Religion through Race

The religious perceptions of Den Nordiske Motstandsbevegelsen

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Abstract

This thesis considers the religious perceptions of a very vocal, self-identified National Socialist group in Norway called “Den Nordiske Motstandsbevegelsen” or “The Nordic Resistance Movement” (DNM). The thesis consists of three main approaches:

1. To contextualize expressions of the group concerning religion and religiosity to National Socialism of the 1920s and 30s as found in the parties of NSDAP (Germany) and NS (Norway) as well as the political group Ragnarok (Norway).

2. To uncover religious ideas and cosmology of the group as found in the textual sources on their webpage.

3. To discuss the groups understanding of the traditional religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam as well as more loose-fitting religious concepts, popularly referred to as “New Age”

My findings indicate that the complex relations between National Socialism and religious thought as were present in the 20s and 30s are still relevant to current groups like DNM. The group is not opposed to religion and does acknowledge the spiritual need of human beings, but places the core features of National Socialism above religious sentiment. These core features include biological-racial ideas as well as a fundamental anti-Semitism. A religion can hence only be accepted if perceived as compatible with National Socialism, leaving religious freedom intact yet within the frames of the ideology. The main difference between National Socialism then and now is the relative decline of importance, where DNM rarely explicitly discuss religion and only occasionally refer to religious issues or the place and space of religion within National Socialism. Because race rather than religion is regarded as the defining characteristic of an individual, DNM do not partake much in oppositional stances against Christianity or Islam and neither seem to have any particular preference for Neo-Paganism as was quite prominent within certain fractions in the 20s and 30s. The assessment of Judaism is however digressing from the clear-cut separation of race and religion, where no great difference is made between the two elements, leading the question of intellectual influence on Christianity an open, unanswered question as opposed to previous National Socialism. The relative peripheral role of religion is also present in the apparent distance of DNM to occultism and “New Age” which has influenced the general Nazi scene to some extent in recent decades. Nevertheless, there are elements which can be given clear religious meaning and perceptions within the cosmology of DNM closely related to the almost sacral apprehension of NSDAP; the role of Hitler, eternal life within the racial memory, struggle as the ultimate meaning of existence and the martyrrium surrounding these sacrifices. As such the manifestation of religion is present, but mainly through the context of race.
Preface

To write the final words of this thesis which has been my main occupation for the last year, is indeed ambivalent. After many days of reading and writing I am ready to let my thesis fly away on the wings of love, but at the same time there is so much more to be said and researched on this so interesting topic. As such, the feeling of curiosity and thirst for knowledge is supressing the bursts of stress and anxiety now the process of the thesis is at an end.

There are many who are to be thanked for their help and support. I would like to thank teachers and co-students of the program Religious Roots of Europe 2016-18; you have made the last two years of studying a real treat with knowledgeable interactions and forgetful compact seminars. Particularly Violina has been a great comrade in arms with continuing offers of decadence and shelter in the great Babylon.

I would also like to thank my family for stimulating my passion for history and religion at a very early stage, where the Third Reich has been an ever-recurring field of interest.

Supervisor Dag Thorkildsen has been invaluable during the writing of the thesis, and despite the geographical distance between us been ever-available with crucial insight and thoughtful advices.

Finally, I would like to thank my indispensable Dotto. You are the sun whose rays are all ablaze.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The topic of choice
Most defining books concerning themselves with National Socialism have regarded the movement primarily as a political ideology where spiritual elements have been considered opportunistic, half-hearted or at best demagogic. Already the conservative Chancellor of Germany 1932 and co-Chancellor with Hitler 1933-34, Franz von Papen labelled NSDAP more of a sect than a political party in the ordinary sense of the word: ‘it’s axiom of the exclusiveness of the political all or nothing [and] its mystical Messiah-faith in the word-mighty Führer as the only one summoned to control destiny (Tal, 2004, p.17). As such the dynamic between the political and the religious elements of NSDAP has been used in order to devaluate the complexity of the movement; if it were to be a sect its deep, political resonance in Germany didn’t have to be taken seriously, if it were to be a political party its religious aspects would merely be a superficial display of populism.
A similar dichotomy has been found in the discussion of the religious properties in National Socialism; if one is to accept its religious perceptions, is it to be interrelated to Christian, Neo-Pagan or more non-committed religious understandings? A traditional approach has been to oppose the teachings of Christianity to the teachings of National Socialism as incompatible of which the churches themselves were very active. As noted by Steigmann-Gall, the churches of Germany in post-war society were very emphatical in distancing any clerical connections to the former regime. By emphasising the clerics who contradicted the Nazi potentate and creating an aura of martyrdom around Christians executed by the state, it removed all ties between Christian creed and National Socialism (Steigmann-Gall, 2003, p.4). By placing religious tendencies as Neo-Pagan, atheistic or even occult, and easy explanation to the very complex question of how Hitler and NSDAP could gain power in Germany is offered (Emberland, 2003, p.149). The discussion of the religious connotations of National Socialism can in other words be controversial.
I had for a long time been very interested in the spiritual dimensions of National Socialism, a topic I was introduced to in 2003 after reading the eminent book “Religion og rase” on Neo-Pagan National Socialism in inter-war Norway by Terje Emberland. When” Den Nordiske Motstandsbevegelsen” (The Nordic Resistance Movement), from now on called DNM for short, emerged in the Norwegian public and media attention and declared themselves adherents to National Socialism as well as the ideas of Hitler I began to see a potential for a
comparison of thoughts. As DNM, unlike many similar groups, acknowledged their murky past and regarded NSDAP as pioneers, I could to a certain degree avoid the tiresome debate of linking the “Hitler-factor” to groups and ideas publicly opposed to the very idea. I also became aware of the religious ambivalence displayed by the group with their depictions of Norse runes and values similar to conservative Christians, yet with no religious perspectives claimed as their own. This impression was further enhanced by the NRK documentary featuring DNM called “The Race Warriors” where an associate participating in one of their arrangements also happened to be a priest, but no attention was given to this somewhat extraordinary fact (NRK, 2017). The lack of recognition of the religious connotations of National Socialism not only by the media but seemingly also by DNM themselves further raised my curiosity. Much attention has been given to DNM in recent years involving their political aspirations, their life stance and not to mention their potential for violence which by the Norwegian Police Security Service has been graded as substantial (Strømmen, 2017). The premises have however been mainly political and this-worldly. In my mind one important aspect of the justification of violence as well as the allurement of National Socialism historically and currently is the potential for spiritual dimension which not only offers a political platform, but also a life stance transcending most aspects of every-day life. 

