Thomas Carlyle's Place in German Intellectual History, 1830–1939: *Kulturprotestantismus* and the Creation of a Prophet

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(I)

Goebbels' recourse to *The History of Frederick the Great* as Russian armies closed in on the *Führerbunker* in April 1945, reading passages to Hitler on Prussia's deliverance, remains a chillingly vivid image. For Hugh Trevor-Roper, who liked to return to this episode after first unearthing it during his work as an MI6 officer on the circumstances of Hitler's death, the scene epitomised Carlyle's compromised status as an ideological progenitor of Nazism (*Last Days of Hitler* 86–7; "Historical Philosophy" 242). The association drawn between the German fashion for Carlyle, and his ultimate depositing amidst the strange bric-a-brac of National Socialist theory, is both a common and an important one, and a reminder of how easily many of the counter-cultural intellectuals of post-Enlightenment Europe have proved serviceable to tyranny. The familiarity of the connection has, however, also tended to obscure and oversimplify the reasons why German intellectuals first became invested in Carlyle, an interest that swelled into a cult in the years around 1900.

Amidst the rich plurality of German responses to his writings, it was above all authors associated with late-century *Kulturprotestantismus* who propelled Carlyle's ascent to "prophetic" status. Though he drew German engagement throughout his literary life, his canonization was really a posthumous process, only gathering pace after 1881. Just as British enthusiasm for Hegelianism reached its height long after its German heyday, so too did the German commitment to Carlyle intensify as his reputation in Britain began to wane. Carlyle's rise belonged to a particular phase of Protestant anxiety that was stimulated by the need to determine which values ought to sway modernity. *Kulturprotestantismus* denoted, in a general way, the later-nineteenth-century assumption that Protestantism, especially in an

undogmatic form, was foundational to German *Kultur*, or the unity of reflective experience necessary to the fulfilment of human ends (Hübinger). In this wider atmosphere, Carlyle's acolytes were *kulturprotestantisch* in the more activist sense that crystallized during the Wilhelmine period. Working through journals and campaigning organizations, they sought to win the modern age for a radically reformed conception of Christianity. They found in Carlyle's heroic and authoritarian response to the emerging "social question" a compelling way of doing so. The cult of Carlyle afforded an early example of what Max Weber (1864–1920) and the Weimar-era critic Siegfried Kracauer (1889–1966) later identified as the revolt of German academic youth against specialization in favour of an irrational quest for prophetic authority (Weber 351; Kracauer 214; Jarausch).

Kulturprotestantismus never monopolised German approaches to Carlyle's writings. These remained amenable to a spectrum of interpretations, including liberal and socialist, but the band distinctly narrowed and darkened with the rise of the interwar radical right. The image of Carlyle that developed during the Nazi period owed much to the legacy of his assimilation to *kulturprotestantisch* values. Though historians know that Carlyle acquired a major German following, their understandable tendency to see this gravitation through the retrospective prism of twentieth-century fascism has obscured the more complex textures of his reception. David Sorensen and Owen Dudley Evans have shown that the question of what place, if any, Carlyle should occupy in the intellectual lineage of totalitarianism has itself been a contentious one in modern European thought ("The Great Pioneer of National Socialist Philosophy?"; "The Hero as Historian"). One way of clarifying Carlyle's historical relationship to fascism is to analyse the contingent processes of interpretation and dissemination through which he acquired different meanings, including those that fascists ultimately found attractive. In this context, late-nineteenth-century Protestant authors emerge as having played an important role in bequeathing a radically redemptive vision of Carlyle's

importance to the German twentieth century. Historical understanding of this dynamic has been a major casualty of a secularizing hindsight.[1]

Peter Zenzinger's pioneering essay of 1983 on Carlyle's German readership rightly identified the years between approximately 1870 and 1920 as the period during which his reputation was at its height ("Thomas Carlyle's Reputation"). But Zenzinger does not distinguish between different phases or interpretations in this half-century, and makes no mention of contemporary debate over Protestantism as a context for such widespread interest in Carlyle. More recent scholars have shown greater awareness of this background. Peter Ghosh, in his immensely learned study of Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic*, recognises that there was a "late and post-Christian celebration of Carlyle" at the end of the nineteenth century, from which Weber himself was distant (Ghosh 82 note 28). Jonathan McCollum's distinguished and refreshingly sceptical explorations of Carlyle's role in twentieth-century fascism observe that Nazi writers were sometimes uneasy with the religiosity they found in his writings ("Fascism, and *Frederick*" 65; "Nazi Appropriation"). Both scholars refer to Carlyle's assimilation to remarkably energetic Protestant efforts, in the years around 1900, to reclaim modern society for radically reformed ideas of Christian leadership and social organization.[2] But to understand the origins, consequences, and impact of this religious impetus, it needs to be placed against the background of nineteenth-century German intellectual history and the alternative readings of Carlyle which developed within it..

From the 1850s onwards, German translations of *Heroes and Hero-Worship* (1841) and *Past and Present* (1843) made readers aware of Carlyle's social and political thought. Carlyle's adulatory synthesis of "the German idea", the fruit of his own unique formation, offered a distinctive resource to nationalist writers from an early point. But the reasons why

[1] The relationship between Carlyle and religious history in the English-speaking world has received more substantial attention: see the collection of essays in Kerry and Crisler, *Literature and Belief*.
[2] Historians of the relationship between liberal German theology and politics have discussed Carlyle's presence among their subjects' reading matter: see for example Bassi, *Baumgarten* 295–7.

German commentators took an interest in him during his lifetime were notably multifarious, and seldom consciously anti-liberal. Only posthumously did a growing circle of critics espouse the idea that Carlyle offered a vision of heroic leadership detached from a hopelessly corrupted present, and dedicated to religious and social regeneration. It was the publicising energy of *kulturprotestantisch* writers, more than any other constituency, that elevated Carlyle to the status of a radical "prophet" during the 1890s and early 1900s.[3] To their minds, Carlyle's limitations as an historian or a philosopher, about which they were candid, mattered little in comparison to his role as a sage interpreter of the ills of the industrial age, which Britain's era of Chartism and high *Manchestertum* during the 1830s and 1840s had first made painfully visible. Though taking their immediate inspiration from British circumstances, Carlyle's social and political writings functioned, in this reading, as a kind of prognostication for Germany's own comparable experience of industrialization, liberalism, and social democracy.

The onset of modernity generated a spiritual malaise which, Carlyle's Protestant admirers argued, only a strong, intuitive, and post-democratic leader—a Carlylean hero—might solve. Cosmopolitan, politically liberal, and socialist interpreters of Carlyle remained active in the German public sphere during the latter part of the nineteenth century. But the radical Protestant impetus, with its strongly unpolitical conception of human worth, and disdainful of partisanship and public debate, showed greater longevity than the earlier progressive and humane responses to Carlyle, which became rarer after the First World War. In their stead, a new breed of Protestant theologian helped to turn the unpolitical, hero-worshipping Carlyle into the radically anti-democratic forerunner of a new order for the

[3] The development of historical economics in Germany after 1860 drew upon a critique of individualistic *Manchestertum* which bore certain affinities with Carlyle's organicist opposition to classical political economy. This critique arose independently of Carlyle. For examples, see Grimmer-Solem, *Historical Economics* and Herold, *Gustav Schmoller*.

