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Weir, Todd; Greenberg, Udi

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Religious Cultures and Confessional Politics

Todd H. Weir and Udi Greenberg

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter argues that the role of religion in the political and social dynamics of the Weimar Republic was determined by two axes of confessional conflict. Alongside the Catholic-Protestant antagonism, there were also significant tensions between secularism and Christianity. Both axes contributed to the formation of different social milieus during the Kaiserreich and supported their continued articulation during the Weimar Republic. The chapter explores developments within the milieus, such as the significant growth and radicalization of freethought within the socialist and communist parties, as well as the shifting relationships between them, which created a fractured and complex set of political struggles, compromises, and alliances. The republic was bookended by efforts to overcome confessional divides in Germany through revolutionary means, on the one hand through the aborted attempt to fully secularize the German state in 1918 and, on the other, the campaign by the National Socialists to win Christian support by calling for ‘positive Christianity’ to heal Germany’s confessional divide by unifying Protestants and Catholics and destroying secularism.

Keywords: religion, confession, secularism, culture war (Kulturkampf), Weimar Republic, freethinkers, Lutheranism, Catholicism

For a long time, religion was a marginal theme in the study of the Weimar Republic. While scholars of the Imperial era often noted how deeply it shaped Germany’s social, intellectual, and political life, the most influential synthetic accounts on Weimar, which were written in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, made only passing reference to religion, leaving the topic mostly to specialized church historians.¹ Over the last few decades, however, scholars have increasingly recognized that debates about religion’s place in the public sphere were central to Weimar’s politics. Politicians regularly clashed over religion’s proper role in education and public morality, and for many Germans, religion or the lack thereof was the anchor point of an entire social-cultural milieu, and often determined their choice of membership in unions, social organizations, and political parties.²

In this chapter, we set out the religious structures and dynamics that underpinned Weimar's political landscape. In particular, we focus on two axes, or two sets of relationships, that were established in the nineteenth century and which continued to dominate religious thought and politics: the rivalry between Protestants and Catholics, and the antagonism between Christians and secularists (other elements of religious conflict, especially over the status of Judaism and anti-semitism, are discussed elsewhere in this handbook). We proceed in three parts. First, after a brief overview of the two axes' development in the imperial period, we explore their place in the republic's formation. We argue that the revolution of 1918/19 altered but did not fundamentally change the faultlines of religious politics and social tensions. Second, this chapter examines the religious cultures that developed within the confessional camps. It surveys the main developments and debates that defined the Protestant, Catholic, and secularist milieus during the 1920s, and charts the relationships between the camps. Third, this chapter focuses on Weimar's final years from 1928 to 1933, when religious politics reached heightened intensity. We trace how anticlerical campaigns on the left helped spark intense anti-secularist mobilization among Christians, and how that, in turn, fostered authoritarian projects based on a hoped-for Catholic-Protestant cooperation (of which National Socialism represented one variant). Finally, we briefly reflect in the conclusion on the ways in which these confessional dynamics continued to shape German life after the republic's demise. We note how the interconfessional alliance between Catholics and Protestants was resurrected after the Second World War to provide a basis for Christian Democracy, the alliance that presided over West Germany's reconstruction. Confessional divides, then, were more than matters of church history. They had far-reaching impacts on cultural life and political stability both during and after the Weimar Republic.

The Two Confessional Axes from the Imperial Era to the Revolution of 1918/19

The term confession (*Konfession*) came from ecclesiastical language, and was initially used to refer to Lutheran adherents of the *Confessio Augustana* (1530).³ However, after 1800, it came to be applied more generally to the Catholic and the Protestant churches and the social milieus that they organized, and it is in this sense that modern historians generally use it. Confessionalism is the rivalry and conflict between the three Christian churches (Lutheran, Reformed Protestant, and Catholic) produced in the course of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. In Germany's nineteenth-century transition into modern nationhood, confessionalism played a significant role. The hostility between the Protestant majority (62 per cent of the population), which was strongest in northern and central Germany, and the Catholic minority (36 per cent), which was concentrated in the southern and western regions, was among the defining cultural and political dynamics of the Imperial era. With the forging of the new German state in the 1860s and 1870s new life was breathed into old tensions, as an avalanche of books and pamphlets on both sides tirelessly attributed to the other political subversion, social deviance, and sexual promiscuity. Confessional animosities shaped political life, most notoriously when the Protestant-

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led national authorities unleashed in the 1870s a harsh campaign to suppress Catholic autonomy and institutions, which contemporaries called the *Kulturkampf* (culture war). But even after most restrictions on Catholic life were lifted in 1886/87, confessionalism continued to shape many Germans' participation in modern society. Church-going Catholics and Protestants often maintained separate sports clubs, reading groups, and labour unions; even party affiliation was strongly confessional, with the Centre Party being largely Catholic and the conservative and liberal parties largely Protestant. Indeed, even though believers sometimes defied these tensions through intermarriage and friendships, what one historian called Germany's 'second confessional age' lasted into the mid-twentieth century. Anti-Catholic and anti-Protestant organizations proliferated, while efforts to repeal legal discrimination against Catholics, especially regarding public funding, faltered in 1903 and 1905, to be fully removed only after the First World War.⁴

Just as important for the empire's religious politics—and with crucial consequences for Weimar later—was the rise of a second confessional antagonism, the one between Christians of both churches and their secular opponents. Beginning in the 1840s, Germany witnessed the emergence of a broad cultural movement that advocated for secularism. What its proponents called for was not merely state neutrality in religious matters (the meaning most scholars today associate with the term 'secularism'), but rather the cultural transformation of society based on an immanent worldview that would largely replace established religions. While secularism's organizational roots were found in rationalist Christian sects, by the Imperial era, the movement became increasingly identified with socialism. Although the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) endorsed state religious neutrality and private freedom of conscience, its press and organizations gave leeway to those who promoted radical calls for anti-religious culture. Socialist education associations, for example, encouraged workers to read anticlerical, popular scientific works such as Ludwig Büchner's *Force and Matter* (1855) or Ernst Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe* (1899), which were materialist (arguing that only mechanical explanations of life were possible) as well as monistic (claiming that all phenomena of life—from biology to consciousness and culture—were ultimately expressions of the same universal and evolving substance). Many socialists had first 'converted' to this worldview before moving on to Marx (if they ever did). And they became susceptible to the campaigns of freethinkers calling for church leaving. By the outbreak of the First World War, many high-ranking socialists had formally renounced their church membership, and become confessionless 'dissidents', thus reinforcing the link between secularism and socialism in public perception. Protestant and Catholic leaders viewed these developments with deep alarm. Secularism, they argued, would lead to anarchy, replace family bonds with sexual promiscuity, and destroy Germany's education (a field in which the churches had long been deeply involved). This threat led to a reorientation of Protestant and Catholic apologetics from defence of the specific truth of their confession to a general defence of Christianity. As one of the era's leading Protestant apologists stated in 1897: 'The Christian worldview currently faces a non-Christian one, and more and more there threatens a division of the whole line of thought in the modern world.'⁵

