

The Christian resurrection as a propaganda tool in Heinrich Anacker's Nazi poetry - The sacralization of *Reich* and *Führer*

Anneleen Van Hertbruggen

Universiteit Antwerpen

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2555-5534>

Abstract

By focusing on the poetry of the Nazi writer Heinrich Anacker, this paper tries to attribute to the study of Nazi literature, which was ignored by German scholars for a long time. Although several overviews of Nazi authors and the impressive dissertation by Simone Bautz appeared in the last decade, there are still few works that focus specifically on the Nazi text itself. Within the long debated framework of National Socialism as a political religion, this paper focuses specifically on Anacker's poetic reinterpretation of the Christian Easter story for propaganda purposes. On the one hand, the adoption of specific vocabulary from the biblical Easter story grants the concept of the "Third Reich" a certain sacredness. On the other hand, Anacker adapts the underlying doctrine of salvation to present the Führer as a new Messiah. Because of the deliberate sacralization of ideological ideas, Nazi concepts like Reich and Führer appear almost as religious-like "articles of faith".

Keywords: Nazi poetry – religious discourse – political religion – poetry analysis

*For Germany was, like the Holy Christ,
Luminously resurrected!*

Heinrich Anacker, German Easter 1933, V.29-30

Introduction

This contribution focuses on the Christian resurrection as an important thread in the propaganda poetry of the Nazi writer Heinrich Anacker (1901-1971). The untraditional – and therefore notable “unchristian” – reinterpretation of this motif will be exemplified with poems from Anacker's anthology *Die Fanfare. Gedichte der deutschen Erhebung* (1936, “The Brass Band. Poems on the German Rise”; henceforth called *Die Fanfare*).¹ The analysis of poems like the above cited “Deutsche Ostern 1933” (HA 112-113², “German Easter 1933”), illustrates that Anacker adopts the Easter story in two ways, while connecting and reinterpreting it within a very specific political – i.e. National Socialist – reality. On the one hand, Anacker seems to describe the resurrection of the German *Reich* rather than of Christ. On the other hand, Anacker adopts the

significance of the resurrected Christ as a Messiah for his own messianic stylization of the *Führer*. This paper begins by briefly presenting Heinrich Anacker as a representative Nazi writer and by linking the sacralization of ideological key concepts in his poetry to the debate on National Socialism as a political religion and its “articles of faith”, as identified by Klaus Vondung.³

Heinrich Anacker – a prominent Nazi writer

Heinrich Anacker (1901–1971), born in Aarau in Switzerland, had a German-Swiss mother and a German – Thüringer – father. During his studies in Zürich and Vienna in the early 1920s, he became acquainted with the ideas of local Nazi divisions. Already in 1924, he became a member of the NSDAP and the *Sturmabteilung* (SA). After he moved to Germany in 1928, he voluntarily renounced his Swiss citizenship in 1939.⁴ Anacker started writing at a young age and by the year 1931 he had already published seven volumes of poetry, mainly on nature and love themes. But it was not until his politically inspired publications during the Nazi period that he became a popular poet. To our knowledge, he had published twenty-two anthologies by the end of World War II. Many of his poems became folk songs and were either sung throughout the *Reich* or used as marching songs by the *Wehrmacht*. Anacker probably owed his popularity to the political – pointedly National Socialist-biased – content of his poems and songs.⁵ After World War II, Anacker was categorized as *Minderbelasteter* (“lesser offender”). He declared that he had made a mistake and would stay away from politics in the future.⁶ Until his death in 1971 he lived at the Bodensee in the south of Germany.

Anacker’s poetry is representative of the poetry of a large number of authors during the Nazi regime, whose names are relatively unknown today. Together with Anacker, Gerhard Schumann, Herybert Menzel, the *Reichsjugendführer* (“national youth leader”) Baldur von Schirach and many others were famous public figures at the time.⁷ They belonged to a group of genuine National Socialist authors, formed at the end of the 1920s and commonly referred to as the “*Junge Mannschaft*” (“Young team”).⁸ They wrote poetry in compliance with the Nazi ideology, like marching songs and political *Kampflyrik* (“fight songs”). Their poems were also published in newspapers and set to music to be sung as marching songs or at political mass events. Furthermore, the Nazi *Rundfunk* (radio) broadcasted this political poetry throughout the entire German *Reich*.⁹ Ideological key concepts of National Socialism like Germany or *Reich*, the German flag and Adolf Hitler as *Führer* occur in numerous propaganda poems written by political writers of this “*Junge Mannschaft*”. As the analysis of Anacker’s poetry will show, they equip these Nazi concepts with Christian attributes and symbols, by which they become central ideological concepts and rise in importance.¹⁰