Nordic peoples. They played the decisive role in creating the image of Carlyle whom Nazi propagandists celebrated as the harbinger of the *Führerprinzip*.

(II)

The development of Carlyle's authorial personality is inseparable from his turn to German literature after leaving Edinburgh in 1814, when the Calvinist mason's son struggled to escape from the spiritual despair he felt in reaction to the Enlightenment (Young, "Counter-Enlightenments"). Modern scholarship has followed Carlyle's nineteenth-century readers in being unable to agree on the extent of his indebtedness to Germany. Did Carlyle adopt his mature world view from transcendentalism, or did his Goethean flourishes and Teutonic syntax simply add yet more idiosyncrasy to the reproachful voice of the half-secularised Puritan (Kerry, "*Via Goethe*")?[4] The question does not admit of a definitive answer. The irresolution reflects the fact that Carlyle's outlook contained a bricolage of ideas that his German readers found both engagingly recognizable and arrestingly original.

In a process taking its public form with his early translations of and essays on German literature in the 1820s, and reaching a kind of resolution in his semi-autobiographical *Sartor Resartus* (1833, 1838) Carlyle arrived at a mode of reading the temporal world for its spiritual meanings which he always regarded as German in its inspiration (Le Quesne 10; Ashton 67–104). It was an intuition of the universe that would give his later social and historical writings their unmistakeable character. As he explained in the opening of *Sartor Resartus*, natural science and political economy examined the surface of human experience. But for authentic insight into the real nature of things—"the grand Tissue of all Tissues"—"Germany, learned, indefatigable, deep-thinking Germany comes to our aid" (*Sartor Resartus* 4). Through the persona of Professor Teufelsdröckh, Carlyle unfolded "the Philosophy of Clothes," which remained fundamental to his interpretation of literature, history, and society in later years. "The vestural Tissue" or "Clothes" through which human

[4] For Carlyle's Calvinist identity, see John Holloway.

existence expressed itself in different times and places were, he explained, really the symbols of a hidden, transcendental world of divine truth and justice. The seer might discern and explain the meanings of such symbols, in order to recall the world to its periodically necessary task of burning through old clothes, in order to remake itself in the image of righteousness. Such work was the province of the true king, "the Sovereign of Mankind," whom Carlyle would later call the hero (*Sartor Resartus* 183). In his conclusion Carlyle asked, "has not the Editor himself lost much of his own English purity?" (*Sartor Resartus* 215).

Synthesizing a number of earlier texts and traditions into a highly original *pronunciamento* for Teutonic "natural supernaturalism" in the interpretation of history and society, *Sartor Resartus* expressed the wider complexity of Carlyle's relationship with Germany. For all its Germanic framing, Carlyle's social and historical philosophy emerged at least as much from his Calvinist heritage, and horrified yet formative experience of Enlightenment-era thought, as it did from his reading of German authors. Goethe is a conditioning presence in *Sartor Resartus,* in the sense that his ideas lent a shape to Carlyle's restless apostrophising without fixing its content (Kerry, "*Via Goethe*"). "Close thy *Byron*, open thy *Goethe*", Teufelsdröckh demands, as part of the redemptive act of renunciation which Goethe regarded as the precondition of a fulfilled life (*Sartor Resartus* 143).

Yet Carlyle's understanding of renunciation as the forsaking of mere ease and utility in favour of the search for "the Godlike that is in Man"—his objective was to re-clothe nineteenth-century Christianity—was quite alien to his mentor's humane aesthetic. Carlyle drew his religious construction of Goethe into alignment with his comparably puritanical conception of German philosophy, having Teufelsdröckh describe Fichte's philosophical commitment to the inwardly-driven creation of the freedom of the self as "to a certain extent, Applied Christianity" (*Sartor Resartus* 145). Carlyle's attempt to draw Goethe and Fichte

together as exponents of a single German insight, as well as Teufelsdröckh's frequent use of biblical stories and phraseology, indicate that Carlyle looked to German writers not solely as the bringers of new ways of seeing, but as routes to recreating the religious certainty of his youth. Yet as Carlyle's half-sympathetic appreciation of Saint-Simonian socialism in *Sartor Resartus* also makes clear, this was to be a deliberately post-theological faith. Carlyle's gospel looked not to reanimate lost beliefs, but to direct modern society (*Sartor Resartus* 217).

Proclaiming a faith justified through the works it inspired, Carlyle's later writings extolled Germany as the modern polity which best realised the social doctrine at which German authors had helped him to arrive. Carlyle's *Frederick the Great* (1858–65), though dedicated to a dutiful servant-king who embodied heroism in the unheroic eighteenth century, also extolled the Prussian state which had both fostered and outlived him. Carlyle's philosophy of clothes, which in its German vesture also comprised indigenous and Enlightened elements, equipped him with the critical technique that would enable him to celebrate political as well as literary Germany. Just as Carlyle projected his own anxieties onto Germany in framing his own idea of its significance, so too would his German readers arrive at widely contrasting conceptions of Carlyle's intellectual persona. The composite character of his ideas admitted of a range of interpretations. The different strands of German life and thought that Carlyle interwove in his writings invited conflicting interpretations of his relationship to a German culture.

Carlyle's identification of a unitary essence in the German genius, for all its intellectual fecundity and international resonance, was simultaneously also an *idée fixe* which hardened him against appreciating the many other expressions of post-Idealist German intellectual vitality. Hostile to theology, he was contemptuous of the branch of *Wissenschaft* which most engaged the other early promoters of German thought in Britain, notably

Coleridge and the young Pusey. Unlike them, Carlyle found in theological speculation the sign of an age in which religion survived through chattering artifice rather than silent faith. He disapproved of his friend John Sterling, the sometime Anglican curate, poet, and Coleridgean, for misdirecting his early interest in German literature towards "Tholucks, Schleiermachers, Neanders, and I know not whom" (*John Sterling* 165). Carlyle's opinion of German historians was less dismissive: they at least wrote about realities. But he still mischaracterized them as Dryasdusts, who mistook the ashes for the fire of history. In citing the authority of the "ingenious Herr Professor Ranke" in his *Frederick the Great,* Carlyle remarked that his predecessor's *Prussian History* had only achieved "a wondrously distilled '*Astral-Spirit,*' or ghost-like facsimile (elegant gray ghost, with stars dim-twinkling through) of Friedrich's and other people's Diplomatisings in this World" (*Works* 15:472). In contrast, Carlyle's self-appointed task in his Prussian epic was to reveal the heroic and the godlike in Frederick, creating a solidarity between himself and his subject (Young, *Eighteenth Century* 38–69). Carlyle believed that he had extracted critical principles from German thought which enabled him to disdain or supersede its more futile or ponderous manifestations. This assumption was echoed much later by German radical Protestants, who were convinced that Carlyle had distilled the essence of their national genius more perfectly than their own countrymen. Behind both the announcement and the response there lurked a kind of philistinism that was by no means characteristic of all of Carlyle's German students.

