolution had come to mean to the Germany's cultural leaders. The Napoleonic occupation signified the failure of 'Germany' to live up to what it was believed its history had promised.

Ranke therefore grew up in vastly different cultural circumstances than those which Hegel had experienced in the compact but increasingly centripetal world of the Württemberg *Bildungsbürgertum*. The communal structures in which Ranke was raised did not undergo the conscious transformation which Prince Eugen brought about when he took steps to make Württemberg's educational institutions some of the German lands' most progressive centres of theology and philosophy. From the intellectual world in which Hegel was formed, the latter maintained that the realm of human experience was intelligible through reason and the universal-historical meaning of the German religious and political community could intervene into its own actual historical development to

¹³² *Ibid.*, [Zur Rückkehr König Friedrich Augusts von Sachsen aus der Gefangenschaft §288] *Tagebücher*, pp. 259-261.

alter its course to fulfill the a-priori historical objectives inherent in the meaning of history. The swift, vast and sometimes discordant political changes going on around it imbued Hegel's education. Ranke's *Ausbildung*, by contrast, shielded him behind the literary-aesthetic study of classical and contemporary German literature. His early writings are at times ponderous, internally contradictory, and lacking in the clear authorial voice he envied in other writers. The historical novels of Walter Scott, for example, taught Ranke much about emplotment and narration. But he could reconcile himself with neither the inherent fictiveness of the 'historical' story nor Scott's willingness to write as though his 'histories' were true. 'By comparing [Scott with true history] I convinced myself that historical traditions are themselves more beautiful and in any case more interesting than *romantische* fiction. I resolved in my own work to avoid everything concocted and to hold myself firmly to the facts'¹³³.

Even if, by the time Ranke began writing his *Die römische Päpste* and *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation*, it had become implausible that he had read all the primary sources he claimed in the prefaces and introductions to have consulted, relying instead on a broad swathe of secondary literature – a point A G Dickens argued persuasively¹³⁴ -, he abided by the intention and worked from the premise that the sources he used to build his argument consisted of pure and true historical knowledge. The difference from Scott was both material, in terms of the veracity of the narrative's historical content, and moral, because the pursuit of true historical knowledge was also the search for evidence for God's existence. As the revealer of historical truth, Ranke's narrative bore the weight of an entirely different kind of moral obligation. His objection

¹³³ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53/54, p. 61, as cited in Walter Nalbandian, *Ranke's Bildungsjahre und Geschichtsauffassung* (Leipzig, 1901) pp. 12-13.

¹³⁴ A G Dickens, *Ranke as Reformation Historian*, The Stanton Lecture, 1979 (Reading, 1980).

to Scott thus hinged on his convictions about the historian's ethical stance toward the sources and their meaning. Knowing disavowal of the historical truth distanced man further from God. The literary writer was ultimately a hedonist¹³⁵.

Scott's literary flourish offended Ranke's moral obligations to the Lutheran historical-scriptural hermeneutical tradition which he saw himself upholding. He believed that the Reformation first expressed that morality in a form intelligible to humanity. He was beholden to further refine the meaning of that historical ethos and had come to this conclusion by the end of his student years, and therefore well before he had developed anything close to what then counted as a 'professional' attitude to history. 'It is a lie', he wrote in his 1817 *Lutherfragment*, 'when one says that the Reformation merely paid homage to reason, or that reason was its principle. It was much more about morality'¹³⁶. For man's relationship to God defined morality because it itself was the truest and most fundamental quality of human existence. Belief was the nucleus of human existence, the only way to know God, and through God, the only way to gain self knowledge. On this, he cited Luther: 'Belief is the creator of the deity; through belief, God creates the deity within us'¹³⁷. This stance underpinned all of Ranke's writings and is one of the main reasons why he saw the Lutheran Reformation as *the* turning point in the history of creation. It revealed to humanity the basic moral-religious essence of its existence and cleared the way for a new kind of human self-understanding.

¹³⁵ Ranke eulogized on this theme on the event of the early death of Charlotte Sophie Stieglitz (1806 – Dec 1834): 'The idea: the writing of poetry spoils the soul. It has no business [...] with he who brings that general happiness – which is God – into view; not a trace of religion coming into consciousness: only a completely personal happiness'. [Charlotte Stieglitz, January, 1835] *Tagebücher*, p. 178.

¹³⁶ Ranke, 'Lutherfragment', *Frühe Schriften*, vol. 3, p. 395.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 367; Luther, *Weimar-Ausgabe*, vol. 40, I, p. 360.

The central problem for Ranke as an *historian* of the Reformation was how to interpret its meaning in a way that reflected and upheld the moral obligations which the events of the Reformation had laid down. By the early nineteenth-century, this was an historicized understanding which regarded the moral-religious dimension of human existence as the truest, most immediate link between man and God. From this Ranke concluded that God must be present in man, and that this conclusion was a matter for belief from which further historical understanding could be drawn. ‘One believes in humanity, for in humanity is the manifestation of God. The truth which another [*ein anderer*] espouses grips us all the deeper, the more original it was in itself. It speaks to us like love. That is our conviction’¹³⁸. Those beliefs entailed further convictions about the existence and presence of God in it and the intelligibility of the intermediary pathways connecting them. Those connections occurred above all through the linguistic conveyance of the meaning of the interrelations between humanity and the divine. ‘For the actual-human [*das Eigentlich-Menschliche*] lies in language’, Ranke wrote in 1882, unknowingly presaging one of *the* fields of subsequent intellectual debate. ‘Language is not only a system of articulate noises, but manifests certain laws which are inherent to humanity. The power of those laws is such that each *Volk* develops its own manner of language which others can learn and thereby understand each other. A certain spirit thus goes through all nations, as Wilhelm von Humboldt once said. But more: the spiritual movement of language is thus an inestimable treasure for the formation of philosophical and religious concepts. To become conscious of these: that is the goal of all philosophy; to maintain the divine within consciousness, that is the goal of religion’¹³⁹.

¹³⁸ Ranke, [Der Mensch als Manifestation Gottes; 1830s, §163] *Tagebücher*, p. 154.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, [Phantasie; 9 November, 1882] §120, p. 135.

Certain beliefs about the historical nature of the human community thus linked man to God. Their expression, unique to each cultural-linguistic 'nation', revealed the working of divine spirituality within the realm of human consciousness. Ranke was deeply concerned about acquiring the correct form of linguistic expression and representation of both objective and spiritual reality. That representation, he believed, was the only way to understand the truth of God, and therefore the truth of history and human existence. The correct historical expression in language allowed the correct moral expression in life. He mastered this moral-religious authorial voice once he had decided that the *métier* of historical writing would enable him to weld his subjective search for the living God, a concept he deduced largely from reading Luther, to the real substance of historical events and changes arising from the collision of the *Tendenzen* of nations, persons, languages, and cultures. 'History is not a balanced, quiet development, but an incessant struggle between the powers which inhabit the world. Opposition is the essential characteristic. Roman and Germanic, Islamic and Christian, Papal and Imperial, Protestant and Catholic, revolutionary and conservative tendencies all struggle against one another. But even in struggle, they belong together and are inseparably connected'¹⁴⁰.

This tension between these historical forces and the changes to which their outcomes led provided the literary element necessary for the narration of the 'actual', historical evidence for the reality and intelligibility of human and divine existence. The authorial perspective Ranke achieved through history stood above these struggles and enabled the narrator to oversee their interaction and connect himself to their pure, moral-religious foundation. Throughout the years leading up to the mid 1840s, Ranke's

¹⁴⁰ Ranke, *Vorlesungseinleitungen, Aus Werk und Nachlass* (1867 – 1868) Volker Dotterweich and Walther Peter Fuchs, eds., vol. 4 (Munich and Vienna, 1975), p. 414.

preoccupation with adducing the moral significance of the history of the Reformation can be interpreted as the external expression of the same process he underwent within his own life as he reflected on the nature of history generally. Between 1817 and 1839, he reworked his conception of Luther and began to understand him as subject to, not historical agent of, the battering, conflicting, 'fermenting' powers of history 'at the time of the Reformation'. The reformer remained steadfast in his moral convictions rooted outside of history; he, like Ranke's childhood hero Friedrich August of Saxony, suffered the consequences of his principles and emerged from the trials morally and historically vindicated.

Like a prophet, Luther was connected to both the divine and the human. The moral-religious significance of the reformer's stance acquired historical significance only when the historian sought to understand Luther by inhabiting subjective consciousness. Luther taught Ranke the absolute meaning of moral-religious belief; Ranke sought to teach his contemporaries why that absolute meaning was inherent to human subjectivity at the present and why the ultimate significance of history was therefore moral-religious in nature. From that point of view, politics resulted from acts of human historical agency based on more immaterial moral-religious precepts. This view shows up in Ranke's portrayal of Luther's summons by Charles V to the Diet of Worms in 1520, the defining moment when the reformer was forced to account for his doctrinal rebellion against the Reich and Church. Had Luther's first intentions been political, 'the unity of the nation would have been fortified and consciousness of the same would have been reached through the common struggle against the worldly power of Rome. The outcome, however, is [different]: the power of the spirit would have been broken had he been

bound by not thoroughly religious considerations. He proceeded not from the needs of the nation but from religious convictions without which he would and could have achieved nothing. The eternal free spirit moves itself in its own pathways'¹⁴¹.

But the problem was that within the *Wechselwirkung* of the spiritual and political forces at work in the Reformation, the 'eternal free spirit' was in fact never free from the complexities of reality in the sense of knowing the past *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. Ranke placed great weight on the purity of Luther's historical stance: he sought nothing but to return to the true essence of the Church and to show how that was theologically necessary. He sought to show why that re-form was spiritually and historically necessary, but he also had to show that the necessity of that change was played out in ways which were antithetical to Luther's spiritual purpose. One consequence of these 'unintended' outcomes was that Ranke sided with Luther's spiritual *Voraussetzung* and reacted defensively when the historical reality of the Reformation undermined that subjective identification. Ranke portrayed the tension in terms of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms¹⁴².

The separation of the spiritual authority of God from the temporal authority of man had both spiritual and political implications¹⁴³. Subjectively, and in terms of the

¹⁴¹ Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte* vol. 1, p. 218.

¹⁴² Luther, *Zwei-Reichen Lehre*; A dominant historiographical trend since the mid-1960s has understood Luther's doctrines of reform as the culmination of efforts to separate the temporal and spiritual powers of the Church beginning with reaction to the Great Schism of 1378, the development of the conciliar movement which paralleled European rulers' challenge to the political authority of Rome, and the resistance put forward by the Waldensians, Wycliffites, and Hussites. See Berndt Moeller, 'Frommigkeit in Deutschland um 1500', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 56 (1965) pp. 3-31; *idem.*, *Spätmittelalter*, in K Schmidt and E Wolf, eds., *Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte: Ein Handbuch* (Göttingen, 1966). But the interpretation fails to account for the development of Luther's religious understanding itself and what he took to be the inherent theological deficiencies of the Church no matter how far its practices had been corrupted.

¹⁴³ See Heinz-Horst Schrey, ed., *Reich Gottes und Welt. Die Lehre Luthers von den Zwei Reichen* (Darmstadt, 1969); Francis Oakley, 'Christian Obedience and Authority, 1520-1550', in J H Burns, ed., *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1991) pp.159-192.

spiritual content of historical thought, the doctrine voiced Ranke's own beliefs about history's purpose as the search for the 'divine hieroglyph' and the intelligibility of the *deus absconditus* through historical particulars rather than the revelation of the divine itself. It also helps explain the danger he sensed in Thomas Müntzer's attempt to create the kingdom of God on earth among his followers through the experience of inner revelation. Lutheranism ascribed powers to worldly magistrates, and in its recognition of the independence of secular authority lay the essence of Lutheran spirituality. The Anabaptist doctrines made no such distinction¹⁴⁴. This points to the similarities between Luther's stance within the Reformation and the criteria for historical judgment Ranke might have inherited from him¹⁴⁵. In Luther's shadow, Ranke distinguished between the reformers who were led by religious convictions within the rule of established political order, such as Luther, and those who were not¹⁴⁶.

More often than not, the latter group failed to measure up to Luther's moral standpoint which for Ranke defined the historical essence of what Luther contributed to the Reformation. Those other reformers who challenged Luther committed above all a moral offense against the spiritual order which resulted from Luther's doctrines. Ranke condemned the *Bauernkrieg* of 1523-1524 because it actively destroyed the moral and political order without which Luther's movement would have been snuffed out well before its doctrines had been written and its political status had been assured by the religious conversion of several key ruling powers. Indeed Luther's conception of

¹⁴⁴ Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte*, vol. 2, p. 104.

¹⁴⁵ On Luther's understanding of history, see Ernst Schäfer, *Luther als Kirchenhistoriker: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Wissenschaft* (Gütersloh, 1897).

¹⁴⁶ Ernst Troeltsch reformulated the Rankean position into a sociological typology when he distinguished between 'sects' and 'churches'; sects assert the subjective holiness of their elect and define membership by the exclusivity of the group; churches, on the other hand, assume the universality of its doctrine and its potential meaning to all humans. See Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, O Wyon, trans., 2 vols., (New York, 1960).

theological reform was predicated upon the existence of social and political structures which pre-dated the historical impact of his doctrines. He did not intend to upset the balance of politics, but rather to question specious theological justification of those structures which, within the papacy and the Reich, had deteriorated into abuses of theological right¹⁴⁷. From the perspective of the late-mediaeval papacy Ranke developed in his *Die römische Päpste*, 'Luther disappeared from the world stage in the blink of an eye' once he had begun to speak out against papal abuses. 'A new political development had begun [...] which the Pope could still hope to use'¹⁴⁸.

The so-called 'popular Reformation' Ranke took to be no less an abuse of the power which Luther's doctrinal critiques afforded. Ranke described the peasants' revolt as a threat to both the 'existence of ruling powers' and an offence to a broader conception of historical reality which the existence of stable political relations ensured: 'struggles over state governance' were tolerable and posed no danger only if the 'foundation of the general convictions remained unshaken'¹⁴⁹. In the context of the Reformation, Luther stood outside those political processes: he 'damned the revolt which ran counter to divine and evangelical right, the two kingdoms worldly and spiritual, and threatened the German nation with ruin'; 'The movement threatened the German essence[...] All its plans for the establishment of a new Reich from the bottom up, or the zealous reorganization of the world under the leadership of a fanatical prophet, were now and forever past'¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁷ See Otto Brunner, 'Vom Gottesgnadentum zum monarchischen Prinzip. Der Weg der europäischen Monarchie seit dem Hohen Mittelalter', in H H Hofmann, ed., *Die Entstehung des modernen souveränen Staates* (Cologne and Berlin, 1967) pp. 115-136; W Schulze, *Bäuerlicher Widerstand und feudale Herrschaft in der frühen Neuzeit* (Stuttgart, 1980); G Oestreich, *Geist und Gestalt des frühmodernen Staates* (Berlin, 1965).

¹⁴⁸ Ranke, *Die römischen Päpste, ihre Kirche und ihr Staat im sechzehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhundert*, 3 vols., (Berlin, 1838-1839) vol. 1, pp. 88-89.

¹⁴⁹ Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte.*, vol. 1, p. 303.

¹⁵⁰ Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte*, vol. 1, pp. 318, 323.

It is revealing of the interdependence of Ranke's contemporary ideological stance embodied in his 'objective' conception of historical reality that he condemned the popular Reformation for destabilizing the Lutheran movement's close alliance with divine will. The material demands of the peasants and their leaders detracted from the essence of the historical moment, for Ranke had made clear in the preface to the *Deutsche Geschichte* that his understanding of the history of the epoch would condone only those 'religious-political influences in which the life-work of the German nation was driven at its most powerful and productive'¹⁵¹. He could tolerate the masses only when they lacked historical agency and were subsumed into thick discourse about the historical-moral status of man before God¹⁵². Their age-old demands for everything from broader rights for gathering firewood – Ranke did not criticise the peasants' for their wish to subsist - to the abolition of de-facto serfdom on the 'spiritual-reformatory grounds that Christ had saved all believers', were given fullest expression in the Twelve Articles of 1525. '[Their] characteristic', Ranke wrote, 'is a blend of spiritual and worldly demands, and the derivation of the first from the second, which above all contradicted Luther's pure reform tendencies'¹⁵³.

Ranke was equally circumspect about the Swiss reformer Huldreich Zwingli whom he compared with Luther to illustrate why Luther's historical significance defined the

¹⁵¹ Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte*, vol. 1, p. 6.

¹⁵² The ideological-historical bifurcation which would retained its political *Aktualität* in European historiography until 1989 is already evident in Ranke's skepticism of the tendency of the 'popular Reformation' to contrive the historical necessity of material change on account of transcendent spiritual principles of Reformation doctrines. The Hegelian-influenced historian Wilhelm Zimmerman published in 1841-1843 a three-volume history of Thomas Müntzer (based on research conducted by G T Stroebel in 1795); Friedrich Engels, in turn, published in 1850 in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (formerly edited by Karl Marx) an article on the Peasant's Revolt. So far as I have been able to discern, Ranke's *Nachlässe* make no mention of Engels anywhere.

¹⁵³ Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte*, vol. 1, pp. 309-310.

true meaning of the ‘reformatorisches Prinzip’¹⁵⁴. Because Luther had so fully believed in the universality of Christian teachings, the inevitability of his separation from the institution which manifest them pained him and caused him to fault himself for the unintended consequences of his initial dogmatic critique. Zwingli, Ranke wrote, never put himself in the spiritual position where he would have withstood storms as fierce as those which ‘battered the deepest depths of Luther’s soul’. Those traumas, the reader is meant to conclude, were Luther’s confrontation of the problem of salvation and belief which entailed a critique of the institution of the Church and the status before God of the Christian believer. That critique was at once universal and particular: universal, because it questioned the theological legitimacy of the changes undergone over fifteen-hundred years in the temporal and spiritual power of the Church; and particular, for in addressing the universal matter he had turned to the Scriptures to recover a pure understanding of their meaning. This forced him to confront the status of the individual before God. Because humanity was both spiritual before God and natural unto itself, Luther’s theological conclusions about the chances for salvation had to take into account the context in which human life is lived out. This is where a political theology becomes evident in Luther’s critique.

Zwingli, rather differently, was made a reformer through a humanistic, truth-seeking study of Scripture and reflection on his experience that everyday life seemed to contradict its teachings. He was able to break from the Church with relative ease, Ranke surmised, because his spiritual commitment to it had been more practical than Luther’s and because he envisaged an ‘improvement in the teachings’ which directed towards an

¹⁵⁴ On Zwingli see especially Bruce Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation* (Manchester, 2002) and Thomas A Brady Jr., *Turning Swiss: Cities and Empire 1450-1550* (Cambridge, 1985).

‘improvement in life: his initial point of view was moral-political in nature’¹⁵⁵. Luther remained with the Church; he wanted merely to purify its doctrine without contradicting Scripture whereas Zwingli strove to bring about a total transformation¹⁵⁶. Of the two, Luther was ultimately the spiritually purer – in Ranke’s sense of embodying the ‘reformatorisches Prinzip’ - for he began with the initial intention of strengthening the Church through uncovering and returning to its true essence, but had the historical effect of creating an entirely different conception of the relationship of man to God and man to man, which the resulting spiritual conception of history vindicated on account of its moral necessity. Luther, in more famous words, could not do otherwise, for he was subject to the interrelation of historical forces over which he exercised no control.

Neither, in terms of Ranke’s interpretation of Luther’s contemporaries’ political-material objectives, was he even conscious of these more subtle, many-pronged forces. For all the emphasis Ranke placed on the doctrine of objective, context-relative source criticism, his understanding of the Reformation was ultimately retrospective; he read his cultural and political standpoint into his sources. For this reason he placed such overwhelming significance on Luther, Lutheranism, and the Lutheran Reformation rather than the multiplicity of *reformations* which historians since the late nineteenth century have more clearly discerned. He prefigured historical continuity between the Reformation and his own time by constructing a narrative which provided cultural self-knowledge to the generation of Prussian reformers, the political order they created in the 1820s and 30s, and its fulfillment in the coronation of Friedrich Wilhelm IV in 1840. The context in which Luther’s theological standpoint had its impact brought about a ‘total

¹⁵⁵ Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte*, vol. 1, pp. 471-472.

¹⁵⁶ Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte*, vol. 1, p. 478.

transformation' of considerably greater historical significance to Ranke's experiences in Prussian intellectual, social, and political life than the impact of Zwingli or the peasants. Especially appealing to Ranke was Luther's absolute standpoint on the unassailability of scriptural teachings, once their truth had been recovered from ecclesiastical error, and the epistemological implications that process had on the nature of historical knowledge itself. To this extent, Ranke sought to uncover the Reformation on whose spiritual-intellectual paradigm his historical consciousness was based and for whose 'ethico-political' objectives he believed he contributed, thereby demonstrating why the historical necessity of the Reformation continued unabated to the present. For Luther's absolute spiritual standpoint had been absorbed by an entire national culture and evolved over time into a narrative of cultural change which by the 1830s, to Ranke's mind, had reacquired the actual means to recover the absolute position. The difference between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, was that the absolute standpoint had shifted from Luther's spiritual understanding of Scripture to an historical understanding of a cultural politics and a political order based on the argument that the political effects of the Reformation, which Luther had 'caused' but of which he was not aware, had become the foundation of historical consciousness in the early nineteenth century.

3.3 History and the 'ethico-political consciousness': realization of the Reformation's political potential

Ranke expressed his moral-spiritual construction of the Reformation in the context of the restoration and consolidation of the political power of the Hohenzollern

regime. He believed that Prussia's cultural and political mission after the disturbance of the French Revolution was to complete the Lutheran Reformation by reasserting the purity of Luther's vision of the immediacy of the realm of human historical experience to an immanent, extra-historical sense of being¹⁵⁷. The medium which could best express this recovered spirituality to contemporary society was the actual political order as understood through historical consciousness of the spiritual and political nature of human existence. The Hohenzollern regime did not simply recover its right to rule Prussia by envisaging itself as the heir of the Reformation. By the fact of its rule, it expressed in contemporary language why it was the *necessary* heir and why history showed just that in the real political terms within Europe and the German Confederation. The essential structure of political authority was furnished by the Lutheran interpretation of the interrelation between the transcendent deity and the Christ figure who mediates between the absolute and the contingent, the state's point of connection to the Christian teleology. But Luther had only hinted at that structure in his writings. To make the Lutheran inheritance politically useful, the connection between past and present had to be constructed and shown on the terms of the present to be historically realistic.

Ranke had been 'doing' history, in the sense of 'recovering' past truths and showing their connection to the present according to a pre-conceived methodology, well before he recognized this as a discipline as such in the early 1830s. As history emerged for him from theology, philosophy, and philology, a search for realism became its

¹⁵⁷ Several recent monographs on the theoretical content of Ranke's historical thought often overlook the fact that for Ranke, theory without reference to specific historical context was unhistorical and meaningless: Sylvia Backs, *Dialektisches Denken in Ranke's Geschichtsschreibung bis 1854* (Cologne, 1985); Siegfried Baur, *Versuch über die Historik des jungen Ranke* (Berlin, 1998); Michael-Joachim Zemlin, *Geschichte zwischen Theorie und Theoria: Untersuchungen zur Geschichtsphilosophie Rankes* (Würzburg, 1988).

defining characteristic and the utility of that realism to political ends its predominant purpose. In his later university days in 1816-1817 he worked from the proposition that Luther's theological arguments were not at the time of their first expression a doctrine of statecraft nor a foundation for historical understanding. Rather, they were a means to learn the foundations of the 'new German written language' and to make that language his own¹⁵⁸. This gave the young historian the form of the argument. He drew its content from what he took to be the reality of contemporary historical existence and the objective difference of Germany's place in history in comparison with the other European nations. Ranke's development as an historian of these spiritual-political interrelations mirrored his construction of the historical development of the Reformation. That construction narrated the evolution of Luther's absolute spiritual standpoint, 'untainted' by political interest, to the cultural-political outcome of that standpoint in the present which retained the 'purity' of Luther's original position but transformed it into a shared political and cultural ideology expressed through historical narrative. In his understanding of Luther, Ranke offered a contextually relative interpretation of the reformer insofar as he did not 'fault' Luther for having not 'foreseen' the political significance the Reformation would later acquire¹⁵⁹. Ranke viewed Luther's intentions as having been primarily theological in

¹⁵⁸ See Walther Peter Fuchs's 'Introduction' to Ranke's *Lutherfragment*, in: *Frühe Schriften: Aus Werk und Nachlass* vol. 3, pp. 331-333.

¹⁵⁹ In the kind of category error which Quentin Skinner first cautioned against in 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas' [*History and Theory* 8 (1969)], Michael Basse suggests that 'typical of Luther's way of thinking is that it lacks a general statement about *Geschichte*'. Basse later approaches the Rankean position when he shifts his focus from the supposed inadequacy of Luther's concept of history and notes instead that his concept grew out of the negotiation between concrete events, themes, and problems – the history of Luther's own person – , which were always at the centre of his theology'. Michael Basse, *Luthers Geschichtsverständnis* pp. 47-48; see also Wolfgang Reinhardt, 'Martin Luther und der Ursprung der historischen Geschichtswissenschaft in Deutschland', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, Sonderband: *Die Reformation in Deutschland und Europa: Interpretationen und Debatten* (Heidelberg, 1993) pp. 371-409; Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther: eine Einführung in sein Leben und sein Werk* (Munich, 1981) p. 198; Martin Schmidt, 'Luthers Schau der Geschichte', *Lutherjahrbuch* 30 (1963) pp. 17-69; Hans

nature and having maintained a basic distinction between divine and temporal authority, which became, in turn, his historicized view of the reformer's historical significance. What followed from Luther's historical meaning was related *indirectly* to the present through a more complex web of interrelations which developed after the Reformation but on which Luther himself exercised no agency. These developments, to Ranke's mind, upheld Luther's original distinction and proved the ideological validity of the Reformation's historical meaning as it had evolved into its present ethico-political state. As far as a ruling doctrine was concerned, the future of the historical Reformation justified the separation between politics and spirituality.

Ranke's ideas about the pure spiritual content of the Reformation were not universally shared. As John E Toews has suggested, Ranke, in the 1830s, differed with Friedrich Wilhelm IV's *religious* vision of restoring a Protestant faith based on a 'radically transcendent God' to authenticate the political structure of restoration Germany¹⁶⁰. The basis of Ranke's view was his belief that the historical work of the Reformation was to have drawn the distinction between spirit and politics and to have shown how it was morally and intellectually incumbent on the present to preserve the original idea of the Reformation. That idea took ideological form as a doctrine of spiritual emancipation of the German people before God and through the state, for only after 1815 had it become historically plausible to conceive of their political liberation. 'It is the spirit of Christianity', Ranke wrote in 1817 in a short entry in his personal journal, 'that it cannot found a state. The material thing [*Einrichtung*] is not Christian, but the spirit of the mind [*Gemüter*] is: and that resides in the *Volk*'. But 'it was the spirit of the German

Camphausen, 'Reformatorisches Selbstbewußtsein und reformatorisches Geschichtsbewußtsein bei Luther 1517-1522', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 37 (1940) pp. 128-150.

¹⁶⁰ Toews, *Becoming Historical*, p. 390.

people', he continued, 'to regard the church and the state as identical, to draw no distinction between spiritual and temporal power. This is how it was when the people were pagans, and so it was in principle on the eve of the Reformation'¹⁶¹.

His thoughts on the separation of the political and the spiritual and his conservative view on the slowness of change conflicted with one of his generation's most formative and historically symbolic experiences. For the hundreds of young men, many of whom were Ranke's contemporaries, who gathered at the Wartburg to commemorate the third centenary of Luther's posting of the Ninety-Five theses, the several days and nights of revelry at the end of October 1817 were seen as a reenactment of the beginning of the Reformation. The youth reacted against the conservative mood of the Restoration by celebrating youth itself through a concept of Protestant-German collective identity which associated German political fragmentation with the interests of a generation whose time had passed. This younger generation, whose ideals received their fullest expression in the political stance of the *Burschenschaften*, espoused liberal and progressive notions of national unification which were first envisaged during the French occupation. The student associations were composed of the politically-motivated sons of Germany's Protestant *Bildungsbürgertum*. For them, the promise of a common national future for Germany went hand in hand with the restructuring of the university as an expression of national cohesion through a reading of the humanities, and particularly history and literature, which emphasized the progress of the German Volk towards a common political identity embedded within a new bureaucratic structure¹⁶². To this end, they

¹⁶¹ Ranke, [Kirche und Staat, 1816-1817] *Tagebücher*, p. 262.

¹⁶² See Reinhart Koselleck's classic study of Prussian bureaucratic reform in his *Preußen zwischen Reform und Revolution* (Stuttgart, 1983); Wolfgang Hardtwig, *Vormärz* (Munich, 1985); Werner Conze, ed., *Staat und Gesellschaft im deutschen Vormärz, 1815-1848* (Stuttgart, 1970); Dieter Langewiesche,

celebrated the Reformation in song, poetry, and prose, and looked to the early sixteenth century as an expression of the pure German spirit which won a new ideological expression through their vision of the post-Revolution Protestant nation¹⁶³.

Ranke shared with the *Burschen* the belief that following 1813, Germany had suddenly become able to release its spiritual potential and direct that energy towards the development of a contemporary political identity based on the historical continuity of political institutions, a common ethnicity, and a consciousness of the active spirituality expressed by historical reality. What this liberation meant to Ranke in 1817 was less a rupture with the past than the world-historical opportunity to return to a purer form of the spiritual foundation of German nationality based on the historical, ethnic nation. Between 1817 and the early 1840s when he synthesized his views on the Reformation into a political-spiritual understanding of the context in which the Reformation occurred, Ranke politicized his conception of the Reformation to reflect the ideological commitments he had acquired over the course of his professional development¹⁶⁴. While Ranke in the late 1810s was obviously moved by the patriotic charisma of Jahn, the ‘father’ of the *Burschenschaft* movement, he sublimated that excitement into study of the historical

‘Reich, Nation und Staat in der jüngeren deutschen Geschichte’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 254 (1992) pp. 341-381; E E Kraehe, *The Metternich Controversy* (New York, 1971)

¹⁶³ On the political dimension of the Wartburgfest and its place in German student culture, see especially Konrad H Jarausch, ‘The Sources of German Student Unrest, 1815-1848’, in: L. Stone, ed., *The University in Society* (Princeton, 1974); idem., *Deutsche Studenten 1800-1970* (Frankfurt a.M., 1984); Jutta Kraus, *Die Wiederherstellung der Wartburg im 19. Jahrhundert* (Eisenach, 1990); K G Faber, ‘Student und Politik in der ersten deutschen Burschenschaften’, *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 21 (1970); G Stark, ‘The Ideology of the German Burschenschaft Generation’, *European Studies Review* 8 (1978); G Steiger, *Aufbruch: Urburschenschaften und Warburgfest* (Leipzig, 1967); K Griewank, ‘Die politische Bedeutung der Burschenschaft in den ersten Jahrzehnten ihres Bestehens’, *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der F. Schiller Universität*. (Jena, 1952); F Schulze and P Ssymank, *Das deutsche Studententum von den ältesten Zeiten bis zur Gegenwart*, (Munich, 1932); G Heer, *Geschichte der deutschen Burschenschaft*, vol. 2: *Demagogenzeit*, in: *Quellen und Darstellungen zur Geschichte der Burschenschaft* (Heidelberg, 1927); Hugo Kühn, *Das Wartburgfest am 18.10.1817* (Weimar, 1913).

¹⁶⁴ On the interaction between Protestant culture and the development of a class of Protestant intellectual civil servants, see Robert M Bigler, *The Politics of German Protestantism: The rise of the Protestant Church Elite in Prussia, 1815-1848* (Berkeley and London, 1972).

origins of the opportunity *contemporary* Germany enjoyed to realize its historical potential. Ranke remained in Leipzig in 1817 and distanced himself from the gathering's political activities, a pensive stance which characterised his life-long attitude to politics: historical-spiritual *Tendenzen* always underlay the actual political reality of a given epoch. His task as an historian was to expose the origins of politics in the timeless spiritual essence of history as it had developed within the particular context of Germany.

Ranke's view became more specifically attuned to political reality in the early 1830s when he argued, reflecting his own maturation as a political thinker and his rise within the politically-committed university institution, that 'it is beyond all doubt that the state had won' the 'war in the Church' during the Reformation. Within the state, 'the public sphere [*Die Öffentlichkeit*] is the liberation of the individual from the bonds with which the state and Church had tied him. To this extent, it belongs to the greatest endeavours of our time'¹⁶⁵. Ranke resisted collapsing the distinction between spirituality and politics which echoed Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms; his conservatism distinguished him from the more progressive, liberal and national ideological sentiments of many of his peers. His understanding of the political meaning and historical agency of the Reformation rested on the conviction that the ideological and theological content of Reformation doctrine required no modernisation and that the French Revolution and Napoleonic occupation disrupted, but did not fundamentally alter, the contemporary meaning of the Reformation to the life of the state. For at the root of Ranke's conception of the state lay the romantic notion of the nation defined by common ethnicity, which in the historical development of the spiritual principles of the Reformation gradually acquired political expression. 'The things of world go slowly', he reflected in the late

¹⁶⁵ Ranke, [Kirche und Staat, 1832] *Tagebücher*, p. 118.

1830s: 'If development happened too quickly, there would be no room for the individual to live'¹⁶⁶. The impetus for his construction of the Reformation was his increasing conviction over the years 1817-1840 that Germany in its present historical situation required a 'reformation' – a return to first principles, which is to say, to God - to reassert the reality of its historical foundations and to show how they were as influential in the present as they were in the past. Luther became the exemplary historical individual because he accepted the political outcomes of spiritual convictions, but left the task of political governance itself to the governors already in power. This was exactly Ranke's attitude to political authority.

What began with Luther was an intellectual and spiritual movement. What resulted was a new political order in which the universal political power of the Church yielded to the principalities of the Empire *particular* temporal powers with which they were to protect the universality of religion and the place of God in hierarchy of powers governing human society. Because those new powers were vested in local authorities, the ruling doctrines of Scripture and law were removed from the hands of the Church. Only after the Reformation was it possible to avoid the kind of moral error into which the universal Church had fallen when the papacy feigned its justification for a conflated conception of spiritual and temporal power. Ranke understood this transformation both personally and politically. It gave him confidence as a Protestant believer and historian to know that the history he wrote was the history of his own culture's deliverance from moral error¹⁶⁷. In his *Die römische Päpste*, he explained that his own cultural-religious

¹⁶⁶ Ranke, [Langsame Entwicklung, late 1830s] *Tagebücher*, p. 162.

¹⁶⁷ While Ranke wrote almost nothing about historical progress in the teleological objective sense which subsequent historians absorbed from Hegel, a passage in his *Deutsche Geschichte* hints at a positivistic element in his thought. The passage of time since the Reformation made possible an objective

standpoint in the writing of the history of the Church could be traced back to the Reformation and the advent of the Protestant historical worldview. 'An Italian, a Roman or a Catholic would grasp the [history of the Papacy] completely differently: personal adoration or hate [...] would give his work a much glossier colour; here a Protestant, a north-German cannot compete. He approaches papal power with greater indifference. This position, when I am not wrong, is the purer historical perspective'¹⁶⁸. The 'purity' of that position derived directly from the 'purity' of Luther's theological intentions. That his lifetime coincided with the vast structural changes in the world-historical expression of the German nation was a fact of its historical existence and his place in it, not his will to determine history itself. His theological claims in themselves were timeless; their impact was not. For the Protestant-German state, therefore, Luther's doctrines provided a transcendental foundation for the emergence of a new conception of temporal power. The doctrine of justification described that foundation and brought about the relocation of the seat of political order from the Church to the Protestant princes. The doctrine made all individuals directly accountable to and equal before God: 'in opposition to the secularisation of the institution of the Church which had almost completely lost the immediacy of the relationship of man to God, the intellectuals occupied themselves with the mysterious depths of the transcendental'¹⁶⁹.

historical understanding of it, and its contribution to one's own history. 'When the time came to dissolve the universal form of Christianity, as it then existed, [...] it became the task of the Protestants to struggle against the spiritual opinions and prejudices which for so long had dominated the soul. But we would be wrong to believe that the Protestants were aware of how to regard these general circumstances. We can observe the great combinations in which the things were situated. But their actuality to the present time of their understanding cannot be derived from their situation itself. For the correct understanding comes from the moral power which one brings to the situation. The moments which determine the progress of world history [...] are a divine secret'.

¹⁶⁸ Ranke, *Die römischen Päpste*, vol. 1, p. xv.

¹⁶⁹ Ranke, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 139.

This helps to explain why Ranke devoted so little attention to the internal structure and the theological implications of Luther's religious doctrines and why he instead saw politics as the *locus operandi* of historical change, but at the same time was able to understand the interrelation of politics and spirituality in terms of the existence and actuality of God's agency in history. He seems to have paid little attention to Luther's writings of the early 1520s in which the reformer's thinking tended towards a theology of politics. Luther concluded from the scriptures, particularly Paul's epistles to the Romans, that a higher law oversaw temporal rule; indeed he regarded the New Testament generally as a source for understanding why belief in the absoluteness of temporal rule amounted to a transgression against God and a misreading of Christian theology. Ranke's attitude to politics reflected the spirit of Luther's most politically-engaged writings, written in 1520 and 1521 when Luther attempted to respond to the political authorities who wished to extinguish what up until then had been primarily a theological critique of the Church. In *An den christlichen Adel der deutscher Nation, De captivitate de Babylonica ecclesiae*, and *Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen*, Luther argued the radical thesis that over the previous several hundred years God's presence had begun to be known through the *Evangelium* and had shown the Pope to be the Antichrist and the therefore entire institution of papal rule to be anti-Christian¹⁷⁰. As K V Selge claims, Luther, between 1517 and 1520, had moved from understanding his project as essentially theological in nature to its becoming the tool of a god-ordained revolution¹⁷¹.

¹⁷⁰ Luther, *Weimar-Ausgabe* vols. 6, 11.

¹⁷¹ K V Selge, 'Das Autoritätgefüge der westlichen Christenheit im Lutherkonflikt 1517 bis 1521', *Historische Zeitschrift* 223 (1976) pp. 591-617; see also G Wolf, ed., *Luther und die Obrigkeit* (Darmstadt, 1972).

In his 'Luther-fragment' of 1817, in contrast to the Wartburg celebrants who constructed Luther and the early Reformation as the instigators of the political formation of German nation, Ranke cast the reformer in the role of teacher and intellectual, distanced from the political struggles themselves, but 'immediate' to the presence of God which imbued all human experience. The only way to reform the Reich and the Church in the sixteenth century was to reform their spiritual foundations; in the early nineteenth century, the only way to complete the German nation which the Reformation had promised was to recover the necessary relationship of politics to the transcendent God. The historian kept the view of 1817 virtually unchanged over the course of his entire career; indeed he never gave up seeking evidence in the past for the validity of his own construction of the Reformation which showed every indication of being more stable and usable for his rulers than the Lutheran Reformation had ever been in its inception. 'Everything depends on the highest idea, which says that even the origins of the state derive from God', Ranke wrote in the *Historisch-politisch Zeitschrift*, the Prussian state-sponsored journal he edited for a short time in the early 1830s. 'Nations are products of a creative genius; not individual persons, not particular generations [...], but a totality, a totality of individuals. These are the expression of a national character and [draw] on the primal energy of the human spirit'¹⁷².

The German nation had shifted from being a people connected by religious ties to a people unified by political allegiance¹⁷³. In Ranke's *historical* perspective, the religious-political forces which made that point of identification possible in the first place were inherent in the actual political institutions as they had come to exist. He predicated

¹⁷² Ranke, *Historisch-politisch Zeitschrift*, vol. 1, 1832, SW 49/50, pp. 328-329 (p. 821: reprint of original edition).

¹⁷³ Ranke, *Historische-politische Zeitschrift*, vol. 2, 1834-1836, pp. 32-33.

the actuality of the interrelations of politics and the moral force of history in the nineteenth-century German lands on the idea that the 1555 Peace of Augsburg resolved the tension between the universal realm of the spirit and the particular realm of politics. Ranke understood 1555, therefore, as the completion of the Reformation and the beginning of the unfolding of the Protestant lands' world-historical potential. 'Of all the demands put up by the Protestants [at the Reichstag of Augsburg], the most important was their view that freedom was absolute and perpetual rather than restricted by conciliar decision-making'¹⁷⁴.

The function, therefore, of Ranke's realist conception of the interrelation of sixteenth-century politics and theology was to show how the historical achievement of political and spiritual peace in Europe was predicated on two universal religious claims: that all humans are spiritually equal before God and that the scriptures are accessible to all. These claims acquired real, political meaning in the unique setting of Germany in the age of the Reformation, for here, as never before, the implications of the universal spiritual claims informed the course of political development while at the same time preserving the autonomy and purity of their inner idea. God ruled through the princes; the history of the Reformation was the doctrine of this kind of governance. The actual Reformation ended, in other words, when the political stability resulting from the freedom of religious belief – *cuius regio, eius religio* - defined the Protestant German political community and suggested that so long as that peace would reign, the political structures in existence at the close of the Reformation would stand and would be historically and spiritually appropriate forms of governance to the German people. He

¹⁷⁴ Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte*, vol. 2, p. 571; this discussion draws heavily on Leonard Krieger's analysis of Ranke's relationship to the Reformation. Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History* (Chicago, 1977) pp. 172-176.

had neither historical nor theological justification for foreseeing any other historical event of as much importance to the reality of German historical existence as the Reformation had been. The future of the Reformation held the promise that its essential meaning would be realised within the kind of cultural-political milieu that the consequences of Luther's theological critique had brought into existence.

By constructing the Reformation as an historical achievement whose outcomes were actual, ideological forces in the early nineteenth-century present, Ranke also sketched, rather broadly, a doctrine of political order in which the achievements of the Reformation, as he understood them, would provide a timely political authority in the present, just as they had in 1555. That kind of political order would be historically true to the moral idea of the Reformation, would be guided by the essence of divine will – what he called the historically ‘necessary’ –, and would resist ‘capricious’ temporal rule. ‘It is entirely true’, Ranke wrote in 1850, ‘that only God governs. All the capricious things the rulers do must disappear. But God cannot be grasped in the moral order of this world. [...] The government of a state must command only the necessary. God rules anyway, insofar as the world accepts his ideas’¹⁷⁵. Because the transcendent God was the mediating factor of Ranke's conception of the historical foundation of political order, time, as the foundation of the concept of the continuity of German history, very nearly stood still. The effect of having grounded his polity in the timelessness of the transcendent divine was that Ranke achieved a means of judging the course of present politics by an extra-historical standard. This was the conception of history on which Ranke had been invited to counsel the Bavarian King Maximilian II in September 1854.

¹⁷⁵ Ranke, [Gott und Regierung, 21 December, 1850] *Tagebücher*, p. 132.

The previous year the King had tried to lure Ranke from Berlin to a chair at the University of Munich, the same university in which the Catholic Church historian Ignaz von Döllinger wrote a history of the Reformation which followed directly after the publication of the final volume of Ranke's history in 1843. For all their confessional, political and cultural differences, Döllinger and Ranke held each other in high regard; one wonders what might have come of a more personal exchange of ideas between these two great historical thinkers. Ranke declined the chair but agreed to give a three-week cycle of daily, and sometimes twice-daily, lectures which came to be titled *Über die Epochen der neueren Geschichte*. In the first of those he advised a royal and academic audience gathered at Berchtesgaden that 'The movement of humanity is based on the displacement and shuffling of the great spiritual tendencies. These tendencies always have a particular direction which predominates and results in the retreat of the rest [...]. Humanity expresses in every great epoch a certain great tendency on which progress is founded. Were one to contradict this view by seeing progress in terms of each succeeding epoch bringing humanity to a higher potentiality [...], one would do injustice to God'¹⁷⁶. Ranke wrote to his wife that the purpose of the lectures, reflecting the King's prerogatives, was 'not about politics, not even about history, but instead were about religion [...]. The King is the first I have ever encountered who indeed learnt something from Schelling: namely, that through his philosophical formation he has returned to *Geschichte* and the religion of humanity'¹⁷⁷.

¹⁷⁶ Ranke, *Über die Epochen der neueren Geschichte*, Erster Vortrag, 25 Sept., 1854. Theodor Schieder and Helmut Berding, eds. (Munich and Vienna, 1971) pp. 58-59.

¹⁷⁷ Ranke to his wife, 1 Oct. 1854, in *Briefwerk*, p. 387, as cited in Ranke, *Über die Epochen...*, pp. 26-27.

In this view Ranke not only reiterated his long-standing rejection of the Hegelian dialectical progress towards the telos of history, but he implied that moments of sudden historical progress, or the potential thereof, such as the revolutions of 1848-1849, threatened the actual survival of the German political community by dissolving the essential relationship between its transcendent foundations and its real historical existence. Ranke shared with his political rulers and patrons certain underlying convictions about what kind of state was most appropriate for the present age in light of the sixteenth-century 'origins' of the Prussian political community and the task at hand at hand of crafting its historical identity. These convictions centered on the problem of how to make the history of the German lands relevant to the present without abusing the past by using it to justify the present in the Hegelian teleological sense. To this end, the relationship between the varieties of Protestant confession in the Reich was less important to Ranke's conception of the interrelations between spirituality and politics than was his conviction that the heterogeneity of those lands in terms of religious creed, dialect, geography, the labyrinthine politics of the Reich, was simply an historical constant. He saw stability in their interrelations, even if those were deeply conflicted. In comparison to the other European powers, including the 'universal' power of the Catholic Church in the German lands, the rise of German political structures within and following the Reformation had provided the foundation for the true 'German' identity. As Heinrich August Winkler has recently argued, building on Otto Hintze's detailed studies of the historical development of the social structures of the Reich, the confessional and cultural differences between German Calvinism and Lutheranism posed no real problem to early nineteenth-century Protestant state-building. Confessional differences were at once

preserved and sublimated beneath the greater political and cultural force of the single Protestant identity¹⁷⁸.

Any attempt to discern the political content of Ranke's conception of the Reformation must account for a basic inconsistency in his understanding of what happened in European history between 1555 and 1813. If, behind the rule of temporal law, the steady hand of divine will ruled Creation, then it seems that the massive destruction during the religiously-motivated Thirty Years' War would suggest that the historical importance Ranke placed on the Peace of 1555 was rather more fragile than he had thought. Showing the progress of history was less Ranke's concern than consoling his readers with the knowledge that the historical world was stable and that the religious-political community to which they belonged could look forward to increased stability in the future, even when the period between the Reformation and the present had been anything but that. The discrepancy arises from his implicit belief that the devastation to the historical project of the Reformation brought about by the Thirty-Years' War, the destruction of Ancien Regime France, and Napoleon's militarization of the philosophy of universal reason, were distinct from the historical context of the Reformation and posed no counter-arguments to his belief in the continued presence of the historical forces which first arose in European history at the time of the Reformation. The study of the political-ideological content of Ranke's thought must also explain why, after the 'restoration' of the actual political and cultural structures of Hohenzollern rule in Prussia

¹⁷⁸ Heinrich-August Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen* (Munich, 2002); Otto Hintze, *Die Hohenzollern und ihr Wert. 500. Jahre vaterländische Geschichte* (Berlin, 1915); Otto Hintze, *Soziologie und Geschichte. Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur Soziologie, Politik und Theorie der Geschichte*, Gerhard Oestreich, ed., (Göttingen, 1964).

in which the world-historical mission of the Reformation could be completed, Ranke regarded the events of 1830, 1848, 1866, and 1871 as divergences from the legacy of the Reformation. A younger generation of historians and statesmen envisaged themselves to be the cultural, political and religious heirs of the sixteenth century: they made the future of the Reformation their present. Ranke, amidst the political and social changes occurring around him, used the study of history to return to a more stable, purer past in which the historical *idea* of the Reformation still retained the ideological power it once had.

Ranke eyed progressive, liberal tendencies with considerable suspicion and saw the Frankfurt Parliament, Bismarck's election as Chancellor and the unification of the Reich as being inherently incongruous with the historical essence of the German past. His tacit condemnation of Thomas Müntzer and the theological foundations of the Peasants' Revolt, and Ulrich Zwingli's attempt to create a politically transcendent community removed from the political *Wechselwirkung* in the early 1520s, closely paralleled his fears about unrest in his own time. The fears were many and deep-rooted; he found consolation by distancing himself from the events taking place around him, and inhabiting an ideal-historical world in which the urgent material and popular demands of society were subordinated to history's great forces. Reacting against the universal-philosophical foundation of the July Revolution in Paris in 1830, he argued in 1833 that the particular carries the general in it: 'one is almost of the opinion that our time has but one tendency. It is the dissolution of the old institutions which hold everything together'. But in the Prussian context, by contrast, 'the events of our time have brought the meaning

of moral power and the nationality of the state finally back into the general consciousness',¹⁷⁹.

