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THE LEGACY OF LUTHER:
NATIONAL IDENTITY AND STATE-BUILDING IN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY
GERMANY

by

RUTH LITTLE DEWHURST

Under the Direction of Joe Perry

ABSTRACT

Historians have posited a number of theories about nationalism. Using Anthony D. Smith's historic ethno-symbolic theory, this thesis examines the development of German national identity in the decades following the French Revolution up to the 1848 revolutions and the National Assembly that met in Frankfurt to write a constitution for the German Nation. Martin Luther was an important figure to Germans in the nineteenth century and a number of influential intellectuals drew on his contributions to define themselves as a distinctive people, even though Germans as yet, had no nation-state. The particular contributions of Luther examined in this thesis are language, music and concepts of freedom and unity.

INDEX WORDS: Martin Luther, Nationalism, Romanticism, Pietism, National Assembly 1848

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RUTH LITTLE DEWHURST

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2013

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2013

THE LEGACY OF LUTHER;
NATIONAL IDENTITY AND STATE-BUILDING IN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY
GERMANY

by

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College of Arts and Sciences

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May 2013

DEDICATION

To my husband, Ken, who has encouraged and supported me in this pursuit and to my children and grandchildren: Betsy and Andy, Katherine, Evan and Dylan; Geoffrey; Emily and Sean, with my love and thanks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely grateful to the professors in the history department who have challenged my intellectual development and skills as a budding historian. My particular thanks go to Nick Wilding who first taught me to question every text and author's thesis and to appreciate science in a new way. Also to Jared Poley who gave us such interesting books to read in his Modern European seminar course and helped me with perfecting my thesis (to the extent that it has been perfected). My greatest thanks go to Joe Perry who inspired me to pursue German history and has been a constant source of encouragement and help in times of confusion. I owe him a debt of gratitude for teaching me nearly everything I know about writing.

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INTRODUCTION

For many historians nationalism is a product of modernity, emerging with the Enlightenment-inspired revolution in France in 1789. The notions of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité* were spread throughout Europe by Napoleon as he liberated—or conquered? In Prussia, the defeat of the Prussian army in 1806 and subsequent occupation of Berlin led Johann Gottfried Fichte to give a series of lectures, *Addresses to the German Nation*. “He to whom a fatherland has been handed down, and in whose soul heaven and earth, visible and invisible meet and mingle, and thus, and only thus, create a true and enduring heaven—such a man fights to the last drop of his blood to hand on the precious possession unimpaired to his posterity.”¹ According to Ernest Gellner, this notion of a nation that is eternal, passed down from generation to generation, with an existence independent of a state is flawed.² His position was that citizenship is an essential quality of nationalism, thus the state was a necessary precursor for nationalism. Other theorists however, contend that nationalism forms over a long period of time and can precede the existence of the nation-state. The second way of thinking resonates with what Fichte said and seems to describe the German states. I argue that German nationalism grew out of the myths and memories handed down by generations and brought to life by the efforts of the early Romantics. Martin Luther’s Protestant Reformation was not the only memory from which Germans could draw in forging nationalism, but it was one of the most important.

On October 31, 1517 Martin Luther initiated the Protestant Reformation when he posted his 95 *Theses* on the church door in Wittenberg. In 2017, Germans and Protestants worldwide will celebrate the 500th anniversary of this event. In Germany, the festivities of 2017 will be the culmination of a *Lutherdekade*—a ten year commemoration of the contributions of Luther to German history and culture. Beginning in 2008, each year is dedicated to a different theme associated with Luther, some of which are:

¹ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, “Addresses to the German Nation,” in *The Nationalism Reader*, ed. Omar Dahbour and Micheline R. Ishay (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995), 62-70.

² Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 8. This book was published posthumously by Gellner’s son who calls it his father’s last word on nationalism.

education, freedom, music, politics, language. Martin Luther has been an iconic figure in German history for five centuries. The German states of Luther's day have been refigured and transformed, but Luther has continued to be an inspiration—an inspiration beyond what he perhaps intended or imagined, but with an enduring imprint on German history. Luther was not a nationalist in the modern sense, but his contributions have become identified with Germany. Luther's influence is embodied by some theories of nationalism that assert national identity can exist prior to a state—eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Germans frequently used Luther as a touchstone for a common identity.

While there are competing theories of nationalism, I use Anthony D. Smith's ethno-symbolic theory to structure my argument. Smith has written extensively about nationalism and formulated his own model. He defines nationalism as “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity, and identity on behalf of a population, some of whose members deem it to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation.’”³ In Smith's “historical ethno-symbolic” nationalism, power derives from the myths, memories, traditions and symbols of ethnic heritages which are rediscovered and reinterpreted by the intelligentsia, and these are reconstituted in every generation.⁴ An analysis of national identity involves scrutinizing a variety of events, beliefs, and practices that have built up over centuries. In the case of Germany, the Protestant Reformation contributed to the development of a group mentality; the Romantic movement with its artistic emphasis on the physical landscape, its literary resurrection of folktales and myths, and the awakening awareness of the rich heritage of German music all contributed to what Smith calls a “cult of the homeland.”⁵

Twenty-first century Germans celebrate Luther's cultural contributions; nineteenth-century Germans were more in tune with his theological contributions, but there was a certain degree of reinterpretation of his theology. In Fichte's “Eighth Address” quoted from above, his theme is freedom and he draws on the memory of the first-century Battle of Teutoburg Forest where Germanic tribes threw

³ Anthony D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations: Hierarchy, Covenant, and Republic* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008) 15.

⁴ Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 9.

⁵ Smith, *Myths and Memories*, 152.

off the yoke of Roman slavery. The Germans fought to keep their freedom rather than settling for the blessings of the Roman Empire because that compromise meant they would be half Roman rather than fully German.⁶ Luther also invoked an image of freedom. His was a theological concept—freedom from slavery to sin. Nineteenth-century Germans tended to conflate Luther’s theology with political goals. Fichte was trained as a Lutheran pastor and was conscious of blending historical and biblical themes to inspire the *Volk* to throw off the yoke of French slavery. In the subsequent decades, other Lutheran theological concepts morphed into something else in the service of German unity and freedom: “the priesthood of all believers,” the visible and invisible church, the “now and not yet,” and *ecclesia semper reformanda*.⁷ These themes will be further developed as I examine the creation of German nationalism in the years leading up to 1848. Fichte was joined by a number of other influential Germans in his attempt to rally the *Volk*.

German intellectuals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century formed one of those distinctive groups in world history—a convergence of literary and intellectual giants who would define German culture for the succeeding generations. Goethe, Schilling, Herder, Kant, Fichte, the Schlegels, Schelling, Schleiermacher, Tieck, et al. were the intelligentsia Smith identifies as essential to the revival and reinterpretation of Germany’s myths and memories. While the majority of these figures came out of pious Lutheran backgrounds, they came to the universities not to become pastors, but to generate a transformed intellectual environment. The romantics conjured up a German mythology drawing on pre-Christian roots but not abandoning the Christian symbols that had become as German as Luther. They sought a form of nationalism that drew on the notion of the *Volk*. Alongside and included with these intellectual elites were conservative Lutheran and Pietist figures like Ernst Moritz Arndt, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn or Johann Gustav Droysen whose goals and visions for Germany converged with those of the romantics. Other demonstrations of nationalism thus emerged in hymns, chorales, sermons, and a conception of German representative government. In tackling the story of early nineteenth-century

⁶ Fichte, “Addresses to the German Nation,” 68.

⁷ The church is always reforming.

German nationalism, I propose that it was not solely a product of the French Revolution and its aftermath, and that while drawing on secular myths and Germany's pre-Christian history, it was also firmly rooted in its Reformation heritage.

The process of developing the symbols and festivals that would bind the *Volk* together drew on older roots; it was not a product of a modern, centralized state. Smith argues that theorists who say nationalism cannot exist without a state give no weight to the pre-existing cultural and ethnic ties. These pre-existing elements became the very heart and soul of German nationalism as first articulated by the romantic intelligentsia. During the early decades of the nineteenth century, German folktales and epics, gymnastic clubs, music festivals, and religious practices became popularized and politicized while the German states remained politically fragmented. The 1848 revolutions in the German states did not lead to a unified nation, but this would not be the end of the story for Germany unity. A German national identity had been developed with national festivals, a flag, songs celebrating the *Volk*, and the religious heritage which continued to retain a place of importance flourished in a growing public sphere.

I intend to use the 1848 Frankfurt National Assembly as my destination point in examining the development of German nationalism. In particular, I want to examine religious language as used in the development of ideas of national identity—from Herder through the Frankfurt representatives. One of the main arguments at Frankfurt was about who belonged to the German state. Another was the form this state would take. Brian Vick argues that the representatives who met in Frankfurt “conceived of the nation not as a static entity . . . but rather as a process in which the nation had to be continually reborn in the consciousness of those belonging to it. Identity was not stasis but rather an active process among the members of the nation.”⁸ Religious language was employed by the entire range of delegates at Frankfurt to articulate their vision of a German state. A national self-identity was linked to a religious identity which retained some of its original Lutheran features while evolving with the spirit of the times.

⁸ Brian E. Vick, *Defining Germany: The 1848 Frankfurt Parliamentarians and National Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002) 206.

The culture of Germany—education, language, music, individualism—these centuries old notions from Luther and the Reformation gave expression to the emerging *Volk* and created an ideological movement for creating a unified identity prior to the creation of an actual German nation-state. Vick notes that, “plenty of room remains for examinations of German nationalist culture in the first half of the nineteenth-century.”⁹ Helmut Walser Smith and Chris Clark, in their 2001 article, “The Fate of Nathan,” note that while the study of religious groups is long-established in the field of German historiography, religion needs to be incorporated more thoroughly and “reintegrated into broader historical interpretations.”¹⁰ This is my objective, and it begins with an examination of how others have approached the topic of nationalism.

There is an enormous body of literature addressing nationalism. Without exploring the nature of nationalism in non-Western nations, I will briefly identify some of the theories pertaining to European nationalism. Within Europe itself, two models have been proposed—the political state patterned after England or France and the ethno-cultural state which is identified primarily with eastern Europe. In defining Germany, both these models can be used to explain various aspects of nineteenth-century nationalism. In each of these models there is a time frame in which modern nationalism is said to have emerged. Going beyond that time frame, there are other theories about the formation and functioning of national identities. I will begin by discussing the broader arguments about nationalism and also focus on the debates specifically within German history.

Scholars like Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, Ernest Gellner and John Breuilly argue that nationalism, as a product of modernity, could not exist without certain features of the modern world such as industrialization, print capitalism, the modern centralized state, mass communication and public, secular education.¹¹ Their argument follows from the climate of the Enlightenment when European

⁹ Vick, *Defining Germany*, 7.

¹⁰ Chris Clark and Helmut Walser Smith, ed. “The Fate of Nathan,” *Protestants, Catholics and Jews in Germany, 1800-1914* (New York: Berg, 2001), 124.

¹¹ Anthony Smith labels Hobsbawm, Gellner and Breuilly as “modernists” and Anderson’s arguments as “post-modernist.” Because I am using Smith’s argument as my framework, I employ his label of modernist when referring to these theorists.

society became more secular and political states consolidated power predicating the need to create educated bureaucracies and cooperative populations. According to Gellner, “Culture and social organization are universal and perennial. States and nationalism are not.”¹² The modernists argue that nationalism is rooted in political power—empowering loyal citizens gives the government more control of the state, therefore more power.¹³ In this scenario, the emotions associated with nationalism replaced religious fervor. During the centuries when a monarchy/aristocracy ruled, the general consensus was that their legitimacy and authority derived from God. As political theorists of the eighteenth century developed the notion of popular sovereignty, “the people” replaced the monarchy as divinely ordained. Anderson, in *Imagined Communities*, contends that eighteenth-century Europe marked not only “the dawn of the age of nationalism but the dusk of religious modes of thought.”¹⁴ The French Revolution and Napoleonic reforms proved fatal to traditional power and faith.

Nationalism as a replacement for religion is a defining feature of the modern industrial world. George Mosse, writing in *The Nationalization of the Masses*, states, “The general will became a secular religion, the people worshipping themselves, and the new politics sought to guide and formalize this worship.”¹⁵ Growing out of Enlightenment deism, God withdrew to observe; the people stepped in to assert sovereign power. All the while, symbolism and mythology became defining features of modern nationalism. Mosse, who is particularly interested in connecting nineteenth-century German nationalism with the excesses of the Third Reich explains, “Nationalism, which at its beginning coincided with romanticism, made symbols the essence of its style of politics. These had always played a cardinal role in Christianity and now in a secularized form they become part and parcel of German national worship.”¹⁶ The modernist perspective proposes that loyalties to religious communities and dynastic realms were

¹² Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism*, 5.

¹³ John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1982), 2.

14. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983), 11.

15. George Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass movements in Germany From the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975), 2.

16. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses*, 7.

replaced by devotion to the nation.¹⁷ Then national anthems, slogans, flags, and celebrations superseded religious creeds, catechisms, and rituals. Other arguments propose that religion remained important.

While modernists argue that nationalism replaced religious belief, other theorists postulate that religion has an important role to play in the development of nationalism. In this argument, religious symbolism is not stripped of its inherent meaning and coopted by nationalists, but functions to define the nation. On this point Mosse and Gellner concede that Protestantism encouraged the creation of a cultural identity because the hierarchical church was eliminated and all believers had direct access to God, but Gellner qualifies this by saying it is an atypical example.¹⁸ Anthony D. Smith makes a stronger argument on this point—the concept of “chosen-ness” was transferred from the monarchy and aristocracy to the “elect.”¹⁹ Smith terms this covenantal nationalism. Much of U.S. nationalism bears this feature of being intertwined with religion—the Puritan’s city on a hill became the nation chosen and blessed by God. Rogers Brubaker uses this example to demonstrate that religious language and imagery often become part of the national, secular language. He uses the word, *etatization*, which comes from Foucault and means the advance of the state into more and more areas of life. Thus religious language and imagery is coopted by states. Here the German example is especially good—the Prussian state took control of the Lutheran and Calvinist churches in the 1820s and promoted a symbiosis of religious and national goals.²⁰ The fact that many pastors and congregations pushed back against this move and had to be forced to accept it shows that religion continued to play a role in the national debate.²¹

Brubaker also makes an interesting point about confessionalism. The conventional modernist position posits that religious creeds were replaced by patriotic rhetoric and pledges. Brubaker argues, “The Protestant Reformation and the broader process of ‘confessionalization’ contributed to the development of nationalism by generating new modes of imagining and constructing social and political

17. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 12.

18 Mosse, *Nationalization of the Masses*, 14; Gellner, *Nationalism*, 23.

19 Smith, *The Cultural Foundation*, 152.

20 Rogers Brubaker, “Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches,” *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 1 (2012) 8.

21 Although this was a Prussian event, the role that Prussia played in the unification of Germany also made it a national issue.

relationships, promoting literacy in and standardization of vernacular languages, and bringing polity and culture into a tighter alignment.”²² In the German states, the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century religious wars and subsequent treaties resulted in the formula, *cuius regio, eius religio*. As a result, confessionalism (whether Roman Catholic, Lutheran or Reformed) became a defining feature of local political units and contributed to an “Us” versus “Them” mentality. Confessionalism fostered local German identities but reinforced national disunity. In the nineteenth century, as Prussia became the larger and more powerful of the various German states, it was also able to impose a version of Protestant German-ness on the other states. The inclusion of religion as a defining feature of national identity separates several other schools of thought from the modernist position.

The primordialist theory of history posits that humanity is divided into “nations” that emerged from kinship and ethnic groups. Nations exist as part of natural law and as such are the ultimate source of power, will and morality. These nations are extensions of kinship groups developing out of ties of blood, speech, custom, religion and territory. Thus there is a genetic and biological aspect of nationalism. The perennialist theory of nationalism, advanced by British historian Adrian Hastings, posits that nations emerged from the spread of a vernacular language. Thus, nations have existed throughout recorded history. Groups like the Egyptians, Babylonians, Chinese, Persians, French, or British formed political units and aligned with or conflicted with others on the basis of these national units—but these were not part of the “natural” order. Hastings highlighted the Israelites as a nation which had fused land, people, language and religion.²³ This became the mission of the German people in the nineteenth-century, and Anthony D. Smith’s historic ethno-symbolic model is a variant of primordialism and perennialism.

Smith’s conception of nationalism rests on the two pillars of language and self-determination. Through language the national character and individuality is expressed; the people assert their will to constitute an actual or potential nation.²⁴ As opposed to the modernist school, Smith believes that a

²³ Adrian Hastings, *Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 150.

²⁴ Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, 15.

people-group can possess some of the traits of nation-ness without possessing all of them.²⁵ The ethnic-linguistic school of thought centers nationalism around ethnic identity, common language, mass participation in the cultural and political life of the nation, and continuity of institutions, including religious traditions.²⁶ According to Smith, this description of nationalism reflects deeper roots than that of the modernists.

The two issues dividing the modernists and the various other schools of thought are: Is nationalism intrinsically religious, linguistic and cultural, or is it a secular tool of modern nation-states? and When did nationalism emerge? Modernist theorists insist that nationalism cannot exist before 1789 and some, such as Walker Connor, put the date even later, arguing that mass participation in terms of enfranchisement is essential to an identity with one's nation and fellow citizens. Connor's argument is based on ethnic self-awareness which may be more "felt" than factual. A good case in point is the United States. As a nation of immigrants, it was political participation that forged a cultural identity rather than common ethnic and religious roots. The German people, while not completely homogeneous, were able to draw on an ancient heritage, but faced a geo-political dilemma. The multiplicity of German states lay between western and eastern Europe and drew from theories about ethnic roots and modern political participation.

The European model of nationalism has traditionally been divided into two types. Western Europe developed a political nationalism based on civic participation in a liberal state. The role models here are England, after the Glorious Revolution, or France, after the 1789 revolution. This civic-liberal model emerged from the Enlightenment—men as rational, moral beings can fashion a just society based on natural laws. The eastern European version is the ethnic-cultural model. In this version, nationalism was not dependent on the existence of a nation-state, but instead depended on genealogical ties, a vernacular culture based on language, customs, religion and arts, "a belief in the virtues of indigenous

²⁵ Smith lists these traits as well-defined boundaries with a fixed center; a legal and political system that is broadly accepted; mass public culture disseminated by means of a public, standardized education system; the ability of the nation to defend itself (and being recognized by other nations as being able to do this); participation in an international community.

²⁶ Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations*, 13.

history and its special interpretation of the history of the nation and its place in the world,” and a belief in “the people” and the need to mobilize them to create a national identity.²⁷ This “eastern” model segues with the perennialist and primordialist models because it calls for a longer history. The people have an underlying understanding of their culture and past which merely needs to be awakened and activated. German nationalism draws from both the political-civic model and the ethnic-linguistic model. The linguistic roots were reinforced by Luther’s sixteenth-century German translation of the Bible, but political fragmentation hindered early modern state-building. German nationalism has been likened to the story of *Sleeping Beauty*—however not awakened by a prince, but arousing “herself” from slumber. This is what Smith calls the “organic version” of nationalism.

The organic version draws on a romantic understanding of the *Volk*. A nebulous notion of “nation” hovers over individuals with certain distinct characteristics that distinguish them from other nations: language, customs, history, institutions, descent, and religion. The people draw on their roots representing the “spirit” of the nation and the roots hold the parts together, melding the individuals into a whole physical nation in which all the parts need each other. Most eastern Europeans developed nationalism out of this construct. The German organic version, according to Smith, is based on three notions. First, each nation possesses certain peculiar traits and the world is divided into various nations with different languages; second, national self-realization comes through political crisis and struggle; third, the individual’s will must be absorbed in the organic state. The first notion is particularly attributed to Johann Gottfried Herder; the other two to Fichte. Education is what arouses the individuals, or in the case of Germany, the *Volk*, from sleep.²⁸ This awakening can precede the political birth of a nation-state. A less romantic version of German nationalism comes from Elie Kedourie, a twentieth-century British historian of the Middle East.

Anthony Smith summarizes Kedourie’s opinion of nationalism: “He holds that it is an antiquarian irrelevance, a baneful invention of some misguided German philosophers supported by the

²⁷ Anthony D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations*, 17.

²⁸ Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, 16-17

frustrations of obscure middle-class writers, low-born sons of artisans, farmers and pastors . . . the real doctrine of national self-determination was elaborated in the first decades of the nineteenth century by Fichte and his followers, in their egoistic and idealist emendations of Kant's notion of autonomy."²⁹ Kedourie is highly critical of nationalism as a concept that confuses principles with interests. Because people will not compromise over their principles, differences of interests cannot be reasonably discussed and settled. Mosse's critiques of nineteenth-century German nationalism echo some of these sentiments. He emphasizes the emotional and symbolic aspects of German nationalism that were manifested during the Napoleonic era and elaborated on by the German romantics. The black-red-gold flag was created during this period and the battles for liberation were commemorated in future national celebrations. George Mosse, who delineates the importance of these symbols notes that, "Artistic creativity for the German nationalist movement was not merely an expression of man's inner nature, but helped also to give form to the shapeless mass through symbols and public festivals."³⁰ Putting these critiques into the context of the times, Brian Vick describes the intellectual context of nineteenth-century Europeans in general as based on the dialectic struggle. The individual struggle to maintain honor and morality and thereby assert themselves as an individual carried over to a national struggle—a nation must collectively act in the same way. Asserting nationhood was essentially a moral and honorable action engaged in by a Christian people.³¹ The awakening of the German *Volk* was not an inevitable prelude to National Socialism, but an expression of German-ness, like being English or French; in the case of Germany, the struggle came before the creation of a political state. The struggle involved not just political unity, but the creation of a national identity that would unite Germans culturally.

The first chapter of my thesis deals with language, the second with music, and the third with freedom and unity. Each of these are themes associated with Luther in twenty-first century Germany and can be examined in the context of the pre-unification period of the nineteenth century. This thematic structure is loosely chronological. The struggle for a German national identity that began in the late

²⁹ Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, 6.

³⁰ Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses*, 15.

³¹ Vick, *Defining Germany*, 207.

eighteenth century depended on awakening the *Volk* and needed time to grow. Beginning with the traditional “starting point” of modern nationalism, the French Revolution, I plan to analyze the efforts of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Ernst Moritz Arndt, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, and Friedrich Schleiermacher, before and during the Wars of Liberation. I argue that these four, engraved together on a nineteenth-century woodcut, forged a connecting link through their use of Luther’s German. They were heroes of the occupation years and Wars of Liberation. And I begin with language because Herder, in the eighteenth century, identified this as the fundamental feature of a nation. It was Luther who established the German language with his translation of the Bible—and the Grimm brothers confirmed this with their *Deutsches Wörterbuch*. Language was used to rally the *Volk* to resist the French and secure a future for German nationhood.

After examining the Napoleonic and Restoration periods in the context of language, in the next chapter I plan to explore the role of Luther in establishing music as “the favorite art form of the Germans.”³² Luther was an accomplished musician and is known as the father of congregational singing. He introduced the chorale form which was further developed by Bach, the last Baroque composer. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Beethoven revolutionized the classical music forms of his day, and it is largely from the work of Bach and Beethoven that nineteenth-century German music critics developed the concept of “absolute music.” Celia Applegate explains that, “Music for the romantics, especially instrumental music, was the key to the innermost secrets of the world and the universe; it was the key to the beyond, to the infinite and the transcendental.”³³ The concept of absolute music was further articulated as intellectual music which only Germans could understand. In the nineteenth century, music expanded into every realm of German life throughout the German states. Singing clubs and music festivals were wildly popular—the *Volk* were brought together by their love of and appreciation for “serious” music. The 1829 Berlin performance of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* established Bach as the

³² Nipperdey, *Napoleon to Bismarck*, 485.

³³ Celia Applegate, *Bach in Berlin: Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn’s Revival of the St. Matthew Passion*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 235.

fifth evangelist and launched the revival of Bach as the quintessential German composer.³⁴ Music played an important role in political events during the *Vörmärz* (1830-1848) with popular political songs taking their place alongside more serious German music. The first two chapters draw on similar sources.

Since people express themselves and their beliefs through various media, I am using chorales/hymns, *Volkslieder*, poems, and sermons to demonstrate the Christian and cultural themes early nationalists employed. Luther was a prolific writer and *Luther's Works, Volume 53* includes not only his ideas about music and worship but a number of his chorales (or hymns). The Lutheran chorale was transformed by Bach and Beethoven. Their music was of the serious and intellectual type that Germans were uniquely equipped to understand. Ernst Moritz Arndt, and other poets and musicians, had a broader popular appeal. Arndt's life encompasses the entire time period covered in this thesis and his autobiography sheds light on not just music and language, but on the political events of 1806-1850.³⁵ The letters of Felix Mendelssohn, while not especially political, are a good primary source for early nineteenth-century German music culture.³⁶ Some of the sermons of Friedrich Schleiermacher and the speeches of Johann Gottlieb Fichte—both important to the Napoleonic era and the emergence of political nationalism—reveal early romantic and nationalist impulses.³⁷

Music and language were two traditions rooted in Luther. In the early nineteenth century, they were rediscovered and reinterpreted by the German intelligentsia. And yet there still was no German political state—the “bride” had no “groom.”³⁸ The final chapter addresses notions of freedom and liberty and how these were cultivated during the years leading up to the Frankfurt National Parliament in 1848. Luther's own conceptions of these ideas were not political but evolved in this direction in the nineteenth century. I particularly intend to look at how figures like Arndt, Jahn and Johann Gustav Droysen

³⁵ Ernst Moritz Arndt, *The Life and Adventures of Ernst Moritz Arndt: The Singer of the German Fatherland*, translated, 1879, (The University of California Library).

³⁶ *Letters of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: From 1833 to 1847*. Edited by Paul Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Dr. Carl Mendelssohn Bartholdy, (Boston: Oliver Ditson and Company, 1863).

³⁷ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, “Addresses to the German Nation,” In *The Nationalism Reader*, edited by Omar Dahbour and Micheline R. Ishay (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995). Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Selected Sermons of Schleiermacher*, Translated by Mary F. Wilson. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schleiermach/sermons.html>

³⁸ Gellner, *Nationalism*, 52-53.

envisioned a German state based on Protestant Christian ideals. There was a wide spectrum of political positions and state visions represented at Frankfurt, but I intend to focus on those that argued from a Protestant conception of government and the state.