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With confessional temperatures around both axes running high, many Germans greeted the announcement of war in August 1914 with relief. For they hoped that the joint war effort would bring an end to religious polarization, an optimism best captured by the Kaiser's famous speech just prior to the declaration of war, in which he stated 'I no longer recognize any parties or any confessions; today we are all German brothers and only German brothers.'⁶ Some tentative steps were taken by the government to dismantle aspects of confessional discrimination. In 1917, for example, the government lifted the ban on the Jesuit order enacted during the *Kulturkampf*.⁷ Yet, as the war dragged on, political divisions re-emerged and by the final year of the war three political camps had appeared, each with implications for the confessional landscape. On the left, a revolutionary socialist wing emerged that gathered most of the SPD's secularists. On the right, the Vaterlandspartei formed which combined national Lutheranism and a growing antisemitic *völkisch* wing, cheered by the Kaiser's talk of a 'Prussian-German-Germanic worldview' rising to win the war. In the middle, an interfactional dialogue took place between moderate socialists, members of the Centre Party, and liberal Democrats.⁸

When the revolution broke in November 1918, hastening the end of the war and establishing a new republic, its course and its consequences were informed by the dynamics of both confessional axes. At first, when the socialists emerged as the country's leaders, it appeared as though the revolution might bring about the triumph of secularism. The radical freethinker, Adolph Hoffmann, who from November 1918 to early January 1919 served as the Co-Minister of Education and Culture in Prussia, sought to secularize the German state by revolutionary fiat. He decreed the strict separation of church and state, the cutting of state subsidies for churches, the equality of dissident children, and the end of school prayer.⁹ These policies, if implemented, would have removed the legal framework of the confessional system in Germany's largest state. Both Protestants and Catholics, however, mobilized against these measures. Parents across Prussia poured into the streets in mass demonstrations, and clerics and teachers issued proclamations decrying their destructive impact. Worried about the impact this would have on the electorate, moderate socialists rescinded most of Hoffmann's orders and postponed further action on religious matters until after elections to the National Assembly, which took place in January 1919.¹⁰

Despite assurances made by the moderate socialists, the Christian confessional parties ran their electoral campaigns for the National Assembly as a defence of Christianity. Following this logic, some Catholic and Protestant theologians, like Protestant minister from Nuremberg, J. Schiller, called for a joint Christian 'holy alliance' against the socialist 'materialism' and a few prominent politicians floated plans to create a single Christian party. However, existential anxiety led Christians to seek the safety of their traditional confessional structures, and proposals to unite the Centre Party with Protestant-dominated parties were nixed. When it came to forming a Reich government in February 1919, the Centre Party, led by Matthias Erzberger, chose to work with the SPD and liberal German Democratic Party (DDP). While its leaders were hardly enchanted with socialism or liberalism, they viewed cooperation as the best way to defend Catholic autonomy and end anti-Catholic discrimination, goals forged through the prolonged tensions with Protestants.¹¹

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Crucial to this coalition, which formed the bedrock of Weimar democracy, was the flexibility of the socialist leadership in the policies of greatest concern to the Centre Party, namely those relating to its confessional prerogatives. This resulted in a number of compromises in the religious paragraphs of the Weimar Constitution, which modified rather than eliminated the confessional system. It has been called a 'limping' separation between state and church that satisfied no one, but produced a liveable solution for most. The constitution, which was ratified in August 1919, gave prominence to the SPD's promise of religious neutrality by declaring 'there is no state church', yet it left many of the churches' privileges intact. State authorities continued to collect church taxes and clergy continued to maintain oversight over many publicly funded schools. In a further compromise, the constitution declared in principle that associations that 'dedicate themselves to the common cultivation of a worldview' could apply to become 'corporations of public law', meaning secularist associations could receive the same status given to churches. However, when such applications were later filed by socialist freethinkers they were largely rejected. In short, the outcome of revolution and state formation was a de facto preservation of the confessional system, despite de jure secularization.¹²

Because the republic was the product of a socialist-Catholic cooperation and had ended Protestantism's privileged position achieved by its close connection to the monarchy, it enjoyed little legitimacy among leading Protestants. A few prominent figures, like theologian Ernst Troeltsch, joined the liberals, and many urban and educated Protestants initially voted for the DDP. Protestantism's conservative wing, however, which included most members of the clergy, remained hostile to both secularists and Catholics, and to the new democratic regime. The revolution had ended Protestantism's unique ties to state institutions: since the Reformation, the monarchs of each German state also served as *summus episcopus* (supreme governor) of the local Protestant churches (the Prussian king, for example, was the head of the Protestant Church of the Old Union of Prussia), an arrangement made impossible by the abdication of the monarchs in 1918. Indeed, the loss of privileges—especially in political appointments—was conceived by many Protestant elites as a dreadful persecution. Conservative Protestants gathered in the German National People's Party (DNVP), which was founded in 1918 from a union of smaller conservative parties and which rejected the republic's legitimacy. In congresses and publications, many Protestants lambasted the republic as an importation of France's 'foreign' secularist and anticlerical model, and the Lutheran theologian Emanuel Hirsch proclaimed that 'Christian love ... must resist a democratic regime'.¹³

The party-political landscape that emerged from the revolution had a clear confessional arrangement, as shown by statistical information on the confessions of Weimar era parliamentarians (Table 1). Both the liberal and conservative parties were dominated by Protestants. The Centre Party retained its strictly Catholic identity, and continued to use a fortress as its main symbol, a sign of its defensive position in a hostile confessional landscape.¹⁴ Secularists, whether freethinkers, free religious, or monists, were registered as confessionless dissidents and concentrated in the Marxist parties. The Communist party (KPD), formally founded in early 1919, profiled itself as the party of atheism and made church exit all but mandatory for its leadership. The SPD faction, although overwhelming-

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ly comprised of dissidents, did have a significant number of Christian and Jewish identified members of the Reichstag. Still, most parties only gathered about 10 per cent of their members from another confession. The one exception was the National Socialist Workers Party (NSDAP), whose membership was largely Protestant but whose Reichstag delegates were about 20 per cent Catholic, making it Weimar's most interconfessional party. We return to National Socialist religious politics later in the chapter.

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Table 1. The confessional identification of Reichstag deputies 1918-1933.

	Communist (KPD)	Socialist (SPD)	Liberal parties	Centre	Conservative parties (DNVP)	Other	Völkisch parties	NSDAP
Total number of deputies	213	341	195	214	212	43	27	347
Protestant	2	43	165	19	182	31	24	262
Catholic	0	14	17	194	28	9	2	64
Jewish	0	5	4	0	0	0	0	0
Dissidents	199	217	2	0	0	0	0	3
Not specified	12	62	7	1	2	3	1	18

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Sources: Martin Schumacher (ed.), *M.d.R. Die Reichstagsabgeordneten der Weimarer Republik in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus: Politische Verfolgung, Emigration und Ausbürgerung 1933–1945* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1994), 29. Figures for the confessional orientation of NSDAP parliamentarians are taken from Max Schwarz (ed.), *M.d.R. Biographisches Handbuch der Reichstage* (Hanover: Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschehen, 1965).