(III)

Carlyle's earliest recognition in the German, as in the British public sphere, came not from his religious or political commentary, but from his work as a translator and literary critic. Here Goethe acted as the crucial intermediary. A mutually admiring correspondence between the pair had developed after Carlyle sent Goethe a copy of his translation of *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* in 1824. Carlyle found in Goethe's writings a consoling mode of

understanding that enabled him to elude his own spiritual despair by focusing on the revelation of the transcendental meaning of inner experience. He was also attracted to the German sage's idealization of world-literature, which would bring the distinctive gifts of individual nations to the service of understanding and educating common humanity (Norton, *Correspondence* 32–33; TC to Goethe, 20 Aug. 1827). Goethe himself reiterated this idea in the concluding note to the introduction that he wrote in 1830 for the German translation of *The Life of Schiller*, the first of Carlyle's works to be published in German. The Goethean notion that Carlyle's importance lay in how he had contributed to the development of spiritual amity among the nations informed a long-lived, if gradually weakening cosmopolitan current in subsequent German estimations of his significance.

The translation of Carlyle's works markedly accelerated during the 1850s. As well as showing continuing interest in his literary essays and biographies, Carlyle's translators reflected the reorientation of their subject's concerns towards social and political questions. They began to suggest that his teachings might have an application to German, as well as to British circumstances. August Kretzschmar (1812–72), who also wrote novels and a book on Richard Cobden, published a six-volume edition of Carlyle's works in 1855, consisting mainly of his literary and historical essays. The edition reflected the growing tendency for German works on Carlyle to value him partly as an instance of a foreigner's recognition of Germany's elevated intellectual vocation, in a way that harmonised easily with nationalist shibboleths. Voicing a more chauvinistic understanding of Carlyle's role as a cultural mediator than Goethe had expressed, and such as would become increasingly common in the following decades, Kretzschmar opened his introduction with the claim that "German literature is a world literature like no other". Besides Thomas Carlyle, he continued, it was difficult to find a second foreign writer who so totally effaced his own national pride before the recognition that the higher literature of Germany was at one and the same time the higher

literature of Europe (“Einleitung” vii, xii). Kretzschmar credited Carlyle with a *geniale Anschauung*, or “brilliant intuition” (“Einleitung” viii). *Genialität*, connoting genius or brilliance in a sense more literary than prophetic, became a quality commonly attached to Carlyle in German writing some time before he acquired his later status as the herald of a new socio-political order.

That Carlyle’s writings possessed a political and spiritual, as well as a purely literary importance nevertheless became increasingly evident, even if his translators at this stage did not present them as containing the kernel of a radical alternative to conventional politics. The fifth and sixth volumes of Kretzschmar’s edition offered translations of, respectively, *Sartor Resartus* and *Past and Present*. In his foreword to the fifth volume, the editor explained that “Carlyle’s writings strike like the hammer of the old god Thor on everything which is to be called an evil in the life and institutions of the nineteenth century.” He observed that Carlyle’s influence on English elites had already been profound, but he did not treat this phenomenon as a pretext for issuing a wider call for Germans to rally to Carlyle’s designs (“Vorwort” ix).

Carlyle’s friend and voluntary secretary, Joseph Neuberg (1806–67), advanced a more definite, if still moderate case for Carlyle’s relevance to modern Germany in his own work as a translator. Born into a Jewish family in Würzburg, the Hamburg firm for which he worked dispatched him to Nottingham, where he also became president of the People’s College, and of the Literary Department of the Mechanics’ Institution. In common with so many of those active in British self-help societies in the years after the Great Reform Act, Neuberg became a follower of Carlyle, finally meeting his hero at the introduction of Ralph Waldo Emerson during the latter’s visit to England in 1847–8 (Jacobs and Lipkind; [Sadler]). Neuberg began to translate Carlyle’s writings after moving to Bonn in 1850, and to assist the author with research in the British Museum following his return to England three years later. His German

edition of *Past and Present* appeared in 1851, and a translation of *On Heroes and Hero-Worship* in 1853 (Carlyle, *Beiträge*; *Heldenverehrung*). In his introduction to *Past and Present*, the title of which he rendered as the "gospel of work," Neuberg went beyond Kretzschmar and aligned his translations of Carlyle with the aspirations of contemporary Germany.

In particular, he addressed liberal hopes in the wake of the revolutions of 1848. At a time of unrest, he explained, when "freedom, political reform, participation in the government" had become popular watch-words, it was important never to confuse the means of change with their ends. Political progress could only be valuable if it generated "social enhancement" (*soziale Erhöhung*), which meant a greater share in wealth on the basis of proper esteem for the dignity of labour (Neuberg, "Einleitung" lv–lvii). The good man, who worked with an eye to higher ideals, would necessarily elevate the political sphere which he entered. Neuberg pointed to Benjamin Franklin as an instance of someone who, in his work as a publisher, wanted always to improve himself and those of the circles with which he came into contact. By becoming a model of probity, he grew into a hero of his newly-liberated fatherland (Neuberg, "Einleitung" lix–lxii). When Neuberg made Carlyle speak to contemporary Germany, his aim was not to denounce constitutionalist politics, but rather to insist upon the necessary link between moral idealism and constructive political action.

Nevertheless, Neuberg helped to contribute an important element to what would become the anti-liberal reading of Carlyle. Translating *Frederick the Great* under Carlyle's supervision, Neuberg completed the fourth and part of the fifth volume of the six-volume edition before his death in 1867, leaving the remainder of the task to Friedrich Althaus (1829–97) (Carlyle, *Friedrich der Grosse*). Neuberg tended to efface himself from the translation, but periodically included footnotes to echo Carlylean judgements of his subject that would instantly commend *Frederick the Great* to Prussocentric conceptions of German

destiny. Where Carlyle praised the Hohenzollerns for preferring active work to the morality of the aesthetic philosopher, the Sunday school, or the babbling pamphleteer, Neuberg added his own respectful cross-references to the complementary parts of his translation of *Past and Present* (Carlyle, *Friedrich der Grosse* 1:214-5 and 215 n. 1). Published by Decker, an official printer of the Prussian state (*Königlichen Geheimen Ober-Hofbuchdruckerei*), Neuberg's edition had establishment approval, and soon ran into popular editions.

Some readers were critical. Johann Gustav Droysen (1808–84), an historian who held to a liberal-constitutionalist ideal of Prussian-led German unification, objected to Carlyle as a "harlequin" and a "chatterbox" who fell short of his own forensic standards of source criticism (McCollum, "Fascism, and *Frederick*" 91). Carlyle swiftly ascended, nevertheless, to the status of Prussia's authorised interpreter of its greatest ruler, a process accelerated by the public support which he gave to the Prussian cause during the Franco-Prussian war. Carlyle needled British Francophile opinion on the conflict in a letter which appeared in *The Times* on 18 November 1870. He argued that the Prussian war effort would restore the historical identity of provinces which had originally been German and create, through a united Germany, a "noble, patient, deep, pious, and solid" continental hegemon to replace "vapouring, vainglorious, gesticulating, quarrelsome, restless, and over-sensitive France" ("Mr Carlyle on the War").[5] The letter soon circulated in German translation (Strauss 57–72). In 1874 Carlyle received Prussia's *Pour le Mérite*, an honour which Frederick II had founded. Otto von Bismarck sent him personal felicitations on the occasion of his eightieth birthday the following year, congratulating Carlyle for having unveiled "our great Prussian king to the Germans in his full form" (Froude 2:402–3).[6]

[5] Though an important and popular intervention, Zenziger's claim that this letter was instrumental in creating the German 'worship' of Carlyle is difficult to sustain: "Thomas Carlyle's Reputation" 336.
[6] In his letter, Bismarck in fact greeted Carlyle on the occasion of his "seventieth" birthday: a faux-pas from the busy statesman which Carlyle gently corrected in his reply.