The “articles of faith” of National Socialism as a political religion

The presence of religious concepts and symbolism was not limited to propaganda poetry but visible at all levels of the Nazi system. Already very soon, the striking combination of religious imagery with political thought provoked discussions on National Socialism as a religious – or pseudo-religious - system. The German political philosopher Erich Voegelin and the French sociologist Raymond Aron described National Socialism as a political religion as early as 1939.¹¹ In later years, scholars perceived the terminological combination of “religion” and “politics”

within the denomination “political religion” repeatedly as problematic. Especially since the 1990s, the discussion on the validity of this concept has grown significantly, expedited especially by Hans Maier, former Bavarian Minister of Culture and holder of the Munich Chair of Christian Worldview, Religious and Cultural Theory.¹² To this day, this debate has not lead to a univocal definition of the concept “political religion”. Instead, a variety of alternative denominations like anti-religion, pseudo-religion or secular religion to name a few have been proposed.¹³ In more recent studies, scholars do not so much focus on the theoretical difficulty of defining National Socialism as a political religion, instead they use the concept with critical distance in order to investigate specific religious aspects of the system, mostly from a historical point of view. Kevin P. Spicer, for example, describes the active role of certain catholic priests during the Nazi reign¹⁴, while Derek Hastings examines the Catholic roots of the early Nazi movement before it transformed into a “political religion in its own rights”.¹⁵ Hastings cites a devotional poem written by Otto Bangert in 1926 to point out the determined messianic stylization of the *Führer* already several years before Hitler’s rise to power.¹⁶ Precisely the messianic characterization of the *Führer* offers an interesting starting point to discuss National Socialism and political religion from a literary perspective.¹⁷ Within the discussion on National Socialism as a political religion, Klaus Vondung identifies six key concepts of the Nazi ideology which he describes as possible “articles of faith” of the Nazi political religion. Then, he says, if one considers National Socialism a political religion, one should identify its “creed”.¹⁸

Thus at the centre of Nazi symbolism and creed stood the ‘Blood’; then came the ‘People’ as the substantive bearer of the blood; the ‘Soil’, the land, which nourishes the people; the ‘*Reich*’, in which it finds its political realization; the ‘*Führer*’ as the representative of people and *Reich*; the ‘Flag’ as the most holy material symbol.¹⁹

A thorough analysis of Anacker’s poetry volume *Die Fanfare* shows that these “articles of faith” appear as thematic focal points in Anacker’s poems. For example, the poem “German Easter 1933” (HA 112-113) clearly focuses on the *Reich* as a possible “article of faith”. A poem like “Die Fahnen verboten” (HA 14, “The flags forbidden”) seems to deal with *Flag*, whereas “Dem Führer!” (HA 11-12, “To the Führer!”), the opening poem of Anacker’s poetry volume *Die Fanfare*, regards the *Führer* as an article of faith. This poem is an ode to Adolf Hitler, whose name is also mentioned in the last verse. Below the poem Anacker notes that he wrote it on 31 January 1933. The date suggests that Anacker wrote this poem in its entirety overnight as an immediate result of the Nazis seizing power and the appointment of Hitler as chancellor on the day before. These “articles of faith” not only appear as dominant topics throughout his anthology, moreover, Anacker embeds them in a specific religious-like context. Sometimes, he does so in a very straightforward and highly unsubtle way. For example in poems like “Zur Freiheit!” (HA 58, “To freedom”) and “Die Blutfahne” (HA 87, “Blood flag”), he explicitly uses the adjective “holy” in combination with the *Flag*, ascribing it like that a certain sacredness. Also the word “Easter” in the title of the poem “German Easter 1933” (HA 112-113) refers explicitly to the Christian Easter feast. However, besides the simple adoption of vocabulary that readers link spontaneously with a religious – mostly Christian – context, Anacker also transfers and reinterprets biblical narratives and metaphors in order to consolidate ideological key concepts. In the poem “Nun schmückt die Fahnen mit jungem Grün” (HA 115, “Now decorate the flags with young green”), Germany is embedded once more in a Christian story. With the double reference to “tongues of fire” in the third and the last verse of the poem, Anacker makes a clear allusion to the Pentecost story in the Acts of the Apostles.²⁰