Confessional Cultures and Relations during the 1920s

On balance, the revolution and the compromises it facilitated ultimately maintained rather than upset the two axes of Germany's confessional system. Protestants and Catholics retained their mutual suspicion, while secularists continued to mobilize against both. Before turning to the interactions between the confessions, we want to look at their internal diversity, for when we use the term 'confession', like the terms 'milieu' or 'camp', we remain aware that these are concepts that help us make sense of a past religious and political landscape. They do not designate monolithic entities. Within each confessional milieu there were multiple divergent responses to events that followed the founding of the republic. These responses both reinforced confessional divisions and created limited room for interconfessional cooperation.

Protestantism was the most internally diverse religious culture in Germany. Alongside numerous small denominations, such as Mennonites, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Baptists, it was dominated by twenty-eight territorial churches (*Landeskirchen*), each of which drew either upon the Lutheran or the Reformed (following Ulrich Zwingli's and John Calvin's interpretation of the Reformation) heritages of their regions, except for those cases as in Prussia, in which an administrative union between the two strands had been formed in the early nineteenth century. These churches tolerated a greater degree of theological variation than the more hierarchical Catholic Church. Two recognizable theological camps had emerged in the Wilhelmine period, each representing a different tradition of Protestant piety. Church liberals took inspiration from Friedrich Schleiermacher and conceived of Protestantism as a motor of progress, compatible and indeed supportive of scientific rationality. They saw Christianity as a historically evolving expression of religious truth, in which earlier dogmatic understandings of revelation were giving way to and finding expression in modern culture. Many so-called *Kulturprotestanten* (culture Protestants) were educated urbanites, who supported paths of social and political reform, including religious freedom in education. They were opposed by conservative or 'confessional' Protestants, who adhered to a 'positive' understanding of the truth of revelation and the traditional dogmas of the faith. Whereas many university theologians were liberal, most prominently Adolf von Harnack and Martin Rade, pastors in Germany's villages and small towns tended to be more conservative upholders of the patriarchal social order and fierce defenders of the monarchy.¹⁵

In response to the republic's new political realities, the Protestant churches embarked on internal restructuring. In 1922, the territorial churches founded the German Evangelical Church Federation, the first national organ to coordinate their work. Its complex structure, which blended clerical authority with elected lay representatives, organized national Protestant congresses (in 1924 in Bethel, in 1927 in Königsberg, and in 1930 in Nuremberg), at which theologians, journalists, and politicians sought to articulate a national Protestant agenda. Although many conservatives and liberals alike wanted to bring the

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church closer to the faithful in a 'people's church', the form of this *Volkskirche* was much debated. Church attendance among Protestants slightly declined throughout the 1920s, continuing a trend that began in the nineteenth century (mostly a result of many migrants from rural areas to the cities dropping from the church's orbit). However, the Protestant organizational universe remained vibrant. The largest organizations were dominated by conservative clergy, such as the Inner Mission, which was founded in 1848 to evangelize among the poor, particularly amongst the disaffected working classes in the growing cities. With its archipelago of charity services, educational endeavours, youth clubs, and publication apparatus, it comprised one of Germany's largest civil associations with close ties to state and politics. Similarly, the lay-led Evangelical Federation (*Evangelischer Bund*), which was founded in 1886 to mobilize against Catholicism, continued to boast a membership of over 300,000 during the 1920s, and its leaders engaged in vocal public advocacy, such as in defence of religious teachings in public schools. Between 1924 and 1930, the number of church papers climbed by 600 and reached a circulation of seventeen million, and the number of theology students jumped from 1,900 to 5,000.¹⁶

The collapse of monarchy and the revolution were deeply traumatic for both conservative and liberal wings of the Protestant Church, but their responses varied. Whereas Wilhelmine conservatives had been amongst the greatest supporters of the status quo, they now became political and theological revanchists. Berlin court pastor Bruno Doehring described the revolution as a 'stab in the back' of the fighting nation and decried the republic as a 'rebellion against God', while the DNVP politician and theologian Reinhard Mumm continued to express a hope for the monarchy's return. Only an authoritarian system, he claimed in works like *Christianity, Fatherland, National Community, Monarchy* (1928), could enjoy divine legitimacy, a sentiment that was echoed from the pulpits of many churches. Educator and politician Magdalene von Tiling, who led the German Protestant Women's Federation (*Deutsch-Evangelischer Frauenbund*), extended this logic to gender relations. Because women's essence was profoundly different than men's, she argued in fiercely anti-feminist publications, their social function had to be restricted to motherhood and family life, a belief that the Federation sought to popularize with manuals and public campaigns. These conservative circles, which tied confessional loyalties to nationalism and militarism, also railed against modern industrialism and urbanism, which they depicted as centres of decadence and social chaos. Under their influence, in 1929 the Protestant Church Federation founded a special settlement service, which helped encourage, train, and fund Protestants to migrate to agrarian regions, with the goal of restoring 'pure' and pious communities. Some conservatives offered theological innovations, such as nationalist Lutheran Paul Althaus, who sought common ground with *völkisch* thinkers. Together they promoted a theology of creation, which claimed that the German people had been entrusted by God with a divine mission that it could only fulfil through a return to military greatness and a purging of internal enemies from the national community.¹⁷

While nationalist conservatism was the dominant force among church leaders and lay organizations, many liberal leaders offered a different response to the new conditions of the Weimar Republic and sought to reconcile Protestant tradition with the bourgeois ethos of religious and political pluralism. Theologian Martin Rade, for example, whose weekly

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Christliche Welt was an important liberal mouthpiece, joined the DDP, welcomed the republic, and accepted separation of church and state as irreversible. He also called on the churches to go through a process of 'internal democratization', for example by subjecting the hierarchies to be elected by the laity. Jurist and politician Walter Simons, who briefly served as the country's foreign minister and was the head of the republic's highest court, similarly challenged his conservative counterparts' intense paternalism and nationalism. As the president of the Protestant Social Congress (Evangelisch-sozialer Kongress), a long-standing association of Protestant academics and politicians, he advocated for cooperation with workers and social reformers, and supported German diplomatic engagement with France and Britain.¹⁸ The period also brought theological innovations. For some students of Harnack and Rade, the experiences of war and revolution had challenged the liberal faith in progress and thrust them into a position 'between the times' (Friedrich Gogarten). They rejected the liberal tradition in which 'all theology appears to dissolve into the discipline of history' (Rudolf Bultmann) and, in the place of earlier certitude, developed 'theologies of crisis', in which the radical break in time through the experience of God became central. As Karl Barth proposed in his epochal *Epistle to the Romans* (1919, revised in 1922), the divine is an unknown domain that cuts through human experience 'vertically from above'.¹⁹ Another innovation was found in the movement of religious socialism, promoted by theologians Günther Dehn and Emil Fuchs, who argued that Protestantism was compatible with socialism's economic egalitarianism, a highly provocative claim even for moderates. In 1926 the Mannheim pastor Erwin Eckert founded the Federation of Religious Socialists in Germany (Bund religiöser Sozialisten in Deutschland), which aimed to provide a door for pious Christians and Jews to enter the SPD. Such voices, however, remained a minority in the Protestant universe. As the 1920s progressed, the vote share of the liberal DDP progressively declined as many churchgoing Protestants migrated to the right, and Christian socialism never gained traction beyond some small circles.²⁰