By his death in 1881, a constrictive nationalistic appropriation of Carlyle had already eclipsed the Goethean serenity of his early reception. The transition was not yet total, however. Nor was there much inkling that Carlyle could fulfil a more fundamentally diagnostic or reformative function for the united Reich. His German obituarists, who generally wrote brief notices, remarked warmly on his work in making German literature familiar to British audiences, and praised the interest and originality of his historical views ([Anon.]; die Redaction). The Hamburg educational magazine, *Pädagogische Reform*, commended Carlyle's workful life as an example to his fellow-teachers (W.). But German tributes at the time of his death stopped short of hailing him as the herald of a new age. Indeed, Carlyle's hymn to the godlike in the German state and its supporters, a benediction which the latter gladly returned, was hardly a stance that encouraged searching criticism of Germany's extant social and political order.

Other commentators warned against co-opting Carlyle for political purposes. Eugen Oswald (1826–1912), a socialist writer, identified his shortcomings as a political thinker. A Heidelberg democrat who had fled Germany in 1848, Oswald took up a teaching position at the self-consciously progressive University College School in London. He also became a Mauricean Christian socialist, and ultimately president of the Carlyle Society. Oswald published numerous studies and articles in English and German which sought to explain the literature of the two nations to one another. In an essay on Carlyle published in Leipzig in 1882, he quoted from Carlyle's lament in his essay "Characteristics" (1831) over how poverty had expanded at the same time as wealth. Oswald wondered what Bismarck, "for whom Carlyle vigorously entered the lists," would say about such passages (Oswald 43–5 and note).[7] He also noticed, with distinct skepticism, that Carlyle's hostility to Parliament had increasingly pressed him into advocating "well-wishing despotism" as an alternative to popular government (Oswald 60).

[7] For Oswald, see Flood, *ODNB*.

Typically for German writing on Carlyle prior to the 1890s, Oswald's essay showed relatively little interest in Carlyle's religious importance. Kretzschmar's account of Carlyle's biography related his discovery of German literature, but not the crisis of faith which preceded it ("Einleitung" ix-x). The ancestrally Jewish Neuberg saw Carlyle's reverence for work as a kind of religious worship. But he did not Christianise Carlyle in the same way that later writers did. Julius Wellhausen (1884–1918), an advanced Old Testament scholar at Göttingen and one of the few among Carlyle's German readers during his lifetime to take an interest in his philosophy of religion, came to a negative judgement. For Wellhausen, the goal and motive of piety was fundamentally egoistic. Writing to the Scottish Hebrew scholar and anthropologist, William Robertson Smith (1846–94), in 1881, Wellhausen reflected that Carlyle placed too great an emphasis on the social nature of religion. Whilst religion certainly had social effects, Carlyle overlooked its essence in the "personal and individual relation to God" (Wellhausen, *Briefe* 89: Wellhausen to Robertson Smith, Aug./Sept. 1881?). German interest in the positive possibilities of Carlyle's religious experience and vision, as the vital force in a potentially transformative philosophy of society, would nevertheless soon intensify. A distinctively *fin-de-siècle* complex of influences fomented this reorientation.

(IV)

In a work of 1887, a young Leipzig scholar of English literature, Ewald Flügel (1863–1914), could still write that "in Germany little has been spoken, on the whole, of Carlyle's worldview. . . . We gladly celebrated and celebrate him as a friend of our people, and as one who reveres our great men, but there, with very few exceptions, the matter has ended" (Flügel [vii]). The situation was to change markedly over the next twenty years, as Carlyle's *Weltanschauung* became an inspiration, and intellectual programme, amidst a new wave of religious anxiety. During the 1890s, British and German opinion of Carlyle began to diverge. As British critics increasingly distanced themselves from Carlyle's authoritarianism,

Germans who identified with *Kulturprotestantismus* began to treat him as a hero whose integration of a religious, historical, and social philosophy presented an urgent choice to the educated public. This newly intense kind of interest in Carlyle informed a search for alternatives to old-fashioned liberalism and, in some cases, a radical hostility towards it. Heightened awareness that Germany was in the midst of rapid social change contributed to a period of political crisis among the Protestant church elite. That crisis galvanised longer-term changes in intellectual fashion to produce a new phase of debate about the values which should lead the modern German state. Carlyle's reputation became a leading beneficiary of this trend. The Carlyle who had drawn Britons to Goethe, and the Carlyle who had lauded Prussian hegemony over Germany, now became assimilated to a more disruptive task. The Chelsea sage became associated with an intoxicating alliance between spiritual certainty and elitist leadership. In its more radical guises, this anti-democratic estimation of Carlyle also became fundamentally anti-political.

As the population of the Reich grew by two-thirds between 1866 and 1914, and Germany experienced a rapid economic expansion that transformed the country from a largely agrarian to a predominantly industrial society, elites became preoccupied by the growth of the Social Democratic Party among the new industrial proletariat. Formed on a socialist platform in 1875, it was only ineffectually hampered during the period of Bismarck's anti-socialist law from 1878 to 1890 (Nipperdey 1:9–10, 2:351–8). Protestant leaders interpreted the rise of "materialist" socialism as betokening a general crisis in the organising values of German life. The creep of scientific naturalism, philosophical pessimism, and Nietzschean atheism into the public sphere seemed to belong to the same, unnerving moment. Christian intellectuals searched for a convincing antidote to this spiritual malaise.

In this context, *Kulturprotestantismus*, or the assumption common to later-nineteenth-century nationalist and liberal circles that an undogmatic conception of Protestantism was fundamental to German *Kultur*, became a powerful current in academic and literary life. It denoted less a banal consensus than a developing configuration of innovative polemical stances that drew upon late-century intellectual moods in order to address the problem of values. Setting no essential importance upon the institutional church, *kulturprotestantisch* authors often belonged to the broad philosophical and intellectual fashion for neo-Kantianism which gathered pace in 1860. Rejecting Hegelianism, neo-Kantians preferred to emphasise the moral autonomy of the knowing subject, free from religious tradition, as also from pantheistic or materialist determinism. They viewed the Reformation as having first liberated this subjective autonomy (Beiser). Though many cultural Protestants were not theologians, a large number were, and commonly took inspiration from the ideas of Albrecht Ritschl (1822–89). Himself a kind of neo-Kantian, Ritschl insisted that religious experience was not reducible to intellectual categories. In its Christian form, he argued, the religious consciousness called its possessors to build the kingdom of God communally, in secular time. The Wilhelmine theologians who, following Ritschl, wanted the individual to make an inner decision in favour of an anti-doctrinal, or even anti-intellectual kind of Christian commitment, for the sake of creating the reign of divine justice in modern Germany, found an aid to reflection in Carlyle.