Of the thousands of documents and petitions related to the events in Frankfurt in 1848-1849, I am primarily using some patriotic songs from a book published for the occasion and the *Constitution of the German Empire* of March, 1849.³⁹ An analysis of the constitution itself reveals much about the writers' intentions and aspirations for a unified state.⁴⁰ The autobiography of Arndt is again helpful here as he was a participant and corresponded with Friedrich Wilhelm IV to persuade him to accept the German crown. An analysis of the life-work of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn and his views about government and society represents the views of many of the constituents at the Frankfurt parliament.⁴¹ These two representatives were important in the early years of the nineteenth century and the struggle against France, and their influence continued to 1850.

Arndt and Jahn alone of the four originally represented on the woodcut were still alive in 1848, and both were representatives at the Frankfurt Assembly in 1848-1849. The Frankfurt representatives who lived through the Napoleonic occupation, the Restoration and *Vörmärz* conceived of a German form of government that embodied Christian principles rather than the secular ideals of revolutionary France. *The Book of Concord* and the *Augsburg Confessions* give insight into Luther's conception of church government and civil government. The constitution that was written and accepted by the German National Constituent Assembly on 28 March 1849, would have established a constitutional monarchy with a federal political system. Citizens were guaranteed civil liberties including freedom of religion. Primary and secondary education would be provided by the state, but religious education was left to the churches. Friedrich Wilhelm IV rejected this constitution, and the representatives drifted away leaving German

³⁹ "Liederbuch für Bürgerwehr, Volksheer und Turngemeinden: mit Melodien"
<http://edocs.ub.unifrankfurt.de/volltexte/2006/6930>

⁴⁰ *Constitution of the German Empire*, 28 March 1849. <http://www.documentarchiv.de/nzjh/verfdr1848.htm>

⁴¹ There are no English translations of Jahn's *Deutsches Volksthum*. I used two articles that quote extensively from Jahn's works for my research. Roland Ray Lutz, "Father Jahn and his Teacher-Revolutionaries from the German Student Movement," *The Journal of Modern History* 48, no. 2 On Demand Supplement (1976) 1-34; and Hans Kohn, "Father Jahn's Nationalism," *The Review of Politics* 11, no. 4 (1949) 419-432.

unification to another architect, another time, and another political climate. A significant number of German pietists and political liberals emigrated after 1850. The creation of the German Empire in 1871 came about within a perceptibly different political and cultural environment. Did Luther's legacy die? The events surrounding the 500th celebration of the Reformation indicate that it has not, but Luther would probably not recognize himself in the context of twenty-first century Germany.

The celebration of the Reformation in modern Germany takes place in a secularized nation, but Germans still revere Luther. In a December 15, 2010 article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Jochen Teuffel criticized the *Lutherdekade* as a farce. "For in this city where the church is disappearing—barely one percent of the populace goes to church on Sunday—here in public view we are going to remember a Reformation event that grounded the identity of the church. The fact that this stage performance can even be put on is thanks to this year's Luther Decade theme, 'Reformation and Freedom.'"⁴² Germans today acknowledge Luther as a national hero and have extracted the concept of freedom as his fundamental message. The Reformation *solus* emphasized the individuals' relationship with God rather than a collective identity with the Roman Catholic Church. The "priesthood of all believers" foreshadowed political equality as well as equality before God. Individual freedom, as mirrored by the responsibility of each believer before God, became a prevailing theme in German history. Luther's translation of the Bible standardized the German language; Luther's artistic contribution came in the form of music. His personal enjoyment of music and congregational singing inspired later German poets and composers. The classical canon of music today heavily favors German composers, and their music played a crucial role in cultivating nationalism.

I hope to trace the role of Luther in awakening the German *Volk* and the identity they created for themselves in such a way that his fingerprints become distinct. Whether Luther's Christian vision has been validated or not, many Germans have embraced certain defining features of the Reformation—language, music, individual freedom and responsibility, equality and respect for authority. What should

⁴² Jochen Teuffel, "That's Not What Luther Meant," Translated by Ed and Marie Schroeder, 2011, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15 December 2010, Nr. 292, page 33.

emerge from my argument is an intertwining of German national identity drawn from Luther and developed by philosophers, pastors, writers, and musicians. According to Smith's ethno-symbolic version of nationalism, the memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritage are reconstituted in every generation. By using "Luther" as a conceptual framework, it is possible to see the continuity of his heritage from 1517 to 2017 and then set 1800-1848 within this context.



Figure 1. Undated Woodcut of Friedrich Gottlieb Jahn, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Ernst Moritz Arndt, and Friedrich Ludwig Jahn

1. LUTHER AND NAPOLEON: THE MOBILIZATION OF THE GERMAN LANGUAGE AND VOLK IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY

Various historians of nationalism and of Germany have observed that certain aspects of national sentiment began to develop in the German states in the late eighteenth century. To a large degree this was a reaction against French culture and its dominance. Beginning in the 1770s German literary and intellectual figures began to look for distinct features of the German *Volk* that differentiated them from a homogeneous eighteenth-century Enlightenment culture. Many French and English intellectuals eschewed traditional Christianity and became deists and skeptics; German intellectuals instead drew on their Christian roots to define themselves. The worst features of the French Revolution, originating in liberty and brotherhood, seemed to prove the bankruptcy of Enlightenment rationalism. T.C.W. Blanning, historian of the nineteenth-century German Rhineland, argues that religion and nationalism nurtured each other in the German states during the Napoleonic era. “With the French so clearly identified with atheism and the German old regime so clearly identified with Christianity, that fusion was inevitable.”¹ Christianity, especially that of the sixteenth-century German reformer Martin Luther, was one of the defining features of German culture. This chapter explores the role of Martin Luther in creating and establishing the German language and how early German nationalists (primarily Prussian intellectuals) utilized language to mobilize the German people against French invaders.

Historian John G. Gagliardo claims that the early German Romantics (1770-1820) changed the entire meaning of the word ‘culture.’ The central figure in this early movement was Johann Gottfried Herder for whom language was the force that created the *Volk*, the foundation of the German nation. Briefly, Herder postulated that the ability to communicate in language was a unique feature of humanness because language expresses thought. Further, since language can only be learned within a community, thoughts are formed and transferred through the community by its language. John Breuilly, in

¹ T.C.W. Blanning, *The French Revolution in Germany: Occupation and Resistance in the Rhineland 1792-1802* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 253-254.

Nationalism and the State, extends Herder's language theory: "All other human activities are understood as sorts of languages. Dress, architecture, customs, ceremonial, song, law: all these and many other activities can be understood in the same way. Ultimately 'community' is understood as the sum total of these modes of expression."² Gagliardo adds, "What arose from this new emphasis on language was a new definition of 'nation' . . . If language was indeed to be the criterion, 'nation' included all who spoke a certain language. For the first time, therefore, the 'folk,' the broad masses of the people, became a part of the nation."³ It was the mobilization of the masses that was essential to preserving German culture from the secular French invaders after 1806.

In the darkest days of Prussia's conquest and occupation by the French, four men stepped up to mobilize the German language in speeches, sermons, poems, and songs—particular aspects of German culture and community. An undated wood-engraving of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Ernst Moritz Arndt, and Friedrich Ludwig Jahn enshrines them as the patriots who enlisted the language of Martin Luther to rouse the *Volk* and ignite an awareness of a spiritual people with deep roots in their own land and their own history. From these roots a new mythology was also emerging which resonated with the emotional appeal of Pietism. By employing language in poetry, songs, myths, histories, sermons, and lectures they also developed the notion of the *Volk* and began to enlist them in national projects. For Arndt, language was the distinguishing feature of German identity. Herder (philosopher, theologian and poet) was the first to explain the connection between language and culture. For both, the German language found its best definition in Martin Luther. Nascent German national sentiment was infused with the language of Luther—not just vocabulary and syntax, but certain Reformation concepts that were part of the culture of the German people. While the Reformation was fundamental to the history of Germany, the trauma of the Thirty Years' War in the seventeenth century led to a crisis of faith that had implications for the future.

² John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 337-338.

³ John G. Gagliardo, *From Pariah to Patriot: The Changing Image of the German Peasant 1770-1840* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1969), 144.

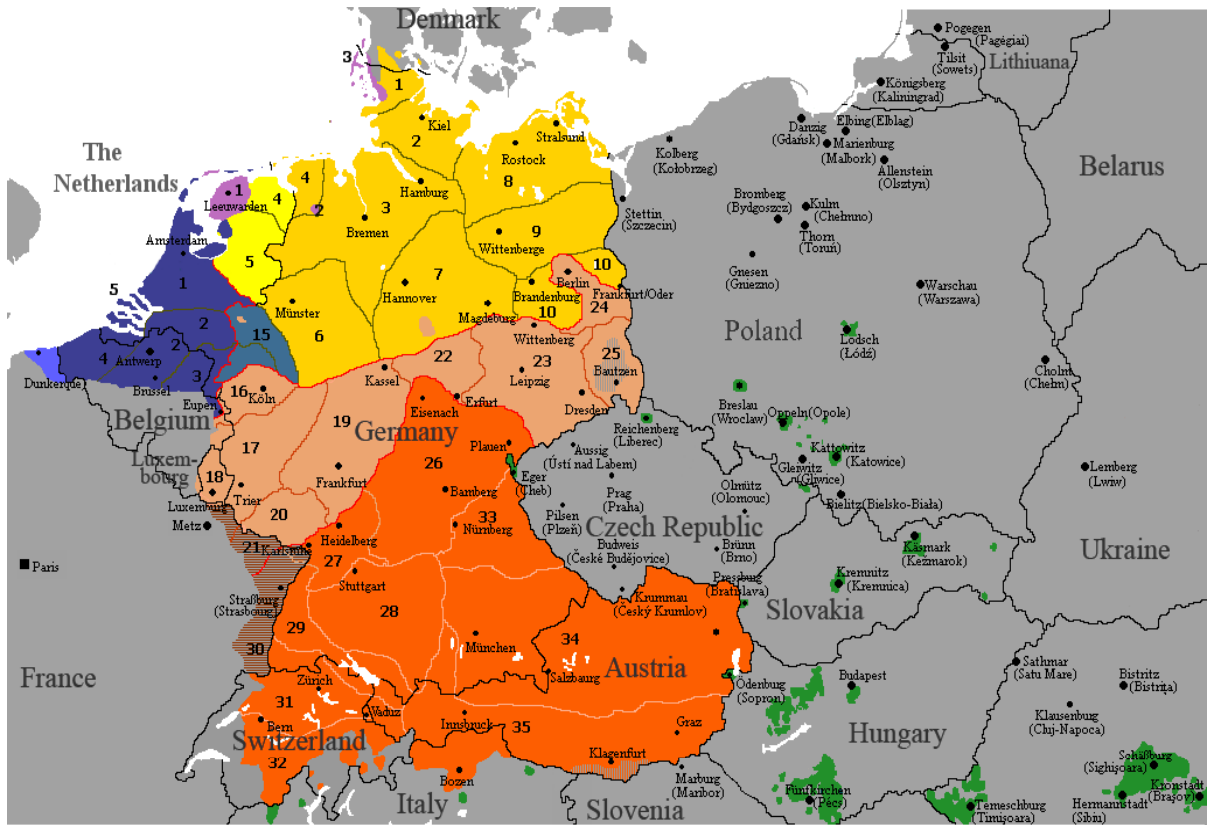
There was a revival in the Lutheran church in the last half of the seventeenth century. The church had grown stagnant, but out of the ministry of Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705), grew a movement which came to be called Pietism. Spener stressed the need for an inner calling, personal communion with God, awakening and rejuvenation, rather than mere confessional adherence. The emphases on calling and individual freedom were traditional Lutheran themes, but Spener's emphasis on emotions and an inner experience of God would reverberate down through the ensuing decades of German history. Pietist terminology is echoed in much of the language of early German national sentiment—not always with the same theological meaning, but as a result of hearing the words and phrases in homes and churches. Peter C. Erb, in his Introduction to *Pietists: Selected Writings*, cautions that modern scholars “must not fail to note the importance of Pietism in shaping the thought of major modern figures. Immanuel Kant's reflection on the ‘interior’ transcendental structures of human thought and on the categorical imperative is a development of his early pietist training, as are Friedrich Schleiermacher's meditations on religious ‘feeling.’”⁴

Pietists also placed a premium on education, as had the original sixteenth-century Reformers, and founded a university at Halle to train pastors, theologians and laymen. Along with the university, there was a Halle press which was committed to ensuring that all Germans could afford a Bible. Within a hundred years, they printed over a million New Testaments and almost two million complete Bibles. Pietists emphasized the importance of daily Bible reading and family devotions. Besides Bibles, the press at Halle printed a number of prayer books, the most famous of which was a collection by Johann Friedrich Starck which was in continuous publication for over a century and a half. While there were a variety of spoken dialects in the Holy Roman Empire, the Bibles printed at Halle were almost exclusively unrevised Luther Bibles.⁵ No matter the dialect spoken in the streets, markets, and fields, the language heard in church and in family devotions was Luther's German. Martin Luther's sixteenth-century

⁴ *Pietists: Selected Writings*, edited by Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 2.

⁵ Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 62.

translation of the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek into German would have an enduring impact on the German language.



Although the Alsatian German dialect has seen a strong decline since the Second World War, a reasonable amount of people still claim to speak the dialect. Generally some 45% of the population claims to speak it.

Region where German has no official status, and/or is spoken by a very small minority.

Area in which Dutch is spoken. Like German dialects in France, the Dutch dialects also suffered reasonably if one compares the modern situation to the 17th century, when the area was nearly completely Dutch-speaking.

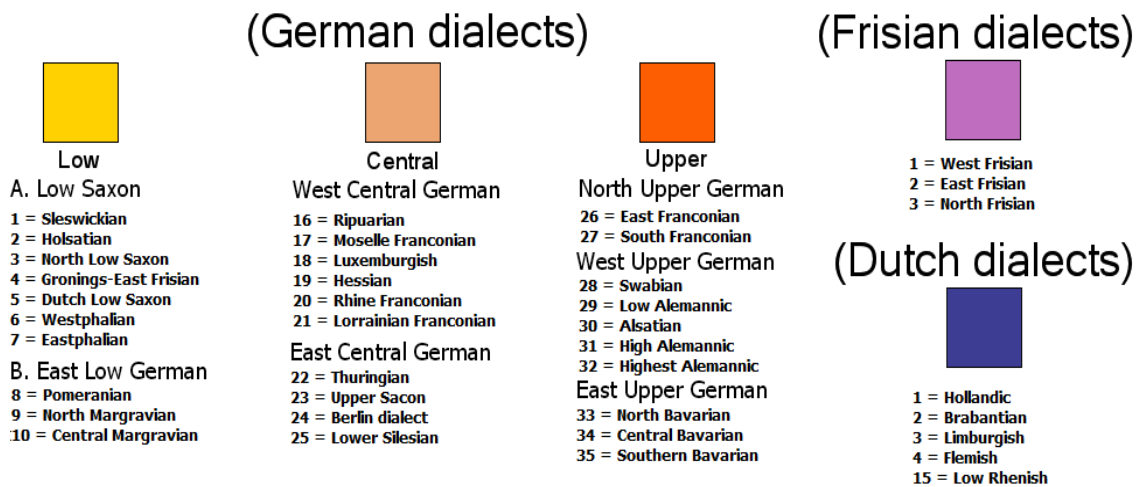


Figure 2. Map of German Dialects

A Brief History of the German Language

The German language was saved from becoming a romance language when the Romans were defeated in the Battle of Teutoburg Forest in 9 CE. This is the assertion of Ruth H. Sanders who has written a history of the German language. The Germans have the warrior-hero Hermann to thank for preserving not only their freedom, but also that most important element of nationalism, their language. In the year 786 CE, the Latin word *theodiscus* first appeared in print. In a communication from the papal nuncio to the English Church, it was ordered that Church decisions be read in Latin and in *theodiscus*—the people’s language. The nuncio was German so he made this a rule for the German Church as well. From this word comes the word for *Deutsch* denoting a language and its people. (“Theud” was a Germanic root meaning “people” so *Deutsch* meant “Peoplish”).⁶ *Deutsch* was the language of the people descended from Hermann.

Before the eighth century, written records from Germanic tribes are rare so any knowledge of the dialects is speculative. The various tribes had more or less settled down by the time the western Roman Empire crumbled and several categories of Germanic dialects can be detected from that time. North Sea German included Old Saxon and Old Frisian. Weser-Rhine Rivers German included what are known as Middle Franconian, South Rhenish Franconian and East Franconian along with the dialects that were ancestors of Dutch and Flemish. Elbe River German included dialects spoken in the regions of Swabia, Alsace, Switzerland, Bavaria and Austria. By about 1150 these had evolved into what is known as Low German (in the northern low-lying lands), High German (in the mountainous regions), and Middle High German. None of these languages were ever standardized, and most of the dialects were spoken, not written. Of the early written languages, only Old High German is a direct ancestor of modern German.

To make sense of Luther’s impact on the language it is necessary to understand the existence of these spoken dialects as well the development of written German. In the Middle Ages, a written language emerged to facilitate legal procedures. The chancery courts needed to be able to communicate effectively

⁶ *The Economist*, “A New History of German Shows How it Came to be, and How it Could Have Been,” August 5, 2010.

across the German states and developed a couple of legal languages which used versions of German dialects that could be understood within broad regions. There were two supradialectal versions that became dominant—both based on High German. From these written and spoken versions of the German language, Luther developed the language he used in his Bible translations. A further advantage for Luther was that Wittenberg, where he lived at the time of the Reformation, was a region where High and Low German had already collided. These factors facilitated Luther's creation of a popular, widely understood German-language Bible.

A German Bible that conceivably everyone could read was absolutely necessary to Luther's vision of Christianity. *Sola scriptura*—scripture alone had authority over the beliefs of the Church—not the Pope or Church Councils. So it was essential to get a copy of the Bible into the hands of as many Germans as possible. Luther's first translation of the New Testament was made while he was hidden in Wartburg Castle from May, 1521 to February, 1522, and he continued to work on Bible translation for the rest of his life. To perfect his German translation, Luther went out into the streets and markets of Wittenberg and into the farms of the surrounding region to listen to the people talk. He wanted to hear their idioms and their folk sayings. He consulted with people to find out which High or Low German word was most likely to be widely understood. Ultimately he wanted to do more than create a Bible for the common folk; it had to be a Bible that would appeal to the educated, as well. So he turned to the local government offices to incorporate the legal language used by the chanceries. By combining these major spoken dialects and the accepted legal language, Luther created a written style unique in sixteenth-century Germany—understandable to a wide audience with its earthy, plain-spoken expressions but at the same time grammatically correct and dignified.

The language of Luther's Bible was the direct ancestor of the Standard High German spoken and written today. Linguist Ruth Sanders proclaims, "No holy book has had more secular influence in

Germany than Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German."⁷ Jakob Grimm wrote that Luther "made use of his mother-tongue with such force, purity, and beauty, that his style, from its powerful influence on our whole language, must be considered to have been the germ and laid the basis of the modern high German language."⁸ Grammarian Johann Clajus praised Luther's Bible, "as the direct product of divine inspiration—the Holy Spirit, who spoke pure Hebrew through Moses and the other prophets, pure Greek through the Apostles, also spoke German through its chosen instrument, Martin Luther."⁹ For Goethe the Luther Bible "far surpassed those 'critical translations' of the eighteenth-century that served only for discussion between scholars," and Goethe, like Herder, believed that "the German first became a people through Luther."¹⁰ Herder and Goethe played a defining role in early German nationalism culturally and linguistically.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the view became commonplace that, "the German (Luther) Bible simultaneously created a German religion, a German culture, and a German nation."¹¹ Herder, in his "First Dialogue Concerning National Religions," stressed the importance of language to national identity and equated the use of particular languages to the spread of Christianity. Herder has two very German characters, Dietrich and Winnfried, discussing language and religion. They begin with Jesus. The Bible relates that Jesus spoke to the crowds in their own language, Aramaic. Then, after the resurrection, Jesus had commissioned his disciples to go and teach all nations. Dietrich asks Winnfried, "Why did the founder of Christianity send out his disciples to all peoples? In order to destroy or *to teach*?" And he continues to explain that this meant teaching "the people in *their own* native languages . . . and to address God in spirit and in truth, in the most genuine language of the mind and heart."¹² At Pentacost, the assembled people heard the gospel in a variety of their own languages and the apostle Paul wrote letters to Corinth, Ephesus and Philippi in their native Greek. Herder's dialogue between Dietrich

⁷ Ruth H. Sanders, *German: Biography of a Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 145.

⁸ Winkworth quoting Grimm, *Christian Singers of Germany*, 121.

⁹ Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, 18.

¹⁰ Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, 224.

¹¹ Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, 227.

¹² Herder, *Against Pure Reason*, 103.

and Winnfried educates the reader further. The first German to convert to Christianity did so when the Bible was translated into the Gothic language. “As soon as the language of the people was returned to them, their mind, heart and soul were also returned to them.”¹³ Dietrich and Winnfried then discuss the reawakening of the *Volk* “after a long sleep under the oppressive yoke of foreign words and practices.” Who was the German who was responsible for this awakening? Martin Luther. Dietrich responds that unfortunately Luther’s German is now archaic to which Winnfried exclaims, “We should rejuvenate it! But language rejuvenates itself automatically, continually and irresistibly.”¹⁴ Heinrich Heine reasoned that Luther began a rejuvenation of the German language. “Luther . . . created the German language. This happened, because he translated the Bible. In fact, the divine author of this work . . . himself chose his translator and gave him the miraculous power of translating from a dead language . . . into one not yet alive.”¹⁵ Luther’s rejuvenation of the German language in the sixteenth century enabled Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm to continue this rejuvenation with their nineteenth-century *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, giving pride of place to Luther in the creation of “high German”—his Bible was “the particular treasure trove, filled with the ‘noblest and most sensible’ language.”¹⁶ Herder then concluded the dialogue between Dietrich and Winfried by asserting that “all individuals would possess *their own* religions, just as they would possess *their own* hearts, *their own* convictions and languages.”¹⁷

The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century concern for the German language must be put in the context of a century of European dominance by the French language. The French *philosophes* epitomized the Enlightenment, and Voltaire was the premier man of letters espousing freedom of religion and railing against the abuses of the *Ancien Regime*. Diderot’s *Encyclopedie* was the essential doctrine of the Enlightenment and its contributors were the recognized party espousing human progress. In this atmosphere, German Pietists and adherents of Luther’s Bible were hopelessly backward.

¹³ Herder, *Against Pure Reason*, 104.

¹⁴ Herder, *Against Pure Reason*, 105.

¹⁵ Sheehan, quoting Heine, *Enlightenment Bible*, 224.

¹⁶ Sheehan, *Enlightenment Bible*, 224.

¹⁷ Herder, *Against Pure Reason*, 106.

The Romantics and Language

Ernst Moritz Arndt is a fine example of an eighteenth-century German Romantic and Pietist. Reflecting on his youth in the 1770s and 1780s he recalled, “It was really a poetic epoch, when Germany was waking from a long weary dream to a literary and poetic existence of its own.”¹⁸ He was raised in a pious Lutheran home in which the parents were free peasants. Several of the children in his family were able to receive good educations and he represents that class of German intellectuals who came from humble backgrounds and became a vanguard for German national identity. T.C.W. Blanning calls the cultural shift of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the “romantic revolution.”¹⁹ In Germany, as mirrored in Arndt’s life, there was much of pietism in the Romantic movement. Romantics and Pietists “stood in awe before the beauty of nature and the majesty of the universe, accented inner illumination and personal growth, and looked toward a better age.”²⁰ It was the Romantics who began to create for the German *Volk* a literary heritage that would rival that of the French. The founders of the German Romantic movement came together in Jena in the 1790s—the Schlegel brothers and their wives, Schleiermacher, Fichte, Ludwig Tieck, Novalis and Friedrich Schelling. The Schlegel brothers had a literary journal, the *Atheneum*.

Behind its Greek-revival name it concealed a deep national awareness, a profound consciousness that, in invoking ‘great Romantic’ names like Dante, Shakespeare, or Cervantes, it was announcing the rebirth of a German poetic and literary culture which could be mentioned in one and the same breath with these other, alien pinnacles of achievement . . . proof that notions of art, history, and faith may be presented through the medium of poetry.²¹

The search for German folklore and medieval tales was mostly an isolated intellectual, scholarly pursuit until the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars created an interest in national myths among a broader group of Germans.

¹⁸ Arndt, *Life and Adventures*, 42.

¹⁹ Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution*, Introduction x.

²⁰ *Pietists, Selected Writings*, 24.

²¹ Roger Paulin, *Ludwig Tieck: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 132-133.

The German Romantics continued to look for the roots of the *Volk* throughout the Revolutionary period. The nationalism of these men tended to blend the notions of “faith,” “*Volk*,” and “fatherland” into an organic whole, but generally their vision was of a Christian “cultural nation” whose unity rested on “primordial factors of shared history, language, and culture.”²² This was when the Grimm brothers published their first collection of fairy tales, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812-1815) and when the *Nibelungenlied* first came to life as Germany’s epic poem—it drew on traditions of myth, legend, and poetry that dated back as early as the fifth century A.D.²³ Jakob Grimm believed the myths “proceeded from the unconsciousness of the *Volk* rather than from the pen of a single writer . . . and suggested a much deeper mythical tradition, which had originated in the earliest encounters of the Germanic peoples with the geography of central Europe and persisted now in fragmentary form in the sayings and customs of the common people.”²⁴ And Grimm believed that the myths revealed a unity among the German people that hid behind a mask of religious and geographical divisions.²⁵

The defeat of the Prussia army at the battle of Jena in 1806 set the stage for a broader and more receptive audience as some of the German Romantics mobilized the German language in speeches, sermons, poems, and songs to rejuvenate the Germans of Prussia. Only then could they liberate themselves from French cultural and political influence. All the early nationalists invoked Luther’s biblical heritage and allusions. Some of these seem obscure to modern readers but nineteenth-century Germans understood the connections. This can be seen in the rejection of French secularism, particularly in Prussia.