Between 1833 and 1848, however, liberal ideology challenged Ranke's conception of historical continuity. The liberals' doctrine questioned not only the appropriateness of a particularist, cultural-historical conception of German national identity, but tended to legitimize conflict within the nation as a means to achieving political change. Since the French Revolution, disruptive ideas had continued to spill into Germany from the west. The revolutions in France in 1848 had the 'dreadful repercussion' of destabilizing the great powers of Prussia and Austria and 'throwing their authority into question by grounding the movement for national sovereignty on open violence'. Ranke saw this both in terms of immediate political concerns as well as an example of a universal tendency. 'The human spirit is seized by an immeasurable progression to which the struggle between opposing forces contributes. In the past it was the conflict between spiritual and temporal power that contributed to the development of European Christianity; now it is the contest between monarchical government and popular sovereignty',¹⁸⁰. Contemporary political conflicts appeared pathetic in view of the enormous religious changes which had become the foundation of European political existence; Ranke lampooned the Frankfurt Parliament of 1848 as a 'literary experiment: all came together, brought nothing into existence, and tore each other to pieces',¹⁸¹. His *Zwölf Bücher Preussische Geschichte*, published 1847-1848, traced the rise of the Hohenzollern dynasty from its political-spiritual foundation in the Reformation to its

¹⁷⁹ Ranke, *Historisch-politisch Zeitschrift*, vol. 2. Reprinted in Ranke, *Preussische Geschichte*, Willy Andreas, ed. (orig. pub., 1847-1848; edition cited: neither date nor place of publication given), p. 35

¹⁸⁰ Ranke, 'Das Zeitalter der Revolution', 19th lecture, 13 Oct. 1854, *Über die Epochen der neueren Geschichte*, pp. 438-442.

¹⁸¹ Ranke, [1848] *Tagebücher*, p. 351.

dominant position in the balance of European powers under Friedrich II in the mid-eighteenth century. He did not question the stability of the Prussian superpower – as Bismarck did once German unification had been achieved – but instead assured his audience by means of an implicit tautology that that which had come into historical existence was necessarily right and true by function of its rise to power¹⁸².

By 1860 he understood the liberals' project to create a German nation as a bastardization of the meaning of German history and a divergence from the broader and more stable tendencies of world history in general. Liberalism emphasized individuality over the historical conditions in which that individual was embedded; it was a 'force which had given shape to itself, more dangerous than before, which is tied together with all the destructive elements'. The power of 'old Europe' is 'stronger than personal will'¹⁸³. More specifically, as an entry in his personal diary suggested, civil marriage, the freedom of association and movement, and the dismantling of rural dynasties in favour of local self-administration all threatened the historical foundation and identity of the Reich¹⁸⁴. By 1872 he had accepted that the Reich was integral to the preservation of German interests in Europe, but he devoted little time to explaining the role liberalism had played in creating it. Old-fashioned power in the form of *Außenpolitik* appealed to Ranke's search for stability, since the longstanding historical conflict between France and Germany had at last been decided in Germany's favour. Bismarck's achievement was less distinctly modern than it was 'eternal' in the historical context which the liberals had sought to transcend. 1871, then, was a contemporary solution to an ancient world-

¹⁸² Ranke, *Zwölf Bücher Preussische Geschichte*. Willy Andreas, ed. (orig. ed. 1847-1848).

¹⁸³ Ranke, [Gefahren des Nationalismus] after 18 June 1860, *Tagebücher*, p. 376.

¹⁸⁴ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vols. 53-54, p. 597, as cited in Hans Liebeschütz, *Ranke* (London, 1954) p. 14.

historical situation: the ‘solution’ – the Reich – ‘cannot be allowed to go so far as to endanger society’¹⁸⁵. The *kleindeutsch* outcome to the problem of German nation-building was neither an absolute nor an infallible resolution; Ranke was happiest when the nation was a cultural-political idea defined by the interrelation of dialectical historical forces rather than the synthesis of that dialectic into an actual thing¹⁸⁶.

In the mid 1850s – troubling years for National Liberals – Ranke excelled in his professional commitments and was content with the political status quo and his academic authority within it. The liberals’ defeat in 1848 confirmed something of profound personal meaning: the actuality of European Christianity as a form of historical agency had been vindicated: the search for God through the development of Protestant historical consciousness had not been made obsolete. The Bavarian King, Maximilian II, eagerly received his advice that in terms of the previous three centuries of German history, ‘Germany’ was justified in being a religiously heterogeneous political entity. Religious difference itself was not the point; rather, that difference highlighted the historical imperative to recover the peaceful co-existence of the Christian confessions as it had been established in 1555. It is essential to note that nowhere in his lectures to the King did Ranke suggest that present relations between Protestant and Catholic ‘Germany’ were problematic. Indeed the historian’s implicit message to the monarch was that historical understanding provided a means to overcome religious and political difference by turning the focus of attention from the difference itself to the interrelation between the things

¹⁸⁵ Ranke, [Sylvesterbetrachtung] 31 Dec. 1872, *Tagebücher*, pp. 412-413.

¹⁸⁶ On the interrelation of philosophical and historical issues in Ranke’s historical thought, see Sylvia Backs (who sometimes over-constructs Ranke’s understanding of the dichotomy between philosophy and history). Sylvia Backs, *Dialektisches Denken in Rankes Geschichtsschreibung bis 1854* (Cologne and Vienna, 1985).

themselves. Had the outcome of the Reformation not been challenged by the foreign power of the papacy, the 1555 division of Germany into Protestant and Catholic principalities would have survived as the formal structure of political rule. 'Above all, it would have been best for Germany', he told the King, 'if a single religion had ruled all the German states thus preserving the unity of the Reich. The remarkable thing about the sixteenth century was that the Protestants did not want to dismantle the hierarchy of the Reich; they wanted merely to grant secular authorities some say in spiritual matters. This kind of secularisation could have maintained the unity of the Reich. The Thirty Years' War and the endless pouring of blood could have been avoided'¹⁸⁷.

The lessons from the Lutheran historiographer of the Prussian state were not lost on a king whose Catholic faith and south-German culture were distant from Ranke's religious and intellectual standpoint. Religious difference were becoming less important than political difference, and on the latter point, both Ranke and the Bavarian king were in full agreement on the historical responsibility to preserve monarchical rule in Germany. Maximilian II's rule showed that the spirit of *cuius regio, eius religio* had survived. For the coexistence of the monarchies – both Protestant and Catholic – represented one of the singular historical achievements of the Reformation, and one which had come under increasing pressure from powerful social, economic and political changes by the mid-nineteenth century. At the close of Ranke's final lecture, the monarch asked him, 'Napoleon's rule is based on sovereignty of the people, but would the people not find in just that the justification to depose him'? The teacher answered: 'Therein lies

¹⁸⁷ Ranke, 'Epoche der Reformation und Religionskriege', 15th lecture, 10 Oct. 1854, *Über die Epochen der neueren Geschichte*, , pp. 308-309.

ideological defence of the need to preserve that past, to guard against its manipulation and permutation, and to do so because the spiritual basis of history had made that incumbent on the present. The Rankean historiography of the Reformation can thus be read as a political doctrine whose ideological significance is to have made the possibility of any historical understanding of the nation a function of the primary task of history, the search for God, 'the God of our nation and world'¹⁹¹.

By the time that he had turned to the study of history and gained access to the authoritative institutions of the German *Kultur*, Ranke's stance had become defined by the spiritual impetus and political outcomes of the Lutheran Reformation. The historical narratives he composed required the premise that the spirit of the Reformation was still alive in the political reality of his time and that the kind of historical consciousness he felt obliged by history to develop further refined and implemented the ideological content of that history. The mood his narratives convey is at once proud, measured, and respectful of authority. His historical voice did much more than merely relate the essence of the past: it established the formal relations between moral obligation, political power, and historical consciousness.

¹⁹¹ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vols. 53-54, p. 140, as cited in Nalbandian, *Ranke's Bildungsjahre und Geschichtsauffassung*, p. 19.

Chapter 4. Ignaz von Döllinger and the conflicts of Catholic historical consciousness

4.1 Döllinger and Ranke: the common language of history

For the same reason that Ranke's understanding of the Reformation cannot be contrived to characterise a 'Protestant' conception of history, so, too, should Ignaz von Döllinger's understanding of the Reformation not be construed as typifying a 'Catholic' conception of history¹⁹². Because the French Revolution had threatened the existence of religious institutions, the defeat of revolutionary ideals gave Protestants and Catholics common cause for cooperation. They celebrated the restoration of order as Christians rather than as Catholics or Protestants. It was in this spirit of *Interkonfessionalismus* that Döllinger and Ranke came of intellectual age¹⁹³, and, as Lord Acton wrote of his two teutonic mentors, the two great historians returned to these terms of 'mutual goodwill' by the mid 1860s¹⁹⁴. To get there, however, Döllinger had to lose his Church and opt for the religion of history.

Ranke was a devout Lutheran whose faith was inseparable from the cultural and political revival in nineteenth-century Prussia and his writing of an historical narrative which showed how the project of constructing a cultural and political nation completed

¹⁹² Ignaz von Döllinger (1799 Bamberg – 1890 Munich) began his studies at the University of Würzburg in 1815 in philosophy, philology, and the natural sciences; he turned to study of theology latterly and in 1818 entered the ecclesiastical seminary at Bamberg in 1820. He was ordained priest in 1822 but acquired through his father a professorship in canon law and church history at the lyceum at Aschaffenburg. In 1826 he was awarded a Doctor of Theology and in the same year was called to the University of Munich; he was made *ordentlicher* Professor in 1827. At the Frankfurt parliament in 1848 he represented Bavaria and returned to his professorship in 1849. Archbishop von Scherr publicly excommunicated him in 1871; Döllinger remained in high academic regard – perhaps because of it – and was appointed to the presidency of the Royal Bavarian academy of Sciences in 1874.

¹⁹³ As Gerhard May argues: *Interkonfessionalismus*, p. 19.

¹⁹⁴ Lord Acton, 'Döllinger's Historical Work' (first published in the *English Historical Review* in 1890); here, in *The History of Freedom and Other Essays*, p. 396.

three centuries' of spiritual, intellectual, and ethical achievement. The nineteenth-century, for Ranke, was a comfortable place. By mid-century when challenges to the social and political order refuted his ethical conception of statecraft and questioned the ideological implications of his conservative historical realism, he had reached a transcendent professional status which enabled him to shroud himself in an historical present of his own construction. The belief which enabled that existence coddled him; it held that the moral, intellectual, and political changes which the Reformation forced into the stream of world history demonstrated that God looked favourably on the German-Protestant historical community. The essential *meaning* of history was religious and its essential *content* was the story of the how the power of the Creator manifested itself in the development of the ideas, institutions, and traditions of the state. The individual, subject to the state and God, experienced freedom as an expression of the historical-cultural present. That idea of freedom first became real when Luther's spiritual doctrine entered into political discourse; far from having diminished, that *Wechselwirkung* had never before the mid nineteenth-century present so fully expressed the ethical content of history and showed the real historical forms in which God and man interact¹⁹⁵. Ranke's purpose in historical study was to show why those forms were necessary and true and how progress had been made towards their understanding.

They were necessary and true for Döllinger, as well, just as he believed that the professional study of history was the most appropriate way intellectually and culturally to understand God's intention in history. He quoted Goethe's *Pylades* in an address to King Maximilian II in 1864: 'We scurry forever after its shadows / The semblance of God in

¹⁹⁵ This is Leonard Krieger's thesis in his classic historical analysis of the idea of *Libertät*. *The German Conception of Freedom* (Boston, 1957), pp. 5-6.

the far distance / The mountain tops crowned with golden clouds'; to which he added a strikingly Rankean conclusion: 'And thus we who are counted among the learned class are willing or unwilling witnesses, prophets, of the true spirit of science'.¹⁹⁶ Unlike anglophone culture, German civilisation was unique in the stability of its institutions and forms¹⁹⁷: the job of 'true science' was to substantiate this preexistent truth and, to Döllinger, to show the historical precedent for the reunification of the Christian Church¹⁹⁸.

Unlike Ranke, however, Döllinger bore allegiance to the Catholic Church and was never able to reconcile his conception of history, as the increase of political and religious freedom within political institutions founded at the time of the Reformation, with his belief in the historical existence of the spiritual institution of the Church and the redemptive, healing powers of its historical development. Contestation about religious doctrine was not the problem. The problem was that political ends had subsumed religious means and the body politic had become a moral edifice whose historical purpose was to justify the usurpation of spiritual authority for political purposes. The mediaeval Church had done this as a matter of routine; Luther inherited the destructive tradition and based his Church on a foundation of political authority without which the new doctrine would have withered. Because from this historical perspective both Catholic and Protestant Churches had developed in historical error, and because the idea of the Church as a constantly-reforming body was theologically and historically sound, Döllinger made it his life's work to show where the Church had erred and to provide a

¹⁹⁶ Döllinger, *König Maximilian und die Wissenschaft* (1864), p. 24.

¹⁹⁷ Döllinger, *Über die Wiedervereinigung der christlichen Kirchen. Siebenn Vorträge gehalten zu München im Jahre 1872* (Nordlingen, 1888), Vorträge I, II, p. 4.

¹⁹⁸ Georg Calixt (1586-1656) wrote 'In necessariis, in non necessariis varietas, in omnibus caritas'; Johann Arndt (1555-1621) referred to the need to recover the 'wahre Christentum'.

new conception of history in which the morally-corrupt institution of the Church could resume its true historical course. It became incumbent on the science of history, therefore, to show where Christianity went wrong and how those failings were to be repaired.

This argument will be developed over three sections. The first considers the cultural context in which nineteenth-century German Catholic intellectual life found its meaning. Section two focuses on the Catholic historians' intellectual inheritance, their assimilation of historical Idealism and conception of the German state and the individual. Section three discusses the conception of the Reformation as it developed in the Catholic-historical context in terms of the idea of reform. It concentrates on the conflict between this conception of history, its bearing on the Reformation, and the objectives of the Catholic Church after the first Vatican Council of 1870. It dwells finally on the historical idea of the universal Church, and the development of German nation-state in the latter third of the nineteenth century.

4.2 Towards a Catholic historical culture

Döllinger looked to political liberalism and the political unification of Germany within a constitutional monarchy to safeguard the spiritual content of religious belief and to create the political assurances that the state would uphold the individual's negative freedom to be left alone in matters concerning personal religious conviction. As James Sheehan argued almost thirty years ago, German liberals looked to national unification as a way to reconcile historical conflicts between Germany's Protestant and Catholic communities and to ensure the rights of men to participate freely in the political future of

the German cultural and political community¹⁹⁹. Liberalism, as a political doctrine, would complete the historical future of the Protestant concept of subjective freedom by separating the spheres of religion and politics and ensuring that the individual had distinct freedoms in both domains. Döllinger participated in this mood. He was a representative at the Frankfurt parliaments of 1848-49 and belonged to the centre 'Casino' party (named after their hotel) composed almost entirely of intellectual 'notables'. The origins of his political liberalism lay in his understanding of history as the progressive development of the political and spiritual institutions of human life, his historically-informed accusation that the Church had abandoned its spiritual responsibilities to its members and had turned instead to the accumulation of temporal power, and his conclusion that the settlement achieved at the Peace of Augsburg (1555) – *cuius regio, eius religio* – militated against the spiritual 'right' of the believer, subject above all to God, to exercise his beliefs in a way consistent with the meaning of the scriptures.

Through the study of the history of the Church, Döllinger sought to show how it could be possible for modern man to achieve the coexistence of religion and politics rather than the primacy of one over the other. In contrast to Johannes Ronge, leader of the German-Catholic movement in the late 1840s who adopted the nomenclature of a religious party but who sought purely political objectives and subsumed religion into politics²⁰⁰, Döllinger maintained a clear distinction between his private religious convictions and his political aims. His politics allowed for an autonomous realm of religious belief while at the same time accepting that the varieties of religious belief and

¹⁹⁹ James J. Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago and London, 1978) p. 112.

²⁰⁰ See Karl Kleinpaul, 'Die Stellung des Herrn Ronge zum Deutschkatholizismus', *Kirchliche Reform* (Feb, 1847), as cited in Robert Bigler, *The Politics of German Protestantism: The rise of the Protestant Church Elite in Prussia, 1815-1848* (Berkeley and London, 1972) p. 249.

identity were basic and necessary factors in the formation of the kind of political community – a unified Germany – that he and his contemporaries sought at mid-century²⁰¹.

The revival of Catholicism in France and the German lands after the French Revolution was fuelled by negating many of the objectives of the revolution itself. If the destructive power of the revolution showed how the political, cultural, and religious foundations of the *ancien régime* were interrelated within distinct national identities, and demonstrated how popular pressure deformed political ideals such as equality and liberty, then the Catholic response to the revolution was characterised by an historical consciousness of the break in historical continuity and the need to reconstruct the political and cultural community around religious consciousness and religious institutions. As Felix Gilbert noted about the aftermath of the Revolution, ‘historical reality was at once broadened’ and any understanding of the dynamics of history would have to acknowledge the incommensurable forces of individual will and social structure²⁰². When Napoleon and the papacy concluded a *Concordat* in 1801 which restored many but not all the rights of the Church in France, many Catholics suspected that Napoleon’s promise of political restoration of the Church was self-serving. That dissatisfaction gave rise to several intellectual movements. Initially, the ‘Catholic revival’ sought to recover the spiritual and intellectual power of religious consciousness, of which Chateaubriand’s *Le Génie du Christianisme* (1802) was the decisive work. On the one

²⁰¹ Josef Buss, the first president of the *Katholischen Verein Deutschlands*, wrote during the association’s first meeting in 1848 that ‘rather than setting itself *kirchen-politische* objectives, the *Verein* seeks to unify German Catholics within a highly developed association which should at the same time contribute to the unity of the nation’. Cited by Albrecht Langer, ‘Katholizismus und nationale Gedanke in Deutschland’, in Horst Zilleßen, ed., *Volk, Nation und Vaterland. Der deutschen Protestantismus und der Nationalismus* (Gütersloh, 1970) p. 239.

²⁰² Felix Gilbert, *History: Politics or Culture?* pp. 8-9.

hand, Joseph de Maistre (1754-1821) combated the return to Gallicanism during the restoration of the Bourbons (1814-1830) by reasserting the universal, absolute power of the papacy. In his view, forcefully articulated in *Du Pape* (1817), only the power of the papacy, ruled by divine will, could repair the damage wrought by the rule of reason; the reconstruction of the national community required a power greater than a national king. On the other hand, there also arose during the Restoration a less reactionary movement which, under its founder Félicité de Lamennais (1782-1854), grew into a critique of the Restoration for its having abandoned the liberties which even the most moderate revolutionaries had supported. His *Des progrès de la Révolution et la guerre contre l'Église* (1829) justified the idea of political liberty and the second revolution of 1830 positioned Lamennais and the Catholic liberals Lacordaire (1802-1861) and Montalembert (1810-1870) for an explicit statement of the requisite freedoms for the co-existence of the Catholic Church, its community of believers, and the state, and the implicit goal of creating a Church which could furnish an historically-appropriate political identity for the community of believers. Among these were the liberties of conscience, education, press, and association, in addition to extension of the franchise and reduction of the central authority of the state.

Pope Gregory XVI reacted fiercely against these views. The encyclical *Mirari vos* (1832) effectively blocked Lamennais' mouthpiece, the political journal *L'Avenir*, after less than a year of its existence. In consequence, Lamennais and his collaborators abandoned hope and trust in the adaptability of the papacy to contemporary historical circumstances. During the period 1830 to 1846, the latter year in which Pius IX succeeded Gregory XVI, Döllinger mingled with the French Catholic liberals and came

to share their realization that even moderate ultramontanistism did more harm than good to the cause of liberalism. While the pontificate of Pius IX made promising noises about bolstering Catholic liberalism and in fact supported the intellectual cause of the revolution of 1848, Döllinger had already made up his mind about the incommensurability of papal and national interests. His position was an amalgam of two essentially political problems which he understood as the historical development of the Church and the political and social impact of Lutheran doctrine on European civilisation. The basic claim was that ultramontanistism was an historical artifact from an historical context of religious and political relations which were themselves a carry-over from former times. The essence of nineteenth-century political existence was founded on the autonomy of the nation-state; he regarded the papacy's claim to the right to intervene in those spheres of national authority as a claim to have the power to destabilize the present by negating the relation of the present to the organic processes of historical development.

Ultramontanistism, in other words, sought to repeat the mistakes the late-mediaeval Church had made when it placed the acquisition of temporal power above its spiritual responsibilities. The danger this posed to the state was as grave as the danger it posed to the legitimacy of Christian belief. Luther reacted to those abuses by arguing – with full moral and spiritual justification – that the institution of the Church was antithetical to the spiritual demands of God and the pastoral needs of man: the spiritual essence of the Church must be recovered. Döllinger blamed Luther's 'solution' to the problems of the Church for having introduced a new kind of theological error, social malaise, and tyranny of temporal interests over the subjectivity of the autonomous individual believer before God. But Döllinger and Luther *shared* the belief that there was a true essence of the

Church which could be recovered, and if recovered, could alleviate the long-standing historical disagreement about what constituted a theologically- and historically-appropriate kind of temporal and spiritual governance of human life. They were both reformers and had more in common than Döllinger had ever admitted.

In addition to writing historical studies of the Church and the Reformation, Döllinger became a respected voice among German liberals who envisaged bringing into existence an historically-legitimate German constitutional monarchy. Like many of his peers at the Frankfurt parliaments, three-quarters of whom were university graduates, Döllinger gave the liberals' political prerogatives intellectual respectability and power by showing how politics was an historical process which could be used to transform the present and arguing that that transformation was historically legitimate and necessary. History was both study and advocacy; to study the essence of the past meant to relate the past to the present, for the past was not passed, but an inevitable determinant of the present. 'The ultramontanes are those who seek to transform the pope into the emperor', Döllinger advised the general assembly of the Katholischen Vereins Deutschlands in Linz on 26 September 1850. 'As members of the Catholic Church we Germans do not want to cease being but to remain German [...] and lose not one iota of our national uniqueness insofar as it is in agreement with the spirit of the Catholic Church'²⁰³. Thirteen years later, against the backdrop of a Church which Pius IX had transformed into an organ of

²⁰³ Döllinger, [Rede gehalten auf der Generalversammlung des katholischen Vereins Deutschlands zu Linz am 26. September 1850] in *Kleinere Schriften*, collected and ed. by F H Reusch (Stuttgart, 1890), pp. 108-109.

reaction and intolerance, Döllinger advocated that a 'scientific consciousness' of the Church's place in history could rediscover the 'German spirit' in Christian theology²⁰⁴.

By the 1830s and early 1840s Döllinger, already comfortable in the French language and culture, absorbed the political and religious values of the French Catholic liberals centred around the journal *L'Avenir*. These men became his intellectual mentors. Across the Rhine, however, great possibility for cultural transformation lay in the German intellectual tradition and the ideological power of the discipline of history was increasing within the Herderian 'nation' of the German Confederation. The previous chapter discussed Ranke's profound contribution to creation of a Protestant-German historical consciousness and how that vision of the interrelation of past and present depended so heavily on the reconstruction of the Reformation as *the* event in European history which first welded national interest to the realm of subjective intellectual and religious consciousness. Döllinger devoted himself to the same cause for 'Catholic' Germany, and in the same way that Ranke's ideology of statecraft and his historical-realist vision show the 'immediacy' but ultimate incomprehensibility of God's presence in history unsettled conservative Protestants and angered the liberals and atheists, so too was Döllinger's historicist turn repugnant to so many of his coreligionists.

The Catholic revival in France was predominantly a political event. Because of the highly local and labyrinthine nature of politics in the German confederation, very much results of the treaties of 1555 and 1648, intellectuals wielded considerable power in the formation of a German cultural-national identity. That power largely resided in research academies and universities. Wilhelm von Humboldt's university in Berlin was

²⁰⁴ Döllinger, 'Die Vergangenheit und Gegenwart der katholischen Theologie' [Rede gehalten am 28. September, 1863, vor der Gelehrtenversammlung München], in F H Reusch, ed., *Kleinere Schriften*, p. 161.

but one example of this development. The Academy of Munich was founded in 1759 which was the first institutional step in establishing a historical culture in Bavaria. The relocation of the University of Landshut to Munich two decades later and the incorporation of the Academy into the new university was ‘a sign of new times: Munich should become a spiritual and artistic centre for all Germany’²⁰⁵. Friedrich von Schlegel’s conversion to Catholicism galvanised German Romanticism whose cultural power Goethe and Beethoven had already shown. Unlike in France, German Catholics possessed full educational liberties which the foundation in 1817 of a Catholic school of theology at the University of Tübingen demonstrated abundantly. Johann Adam Möhler²⁰⁶, Tübingen’s Catholic equivalent of Schleiermacher in Berlin, led the other Catholic theologians at Tübingen to define a theological viewpoint which mediated between rational and revelatory conceptions of religion²⁰⁷. Möhler worked from the premise that the two confessions shared more than what divided them and took it as his prerogative in a book of 1825 to show the possibility of the reunification of the two faiths. Conservative Catholics soon cooled to Möhler, finding his views too sympathetic to Protestant liberalism for their tastes. Yet certain Protestant theologians such as Friedrich Christian Baur of the Protestant faculty of theology at Tübingen took offense to

²⁰⁵ Walter Goetz, ‘Die Bayerische Geschichtsforschung im 19. Jahrhundert’, *HZ* 138 (1928) 1, pp. 255, 257.

²⁰⁶ Johann Adam Möhler (1796 Igersheim – 1838 Munich) entered the Catholic seminary at Ellwangen which the government of Württemberg had incorporated into the University of Tübingen in 1817. He was ordained in 1819 and after a period of unemployment was appointed a privatdocent in church history in 1822. On leave between 1822-23 he traveled and met Johann August Wilhelm Neander, Philipp Marheinecke, and Friedrich Schleiermacher in Berlin. Möhler published in 1832 the first of five editions of *Symbolik, oder Darstellung der dogmatischen Gegensätze der Katholiken und Protestanten*. The work build his reputation; after a fiery dispute with the Protestant theologian Friedrich Christian Baur at Tübingen, Möhler left for Munich where he was called to a professorship in theology in 1835. He remained there until his death; together with Döllinger, he helped define liberal Catholicism and establish its institutional credibility.

²⁰⁷ See A R Vidler, *The Modernist Movement in the Roman Church* (Cambridge, 1934) pp. 32-39.

Möhler's conception of what separated the faiths, an argument he published in 1832²⁰⁸.

An embattled exchange took place between the two theologians, and, once pushed by Baur from Tübingen, Möhler accepted a call to Munich in 1835²⁰⁹. During his three years at Munich he published his *Symbolik* which used textual-critical analysis of Protestant and Catholic dogma to argue that hermeneutic misunderstandings were the ultimate cause of the schism in Christianity²¹⁰. Möhler's death in 1838 had the fortuitous effect of bringing Döllinger to the fore of Catholic intellectual life.

Indeed Döllinger felt deeply indebted to Möhler. He not only edited the deceased's writings but remained sympathetic to the cause of increasing the spiritual, moral, and intellectual standing of the Catholic community²¹¹. Historical study of the Church became a way to identify the historical errors of the Church by showing the discrepancies between the evolution of the institution and the intention of its teachings; critical history therefore also proscribed a means of rectifying error in a pastoral capacity. Like Ranke, Döllinger saw the study of history as inseparable from the living historical community in whom the past lives on and for whom belonging to a past is as much a matter of things past as present. The intention, at least, was historical theology, not polemic. For Acton, this made 'history...the true demonstration of religion'. For Ranke, regarding a theologian who had written a history of the Reformation and hailed the Berlin

²⁰⁸ Horton Harris, *The Tübingen School* (Oxford, 1975), pp. v, 24-25.

²⁰⁹ As cited by Harris, pp. 24-25: Baur to Heyd, 1 Feb. 1833: 'Perhaps I shall yet write something against this learned but malevolent opponent of Protestantism'. Baur replied to Möhler's 1832 work with 'Der Gegensatz des Katholizismus und Protestantismus...', *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* (1833) III, IV, pp. 1-438; published as a book in 1834, reprinted 1836. Möhler took the critique personally and responded with his hostile *Erwiderung auf Herrn Dr. Möhler's neueste Polemik* (Tübingen, 1834).

²¹⁰ *Symbolik, oder Darstellung der dogmatischen Gegensätze der Katholiken und Protestanten nach ihren öffentlichen Bekenntnißschriften* (Mainz, 1843). From this Fritz Vigner wagers the claim that Möhler's historical understanding was essentially Protestant, imported into a Catholic intellectual establishment, and used in turn to criticize the work of Protestant historians. Fritz Vigner, *Drei Gestalten aus dem modernen Katholizismus: Möhler, Diepenbrock, Döllinger* (Munich, 1926), p. 37.

²¹¹ Johann Adam Möhler, *Möhler's gesammelte Schriften und Aufsätze*, Döllinger, ed., (Regensburg, 1839).

historian as his colleague, the tone is chillier: 'You are first a Christian. I am first a historian. There is a gulf between us'²¹².

Historians have tended to set Ranke and Döllinger in diametrical opposition²¹³. That Döllinger should be regarded as 'unnatural' for having distanced himself from the 'partisan investigations' and 'fundamental allegiances' ignores the possibility that for him the partisan allegiances were surface phenomena of a less contested sense of German national-cultural identity,²¹⁴ perhaps more united than divided. Apart from some key hermeneutic differences on specific issues in the history of the Reformation – particularly the Lutheran Doctrine of Justification and the political effect of the Peace of Augsburg -, Ranke and Döllinger shared the belief that one outcome of the early sixteenth century was the beginning of a new kind of subjective consciousness, that this was key to amalgamating the national community with subjective individual religious identity, and that the political processes of nation building were inseparable from the religious foundations of the human community.

They therefore agreed that the study of history transposed the moral power of their religious convictions to the realm of the political community: moral subjectivity became an objective, governing ideology for the present through which the past could be completed. 'The role which once fell to the Greeks in the ancient world has now fallen to the Germans in the present. Never before has one better learnt to connect depth of

²¹² Cited in Acton's Inaugural Lecture, 11 June 1895; cited in Chadwick, *Acton, Döllinger and History*, German Historical Institute London Annual Lecture 1986 (London, 1986) p. 28.

²¹³ See for example Ernst Schulin, who described Ranke as a 'politically conservative religious reformer' and concluded that that position was antithetical to Döllinger's religious stance. The crucial intellectual historical aspect Schulin does not consider is to ask why both men turned to the study of history and how their historical views of the Reformation functioned in the mid nineteenth-century debates about the formation of the nation-state. 'Luther und die Reformation', in *Arbeit an der Geschichte: Historisierung auf dem Weg zur Moderne* (Frankfurt a.M., 1997), pp. 45-46.

²¹⁴ Peter Iver Kaufman, 'Unnatural' Sympathies? Acton and Döllinger on the Reformation', in *Catholic Historical Review* 70 (1984) 4, p. 547.

research with breadth of perspective; Luther brought us to this point and stirred the present in the most provocative ways²¹⁵. Elsewhere Döllinger noted that one of the first ‘fruits’ of the Reformation was the ‘recognition of the right of conscience’²¹⁶. The broader issue in which Ranke and Döllinger were involved was the shift in humanistic understanding from theology to history which took place in the early nineteenth century and provided the hermeneutic ‘space’ in which the eternal truths of the scriptures could be integrated into a progressive historical conception of time, the kind of conceptual shift of which Reinhart Koselleck has written²¹⁷. ‘As far as its integrity as a kind of academic research, theology cannot do without its historical dimension [...] for this was open to the impact of religion, its most powerful impetus’²¹⁸. Finally, Ranke and Döllinger’s views of the place of God as overseer of the sciences were also present in the thoughts of the Bavarian King Maximilian II, whom Ranke tutored and who was patron to Döllinger at the University of Munich. ‘In all the sciences, and with all their associated freedoms, the divine and political order must be borne in mind and in that man must subordinate the human beneath the divine’²¹⁹.

How Döllinger arrived at the study of history and employed it as an ideological tool to transform the political and cultural *Verhältnisse* of his historical present is a question deeply implicated in the relationship between his historical or ‘scientific’ understanding of the Reformation and his religious or ‘ethical’ involvement in the

²¹⁵ Döllinger, ‘Überblick über die geschichtliche Entwicklung und die gegenwärtige Aufgabe unsrer Akademie’, in *Akademische Reden* (Nördlingen, 1888-1889) vol. II, p. 331.

²¹⁶ Döllinger, ‘Die Geschichte der religiösen Freiheit’, in *Akademische Reden*, vol. III, p. 280.

²¹⁷ Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, Keith Tribe, trans. Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, MA, 1985)

²¹⁸ Döllinger, ‘Überblick über die geschichtliche Entwicklung und die gegenwärtige Aufgabe unsrer Akademie’, in *Akademische Reden* vol. II, p. 335.

²¹⁹ Döllinger, *König Maximilian II und die Wissenschaft*, p. 6.

intellectual mode of historical understanding itself. What Karl Barth argued for the case of nineteenth-century theology speaks also to nineteenth-century history: 'we cannot assume that the theologians of the [nineteenth century] were in the end [...] concerned with anything other than knowledge and confession of the Christian revelation. It is necessary to remind ourselves that it has in no way been revealed to us that the nineteenth century was in whole or in part a time in which God withdrew his hand from the Church'.²²⁰ The study of history, therefore, involved the application of a concept of God to historical reality and the historian himself mediated between the two realms. The situation recalls what Barth called 'the universal rule of historical understanding', which he turned to Luther to illustrate: 'No one can understand Virgil in his *Bucolics* and *Georgics* unless he has been a shepherd or a farmer for fifty years. No one can understand Cicero in his letters unless he has been involved for twenty years in the life of a powerful state. Let no one think that he has tasted Holy Scripture unless he has for a century *ecclesias gubernarit* and has been responsible for the Church'.²²¹ Neither was it plausible to study the Reformation and its relation to the present without having already made the Reformation 'present': to study it meant to be already 'in' it, to 'be there'.

Lord Acton, whom Döllinger taught at Munich, once remarked that 'the uncertainty of history means the uncertainty of Christianity'. Contestation between competing untruths about the history of the Church, to which Döllinger devoted a scathing book in 1863, left the Church vulnerable to assault on its historical credibility²²². Bad history, or worse, intentionally-misleading history, was a sign of moral decay, and

²²⁰ Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History* (Grand Rapids, 2002; first ed. Zürich, 1947), p. 13.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²²² Döllinger, *Die Papst-Fabeln des Mittelalters. Ein Beitrag zur Kirchengeschichte* (Munich, 1863; reprinted Darmstadt, 1970).

therefore Döllinger praised Luther's search for the doctrinal foundations on which a true Christian consciousness could be rebuilt. He criticised Luther for allowing that morally recuperative, subjective project to become entangled once again in political struggle. But Döllinger saw great promise in Luther's act of protest: he admired the idea of a pure Christian consciousness and turned to historical study to be able to distinguish, in a contemporary 'scientific' language, between true and false religion and genuine and feigned religious conviction.

Like Ranke, Döllinger possessed both piety and belief in the validity and necessity of historical knowledge that led him to study the history of religion²²³. The historical method of Reinhold Niebuhr – Ranke's great mentor - was particularly instrumental in developing what Stephen Tonsor calls a 'historical theology [...] ready made for the Catholic church historian and apologist', a notion which Acton captured at the close of the nineteenth-century: 'every organism possesses the faculty of growing on its own lines, of assimilating what is congenial, of expelling what is foreign'²²⁴. Döllinger did not make written mention of having studied Niebuhr explicitly, but his conversion of historical theology into a progressive vision of political redemption for the Christian-German community suggests that he and the Berlin theologian shared a basic understanding about the immediacy of theological hermeneutics to the basis of national life. 'With the first appearance of the Christian Church from the motherly womb of Judaism came the foundation of ecclesiastical life, the principle of Catholicity, the world-religion, the world-Church... This principle is truly above mankind and can asserted by

²²³ Acton, as cited in Stephen J. Tonsor, 'Lord Acton on Döllinger's Historical Theology', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XX (1959) p. 343.

²²⁴ Acton, as cited in Tonsor, *ibid.*, 336-337.

man only through institutions reflecting its higher power'.²²⁵ And those institutions are never purely ecclesiastical; in fact, they bear no necessary relation at all to his view of the historical origins of the principle of the Church. For the nation was not a whim of history, he wrote, and the differences among nations and their peoples testify to the 'world-plan of divine providence' expressed in the uniqueness of every people (*jedes Volk*)²²⁶.

Döllinger in the 1830s and 40s was a different historian from the Döllinger of 1861, and to understand his development as a historian and his understanding of the events he experienced, it is necessary to consider where he started. That is essentially the point Acton made: advancing the discipline of history and increasing historical understanding would lead to a stronger ecclesiastical institution more in keeping with its idea. The central question was whether the creation of a strong Church would allow for the recovery of the one, universal Church of pre-Reformation Europe or whether it must coexist within a multi-confessional state. Döllinger's search for a political solution to religious coexistence suggests that he had accepted that Protestantism and Catholicism must coexist within the historical reality of the present. Döllinger's appointment by Ludwig I to the University of Munich in 1826 was welcomed by Protestant and Catholic intellectuals alike, for they believed that he would be able bring about confessional reconciliation²²⁷. At the same time, the nineteenth century has been called a 'second confessional age' because of the revival of religious consciousness in intellectual life which occurred on a scale unknown since the sixteenth century²²⁸. Just as the Counter-

²²⁵ Döllinger, *Kirche und Kirchen* (1861) pp. 22-23.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

²²⁷ Heinrich Lutz, *Zwischen Habsburg und Preußen: Deutschland 1815-1866* (Berlin, 1985) p. 379.

²²⁸ Olaf Blaschke, 'Das 19. Jahrhundert: Ein Zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter?', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 26 (2000), pp. 50-51.

Reformation attempted to reassert the dogmatic and political power of the Church after the Reformation, the Catholic intellectuals at Tübingen and Munich wished to show that the Protestant foundation of German intellectual life at the beginning of the nineteenth century was not the only historically legitimate view. Rebuilding a distinct Catholic intellectual tradition became a powerful countermeasure to evangelical Protestantism's desire to subsume German Catholicism in a Protestant version of the one Christian Church²²⁹.

This threat provoked Joseph Görres²³⁰, the eclectic natural philosopher, romantic, political publicist, and Ultramontane called to the University of Munich in November 1827, with the support of a circle of Catholic intellectuals including Sailor, Diepenbrock, Ringseis, von Schenk, and Brentano²³¹. Known already for his excited rhetoric, he was called to orchestrate the revival of Catholic intellectual life; he came to Munich as neither historian nor philosopher, but as the prophet of a Catholic-humanistic worldview²³². He edited the journal *EOS* from 1818 until 1832, and from 1838 until his death a decade later he edited the *Historisch-politischen Blätter*. His writings in response to the arrest of Archbishop Droste-Vischering of Cologne by Prussian police in 1837 condemned

²²⁹ Ernst Walter Zeeden, 'Die katholische Kirche in der Sicht des deutschen Protestantismus im 19. JH', *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 72, pp. 440.

²³⁰ Johann Joseph von Görres (1776 Koblenz – 1848 Munich) was the founding editor in 1814 of the *Rheinischer Merkur*, through which, among his later writings, he became the most renowned Catholic political writer of the first half of the nineteenth century. In the hope of fuelling a powerful Catholic-intellectual revival, King Ludwig I appointed him in 1827 to a professorship in history at the newly-founded University of Munich, a post he held until his death. His principal writings include: *Athanasius* (1837); his editorship of the *Blätter für das katholische Deutschland* (from 1838); *Die christliche Mystik* (1842).

²³¹ Heribert Raab, 'Görres und die Geschichte', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 93 (1973) pp. 73-74. See Döllinger to Räß, 14 April 1826, cited in Johannes Freidrich, *Ignaz von Döllinger*, vol. I (1899) p. 179. See also K. A. von Müller, 'Görres' Berufung nach München', in K. Hoerber, ed., *Görres Festschrift*, (1926) p. 216f.; E. Dauerlin, 'Einleitung' to vol. XV, *Gesammelte Schriften: J.v. Görres. Geistesgeschichtliche und politische Schriften der Münchener Zeit (1828-1838)*, 1958.

²³² Heribert Raab, 'Görres und die Geschichte', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 93 (1973) p. 76. A review essay of studies of Görres' life in *Historische Zeitschrift* (XVI) pp. 179-180, concluded judged him harshly for being the 'seed' of German Ultramontanism and for *not* criticizing papal claims of infallibility.

Protestant Germany for having ruptured what over the previous century had been a relatively amicable coexistence of the Christian confessions²³³. Prussia was the aggressor, the control and manipulation of Catholic society its objective, and intentional disregard for the tradition and political basis of peaceful coexistence its *modus operandi*²³⁴. In 1842, Görres formulated the problem in the register of an old idea: German Catholics had to return to the religious essence of Catholicism and rebuild the cultural strength of the Church. As the dominance of Prussian interests threatened to destabilise European society, Catholics, without a strong ideological core, would be too weak to respond. ‘As all unhealthy organisms seek recovery through their inner nature, so here the Church must seek to heal its sick body through the vitality of its inner spirit and in accordance with its native laws of life’²³⁵.

Görres and Döllinger’s conceptions of religious revival differed most obviously in what they envisaged as the foundation upon which the revival would take place. A generation older than Döllinger, Görres understood religion first of all as ritual and tradition, and second as a corpus of ideological and ethical statement. Görres’s main intellectual work during his time at Munich was his *Die christliche Mystik*, published in four volumes at Regensburg and Landshut between 1836 and 1842. Karl Rosenkranz, one of the so-called Young Hegelians²³⁶, described the work as a ‘poetical work on belief’; Heribert Raab has more recently called it ‘no history, but a system of mysticism, erratic,

²³³ Joseph von Görres, *Kirche und Staat nach der kölnische Wirren* (Weissenburg, 1842).

²³⁴ Görres, *Athanasius* (Regensburg, 1838, 2nd ed), p. 2.

²³⁵ Görres, *Kirche und Staat...*, p. 117.

²³⁶ See John E Toews, *Hegelianism: The Path Towards Dialectical Humanism 1805-1841* (Cambridge, 1981).

in which historical remarks arise here and there'²³⁷. Görres based his support of the ultramontane papacy on his conviction that a powerful papacy inhered naturally in the Church organism; he dismissed the Reformation as an aberrant moment in the history of religious life and tended equally to dismiss the profound ethical power of reform doctrine to blur the distinction between religion and politics. As Owen Chadwick wrote, echoing Weber, 'The man who would leave the world turned into the man who would change it. Religion centred upon ritual veered towards religion centred upon ethics [...] The study of [the] history of ideas moved into a new phase. You could no longer explain the movement of minds by seizing only upon what was expressed in formal propositions, articulately'²³⁸. As a consequence of the shift into an ideological reading of religious discourse, 'if politics transcend religion...it is because ethical principles are supreme'²³⁹. 'The Reformation made all secular life into a vocation of God'²⁴⁰.

Görres's life project - 'a higher world-historical meaning', he wrote in 1826 to von Schenk - was to retaliate against the idea of secular life itself. He sought to overcome the bifurcation between religion and science which he blamed on the historical development of the distinction between secular and religious devotion²⁴¹. The means by which he sought to accomplish this involved refuting the liberal belief that politics was the foundation of human community. Protestantism compounded the problem because since its beginning, it had been subsumed into authoritarian structures. When the Archbishop of Cologne in 1837 denied the right of Catholics to intermarry, Prussian

²³⁷ Raab, 'Görres und die Geschichte', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 93 (1973) p. 84; Karl Rosenkranz, *Studien. 5. Theil, Reden und Abhandlungen: Zur Philosophie und Literatur* (Leipzig, 1848), p. 100f, as cited in Raab, above.

²³⁸ Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1975) p. 8.

²³⁹ Owen Chadwick, *Acton, Döllinger and History*, p. 13.

²⁴⁰ Chadwick, *Secularization*, p. 8.

²⁴¹ Cited in Raab, *ibid.*, p. 74

police arrested him. Görres railed against the action by condemning Protestantism and not only Prussia, as a ‘devouring, corrosive poison, a demonic power which gnaws away at, destroys, and finally eliminates everything’²⁴². Görres lumped the Reformation and all European revolutions since 1550 under this common rubric of immanent destruction: ‘not only the great French Revolution, but also the Swiss, the English and the Dutch, for all belong with the Reformation to the list of destructive reformations’²⁴³. But his polemics led to a positive outcome. By 1842, he could claim that ‘what Catholic Germany was ten years ago – divided, displaced, asleep – had been swept away by what it had become in Austria and Bavaria, in the Rhineland and Belgium: ‘the great beam of the spirit stirred a great front in each of the different peoples’²⁴⁴. As Reinhard Habel commented, ‘past, present, and future flow together towards an immovable point *behind* history’ in Görres’s thought²⁴⁵, a return to the pantheistic and secretive principle of God and a thoroughly speculative philosophical understanding of late-mediaeval theology²⁴⁶.

Döllinger loathed invisible and secretive historical processes. He sought positive and substantive knowledge: ‘By and large we [Catholics] must confess that, if we take our measure from the standpoint of the interest of science, [the study of the history of theology] proved itself to be far more profitable and progressive than destructive’²⁴⁷. As a consequence of the shift into a ‘scientific’ reading of religious discourse with overtones

²⁴² Görres, *Athanasius*, p. 97.

²⁴³ Görres, *Teutschland und die Revolution* (Koblenz, 1819) p. 61f, cited in Görres, *Gesamte Schriften*, vol. 13, ‘Politische Schriften (1817-1822)’, G. Wohlers, ed., Cologne, 1929, pp. 35-143). See Karl-Georg Faber, ‘Görres, Weitzel und die Revolution (1819)’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 194 (1962) p. 44.

²⁴⁴ Görres, *Kirche und Staat*, (1842) p. 199.

²⁴⁵ Reinhard Habel, *Joseph Görres: Studien über den Zusammenhang von Natur, Geschichte und Mythos in seinen Schriften* (Wiesbaden, 1960), p. 144.

²⁴⁶ Siegfried Wollgast, ‘Grundlinien oppositionellen...Denkens’, in Günter Vogler, ed., *Wegscheiden der Reformation*, pp. 345-346.

²⁴⁷ Döllinger, *Kleinere Schriften: gedruckte und ungedruckte*, F H Reusch, ed., (Stuttgart, 1890) p. 169.

of the ideological commitments of the Rankean historical understanding, the historical study of the Reformation eroded the ethical principles of a 'religious' understanding. 'If politics transcend religion...it is because ethical principles are supreme'²⁴⁸. For the same reason, Hegel deplored Görres' speculative understanding of religion: it was removed from world history²⁴⁹.

Döllinger combatted Görres's view in a speech of 26 September 1850, to the general meeting at Linz of the *Katholischen Vereins Deutschlands*. Among the nations of Europe, only Germany had failed to participate in the 'great European republic' of Catholic theology; 'only Germany had placed its most gifted and able men in service to Protestantism'. The 'great beam of the spirit' had not shone on German soil. The reason for this, he suggested, was that German historians were slow to become conscious of their own history. Only in 1850 had 'the truth that the Christian religion is historical and only as a historical fact in light of its fifteen-hundred year course of development has come to be understood and valued. This idea finally made headway and led to a rebirth of theology which could be completed only over the course of centuries'²⁵⁰. Döllinger called for the *completion of the Reformation*, not in its specific doctrine, but in refining its place in national history. The Lutheran Reformation was inherently German; the revival of Catholic religious life in the nineteenth century must also respect its cultural and political fatherland. Catholic intellectuals must modernise their historical understanding or face obsolescence.

²⁴⁸ Owen Chadwick, *Acton, Döllinger and History*, p. 13.

²⁴⁹ Hegel, *Berliner Schriften*, p. 424.

²⁵⁰ Döllinger, 'Rede, gehalten auf der Generalversammlung des katholischen Vereins Deutschlands zu Linz am 26. September, 1850', in *Kleinere Schriften*, F H Reusch, ed., (Stuttgart, 1890) pp. 169-171.