As such my approach of study is not to reveal “the hidden religion” of National Socialism or DNM, or even to explain the full picture of the relation between the ideology and religion. I aspire to compare some of the most important religious sentiments and aspects essential to the emerging National Socialism of the 20s and 30s and the notions of DNM today as a group identifying as belonging to a narrative began by Adolf Hitler. This “grand narrative” was already from the beginning was divided in many directions due to social, political and geographical contexts. Hence, I will give acknowledgement to the Norwegian setting of which DNM is part of and include Nasjonal Samling (NS) and the small Neo-Pagan Ragnarok-group in the comparison as well to highlight difference and similarities of thought. But as DNM mainly acknowledge NSDAP as their main source of inspiration, the emphasis will rest there. In identifying the presence or lack of presence to issues featuring religious conflict lines of NSDAP. The actual research question will be:

“What are the religious policies and perceptions of DNM in Norway? How can their religious notions be understood in relation to historical National Socialism in the shape of constellations such as NSDAP, NS and the Ragnarok-group?”
1.2 Scope and limitations
The research question implicates an emphasis on the metaphysical and spiritual aspects of National Socialism, which can in certain terms be more lucid and subjective than political aims. Even within a group of hierarchical structure like DNM one is likely to find a variety of individual understanding of religiosity and its compatibility with National Socialism; ranging from hostility to indifference to acceptance. The scope of the thesis is hence not to give a complete evaluation of the religious perceptions of the members of DNM, rather the official and sanctioned expressions of DNM as a public group. I will in other words treat DNM as a homogenous and unified group for the sake of my research scope and its ramifications rather than for any normative reasons, a choice I would like to stress very early in the process. The sources will also enforce the public and formal front of DNM as I ground my documentation primarily from two spectres of the official leadership; their political program and their ideological writing, as well as articles and writings collected from their website Frihetskamp.net. Most articles of my using are written either by the editorial staff of Frihetskamp or members belonging to the Norwegian or Swedish leadership of DNM. In these examples the authorizations as well as the compatibility with formal policies is likely to be acceptably certain. A few remaining contributions originates from anonymous writers or individuals of no apparent significance within Frihetskamp or DNM, but I have chosen also to regard these sources as representative for DNM ideas for one main reason; the texts have been approved by the editorial staff and likely contain some level of relevance with the remaining sources. I am however aware there is a potential difference in relevance and significance between sources from actors of DNM leadership and more peripheral members or sympathizers writing on matters important to them. This particular ambivalence also relates to what I regard as the main limitation of the thesis; namely my complete reliance on textual sources. The textual sources are of course dominant on a webpage like Frihetskamp.net, but the site also offers both videos-clips and interviews as well as podcasts of which I will not be using due to my emphasis on the textual. Because of the limitations in time imposed on a master thesis as well as the issues of privacy guidelines I chose in consultation with my supervisor not to include any interviews or personal statements from members of DNM or even the authors of my textual sources. The lack of personal involvement from the actors implies that some assertions of mine will be made as assumptions, while the actors themselves have in other words been denied any explanatory possibilities. A further limitation is related to the geographical context of my study; although DNM is an organization with representation in all of the Nordic countries with a clear origin in the Swedish National Socialist milieu, I
have chosen to concentrate only on the Norwegian section as I mainly use articles found on Frihetskamp.net. Only occasionally I have used articles from the Swedish sister-site Nordfront.se. As DNM have its strength (both in numbers and leadership) in Sweden and articles are exchanged between the various websites controlled by DNM, it is likely that my findings will be relevant also for the Swedish division and other Nordic wings. But as I have not conducted the same level of research on these websites, I cannot claim to make my research conclusions to implicate DNM in a general sense, only the Norwegian branch of DNM as found on the Norwegian website Frihetskamp.net.

1.3 The academic development on the topic
A significant development within the research on National Socialism has been the gradual change from evaluating the ideology as a collection of power hunger and collective psychopathy with only negations as its defining features, to an ideology of independent and genuine beliefs with several “positive” notions in their Weltanschauung (Emberland, 2003, p.13-14). The understanding of religion and religious implications of the ideology is closely connected to this approach. One of the first to promote the latter system of thought was George L. Mosse in the book “Nazi Culture”. Another significant contributor is Roger Griffin, who was vocal in crediting both Fascism and National Socialism with “a mythic core” (Griffin, 1993, p.43-44). There have been many perspectives on the relation between religiosity and National Socialism, ranging from viewpoints on Christian involvement, to Neo-Pagan influences as well as occult tendencies. Many books concerning the relations between Christianity and NSDAP have articulated that Christianity was incompatible with the ideology and that Christians dedicated to the cause was either deceived or not truly Christians (Steigmann-Gall, 2003, p.5), leaving the religiosity of National Socialism dubious or at best “diffuse emotionality” (Burleigh, 2000, p.256). Promoters of this view includes Michael Burleigh, Klaus Scholder, John Conway, Irving Hexham and Doris Berger with her work on the German Christians. Their perception of religion and National Socialism is frequently found to be an imitation of religious symbols and functions or of Neo-Pagan influences. A contradictory voice was that of Richard Steigmann-Gall and his book “The Holy Reich” from 2003 which suggested that National Socialism was neither anti-Christian nor atheistic and that many within the Nazi movement felt a genuine devotion towards Christianity. The book “The Aryan Jesus” by Susannah Heschel from 2008 further examined the role German theologians played in creating the Aryan version of Christ. Many endeavours to explain the phenomena of Hitler and National Socialism in occult terms were also launched in the decades after the war,
which often were more or less founded on few and/or implausible sources. Non-academic books like “The Spear of Destiny” by Trevor Ravenscroft and “Le Martin des Magicien” by Louis Pauwel and Jacques Bergier belongs to this tradition. Researchers which have aspired to evaluate the occult influence on National Socialism has been Nicolas Goodrick-Clarke with “The Occult Roots of Nazism” and much of the authorship of Jeffrey Kaplan.

1.4 The importance of the research
As presented above there are many distinguished researchers who deals eminently with the dynamic of National Socialism and religion. A ground-breaking work in Norway was the book” Race and Religion” by Emberland which in a prestigious way differentiated the established understanding of the conflict lines within the National Socialist scene of the 30s. Its rise to power, it’s devastating effect on Europe and its people and its implication for the world of today are all compelling reasons to the importance of this phenomena. Nonetheless, when research is conducted on a current group or actors of seemingly secular, political content religious implication is usually underplayed outside of the circle of researchers who actively have a religious approach. What I hope to contribute with my thesis is how and why current groups or constellations of National Socialistic orientation might invoke religiously infused meaning or sentiments as a, at times, understated element of the ideology. Even though it might not be the most prominent feature in their own self-understanding or their life stance, it can nevertheless offer some nuances to National Socialism- for example the potential for violence which can contain metaphysical meaning often overlooked. I believe several defining properties of the ideology, ranging from their thoughts on human existence, the positive values given to struggle and heroic death as well as their dualistic interpretation of various concepts golden age-degeneration or Jew-Nordic can be grasped in a religious context as well as a political. In order to understand a group like DNM, it can constitute a valuable perspective.