The educated class of the German *Aufklärung* supported the early events of the French Revolution but withdrew support as it became more radical. Austria and Prussia declared war on the French Republic in 1792; subsequently, Prussia signed a peace treaty with the Directory in

²² Karen Hagemann, “Occupation, Mobilization, and Politics: The Anti-Napoleonic Wars in Prussian Experience, Memory, and Historiography,” *Central European History* 39, no. 4 (2006), 598.

²³ George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 84.

²⁴ Williamson, *Longing for Myth*, 82.

²⁵ Williamson, *Longing for Myth*, 111.

1795 and then maintained neutrality for ten years. Once Napoleon came to power, various states of the Holy Roman Empire either allied with or were annexed by the French, leading to the disappearance of the German empire in all but name. 1806 was the critical year when territorial and political upheaval followed Prussian military defeats at Jena and Auerstädt. The Holy Roman Emperor resigned, Vienna and Berlin were occupied and Napoleon reduced Prussia's land and population by half. The Prussian people had to pay an indemnity of 140 million francs and for the next seven years, French armies would continue to consume German provisions, money and men.

Territorial chaos followed military defeat. The central German states during the Napoleonic era can be roughly divided into four regions: the Rhineland, the southern German states, the Hanseatic cities and Prussia. Each region had its own experience of annexation, conquest and occupation and there was no common German experience that emerged from the period. For Prussia, occupation and physical hardship led to internal reforms that enabled it to take a leading role in the wars of liberation. Led by bureaucrats Stein and Hardenberg, these reforms, according to historian David Blackbourn, were aimed at awakening and arousing the sleeping forces in Prussian society.²⁶ And historian Karen Hagemann's research has revealed that, "hatred of Napoleon and all things French, together with the patriotic-national mobilization for the 'war of liberation' against France in 1813 were apparently stronger in Prussia than elsewhere in the German-speaking lands. . . This seems to be particularly true for the traditionally Protestant 'heartland' around the capital Berlin."²⁷ The figures—Fichte, Schleiermacher, Arndt, and Jahn—from the commemorative wood-engraving, all converged in Berlin in these war years. Having set the historical stage, we can examine the roles they played in the awakening and revival of the *Volk*.

The French and the Mobilization of Language

In the winter of 1807-08, one year after the defeat of the Prussian army at Jena, Johann Gottlieb Fichte took it on himself to rouse the Prussian people. The 1896 translator of his *Addresses to the*

²⁶ David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 84.

²⁷ Hagemann, *Occupation, Mobilization, and Politics*, 586.

German Nation commented, “It was probably the lecturer’s presence, delivery and force of character, as much as what he said, which influenced public opinion at the time so profoundly as to draw from Stein the comment that the Addresses ‘had a great effect upon the feelings of the cultivated class.’²⁸ There were fourteen lectures with themes ranging from educational reform to language to liberation and freedom. Anthony La Vopa who has written a recent biography of Fichte admits, “By 1790 Fichte had shed the orthodox Lutheranism of his childhood, but he was far from being a post-Christian. In his ways of formulating his aspirations and dilemmas, in fact, he was very much a German Lutheran, though of the ‘enlightened’ variety.”²⁹ In the third Address, Fichte quotes a long passage from the Old Testament book of Ezekiel in which the prophet sees a valley of dry bones which gradually take on flesh and come back to life. He uses this illustration to emphasize the value of a “real German national education” in bringing the German people back to life. The fourth Address emphasizes the importance of the German language and the necessity to keep it free of foreign influences. “Men are formed by language far more than language is formed by men.”³⁰ The closer a national language is kept to its roots the more useful it will be in keeping the people “pure” and “natural.” For Fichte, this meant the German of Martin Luther—the older the language, the more pure. By resisting modern eighteenth-century translations of the Bible, the Pietists and Romantics had preserved the purity of Luther’s language.³¹ Fichte in his eighth Address asserts, “The promise of a life here on earth extending beyond the period of life here on earth—that alone it is which can inspire men even unto death for the fatherland.”³² Fichte used the power of the spoken word to awaken the German spirit of the *Volk*. In 1813, he entered into the life “extending beyond the period of life here on earth” and Arndt and Schleiermacher perpetuated his mission.

²⁸ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, Translated by R. F. Jones and G. H. Turnbull (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1922) <http://www.book.google.com>

²⁹ Anthony J. La Vopa, *Fichte: The Self and the Calling of Philosophy, 1752-1799* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 47.

³⁰ La Vopa, *Fichte*, 55.

³¹ The Grimm brothers’ dictionary was issued in sixteen parts from 1852-1860 and was based on Luther’s German Bible translation. It remains the most comprehensive guide to the German language.

³² Johann Gottlieb Fichte, “Eighth Address: What is a People in the Higher Meaning of the Word, and What is Love of Fatherland?” in *The Nationalism Reader*, ed. By Omar Dahbour and Micheline R. Ishay (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995), 67.

Censorship prevented Prussians from publicly criticizing French control until 1812-13. After Napoleon's 1812 invasion of Russia turned into a disaster, censorship was lifted in the areas liberated by the French retreat. Prussian military leaders encouraged anti-French publications in order to recruit German soldiers. Hagemann notes, "By the spring of 1813, patriots founded a whole wave of patriotic-national newspapers and journals." Large print-runs allowed for editions of 10,000 and sometimes 60-80,000 which filtered down to common soldiers in northern and central Germany, the Rhineland, parts of the allied armies and Prussian militia. The mobilization of peasants was part of the effort to engage the *Volk* in the nationalist project of defending the Fatherland. Patriotic literature was Arndt's forte. He was employed by Stein during the Napoleonic era as a German propagandist. "Herr Arndt must immediately be employed in composing songs and writings, which may be distributed among the Germans . . . he may inspire them with enthusiasm."³³ The most important book Arndt wrote during the war years was *Catechism for the German Warrior and Defender of his Country*. His translator added a comment that the Catechism taught how a Christian defender should get into battle—with God for his nation. The popularity of this little book ensured its reappearance in a number of editions. The third and fourth stanzas from one of Arndt's "Songs for Soldiers," illustrates the type of appeals Arndt created:

O sacred German Fatherland,
O German honour true,
To thee, revered beloved land,
We swear our faith anew.
We hale a curse on caitiffs all,
To feed the kite and crow,
And, like old Hermann once, we call
For vengeance, and we go.

Now roar and lighten whatso can,
And blaze up bright and clear;
And all you Germans, man by man,
To guard your homes appear.
Appear, and lift your hearts on high,
And lift your hands to heaven,
And man by man in chorus cry,
The tyrant's yoke is riven.³⁴

³³ Arndt, *Life and Adventures*, 207.

³⁴ Arndt, *Life and Adventures*, 267.

In these stanzas we see the historic appeal to fight as the ancient Germans had against a foreign oppressor—Hermann was the Germanic hero who defeated the Romans at Teutoburg Forest. Arndt invokes this memory to encourage the Germans of his own time to fight for their traditional homeland—only cowards (caitiffs) will fail to answer the call to wreak vengeance on the invaders. Freedom is a greater prize than compromise with a tyrant. Fichte had used this same theme in one of his Addresses. While neither of them explicitly draw this parallel, it might have occurred to Germans that Luther's Reformation was also a struggle of Germans against a foreign foe—the Roman Church.³⁵ Poems and songs were popular forms of patriotic and Romantic literature. Sermons proved to be the next most important medium by which to reach, awaken, and unify the *Volk*.

The Prussian government actively recruited the Protestant churches to promote the war against Napoleon and enlist support for the military. Nicolovius, the head of the Department of Religious Affairs, issued a statement to the “Clergy of the Prussian State” on March 24, 1813. In part it said,

It is up to the clergy to ensure that a spirit prevails in every corner of the fatherland according to which no sacrifice for the common good is deemed too great, and that the people devote themselves to it with all of their hearts and efforts . . . when such a holy fire burns throughout the fatherland, then God will grant us His blessing, and with your [the pastors] vigorous help, the great prize will be ours.³⁶

What was this great prize? It was independence from foreign oppression and the right to express their German religious beliefs which were the antithesis of French Catholicism or secularism.

Friedrich Schleiermacher was one of the pastors who embraced the call to oppose French occupation. The son of a poor army chaplain, he became a member of the early Romantic circle and fused Pietism and Romanticism to become one of the most important theologians of the nineteenth century. Appointed pastor of Trinity Church in Berlin in 1809, he was closely associated with both Fichte and Arndt. Mary Wilson who translated a number of his sermons and wrote a short biography of

³⁵ The Catholic Church was not known as the *Roman* Catholic Church until Luther labeled it that way—the Church in Rome, as opposed to the universal Christian Church.

³⁶ Quoted in “Occupation, Mobilization,” Hagemann.

Schleiermacher recorded that in Berlin, “his preaching drew increasing crowds, not only of the more intellectual classes, but from among the poor and uneducated, who found that they received in it food for the hunger of their hearts, guidance from Scripture for the practical affairs of daily life, and comfort in its sorrows.”³⁷ Schleiermacher, like Arndt and Fichte, was a fearless patriot. They represented the early German nationalists who came from humble, pious backgrounds, obtained university educations, and laid the foundation for German nationalism. Schleiermacher’s second collection of sermons reflects the circumstances of the war years. In 1813, as Prussians prepared to mobilize for war with Napoleon, Schleiermacher’s sermon of March 28 was entitled, “A Nation’s Duty in a War for Freedom.” A few weeks before, French armies had marched out of Berlin and Prussian troops were now mobilizing to engage the “enemy.” Schleiermacher tells his congregation that, “the transition from bondage to freedom is in preparation.”³⁸ He goes on to exhort the listeners to:

enter on a course of brave deeds . . . and hence . . . the hope that we shall preserve for ourselves our own distinctive character, our laws, our constitution and our culture. Every nation, my friends, which has developed to a certain height is degraded by receiving into it a foreign element, even though that may be good in itself; for God has imparted to each its own nature, and has therefore marked out bounds and limits for the habitations of the different races of men on the face of the earth. . . In rising up to cast this utterly off and to keep it away from us for the future, we become once more a kingdom that trusts in the Lord.³⁹

Schleiermacher goes on to warn that his listeners will be called on to take part in the defense of the Fatherland, some will be called on directly to fight and he ends by telling his audience to encourage the rising generation, “that this eternally memorable time may indeed be remembered, and that each

³⁷ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Selected Sermons of Schleiermacher*, translated by Mary F. Wilson. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schleiermach/sermons.html>, 22.

³⁸ Schleiermacher, *Selected Sermons*, 49. The phrase “from bondage to freedom” is pure Luther. One of Luther’s most famous works is entitled, *The Bondage of the Will*. This is an example of a concept that was understood to Schleiermacher’s hearers but possibly less so to the modern reader.

³⁹ Schleiermacher, *Selected Sermons*, 56.

descendant whom it concerns may say with just pride, There fought, or there fell, a relation of mine.”⁴⁰

Many of the militiamen who heard this sermon were university students who left their studies to liberate the German states. One of the most influential leaders of German students at the time (and for the next forty years) was Friedrich Ludwig Jahn. He was possibly the most oddly intriguing figure on the wood-engraving. His mission was to train young Prussian students to physically confront the enemy and in doing so, he started the gymnastics movement.

Jahn had been one of Arndt’s students when they were both at the university at Greifswald. Like many of the influential men of his time he was the son of a Lutheran pastor. Without earning a degree himself, he settled in Berlin in 1809 and opened a gymnasium for the purpose of providing physical training for young men who might be called on to fight battles of liberation. He became the founder of a German gymnastics movement that would have a tremendous emotional and symbolic role to play in nineteenth- and twentieth-century German nationalist history. During the Napoleonic era his gymnastic techniques and moral philosophy found wide acceptance among university men who had formed the *Burschenschaften*—fraternities with a Christian mission. This group would invent the black-red-gold color combination later incorporated into the German flag.

Jahn’s basic belief, laid out in his book, *Deutsches Volkthum*, was that body and spirit were one and love of nation could be expressed by keeping fit physically and spiritually. When the battles of liberation began in 1813, Jahn and all his students enlisted in the Prussian army. George Williamson, writing about the *Burschenschaften* described them thus: “United under the ‘idea’ of freedom, students would lead the campaign against the archenemies of German nationhood. . . By combining ‘free’ scholarship with a profound sense of piety, they would fulfill Martin Luther’s legacy and live out his doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.”⁴¹ The *Burschenschaften* and the rites and symbols that developed around the gymnastics movement drew on classical examples like Sparta and Rome—the German nationalists stressed the emotional bonding of men in fighting heroically to preserve their

⁴⁰ Schleiermacher, *Selected Sermons*, 56.

⁴¹ George Williamson, “What Killed August von Kotzebue? The Temptations of Virtue and the Political Theology of German Nationalism, 1789-1819,” *The Journal of Modern History* 72, no. 4 (2000), 922.

identity, resist outside influence, and defend their honor. Morality was equally important to this version of nationalism; moral striving was inherent to the Pietist understanding of Christianity and Jahn and his students understood this to be part of their physical struggle. The German struggle for freedom and the appeals for resistance and engaging the enemy came initially from the intellectuals and rulers, and would have been powerless without a populist audience. Jahn believed that polished language was a mimicry of French elitism and only used to hide truth (it was the language of diplomacy). “A true German was always forthright, outspoken and sincere. . . Jahn hated words of foreign origin and was a fanatic for the purification of the mother tongue.”⁴² Jahn would be an advocate for democracy and the education of the *Volk* to train them to become active participants in a political nation. His influence extended far beyond the Napoleonic years and his work with students translated into training them to be teachers. He was a proponent of the Pestalozzi method of teaching which was designed to reach all classes of people and engage them with practical, hands-on instruction. The students trained by Jahn influenced generations of Germans and many of them were members of the Frankfurt Parliament in 1848. Of all the representatives, they were among the most fiercely democratic. The early patriots inscribed on the wood-cut were all from peasant backgrounds with roots in Lutheran Pietism. This had a profound effect on early nationalist movements.

The vast majority of Germans in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were agricultural workers. They ranged from free peasants to virtual serfs. Arndt was engaged throughout his lifetime in petitioning for the freedom of serfs and the ability of peasants to own their land. The reforming bureaucrats of the early nineteenth century were conversant with the economic theories of Adam Smith and the Physiocrats; the crisis of the Napoleonic era hastened the pace of agricultural reforms. “Stein saw in the people a vast potential source of moral energy which heretofore had not been utilized by the state for its national purposes, and his problem reduced therefore in one sense to the double question of how this energy could be created and how it could then be placed at the service of the state.”⁴³ In spite of the

⁴² Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1965), 37.

⁴³ Gagliardo, *From Pariah to Patriot*, 186.

conservative reaction that set in after 1815, Arndt, Jahn, and their protégés would continue to fight for freedom—a freedom they conceived of as part of their Lutheran faith as opposed to the secular freedom of the French revolutionaries.

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, the image of the German peasant began to change. Formerly seen merely as creatures of labor, they began to be idealized as pious, naturally wise, innately good and simple people of the earth. Much of this change of image came from the Pietist movement. Pietists were concerned for the common man; the doctrine of the “priesthood of all believers” implied that all people were equal before God. The changing image of the peasant, the fact that many of the leaders of the early “German” movement were themselves from humble backgrounds and the need for patriots to fight in the wars of liberation, created a new audience and market for nationalist literature. “In this context of disillusionment with the traditional leadership classes, it was the *Volk*, the masses of the people, to whom worried reformers turned for the hope of a patriotic German regeneration.”⁴⁴ Some Prussian leaders recognized the success of Napoleon in mobilizing the French masses and determined to copy that method. As the nineteenth century dawned, the peasant classes came to be seen as citizens. They became the audience mobilized by the poems, songs and sermons of Arndt and Schleiermacher. These were the people who were closest to the pure language of Luther that Fichte extolled. While the German governments of the Restoration period were not yet ready to offer them full citizenship rights, the early Romantics had at least partially succeeded in rousing the *Volk*. The fulfillment of a nation-state would be in the future.

German nationalists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries invoked the language and spirit of Luther to revive what Herder saw as the fundamental unit of human existence—the *Volk*, which for Herder was more than “people”; it also denoted “a community bound by ethnic and cultural ties.”⁴⁵ The patriots of the early nineteenth century were able to appeal to a fairly broad swath of Prussian society. The bigger problem would be establishing a sense of German-ness that would endure past the war years

⁴⁴ Gagliardo, *From Pariah to Patriot*, 177.

⁴⁵ Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution*, 108.

and prove the basis for a unified political nation. The early years of Martin Luther's sixteenth-century Reformation were distinguished by translating the Bible into German and a massive printing campaign to get, not just the Bible, but a wide range of material into the hands of the German people. Pamphlets and cartoons made up a propaganda campaign aimed at throwing off a foreign language (Latin) and ruler (the pope) and arousing the German people to assert a direct access to power (or to God). The growing public sphere of the nineteenth century meant that German nationalists of the Napoleonic era had a wider and more literate audience than Luther, but they employed many of his strategies and appealed to a long-standing German notion of freedom from foreign oppression. They did this by mobilizing their own language—the language and biblical imagery Luther established for them.

2. A MIGHTY CHORUS: THE LUTHERAN CHORALE AND ITS ROLE IN THE CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF GERMAN NATIONAL CULTURE

The era of Napoleon ended with the liberation battles of 1814-15, and hundreds of people representing Europe's aristocratic-political elites gathered in Vienna. The leaders of the Great Power states huddled together to make the most important decisions while the others waited to hear their fates. If Metternich had favored the unification of the German states at this time, the history of Germany would have followed a different path. As it was, the German states remained divided, reorganized, but only loosely connected. Ernst Moritz Arndt lamented the decisions at Vienna as motivated by "the old German jealousy and by the miserable fear lest some great light should arise in Germany that should show how very short the shadows of the others were."¹ He quoted a Roman proverb apropos to the German situation: "The states of Greece, wishing each to rule alone, lost their liberty altogether."² The ensuing period of German history, 1815-1848 was marked by transformation and transition. Historians later divided the period into two phases—the Restoration (1815-1830) and the Vormärz (1830-1848), but historian David Blackbourn says that it "may be better to see the whole period . . . in terms of a series of cycles"—political expectations and reform followed by repression.³ However, the failure of political reform and unification, social inequality, and economic upheavals do not tell the whole story. The "idea" of a German nation which began with Herder's theory of language and nation and was fueled by the fires of anti-French sentiment from about 1800 to 1815, continued to grow and find expression throughout the Restoration and *Vormärz*, and music—specifically Luther's chorale—was central to this process.

As the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation approaches in our century, Germans are reminded anew of Luther's historical significance. The year 2012, in Germany, is set aside to commemorate Luther's enormous impact on music. The official website for the *Lutherdekade* states that

¹ Arndt, *Life and Adventures*, 321.

² Arndt, *Life and Adventures*, 321.

³ Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century*, 121.

“the Reformation laid a foundation for European music culture.”⁴ Bach took the Lutheran chorale and transformed it from a simple church hymn to a variety of musical forms. These were further transformed by later German composers. Beethoven was the most revered German composer of the nineteenth century, and his adaptations of Bach’s fugue and sonata forms created what music critics defined as “absolute music”—serious music which only Germans could truly appreciate. Mendelssohn’s revival of Bach’s music two years after Beethoven’s death enshrined Bach and Beethoven as twin giants of the German music pantheon. Their music came to define a peculiar characteristic of German national identity, something that set Germans apart from other nations.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, Germans celebrated the three-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation and three of its key events: Martin Luther’s nailing of the *Ninety-five Theses* to the church door in Wittenberg (1517), his translation of the New Testament into German (1522), and the publication of the Augsburg Confession of Faith (1530). These celebrations, begun in 1817 and concluded in 1830, reminded the German people of Luther’s contributions to their culture and heritage. Being Lutheran was a reminder of a unity that transcended the political boundaries of the newly formed German Confederation. In this sense Lutheranism became an underlying foundation for political unity and foreshadowed a oneness that was “now” but “not yet.”⁵ Music was a way to actually enter into the present experience of the community of the *Volk* singing and worshipping together—at least among the Protestant *Volk*.

German historian Thomas Nipperdey calls music “the favorite art form of the Germans, which brought them renown like nothing else in this period.”⁶ Music, from at least the nineteenth century onward, became a defining feature of German culture and identity and this can arguably be attributed to the emphasis that Martin Luther placed on music. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries church music and hymns thrived in Protestant Germany and absorbed not only musicians, but the whole

⁴ Themenjahre der Lutherdekade, 2008-2017 www.luther2017.de

⁵ The “now and not yet” is a theological conundrum, or a kind of Christian dialectic, in which there is a promise which exists now but the ultimate fulfillment is in the future. For example, Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is at hand,” and he also said, “The kingdom is coming.”

⁶ Thomas Nipperdey, *From Napoleon to Bismarck, 1800-1866* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 484.

congregation. Under the influence of pietism, a large body of hymns were written, some of which are still sung today in Germany, and in English-speaking countries. The eighteenth-century Enlightenment led to a decline in church attendance and hymn production; however, German music did not die. The eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were the era of Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. These giants of the modern musical canon were all born into the German-speaking states of central Europe. As the nineteenth century dawned and the Romantics agitated for a German identity, music began to move center stage as the quintessential German art form. Singing clubs, music festivals, and concerts spread and took on new life outside the walls of churches. In the *Vormärz* music often became a means of expressing political beliefs and nationalist feelings. Various factions of Germans—liberals, romantics, peasants, professors, gymnasts, journalists, or historians—engaged with and mobilized Germany’s musical heritage to promote the national project of unifying the German-speaking people into a nation of their own. A newborn historical sensibility demonstrated by the Luther tercentenary celebrations was part of this impetus.

Music and Luther

Music did not unexpectedly and suddenly emerge in the nineteenth century as the favorite art form of Germans. In order to understand how it became part of the nationalist project of the *Vormärz*, it is helpful to look much further back into church history because not just Protestant-German music, but all western music grew out of church music. For the purposes of my argument, I am primarily focusing on choral music, although many of the arguments employed here also apply to instrumental music. Paul Westermeyer, author of *Te Deum: The Church and Music*, says, “The early church came singing into a world . . . with Jewish and Gentile traditions. . . The apostolic and postapostolic church in its worship adapted the unaccompanied congregational song of the synagogue.”⁷ There were no choirs in the early church—early believers congregated in homes and the whole congregation sang as one voice. Once Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, the language of the liturgy was established as Latin and in the fourth or fifth century the choir started to take over the congregation’s participation.

⁷ Paul Westermeyer, *Te Deum: The Church and Music*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 78 and 93.

The Gregorian chant dominated musical style in the western church and chants were difficult for a congregation. The hymns of the early church were based on a simple melody, but Westermeyer describes the chant as “melodic without harmony, counterpoint or accompaniment and . . . exclusively vocal but without strict meter.”⁸ Events in the ninth century, as the papacy elevated the power of its office, silenced the congregation even more—the congregation lost its birthright as singers. Christianity stretched into northern and western Europe, Roman imperial government crumbled, and the use of a Latin liturgy devalued the singing of the uneducated and accentuated that of the ordained choir even further. Even so, the people continued to sing.

During the late medieval period (1200-1500) popular songs (or as Herder later named them, *Volkslied*) were common among the Germanic peoples. Catherine Winkworth, a nineteenth-century British woman who translated numerous German hymns into English, also wrote a history of church music, *Christian Singers of Germany*. Church music was mostly written and performed in Latin, but another type of music developed from lyrical poets known as minnesingers. Their songs were very popular among the common people and the nobility and sung by wandering knights at village wakes or tournaments. Walter von der Vogelweide (1170-1230), considered the greatest of the minnesingers, traveled all over Germany. He was a Crusader and his poems are illustrative of a life of travel and an interest in politics, religion, and literature. One stanza of his patriotic song, “The Praise of Germany,” demonstrates the kind of early German nationalism that later romantics spent so much time searching for:

I have seen full many a country,
And sought out the best in every part,
But if alien scenes or customs
Could ever like Germany please my heart,
May evil hap that heart befall!
I speak the truth, for of what avail
To strive unfairly with words or in mail?
German breeding surpasseth all.⁹

In all his travels, he never found a better people or land than those of the Germans. And Vogelweide in another stanza described Germany as stretching from the Elbe to the Rhine and “back to the far

⁸ Westemeyer, *Te Deum*, 93.

⁹ Catherine Winkworth, *Christian Singers of Germany*, 1869 <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/winkworth/singers.pdf>, 63.

Hungarian ground.”¹⁰ He expressed the same sentiments that Ernst Moritz Arndt did in his nineteenth-century poems and songs.

The music of the minnesingers was that of the *Volkslied*. Winkworth defines this type of early German music as that which has “the true breath of the people’s life in it, which it deals with in its most varied forms—in songs of love, of dancing, of drinking, of wandering and parting, of spinning and weaving, and of the huntsman’s and forester’s crafts.”¹¹ When Martin Luther inadvertently started the Reformation in 1517, he was part of a church that practiced the Latin liturgical Gregorian mass and of a community that sang German songs with the true breath of the people’s life in them. Both these influences would make a mark on German music in the ensuing centuries.

After Luther was excommunicated in 1521, he spent years translating the Bible into German and in 1524 he wrote his first hymn in German. He went on to compose thirty-seven hymns over the next twenty years. Westermeyer says, “Luther was not simply fond of music. Luther thought music has a theological reason for being.”¹² Quoting Luther himself, “The gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music, namely, by proclaiming [the Word of God] through music and by providing sweet melodies with words.”¹³ Luther did not simplistically set theological words to tunes. He was an accomplished musician who played the lute and understood the musical forms of his day well enough to transform them. He employed tunes and structures that were already in place and he taught the congregation to sing again.

The first hymn by Luther, “A New Song Here Shall Be Begun,” is reminiscent of the medieval minnesingers which told the stories of important events and personalities. It was composed in 1524 and while not recognizable as a modern religious hymn, it was typical of the kind of music composed by minnesingers. Written in ballad form, it told the story of two Belgian martyrs, Augustinian monks who

¹⁰ Vogelweide’s poem is quoted by Catherine Winkworth, *Christian Singers of Germany* (McMillan and Company Publishers, 1869), 63.