The Catholic camp, too, witnessed a flurry of activity and intellectual ferment. Alongside stable, and in some regions even rising, church attendance, social associations thrived. These included the People's Association for Catholic Germany (Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland), which was founded in 1890 to advocate for Catholic causes, and which boasted membership of over half a million members during the 1920s, and the charity Caritas, which was founded in 1897 to give relief to the poor. These well-established organizations were joined by new ones, such as the Mothers' Association for the Promotion of Christian Education (Mütterverein zur Förderung christlicher Kindererziehung), federations of Catholic employers, groups for the promotion of Catholic arts and music, and many others. Romano Guardini, one of Germany's most famous theologians and the leader of the youth movement Quickborn, promoted the laity as the heart of Catholic life. The church, he wrote in books like *The Opposite* (1925), had to be organized less on obedience to clerics and more on a lay community (a transition he sought to symbolize by changes to liturgy). The episcopal hierarchy, in part in an effort to control and tame these developments, inaugurated in 1928 a national programme of Catholic Action,

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which was an international campaign of lay activism spearheaded by Pope Pius XI to respond to the threat of secularism and secularization.²¹

Although the Catholic milieu maintained greater internal coherence than its Protestant counterparts, Catholics were also divided in their approach to modern politics, economics, and society. Conservatives subscribed to a paternalist vision of social relations, and vehemently rejected liberalism, church-state separation, and pluralism. Michael Faulhaber, the cardinal of Munich, condemned the Weimar Republic in 1922 as 'branded with the mark of Cain', a sentiment that was shared by the Bavarian People's Party (BVP), the Centre's Bavarian branch, which in November 1918 broke off from the national party to pursue a more authoritarian agenda. Reactionaries also railed against the modern economy and its class antagonism, which they hoped to heal by resurrecting the medieval guild spirit of paternal charity. 'In the strong and pious soil of the Middle Ages,' wrote Georg Moenius, the influential editor of the Munich-based journal *Allgemeine Rundschau*, 'saints and heroes were allowed to emerge as representative powers; in our time businessmen have taken their place.'²² Such nostalgic opposition to an allegedly corrupt modernity was bolstered by the resurgence of popular piety. Mystics such as Therese Neumann, who claimed in the 1920s to see visions of saints and experience miraculous healing, generated enormous fascination, and helped their followers to articulate a desire for a 'pure' and homogeneously Catholic environment.²³

Other Catholics, in contrast, especially in the industrialized and confessionally mixed Rhineland, claimed that Catholics must embrace and operate within modern society. Even if they formally rejected liberal views of the economy and politics, they insisted that these would not be replaced by medieval fantasies, but reformed and infused with Catholic values. Cologne mayor Konrad Adenauer, for example, in a widely covered speech in 1922, called on Catholics to embrace the republic, which he claimed was necessary for Catholic renewal. He was supported by networks of activists, urban reformers, and Christian union leaders. Some similarly sought to challenge the church's long-held hostility to capitalism. Jesuit economist Oswald von Nell-Breuning, for example, argued in *Basic Principles of Stock Exchange Morality* (1928) that the stock exchange, which had been long condemned by Catholic preachers, was in fact compatible with Catholic morality, a claim that was endorsed by Cologne's archbishop, Karl Joseph Schulte. In the pages of newspapers such as *Kölnische Volkszeitung* and magazines like *Hochland*, proponents of reform Catholicism envisioned a church that was not engaged in a rearguard struggle for tradition, but one that was open to change. As writer Paul-Ludwig Landsberg explained in *The World of the Middle Ages and us* (1922), the medieval church was 'dead', and a Catholic future was destined to build upon new principles.²⁴

Even though secularists lost out in their effort to restructure German confessional laws during the revolution, they made significant inroads into the associations of the working-class milieus that reached their apogee in the late 1920s.²⁵ Several liberal intellectuals of the pre-war monist movement now reappeared as leading lights in the effort to build a 'collective culture' (*Gemeinschaftskultur*). Reality disappointed hopes that they would form a 'third pillar' of socialism alongside the parties and unions, but freethinkers sub-

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stantially grew in number throughout the 1920s, reaching over half a million members by 1928. This growth was fuelled, in part, by an attractive cremation insurance policy offered by the main socialist freethought association.²⁶ Because cremation contravened church injunctions against destruction of the physical body, it proved an ideal means to challenge the church monopoly over burial. This was not the only area in which the socialist freethinkers sought to replicate the milieu-building functions of the churches. They offered an alternative confirmation ceremony called the *Jugendweihe*, backed the formation of secular (*weltliche*) schools, and promoted sexual reform and revision of the restrictive laws on abortion.²⁷

These activities by secularists open a window on to the confessional dimensions of the upsurge of visionary cultural movements within the USPD and later the left-wing of the SPD that sought to achieve revolutionary ends through cultural experimentation and artistic innovation, which were known at the time as 'culture socialism' (*Kultursozialismus*). West German social historians writing in the 1980s, such as Dieter Langewiesche, argued that the 'utopia of the socialist society of the future [in which] the "New Man" would create the "New Society"' held little attraction for the educational institutions of the SPD and the unions, which remained characterized by 'connection to reality and pragmatism'.²⁸ Langewiesche interpreted *Kultursozialismus* as a 'cultural compensation', a 'consolation' for lack of real power.²⁹ Yet, the confessional history of the socialist movement suggests another reading, namely that cultural socialism was an expression of the secularist contribution to the wider socialist culture. The precise strength of this subculture of socialist secularism needs to be examined regionally. In rural areas and in some towns, it was nearly non-existent. In cities such as Berlin, however, the tradition of secularism meant that the churches had a hard time missionizing in working-class neighbourhoods. The Protestant minister and religious socialist Paul Piechowski complained to his consistory in 1926 that freethinkers were 'gaining ground among the workers' and that the local social democratic deputies in Berlin 'are nearly all Freethinkers themselves'.³⁰