This was not merely a disagreement over how much or how little the revival of nineteenth-century German Catholic intellectual life had accomplished, for larger issues were at stake. The contradiction between Görres and Döllinger's views on the place of the nation in Catholic culture drew into question the notion that there was a coherent concept behind the German-Catholic school of thought at Munich. When Görres set out to reinstate religious truth at the top of the hierarchy of values as a pre-requisite to rebuilding a German Catholic intellectual culture, he did so without acknowledging that the philosophy of history accepted in Berlin, and in fact most of central Europe by Hegel's death in 1831, had already subordinated the categories of 'religion', 'politics' and 'history' to the historical experience of subjective Becoming. This is what Walter Goetz means when he argues that *Geschichtswissenschaft* never came into its own at Munich until Görres's death in 1848. Döllinger's philosophy of history was certainly not Hegelian, but he nevertheless worked from the premise that 'religious' and 'political' consciousness should be read as modes of 'historical' being appropriate to the present cultural and intellectual circumstances. The *Großdeutsch* solution to German nationhood, which the *Katholischen-Vereins Deutschlands* discussed enthusiastically at its meeting in 1848, would have synthesized these.

The conflict between Görres and Döllinger concerned what kind of historical representation was appropriate for understanding the history of German Catholicism. Görres's romanticism was not historical idealism nor Hegelian as the reconciliation of the absolute transcendent standpoint with the actual place of human subjective historical consciousness. The greatest problem facing the project of building a Catholic intellectual community was that at its foundation was a sixteenth-century concept of positive religion

- with which the Tridentine Church had combated Luther's 'conceptual revolution' - amalgamated with the romantic infatuation with subjective feeling. This took precedence over the intellectual heritage of the Catholic *Aufklärung*: the spiritual and political institution of the Church, not the intellectualization of the subjective *Anschauung* of the intellectuals themselves, took priority at Munich. 'Theological and religious practice was oriented on the model of the Tridentine Church'; 'The new religious attitude arose at the cost of the truths that were previously believed. This new mode of thought led to reconessionalisation and a sharp differentiation from the other Christian communities'²⁵¹.

In principle, at least, the intellectual history of Pietism had given Protestant believers a rather different view of their Catholic counterparts. It was possible to regard one's Christian neighbour as a Christian brother, Zeeden writes, so long as he was a pious believer²⁵². 'Despite the rigidity of the new communities of belief, the Reformation ushered in for the first time the idea of subjective belief, an inwards-orientated cast of mind'²⁵³. Of course orthodox Protestants feared such tolerance – one thinks of the deeply-conservative Evangelical movements which arose during the Restoration. Görres even implied that a political united Germany would necessarily be a Protestant Germany, a notion he thoroughly condemns²⁵⁴. But Döllinger's intellectual development provides a

²⁵¹ Adolf M. Birke, 'Nation und Konfession: Varianten des politischen Katholizismus im Europa des 19. Jahrhunderts', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 116 (1996) p. 397.

²⁵² Ernst Walter Zeeden, 'Die katholische Kirche im Sicht...', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 72 (1952), pp. 434-436.

²⁵³ Richard van Dülmen, 'Reformation und Neuzeit: Ein Versuch', *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 14 (1987) p. 8. Dülmen's argument restates a classical principle in German intellectual history: Wilhelm Dilthey, *Weltanschauung und Analyse des Menschen seit Renaissance und Reformation* (Leipzig, 1921); Ernst Troeltsch, *Aufsätze zur Geistesgeschichte und Religionssoziologie* (Gesammelte Schriften IV), (Aalen, 1966); Heinrich Bornkamm, *Mystik, Spiritualismus und die Anfänge des Pietismus Luthertum* (Gießen, 1926).

²⁵⁴ Görres, *Kirche und Staat*, p. 16.

convincing counter-example to the re-confessionalisation thesis and an alternative to Görres's fear of German national unification. The latter offered a way out of post-Reformation history; Döllinger returned to the Reformation and sought to show how an historical critique of its theological content could provide an ideological-political foundation for a new German Catholic historical consciousness²⁵⁵. For the 'modern' Catholic Church to achieve intellectual legitimacy in nineteenth-century intellectual discourse – one thinks of the example set by Schleiermacher's synthesis of religion and science and Hegel's synthesis of religion and history – it would need to exorcise the fables from its history by creating an intellectual 'realm' in which the theological presuppositions of historical consciousness could be scientifically assessed.

Döllinger's religious convictions led him to believe that it was spiritually necessary to recover the one Christian Church. His intellectual convictions, however, led him to question *how* that one Church was to be determined, how it had arisen and how it must be understood in relation to its past. In a letter of 1880 to 'a lady of high rank' (Lady Charlotte Blennerhassett, with whom Döllinger had corresponded for decades) and nine years after his excommunication, he reflected for a moment on his own life: 'I ought, as the favourite expression of the Jesuits runs, 'to make a sacrifice of my intellect'. But if I did so...there would then no longer be for me any such thing as historical truth and certainty... The very ground would thus be taken away from under my feet, and that, too, for my religious views; since even our religion is founded, of course, on historical

²⁵⁵ Döllinger, *Kleinere Schriften*, p. 161.

facts'²⁵⁶. Döllinger was educated at Mainz in the scholastic tradition. At Munich, however, 'history itself was the critic', Kaufman argues. 'Munich was intent upon understanding the creative thrust of history's criticism'. Lord Acton commented that, 'What Rome resisted was not the judgment of history, but the notion of history'²⁵⁷.

In this regard, Döllinger achieved an understanding of history unique in his time. He sought transparency in the method employed to arrive at historical truths; he rejected inherited truths and thus came to oppose the entire historical edifice of the Roman Church. But this was hardly his intention and his thoughts were often contradictory: 'Should there be a German Catholic Church within the greater Catholic Church?. I answer yes and no. No, when it would challenge the universality of Christendom. And yes, in the sense that every great world-historical people has a character unique to itself, implanted through a higher act of divine creation and through which its world historical mission will be realized... Thus, in modern history there are a few truly world-historical peoples – the Germans, English, Italians, and French - who are the carriers of the whole movement of history'²⁵⁸. But in a lecture to King Maximilian II he stated, 'the Germans have always had political unity – the *Reich* with the Emperor and the *Reichstage* – but lacking is a higher, organic form and unity, that is, a German-national Church'²⁵⁹. Maximilian himself suggested that this was the task of German intellectuals: not only for Bavaria but for all Germany 'should science, in the freest sense, stay apprised of man's regard for divine and political order such that man should subordinate the human to the

²⁵⁶ Döllinger, *Declarations and Letters on the Vatican Decrees, 1869-1887* (Edinburgh, 1891) p. 132.

²⁵⁷ Peter Iver Kaufman, 'Unnatural Sympathies?', p. 556; See also Acton's essay 'Döllinger's Historical Work', *The History of Freedom and Other Essays*, pp. 383, 402, 414-416, 435.

²⁵⁸ Döllinger, *Kleinere Schriften*, F H Reusch, ed., 'Rede gehalten auf der Generalversammlung des katholischen Vereins Deutschlands zu Linz am 26. September, 1850' (Stuttgart, 1890) pp. 105-107.

²⁵⁹ Döllinger, *Über die Wiedervereinigung...*, 'Die deutsche Reformation', Vortrag IV, pp. 58-49.

divine²⁶⁰. From this it is clear that Döllinger looked to the discipline of *history* to produce a German Catholic Church, the consequence of which was his excommunication by Pius IX in 1871. He may have professed in 1850 that belonging to the Church enabled one to be German in the ‘fullest and truest sense and lose not one iota of our national uniqueness’²⁶¹. But the particular method by which he sought to understand that dynamic – *Geschichte* as a means to provide rational explanations of historical change, development, and the relation of past to present – was regarded by Rome as simply dangerous²⁶².

4.3 History versus revelation: Döllinger’s undoing

The specific problem Döllinger sought to understand was why, when, and where religious unity became divorced from national character. His sought to understand religion because God and the spirit of Church demanded it of him, and to understand politics because its understanding was morally incumbent on him after the events of the sixteenth century had politicized religion. This is the thesis he argued in his three-volume history of the Reformation. ‘History as history’ confronted ‘history as revelation’. From this process emerged a different kind of historical understanding, as Owen Chadwick noted: ‘Modern historical consciousness arose within Christianity. The question...meets us whether history was one of the children which Christendom begot and which slowly

²⁶⁰ Cited in Döllinger, *König Maximilian II und die Wissenschaft* (1864), p. 6; see also Goetz, ‘Die baierische Geschichtsforschung...’, p. 273.

²⁶¹ Döllinger, ‘Rede...zu Linz am 26. September, 1850’, *Kleinere Schriften*, pp. 108-109.

²⁶² The tensions between the revealed and secular historiographies were formidable: see Georg G Iggers, *The German Conception of History* (Middletown, 1968) and Josef Höfer, ‘Zum Aufbruch der Neuscholastik im 19. Jahrhundert’, p. 417.

began to change its father'²⁶³. On the one hand, Protestant historians viewed the *Reformation* as an attempt to recover the essence of ancient Christianity in order to understand why late-medieval Catholicism had undergone severe historical change. On the other hand, Döllinger viewed *history* as an attempt to recover the essence of ancient Christianity and to provide an explanation for why the universal Church had shattered. It was not loss of religion but change in the meaning of religion that brought Döllinger to study the Reformation. The argument builds on Siegfried Wollgast's notion that the *Aufklärung* began as Pietism deep within German Protestantism and manifested itself not as a loss of religious conviction, but as the formulation of a new ideal of religion²⁶⁴. An article in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* argues in the same way that the Reformation was the beginning of the spiritual illumination of the work completed by the *Aufklärung* and historical Idealism²⁶⁵.

Ranke's *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation* had constructed a coherence between his conception of history and its 'origins' in Lutheran scriptural hermeneutics. From Döllinger's perspective, Ranke's work functioned as an extension of the intellectual claim of Reformation itself. Because the Reformation had been institutionalized in German Protestant cultural life since the sixteenth century and because that structure was, Döllinger believed, morally flawed, he had to establish the historical basis of Christian morality and then show the impact of the Reformation on it.

²⁶³ Chadwick, *The Secularization...*, p. 189.

²⁶⁴ Siegfried Wollgast, 'Grundlinien oppositionellen weltanschaulich-philosophischen Denkens...', in Günter Vogler, ed. *Wegscheiden der Reformation*. P. 363. On the same point see also Ernst Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*, Tübingen, 1932, p. 180; Fritz Mauthner, *Der Atheismus und seine Geschichte im Abendlande*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1922) p. 161.

²⁶⁵ 'Reform – Reformation', in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 4 (1984) p. 332.

In an address to the first meeting of the *Katholischen Vereins Deutschlands*, held at Mainz held from 3-6 October 1848, immediately following a long summer of work towards a German constitution, Döllinger expressed his dissatisfaction with the Peace of Westphalia in its bicentennial year. He sought to replace the treaty with an entirely new document of 1848, ‘the establishment of a general bill of rights for all Germany and in relation to the churches’²⁶⁶. But also he had to salvage what he could from its history to preserve the validity of his belief in the necessity of reform in the Church and the place of the idea of reform to the essence of the true Church – he did all this, in short, to preserve his conception of history. And at the core of their conception lay the necessity of preserving a German-Catholic Church in Germany.

Johannes Friedrich wrote in 1900 about Döllinger’s interest in the history of the Reformation that ‘the Protestants have had their time to speak. Now is the Catholics’ turn. The great religious movement that created our Fatherland and spread over all Europe and the New World, requires now a different historical understanding’²⁶⁷. If Catholic intellectuals during the *Aufklärung* tended to assimilate their thought into the culturally Protestant, Pietistic tradition, as Gerhard May argued²⁶⁸, Döllinger’s work brought a different conception. The result is what Gunter Vogler calls an ‘alternative Reformation’. Vogler makes his point in the context of Thomas Müntzer and the popular reform movements of the early 1520s, but the concept he develops is highly applicable to Döllinger’s conception of the Reformation: ‘Insofar as the Reformation was not a monolithic event but rather a contradictory conglomeration of interests and ideas’ – and

²⁶⁶ Döllinger, ‘Rede, gehalten auf der ersten Versammlung der katholischen Verein Deutschlands zu Mainz, 3-6 Oktober, 1848’, *Kleinere Schriften*, F. H. Heusch, ed., (Stuttgart, 1890) p. 45.

²⁶⁷ Johannes Friedrich, *Ignaz von Döllinger: Sein Leben auf Grund seines schriftlichen Nachlasses dargestellt*, vol. 2., (Munich, 1900) pp. 235-236.

²⁶⁸ Gerhard May, *Interkonfessionalismus...* p. 17.

is thus to be understood in its homogeneity and its heterogeneity - 'the task is not just to describe its variety, but to explain the relation among its parts'²⁶⁹. 'The subject of the Reformation', Hans-Jürgen Goertz agrees, 'is a 'collective agent'. 'The Reformation loses its concrete form...and thus can be studied only in terms of the historical forms it took, the interaction between reformer, idea and followers that created the movement itself'. The meaning of the Reformation, in other words, cannot be determined from the study of original intentions among its actors²⁷⁰.

Döllinger viewed the seventeenth century through a similar optic which shows a overlap between later-twentieth-century social-historical research on the 'alternative Reformation' – which Ranke loathed – and Döllinger's view of the Reformation from a mid-nineteenth-century Catholic perspective. 'The Reformation', Döllinger wrote, 'was a movement so deeply grounded in its time and developed with such necessity from the circumstances of the Church that all the peoples of Christendom were affected by it'²⁷¹. The question *how* they were affected became the question through which Döllinger reconceived the historical event and meaning of the Reformation; and the form his argument took distinguished between two conceptions of it. One agreed with Luther's hermeneutic intention in the early Reformation to recover the sources which showed the pure and uncontested Church. The other blamed the social, political, and theological course followed by the reformers for exacerbating the schism between the idea of the universal Church and the reality of the Church's historical disintegration. The

²⁶⁹ Gunter Vogler, 'Reformation als Alternative – Alternativen der Reformation', in Vogler, ed., *Wegscheid der Reformation....*, p. 11.

²⁷⁰ Hans-Jürgen Goertz, 'Eine bewegte Epoche: zur Heterogenität reformatorischer Bewegungen', in Gunter Vogler, *ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

²⁷¹ Döllinger, *Über die Wiedervereinigung....*, 'Die deutsche Reformation', Vortrag IV, pp. 52-53.

Reformation was a central but not the sole factor in this process of fragmentation.

Christianity had dissolved into sectarianism²⁷².

Two further strands of thought underpin Döllinger's 'alternative' conception of the Reformation. The first revised Ranke's periodisation. Rather than understanding the epoch of the Reformation as having begun with Luther's initial act of protest in 1517 and ending with the Peace of Augsburg, Döllinger turned his attention to the impact of that theology on the moral welfare of society over the period 1555-1750. On what happened after 1555, Döllinger cited Melanchthon: 'The great house, wild and abandoned by God, lives drunk and deluded, is happy for its false opinions, and cares not a bit for the true calling of God. [...] Surely horrible punishment will follow if this wretched mess cannot be altered through an improvement of our morals'²⁷³. The second shifted the focus from Ranke's notion of 'German history in the age of the Reformation' to the idea of the influence of Lutheran doctrine on the development of Christian doctrine and the nature of European society. Döllinger reduced Ranke's notion of religious reform, social change and political development at the time of the Reformation to analysis of the writings of reformers who later distanced themselves from the initial Lutheran movement. Döllinger's Reformation, in this sense, is a presentation of reformers' reactions against the movement itself. It was a study of disintegration more than integration, decline more than rise. In this perspective, the Reformation showed yet another divergence of the

²⁷² Döllinger, *ibid.*, Vorträge I-II, p. 5. Berndt Hamm argues that contemporary historians have yet to produce an alternative hermeneutic understanding to this either/or conception. In place of the reductionistic 'continuity or disruption', Hamm puts forward the notion of 'continuity and disruption' as a model allowing for the idea that the conglomeration of events and ideas of the sixteenth century was not necessarily a coherent movement in its own time. That is to say, the multiplicity of historical forms of which Goertz writes were reduced in retrospect to something called 'the Reformation'. Berndt Hamm, 'Wie innovative war die Reformation?', *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 27 (2000) p. 483.

²⁷³ Döllinger, *Die Reformation*, vol. 1, pp. 402-403.

institution of the Church from its theological essence²⁷⁴. Döllinger became especially critical of the Church once he had exposed the similarities between the Protestant reformers and the papacy's abuse of critical of the Church. The rise of Protestantism alerted Döllinger to the historical decline of the Church since its inception. If nothing else, his despair was ecumenical.

Accordingly, what saved his work on the Reformation from being purely reactionary was his more abstract concern with the idea of reform within the Church itself. At one point, for example, he suggested that the '*altkirchlichen* elements' in Germany weakened over the sixteenth century allowing Protestantism to dominate, 'like a powerful current'²⁷⁵. Thus he framed the Reformation *within* the greater history of the Church: reformation doctrine and its effects on the individual and entire Protestant communities exemplified the instability and anti-historical tendency of the idea and moral influence of the Reformation. To this extent, Döllinger followed in Ranke's footsteps by casting his historical analysis of the Reformation within a larger conception of German history. The difference was, however, that whereas Ranke saw the period between 1517 and 1839 develop from the Reformation within German history to German history consisting of the historical development of the Reformation itself, Döllinger maintained a distinction between a larger conception of German history (which he saw in relation to the larger history of Christian Europe and the Church) and a more limited conception of the historical development of the Reformation. The two categories were never joined and thus no reunification of the Church could be realized, although it was Döllinger's hope that by exposing the specific nature of the difference between Protestant

²⁷⁴ Döllinger, *Über die Wiedervereinigung*, Vortrag III, pp. 33-34.

²⁷⁵ Döllinger, *ibid.*, Vortrag IV, p. 61.

and Catholic doctrine and society, he could show the historical plausibility of their eventual reconciliation.

Döllinger gave fullest expression to his hope for reconciliation through his conception of history. This was not without its problems, for we must now examine a contradiction embedded in his thought. Having posited the notion of his conception of the Reformation being an 'alternative' to the Protestant, Rankean conception, yet also having alluded to his belief that the history of the Church was also in many instances the history error itself, it becomes important to know the *kind* of conception of history Döllinger turned to alter the historical development of society and the Church as he knew it. In this, his conception of history entailed a specific doctrine of historicism and understanding of the idea of reform and the nature of historical change. The rest of this chapter will argue that Döllinger's conception of the Reformation entailed more than mere *understanding* of the event and its meaning. This much he accomplished in his history of the Reformation published between 1846 and 1848 when he sought to recover certain central ideals of the Reformation, extract them from their historical context, embed them into a nineteenth-century understanding of history, and apply them to political and ecclesiastical problems in the latter third of the nineteenth century. The greatest of these problems was the Church's reactionary entrenchment after a moment of tolerance in the late 1840s. By 1870, Döllinger's problem was no longer with the Reformation, but with his own Church's attack on the philosophical background, methods, findings, and culture of the German nineteenth-century conception of history. It was an attack on human intelligence that Döllinger found unconscionable.

4.4 The human community as the essence of history

Döllinger did not give up hope that he could recover what he imagined to be the morally-right conception of the Church, its community, and its history. Historical understanding was not about technical ‘history’, but rather about the living human communities which are its subject. He believed that the Reformation was the single greatest disruption of historical continuity of European religious life, but credited that disruption with having allowed the creation of a critical historical understanding and altered the basic nature of the human community. The Reformation legitimized the nation-state by defining the distinct realms of politics and spirituality; but the future history of the Reformation became the history of the intentional dissolution of those boundaries. And it became imperative for him to understand the nature of that disruption. Concomitant with understanding came judgment of what the Reformation had accomplished and what it had destroyed. Here Döllinger adopted Möhler’s perspective, aligning himself with a pre-historicist, Enlightenment historical tradition in which a commitment to the truths of history is viewed as commitment to the imperatives of the moral life²⁷⁶. And if the universal Church is the true Church, as Döllinger argued when he cited the Gospel of St. John²⁷⁷, then Protestantism, regarded as sectarianism arising from the division of the Church, must be false. The two confessions are ‘further expositions of the same inner meaning’, Möhler argued²⁷⁸.

Döllinger identified the Lutheran doctrine of Justification (*Rechtfertigungslehre*) as the core of that ‘inner meaning’ whose essence was purely destructive. ‘[a] new

²⁷⁶ Möhler, *Symbolik*, p. 237.

²⁷⁷ Döllinger cited John (17: 21), in *Über die Wiedervereinigung*, Vorträge I, II, p. 12.

²⁷⁸ Möhler, *Symbolik*, p. 4.

Christian freedom', he wrote, 'which allowed individuals to dispense with the statutes of the Church'²⁷⁹. The *effects* of Protestant doctrine on the ecclesiastical, social and political life of all European society were therefore inseparable from the 'inner development' of the idea of justification by faith alone²⁸⁰. That doctrine oppressed the human community by undermining its religious, political, and social traditions²⁸¹. His beliefs about the necessity of tradition were basic to the entire project of cultural revival in early nineteenth-century Germany: the reaction against the Revolutions' destruction of the past manifested itself in the recovery of the complexity of the past. History mattered like never before²⁸². In this regard, Döllinger presaged what Hans-Jürgen Goertz calls the 'inseparability thesis': *Homo politicus* was at the same time *Homo religiosus*²⁸³. Proper historical work would recover the moral value of man, God, society and the Church that the Church itself had been losing since the sixteenth century – not reformation but 'an ever-growing deformation'²⁸⁴. Döllinger set out to redeem the Christian community by

²⁷⁹ Döllinger, *Luther: A Succinct View of his Life and Writings* (London, 1853), p. 36.

²⁸⁰ Victor Conzemius, Church historian and editor of three volumes of Döllinger's correspondence, contradicts Döllinger's intellectual and social-historical treatment of the development of Protestant doctrine. He argues that when approaching a Church-historical problem, the 'profane historian' must admit that religious phenomena are the foundational category of human existence. Victor Conzemius, 'Kirchengeschichte als 'nichttheologische Disziplin'', *Theologische Quartalschrift* 155 (1975) pp. 192-193.

²⁸¹ Richard van Dülmen argues the opposite: 'the Reformation brought into being for the first time a notion of religion entirely and transcendent of temporality'. Richard van Dülmen, 'Reformation und Neuzeit: Ein Versuch', *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 14 (1987) p. 4.

²⁸² See Stephen J Tonsor, 'the idea that new ideas do not spring from living brains but are evolved from those of the dead': 'Lord Acton on Döllinger's Historical Theology', *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1959) XX, pp. 329-352, here p. 335.

²⁸³ It was not until Peter Blickle's *Gemeindereformation: Die Menschen des 16. Jahrhunderts auf dem Weg zum Heil* (Munich, 1985) that the 'inseparability thesis' was first posed as a historical argument itself. Goertz notes: 'The argument for Blickle was not humanity on the way towards secularity, but humanity on the way towards Redemption. *Homo politicus* was at the same time *homo religiosus*'. Hans-Jürgen Goertz, 'Eine bewegte Epoche: zur Heterogenität reformatorischer Bewegungen', p. 30; Peter Blickle, *Gemeindereformation: Die Menschen des 16. Jahrhunderts auf dem Weg zum Heil*. (Munich, 1985).

²⁸⁴ Döllinger, *Kirche und Kirchen*, p. 392.

constructing a conception in which it was possible to recover a conception of theodicy: a demonstration of the historical place of God in religion and politics²⁸⁵.

It was not that Protestantism and Catholicism lacked common doctrine but that factors beyond Scripture made reunification of the Church within the spirit of the Scriptures impossible. Döllinger concluded this explicitly only in 1861²⁸⁶. His work up to that point focused on doctrine *not* held in common, a line of inquiry concerning the Protestant ‘*symbolische Bücher*’ which Möhler in his work *Symbolik* of 1837 had interpreted as historical sources to demonstrate the historical fact of Christendom divided by historical *and* spiritual circumstances. In the mid-1820s, he had argued that the fact of this division could be overcome were only Catholic theologians and historians to adopt what he called a Protestant treatment of history. And this was for good reason, for many Protestant theologians had sought to unite the confessions since the mid-eighteenth century²⁸⁷. By the time Möhler was called to Munich he had become disabused of this desire; after his death, Döllinger omitted from a volume of Möhler’s miscellaneous writings an address to the historian Planck which praised the Protestant understanding of history prevalent at Berlin and Göttingen²⁸⁸. But for Döllinger, by the late 1840s, the

²⁸⁵ Döllinger uses the term *Theodicee* infrequently: *Kirche und Kirchen...*, p. xv.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

²⁸⁷ Gerhard May, *Interkonfessionalismus*, p. 15. May mentions Benedikt Stattler (1728-1797), *Plan zu der allein möglichen Vereinigung im Glauben der Protestanten mit der katholischen Kirche, und den Grenzen dieser Möglichkeit*; Maximilian Prechtls (1752-1832), *Friedenswort an die katholische und protestantische Kirche für ihre Wiedervereinigung* (1810), Michael Aschenbrenner, *Ueber die Herstellung einer allgemeinen christlichen Kirche und ihre Organisation in Ansehung der Glaubenslehre, des Cultus und der Kirchenverfassung. Ein Versuch zur Beendigung der kirchlichen Wirren der Katholiken und Protestanten* (1840).

²⁸⁸ In Acton, *The History of Freedom and other Essays*, p. 378, first published in *English Historical Review* (1890). Vignier argues similarly for Möhler’s high regard for the Protestant historical attitude, *Drei Gestalten...*, p. 11.

situation was much broader than academic partisanship. It concerned the history of the social impact of religious doctrine on intellectuals and non-intellectuals alike.

Here one of many commonalities between Luther and Döllinger arises: both deplore 'wrong' interpretation; both see the dangers posed by wrong interpretation in terms of the spiritual and social welfare of the community of believers; both place the utmost moral value in upholding the pastoral responsibilities of the intellectual. There is truth in the sources and one's task is to discern it. And those who execute those responsibilities must be faithful to their pastoral calling as well as to the history of the documents themselves. Döllinger cited Luther's condemnation of Anabaptist preachers, 'for the Devil knows full well that when the rabble hears well polished-gibes, they become attracted to them and believe uncritically, asking nothing about origin or cause'²⁸⁹. Much of Döllinger's condemnation of the Lutheran Reformation resembled the dim view Luther himself took of the Anabaptists. But whereas Luther saw no good at all in the 'popular Reformation', Döllinger respected the impetus and intention behind the reformer's thought and it resonated clearly in Döllinger's own moral and intellectual objections to the Church.

His bifocal view of Luther remained conceptually problematic as a way of understanding Luther himself, but allowed him to distinguish between Luther's intention to return to the idea of the Church and the kind of society which emerged from the political controversies which engulfed the Luther's theological critique. His turn from Church history to political history of religion enabled him to mediate between these positions. He believed that historical study could be employed to recover a lost past and to modernise it. The problem was not a lack of German national spirit, but the

²⁸⁹ Luther cited in Döllinger, *Die Reformation*, vol. 3, p. 218.

interference of 'foreign' influences in the 'natural' historical development of the spirit. The first interference was the exertion of 'objective' political power by the Roman See. 'The history of the German *Volk* shows a spirit immersed in the Catholic religion. The German national feeling suffered injury by Rome's treatment of German persons, things and interests'²⁹⁰. The second interference was Luther's subjective hermeneutic which lent itself so easily to distortion into a doctrine of political authority which, once that metamorphosis had taken place, bifurcated the German historical community into not only nominal confessional groups, but into opposed intellectual communities.

The problem for which Döllinger had no solution arose from his being fluent in the 'language' of both communities yet at home in neither of them. On the one hand, he resigned himself to the ubiquity of Luther's cultural influence. 'Luther so had powerfully stamped his immortal seal on the German spirit and language that even those who abhor him, as a matter of conscience, as heretic and seducer of the nation, cannot do otherwise than speak with his words and think with his thoughts'. Echoing Ranke's unquestioning belief in Luther's importance as one of the founders of the German intellectual tradition, Döllinger, too, accepted that the critical content of Luther's work had become the *métier* of professional historiography. On the other hand, he maintained his hope that the primeval power of the German people would reassert itself into the flow of history and bring about a non-destructive reformation of its historical development. 'Had there been no Luther – titan of the spiritual world - Germany would still not have remained Catholic'²⁹¹.

²⁹⁰ Döllinger, *Kirche und Kirchen*, p. 9.

²⁹¹ Döllinger, *Über die Wiedervereinigung*, 'Die deutsche Reformation', Vortrag IV, pp. 53-54.

Döllinger associated the reform of the Church with the creation of the German nation. He told a conference of German bishops in 1848 that ‘the German nation is a world-historical nation. [...] The Catholic part of the nation bears the true nationality because it develops in accordance with the past. And because God wills it, with the people retreating from their apostasy, the return to the one Church will commence’²⁹². While Döllinger’s Catholicism put him in the minority among his largely Protestant peers at the Frankfurt parliament, they were united in their resolve to keep the revolution from disintegrating into a popular initiative. The liberals’ search for a new form of national government and society went hand in hand with the emergence of a political discourse concerned with the application of a philosophical idea of freedom which they used to refute the threats of popular and authoritarian rule²⁹³. We have seen that the nobility, capitalist, and worker segments of the demographic spectrum were vastly underrepresented at Frankfurt. The composition of the ‘representative’ body therefore alludes to the a priori assumption Friedrich Christian Dahlman intoned when he wrote that ‘every revolution testifies to an appalling misfortune’²⁹⁴. But the ‘misfortune’ was not social and economic deprivations which had become so acute during the 1840s, but the result of popular revolt to redress those problems. Theodor Welcker argued similarly that the representatives at Paulskirche must protect ‘true freedom’ from the ‘purposeless

²⁹² Döllinger, *Kleinere Schriften*, ‘Gutachten, auf der Konferenz der deutschen Bischöfe zu Würzburg im Oktober und November, 1848’, pp. 68-69.

²⁹³ See Rudolf Vierhaus, ‘Liberalismus’, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart, 1972ff) pp. 741ff.

²⁹⁴ Friedrich Christian Dahlman, *Die Politik auf den Grund und das Maß der gegebenen Zustände zurückgeführt* (Berlin, 1924), p. 178; cited in Walter Grab, ed., *Die Revolution von 1848/1849: Eine Dokumentation* (Stuttgart, 1998) p. 12.

majority vote' of the 'unorganized masses'²⁹⁵. The liberals' intention was to limit the scope of the 'revolution' to a political movement among intellectuals²⁹⁶. Friedrich Wilhelm IV's declaration on March 21 1848, demonstrated a bond between the Prussian throne and liberal opinion. 'Germany is gripped by an inner turmoil and is threatened also by outside dangers...', the King warned. 'Rescue from this doubly urgent danger is possible only by unifying the German princes and peoples under the closest common rule'²⁹⁷.

The national assembly decided for a *kleindeutsch-preussische* solution to the German national question; on 28 March 1849, the representatives offered the Prussian King the title of emperor. His refusal not only dashed the liberals' hopes for a constitutional monarchy and the establishment of constitutional proscription of powers, responsibilities, and freedoms, but it defeated an entire conception of the political and moral forces of history and their agency to 'complete' what the past had left undone. The German political and cultural nation, cloven by the Reformation, would remain so for the present. To Döllinger's mind, the future of the Reformation was his own political present. His historical construction of the Reformation first in 1846-1848 and in speeches and other writings over the subsequent twenty years, was an attempt to shore-up his increasingly precarious historical epistemology. As Pius IX entrenched against European liberalism, an opposition which led to the 1863 encyclical *Quanta Cura* and culminated

²⁹⁵ Walter Grab, *ibid.*, p. 12; from the speeches of Carl Theodor Welcker, 12 Dec. 1848, in F Wigar, ed., *Stenographischer Bericht über die Verhandlungen der deutschen konstituierenden Nationalversammlung* (Frankfurt a. M., 1848) vol. 6, p. 6046.

²⁹⁶ Given the prominence of the *Bildungsbürgertum* elite in the liberals' conception of who would hold actual political power in the constitutional monarchy, Lothar Gall's analysis that the liberals' desire to create a *klassenlosen Bürgergesellschaft* seems to miss the point that the liberals were hoping to replace the ruling nobility with the ruling intellectual professionals. See Lothar Gall, ed., *Liberalismus* (Cologne, 1976).

²⁹⁷ 'Proklamation des Königs von Preußen', 21 March 1848, in Grab, *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

for Döllinger in his excommunication in 1871, the historian found himself placed in a position similar to Luther's before he had secured political protection from the Saxon princes. Increasingly, Döllinger had little to rely on but his religious conscience and the intellectual purchase that gave him on an intractable historical problem. As Owen Chadwick wrote, 'in western Europe the ultimate claim of the liberal was religious. Liberal faith rested in origin upon the religious dissenter'²⁹⁸.

4.5 The Reformation: plague and panacea of national identity

Döllinger's understanding of the Reformation emerged from his attempts to answer two questions: in what ways was the relationship of the individual to temporal and spiritual authority the product of history?; and secondly, how had this relationship changed under the moral influence of Protestant doctrine? Unlike Ranke and the Protestant liberals who believed that German history since the Reformation was a winning proposition, Döllinger faced the difficult problem of understanding how the world-historical rupture of the western Church could have, in the same culture nation, led to the emergence of a conception of politics which would recover a political space in which the religious conviction and the institution of the Church were autonomous.

Two years after his excommunication, Döllinger held an embittered, Darwinian view of the Church's fate in post-Reformation Germany. 'Church history is a large-scale religious experiment: what survives or becomes stronger over the passing of time has rightly earned the prize of existence; what declines and over time and disappears was not

²⁹⁸ Chadwick, *The Secularization*, p. 26.

worth the bother of existence'²⁹⁹. This should not suggest that he had lost his religion; he had merely lost faith in the historical institution of the Church whose true essence he had sought to recover in contemporary historical language. He began to develop a redemptive view of history and a doctrine of objective political, and subjective spiritual, freedom through the travails of 1849 and his history of the Reformation was a decisive turning point in kind of history he wrote and what kind of subject matter he wrote about. He turned from histories of the Church and Islam in the late 1830s to studies of the early Church and more polemical works on the historical fabrications of the papacy and the incongruence of the history of the papacy with the history of the Church. He struggled for the latter half of his life to reconcile history and freedom with historical reality and the subjective experience of disappointment. He did not *choose* to dissent. Circumstances beyond his control forced it; objection had become the only conscionable thing to do in an otherwise unconscionable situation. In his final refusal to submit to the doctrine of papal infallibility, Döllinger declaimed that, 'In the present complicated position of the Church it is a purely historical question which must be treated and decided only with the means placed at our disposal for the purpose, and according to the rule which hold for every historical investigation, and for every ascertainment of facts of past ages, facts which accordingly belong to history'³⁰⁰.

Instead of dismissing the Reformation as the destruction of historical continuity – as Görres so often argued – he deconstructed the nominal concept of 'the Reformation' into three conceptual issues of politics, religion, and intellectual life, which were borne of

²⁹⁹ Döllinger, *Über die Wiedervereinigung*, Vorträge I, II, pp. 5-6.

³⁰⁰ Döllinger to Archbishop von Scherr, 28 March 1871, *Briefe und Erklärungen über die Vatikanischen Decrete, 1869-1887*. F Reuch, ed. (Munich, 1890; reprinted Darmstadt, 1968) p. 99.

those kinds of strife in the early sixteenth-century. The Reformation did not annihilate history, but rather altered its nature: new forms of historical existence had come into existence and these were the essence of historical problems of his own time: a view of the individual as *homo religiosus* and *homo politicus*, the idea of individual freedom, and the idea that since the Reformation, history progressed consistently rather than recurred cyclically³⁰¹. Döllinger could not accept that Luther's promise of recovering the historical and spiritual essence of Christianity had devolved into a doctrine of moral depravity and political abuse. The disjunction between what history *had become* and what it *should be* formed Döllinger's conception of history as a doctrine of redemptive hope, for the past and the present militated against what he believed historical development could have achieved for society. The subjunctive tense of his experience of history was inconceivable to Ranke, for whom the present existed comfortably in an historically-contiguous ideological world. It was deeply unsettling to Döllinger that he believed himself to be morally right yet was alienated from the institution he sought to rescue from error.

This was not God's but man's failing and Döllinger used history, not belief, to attempt to understand where humanity had gone wrong. Like Ranke, however, Döllinger understood his power as an historian to consist in part in mediating between God and man - between history's moral powers and historical reality. One consequence of his confrontation with his own historical subjectivity was that he distinguished between abstract historical forces, to which individuals are subjected, and individuals' representation of that experienced of subjectivity. He wrote in 1861 that, 'We live out of

³⁰¹ See Robert A Nisbet, *Social Change and History: Aspects of the Western Theory of Development* (New York and London, 1969); G W Trompf, *The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought: From Antiquity to the Reformation* (Berkeley and London, 1979).

hope and console ourselves with the conviction that history, or some other [...] social, political and ecclesiastical process of development, will come to fruition before our eyes. This will take all believing Christians by the hand to the collective struggle of defence against the destructive movement of time³⁰². The foe in that struggle displayed the same anti-historical characteristics as Luther once had: 'It is one of his commonest artifices', he railed against the reformer, 'first to distort a doctrine or an institution into the most absurd caricature, and then to declaim against it as he wishes, forgetting that what he is opposing is, in such a shape, a mere phantom of his own tortured imagination'³⁰³. He sided with Erasmus who had decried Luther as a charlatan: 'Luther preaches his beliefs everywhere, but where is he? In him we see only word of the flesh and not a trace of spirituality'³⁰⁴.

The problem was not the idea of reform, nor Luther's claims that the Church had erred, nor even that Luther had created an alternative theology to get around the Church's failings. 'The reason lies deeper, solely in Luther's individuality. One sees how he was driven by his temperament, an inner fear of his own knowledge, to fault the Church, construing every small fault to be its full essence'³⁰⁵. It was not 'solely' Luther's personal depravity that concerned him, but through the moral perversion of his autistic character he allowed himself to be numbed to the social and political influence of his doctrine. Luther, in other words, had turned against the human community whose traditions, institutions, and continuity were what enabled the existence of historical consciousness and identity. Döllinger's construction of the Reformation attempted to show how that

³⁰² Döllinger, *Kirche und Kirchen*, p. xxxii.

³⁰³ Döllinger, *Luther: A Succinct view*, p. 94.

³⁰⁴ Erasmus, *Sendschrift*, 'Wider diejenigen, die sich fälschlich rühmen, Evangelisch zu seyn', in Döllinger, *Die Reformation*, vol. 1, pp. 13-14.

³⁰⁵ Döllinger, *ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 252-253.

destructive tendency was merely one of several possible outcomes. Reform and history could be reunited and he amassed sources which showed that Luther's Protestant contemporaries had believed this. In other words, there was neither one 'Reformation' nor one variety of 'Protestantism' and its destructive influences were not an historical *fait accompli*. 'I cherish the hope', wrote Georg Wigel in 1530, 'that once the princes of the [Protestant] sects have harvested the evil fruits of their orchards, that they will come to think differently about the state of things. To be sure, this...schism will not last for long'³⁰⁶. This attitude is further evident in Döllinger's appreciation for Melanchthon's hope that the Augsburg Confession of 1530 would close the schism which had divided Christianity. As Peter Neuner suggests, Döllinger's desire to reconcile the confessions drew directly on Melanchthon's conciliatory attitude³⁰⁷.

Döllinger's conciliatory stance also helped locate his historical voice in nineteenth-century historiography. Ranke's interpretation in the early 1840s envisaged Luther as the point of human contact for the metaphysical forces of history, a Moses-figure for the world-historical spirit of the early sixteenth century. 'It is true, Luther left the Roman Church, or rather, was removed from it, and also had done more damage than any other person. [But] when we set eyes on the world-historical movement of his mentality and doctrine, it is clear that Luther is the organ through which the Latin Church reformed itself into greater accord with the original tendency of Christianity as a freer, less hierarchical development'³⁰⁸. Johann Adam Möhler's condemnation of Protestantism was also a retort to Ranke's conception. 'We Catholics have an eternally changing individual formation of a general principle, whether through this or that person, or time,

³⁰⁶ Döllinger, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 34-35.

³⁰⁷ See Peter Neuner, *Döllinger als Theologe der Ökumene* (Paderborn, 1979).

³⁰⁸ Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation*, Andreas, ed., vol. 1, pp. 481-483.

which elevates the general [...] But the Protestant's entire system consists of nothing but an individual which is transcendent to the point of universality. Luther legislated the necessity of the self [*eines Ichs*] which made itself the point around which all should gather; in short, he elevated himself to the position of Christ³⁰⁹.

Döllinger assimilated Ranke and Möhler's arguments in his interpretation of Luther in the late 1840s. As Pius IX became more energetic in the early 1860s about asserting the absolute authority of the papacy, Döllinger retaliated by exposing other cases in history of extraordinary claims for temporal power. He founded his loathing on ethical-political reasoning rather than any specific theological claims – a perspective which he imparted to Acton³¹⁰ - which reiterated the danger he saw in the social and political impact of Luther's concept of the transcendent self on the fabric of the Christian community. The declaration of papal infallibility would force the history of the present back into a past form from which it had evolved: infallibility would be anti-historical, 'as if a hitherto free community were suddenly put under the yoke of an absolute monarchy'³¹¹.

The declaration of papal infallibility elevated a human individual above what was historically and spiritually human, and therefore could not be considered a 'reformation', in the sense of returning to an original principle, but rather deformation, for the idea of the Church was intentionally subverted. Claims to infallibility disrespected not only the history of the Church, but undermined the legitimacy of history itself. Döllinger, for this reason, was more than a Church historian, for he relocated the papal claims from the theological context of Pius IX's justification to the realm of political ethics. In this regard

³⁰⁹ Möhler, *Symbolik*, pp. 9-10.

³¹⁰ Lord Acton, *The History of Freedom and other Essays* (London, 1907), p. xxvi.

³¹¹ Döllinger, *Declarations and Letters*, p. 57.

Victor Conzemius suggested that ‘whether the confessionally-engaged Church historian likes it or not, Church history is studied and researched outside the theological faculty. Perhaps the future of Church history lies with the profane historians, believers and unbelievers’³¹². Indeed ‘it can no longer be denied that a force of secularization has penetrated Europe for a century’, Döllinger wrote in 1861. ‘In our time, the ties between worldly functions and activities and the clergy are not an element of strength, but of weakness’³¹³: the historical role of the clergy as the purveyors of truth had become an artifact. The meaning of Christian piety had shifted from subservience to the secular-institutional function of the Church as the standard of pious devotion to the subjective search for an autonomous notion of truth whose pursuit was itself an act of piety. Intellectual activity, then, became a form of religious devotion³¹⁴. Therefore ‘we [who reject the Ultramontane papacy] believe our piety owes its first duties to the Divine institution of the Church and to the truth, and it is precisely this piety which constrains us to oppose...every disfigurement or disturbance either of the one or the other’³¹⁵. With this radical shift in understanding of the meaning and practice of Christian piety, Döllinger had shown how the papacy was neither necessary to nor legitimate in the temporal or spiritual authority to which it laid claim.

³¹² Victor Conzemius, ‘Kirchengeschichte als ‘nichttheologische’ Disziplin’, *Theologische Quartalschrift* 155 (1975) p. 192.

³¹³ Döllinger, *Kirche und Kirchen*, pp. 670-671.

³¹⁴ This resonated with Hegel’s thesis that the unity of the subject of history, whether in terms of the completeness of subjective experience individuality or the objective coherence of an idea or process, remains a religious postulate without verifiable empirical and philosophical foundation. See Iwan Iljin, *Die Philosophie Hegels als kontemplative Gotteslehre* (Bern, 1946) p. 336.

³¹⁵ Janus [Döllinger and Johann Friedrich], *The Pope and the Council* (2nd English ed. London, 1869) pp. xx-xxi.

These objections made Döllinger the papacy's nineteenth-century Luther, for once the historian accepted that the claims of the papacy were falsely represented as theological matters, his focus gravitated necessarily towards the ethics of secular power. This, in turn, was accompanied by an epistemological shift in his understanding of the foundation of historical consciousness and the ideological function of historical understanding. His central preoccupation became the history of the individual's development as a subjectively free and autonomous being. Once he had reconceived Christian piety as the foundation of individual subjective consciousness, the history of the institution of the Church became the study of impositions of power and creed on the individual, incursions, in other words, into the individual's freedom to distinguish between the true and false Church. The political 'settlement' of the Reformation reached at the Treaty of Augsburg in 1555 – which Hegel and Ranke regarded as a positive political assurance of Protestantism's existence – exemplified to Döllinger exactly the kind of amalgamation of religious identity and political enforcement he believed had caused the destruction of the true historical purpose of the Christian faith: to make the individual believer subjectively free before all save God. 'Freedom consists of not only not having to do that which I do not want to do. For it must be generally understood that no one may be coerced into belonging to a religious confession, and that one may actually declare himself to be without a confession at all, and the state must protect one's right to do so'³¹⁶. This was the protection of the notion that the individual could enjoy the subjective freedom to exist legitimately in his objection to the world around him.

³¹⁶ Döllinger, 'Rede, gehalten in der 64. Sitzung der deutschen konstituierenden Nationalversammlung zu Frankfurt am 22. August 1848', *Kleinere Schriften*, p. 24. 'Der Religionsfrieden setzt Religionsspaltung und die Unmöglichkeit, diese Spaltung zu Überwinden, voraus. Mit dem Religionsfrieden wurde in konfessionell geteilten Staaten des 16. Jahrhunderts versucht, die zerstörte

Döllinger associated religious and political persuasion with the violent disruption of social life, as in the deleterious moral effects of Lutheran doctrine, and also the falsification of what science recognised as historical truth, as unnecessary and avoidable consequences of the exercise of morally corrupt forms of political authority. A time had again come in the political life of the nation to bring about the kind of enlightened subjectivity which German intellectual life had achieved first with Luther and later with Hegel. 'All of science derives from its historical development, it lives from its traditional past as the tree from its roots. The Reformation seized the principle of tradition and historical continuity at the very point at which the intellectual consciousness of man is focused'³¹⁷.

The discipline of critical history as Döllinger and Ranke understood it exemplified how 'Germany' was already unified through its intellectual culture. Both men understood themselves as having been 'called to the priesthood of science'³¹⁸. Religious, cultural, and local-political differences were absorbed by but not lost within this universal calling; Döllinger's identity was both culturally Bavarian and also 'intellectually' German; he identified with the idea of Germany as the 'spiritual centre' because the writing of history contributed to its formation in the same way that a good politician contributes to the health of the state. 'History is the difficult task of regarding beliefs, systems, wishes, the phenomena and facts most adequate for recognition and establishment. It is thus something divine that we never fully reach, for only God sees the

Glaubenseinheit durch einen politischen Frieden zu ersetzen': E Wolgast, 'Religionsfrieden als politisches Problem der frühen Neuzeit', *Historische Zeitschrift* 282 (2006) p. 95. See also Axel Gotthard, *Der Augsburger Religionsfriede* (Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte, vol. 48) (Münster, 2004).

³¹⁷ Döllinger, *Die Reformation*, vol. 1, pp. 491-492.

³¹⁸ Döllinger, *König Maximilian II und die Wissenschaft*, pp. 14-15.

matter in full clarity: we must make do in fog and veil'³¹⁹. When he proclaimed several pages later that Ranke was the 'most respected historian of Germany', perhaps he was alluding to Ranke's allegory of history as a divine hieroglyph³²⁰. In Döllinger and Ranke, the scientific 'religion' of history found, momentarily, two protagonists whose complementary views bridged the *Glaubensspaltung* which had plagued the formation of German national identity since the early sixteenth century.

The Church now widened the cleft. He not only showed the papacy's own historical justification of its spiritual existence and right of temporal rule to consist of historical falsification. To do so, he had adopted and furthered a new doctrine of history which Luther had inaugurated. It argued that the search for the intellectual foundations of subjective freedom itself compelled him and all modern intellectuals to accept that the Reformation had begun the methodological search for historical truth and the process of moral cleansing and which, by the mid-nineteenth century, had become the central task of intellectual life. 'History' was not an abstract process: it was the ethical realm in which intellectual life was possible and which showed how humanity shapes its 'historical' world. On July 21, 1870, three days after Pius IX's official declaration of infallibility, Archbishop von Scherr of Munich forced Döllinger to respond to the development. To the archbishop's question, 'So, shall we start over and begin to work for the holy Church'?, the historian replied, 'Yes, for the old Church'. The Archbishop declared in return that, 'There is only one Church, none new and none old'. 'But man has *made* a new one', Döllinger retorted, attempting to show his opponent why, from a historical

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

understanding, it was impossible to concede the claims of the papacy³²¹. ‘The papacy is not a Being but a Result, not an End, but a Means’³²². The result, many historians conclude, is that Döllinger, ‘ultimately, was fully isolated’ from the Church he had sought to redeem³²³.