¹¹ Catherine Winkworth, *Christian Singers of Germany* (McMillan and Company Publishers, 1869), 94.

¹² Westermeyer, *Te Deum*, 145.

¹³ *Luther’s Works, Volume 53: Liturgy and Hymns*, ed. By Ulrich S. Leupold (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 323.

were followers of Luther. Wandering minstrels with their ballads served as the mass media of the sixteenth century. This hymn was published in broadsheet form a year after Luther composed it. Here is the first verse and verse ten:

A new song here shall be begun
The Lord God help our singing!
Of what our God himself hath done,
Praise, honor to him bringing.
At Brussels in the Netherlands
By two boys, martyrs youthful
He showed the wonders of his hands,
Whom he with favor truthful
So richly hath adorned.

The ashes of the lads remain
And scatter to all places.
They rise from roadway, street and lane
To mark the guilty faces.
The Foe had used a bloody hand
To keep these voices quiet.
But they resist in every land
The Foe's rage and defy it.
The ashes go on singing.¹⁴

Luther composed this as a hymn in the sense that it begins by acknowledging God—his praise, honor, the wonders of his hands, etc. But it was also a ballad intended to tell a story—in this case the martyr of Belgian adherents to the Protestant faith. The use of songs to spread news and a particular political or religious message continued into the nineteenth century and played an important role in the expansion of the public sphere—this will be examined later. Songs (or ballads) were an effective means of spreading news before literacy was widespread. The tune helped the singer and listeners remember the words and reinforced the message because the tune remained in one's mind long after the singer had moved to another town.

Characteristic stock phrases and melodic turns of the folk song are found in all of Luther's hymns. Westermeyer credits Luther with uniting old and new, high art and folk art, rural and urban by the chorale itself. Luther was both radical and conservative. He employed the techniques of the

¹⁴ *Luther's Works, Vol. 53, 214-216.*

minnesingers in using lyric poetry written in the vernacular to spread a message by means of traveling singers. He also used traditional church music composed for the mass and sung by congregations of monks. Most of Luther's hymns while drawing on earlier traditions like the chant, used scripture set to a simple line of melody because he wanted to reclaim music for the congregation.

Luther promoted singing lessons from childhood onwards. "Children must . . . sing and learn music together with mathematics."¹⁵ He had the catechism set to music so that it could be more easily learned—"their lyrics enter straight into the soul."¹⁶ To teach the congregation to sing, Luther had mid-week practices where everyone came together to learn the new hymns. The use of familiar folk tunes helped people learn the hymns even without the ability to read the words or the music. Catherine Winkworth records that throughout the sixteenth century it became customary for city musicians to broadcast tunes or hymns by climbing into the towers of churches or town halls. They blew horns or sang so that people became acquainted with tunes and words; the music and message of the Lutheran church became part of daily life. By the close of the sixteenth century the chorale had assumed essentially its modern form, and the organ was universally used in Lutheran churches.¹⁷ In giving the music and singing back to the congregation, it almost goes without saying that Luther gave them worship music in their own language, just as he had given them the scriptures in that language.

Luther spent several years working on a new liturgy in German for the Protestant church. One unique feature of the Lutheran church (as opposed to the Reformed churches that followed Calvin) was its preservation of some of the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church. But Luther wanted to put the language into German and increase the participation of the congregation. When Luther was translating the Bible, he went out into the streets and listened to the people talk so that he could capture their expressions and accurately translate the sense of the Greek or Hebrew scriptures into the German language. This was the same approach he took in translating the Roman Catholic mass into a German liturgy—it involved more than merely translating the text. The music's rhythm would need translation from the Latin to German

¹⁵ "Martin Luther: Father of Songs," Veröffentlicht auf Luther 2017. <http://www.luther2017.de>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Winkworth, *Christian Singers*, 186.

speech patterns. In Luther's words, "I would very much like to have a true German character. For to translate the Latin text and retain the Latin tone or notes has my sanction, though it doesn't sound polished or well done. Both the text and notes, accent, melody, and manner of rendering ought to grow out of the true mother tongue and its inflection, otherwise all of it becomes an imitation, in the manner of the apes."¹⁸ The congregational music that evolved out of Luther's liturgy was the chorale. A chorale is a simple song-like melody set to biblical words (also known as a hymn). Generally there is one word or syllable per note, a significance that will be further explored later. The texts were divided into stanzas; the tunes were originally written to be sung in unison but later written in four parts—Luther moved the melody to the soprano line rather than the tenor line where it had formerly been (when the choir was composed of men). While the Gregorian chant and later Renaissance music were difficult to sing by untrained singers, chorales were intentionally written to emphasize a single melodic line with a simple rhythm. As the people became familiar with the music and words, the chorale was an extremely effective means of engaging large groups to participate in worship. Sixteenth-century men, women, children, rich and poor sang together for one purpose and with one language. In the eighteenth century, Johann Sebastian Bach would elevate the chorale and transform Lutheran church music again.

From Bach and the High Baroque to Beethoven and the Now and the Not Yet

Richard Wagner, in the mid-nineteenth century called Bach, "music's wonder man, unfathomably great, embodying the history of the German spirit's inmost life."¹⁹ In Bach's own lifetime (1685-1750) he had more renown as a performer (organist) than a composer and was not particularly famous. The following job opportunities were available to a composer at the time he lived: first, and most desirable in terms of status, was in the opera house; next, one might work in a secular court with a noble or royal patron; and lastly, and the position Bach generally held, as a church/municipal musician. For the last twenty-seven years of Bach's life, he was employed by the city of Leipzig as the church organist and *Thomaskantor*, where his duties included composing a new cantata for the town's four churches' worship

¹⁸ *Luther's Works, Vol. 40*, 361.

¹⁹ Quoted by Celia Applegate, *Bach in Berlin: Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn's Revival of the St. Matthew Passion*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 252.

service each Sunday, rehearsing the church choirs to sing the cantata, teaching at the St. Thomas School attended by several hundred boys, and composing other pieces for city festivities—and of course, playing the organ. Bach composed a number of other types of music—masses, oratorios, passions, a few secular cantatas, music exercises for the keyboard, concertos, etc. Professor Robert Greenberg who teaches music history and literature at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music says that Bach “synthesized in his music the various national styles and compositional techniques then current . . . He was at his greatest when writing music for the Lutheran church.”²⁰ Greenberg says that Bach’s legacy lies in first, his synthesis of French and Italian music with German music, and second, his Lutheran spirituality and indoctrination—what Greenberg calls the most important aspect of Bach.²¹

Bach used the Lutheran chorale in almost all his compositions and signed them with “SDG” (*Soli Deo Gloria*—to God alone be Glory). According to Greenberg, Bach exerted the same meticulous effort into musical exercises written for his children as he did to his greatest choral or instrumental works. This was an influence of Bach’s own Lutheran background and its teaching that all work was done as worship to God. All music, whether for a child or a king, could be composed to God’s glory. Westermeyer notes that Luther’s congregational chorale-singing led to a rich development that grew beyond those songs and in the Baroque period developed into oratorios, passions, masses and requiems—free-standing pieces that could be performed outside the walls of the church but at the same time were dependent on their roots in the Lutheran church. Seventy-five years after Bach’s death, Felix Mendelssohn had adopted an aphorism that “every room in which Sebastian Bach is sung is transformed into a church.”²² Bach could not have imagined the singing clubs and music festivals that replaced the Leipzig choirs, but within a few decades of Bach’s death, music moved into vastly different settings without losing its serious intensity.

In the opera houses, churches and royal courts where music was written in Bach’s day, composers worked with a patron and consequently wrote work on commission. But in the last few years of Bach’s

²⁰ Robert Greenberg, *Bach and the High Baroque* (Chantilly, VA: The Great Courses, 1995,1998), 4.

²¹ *Ibid*, Lecture 10.

²² *Letters of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: From 1833-1847*. Edited by Paul Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Dr. Carl Mendelssohn Bartholdy (Boston: Oliver Ditson and Company, 1863), 67.

life, he devoted himself to completing a work that was unique in its form and its inspiration. The *B-Minor Mass* tells us something about Bach as a person and gives us an understanding of the musical time in which he lived—it looked backwards to an older musical tradition and forward to a new era of music culture. Working outside the system of the day in which musicians only composed for an “occasion” commissioned by a patron, Bach anticipated a time in the not-so-distant future when musicians moved into the public sphere and composed for an occasion of their own choosing. The *B-Minor Mass* was inclusive of all the genres and techniques familiar to Bach; it was a complete expression of everything he knew about music and a catalog of every style dating back to the medieval period. Patterned after the traditional Roman Catholic mass composed of five parts (*Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei*), Bach changed some text and the order of the individual parts. Musicologists debate why Bach wrote this piece. Wilfrid Mellers explains that Bach reworked many of his earlier compositions for the *B-Minor Mass*. This was not unusual; composers frequently did this. But Mellers notes that Bach did this not to save time but as an expression of his life’s work. “The mass became a summation of Bach’s life-work, and the most central manifestation of Christian faith and dogma . . . By the time he copied the score [probably 1747-48] he was composing for no master but for himself and God, as a servant of the church universal.”²³ In the Lutheran liturgy, only the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* part of the mass were used so Bach did not compose the *B-Minor Mass* with a view to it ever being performed in its entirety in a Protestant service.

The *B-Minor Mass* used many of Bach’s previous German cantatas written for the Lutheran service at *Thomaskirche*. Bach took these earlier works, changed the words to Latin and seamlessly blended the styles of the Roman Catholic liturgy with the Lutheran chorale. Paul W. Hofreiter, composer-in-residence with the Greater Princeton Youth Orchestra, credits Bach with using the music itself to convey his deeply held religious convictions:

In this monumental work, the musical and compositional devices employed supplant the roles previously afforded by commentary in the ‘libretti’ for the cantatas. The music itself offers the commentary on the word as contained in the Latin text, as Bach presents movement after

²³ Wilfrid Mellers, *Bach and the Dance of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 162.

movement of momentum via the various stylistic compositional idioms available to him. . . While Bach had always used his remarkably skillful technique as a composer in his church cantatas and passions to offer musical depiction of the meaning in the text, in this last work one discovers that it is purely and solely his compositional technique that offers such clarity to the doctrinal positions he believed and confessed.²⁴

That analysis of the function of the “music itself” becomes a crucial feature of the nineteenth-century theory of “absolute music” which originated in German romanticism. This will be explored in more detail further on, but in tracing the origins of German music and Bach’s role in its definition, this is a fascinating observation about his eighteenth-century composition. Bach’s death in 1750 marked the end of the Baroque period; central European, German-speaking composers Haydn and Mozart epitomized classical music with its melodic beauty and clarity, purity of form, expressive restraint and good taste. This was reasonable music for enlightened European courts. Then came Beethoven.

Beethoven was born in 1770 and like all of us was influenced and shaped by the time in which he lived. Unlike most of us, he also transformed the time in which he lived. By redefining the musical forms and tonal conventions of his day, he did for music what the early German romantics did for literature. For the amateur, Beethoven’s innovations are not pronounced, but for his patrons and the musically educated among his listeners, his early music broke with conventions and sounded as radical as that of Stravinski’s in the early twentieth century. He “destroyed” the minuet form and totally transformed the sonata form. Although a contemporary of Mozart and Haydn, Beethoven was most influenced by the music of Bach. The only formal music instruction he received in his early years was from a Lutheran-born composer and organist named Christian Gottlob Neefe. Neefe’s influence on Beethoven may be seen in Beethoven’s turn towards emulating Bach in his later years when he was acutely aware of the power of faith on Bach’s music. Beethoven was raised as a Catholic and was never particularly religious,

²⁴ Paul Hofreiter, “Bach and the Divine Service: The B-Minor Mass,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (2002) 223.

but after he emerged from a dark period and accepted his deafness (about 1817), several of his compositions were consciously patterned after Bach's.

Under Neefe's tutelage, Beethoven memorized all of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Bach was the most important influence on Beethoven musically, but he used Bach's inspiration to create music that looked far to the future. Beethoven used the newly invented piano to experiment. In his *Piano Sonata no. 11 in B-Flat Major* (1800) there is a "powerful combination of intellect and expression unlike any other music of the Classical era but very much like the music of the High Baroque, in particular that of Johann Sebastian Bach."²⁵ It was the intellectual and expressive nature of Beethoven's music that led the music critics of his day to define German music as superior to that of other nations. In his later life Beethoven found Bach a kindred spirit, and in his closing years he composed a couple of works that mirrored Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and the *B-Minor Mass* (the *Diabelli Variations* and *Missa Solemnis*). And the fourth movement of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* (1819) was a synthesis of the fugue and sonata forms.

This is a fugue about fugues. It is an extrapolation of Johann Sebastian Bach's belief that music was a tool of God's will and that the creation of music of great technical and intellectual complexity was both a profoundly spiritual act and an affirmation of God's order beneath the chaos. Beethoven's monumental fugue is about nothing less than the beauty, the complexity, and ultimately, the underlying order of God's cosmos. Beethoven has created, literally, a universe of pitch and rhythm, in which methodology is both the means and the end.²⁶

Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* was written on his own initiative (like Bach's *B-Minor Mass*), and like the *Hammerklavier*, "stretch[ed] form, technique and instrumental resources beyond bounds then conceivable."²⁷ The composer's deafness was complete by 1819 and he heard the music only in his head. Some of his later works including the *Hammerklavier* and the *Missa Solemnis* were unperformable on the instruments of his day. But, "Ultimately the Mass . . . becomes an act of prayer," and "a transcendent

²⁵ Greenberg, *Beethoven's Piano Sonatas*, 91.

²⁶ Greenberg, *Beethoven's Piano Sonatas*, 204.

²⁷ Mellers, *Beethoven and the Voice of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 291.

perfection wherein there is no longer any need to communicate.”²⁸ Beethoven understood that Bach’s music was a product of his Lutheran faith; Beethoven’s faith was a product of German romanticism but, “In the long run it doesn’t matter how much or how little Beethoven was affected by the religious ferments of his time; what is of consequence is that by the end of his not very long but spiritually eventful life he had become a religious composer of a kind without precedent.”²⁹

Without stretching the point too much, Beethoven’s late compositions might be seen as a metaphor for the early nineteenth-century German nation. He drew inspiration from the compositions of Bach, composed for instruments not yet made, and heard a musical work that was only in his own head. The German *Volk* lay buried in the imaginations of a few German scholars, but the instruments for bringing it to life were in the future. Music was to play a major role in giving the *Volk* a national culture. Beethoven’s death in 1827 was mourned by massive crowds in Vienna; but it was in the Prussian capital of Berlin that the campaign for music as the most German art form began.

Romanticism and Nationalism

As the nineteenth century moved into and past the Napoleonic era, there was what German historian Celia Applegate calls a “crisis in music.” Bach’s music (which became relatively unknown in the decades after his death) was considered obscure and technical, too difficult for ordinary people to hear and understand. Church music was characterized by Pietism—Pietist hymns seemed sentimental and written merely to provoke an emotional response. As a repercussion of these factors, there was a decline in church music—both in the quality of singing and in the composition of new chorales. E. T. A. Hoffmann, an influential music critic in early nineteenth-century Germany wrote an essay, “Old and New Church Music” (1814) lamenting the decline in music which he said had descended into “unparalleled frivolity.”³⁰ At the same time, German education had fallen into decline. During the Napoleonic era reform of the universities became a priority. The music crisis became part of this story.

²⁸ Mellers, *Beethoven*, 291.

²⁹ Meller, *Beethoven*, 3-4

³⁰ Quoted by Applegate, *Bach in Berlin*, 182.

The dismantling of the Holy Roman Empire and its reconfiguration into thirty-eight states drastically reduced the opportunities for musicians to work under the traditional patronage system. In the opening decades of the nineteenth century, German musicians were forced to redefine themselves and find new ways of earning a living from their craft. Applegate compares the music field as one in which the development of “new means of support, new structures of social organization and performance” was “just like modern industry itself” which arose in a “context of ruin and insecurity.”³¹

One of the architects for resolving the crisis in music was Carl Friedrich Zelter. Although not university trained (he was a master brick mason), his love of music led him on a personal crusade to revive an intellectual music tradition in Germany. Having set some of Goethe’s poems to music, he entered into a long correspondence and friendship with the writer which lasted until both died in 1832. Zelter’s original idea was to have his music revival project become part of the education reforms. It was Goethe and Schiller who encouraged him to frame his education appeals to Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III in terms of music’s ability to revive religion in Germany, believing he would thus be more successful with his proposals. This was the beginning of “successive waves of reform” which eventually resulted in music entering the education system with the effect of what Applegate calls a “peculiarly German synthesis of utilitarian training for the free professions and state service, on the one hand, and a neohumanistic education of individual cultivation and self-development (*Bildung*), on the other.”³²

Nipperdey notes that the consequence of the education reforms was a system that was no longer grounded in physics and mathematics but in history, language, and culture.³³ The concept of *Bildung* arose from the philosophical undergirdings of the educational reform movement. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, credited by some as the originator of the German nationalist movement, lamented the current system of Prussian education as something designed to turn out workers, i.e. bureaucrats, for the state—a person’s

³¹ Celia Applegate, “How German Is It? Nationalism and the Idea of Serious Music in the Early Nineteenth Century.” *19th-Century Music* 21, no. 3 (1998) 283.

³² Applegate, *How German Is It?* 285.

³³ Nipperdey, *From Napoleon to Bismarck*, 46.

value merely equal to what he could do for the regime. Fichte's reforms urged the study of philosophy so that one could "know oneself" before pursuing a career that involved more specific, practical training. Reading the classics, and in Zelter's vision, knowing the classics of German music, would enable an individual to develop one's own inner self. This would also elevate the status of musicians by including them in the universities. Zelter's most important student was Felix Mendelssohn.

Mendelssohn is a metaphorical bridge in the German society of his day—famously connecting Bach to the nineteenth century, composing serious, intellectual music but also participating in the singing clubs and music festivals that became ubiquitous to his age. Mendelssohn's life (1809-1847) encompassed nearly all of the *Vormärz* and as a musician (acclaimed by Goethe as a greater prodigy than Mozart—both of whom he heard perform as children), he was strategically positioned to participate in the project of making music a fundamental part of German national life. On July 3, 1839, Felix Mendelssohn wrote from Frankfurt to his mother in Berlin. He described to her "the most delightful thing I ever saw in society" which was a "fete in the forest here."³⁴

. . . deep in the forest where lofty spreading beech-trees stand in solitary grandeur, forming an impenetrable canopy above, and where all around nothing was to be seen but green foliage glistening through innumerable trunks of trees,—this was the locality. We made our way through the thick underwood, by a narrow footpath, to the spot, where, on arriving, a number of white figures were visible in the distance, under a group of trees, encircled with massive garlands of flowers, which formed the concert-room. How lovely the voices sounded, and how brilliantly the soprano tones vibrated in the air! What charm and melting sweetness pervaded every strain! . . . The choir consisted of about twenty good voices; . . . Towards evening, however, when they stood under the trees, and uplifting their voices gave my first song, 'Ihr Vöglein in den Zweigen schwank,' it was so enchanting in the silence of the woods, that it

³⁴ Mendelssohn, *Letters*, 158.

almost brought tears to my eyes.³⁵

Mendelssohn's description encapsulates many of the artistic themes of early nineteenth-century Germany—the romantic forest setting and women dressed in white singing songs about nature (the birds swaying in the tree branches), the intense feelings evoked by the singing, and the warmth of a son sharing with his mother in beautiful poetic language the pure simplicity of life. Further on in the letter Mendelssohn describes an evening at the St. Cecilia Association, the local singing club: “First, we had some music and played and sang.” And he lists the evening's songs: his own “Midsummer Night's Dream” overture, a German folk song from “olden time,” followed by a version of “Ave Maria,” then another of Mendelssohn's songs followed by a Spanish song, then some religious choruses and a selection from Mendelssohn's *St. Paul* oratorio and finally a psalm.³⁶ He ends the letter by asking his sister Fanny to examine a Bach fugue and to notice “how the left hand glides and turns, and how gently it dies away towards the close!”³⁷ The music listed ran the gamut from romantic poetry and Christian scripture in song to the immortal Bach.

Another look at Mendelssohn's letter reveals something not explicitly articulated about his perspective on the music of his day. The scene in the forest and the later singing club evening, while joyous, were not frivolous or trite. Germans of the nineteenth century began to acknowledge a distinct quality of their music as something serious, intellectual and disciplined. The religious themes of the music reflected the roots of the Lutheran chorale—hymns which had an inherently weighty purpose and subject. Even as music moved out of the patronage system of court and church in the late eighteenth century, it continued to conform to the role Martin Luther had envisioned for it—participation by the entire group, not a select few and with a moral and enduring nature.

Felix Mendelssohn had a major role to play in the resolution of the “crisis in music.” He presided over the “resurrection” of Bach beginning with the performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* in 1829. The

³⁵ Mendelssohn, *Letters*, 159.

³⁶ Mendelssohn, *Letters*, 161.

³⁷ Mendelssohn, *Letters*, 163.

“intellectual” music of Bach stirred the crowds who heard it in the initial three performances in Berlin and demonstrated that intellectual music could be packed full of emotions. A. B. Marx, the publicist for the performance reported: “As one listened, ‘eighteen hundred years disappeared,’ and the listeners felt themselves to be in the immediate presence of ‘Jesus, his disciples, the high priests, and the people.’”³⁸ Applegate explains that part of the power of the *St. Matthew Passion* performance was in drawing the audience (the congregation) into a sense of participation in the music. Johann Gustav Droysen, who sang in the chorus, claimed that Bach’s passion music had given back to Berliners a sense of their Reformation origins, and that Bach was the “embodiment of something essentially German,” which would enable them to reclaim their musical birthright.³⁹ This became part of the search for what would be defined as intrinsically German music.

Part of the impact of the 1829 performance of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* was in reintroducing the German people to German music—not just in folk songs or *lieder* but in the elevated, intellectual music of Bach. Bach’s music was inclusive of other national styles but exclusive in its use of Lutheran chorales. It was a serious work and expressed an enduring theme. “Knowing Bach entailed understanding not only the Christian, Protestant heritage of Germany, not only the intellectual, inward turn in German character, but also the musical complexity that was as much a part of being German as was the German language itself.”⁴⁰

“Few nations have articulated their self-understanding through music as much as have the Germans,”⁴¹ writes Bernd Sponheuer in an essay included in *Music and German National Identity*. As early as 1737, Johann Adolph Scheibe had written, “German music is primarily borrowed from foreigners, and it differentiates itself only through hard work, regularity of phrases, and deep sensitivity of the harmony.”⁴² This articulation of “German” music as a result of hard work and depth will resonate

³⁸ Applegate, *Bach in Berlin*, 229.

³⁹ Quoted by Applegate, *Bach in Berlin*, 229 and 233.

⁴⁰ Applegate, *Bach in Berlin*, 119.

⁴¹ Bernd Sponheuer, “Reconstructing Ideal Types of the German in Music,” *Music and German Nation Identity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

⁴² Quoted by Sponheuer, “Reconstructing Ideal Types,” 45.

through the succeeding centuries. Sponheuer assesses German music as having two “ideal types” both of which are articulated in the Scheibe quote above. The exclusive type manifests itself as music which shows depth, hard-work and thoroughness; and the universal type manifests itself as a fusion of things otherwise separated (Italian and French music; form and expression; horizontal and vertical).⁴³ Sponheuer says that the two types “can parallel one another or share various relationships with one another,” but the exclusive type usually wins out over the universal or some mixture of the two, and these assumptions have held sway now for almost two hundred years.⁴⁴ Already in the music of Luther, Bach and Beethoven we have seen that these composers borrowed from earlier techniques and styles while creating something new which because of its very nature had a serious and enduring purpose.

Felix Mendelssohn, writing his mother in 1834 about a visit he had with Chopin and another musician friend, first expresses his admiration of their keyboard abilities and yet, “Both . . . rather toil in the Parisian spasmodic and impassioned style, too often losing sight of time and sobriety and of true music.”⁴⁵ Several years later, in 1839, he again bemoans the Parisian music scene, “The very great inward poverty which this [French music] betrays, along with the outward glitter of grandeur and worldly importance which such misères assume, is truly revolting to me, even when I read of them in a letter. I infinitely prefer our German homeliness and torpor and tobacco-pipes.”⁴⁶ In 1852 Franz Brendel wrote a history of German music. He detailed the nature of German superiority in music (basically its exclusive and universal features) and asserted that the “historical responsibility of Germany” was to “collect all the other peoples around the throne of Germany’s universal monarchy [in music].” Testifying to the “predominantly intellectual nature of German music,” he attributed this to “Protestant individualism, a ‘principle’ that originated in Germany and constituted the deciding principle of the modern age.”⁴⁷

⁴³ Sponheuer, “Reconstructing Ideal Types,” 40.

⁴⁴ Sponheuer, “Reconstructing Ideal Types,” 41.

⁴⁵ Mendelssohn, *Letters*, 34.

⁴⁶ Mendelssohn, *Letters*, 171.

⁴⁷ Quoted by Sponheuer, “Reconstructing Ideal Types,” 55.

Brendel credits Beethoven with moving the German features of music past the age of Luther and Bach to awake people to the notion “that the artist is entrusted with revealing the highest meaning of humanity.”⁴⁸

The concept of “absolute music” originated in German romanticism—the idea of music as poetry, and music as a key to the infinite and transcendental. Hoffmann inaugurated the concept with his “ecstatic review of Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony* in 1813,” and this idea would go on to “become the single most influential aesthetic idea concerning music.”⁴⁹ “Absolute music” asserts the supremacy of music above all other arts, values instrumental music above choral music (believing that words actually detract from the meaning of the music), assigns a quasi-religious function to *listening* to music, and distinguishes (while elevating) music from visual art by equating form and content.⁵⁰ Here we are reminded of Hofreiter’s description of Bach’s *B-Minor Mass*—the musical and compositional devices Bach employed did away with the need for a libretto because the “music itself” offered all the commentary needed to understand the message. When Hoffmann wrote about the *Fifth Symphony* he commented, “Its content and effect centered in its form rather than in a poetic or programmatic text.”⁵¹ Hoffmann was the first to articulate and assign this aspect of music to German music and German audiences. Not only was German music particularly imbued with serious content and form, only Germans could fully appreciate music in this way. A hundred years earlier, Scheibe had actually said something similar, “Yes, we have finally found good taste in music, such as Italy has not yet shown us in its entire beauty. The creation of good taste in music has therefore been the work of the German spirit, and no other nation can pride itself on this distinction.”⁵²

Now we come to the essence of music expressing itself as the product of a particular people-group. As earlier noted, many Prussians perceived a crisis in music in the late eighteenth and early

⁴⁸ Sponheuer, “Reconstructing Ideal Types,” 55.