<p>Nun schmückt die Fahnen mit jungem Grün! [...] Das Morsche stürzt und das Faule fällt, Vom göttlichen Lichte durchdrungen - O starker Geist, der nun Einzug hält:</p>	<p>Now decorate the flags with young green²¹ [...] The slummy supports and the foul falls, permeated by the divine light – Oh strong spirit, that is making its entry:</p>
<p>20 Es spricht das neue Deutschland zur Welt Mit hundert feurigen Zungen!</p>	<p>The new Germany is talking to the world With one hundred tongues of fire!</p>

Once again lexical elements like “divine” (V.17) and “spirit” (V.18) already call for a spontaneous religious association. Moreover, Germany is playing the leading part in the originally Christian story of Pentecost: not the Apostles, but Germany receives the fire of the (holy) spirit and is able to talk in different “tongues”, i.e. in different languages to the world.

This contribution focuses specifically on Anacker’s reinterpretation of the Christian resurrection regarding the sacralization of the “articles of faith” *Reich* and *Führer*. The poetry analysis will show two different approaches to the sacralization of these two political key concepts. In order to sacralize the *Reich*, Anacker primarily provides this concept with lexical elements that are associated with the resurrection theme. Regarding the *Führer*, vocabulary is of minor importance. Anacker transfers the actual religious significance of the doctrine of salvation. In this way, he connects the *Führer* thematically to the resurrection story.

The resurrection of the German *Reich*

In various poems, the association of the *Reich* and the resurrection theme happens merely lexically by the combination of “Reich” or “Germany” with the word “resurrection” or one of its derivations. For example, in “The flags forbidden” (HA 14), Anacker describes how the people want “to battle bravely / For Germany’s resurrection” (V.11-12). Solely in his poem “German Easter 1933” (HA 112-113), Anacker connects the “article of faith” *Reich* thematically with the Christian Easter story as well. As the title already gives away, this poem serves as a clear example for the intertwining of ideological thought and religious imagery. The Christian Easter not only becomes a pointedly “German” Easter, but is, in addition, specifically linked to the year of Adolf Hitler’s rise to power in 1933.

At first sight, this poem seems to relate a religious narrative. Words like “Easter bells” (V.1, 7, 13, 19, 2), “Golgotha” (V.9), “cross” (V.10), “tomb” (V.21), “the Holy Christ” (V.29) and “resurrected” (V.6, 30) call for a spontaneous association with the Christian Easter story with Jesus in the leading part. However, not Jesus, but “Germany” (V.5, 9, 15, 21, 29) plays the leading part in Anacker’s passion. Anacker emphasizes already in the first strophe that only today we really understand the meaning of the Easter feast: “For Germany itself was / luminously resurrected” (V.6-7). The second strophe describes the events on Good Friday. But whereas in Christian tradition this day symbolizes the crucifixion and the death of Jesus, Anacker implicitly

compares Christ's "Golgotha" with the German defeat in World War I. With the reference to the empty tomb and the heavy stone in the fourth strophe, Anacker almost literally adopts the description of the events on Easter day. According to the biblical Gospels, Jesus' tomb was empty and the heavy stone that was put in front of the tomb's entrance had been rolled away.²² In Anacker's poem, Germany's tomb is empty and the heavy stone was conquered by the "people" (V.22). The last two verses of the poem are not even metaphorically intended: With the rhetorical figure of personification, Anacker explicitly compares Germany's situation with the resurrection of the "Holy Christ" (V.29). Instead of the Christian Passion of the Christ, this poem seems to tell the Passion of Germany. However, Germany did not resurrect from death like Jesus, but, as Albrecht Schöne puts it, from the disgrace and hell of the scandalous peace treaty of Versailles.²³