In the 1850s and 60s there was more than a new Church in the making. Ranke and Döllinger’s ecumenical historical understanding did not transfer to the generation of their students. Johannes Janssen vacillated over but did not condemn the declaration of papal infallibility. Johann Gustav Droysen, Heinrich von Sybel, and Heinrich von Treitschke resigned their hopes – rather too eagerly in Sybel and Treitschke’s case - for the marriage of liberal ideals to the political form of a constitutional monarchy. The *realpolitisch* solution Bismarck offered his fellow Prussians achieved German national unification at the expense of the kind of negative freedoms which Döllinger argued were the foundation of political existence. Instead of being a right conferred by man’s existence, subjective freedom of religious consciousness became a right the state would confer only when it was expedient, or not, to a larger political calculus. By all appearances it seemed that Germany was entering a second confessional age, and Prussian historiography cast the future of the Reformation as the victory of a Protestant kind of statecraft. Theodor Mommsen captured the partisan mood of 1866: ‘It is a wonderful feeling to be present

³²¹ Döllinger, dialogue of 21 July 1870, cited in Johannes Friedrich, *Ignaz von Döllinger. Sein Leben auf Grund seines schriftlichen Nachlasses*, vol. 3 (Munich, 1901), p. 547; Victor Conzemius, ‘Die Kirchenkrise Ignaz von Döllingers’, *Historisches Jahrbuch* 108 (1988) 2, p. 406.

³²² Döllinger, *Kirche und Kirchen*, pp. ix-x.

³²³ Otto Weiss places particular emphasis on Döllinger’s alienation. See his ‘Das Gedächtnis des 100. Todestages Johann Josef Ignaz von Döllingers: Ein Forschungsbericht’, *Historisches Jahrbuch* 112 (1992) p. 485.

when world history turns a corner. It is no longer a hope but a fact that Germany has a future and that the future will be determined by Prussia³²⁴.

³²⁴ As cited in A Wucher, *Theodor Mommsen* (Göttingen, 1956), p. 151; see also James J. Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century*. 1978, p. 123.

CHAPTER 5: The future is Prussian: Johann Gustav Droysen, Heinrich von Treitschke, and Heinrich von Sybel

5.1 A transcendental history of the present

The early nineteenth-century German understanding of history and its relation to the Reformation, insofar as it has been considered in the works of Hegel, Ranke, and Döllinger, has tended in two directions. Hegel and Ranke attributed to the Reformation a positive influence on Germany's world-historical development; Döllinger saw the event as the beginning of the rupture of the Germany's historical unity and the corruption of history's ethical purpose.

Hegel and Ranke, in different ways, sought to define and legitimate a worldview centered specifically on the Prussian monarchy and the construction of Protestant-German cultural identity and political institutionalisation in the years after 1817. Hegel believed that his own time saw the completion of world historical development in which German civilisation would harmonise the ideal world with historical reality. The theological consequence of this development was that it replaced the Christian conception of God with a transcendent conception of human reason. This, he believed, demonstrated that restoration Germany had reached a singularly advanced and revealing place in world history, a political equivalent in the cultural-historical world to what Christians had seen in the appearance of Jesus Christ. The rational individual, opting freely into the political community and freely submitting to its rule, reconciled human

subjectivity with the objective, external historical world. The result was not only a way of relating the cultural and political aggregation of the post-Revolution German Confederation to the notion that its existence was historically necessary, but of doing so through an ideological language appropriate to its place in history. One manifestation of that language was the definition of a kind of political community with politically and historically conscious intellectuals at its core, ‘the bureaucracy that came to be called liberal: the “general estate[...] which made the general interests of the social situation’ its business, and whose ‘private interests were satisfied in its work for the common good’³²⁵. At the foundation of that community was the belief that the present was the future of the Reformation: both praised and condemned, the events of the sixteenth century had not lost their formative power, were not yet complete in their historical development, and expressed themselves in the ethical nature of political and cultural forms of the present.

The last chapter explored how Döllinger blamed the future of the Reformation for the defeat of liberals’ efforts to secure religious and civil freedoms which the Catholic Church and the Protestant confessions had prevented since the Reformation. At the same time he predicated his entire understanding of history on a belief in the historical development of human freedom. An insurmountable conflict arose, for those terms inhered directly in some of the most original Protestant doctrine and intellectual thought to arise during the Reformation. The very idea he condemned recurred elsewhere as the promise of individual political freedom, and this he had hoped to redeem.

³²⁵ Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*, 1821, §205. Cited in Dieter Langewiesche, *Liberalism in Germany* (Princeton, 2000) p. 6.

It was a defeat shared by many, Catholic and Protestant alike. For in different ways it came to define a larger group of German historians who were almost exclusively Protestant and for whom the Hegelian and Rankean heritage failed to address what they believed was 'history's' remit: to enable understanding of the historical development of the individual and the state as real and ethical beings in the present. This, simply, was the process of subjective emancipation through a historical hermeneutic which would show why the state was the embodiment of that freedom. Historical narrative of the *present* became the basis of this urgent sense of historical community in the context of politics³²⁶. When this liberation was not achieved at the Frankfurt Parliaments of 1848-49, the intellectual 'middle' left the congresses disappointed but not disillusioned.

Friedrich Georg Dahlmann, Karl Welcker, Georg Waitz, Georg Gervinus, and Max Duncker, who had all been academic historians before Frankfurt, re-engaged with the academy and re-expressed their hopes and energies for national unification after its disappointments in the language of academic historiography³²⁷. Theodor Mommsen, for example, founded and edited the *Preussische Jahrbücher* in 1848 at the University of Kiel, echoing Ranke's *Historisch-politische Zeitschrift* of 1831-32³²⁸. While the purpose of Ranke's journal was to show for the first time how history could be made to serve

³²⁶ On the inescapability of historical present-mindedness, see Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of history* (Cambridge MA, 2004).

³²⁷ See Wolfgang Hock, *Liberales Denken im Zeitalter der Paulskirche. Droysen und die Frankfurter Mitte* (Münster, 1957), as cited in Georg Iggers, *The German Conception of History* (Middletown, 1968).

³²⁸ On a parallel development in politically-engaged partisan scholarship, see Dagmar Bussick, *'Mit Gott für König und Vaterland!': die Neue preußische Zeitung (Kreuzzeitung) 1848-1892*. (Münster, 2002), and as cited in Iggers, *The German Conception of History*, Otto Westphal, *Welt- und Staatsauffassung des deutschen Liberalismus. Eine Untersuchung über die Preußischen Jahrbücher und den konstitutionellen Liberalismus in Deutschland von 1848 bis 1863* (Munich, 1919).

politics, Mommsen was in a position to show how politics already served history³²⁹.

From the late 1850s, that position became the common standpoint for the moderate liberal historians. Several years later Georg Waitz wrote that the future of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* lay in leading the 'rising demands of science'. 'No other nation possesses a project such as this; under the German Reich, with the cooperation of all the national forces, the *Monumenta* embodies the science of history and love of the Fatherland'³³⁰.

These feelings and ambitions were largely shared by the historians Johann Gustav Droysen³³¹, Heinrich von Treitschke³³², and Heinrich von Sybel³³³, whose intellectual

³²⁹ On the Prussian historians' orientation in the present, see Carl-Georg Faber, 'Realpolitik als Ideologie. Die Bedeutung des Jahres 1866 für das politische Denken in Deutschland. *Historische Zeitschrift* 203 (1966).

³³⁰ Georg Waitz, 'Zukunft der Monumenta Germaniae Historica', *Historische Zeitschrift* 30 (1874) pp. 1, 13.

³³¹ Johann Gustav Droysen (1808 Treptow an der Riga – 1884 Berlin) studied philosophy and philology at the University of Berlin and taught at the Gymnasium zum Grauen Kloster in Berlin from 1829; he accepted an *außerordentlicher* professorship in history at the University of Kiel in 1840, and then full professorships at Jena in 1851 and finally Berlin in 1859 where he remained until his death. Droysen came to contemporary politics through his involvement in the Schleswig-Holstein problem and represented the provisional government of Kiel at the Frankfurt National Assembly. His principal works include: *Geschichte Alexanders des Grossen* (1833); *Geschichte des Hellenismus* (1836-1843); *Das Leben Feldmarschalls Grafen Yorck von Wartenburg* (1851-1852); *Historik* (1857); his *Geschichte der preußischen Politik* (1855-1886) was the definitive work on the *preußisch-kleindeutsch* concept of German nationality.

³³² Heinrich von Treitschke (1834 Dresden – 1896 Berlin) studied history and economics at the universities of Bonn, Leipzig, Tübingen, and Freiburg im Breisgau. He habilitated in 1858 and was appointed in 1863 as *außerordentlicher* professor of *Staatswissenschaften* at Freiburg. He became a full professor at Kiel in 1866 which he left a year later for Heidelberg; lastly, in 1874 he accepted Ranke's chair at the University Berlin. From 1858 he edited the *Preußische Jahrbücher*, the journal in which his blurry distinction between history and partisan politics, in addition to his anti-Semitism and loathing of Catholics, most clearly reflected. He engaged politically as a member of the Reichstag from 1871-1884; in 1879 he left the national liberal party and veered to the right. His principal work is the *Deutsche Geschichte im 19. Jahrhundert* (1879-1894) in which he legitimated Prussia's political ambitions. Other works include: *Die Lösung der schleswig-holsteinischen Frage. Eine Erwiderung* (1865); *Zehn Jahre deutscher Kämpfe* (1866-1874); *Schriften zur Tagespolitik* (1874); *Luther und die deutsche Nation. Ein Vortrag* (1884).

³³³ Heinrich von Sybel (1834 Düsseldorf – 1895 Dresden) studied history in Berlin under Ranke. He accepted an *außerordentlicher* professorship at Bonn in 1841 and full professorships at Marburg in 1846 and Munich in 1856. He inaugurated the historical seminar in Munich in 1857 and founded the *Historische Zeitschrift* in 1859; later, he was director of the Prussian state archives in Berlin from 1875-1895. His political activities began in 1848 when he was a representative at the Paulskirche *Vorparlament*; his politics continued in capacities as an *Abgeordneter* in the Prussian *Abgeordnetenhaus* from 1862-1864 and in the Reichstag of the *Norddeutschen Bundes* during the period of *Kulturkampf* (1872-1880) when he

influence on the relationship between German historiography and statecraft cannot be overestimated³³⁴. Over the period of their intellectual activity, roughly 1840 to the mid 1880s, the focus of how, why, and to what end they sought to implement the ethical content of history's purpose shifted from the individual to the super-individual nation-state. They did not agree on the means or even the objectives of this change, but they agreed that history's foundation was ethical and its application the realm of the political. Also common to all three was the positivist conviction that historical knowledge is cumulative, for which process the state became the defining piece of evidence and its history the highest ethical expression. They formed the belief that the discipline of history was the only mode of human understanding appropriate to guiding that progress and they were optimistic about their ability to build on the past and bring into existence the kind of historical world they had envisaged. Political set-backs in the 1850s were experienced as

was most critical of Bismarck. His main works include: *Entstehung des deutschen Königtum* 1844); *Geschichte der Revolutionszeit 1789-1795* (1853-1860; extended through 1800 in vols. 4 and 5 in 1870-1879); *Die Begründung des Deutschen Reiches durch Wilhelm I* (1889-1895); *Kleine historische Schriften* (1863-1881); *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (1874); *Vorträge und Abhandlungen* (1897).

³³⁴ Utz Haltern grouped these three historians together on account of their shared political aspirations and understanding of the 'presentness' of history's ethical power: 'Geschichte und Bürgertum: Droysen-Sybel-Treitschke'. *Historische Zeitschrift* 259 (1994). Georg Iggers' chapter on the Prussian School is especially strong. See his *The German Conception of History* (Littleton, 1968). Since the late 1960s, historians have begun to locate Droysen's originality in the synthetic power of his historical writing and his powerful theoretical argument for the philosophical necessity and scientific autonomy of the discipline of history. The philosophically-engaged revisionist studies of Droysen include M J Maclean, 'Johann Gustav Droysen and the Development of Historical Hermeneutics'. *History and Theory* 21 (1982); Jörn Rüsen, *Begriffene Geschichte: Genesis und Begründung der Geschichtstheorie J. G. Droysens*. (Paderborn, 1969); see also Irene Kohlstrunk. *Logic and History in Droysen's Theory of History* (Wiesbaden, 1980); Robert Southard, *Droysen and the Prussian School of History*. (Lexington, KY, 1995); Thomas Burger, 'Droysen's Defense of Historiography: A Note'. *History and Theory* 16 (1977). Historians' interest in Treitschke has tended to focus on his energetic nationalism and attacks on Catholicism. See K H Metz, 'The Politics of Conflict: Heinrich von Treitschke and the Idea of Realpolitik', *History and Political Thought* 3 (1982); A Biefang, 'The Dispute Concerning Treitschke's *Deutsche Geschichte* in 1882/1883: On the Splitting of National Liberalism and the Establishment of a National-Conservative view of History', *Historische Zeitschrift* 262 (1996); Walter Bußmann, *Treitschke: Sein Welt- und Geschichtsbild* (Göttingen, 1952); Bußmann, 'Treitschke als Politiker', *Historische Zeitschrift* 177 (1954) pp. 249-279; On Sybel, see Bußmann, *Heinrich von Sybel 1817-1895*. In: *Bonner Gelehrte. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Wissenschaft in Bonn. Geschichtswissenschaften* (Bonn, 1968). For a Marxist perspective on the tendencies of the Prussian historians see Hans Schleier, *Sybel und Treitschke. Antidemokratismus und Militarismus im historisch-politischen Denken großbourgeoiser Geschichtsideologen* (Berlin, 1965).

defeats of varying severity. In the years between 1849 and Bismarck's conciliatory act of supporting a new federal parliament in 1860, Prussia's acquisition of Schleswig in 1864, occupation of the then-Austrian Holstein and Prussia's subsequent defeat of Austria at Königgrätz in the summer of 1866, the Prussian historians became impatient with the discrepancy between history's promise and history's reality. Already in 1843 Droysen felt the Prussian cause tug at his heart: 'It distresses me that I've sold my whole life's work to antiquity; by a thousand times I'd rather turn my efforts to the striving present'³³⁵. Once he had done just that, he still found reason to be troubled. He reacted sourly when the Catholic Assembly met in Vienna in September, 1853, to unite Catholic intellectuals within a *wissenschaftliche* academy: Prussia had been thrown onto the defensive; 'It is gruesome how far the spiritual life of the nation has sunk...now that Berlin no longer has its gravitational pull'³³⁶! 'I am greatly amused by the nonsense of the world'³³⁷, he wrote several years later.

To rectify these disappointments, intellectuals used the substantial powers they held in the German universities to propagate their political wishes. Rudolf Haym, who was more a political philosopher than historian, took over the editorship of the *Preussische Jahrbücher* in 1859, with the purpose, he proclaimed, of 'representing the liberal-national perspectives and objectives of Prussia with the weapons of the scientific attitude'³³⁸. This aggressive mood reflected the urgency with which these historians approached the past, and particularly the Reformation which they used to justify and

³³⁵ Droysen to Welcker, 12.9.1843, *Briefwechsel*. R Hübner, ed. 2 vols. *Deutsche Geschichtsquellen des 19. Jahrhunderts*, vols 25-26. (Stuttgart, 1929). vol. 1, p. 252.

³³⁶ Droysen to Schulze, 19.10.1853, in *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 182.

³³⁷ Droysen to Karl Francke, not dated, but February/March 1856, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 405.

³³⁸ Cited by Karl Kupisch, 'Die Wandlungen des Nationalismus im liberalen deutschen Bürgertum', in Horst Zilleßen, ed., *Volk, Nation und Vaterland. Der deutsche Protestantismus und der Nationalismus* (Gütersloh, 1970).

drive forward their political and intellectual commitments over the second half of the nineteenth century. The task became an ethical imperative of disciplining the idea of history with the purpose of ‘allowing’ it to reveal history’s destiny for the German community. The dilation of the question of German nationality into *kleindeutsch* and *großdeutsch* arguments indicated the sustained power of confessional divisions in German national life which had their spiritual origins in the theological conflicts of the sixteenth century and their political origins in their settlements. The question was how to release the ethical powers inherent in the nation’s history and how to create a political form in which they would be most free to effect change in the present. The predominance of this problematic in the historical writing of the 1850s and 60s was illustrated by the conflict between Sybel and the Austrian-Catholic historian Julius Ficke over the interpretation of the political powers of the Holy Roman Emperor in the late Mediaeval period³³⁹.

Droysen’s answer was that if the goal of history itself were clarified, as Felix Gilbert has argued, the substance of history would provide the means to reach it: ‘the reality of historical forces lies in their intellectual content and ethical power. The relationship of Prussia to Germany was one of ideas, not existing states’³⁴⁰. Sybel and Treitschke, whose *Ausbildung* had focused on the German past and lacked the comparative perspective that Droysen’s vast knowledge of Hellenism provided, took the ideas of history for granted and transformed the discipline into a means of transforming actual political institutions. Whereas Droysen sought in his *Historik* of 1859 to refute

³³⁹ See B C Witte, *Was ist des deutschen Vaterland?* (Mainz, 1967); Iggers, *The German Conception of History*, p. 152; Heinrich von Srbik, *Geist und Geschichte vom deutschen Humanismus bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. 2 (Munich, 1951).

³⁴⁰ Felix Gilbert, *History: Choice and Commitment* (Cambridge, MA; London, 1977) p. 37.

Hegel's claim that history advanced along a linear path intelligible through *a priori* Reason, Sybel and Treitschke 'returned' to the Hegelian view in so far as they envisaged German history as the narrative of intelligible progress. Droysen, indeed, argued that German history must be understood as progress, but he attached to it the more provocative argument that acquiring true knowledge of historical progress required one to understand the historical circumstances surrounding instances when history did *not* advance. The purpose of the *Historik* was show how the historian's theoretical reflection on the discipline of history was itself constitutive of historical thought and provided the impetus for its development. It regarded *Selbstreflexion* as inherent to the writing of history rather than as a stepping outside of historical understanding³⁴¹. Sybel was less interested in the foundations of historical understanding. He argued that the overwhelming purpose of history was to justify the historical basis of the ideological content of a nation's present situation and how that foundation had led to a more highly-developed form of historical existence. His focus was on the process itself rather than the historian's understanding of process. Treitschke removed himself further from self-reflection and argued that history and politics were not only inseparable but were identical because their application to real political problems dissolved the distinction between historical understanding and political agency. Therefore, in his view, Luther's historical originality lay in his amalgamation of individual subjectivity with the assertion of the authority of the political community. 'It was first Luther who smashed to ruins the notion that 'spiritual power is over the temporal', this strong wall of the Romanists. He taught, instead, that the state itself is an order of God, justified and obliged, independent

³⁴¹ See Horst Walter Blanke, 'Die Rolle der Historik im Entstehungsprozeß modernen historischen Denkens', in Wolfgang Küttler et al, eds., *Geschichtsdiskurs: Anfänge modernen historischen Denkens*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt a.M., 1994) pp. 282-294.

from the Church, the single moral purpose in life to be pursued'³⁴². At approximately the time that cross-Channel intellectual and political relations began to cool, Acton ruminated soberly on this mode of Lutheran *Realpolitik* that religion, and morality, the entire community of knowledge, had lost its power over the state³⁴³. It was no longer the Germany with whose cultural and religious particularity Acton had so profoundly identified.

5.2 Politics as the essence of history

Droysen, Sybel, and Treitschke took many things for granted about the meaning of 'history' because they were the happy inheritors of the historical consciousness which Hegel and Ranke had defined in terms of ideological utility in the early nineteenth century. The Prussian historians were less philosophers than practitioners of historical ideas. The real world in the present was their intellectual home and they made history its servant. In his *Historik* (1857) Droysen attempted to compose a methodology of historical consciousness to show how the discipline of history was the intellectual foundation best suited to the realisation of the historical idea of the German nation³⁴⁴. But the question at the basis of even this most 'theoretical' work was how to make the discipline of history useful to the formation of a political community.

These three men used the concept of liberalism to relate the cultural and religious idea of freedom to the actual political institutions they sought to create and with which

³⁴² Treitschke, 'Luther und die deutsche Nation', in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1911, 5th ed.) p. 148. See also: Treitschke, *Die Freiheit* (Leipzig, 1861) pp. 21-22.

³⁴³ Acton, 'The German Schools of History', *English Historical Review* (1886) 1; reprinted in *Historical Essays and Studies* (London, 1907) pp. 379-380, cited here.

³⁴⁴ See Hayden White, (review) J G Droysen. *Historik History and Theory* 19 (1980).

their national community would identify³⁴⁵. The meaning of freedom captured by the concept of liberalism had roughly four facets which returned ultimately to the religious function of historical consciousness. These were the assertion of belief in God and the inherently ethical nature of human will and action; the assertion of German nationality through the establishment of an historical narrative demonstrating the necessity of this ideal and its realisation; the legitimation of the historical narrative through the development of an historical hermeneutics which would examine and defend a particular mode of historical explanation; and lastly, the actualisation of the ideal of a German nation unified under Prussian rule. These were regarded not as wishes but imperatives, responsibilities incumbent on a group of historians convinced of the truth, righteousness and necessity of their methods, claims and goals. They elevated ‘interpretation’ above ‘criticism’ and drew truth-claims from their interpretation of history preserving the foundational beliefs that ‘God is Truth’, ‘from history we learn to understand God’, and ‘only in God can we understand history’³⁴⁶. Ultimately, these beliefs enabled the definition of an historical-critical method with ‘far-reaching validity’ by means of a ‘religiously justified equation of truth with reality and statement with substance’³⁴⁷. ‘Our business is theodicy’, Droysen urged his long-time friend Wilhelm Arendt: ‘one learns to worship’³⁴⁸.

Droysen failed to clarify whether one learned to worship God or the truths of history, perhaps because the ambiguity is more problematic for our own contemporary

³⁴⁵ For an almost-contemporary understanding of German liberalism, see Hermann Baumgarten, ‘Der deutsche Liberalismus. Eine Selbstkritik’, in: *Historische und politische Aufsätze und Reden* (Straßburg, 1894); first published in *Preußische Jahrbücher* 18 (1866) pp. 455-515.

³⁴⁶ Droysen, *Historik*, p. 330.

³⁴⁷ Wolfgang Hardtwig, ‘Geschichtsreligion’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 252 (1991), p. 7.

³⁴⁸ Droysen to Wilhelm Arendt, 20/9/1854. *Briefwechsel*, Rudolf Hübner, ed., (Berlin/Leipzig, 1929, vol. 2, pp. 282-283.

conception of history than for Droysen's. He sought a 'realistic ethics' by which he meant an 'historicist ethics' in which the *process* of historical understanding more than the *goal* of achieving the objective standpoint should guide the historian in framing historical reality³⁴⁹. The notion of an 'historicist ethics' should be understood in both an ontological and epistemological sense: ontological insofar as 'the ethical' suggests a morally sound political community into which humanity evolves, and epistemological insofar as achieving an ethical understanding through historical interpretation became equated with 'history' itself as a means of progressing towards that moral community. And because these historians routinely equated progress towards a moral world with an increase in freedom, history – in the double sense of a human community 'in history' and 'history' as a means of achieving that community – became shorthand for freedom itself³⁵⁰.

This idea of progressing towards freedom as an idea, and into communities freer than their historical predecessors, is a notion common to Droysen, Treitschke, and Sybel. But, of the three, only Droysen spent any significant part of his professional life studying communities from which he believed his own to have progressed, which he understood as the study of communities in which the full meaning of freedom had not been realized but in which first steps had been taken. 'Hellenism was called to work through the transition from the pagan to the Christian world. It accomplished this most difficult and fruitful task within the history of humanity. [...] Hellenism is the fulfillment of paganism, this full

³⁴⁹ See Hayden White, review of Droysen's *Historik: History and Theory* 19 (1980) pp. 75-76.

³⁵⁰ See Friedrich Jäger, *Bürgerliche Modernisierungskrise und historische Sinnbildung: Kulturgeschichte bei Droysen, Burckhardt und Max Weber* (Göttingen, 1994); Helen Liebel-Weckowicz, review of F. Jäger, in *History and Theory* 34 (1995) pp. 263-270.

and rich development of the human spirit under its own power'³⁵¹. Here Droysen implied that a defining feature of Christian communities is that the human spirit was guided by something greater than itself. Defining that greater power and its influence became his life work. And while he devoted half his life to writing the history of Prussia, we should not, as Alfred Dove suggested in 1878, see the 'glorification of Prussia' as Droysen's only objective³⁵². Nor do his writings give us license to distinguish between the 'Christian element' or 'concept of a religious dynamic' and whatever that would *not* include, the critical perspective from which Felix Gilbert proceeds³⁵³. Instead, we should ask how and why he arrived at the idea of the 'greater power' and how he understood the process of interpreting it and thus minimised the distinction between religion and politics but emphasised the contrast between reality and the metaphysical realm. The same approach will be taken with Trietschke and Sybel, and a good starting point is to look at their critiques of Hegel and Ranke, their teachers actual and figurative.

Behind the claim that Droysen was the first historian to make the transition from *Geschichtsschreiber* to *Forscher*³⁵⁴ lie a number of real changes in the historian's attitude to the idea of the past, to historical sources, and their meaning. Droysen discussed some of these changes in a letter to Sybel in 1853 in which he distanced himself from Ranke. What gave Droysen pause, however, was not a perceived fault in Ranke's understanding of the past in itself, but a weakness in the ethical impulse the historical narrative should

³⁵¹ Droysen, in reflections from 1838, in Droysen, *Texte zur Geschichtstheorie*, Günter Birtsch and Jörn Rüsen, eds., (Göttingen, 1972) pp. 41-42.

³⁵² Alfred Dove, 'Johann Gustav Droysen', in *Ausgewählte Schriften* (Leipzig, 1898) p. 369. Orig. pub: *Wochenschrift im neuen Reich* (Leipzig, 1878).

³⁵³ Felix Gilbert, *History: Choice and Commitment* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1977) p. 32.

³⁵⁴ Hardtwig, *ibid.*, p. 20.

impart to the reader. Ranke faltered not in providing historical knowledge, but in integrating his own self-consciousness of history's ideological meaning into the historical argument itself. 'His books seldom awake anything more in me than intellectual interest [...] I find in his best works that, when I have finished, I close the book with neither rage nor inspiration[...] I feel I have become cleverer, but our science is for those who above all want to improve humanity: history's greatest strength is its ethical nature'³⁵⁵. The difference between Droysen's notion of 'ethical nature' and Ranke's belief in the existence and agency of a universal, metaphysical power, was not that these powers existed, but that history's ethical content was manifested in what history made intelligible to man. For Ranke, the metaphysical lay beyond human intelligibility: Droysen subsumed the divine into historical understanding itself. As Sybel wrote in 1886, 'the main issue which we always confront [in Ranke's writing] is humanity as it is, understood or not understood: the life of particularities, peoples, the folk, all the while the hand of God above them. Thus goes his formation of concrete realities and events. What remains unexplained he lets be, now and then reflecting on the hand of God above humanity'³⁵⁶.

These objections highlight a distinguishing characteristic of Droysen, Sybel, and Treitschke's conception of history. They distinguished between two spheres of human understanding and national development, the subjective and the objective, and thereby fixated on the nature of their interrelation and how that had changed over time. The interrelation took the form of a question: on what historical basis do Prussia and its political subjects derive their historically-determined subjectivity and to what objective do they direct their belief in the necessity of realizing the ideals inherent to its existence

³⁵⁵ Droysen to Sybel, 5 Aug. 1853, in *Briefwechsel*, vol. 2, p. 169.

³⁵⁶ Heinrich von Sybel, 'Gedächtnisrede auf Leopold von Ranke, gehalten in der kgl. Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin am 1. Juli 1886', *Historische Zeitschrift*. 56 (1886) p. 469.

as a cultural and political community? Reason and logic, not reality, necessitated Hegel's conclusion that Protestant, restoration Prussia completed the historical development of the world. The absence of a sense of the future in Hegel's philosophy of history clashed with mid-century political reality. The liberals had conclusively failed to bring a German political nation into existence. A speculative philosophical history was simply the wrong tool with which to attempt to reform contemporary cultural, religious and political reality. Instead, Droysen and his contemporaries sought a conception of history which would interrelate theory and subjective and objective reality. He acted on this need by locating his notion of a transcendent God in the realm of human subjectivity and his understanding of the reality of human existence to the realm of the historically objective. As Jörn Rüsen wrote, 'Historical thought cannot abstain from having practical relevance[...] [History] must insist on the mediation of history as it actually happens ['aktuell geschehender Geschichte'] and as it is concretised through method. But the research methods do not themselves provide this mediation. For this reason the science of history must open itself to historical-philosophical theory'³⁵⁷.

Droysen's conception of the discipline of history was born of this forced marriage. This was his starting point for a theory of history based on what he took to be the 'real' and 'ideal' historical antecedents of the conceptual world which lacked a historical self-consciousness. When he postulated that 'every person is a moral subject' and that 'freedom is the life impulse of historical movement'³⁵⁸, he spoke as much to the individual in abstraction as to his perception of himself in historical reality. The writing of history forced Droysen to account for the historicity of his own historical self-

³⁵⁷ Jörn Rüsen, *Begriffene Geschichte*, p. 10.

³⁵⁸ Droysen, *Grundriß...*, pp. 33-34.

consciousness³⁵⁹. Mid-century German liberal historiography tells the story of the attempted reconciliation of these two perspectives. And in this, we can understand the objective perspective as being akin to the ‘actual’ experience of life in mid-century Germany – what Sheehan calls ‘the particular blend of privilege and frustration which characterised the educated man’s position in German society’³⁶⁰ – and the subjective experience as the subjective belief in the moral necessity of achieving a certain kind of society following a certain path of historical development to a certain end.

This subjective moral necessity took the form of a nominally Protestant understanding of history and declared an *a priori* relationship between the Reformation and the problematic of historical hermeneutics. While both Catholic and Protestant German liberals sought to create a secular state respectful of all Judeo-Christian confessions, they did so within a culture of ‘secular Protestantism’ which connected the political process of civil emancipation with what they believed was the necessary completion of the Reformation’s historical development. The liberals believed history’s commission to the present was the ethical development of the individual, a view which had immediate political significance and drew on an historical narrative imbued with the liberal view of the ancient world. Droysen intuited history’s pedagogical function as an agent of moral development in his translations of Aeschylus and his histories of

³⁵⁹ Pierre Nora captures the notion of transition between kinds of historical existence when he writes that ‘tradition is memory that has become historically self aware of itself. [...] one has to combine the insider’s view, the understanding of heritage that one assumes, with the outsider’s, which objectifies that heritage and establishes it as ‘tradition’. Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: The French Construction of the Past*, vol. 2, ‘Traditions’, Arthur Goldhammer, trans. (New York, 1992) p. ix.

³⁶⁰ James J. Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago and London, 1978) p. 20. Sheehan also points out that ‘more than one-sixth of the liberal elite that was elected to the Frankfurt Parliament in 1848 had been persecuted by the state at one time or another in their careers’ [*ibid.*, p. 37, from Frank Eyck, *The Frankfurt Parliament* (1968) p. 93].

Alexander and the idea of Hellenism³⁶¹ in which he set the terms for every subsequent piece of historical writing he would produce, histories increasingly focused on contemporary Prussia. Similarly, Dahlmann shifted in the early 1830s from study of the classical world to nineteenth-century politics. Friedrich Meinecke captured the essence of this shift when he wrote that Droysen ‘came a believing Christian to the splendid world-historical discoveries and their mediatory role between antiquity and the Christian-western world. [...] The Christian idea of salvation was again revealed. The speculative method was much more dangerous to historical research and understanding than the Christian religion in the form Droysen knew it’³⁶².

Furnishing the political context of Protestant Christianity’s development had the function for Droysen of bringing ‘subjective’ belief and ‘objective’ understanding into closer alignment. To call it a religion of history is hardly misguided. Professing a modern way forward in historical understanding leading to a more historically self-conscious and autonomous society, Sybel’s introduction to the 1877 volume of the *Historische Zeitschrift* reads like a manifesto for this historical religion. He began by citing the introduction to the first number of 1859: ‘Above all, the journal should be a scientific one. Its first task is thus to stand for the true methods of historical research and to identify deviations from the original’. In the 1877 edition he asserted the journal’s ‘objectivity’: ‘from this foundation our intention is to make a journal neither antiquarian nor political. [...] We do not identify with a particular political party’. Yet at the same time he

³⁶¹ Droysen, *Des Aischylos Werke* (Berlin, 1832); *idem, Geschichte Alexander des Grossen* (Leipzig, 1833; reprinted Kettwig, 1990); *idem, Geschichte des Hellenismus* (Hamburg, 1836).

³⁶² Meinecke, *Schaffender Spiegel...*, pp. 168-170. Dieter Langewiesche misses the point when he argues that the liberals’ secular conception of politics meant that they removed a concept of the religious foundation of history from their conception of politics. ‘A secular state was at the heart of liberal beliefs [...] [the German liberals] wanted a confessionally neutral state [with] the de-churched state as a guarantee of the freedom of the individual to live a public and private life’. Langewiesche, *Liberalism in Germany*, pp. 199-200.

identified himself with a particular worldview by rejecting feudalism as a danger to the 'progressive life', radicalism as the equation of 'subjective caprice' with 'organic process', and Ultramontanism as the 'subjugation of national and spiritual development beneath an external church'³⁶³. 'Historical reflection', he continued, 'is made known to the life of every people within the governance of ethical laws, as natural and individual development, which under internal necessity produces the forms of the state and culture, neither squeezed or pushed by caprice nor forced by outside rules'. As if the urgent tone of all this had not been made clear enough, Sybel elaborated once again that 'If recognition of the lawfulness and unity of all Becoming and Life is the highest task of historical reflection, then a recognition such as this could not be expressed more clearly than in the proof that the past is present and has a progressive effect in all of us'³⁶⁴.

Two things about this issue of historical Becoming must be borne in mind. First, these historians took for granted that the origins and therefore historical value of these methodological debates could be traced back to the intellectual influence of the Reformation on the present. Second, we must note that Sybel's reflections date from 1877, six years after the founding of the German Reich and Ranke's retirement, eighteen years after the first edition of *Historische Zeitschrift*, and twenty years after Droysen published *Historik* and Prince Wilhelm succeeded King Wilhelm Friedrich IV to the Prussian throne. Two profound changes had occurred to the discipline over the two decades since then. First, Droysen sought to give historians a meta-conception of the discipline itself to reveal the philosophical and political assumptions and objectives

³⁶³ *Historische Zeitschrift* XXXVII (1877), 'Vorwort', pp. iii-iv.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. iv.

already informing its assertions and objectives. And second, as Sybel suggested above, it became incumbent on historians that they involve their fellow political subjects, their audience, in the process of historical development, without which a consciousness of history itself was scarcely imaginable under this new dispensation. Rüsen's appeal for theoretical reflection *in* history is an obvious child of these justifications of the autonomy and legitimacy of the discipline.

These changes were one of the ways in which the defeated liberals could regain their intellectual footing. The political crises of the 1850s in central Europe, and particularly the Prussian withdrawal from the Treaty of Olmütz in 1859, forced historians to imagine a better future within the conceptual world under their control. Part of the exercise of imagination involved establishing a particular view of the common European past to speak to a Protestant citizenry about certain practical and ideological needs in the language of an autonomous historical discourse which would connect the individual to the historical community. This urgency had increased by 1866. A reviewer in the *Historische Zeitschrift* of Gervinus's *Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* reminded him and the journal's readers that 'it should not be forgotten, that contemporary Prussia has not yet established in itself all the qualities desired by a state, qualities which will appear in the German state of the future. Above all the historian should remain conscious of what are merely passing aberrations and what is grounded in the nature of the state'³⁶⁵.

What Gervinus's reviewer advised was exactly what historians had to do to regain control of historical reality in those times of crisis. To get around the discrepancy between their ideal conception of the state and their ideal conception of history which would enable the realisation of that ideal, on the one hand, and on the other, the failure of

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, XVI, p. 180. Gervinus, *Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts seit den Wiener Verträgen*.

the real world to come anywhere close to fulfilling these ideals, Droysen reverted to a more subdued plan of action. He returned to the project of showing how historical reality was inconceivable without regard to its ethical content. In 1864 he argued that what remains of the past in the present is not fact, but indications of the human understanding of fact, the remains of past expressions of human agency. What historians have to work with consisted of the continuity of expression of human will through participation in 'ethical communities'³⁶⁶. This notion of community was short-hand for the 'Protestant' community, for the Reformation was the point at which Protestant Germans' history distinguished itself from the rest of world history. The Protestant nature of the discourse often was assumed. 'The elevated ethical trait of history should inspire us and sweep us away', Droysen wrote in *Historik*: 'The soul raises itself from its own small and petty eccentricities and learns to think and feel in terms of the ego of mankind'³⁶⁷. So of course his generation sought to *create* the community they saw latent in their conception of the past: the community had to be created in order for the historian to express its history, in turn a prerequisite for the subjective experiences of humanity to be brought to light. But the existence of that community was not a given. As Rüsen explains, Droysen shared Hegel's idea that the essence of history is alienation [*Entfremdung*] from the human community itself in the sense of a discontinuity in the development of the human world, a view opposed to the 'vegetative view' which located the essence of history in an organic, unbroken conception of history from which the individual cannot be separated. Within this experience of alienation and discontinuity, an ideal conception of the essence of

³⁶⁶ Droysen, 'Zur Quellenkritik der deutschen Geschichte des 17. Jaurhunderts', *Forschungen zur deutschen Geschichte* 4 (1864); *Historische Zeitschrift* IX (1863); Maclean, 'Droysen and the Development of Historical Hermeneutics', *History and Theory* XXI (1982) p. 355.

³⁶⁷ Droysen, *Historik*, pp. 251-252, as cited in McGlew, 'J. G. Droysen and the Aeschylean Hero', *Classical Philology* 79 (1984), p. 12.

history lived on in the continuity of the objective of the realisation of human freedom³⁶⁸. Reporting that ‘Hegel’s historical and political theory assured Droysen that he was on the right and the winning side’³⁶⁹ ignores the function of the concept of *Entfremdung* in Droysen’s conception of its relation to the historical development freedom. Instead, it indicates a common simplification of Droysen’s relationship to Hegel to support the thesis that what distinguishes the Prussian historical school most of all is its belief that history was always on its side.

The discontinuities and ruptures in intellectual, political and cultural life during the mid-nineteenth century render the ‘winner/loser’ argument implausible, at least until 1871. Study of the dialectic of alienation and reconciliation of the individual from the human community and from the idea of human freedom operates at a higher level than the political and religious crises of the present. No matter how dire these present circumstances, evidence of human agency is always present. It gives hope, at least within this historical understanding. And what that evidence meant, how that meaning was established, and in what context it arose must be distinguished from the historically-conditioned value placed on the crisis, discontinuity or ‘defining moment’ itself. The farther back in time the ‘crisis’ occurred, the less a ‘crisis’ it became and the more the process of historical objectification was able to give it a positive, necessary, ethically defensible meaning. Breaks in historical continuity were perceived by contemporaries as moments of crisis – one thinks of the early reformer’s fright at the thought of breaking

³⁶⁸ Rüsen, *ibid.*, p. 37.

³⁶⁹ Robert Southard, *Droysen and the Prussian School of History*, pp. 14-15.

from the Church – but later as necessary steps to creating the present sought by historians and historical thinkers³⁷⁰.

Droysen made this point in a letter of 1852 when he alluded to the assumption that Prussia was inherently Protestant: ‘What moves history and politics in a German and Prussian-evangelical direction, and what the *vaterländische* and European history makes of this, has become a fabrication in light of the events since 1848, or more precisely 1850. How can one demand that the youth place their belief in this understanding of history when Prussia, with the approval of its spokesmen, officially denies all that we teach or hope?’³⁷¹. Clearly, the alienation of the ‘condition’ of historical thought from the ‘actual’ political reality in Prussia in the early 1850s not only made it hard to imagine one’s self a ‘winner’, but questioned the legitimacy of historical thought itself. Not least among these, for Droysen, was the idea that ‘every presupposition of absolute freedom must exist first of all in the form of belief, such that for the historian who seeks to approach his materials in that sense, the result [of historical understanding] is the affirmation and fulfillment of that belief’³⁷². ‘The level of our spiritual life is sinking in a great hurry’, he wrote in 1854. ‘One exterminates the freedom of spiritual life and makes room for positivism for fear of impending political dangers: when religious belief does not tally with the general worldview, one sees where it all leads’³⁷³.

³⁷⁰ ‘History furnishes the empty frame of a linear succession which formally answers to questions on *beginnings* and to the need for *order*,’ writes Michel de Certeau: ‘It is thus less the result obtained from research than its condition’: Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*. Tom Conley, trans., (New York, 1988) p. 12; originally published as *L’écriture de l’histoire* (Paris, 1975).

³⁷¹ Droysen to Theodor von Schön, 1 Feb. 1852, *Briefe*, vol. 2, pp. 47-49.

³⁷² Droysen to Friedrich Perthes, 30 Oct. 1836, *Briefe*, vol. 1, p. 104.

³⁷³ Droysen, ‘Die Krise der Europäischen Kultur’ (1854), in Birtsch and Rösen, eds., *Texte zur Geschichtstheorie*, pp. 58-59. Maclean elaborates on Droysen’s rejection of positivism: ‘Johann Gustav Droysen and the Development of Historical Hermeneutics’, *History and Theory* XXI (1982) p. 349.

The meaning of belief in this sense was not a matter of overt expression of religious devotion. Instead, Droysen intellectualized religious belief to achieve certain political and intellectual goals. In this he was no different from Hardenberg, the Gerlach brothers or Friedrich Julius Stahl, evangelical ‘reactionaries’ of the restoration whose ‘throne and altar’ political creed mediated between subjective belief and objective expression seeking to align the political status quo with a literal reading of Scripture. Whereas they *reacted*, the Prussian school *acted*, and the mode and terms of this action are rooted in the Reformation and the intellectual perspective it informed looked to the future they hoped to shape. Whether Droysen, Treitschke and Sybel read the Bible at all, literally or not, made no difference, for they maintained a sharp distinction between religion as a religious issue and religion as an historical issue. For Treitschke, the major *historical* significance of the Bible was that Luther ‘germanised’ it, thereby uniting Germany before political unification had become conceivable: ‘We owe this exquisite tome to the struggles of the Reformation; it alone holds us together in these days of German disunity, our new language. Holy Scripture, handed down in strict fidelity through an inherent religious genius but also so thoroughly germanised, so thoroughly inspired by the finest of German souls, that today we can scarcely imagine any other rendition of the Bible’³⁷⁴.

In contrast to Ranke, who was characterised as conceiving of the essence of the Reformation as the shift from the coincidental to the essential, from the untrue to the true, and from the subjective-arbitrary opinion to the objective thing³⁷⁵, the Prussian school subsumed religion in history. Ranke conceived of historical understanding as a function

³⁷⁴ Treitschke, *Ausgewählte Schriften*. ‘Luther und die deutsche Nation’, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1911; 5th ed.) pp. 150-151.

³⁷⁵ As Schultz summarises, *Lutherischen Geistes Ranke und Droysens*, pp. 111-112.

of divine understanding; Droysen in particular maintained that theoretical engagement with the past itself best explains the meaning of history. This does not make them atheists: they rejected positivism and were equally suspicious of historical materialism and Feuerbach's anthropological theology as competing ideologies arose in the struggle to claim Hegel's inheritance³⁷⁶. Droysen's view was different: God resided within history, and what distinguished this notion from his peers' was that he argued that the point of history was to realise the historical agency of the individual and to show how all historical events, individual agency, and the forms of human community such as religion and the state are expressions of moral forces which have the power to liberate humanity from ignorance. He went one step further when he defined the human existence as the working out and recognition of the 'restless progress' of the idea of freedom³⁷⁷. It followed that he found 'traditional' source-based historiography plodding and pointless: the historical school trained in mediaeval sources 'is so far removed from the spiritual necessity incumbent on history'³⁷⁸; 'we in Germany have become mired deep in the so-called critical method of the Rankean school whose entire trick amounts to whether one poor devil of a chronicler cribbed another'³⁷⁹.

These remarks suggest how Droysen might have been frustrated by Ranke's unwillingness to interpret historical events after the fact, in the sense of their being

³⁷⁶ John E Toews, *Hegelianism: The Path to Dialectical Humanism* (New York and Cambridge, 1980).

³⁷⁷ Droysen, 'Ungedruckte Materialien zur Historik', aus der Vorlesungen über 'Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der Geschichte' (1857), in Günter Birtsch and Jörn Rüsen, eds., *Texte zur Geschichtstheorie* p. 17.

³⁷⁸ Droysen to Treitschke, 22 March 1873, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 2, pp. 906-907.

³⁷⁹ Droysen to Wilhelm Arndt, 20 March 1857, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 442.

‘necessary steps in the establishment and realization of freedom’.³⁸⁰ Determining the meaning of the past in the present, not the ‘essence’ of the event, must to be the historian’s objective. No event more than the Reformation transcended its own meaning so easily, and if the greatest task of the historian, Droysen wrote in *Historik*, was to unite his personal perspective with that of his nation and religion in the present³⁸¹, study of the Reformation was a natural aide in the formation of historical understanding. Treitschke captured the urgency of Droysen’s thought: ‘Millions of our citizens [...] cannot understand that the reformer of our Church pioneered the same free ethos for the entire German nation. We trace his spirit everywhere in state and society, household and science. He who speaks of Luther must recognise that by doing so he assumes the great moral tasks of the present’.³⁸² Hayden White sees in this ‘the circle of moral conceptions’ constructing a ‘reality’ which German *Bürger*s ‘could offend only at the risk of their humanity’.³⁸³

Under this kind of moral imperative the present determined the meaning of the past. Here can be glimpsed how the nascent theory of history amalgamated the double significance of the Reformation – as reformation of religion *and* as the first political acts of a new nation – into a single historicised understanding of the moral necessity of the German nation. The political content of this objective was conceived and executed in a discourse informed by a particular reading of the historical significance of the Reformation. ‘Theodicy’ is the concept commonly referred to, ‘a philosophy of history

³⁸⁰ *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, ‘Reform – Reformation’, 1984, pp. 337-338.

³⁸¹ *Historik*, p. 238, cited in James F. McGlew, ‘J. G. Droysen and the Aeschylean Hero’, *Classical Philology* 79 (Jan-Oct. 1984) pp. 10-11.

³⁸² Treitschke, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, ‘Luther und die deutsche Nation. Vortrag, gehalten zu Darmstadt am 7.11.1883’ (Leipzig, 1911) p. 137.

³⁸³ Hayden White, review of Droysen, *Historik. History and Theory* XIX (1980), pp. 92-93.

that presumed to demonstrate necessity and meaning in the historical process', as Gilbert writes, which 'might appear to be the appropriate framework for historical religion'³⁸⁴. A useful comparison is to Graf's argument that the conception of knowledge of the evangelical conservatives of the restoration period 'was dominated by a religious semantics' in which 'Lutheran tradition was politicized'. Indeed the 'constitutive relationship between the religious and the political' enhanced the stability of the monarchy³⁸⁵. The Prussian historians strove to achieve in reality what their vision of history urged them to believe was immanent and necessary, but they found that their conception of what history had to say to the present always lagged behind what actual politics said to history. Historical idealism had lost its ideological leverage on political reality which challenged the applicability of the idea of theodicy³⁸⁶. They were forced to 're-tool' by refashioning their understanding of the historical origins of the present. As de Certeau argues, the 'condition' of history is the necessary process of filling the 'empty frame of linear succession' with interpretation and meaning. Droysen's solution to the problem was to transform the past into the present by concentrating on the 'remains' [*die Überreste*] of the past which had carried over into the present³⁸⁷.