⁴⁹ Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, eds. *Music and German National Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 13.

⁵⁰ In visual or literary art, the subject of a painting or poem is outside the work itself, whereas in music, the subject of a piece of music is within it.

⁵¹ Quoted by Carl Dahlhaus in *The Ideas of Absolute Music*, translated by Roger Lustig, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

⁵² Quoted by Sponheuer, “Reconstructing Ideal Types,” 45.

nineteenth century. Applegate theorizes that this predicament had to do with the shifting social and economic conditions that transformed musicians from occupations in church and court to a kind of free-market culture. The fact that musicians were thrown into the marketplace gave rise to a crisis of identity. Applegate asserts that, “Nation-ness, specifically German-ness, enters into this story, as it does into so many, as a strengthening and linking agent, an explanatory framework that connected the problems and possibilities of musical life to social life as a whole and to larger problems of cultural meaning.”⁵³ Musicians had to find a way to reassert themselves into German society and as a concurrent matter to the education reform, they employed national arguments to do this.

The original group of German “nationalists” were literary figures—the Jena group (Goethe, Schiller, the Schlegels, Fichte, Novalis, Schleiermacher, Tieck), and for them, a national literature was the essence of cultural expression. We have already seen that Fichte played a major role in moving education towards a greater emphasis on the classics and philosophy. These originators of romanticism were able then to connect language and music, and Nipperdey claims that, “Music for the romantics, especially instrumental music, was the key to the innermost secrets of the world and the universe; it was the key to the beyond, to the infinite and the transcendental.”⁵⁴ How to combine literature and music to create something of enduring and defining German-ness? The answer—transcend music into poetry. Beethoven was the essence of poetic music for the romantics.

The romantics, Wackenroder and Tieck, helped to turn around the impression of music as inferior to literature, but they especially valued music without words. In an echo of Luther’s understanding of music as theology, “Wackenroder claimed that music *was* in fact a language—the ‘language of angels.’”⁵⁵ Another avenue for music to become poetic also presented itself. Goethe’s poetry set to music became the beginning of a widespread genre, the *Lied*, that was practically by definition German. The national importance of the *lied* began with the Goethe-Zelter pair, then intensified as more German composers

⁵³ Applegate, *Bach in Berlin*, 282.

⁵⁴ Nipperdey, *Napoleon to Bismarck*, 485.

⁵⁵ Quoted by Applegate, *Bach in Berlin*, 59.

gave musical expression to the romantic literary canon. Countless performances of *lieder*, both amateur and professional, gave it a more national reach than any other musical genre.⁵⁶

Philip V. Bohlman in another essay from *Music and German National Identity* describes the importance of the *lied*, or folk song to Germans of the nineteenth century. “Imagined during the late eighteenth-century *Aufklärung*, the German Enlightenment, and invented during the romanticism of the early nineteenth century, German folk song became a visible player in the struggle to construct German nationalism. . . . By coining the term *Volkslied*, or folk song, in the 1770’s, Johann Gottfried Herder consciously engaged in an act of naming a previously unnamed quality of Germanness. From its Enlightenment beginnings, folk song served to connect language to place.”⁵⁷ Bohlman goes on to say that folk songs did not merely *represent* German-ness but became an *agent* in creating a national identity. As print became more common, all kinds of music became widely disseminated which contributed to the permeation of various kinds of music into German culture—the printing of Bach’s chorales, passions and motets, *Volkslied*, as well as the patriotic songs of Ernst Moritz Arndt during the Wars of Liberation—these, and more, contributed to a flourishing music culture throughout the various social classes and regions of *Vormärz* Germany.

Establishing music as a national heritage and asserting its distinct characteristics was one thing. But is it possible to hear the difference between a German symphony and a French one? Did Handel’s *Messiah* sound English (because he lived and worked in Britain) or German (reflecting his native heritage)? Most nineteenth-century composers enjoyed employing folk music in various ways—this is one of the defining features of the romantic movement in music. So some historians of music discount the notion that music has a national “sound.” A German composer might use Hungarian folk songs or a French composer, Polish ones—does this change the essential quality of the German music (or French)? However, Greenberg makes an argument for national music based on the unique features of language

⁵⁶ Applegate and Potter, 13.

⁵⁷ Philip V. Bohlman, “Landscape-Region-Nation-Reich: German Folk Song in the Nexus of National Identity,” in *Music and German National Identity*, edited by Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 108.

which is apparent even in instrumental or orchestral music. His theory resonates with Herder's ideas about language as a determining characteristic of national identity.

According to Greenberg the German language emphasizes consonants more than vowels; words are crisply articulated; it has a certain rhythm to it. This is what Luther was concerned about when rendering the Latin liturgy into German: "Both the text and notes, accent, melody and manner of rendering ought to grow out of the true mother tongue and its inflection."⁵⁸ The Lutheran chorale was written to a simple melodic line, one syllable and/or word to a note. Children learned this music in school, the catechism was sung in this style; Germans sang in church on Sunday, at home during the week and heard the music of the chorales played from the towers of the church or town hall. That was the music they were acclimated to and Greenberg contends that the sound of German music becomes concise, compact, "punchy"—with more significance to each note, a faster turnover of pitch, less embellishment and rhythmically etched. He asserts that by Bach's day the melodic nature of the chorales affected the way all German composers wrote music. Only in Lutheran churches did this style of music develop, but because Lutheran music was so pervasive, it affected all music, and he concludes that German composers unconsciously wrote in this style.⁵⁹

Because Luther believed music was an essential aspect of worship he applied his skill and energy to teach the congregation to esteem and participate in the liturgy. He not only wrote music himself but encouraged others to do so. More importantly he made music central to the practice of faith and it permeated the lives of the people. In the nineteenth century as music moved out of the rarified circles of court, theater, and church, as German music was made part of the national identity, the congregation, the German *Volk*, had to be engaged with a national project of political unity. The idea of a nation needed to be created and planted in the imaginations of not just the romantic elites, but in the *Volk*. The mission for the Romantics and other German liberals in the *Vormärz* was to get their vision of a modern nation-state out into the villages and countryside and in the process bring the various social groups in German society

⁵⁸ Cited previously, *Luther's Works Vol. 40*, 361.

⁵⁹ Greenberg, *Bach and the High Baroque*,

into a single “congregation.” Music became an important means to achieve this goal but was only partially the job of composers, organizers, music critics and political reformers.

The Sections of the Chorus Come Together

Friedrich Wilhelm III’s Prussian union of the Lutheran and Reformed churches in 1817 was intended to bring Protestants together. But his heavy-handed approach and the strange (and foreign) liturgy he introduced led to a further decline in church attendance. Liberals after 1815 had been thwarted in their endeavors to give Germany a unified nation with enfranchisement and representative government, but they continued to work on the national project of cultural unity. In an age in which the Protestant and Catholic churches came under increased government control, censorship restricted freedom of speech, and many of the leaders of Napoleonic liberation found themselves imprisoned or intellectually shackled, music provided an outlet for political and religious expression outside the traditional environs of church or university. The singing clubs and music festivals brought people together to sing and celebrate with one voice and these expressions of musical harmony were not confined to Berlin or Prussia but echoed across the German states and social classes.

Cecilia Hopkins Porter, who has written about the history of the enormously successful Lower Rhine Music Festival which we will look at more extensively below, discovered that civic music-making flourished in amateur singing groups—particularly all-male groups—not just in the Rhineland, but throughout the German states. This corresponds to James Brophy’s discovery of an expansive public sphere which came about by means of popular culture—including music. “Germany’s first mass publics in the modern era encountered their ideas and molded their opinions more through crypto-political means than through a formal public sphere.”⁶⁰ He emphasizes the cross-cultural impact of music during the *Vormärz*—political songs appealed to various social groups and united them (or polarized them) in unexpected ways. Traveling musicians, like the medieval minnesingers, spread political news beyond the educated elites and their public sphere. The *Volk* were coming together as a new kind of congregation but

⁶⁰ James M. Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 2007), 12.

one that reflected their Lutheran heritage. What kinds of music were Germans performing and listening to in the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s?

By looking at the Lower Rhine Music Festival and at the amateur singing groups we can get a fairly comprehensive idea of how Germans expressed their beliefs through enjoyment of music in the decades after 1815. The centrality of song to general musical education in Germany helped to create the nation in which even the smallest town had a chorus and a *Liedertafel*, church services boasted enthusiastic choirs, and many thousands of amateur singers could be mobilized for any regional choral festival.⁶¹ The Lower Rhine Music Festival was inaugurated in 1818 and Cecelia Hopkins Porter gives an account of its history from 1818-1867. It was during this time that a new public sphere was created for the bourgeoisie from a music culture that had been defined as essentially German.

The festival in its first thirty years always lasted two days and the first day featured an oratorio⁶²; the second day always had a Beethoven symphony. Some other shorter works, an aria, concerto, overture, cantata, or other choral piece, would also be performed on the second day. Up until 1847 nearly all the members of the orchestra and choirs were amateurs—a typical choir included 100 singers in the early years up to a high of 616 in 1847. A third day of music was added after 1847, and while the number of arias and *Lieder* increased as well as orchestral pieces like symphonic poems and suites, the oratorios, symphonies and religious choral works remained the established offerings on the first two days. Mendelssohn conducted the festival in 1835 and introduced Bach to its repertoire for the first time. All the music performed was from German composers with Beethoven, Handel, Mozart and Mendelssohn leading the list over a forty-year period of time. Attendance at the festival increased from around 800 in the 1820s to more than 2000 people in 1855.⁶³

In 1841, the *Kölner Zeitung* (Cologne Newspaper) reporting on the twenty-third Lower Rhine Music Festival said that it was “a true national festival,” which allowed Germans to “become conscious of

⁶¹ Applegate, *Bach in Berlin*, 156.

⁶² An oratorio is a musical setting of a religious text, often a dramatic Bible story which requires soloists, chorus, and instrumentalists and is intended to be performed in a church or concert hall without action or scenery.

⁶³ Porter, “The New Public and the Reordering of the Musical Establishment: The Lower Rhine Music Festivals, 1818-67,” *19th Century Music* 3, no. 3 (1980), 218.

the noblest treasures of the nation in inspired association, for that is a spiritual possession no one can steal.”⁶⁴ Some of the popularity of the music festivals can be attributed to Friedrich Wilhelm III’s 1806 policy forbidding concerts in the churches. The music festivals provided another venue and singing clubs gave musicians the opportunity to meet weekly to sing sacred music for private edification. Singing clubs also offered an outlet for political expression.

Johann Gustav Droysen, as a member of the Berlin Singakademie, took part in the 1829 *St. Matthew Passion* performance.⁶⁵ He went on to found a political journal after the revolutions of 1830 and was a participant in the Frankfurt National Parliament in 1848-49. Applegate says he best illustrates the intertwining of cultural and political elements in the culture of nation building because of his vision of a spiritual national unity which would extend the principles of the sixteenth-century Reformation into a modern German nation.⁶⁶ The singing clubs provided an ideal medium for this vision. While the Berlin Singakademie was organized primarily to sing serious and usually religious music, other singing clubs were more pedestrian. Between 1815 and 1848 numerous songs of a political and patriotic nature were composed. The songbook compiled as part of the Frankfurt national movement in 1848 includes this song by Hans-Georg Nägeli (1773-1836), “Unser Vaterland.”

Do you know the country, so beautifully wreathed in its oaks?
That country where the gentle heights of grapes, rise in the sun’s splendor?
That beautiful country is known to us. It is the German Fatherland.

Do you know the country, free from deceit where a man’s word still shows the man?
The country in which love and faith soothes the pain of life here on earth?
That good country is well-known to us. It is the German Fatherland.

Do you know the country, where happy people live in a circle of morality?
That country where undefiled faith sits enthroned?
The sacred land is known to us. It is our Fatherland.

⁶⁴ Porter, “The New Public,” 212.

⁶⁵ The Singakademie began in Berlin as a summer singing circle in the 1790s and gave its first public performance in 1791. It was made up of a mixed chorus of amateur singers concerned with singing “serious” music.

⁶⁶ Applegate, *Bach in Berlin*, 141.

Hail to thee, thou Country! The noblest and greatest on earth!
How beautifully the noble and beautiful union thrives in your tender shoots.
Therefore we will consecrate your love, and be worthy of your peace.⁶⁷

This song celebrated the beauty of the German land and the moral traits of the German people and was not polarizing. The Fatherland was a term used throughout the period to denote any home state, not necessarily a unified German nation. Thus it is an example of the kind of song Germans of various social classes and political persuasions could sing, and for many Germans it suggested an underlying unity that had yet to be fulfilled.

In addition to the singing clubs, gymnastic clubs were also extremely popular throughout the German states. Started during the Napoleonic era by Ludwig Jahn, the gymnasts were joined by students (the *Burschenschaften*) and patriotic songs were an important means of expressing political and nationalist ideals. After the Hamburg festival, members of the *Burschenschaften* formed the Frankfurt Storm Guards. Their goal was to trigger an armed uprising for freedom and German unity. As a result of an uprising in 1837, nine students were killed and twenty-four injured. Six were arrested and subsequently sentenced to life in prison. Echoing Luther's first hymn, a song was composed for these students—*Die freie Republik* (The Free Republic, 1837):

To the dungeon on Frankfurt on the Main
Six students were sent for many years.
They fought for freedom, for the citizens,
And for the rights of the free republic.

The mayor spoke daily to Herr Jailer,
Don't let them run away.
But at the twelfth hour, when the big storm broke,
They disappeared from the tower.

Next morning the alarm is heard
And it was terrible—the soldiers swarmed.
They searched up and down, back and forth,
They were looking for six students and found them no more.

⁶⁷ "Liederbuch für Bürgerwehr, Volksheer und Turngemeinden: mit Melodien." <http://edocs.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/volltexte/2006/6930>

But they came again with swords in hand.
Arise, German brothers, now is the time for Fatherland.
Now is the time for human rights and for the citizens,
We are not servants of the free Republic.

When the people ask, Where is Absalom?
They can say, well, he is already hanging high.
He clings to no gallows, he is not captured
But rather free for the Republic.⁶⁸

The students escaped—many of the *Burschenschaften* were arrested, deported, or left Germany to escape persecution. These students apparently lived on to fight for a free republic. The last stanza refers to the son of Israel's King David, Absalom, who led a rebellion against his father. He fled from his father's army, but was entangled by his long hair in a tree and then stabbed to death. In this case, the students lived to continue fighting for the idea of freedom.

The various singing and gymnastics clubs and societies were an important means of assimilating, expressing and spreading principles of liberalism and nationalism and for this reason they were sometimes oppressed.⁶⁹ In spite of the broad popularity of *Freiheitslieder* (songs about liberty and freedom) and a growing political consciousness, the German revolutions of 1848 came unexpectedly.

Nipperdey claims that the demonstrations and protests that broke out in numerous locations in the German states in 1848 had no planning or leadership. The spontaneous revolts that broke out across the German states of Central Europe in March were triggered by the revolution that broke out in France in February and represented years of suppressed frustrations. Soon after revolts began, a national parliament was assembled in Frankfurt to design a unified national state. The slogan that encapsulated the hopes and dreams of the revolutionaries was, "*Einheit und Freiheit des deutschen Vaterlandes*" (Unity and Freedom for the German Fatherland). Naturally, these events and aspirations were acknowledged in song. Robert Schumann was a contemporary of Felix Mendelssohn (who had died in 1847) and in John Daverio's essay in *Music and German National Identity*, Daverio claims that the revolutions of 1848-49 were of central importance to Schumann as a man and an artist. Schumann composed a number of pieces to be

⁶⁸ Freedom Songs, www.volkliederarchiv.de/text1494.html

⁶⁹ Nipperdey, *From Napoleon to Bismarck*, 474.

performed by male choruses and Daverio proposes that, “The mixture of martial and religious elements in Schumann’s ‘revolutionary’ music is a sounding metaphor for the intertwining of politics and religion in the German romantic outlook on society as a whole.”⁷⁰ Two larger pieces that Schumann composed were the *Adventlied* (Advent Song) and the *Neujahrslied* (New Year’s Song). Schumann’s music echoes the format of a chorale and the *Neujahrslied* culminates in the Lutheran hymn, “Nun danket alle Gott.” Daverio summarizes Schumann’s work as an expression of independence (through the solo voices) and unity (in the chorales) while combining militarism and religiosity. Schumann represented the serious, intellectual music that had become the defining feature of absolute music. And still there were other, simpler songs composed for this momentous occasion.

The parliament that met in Frankfurt to write a constitution also inspired the publication of hundreds of pamphlets, speeches and broadsheets. One publication was a collection of patriotic songs. In the forward to the song book, the editors proclaimed their full confidence that a new and better time had begun. They alluded to the events of 1806-1814 and the patriotism that was stirred up then and hoped that the songs they have published (in 1848) will recall the spirit of those earlier times. They add their hopes that new songs can be added to the old, long-cherished German songs such as Father Arndt’s militia songs and that these songs they have published might ignite the same holy, pure enthusiasm as those did.⁷¹ There are seventy-one songs included and the first is Arndt’s *Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland?* These are songs written like Luther’s chorales of the sixteenth-century. They have a line of melody, a word or syllable per note, several stanzas and many express religious themes or references to God. Arndt was a representative at Frankfurt who ended up grievously disappointed in its result. He was already an old man in the late 1840s and went into retirement afterwards, but in 1855 he published “Geistliche Lieder” (Spiritual Songs). In its preface he wrote, “If I have succeeded a little in my attempts to *speak* and

⁷⁰ John Daverio, “Einheit-Freiheit-Vaterland: Intimations of Utopia in Robert Schumann’s Late Choral Music,” in *Music and German National Identity*, ed. by Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 69.

⁷¹ Ernst Moritz Arndt, “Liederbuch für Bürgerwehr, Volksheer und Turnvereine: mit Melodien.“ <http://edocs.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/volltexte/2006/6930/>

sing German, I owe it, like many others of German thoughts and feelings, to having been well practiced from my childhood up in the reading of Luther's Bible."⁷² [italics added]

Is there a simple conclusion that can be drawn from the complex story of German music and attempts to develop a unified culture and nation? Samuel Taylor Coleridge remarked after a visit to Germany in the nineteenth century that Luther's hymns had as great a Reformation impact as his translation of the Bible. He noted that every German peasant had the hymns of Luther memorized and they informed their every thought, argument and action.⁷³ Using the same biblical sources as the Reformers, nineteenth-century Germans were redefining concepts like "the priesthood of all believers" and "freedom in Christ" in Enlightenment terms of political equality and liberty. For the German nationalists of Frankfurt, they also came up against something of the conundrum of the "now and not yet." There was a promise of freedom and unity in the *Vormärz*, but it was not to be realized until sometime later. The music of Luther, Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann and many others would continue to bind them together in a cultural unity that foreshadowed the promise of political unity.

⁷² Arndt, *The Life and Adventures*, 455.

⁷³ Quoted in Introduction to *Dr. Martin Luther's Deutsche Geistliche Lieder. The Hymns of Martin Luther set to their original Melodies with an English version*, ed. Leonard Woolsey Bacon and Nathan H. Allen (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1884) oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?Itemid=288&id=706&option=com_content&task=view

3. EINHEIT, FREIHEIT, VATERLAND AND THE MAKING OF THE FRANKFURT CONSTITUTION

In 1524, German peasants revolted against feudal authority demanding the right to be free from excessive taxes and labor demands, to have the ability to use forests for hunting and fishing, to be free from arbitrary “justice” and to be allowed to elect and depose their own clergymen. Historians have debated for years about the causes of the Peasant Revolt, but it did follow closely after Martin Luther’s assertion of freedom from papal authority. And while German princes put down the armies of rebellious peasants, many princes supported Luther’s rebellion against Rome. Luther himself represented a curious paradox between rejection of papal authority and submission to civil authority. Three centuries later, German Protestants invoked the memory of Luther to make claims about authority and freedom across the political and ideological spectrum.

Martin Luther’s straightforward doctrines of freedom and liberty were transformed by nineteenth-century Germans into something more complex. Luther’s definition of freedom was other-worldly—it had more to do with spiritual freedom from sin and the wrath of God than political freedom. During the eighteenth century, freedom became a political and social issue. Enlightened thinkers began to challenge traditional sources of authority and assert the natural rights of men. The French Revolution of 1789 pioneered the ideals of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. These permeated the rest of Europe as the educated public sphere followed events in France and as Napoleon subsequently brought the revolution to all of Europe. After 1815 a conservative reaction set in, but the ideas of freedom and equality were not as easily disposed of as was Napoleon. During the course of the nineteenth century, there were repeated attempts at revolution—for political freedom and individual rights and for national unity. German intellectuals drew inspiration from the early ideals of the French Revolution, but envisioned a national state that drew on their own ancient roots and myths and their Lutheran heritage. In the spring of 1848, revolts broke out

across the German Confederation. As a consequence, elections were held for state parliaments and for a national parliament.

When delegates met in Frankfurt in 1848 to draft a constitution for a united Germany, various factions invoked religious language and arguments. Conservatives believed in a traditional, patriarchal state headed by a monarch. The conservatives were led by men like Ernst-Ludwig Gerlach who believed that the state was an extension of the family—God placed fathers at the head of their families and the monarch represented the God-ordained head of all the people. Liberals, represented by men like Johann Gustav Droysen, a historian and politician who served on the constitution committee at Frankfurt, was convinced that history represented a gradual unfolding of freedom. By the nineteenth century, the *bürgerlich* (middle-class) was prepared to express their freedom as responsible citizens in a constitutional state. Droysen’s sense of history derived from his Christian faith and he believed the German people were called to a mission—to collaborate with God’s purposes in leading creation back to the Creator. Droysen associated this mission with “Luther’s central task of showing that ‘the truth of Christianity . . . was to be sought in the ever vital and actual interpenetration of the mortal by the eternal.’”¹ In the sixteenth century this interpenetration dealt primarily with individual salvation; in the nineteenth century, “it promised social and political reform.”²

To the left of Droysen’s liberalism lay a more democratic faction that might be labeled liberal-secularists. Some of them were members of the *Deutschkatholiken* movement which sought to join Protestants with German-Catholics (as opposed to Roman Catholics). They applauded their movement as “the Reformation of the nineteenth-century,” and their leader Johannes Ronge was called “the new Luther.”³ Their cooperation and brotherly love demonstrated, “how far humanity can come in the nineteenth-century in Germany and that through the new Reformation . . . the spirit of God will be

¹ Robert Southard, “Theology in Droysen’s Early Political Historiography: Free Will, Necessity, and the Historian,” *History and Theory* 18, no. 3 (October, 1979) 378-396.

² Southard, “Theology in Droysen,” 378.

³ Dagmar Herzog, *Intimacy and Exclusion: Religious Politics in Pre-Revolutionary Baden* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 62.

capable of . . . making the German nation a chosen people of God in sensibility, feeling and education.”⁴

As proof of this variegated nature of German Protestantism in 1848, barricade fighters in Berlin sang hymns as Friedrich Wilhelm IV agreed to the March Demands. This overview sets the stage for reviewing several decades in which liberal ideas of freedom, equality and national identity challenged conservative traditionalism and patriarchalism—everyone involved drawing on Luther’s language and perceived teachings.

The German composers Bach and Beethoven were masters of transforming simple musical motifs of as few as three notes into complete compositions. In a similar way, Luther’s teachings about freedom and liberty have been coopted by succeeding generations of Germans into discussions about authority and human responsibility, faith and power, freedom of conscience and human rights.⁵ Luther’s theology, unlike Calvin’s, was more about eternal life and less about transforming earthly societies. Nineteenth-century Germans took Luther’s *solas* and the “priesthood of all believers” and turned them into a profusion of political variations.⁶ This chapter argues that German philosophers during the Enlightenment and French Revolution transfigured Luther’s concepts of freedom and equality, and German Protestants (across the political and social spectrum) in part invoked Luther to conceptualize civil government. In the process, the popularization of the public sphere successfully brought concepts of freedom and equality to the peasant—*liberte, egalite, fraternite* became *Einheit, Freiheit, Vaterland*. This process of utilizing and transforming Luther began in the eighteenth century and continued during the decades before the 1848 revolutions but left open a crucial question: Could non-Protestant Germans participate in a German constitutional state that called on Protestant definitions of freedom, equality and brotherhood?

⁴ Herzog, *Intimacy and Exclusion*, 62.

⁵ www.luther2017.de

⁶ The *solas* (*sola fide, sola gratia, sola scripture, sola Christus, soli Deo Gloria*) define salvation based on the work of Christ alone as articulated in scripture without the need for the Roman Catholic Church and its authority. The doctrine of the “priesthood of all believers” posits the right of every Christian to approach God directly without the mediation of an ordained priest. Luther’s theology therefore stresses individual equality and autonomy.

German Pietism and Romanticism vs. French Rationalism

The French Revolution was the culmination of Enlightenment philosophy and for the educated bourgeois class throughout Europe the onset of revolution elicited hope for a new era. Young Germans looked to France for inspiration in the early 1790s. For German liberals considering their own political aspirations, could they establish a free state as defined by Enlightenment *philosophes*—freedom from traditional authority, the exertion of popular sovereignty and establishment of natural law—or a German freedom? The early German romantics were fortuitously assembled in Jena in the 1790s. All were disciples of Kant and most came from Lutheran-Pietist backgrounds. Isaiah Berlin asserted that Herder and Kant were the formative influences on these early German romantics. “Kant was virtually intoxicated by the idea of human freedom. His pietist upbringing led not to rhapsodical self-communings . . . but to a kind of intense preoccupation with the inner, moral life of man.”⁷ The preoccupation of the early romantics with Kant’s philosophy generated a German response to freedom which was distinct from that articulated in France.