Alongside such internal debates and changes within the various confessional milieus, the 1920s also witnessed contradictory impulses in relationships between them. On the one hand, Weimar's pillarized public sphere preserved many of the animosities that defined confessional relations in the Imperial era. Anti-Catholic and anti-Protestant tropes circulated widely: the bestselling Catholic journalist Waldemar Gurian, for example, routinely blamed Protestants for their alleged lack of any transcendent values, making them responsible for modernity's decadence, nihilism, and violence, while scholar Joseph Bernhart claimed that Luther's 'monstrous error' of abolishing priestly celibacy had led to the denigration of marriage and ultimately to modern sexual hedonism. Protestant writers were just as prone to recycle confessional stereotypes. One of the most vocal was Lutheran Gerhard Ohlemüller, who led the International League for the Defence and Furtherance of Protestantism (Internationaler Verband zur Verteidigung und Förderung des Protestantismus) to fight Catholic 'infiltration'.³¹ Such sentiments made efforts to break down the confessional boundary difficult. When a few conservative Catholic politicians broke from the Centre and sought to make the DNVP an interconfessional party, their efforts met with electoral apathy, and ultimately fizzled out. Clerical authorities expressed

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hostility to a growing interest in ecumenism, and in the encyclical *Mortalis animos* (1928) Pope Pius XI formally banned Catholics from joining interconfessional organizations. In the face of the growing strength of proletarian freethought, as well as the emergence of new spiritualist and pagan-*völkisch* sects, both Catholic and Protestant churches beefed up their apologetics organizations. The Protestant Church created, via the Inner Mission, in 1921 the Central Office for Apologetics (Apologetische Centralstelle), which engaged in research and training to fight growing threats from competing worldviews, and was a counterpart to the existing Apologetics Department of the Catholic Volksverein.³²

Against the backdrop of persistent interconfessional suspicion, however, the 1920s also witnessed some pragmatic efforts of cooperation between the confessions. This was especially the case between Catholics and Protestants, who, despite pervasive mutual suspicion, occasionally found common ground over matters of gender and sexuality. Members of both Christian milieus, for example, mobilized to bolster traditional family structures, especially against efforts of feminists, socialists, and others to establish equality between married and unmarried mothers. It would be the end of marriage's sanctity, Christian clergy and politicians warned, if illegitimate children and their mothers could make financial or inheritance demands on the fathers. Joseph Mausbach, a prolific Catholic writer and politician, warned in his *Moral Theology* (1922) that equal rights for unwed mothers would lead to mass 'fornication'. The prominent Protestant activist Paula Müller-Otfried agreed, and predicted that 'if the status of unmarried mothers is improved many more women will imitate them' by engaging in extra-marital sex. Such arguments were echoed in parliamentary debates, when socialists and liberals in the Reichstag submitted proposals for equal rights of all mothers. In 1922, Catholics and Protestants successfully joined hands to block the proposed reform, which would not be implemented until decades later.³³ A similar cooperation forged around censoring what Christian writers and politicians called 'trash and filth' (*Schund and Schmutz*) literature, mostly erotic publications. In 1926, and against the socialists' and liberals' opposition, the Centre Party and the DNVP passed a law which empowered censorship panels to ban the sales of 'indecent' movies, advertisements and journals to the young.³⁴

Socialists and Christians also found possibilities for collaboration. The divide persisted between socialist moderates, who were open to cooperation with liberal and Christian parties, and radicals, who supported more thoroughgoing transformation of society towards a secularist socialist culture. When the radicals briefly splintered into their own parties (USPD and KPD) in the republic's first years, the moderates moved towards a rejection of materialist and Marxist worldviews. In 1921, at its congress at Görlitz, the SPD adopted a new platform, which retreated from language of class struggle, and which, according to historian Heinrich August Winkler, was a short-lived attempt to replace dogmatic Marxism with a pragmatic and pluralist approach to politics that would have allowed socialists to leave their 'worldview and social ghetto' and forge instead a cross-class big-tent party, an aspiration only realized in the Bad Godesberg Programme of 1959.³⁵ The effort to forge a more pluralistic party culture also opened the way for the religious socialists, who found support in the party hierarchy but struggled against the hos-

tility of the many freethinkers in the party base. However, when many of the radical Independents rejoined the SPD in 1921 and 1922, the party returned to early positions on matters of religion and worldview. And, to reunite its temporarily fractured milieu, the party adopted a platform at its 1925 Heidelberg Congress that reaffirmed the Marxist truisms of the pre-war era.³⁶ In short, although there were significant efforts by some milieu leaders to overcome confessional hostilities, often motivated by pragmatic calculations, most Germans in the Weimar Republic continued to live in confessionally segregated social worlds. What one leading historian has called German Catholics' 'incapacity for dialogue' applies to Protestants and secularists as well.³⁷

Culture War and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Germany witnessed a renewed flaring of confessional conflict, one so intense that scholars have recently compared it to the *Kulturkampf* of the nineteenth century.³⁸ But unlike its nineteenth-century precursor, this culture war was marked less by animosities between Protestants and Catholics, than by intensified conflict between secularists and Christians. This was an international conflict, which deepened in 1928, when authorities in the Soviet Union launched a wide campaign of anti-religious agitation, hoping to eliminate the Christian clergy as a source of potential opposition. For Joseph Stalin and others, the campaign against religious organizations was integral to the party's project of collectivization and 'cultural revolution', which was to remake the Soviet economy and society.³⁹ The German Communist Party, which over the 1920s came increasingly under Soviet influence, was directed to increase its anti-religious propaganda and promote church-leaving as a weapon of 'class struggle'. Anticlericalism was also meant to extend communist influence in the socialist milieu. To win supporters away from the SPD, the KPD attacked the socialists for being soft on the religious front. For example, when the SPD-governed Prussian State agreed to a concordat with the Vatican in 1929 at the behest of its coalition partner the Centre Party, the communists accused the socialists of coming under the sway of Pope Pius XI. The treaty, they claimed, was similar to the recently signed agreement between the Vatican and fascist Italy (the Lateran Accords), and thus exposed the SPD as the party of 'social fascism'.⁴⁰ Although the KPD's efforts to usurp control of the 600,000-strong membership of the 'proletarian' freethought movement failed, socialist secularists also became more militant.⁴¹

The surge of Communist belligerency abroad and at home sent shock waves through the German Christian world. Catholics and Protestants alike were deeply alarmed by the prospects of potential Communist revolution—fears that were exacerbated by the deep effects of the Great Depression in 1929—and responded with anti-secularist mobilization of an unprecedented scale. The institutions of the Catholic milieu were receptive to the warning issued by Germany's bishops in February 1930, of the need to combat the 'storm waves of godlessness' that were threatening to wash over Germany.⁴² Catholic newspapers such as *Germania* reported in detail about the horrors of anti-Christian violence in