5.3 The 'remains' of the Reformation as political agency

³⁸⁴ Gilbert, *History: Choice and Commitment*, pp. 33-34. Also, Hardtwig, 'Geschichtsreligion', *Historische Zeitschrift* 252 (1991) p. 6.

³⁸⁵ Fr W. Graf, 'Die Spaltung des Protestantismus', in Schieder, ed., p. 160.

³⁸⁶ The discussion of the impact of human crisis on the conception of theodicy in the context of Hegel is applicable, to a limited extent, to the crisis of 1849. See Iwan Iljin, *Die Philosophie Hegels als kontemplative Gotteslehre* (Bern, 1946) p. 306.

³⁸⁷ Droysen to Arendt, 8 May 1857, in: *Briefwechsel*, R. Hübner, ed. Vol. 2, p. 451.

The Prussian historians furthered the Idealistic tradition in viewing the Reformation as the beginning of a German-Protestant world-historical epoch which would culminate in the full realization of human freedom within a spiritualised conception of the political state. And whether in relation to Hellenism, the middle ages, or modern Austria, they saw the unfolding of the spirit as a dialectical process. As Droysen wrote, 'The Reformation introduced the idea of the national church and national authority. With this began a tremendous struggle of the new against the old, the justification of belief against the hierarchy: it surfaced in the idea of the state'³⁸⁸. The Reformation was a rational, intellectual change taking place within the real processes of history and in their own time. 'The state found its moral meaning in which it became of the people and in which the people began a new, heightened life'³⁸⁹.

To bring about this reconciliation, historians brought the foundation of modernity into the present: the sixteenth century yielded the ideas of modern politics; the nineteenth century would bring their realization. The liberal conception of Protestantism became the vehicle of delivery for a spiritually-inspired politics which abandoned the 'positive' conception of religion in Catholicism and conservative Protestantism and replaced them with a notion of sacredness embedded in every-day life. They refashioned Luther into the historical source of the modern conception of freedom and that 'secular' spirituality, the embodiment of modernity itself. 'Liberal Protestantism allowed the middle classes to reconcile the Protestant faith with the new interest in science and philosophy with a clear conscience, [...] in theological reflection and Christian tradition'³⁹⁰.

³⁸⁸ Droysen, 'Die Epoche der bürgerlichen Revolution' (1846), as cited in Birtsch, et. al. *Droysen: Texte zur Geschichtstheorie*, pp. 50-51.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁰ Nipperdey, *German History*, p. 379.

The history of the Reformation, therefore, was the history of the emergence of a new political form of spirituality. Treitschke, for example, wrote that the evangelical teaching survived only because secular authorities gave it refuge. Politics, in other words, saved the modern spirituality. 'As protectors of the German Creed, the territorial powers claimed and preserved the right of their existence. Nevertheless, the nation was neither able to grant sole power of governance to its own work, the Reformation, nor rejuvenate its own state through the new, worldly thoughts. Its spirit, tending towards effusive Idealism since eternity, was thoroughly alienated from the struggles of political life by its profound new theology'³⁹¹. The central problem became how to create an historical narrative which would overcome the alienation of politics from religion that had limited the conceptual and actual power of Protestant doctrine since its inception in the sixteenth century and which made Catholicism uselessly pre-modern. By transcending this perceived hindrance, they could modernise the future.

Droysen's university training as a classicist, his translations of Athenian drama, and his fascination with the rise of Athenian democracy and its subsequent explosion into the world-historical power embodied by Alexander, can all be read as preparatory material for his turn to study of Protestant German history in the early 1850s. It is as if in his studies of Hellenism he were creating for himself a mode of historical thought to be expanded in applications elsewhere when the time was right. He alluded to this in a letter from his student years to Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker dating from early 1824. 'You know already that I am an admirer of movement and progress; Caesar, not Cato, Alexander and not Demosthenes is my passion. Gladly, I praise the virtues, morality and excellence of these men, for their thoughts were not in accordance with their times. Neither Cato nor

³⁹¹ Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte*, v. 1 (1918, 10th ed), p. 4.

Demosthenes understands this, the development, the unstoppable progress. And the historian, in my opinion, has the obligation to take these particular thoughts [of Caesar and Alexander] as his perspective and from there to gaze out over all the rest³⁹².

The same claim Droysen made about Caesar and Alexander has been made about Droysen himself by intellectual historians since Gadamer in 1960 and Rüsen in 1968: he distinguished himself from peers in his ability take parts of the past and to make them speak to the ideological needs of the present³⁹³. Droysen's career can be seen as precisely this pursuit. And if he did not evaluate history in light of other disciplines until his *Historik* of 1857, he had indeed questioned the extent to which historical source-criticism licensed the historian to trace intentionality to a time before its becoming evident. Thought, before it has become deed is merely a dream, a phantom, the playing of an excited fantasy; it first gains form and flesh through that which gives it expression, the impulse of its own movement. Is Alexander [...] like a dreamer, commencing with the summary thought of conquering Asia all the way to the unknown seas surrounding it? Or had he known what he wanted and what he could want? The issue is not to work backwards through the sequence of results, indicating their planned interrelation and giving the evidence as results; rather, it should be asked whether results are already evident which would tell how the work would turn out before it had actually begun³⁹⁴.

While this appears to be retrospective historical reading of the worst kind, Droysen proposed a way of understanding the interrelation of many different 'pasts'

³⁹² Droysen, to Friedrich Gottfried Welcker, 1 Sept. 1824, *Briefe*, vol. 1, pp. 66-67.

³⁹³ Hayden White argues that 'the question of Droysen's achievement [...] must turn on the problem of the ideological function or value attached to the claims for history's autonomy vis a vis other ways of thinking and disciplines', Hayden White, review of *Historik. History and Theory* XIX (1980) p. 89. See also Hans-Georg Gadamer's interpretation of Droysen's historical hermeneutics: *Wahrheit und Methode*, pp. 216-221.

³⁹⁴ Droysen, *Geschichte Alexander des Grossen* (1833); (Stuttgart reprint, undated), pp. 158-159.

through their common meaning to the present. Only the present could elucidate the common meaning.

By the time Droysen turned his attention from Antiquity to Prussia, the logical step to take, following his own formula, was to advance *conceptually* into the theoretical *Überreste* of the Reformation. His claim for the autonomy of historical thought bolstered the assertion that the world-historical discourse he and his contemporaries were creating showed that the time for the realisation of Prussia's place in the world was impending. It was necessary to integrate the Reformation into the Prussian historical narrative because the Reformation was the first modern appearance of the idea of freedom which had recurred in a novel historical form which was currently being worked out in the present. 'The essence of the Reformation [...] is Christianity as an historical fact made once again valid. One already knows how great is the general movement of the spiritual life which these thoughts brought into action. It was the third great epoch of the development of Christianity in the world. Christianity was established as an historical fact and the task of understanding it, and once understood, to live through it, was given in infinite depth: this is what Luther meant with the expression that one must live through the Gospels'³⁹⁵.

Droysen's understanding of the purpose of history corresponded to his conception of Luther's understanding of the Gospels. Both are *lived through* and both are immediate to the present; they are 'made valid once again' and have 'infinite depth' because their conceptual power to reveal the spiritual essence of the present and to suggest how the present could be presaged. In this sense, the Reformation inaugurated a new conception of history: 'Let us begin with the possibility that we in Germany still await our history',

³⁹⁵ Droysen, from the lectures 'Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der Geschichte' (1857), in Birsich-Rüsen, eds., *Droysen: Texte zur Geschichtstheorie*, p. 23.

Droysen wrote Wilhelm Arndt in 1831. That new history would convey an ideology of political ethics which would trace its own emergence from a dogmatic ethics to what was held to be a more 'secular' one of which the Reformation was the beginning. The ideological function of this political ethos was to legitimate its historical narrative by envisioning it as a secular version of the Gospel. 'Let us establish sharply and accurately the four spheres in which [the new] religion could begin: how the particular development of Protestantism obtained a *tabula rasa* for the Gospel; how it informed any old individual instead of collective devotion; how the casual institution of the sermon took the place of the essential sacraments and devotion; and how the dismantling of the outer Church led us not to Atheism, emotional impoverishment and listlessness, but rather how it brings us to a lessened interest in religion³⁹⁶.

The Prussian historians came to a conceptual understanding of the Reformation backwards through Hegel rather than via Luther as a moral and intellectual mentor, the view so central to Ranke's conception of himself as an historian and Lutheran. With Hegel the philosophy of history demonstrated the progress of Reason within human consciousness and the civil community. The Prussian state Hegel witnessed in ascendancy during his lifetime demonstrated Reason's advance and its expression within the universal idea of world history. We might say, in contrast, that Ranke was 'born' into the Reformation as the essence of his intellectual piety by which he guided his life. Gradually, over the course of the century, an intermediating factor arose within the notion of Luther as a source of personal identity. The spirit of history lived through world-historical individuals such as Alexander and Luther, but they were important for more reasons than that they showed world-historical moments. Divinely-endowed individuals

³⁹⁶ Droysen to Wilhelm Arndt, 31 July 1831, in: *Briefwechsel*. Vol. 1, pp. 37-38.

enabled the student of history to enter into the world-historical realm, to transcend chronological difference, and to import into the present the parts of the past which were still relevant.

This idea and its expression in law, history and tradition was the optic through which the Prussian historians viewed the historical significance of the Reformation. Aspiring to see the Reformation *wie es eigentlich gewesen* could only detract from what Robert Southard calls the ‘spiritual condition’ by which the Prussian citizenry would participate in the development of a state that was united by the interdependency of political power and freedom, and free will and necessity³⁹⁷. The urgency of the cause turned the burden of the historical argument from understanding in context to understanding in application. It did so in the light of two theses Droysen argued in *Historik*: first, the categories used to understand the past derived their validity and meaning in the present; and second, the ‘past’ which those categories were used to understand was actually what from the *Überreste* of the past that had survived into the present, ‘the application of the categories operative in our own present situation...to the materials that are equally present to our perception’³⁹⁸.

The liberal historian Friedrich Dahlmann who, like Droysen and so many of the northern-German historians, represented Prussia at the Frankfurt Parliaments in the centrist ‘Casino’ party, looked to Luther as a source of political concepts rather than as the transcendent spiritual patriarch Ranke had adored. Unlike Droysen, Dahlmann was not an historical theorist, but concurred with him about the utility of the past. In the introduction to his *Politik*, Dahlmann looked to Luther’s *Obrigkeitslehre* – his teaching

³⁹⁷ Robert Southard, ‘Theology in Droysen’s History’, *History and Theory* 18/3 (1979) p. 391.

³⁹⁸ Hayden White, review of *Historik*, *History and Theory*, p. 83.

on civil authority and the responsibilities of its subjects³⁹⁹ - as the foundation of the German liberals' attempt to guide the nation into the form of constitutional monarchy⁴⁰⁰. 'The old custom of obedience, which defies application elsewhere, is firmly rooted in our royal houses', he remarked on 26 April 1848, in some comments on the German constitution⁴⁰¹. He was minimally concerned with the historicity of the Reformation, but saw instead a way to use the authority of the Reformation's historical existence to strengthen the cause of German liberalism against the political and theological threats posed by Protestant orthodoxy, historical materialism, and the diverse doctrines of the 'Young Hegelians'⁴⁰².

Thus Droysen and Dahlmann argued for a liberal-Protestant conception which asserted a moral understanding of the relationship of the individual to the state and the state to history. This understanding was inseparable from the idea of freedom: not freedom *from* the state, but freedom to see oneself as a part of the body politic *within* the overlapping spheres of faith, historical understanding and the state. Historians now tend to concentrate on Droysen's contribution to historical hermeneutics and his critique of pure objectivity in historical thought, but it should not be overlooked that behind his works of theory lies a self-professing Christian. For all his insistence on the power of historical consciousness to recover from the past that which is objectively useful, his

³⁹⁹ Luther's political engagement reached its pinnacle in the four writings he published in 1520: *The Freedom of the Christian*, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, *Address to the Christian Nobility*, and *On the Papacy at Rome*.

⁴⁰⁰ Friedrich Christoph Dahlmann, *Die Politik* (Frankfurt, 1997; 1835).

⁴⁰¹ Dahlmann, 'Verfassungsentwurf', 26 April 1848, cited in Fritz Fischer, 'Der deutsche Protestantismus und die Politik im 19. Jahrhundert', *Historische Zeitschrift* 171 (1951), pp. 468-469.

⁴⁰² See, for example, Bruno Bauer's critique of the liberals' vision of the German nation unified in a constitutional monarchy: *Der Untergang des Frankfurter Parlaments: Geschichte der deutschen konstituierenden Nationalversammlung* (Berlin, 1849; reprinted Aalen, 1970); see also Gustav Meyer, 'Die Junghegelianer und der preussische Staat', *Historische Zeitschrift* 121 (1920);

religious instinct meant that the meaning of the past was never univocal. Writing in 1836 to his publisher Friedrich Perthes, Droysen explained that ‘I have already shown you that I am an earnest believer [...] I am so convinced of the almighty governance of God that I must admit that not a single hair can fall from the head without his having willed it. But the finiteness of our insight limits our ability to see through this wondrous mystery. The lofty task of scientific effort is to bring the teachings which Christ revealed as truth closer to the finite and human standpoint’⁴⁰³.

On one level, this commitment impinged on his claim that his conception of the state and its ideological discourse have evolved into autonomy from religious doctrine. It also placed his conception of human freedom within an orthodox understanding of divine omniscience ‘The historian is not prepared to understand the necessity of all that happens down to its most minute level’⁴⁰⁴. If, however, we read these remarks in the context of his shift in study from Hellenism to more modern, German problems, the nature itself of that change in focus puts his view of absolute necessity in a different light. The degree to which God’s will is necessary neither increases nor diminishes in Droysen’s understanding. The things or ideas he saw as ‘necessary’ *did* change, however, for the historical event of ‘the teachings which Christ revealed as truth’ delimited the possible ways he could understand the pagan past. Droysen illustrated this when he proclaimed Hellenism as ‘the last and the decisive work of the self-completing Antiquity’⁴⁰⁵.

⁴⁰³ Droysen to Friedrich Perthes, 30 Oct. 1836, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, pp. 103-104.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁵ Droysen, *Geschichte des Hellenismus*, vol. 3, p. 424, cited in Friedrich Jaeger, ‘Geschichtsphilosophie, Hermeneutik und Kontingenz in der Geschichte des Historismus’, in *Geschichtsdiskurs*, W. Küttler et. al. eds, vol. 3, *Die Epoche der Historisierung* (Frankfurt a.M., 1997) pp. 52-53.

And what next?, he leads us to ask. Christianity seems to be the answer, by which Droysen meant *Protestant* Christianity found in the cultural and spiritual milieu of the Prussian Germany of his own time. Not once did he question the historical necessity that Germany should have developed in this way. In a letter of 1845 to Max Duncker, another liberal and subsequent Casino Party compatriot at the Frankfurt Parliament, Droysen remarked how ‘one speaks at length of the German spiritual development, its tremendous importance and that it could have been in store only for Protestant Germany’. He illustrated his point in the context of German music. From the ‘last great Lutheran Bach, the anglicized Handel, the Enlightenment composers C P E Bach and Graun, and opposing them the German-Catholic music of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, one appears not to take notice of [that opposition]. Yet specifically music is the art of today and its innermost drive is intimately related to its essence [...] Be glad you are in Prussia. I mock not; I say it because there are decisions being made there whose meaning cannot yet be predicted. These religious and political matters seize me with the utmost seriousness’. Several lines later he brought the metaphor of Protestant and Catholic music to bear on the political future of Germany: ‘The struggle is not between the kingdom and the people, between religion and godlessness; the Catholic and Protestant clerics, the administrators, have driven themselves to bewilderment, to bald equality. All one’s energy should be turned against the middling administrators of the kingdom of God and those of the worldly state’⁴⁰⁶. Droysen’s objection was not to the state and Churches themselves, but to their derangement under the wrong kind of human governance. The essence was sound, but the execution has erred. The point could have been Döllinger’s.

⁴⁰⁶ Droysen to Max Duncker, 24 Feb. 1845, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, p. 307.

What followed from Droysen's musicology was a vision of reform of Christian religion uncannily reminiscent of Luther's intention at the outset of the Reformation except that instead of reforming the Church and thereby altering the idea and practice of politics, the political ideology of the nation would be reformed and thereby bring a new conception of religion into force. Droysen's letter actually responded to a letter from Duncker in which he had described the opponents of the liberal conception of German nationhood. 'Cultured Protestantism and cultured Catholicism are not the enemy; they both work from moral principles and they have the same opponent: Catholic and Protestant reactionaries. Against these a united struggle and a new democratic Church [...]: the dogmatic ballast will be thrown overboard and the pure, morally-renewed principles established, insofar as they are imperative'⁴⁰⁷. Both Droysen and Duncker saw the Reformation as the beginning of a cultural, political and religious process enabling Germany's development as a nation and constitutional monarchy. The 'morally-renewed principles' were those which the Prussian historians attributed to the Reformation, specifically the belief that the new form of Christianity would reorient the focus of human effort to enable action within the temporal, national community⁴⁰⁸. But their understanding of the Reformation was thoroughly influenced by their political commitments and belief in what kind of religion could best further those objectives.

It is striking that Droysen and his peers never mentioned that the early reformers, at least until 1521, thought and acted with the intention of returning to the pure idea of the Church, and in that pursuit not severing themselves from its contemporary institution.

⁴⁰⁷ Duncker to Droysen, 11 Jan.1845, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, p. 304.

⁴⁰⁸ Droysen, 'Politische Predigten der Gegenwart', in *Halle'sche Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung*, nos. 238, 239 (September, 1844); *Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, pp. 358-360; as cited in Southard, *Droysen and the Prussian School of History*, pp. 76-77.

Only when their cause had become *politically* intractable were they forced to admit that in order to recover the true Church, they would have to ground a new one. From that point, the Reformation became as much a struggle over political ideology as religious dogma. It is also striking that a great deal of nineteenth-century political history also neglects to mention that a guiding hope of the reformers was to remain *in* the Church. That hope shattered when Charles V, upholding his duties as Emperor, sought to protect his realm from a religious heresy which posed very real, though not at first intentional, threats to his political legitimacy.

Instead, the view of the Reformation Droysen paints in his *Geschichte der preussischen Politik* is a more direct story of Luther as a clear-minded, self-conscious agent of historical change who directed his energies at achieving tangible victory over the Roman Church. 'It was imperative that Luther break through. With strength and a powerful hand he had to shake and raze that structure of the centuries, the Church whose cornerstone was Rome. Was that not religious, the customs, mentalities, and regulations in state and family, the entire life of humanity [...]: everything was part of this hierarchical system which shuddered now to its foundation. There was nothing which was not shaken to its innermost essence, affected clear to the idea of its existence. Thus began an immeasurable work'⁴⁰⁹. In comparison to the Droysen we have considered thus far, we notice now a distinct change in his thinking from the construction of a theory of the ideological nature and function of historical thought to an historian making loud noises about the second great Prussian historical undertaking. This project was to write the history of Prussia itself as a narrative which would justify Prussia's future by

⁴⁰⁹ Droysen, *Geschichte der preussischen Politik*, vol. 2, p. 100.

showing the historical necessity of its development from past to present. Droysen put Luther at the front of this vector of Prussia's trajectory as a European power by transforming the reformer's theological principle of *sola fide* into a testament of spiritual resolve which would carry the political will of the nation when all else had been upturned. 'Everything was dissolved and thrown into question as if by one great blow, first in the thoughts of people, then, as an immediate consequence, in the general state of affairs. All at once, everything spiritual and temporal had come apart at the seams: chaos. And in this immeasurable turmoil there was no fast point except the pure word of God, no unbroken force except 'by faith alone'⁴¹⁰.

Droysen and Treitschke believed that they had captured the true historical essence of Prussia and that they had deciphered where that history would drive the nation in the present. Droysen was surer of his competence as an historian than Treitschke, and was in fact a more rigorous historian, but Treitschke threw the harder rhetorical punches and had managed to use his *realpolitisch* historical attitude to seduce Bismarck. The Reich Chancellor, in turn, was anxious to retain Treitschke's persuasive power and institutional authority for his own purposes. He wrote to Treitschke in November 1866, to assure him that should 'you feel endangered in Baden, we would promptly see to it that you are offered a replacement [position] in Prussia. [...] You know and feel the deepest streams of the German spirit'⁴¹¹. With this kind of guarantee behind him, Treitschke had the confidence to abandon the kind of decorous restraint Droysen and Duncker showed in their political and religious writings. He turned on the Catholics. While teaching at

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹¹ Bismarck to Treitschke, 11 June 1866, *Bismarckbriefe 1836-1866*, Horst Kohl, ed., p. 425.

Freiburg in 1864, he remarked to his father that ‘I shall not stay here forever; my place is at one of the Protestant universities, for they are the only ones who deserve to be called universities. The opposition of Catholicism and Protestantism is unfortunately deeper than well-natured people believe. The issue is not the difference between particular dogmas, but the antithesis of slavery and spiritual freedom’⁴¹². His dialectic echoed a central point of Hegel’s philosophy of world history: Protestantism is progressive and suited to the German race whereas Catholicism is backward and concomitant with the roman race⁴¹³. In 1855, when the future of Prussia seemed particularly bleak following Prussia’s submission to Austria in the Treaty of Olmütz, Treitschke focused on what nevertheless continued to make Protestant culture superior to Catholic, even if Prussia had become the political loser. ‘Contemporary Protestantism has lost its shell long ago, but the kernel – Protestantism’s [world-historical] assignment - has remained, for no external means could take that from it. And that, in truth, is a glorious kernel; without this idea of obligation all spiritual freedom is abolished [*aufgehoben*]. It is no coincidence that our greatest poets were Protestant [...], the bearers of our culture, while Austria and Bavaria grow numb all the while. This sounds almost like proselytism, [...] though, mind you, I see myself still as a Protestant and would commemorate the Peace of Augsburg with great joy’⁴¹⁴. The historians were adept at shifting between political and cultural conceptions of German nationality. On the one hand, when Prussia suffered political defeat, the historians turned to the deeper continuities of Protestant culture to show that

⁴¹² Treitschke to his father, 9 Feb.1864, in *Briefe*, Max Cornelius, ed. 4 vols. Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1912, 1912, 1917, 1920; here, vol. 2, p. 318.

⁴¹³ Hegel, *Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, Lasson, ed., vol. 4, 1920, p. 866. See also Ernst Walter Zeeden, ‘Die katholische Kirche in der Sicht des deutschen Protestantismus im 19. Jahrhundert’, *Historisches Jahrbuch*, vol. 72, p. 445; on the Prussian historian’s renewed interest in what they took to be Hegel’s political vision for the Protestant German nation, see Hermann Heller, *Hegel und der nationale Machtstaatgedanke in Deutschland* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1921).

⁴¹⁴ Treitschke to Wilhelm Nock, 2 Sept.1855, *Briefe*, vol. 1, p. 315.

on a deeper but subtler level, continuities and promises still existed. When Prussia once again achieved political advantage, they became more generous in making ecumenical concessions that Catholic and Protestant cultures shared a common foundation in the post-Reformation political nation.

Little of Droysen and Duncker's feelings that cultural Protestantism and Catholicism were in many ways complementary carried over into Treitschke's narratives. His prerogative was not to deconstruct the foundations of the history he advocated, but to fight against Catholic historiography by composing edifying volumes on Prussia's cultural and political accomplishments. He did not accommodate that which detracted from history's goal. His historical writings became best-sellers among the anxious Protestant *Bildungsbürgertum*, presumably because they allayed the political and cultural insecurities associated with stymied ambitions to achieve nationality. He furnished a historical reality when the political reality had not yet become manifest; the one substituted for the other by presaging it. A reviewer remarked of the first volume of Treitschke's *Deutsche Geschichte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert* that he 'has come to the view, quite rightly, that all history is essentially political history: 'the deeds of the folk as persons shall be researched as though they were nations'⁴¹⁵.

But the form Treitschke gave to his argument left another reviewer with the impression that he thought that poetic appeal was as important to the effectiveness of the historical argument as adherence to the disciplined methods of historiography. In this way, perhaps, Treitschke practiced what intellectual historians attuned to literary

⁴¹⁵ H. Ulrich, reviewer of part one of Treitschke's *Deutsche Geschichte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. XLII, p. 330.

criticism have argued since the mid-1960s: that the distinction between ‘scientific’ or ‘historical’ writing and ‘poetic’ writing is false. The reviewer continued that ‘Treitschke fuses the historical writer’s calling with that of the poet which lends a poetical element not only to the language but to the historical forms which he regards as true flesh and blood. [...] Not merely the scientific method, but also artistic feeling and a poetical instinct instruct him’⁴¹⁶.

It is doubtful whether it had occurred or even mattered to Treitschke that his work blurred the line between ‘history’ and ‘literature’. He understood his task to be that of narrating a readable, positive, and perhaps self-congratulatory story about world-historical idea of spiritual freedom in the particular forms in which the history of the fatherland expressed it. No matter what ‘form’ his narrative of the development of the idea took, it was still argued from an historical point of view, for his ultimate concern was to prepare Protestant German society for the task he believed events in its past had made incumbent on the present. It had taken three and a half centuries for this process to unfold, which suggests why his *Deutsche Geschichte* began with the Reformation and argued that the greatest initial achievement of German history was to have destroyed the unity of Catholicism. ‘The middle ages appeared to the moral world as a closed and visible unity; state and church, art and science took from the hand of the pope the moral laws on which they lived. The intention of the Reformation was to break the control of spiritual power to win back for the state and science the right of independent moral existence. [...] The character of modern culture was first shaped in this new century, the freedom of belief, thought and work became the property of Europe’. For good measure, he also attributed the achievements of Columbus, Machiavelli, and the reformer Ulrich

⁴¹⁶ Reviewer unnamed, *ibid.*, vol. XLIX, p. 513.

von Hutten to the world-historical task of the Reformation. 'Germany entered just as the theocracy of the middle ages collapsed: the political testament of the sixteenth century was finally executed'⁴¹⁷. The universality of that testament, we are left to surmise, was what 'enabled' Treitschke to include two non-Germans and a 'radical' reformer (who was a persistent critic of Luther's conservatism and for whom Ranke had only scorn) within the Reformation's realm of influence.

Treitschke's narrative of German history centred on the development and union of two main historical forces: the world-historical realisation of the universal idea of spiritual freedom, and Luther's personification of this idea in his role as a maker of German history. Treitschke gave these themes their most direct expression in a speech at Darmstadt on 7 November 1883, the four-hundredth anniversary of Luther's birth. In the commemoration, entitled 'Luther and the German nation', he reiterated that all history was political history and that Luther had been its prime historical agent. 'Luther's deed was certainly a revolution in which religious belief rooted itself in the innermost kernel of the people's spirit. With this, belief became part of the radical political change of modern history which cut deeper into all that exists. The whole order of the moral world, sacred for a millennium, the long chain of venerable traditions, which held together the life of Christianity, collapsed with one hit. With childlike trust he began to build with the power of God's word alone'⁴¹⁸. For the first part of the speech, Treitschke portrayed Luther as a mediator between common humanity and the world-historical individual. Luther, in other words, became Protestant Germany's personal Jesus. 'In history, no man's name lasts

⁴¹⁷ Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, vol. 1, (Leipzig, 1918, 10th ed) pp. 91, 192-193.

⁴¹⁸ Treitschke, 'Luther und die deutsche Nation', in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1911) p. 143.

who was not greater than his achievements. No other nation in recent times has seen a man whose words are so taken from his lips by its countrymen [...]: his is blood from our blood. The heroic courage of the Germans shone from the deep eyes of this farmer's son who did not flee the world, but sought to rule it through the power of moral will⁴¹⁹.

The revolution enacted by Germany in world history recognised and utilised this 'moral will' to form a political means of governance. Treitschke's language is opaque – he never explains the specific historical meaning he intended when he used concepts such as freedom or fate – but the function of his historical narrative as a popular, political ideology was indelible. It did for the nascent nation what a magnet does when waved over steel shavings. 'Our century has put form to, and completed, much of what in Luther's day was mere premonition. The new world, then discovered, has since entered world history; German and Italian independence are established, [and] the freedom of belief of all the peoples of the moralised [*gesitteten*] world has been assured'⁴²⁰. What remained was to complete the task of the Reformation, and the time for that to occur was the present moment. 'Protestantism had strengthened the national government in other Protestant lands. In its native land, however, it had only dissolved the old polity. It was decisive for the future of the German monarchy that a stranger took our crown during those hopeful days when the nation greeted the Wittenberg monk. [The nation] awaited a totally new formation [*Neugestaltung*] of the Reich'⁴²¹.

This Treitschke still awaited. In the meantime, he suffered setbacks to the course of development he envisaged. Making himself part of creating the *Reich* that the Reformation had promised had become elemental to his self-consciousness. The 1850s

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁴²¹ Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte*, vol. 1, pp. 4-5.

were disappointing years for anyone who hoped to see progress made towards realising Prussia's world-historical mission. A decade of disagreement between Friedrich Wilhelm IV and parliament over control of the military budget deprived the state of its surest means of convincing itself of the reality of its mission. The completion of the Reformation seemed, once again, a distant hope, particularly to the *Bildungselite* who saw history in these terms. More personally, Treitschke was troubled by what he perceived as a discrepancy between his profession – and the connections to other elites it afforded - and the power of his writing to turn his hopes for the nation into reality. He dug in his heels and reiterated that intellectuals must act, not only think. 'I have never been more dissatisfied with myself, the incompleteness of my education and the distance between my accomplishments and what I wish to do. As we were in the time when independent thought began, holding forth in fantastic abstractions until it returned to us as world-weariness, now it is unavoidable that all intellectuals should incriminate themselves. The happy time when we could live unto ourselves, dwelling in the kingdom of thought is passed. Now we should join the whole of the human endeavour as a vital member⁴²². Part of that new assignment would be to remind the readers of German history that the idea of the Reformation was still an active, formative and positive force in their lives and the life of their nation. The promise of the opportunity in history to submit under one's own will to a German nation unified under the promise of spiritual freedom must not be forgotten.

Nor should the moral righteousness of the idea of the nation, grounded in the Reformation, be mitigated by a few aberrant acts of radicalism and destruction. This was the position Treitschke took on the Wartburgfest which took place over the night of 18-19

⁴²² Treitschke to Heinrich Bachmann, Göttingen, 19 July 1856, *Briefe*, vol. 1, p. 373.

October 1817, at the Wartburg castle near Eisenach where Luther completed the bulk of his translation of the New Testament. An educated and Protestant elect of German society gathered at the estate to commemorate the three-hundredth year of the Reformation and the fourth anniversary of Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig, and to celebrate the rise of the German *Burschenschaft* and their cause of breaking the hindrances placed by the Congress of Vienna on German national development. The *Burschen* came from German universities including Göttingen, Heidelberg, and Halle: young, Protestant men guided by the ideal of creating a unified, Protestant German nation. Their children and grandchildren were positioned to be the Prussian historians' ideal audience⁴²³. The nation they envisaged would be true to German tradition and faithful to the ideals of the freedom of association and expression, proto-liberal values speaking to the idea of a united Germany which would guide the party of Döllinger, Droysen, and Duncker: 'The folk is healthy all in all', Droysen wrote in a letter of 1844. 'But not so with the civil service, [...] even worse with the universities. If only there were a means to bind the universities together! For there are not just Prussian, Bavarian, etc. universities: they are all German; they must conduct themselves as a German corporation and move forwards'⁴²⁴. The black, red, and gold flag flown at the Wartburg would also fly over the national assemblies of at Frankfurt (1848-1849), Weimar (1918-1933) and the post-World War II Parliamentary Council of 1949, 'the three national assemblies to which modern German

⁴²³ See particularly Walter Horace Bruford, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: 'Bildung' from Humboldt to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge, 1975); R S Elkar, *Jünges Deutschland in problematischem Zeitalter* (Düsseldorf, 1979); Ulrich Engelhardt, 'Bildungsbürgertum'. *Begriffe- und Dogmengeschichte eines Etiketts* (Stuttgart, 1986); G Heer, *Geschichte der deutschen Burschenschaft*, vol. 2: Demagogenzeit, in: *Quellen und Darstellungen zur Geschichte der Burschenschaft* (Heidelberg, 1927); Konrad H Jarausch, 'The Sources of German Student Unrest, 1815-1848'. In: L. Stone, ed., *The University in Society*. (Princeton, 1974), and *Deutsche Studenten 1800-1970* (Frankfurt a.M., 1984);

⁴²⁴ Droysen to Friedrich Gottfried Welcker, 16 Aug. 1844, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 1, pp. 287-288. On the interrelations of German universities on the question of the formation of national identity, see Walter Ruegg, ed, *Universities in nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Europe 1800-1945* (Cambridge, 2004).

traces its lineage'.⁴²⁵ After the military and moral victories of 1866 and 1871, which came at the expense of the ideals of liberalism but were accepted despite the sacrifice of certain political principles, the ideals of forming a new society which had been fought for at the Wartburg were quickly forgotten and substituted by broad and rousing mythological visions of the festival's connection to the Reformation.

The evening warmed up once some of those in attendance began burning what they called 'foreign' books, an act which Treitschke gave historical justification by relating to Luther and several of his students' burning of books of canon law, papal decrees, and scholastic theology in Wittenberg in 1517. Treitschke dismissed the disciples of the Lutheran Pietist Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, spiritual founder of the German fraternity movement itself, as 'fanatical primal-Teutons' who seized the moment at the gathering for 'mischievous fraternising': 'They were an indescribably fatuous posse, no worse than many similar outbreaks of academic rawness, dubious only in their immeasurable arrogance and jacobin impatience with which these young people announced themselves'. Karl Sand, who murdered the writer August von Kotzebue the following year, was one of the agitators who pushed Prince Metternich to make an official response to the fracas by shutting down fraternities all across Germany and placing severe censorship over the means of civic expression. Treitschke, however, placed Sand in a different light by placing him under the long shadow of Luther: 'The main idea of our gathering is that we are all ordained priests through our common baptism, we are all free and equal; the archenemies of our German national tradition are

⁴²⁵ Steven Ozment, *A Mighty Fortress: A New History of the German People* (New York, 2004) p. 167.

Roman Catholicism and the legions of monks and soldiers'⁴²⁶. 'With this', Treitschke continued, as if to suggest that the Protestant-national aspirations of the Wartburg celebrants had not been fully expressed, 'the collective-German character of the gathering was overcast from the outset'⁴²⁷.

In the light of Treitschke's much graver concerns about the braking power of Catholic-German culture and politics on the post-Reformation German historical trajectory, it is questionable just how troubled he was by the nationalistic cloud-cover which the radicals cast over the Wartburg gathering. The existence of a Catholic Germany was a more obvious foe; nationalism, even in its more aggressive forms, nevertheless sought an agreeable outcome, even if the means were dubious. Treitschke portrayed Karl Sand as a man with sound intentions but an unstable temper. As a whole, the Wartburgfest was an important conceptual bridge between the Reformation and the construction of the German nation in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Treitschke's vision of the Reformation justified the course German history had taken since the creation of the North German Confederation following Prussia's rout of Austria at Königgrätz in early 1866 and the subsequent removal of Austria from Germany by the Treaty of Prague in August of that year. He read the present into the past, so that the Wartburg celebrations enabled the present, just as the Reformation had led to the Wartburg. The advance of this progressive history was morally impeccable, and this allowed him to conclude on a tone of syrupy nostalgia: 'The gathering was generally harmless, happy and innocent, despite the stupidity of a few individuals. As farewells were said with streaming tears, it would remain a memory for many of the springtime of

⁴²⁶ Cited in Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte*, vol. 2, pp. 424-426.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*

youth. Thus had Heinrich Leo understood it: they had fraternised with acquaintances from north and south, and they grasped with their hands the disunited fatherland⁴²⁸.

Some differences between German liberalism and western liberalism are obvious in the Prussian historian's conception of German history⁴²⁹. In its German form, the state existed as an end in itself rather than as a means for improving the lot of the individual; partially unintelligible historical forces intervened in the processes of statecraft and religion and pushed and pulled 'reality' in ways which reason could not capture; the state was also an ethical entity in itself without which the cultural and political nation had no moral value. One ultimate difference was that the Prussian historians were apt to settle for a conception of state that was morally 'good enough' rather than a conception which was absolutely rational or necessary or defined by an *a priori* understanding of what a state must be to serve the function which a state must serve. Historicist relativism subsumed reason. The adaptability of their future-orientated conception of state left them prone to constructing retrospective historical justifications of what the state had turned into. The historian's power to participate in the construction of the conception of the state, and then to narrate its 'history', reached an unprecedented level of authority by the late 1860s which it enjoyed for the subsequent three decades. The generation of the Prussian School therefore differed from the Rankean and Hegelian conceptions of history in at least one fundamental way. Because the latter believed that the state had culminated in the present, they were much clearer about what the ideal state consisted of, how and

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁹ Georg Iggers is particularly convinced of the centrality of the distinction between western and German conceptions of liberalism to historical understanding of national context. See the chapter entitled 'The Prussian School' in his *The German Conception of History*.

when it would be realised, and how the historically-conscious intellectual would recognise it. The future was merely the modulation of a constant, absolute principle; the present, therefore, had already revealed what the future held in store. History had redeemed their political community and made it conscious of how it had arrived there. For the Prussian historians, in contrast, the future was everything because without history's promise of redeeming the ethical purpose of the present through the achievement of higher forms of ethical purpose, the ethical legitimacy of the present diminished. Bismarck's rise into power provided an option out of history as hope and promise. It showed in real terms how the present could be made to reach the future.

The liberals' acceptance of Bismarck's offer of a real purchase on the present instead of the idealist images of it is a story often told⁴³⁰. In it, historians debate, among other things, not whether the Reich Chancellor's rise influenced the course of German history for the subsequent century, but whether it did so as an expression of German liberalism or as a youthful, vigorous and historically-anticipated form of nationalism, or as both⁴³¹. Patriotic Germans, and German intellectuals, in particular, on account of their subservience to the state as civil servants, found themselves in a untenable position when hopes for the nation's future became incommensurable with the nation's status quo. The

⁴³⁰ On the 'generational shift' among historians in attitudes to the events of 1871, see Werner Conze, 'Das Kaiserreich von 1871 als gegenwärtige Vergangenheit in Generationswandel der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung (1979)', in: Ulrich Engelhardt, Reinhart Koselleck and Wolfgang Schieder, eds. *Gesellschaft-Staat-Nation. Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Stuttgart, 1992); more generally on the liberals' acceptance of Bismarck's 'offer' see Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, *Die deutsche Frage und das europäische Staatensystem 1815-1871*; *Enzyklopädie deutscher Geschichte* 15 (Munich, 1993); Joachim Ehlers, *Die Entstehung des Deutschen Reiches*; *Enzyklopädie deutscher Geschichte* 31 (Munich, 1994); Bernd Faulenbach, *Ideologie des deutschen Weges. Die deutsche Geschichte in der Historiographie zwischen Kaiserreich und Nationalsozialismus* (Munich, 1980); Lothar Gall and R Koch, eds., *Der europäische Liberalismus im 19. Jahrhundert*, 4 vols. (Frankfurt a.M., 1981); Theodor Schieder and Ernst Dauerlin. *Reichsgründung 1870/1871. Tatsachen, Kontroversen, Interpretationen* (Stuttgart, 1970); Theodor Schieder, *Das deutsche Kaiserreich von 1871 als Nationalstaat* (Cologne, 1961).

⁴³¹ Rudolf von Thadden, 'Bismarck und die Deutschen. Ein Rückblick auf den 100. Jahrestag seines Todes', in: Schöttler et al eds. *Plurales Deutschland – Allemagne Plurielle*. (Göttingen, 1999); Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Bismarck und der Imperialismus* (Cologne, 1969).

implications of their arguments, as Fritz Fischer writes, were that the state was as important as its idea, that the reality, not the norm, of the state's authority was ultimately the stronger, and that the individual was the object of the state, never subject, 'never partner'⁴³². Within Prussian nationalism, legitimated itself by becoming the agent of German nationalism in 1871, the political historians' voices were respected. They offered a buoyant *evangelische Lebensgefühl*, as Heinrich-August Winkler recently described it, which captured the essence of Prussia while at the same time providing a dynamic, almost prophetic sense of purpose for all of Germany⁴³³. Bismarck's conception of the foundation of European politics, which was as much the product of cultural knowledge as academic study, reflected a similarly unambiguous belief in the Christian origins of modern statecraft. 'Anyone who wishes to justify the existence of these states must do so in terms of their religious foundation', he spoke to the First *Landtag* of Berlin in 1847. 'By the will of God I must recognise that what is revealed in the *Evangelium*, and, what I believe is in my right to say when I pronounce this state to be a Christian state, is the present task which is to realise and fulfill the teachings of Christianity'⁴³⁴.

Treitschke shared this zeal. In 1879 he implored the readers of the first volume of his *Deutsche Geschichte* to believe that, 'The teller of German history does only half his job when he merely shows the interrelation of the events and then gives his honest judgment. He should know to awaken in himself and in the hearts of his readers what many of our countrymen have lost to frustration and squabbles: delight in the

⁴³² Fritz Fischer, 'Der deutsche Protestantismus und die Politik im 19. Jahrhundert', *HZ* 171 (1951) p. 474-475.

⁴³³ Heinrich-August Winkler, *Der Lange Weg nach Westen*, p. 178.

⁴³⁴ Bismarck, 'Aus einer Rede auf dem 1. Vereinigten Landtag zu Berlin, den 15.06.1847', in *Deutscher Staat. Ausgewählte Dokumente* (Bielefeld and Leipzig, 1900), p. 14.

Fatherland'⁴³⁵. Perhaps the Prussian historians' conception of history extolled pride in national unity more than intellectual fidelity to the complications and contradictions of historical reality which had so absorbed Ranke and Döllinger. But the impression of power, collective action, and the 'moral force of the facts' exuded by that politico-academic establishment was a formidable one indeed. The Catholic Church's response to north-German modernism was not unlike the Church's response to Luther and the other reformers. The papacy of Pius IX found the actions, ideas and objectives of northern Germany particularly monstrous and dangerous because it provided a new political understanding of what might be changed in German society. It did so by offering a new 'scripture' in the form of historiography of the present as well as a new hermeneutic understanding of how past and present might come together. The Church was not alone either in its skepticism or in reacting against the perceived threat. Many historians and philosophers tightened up their arguments and began to question the assumptions on which the Prussian conception of history rested. Some of these critiques would address the meaning of the Reformation in the nineteenth century and would attack the notion that its most profound meaning to the present was political in nature. Little agreement would be forged. For the Reformation concept of reconciliation – *Versöhnung* – would have to wait until a point in history when there were no options remaining but to clear the rubble and come to terms with a ruined civilisation. By that time, however, the ideological power of this historical conception of the Reformation had lost its force.

⁴³⁵ Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte*, vol. 1, p. vii.

Chapter 6: The future is Protestant: Fatherland, *Kulturkampf*, and General Luther

6.1 Hope and Despair for the Protestant Nation

What are we to make of Treitschke's call to his fellow Germans to 'delight in the Fatherland'? The risks which any historiographical study assumes become apparent in the imbalance between analysis of the work's content and the context from which the content is thought to arise. The form of the historical work, its function within intellectual and national communities, and the historian's intellectual worldview, on the one hand, and on the other, the larger social and cultural structures which inform the historian's choice of content in the first place, resist assimilation. Historians have tended to portray the problematic as a discrepancy between representations of historical consciousness and continuities of historical traditions, which since the French Revolution have been conceived of by historians as a problem of subjective consciousness of political nationality. Within the post-revolutionary nation-state, as Reinhart Koselleck has argued, the bifurcation of subjective 'experience' and 'expectation' persists as one of the ubiquitous traits of modernity and one of the fundamental influences at work within the historiographical representation of the past⁴³⁶.

⁴³⁶ Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik Geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt a.M., 1979); Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, Todd Pressner et. al., trans., (Stanford, CA, 2002), Koselleck and Paul Widmer, eds. *Niedergang: Studien zu einem geschichtlichen Thema* (Stuttgart, 1980); See also Jürgen Habermas, 'Über das Subjekt der Geschichte. Kurze Bemerkung zu falsch gestellten Alternativen', in: Reinhart Koselleck and Wolf-Dieter Stempel, eds. *Geschichte: Ereignis und Erzählung* (Munich, 1973). See also Paul Joachimsen, *Vom deutschen Volk zum deutschen Staat. Eine Geschichte des deutschen Nationalbewußtseins* (Göttingen, 1956); Ulrich Herrmann, 'Was ist 'deutsche Geschichte?''', in: U Dirlmeier et. al., *Kleine deutsche Geschichte* (Stuttgart, 1995), pp. 9-16; Ulrich Herrmann, 'Volk – Nation – Vaterland: ein Grundproblem deutscher Geschichte', in: *idem.*, *Volk – Nation – Vaterland* (Hamburg, 1996) pp. 11-18.

One consequence of historians' turn to this issue of subjectivity within national-political historical discourse has been to question traditional assumptions about the correspondence of historical representation to the historical context in which it arose and the 'reality' of the past it purports to explain. Form, and for some content, are decided in the present⁴³⁷. The core argument of the dissertation, that the nature of the historian's engagement with his present heavily influences the terms on which he writes the history of the Reformation, compels us to look beyond the 'reality' of the argument and towards its conceptual structure: beyond the skin and into the flesh⁴³⁸. And this, returning to Treitschke, signals the difference between the meaning of 'delight in the Fatherland' in 1879 and the meaning that phrase could acquire by 1914 and then 1918, a chronology this chapter will chart through the construction of the Reformation within the historical expression of the 'Protestant' German nation.

If we take seriously the notion that the form of the historical work inspires its content, then we can begin to understand how the national historiography of Germany between the defeat of Austria in 1866 and Prussia's defeat in 1918 performs a greater service than simply re-hashing a venerable historical narrative. By keeping our focus on the historical dimension of representations of the Reformation, by showing how at specific points the historian descends from above to refasten the narrative to 'reality', and by attempting to understand what effect – political and otherwise - the historian sought to achieve through these particular historical constructions, we gain the advantage of being

⁴³⁷ Two of Hayden White's works introduced the problematic to historians and in many ways remain the defining statements of the issue: *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1975); *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, 1987).

⁴³⁸ Steven Ozment, *A Mighty Fortress: A New History of the German People* (New York, 2004), pp. 228, 232

able to understand nineteenth-century German historiography of the Reformation as the *continuation* of the sixteenth-century Reformation as these historians understood it. We move, in any case, towards the idea of *Geschichtsreligion*, a ‘religion’ of history, in which the historical argument makes direct appeal to, if not itself becoming, a means of transcendence in the dialectical, Hegelian sense of *Aufhebung* and the Christian conception of salvation⁴³⁹. History points to a ‘fundamental category of religion’, writes Peter Berger, ‘namely the conviction of belief that there is a different reality, and no less one of absolute meaning for humanity, which transcends the reality of our every-day’⁴⁴⁰.

The previous chapter attempted to show two aspects of the evolution of Prussian-national historiography: first, the development of an historical consciousness grounded in the objective belief that the mid nineteenth-century German idea and practice of history originated in the Reformation; and second, that the context and idea of the German nation-state was held by historians to be the modern, true and necessary expression of the historical-spiritual force of Protestantism. Robert Southard has described the project of liberalism as ‘purposive historical progress towards human freedom in national states’. But unique to the German *Geisteswissenschaften* and their relation to political liberalism, he continues, ‘was the Augustinian-Christian equation of progress with theodicy [...] the ideal of directional, providential history, divinely governed and working largely through unseen processes toward ultimate good’⁴⁴¹. Within this vector of historical development,

⁴³⁹ Wolfgang Hardtwig, ‘Geschichtsreligion – Wissenschaft als Arbeit – Objektivität: Der Historismus in neuer Sicht’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 252 (1991) pp. 1-2; and as cited by Hardtwig: Heinz Robert Schlette, ‘Religion’, in Hermann Krings, Hans Michael Baumgärtner and Christoph Wild, eds., *Handbuch philosophischer Grundbegriffe*, vol. 5, (Munich, 1975) p. 1238.

⁴⁴⁰ Peter L. Berger, *Auf den Spuren der Engel. Die moderne Gesellschaft und die Wiederentdeckung der Transzendenz* (Frankfurt a.M., 1970) p. 14.