A distinctive circuit of institutions and media fostered this rediscovery. In 1886–7 a group of Ritschlian theologians founded a new weekly, the *Christliche Welt*. Describing itself as an “evangelical-Lutheran congregational paper for the educated of all classes,” the magazine aimed to appeal to the intellectually discerning, rather than to the masses. As Ritschl’s younger pupils wondered where the liberal Protestant pilgrimage should take the sword he gave to them, the paper soon broadened outwards from its initial focus on

ecclesiastical and doctrinal questions, also to encompass *kulturprotestantisch* commentary on all aspects of intellectual, political, and social debate (Schmidt-Rost; Troeltsch).

The paper's readers and contributors accordingly overlapped with the supporters of another vehicle of the Protestant elite, the *Evangelisch-Sozialer Kongress*. Adolf Stoecker (1835–1909), a Lutheran court preacher and political activist, drove the creation of the Congress in 1890 in the hope that it would enable the church to win the working classes back from socialism, but its members included liberal and radical clergy, as well as conservatives. The body split in 1895–6, however, after the *Evangelischer Oberkirchenrat*, the governing body of Prussia's established United Church, began to harass unacceptably left-wing clerics (Nipperdey 1:499–504). As Stoecker withdrew to form a more reliably conservative group, the Congress's left-liberal members established the *Nationalsozialer Verein*. The rump of the Congress, now under the tutelage of the Berlin theologian and pupil of Ritschl, Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930), turned away from the political courses which the two secessions adopted, to become a forum for primarily ethical discussions of how social reform could secure and enhance the Christian personality. The Congress's constructively critical attitude towards socialism, and liberal Protestant interest in moralising the individual, gave it a continuing overlap with the *Nationalsozialer Verein* whose political radicalism it eschewed; and intellectuals associated with both continued to publish in the *Christliche Welt*.

The crisis in the Christian-social movement prompted its followers to reconsider their goals in the context of growing disillusionment with the prospects of contemporary politics. This movement formed the backdrop to a new surge of interest in a Christianised Carlyle. The one-hundredth anniversary of Carlyle's birth in 1895, coinciding with the splintering of the *Evangelisch-Sozialer Kongress*, provided the catalyst. In that year, Christian Rogge (1864–1912), a thirty-one-year-old army chaplain and participant in the Congress, published a study of Carlyle that expressed the moderate *kulturprotestantisch* interpretation of the

Scotsman's importance (Zirlewagen). Rogge's work united the long-established appreciation of Carlyle as the representative of the German spirit in England, with a new emphasis on his Christian solution to the riddle of the universe. In this account, Carlyle's social and political views were given priority over his literary and historical interests. Rogge rejected the "the chorus of those who almost want to make an opponent of the Christian faith out of [Carlyle]" (Rogge 20). Confronted with a spiritual crisis as a young man, Carlyle forsook both the Benthamite felicific calculus and Faustian pursuit of pleasure. Instead, he chose to follow Wilhelm Meister in developing virtue through renunciation. There was, however, an unbridgeable gulf, Rogge continued, between "the Scottish Puritan" and "the world-citizen, the German poetic genius educated in antiquity" (Rogge 23). Carlyle emerged from his spiritual crisis cleaving fast to the Christian truths he had learned in his childhood. From then on, he struggled for truth and justice in the face of political majorities that were oblivious to higher goals.

For Rogge, the result was a Christian-social alternative to the errors of socialists and orthodox liberals. He considered that Carlyle's rediscovery of man's organic relation to history and the world represented a satisfying alternative to the materialist and "constructed" vision of reality that modern-day socialism offered (Rogge 47–8 and note) In opposition to the laissez-faire *Manchestertum* of his day, Carlyle recognised that there could be no lasting reform which did not begin with the reformation of the inner man. Carlyle's call for leaders first to see, and then to act on their responsibilities to their inferiors proceeded from these basic insights: "It is his socio-political works that make him a moral power of the first rank today" (Rogge 61–5). Rogge's sentiments were becoming increasingly widespread. "It is a fact that the English 'prophet' is also beginning to become a great power in our fatherland," wrote Johannes Weiss (1863–1914), a Ritschlian theologian who became a member of the *Nationalsozialer Verein*, in the *Christliche Welt* for 1895 (Weiss 333; Wenck 80).

Weiss offered this reflection in his review of the first volume of Paul Hensel's edition of Carlyle's *Socialpolitische Schriften*, to which Rogge had also drawn attention in his book (*Socialpolitische Schriften*; Rogge 61 and note).[8] Born into a Protestant family and raised in Berlin, Hensel (1860–1930) had become a philosopher with Kantian sympathies, in this period at Strassburg, and thereafter at Heidelberg and Erlangen (Medicus). He was descended from Moses Mendelssohn in the paternal line. Self-consciously undogmatic in religion, Hensel sympathised with liberal Protestantism, and was a friend and admirer of the theologian and historian Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923), who had been Ritschl's pupil (Glockner 46). He nevertheless remained conscious of his heritage. A former pupil visiting Hensel's home at Erlangen, recalled that his mentor kept one of the porcelain apes which his great-grandfather had been obliged to purchase as a result of an industrial law which Frederick II had targeted against Jews. Hensel referred to it as his "household god". He also kept a portrait of Carlyle (Glockner 13–17, 20). Hensel's awareness of his Jewish ancestry remained implicitly discernible in a portrayal of Carlyle that swiftly rose to popularity in Protestant nationalist intellectual circles.

Introducing his edition, Hensel offered a more radical image of Carlyle than Rogge. Whereas the latter criticized Carlyle for underestimating the value of political reform in effecting social improvement, Hensel promoted the anti-democratic idea of the Carlylean hero as the distillation of Germanic values (Rogge 66). Thirty years ago, Hensel wrote, Henry Thomas Buckle's philosophy of history, which anchored progress in the laws of scientific and material improvement, had swept the field in Germany ("Einleitung" i-iii). But the rise of a great man who had shown that it was still possible for a great personality to shape modern politics—he did not mention Bismarck by name—and the growth of cultural pessimism, had readied Germany for Carlyle's heroic prescriptions for social betterment. For Hensel,

[8] In his edition, Hensel translated *Chartism*, "The Negro Question," "Shooting Niagara," "Characteristics," and *Latter-Day Pamphlets*.

Carlyle's mature thought proceeded not so much from a Goethean epiphany, but rather from Fichte's insight that the individual only had worth as a member of a moral order, as an incarnation of values ("Einleitung" xxix). Whereas Fichte regarded the moral world order as being itself God, Carlyle's abiding faith was in a God who stood behind the world of outward appearances, and whose cause inspired the work of the hero.