1.5 The structure of the thesis
As stated my approach is a comparison between the historical inter-war National Socialism presented by NSDAP (in addition to NS and the Ragnarok-group) and the current National Socialism as presented by DNM. A background chapter on the origin and emergence of the ideology in a German context as well as a Norwegian context will be essential in creating a fundament for juxtapositions. In order to connect DNM to these tendencies and
developmental traits in post-war times, it will further be relevant to give a short description of National Socialism after 1945 with its implications of the demise of Hitler and his Reich. I will first present the methods I will employ to handle the sources in this thesis and give definitions to concepts central to my research question like “religion” and “National Socialism”. I will also discuss how to categorize the spiritual and political sides of the ideology by discussing the academical use of the term “political religion”. Then I will present chapters on National Socialism in Germany, in Norway and post-war times which will constitute the basis for comparison. At this point I will present the sources collected on DNM and analyse their content in the historical context established and evaluate continuity or change between the two phenomena. Structurally the analysis will be divided in subchapters involving religious considerations by source type, apprehension of Christianity and Islam, the antagonistic conception of the Jews as well as DNM’s own awareness of NSDAP and developments within National Socialism in post-war years. Finally, I will summarize my findings in a condensed conclusion, and give some notes on further research on the topic.
Chapter 2: Methods, concepts and the problems of categorisation

2.1 Introduction
In this chapter I will discuss the methods which will be used in acquiring and interpreting the primary sources, its strengths and its problematic sides. Further I will present some central concepts which will appear frequently in the next chapters and define the framework of content in the manner these terms will be utilized. Closely connected to the definition of concepts is the last aspect of this chapter, namely the dissection of the ambivalence between religion, politics and ideology. Much scholarly work has been done on understanding the religious dimensions of National Socialism, and I will present some of the central features, discuss the premises for evaluating its religious and political connotations and provide my understanding of the issue.

2.2 Approach of method: discourse analysis
The sources can be very significant in the choice of method, and as I have chosen to make use of written sources as found on the website Frihetskamp.net, a discourse analysis appeared most contiguous. A prominent method approach emerging in the field of internet source currently, netnography, can easily be implemented into a more traditional discourse analysis. Netnography is particularly interested in the interaction and identities which is available to internet sources contrasting literary sources. How the writer and the reader as well as reader to reader might contact each other directly to discuss issues and current topics and thus form long-lived or short-lived communities is of interest to this approach (Costello, McDermott, Wallace, 2017, p.2). But as I conduct my research based solely on the textual sources themselves, and do not involve the comments, interactions or social media between DNM and their circle of members and sympathizers, I have chosen to disregard netnography and concentrate solely on the discourse analysis. Discourse analysis can imply a variety of approaches depending on research field; the discourse analysis of linguistics gives preference to different aspects than in social sciences or humanities. Discourse in everyday speech usually implies written or spoken communication of any genre or topic but can also refer to a formal expression of thought on a subject (Merriam Webster, 2018). A very general, all-reaching definition of discourse approach can
be “an assumption that language is an irreducible part of social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life, so that social analysis and research always has to take account of language” (Fairclough, 2003, p.2).

Discourse analysis is thus a form of textual analysis, but as emphasised by Fairclough, not only that. It is concerned with the abstract, structural levels of social life, where a word or a sentence refers to a context in society (Fairclough, 2003, p.3). Another famous presentation of discourse analysis has been “a process reflecting a distribution of knowledge, authority and social relations, which propels those enrolled in it” (Barth, 1993, p.173). The French historian Michel Foucault connected discourse analysis to archaeology (Neumann, 2001, p.17), which is a good metaphor for the ambition as well as goal of the discourse analyst. Like an archaeologist one digs up a find; sometimes whole and sometimes fragmented. It might be telling of its function or it might be silent; either way it needs to be interpreted and placed in a broader context of cultural, religious and socio-political structures. Like in archaeology there can also be times where the interpretation might be nothing but an educated guess, where the true meaning is lost in space, time or intellectual distance. It indicates an ability of discourse analysis to design meaning, which by Foucault has been labelled as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972, p.49). As such the meaning of a text is not necessarily objective but created and shaped through social interaction by both the writer and the reader, leaving the reader an involved participant and not a distanced spectator.

Because of the dynamic between writer, text and reader, Neumann lists several elements which ought to be present when conducting a discourse analysis. These factors include:

- cultural competence
- the identification of the representation of discourse
- the stratification of the discourse (Neumann, 2001, p.50).

It is reasonable that an understanding of the cultural context from which the text emerges is necessary to understand the depth of meanings and connotations. A typical example can be found in the National Socialist use of the word “Volk/Folk/People”. In everyday speech it is a reference to a group of people of assorted size and conjunction, meaning everything from “these people over here” to “the people of Norway”. Historian George L. Mosse has pointed out that the term Volk has deep connotations in German not properly present in any English translation:

Volk signified the union of a group of people with a transcendental essence. This essence might be called “nature”, “cosmos” or “mythos”, but in each instance, it
was fused to man’s innermost nature, and represented the source of his creativity, his depth of feeling, his individuality, and his unity with other members of the Volk (Mosse, 1966, p.4).

As words carry more meaning than the superficial or literal understanding, cultural competence is essential when interpreting textual sources. This is perhaps especially prominent when dealing with movements and groups who explicitly or implicitly connect themselves to the literary genre of the past, in my thesis to NSDAP and the National Socialism of the 20s and 30s. The Russian semiotician Mikhail Bakhtin postulated that the genre consists of its own memory, in the sense that each text leans to the previous text of the genre and contained echo of the past. The early textual sources will in this context be of highly importance as they pose as “pioneer texts” for the future and holds much of the framework conceived as valid of the genre (Neumann, 2001, p.54). The substantial effort I have done in the background chapter is to highlight the similarities and differences found between National Socialists of the past and present, where the pioneer texts pose as the point of departure.

The cultural competence is thus closely related to the representation of the discourse. Representations are by Neumann defined as things and phenomena in the form they appear to us, filtered by language, categories etc (Neumann, 2001, p.33). In short, they can be expressions of different perceptions of reality. These realities consist of how the world is organized, how history presents itself, the definitions of various phenomena and not to mention the distinction between friend and foe. Because many representations usually co-exist within a discourse, a conflict level can exist where taboos and sanctions arise, which can be in effect across the diversity of representations, even discourses characterized by opposition. A particular challenge in this thesis is the interfering involvement of different languages; most of my historic primary sources is written in German or Norwegian, most secondary sources in English and most current textual sources in Norwegian- the latter where some has been written in Swedish or other languages, translated to Norwegian by the editorial staff of Frihetskamp.net and again translated to English by myself. One must assume the various translations remains relatively close to the original wording, but at the same time the dynamic between literal and metaphoric language can result in lost dimensions of meaning and contexts not known to the chain of translators.