Deutsche Ostern 1933

- Hört ihr die Osterglocken
Frohlocken?
So haben wir noch zu keiner Frist
Des Festes Sinn verstanden
5 Wie heute ... Denn Deutschland selber ist
Leuchtend auferstanden.
- Hört ihr die Osterglocken
Frohlocken?
Auch Deutschland erlitt sein Golgotha,
10 Und ward ans Kreuz geschlagen –
Nun hat das Bittere, das ihm geschah,
Herrliche Frucht getragen.
- Hört ihr die Osterglocken
Frohlocken?
15 Auch Deutschland hatte der Mütter viel
Mit dem Schwert im blutenden Herzen –
Nun läßt sie das österlich-hohe Ziel
Vergessen alle Schmerzen.
- Hört ihr die Osterglocken
20 Frohlocken?
Auch Deutschlands Grab ist heute leer:
Das Volk hat heimgefunden –
Und war der Stein auch noch so schwer,
Es hat ihn überwunden.
- 25 Hört ihr die Osterglocken
Frohlocken?
So haben wir noch zu keiner Frist
Die Botschaft tief verstanden –
Denn Deutschland ist, wie der Heilige Christ,
30 Leuchtend auferstanden!

German Easter 1933

- Do you hear the Easter bells²⁴
Rejoice?
We have never
Understood the meaning of the feast
Like today ... For Germany itself was
Luminously resurrected.
- Do you hear the Easter bells
Rejoice?
Germany too suffered its Golgotha,
And was nailed to the cross –
Now the bitterness, that happened to him,
Has borne delightful fruits.
- Do you hear the Easter bells
Rejoice?
Germany too had many mothers
With the sword in the bloody heart –
Now she makes the paschal-high goal
Forget every sorrow.
- Do you hear the Easter bells
Rejoice?
Germany's tomb too is empty today:
The people have found their way home –
And even though the stone was so heavy,
They have overcome it.
- Do you hear the Easter bells
Rejoice?
We have never
Understood the message²⁵ –
For Germany was, like the Holy Christ,
Luminously resurrected!

The fourth strophe of “German Easter 1933” (HA 112-113) stresses the fact that the “people” (V.22) have an important part in Germany’s resurrection. Not “Germany”, but the “people” have overcome the heavy stone in front of the tomb and made the resurrection possible. Also in other poems, the people play an active role in the realization of Germany’s resurrection. In Anacker’s poetry, they are called to make sacrifices and go to battle in order for Germany’s resurrection to occur. For example in the third strophe of “The flags forbidden” (HA 14) he writes:

Die Fahnen verboten

[...]
 Mag Zwang uns entrechten,
 10 Gewalt uns geschehn -
 Wir wollen tapfer fechten
 für Deutschlands Auferstehn.

The flags forbidden

[...]
 May pressure deprive us of our rights,
 Violence happen to us -
 We want to battle bravely
 For Germany’s resurrection.

The poem argues that Germany’s resurrection requires combativeness of the German people and when necessary even the sacrifice of their lives. In “Steig’ auf, du Jahr der deutschen Schicksalswende” (HA 24, “Rise, you year of the turn of the German fate”) Anacker describes “der Freunde Gräber” (V.6, “the tombs of the friends”) as “Meilensteine / Am steilen Weg zu Deutschlands Auferstehn” (V.6-7, “milestones / along the steep road to Germany’s resurrection”). That Germany’s resurrection is impossible without the effort of the people, becomes once again very clear in “Wir warten!” (HA 50, “We are waiting”): “Wir wissen, wir wissen, / Daß Deutschland mit uns aufersteht oder fällt –“(V.12-13, “We know, we know / That Germany will resurrect or fall with us –”). It is not entirely clear what Germany will be arising from. Only the poem “The flags forbidden” (HA 14) replies in a certain way to this question:

Die Fahnen verboten

[...]
 Aufsteigt aus Schmach und Trümmern
 20 Das heil’ge Dritte Reich.

The flags forbidden

[...]
 Rises from disgrace and ruins
 The holy Third Reich.