According to Hensel, Carlyle saw the present age of doubt and criticism as generating theology, a science which amounted to a weak and shifting "mediation between faith and knowledge". With this formulation, Hensel alluded critically to the German *Vermittlungstheologie* or "mediation theology" which, earlier in the century, had tried to effect vague compromise between tradition and reason ("Einleitung" xlv).[9] At such a time, the hero, taking his stand not on outworn dogma, parliament, or the press, but in "silent contemplation" and religious faith, must burn the old clothes, and use might in order to restore right ("Einleitung" xxxv-ix, li-lv). The hero's collaborators in this mission were the factory owners who gave their workers security, and the writers and philosophers—such as Carlyle himself—who taught the value of hero-worship to their readers. Hensel anticipated that Germans would play a special role in the resulting transformation of the political order. He saw Carlyle as echoing Fichte's view that the Germans were the *Normalvolk*, the "salt of the earth", when the Scot credited the Germanic peoples with a great task in world history ("Einleitung" lx). If they adhered to the Fichtean Idealism which Carlyle interpreted for them, and followed a Christianity purged of its Jewish residue, Hensel believed that the Germans would join "a powerful symphony" raising humanity closer to God ("Einleitung" lx-lxiv). In this way, he aligned Carlyle's idealisation of heroic action with radical nationalism. It is notable nevertheless that Hensel, conscious of his Jewish heritage, used Carlyle to promote a spiritual more than a racial conception of Germany's world mission, which located Germany

[9] Carlyle's own dismissal of German theology excoriated mediating theologians in particular: *John Sterling*, 165.

as part of a Teutonic and universal family of nations. . Later writers would take the idea of a German mission in a more explicitly *völkisch* direction.

Hensel's portrayal of Carlyle as the anti-intellectual, anti-liberal herald of a new order forged through religious faith resonated with the Göttingen theologian, Wilhelm Bousset (1865–1920). In a series of articles on Carlyle published in the *Christliche Welt* in 1897, Bousset praised Hensel's portrayal of Carlyle's views as the best yet published ("Thomas Carlyle" 296 and note). His sympathy for Hensel's reading of Carlyle expressed two interrelated facets of his intellectual identity. Born in Lübeck, Bousset was former a pupil of Ritschl who became active in the *Nationalsozialer Verein*. He also belonged, in his critical work as a New Testament scholar, to what became known as the Göttingen "History of Religions School" (Meeks; Verheule 21–9). Though indebted to Ritschl's reclamation of the social meaning of Christianity, the History of Religions School also moved beyond his ideas.

Whereas Ritschl had assumed that the study of the early history of Christianity could yield a normative body of doctrines, albeit in a thoroughly revised form, the School actively stressed the difference between the lived religion of the people and the reflective activity of theology. There was a connection between Bousset's conception of early Christianity as a cultic force rather than as a body of truths, and his involvement in a radical movement in Protestant social politics. For the School's disparagement of theology, characteristic of German liberal Protestantism, yielded a kind of programmatic political or cultural theology of its own. Together with kindred scholars such as Johannes Weiss, Bousset held that whilst the magical cultus which had gathered around Christ in the first century could no longer be authoritative over thinking people, religion must remain rooted in the worship of a great personality, which enabled a kind of unity between individual and society, and between life and thought. Bousset considered that the abiding purpose of religion consisted in its capacity to secure the power of personality against the depersonalising conditions of modernity

(Höffker 81–9). He turned to Carlyle in this spirit, as one who had radically reinvented Christianity in a way that made it an antidote to contemporary social and political sickness.

In opening his sequence of essays for the *Christliche Welt*, Bousset observed that although Carlyle's ideas had not yet penetrated to the masses, they were spreading more and more amongst Germany's "recognised intellectual leaders" ("Thomas Carlyle" 250). Carlyle was a second- or third-rate philosopher, he conceded. As a historian, his works were too partisan and anecdotal. Bousset insisted that Carlyle's importance lay rather in the fact that he was a "prophet of the nineteenth century", raised up from humble beginnings, like Luther before him, to shake the world out of its commonplace ideas ("Thomas Carlyle" 250–1). Bousset's elevation of Carlyle to prophetic status, which Weiss had anticipated, reflected the conception of prophecy which he adumbrated in his biblical studies. For Bousset and his followers, a prophet was not the possessor of supernatural powers of revelation or prediction. As Bousset had previously argued in *Jesu Predigt*, the prophet was instead a figure with insight into the real relationship between God and his people. He called Israel to the high and difficult task of submission to the divine law, contradicting the ritualistic and external authority of *Spätjudentum*'s priestly tradition (*Jesu Predigt* 10–20).[10]

Bousset accordingly interpreted Carlyle's transformative importance as primarily religious in nature. It was from his religious insight that his political resonance derived; and his literary or scholarly characteristics were relatively indifferent by comparison. In a manner similar to Rogge, Bousset insisted that the importance of Goethe and Fichte to Carlyle's development was not to draw him into the world of philosophical reflection, but to strengthen his native Puritanism in its faith in God and hatred of injustice ("Thomas Carlyle" 253, 270). With post-Ritschlian disparagement of the place of the intellect in religious faith, Bousset described Carlyle as "in his whole nature only a prophet, not a philosopher"

[10] Bousset's chief authority on Old Testament prophecy was Wellhausen's *Geschichte Israels*: *Jesu Predigt* 11 n. 1.

("Thomas Carlyle" 267). Carlyle's teaching, in common with what Bousset took to be that of the Old Testament prophets, was national. With Fichte, Carlyle believed that the Germanic peoples had to light the way for wider humanity. This path would lead to the re-clothing of Christianity in terms suited to the nineteenth century ("Thomas Carlyle" 271). Carlyle saw that, as God had once effected in Christ, he continued to reveal his purposes in great personalities, with an insight into the divine, whom the people were called to worship. It would first be from hero-worship, therefore, that the society of the future would emerge ("Thomas Carlyle" 297–9). Bousset leavened his evocation of Carlylean hero-worship with the repeated and gratified observation that Carlyle had himself spurned political action: "He was not the man for that, and his time—with its egoistical party spirit, lying press, and pathetic parliamentary conditions—was not ripe" ("Thomas Carlyle" 296). While politicians in England had proved deaf to Carlyle's teachings, in Germany his ideas were becoming a common possession ("Thomas Carlyle" 326–7). The antithesis that Bousset and Hensel presented between heroism and liberal constitutionalism, less pronounced in Neuberg's or Rogge's expositions of Carlyle's ideas, would pass down into twentieth-century Protestant thought.

The proliferation of celebratory essays, studies, and collections devoted to Carlyle in the years around 1900 continued to stress the connection between his rescue of religious faith and the nobility of his social philosophy. The editor of the *Christliche Welt*, Martin Rade (1857–1940)—a pupil of Harnack's and member of the *Nationalsozialer Verein*—positioned Bousset's salute to Carlylean hero-worship immediately after his own loyal opinion-piece on the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Kaiser Wilhelm I ("Kaiser Wilhelms I." 249). Together with other contributors to the *Christliche Welt*, Rade began to promote Carlyle's imperative to "work, and despair not!" as a rallying-call to the periodical's readers

("Arbeiten" 620).[11] The motto was soon to serve as the title for a popular anthology of Carlyle's writings, whose author, wrote the editor, "requires no further introduction in Germany" (Carlyle, *Arbeiten* 4). Introducing a new edition of Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, the Protestant cleric August Pfannkuche (1870–1929) adopted Bousset's description of its author as a "prophet of the nineteenth century", who had answered mechanism and pessimism with the "eternal yes" (Pfannkuche 7 and note, 8). In his study of Carlyle and Nietzsche published in 1897, Johann Heinrich Wilhelmi (b. 1851) made extensive use of Hensel's edition and Rogge's biography to reinforce his conclusion that Carlyle's ultimate recourse to faith in a personal God taught him to revere the social meaning of human life to a much greater degree than Nietzsche (Wilhelmi 56–61).