The stratification of discord also attends to representations, and particularly with the apparent eternal and unifying aspects of these realities. As pointed out by Neumann, even similar features of the same representation do not have to be of identical content (Neumann, 2001,
He gives the example of studying the national identity of country, where there will be a
great diversity of ideas concerning what is typical of this area-the sociality of this concept is
just too extensive to only contain one truth (Ibid). I believe this is very present also within a
National Socialist context, despite their desire to display a surface of homogeneity of belief
within their group. It is further a reminder of the flexibility, even fluidity, of a concept such as
National Socialism; and its content decided by both internally and externally actors.
This position leaves me in great control and with extensive definition of power. An important
element of power is in the designation of what in sociology is called subject position, where a
discourse offers a whole range of features of how to behave, how to think, how to appear
when belonging to a specific group, either voluntarily or forcibly allocated (Neumann, 2001,
p.116-17). The danger is of course to void individuals of any unique traits except those
believed to be within his or her subject position, which reversely could influence the self-
understanding and acquiring of knowledge as discussed by Foucault (Ibid). An important
aspect of my research is to not create opinions and perspectives where there is none, an easy
task when dealing with groups and individuals with radical countercultural life stances. The
connection between the perceived and the actual is a central dynamic of any identity, which
by Neumann is defined as a pattern of interaction and the solving of conflict lines; who are
“we” and who are “they” (Neumann, 2001, p.1224-25). This is a dynamic which naturally
will develop over time, and be influenced by current issues and trends in society, where just
not anything goes. Such a selection of content within identity has by Sørensen been named
resonance, where ideas are incorporated into identity based on how much they resonate with
the intended recipients. Sørensen uses the examples of the ideas of what it implied to be
Norwegian in the great nation building projects of the 19th Century, where the peasantry only
accepted the elite conception of Norway when it was adaptable to the peasants’ own
perceptions and cultural understanding (Sørensen, 1997, p.19). While the power of resonance
is unequally spread in terms of socio-cultural and geographical position, there is still an aspect
of choice; defiance or confirmation. According to Hirschman a strategy on a personal level in
facing the dominant discourses, three possible approaches; exit, voice or loyalty. Exit is
defined by non-participation in society, voice by protest and opposition, and loyalty by
acquiring the expected subject position and identify with its values and norms (Neumann,
2001, p.169). This element of a discourse analysis will be central in my discussion of the
primary sources, as the conflict lines between “us” and “they” are formative not only in the
political context but also a category which influence the mythos of the world; what the world
is, why the world is as it is and how the status quo can be changed- all these concepts are
related to identity. The theories surrounding power and resonance could provide important tools when discovering and understanding difference approaches to the “us” and “they” within National Socialist discourse; despite similarity of Weltanschauung. As implied by the resonance theory of Sørensen; resonance is not a static matter but could change not only between groups but within groups based on age, life situation, personality etc.

2.3 Definitions of concepts
There are several terms and concepts used frequently during this thesis, and which requires a definition of meaning. One of the core terms used in this work is nation and nationalism, an important aspect of National Socialist thinking. As a general notion I would define nation according to its lexical description; an entity which can consist of a collection of individuals or a state formation with one common identity and shared cultural and social values. Nationalism can both be an individual or collective feeling of community within the nation but could also be politicized either by the state in a way to legitimacy and create unity or by various groups and movements in order to achieve political goals regarded as vital for the nation (Fagelund-Knudsen, 2018). Among modern National Socialists this notion of nationalism might also have an international flavour where the nationalism of each nation is transformed into a broader sense of community based on similarity in race, culture etc. There is hence an inclusive and exclusive dimension of nationalism; by defining what the nation contains, it will automatically define what and who is foreign or artificial to the nation, a feature very essential to National Socialism.

The perhaps most blatant concept in need of definition is National Socialism and National Socialist, or in its short version; Nazi. The term is for many so implicit that many books on the subject, including academic works, do not bother to define its content. The way I see it the concept has two main interpretations; as a historic restricted word and as a current, broader word used by a diverse conjunction of groups, movements and actors. The two versions are of course highly interwoven, but also detached and do not necessarily imply identical political opinions, world view or religiosity. To state the obvious; even National Socialism has, like the world it resides in, developed in the last 75 years and is now answering to different political contexts and conflicts than in the 20s and 30s. There are however certain core values and beliefs which are formative in the exclusiveness of the concept, otherwise the word would hold no meaning. A general notion of National Socialism of Germany in 20s and 30s is yet difficult to assess as it burst the traditional left-right axis of the political spectre. This is very
present in the writings and speeches of Adolf Hitler such as Mein Kampf, which can be used as an introductory framework of a National Socialist definition.

A central feature of the ideology presented in Mein Kampf is the fighting community of the people of the same nation or race (Volksgemeinschaft) which implies the emphasis on both the nation and on race. This race, called by many names such as the Nordic race, the Germanic Race or the Aryan race was destined to be founders and establishers of culture and thus the driving force of any civilization development. The prevalence of the race was found in most of Northern and Western Europe and had according to Hitler a deeply connection to the German people of which particularly had managed to preserve the unique qualities of the race (Hitler, 1992, p.360-61). These qualities included values such as devotion, self-sacrifice, heroism and collective thinking. In a dualistic contrast the goodness of the Germanic race was challenged by its hereditary adversary, the Jewish race (Hitler, 1992, p.378-79). Not unlike the Marxist idea of the struggle between collectives as the dynamic of history, Hitler regarded the conflict between the Germanic and the Jewish race as the principle cosmic struggle of history, where the evil powers of Jewishness had emerged within art, culture, Marxism and particularly international capitalism (Hitler, 1992, p.285-91/ p.407-8). As such, National Socialism was deeply anti-capitalistic and opposed to market economy, but also antagonistic towards Marxism and its focus on class and class conflict; both evaluated as an expression of the Jewish ambition for world domination. As is indicated in use of large entities such as “Germanic race”, “German nation”, “Jewish race”, Hitler had little concern for liberal individualism; it was primarily a collective thinking where solidarity rather than class struggle was the essential feature. The racial properties were the defining value of the individual in the collective which gave worth as well as meaning although had a distinctly biological approach; the Volksgemeinschaft could be compared to a body, if a part was weak or degenerated it had to be cured or even removed (Hitler, 1992, p.260-61). Because the struggle of races was the struggle of the fittest where the natural selection was the ground rule, Hitler had few objections against the removal of anti-social and Jewish elements in the German nation or subjugating inferior nations in order for the Germanic race to grow and flourish (Hitler, 1992, p.125). To sum up; the negations of National Socialism are anti-Semitism, anti-capitalism, anti-democracy and anti-individualism. The positive values are described as racism, nationalism, collectivism, heroism and militarism.