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the Soviet Union, while Catholic associations organized local marches to protest against Communist brutality. Anti-secularism—which some conflated with Communism, while others associated with the entire left—in fact proved to be a useful integrative force for the diverse Catholic milieu. In the annual Catholic congresses (*Katholikentage*) of 1930 and 1931, in which Catholic activists and leaders gathered, speakers could agree that the defeat of secularism and Communism was the moment's most urgent task, and founded the Committee for the Struggle against Bolshevism, an organization to coordinate anti-Communist research, publications, and exhibitions.⁴³ Similar agitation swept the Protestant milieu. With the church leaders' support, the Inner Mission churned out hysterical anti-Communist articles for Germany's leading conservative newspapers and printed numerous anti-godless brochures and books. Some Protestant clergy made the struggle against freethought a core field of action. When Communists announced an 'anti-Easter march' through Brandenburg in 1930, General Superintendent Otto Dibelius called on his pastors to hold competing church services, adorn their churches with flags, and ring their bells.⁴⁴

This *Kulturkampf* atmosphere had far-reaching political consequences for both the Catholic and Protestant milieus. Even before German politics plunged into crisis in 1930, it strengthened the voices of hardliners, who argued that the parliamentary democracy should be replaced with an authoritarian alternative. It was the republic's principle of religious neutrality, some argued, that facilitated spiritual indifference, which in turn led to militant secularism; only a strong leadership could thus suppress anti-Christian militant Marxism. In December 1928, following the collapse of the Centre-led coalition under Wilhelm Marx, conflicts erupted over the cooperation between Christian and non-believers in labour unions and over the Centre's commitment to republican government. After an intense internal debate, the party elected as its leader the conservative prelate Ludwig Kaas—the first priest at the helm of the party, founded in 1870—who openly called for 'leadership on a grand scale' and claimed that authoritarian state may be better positioned to protect the church. This shift to the right was mirrored among conservative Protestants, whose tolerance for democratic politics had long been lower than that of the Catholics. In 1928, the DNVP elected as its leader the media baron Alfred Hugenberg, who called for the Reichstag's dissolution and its replacement with an all-powerful executive. While some continued to believe in democratic politics, authoritarianism was clearly gaining ground in Christian politics. Eugen Bolz, a prominent Catholic leader and minister-president of Württemberg, spoke for many when he said in 1930, 'I have long been of the opinion that the parliament cannot solve severe domestic political problems. If a dictator for ten years were a possibility—I would want it.'⁴⁵

It did not take long for some Catholics and Protestant conservatives to recognize how joint action against secularism might serve their shared desire for a return to authoritarian government. Weimar's final years thus witnessed several efforts to form an interconfessional front against liberalism and Marxism. The first undertaking began in 1930, when the conservative Protestant President Paul von Hindenburg appointed as chancellor the Catholic Heinrich Brüning, who was former leader of the Centre's delegation to the Reichstag and was known for his friendly relations with Protestants. With a goal of ex-

cluding the SPD from power and crafting a 'Christian' response to the mounting economic calamity, the two gathered Catholic and Protestant experts in a Commission for the Study of the Unemployment Question (Kommission zum Studium der Arbeitslosenfrage), and then sought to implement those with emergency decrees and without the parliament support.⁴⁶ The failure of these efforts—by 1932, unemployment almost doubled—opened the door to an even more reactionary interconfessional alliance. It was led by the devout Catholic aristocrat Franz von Papen, who in June 1932 replaced Brüning as chancellor. A long-time opponent of the republic, Papen had long argued that political sovereignty stemmed not from the people, but from God, and advocated for an aggressive suppression of liberalism, Marxism, and secularism. This mission, he concluded in 1930, would be best carried through cooperation with Protestants, which led him to join hands with the Protestant power broker and businessman Werner von Alvensleben and form the German Association for the Protection of Western Culture.⁴⁷ After his appointment as chancellor, and the formation of a largely aristocratic and nonpartisan cabinet opposed to 'cultural Bolshevism', von Papen sought to realize this interconfessional and anti-secularist vision, especially through education. The new Minister of Interior, Protestant lawyer Wilhelm von Gayl, drafted new plans to 'protect the free development of Christian schools and the Christian foundation of all education', which included the barring of confessionless teachers and closing secular schools that 'have no relationship to German national character (*Volkstum*)'.⁴⁸

While those political constellations were confined to a small circle of powerful elites, another experiment at a Catholic-Protestant cooperation emerged under the wings of the National Socialist Party (NSDAP). As historians have increasingly noted, the National Socialists routinely presented themselves as the churches' natural allies in their struggle against secularism. While many of its leaders, such as its informal philosopher Alfred Rosenberg, were widely acknowledged at the time to be anti-Christian, Adolf Hitler and others insisted that the party's fierce anti-Marxism aligned with Christian morality and traditions. Hitler maintained in October 1930 that Christians should embrace the swastika as a 'political sign that will unite the people who stand on the foundation of a non-Marxist, non-materialist, ... deeply idealistic worldview'.⁴⁹ Crucially, the National Socialists insisted on their dedication to 'positive Christianity', a term which appeared on the party's founding manifesto and which signified a national unity that transcended the division between the confessions. In 1932, Hitler declared, 'in the struggle against the abuse of religion, I'm not a Catholic and not a Protestant, but a German Christian, who does not want our people to receive a new religious conflict on top of its other struggles'.⁵⁰ Thus the National Socialists positioned themselves squarely within Germany's existing confessional axes, by linking anti-Marxism, antisemitism, and anti-secularism, and by calling for Catholic-Protestant unity to restore national unity. As Hitler explained in a speech in 1928, the Christian confessions could not overcome their differences by 'beating, degrading or insulting each other', but only by coming together under the banner of National Socialism.⁵¹

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Such statements were reinforced by the composition of the party's leadership, which, alone among the reactionary parties, included nominal Catholics, such as Hitler and Joseph Goebbels. Together these factors opened the NSDAP to nationalist Catholics.⁵² Some of Catholicism's most enthusiastic interconfessional thinkers, such as theologian Robert Grosche and historian Joseph Lortz, welcomed cooperation between the church and the NSDAP.⁵³ In practice, however, the interconfessional rhetoric of 'positive Christianity' carried an anti-Catholic barb that exacerbated confessional tensions. National Socialist leaders lambasted the Centre Party as the main obstacle to anti-secularist unity (attacks they did not level against the DNVP). As early as 1925, Hitler claimed that 'no movement has waged the struggle against the Centre Party and the groups associated with it more energetically than our old party', not for religious reasons, 'but solely because a party which allies itself with atheistic Marxism for the oppression of its own people is neither Christian nor Catholic'.⁵⁴ Thus, National Socialist interconfessionalism appealed largely to Protestants. While Catholic voters mostly remained loyal to the Centre Party, their Protestant counterparts flocked to the NSDAP and in the elections in 1932 made it the largest party in the country. A number of leading Protestant clergy, such as Bishop Heinrich Rendtorff of Mecklenburg, spoke warmly of the party, and newspapers reported that some pastors had begun to identify Hitler as the saviour of German Christianity.⁵⁵