⁴⁴¹ Robert Southard, *Droysen and the Prussian School* (Lexington, KY, 1995) p. 8.

however, lay too many points of hermeneutic contestation which provided, over the course of the nineteenth-century, substantive counter-examples to the Prussian notion of historical Providence. The Prussian historians' conviction that the creation of the German nation exposed the essential political content of the Reformation came at the expense of the historical importance of Protestantism's theological content. As the ideological content of nineteenth-century Germany historiography shifted from relying on a foundation of historicist interpretation of the early sixteenth century to a present-orientated reading of what the Reformation held in store, the meaning of the Reformation itself underwent reconstruction. As Werner Conze has argued, the contested relationship between national and religious identities, their historical origins, meaning for the future, and their expression as political-ideological statements would remain the single greatest impediment to reaching the 'ultimate good' in the various interpretations of that providential dream⁴⁴².

The tension between religion, nation, and political purpose might be construed, in any case, more usefully as two conceptual tendencies. The first builds on the previous chapter's analysis of Droysen and Treitschke's understanding of history and their interpretation of the Reformation as the *political* future of the early sixteenth-century transition from a theological to political conception of religion. The second direction leads to *Kultur* which regarded politics as a momentary and passing preoccupation. When Prussia dissolved itself into the German nation, excluding Austria, bastion of Catholicism, in 1871 and thus realised the *kleindeutsch* solution to national unification, the act was heralded as the completion of a cultural and political idea of Germany which

⁴⁴² Werner Conze, 'Zum Verhältnis des Luthertums zu den mitteleuropäischen Nationalbewegung im 19 Jahrhundert', in *Gesellschaft-Staat-Nation*, p. 422.

first entered the stream of *Weltgeschichte* in 1517. The Reich was one step closer to realising its Protestant mission. To this historical narrative Droysen provided a theory of history and a method of historical understanding, a ‘categorical imperative’ for the realm of history, which revealed the relationship between history as an object of study and history as the subjective condition of the historian and his intellectual-cultural milieu⁴⁴³.

In this teleological programme of national development, the future of the Reformation could assume but one form of historical expression and its historians made little room for variance. This future was ‘closed’ in the sense that the Prussian-qua-German conception of history offered only one conception of the German empire: a metaphysical idea of the nation competing for greatness among the world powers, predicated on the belief in a greater future and bent on achieving it. The view shunted all contingencies and armed itself against the ambiguities and challenges posed by a more pluralistic notion of what the past could possibly mean to the present. Even Wilhelm II began around 1900 to diverge from the Hohenzollern’s Old-Lutheran, traditional distaste for the more vibrant forms of evangelical German nationalism. Insistence on the sixteenth-century understanding of the connection between principality and confession, as mandated by the Peace of Augsburg, was held to be the moment of ‘breakthrough’ into modernity conceived as the contemporary political-intellectual relationship between nation, nationalism and Protestantism: ‘The nation-state would be re-evaluated along the lines of evangelical Lutheranism and Protestantism would be saturated with national ideology’, wrote Conze⁴⁴⁴. Even Ranke’s relatively conservative position allowed for the observation in 1862 that Germany’s world-historical importance was the ‘idea of the

⁴⁴³ Droysen, *Historik and Kleine Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 299, as cited by James F. McGlew, ‘J. G. Droysen and the Aeschylean Hero’, *Classical Philology* 79, Jan.-Oct. 1984, p. 9.

⁴⁴⁴ W. Conze, ‘Zum Verhältnis’, p. 426.

unity of the old dynastic principalities [and] the fusing of the rapidly rising Prussia with an organic whole'⁴⁴⁵.

Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*, the antagonistic *Katholikenpolitik* adopted by the culturally Protestant German Reich in the mid-1870s, sought to defend the values and mission of the German nation against the steps taken by Pope Pius IX to bring the Church into a more advantageous, pro-active stance in European politics following its major defeats in Italy and Austria-Hungary. Pius's declaration of papal infallibility in 1870 issued a threat which, if not answered, could weaken the political cohesion of the Reich by attacking its self-legitimizing historical narrative. Döllinger was excommunicated in return for his perseverance in questioning the thousand-year history of dubious claims by the papacy to temporal authority; Johannes Janssen, accused by Protestant historians of using cultural-historical methods to undermine the Reich's political-historical standing, was so thoroughly savaged by Berlin political historians that it took until the 1920s for cultural and social historians to gain institutional and intellectual credibility. The dismissal of Karl Lamprecht's cultural histories by the same keepers of the political-national historiography in Berlin was comparable to Janssen's excoriation. For the conflict between interpretations of the past became a conflict about historical method in the present. Within historiography, the issues of *Kulturkampf* and *Methodenstreit* may be deemed as much struggles over historical interpretation as they are competing historical

⁴⁴⁵ Ranke's apprehension about the ideals and objectives of the national assemblies and social uprisings of 1848 show not only the distance between his conservative, royalist position and the more active stance taken by the Prussian historians, but also shows that historians who agreed that modern German history began with the Reformation did not necessarily agree on where that history should take the nation in the future. See Ranke, [Gegensatz der historischen Ideen in der Welt] May-June 1848, *Leopold von Ranke: Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1: *Tagebücher*, Walther Peter Fuchs, ed. (Munich and Vienna, 1964) p. 385.

creeds, not dissimilar from the papal declaration of transcendental powers versus the political agency of history's metaphysical foundation⁴⁴⁶.

The second conceptual direction, the idea of *Kultur*, raised the possibility that the infatuation with politics as the dominant category of historical consciousness – Bismarck's realm in which firepower and diplomacy won unity, progressive legislation and a coherent constitution for Germany, accomplishments of which more contemplative liberals had only dreamt⁴⁴⁷ – starved German history of authenticity by reducing the idea of culture to the menial status of decorative ornament on the powerful historiography of politics. Seen from the perspective of culture, political history has brought not progress, optimism and theodicy, but rather artificiality, alienation and decline to the *Volk*, the primal element of all things political and national. Jacob Burckhardt was the main exponent of this counter-view. He offered an 'open' interpretation of the Reformation insofar as he did not contemplate it having a future at all; he questioned the meaning of history in the most general sense by offering a radical critique of the Protestant-Prussian historical narrative reflected in the society around him. Friedrich Nietzsche, Burckhardt's close acquaintance in Basel and severe critic of the institution and modus operandi of German political historiography, went so far as to blame historicism for smothering the human spirit. Rather than being the German nation's moment of revelation, the historical

⁴⁴⁶ The national historiography of virtually every European country (and the USA) experienced similar 'crises' following Lamprecht's example in Germany: Paul Lacombe, Henri Berr and François Simiand in France, Charles A. Beard and James H. Robinson in USA, J B Bury in England, Henri Pirenne in Belgium, Johan Blok in Holland, Halvdan Koht in Norway, Gino Luzzato in Italy and Eduard Fueter in Switzerland: see Giuseppe Cacciatore, in Gerald Diesener, ed., *Karl Lamprecht weiterdenken: Universal- und Kulturgeschichte heute* (Leipzig, 1993).

⁴⁴⁷ 'Is it surprising that many liberals wanted to believe that a new political age had dawned, an age in which the goals of liberal society, Volk and Staat, might successfully be pursued? A liberal future seemed possible', writes James Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago and London, 1978) p. 121.

construction of the Reformation became both a symptom of an ailing folk and body politic and the expression of its sickness⁴⁴⁸.

Historians of *Kultur* saw it as the counterpoint to the Prussian historical narrative of national progress and therefore a rejection of the Christian sense of fulfillment. They turned from a paradigm seeing politics as the focus of historical forces to the anthropocentric notion that the true value of history lay in describing the human experience and its modes of expression - aesthetic, moral, and physical. In this, the salience of the Reformation never dwindled, even when politics was cast as an attribute of culture. Far from weakening the hold of the past on the present, the 'crises' in the historical sciences beginning in the early 1870s caused historians to entrench in defense of their respective positions. And this, in the light of the present analysis, makes for fertile ground, for crises in the humanities are generally met with defense of the methods, objectives and interpretations in question⁴⁴⁹.

Historians in the Prussian intellectual establishment had the most to lose in this tangle with *Kultur* and therefore took the boldest steps in self-defense. Many Prussian historians focused on method, which meant the means of achieving the desired political objective. Droysen, whose *Grundriß der Historik* of 1857 was the first and indeed most

⁴⁴⁸ See Lionel Gossman's magisterial study *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt: A Study in Unseasonable Ideas* (Chicago, 2000); Werner Kaegi, *Jacob Burckhardt: Eine Biographie*, 2 vols. (Basel, 1950); and Thomas Albert Howard, *Religion and the Rise of Historicism: W M L de Wette, Jacob Burckhardt, and the Theological Origins of nineteenth-century Historical Consciousness* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁴⁴⁹ 'The most important moments of the history of cultural history are those which coincide with moments of crisis', writes Fulvio Tessitore: 'these lead not to a weakening of the discipline but to a strengthening of it in the form of the specialisation of research'. Fulvio Tessitore, *Storiografia e storia della cultura* (Bologna 1990), cited by Giuseppe Cacciatore in Diesener, ed., *ibid.*, p. 347. Thomas Kuhn formulated the decisive thesis on the idea of conceptual revolutions: Thomas S Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 1962).

definitive statement on historical method, despaired of the post-1871 treatments of the subject. In a letter of 1881 to his son, he advised against the theoretically uninterested works of Ottakar Lorenz, Häckel, Dubois-Reymond, Birchow and not least Heinrich von Sybel, editor of the *Historische Zeitschrift* and by far the most powerful historian of the group. ‘Once I am dead’, Droysen continued to his son, ‘perhaps it will be seen that there was something to the *Grundriß*’⁴⁵⁰.

All these historians’ works were political in the sense that they themselves made judgments on the ethical content of Germany’s historical institutions of power and community. Droysen was unique in having argued that the historian must become self-conscious about the ideological presuppositions of his historical writings, for the choice of historical subject matter and its interpretation had to be understood as expressions of political values. Sybel and others differed in their crasser *use* of history to achieve the desired political effect and their uninterest in the status of the historian’s self-consciousness⁴⁵¹. ‘The purpose of the state is the fulfilment of freedom through the power of the community’, wrote Sybel, showing the tendency to concretise the idea of freedom within a conception of the state as the manifestation and expression of power⁴⁵². A review in Sybel’s *Historische Zeitschrift* – itself not exactly a bystander to politics – criticised the first volume of Treitschke’s *Deutsche Geschichte* on similar grounds: Treitschke is right in seeing Prussia’s reconciliation of opposed elements as the completion of the Reformation in the form of the long-promised, new German state. But

⁴⁵⁰ Droysen, *Briefwechsel*, Rudolf Hübner, ed. 2 vols. (Berlin and Leipzig, 1929); here, vol. 2 p. 943. Ottokar Lorenz, ‘Drei Bücher Geschichte und Politik. Berlin 1876; Heinrich von Sybel, ‘Über die Gesetze des historischen Wissens’, speech held on 3 Aug. 1864, published Bonn, 1864, reprinted in Sybel, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Berlin 1874, 1875, 1885).

⁴⁵¹ See Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Die Gegenwart als Geschichte: Essays* (Munich, 1995) pp. 231-232.

⁴⁵² Sybel, ‘Über die Wirksamkeit der Staatsgewalt in sozialen und ökonomischen Fragen’, in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Berlin 1874), pp. 131-148

he operated from the premise that Prussia's mission was to recognise its own fate and accept it⁴⁵³. In 1865, one year before he assumed the editorship of the *Preussische Jahrbücher*, Treitschke had urged this message on his readers in an even blunter formulation than Sybel's: 'we seek Germany's unity through the connection of the small states to Prussia. We cannot say ahead of time how this will happen... but the future belongs to the party which stays truest to Prussia's flag'⁴⁵⁴. He associated the future of the nation with the increase of its power, a position he stated unequivocally in the fourth volume of his *Deutsche Geschichte* in 1886: 'Small states are easily made objects of ridicule, for the total state is power'⁴⁵⁵. Two years later, he reiterated the position: 'Unless all signs deceive, this great century, which began as the French, will end as the German. Germany's thoughts and deeds have solved the question of history; it will fulfill what Emanuel Geibel once proclaimed: *Es mag am deutschen Wesen / Einmal noch die Welt genesen*⁴⁵⁶!

It is difficult to ascertain to what extent Treitschke's engagement with history can be separated from his activities as a politician. But at a minimum we might suspect that his years in the Reichstag from 1871 to 1884 directed his understanding of politics towards the real and the immediate in an almost evolutionary sense of the contest for survival. Nuance was never his specialty and the strong-willed, linear tone of his writing – whether extolling the righteousness of Prussian statecraft or instructing his wife on the cultural inferiority of the French - has left at least Georg Iggers slightly uncomfortable:

⁴⁵³ H. Ulrich, review of Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, vol. 1. *Historische Zeitschrift* XLII (1876) pp. 330-338, here pp. 330-331.

⁴⁵⁴ Treitschke, 'Die Lösung der Schleswig-Holsteinischen Frage', *Preussische Jahrbücher*, vol. 5 (1865) pp. 169-187, here p. 185.

⁴⁵⁵ Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, vol. 4 (Leipzig, 1891) p. 98.

⁴⁵⁶ Treitschke, 'Zwei Kaiser' [speech given on 15 June 1888], printed in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 1, 5th ed. (Leipzig, 1911) p. 318.

‘Gradually, Treitschke’s historical writings became the vehicle for an exaggerated nationalistic and increasingly authoritarian political outlook, and one closely bound to anti-Semitism’⁴⁵⁷.

It is a question worth asking whether this distaste for Treitschke is different from a distaste for the more general political mood in Germany once its *Bürgers* accustomed themselves to the confident discourse of imperialism. Wilhelm Dilthey, who differed substantially from Treitschke in character, intellectual style, and ‘scientific’ focus, also expressed his belief that the future of the Reformation was the present. ‘In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, so full of energy and developing powers, people looked ahead into an infinite future which reached its highpoint when it established the basic moral law of the will. This came to dominate the passions by means of its own inner powers’⁴⁵⁸. While Dilthey’s sense of the future lacked the edgy tone of an apology for a militant state, he did not refute the idea that Germany – imperial, Prussian Germany – had embarked on its historical mission, and that that mission was justified by the existence of the state as an expression of ethical necessity. Dilthey and Treitschke, in this regard at least, represented two ends of a spectrum, but both working towards a future which they believed was destined.

Most troubling to Iggers is not the idea of German nationality but the *means* by which Treitschke and the political mouthpiece of his mentality, the *Preussische Jahrbücher*, went about asserting and achieving the power of the nation. There was something brooding and self-destructive about the national-liberals’ frustrations over their perception of the inability of the state to enact its inherent promise. The means of

⁴⁵⁷ Georg Iggers, ‘Heinrich von Treitschke’, in H-U Wehler, ed., *Deutsche Historiker II* (Göttingen, 1971) pp. 66-67.

⁴⁵⁸ Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. II, ‘Weltanschauung...’ p. 16.

German imperialism gradually became its end which was expressed in the exercise of power itself; formerly liberal historians found themselves obliged by their own historico-ethical concepts of state to accept Bismarck's offer of German nationality, even if the *realpolitisch* terms of the offer mocked the historians' former political self-concept⁴⁵⁹. 'Holding on to and further developing that which was the original source of Prussia's power is the task of the Prussian politics of the future', an anonymous reviewer in the *Preussische Jahrbücher* had written as early as 1858. Readiness to arms was the means for executing that task: 'We believe that Prussia must be prepared to counter coordinated attacks from both east and west'⁴⁶⁰. The reviewer suggested further that intellectual reflection on the problem of national development also sacrificed the ethical energy of the nation: 'it is an essential development in politics that one has begun to regard the task of the state not solely in terms of philosophical principles: questions about assuring existence and power have taken precedence over theories'⁴⁶¹. The *Jahrbücher* returned to the problem of idealism on the fiftieth anniversary of the wars of liberation. The argument contended that liberation failed to create a self-sustaining Prussia because it lacked a guiding historical idea. But achieving that idea was a false end; Prussia's true objective was to create a nation 'internally strong and free and on the summit of Germany: Prussia would either achieve this together or be wrecked together'⁴⁶². Indeed the nation was achieved, but that failed to fulfill the yearning for a deeper feeling of national authenticity. Twenty-three years after the article in the *Jahrbücher*, and thus well

⁴⁵⁹ On Treitschke's abandonment of moderate liberalism and his reconstruction of his political allegiances within the content of his historiography, see A Biefang, 'The Dispute Concerning Treitschke's *Deutsche Geschichte* in 1882/1883: On the Splitting of National Liberalism and the Establishment of a National-Conservative view of History', *Historische Zeitschrift* 262 (1996).

⁴⁶⁰ Review of *Politik der Zukunft* (Berlin, 1858), *Preussische Jahrbücher* vol. 2 (1858) pp. 40-41.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴⁶² *Preussische Jahrbücher*, vol. 11 (1863) 'Das Jubelfeier der Befreiungskriege', pp. 64-82, here p. 81.

after 1871, Treitschke carried that anxiety forward: ‘We still lack the generally recognised political ideals and the cock-sure instinct of a flesh-and-blood pride in the nation’,⁴⁶³.

But there was another way to conceive of the problem of national authenticity and another way to conceive of its solution. If the political historians’ impatience with contemporary *Realpolitik* in the present yielded no real increase in the power of the nation, then an appeal to the historical origins of moral necessity itself might enable them to engage the engine of national progress. These origins lay neither in the founding of the Reich in 1871 nor in the ‘national’ liberation of 1813: it was the Reformation to which they returned. In a speech commemorating the four hundredth year of Luther’s birth, Treitschke appealed to the honour and righteousness of throwing oneself into the cause of the German state. Luther’s ‘act of liberation’ of the German spirit ‘stemmed from the honour of the German conscience; Luther created the greatest powers of daring from within that honour’s humility’,⁴⁶⁴. Three years later, in an address to the upper house of the Reichstag in April 1886, Bismarck himself equated Catholicism with a deficient aptitude for national feeling, and by implication, suggested that Protestantism enabled deeper, more genuine feelings to rise to the surface. It was the absence of that feeling that Treitschke deplored. ‘The German priest is made honourable by his inner religiosity [*was inner Religiosität alle Ehre macht*],’ the Chancellor would have thundered, ‘and because his feeling for the nation is poorly developed, he remains first and foremost a

⁴⁶³ Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte*, vol. 4, p. 466.

⁴⁶⁴ Treitschke, ‘Luther und die deutsche Nation’, speech held at Darmstadt on 7 Nov. 1883, in *Ausgewählte Schriften*, vol. 1, 5th ed, (Leipzig, 1911), p. 142.

priest, then a German'⁴⁶⁵. As if national pride were a dialectical construct, both Treitschke and Bismarck cast Catholicism as Germany's Judas and Protestantism as its redeemer. Protestantism and the German nation shared a common foundation in the culturally-Protestant historical conception of the Reformation. Protestantism and the historical form of the Prussian state appeared concomitantly and to find oneself on the winning side was something to proclaim.

Lord Acton found this attitude repugnant. Prussian-Protestant partisanship twice offended him, first because of his Englishness and second from his close familial and intellectual ties to German, liberal Catholicism. 'The historian displays the laws governing human life: it is not his duty to expound a private view', he counsels. 'It is the heresy of history to choose a side that seems good in our eyes, to reject the appointed course and the dominion of law, in order to degrade the life of nations under the anarchy of casual and disconnected causes'⁴⁶⁶. For Acton – refused admission to Cambridge for his Catholicism - this was the heresy of Sybel, Droysen, Treitschke and the historians on their periphery, as a response to which he urged his readers to revisit the idea of history as a religion. The Prussian conception of history bore the mark of heresy insofar as the claims it asserted and the moral influence it exercised on the society it described clashed with the assertions and values of Acton's conception of history.

Once again, we have a dialectical construction: accusations of false belief are valid only when weighed against a conception of true belief. As the Prussian historians struggled to verify their providential conception of history and to make good its promise

⁴⁶⁵ Otto von Bismarck, *Deutscher Staat: Ausgewählte Dokumente*; from a *Herrenhausrede*, Berlin, 12 April 1886, p. 267.

⁴⁶⁶ Lord Acton, 'The German Schools of History' (1886), in *Historical Essays and Studies* (London, 1907) p. 382.

to national politics, they measured their success against the ideas of the good, the right and the true. Whether these ideas were ever fully realised can be debated, but certainly by 1918 a different reality had negated the issue altogether. What is clear is that all these historians ‘inhabited’ the histories they wrote; they were already ‘in’ the Reformation in the sense that they were subjectively committed to objectives and outcomes in which they were objective participants. Their historical condition of the present cohered around the interrelation between the objective experience of progress and the subjective experience of hope, which was most clearly experienced in 1866⁴⁶⁷, and the countervailing failure to reach the desired objective which was experienced subjectively as a disappointment tended to recur out of proportion to the ‘actual’ disappointing event⁴⁶⁸.

Reinhart Koselleck has pointed out that in comparison with the ancient concept of degeneration, which was a constant preoccupation of late-mediaeval and early-modern intellectuals such as Machiavelli, Luther, and Melancthon, the historical-experiential category of progress emerged somewhat later. Theories of decline did not go away: one thinks of Max Nordau’s *Entartung* of 1894 and the diverse fears of demographic failure, racial contamination, and national impotence which emerged in various adaptations and misconstructions of Darwinian principles⁴⁶⁹. By contrast, the idea of progress underwent a fundamental change during the late eighteenth-century, and even more forcefully in the early nineteenth. Until then, ‘progress’ had had an historicist connotation which suggested improvement within the past which bore no necessary connection with the

⁴⁶⁷ See Carl-Georg Faber, ‘Realpolitik als Ideologie. Die Bedeutung des Jahres 1866 für das politische Denken in Deutschland.’ *Historische Zeitschrift* 203 (1966) pp. 1-45.

⁴⁶⁸ See Reinhardt Koselleck, ‘Einleitung’ and ‘Fortschritt’ und ‘Niedergang’ – Nachtrag zur zweier Begriffe’, in *idem.* and Paul Widmer, eds., *Niedergang: Studien zu einem geschichtlichen Thema* (Stuttgart, 1980), here, p. 7; Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (London, 1980).

⁴⁶⁹ A recent discussion of the issues can be found in J W Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914* (New Haven and London, 2000) pp. 92-108.

present. The conceptual shift occurred when the historian's focus moved from the history of instances of progress to the notion that history is the story of progress itself, a shift which entailed not only the exchange of subject and object but also placement of history in direct relation – if not competition – with the concept of the Kingdom of God⁴⁷⁰. In contrast to the relative autonomy of the concepts of decline and progress following this shift in the eighteenth century, early modern thought tended to see them as mutually dependent. Even the concept of *reformatio* in its sixteenth-century form meaning of a cyclical return to a purer past, was regarded as the harbinger of ruination⁴⁷¹. This had changed dramatically by the nineteenth century such that when Prussian historians strove for a better future, they did so without fearing that a worse, or God, would also seek its due. That these historians interpret the Reformation in the vocabulary of the nineteenth-century meaning of progress urges us yet again to retain our focus on the idea of the Reformation as an intellectual construct⁴⁷². 'The historiographical processing [*Bearbeitung*] of the 'Reformation' offers illustrative examples', Koselleck advised⁴⁷³.

6.2 The individual and the German religion of history

The following section further develops the German-national Protestant construction of the Reformation and its bearing on the idea of a religion of history. From

⁴⁷⁰ Koselleck, "Fortschritt' und 'Niedergang", pp. 220-225.

⁴⁷¹ Stuart Clark's discussion of early-modern understandings of progress, decline, and divine punishment is particularly helpful: *Thinking with Demons: the Idea of Witchcraft in Early-Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997).

⁴⁷² To this end, Ernst Schulin's interpretation might be found conceptually lacking: 'The Reformation was the epoch in which German history achieved its world-historical meaning. The nineteenth-century German science of history cultivated and expanded exactly this sixteenth-century understanding'. See Ernst Schulin, 'Luther und die Reformation', *idem.*, *Arbeit an der Geschichte. Historisierung auf dem Weg zur Moderne* (Frankfurt a.M., 1997).

⁴⁷³ Koselleck, *ibid.*, p. 7.

both the perspective of reflection *on* the nature of historical knowledge and as the more 'practical' writing *of* national historical narrative, the question becomes not whether the concept of religion, distinct from history, had a place in the historical work, but rather what form it took and how it functioned.

Not at all a national partisan in the Treitschkean sense, Dilthey nevertheless located at the core of his study of human consciousness the relationship between the development of Protestantism and the nature of historical knowledge itself. 'It appears that world-historical reflection is bound inseparably to the development of religiosity. The connection of the history of philosophy with religion [...] is aimed at the crux of metaphysical consciousness in which the two are connected. [...] This places consciousness in relation to reality'⁴⁷⁴. Later on in the argument Dilthey named this process the *reformatorischen Hermeneutik* and clinched the relationship between the 'experience and understanding of the *inneren Zusammenhang* which unites individual parts of the text and makes it a living work. This interrelation must be seen as the basic idea of the *protestantischen Hermeneutik*'. The Reformation created a means of textual exegesis, he concluded, and established the unity and normative autonomy of the text, presaging the point with which Gadamer began sixty years later⁴⁷⁵.

In Dilthey's estimation, this accomplishment was nothing less than the origin of a concept of progress understood as an unrolling of the increase of knowledge. Beginning with Leibniz, he argued the German Enlightenment displayed the signs of secularisation in which there arose a consciousness of the interconnection of nature and intellect: 'Here, the German spirit came into its own' but the oppositional relationship of Protestantism

⁴⁷⁴ Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, *Weltanschauung...*, pp. v-vi.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hermeneutik I: Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge zu einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (vol. 1, *Gesammelte Werke*). (Tübingen, 1990; 1st ed., 1960).

and Catholicism hindered the development of the German nation⁴⁷⁶. And with that, he dropped the subject of German statehood and ended with an understanding of the nation similar to that with which Ranke, Droysen, and Gervinus, as a young scholars of political history, began. In his study of the progressive development of the ideas of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, which remained intellectual devices, rather than the thing of the state which fluctuated unhappily between concept and reality and subjected the historian to more tangible political forces, Dilthey's idealist constructions escaped the momentary embarrassment felt by the political historians after Prussia's victory at Königgrätz when it became clear that the nation was born of Prussian arms, not the inner ethical unfolding of benevolent historical forces. Following Prussia's dissolution into *klein*-Germany and the ensuing 'solution' to the travails of national unification, the German national movement lost the goal for which it had long striven. For the historians, the answer to the question of nationality became precisely the problem of its historiography⁴⁷⁷.

When the German nation had been achieved in 1871 and the objective world-historical mission of the Reformation seemingly completed, a deep suspicion still lingered in many that the nation as it had become was not the nation to which Germany had been destined. Dilthey, for one, concerned himself with ideas whose flashpoint occurred above politics. His conception of the intellectual influence of the Reformation easily absorbed the idea that Luther's cultural delivery to the German nation originated in the concept of humanism, older and freer from the conceptual limitations of the native 'German' theology of the Lutheran Reformation. Luther adopted and Germanicised the religio-universalistic concept already at work in humanistic thought. Within the

⁴⁷⁶ Dilthey, *Ibid.*, vol. 7, 'Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt', pp. 335-336.

⁴⁷⁷ As Werner Conze argued in his 'Staats- und Nationalpolitik. Kontinuitätsbruch und Neubeginn', in *Gesellschaft-Nation-Staat*, p. 444, 448.

formation of a German national and intellectual identity, Luther was made out to be the bearer of what became the ‘cultural hegemony’ of the Lutheran-German idea of the *Kulturnation*. Droysen, by contrast, seized on the political meaning of the Reformation whose cultural patriotism and stricter periodisation drawing on a *political* periodisation of the Reformation caused him to condemn the late middle ages as corrupt, no matter how deeply informed Luther and Melancthon’s theology may have been by ‘late-Mediaeval’ thought⁴⁷⁸.

The juxtaposition of culture and politics grew sharper *en route* to its climax in 1918, a hardening of positions characteristic of the practitioners of cultural history, on the one side, and the historians who were later named, inaccurately, the *Neorankeaner*, on the other. Two aspects here will concern us: first, the manner in which the historian conceptualised the realm of culture or politics, and second, the moral and political status of the individual which resulted within these realms. Two conceptions of individuality became apparent and both envisaged the individual as *subject* to historical forces and circumstances whose origins were in the early sixteenth century. Taking more after Treitschke than Ranke himself, as Iggers surmises, the so-called *Neorankeaner* Max Lenz⁴⁷⁹, Hermann Oncken, and Hans Delbrück, all historians at the University of Berlin

⁴⁷⁸ Dilthey, *ibid.*, pp. 49-50; Droysen, *Geschichte der preussischen Politik*, vol. 2, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁹ Max Lenz (1850 Greifswald – 1932 Berlin) characterises the experience of many German historians who experienced the latter empire and its defeat. He grew up in an orthodox Lutheran household. He cut short his studies under Sybel at Bonn by volunteering for the cause in the Franco-Prussian with the *pommerschen Jägerbattalions* in whose service he was wounded in 1870 at Champigny. Lenz habilitated at Marburg in mediaeval and early-modern history; thus began his interest in the Reformation, one example of which was his biography of Luther (1883). He was named *außerordentlicher* professor in 1881 and full professor in 1885 at Marburg. By way of Breslau he was called to the University of Berlin in 1890. Germany’s defeat in 1918 contradicted the basic thesis of all his historical work; to this he responded by turning towards the *Nationalkonservativen* in the 1920s. He was a member of the *Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* from 1886; one of his prominent students was Hermann Oncken.

and each a defender of the belief that history's primary task was the study of politics, tended to see the individual as subject to the 'compulsive characteristics' of 'super-individual tendencies' of the state⁴⁸⁰. What distinguished the group from Ranke, and why they shared much of Treitschke's infatuation with the moral imperative of the nation's historical development, is as much a matter of attitude as it is context. They worked from the premise that objectivity was a practical matter one could achieve by writing good history; the moral imperative of world history would become apparent if only the facts of historical development were discovered. They ignored Ranke's constant deference to the omniscience of the transcendent divine and the abstract forces of history in their conceptions of historical understanding. Perhaps more formatively of what history meant to them, the context of the social, cultural and political changes in imperial Germany shifted the terms of the historical argument at a level few had imagined possible: industrial, demographic, social, economic, and international *Verhältnisse* altered the meaning of 'reality' as the foundation of historical consciousness.

How these factors reverberated within the historical argument itself must remain our focus. While the *Neorankeaner* did not strive consciously to write world histories in the spirit of Ranke's late works, the eschatological limits of world history nevertheless conditioned their understanding of the past and predisposed them to conceive of it in terms of politics and its inherent ethical forces. The world-historical perspective universalized the course of German history such that what Adolf von Harnack, for

⁴⁸⁰ Ernst Schulin, 'Friedrich Meinecke', in H-U Wehler, ed., *Deutsche Historiker I.* (Göttingen, 1971) p. 41; see also H H Krill, *Die Rankerenaisance: Max Lenz und Erich Marcks. Ein Beitrag zum historisch-politischen Denken in Deutschland 1880-1939* (Berlin, 1962); Karl Kupisch, *Die Hieroglyphe Gottes: Grosse Historiker der bürgerlichen Epoche von Ranke bis Meinecke* (Munich, 1967); Fritz K Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933* (Cambridge, MA, 1969);

example, held to be the liberation of the German spirit in 1517 could as easily be conceived to be the universal history of freedom's agency⁴⁸¹. 'The Reformation declared the freedom of every individual' and from that point forward 'freedom will unfold according to its own laws. [...]With this, Luther established *die Neuzeit*'⁴⁸². Growing old by 1917 but not muddled in his opinions about Germany's neighbour to the west, Treitschke characterised the German conception of freedom in terms of *Nationalcharakter*. 'History shows that France, for all its enthusiasm for the idea of freedom, has never meant anything more with the idea than equality: never freedom itself'⁴⁸³. In this passage, Treitschke left the reader to surmise what that greater meaning could be, but he implied minimally that an inherent element of *inequality* distinguished the German conception of freedom from the non-German. Political historiography had become a means of justifying and satisfying subjective yearnings for the creation of a superior and unique national community.

The inequality became both actual and ideological, with both forms contributing to what Peter Burke has called the 'emotional overtones' and Arthur Lovejoy the

⁴⁸¹ Adolf von Harnack (1851 Dorpat, today Tartu, Estonia – 1930 Heidelberg) studied Protestant theology at the University of Dorpat from 1869-1872, received his doctorate and habilitated at the University of Leipzig in 1873-1874, and became an *außerordentlicher* professor at Leipzig from 1875-1878. From 1875-1910 he edited the *Theologische Literaturzeitung* and in 1879 accepted a full professorship in church history in the theological faculty at Giessen. From 1868-1888 he wrote the *Lehrbuch für Dogmengeschichte* and founded the Protestant culture journal *Christliche Welt*. The *Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften* accepted him in 1900; coincidentally, he wrote a history of its 200 years in 1900 as well as *Das Wesen des Christentums*. In 1911 he was a co-founder of the *Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft* (today the *Max-Planck Gesellschaft*) over which he presided until his death. Wilhelm II ennobled Harnack in 1914, an honour he returned by devoting himself to the war objectives of the *Freien Vaterländischen Vereinigung*.

⁴⁸² Adolf von Harnack, *Martin Luther und die Grundlegung der Reformation: Festschrift für die Stadt Berlin*, speech given on 31 Oct 1917 (Berlin, 1928), pp. 118-119.

⁴⁸³ Treitschke, 'Die Freiheit', *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 2; here, as cited in Christof Dipper, 'Freiheit', *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart, 1975) p. 538.

‘metaphysical pathos’ of historical thought⁴⁸⁴. The idea that nations were unequal in their world-historical development was an ancient and uncontroversial point. German political historians tended over the course of the nineteenth-century to increase those inequalities by politicising the Herderian conception of the European identities. Writing in the *Historische Zeitschrift* in 1871, Adalbert Horowitz, for example, praised sixteenth-century German historians for doing what philologists, mathematicians, and natural scientists had not: they ‘strove in earnest to reform the highest functions of the life of the mind. It came quite naturally that one finally began to consider the history of one’s own *Volk*, histories which were written to awaken national consciousness and love of the Fatherland’⁴⁸⁵. In a reference to nineteenth-century historiography, Horowitz escalated the idea when he claimed that the ‘innermost essence’ of German historiography was to enhance the ‘consciously patriotic ethos’⁴⁸⁶. Between 1871 and the First World War the difference for the political historians between historical scholarship and uncritical patriotism dwindled to the point of insignificance. Indicating the direction things took while showing all the resolve of a soldier of history, the theologian and historian Adolf von Harnack attacked American President Wilson for criticising Prussia’s volatile amalgam of patriotism and militarism. Harnack’s defense of the Fatherland took the form of a defense of history, and specifically, the history of freedom whose expression the War was meant to protect: ‘We want the freedom which comes from our past and with our past, for only with that can we maintain and increase it!’⁴⁸⁷.

⁴⁸⁴ In Peter Burke, ‘Renaissance, Reformation, Revolution’, in Koselleck et. al., eds., *Niedergang*, p. 139; Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (New York, 1960, 2nd ed.) Lovejoy cited in Burke, *ibid*.

⁴⁸⁵ Adalbert Horowitz, ‘Nationale Geschichtsschreibung im 16. Jahrhundert’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 25 (1871) p. 67.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

⁴⁸⁷ Harnack, ed. *Die deutsche Freiheit. Fünf Vorträge* (Gotha, 1917), p. 13.

An obvious problem underlay the notion that the idea of freedom was the primary liberating factor of the German nation-state. By not admitting a degree of human agency in the historical processes of the expression the idea of freedom, national historiography lost touch with the sense of reality that enabled its audience to identify with the person of the hero himself. Additionally, the detailed, structural studies of Prussian politics in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were gradually re-shelved under obscurantism; the style of Droysen's highly popular biography of Alexander (1833), which portrayed the direction of world history through the individual himself, was also too measured in its assertion of the immediacy and ubiquity of the nation's power at the present⁴⁸⁸.

The individual in history became a vehicle for expressing the unfolding of the nation's place in *Weltgeschichte*: the autonomy of the individual was lost. Treitschke's belief that Protestantism not only opened the way to national feeling but that its meaning *was* national feeling suggested an abridgment in historical reasoning which gave the worship of national heroes its central place in this historiography. From the process of Becoming to the defense of what Became, the heroic individual was looked to as the truest expression of the national idea. The audience, it might be concluded, became accustomed to the notion that without the nation, the individual had no historical significance. Meinecke saw the historical meaning of the issue in terms of the moral-political tension within the individual between his status as person and political subject within the state. And behind this understanding operated the foundational proposition that

⁴⁸⁸ Otto Hintze's detailed studies of the rise of the Hohenzollern dynasty, for example: *Die Hohenzollern und ihr Werk. 500. Jahre vaterländische Geschichte*. (Berlin, 1915); *Soziologie und Geschichte. Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur Soziologie, Politik und Theorie der Geschichte*, Gerhard Oestreich, ed. (Göttingen, 1964).

nothing can be immoral which comes from the innermost, individual character of a being: 'The state is thus not sheer power, but the institutional embodiment of morality', reflected Iggers⁴⁸⁹, suggesting how the state itself became the omnipotent world-historical individual.

The kind of 'individual' described by these processes was therefore more a transcendent being than a real person⁴⁹⁰. When Hermann Baumgarten praised the Reformation for breaking the Holy Roman Empire, he saw victory assured in the redirection of 'moral energy' to the 'inner-individual', an act which broke the 'last, weak bonds which had held together the Roman Empire of the German nation'. This was Luther's singular accomplishment, he continued, for 'the idealistic goals and lofty thoughts all directed at the innermost of man gave this attribute of our being unconditional reign over the coming centuries'⁴⁹¹. But Baumgarten stopped short of describing what that reign would bring. He appealed instead to his audience on the level of 'metaphysical pathos' and emotion. The Prussian victory of 1866 marked the rejuvenation of the emotive spirit which had moved so many Protestants in 1817. One had only to believe in the cause of the nation to translate that into belief in the cause of Luther. Putting two and two together demanded no great powers of mind.

⁴⁸⁹ Friedrich Meinecke, *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat. Studien zur Genesis des deutschen Nationalstaats* (Berlin, 1907); Iggers, *The German Conception of History*, p. 9

⁴⁹⁰ Ernst Schulin offers a simpler explanation of the origins of the hero than the one developed here: 'No other European nation lays claim to a religious hero who so decisively changed the relationship between politics and religion and who at the same time furthered language and literature. It is understandable from this perspective why strong-willed individuals were so highly regarded in nineteenth-century German historical writing'. In: *Arbeit an der Geschichte*, 'Luther und die Reformation', pp. 14-15.

⁴⁹¹ Hermann Baumgarten, 'Der deutsche Liberalismus: Eine Selbstkritik', *Preussische Jahrbücher*, vol. 18 (1866) p. 455. The passage draws heavily on Droysen: 'Every page of our history bears witness to the reign of moral powers which are alone responsible for making life worth living'. Droysen, 'Einleitung': *Geschichte der preussischen Politik*, part 1. (Berlin, 1855) p. iii.

As we move forward toward 1914, the Idealism which was so integral to Droysen and Baumgarten's language yielded to the blunter if not dimly authoritarian tones of Harnack, Lenz, and Treitschke's writings. The 400th year of Luther's birth, celebrated in late October and early November, 1883, and the death of Bismarck on July 30, 1898, gave great impetus to the coupling of the Reformation with the Reich and the reformer to Chancellor. The terms of this 'logic' had already been outlined by the pre-1871 generation, but it soon acquired a lively dynamism. Harnack, for example, proclaimed that 'The *Übermensch* is long since here. The history of human morality is an evolutionary one and is bound to God who is no longer a mysterious and impetuous force, but reveals himself instead as a norm, a strength and a protector'⁴⁹². It was no coincidence that this conception of God was also the contemporary conception of the state *and* the national hero. God, nation and super-human: all shared the same ontological status and most importantly, political historiography made each a defender of the Fatherland and the object of divine revelation⁴⁹³.

With God, nation and hero all functioning in synchrony, we can expand Iggers's notion that the state became the institutional embodiment of morality to include God and the hero. And wielding the greatest power of all, the historical narrative became the instrument which granted moral authority to whom or what it wished. History now has the power to raise its subject to its own moral plane⁴⁹⁴. The 'heroic turn' was thus a function of political history which by this point in the argument had acquired exactly the

⁴⁹² Harnack, 'Die Bedeutung der Reformation innerhalb der allgemeinen Religionsgeschichte' (1899) p. 298.

⁴⁹³ As Manfred Jacobs argues in 'Die Entwicklung des deutschen Nationalgedankens', in Horst Zilleßen, ed., *Volk-Nation-Vaterland*, p. 56.

⁴⁹⁴ 'Raise' meant here in the similar connotation of the term *aufheben*. The obvious objection to this point is that the universities and their faculties were civil servants of the highest order, *obeying* the state rather than being critical about its moral value. Within this particular historical construct, the historical narrative wielded the greatest authority.

‘ethical force’ of the institutions and ideas it ‘explained’. ‘The Grand Master of the German Order, Albrecht of Brandenburg, took off his white mantel and black cross, abandoned the false practices of the monks and grounded a ‘right and orderly rule’’, as Treitschke cited Luther: ‘Behold the wonder, in full stride and under full sail, the *Evangelium* hurries its way through Prussia!’⁴⁹⁵.

Dilthey’s synopsis of the reformer diverged somewhat from the history of historical consciousness and proclaimed Luther’s uncommon aptitude for politics: ‘He was born for action and to rule and something high-handed and sovereign characterised his person’⁴⁹⁶. And finally Lenz, in a tumble of metaphors, formulated the matter in the most far-reaching form. Luther’s greatest deed was to provide the impetus for Germany’s transcendence of all the nations of the world. Thanks to Luther, Germany *became* Weltgeschichte. ‘The greatest time of our history saw the planting of a seed in the soil of our nation. From this grew a tree in whose shadow we all now live and whose trunk rises high above all the other nations the earth. [...]Interest in the relationship between reform-minded doctrines and the concept of political power becomes self-evident’⁴⁹⁷.

‘Self-evident’ to Lenz it may have been, his analysis – not untypical of the rest of German-Protestant national historiography – largely ignored the content and even existence of the teachings themselves. One exception was his essay on Luther’s doctrine of authority. But for an historian whose focus so evidently concerned the relationship between doctrine and political authority and its historical significance to the nineteenth century, the absence of Luther’s four political writings of the early 1520s is

⁴⁹⁵ Treitschke, ‘Luther’, *Ausgewählte Schriften* (vol. 1) pp. 149-150.

⁴⁹⁶ Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. II, pp. 53-54.

⁴⁹⁷ Lenz, ‘Luthers Lehre von der Obrigkeit’ (1894) [speech held at the Friedrich Wilhelm University (Berlin)]. *Kleine historische Schriften*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1910) pp. 132-135.

noteworthy⁴⁹⁸. Even if the whole tradition of nineteenth-century historical Idealism worked from Luther's belief that the history of the Reich led ultimately to God, not humanity, and that to understand the Reich one must understand God – the possibility of which Ranke denied -, the historians were silent about Luther's own foundation in Old Testament law, for this would have exposed the antiquity of Luther's so-called 'modernity' as theologian and political theorist. Indeed Luther did not understand the categories of law or nation in the civil sense, but conceived of the empire, emperor, and princes as direct subordinates of God. Ranke understood this better than any other historian of the century.

These later nineteenth-century views vacillated between seeing Luther as the producer of the German spirit or as merely the representative of its deeper, 'organic' currents. The situation is different with the second hero of consequence to late nineteenth-century German-Protestant historiography. Bismarck, more immediately than Luther, embodied the idea and reality of national unification. Protestant historians heralded Bismarck as the contemporary expression of the German-Lutheran *Weltgeist*. Many heralded his battle-ready statesmanship as the only practical solution to Liberalism's static idealism. Whether he achieved what he is remembered for having achieved is debatable. But the statues erected in hundreds of German Protestant towns and cities in the years after his death show that the function of the *idea* of the man was

⁴⁹⁸ Historians now concur that Luther did not work from an idea or essence of the state, folk or nation, but instead from an Old-Testament conception relating God's intervention in history and to save humanity from Satan. The ensuing Christian conception of the Reich – Luther's premise – was thus contingent on the grace of the Trinity, not the metaphysical conception of the civil community under temporal rule. Luther's conception of the nation stems from this biblical notion of the Kingdom of God, not the kingdom of the people. See Heiko A. Oberman, *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications*, Andrew Colin Gow, trans. (Edinburgh, 1994); M. Jacobs, 'Die Entwicklung...', in Zilleßen, ed., p. 59:

central to German national identity⁴⁹⁹. His aggressive policy on Catholicism during the mid 1870s, as will be discussed below, not only revived animosities between Catholics and Protestant reminiscent of tumultuous sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – treading on Liberalism’s promise for a better future -, but also alienated conservative Protestants who feared that once it had devoured Catholicism, the new Reich would impose itself on their creed, as well.

After the Iron Chancellor’s death, these reservations quickly disappeared from the historical narrative. Lenz recommended Bismarck’s letters to his bride as ‘the purest revelation of the German heart’ and told her that the correspondence recalls the young Goethe and Luther. ‘Piety and masculinity, strength and clarity of will, religion and love show their fundamental harmony’⁵⁰⁰. But the Chancellor’s greater meaning to Lenz was as the shaper of nations, not the definitive source of the meaning of love in the time of Prussia. In a speech given at the University of Berlin shortly after Bismarck’s death, Lenz sculpted the contours of his ‘cultural memory’ which held its political and moral power until 1918 by asking, ‘When since the Reformation has the soul of our *Volk* been moved more deeply and powerfully than during the time of our wars of unification! When has the nation striven after purer and more awe-inspiring goals? With all the fibres of his essence, he rooted himself in Luther’s concept of God’⁵⁰¹. Harnack concurred entirely in his own funereal commemoration of the man: Bismarck afforded a degree of national and cultural security unknown before in Germany. He gave the cleft *Volk* what they had been lacking: ‘the assurance of a great political existence’. ‘And why this escalating

⁴⁹⁹ The city of Hamburg-Altona erected a statue of Bismarck on a scale which Stalin would have envied. See Kai Krauskopf, *Bismarckdenkmaeler: ein bizarrer Aufbruch in die Moderne* (Hamburg, 2002).

⁵⁰⁰ Lenz, ‘Bismarcks Religion’ (1901) *Kleine Historische Schriften* (1910 Berlin) pp. 361-362.

⁵⁰¹ Lenz, ‘Zu Bismarcks Heimgang’ (speech held at the Friedrich-Wilhelm University of Berlin, 22 Dec 1898) *Kleine Historische Schriften: Von Luther zu Bismarck*, vol. 2, (Berlin, 1913), pp. 346, 356.

admiration and belief in the *post-Existenz* of this hero? Because the nation sees itself in his personal greatness, unity of his character and will and the richness of his goal-orientated spirit. [...] Bismarck is conceivable only as a German, *ja*, only as a Prussian, something all Germans feel as instinct and conscience⁵⁰².

‘Instinct’, ‘conscience’, ‘piety’, ‘personal greatness’: this was the vocabulary of religion. Combined with the belief that the essence of the state was an autonomous, self-determining personality which can be explained only in terms of itself, we can broaden Bismarck’s reception into a more general historical attitude. Beneath the praise of Luther and Bismarck and behind the idea that the German nation was a unique phenomenon leading the advance of *Weltgeschichte* lay a sobering observation. It seems to have occurred to none of the German-Protestant historians considered here – before 1918, at least, for Meinecke⁵⁰³ – that their historical worldview was self-justifying, value-laden, and ideologically committed. They recognised no norms of political procedure and boasted militancy and power as expressions of moral forces and as the realities of the historical world⁵⁰⁴. Further, the rapid assimilation of the heroic figures of Luther and Bismarck into the historical narrative indicated the willingness of certain historians to work for the good of the empire. Those we have considered thus far have shown every sign of delighting in the challenge and ignoring whatever bearing this would have on the moral status of their historiography. The metaphysical ends to which they strove offered

⁵⁰² Harnack, ‘Bismarck: zum Gedächtnis seines Todestages’ (1898), in *Adolf von Harnack als Zeitgenosse*, vol. 2, (1908) p. 1549.

⁵⁰³ A mood shift which accompanied the experience of national and moral defeat by 1918 can be detected in at least two of Friedrich Meinecke’s works: *Das Zeitalter der deutsche Erhebung, 1795-1815* (Bielefeld, 1913); *Preussen und Deutschland im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich and Berlin, 1918). In *Die Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte* (Munich, 1924), Meinecke attempted to synthesise the pre- and post-war German pasts into a single concept of statecraft.