It does not follow however that every expression of National Socialism neither in the 20s and 30s nor today incorporate every single element of these core values; for example, National Socialists in America are more likely to emphasise the “survival of the fittest” element of the
teachings in order to devaluate the welfare system, while National Socialists in Europe often embrace solidary anti-capitalism in their support for the welfare state, reflecting the political tradition in their own countries. A distinct sense nationalism is often present currently, but a significant internationalism has also emerged where racial unity beyond national borders is highlighted—indicated in expressions like “white pride- world wide” (Blamires, Jackson, 2006, p.460-61). Yet, several elements mentioned are usually incorporated in a distinguishable word-view consisting of the following:

- racial distinctions and hierarchy between humans
- an almost Manichean contrast between good and evil
- a society controlled by hidden, shadowy forces of Jewish origin and/or their non-Jewish lackeys.

Many actors which could be labelled as the Neo-Nazi nevertheless actively oppose such a label, denying any sense of respect for Hitler or NSDAP. I imagine some promote this opinion to avert any negative association with their own stance, which is particularly present in groups with some sort of political aspiration which need to seem different and new vis-à-vis the sins of the NSDAP. This explicit distance to Nazism of old always invokes the question of categorization where a discussing has to be conducted as to legitimize such a label. In my case, the primary sources actually accept the association to National Socialism and openly label themselves as such. Their admiration for Hitler and NSDAP is also very vocal. As such, I am in accordance with the sources self-identity when I categorize them of National Socialist ideology.

This thesis concerns itself with the religiosity of National Socialist groups, leading to the necessity of a definition on the concept of religion and religiosity. As is well known by the devotees of religious studies, definitions of religion are plentiful and partly overlapping. As such, religion is easy to identify, but hard to define. A well-known model is that of Ninian Smart which understands religion through seven dimensions: action-oriented, ritual, experience and feeling, myth, learning and philosophy, ethical and moral, society and institutions and material (Gilhus, Mikaelsson, 2007, p.142). The use of dimensions of religion allows the concept to have nuances where religiosity can be present in some aspects and not in other. The presence of religion is then not a question of yes or no, but where and in what sense. Another model used by Gilhus and Mikaelsson to understand the growing presence of “New Age” also emphasises the relative presence of religion. Their point of departure was the conceptualisation of circles of religion, where a person “using” religion in his or her everyday-life would be in the middle of the circle, a moderately interested user would be in
the outskirts of the circle, while a sporadic user would be in the fringe zone. Placement in the circle is movable where changes in life situation, interests etc could move the user inwards or outwards. A similar circle-model could be drawn between traditional church communities and alternative movement, where one can be involved in both but perifocal in one and to the centre of the other. The idea poses that religion is not only for the very devout but functions differently to different people and is upheld with great diversity in society of today (Gilhus, Mikaelsson, 2007, p.143). It is reminiscent of Jonathan Z. Smith’s model of “here, there and anywhere”, originally implemented on the religious situation of the Roman Empire in late Antiquity where different expressions and actors were involved in the religious activities of the home, of the state and of mobile religious experts like astrologers, fortune-tellers and divinators (Ibid). Also relevant for any definition of religion would be the distinction often found in sociology of religion between definitions of content and definitions of function. The first emphasises the content of religion and hence what religion is and the latter to the functions of religion and hence what religion does (Gilhus, Mikaelsson, 2007, p.140). A definition of function would in other words be more inclusive as it would incorporate elements closely connected to religious expressions like communal feeling, common meaning, existential answers etc despite lack of formal attachments to religious belief.

In this thesis I will relate to the models which postulate the nuanced, dimensional understanding of religion, particularly that of Smart, as well as primarily place significance on function rather than content. The religious connotations of a political ideology will often find itself “out of place” with more traditional apprehensions of religion, where elements and graduations have a religious undertone but lacks the formal properties. This is evident in the need for Gilhus and Mikaelsson in their implementation of a new model when interpretation the New Age concept, another term displaying itself in often unorthodox manners opposed to the traditional. As such I will use a very wide definition of the religious, invoking the flexible and changeable dynamic religion consists of today. I define religion and religiosity to include notions of metaphysical attributes which is related to a force or abstract concept outside of the human itself which can be accessed through symbols, rituals and intellectual endeavours. This can be expressed in a multitude of ways like belief in a supernatural being, the idea of an eternal soul, that there is an external meaning to nature and human existence which can be realized in a specific way, the cosmology of the world and how it’s organized etc. Such a definition implies that most traditional religions like Christianity or Islam can be included, but also more diffuse and fluid notions without any peculiar religious outreach like pantheism, spiritism and ideas found in the alternative movement. In my mind this will give greater
opportunity to not only place the religiosity found within DNM in a historical context, but also a better comprehension of the many layers of ideas, concepts and notions which is present in the modern society of today.

When I ascribe the term “Christian” I include all denominations and church communities which profess their belief in Jesus Christ, which implies an inclusion of more fringe groups which often is not regarded as “fully” Christian by more traditional actors like for example the German Christians. When a more fixed description like Protestant or Catholic is deemed necessary, I will specify this.

Pagan, Paganism and even Neo-Paganism are concepts of an ambivalent nature within scholarly debate as the term has been used by the Christian standard to downgrade and ridicule pre-Christian beliefs. So, when I use these terms, it is with caution in lack of more fitting wording. When I employ the word Pagan or Paganism it is to refer to the Paganism of old, which due to the thesis German and Norwegian context, would imply the belief in the Nordic/Germanic pantheon of old. As I originate from Norway I will use the Norwegian names of the pantheon such as Odin rather than Wotan, as this approach is more natural for me. When I apply the term Neo-Pagan or Neo-Paganism I refer to the modern interpretation of the ancient Paganism as they appeared in völkisch circles from later 19th Century until today. Although the content and meaning of Neo-Paganism has changed somewhat to its devotees in time and space, I will not involve the thesis in this development and operate these terms interchangeable.

2.4 National Socialism as a political religion?

Despite the conventional categorization of National Socialism as a primarily political movement, its ideological implications also contain religious sentiments and concepts. The dualistic conflict between Aryans and Jews have indeed cosmic suggestions and a distinct apocalyptic climax between the arch enemies, blood mysticism of their racial teachings, as well as an almost personalised notion of fate and destiny. There is consequently a great scholarly discussion of what kind of religiosity it can be categorised as, and what potential agendas underpinned the religious expressions.