It is important to understand something about Lutheran theology and pietism in order to understand the Romantics and German philosophy. Kant’s reflections on the interior transcendental structures of human thought is a development of his early Pietist training, as are Friedrich Schleiermacher’s meditations on religious feelings.⁸ Luther rejected Catholic legalism as well as most of the sacraments and stressed the importance of an individual relationship with God. In that sense he was defining Christianity as a rejection of human authority over salvation and asserting individual responsibility. A hundred years or so after Luther’s death, some Germans thought the Lutheran church had become nothing but orthodox creedal formalism. In 1675 Philipp Jakob Spener published a treatise, *Pia Desideria: or Heartfelt Desires for a God-pleasing Improvement of the true Protestant Church*, which became the first expression of the pietist movement that was so important to Germany in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. “Our whole Christian religion consists of the inner man or the new

⁷ Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, edited by Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 69.

⁸ *Pietists, Selected Writings*, edited with an introduction by Peter C. Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 2.

man, whose soul is faith and whose expressions are the fruits of life.”⁹ Spener said that outward or external practices like baptism, communion, preaching and church attendance are only significant in terms of how they are experienced by the “inner man.” Pietists emphasized several other ideas which would later influence nineteenth-century German concepts of equality and social interaction.

Spener in 1677 wrote *The Spiritual Priesthood* which consisted of seventy questions and answers. The whole document defines what it means to be a “priest”—all Christians are permitted to bring sacrifices to God (spiritual sacrifices, not animal). Questions nine and ten define who are priests: “All Christians without distinction, old and young, male and female, bond and free.”¹⁰ All people are equal before God and therefore equal to one another. And priests bear a responsibility before God—Spener’s questions and answers address these responsibilities. This is consistent with Luther’s teaching about the priesthood of all believers and important for future German ideas of equality and community. At the same time as the Pietist movement was emerging, European states began consolidating under absolutist monarchs. Protestant declarations of equality and freedom versus divine-right hierarchical societies were destined to have wide-ranging repercussions.

One hundred years after Spener, Emmanuel Kant, attempted an answer to the question, “What is Enlightenment?” His answer, that it was the ability of men to determine their own lives, to make moral choices and to be responsible for their own acts, reflected the influence of pietism. Kant lived in Prussia during the reign of Frederick the Great, a supposedly enlightened monarch. But many Prussian peasants still lived as serfs. Kant opposed the exploitation or domination of one human by another—this would be to deny their free will and what essentially characterized them as human, “namely their self-determining liberty.”¹¹ His “Enlightenment” answer was a mild rebuke to Frederick, and thus Kant was enthusiastic about the early reforms of the French because they provided “a form of government in which all men, at least theoretically, were able to vote freely, to speak their views; they need no longer obey a government,

⁹ Philipp Jakob Spener, from the *Pia Desideria*, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964)

¹⁰ Spener, from *The Spiritual Priesthood, Pietists Writings*, 50.

¹¹ Berlin, *Roots of Romanticism*, 70-71

no matter how benevolent, no longer obey a Church, no matter how excellent, no longer obey principles, no matter how ancient, provided they were not of their own making.”¹² Kant, although a product of the eighteenth century, rebelled against the idea that Nature controlled everything with fixed laws and asserted the primacy of human will. German philosophers after Kant insisted on organic law and rejected social contract theory in favor of the organic state. German Pietist communities of the eighteenth century were established along these lines. The “Brotherly Union and Agreement at Herrnhut” laid out forty-two “agreements” for the members of Count von Zinzendorf’s community—how to settle conflicts, what kinds of occupations to engage in, the spiritual habits to cultivate, and means of providing for weak or sick members.¹³ The Pietist movement was an attempt to correct an impersonal element that had crept into the Lutheran church. The state, as well as the church, was in perpetual need of reform which came about through struggle—like the original Reformation. Kant’s protégé, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, took Kant’s philosophy and developed German idealism. He is also considered the “father” of German nationalism.

In a philosophical/romantic variation, Fichte alleged that the individual will is swallowed up in a collective national will. The organic community was one composed of people with different but complementary gifts and as they interacted, the community was continually being transfigured and renewed in order to express the institutions, morals and artistic effort of its members. The fixed laws of the universe led to a deistic religion in which God sat back after setting everything into orderly, predictable motion, but the organic universe was not static and unchanging. The ideas of the Enlightenment were a source of inspiration for German intellectuals, but among educated, middle-class elites in Germany, traditional values remained more appealing than the proposed French secular state. George Mosse notes that, “Pietism managed to forge a unity between religion and patriotism, and fill love

¹² Berlin, *Roots of Romanticism*, 77.

¹³ Nicolas Ludwig, Count von Zinzendorf, “Brotherly Union and Agreement at Herrnhut”, 1727, in *Pietists, Selected Writings*, 325-330. Agreement number 18 is illustrative of the cooperation expected in the community: No brother is to enroll himself as a member of any particular trading or handicraft association without first acquainting the others of his design. And no business carried on among us is to be looked upon as in itself mean and despicable.

of the nation with Christian faith.”¹⁴ They also fused their understanding of a constantly renewing church with a continuously reconfigured state—this will be discussed in more detail below.

When the Jena romantics dispersed in the late 1790s many, like Fichte, ended up in Berlin. This is where he gave his “Addresses to the German Nation,” in the wake of Napoleon’s invasion of Prussia. Anthony La Vopa, in his biography of Fichte, says that Fichte, “like other Germans of his generation . . . experienced the Enlightenment as a distinctly Protestant phenomenon,” and he developed his concepts of selfhood and moral agency not as a rejection of his Lutheran heritage but as a “modern variation on the Lutheran ideal of calling, that would realize both a new kind of individual freedom and a new form of community.”¹⁵ Fichte found his calling by appealing to Prussians to remember their German heritage and fight for their national identity.

Drawing on Herder’s theories about language and culture, Fichte’s notions of nationalism grew out of an understanding that individuals were a product of “some common stream in which I am an element.”¹⁶ His “Addresses” were a kind of “call” to the German people to identify themselves as the “people of Germany.” La Vopa explains that Fichte did not believe in Christian saving grace (*sola fides/sola gratia*) but he still believed in a moral struggle. For Fichte, this became the crux of his philosophy of self-hood and striving, the individual will swallowed up in a collective national will. For Fichte, freedom meant action, not contemplation or surrender to natural laws. The eighteenth-century men of reason trusted in the absolute laws of nature. But in 1794 it seemed that by abolishing the Catholic Church and worshipping Reason, not only the authority of kings was destroyed but also a unifying moral authority. The result was rule by the mob, terror, and anarchy. In 1799 the French allowed Napoleon to take over and while reestablishing order in France, he wrecked disorder elsewhere. Jonathan Sheehan explains, “When the generation who lived through the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars looked back on the eighteenth-century, they saw only the ruins of rationalism. . . the new generation [of

¹⁴ George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975), 14.

¹⁵ Anthony J. La Vopa, *Fichte: The Self and the Calling of Philosophy, 1752-1799* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 12-13.

¹⁶ Berlin, *Roots of Romanticism*, 91.

Germans] felt themselves on the verge of a Christian religious revival unequaled since the Reformation, felt themselves in the midst of a grand desecularization.”¹⁷ The response of Germans was to assert their own will to create, out of nothing, a collective identity reflecting ancient Germanic roots and Lutheran faith.

Napoleonic Era, German Reforms, and Reaction

The Napoleonic era revealed weaknesses in the Prussian state and led to a number of internal reforms which strengthened the state and the people’s spirits. The humiliating defeats of 1806-1807 led to a reorganization of the army and the bureaucracy. Fichte, Jahn, Arndt, and Schleiermacher played a role in stirring the Prussians to fight the Wars of Liberation and ignited a hope of German unity. Of course, German experience is not defined by the Prussian experience—there was a wide range of reactions to French occupation and reorganization in the German states. But Karen Hagemann claims that “succeeding generations appear to have conceived of this period as the founding era of the Prussian-German nation and its collective identity.”¹⁸ The years of occupation and war established the French as the “other” and helped to forge a German identity, even though the German *Volk* were dispersed over a number of individual states. The future of Germany depended on fusing some of these states.

The period 1806-1815 proved to be formative in several ways. First, Napoleon dissolved the Holy Roman Empire and redrew the map of central Europe. Napoleon’s strategy was pragmatic: eliminate the ecclesiastical princes, independent cities and knights of the Empire; transfer the territory of the dissolved states to other states (and relocate power to a limited number of rulers); maintain equilibrium among the “great houses,” and provide compensation for losses.¹⁹ Earlier ideas about national identity included only the elites; Herder’s argument was that language and particular culture defined the “nation.” Napoleon’s reorganization and occupation had the effect of galvanizing the fluid patriotisms of the eighteenth century

¹⁷ Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 228.

¹⁸ Hagemann, “Occupation,” 610.

¹⁹ Declaration of France upon the Reorganization of Germany August 18, 1802. www.napoleon-series.org/research/government/diplomatic/c_germany4.html

into the harsher lineaments of the modern nation-state.²⁰ A group identity was forged around several antipathies—hatred of foreign taxes and conscription, the ravaging of farmland, and loss of particular identities as well as the sympathetic bonds of language and culture. During and following the Wars of Liberation, there were a variety of goals and visions articulated for Germany but not a single national goal. Katherine Aaslestad and Karen Hagemann note that, “In general, expressions of patriotic and national sentiments during this time were far more cultural than political . . . the idea of the nation proved flexible and adaptable to competing and overlapping loyalties and visions.”²¹ Anti-French propaganda was often couched in religious imagery and consciously sought to set aside confessional differences between Catholics and Protestants in the name of German unity. The religious nature of German nationalism stands in sharp contrast to French nationalism.

Besides geographical revisions and a nascent nationalism, the Napoleonic era sparked an era of reform. Particularly in Prussia, the humiliating military defeats exposed underlying weaknesses in government and society, but throughout the German states, French occupation and taxation drove reforms. In the Rhineland, which was annexed to the French state, the French overthrew the existing feudal systems and introduced religious toleration, secularization and diminution of aristocratic privilege. David Blackbourn calls the reforms, “a crash course in modernization.”²² Across the German states there was an effort to abolish the estates, reduce the power of the nobility, introduce civil liberties and constitutions, broaden the education system and create modern bureaucratic states. Prussian reformers, Stein and Hardenberg emancipated the peasants and introduced land reforms; they reformed the education system and the military. Stein was particularly influenced by Adam Smith but with a German idealist twist:

More important . . . ultimately than the idea of a freely competitive economy as such
was the idea that human ability was able to develop itself only in situations of challenge,

²⁰ Bayly, *Birth of the Modern World*, 112.

²¹ Katherine Aaslestad and Karen Hagemann, “1806 and Its Aftermath: Revisiting the Period of the Napoleonic Wars in German Central European Historiography,” *Central European History* 39, no. 4 (2006), 569.

²² David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 71.

and that freedom was necessary to the existence of such a challenge. . . In order, then to develop in the individual the quality of self-reliance, it would be necessary to give him an arena in which he could feel challenged, and at the same time the freedom to develop his own response to the challenge.²³

Events in France had alerted German aristocrats to the proposition that peasants could rebel in Germany too. This was enough to inspire governments to remove causes of dissatisfaction and at the same time, to compel peasants to become German patriots. Invading French armies forced German governments to solicit peasant support—not just to keep them from rebelling but also to enlist them in resisting the French. During the years 1806-1815, the peasants were called on to defend Prussia; throughout this time period the Enlightenment and French Revolution were identified with atheism—an anathema for pious common folk. One proposal for educating the peasants proposed a two volume *Volksbücher*—one volume comprised of a series of catechisms for religion, health, patriotism, and sound reason and the other containing passages from the Bible, a hymnal, and a collection of prayers.²⁴ “The peasant suddenly emerges as the most patriotic of Germans in his devotion and fidelity to prince, law, and fatherland.”²⁵ Parallel to this veneration of the peasant was a critique of the attitude of the nobility. Liberal and moderate groups in Germany promoted the peasant and mildly rebuked the noble—the nobility were exhorted to behave as Christians and view the peasants as fellow believers. It was the peasants who fed the nation, who kept its moral fiber strong, and who defended the land. The future of a unified German nation depended on whether the peasants could sustain their importance to the political state once the French threat was removed. Peasants, nobles, and liberal elites needed to maintain a unified front.

²³ Gagliardo, *Pariah to Patriot*, 190.

²⁴ Gagliardo, *Pariah to Patriot*, 159.

²⁵ Gagliardo, *Pariah to Patriot*, 164.

The Pietist and Lutheran idea of “calling” emphasized that people had different roles to play in society but that all jobs and positions had worth and meaning.²⁶ This concept has a relation to the organic state (mentioned earlier in relation to the romantics and Fichte) but also to Lutheran Christianity—each member of a community had an individual role and also a responsibility to the whole. This gave value to individual work because the entire society depended on the work of each person no matter their rank or wealth. In contrast to the Catholic Church, “calling” was for every believer, not just the clergy. The priesthood of all believers was a notion that would evolve into the notion of citizenship and political participation in the decades after the Wars of Liberation. Further education and indoctrination would be necessary to turn laborers and peasants into full-fledged participants in the nation.

Central Europe was further reorganized at Vienna in 1815, and there was a movement for the German states of the Confederation to write constitutions. Most of the states did and implemented some form of limited representative government. But the hopes of the German liberal nationalists in Prussia were quashed after the assassination of August von Kotzebue and the passage of the Karlsbad Decrees in 1819. However, Blackbourn cautions that, “We should not equate politics with parliaments, constitutions and formal political debate. Public life in the broad sense was not frozen in this period.”²⁷ German peasants in central Europe were not quite ready to participate as national citizens in 1815 but were they by 1848? Some recent historians make the argument that peasants, craftsmen, and laborers were gradually brought into the public sphere at the popular level and thereby politicized. “Also characteristic of this interpretation is an attempt to connect the outbreak and course of the [1848] revolution with the social, economic, and cultural changes of the preceding decades.”²⁸ Social groups outside the educated men of letters used other channels of communication—the singing and athletic associations, social and reading clubs, and their churches.

²⁶ Luther’s conception of calling pertained to salvation *and* to occupation. According to Max Weber, Luther was the first to translate “calling” in I Corinthians 7:17-24 as *Beruf*. “Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him.” I Cor. 7:17

²⁷ Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century*, 124.

²⁸ Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848-1851*, 3.

In addition, the failure of reforms in Prussia, its inability to write a constitution after 1815 and the conservative backlash after 1819, gave birth to the radical nationalist *Burschenschaften* movement. It was originally a student movement which envisioned an ordered state representing the values of freedom and equality. They dedicated themselves to a unified Germany that represented these values and to which they could belong. Many of the students later became teachers who spread out beyond Prussia to promote a national, rather than a local *Heimatgefühl*. In spite of efforts to sustain the patriotism of the Napoleonic era, the period of the Restoration and the *Vormärz* saw a polarization of political ideologies and an expanding public sphere. Dagmar Herzog whose research focuses on Baden, the most liberal region of the German Confederation, observes that, “Far from being an era of steadily increasing secularization, the first half of the nineteenth-century actually saw a major battle over the place and content of Christianity in a post-Enlightenment post-French Revolution world, a battle that involved all the key political players and reached up to the highest levels of state.”²⁹ In examining the evolution of these various forces, we will look first at how distinct political ideologies developed.

Faith and Power—The Development of Political Ideologies

The always-present fear of revolution forced conservatives to develop a “positive political doctrine” that was not merely opposed to radical change but justified tradition. Jonathan Sperber discerns three themes that were encompassed in this conservative doctrine: historical tradition, patriarchalism and divine justification. “Governmental institutions should be perceived as living organisms, products of a long historical development, in the course of which particular traditions had been created and become part of the existing state or affairs.”³⁰ The oldest institution was the family; state and society were expanded versions of a family. Just as God ordained the family, he ordained the state with a divinely appointed monarch—the father of the state. Conservatives criticized government bureaucracy, so valued by Napoleon and Prussian reformers. What father runs his house with the help of tenured civil servants? And

²⁹ Dagmar Herzog, *Intimacy and Exclusion: Religious Politics in Pre-Revolutionary Baden* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 4.

³⁰ Sperber, *European Revolutions*, 74.

of course, these institutions—family, state, monarchs and social structure were part of God’s ordained order. Conservatives were generally anti-nationalist because they supported individual ruling dynasties.

Liberalism in general arose out of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. With its emphasis on natural laws and natural rights came belief in equal treatment under the law, the right to private property and freedoms of religion, speech, and the press. Liberals favored government-sponsored public education and anti-clericalism was a major component because established churches were a mainstay of conservatism. German liberals looked to Great Britain and its constitutional monarchy as a model. And they admired the American system of balancing powers between executive, legislative, and judicial bodies. Similarly, the early romantics believed the best state was a mixture of aristocracy, monarchy and democracy. Liberals were reluctant to stir up the masses and feared anarchy and mob rule. Their goal was education and an avoidance of the excesses of the French Revolution. Before 1830 liberals and radicals were not that different. After the 1830 revolutions there arose more opportunities for political organization and distinctions became more apparent. Age was also a factor in the split between liberalism and radicalism. The original German liberals were those who participated in the Wars of Liberation; leftism became increasingly associated with the younger generations. Three main beliefs separated later German liberals from radicals: popular sovereignty, religion and revolution. As we have already seen, liberals favored political participation by the educated classes, not everyone indiscriminately. Liberals tended to fit into the traditional Lutheran belief system and many also identified with pietism. And liberals rejected the excesses of the French Revolution preferring the order of the British or American constitutional systems.

Nineteenth-century radicalism was dominated by the heritage of the French Revolution. Radicals drew their inspiration and symbolism from that event. Jonathan Sperber reports: “In the 1840s, leftists all across Europe sang the Marsellaise. . . They waved tricolor flags, each national group having its own three colors, called for liberty, equality, and fraternity, wore Phrygian caps, planted trees of liberty,

denounced their opponents as aristocrats, and even made surreptitious references to the guillotine.”³¹

While liberals believed that an educated elite could represent the people, radicals believed sovereignty rested in the people—they were the ultimate source of power. Radicals vehemently opposed established churches and disdained the authority of religion based on revelation. German liberals and radicals did both favor a national state and many German liberal nationalists placed their hopes in the kingdom of Prussia as the largest, most affluent, and militarily powerful of the German states. The romantics, who had so much to do with early German nationalism, did not easily fit into a particular political ideology.

The Romantics in general rejected rules, order, self-restraint and discipline—freedom was the ability to reject these things. Free will meant that you create values, goals, ends, your own vision of the universe. “According to Berlin the twin aspects of romanticism were exertion of the will, and denial of order, laws of nature, rules, etc. The heart of the entire process is invention, creation, making out of literally nothing, or out of any materials that may be to hand.”³² The “highest good” for the romantics was education (self-realization) and through the education of society everyone could come together in a community seeking the best for the whole. The romantics rejected social contract theory because they thought it pitted people against one another—everyone was only concerned for their own self-interests. “For the romantics, both the absolutist princes in Germany and the Jacobins in France had made the same fundamental mistake: They abolished autonomous groups, the old corporations and guilds, so that everything could be directed from above, whether that was by the will of a monarch or some revolutionary committee.”³³ The only safeguard to this two-edge choice (absolutism or Jacobinism) was the structure of the organic state.

Much of romantic thinking reflects the idealism of early nineteenth-century philosophers from Fichte to Hegel. For Fichte the “self” was only what one makes of it (through education) and the “self” also “creates” its world—it has the power to create its society/world through endless striving. “What Fichte was saying is that the social and political world is not an eternal order to which we must submit;

³¹ Sperber, *European Revolutions*, 80.

³² Berlin, *Roots of Romanticism*, 119.

³³ Berlin, *Roots of Romanticism*, 39.

rather it too is something that we can create according to the demands of our own reason . . . he was indeed insisting that we have not only the right but the duty to transform the social and political world according to reason.”³⁴ Fichte believed individuals created their community, and it did not depend on a political state. The community could go from one civil government to another—republic, democracy, constitutional monarchy, etc. The romantics denied objective laws of economics or politics because objective laws were fixed and unchangeable, whereas organic law was always renewed by the community of creative, striving individuals.

German romanticism and Lutheran Christianity shaped political ideology in the German states in a way that was unique to them. An older historian, Robert Bigler, says that in German history the great “movers and shapers” have been men of literature and music. “Furthermore, these men of music and literature as well as men active in public life, have in turn been shaped to a great extent by the Protestant religious heritage of Germany. Many of them have come from families of clergymen even though quite a few have not been religious themselves in the sense of accepting a definite creed.”³⁵ In light of these particular German characteristics of ideologies and beliefs concerning the state and society we can now look at how did Germans aligned themselves politically.

Who’s Who

Some generalizations can be made about religious affiliations and corresponding political affiliations. Those who belonged to a religious majority or the same one as the ruling dynasty were more likely to be conservatives. Protestant pastors were not always in absolute agreement about political opinions. Friedrich Julius Stahl, a conservative, argued for an alliance between the conservative party and ‘positive’ religion (Schleiermacher, et al) on the basis that both were opposed to revolution, reason and skepticism. Conservatism appealed to the upper classes who opposed revolution as synonymous with rebellion against God, as well as to lower class peasants, laborers and craftsmen. Pietist Johann Heinrich

³⁴ Berlin, *Roots of Romanticism*, 177.

³⁵ Robert M. Bigler, “The Rise of Political Protestantism in Nineteenth Century Germany: The Awakening of Political Consciousness and the Beginning of Political Activity in the Protestant Clergy of Pre-March Prussia,” *Church History* 34, no. 4 (1965), 424.

Jung-Stilling (called the greatest of the neo-Pietists), “gently reminded the peasant” to pay his feudal obligations. “There is truly only one mild, peaceable, and beneficent way in which all abuses . . . can be abolished and this is very certainly general striving for moral perfection, refinement of oneself and avoidance of luxury; in a word: general and practical cultivation of the pure and true Christian religion.”³⁶

The injunction to behave as true Christians applied to nobles as well as peasants. The poet Matthias Claudius wrote a poem entitled “The Peasant Song” which described the work of the peasant and reminded both nobles and peasants to consider the source of their blessings:

We plow, and we scatter
The seed on the land;
However, growth and prosperity
Is not in our hands.

Refrain:
Every good gift
Above comes from God,
From the beautiful blue heaven!

He gives cattle and joy,
He makes us fresh and red,
He gives the cows grazing,
Our children, bread.

[Refrain]

Even piety and trust,
Silent and noble mind,
Imploring him, and look to Him,
Everything comes to us through Him.

[Refrain]³⁷

The produce from the fields came from the labor of the peasants but was ultimately a gift from God. The nobles may have owned the land, but they could not take credit for its success—that was from the peasants’ labor and God’s blessing. The nobility had a responsibility to respond in humility; then their peasants would be obedient and would not chatter so much about the rights of man. This championing of submission to civil authority and obedience to Christian morality was reminiscent of Luther and sixteenth

³⁶ Jung-Stilling quoted in Gagliardo, 159.

³⁷ Matthias Claudius, “The Peasant Song,” www.kalliope.org/en/digt.pl?longdid=claudius2001102301

century events. Other nineteenth-century Christians and theologians taught that obedience was required only as long as the authorities acted according to the constitution, otherwise the right of resistance was permissible.³⁸

Liberal German Protestants were split into two groups. One group was liberal politically but more conservative in their religious beliefs. They were nationalists and believed in constitutional government, but they generally supported traditional authority. Johann Gustav Droysen exemplifies this group well and will be discussed in more detail a little further on. He thought Stein's reorganization of Prussia during the Napoleonic era demonstrated a proper balance between absolutism and popular sovereignty and claimed that the "major vocation of his own age [was] to continue the liberating implications of the Reformation 'in social and political affairs' with the firm conviction that it was 'not in vain that the great movement of the so-called material interests, the massive progress of the human spirit in understanding and controlling nature accompanied the powerful upturn in the religious life of contemporary Protestantism.'"³⁹ Droysen participated in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* performance in 1829 and as a consequence of that participation wrote, "We cannot fail to recognize that Bach's music, the true essence and witness of our evangelical faith, came to life again in our city, the very countenance of our Prussian Fatherland. . . Prussia is the land of Protestantism . . . and the time has come to restore this religion to where it belongs as the central point and purpose of our lives and the life of the state."⁴⁰

The other strand of liberal Protestantism developed out of the "idealistic" reinterpretation of Christianity posited by Fichte, Hegel or Schleiermacher—the "father of liberal Protestantism." The more radical factions within this group rejected justification by faith alone and thought that as the state and culture became more moral there would be no need for the church. Luther was "modernized and came to be regarded as the father of the spirit, of freedom and of modern culture."⁴¹ This group of liberals was preoccupied with responsible autonomy and free self-development of the individual and thus more

³⁸ Nipperdey, *Napoleon to Bismarck*, 386.

³⁹ Droysen quoted by Southard, 392.

⁴⁰ Droysen quoted by Applegate, *Bach in Berlin*, 232.

⁴¹ Nipperdey, *Napoleon to Bismarck*, 379.

inclined to popular sovereignty and democracy. Included in this group were “rationalist Protestant pastors in southwestern Germany, who had long been in trouble with their ecclesiastical superiors over their Unitarian views [and] showed a strong inclination in 1848 to interpret the Gospels to their peasant parishioners in terms of liberty, equality, fraternity, to plant trees of liberty and found democratic political clubs.”⁴² Both liberal groups identified themselves as Protestant, were anti-Roman Catholic, and were the firmest supporters of nationalism. In addition to these two strands within traditional Protestantism, there were important political factions from the pietist tradition.

Not all Pietists contributed to German nationalism and unification and there were at least five main groups of Pietists in the nineteenth-century. Two of these groups were more political. One of these was comprised primarily of leading government officials, senior officers of armed forces and Prussian nobles living east of the Elbe River and characterized by Prussian patriotism, piety and conservatism. This group of conservatives wanted an organized and established church in charge of public education and public morality. They are commonly named the “throne and altar” constituency because of their belief in a divinely ordained social structure and a monarch chosen by God. Protestant revivalists Ernst-Ludwig and Leopold von Gerlach organized a conservative group among the Prussian nobility who made up a circle of supporters around Friedrich Wilhelm IV, “the conservative and devout king of Prussia, [who] was given to describing the French Revolution as the Beast of the Book of Revelation.”⁴³

The other politically oriented Pietist group was led by Johann Hinrich Wichern and was important for the course of German nationalism in the middle of the nineteenth century. In the summer of 1848, at the height of the revolution, Wichern wrote in an article: “The German nation has become what it is, through Christianity . . . It has to be born a second time as a nation, it has to be reborn through Christianity.”⁴⁴ Wichern saw Germany as the new Israel, first becoming a revived nation bringing all

⁴² Sperber, *European Revolutions*, 197.