Although this description remains rather vague, one could assume that with “disgrace and ruins” the failed Weimar Republic is intended. Propaganda writers like Anacker tend to describe the period between the defeat after World War I and the upswing of National Socialism in the 1930s as a period of destruction, failure, despair and slavery.²⁶ Although Anacker does not use the verb “auferstehen” (“to resurrect”), which has an explicit religious connotation, the combination of “Third Reich” with the adjective “holy” stresses once again the sacralization of the political idea *Reich*. Although the concept of a “Third Reich” lingers on as a collective symbol in the mind of the German people, Walter Knoche doubts whether the average Nazi was aware of the original theological origin of the concept.²⁷ However, by using the adjective “holy”, Anacker uses a very simple technique to present the concept “Third Reich” once again as a sacred entity,

perhaps even as an “article of faith”.²⁸

In his poem “To the Führer!” (HA 11-12), Anacker chooses once more the verb “aufsteigen” (“to rise”) instead of “auferstehen” (“to resurrect”).

Dem Führer!

[...]

Aufsteigt beim gewaltigen Hammerschlag

Aus dem Alten das blühende Neue ...

Soll kommen was will, soll kommen was mag

Wir schwören es dir am heutigen Tag:

30 Adolf Hitler, wir halten dir Treue!

To the Führer!

[...]

Rises at the powerful hammer-blow

From the old the flourishing new ...

Should come what will, should come what may

We swear to you today:

Adolf Hitler, we stand by you!

Although the verb “aufsteigen” (“to rise”) itself does not imply an explicit reference to the resurrection theme, the following verse does support this image: Almost like the rebirth of the phoenix, something is rising “from the old” as “the flourishing new” (V.27). In “The flags forbidden” (HA 14) Anacker represents the old as “disgrace and ruins” (V.20), whereas the new is described as “The holy Third Reich” (V.21). The last verse of the poem “To the Führer!” (HA 11-12) indicates that the coming and rise of Adolf Hitler as the *Führer* symbolize the beginning of a new era and that, in that respect, the *Führer* himself takes part in the resurrection of the new *Reich*. Already in this opening poem, Anacker depicts Hitler as the long-awaited savior of the fatherland after years of struggle, bitterness and waiting. In the last part, this contribution focuses on the messianic stylization of the *Führer* in Anacker’s anthology *Die Fanfare*.

The Führer as new Messiah

Although lexically Anacker seems to connect the “article of faith” *Reich* primarily explicitly with the Christian Easter and resurrection story, he transfers the actual biblical meaning of the resurrection story to the Nazi “article of faith” *Führer*. Christ’s resurrection is observed as the central idea of the Christian creed and is significant within the doctrine of salvation.²⁹ Anacker adopts precisely the idea of salvation in his stylization of Adolf Hitler as messiah-like *Führer*. The scholar Hans Maier already denoted the Nazi “doctrine of salvation” and the vision of Adolf Hitler as the possible savior within this doctrine as an important aspect of National Socialism as a political religion.³⁰ For example the adoption of the word “Heil” in Nazi common parlance – like in the Nazi salute “Heil Hitler”, generally known as the German salute – is a well-known example for the Nazi doctrine of salvation. Sabine Behrenbeck explains that the Heil salute knows a long history as a salute in sporting clubs or as a toast in students unions. Furthermore, also many national or patriotic movements took over the Heil salute. The Nazi movement simply carried on this patriotic tradition. However, Behrenbeck points out that the original concept of “Heil” is found – once again – in Christian tradition, where it signifies salvation. The realization of “Heil” in the New Testament is solely bound to Jesus Christ. He is able to overcome all psychological, physical, social and spiritual extremities. “God’s Kingdom” implies the liberation of sickness and pain, the salvation from immediate mortal danger, the reconciliation with God, the resurrection

and the eternal life.³¹ The Hitler salute does not connect this “Heil” – this salvation – with Jesus, but with the *Führer*. The connection of the *Führer* to the Heil salute implies a certain messianic ascription to Hitler. Anacker too uses the Hitler salute in poems like “Kameraden, Tritt gefaßt” (HA 39, “Comrades, get ready”) und “Wir alle tragen im Herzen dein Bild” (HA 107, “We all cherish your image in our hearts”).³²