A popular approach has been to label National Socialism as a “political religion”, indicating a political movement with a secular agenda and secular political goals, but displaying aspects of traditional religion, including rituals, cultic celebrations, strong leaders who are worshipped like divinities and orthodoxy of thinking leading to expulsion of so-called heretics (Burleigh, 2000, p.113). A critical objection to the concept of political religion asserts that the religious
features is only to be regarded as propaganda and thus only have an official character without real, religious content (Vondung, 2007, p.88). Some such Karla Poewe argues that the whole concept of religion is not applicable to National Socialism, and seems on the other hand to indicate that too little religion was part of the problem of NSDAP (Poewe, 2006, p.50). She discusses the religious content of NSDAP and refers to a speech held by Karl Barth in 1919 where he accused German Christians for giving to little heed to the words of Christ. Poewe writes: “Had Germans heeded the words [of Karl Barth] […] the Nazi nightmare might not have occurred” (Ibid). A problematic issue of the arguments of Poewe and other critics is their postulation of religion as an ideal phenomenon where the theoretical models and aims are treated as the norm. Failure to commit to the ideal of religion is seen as indications of a “lesser” religion or absence of genuine religiosity. As such Poewe opposes “real” Christianity to the “make-believe” religiosity of NSDAP (especially those identifying both as National Socialist and Christian) by referring to the apparent reproduction of genuine religion. An assertive quote which supports this view and is quoted in Poewe’s book belongs to Payne who stated that the ideological language of fascism and National Socialism was “the recapitulation and secularist imitation of key traditional religious themes” (Payne, 2002, p.124). The statement is contradicted by Vondung who points out that there is not a contradiction between propaganda and religious belief:

This [propagandistic] intention was not necessarily in conflict with the symbolic function of the ceremonies, rites and relics. That is to say, the ‘forms’ have to be taken seriously as symbolic expressions of something that indeed can be labelled as a political religion. Behind the forms there was faith (Vondung, 2007, p.89).

A further conceptual approach which has been launched in order to avoid the exclusions and inclusions of the term religion is “ethnotheism” by historian Samuel Koehne. Ethnotheism implies in the words of Koehne “religion defined by race and the supposed moral or spiritual characteristics that the Nazis believed were inherent in race” (Koehne, 2014, p.576). According to Koehne, this emphasis on race can help explain both NSDAP’s formal programs and statements as well as the belief of leading members of the party where the deciding feature was not on religious confessionalism but on its combability with the “moral feelings of the Germanic race,” (Ibid). If one evaluates “Nazi religion” through the eyes of ethnotheism, there are some apparent consequences as discussed by Koehne; doctrines and teachings becomes quite peripheral, where the conclusive point of departure is how belief could be given racial morality. Further, if the capacity for religious sentiment was to be
related to race, then Judaism would become a kind of non-religion as Jews had no moral or spiritual dimension due to their racial features (Koehne, 2014, p.589).

Although I will continue to use the term religion when discussing the spiritual dimensions of National Socialism, I do think the “ethnotheism” of Koehne has promising properties, where one largely escapes the question of true or false religiosity, in what sense or how genuine religion was regarded by the Nazis or having to choose between either regarding National Socialism as religious or not. Trying to place National Socialism in a religious spectre can be very difficult as it transcends the spectre axis; there are issues and beliefs related to both extremes and many that goes well beyond. Therefore, a flexible and not to mention nuanced approach is necessary.
Chapter 3: The Völkisch circles and the early NSDAP

3.1 Introduction
In this chapter I will discuss the some of the “mental roots” of the Nazi Weltanschauung and its relation to religion and religious sentiment. Many scholars have hence argued convincingly that important preconditions for the success of NSDAP in Germany, are present already in the early Romanticism and in German intellectuality from Goethe to Wagner. But, due to a very limited amount of word as well as an approach seeking out the religious aspects, I have chosen to seek some of the preconditions and intellectual influences from a later stage in history; namely the völkisch movement as it emerged to common attention approximately after the unification of 1871 and into the Weimar-years, its perception of religious identity and the relation to NSDAP.

3.2 A brief sketch of the völkisch ideology
The völkisch was not a clearly defined movement, but rather a loosely based system of thought which was shared by both groups and individuals, and amassed within a political, individual and religious context. Two writers vastly influencing the völkisch ideology was Paul de Lagarde (1827-1891) and Julius Langbehn 1851-1907), both who gained a great following both within the völkisch milieu and in the broader segments of German society. Central to Lagarde was an attack on liberalism in its political, economic and theological sense which he felt had weakened and fragmented Germany. The nation could only be reborn through a cleanse of the toxic elements of internationalism and alienation contravening cultural and ethnic unity (Frøland, 2017, p.83). Langbehn followed these ideas, and included mysticisms of the blood, where the greatness of Germans is the quality of creative lifeforce which is signified ethnically and should be the basis for any societal organisation in Germany. Unique to Langbehn was also his peculiar definition of “German”, not referring to the formal nationality but to the perceived racial community of people (Volk) ranging from Germany, to Northern-Europe to Great Britain (Frøland, 2017, p.92-93).

As emphasised by George L. Mosse in the last chapter, the term Volk has deep connotations in German not properly present in any English translation. Prominent also, according to Mosse, was how the Volk was being torn between genuine culture and civilisation. Culture
was the genuine and original expression of the Volk, civilization was the rootless and alienated mass society, a polarity which was described already by the sociologist Tönnies in 1897 as “Geimenschaft” vs “Gesellschaft”. Gemeinschaft was a traditional society of collective norms and social community shared by the Volk, whereas Gesellschaft was a modern society of individuality and superficial relations (Steber, Gotto, 2014, p.43).

Implemented in a modern perspective was interests of capital and social class, which according to the völkisch, was dividing the undividable, namely the Volksgemeinschaft. Groups outside of the formal definition of Volk, most prominently the Jews, was regarded as foreign to the German spirit, sentiment and relation to the divine powers residing in the earth.

A famous expression linked to the movement and to neo-romanticisms more generally was “Blut und Boden” or “Blood and Soil”, which referred to the blood or racial qualities of the Volk which created a deep, intuitive connection to the particular soil of the nation. The perception implied that any individual lacking the right racial qualities could not understand or belong to the soil in a similar emotional or spiritual manner as a member of the Volk.

The völkisch regarded themselves as a third way between liberalism and socialism (which both were evaluated as Jewish constructs) and desired a complete transformation of society; through the glorious past a glorious future could be attained. Yet, the many völkisch groups did not gain widespread following as its members had little interest in political organisation, had no definitive leader figure and was by design very diverse and had few aspirations in terms of any political platform (Emberland, 2003, p.33). With that in mind, the völkisch system of ideas constituted a rather broad and faceted Weltanschauung where some elements such as the predestination of the Germans and the virulent anti-Semitism had a wider appeal in the general public. The völkisch provided a context of thought which aspects were recognisable and to a certain degree respected in German society, which NSDAP was associated with and could make use of, rather than a direct herald of the party (Griffin, 1993, p.26).