⁵⁰⁴ Iggers, ‘Heinrich von Treitschke’, in H.-U. Wehler, ed., *Deutsche Historiker* vol. 2, p. 78.

the security of a powerful nation and the promise of fame and destiny. It demanded a leap of faith, and they jumped eagerly.

6.3 Re-igniting the sixteenth century: *Kulturkampf* and Catholicism's threat to the metaphysics of Protestant-political historiography

If we take seriously the belief held by members of the German *Bildungsbürgertum*, at whose pinnacle the Prussian-Protestant historians exercised their authority, that the founding of the *Reich* brought Germany nearer than ever before to completing the historical mission of the Reformation, then we might wonder what they thought impeded its *total* completion. The nineteenth-century claims of development, refinement and realisation of historical destiny in matters of nation and mind was understood as the ongoing process of liberation from the Catholic Church. In the logic of nineteenth-century historiography, the most obvious hindrances to the German world mission could be eliminated. By the mid-1870s, this realistic solution to an essentially religious problem had become something which many historians and statesmen simply took for granted. Catholicism posed a double difficulty. First, despite the political, spiritual and intellectual truths revealed by the Reformation, the mere fact that Catholicism continued to exist left the future of the Reformation uncertain. In historiographical terms, at least, the strife between the confessions recalled the theological struggles during the first years of Luther's confrontation with the Church.

Second, Protestant history blamed the Catholic Church for the reality of an ‘incomplete’ history and rendered more urgent the idea of its completion.

But the *Kulturkampf*, dating roughly from 1869 to 1887, was about politics because it was about religion. Instigated by Bismarck’s programme of reform which sought to nationalise social and cultural structures and thus exchange the power of the state for the presence of the Church in daily life, the Protestant-liberal vision was not immediately welcome in the nation. The guiding principle held that freedom *within* the state was a more historically-modern, liberal-German form of freedom than freedom *from* the state: it was a conception of freedom which, as Leonard Krieger so well described, cohered around the German conception of *Libertät*, which had no equivalent in other European contexts⁵⁰⁵. It has been argued that the historical phenomenon of the *Kulturkampf* should not be confused with sixteenth-century confessional opposition or thought of as its modern rescendent⁵⁰⁶, not least because the religious settlements of 1555 granted the Roman faith the right to exist. Matters had changed with time. ‘The apparent triumph of certain liberal ideals underscored the fact that what seemed like liberty to liberals often seemed like compulsion to others’, writes Sheehan⁵⁰⁷.

Closer historiographical analysis shows that the clash between religious ‘cultures’ appears rather to be a conflict of political ideology based on two incommensurable conceptions of history. *Kulturkampf* turned into a struggle over the construction of historical meaning played out within the historically-charged interpretation of what form of religious morality bore legitimately on politics. All signals from Rome indicated the

⁵⁰⁵ Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom* (Boston, 1957).

⁵⁰⁶ As argued by Winifred Becker, ‘Der Kulturkampf als europäisches und als deutsches Phänomen’, *Historisches Jahrbuch* 101 (1981) pp. 422-446.

⁵⁰⁷ Sheehan, *German Liberalism*, p. 144.

transubstantiation of all matters of human civilisation into a specific conception of religion, all the while turning a blind eye towards the political consequences of the bold, new doctrines. The Immaculate Conception of the Virgin (1854) asserted Pius IX's transcendental powers over life and life to come. His *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) fired more directly at liberal politics by condemning 'progress, liberalism, and civilisation as lately introduced': separation of Church and state, nonsectarian schools, and religious pluralism and toleration all threatened the divine sanction of the Church. Finally, the doctrine of Papal Infallibility (1870), which Döllinger so self-injuriously denounced, plainly subjected all temporal rulers to the moral and religious authority of the pope⁵⁰⁸. The papacy understood the doctrines as a defensive move against the ungodly advance of temporal authority.

The opposite view prevailed in Berlin. Bismarck thought he saw the simple truth of the matter when he declared his prerogatives were political, not religious. 'The question which concerns us, and the light in which we see it, would be misconstrued were we to do so as a matter of confession or church. It is essentially about politics; it is not about a fight against our Catholic fellow citizens or an evangelical dynasty set against the Catholic Church, nor about the power struggle between royalty and priesthood'⁵⁰⁹. Heinrich von Sybel, very much the wolf cloaked in lambs' wool, reiterated the view a year later when he reassured German Catholics that 'the state and Liberal party guarantee that they do not seek to intervene in matters of a person's right to believe or in the form that belief takes. But they do seek to assert the binding power of national law over the *outer* rights of all individuals and corporations. Exactly this is the indispensable

⁵⁰⁸ As cited by Ozment, *ibid.*, p. 215.

⁵⁰⁹ Bismarck, from a speech in the upper house, 10 March 1873. *Deutsche Staat. Ausgewählte Dokumente*, p. 256.

protection of personal religious freedom from arbitrary and repressive hierarchies, the bulwark of national independence against the rejuvenation of mediaeval, papal domination of the world',⁵¹⁰.

Some historians of the past half-century have placed the *Kulturkampf* in a European-wide context, emphasising the common experience of religious minorities in all the countries which underwent radical national unification over the nineteenth century⁵¹¹. Others focus on the particularity of the German context and note that Germany's historiographical tradition singles out the Reformation as an event and influence distinct unto itself. *Kulturkampf* in Germany was not as it was in Belgium or Italy, because the *kleindeutsch-großpreussisch* 'solution' to the eternal problem of German provincialism was the result of a unique German historical and political tradition. So begin the various *Sonderweg* theories, the attempt by historians in the post-war Germany to historicise the 'course' of German history, to compartmentalise its *reichs-nationalistisch* pathologies in the past which would limit the effects of national shame and allow for the belief that German culture itself had been scrubbed clean⁵¹². 'After 1871, no trace remained of the liberal traditions in evidence at the commemoration festivals between 1817 and 1859. An aura of *Illibertät* and militant nationalism dominated', concluded a prominent German historian in 1995⁵¹³. The Catholic historian

⁵¹⁰ Heinrich von Sybel, 'Klerikale Politik im neunzehnten Jahrhundert' (1874) in *Kleine historische Schriften*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart, 1880, 3rd ed) p. 376.

⁵¹¹ See Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser, eds. *Kulturkampf in Europa im 19. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig, 2003).

⁵¹² See Gerard Raulet, ed., *Historismus, Sonderweg und dritte Wege* (Frankfurt a.M. and New York, 2001). What had been a 'great power without a concept of the state' became a lesser power with a greater moral authority over its political institutions. See Rudolf Morsey, 'Die deutsche Katholiken und der Nationalstaat zwischen Kulturkampf und erstem Weltkrieg', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 90 (1970) p. 36; Morsey cites H. Plessner, *Verspätete Nation* (1959), p. 39; Theodor Schieder, *Nationalstaat* (39), p. 45; W. Sauer, 'Das Problem des deutschen Nationalstaats', *Politische Vierteljahrschrift* 3 (1962) p. 179.

⁵¹³ Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Die Gegenwart als Geschichte* (Munich, 1995) p. 220.

C. A. Cornelius, writing in the early 1870s, sensed a more diffuse danger embedded in the ‘assurance’ of freedom under Prussian national unification. ‘A sound and long-lasting tradition of particularism is rooted in our history, in our very nature; this, with European freedom and our own future, must be protected from German unity. [...] It is beyond question that the victory of unity through revolution and the overthrow of state, church and society of the fatherland can bring no victory’⁵¹⁴. No victory under the old paradigm, in any case. For no matter whether 1871 opened an age of religious freedom within the nation, national independence, of ‘militant nationalism’ or the first signs of an endangered future, it was clear to almost all that what used to be the separate functions of religion and politics within the nation had since become inseparable.

The advantage lay with the Protestants who believed, and therefore knew, in the logic of the times, that history was on their side. Basic concepts such as ‘nation’, ‘scientific progress’, and ‘freedom’ appeared synonymously and effortlessly to describe the historical meaning of Protestantism. Not coincidentally, the responsibility of maintaining the Reich once it had been powered into the temporal realm fell in part to the historians. The understanding of the state’s relationship to God broke with the ‘throne and altar’ conception which saw the king as an intermediary between a transcendent God in a metaphysical moral realm and common man as the subject of God and King – essentially the Lutheran and Rankean position – and evolved into the ‘Prussian’ conception which regarded the state as a divine and moral realm in itself. Even Wilhelm I jettisoned the reticence typical of his lineage and wrote to Pius IX in 1873 to impress on

⁵¹⁴ C. A. Cornelius. ‘Über die deutschen Einheitsbewegung im sechzehnten Jahrhundert’, in *Historische Arbeiten vornehmlich zur Reformationszeit* (Leipzig, 1899).

the Italian agent of God the Protestant view of the Church⁵¹⁵. Treitschke provided the definitive formulation: ‘The absolute civil sovereignty of the Church and the state is the work of the Reformation’⁵¹⁶.

In the course of the shift from religion to politics, Catholicism became a necessary opponent. To this end, the *Neue Evangelische Kirchenzeitung* declared in January 1871, that ‘the epoch of German history which began in 1517 arrives through battle and the cries of war to a God-ordained conclusion’. Not to be outdone, the future Prussian court-preacher Adolf Stoeker echoed the message later the same month. ‘The holy evangelical Reich of the German nation is completing itself. In this we see the work of God from 1517 to 1871’⁵¹⁷. As Heinrich-August Winkler recently argued, the attempt to establish the ‘political hegemony’ of Prussia by underpinning it with the ‘cultural hegemony’ of the Reformation both united and divided the nation along exactly the same lines⁵¹⁸.

The manoeuvre also shook an already wobbly epistemological position among historians ready to defend the new dispensation. Thus in 1907, thirty-six years after the *Reichsgründung*, Lenz fumed about the still-unfinished the nation. ‘National unity remains incomplete so long as our worship of God does not rest on common ground; [...] Before us lies the political and moral necessity of searching for whatever life-force will give nationality its *eigentliche* content’⁵¹⁹. Others knew the frustration. Born in Düsseldorf in 1817, Sybel had fled the *kleinstädtische* landscape burgeoning with

⁵¹⁵ Wilhelm I to Pius IX, 3 Sept. 1873, cited in Ernst Walter Zeeden, ‘Die katholische Kirche im Sicht des deutschen Protestantismus im 19. Jahrhundert’, *Historisches Jahrbuch* vol. 72, p. 442.

⁵¹⁶ Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte im 19. Jahrhundert*, vol. 3, p. 211, cited in Zeeden, ‘Die katholische Kirche’, p. 442.

⁵¹⁷ *Neue Evangelische Kirchenzeitung*, 7 Jan. 1871; Adolf Stoeker, end Jan. 1871; cited by Winkler, *Der lange Weg*, vol. 1, p. 214.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁹ Lenz, ‘Nationalität und Religion’ (1907), *Kleine historische Schriften*, vol. 1, Berlin 1910, pp. 254-255.

industry and peppered with Protestant and Catholic enclaves and found refuge in the Protestant hegemony of Prussia after he had proved himself as a historian at Munich. He would become one of the discipline's greatest partisans, editing the *Historische Zeitschrift* from its first issue in 1859, accepting a chair at the University of Berlin in 1861, and in 1875 claiming the ultimate accolade of the historical world with his appointment as official historiographer of the founding of the Reich. The power he achieved within the fortress of Prussian academics allowed him to levitate comfortably above the real world, a transcendental status which has long characterised the genealogical structure of the German historical community⁵²⁰. Toleration of Catholicism, an institution of the spirit which had turned in his estimation more aggressor than shepherd, seemed tantamount to settling for less than what history had promised the nation which had since begun to sail under the Prussian flag. 'The question of whether the Church is justified in ruling the world ignores all scientific evidence and counter-evidence: the issue is about the creation of a clerical world power, not the freedom of religious principles', wrote Sybel⁵²¹. The political scientist and philosopher Johann Caspar Bluntschli shared largely the same view which he conveyed to his students as a lesson of history⁵²².

The problem Protestant-national historians had with Catholicism rested in large part in their conviction that if the powers of the Church were allowed to grow, stasis would replace history's progress. The worry predated the *Kulturkampf* by at least a

⁵²⁰ Wolfgang Weber, *Priester der Klio. Historisch-sozialwissenschaftliche Studien zur Herkunft und Karriere deutscher Historiker und zur Geschichte der Geschichtswissenschaft 1899-1970* (Frankfurt a.M., 1994).

⁵²¹ Von Sybel, 'Klerikale Politik im neunzehnten Jahrhundert' (1874), *Kleine historische Schriften*, vol. 3, p. 378.

⁵²² See Ernst Walter Zeeden, 'Die katholische Kirche in der Sicht des deutschen Protestantismus im 19. Jahrhundert', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 72 (1953), pp. 447-448.

decade, indicating that behind the fear of a strong and reactionary Church stood some deeper tendencies which affected the Protestant historical discipline. 'The modern sciences and the modern state are the principal powers of the modern age which progresses from the spirit of the individual [...]', wrote Bluntschli in 1861. 'The Church sees its ideals in past centuries and strives wearily towards the heights it had formerly achieved'⁵²³. The equation was simple: Protestantism brought progress and strength, Catholicism caused retreat and attenuation. The fear of historical regress registered in Bismarck's vilification of the Centre Party as the organ of Catholic aggression, though the party drew on a rather more diverse constituency with Protestant and Catholic workers, aristocrats, conservatives and democrats in the demographically and religiously-diverse Rhineland⁵²⁴.

The Chancellor succeeded in wedging Catholics into a 'dilemma between patriotism and religious conviction' which alienated many of them from the Reich and made clear to all that religious homogeneity was the essential prerequisite to political integration⁵²⁵. Treitschke heightened the animus by stipulating that German history could be regarded only from the standpoint of Prussia, seeing therefore the rise of the Hohenzollern (following Droysen and Sybel's lead) as the liberation of Germany from

⁵²³ Caspar Bluntschli, 'Kirchenfreiheit und Kirchenherrschaft in der Geschichte', *Historische Zeitschrift* (5) 1861, p. 49.

⁵²⁴ See Stanley Zucker, 'Politischer Katholizismus und deutsche Demokratie: Der Fall Phillip Wasserburg (1827-1897)', *Historisches Jahrbuch* (102) 1982, pp. 94-112; Zucker cites J. Snell, *The Democratic Movement in Germany, 1789-1914*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1976; R. Ross, *Beleaguered Tower: The Dilemma of Political Catholicism in Wilhelmine Germany* (Notre Dame, 1976); P. Gilg, *Die Erneuerung des demokratischen Denkens im Wilhelmschen Deutschland* (Wiesbaden, 1965).

⁵²⁵ Rudolf Morsey, 'Die deutschen Katholiken und der Nationalstaat zwischen Kulturkampf und erstem Weltkrieg', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 90 (1970), pp. 35-36; See also K. Bacham, *Vorgeschichte, Geschichte und Politik der Deutschen Zentrumspartei: zugleich ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der katholischen Bewegung, sowie zur allgemeinen Geschichte des neueren und neuesten Deutschland 1815-1914* (Cologne, undated), here, vol. 2, 1927; Heinrich Finke, *Die Geschichte der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellung*, S. Steinberg ed., (1925), p. 93.

foreign domination⁵²⁶. Prussia's victory in 1866 stirred up an 'apocalyptic mood' among many German Catholics. Despite the Reich's anti-Roman prejudice, certain Catholics such as the Bishop of Mainz, von Ketteler, saw the need to cooperate with Prussia no matter how dismal the future appeared. At the 1871 *Katholikentag*, he insisted that 'we will be second to none regarding love of the Fatherland'. But *pro patria* was easier to preach than to practise. The representatives of the *Zentrum Partei* voted against the constitution proposed in 1871. By 1874, well into Bismarck's offensive, eighty per cent of Catholic men in Germany voted for the party which had amassed 27.9 per cent of the total vote⁵²⁷. Bismarck essentially defined the political existence of his opponent and then squeezed it to the periphery of national life. Döllinger's hopes for the Church and nation were one of the many casualties. While at the *Katholikentag* at Linz in 1850 Döllinger announced that 'Christianity has never endeavoured to destroy the nation but rather to ennoble it, to draw it back to its true character: A German Church is bound to the highest degree to German culture'⁵²⁸, the ecumenical notion which found no friend in Bismarck who opted instead for the belief that the divided nation was indeed a well governed one.

With the present promising no redemption, some Catholic historians found consolation in the claim that the true apogee of German national life had occurred already in the mid-fifteenth century. The 'real' Germany had existed over three and a half centuries before Bismarck, pre-dating the historical justification of the Protestant-German

⁵²⁶ Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte*, Cited by Iggers, 'Heinrich von Treitschke', in H-U Wehler, ed., *Deutsche Historiker*, vol. 2, 1971, p. 76.

⁵²⁷ Cited by Morsey, *ibid.*, pp. 34-35. He cites J. Schauff, *Die deutschen Katholiken und Zentrumsparti* (1928).

⁵²⁸ Ignaz von Döllinger, speech held in September, 1850 in Linz to the *Katholikentag*. *Verhandlungen der vierten General-Versammlung des katholischen Vereins Deutschlands*. 24-27 September, 1850, pp. 196-197. Cited by Albrecht Langer, 'Katholizismus und nationaler Gedanken in Deutschland', in Zilleßen, ed., p. 239.

nation itself⁵²⁹. The Reformation snuffed out the only nation Germany had ever known. Not merely a change of course from the Protestant-national historiography, the ‘Catholic’ view of the nation plotted an entirely different course altogether. Von Baader, Görres and Döllinger, in significantly different ways, had been arguing since the 1820s that German culture and German nationality, in the Herderian sense, were one and the same. Döllinger’s critique of the Reformation, and rejoinder to Ranke, focused on the cultural and social consequences of Lutheran doctrine and Luther himself. He worked from the premise that the outcome of the Reformation had distorted its idea of return to first principles to restore the pure relationship between God and all believers. He took to be one of his main responsibilities as an historian, therefore, to be the restoration of the pastoral capacity of intellectual life, which intellectuals and religious authorities were morally obliged to nurture, for this had attended to the lives of *all* Christians before the Reformation, not merely the elect beneficiaries of Protestant cultural and political policy thereafter⁵³⁰.

⁵²⁹ See, for example, Joseph Hergenröther, *Katholische Kirche und christlicher Staat in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung und in Beziehung auf die Fragen der Gegenwart: historisch-theologische Essays und zugleich ein Anti-Janus vindicatus* (Freiburg i.B., 1872; reprinted Aalen, 1968); Wilhelm Maurenbrecher, *Studien und Skizzen zur Geschichte der Reformationszeit* (Leipzig, 1874); Johannes Janssen, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters*, 9 vols. (Freiburg i.B., 1893-1897).

⁵³⁰ Historiographers and biographers tend to see Döllinger’s critique of Reformation theology in theological terms: an historian defending the theological foundation of his Church rather than a German-Catholic historian espousing a critique of the moral, and therefore political, consequences of the Reformation and its limitation of religious plurality *within* the nation. Viktor Conzemius, ‘Aspects ecclésiologiques de l’évolution de Döllinger et du Vieux-catholicisme’. *Revue des sciences religieuses* 34 (1960); H Fries and Georg Schwaiger, eds. *Katholische Theologen Deutschlands im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1975); Johann Finsterhoelzl, *Die Kirche in der Theologie Ignaz von Döllingers bis zum ersten Vatikanum* (Goettingen, 1975); C. A. Cornelius was of the same opinion in speech given on 28 March 1890 in commemoration of Döllinger’s life, ‘Gedächtnisrede auf J. von Döllinger’, in: *Historische Arbeiten*, p. 605.

The success of Bismarck's effort at dividing the empire along confessional lines became clear early in the 1870s and remained so until war broke out in 1914⁵³¹. While Döllinger and Droysen stood shoulder to shoulder at the Frankfurt national assemblies, seeking the common goal of creating a liberal, constitutional monarchy supported by both confessions, by the 1870s the cultural and political context in which historians worked influenced their own work in the same way as it had shaped the nature of religion within the empire itself. Protestant and Catholic historians, each working for his respective community, turned to fighting partisan battles within the nation rather than defending the nation as an expression of all within it. Wilhelm Baum has characterised this shift from cooperation to polarisation as the change from a 'progressive' to 'ultramontane' historical perspective⁵³², though he did not mention that Bismarck's *Katholikenpolitik* was equally effective in dividing the national community. The overlapping circles of politics, culture and religion determined both the questions historians would ask and the answers they would find. In this sense, religion became a concept of political-historical nature, exemplified in the case of Protestantism by Treitschke, Lenz and Harnack, and that of Catholicism by Johannes Janssen (1821-1891).

Janssen met Döllinger through the mutual acquaintance of the Schlosser family around whose house near Heidelberg a group of Catholic intellectuals congregated. His teachers were not entirely comfortable with Döllinger's desire for reconciliation of the

⁵³¹ The *Volkverein für das katholische Deutschland*, offshoot of the *Zentrumspartei*, sought to defend the place of Catholic intellectuals in political life. Membership in the *Verein* reached its highpoint in 1914 with 805,000 members, shrinking to 380,000 by 1932 indicating the close relationship between a strong Reich – or a Reich at all – and the tendency for the minority community to coalesce around itself. Cited in Albrecht Langer, 'Katholizismus und nationaler Gedanken in Deutschland', in Zilleßen, ed., *Volk-Nation-Vaterland*, pp. 244-247.

⁵³² Wilhelm Baum, 'Johannes Janssen und Ignaz von Döllinger', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 95 (1975) pp. 408-417.

confessions. By the early 1860s Janssen had succeeded in bringing Döllinger around to a position whereby he infuriated Sybel and offended national liberals, but in so doing, brought about the cohesion of the moderate and conservative groups of German Catholic intellectuals⁵³³. The issue within the Catholic community concerned the reconciliation of the intellectual circles at Mainz and Munich in preparation for the 1863 *Katholiken Gelehrtensammlung*; Döllinger placed as many hopes on the reconciliation of the Protestant and Catholic confessions. At the meeting, Janssen outlined his position on contemporary politics, which he further sharpened over the course of his career: he expressed the desire Germany to develop as a federation, asserted the freedom of the individual, and placed the values within a conception of historical development which tied the present and future to the Holy Roman Empire in the late middle ages⁵³⁴. The meeting was an important point of self-identification for Catholic intellectuals, but through his orchestration of Döllinger's encounter with von Sybel and his implicit critique of the Reformation-based periodisation of German history, Janssen, too, stoked the fires of confessional animosity.

The conflict ultimately concerned history, and therefore politics and religion. Döllinger and Janssen's friendship broke off when the latter, not particularly interested nor educated in dogmatics, 'went the way of the indifferent middle', leaving Döllinger alone in his objection to Pius IX's declaration of Infallibility on the common grounds of conscience, dogma and history⁵³⁵. Janssen's side-step also spared himself the weight

⁵³³ Sybel's critique of Döllinger appeared in the second volume of Sybel's own political organ, the *Historische Zeitschrift*, in 1859: 'Beilage von der historischen Commission bei der kgl. bayer. Akademie der Wissenschaften' (unpaginated).

⁵³⁴ Janssen, 'Die Kirche und die Freiheit der Völker' (1863).

⁵³⁵ See Wilhelm Baum, 'Johannes Janssen und Ignaz von Döllinger', *Historische Jahrbuch* 95 (1975) pp. 408-417.

Döllinger bore in his decision to part with the Church on a matter of historical conscience. By *not* acting, however, Janssen's critics were quick to accuse him of ultramontane partisanship. It was unthinkable, from the perspective of Berlin, that a German historian – and a Catholic one at that - could contribute to the history of the Fatherland while at the same time sympathising with a papacy blatantly hostile towards the existence of the German nation. But Janssen's transgressions were even greater. He dared denounce late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century European humanism as 'hostile' to the Church and say the mid-fifteenth-century as 'one of the richest and most fertile periods in the history of Germany in religious morality and in politics, science and art. It was the real period of the German Reformation [‘das eigentliche Zeitalter deutscher Reformation’],⁵³⁶.

Droysen exemplified the tension between Janssen and the Protestant historians in his understanding of the period between the Councils of Konstanz (1414-1418) and the 'Reformation', which he understood as 'a time of great movement [...] which in our time we call politics'⁵³⁷. He prefigured the Prussian future of the Protestant Reformation even before the outcomes of Luther's 'Catholic' reforms made it clear that a break had been made from the Church. It offended Catholic historians that reforms within the fifteenth-century Catholic Church should be considered as the roots of Protestantism. The implication was that the Church had participated in its own destruction. C A Cornelius, for example, wrote that 'without Latin Christianity there would have been no Reich', by which he meant the first German Reich. 'This required a unified Germany which encouraged its growth; quickly it developed into the Holy Roman Empire of the German

⁵³⁶ Johannes Janssen, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters* (1876-1894) vol. 1, pp. 6-7.

⁵³⁷ Droysen, *Geschichte der preußischen Politik*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1855) pp. vi-v.

Nation. The existence of the German Reich was the salvation of the West from dispersion and destruction'. But optimism withered when he considered the historical viability of the Reich. 'While all the other branches of Christendom basked in glory, only the German spirit sank, growing quieter then silent'⁵³⁸.

Early-sixteenth century northern-European humanists were also to blame for the decay of the Reich. Unlike the 'older' humanists such as Nicolaus von Cues and Rudolf Agricola who regarded classical antiquity from the perspective of the 'truth of Christianity' and who 'brought the past into service of belief', Janssen accused Erasmus of being a 'cold egoist' of unsound mind and lacking in solid conviction. 'He was a man with a universal perspective but he knew no spiritual depth'. The older humanists, in contrast, 'possessed a truly reformatory calling, for their belief in the truth and holiness of Christianity and the Church was their innermost property'⁵³⁹. The 'social-ecclesiastical outrage' caused by the 'newer' humanists 'intentionally undermined' ecclesiastical authority: 'many of these humanists sought a total collapse of all existing authority and in so doing ignited a spiritual civil war which soon destroyed all seeds, flowers and fruits of epoch of the Reformation'⁵⁴⁰. He regarded these 'fruits' as part of the moral dimension of German culture in the broader sense of the ethical realm of *das Volk*.

But *das Volk* within what context? Here arises a central ambiguity in Janssen's scholarship. On the one hand, he condemned the later humanists for trouncing ecclesiastical authority and causing the 'division of the Church'. On the other hand, he stated that his objective was to write the history of the German folk which he saw as

⁵³⁸ C. A. Cornelius, *Historische Arbeiten...*, 'Über die deutschen Einheitsbestrebungen im 16. Jahrhundert', pp. 558-567.

⁵³⁹ Janssen, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, vol. 2, p. 1.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 598-99.

being distinct from the theological disputes of the time, which is to say, independent of the Reformation⁵⁴¹. If the *Volk* existed independent of the production of the ‘destructive’ intellectual and moral forces which acted on it, and if he remained convinced that the folk merely reflected these foreign forces, then Janssen’s history must be read as a *reaction* against the Protestant historiography of the early sixteenth century, what Hans Schleier has called ‘*Oppositionswissenschaft*’⁵⁴².

Janssen’s work is the opposite of the national-Protestant conception of theodicy. Nothing good has or can come from the Reformation, for the construct of the Reformation itself was flawed. While Protestant historians located the origins of the German nation in Luther’s doctrines of political authority and civil obedience, Janssen retorted that complete anarchy had prevailed in the Protestant community because its religious foundation had been cracked. Echoing Döllinger but citing the Catholic historian Wilhelm Maurenbrecher, Janssen rejected the political connotation of the answer to the question ‘Who should make the decision whether this or that individual belongs to the community of believers?’ ‘The community is not even the Church’, he protested. ‘Exactly this is the most difficult of problems, to create and secure a constitutional [*verfassungsmäßig*] connection between the individual community and the whole Church’⁵⁴³.

He blamed Luther. If the incoherence of Luther’s conception of the relationship between the individual, the state and the divine was the problem with Protestantism, then

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, *Vorwort* (unpaginated).

⁵⁴² Hans Schleier, ‘Kulturgeschichte im 19. Jahrhundert: Oppositionswissenschaft, Modernisierungsgeschichte, Geistesgeschichte, spezialisierte Sammlungsbewegung’, in Wolfgang Küttler et. al., *Geschichtsdiskurs: Band 3: Die Epoche der Historisierung* (Frankfurt a.M., 1997) pp. 424-446.

⁵⁴³ Janssen, *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 19. Citation of Wilhelm Maurenbrecher, *Studien und Skizzen* (Leipzig 1874), unpaginated.

at least the ambiguity could be clarified by turning to the creator of the whole mess. After a childhood marked by abuse which assured him an 'anxious state of mind', Janssen explained, Luther reciprocated by inflicting on the world his 'conflicted and tortured conscience', careening from one extreme to the other. 'He arrived ultimately at the belief that original sin had made all humanity inherently evil and totally dispossessed of free will: only through belief could man be saved'⁵⁴⁴. From this Janssen identified two outcomes. First, Luther had turned his wrath loose on the Jews, an attack which indicated Luther's frustration with the ambiguity about who and does not belong to Protestant community. Janssen made clear that Luther's concept of community relied as much on exclusion as inclusion, all of which the reformer perceived as a threat to the new order. Janssen cited an excited passage from Luther's *Tischreden*: 'A warning about the Jews: when they refuse baptism, one must drive them out of the land. He who refuses to do this makes clear beyond doubt that he himself is a disguised Jew who blasphemes incessantly against Christianity'⁵⁴⁵. The second consequence came in Luther's condemnation of the Protestant community itself for moral failure. Already in 1523 the reformer declared that 'all the world guzzles, boozes, and rages', adding in 1525 that 'we have become the object of ridicule for other lands'. The future seemed so bleak that in 1532 Luther announced the end of the world. 'What is the world save but a vast, wild sea of all roguishness and evil? For these final days are surely a sign that time is coming to an

⁵⁴⁴ Janssen, *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 73-74.

⁵⁴⁵ Janssen, *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 537; Luther, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 65, p. 188. By the mid-1870s, in contrast, 'Jews and liberals were the purveyors of an alien ideology, engaged in a conspiratorial assault on those social groups which personified the moral and material well-being of German society', writes Sheehan. This was the position to which Treitschke gravitated (one wonders why he did not seek confirmation of his anti-Judaism in Luther's writings). James J. Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago and London, 1978) p. 159.

end'⁵⁴⁶. Neither as the founder of a new Church nor as the spiritual foundation of the German nation, Luther assumed the role of a brutish, ignorant, but opportunistic parasite whose personal pathologies became the plague of the German future.

Protestant reviewers erupted in fury. Janssen's Catholicism was already a problem for the northern-German establishment, but his silence during the ideological struggles surrounding the doctrine of infallibility gave his detractors yet more reason to denounce his work as ultramontane apologetics. That his history of the German *Volk* had reached twenty editions by 1914 might also have alarmed the historical authorities in Berlin. But Janssen's critics tended to attack him on the vulnerable flanks of his historical periodisation and 'ignorance of the rudiments of critical history, his failure to distinguish between the paltry remnants of the past and the meaning', as Lenz wrote⁵⁴⁷. The critics seemingly ignored his claim that he practiced the idea of *Kulturgeschichte* and concentrated Janssen's religion and its bearing on his writing. The attempt to ally himself with Jacob Burckhardt, the nineteenth-century's greatest secessionist from the Protestant-political historical establishment, fooled none of them.

In a review from 1884, the moderate-liberal Berlin historian Hans Delbrück accused Janssen of committing the sin of inductive reasoning. 'The whole thing is nothing but an outrageous lie', the heated critic wrote. He placed it in the notorious genre of the great papal offenses, which Döllinger had condemned so angrily in his polemic *Die Papst-Fabeln des Mittelalters*: the Donation of Constantine, the pseudo-Isodoric decrees, and the misrepresentation of the theological understanding of the Church Fathers on

⁵⁴⁶ Janssen, *ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 362-363.

⁵⁴⁷ Lenz, (review) 'Janssen's Geschichte des deutschen Volkes', *Historische Zeitschrift* 50 (1883) pp. 233-234.

matters of the institutional-temporal powers of the Church. ‘Janssen’s work is both a sign of and a step forward towards the rise of ultramontaniam in our own time’. This fear arose from Janssen’s thesis that the Church had entered into a period of ‘regeneration’ by the mid-fifteenth century which would have continued along quite naturally had the ‘lawlessness’ of the Reformation not shattered the ‘healing’ processes already at work within the Church. ‘Since then’, Delbrück paraphrased Janssen, ‘decline, misery and immorality have ruled the world, and nowhere more than in Germany’,⁵⁴⁸. Delbrück offered in response an irrefutable counter-thesis that the world-historical ‘appearance’ of the Reformation itself was ‘evidence for the diffusion and groundlessness of late-mediaeval Catholicism. The Catholic side, including Döllinger, we are led to assume, would have admitted this up until a few years ago’⁵⁴⁹. In a review of 1887, Lenz put the charges more bluntly. ‘Janssen has written the history of the sickness of our people, the history of decline and fall of the German nation since the great revolutions of the second and third decades of the sixteenth century’⁵⁵⁰. Another reviewer echoed Lenz later the same year. ‘[Janssen] wants to be the judge who condemns Protestantism to death, whose intention is to condemn it for what he believes it has been from the beginning: the pernicious, disintegrating force of German history’⁵⁵¹.

The problem was not just Janssen’s interpretation of the Reformation, but what his interpretation *implied* about the late nineteenth-century German nation. If what the Reformation had *become* was the measure of its destruction, and if that destruction had in

⁵⁴⁸ Hans Delbrück, ‘Die historische Methode des Ultramontanismus’ (1884), *Historisch-politische Aufsätze*, 1907 (1886, 1st edition), p. 25.

⁵⁴⁹ Delbrück, *ibid.*, pp12-13, 25.

⁵⁵⁰ Max Lenz, review of Janssen’s *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, *Historische Zeitschrift* 57 (1887) pp. 523-529.

⁵⁵¹ G. Egalhaaf, review of vol. 5 of Janssen’s *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*. In: *Historische Zeitschrift* 58 (1887) pp. 367-370; Egalhaaf previously had reviewed vol. 4 in *Historische Zeitschrift* 56 (1886).

fact become the ‘reality’ of the German Reich, then the notion that the state was the self-justifying, positive expression of morality could be countered by the claim that the state was equally the expression of immorality. The ‘reality’ of the state did not resolve the contestation, nor could the self-justificatory function of the historical argument in the Protestant historical narrative ignore narratives which argued that self-justification of the state was impossible because the state was expression of immorality. Nor was Janssen the only target. The Prussian historian Hermann Baumgarten torpedoed Wilhelm Maurenbrecher’s history of the Catholic Reformation for suggesting that the Reformation could be anything but the spiritual and political origins of present-day Prussia. ‘When Luther’s act deserves to be called a Reformation, then it is impossible to designate what was sought and achieved in Spain before his time with the same expression’. The ‘true character’ of the Catholic ‘Restoration’ and Protestant Reformation, Baumgarten reasoned, is lost when the concepts are muddled⁵⁵².

Even within the narrower perspective of the historiography of the Reformation, the issue at stake in the *Kulturkampf* was the fight for survival of two distinct intellectual traditions. The stakes were high because metaphysical, ethical, and hermeneutical beliefs and practices were challenged by an opposite faith in conflicting beliefs and practices. Whether one believed that the modern science of history drew its lineage from Luther, or whether God commanded historians to reveal the true nature of the Church in accordance with dogma, compromise seemed impossible because of the inherent risks to the historians’ intellectual and institutional credibility. Lenz’s declamation that ‘will of Rome

⁵⁵² Hermann Baumgarten, review of Wilhelm Maurenbrecher, *Geschichte der katholischen Reformation* (Nordlingen: Bech 1880), *Historische Zeitschrift* 46 (1880) pp. 154-165, here p. 158.

regulates belief and science: [...] Dogmatics has surmounted history'⁵⁵³ suggested the irreconcilability of the conflict.

Kulturkampf passed with Bismarck's ejection from the chancellery in 1890 by Catholic voters who had suffered his *Kulturpolitik*, by conservative Protestants who feared losing their own religion, and by Social Democrats who loathed his distrust of the working masses. His successor Leo von Caprivi never acquired the heroic status Bismarck had won in 1866 and 1871, nor the international fame the statesman enjoyed following his deft handling of the Great Powers at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. Additionally, Wilhelm II directed much of his energy against Bismarck's support of protectionism and the *Junkertum* generally. Whatever chimera of liberalism Bismarck had maintained had passed. Stability through industrial militarism and protection of moneyed interests seemed like the way forward. For the Catholic world, the aggressively anti-modern positions of Leo XIII and subsequently Pius X succeeded in crushing all theological and historical modernism in Catholic intellectual life, of which Döllinger had been the greatest German champion. As a consequence, the Church retreated from its previous involvements in European political life⁵⁵⁴.

The Empire under the leadership of the power-hungry and politically-naïve Wilhelm II showed all signs of forced unification around the goal of beating Britain at its own game. No such linearity of purpose had aligned the humanities. Quite the opposite, the continued diffusion of philosophy and history towards right and left and into theological, cultural and political directions shows important continuities with the wider

⁵⁵³ Lenz, 'Janssen's Geschichte des deutschen Volkes', *Historische Zeitschrift* 50 (1883) pp. 238.

⁵⁵⁴ For discussion of specific papal decrees, see Alec R Vidler, *The Modernist Movement in the Roman Church: Its Origins and Outcome* (Cambridge, 1934), especially pp. 217-233.

spectrum of eighteenth-century historiography⁵⁵⁵. Following the dominant tones of Hegel, Ranke and the several generations of Protestant-national historians, *Kulturgeschichte* rang dissonantly in the questions it raised about historical sources and their interpretation. These new tendencies in historiography tended not least to undermine the political advances of mid- and later-nineteenth-century political historiography. In all of these moods, however, the concept of the Reformation remained a point of contention.

6.4 *Kulturgeschichte* and *Kulturpessimismus*: secession from political Protestantism

When the popular and controversial cultural historian Karl Lamprecht (1856-1915) died, many commentators contrasted him with the tradition Ranke and the Prussian School⁵⁵⁶. The comparisons were not accidental nor the contrasts insignificant. To Lamprecht, politics accounted for a single factor in the complex process of historical development. Because the task of the historian lay not merely in seeking to understand the history of single events but to understand their wider meaning, historical work had to attend to the cultural conditions of the past⁵⁵⁷. Politics, in other words, became one of many other kinds of cultural expression. While for Burckhardt, as one critic has written,

⁵⁵⁵ See, for example, Peter Hanns Reill, 'History and Hermeneutics in the Aufklärung: The Thought of Johann Christoph Gatterer', *The Journal of Modern History* 45-1 (1973) pp. 24-51, who argues that the tone of German *Aufklärung* historiography was predominantly 'cultural' rather than 'political'.

⁵⁵⁶ Karl Gottfried Lamprecht (1856 Jessen, Saxony – 1915 Leipzig) grew up in a Lutheran household. As a student at Göttingen, Leipzig, and Munich, his interests ranged widely between history, politics, economics, and art, a background which reflected his then-outrageous inter-disciplinary use of humanistic and social-scientific methodologies. He taught at Marburg and latterly at Leipzig where he founded an institute devoted to comparative world and cultural history, an approach unheard of in its time.

⁵⁵⁷ On the comparison with Ranke, see W. Wundt and M. Klinger, 'Karl Lamprecht: ein Gedankenblatt', 1915, pp. 8-12.

‘humankind gained freedom through culture’⁵⁵⁸, for Lamprecht, humankind was *bound* by it.

Born into a Protestant household in the centre of Luther-country – his father was an *Oberpfarrer* near Wittenberg – Lamprecht habilitated in Bonn in 1880, published between 1885-86 a three-volume history of German commercial life in the middle ages, and settled at the University of Leipzig in 1891 where he remained until his premature death. His years at Leipzig gave rise not only to his nineteen-volume *Deutsche Geschichte*, between 1891 and 1909, and smaller pieces on theory and method, but to works that challenged the core assumptions of the discipline of history. While Troeltsch and Meinecke saw one of key factors of historicism to be its capacity for self-renewal through the correspondence of method to subject, thereby creating a ‘check and balance’ against teleological or totalizing epistemological frameworks, Lamprecht tended more towards the model of the natural sciences and sought a totalising, positive understanding of and existence in history⁵⁵⁹.

Lamprecht’s cultural history of Germany won, like Janssen’s, a huge popular audience, but also the criticism of his colleagues and an irrevocable barring from the historical establishment centred in Berlin⁵⁶⁰. Fortuitously for him, he had never belonged to it, for early in his understanding of Germany’s historical development into modernity he had diverged from the political, state and individual-centred view of history envisaged by the editors of the *Historische Zeitschrift* who so powerfully defined the institutional

⁵⁵⁸ Helen Liebel-Weckowicz, review of Friedrich Jäger, *Bürgerliche Modernisierungskrise und historische Sinnbildung. Kulturgeschichte bei Droysen, Burckhardt und Max Weber* (Göttingen, 1994); reviewed in *History and Theory* 34 (1995) pp. 261-270, here p. 264.

⁵⁵⁹ See Guisepppe Cacciatore, ‘Karl Lamprecht und die Kulturgeschichte’, in Diesener, ed., *Karl Lamprecht weiterdenken*, p. 336; on historicism see Jörn Rüsen, ‘Theorien in Historismus’, in J. Rüsen and H. Süßmuth, eds., *Theorien in der Geschichtswissenschaft* (Düsseldorf 1980).

⁵⁶⁰ See Adolf Kuhnert, ‘Der Streit um die geschichtswissenschaftlichen Theorien Karl Lamprechts’. Inaugural Dissertation: Fr.-Alexanders Universität Erlangen (1906), pp. 6-7.

understanding of historiography. It was never clear to Lamprecht that the analytic category of politics belonged anywhere near the top of Germany's intellectual priorities⁵⁶¹. He integrated the multi-faceted western-European concept of *Kulturgeschichte* into fifteen-hundred years of German history, emphasising continuities and structures over individual events and individuals⁵⁶². Many contemporaries mainly in Prussian universities, feared that his 'dilettantism' would ruin the discipline, obscure history's political calling, de-legitimate the state and corrupt the people. The opposite actually took place with a flood of new periodicals dedicated to cultural history appearing as early as 1893⁵⁶³, and the establishment in 1908-09 of one of the first humanistic research and teachings institutes in Germany⁵⁶⁴. The institute was Lamprecht's own and

⁵⁶¹ See Roger Chickering, *Karl Lamprecht: A German Academic Life (1856-1915)*, (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1993); Gerald Diesener, ed. *Karl Lamprecht weiterdenken: Universal- und Kulturgeschichte heute*. (Leipzig, 1993); Karl Heinz Metz, *Grundformen historiographischen Denkens. Wissenschaft als Methodologie. Darstellt an Ranke, Treitschke und Lamprecht. Mit einem Anhang über zeitgenössische Geschichtstheorie*. (Munich, 1979); and with special focus on Treitschke and Lamprecht's confrontation, see the edited volume by Herbert Schönebaum, ed. *Heinrich von Treitschke und Karl Lamprecht*. (Hannover, 1960). Ernst Bernheim, *Lehrbuch der historische Method* (Leipzig, 1894), and Adolf Bartels, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1901), had already remarked on the fierceness of the methodological debates.

⁵⁶² Hans Schleier breaks *Kulturgeschichte* into the following thematic areas: 1. as the history of European modernisation as the history of European civilisation (Guizot, Buckle, Rimbaud, Kolb, Biedermann and Lippert); 2. as universal, law-based natural-history (Buckle, Taylor, Spencer, Klem, Heller); 3. as political opposition against the ruling state (Kolb, Scherr, Vehse, Jodl, Honegger); 4. as the spirit or morality of the folk which remains on the level of hypothetical construction (Engelhardt, Duller, Riehl, Freytag, Dahn); 5. as ethnology in terms of the growth of civilisation, which after 1859 became anthropology; 6. as new perspective on cultural epochs (Burckhardt); 7. as critique of the process of modernisation and of culture itself (Riehl, Draper, Burckhardt, Nietzsche); 8. as the turn from the genre of 'political' to that of 'aesthetic'; 9. as non-political study of micro-history, history of the every-day, fashion, taste; 10. in indirect form as study of the history of commerce; 11. as unstructured compilation of secondary literature. Hans Schleier, 'Kulturgeschichte im 19. Jahrhundert', in Wolfgang Küttler, et. al. eds., *Geschichtsdiskurs*, pp. 427-428.

⁵⁶³ In Georg Bollenbeck, 'Der Begriff 'Kultur' um 1900', in C. König et. al. eds., *Konkurrenten in der Fakultät: Kultur, Wissen und Universität um 1900*. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer 1999, pp. 26-27; *Zeitschrift für Kulturgeschichte* (1893ff); *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* (1903ff); *Die Kultur. Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft, Literatur und Kunst* (1899ff); *Ethische Kultur. Wochenschrift für sozialethische Reformen* (1894ff); *Kulturfragen. Monatschrift für Volkswirtschaft, soziale Kultur, Literatur und Kunst* (1905ff); *Der Kulturmenschen. Zeitschrift für körperliche und geistige Selbstsucht* (1904ff); *Deutsche Kultur* (1905ff); *Kultur der Gegenwart* (1906ff); *Harmonische Kultur* (1912ff); *Deutsche Kultur in der Welt* (1915ff); *Religiöse Kultur* (1916ff); *Theosophische Kultur* (1919ff).

⁵⁶⁴ See Bernhard vom Brocke, 'Institutionelle Wege aus der Krise', in C. König, et. al., eds., *Konkurrenten in der Fakultät*, p. 205

with it he intended to counter the traditional research interests of the *Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft* in Berlin. Thus from the subjective point of view of the Prussian historians, many of Lamprecht's specific claims, and the structure of his argument more generally, threatened their conception of history and their own subjective commitments to history's ideological content⁵⁶⁵. 'Attention paid to the development of social and culture since the beginning of the nineteenth century has gone backwards through neglect', Lamprecht taunted⁵⁶⁶.

Lamprecht's vocabulary already separated him from his peers in Berlin. 'Inner tendencies', 'national types', 'a new world of the life of the soul', 'variations of psychical disposition', 'inner' and 'outer' historical experience: this concept of history diverged radically from the accustomed one. Lamprecht introduced the first volume of his *Deutsche Geschichte* by distinguishing between *natürlichen Nationalität* and what we might call 'constructed' national identity (he left the latter undefined). The former lay embedded in the 'social-communal consciousness' of class society. Between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, the 'natural nationality' gradually acquired the 'political character of a conception of the nation', a process he called the 'extraordinary transformation of a culture which went hand in hand with the radical social and commercial changes, at the same time prompting and fortifying the feeling of nationality'. 'Free German thought, the Hanseatic League, German preaching and a literature of the people: the instinct of a national-*bürgerlichen Kultur* was already there. It

⁵⁶⁵ See Richard Falkenberg, *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie: von Nikolaus von Kues bis zur Gegenwart* (Berlin, 1905) p. 572.

⁵⁶⁶ Hans Schleier, 'Der Kulturhistoriker Karl Lamprecht, der Methodenstreit und die Folgen', in Hans Schleier, ed., *Alternative zu Ranke: Schriften zur Geschichtstheorie* (Leipzig, 1988) p. 15.

pointed to a higher psychic development and a greater fate was now needed to bring it to full consciousness. Were these not already the thoughts of national consciousness? The true feeling of political community first appeared in the eighteenth century'⁵⁶⁷.

That community remained for Lamprecht a body composed of individuals, and portraying their personal experiences was his main concern⁵⁶⁸. The 'decisive moment' in the 'outer history' of Germany was the emergence of the Germanic tribes, then the race, then the *Volk*, each step bringing the individual clearer into view. And while he reiterated the familiar interpretation that the individual was released from the Church in the sixteenth century, he did *not* argue that the Reformation furnished the future of freedom. The great events of German history followed each other sequentially in time, but occurred a-causally. To Lamprecht, therefore, there was no 'future' of the Reformation as in the Prussian historians' eschatological understanding of the state's historical mission. With the Reformation, 'one of the greatest world-historical deeds of our folk', the bonds between individuals within communal life were dissolved, a process of 'disintegration which Luther himself had deplored'⁵⁶⁹. Without stating that *q* follows from *p*, though the unspoken implication remains, the 'emancipation' of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, above all, freed the mind. 'The epoch had the character of increasing intellectuality' which then betrayed the human community and became the concept of the state, 'an artificial creation which came into existence through particular acts of will of certain individuals, that is, through the will of those who treated the community contractually. In

⁵⁶⁷ Lamprecht, *Deutsche Geschichte*, vol, 1, part 1, 'Einleitung' (Leipzig, 1891) pp. 20-21, p. 25.