But besides the Heil salute, Anackers transfers other Christian – messianic – imagery in order to describe Hitler as such a savior who will bring salvation to the German people. Based on the writings on (political) messianism by Hans Otto Seitschek and Hans Jörg Schmidt, it is possible to identify five messianic characteristics in Anacker’s stylization of the *Führer* as a Messiah. Firstly, there are different stages in the messianic expectation. The first two stages are also applicable to Nazi ideology: waiting and hoping for the Messiah (1) and the unconditional obedience by the hopeful people (2).^{33,34} Within a religious cult of personality the believers also play an important role. They should spontaneously ascribe certain messianic characteristics to the apparent Messiah (3) and they believe in his superhuman ability (4) and his omnipresence (5).³⁵ Regarding the Christian sources of inspiration of Nazi propaganda writers, one could complete this list of messianic characteristics with one last aspect: parallels with the life of Christ as the Messiah (6). Although it is possible to find examples for each of these messianic characteristics in Anacker’s poetry volume *Die Fanfare*, this contribution only gives a few examples for the sixth characteristic, which can be thematically linked to the resurrection and salvation theme.

Anacker connects the *Führer* exclusively in his opening poem “To the Führer!” thematically with the resurrection story. As can be read in the citation above, Anacker mentions the name of Adolf Hitler within the same strophe, where he also makes an allusion to the resurrection. In a very simple way, he links both topics. Although Anacker does not describe the *Führer* as the resurrected one, he is portrayed – by the mere thematic association – as a savior and bearer of a new era with new hope. In other poems, Anacker describes Hitler very explicitly as a savior or liberator:

Die Fahnen verboten

[...]
Nur Hitler wird uns retten!
Nur Hitler macht uns frei!

The flags prohibited

[...]
Only Hitler will save us!
Only Hitler will free us!

The repetition of “Only Hitler” (V.23-24) stresses once more the very particular role of Hitler within the salvation of the German *Reich* and people. He really is the chosen one to lead the rest into a new era. In the poem “Frontweihnacht 1931” (HA 23, “Christmas at the front 1931”), the *Führer* is designated by the noun “Befreier” (V.14, “Savior”) and in “München grüßt Adolf Hitler” (HA 85, “Munich greets Adolf Hitler”) by the phrase “Retter des Vaterlandes” (V.18, “Savior of the fatherland”). Both in “Die erwachte Nation” (HA 79, “The awakened nation”) and in “Nun schmückt die Fahne mit jungem Grün”(HA 115, “Now decorate the flags with young green”) Anacker connects the *Führer* with the verb “erlösen” (“to redeem”). By using this verb, Knoche claims that Anacker automatically generates the association with the noun “Erlöser”

("Redeemer"). According to Knoche, derivations of "Erlöser" ("Redeemer") have without any doubt a religious connotation³⁶ and are therefore spontaneously linked to Christ as the Messiah.

In this way, Anacker connects the *Führer* explicitly to the idea of the Messiah as a savior. The fact that political writers like Heinrich Anacker presented Adolf Hitler notably as a messiah-like savior was not only a mere propaganda strategy, to a certain extent it also reflected a public belief. In his autobiography, Schumann writes that, at the time, he and his circle of friends truly believed in Adolf Hitler as the god-send *Führer* and savior of the *Reich*.³⁷

Conclusion

In his anthology *Die Fanfare*, Anacker refers to the Christian resurrection story on various occasions. Although Anacker does not follow the traditional Christian interpretation of Christ as redeemer, he does adopt this motif lexically and thematically for his own propaganda purposes. By transferring specific vocabulary from the Easter story into the National Socialist political context he grants the idea of a new German – better known as Third – *Reich* a certain sacredness. Although this vocabulary is missing in his depiction of the *Führer*, one also observes a certain religious dimension in that context as well. Instead of simply providing the *Führer* with lexical elements with an explicit religious connotation – like "holy", "resurrected" or "redeemed" – he ascribes certain aspects to him, which are linked to messianic thought. The focal point in this ascription is the doctrine of salvation which is inherent to the Christian Easter and resurrection story. However, in Anacker's poetry not Christ but Hitler himself is represented as the savior, whom the German people seemed to be expecting. He is described as a "savior" and "liberator" and his name is explicitly connected to the idea of salvation in the Heil salute. Just as many of his propaganda colleagues, Anacker reinterprets and abuses Christian symbolism for the consolidation of ideological key concepts in his poetry. Leaning on Christian tradition, political concepts like *Reich* and *Führer* did not only obtain a certain religious – sacred – aura, they were also recognizable for their German – and mainly traditionally Christian – readership. Within the political Nazi cult, these sacralized ideological key concepts could actually become "articles of faith".