3.2.1 The religious identity of the völkisch

An enthusiasm for Germanic heritage could be of a complete non-religious nature as it placed itself so closely to perceptions of national identity and racial origin, both within and outside of the völkisch context. But implicit in the celebratory position was a critique or perhaps rather a dystopian understanding of Christian implementation of Proto-Germanic and Nordic society. A further uncomfortable fact, especially to the völkisch groups, was Christianity’s close
connection to Judaism and to the Jewish background of Jesus. The response to this difficult, mental caper can be summarized in two different approaches:

- incorporate Jesus and Christianity as a natural element of das Volk by implicitly or explicitly removing the Jewish context surrounding the emergence.
  These actors often regarded the Aryanized Christ as well as Odin as expressions of the same transcendental and immanent divinity who resided in nature and in the soul of the Aryan. While traditional, dogmatic Christianity was rejected, Christian mysticism as well as the figure of Christ was treated as an expression of Aryan religiosity.
- depose of Jesus and Christianity as a Jewish and thus un-Germanic conspiracy created to enslave and undermine the unique culture and religion of the Germans.
  Any connection to Christianity, be it the figure of Christ or Christian mysticisms was per se a hindrance to the rebirth of the Volk and the Volkegemeinschaft. A common standpoint was to implement faith based on Pagan concepts as well as an influx of occult and esoteric ideas.

3.2.2 Aryanized Christianity

Christianity has a close relation to its Judaic origin; their mythos, their ancient texts as well as their prophets of the Old Testament gave credibility and legitimacy to the early Jesus-movement. The dilemma was very tangible for the nationalistic, anti-Semitic and völkisch oriented believer who still felt close to Christ. One answer could to be found in the prominent undertone of pantheism present in German society in late 19th and early 20th Century, as well as the far-reaching theories on the function of the Aryan race and their eternal, cosmological battle against the Jews.

Pantheism, the conviction that God or the divine is the construction of our reality and thus present in all aspects of the physical world, was not a new influence in German intellectualty. The stream of mysticism in Romanticism was partly fuelled by a pantheistic notion of Gods immanent presence in nature, which could be accessed through embracement of the wild and untamed outdoors (Williamson, 2004, p.46). The religious implications of such a belief is that the swarm of divinities and religious traditions were expressions of the omnipotent, eternal principle of the divine “One”, which disabled the hierarchy of rightful and wrongful paths to religious fulfilment. The exclusive position of Christianity as the only true and proper religion, could not be forcibly argued in a pantheistic context. Rather, Christianity retained its precious position as the most complete and perfect expression of divine will and revelation, but at the same time elevating other religious traditions- among them the Germanic/Nordic
Paganism (Williamson, 2004, p.34-35). Parallels was drawn between Christ and the gods of the North. The fair and beautiful Balder with the epithet “the good” was presented by Snorri as god of light and goodness treasured by his all-powerful Father and dying undeserved through the callous actions of others. The connotations were somewhat reminiscence of Christ and the two figures were seen as examples of the same Nordic longing for spirituality, light and truth (Gossman, 2009, p.19). A very typical expression of this view can be found in Ernst Stadler, one of the early expressionist writers, who presented Balder, Christ, and Prometheus as aspects of the same archetypical, heroic saviour-figure (Siewert, 2002, p.134). Others aligned the Aryan Jesus even to Buddha, paralleling the childhood and life of the two in order to “prove” the Indo-Germanic essence of Jesus (Herschel, 2008, p.39). The dynamic of interaction would also change the perception of Christ and remodelled to better suit the aspirations of the much-needed revitalisation of the nation and the Volk. Particularly was the notion of the suffering Jesus whose primary features were compassion, forgiveness and self-sacrifice actively opposed by the völkisch groups. Preferably Christ was displayed a fighting, masculine and active warrior who met his end battling his enemies. As was stated in the widely influencing book “Krieg- eine politisch-entwicklungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung from 1906: “to brand Jesus, that fighter full of Germanic daring, as a patient lamb, is a lie, an impudent distortion of a Siegfriedian image, of a Baldurian figure (Coole, Potter, 1941, p. 6-7).

But if Christ should constitute a Germanic warrior hero, the matter of Jewish creed had to be addressed. The concept of Aryan race and Aryan homeland originated in the beginning of the 19th Century within linguistic circles and had initially little to do with racial or nationalistic assumptions. Distinct similarities within a vast network of languages from Scandinavia to India was discovered and collected in a category of “Indo-European” languages including most of Europe, Persia and India, placing them in opposition to most languages in the Middle east (among them Hebrew and Aramaic) which was labelled “Semitic”. Coinciding with the focus on Indo-European languages, was the newfound interest in India, it’s ancient language of Sanskrit and the elevated religiosity of Hinduism and Buddhism, and India was named the geographical origin of Europe. The Persian and Indian languages of the Indo-European category was called Aryan and was soon extensively used to describe the racial and cultural contrast of Aryan vs Semitic (Heschel, 2008, p.30-31).

This method was soon to include a more cultural and religious distinction as well, especially by the French philologist Ernest Renan who identified Semitism mostly by negative qualities related to language, race, religion and culture. This was contrasted to Aryanism which he
evaluated in relation to the Hellenic roots of Christianity. In his very influence book “The Life of Jesus”, which was mainly based on the Gospel of John, he presented Jesus as a Galilean who went through an extraordinary transformation from Jew to Christian by purifying his spiritual visions of anything Jewish. This deed was for Renan proof of the greatness of Jesus, as he was able to overcome his Jewishness and creating followers who was spiritual Aryans through their faith (Heschel, 2008, p.35). As such, the racial notions of Renan were not completely deterministic or biological but could also present itself spiritually.