⁴³ Sperber, *European Revolutions*, 75.

⁴⁴ Hartmut Lehmann, “Pietism and Nationalism: The Relationship Between Protestant Revivalism and National Renewal in Nineteenth-century Germany,” *Church History* 51, no. 1 (1982), 47. “Throne and altar” was a philosophy that denounced universal equality and freedom and endorsed divinely-appointed kings as representative of the authority of God.

Germans back into the true church (*Volkskirche*) and then reaching out to the rest of the world. “Then, in the same way as history spoke of the German church as the church of the Reformation it would in future speak of her as the church of regeneration.”⁴⁵ Wichern believed godlessness had originated in France; the German people needed to return to their old virtues: piety, morality, social justice and political obedience. This brings us back to the common folk, the peasants who had become in the Napoleonic era the group that most epitomized these German virtues but had been neglected in the conservative reaction of the post-revolution era. Popular culture and pressing social and material needs would bring them into the public sphere in the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s.

Einheit (Unity) and Disunity

Conservatives had a more or less fixed constituency and agenda. The social groups who could be more easily persuaded of nationalist ambitions were students, the working classes and peasants. The goal of German nationalists, who originated with the early romantics, was to bring the *Volk* together. Various groups and forces worked together after the conservative crackdown of the 1820s to foster a national culture. “When the governments of the German Confederation curtailed the freedoms of speech and assembly with the Karlsbad Decrees in 1819 and then again with the Six Acts in 1832, they unwittingly politicized manifold areas of public space and popular culture.”⁴⁶ The impact of the performance of Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* and the growth of singing clubs and festivals has already been discussed. Most participants in these were the bourgeoisie, but music functioned as a political tool among the lower classes, as well. In the Rhineland, where French influence was most pronounced in the early years of the nineteenth-century, Rhinelanders continued to invoke tunes and themes from the pre-1815 era to protest Prussian authoritarianism prior to 1848. Songs were an effective way to embed political ideas because you learned a song by hearing it and singing it (in some public setting like a church, tavern or club) but then you continued to sing it to yourself as you went about your daily life, and the ideas worked their way into your consciousness. Political songs might be censored in the process of publication, but

⁴⁵ Lehmann, “Pietism and Nationalism,” 49.

⁴⁶ Brophy, *Popular Culture*, 12.

Freiheitslieder could be sung in private spaces or in situations where censors (or police) were not present and became part of the culture.

James Brophy's thesis in *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere* is that in opposition to the prevailing notion that the public sphere was primarily composed of the educated bourgeoisie, common folk participated in their own public spheres and sought to join the political world as rights-bearing citizens. Their arenas of interaction might differ from the more highly educated, but still provided them with the means to find out about the news of the day and form opinions. "The tavern, the market, and the pulpit were the principal nodal points in a village's social network . . . the market and tavern trafficked in opinion and rumor, the pulpit conveyed an authoritative viewpoint. Consequently, the power of the pulpit to influence parish views and connect it with the outside world was considerable."⁴⁷ Both Protestant and Catholic pulpits became part of the public sphere.

Up to this point, only the political viewpoints of Protestants have been examined; a brief consideration of Catholicism in Germany is in order here. Within the Protestant churches we have seen that there were divisions of opinion between the liberal and conservative viewpoints. The same thing happened within the Catholic churches of Germany. Liberal Catholic priests and bishops in the post-French Revolution era loosened ties with Rome and used German in the mass. But the 1830s and 1840s saw a return to conservative Catholicism and the reformist priests/bishops were gradually replaced. There was a resurgence of popular Catholic piety in which pilgrimages and religious festivals became central to expressions of faith. In regions like the Rhineland or in Baden where the ruler was Protestant but a majority of the population was Catholic, this led to clashes between the Catholic Church and the civil authorities.

The two issues that most threatened public peace were clerical celibacy and mixed marriages. In one of the more famous incidents, the Cologne Upheavals of 1837, the Prussian government arrested the archbishop over the mixed marriage issue, causing an uproar all over Germany. The position of the Protestant government was that mixed marriages could overcome confessional difference and therefore

⁴⁷ Brophy, *Popular Culture*, 28.

work towards the unity of the population—the children of Catholic-Protestant marriages could be compelled to join the state church and strengthen the Lutheran confession. The conservative Roman Catholic position was that Catholics did not have freedom of conscience to decide matters which the church had a position on—marriage, the rearing of children, salvation, etc. Herzog emphasizes that in Baden, “The Church began from the premise that the individual had no rights.”⁴⁸ Liberals from both confessions were troubled by this position because it threatened their ideal of autonomous individuals freely choosing a belief system. Liberal activism was particularly intense in Baden because of the alarm over the rise of the religious right—both of the Catholic and Protestant variety.

Frequently Protestant ministers and Catholic priests used their pulpits to criticize the other religion. One priest viewed sermons “as the only available means to combat pernicious print material condoned by a biased Protestant government.”⁴⁹ Warring sermons often ended up causing civil disorder, riots, and other demonstrations provoking governments to crack down and offer guidelines for sermons. The Prussian government offered the standard that sermons should emphasize piety and adhere strictly to the context of biblical passages, not making allusions to current events.⁵⁰ Out of this discord came the *Deutschkatholiken* movement. This represented a merging of Protestants and German-Catholics who met unofficially to worship together. Liberal-secularists all over Germany praised this movement as a unifying force because it broke down confessional differences, and as observed earlier, it was hailed as a new Reformation and its leader, Johannes Ronge, the new Luther. (Ronge and Luther were both former Roman Catholic priests). From the above we can concur with Nipperdey’s observation that “Ideas, theories, political agendas within Germany had an altogether theological flavor.”⁵¹ The *Volk* of Germany became more aware of political issues through the various channels of communication available to them. Education, a critical means of communication, was valued by nearly all Germans in the nineteenth century and this, like many other facets of German life, could trace its roots to the Reformation.

⁴⁸ Herzog, *Intimacy and Exclusion*, 48.

⁴⁹ Brophy, *Popular Culture*, 281.

⁵⁰ Brophy, *Popular Culture*, 283.

⁵¹ Nipperdey, *Napoleon to Bismarck*, 373.

Luther and other Reformers were particularly interested in education because of their emphasis on reading the Bible. If we look back to Spener's seventy questions and answers in *The Spiritual Priesthood*, we read that the third office of a "priest" (which according to Spener is every Christian believer) is to be occupied with the Word of God. "Not only shall they *hear* it, when it is preached and proclaimed in the congregation, but they shall also diligently *read* it and have it read to them."⁵² The pietists founded a number of educational facilities for not only "the education of the sons of lords, nobles and other important people," but also schools for Burger sons and daughters, the poor, and orphans.⁵³ Because of the influence of the Reformation, education was more common in the German states than some other regions of Europe. Michael Rowe reports that the Rhineland in 1788 boasted some of the highest literacy rates in Europe—91% of 7000 schoolchildren between the ages of seven and twelve could read and write in the city of Trier.⁵⁴ And an English traveler to the region shortly after Napoleon's defeat noted with surprise that most peasants could read and write well.⁵⁵ A reform of the education system was one of the main accomplishments of the Prussians in the Napoleonic era, and several of the early German nationalists were involved in this project including Schleiermacher and Fichte. The failure of liberal and nationalist aspirations in the post-Napoleonic era generated a couple of groups that would have a tremendous impact on education. These were the gymnastic societies and the *Burschenschaften* (student fraternities). These groups were absolutely dedicated to German nationalism.

Friedrich Ludwig Jahn was an iconic figure in the development of German nationalism and played a pivotal role in the gymnastic societies, the *Burschenschaften*, and education. In 1811 when the French had occupied Prussia and forced alliances with various other German states, "Father" Jahn opened the first gymnastic ground (in Berlin) with the purpose of training youth to be ready, willing and able to fight for the fatherland. Hans Kohn, known for his theory of nationalism that posits a divergence of types—the liberal-constitutional form of nationalism exemplified by France and England versus the

⁵² Spener, *Pietists, Selected Writings*, 54.

⁵³ *Pietists, Selected Writings*, 163-164.

⁵⁴ Michael Rowe, *From Reich to State: The Rhineland in the Revolutionary Age, 1780-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 7.

⁵⁵ Rowe, 237.

ethnic-linguistic state situated in eastern Europe—says about Jahn that, “Among the German nationalists of the Napoleonic period none had a stronger influence on the practical manifestations of German nationalism than Friedrich Ludwig Jahn.”⁵⁶ Jahn’s introduction of national festivals and the building of monuments to commemorate Prussian victories over the French, combined with his stress on instruction in national history, blended Germanic symbols and rites with Protestant/Christian ones. The gymnastic societies “had the dual purpose of binding the nation together into a strong unit and creating a democratic and egalitarian society, no longer divided along estate lines.”⁵⁷ Jahn’s basic belief was that body and spirit were one and that love of nation could be expressed by keeping fit physically and spiritually. In 1818, there were approximately one hundred gymnastic organizations in Prussia with about six thousand gymnasts. “The creation of gymnastics was part of Jahn’s concern for meaningful national rites; for he realized that such rites meant the channeling of a chaotic crowd into a mass disciplined in part through the performance of ‘sacred acts.’”⁵⁸ The original gymnastic training was to prepare a student militia to fight the War of Liberation. The war generation formed the nucleus of the student movement in which Jahn played a critical role. Jahn’s involvement with the students of this first generation of participants carried over into his role in the education system of Germany.

In 1806 Jahn wrote the first draft of his *Deutsches Volkstum* which was a total critique of German society along with Jahn’s proposed solutions. The *Volk* were a deep-rooted creative force and part of God’s own creative effort. The *Volk* needed to be made aware of their history—primarily through education—before they could “create” and “save” themselves and generate a nation-state. This awakening began during the Napoleonic era, but it would not be complete until Germany became its own nation. Jahn was part of the group of German nationalists that emerged from the struggle against French occupation. His gymnasts participated in the wars of liberation, but he had a more pervasive influence in his involvement with the students of the *Burschenschaften* and his interest in folklore. The *Burschenschaften* was “an organization seeking to reform student life . . . and to conduct a civilizing

⁵⁶ Hans Kohn, “Father Jahn’s Nationalism,” *The Review of Politics* 11, no. 4 (1949), 419.

⁵⁷ Nipperdey, *Napoleon to Bismarck*, 244.

⁵⁸ Mosse, *Nationalization of the Masses*, 129.

crusade for the cultivation of the inner self, bring to the fore the new idealistic ethos, the new spirit of friendship and community, the concept of an internalized ‘honour.’”⁵⁹ They were democratic and nationalist, meaning Christian. “Honor, Freedom, Fatherland” was their motto and they introduced the black-red-gold colors which became the German flag. Symbolically the colors represented the struggle out of the black night of slavery through the red blood of battle to the golden day of liberty. The *Burschenschaften* represented a kind of counter-culture. “They symbolized a populist revolt against hierarchy, elitism, and authoritarianism.”⁶⁰ Their goal was a united Germany based on popular sovereignty and civil rights. They began their training as students; many went on to be actively involved in education and politics.

Jahn spent several years in prison as a result of the crackdown initiated with the Karlsbad Decrees. After his release, he made it his mission to educate students who would become the next generation of teachers. For Jahn, his goal was that “most sacred moment . . . when [the people] awakens from its torpor [and] rises from its death-like existence . . . A people which grasps with joy and love the eternity of its folkdom can celebrate at all times the festival of its rebirth and the day of its resurrection.”⁶¹ Education was what would awaken and reshape the nation. Jahn’s educational philosophy was influenced by the Swiss educator, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi.

Pestalozzi believed experience was the basis of education—peasant children should be educated in the environment of fields, barns, etc. He was responsible for establishing several model schools based on his belief in personal development—“education had to do not just with the inculcation of information, but with the development of the power of the individual *to think for himself*.”⁶² Jahn tweaked this philosophy to reflect German romantic beliefs in the *Volk* and the community. The student and gymnastic groups in which Jahn participated or helped form demonstrate the conceptualization of freedom as a group activity as opposed to individual freedom; the most important group was the *Volk*. Jahn coined the

⁵⁹ Nipperdey, *Napoleon to Bismarck*, 244.

⁶⁰ Roland Ray Lutz, “Father Jahn and His Teacher-Revolutionaries from the German Student Movement,” *The Journal of Modern History* 48, no. 2 On Demand Supplement (1976), 2.

⁶¹ Kohn, “Father Jahn’s Nationalism,” 429.

⁶² Gagliardo, *Pariah to Patriot*, 191.

term, *Volkstum*, by which he meant the folk spirit. His goal was to educate children by using folk tales and *Volkslieder*; he read the *Nibelungenlied* to young people in his athletic clubs. For Jahn this meant more than inculcating an appreciation for traditional German culture—it was the means by which the *Volk* would be rejuvenated.⁶³ When revolution broke out in 1848, three generations of German youth had been indoctrinated through the gymnastic and student movements; successive generations of students became teachers in Jahnian-Pestalozzian schools and when representatives were sent to Frankfurt to write a constitution, Jahn and many of his students were among those sent there.

1848—The Time for Freedom and Unity Arrives

The entire period from 1815 to 1848 can be seen as a period of rising social and political expectations followed by repression. For instance, when Frederick William IV ascended to the Prussian throne in 1840, there was hope of change but he turned out to be a disappointment. Correspondingly, the 1840s saw the “explosive growth of associational life” (the athletic and singing clubs, reading and social clubs, and the *Deutschkatholiken* movement), “united in their anger at the authoritarianism gaining ground within the Catholic church in particular, and they were devoted to individual freedom of belief and cross-confessional cooperation.”⁶⁴ The large athletic and singing festivals made supraregional organizations possible; improved communications meant that the news of events in one part of Germany (or Europe) quickly spread; a genuine national public sphere was beginning to manifest itself.

Most historians seem to be united on the broad causes of discontent that led to the most widespread wave of revolutions in the nineteenth-century. The roots lay in the beginnings of industrialization and changes in agricultural practices, pressure of growing populations on natural resources, the decline of the guild system, conflicts between lords and serfs, forest use, resistance to taxation, religious conflicts, and hopes raised by the French Revolution. That Revolution had introduced the ideas of a new order and even where actual long-term changes had not taken place, the model had been created and there now existed the possibility of change. “Much of the tension leading up to the 1848

⁶³ Cati Coe, “The Education of the Folk: Peasant Schools and Folklore Scholarship,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 113, no. 447 (2000), 20-43.

⁶⁴ Herzog, *Intimacy and Exclusion*, 13.

revolution can be understood as involving the interaction of these new political ideas . . . with a social structure and a structure of social conflict.”⁶⁵ Between 1845-47 there was a run of very poor harvests, economic recession and a financial and banking panic—all related to industrialization and a shifting labor force. Overshadowing all these was a social crisis of bleak poverty, crime and periodic revolts all put down by force.⁶⁶ As the feeling grew that there was something fundamentally wrong with the established order, Frederick William IV summoned the provincial estates. Jonathan Sperber notes that, “It was hard to miss the analogy to the events of 1789: the government’s financial problems, the attempt to resolve them by calling for what was, in effect, an Estates General, the determination of the majority of the deputies to use state finances as a lever to produce political change. If all these had occurred, could a new storming of the Bastille be far behind?”⁶⁷

When news reached Germany of the February revolution in France, it seemed to signal the end of the old order and the Age of Metternich. Nipperdey says that revolution came unexpectedly to Germany in the sense that it was not planned or organized by activists, but it was a spontaneous outburst of anger and of hope. “Monster meetings were held, petitions drawn up and crowds gathered outside parliaments, palaces and town halls, calling for an end to censorship, the establishment of citizens’ militias or civil guards, liberal ministers, a national parliament and the removal of remaining feudal privileges.”⁶⁸ The revolutionary movement began in Baden and the southwest (where incidentally the *Burschenschaften* movement was strongest) and spread north and east. Ideas, sentiment, and action brought Germans together despite their geographical differences.

In March, crowds of people in Berlin confronted Frederick William IV. The March Demands included: freedom of the press, an end to censorship/freedom of political expression, courts with juries, a militia, and a national Parliament. Other demands were added to the original ones: new elections, a liberalization of voting rights, and liberation of peasants. In May, elections were held for Prussian and

⁶⁵ Sperber, *European Revolutions*, 55.

⁶⁶ Revolts included the Silesian weavers in 1844, Galician peasants in 1846, and the Berlin potato revolt in 1847.

⁶⁷ Sperber, *European Revolutions*, 115.

⁶⁸ Blackbourn, *Long Nineteenth Century*, 141.

other state parliaments and for the national parliament. The Constituent National Assembly gathered in St. Paul's Church in Frankfurt on May 18. Nipperdey says that, "The masses were to constitute the power base of a revolution: they included city-dwellers, apprentices, workers and students, and peasants and country people from the whole state."⁶⁹ But Blackbourn notes, "The revolutionaries were less powerful than they appeared, the forces of the old order less weak. That was to be crucial in what followed."⁷⁰

As elections were held to choose representatives for the Frankfurt Assembly, ordinary voters generally rejected radical activists and the liberal politicians who had just participated in the Prussian United Diet preceding the outbreak of revolution. "Instead, they voted along religious lines, supporting candidates sponsored by the clergy of their Christian confession, opposing candidates of the other one. Whether chosen by the Protestant or Catholic vote, the deputies so elected stood on the right wing of the political spectrum."⁷¹ Sperber goes on to point out that the elections showed the power of the "notables, the locally most influential and affluent men," whose sympathies were usually with the liberal center or the right.⁷² The Assembly has sometimes been characterized as a "professor's parliament." Out of 812 delegates, 94 members were professors, 30 were teachers and 233 had a university education.

Among those elected were Ernst Moritz Arndt⁷³ (who took his seat on the center right) and Friedrich Ludwig Jahn who was surrounded by forty-five *Burschenschaften* alumni. These alumni represented nearly every political perspective, but most of them clustered in the center.⁷⁴ The president of the Frankfurt Assembly was Heinrich von Gagern who was the co-founder of the *Burschenschaften*. Arndt, a professor, and Jahn, whose career was spent working with students in the gymnastic and *Burschenschaften* movements, represented the generation that liberated Germany from French occupation

⁶⁹ Nipperdey, *Napoleon to Bismarck*, 528.

⁷⁰ Blackbourn, *Long Nineteenth Century*, 143.

⁷¹ Sperber, *European Revolutions*, 153.

⁷² Sperber, *European Revolutions*, 154.

⁷³ Arndt, as a hero of the Napoleonic era, was nominated by nine different cities but chose to represent Solingen with its steel and iron workers.

⁷⁴ There was only one *Burschenschaften* representative on the far Right; they occupied seats throughout the rest of the spectrum.

and began to uncover the roots of the German *Volk*. They were the two patriots left from the old woodcut—Fichte had died in 1814 and Schleiermacher in 1832.

There were three main questions taken up by the parliament: Who should be included in a German nation? What form of government should the nation have? Should Germany be a federation or a centralized state? For my purposes, I am only concerned with the questions about how German Protestants conceived of a Christian state—how would freedom and equality be defined politically and how would political power be distributed? I intend to focus on the views of Arndt and Jahn because of their roles during the Napoleonic era and their influence during the ensuing decades. I will also draw on the ideas of Johann Gustav Droysen who was influential as a historian and a nationalist, served as a link between German music culture and political culture, and represented a younger generation than that which fought in the Wars of Liberation. After looking at their theories of what a German nation *should* look like, I will examine the constitution that was written by the Frankfurt Parliament. Droysen, Jahn and Arndt all drew on a Protestant heritage and those beliefs were central to their life's work. They all shared a belief in a German nation-state led by Prussia and mostly supported the idea of a Big Germany (*Großdeutsch*). They sat on the Center or the Center Right of the Assembly; their views diverged somewhat on the issue of what form the government should take.

Father Jahn was the most democratic of the three men. His schools (those he founded and inspired) enforced a strictly egalitarian format—students and teachers addressed each other with the informal “du” and addressed each other by first names. Instructors and students alike dressed in the Jahnian style—beret, pea-jacket, grey linen trousers—and wore shoulder length hair and beards. They lived together in dormitories without strict rules or punishments; cooperation, conciliation, working together for the good of all was expected and cultivated. In stressing the equality of the academic community, Jahn was preparing the students (and teachers) to be equal participants in the civil state. His vision for Germany, which he first described years before in *Deutsches Volksthum*, was for a single princely state administered by a king, a council of ministers, and a larger administrative council (*Reichsrat*). The officers of the *Reichsrat* would share power with a legislature (*Reichstag*) made up of

elected representatives from each class of citizenry. This was not the feudal three-estate structure, but instead would reflect the complexity of German society—laborers, peasants, merchants, professionals, industrialists, etc. “It is clear that for Jahn sovereignty resided in the people, the *Volk*, through its elected representatives in the *Reichstag*. The prince and the bureaucracy were only the administrative officers of the popular state.”⁷⁵ Jahn’s gymnastic and student organizations and the schools he founded and worked with were the training grounds for creating a participatory, democratic, national state. He believed that, “Public education is the true spirituality of the people. Without it the best conceived popular constitution will become a paper weather-vane, a magic book which no one can read and understand, a burned down candle which the slightest breath will extinguish.”⁷⁶ While Jahn believed in democracy and popular sovereignty, he also believed there was a place for the aristocracy in society and his vision of government included a king. It is understandable that students raised in his schools and organizations represented a range of political positions in the Frankfurt Parliament.

After Arndt first arose in St. Paul’s Church to speak, he described himself as, “an old man beyond the age in which a man can hope to do anything,” but happy to be in the presence of many young men whose, “German conscience. . . believes in the immortality of his people.”⁷⁷ The whole assembly applauded him and Jahn suggested a “threefold Hoch!” Arndt was publicly thanked for the great national song, “Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland?” and asked to add some lines with reference to the current circumstances.⁷⁸ Arndt was staunchly against democracy and opposed the formation of a republic. Although he seldom spoke during the general meetings, he was not timid in expressing his opposition to absolute democracy; he was one of the most determined to see a German constitutional federal state. In January of 1849 as the Parliament was completing its work, Arndt wrote to his friend, Frau von Kathen:

In the next few weeks we shall come here to the chapter of the German Chief King or Emperor.

⁷⁵ Lutz, 7.

⁷⁶ Lutz, quoting Jahn, 9.

⁷⁷ Arndt, 426-427.

⁷⁸ Arndt, 426-427.

You can imagine what excitement and emotion in heart and head this causes. . . . If people do their duty, if they obey their reason and their consciences as they ought to speak, it could be no other than our lord the King of Prussia. . . . We will place our hope in God, and pray that in the wild tumult of the world He will let faith and love live and rule in us and in the people.⁷⁹

Arndt believed in a constitutional form of government. As a Prussian (and a German) he believed that Friedrich Wilhelm was the best choice to lead a unified German nation-state. Friedrich Wilhelm had the added advantage of being an ardent Lutheran-Protestant. Arndt had a role to play not just in the Parliament, but also in persuading Friedrich Wilhelm to accept the crown. Before we come to this, we shall look at the views of one of those “young men” who Arndt was encouraged to see in St. Paul’s Church.

Johann Gustav Droysen was representative of the group characterized earlier as liberal politically but religiously conservative. In the wake of the 1830 July Revolution in Paris, Droysen founded a political journal, “that would link historical inquiry with political advocacy and thus . . . realize his vision of a ‘spiritual national unity and personality, formed in the medium of public opinion.’”⁸⁰ Droysen felt that the study of history could serve as a guide for the present. He called history an “uninterrupted stream [with] eddies and whirlpools,” but also with “a direction that all the water follows, be it slowly or quickly, a restless movement onwards, whose goal we may intimate from the direction.”⁸¹ The direction Droysen detected for Germany in the 1830s and ‘40s was a continuation of the Reformation but with the added dimension of readiness for social and political reform. It was noted earlier that Droysen was a supporter of the early nineteenth-century reforms of Stein which he believed demonstrated the proper balance between absolutism and popular sovereignty. Now he perceived a political evolution in which the German state, “properly conceived and nicely adjusted to German circumstances, was a vessel for the release and

⁷⁹ Arndt, *Life and Adventures*, 431.

⁸⁰ Celia Applegate, *Bach in Berlin: Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn’s Revival of the St. Matthew Passion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005) 241.

⁸¹ Southard, quoting from Droysen’s *Briefwechsel*, I, 103.

exercise of popular energies.”⁸² The Reformation initially made the people equal participants in the church by destroying the Roman Catholic hierarchy and allowing the people direct access to God; now the continued Reformation would allow political equality—and Droysen used the term, “priesthood of all believers” to express this. Like Jahn and Arndt, Droysen’s hope was for a Prussian-led German national state. The conservative Prussian state had affirmed a degree of civil equality by abolishing serfdom and instituting universal military conscription. As the Reformation continued to evolve its government would free people from authoritarian control and empower them to claim political freedom. The Protestant Prussian state was the one best equipped to restore religion and release the natural energies of the people. For Droysen this high valuation on political participation was the long-term consequence of the spiritual revival begun in the sixteenth-century.⁸³ Droysen served on the committee that wrote the constitution. It addressed the grievances presented to the Prussian king in March, 1848 but with a cautious approach to freedom and unity representative of a “nice adjustment to German circumstances.” An evaluation of the structure and content of the constitution written in Frankfurt reveals the collective vision and conservatism of the constituents. Would this vision succeed in shifting the balance of power in the direction of *Einheit, Freiheit und Vaterland*?