¹ Heinrich Anacker, *Die Fanfare. Gedichte der deutschen Erhebung*. (München: Eher, 1936). First edition in 1933.

² All the cited poems in this article are included in *ibid.* Bibliographical references of the individual poems will be marked as followed: (HA page).

³ Cf. Klaus Vondung, "National Socialism as a Political Religion: Potentials and Limits of an Analytical Concept," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 6, no. 1 (2005).

⁴ Cf. Verena Schulz, "Heinrich Anacker – Der "Lyrische Streiter"," in *Dichter für das "Dritte Reich": Biografische Studien zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Ideologie.*, ed. Rolf Düsterberg (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2011), 25-26.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 33.

- ⁷ Research performed at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv (DLA, "German Literary Archive") in Marbach (Germany) revealed numerous articles in different German newspapers on these and other authors. Newspapers like *Völkischer Beobachter*, *Berliner Illustrierte*, *Hamburger Tageblatt* and many more not only published a variety of their poems, but also dedicated articles to the literary prizes that they obtained, reported on poetry readings at public events or on the radio or advertised for new anthologies.
- ⁸ Vgl. Uwe-K. Ketelsen, *Völkisch-nationale und nationalsozialistische Literatur in Deutschland 1890-1945* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1976), 65.
- ⁹ Das Deutsche Rundfunkarchiv (DRA, "German Radio Archives") in Frankfurt am Main still contains a significant number of audiotapes from the time of Nazi broadcasting.
- ¹⁰ Cf. Peter Hasubek, *Das deutsche Lesebuch in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Hannover: Hermann Schroedel, 1972), 39.
- ¹¹ Cf. Brigitte Gess, "The Conceptions of Totalitarianism of Raymond Aron and Hannah Arendt," in *Totalitarianism and Political Religion*, ed. Hans Maier (Oxon: Routledge, 2004), 235. Fn. 4.
- ¹² Maier (co-)edited several volumes on totalitarianism and political Religions: *Totalitarismus und Politische Religionen* (3 Vol., Paderborn 1996-2003).
- ¹³ Cf. Anneleen Van Hertbruggen, "Glaube und Propagandadichtung : Religionsdimensionen im Nationalsozialismus," *Kritische Ausgabe: Zeitschrift für Germanistik & Literatur* 19, no. 28/29 (2015); Anneleen Van Hertbruggen, "Methodische Annäherungen an die politische Theologie als Interpretationsansatz für nationalsozialistische Propagandadichtung," *Focus on German Studies* 21 (2014).
- ¹⁴ Cf. Kevin P. Spicer, *Hitler's Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism* (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008).
- ¹⁵ D.K. Hastings, *Catholicism and the Roots of Nazism: Religious Identity and National Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 163.
- ¹⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 164.
- ¹⁷ Although Hastings' citation of Bangert's poem may suggest otherwise, there are only few works that offer a literary perspective on affirmative poetry during the Nazi reign in general and the religious – Christian – symbolism in this poetry in particular. For a long time, only Walter Knoche's dissertation on *The Political Poetry of the Third Reich: Themes and Metaphors*, defended in 1968, and Cornelia Jungrichter's studies on National Socialist sonnet writings (1979) offered more detailed insight in the writings of young Nazi authors. Esther Roßmeißl sees the neglect of Nazi literature in literary studies as a function of the dominant assumption that it was not "real literature"; it was inhumane, intellectually undemanding, formally unsatisfying and only to be seen as a propaganda medium. Cf. Esther Roßmeißl, *Märtyrerstilisierung in der Literatur des Dritten Reiches* (Tausenstein: Driesen, 2000), 10. Over the last decade, however, several works on Nazi poets have seen the light, like Jay W. Baird's *Hitler's war poets* (2008) and four volumes of bio-bibliographical portraits of different Nazi authors by Rolf Düsterberg (2009, 2011, 2015, 2018). Furthermore, Simone Bautz produced the first large work on one specific propaganda author, i.e. Gerhard Schumann, with her dissertation in 2008.
- ¹⁸ Cf. Vondung, 89.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.
- ²⁰ cf. Acts 2, 1-4