⁵⁶⁸ As Peter Griss argues in: *Das Gedankenbild Karl Lamprechts: Historisches Verhalten im Modernisierungsprozess der 'Belle Epoche'* (Frankfurt a.M., 1987), p. 13.

⁵⁶⁹ Griss, *ibid.*, p. 39.

principle, this community could be dissolved by these persons at any moment': the last thing deemed desirable in Berlin⁵⁷⁰.

Lamprecht interpreted these acts of will as the interrelation of subjectivity and authority. Subjectivity, understood as reason and knowledge of the individual by the individual, is the basis of the life of the mind. It changes over time making it part of the abstract process of historical development which the historian must be able to discern: here, Lamprecht drew on Dilthey. On the level of the community, the collective subjectivity of all individuals became the 'binding power of authority'. Lutheran doctrine established exactly that through its assertion that temporal authority originated within the individual's willing acceptance of subjective belief in the Scriptures. But outside the realm of the individual lay the 'objective power of tradition', and the historian's understanding of the past must account for this, as well⁵⁷¹.

Turning from Luther's reformation within the intellectual *Bürgertum* to the so-called popular Reformation (*Bauernreformation*), Lamprecht wrote that the more 'primitive', 'utopian' dreams of the peasants closely approached the modern sense of the national and political. The key modern characteristic was not primitiveness or noble savagery but the notion that 'political instinct' arises from the 'innermost psychological' grounds, by which he meant unselfconscious, non-reflective existence within the milieu of culture. The effect of this modern trend was reactionary, not progressive, for 'one wished to return to the better times of the former free parish Church', by which he meant the Church which the state had not co-opted into its own development⁵⁷². From the

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

⁵⁷¹ Johannes Janssen, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters*. 9 vols. (Freiburg i.B., 1893-1897), here vol. 5, part 1, pp. 11-12.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 34.

perspective of the cultural historian, this was not regression but rather association with an older tradition. Lamprecht's argument was potentially turbulent because his alternative to historical idealism and the histories of 'great men' presented political activity as a function of social rather than national structures. Instead of basing his conception of political development on a primal conception of the Reformation and a few of its key individuals, Lamprecht relied instead on a constructed sense of organic, cultural development. His concept of the 'Reformation' symbolized cultural transferences among individuals.

The period of religious and social change spanning the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, the *cultural* period of the Reformation for Lamprecht, culminated in an abstract process: the shift from a 'poly-dynamic' character of mythology to a 'mono-dynamic' conception of the world marked by an increased focus on the individual's relationship to the Christ-figure⁵⁷³. Luther distanced the individual from the world by making individual subjectivity 'immediate' to the 'mediator of Christian deliverance'⁵⁷⁴. When he rejected the idea that the modern age began with the Reformation, he concluded by formulating a critique of nineteenth-century politics and historiography generally. 'Among the greatest errors of present historical thought', he wrote, 'is the belief that the individualism of the Reformation has lived on into our own time. [...] The culture of individuality has been dying out since then'⁵⁷⁵. Nineteenth-century German historians of the state were largely to blame.

In many ways, Lamprecht's career presaged the experience of academic life after the abrupt structural changes in 1918 (and his concentration on the historical experience

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, part 1, pp. 22-23.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, part 1, p. 8.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, part 1, pp. 10-11.

of the individual places him in the centre of the historical debates of the day⁵⁷⁶. He had acquired in the United States and France both an appreciation for the empirical analysis in history and the conceptual language of sociology and anthropology. Had he lived longer, he would have found himself a progressive in highly respectable company⁵⁷⁷. As it was, Lamprecht was more a lone guerilla. He sought a 'full revolution' in the direction of an 'organic conception of the unity of the disciplines'⁵⁷⁸. 'I have the impression that very soon there will be a struggle between the older historical school and the younger', he wrote to Gustav Mevissen in 1893. He distinguished between 'those who believe in the absolute freedom of the will but *within* the chain of great deeds in history, allowing the individual freedom only within this tight arena, and those who believe in a restricted freedom of the will within certain given conditions. I believe this struggle to be between the older humanistic worldview and that of modern, natural-scientific realism'⁵⁷⁹.

Whether Lamprecht by the end of his life had succeeded in synthesising these perspectives into a coherent philosophy of history is a question that has to be answered in terms of what the history of culture became after his death. We will have to make do with his conviction that *cultural* differences between Germany and its neighbours made war inevitable and necessary by 1914. European traditions, such as carnival, bind the nation together socially and politically but do not exclude the sharing of such traditions

⁵⁷⁶ See for example Ludolf Herbst, *Komplexität und Chaos: Grundzüge einer Theorie der Geschichte* (Munich: 2004) pp. 194-197; W. Schulze, ed., *Sozialgeschichte, Alltagsgeschichte, Mikrohistorie. Eine Diskussion*. Göttingen, 1994; Otto Gerhard Oexle, 'Nach dem Streit. Anmerkungen über 'Makro' und 'Mikrohistorie'', in *Rechtshistorisches Journal* 14 (1995) pp. 191-200; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (Munich 1987).

⁵⁷⁷ One recalls the generation who figured so heavily in German social science after 1918: Georg Simmel (1858), Émile Durkheim (1858), Max Weber (1864), Aby Warburg (1866) Ernst Cassirer (1874).

⁵⁷⁸ Cited by Hans Schleier, in Diesener, ed., *ibid.*, 'Karl Lamprecht's Universalgeschichtlichekonzeption im Umfeld seiner Zeit', p. 145.

⁵⁷⁹ Lamprecht to Gustav Mevissen, 10 Oct. 1893, in *Nachlässe Mevissen*, 1073, No. 160, as cited in Luise Schorn-Schutte, *Karl Lamprecht, Kulturgeschichtsschreibung zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik* (Göttingen, 1984) p. 104.

across political boundaries in the form of a common human culture⁵⁸⁰. The national varieties of European liberalism, Lamprecht suggested as a point of contrast, were embedded too firmly in ‘mono-dynamic’ traditions of national politics and were ultimately ideologies of political exclusion. The credit that historians such as Lenz gave liberalism for having enabled national unification betrayed the conceit of the liberal historians themselves who claimed more than their due. What it really demonstrated was their ignorance of the basic causes and laws of historical existence⁵⁸¹. Most troubling to Lenz was that *Kulturgeschichte* postulated historical continuity, but did so through sources and a methodology which neither necessitated nor accepted a *telos*. Lamprecht’s *Kulturgeschichte* attempted to frame a view of the past without accepting that history moves in intelligible ways through the structures available in the present. The greatest of these was the state.

Lamprecht justified his position somewhat when he retaliated that in light of the process of its own historical becoming, the Reich had become a superfluity, an unnecessary *telos*. The idea was that German nationalism after 1871 surrendered whatever ‘organic’ quality it had once possessed to the ‘*realpolitische*’ compromises of *bürgerliche* liberalism. The meaning of nationalism became recognition of what had happened and trust in the leadership of the state to continue those beneficent historical

⁵⁸⁰ Lamprecht, *Krieg und Kultur* (Leipzig, 1914), pp. 9-11. Hans-Ulrich Wehler makes exactly the same point when he argues that ‘the nation and nationalism are Europe’s social inventions’. To understand the inventions, one must look to ‘older forms of loyalty’ for a different basis on which to legitimate the national construct. ‘Probleme eines deutschen Nationalismus’, in *Die Gegenwart als Geschichte. Essays* (Munich, 1995), pp. 128-129.

⁵⁸¹ Lamprecht, *Zwei Streitschriften den Herrn H. Oncken, H. Delbrück, M. Lenz, zugeignet von Karl Lamprecht*. (Berlin, 1897) p. 42. Quotations from Lenz originally printed in *Historische Zeitschrift* 41 (1879) pp. 49-116 as a review of vol. 5 of Lamprecht’s *Deutsche Geschichte*.

processes⁵⁸². Lenz responded with a defense of the primacy of politics: 'Progress in even spiritual life is dependent on the destiny of states, their struggles and their power. Over the centuries, these have determined the life of the mind'. Lamprecht retorted that historical life itself (manifest in the force of nationalism, for example) derived ultimately from 'psychical currents' which influenced the actions of individuals⁵⁸³. Lenz should have final word in the exchange, not because he won the debate but because he reframed it in terms of its retrospective essence, and on that point both he and Lamprecht were able to agree without conceding their positions. 'There is no doubt', he wrote in 1897, 'that the undermining of our traditions can be traced back to the nervous disquiet of our time, its fear of the future, yes, its feeling of spiritual impoverishment'⁵⁸⁴. At a grave moment in 1902 Theodor Mommsen muttered that 'Bismarck broke the nation's back'⁵⁸⁵.

There were other equally formidable objections to the ways and means of history. Precocious in so many ways, Friedrich Nietzsche had harboured similar sentiments since at least 1873 when he produced his potent critique of German historical consciousness. He anathematized the Franco-Prussian war as a 'madness of the highest perniciousness: not because it is mad, [...] but because the victory is capable of transforming itself into a total defeat, the defeat, indeed, the extirpation of the German spirit for the benefit of the Reich'⁵⁸⁶. Prussian militarism was not the only threat to the vitality of the German spirit.

⁵⁸² See Karl Kupisch, 'Die Wandlungen des Nationalismus im liberalen deutschen Bürgertum', in Zilleßen, ed., *ibid.*, p. 127.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

⁵⁸⁴ Max Lenz, 'Die Stellung der historischen Wissenschaften in der Gegenwart' (1897), in *Kleine historische Schriften*, vol. 1, (Berlin/Munich 1922) p. 605; see also Hans Schleier's introduction to *Lamprecht: Alternative zu Ranke*, pp. 21-22.

⁵⁸⁵ Cited by Heinrich August Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen* (Munich, 2000) vol.1, p. 264.

⁵⁸⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben* (1874) *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 1, Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari, eds., (Munich, 1980) pp. 245-334.

The discipline of history, too, worked its poison. Infatuation with the doctrine of historicism in nineteenth-century intellectual life upset the balance between *Geschichte* and *Gedächtnis*, which he understood as ‘memory’ and ‘forgetting’. As limits on the controlled substance of history were lifted, the mad rush to understand life through the window of historical consciousness sapped the culture of the ability to forget. For the human who cannot forget knows no true happiness, individuality, nor authenticity; the pure moment remains forever a footnote to its own place in history⁵⁸⁷.

One of Paul Ricoeur’s critiques of Nietzsche centred on how the authentic human being was to survive in a historicist culture. Nietzsche attempted to offer the individual a way to escape history altogether; Ricoeur argued that he failed to show how that might actually be possible⁵⁸⁸. It seems that Nietzsche allowed that to become the reader’s problem, turning his attention instead to an analysis of the impact of historicist culture on the individual. The fundamental characteristic of the modern human being, ‘habituated’ to the ‘disconnected facts’ and ‘inexhaustible sources’ of historical knowledge, was the ‘antithesis between an interior that corresponds to no exterior and an exterior that corresponds to no interior’. The individual had lost its authenticity through its attempt to become historical, for the confines of historical consciousness imposed certain inauthentic ideas and assumptions on the individual⁵⁸⁹. Not only the usefulness of history

⁵⁸⁷ Nietzsche, *ibid.*, SW, 1, p. 271, as cited in Aleida Assman, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich, 1999), pp. 130-131.

⁵⁸⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *Zeit und historische Erzählung* (Munich, 1988) p. 445-447. See also Paul Ricoeur, *Gedächtnis, Geschichte, Vergessen* (Munich, 2004).

⁵⁸⁹ Historians and philosophers interpret Nietzsche’s critiques of history as one of the first solid attacks on the historicist culture and its ideological commitments to the notion of modernity. See, for example, Alan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida* (Berkeley, 1985); Jürgen Habermas, ‘The Entry into Postmodernity: Nietzsche as a Turning Point’, in *idem.*, ed., *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, Frederick Lawrence, trans., (Cambridge, MA, 1987); Christian Lipperheide, *Nietzsches Geschichtsstrategien: die rhetorische Neuorganisation der Geschichte* (Würzburg, 1999).

to the present went into decline, but also the viability of cultural existence itself in the present seemed threatened⁵⁹⁰. ‘Our modern cultivation is not a living thing precisely because it cannot be comprehended without this antithesis: that is, it is no real cultivation, but rather only a kind of knowledge about cultivation’⁵⁹¹. The entire Christian redemption story of German historical development became part of modernity’s pathology in Nietzsche’s cultural critique as it ‘developed’ from its forceful first statement in his 1871 attack on historicism to its subsequent rejection of Christianity, some major beliefs of western moral philosophy, and intellectual rhetoric itself⁵⁹². Some more specific targets of Nietzsche’s attack were Luther and historians’ habitual association of him with a positive understanding of the Reformation as the origins of nineteenth-century culture and nationality⁵⁹³.

Lamprecht was therefore not alone in his rejection of the traditional historicist assumptions about the primacy of politics and the overwhelming teleological value placed on the Reformation. He provided an alternative to Prussian historiography’s national origins myth and the ideological value Prussian historians invested in what they

⁵⁹⁰ See, for example, Thomas H Brobjer, ‘Nietzsche’s View of the Value of Historical Studies and Methods’. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65 (2004); Bernhard Lypp, ‘Über drei verschiedene Arten Geschichte zu schreiben: Bemerkungen zur Logik historischen Diskurses im Hinblick auf Nietzsche’, in Reinhart Koselleck and Paul Widmer, eds., *Niedergang: Studien zu einem geschichtlichen Thema*. (Stuttgart, 1980); Jörg Salaquarda, ‘Studien zur Zweiten Unzeitgemäßen Betrachtung’. *Nietzsche-Studien* 13 (1984).

⁵⁹¹ Nietzsche, *ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

⁵⁹² On the ‘development’ of Nietzsche’s thought – if the historicist notion of ‘development’ is at all justified in interpreting Nietzsche’s philosophy – see: Thomas H Brobjer, ‘Nietzsche’s Changing Relation to Christianity: Nietzsche as Christian, Athiest and Antichrist’. In: Weaver Santaniello, ed. *Nietzsche and the Gods* (New York, 2001); Jörg Salaquarda, ‘Nietzsche and the Judeo-Christian Tradition’. In: B. Magnus and K M Higgins, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* (Cambridge, 1996). For an older interpretation, see: Ernst Benz, ‘Nietzsche’s *Ideen zur Geschichte des Christentum und der Kirche*’: *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*: Beiheft 3 (1936)

⁵⁹³ Large, Duncan. ‘Der Bauernaufstand des Geistes’: Nietzsche, Luther and the Reformation’, in Nicholas Martin, ed., *Nietzsche and the German Tradition* (Oxford, 2003).

saw as the political content of the Reformation. One might ask why some of Germany's most powerful historians resisted the developments in cultural (and social) history and their philosophical premises. Still a young but already dogmatic mind in 1874, Treitschke entrenched against the Basel philosopher admitting as he dug that 'I have no idea what he wants. Unclear thoughts, unclear language [...], an impertinent denial of the greatest events of recent history without any attempt at understanding the essence and right of the state. It's all too much for me! My dear friend, do not let your clear mind be spoiled by mysticism',⁵⁹⁴.

A measure of clarity came somewhat later. Written in 1918 - not a highpoint for the self-confidence of German political historians - Meinecke's critique of Nietzsche lacked Treitschke's flamboyance but made up the difference in the substance of the argument. *Sotto voce*, he reiterated the familiar conception of history as the teleological development of the state and the national community. 'Historical reflection and political-social creation of the nineteenth-century are inseparable in respect to their origins. Powerful, instinctive needs drove individuality [*Persönlichkeit*] to acquire freedom and autonomy and to regard and express these within the historical world'. Meinecke reiterated that the historicity of this world was a constant. Even its strongest critics could not escape a historicist existence. 'Nietzsche had completely overlooked that historicism – which in his opinion kills the creative instinct – itself originates from [the] creative force [of human instinct]. One is in the right to hold against this bitterest of critics of

⁵⁹⁴ Treitschke to Franz Overbeck, Berlin 22 Nov. 1874, in *Briefe*, Max Cornelius, ed. vol. 3, pp. 406-407.

history that he draws his own creative powers from an uncommonly fine historical education'⁵⁹⁵.

Nietzsche's reputation fared poorly under Karl Popper's pen and others' of his generation⁵⁹⁶, finding reincarnation only in the early 1980s in Anglophone critical theory and cultural studies and somewhat later in the French and German equivalents. Until 1918, at least, these views, of which Treitschke and Meinecke's are typical, held sway. In addition to the more self-evident economic and geographic interests of the empire, the defense of the German culture of politics, and the politics of culture, concerned not just a few public figures and intellectuals. The practitioners of the historical idea of the Fatherland itself now had reason to delight in the Reformation and the Protestant culture which nurtured it. To criticise the belief that the political present was destined to greatness by the moral forces of history, which the Protestantism had revealed to mankind, was tantamount to criticizing the moral right of existence of the nation itself. Only after 1918 was that critique no longer taboo.

6.5 General Luther and the defense of history

Queen Victoria did not easily tolerate the antics of her grandson Wilhelm II. But Edward VII, King from 1901, regarded his nephew as a danger to the political stability of European civilisation. Battleship construction commenced in the Reich in 1898, received a massive subsidy two years later, then took to the seas to intimidate the island empire and to prove to the world that Europe's newcomer was no coward. Blundering his way to

⁵⁹⁵ Meinecke, 'Persönlichkeit und die geschichtliche Welt' (1918), *Schaffender Spiegel*, p. 41.

⁵⁹⁶ Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 2 vols. (London, 1945).

war when not cruising the North Sea to escape the imperial metropolis he never understood, on 1 August 1914 Wilhelm II could finally proclaim that the empire had achieved the real unity it had sought since 1871, a moral victory which satisfied one hundred years of longing for the spiritual completion of the nation's historical destiny. 'In the battle now lying ahead of us, I recognise in my *Volk* no more parties. Among us there are only Germans, and if some of the parties in the course of past differences have turned against me, I forgive them all. All that now matters is that we stand together like brothers, and then God will help the German sword to victory'⁵⁹⁷.

External factors thus forged the official perception of national unity. In addition to the new science of mastering the external through water-borne supremacy, German universities also reiterated the Reformation's devotion to the war cause. The form that concept assumed came habitually and from deep within the German *Geisteswissenschaften*; there was no mention of the fact that England, too, had a Reformation. Because the war was justified as a necessary and defensive measure to keep the Reich's neighbours from hindering the full expression of its unique destiny, the intellectual apparatus supporting this myth also became conscripted. A certain Dryander, who preached to the Emperor at the Berlin cathedral, saw the war as the defense of Germany's cultural inheritance which began with Luther and through Bismarck reached into the present⁵⁹⁸. Fritz Fischer took this so-called 'continuity thesis' as his starting point for the categorical accusation that German idealism and Wilhelmine imperialism caused

⁵⁹⁷ Cited in David Clay Large, *Berlin* (New York, 2000) p. 122.

⁵⁹⁸ Cited in Wolfgang Tilgur, 'Volk, Nation und Vaterland im protestantischen Denken zu Kaiserreich und Nationalsozialismus (1870-1933)', in Zilleßen, ed., *Volk-Nation-Vaterland*, p. 155; Tilgur cites W. Pressel, *Die Kriegspredigt 1914-1918 in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands* (Göttingen 1967).

not one but two world wars and must be understood as divergence of German civilisation from that of the rest of the world⁵⁹⁹.

Lamprecht spoke of the need to defend German culture in more general sense, paralleling Dryander, but employed the less nationalistic concept of *Kultur* to criticise the claims of national unity during what Prussia's patriots knew to be its finest hour. 'We are all used to being enraptured by the unity of the Reich. We should not forget, however, that our consciousness of unity is a fiction. The Reich constitutes only part of the nation and its unification is unfinished'⁶⁰⁰. Unfinished, because Prussia's *kleindeutsch* Reich and its expression through military victory in 1866 and 1870 brought about a period of cultural non-productivity. The humanities could mask this stagnation through self-gratifying historical narrative, being 'always poetical to a certain degree'⁶⁰¹, but to revive the strength of cultural expression and to make it relevant and living to the present, the origins of German national unity must be understood in true cultural terms, as well. The façade left the mind wanting. Not in 1815 but in the middle of the eighteenth century, Lamprecht implored, lie the roots of the 'kosmopolitischer' understanding of German nationality⁶⁰².

⁵⁹⁹ Fritz Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht: die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914-1918*. 3 vols, Düsseldorf 1964. See also his 'Die Auswirkungen der Reformation auf das deutsche und westeuropäisch-amerikanische politische Leben', (Antrittsvorlesung, 1948); 'Der deutsche Protestantismus und die Politik im 19. Jahrhundert' (Vortrag auf dem Deutschen Historikertag in München am 14. September 1949); both reprinted in Fischer, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und das deutsche Geschichtsbild: Beiträge zur Bewältigung eines historischen Tabus* Düsseldorf 1977, pp. 37-46, 47-88 resp. See also Julian Jenkins, 'War Theology, 1914 and Germany's *Sonderweg*: Luther's Heirs and Patriotism', *Journal of Religious History* 15 (1989) pp. 292-310. Jenkins' argument falters by making false distinction between discourse of 'spiritual' and 'political' leaders, thereby perpetuating one of the unfounded constructs on which Fischer relies, the dichotomy between 'normal' and 'abnormal' 'courses' of historical development. See H.-A. Winkler, 'The Long Shadow of the Reich: Weighing up German History', German Historical Institute London, 2001 Annual Lecture (London, 2002).

⁶⁰⁰ Lamprecht, *Krieg und Kultur* (Leipzig, 1914) p.12.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

⁶⁰² Lamprecht, *Deutscher Aufstieg 1750-1914* (Gotha, 1914) p. 1.

In this super-national periodisation of history, two thousand years of German culture turned up the 'greatest trumps which could have been thrown into world-historical development: Luther, Goethe, Kant, Schiller, Beethoven'. Between then and the present in 1914, a *political* conception of history arose, which held that these heroes provided the 'great principle of so-called militarism which the nation only partially absorbed'. Lamprecht's problem with this interpretation was that the principle of defense of the nation through its cultural goods never transcended the national origins of the need for national defense. 'We praise all these heroes in the context of the nation', he remarked, 'but the world-historical greatness of an individual is surely something else',⁶⁰³.

The salience of the nation in 1914 was apparently so strong that even Lamprecht dropped the subject of the *Kultur Mensch*. He turned instead to a more immediate practicality: the preservation of German culture in the time of national sacrifice and external threat. He offered no particular advice on how that should be accomplished, but was clear about the danger it faced, intoning even the possibility of defeat: 'The German Reich is too weak to protect the entire nation, as we must have at least five enemies. We should hope that a structure emerges which gives the Reich a place equal at least to what the Reich under Prussia had known. A leading place, to be sure, but in such a form that our culture as a whole remains intact, undisturbed by foreign elements',⁶⁰⁴.

Within the academy, Lamprecht's dissention made him a loner. In contrast to coal, the reserves of chauvinism seemed inexhaustible even as 'progress' on the front mired. A great many historians and theologians contributed at least their share to the war

⁶⁰³ Lamprecht, *Krieg und Kultur* pp. 68-69.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

cause, perhaps more disturbing to our own understanding of war than their own⁶⁰⁵.

Historian of the Prussian economy and Hohenzollern dynasty, the Berlin historian Otto Hintze, did not share Lamprecht's conviction that history's ultimate concern was the study of the emergence of cultural forms. But Hintze was not dissuaded from seeing the war as an opportunity to open the world to German culture. His reasoning made amply clear the tendency for Idealism to displace one's sense of reality. 'We do not conduct ourselves as the English do, showing off their external powers, but instead we have the cultivation and breadth of the nation's humanities and ideal of the individual. We have always paid too much regard to foreign ways of life and we know too well the weaknesses of our own national character. The ideal of the Germans is a free and orderly co-existence of all peoples in their own ways and morals'⁶⁰⁶. Working from the premise that the war sought to defend the historical development and realisation of the highest form of freedom known to humanity and God, Hintze's ecumenical spirit was perhaps not intended to be as condescending as it now sounds.

Moving back in the direction of the Reformation, Ernst Troeltsch argued that the German nation, and the moral cause of war itself, were already tempered by the Thirty-years' War which had tested Germany's moral fortitude and prepared the nation for future conflict. In a positive sense of *Sonderweg*, he suggested that Germany's war of self defense was also a war defending Germany's blossoming following its near destruction in

⁶⁰⁵ See Roland N. Stromberg, *Redemption by War: The Intellectuals and 1914* (Lawrence, USA, 1982); Karl Hammer, *Christen, Krieg und Frieden* (Olten und Freiburg i.B. 1972); idem., *Deutsche Kriegstheologie, 1870-1918* (Munich 1974); idem., 'Historische Leitbilder der Kriegstheologie deutscher Protestanten 1914-1918, *Theologische Zeitschrift*, 29 (1973) pp. 400-418; Charles E. Bailey, *Gott Mit Uns: Germany's Protestant Theologians in the First World War*, PhD thesis, University of Virginia (1978); Arlie J. Hoover, *The Gospel of Nationalism: German Patriotic Preaching from Napoleon to Versailles* (Stuttgart, 1986).

⁶⁰⁶ Otto Hintze, 'Imperialismus und Weltpolitik', in Harnack, ed., *Die deutsche Freiheit: Fünf Vorträge von Harnack, Meinecke, Sering, Troeltsch und Hintze* (Gotha, 1917) pp. 133-134.

the first half of the seventeenth century. 'Other peoples would have succumbed but our life force raised us up once again and led us to the nineteenth century and the unified Reich. Today's enemies want only to retard this development: that is their secret goal in war'⁶⁰⁷. In an accompanying essay, Meinecke turned to Luther for support of the war's defense of German freedom. 'A Christian is free in all aspects of life and is servant to no one', he paraphrased the reformer, removing the extract from the religious context to the 'temporal sphere' where he attached it to the historical concept of Becoming. 'Freedom is not a given, but rather something always recreating itself because it is forever threatened with destruction. When freedom blossoms it is miraculous, but is perhaps only a dream'. Figment or not, Meinecke saw a very real political doctrine at work: the belief that what made German political Idealism unique was that the ruler gave his subjects their freedom and thus assured their political equality, a doctrine worth fighting for⁶⁰⁸.

Others stated the issue more directly, making the logic of war comprehensible to those beyond the walls of *Bildungsbürgertum*, nudging belief in the war towards the apocalyptic. 'For us', wrote Hintze on behalf of the nation, 'the struggle for freedom is a struggle for existence. [...] We fight for Europe's freedom, indeed for the freedom of the world'. Should Europe or the world deny that fight and thereby force Germany into the 'yoke of an arrogant and brutal victor, we should not wish to live any longer'⁶⁰⁹. Lenz and Harnack agreed that the sacrifice of men to preserve the idea of freedom was logically consistent with the teleological justification of war, though they stopped short of annihilation and instead summoned a Christ-like Luther into the trenches to mediate

⁶⁰⁷ Ernst Troeltsch, 'Der Ansturm der westlichen Demokratie', in Harnack, ed., *Die deutsche Freiheit. Fünf Vorträge*, (1917) pp. 84-85.

⁶⁰⁸ Meinecke, 'Die deutsche Freiheit', in Harnack, ed., *Die Deutsche Freiheit...*, pp. 15-20.

⁶⁰⁹ Hintze, in Harnack, ed., *ibid.*, p. 114.

between the realm of absolute freedom and the reality of battle. ‘Luther’s meaning to us lies in his personality which has remained as strong as ever over the centuries. Under all genuine and great Germans, he is the most genuine and the greatest’⁶¹⁰. We turn to Lenz for a final example of the nebulous distinction between the spiritual and political cause of war and the degree to which the ‘metaphysical’ realm of the divine and the ‘human’ realm of the state had melted together. Wrote the *historian*: ‘We raise our hands to God, to God our father, in whose name we fight for freedom and the fatherland, and with Luther’s victory song on their lips the sons of our land are drawn into the war’⁶¹¹.

One is struck by how much is left unsaid in these historians’ and theologians’ cases for and against war, their historical justification, and how much this can tell us about the logical underpinning of their author’s conceptions of the Reformation. That Luther could motivate soldiers, for example (or at least that Luther could motivate an historian to believe that Luther could motivate soldiers) is a far cry from the argument that Luther caused the moral and then political ruination of Germany. The simple assertion of the historical event and idea of the Reformation, through whatever form of argument, asserts its existence at a particular point in time which is not the present. Koselleck has noted that ‘to talk about history and time is difficult for a reason that has to do with more than ‘history’. Time cannot be intuited. If a historian brings past events back to mind through his language, then the listener or reader will perhaps associate an

⁶¹⁰ Harnack, ‘Martin Luther und die Grundlegung der Reformation. Festschrift Stadt Berlins’, (30 October 1917) (Berlin, 1928) p. 119.

⁶¹¹ Lenz, ‘Luther und die deutsche Geist’ (31 Oct. 1917), in idem., *Kleine historische Schriften*, vol. 2, *Von Luther bis Bismarck* (Munich and Berlin, 1920) p. 11.

intuition with them as well. But does he therefore have an intuition of past *time*? Hardly so, or only in a metaphorical use of language'⁶¹².

There is no pure recollection of the Reformation, not only because all recollection is also representation, but because the nature of the *appeal* to 'recall' the event places before it a certain filter. The recollection and the event, to a certain extent, become indistinguishable. Additionally, assertions of where the past has led, and where it is leading, are also inescapably norm-dependent because understandings of historical events and their 'becoming' necessarily orientate themselves around a concept which interrelates them. In the analysis of historiographical constructions of the Reformation, the time elapsed between the 'event' and its representation carries with it a value. Rise, stasis, or decline, right or wrong, seditious or patriotic, 'German' or foreign: the yardstick is equally important as the object of measurement. For the representation also suggests a prognosis 'which is harnessed between its normative beginning and its goal', and the goal 'cannot be conceived of as only the goal'⁶¹³.

Scenarios of historical decline can never reach an absolute state of decline they prophesy because at the point of total 'decline', the downward movement would have stopped and therefore the decline would have ceased. Conversely, many historians were troubled that the unification of the German nation in 1866 and the foundation of the Reich in 1871 completed the process of development and ended a long period of hope and expectation which had for so long been history's subjective motivation. So can we understand why the historical concept of 'the Reformation' will always have a future.

⁶¹² Reinhard Koselleck, 'Time and History', in *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, Todd Samuel Pressner and others, trans. (Stanford, USA, 2002) p. 102.

⁶¹³ Paul Widmer, 'Niedergangskonzeptionen zwischen Erfahrung und Erwartung', in Koselleck et al., *Niedergang*, pp. 13-16.

Until the concept is forgotten, it will always be cast in some form of dynamic, be that positive or negative. The representation will continue to change and thus the concept will also evolve: short of a dada conception of the Reformation, the goal of its representation will never cease becoming and will always advance one step ahead of the present.

Epilogue

I. From gold to silver

Because German political historians since Ranke had invested so heavily in the *process* of hope and expectation of national Becoming, the realisation of national unity – politically in 1871 and spiritually in 1914 – was followed by the national equivalent to post-coital depression. Within these transformations, the Reformation remained a central point of reference. From it, historians conjured up a sense of stability, depth, and authority which helped them to collapse the distance between past, present, and future. Political historians used the Reformation to legitimate the *Kaiserreich*; the left and the right challenged this middle-right position. After *Kulturkampf*, politics became the realm of contestation. Historians of *Kultur* and social structures drew from deeper wells less contaminated by current events; decline seemed to nourish their pessimism. Political and Protestant historians underwent particularly arresting shifts of mood as the imperial structures began to weaken. Germany's defeat in 1918 was not only the objective fall of the nation's political existence, but it also refuted the historians' conviction that they had held a privileged position of prophesy into the nation's future. They were implicated subjectively in the past they represented, and the connection of that past to the present had become the story of failed hopes and historical untruths⁶¹⁴. Friedrich Meinecke's

⁶¹⁴ John Walker described the idea as the Hegelian notion of time-bound experience: 'The difference between historical causation and natural causation is that, in historical, our knowledge of causation cannot meaningfully be disassociated from causation itself. Human beings acting in a concrete historical environment are themselves conscious of how they act; and this consciousness changes the historical significance of their acts, just as their consciousness of their environment changes how they act within it'. John Walker, 'The concept of revelation in Hegel's historical Realism', in: *Hegel-Studien* 24 (Bonn, 1989) p. 82.

experience was characteristic of the situation. In the march to war he saw the promise of reconciling Germany's religious division and transcending the class struggles which had destabilised political and social life. The most powerful historians of the age – Harnack, Troeltsch, Hintze, and especially Meinecke – believed the test of war would vindicate the German concept of freedom⁶¹⁵ which Leonard Krieger has so effectively captured⁶¹⁶.

The outcome of the War, however, negated its anticipation. After 1918, historians had to account for how their belief that Reformation's future was the glorious present had been destroyed. The first response was to decouple the Reformation from late-Wilhelmine politics. 'What the reformers had begun', wrote Max Lenz in 1920, 'Prussian statesmen had implemented. On the foundation of the nation rested the house in which, so it appeared to us, the genius of our folk would forever reside. Today, the dream is *ausgeträumt*. We have been torn from the heights on which we were so sure we walked and dashed into the depths of the abyss'⁶¹⁷. Contradicting his earlier pronouncement about war's promise of vindicating Germany's historical purpose, Meinecke rearranged his views such that by 1930 he was of the opinion that history's power had dissipated since the joyous moment of 1871. 'When one evaluates the achievements and prospects of the latest generation of German *Geisteswissenschaft*, it can be seen that they lacked a certain strength which was inherent to the generations from Ranke to Treitschke. The symbiosis between science and politics had not flourished in the political air since then.

⁶¹⁵ See Werner Conze, *Das Kaiserreich von 1871: Gesellschaft – Staat – Nation: gesammelte Aufsätze* (Stuttgart, 1992) pp. 50-51.

⁶¹⁶ 'When the point of separation [of the German conception of freedom from that of the 'Atlantic community'] is moved back into a period in which neither Germany as a whole nor its particular principalities had yet organized their states into absolute systems of authority, then it becomes clear that the peculiar nineteenth-century version of political freedom was founded on older national assumptions which made the idea of liberty not the polar antithesis but the historical associate of princely authority', in: Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom* (Boston, 1957) p. 5.

⁶¹⁷ Max Lenz, 'Vorwort' to *Kleine historische Schriften*, vol. 2: *Von Luther zu Bismarck* (Berlin and Munich, 1920), p. v.

The golden age of German historiography was followed by a silver one⁶¹⁸. Pierre Nora captured this ebbing of historians' power in the late nineteenth century when he wrote that 'the historian was no longer the embodiment of the nation; the nation had embodied itself': the patriarchs of national historiography had lost control of their child⁶¹⁹.

Before Germany's fortunes faltered in the Great War, Meinecke had dedicated himself to the project of writing a contemporary history of the European *Grosse Mächte* in the spirit of Ranke's defining notion of the national *Wechselwirkung* and the historian's powers of discernment, inspired as they were by a God who cast his blessings on the German historical Becoming. The work Meinecke actually wrote, *Die Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte* (1924), differed from Ranke's position in two essential ways. First, he found it impossible to harmonise the historical trajectories of national and intellectual development; second, he transformed the ideological purpose of the historical argument from the interrelation of European political powers to the balance between the operation of the state and the moral responsibilities of its subjects⁶²⁰. The present intervened, as it were, into the representation of the past; Ranke's age had become more historical than actual; certainly his belief that God expressed himself through the state no longer held. Meinecke expanded on the bifurcation of political and intellectual life in his *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (1936). Gone was the former infatuation with national development as the expression of the German spirit. Instead, the *Geist* had regained its autonomy which political historians had encroached upon since

⁶¹⁸ Friedrich Meinecke, 'Johann Gustav Droysen: Sein Briefwechsel und seine Geschichtsschreibung' (1929-1930), in: *Schaffender Spiegel* (Stuttgart, 1948) p. 148.

⁶¹⁹ Pierre Nora, *Zwischen Geschichte und Gedächtnis*, Wolfgang Kaiser, trans. (Frankfurt a.M., 1998; orig. pub. Paris, 1984) p. 55.

⁶²⁰ See Ernst Schulz, 'Friedrich Meinecke', in: *Deutsche Historiker I*, Hans-Ulrich Wehler, ed. (Göttingen, 1971) pp. 45-46.

Hegel's death. 'Once they have happened, *geistige* revolutions can neither be undone nor rendered powerless. Each of them continues to work on a deep level, even when they are dissolved by more recent revolutions'. Not the rise of the state but instead *historicism* was the 'greatest revolution western thought had ever experienced'⁶²¹. Historicism, Meinecke continued, had dissolved the Reformation, the second most important revolution, in the dialectical sense of *Aufhebung*. The historical power of the Reformation, therefore, lived on within the historicist mode of historical representation itself, and was rescued from the political disaster which surrounded it because historians attempted to sever the representation from political agency.

While Meinecke found a way to de-politicise the concept of the Reformation and integrate it into the post-War and temporarily post-political conception of national history, the shift did not pass without larger tremors having shaken deeper foundations. The purpose and function of history itself had been called into question: that old, habitual self-consciousness which Droysen's *Historik* had shown to be inherent to historical thought recurred in the post-1918 present, but did so because historical reality and historical consciousness had been separated. Recently, Pierre Nora has described the idea as the shift from a 'culture of history' to a 'culture of memory'⁶²²; Meinecke had already intoned that when he argued that the power of historical writing had been decreasing since the foundation of the Reich. As further evidence, shortly after Bismarck's death in 1898, devotees in Germany founded three hundred 'Bismarck-Vereinen' and raised seven

⁶²¹ Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Entstehung des Historismus*, vol. 2 (Munich, 1937), p. 1; as cited in Werner Schultz, 'Der Einfluß lutherischen Geistes auf Rankes und Droysens Deutung der Geschichte', in: *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 39 (1942) pp. 108-142, here p. 108.

⁶²² Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: The French Construction of the Past*, 2 vols. Arthur Goldhammer, trans. (New York, 1992); orig. pub.: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1984).

hundred monuments to the man, the great majority of which cast him as the ‘iron chancellor’ rather than as a talented and successful diplomat⁶²³.

Luther’s place in the post-war narrative was also refashioned. For Gerhard Ritter, who volunteered for the German army in 1912, remained true to Wilhelmine principles throughout the Weimar Republic, and made no noise when the Nazis seized power, it was important after the Great War to decouple Luther from the national teleology which had ended in the trenches⁶²⁴. General Luther therefore shed his uniform and dressed once again in his monk’s cloak, a token attempt by the conservative historian to de-politicise the reformer’s role in German history by returning to the older conception of Luther as the father of the German intellectual spirit and to show its essentially *religious* essence. Ritter pushed Luther back into the past and made him pre-modern, the consequence of which was to re-assert Germany’s historical legitimacy by showing the depth of its roots, the continuity of its development, and the impeccability of its moral stance. In his biographical study of 1925, Ritter portrayed Luther as a transcendental spiritual force, high above the dirt of politics, whose power inspired the national *Geist* but bore no responsibility for the nation’s deeds. Just as Ritter cleansed Luther after 1918, so also he sanitized the historical discipline itself after 1945. As Georg Iggers has argued, Ritter reacted quickly to defend the historical discipline from accusations of complicity in the Nazi regime. His defense took essentially the same form as his reformation of Luther in

⁶²³ Cited in Heinrich-August Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, vol. 1 (Munich, 2002) pp. 278-279.

⁶²⁴ Gerhard Ritter (1888 Bad Sooden-Allendorf – 1967 Freiburg) grew up in a house whose patriarch was a Lutheran pastor; Ritter studied at the universities of Munich, Leipzig and Berlin from 1906 and received his doctorate in 1911 under supervision from Hermann Oncken at Heidelberg. Ritter volunteered for the German army in 1912 and habilitated in 1921 after which he spend his career at the university of Freiburg from 1925-1956. He supported the idea of a strong state, criticised the Weimar Republic for being overly democratic, and broke with the Nazis only when they began persecuting religious institutions. He belonged to the conservative resistance and was imprisoned in 1944-45 and was one of the few men involved in the assassination plot of 1944 who was not executed.

1925: throughout the Third Reich, the majority of historians had protected the intellectual and spiritual essence of German culture and were powerless towards or at least ignorant about the events taking place around them⁶²⁵. The self-conception of the nation once again lost its connection with reality as the conception of the nation once again became *vergeistigt* and *metaphysiert*, as it had with Hegel over a century before⁶²⁶. The political historians retreated from the political realm when it became ethically expedient. Such was the relationship between moral and political responsibility.

II. 'Death and rebirth'

If the German political nation died in 1918 and was re-born when historians such as Ritter revived the old Idealist conception of the nation as *Geist* and Luther as the intermediary between the ideal and real, then one might ask with Manfred Jacobs whether the ideological function of that elective transcendence of unpleasant real culpabilities played an enabling role in the events of 1933-1945⁶²⁷. One problem with a transcendental conception of the nation's historical existence is that the notion of an ideal historical existence is nonsensical. Because Ritter and other historians of his generation were so fully conscious of the unique nationality of their Germany historical situation, they were very far indeed from being in the kind of extra- or post-national position within which

⁶²⁵ As cited in Georg Iggers, *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft* (German ed. of *The German Conception of History*) (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar, 1997) p. 318; Gerhard Ritter, 'Der deutsche Professor im Dritten Reich', in: *Gegenwart* 1:24 (Dec. 1945) pp. 23-26; see also his 'Deutsche Wissenschaft im 20. Jahrhundert', in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 1 (1950) pp. 81-86, 129-137.

⁶²⁶ See Manfred Jacobs, 'Die Entwicklung des deutschen National Gedankens von der Reformation bis zum deutschen Idealismus', in: Horst Zilleßen, ed., *Volk-Nation-Vaterland: der deutsche Protestantismus und der Nationalismus* (Gütersloh, 1970) p. 51.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*

they could have found historical evidence for the kind of 'pure' spiritual correspondence they imagined had existed between Luther and the German nation. Ritter *believed* it was possible to relocate to an extra-political realm. In reality, however, the eschatological boundaries of world history placed real limitations on what his historical imagination could plausibly achieve. 'The nation can never have an absolute meaning for human individuals', wrote Heinz-Dietrich Wendeland⁶²⁸. Ritter comforted himself in the belief that it was possible to retreat into the pure spiritual standpoint. The lie helped insulate him from the reality in the 1920s and blinded him to it the 1930s.

One manner in which it *was* possible to experience historical transcendence, Aleida Assmann remarked to Reinhart Koselleck, is through collective participation in the process of 'death and rebirth' of collective processes of historical experience: not *Historie*, in the absolute, *Heilsgeschichtliche* sense, but *Geschichte* as the interrelation between methodology and particular experiences or events. Koselleck warned against the opposite of what Assmann described when he reflected on the divorce of scientific *Geschichtsforschung* from *Geschichtserfahrung*. 'The moral consternation, the hidden protective function of historical understanding, the accusations and dispersal of guilt inherent to historical writing: all these techniques for overcoming the past are lost in history's relation to politics and existence. They fade for the betterment of scientific *Einzelforschung* and hypothesis-driven analysis'⁶²⁹. When Ritter and many of his generation distinguished between the moral function of historical consciousness, on the one hand, and on the other, absolved themselves of having participated in forming and

⁶²⁸ This notion is drawn from Heinz-Dietrich Wendeland's much broader development of the idea: See his chapter 'Antworten der christlichen Ethik auf die Frage nach Nation und Vaterland', in: Zilleßen, ed., *Volk-Nation-Vaterland*, p. 278.

⁶²⁹ Conversation between Aleida Assmann and Reinhart Koselleck, in Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich, 1999) p. 14.

furthering history's political function through the construction of an extra-political Luther, they practiced the kind of flight from reality which Koselleck had indicated. It was indeed the abandonment of the kind of historical consciousness which nineteenth-century historical thinkers were so utterly convinced that the Lutheran Reformation had forged, had brought down to earth, had constructed, had in some way made real and necessary to the human consciousness⁶³⁰.

At present, western historians grapple with the historical discipline's moral culpability for the German past. This is causing the discipline to evolve into a pluralistic and contingent historical self-consciousness. The Rankean notion of the *Verhältnisse* between God and history now finds an analogue in the negotiated balance between historical knowledge, historical hermeneutics, and the 'irreducibility' of historical experience. Efforts were made in the memory-laden year of 1998 to emphasise the 150th anniversary of the Paulskirche parliaments and down-play the centenary of Bismarck's death. Linking celebration of the German re-unification to commemoration of the life of the architect of the *Reichsgründung* was deemed to put at risk the nation's historical recovery. It was necessary to protect the public good. Commemoration speakers made

⁶³⁰ Ritter's flight from the political conception of Luther which had emerged in post-Rankean Protestant historical writing is the reversal of what Craig Koslofsky has argued happened to historical consciousness during the Reformation. 'The rejection of *memoria* was the single most important step to a past that is history: profane, finite, finished, and separate. From the perspective of *memoria*, the gap between loss and recovery is a permanent part of modernity. The past is truly dead, and death is what makes the past history. Compared with the medieval presence of the dead, the modern past is always unmasterable: it can be remembered and interpreted, but never set right. In this sense it is irretrievable. But the past can nevertheless be historicized: it is not the passage of time that creates the past, but specific attitudes toward death and the dead that establish the past in the modern order of memory'. Craig Koslofsky, 'From Presence to Remembrance: The Transformation of Memory in the German Reformation', in: Alon Confino and Peter Fritzsche, eds., *The Work of Memory. New Directions in the Study of German Society and Culture* (Urbana and Chicago, 2002) p. 34.

every effort to avoid recalling Prussia's role in German unification⁶³¹. Historians have also uncoupled the future of the Reformation from the Prussian engine; many, in fact, have removed politics entirely from the Reformation's historiographical future. The focus of the discipline in general has dilated; new methods and a well-intended spirit of multi-disciplinary cooperation have appeared, partly in an effort to make intelligible the horrors of the twentieth century, as Rudolf Vierhaus has argued⁶³². Heinrich-August Winkler's thesis is indicative of the new dispensation: the Germany of the *Sonderweg* has yielded to a conception of Germany *within* Europe. Part of that reconciliation has been to disavow the kind of flight from acceptance of responsibility for history's political power on which Ritter and so many other historians departed in the aftermath of the twentieth century's disasters.

The focus has shifted from seeing the future of 'the Reformation' as the embodiment of the nation itself to a view towards the question of how the Reformation functions in historical thought. Étienne François and Hagen Schulze's three-volume *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte* – the German equivalent to Pierre Nora's *Les Lieux de Mémoire* – portrays the Reformation in the spirit of *Begriffsgeschichte*: 'The Reformation is a foundational historical event because it was willed to be that'⁶³³. The future of the Reformation has become the debate over its meaning within Germany's 'long way to the West'. To make the point, Winkler includes a conversation between himself and the historian Franz Borkenau. Winkler: 'From the point of view of politics, German

⁶³¹ Rudolf von Thadden, 'Bismarck und die Deutschen: Ein Rückblick auf den 100. Jahrestag seines Todes', in: Peter Schöttler, Patrice Veit, and Michael Werner, eds., *Plurales Deutschland: Festschrift für Étienne François* (Göttingen, 1999) p. 346.

⁶³² Rudolf Vierhaus, 'Coming to Terms with the Past? Die Historiker und das 20. Jahrhundert', in: *Plurales Deutschland: Festschrift für Étienne François* (Göttingen, 1999) p. 365.

⁶³³ Gerald Chaix, 'Die Reformation', in: Étienne François and Hagen Schulze, eds., *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, vol. 2 (Munich, 2001) p. 9.

Lutheranism was a step backwards'; Borkenau: 'Lutheranism's spiritual freedom was bought for the price of worldly servitude. The political realm is where the spirit and the world connect. The Lutheran manner lacks the essence of politics; it has contributed to the fact that we, the German *Volk*, have failed before politics, that we, the people, have been thrown back and forth between the false alternatives of an internal existence removed from the world and the brutal frenzy of power'⁶³⁴. The future of the Reformation is far from over.

⁶³⁴ Winkler, *Der lange Weg*, vol. 1, pp. 16-17.

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