Protestant writers in the 1890s and 1900s accorded Carlyle prophetic status based on two recurrent motifs in his work. In an atmosphere of unease over the implications of academic specialisation for common values, Carlyle offered a religious conception of reality as a whole which his German followers could not find to the same degree in their own country's theological, historical, or philosophical science.[12] This reflected the tendency for German intellectual life to be more moulded in accordance with formal divisions between university faculties than its Victorian British counterpart. Carlyle's admirers appreciated the fact that he was not confined by any one disciplinary specialism, but instead wrote with religious insight into life as a totality, seeing that the will, more than the intellect, moved the world for the better (Bousset, "Thomas Carlyle" 251; Wilhelmi 54; Hensel, "Einleitung" xxvi–xxvii). Carlyle's religion was also compelling because it was distinctively modern. Unlike many anti-modern reactionaries, he accepted the reality and the potential of industrialization. Bousset argued that because Germany was experiencing the same processes

[11] Cf. [Bonus], "Arbeiten und nicht verzweifeln". The phrase derived from Carlyle's translation of Goethe in *Past and Present*.

[12] Though not as polymathic as Carlyle, Paul de Lagarde, the Göttingen orientalist and abrasive conservative polemicist, bears comparison to him in certain respects. See Sieg, *Deutschlands Prophet* and Alexander Jordan, "Thomas Carlyle and Paul de Lagarde of Göttingen."

which Carlyle had so powerfully analysed in Britain during the 1840s and 1850s, the country's leaders must respond to Carlyle's call that labour should be organised for the common good. For Bousset, it was the spirit, rather than the letter of his prescriptions that mattered ("Thomas Carlyle" 324–7). Hensel echoed this analysis in the biography of Carlyle that he wrote after publishing his textual edition, writing of the "social-revolutionary" Chartists in terms reminiscent of how cultural Protestants saw contemporary Social Democrats. The organization of labor, he considered, was necessary if Germany were to experience its own, later industrialization less disruptively (Hensel, *Carlyle* 107, 168–70, 207). This combination of philosophical anti-intellectualism, and the belief that Carlyle had foretold Germany's destiny, would acquire new forms in the twentieth century.

(V)

By 1900 Carlyle was not solely being read and interpreted with a view to remaking the present. He also acquired a more straightforwardly respectable, even conventional status as a source of literary, philosophical, and philological topics for academic research. One sign of his maturing status in the German literary canon was the increasing proliferation of doctoral treatises dedicated to specific problems in his writings. Though sympathetic to their subject, the authors of these studies typically disclaimed a polemical register. In his dissertation *Carlyle und Schiller* (1902), which he presented to the philosophy faculty at Leipzig, Frohwalt Küchler (b. 1878) sought to reconstruct the distinctive place that Schiller occupied in Carlyle's authorial development. In a similarly cautious thesis entitled *Das Princip der Persönlichkeit bei Thomas Carlyle* (1903) presented to the philosophy faculty at Giessen in 1903, Peter Rixius (1880–1914) argued that the unifying principle of Carlyle's thought consisted in his defence of the freedom of the personality, through duty, against empirical constraints. Other students were interested in classifying Carlyle's neologisms. In a study of Carlyle's word-formation in *Sartor Resartus* submitted to the philosophy faculty at

Jena in 1904, Otto Lincke (b. 1881) focused on Carlyle's unusual inclination among Anglo-Saxon authors to make the German language, rather than Latinity, the model for his stylistic innovations.

Even among Carlyle's more partisan readers, Carlyleanism did not yet necessarily imply a commitment to radical nationalism or the abolition of constitutional politics. The cosmopolitan author whom Goethe had commended persisted in the German public sphere. So too did the idea that Carlyle offered an incentive to voluntary self-reformation in a basically liberal framework. On the eve of the First World War, a Zionist writer, Georg Hecht (1885–1915) published a new edition of Carlyle's correspondence with Goethe. Now that Europe had finished its wars of liberation and unification, Hecht hoped, Carlyle's example might encourage an intellectual exchange between nations that would realise Goethe's dream of a world literature (Hecht 175–6; Heuer, Renate, et al.). A constructive attitude towards liberal institutions, such as Neuberg had once voiced, also continued to find its voice. The anglophile lawyer and economist, Gerhart von Schulze-Gaevernitz (1864–1943), found in Carlyle's writings a way of restoring an idealised puritanism to the capitalist economics which he held to have originated in English nonconformity (Zielenziger 7–12, 22–9). Active in both the *Nationalsozialer Verein* and the *Evangelisch-Sozialer Kongress*, before becoming a Reichstag deputy for the left-liberal *Fortschrittliche Volkspartei* between 1912 and 1918, Schulze-Gaevernitz—whose grandfather had learned the cotton business in Cobden's Manchester—showed how a *kulturprotestantisch* reading of Carlyle need not always terminate in authoritarianism. Addressing the *Evangelisch-Sozialer Kongress* in 1907, he argued that the satisfying alternative to Marxist materialism, or Nietzschean subjectivism, lay in Kant's reassertion of the moral worth of the human personality ("Kultur und Wirtschaft" 12–32). Assuming a pluralist conception of society, Schulze-Gaevernitz welcomed Carlyle's efforts to promote ruling-class paternalism and working-class self-help as practical strategies

for realising Kant's insight (*Carlyle* 94, 199–33). In a study of the of the British trade union movement, Schulze-Gaevernitz asserted that Carlyle's writings had given a crucial stimulant to the social elites' recognition that organised labour enhanced the freedom of the workman (*Social Peace* 95). The wellspring of Carlyle's belief in the possibility of improvement, he considered, was an anti-traditional faith in the person of Christ akin to that which Harnack expounded in his *Dogmengeschichte* (*Carlyle* 100 and note).

Such favourable readings of Carlyle extended to German socialists, who, as Eugen Oswald showed, discovered admirable qualities in his writings. Friedrich Muckle (1883–1944), who after the November Revolution would serve as an official under Kurt Eisner's radical socialist ministry in Bavaria, stressed that Carlyle's importance lay in how he had popularised the work of Saint-Simon in England. In a study of Saint-Simon and his influence, Muckle denied that Carlyle was an original thinker, maintaining instead that he had borrowed his ideas from the French socialist (Muckle 345–80).[13] He posited a Saint-Simonian origin for Carlyle's commendable belief that the fundamental problem of the post-revolutionary world concerned the organization of society, which a new industrial and political elite would accomplish with the aid of a religion of humanity binding them to their workers. Carlyle's hero-worship, Muckle added, was not the adulation of the conqueror who set history on new paths, but the respect accorded to the leader who sought to provide work for the common people. Muckle was aware that his interpretation of Carlyle's doctrine of heroism was unusual, accepting that it ran contrary to "common opinion" on the subject (Muckle 355–6, 377–8).