Here I Stand: the Parliamentarians versus Friedrich Wilhelm IV

The Constitution of the United States begins by asserting: “We the people . . . do ordain and establish this Constitution.” Three-fourths of the states then had to adopt the constitution before it became the law of the land. By contrast, the German Constitution of 1849 begins with these words: “The German National Constituent Assembly adopted and proclaimed a constitution.”⁸⁴ Its acceptance depended on the will of the German princes and ultimately that of Prussia’s king. There may be only a subtle difference in the introductory words—obviously “the people” of America in terms of voting rights was fairly restricted in the late eighteenth-century. At the same time, the subtle difference may indicate something more substantial about how authority, freedom and equality were eventually established in each nation. An

⁸² Southard, “Theology in Droysen,” 395.

⁸³ Southard, “Theology in Droysen,” 395.

⁸⁴ *Constitution of the German Empire*, 28 March 1849. <http://www.documentarchiv.de/nzjh/verfdr1848.htm>

examination of the Constitution of the German Empire of 1849 illuminates the conservative nature of the political aspirations while expressing liberal principles like freedom of religion, speech, association and the value of secular, public education.

First, by announcing that the *German National Assembly* has adopted and proclaimed a constitution, the members revealed the liberal viewpoint that educated elites could best represent the people's interests. This was the position of men like Arndt and Droysen. The true nature of how these men viewed the power structure of a German nation comes from the organization of the constitution. Section I is entitled "The Kingdom," Section II "The Imperial Power," and Section III, "The Head of the Empire." Section IV describes the Reichstag, Section V the Supreme Court and finally in Section VI we come to, "The Fundamental Rights of the German People." The first three sections which deal with imperial power and the emperor make up almost half of the document. Significantly, the first section, the Kingdom, deals with what was the most hotly debated and controversial issue of the Parliament—who constituted the German nation? For some of the representatives, all the lands of the German Confederation as well the Austrian Empire should be included—this was the *Großdeutsche* argument. The other side won; the *Kleindeutsche* state included only the northern German states of the German Confederation and excluded Austria. This most significant issue comes first and after all the debate is one of the shortest sections in the completed constitution. This section also establishes the German nation as a federation of states. Sections II and III dealing with imperial power and the emperor are much longer.

The power structure of the German empire that was outlined in the 1849 constitution is laid bare in the arrangement of sections II, III, IV and VI. Imperial state power and the emperor's role precede the responsibilities of the *Reichstag* (the representative body) or the rights of the German people. Without even reading the content of the sections, but merely by looking at the order and length of these sections, it seems that conservatism won the day. In the federal system established by the constitution, the "imperial power" conducts foreign policy, has the right of war and peace, controls the army and navy (which protects all the states), regulates shipping between states, has power over the railroads and other infrastructure for the "protection of the empire" and the general interests of the states, regulates trade

within the empire, issues patents and controls commerce, supervises the postal system and other communication systems (i.e. telegraph), coins money and establishes a system of weights and measures, collects taxes, establishes citizenship standards and enacts and establishes criminal law and judicial procedures. These are many of the powers given to the United States Congress in our constitution. But this German constitution does not give these “imperial powers” to the members of the Reichstag, but to the emperor and his ministers. The emperor not only enforces the law (the constitutional responsibility of U.S. presidents) but has a great deal of power in establishing the law. The emperor also appoints and approves the *Reichstag* and has the right to dissolve the People’s House. In other words, rather than a system of explicit checks and balances, the “imperial power” and the person of the emperor are closely linked. Section III begins with these declarations: The dignity of the Empire is vested in a chief of the ruling German princes; the power of the emperor is hereditary; the person of the emperor is inviolable. This represents a great respect for traditional authority but not popular sovereignty. If nothing else, this represents an abandonment of the early romantics who believed in an organic, evolving state. The “throne and altar” faction seemed to have emerged triumphant.

In section IV, the constitution finally gets to the role of the *Reichstag*. There are two houses—the State House and the People’s House. The State House was designed in a similar way to the U.S. Senate in the 1787 constitution—indirect representation. The People’s House is composed of the representatives of the German people (those few who could vote). The *Reichstag* had limited power to actually legislate and few actual government powers independent of the imperial power. The point of this is that liberal Germans of 1848-49 had a very conservative view of popular sovereignty and a fear of revolutionary masses.

The months of the revolution provided many opportunities for political participation—chances to join political or occupational clubs, read newspapers, and debate the issues of the day, attend mass rallies, demonstrate, sign petitions, and cast votes. Teachers and clergymen from less conservative religious factions were among the more actively involved political groups. “Both groups were involved in organizing efforts during the revolution, attempting to obtain redress for long-standing grievances and to

improve their social influence and esteem.”⁸⁵ A popular way of expressing public opinion was through petitions; the Frankfurt parliament received more than 20,000 petitions focusing on a range of issues from education to free trade to Jewish emancipation. Petitions originated from local communities and organizations rather than from individuals and were more popular in the early months of the revolution. By late 1848 and into 1849, political clubs became more ideological and began to take the shape of political parties and replace informal protests.

One of the most heated crises in the midst of the national parliament taken up by the newly politicized *Volk* was the acceptance or rejection of basic civil rights. These are spelled out in section VI, The Fundamental Rights of the German People. Section VI is one of the longer sections of the constitution and begins by defining who the German people are—the families of the states forming the German Empire. It further states that no German state can take away the civil or due process rights of anyone recognized as a German citizen by that citizen’s own state. There follows a long list of civil rights including equality under the law, freedom from arbitrary searches or seizure of property, freedom of expression and the press, freedom of religion (one of the issues that provoked popular protests), separation of church and state, free public education, recognition of teachers as public servants, freedom of assembly, the right to physical and intellectual property, abolition of feudal obligations, public trials, abolition of military justice (for private citizens), and the guarantee of representative government in all the German states. Even though this comes at the end of the constitution (there are a few very short sections after this) it represents a significant part of the whole and seems to balance some of the imperial power. It also addresses the issues originally presented in the March Demands. Overall, the constitution seemed to begin to balance the rights of the people and the power of the ruler and to negotiate a role for the German states within a German nation.

At the beginning of March 1849 as the parliamentarians were wrapping up their work, Arndt wrote a letter to Friedrich Wilhelm. “Most illustrious King! Most gracious King and lord! To God and to

⁸⁵ Sperber, *European Revolutions*, 181.

the King a man may speak freely, and present his petitions and prayers.”⁸⁶ He reminds him that, “You have vowed to devote all your power and all the strength of your people to the strengthening of Germany. Germany believes your word.”⁸⁷ He goes on to speak a little of Austria as a threat to German unification and implores the king, “Dare to be quite German, wholly German—dare to be the savior and deliverer of the Fatherland—dare to share all its dangers—dare to stand wholly by the Fatherland . . . My heart felt forced to pour itself out to my king, and I am only expressing the feelings of many of the . . . Prussians and Germans, who are sitting and contending in the assembly here.” Arndt concludes, “I have written these words with thought and prayer . . . God’s will be done, and it will be done in earth and heaven.”⁸⁸ Friedrich Wilhelm wrote a long letter in return a week later. After beginning with a kind word about the service Arndt has given to Prussia, he answers his “petition”:

Now you make your petition to him that he will accept a ‘crown offered’ to him. Here everyone who can count more than fourteen years would desire to ask, to examine, to consider, 1st, who offers, and 2nd, what is offered; and first let me declare that the abominable, disgusting slime of the year ’48 did not wash away my sacramental grace, but rather that I have washed off the slime, and will wash it off still more if necessary. . . The great assembly which calls itself the German Imperial or National Assembly . . . has neither a crown to give nor to offer. . . What authority has been given to these men, which justifies them in setting a king or an emperor over the lawful superiors to whom they have sworn allegiance? . . . The thing of which we are speaking does not bear the sign of the holy cross, is not stamped with the words, ‘By the grace of God,’ is no crown. It is the iron collar of servitude.⁸⁹

In a faint echo of Martin Luther’s assertion before the Diet of Worms, “My conscience is captive to the Word of God,” rather than to assemblies or councils, Friedrich Wilhelm took his stand and refused to

⁸⁶ Arndt, *Life and Adventures*, 432

⁸⁷ Arndt, *Life and Adventures*, 433

⁸⁸ Arndt, *Life and Adventures*, 434

⁸⁹ Arndt, *Life and Adventures*, 435-436

accept a crown from the parliamentarians. The attempt to unite Germany failed and the parliamentarians returned home.

It is not within my scope to ponder the failure of the revolutions in Germany and why the *Vormärz* hopes of equality, freedom and nation were not realized. Thomas Nipperdey's conclusion about Protestantism post-1848 is that the basis of the Prussian reform movement was religious, but religious opinion was fractured and this created an inseparable rift between Protestant conservatives and liberals. "The division between religion and politics, or the Lutheran ideal of submitting to obedience, were not the decisive factors, but it was out of the Lutheran ethos of work and duty that the demand for political freedom and freedom for the state came. . . On the other hand there was orthodoxy and revivalism. Revolution was a 'sin,' a deed of the devil, as were the principles of human rights and sovereignty of the people."⁹⁰ Robert Prutz, a liberal publicist living through the events in the 1840s expressed a similar pessimism about the religious nature of German politics. "Here we have in sum the national interests of the German people: the red thread which marks its way through the confusion of these years is spun of spiritual wool. Religious dogma is our *contract social*, clergymen are our folk heroes, theological questions are the questions of the moment, the questions of the nation."⁹¹ This explains the pivotal difference between Enlightenment *philosophes*, French revolutionaries, and the German nationalists. For Germans, the nation was an extension of the Christian community; it was a body of believers, equal under God, working together to extend the Reformation. What Luther began was a work in progress, and he had been joined by many reformers along the way. Some of these were delegates at the 1848 Frankfurt Parliament.

Father Jahn, in creating the gymnastics movement, believed that physical education was only a means to an end. "Jahn was convinced that Germany needed her own war to consummate the national awakening and to create a true German nation."⁹² Jahn died in 1852, bitter and sad, but his influence endured. In one of the first progressive schools in which he taught, the Plamann Institute in Berlin, there

⁹⁰ Nipperdey, *Napoleon to Bismarck*, 385

⁹¹ Bigler, quoting Prutz, "Rise of Political Protestantism," 423.

⁹² Kohn, *Nationalism*, 432.

was a student who attended briefly—Otto von Bismarck, who mentions the school in his memoirs.

Theodor Herzl, the founder of Jewish nationalism, learned some lessons from Bismarck's *Realpolitik*.

“Bismarck understood that people and princes could not be moved to small sacrifices for the objects of all the songs and speeches. Therefore he imposed great sacrifice upon them, forced them into wars.”⁹³ He became the architect of a united Germany—by blood and iron. War, not revolt and petitions, eventually pushed Germany into *Einheit* and *Vaterland*.

⁹³ Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981) quoting Herzl, 165.



Figure 3. *Burschenschaften* Students at Wartburg Castle

CONCLUSION

At the end of the nineteenth century, Theodor Herzl experienced a crisis of identity and faith and created Zionism. Herzl's diary explains some of his feelings about how the Jews could find their own identity and homeland. It existed first as a dream; political forces would enable the dream to come true. The true homeland began inside oneself—in the heart. As an Austrian who lived after Germany had finally attained a political state, it seems obvious that he would draw on their example. "Do you know out of what the German Empire arose? Out of dreams, songs, fantasies and black-red-gold ribbons. . . Bismarck merely shook the tree that fantasies had planted."¹ This tree's growth had been nurtured for many years. Several celebrations and events foreshadowed its maturation.

In 1755 the first full manuscript of the *Nibelungenlied*, an epic which became Germany's own national *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, was discovered. It was published two years later, but it was not until the first two decades of the nineteenth-century that it became popular. "Between 1806 and 1813, the *Nibelungenlied* became by all accounts quite fashionable in the salon culture of Berlin," largely through the efforts of early romantics like Friedrich Schlegel, who "maintained that its overall character was Christian, in the spirit of medieval knighthood."² Schlegel and Jacob Grimm disputed the scholarly roots of the epic but agreed that these originated in early German legends which reached their final form in the twelfth century. Their dispute arose from the nature of origins—was the myth derived from historical sources and a particular author or from the spirit and power of the German people? Debates about the meaning and origins of the epic continued, but it was embraced by all German nationalists as part of their cultural heritage. Although the story contained in the epic does not seem Christian, various German

¹ Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 165.

² George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 86.

scholars besides Schlegel managed to highlight its elements of “sin, guilt, and the erotic,” squaring it with a Christian mythology.³

Between 1812-1815, the Grimm brothers published their fairy tales, the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. Inspired by Herder, they collected old stories which reflected the roots of the German *Volk*. Herder had encouraged the unearthing of local stories that reflected the ancient history of German laws and customs. In researching the folk tales, the Grimm brothers were looking for a deep mythical tradition rooted in geography and the customs and sayings of the German peasants. They also spent years compiling *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (German Dictionary). It was first published in 1854; “Jacob Grimm gave Luther pride of place in the planning of the new dictionary. Luther marked the beginning of ‘new high German,’ and his Bible was the particular treasure trove, filled with the ‘noblest and most sensible’ language.”⁴ Luther was considered the German Shakespeare and the language he used in his Bible translation also became part of German national culture. Because Luther’s Bible was so widely dispersed in the German states, his German became the literary language of the German people which the Grimm brothers enshrined in their dictionary.

The Wartburg Festival was held on October 18, 1817. Wartburg was Luther’s hiding place after his condemnation at the Diet of Worms and where he translated the Bible into German. The location of the festival was chosen as a symbol of German nationalism. Students from various German universities, part of the newly formed *Burschenschaften*, met to commemorate the three-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation and the fourth anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig. Marking a convergence of religious and political national events, the students waved the black-red-gold flag carried by those other students who fought in the Wars of Liberation.

In 1829, Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* was performed in Berlin and became one of the most significant musical performances in German history. Mendelssohn revived Bach and the spirit of historical Lutheranism at the same time. Music was established as the primary expression of German

³ Williamson, *Longing for Myth*, 88.

⁴ Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 224.

culture in the first two decades of the nineteenth-century. The upheavals of the eighteenth-century paved the way for music to become an art, not merely a craft as it moved out of the patronage system into the public sphere. And musicians began to acquire the unique German training of *Bildung* which made music acceptable to the bourgeois elites. These two things combined with the traditional importance of music to the German people gave music its premier place in German culture and identity. Celia Applegate summarizes the significance of this performance: “Knowing Bach, one would come to know oneself as a German, because knowing Bach entailed understanding not only the Christian, Protestant heritage of Germany, not only the intellectual, inward turn in German character, but also the musical complexity that was as much a part of being German as was the German language itself.”⁵ The Bach revival was part of a growing popular acknowledgement of the importance of music to all Germans, not just elite Berliners. Beginning in the early nineteenth century there was the first of what would become German-wide, regional music festivals. These became highly competitive and had political, religious, and national overtones.

In 1830 there was a celebration of the anniversary of the Augsburg Confession which officially established the Lutheran Church and its doctrines. Mendelssohn composed a symphony for the 1830 occasion, the Reformation Symphony.⁶ It starts with a *motiv* found in German hymns; the next movement is fugal, invoking Bach, and it concludes with a movement based on Luther’s, “A Mighty Fortress is our God,” considered the battle hymn of the Reformation. The Augsburg celebration was somewhat ironic since the Augsburg Confession called for a separation of church government and civil government,⁷ whereas Prussian king, Friedrich Wilhelm III, had joined the Lutheran and Calvinist churches in 1817 and imposed a liturgy on the church of his own choosing. In the decades following this union, Friedrich Wilhelm was forced to use coercion to subdue pastors who objected to his control of the church.

⁵ Applegate, *Bach in Berlin*, 119.

⁶ Prussian king, Friedrich Wilhelm III did not accept Mendelssohn’s symphony for performance at the celebration; it was performed in Berlin a couple of years later and then not again until twenty years after Mendelssohn’s death.

⁷ The Augsburg Confession (1530) Art. XXVIII. 12 and XXVIII. 20
www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-boc.html

In May 1832, a celebration of German unity, freedom and democracy was held in Hambach—disguised as a county fair. The celebrants were demanding liberty, civil and political rights, national unity, and popular sovereignty. This was held in the wake of the 1830 revolutions throughout Europe where Belgians gained independence and Poles were denied it. Many songs were sung at Hambach and not surprisingly Arndt's *Des Deutschen Vaterland* was included as was Theodor Körner's *Die Eichen*. Arndt's called for unity among German-speaking Christians and Körner's for the German people to persevere in their goal of freedom and stand strong like the oak. Over the span of thirty years, Germans had begun to establish national festivals, songs, memories, and a flag while embracing a vision of national unity.

What I have attempted to demonstrate is that German nationalism emerged before there was a German nation and that this nationalism was rooted in certain Lutheran ideas and events which were often blended with older Germanic traditions. Beginning in the eighteenth century there were Germans who began to draw a distinction between themselves and a homogeneous European intelligentsia, particularly the French. Herder first identified language as a fundamental feature of each nation. The early romantics created a literary tradition and believed that the *Volk* were the center of a national identity—folk tales and beliefs, mythology and heroic history. Beethoven rejected the standard Italian-language musical notations and used German instead. Most importantly, German intellectuals rejected French and British deism and drew on their own Lutheran and pietist beliefs—even though most were not orthodox believers. While Germans were establishing their cultural heritage, they also wrestled with how to create a unified nation. Religion played a role in this across the political spectrum. It was not a case of a centralized state rallying the masses with symbols and traditions to create a patriotic citizenry willing to march off to die for the state; most rulers of the German states after 1815 did not want a unified Germany. This was one of the problems the Frankfurt parliamentarians faced. Anthony D. Smith insists that, “What gives nationalism its power are the myths, memories, traditions and symbols of ethnic heritages and the ways in which a popular living past has been, and can be, rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern nationalist

intelligentsias.”⁸ German nationalism emerged in spite of the fractured nature of the German states and the opposition of local rulers.

In Germany, Martin Luther was an iconic figure around whom many of the memories, traditions and symbols converged. In 1796, after the French had dethroned the Roman Catholic Church and replaced it with the Cult of Reason, Hegel contemplated the state of religion in Germany. “Christianity has emptied Walhalla, felled the sacred groves, extirpated the national imagery as a shameful superstition. . . . Except perhaps for Luther in the eyes of Protestants, what heroes could we have had, we who were never a nation?”⁹ Hegel believed the Germans would have to create, not a Cult of Reason, but a new religious imagery out of traditional mythology and geography combined with Protestantism. He was echoing the romantic yearnings for Germanic roots and the Reformation heritage of Germany. Out of the Romantic movement came the *Volklied*, the *Nibelungelied* and the *Märchen* which displayed the deep roots of Germanic culture along with the veneration of the Rhine River and historic and mythological figures like Wotan, Siegfried and Barbarossa. From their Reformation past came German music, an appreciation for education and some concepts that drew on theology—the “priesthood of all believers” (unity), the *solas* (freedom from authority/the independence of the individual), and the dialectic struggle represented in Protestantism by the “now and not yet” and the “church always reforming.”

There was a tension between the Romantics’ ancient German mythology and Protestantism’s Christianity. The resolution came in a common story of struggle for German freedom and independence that dated back to the Teutoburg forest and continued into the nineteenth century. Set against this backdrop, German nationalism was not merely a product of the French Revolution, but reflects Smith’s historic ethno-symbolic theory of nationalism. And Smith’s theory provides for longevity—aspirations for nationhood can be in place for a long time before a nation is realized—the nation must display an ability to maintain its existence and culture over a long period of time (even without being recognized as a political unit). Celia Applegate weighs in on this theory, “Not all nationalisms are state-seeking, not all

⁸ Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 9.

⁹ Williamson, quoting Hegel, *Longing for Myth*, 73.

forms of nation-building are state-building or state-centered, and therefore, sometimes a symphony is just a symphony.”¹⁰ Some Germans began in the eighteenth century to awaken to the sense that they had a unique cultural history and in spite of the enormous variety of states, kingdoms, principalities, dukedoms, free cities, etc. there was a cohesiveness to bind them together. The German states were not alone in their struggle for unity and freedom, and they drew inspiration from others.

In the 1820s and 1830s, there were liberal and nationalist movements in Belgium, Greece, Spain, Poland, France, and the Italian states which proved an inspiration for German nationalists. Some of these movements were successful, others not. The independence of Greece was a great romantic project which succeeded; the independence of Belgium succeeded because of the support of Great Britain. But where the Great Powers opposed unification, independence, or liberalization, revolution failed and the old order prevailed. Germans sympathized with these movements—James Brophy reports on the number of songs composed in the Rhineland about events in Belgium and Poland indicating a political interest in the struggles of other folk. Many of these *Freiheitslieder* were composed to the tune of the *Marsellaise* or *Ça Ira*, songs which had been banned in the post-1815 era. In the German Confederation there existed the possibility of national unity but regional loyalties persisted—partly because of religious differences.

While several forces combined to make religion and history a powerful connective fiber in the German states, there were growing divisions among the opposing confessions. The traditional Protestant-Catholic divide persisted with the prevailing perception that Catholics were loyal to Rome, not Germany. Within the Protestant churches there was disunity in the nineteenth century demonstrated by the conflicts between liberals and conservatives. Pietists were generally conservative, but because of their emphasis on individual experience, rejected the established church. A variety of movements emerged from pietist communities—some political, some apolitical. They were generally opposed to a state-controlled church, but some were of the throne and altar faction. A conservative revival movement in both Catholic and Protestant churches kept religion in the forefront of life as people struggled with a shifting social and economic landscape prior to 1848. All of this demonstrated that religion remained fundamental to large

¹⁰ Applegate, *Bach in Berlin*, 280.

groups of Germans, but they were not all of the same mind. Consciously, and unconsciously religious beliefs continued to be part of the fabric of German life. As the concepts of nationalism, unity, and freedom moved into the public sphere, religious divisions became part of the national political debate, and these would continue to occupy the national and political scene in the years to come. A final look at the life of Arndt may be helpful in summarizing the role of nationalism in the first half of the nineteenth century.

On February 1, 1860, Ernst Moritz Arndt was laid to rest under an oak tree by the banks of the Rhine River. Raised during the German Enlightenment, he lived through the transformative years of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: the French Revolution, the Napoleonic era, the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire and the ensuing years of restructuring the German states. Arndt was an advocate of constitutional monarchy and dreamed of the unification of all German-speaking states in central Europe. When these political dreams evaporated in 1849, he retired to his home in Bonn where he had lived since 1817. A long procession of mourners attended his funeral—veterans of the Wars of Liberation, students (from Bonn, Greifswald and other German universities), professors and dignitaries from the university at Bonn, civil authorities and “a great multitude of the inhabitants of Bonn and the neighborhood.”¹¹ Germans worldwide contributed to a monument erected to his memory. On the monument was inscribed,

“Ernst Moritz Arndt.
‘The Rhine, Germany’s stream, not Germany’s boundary.’
‘Who underground the iron stored, cared not to see a slave.’
Erected by the German people, MDCCCLXV.”¹²

The two quotes are from poems Arndt wrote reflecting his vision of Germany. The first line hints at the physical boundaries of Germany—not the Rhine, as was historically accepted. In his most famous poem, “Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland?” he described what he considered the correct boundaries of Germany—wherever the German language was spoken, German hymns sung, and the memory of

¹¹ Arndt, *Life and Adventures*, 450. The description of Arndt’s funeral is added at the end of his autobiography by the translator.

¹² Arndt, *Life and Adventures*, 450.

Hermann lived. The second line quoted on the memorial indicates *who* was included in this German land—not only the aristocrats, the hereditary leaders and rulers, but also those who had been considered “slaves”—the lower classes and laborers on the land. And Arndt reminds readers that it is the “creator” who stored the iron and cared not to see a slave. From these lines of Arndt’s poems we discern what were for the men of Arndt’s generation the defining characteristics of German-ness—language, faith in God, and a heroic history.

In the 1879 preface to the English translation of Arndt’s autobiography, J.R. Seeley observed that Arndt’s life “reflects his time, because it was decisively influenced by it.” And more significantly, “Arndt’s character was a remarkably clear mirror for his time to reflect itself in.”¹³ Born on the island of Rügen into a devout Lutheran peasant family, Arndt was a contemporary of Goethe, Schiller, Herder and the other early Romantics. He was a brother-in-law of Friedrich Schleiermacher, a student at Jena while Johann Gottlieb Fichte lectured there, a professor and teacher of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn at Greifswald. He worked as a propagandist for Heinrich von Stein during the Napoleonic era and accompanied him to Russia in 1812. As Napoleon’s *Grand Armee* retreated back across Eastern Europe, Arndt followed it to Prussia to help recruit and inspire German armies for the Wars of Liberation. These were the years which led to Arndt’s Prussian “conversion”. Reflecting on the way the Prussians fought against Napoleon in 1813-1814, Arndt wrote, “I thought I perceived a power which possessed sufficient vitality to maintain and protect itself in the future. I became heart and soul a Prussian.”¹⁴ Ultimately he became a German. His four sons born after the war years were given traditional German names—Siegerich, Roderich, Leubold and Wilibald. During the Restoration he suffered the loss of his professorship as a consequence of the conservative backlash of the Karlsbad Decrees and was not restored until Friedrich Wilhelm IV came to the throne twenty years later. His correspondence with Friedrich Wilhelm was significant to the outcome of the Frankfurt National Parliament. While Frankfurt represented a failure to Arndt, he died optimistic about Germany’s future because of his faith. “My evening sun will not set in golden glory or

¹³ Arndt, *Life and Adventures*, viii-ix.

¹⁴ Arndt, *Life and Adventures*, 315.

with golden hopes, but yet I do not surrender all brave and manly hopes. I trust in Providence, in the spirit of the Germans, and cry with all the brave apostles and prophets, ‘De caelo et patria nunquam desperandum.’”¹⁵

Political efforts failed in 1848-1849, but the true homeland had begun its life not just inside Arndt, but in countless others— the *Burschenschaften*, peasants, singers, gymnasts, miners, pastors, merchants, teachers, politicians, the educated, and uneducated. The national dream began with the language of Luther that unified the Germans, his music which gave them their greatest art form, and the concepts of freedom which echoed into the nineteenth century. The Romantics rediscovered German folk tales, heroes, and myths and introduced these memories to the *Volk* by means of language and imagery familiar to them. The tree grew and matured until Bismarck shook it and harvested the fruit.

¹⁵ Arndt, *Life and Adventures*, 443. “Of heaven and fatherland, never despairing.”

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