Ultimately, the strands of anti-secularist interconfessionalism came together in January 1933, when the NSDAP and other nationalist parties formed a coalition, with Hitler as chancellor and von Papen as his deputy. Once in power, the National Socialists swiftly sought to end the confessional dynamics that defined Germany's religious politics throughout the Imperial and Weimar era, by eliminating secularism and suppressing the Catholic-Protestant tensions. First, the government implemented its anti-secularist promise. In February, it violently crushed the Communist party, and in March, it shut down the socialist freethought organizations (followed in a few months by the abolition of all socialist unions and parties).⁵⁶ Then, having already declared an end to 'the *Kulturkampf*' upon taking power, the National Socialists moved in early summer of 1933 to eliminate what they saw as the last vestiges of inter-Christian disunity.⁵⁷ Hitler forced the DNVP to disband in June. The following month, after concluding a concordat that brought with it the dissolution of the Centre Party, he boasted that he had succeeded in 'driving the last nail in the coffin' of the political parties and stopped priestly meddling in politics.⁵⁸ The NSDAP was not satisfied with the elimination of the confessional parties, and began to increase pressure on the churches to actively support the regime's mission. Hitler stated in a radio address on 22 July 1933 that 'Churches which fail to render to the State any positive support ... [are] worthless.'⁵⁹ Within a short time of taking power, then, it became clear that the National Socialists were introducing new realities to all confessional milieus, whether Protestant, Catholic, or socialist-secular. For the next few years, each camp's politicians, thinkers, and members would be consumed by debates on how to respond to the new regime's brutal demands.

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The conclusions to be drawn about the place of church milieus, secularism, and religious politics in the wider history of the Weimar Republic depend on what one seeks to explain. The question at the centre of much contemporary historical scholarship has been: what role did confessional antagonisms play in the republic's weaknesses and in the ascension of the National Socialist Party to power in January 1933?⁶⁰ Viewed from this perspective, the dynamics engendered by animosities along the two confessional axes explored in this chapter contributed to the instability of the political system. The long traditions of hostility between Germany's main social-cultural milieus, which were inherited from the Imperial era, made lasting coalitions difficult. Even as Catholics and socialists cooperated with each other during the republic's foundation and in governing coalitions throughout the 1920s, their deep differences over religion added fragility to any alliance. Similar conclusions can be reached about relations between confessional Catholics and liberals of various backgrounds, as well as between Protestant liberals and Protestant conservatives. During the republic's final years, the intensification of anti-secularist sentiments sent many Christians into the hands of the authoritarian and radical right. Perhaps most consequentially, the National Socialist Party skilfully mobilized the conceptual arsenal forged by church apologists and Christian conservatives. Under the banner of the term 'positive Christianity', it utilized Weimar's culture wars to argue that it alone could destroy secularism and modern Judaism (always linked in antisemitic rhetoric) and bring together both Catholics and Protestants into a nationalist unity. Weimar's *Kulturkampf* dynamics provided Hitler the opportunity to portray his party as Christianity's defender, not in religious terms, but in confessional ones. Just as the violent deeds of the brownshirts gave the NSDAP prominence in the low-grade civil war fought between the right and the Communists, so its call for extreme measures against freethought allowed it to appear as the standard-bearer of the Christian West on the religious front of that war.

If we look beyond the republic's collapse, however, the era's confessional dynamics acquire additional legacies. Here we may borrow a metaphor employed by historian Helmut Walser Smith, who likened the central event that historians seek to explain to a painting's 'vanishing point' around which all objects are aligned.⁶¹ Alongside 1933, a second vanishing point in the story of Germany's religious politics could be 1946, the year in which Catholics and Protestants joined hands to form the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), an interconfessional alliance that would become West Germany's ruling party for most of the time from the founding of the Federal Republic in 1949. Drawing on the experiments of Weimar's last years as well as on the complex experiences under Hitler's rule, leaders of both Christian milieus concluded that only a robust cooperation could return organized religion to the centre of the nation's life. Nazism, they claimed, was a secular twin of Marxism, and it was up to the churches to provide the social, political, and ethical bulwark against their return. Under the leadership of Konrad Adenauer, who served as West Germany's chancellor for fourteen years from 1949 to 1963, the CDU would thus continue the anti-secular campaign in a decisively democratic key. As the leading force in the country's reconstruction, its agenda echoed much of the Catholic and Protestant demands in the 1920s, whether in education, family law, or anti-Communism.⁶² Weimar's

confessional axes, then, did not disappear with Nazism and war. With some alterations, they continued to shape West Germany's democratic politics for many years.

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Notes:

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(3) Lucian Hölscher, 'Konfessionspolitik in Deutschland zwischen Glaubensstreit und Koexistenz', in Hölscher (ed.), *Baupläne der sichtbaren Kirche: Sprachliche Konzepte religiöser Vergemeinschaftung in Europa* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007), 11–52.

(4) Olaf Blaschke, 'Das 19. Jahrhundert: Ein Zweites Konfessionelles Zeitalter?', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 26 (2000), 38–75. See also Helmuth Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Manuel Borutta, *Antikatholizismus: Deutschland und Italien im Zeitalter der europäischen Kulturkämpfe* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010).

(5) Todd Weir, *Secularism and Religion in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 158–161; Sebastian Prüfer, *Sozialismus statt Religion: Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie vor der religiösen Frage 1863–1890* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002). Quote is from Christoph Ernst Luthardt, *Die modernen Weltanschauungen und ihre praktischen Konsequenzen* (Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1897 [1880]), 1.

(6) Quotation of Kaiser's speech is from 'Zweite Balkonrede des Kaisers, August 1, 1914', in Ulrich Cartarius (ed.), *Deutschland im Ersten Weltkrieg: Texte und Dokumente* (Munich: dtv, 1982), 15.

(7) Patrick J. Houlihan, *Catholicism and the Great War: Religion and Everyday Life in Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914–1922* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

(8) Quotation of Kaiser's speech is from 'Der Kampf der Weltanschauungen', *Mitteilungen aus dem Verein zum Abwehr des Antisemitismus*, 28/12–13 (10 July 1918), 57–59.

(9) Ludwig Richter, *Kirche und Schule in den Beratungen der Weimarer Nationalversammlung* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1996), 241. On 28 November Hoffmann issued a decree ordering the consistories to eliminate prayers for the King and the royal house from their services. On Adolph Hoffmann and the Protestant Church, see Gottfried Mehnert, *Evangelische Kirche und Politik* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1959), 106–115.

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(15) Lucian Hölscher, 'The Religious Divide: Piety in Nineteenth-Century Germany', in Helmut Walser Smith (ed.), *Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in Germany, 1800-1914* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2001), 33-48.

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(26) Kaiser, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 180.

(27) Weir, *Secularism and Religion*, 271.