The First World War acted as a caesura to these humanistic, liberal, and socialist responses to Carlyle. Protestant clergy, however, continued to celebrate the potential for the Carlylean hero to recreate Germanic society. Building on the work of earlier *kulturprotestantisch* writers, but now insisting that Germany's redemption lay through blood

[13] For Muckle, see *Landeskundliche-Informationssytem für Baden Württemberg*.

and soil more than in the spread of Protestant values, a new generation of Protestant theologians transmitted to the Nazi period a more racialized version of Carlyle (König). Wolf Meyer-Erlach (1891–1982) represented this new breed. Ordained as a pastor during the war, he became a National Socialist propagandist soon after the party's foundation. In 1927 he published a pseudo-Nietzschean compilation dedicated to *Nordische Seher und Helden*, which named the "prophetic" Carlyle as a "herald" of "Nordic life-power." Presenting Carlyle's spiritual crisis as expressing "the grim will of the Nordic man," Meyer-Erlach interpreted Teufelsdröckh's renunciation of the "Everlasting No" as a declaration of freedom for slaves of the "human-all-too-human" (Meyer-Erlach viii, 5–12; Herschel). In common with earlier Protestant writings, Meyer-Erlach approved of Carlyle's reverence for silence as the space in which certainty could be discovered, free from the unmeaning chatter of the public sphere. Such were the conditions in which heroes were made, who deserved the freedom and reverence not owed to "subhuman individualities" (Meyer-Erlach 38). According to Meyer-Erlach, Teufelsdröckh's youthful sufferings, his mature penetration to higher realities, and his final victory over common humanity prefigured the struggles of Carlyle's Frederick the Great, a figure in whom Carlyle's earlier cultural Protestant followers had been less invested. But Meyer-Erlach regarded the Prussian king's military triumphs as a vindication of his racial identity: "The seven-years' war shows us the victory of the northern soul over all powers of fate" (Meyer-Erlach 52). Meyer-Erlach's views earned him comfortable preferment during the Nazi period. Rising to particular prominence as a leader of the Nazi-sponsored German Christians in Bavaria in 1931–2, his toadyism raised him to the chair of practical theology in the partisan Nazi Jena faculty in 1933, despite his lack of a doctorate or habilitation. It was during this time that he changed his original name, Wolfgang Meyer, to the more Aryan and less Jewish-sounding Wolf Meyer-Erlach. He and like-minded faculty colleagues promoted a *völkisch* theology that aimed to remove "Judaizing" influences

from Christianity. One sign of the favour Meyer-Erlach found among certain protectors of Nazi orthodoxy was the accession of *Nordische Seher und Helden* to the library of the Ordensburg-Sonthofen barracks in the Bavarian Alps, a bombastically castellated new training centre, designed by Hermann Giesler, for higher military and party echelons.[14]

Wilhelm Michael Vollrath (1887–1968), a professor of theology at Erlangen, offered a comparable, and still more *völkisch* appraisal of Carlyle in a study that paired him with the racial theorist Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927) as "two friends of Germany" (Vollrath). Drawing on Hensel's biography as well as more recent studies, Vollrath argued that Carlyle's overriding importance consisted not solely in his devotion to heroic leadership, or *Führertum*, as the force that swayed the destinies of peoples (Vollrath 38–9, 59–61 and 61 note 1). For as well as heroism, Carlyle also saw the importance of blood and race in ordering human affairs. Coming from southern Scottish, and hence, Vollrath supposed, the purest Danish and Scandinavian ancestry, Carlyle upheld the view that the Scots, English, and Germans were blood-brethren (Vollrath 50–3, 59–61). Not all Nazi theorists agreed with Vollrath's and Meyer-Erlach's efforts to enlist Carlyle in the National Socialist cause. Theodor Deimel (b. 1909) considered that Nazism's recognition of the decisive importance of race in determining human capacities superseded Carlyle's religious preoccupations, and those of the Christian-social movement which he had influenced (Deimel 143–4; McCollum, "Fascism, and *Frederick*" 65). In Deimel's very act of self-distancing from Carlyle, there was, at the same time, an implicit recognition that the Carlyle whom Nazi writers encountered had been mediated through the legacies of *Kulturprotestantismus*. Hensel and Bousset did not have Hitler in mind when they defended the Carlylean hero in accordance with superior, unpolitical values. But they unwittingly supplied a religious current to early twentieth-century radical right, and the Nazi theologians whom they influenced.

[14] The Bayerische Staatsbibliothek's copy of the book features the library's stamp at 57: shelfmark Biogr.c.434ᵉ1–5.

(VI)

Considered across the long nineteenth century, Carlyle's German reception unfolded in several overlapping phases. Different aspects of Carlyle's writings, and of the Germany which they represented, came to the forefront in changing historical circumstances. From the 1830s down to the 1850s, the idea of German genius as a literary vocation that played a crucial role in the approaching era of liberal politics, created a status for Carlyle as an intellectual partner and spiritual mentor. In the wake of the Prussian-led German unification of the 1860s and 1870s, Carlyle was recast as an apologist for the *Machtstaat*. Towards the end of the century, when the nation-state had transitioned from hopeful aspiration into disappointing status quo, his name became identified with a radical Protestant diagnosis of the ills of modernity. Numerous cultural Protestants looked to Carlyle, in a newly alienated sense, as a prophet calling Germany to the worship of a great hero who would make all things new. This authoritarian Carlyleanism, which originated in theological debate, flowed into the racialised clamour of the far right during the 1920s and 1930s. Unpolitical Germany, in its disdain for the reality of politics, thus made an anti-political hero out of Carlyle. It was a process with which the intellectual history of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Germany is not wanting in parallels. As the spectrum of alternative liberal, socialist, and internationalist readings of Carlyle makes clear, however, the path his reputation took was neither linear nor unavoidable.

Lecturing to his adoptive countrymen in New York in May 1945, Thomas Mann explained why he could not agree with the idea, popularised in the English-speaking world during the era of the world wars, that there were "two Germanies." It was wrong, Mann explained, to imagine that there was a good Germany of thought and culture, and a bad Germany of action and destruction. In Mann's view, the German's commitment to Goethe's *dämonisch*, the supra-rational power of artistic and intellectual inspiration, made him doubt

that politics, with all its inanity and compromise, could be a power for good. From this perspective, politics was an unscrupulous business that discarded the pretence of civility for the pursuit of power. Bismarck's Reich, once awakened into life, had lived as "a thorn in the flesh of the world" and created the conditions for its own destruction (Mann 248). Only through the renunciation of political nationalism could Germany once more become a creative force in the experience of humanity.

Just as there were not "two Germanies" during the long nineteenth century, so there were not "two Carlyles" corresponding to that division amongst Carlyle's German admirers. George Macaulay Trevelyan, in an influential essay written towards the end of the First World War, distinguished between the younger, idealistic iconoclast who reverenced the hero as the instrument of justice, and the old, embittered misanthrope whose hero-worship metastasised into mere "Prussianism", the adulation of blind force, after the mid-century.[15] Carlyle's German readers seldom recognised such a distinction. The universal and the chauvinistic typically coexisted in the German image of Carlyle, as critics used his writings to interpret what his conception of German idealism meant for Christianity, politics, and culture. Wilhelmine *Kulturprotestantismus* bequeathed a narrowly religiose and anti-democratic Carlyle to the twentieth-century that tended to suppress alternative accounts of his broader importance. There was only one Carlyle, but his writings, in common with the Germany in which they were read, contained a chiaroscuro of good and ill whose effects resulted from the voluntary choices which individuals made.

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