- ²¹ All the poems are translated by the author of this article. Because I chose to translate literally, the original rhyme and meter are lost.
- ²² Cf. Mc 16, 4-6; Lc. 24, 2-6; John 20, 1-2
- ²³ Cf. Albrecht Schöne, *Über politische Lyrik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 16.
- ²⁴ The German word "Osterglocken" could either refer to the daffodils which announce spring time or the "Easter bells", which proclaim the resurrection of Christ three days after his death. Within the Easter theme, I choose the latter translation.
- ²⁵ The German word "Botschaft" is easily associated with "die Frohe Botschaft" – "Gospel" in English. This connotation is lost in the English translation with "message".
- ²⁶ When describing the period preceding the seizure of power, Anacker uses multiple times words like "Knechtschaft" ("bondservice"), "Joch" ("yoke"), "Fesseln" ("chains"), ... : cf. "Preußens Erhebung" (HA 67-68, "Prussia's elevation"), "Die erwachte Nation" (HA 79, "The awakened nation"), „Zur Freiheit!“ (HA 58, „To the freedom!“), „Zum Endkampf!“ (HA 54, „To the last battle!“).
- ²⁷ Cf. Walter Knoche, *The political Poetry of the Third Reich: Themes and Metaphors*. 1969, Dissertation, 10.
- ²⁸ According to Knoche, "Third Reich" is originally a religious and philosophical concept, developed by the Cistercian abbot Joachim of Fiore (around 1130-1202). In Joachim of Fiore's belief, the Third Reich would follow after the First Reich – the one of the father – and the Second Reich – the one of the son. The Third Reich would be the era of the spirit. Cf. *Ibid.*, 9. Cf. "Das Dritte Reich" in Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 156.
- ²⁹ Cf. "Auferstehung", in Adel Theodor Khoury, *Lexikon religiöser Grundbegriffe. Judentum – Christentum – Islam* (Graz, Wien, Köln: Styria, 1987), 80. Khoury 8
- ³⁰ Cf. Hans Maier, "Totalitarismus und Politische Religionen. Konzepte des Diktaturvergleichs," in *Totalitarismus im 20. Jahrhundert. Eine Bilanz der internationalen Forschung*, ed. Jesse Eckhard (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1999), 125.
- ³¹ Cf. Sabine Behrenbeck, "Heil," in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, Vol. 3. ed. Étienne François and Hagen Schulze (München: Beck, 2005), 316.
- ³² Although the Christian roots of the idea of "Heil" are indisputable, one could make the same remarks as with the theological origins of "Third Reich" as a collective symbol. Once again, it is questionable that the average Nazi was aware of this original and exclusive religious background of the Heil salute.
- ³³ Cf. Hans Otto Seitschek, *Politischer Messianismus - Totalitarismuskritik und philosophische Geschichtsschreibung im Anschluss an Jacob Leib Talmon* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005), 31.
- ³⁴ According to Hans Otto Seitschek, in the third phase the people are expecting the return of the Messiah after a certain period of absence. Cf. *Ibid.*, 32. At the beginning of the 1930s, this phase has yet to come from a National Socialist point of view. The return of Hitler as a Messiah could only be expected after his disappearance, which would be after the destruction of the Third Reich. It is not surprising that this phase is not included in propaganda poetry that is written at the beginning of the 1930s.
- ³⁵ Cf. Hans Jörg Schmidt, "Herrscherkult und politische Religion als Erklärungsmodell gelegentlichslyrischen "Schaffens"/"Schriftums" im Rahmen der "sozialistischen deutschen Nationalliteratur" und der

“nationalsozialistischen deutschen Literatur” in *Totalitarismus und Literatur*, ed. Hans Jörg Schmidt and Petra Tallafuss (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 99.

³⁶ Cf. Knoche, 20-21.

³⁷ Cf. Gerhard Schumann, *Besinnung von Kunst und Leben* (Bodman, Bodensee: Hohenstaufen Verlag, 1974), 144.

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