(28) Dieter Langewiesche, 'Erwachsenenbildung', in Dieter Langewiesche and Heinz-Elmar Tenorth (eds), *Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte*, vol. 5. 1918–1945 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1989), 348.

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(31) Waldemar Gurian, *Die deutsche Jugendbewegung*, 3rd ed. (Habelschwerdt: Frakes Buchhandlung, 1924); Joseph Bernhart, 'Marriage as a Sacrament', in Hermann Keyserling (ed.), *The Book of Marriage* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1926), 472–507, here 487; Gerhard Ohlemüller, *Beitrag zu den Konkordatsverhandlungen zwischen Deutschland und dem Vatikan* (Berlin: Säemann-Verlag, 1922), here 17.

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(33) Both Mausbach and Müller-Otfried are cited in Cornelia Usborne, *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany: Women's Reproductive Rights and Duties* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), 82.

(34) Gideon Reuveni, *Reading Germany: Literature and Consumer Culture in Germany Before 1933* (New York: Berghahn, 2006), 221–273.

(35) Heinrich August Winkler, 'Klassenbewegung oder Volkspartei? Zur Programmdiskussion in der Weimarer Sozialdemokratie 1920–1925', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 8 (1982), 9–54, 33.

(36) *Ibid.*, 45.

(37) The quote is from Thomas Ruster, *Die verlorene Nützlichkeit der Religion* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1997), 173–9.

(38) See e.g. the articles gathered in the special issue edited by Todd Weir, 'Europe's Interwar Kulturkampf,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 53/3 (2018).

(39) Victoria Smolkin, *A Sacred Space is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

(40) Stewart A. Stehlin, *Weimar and the Vatican* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

(41) Kaiser, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 164–72.

(42) Quoted in Ulrich Kaiser, *Realpolitik oder antibolschewistischer Kreuzzug? Zum Zusammenhang von Rußlandbild und Rußlandpolitik der deutschen Zentrumspartei 1917–1933* (Frankfurt/Main: Lang, 2005), 190–191.

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(43) The information on the Committee is taken from Stadtarchiv Mönchengladbach, Algermissen papers, no. 15/7/5. More broadly, see Hürten, *Deutsche Katholiken*; Stefan Ummenhofer, *Wie Feuer und Wasser? Katholizismus und Sozialdemokratie in der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin: wvb, 2003); Horstwalter Heitzer, 'Deutscher Katholizismus und "Bolschewismusgefahr" bis 1933', *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 113 (1993), 355–387.

(44) Mirjam Loos, *Gefährliche Metaphern: Auseinandersetzungen deutscher Protestanten mit Kommunismus und Bolschewismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020); Walter Fleischmann-Bisten and Heiner Grote, *Protestanten auf dem Wege: Geschichte des Evangelischen Bundes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986); Nowak, *Evangelische Kirche*, 205–339. The information on Dibelius is from 'Protokoll über den Ephorenkonvent der Kurmark am 1. und 2. Mai 1930', Evangelisches Zentralarchiv Berlin, 7/3568, fo. 114.

(45) Patch, *Christian Trade Unions in the Weimar Republic*, 125–156. Kaas is cited in Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 262. Bolz is cited in Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 212.

(46) On the efforts to forge an interconfessional cooperation under Brüning, see Noah B. Strote, *Lions and Lambs: Conflict in Weimar and the Ceation of Post-Nazi Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 46–68.

(47) Todd H. Weir, 'The Christian Front Against Godlessness: Anti-Secularism and the Demise of the Weimar Republic, 1928–1933', *Past and Present* 229 (2015), 201–238.

(48) Lary Eugene Jones, 'Franz von Papen, Catholic Conservatives, and the Establishment of the Third Reich', *Journal of Modern History*, 83 (2011), 272–318; Rainer Bölling, *Volksschullehrer und Politik: Der Deutsche Lehrerverein 1918–1933* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 217.

(49) Speech in Munich, 25 Oct. 1930, *Adolf Hitler: Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen*, vol. 4/1, ed. Constantin Goschler (Munich: Saur, 1996), 33. For a discussion of National Socialist confessional politics, see Todd H. Weir, 'Hitler's Worldview and the Interwar Kulturkampf', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 53 (2018), 597–621.

(50) *Der Angriff*, 8 Apr. 1932. On the National Socialists' rhetoric of Catholic-Protestant reconciliation, see Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), esp. 101–111.

(51) Adolf Hitler, *Hitler. Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen*, vol. 2/2. *Vom Weimarer Parteitag bis zur Reichstagswahl, August 1927–Mai 1928*, ed. Bärbel Dusik (Munich: Saur, 1992), doc. 237. On Nazism and confessionalism, see e.g. Richard Steigmann-Gall, *Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919–1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. 13–50.

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(52) Derek Hastings, *Catholicism and the Roots of Nazism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

(53) Udi Greenberg, 'Catholics, Protestants, and the Violent Birth of European Religious Pluralism', *American Historical Review*, 124 (2019), 511–538. A useful collection of documents on German Catholicism and ecumenism in the 1930s is Jörg Ernesti (ed.), *Die Entdeckung der Ökumene: Zur Beteiligung der katholischen Kirche an der ökumenischen Bewegung* (Frankfurt/Main: Bonifatius, 2008).

(54) *Völkischer Beobachter*, 26 Feb. 1925, reprinted in: Adolf Hitler, *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen*, vol. 1. *Die Wiedergründung der NSDAP, Februar 1925–Juni 1926*, ed. Clemens Vollnhals (Munich: Saur, 1992), doc. 1.

(55) A survey of clerical statements in favour of National Socialism is found in *Die Welt am Montag*, 20 (8 June 1931). More broadly, see Scholder, *Churches and Third Reich*, vol. 1, 127–145.

(56) Weir, *Secularism and Religion*, 274.

(57) *Völkischer Beobachter*, 8 Feb. 1933.

(58) For two contrasting interpretations of the concordat with the Vatican, see Gerhard Besier and Francesca Piombo, *The Holy See and Hitler's Germany* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Hubert Wolf, *Pope and Devil: The Vatican's Archives and the Third Reich*, tr. Kenneth Kronenberg (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). Hitler's quote is from a speech to the SA on 21 July 1933; an English translation of parts of the speech is available in Norman H. Baynes (ed.), *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler: April 1922–August 1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), vol. 1, 373–374.

(59) Baynes, *Speeches*, vol. 1, 376.

(60) See e.g. Manfred Kittel, 'Konfessioneller Konflikt und politische Kultur in der Weimarer Republik', in Olaf Blaschke (ed.), *Konfessionen im Konflikt: Deutschland zwischen 1800 und 1970: Ein zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), Steigmann-Gall, *Holy Reich*; Bergen, *Twisted Cross*.

(61) Helmut Walser Smith, 'The Vanishing Point of German History: An Essay on Perspective', *History and Memory*, 17 (2005), 267–295.

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Todd H. Weir

Department of History, University of Groningen

Udi Greenberg

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Department of History, Dartmouth College