Another version of the Aryan Jesus was found in Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the English-born son-in-law of composer Richard Wagner. He promoted a Jesus of likely Aryan race, but still Jewish in some aspects of his teachings. Chamberlain main argument regarding the Aryan background of Jesus, assumed that Galilee had not recovered from the Assyrian invasions centuries before. Therefore, the few remaining Jews living in the areas were liberal in their religious behaviour and mostly lived and inter-married among non-Jews. Christ was influenced by his geographical context but managed to rise above it because of his Aryan blood. Ever since, European history was thus a battle between the forces of Aryan and Semitic influence where the latter continued to infiltrate Aryan Spirituality (Herschel, 2009, p.41). In his racial reasoning Chamberlain is clearly influenced by the Frenchman Arthur Joseph Gobineu who by 1851 had composed a biological racial hierarchy where the Germanic race was intellectually, morally and culturally superior, as the heirs of the ancient Aryans of India. But because of breeding with inferior races the Germans have degeneration, endangering the survival of the unique racial qualities In Chamberlains mind, Catholicism was an example of such a Semitic-led decay of the Aryan, while Protestantism was a return to the true teachings of Christianity (Herschel, 2009, p.42). As indicated by Chamberlain, the Aryanized Christianity was particularly appealing to Protestants in Germany, where many pastors and theologians demanded “more Germanic Christianity, less Jewish Christianity (Herschel, 2008, p.45). Consequences of this ambition was to devaluate the sanctity of the Old Testament, the role and creed of Israel and promote Christian values which were better in accordance with the German soul and sentiments. It must be noted however that the use of the term “Jewish” by the German Christians indicated a wide array of concepts, ranging from liberalism, moral decay, modernism, to current themes in in music and literature. Jewishness had thus not a strict theological restriction but referred to everything deemed anti-Christian. Because the reformation was regarded as initiated in Germany by Germans, the idea of Catholicism and the pope in Rome could easily be defined as a religious liberation from oppressive, foreign rule and follow the fronts created during the Kulturkampf of Bismarck (Figueira, 2012, p.84).
The protestant emphasis of many Völkisch Christians did not of curse deter the inclusion of Catholics in völkisch circles. Typical for these actors was the clear differentiation between faith and dogma, where many Catholic völkisch often could be anti-clerical if not anti-Catholic in their words and ideas, and the Church as a unifying, universal body of Christ not always regarded with the same reverence (Herschel, 2008, p.134-36). For many völkisch Catholics the need to Germanise Christianity and its organizational expressions was very much present.

3.2.3 Neo-paganism and the religious revival of the nation

In the wake of the völkisch groups, questions were asked how a Volk could free itself from the Jewish influences in culture and politics, if it still adhered to the Judeo-Christian religion. Unlike actors such as Renan or Chamberlain, the radical, anti-Christian völkisch greatly underlined the Jewish context of Jesus, ridiculed the notion of Aryan background and displayed him as the effeminate, weak and passive counterpart of the mighty, masculine and resourceful Odin. The Aryan Christians reformation of “German Christianity” and Liberal Christians symbolic interpretation of Biblical texts was regarded by some Neo-Paganists as potential allies in the new religious platform for national revival. To others it was clear that a spiritual and factual revival of the nation had to be based on a sound foundation, which could only be found in the Paganism of old (Puschner, Vollnhals, 2012, p.19-20). Paganism was not only regarded as a purely religious matter, but also in cultural and national terms where “homely” was contrasted to “foreign”. To identify as a neo-Pagan did not necessarily mean personal, religious belief in the concrete existence of Germanic and Nordic gods or any ritual worship and sacrificial participation. It was often regarded as symbols of the transcendent power of the Aryan, of the force of life and the pantheistic divine principle residing in nature. The Jews tried to destroy this connection between the Aryan and the divine through the invention of Christianity. In this cosmological conspiracy, which implications was shared by many Aryan Christians, it is very clear how the Jews were not treated as merely an enemy in terms of ethnicity and culture, but as an eternal adversary of demonic, metaphysical connotations. The Jews were not necessarily evil because they believed, thought or acted in a particular way, the ability for evil was in their creation. As such, a Jew could not revert his Judaism in the tradition of Renan, it was an undeterrable quality. By leaving Christianity, the Aryans would be rid of one important factor of Jewish influence (Emberland, 2003, p.32-34.). Similar to the Aryan Christians, the widespread support for pantheistic thought was helpful to the Neo-Pagans, who could display various gods from the Nordic, Germanic and even Vedic
mythology as expressions of the same Aryan longing for spiritual enlightenment in the hidden, imminent and transcendent “One”. Hence, one could use concepts from the wide range of Pagan traditions in Europe (and sometimes also ideas from Zoroastrianism and Hinduism), as well as esoteric and occult tendencies in contemporary intellectuality like spiritualism and theosophy. The founder and visionary of the latter was a Russian emigre named Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, often coined Madame Blavatsky, who preached a message which shared some elements with the broader völkisch movement. In her cosmology, the turn of the world was a cyclic development consisting of seven stages of “root races”; characterized from inter-material beings via inferior races towards a new dawn of more enlightened beings. The fifth and current root race was the Aryan race which evolved into greater enlightenment as according to the will of the masters who remain hidden in the land of Tibet (Emberland, 2011, p.94).

Blavatsky’s teachings was highly influential, and one of her admirers was the Austrian Guido von List and his doctrine on the secret and ancient Rune language of the Aryans (which post-humus was coined Arisophy). According to von List human value was closely related to their spiritual and enlightened abilities where a stern evolution was at place; at the top were the Aryans as the people of the Sun. Like Blavatsky, von List imagined a holistic and occult source containing all human knowledge, which could be understood by the Aryans through the Rune language and ancient Paganism. Paganisms deep connection to the esoteric knowledge of the hidden, immanent divine force of “the One” contrasted the personal, interfering Christian God, by von List regarded as the one great misfortune which have befallen Europe. In his view Christianity was an Asian and submissive religion which had corruptive influence and in modern times was in league with freemasons, communists and Jews. Inevitably, there would be a racial war, and after the final victory of the Aryans, a Pan-Germanic empire based on the principle of racial purity and “Wotanism” will be created through Europe. The teaching of von List soon won many believers, and several lodges and secret societies were established in Germany and Austria, among them Guido-von-List-Gesellschaft and Hoher Armanen Orden. Von List applied the swastika as the groups emblem to symbolize the sun-worship of the ancient Aryans, an element he borrowed from the theosophist (Emberland, 2011, p.97-100).

In their critique of Christianity, these actors displayed a dynamic between modernity and the urge for the past which was very typical of völkisch groups in general. The attack on Christianity was part of a new standard for religious criticism which found a turning point in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. In the spirit of Nietzsche, Christianity was by the neo-
Pagans regarded as a slave religion which demanded ultimate submission to a tyrannical and domineering God, contrasting it to the intuitive love for freedom, independence and nature which was typical for the Aryan character. The intellectual prominence in German society of the so-called Lebensphilosophie, of which Nietzsche was regarded as part of, promoted the meaning life as vitality and heroic struggle. Although abstract and apolitical in many perspectives, the emphasis on new values and morale had a concrete, day-to-day content which also had a political tendency (Lebovic, 2013). The many organisations with a völkisch, neo-Pagan content were very diverse and varying greatly in function and ambition. The two biggest organizations in terms of members, which also reveals the great diversity of opinion among the Neo-Pagans, where the Deutsche Glaubensbewegung- DGB and the Tannenbergbund- TB.

DGB was led by Jacob Wilhelm Hauer, a historian of religion who for many years engaged himself in ecumenic and völkisch circles before founding the first in a succession of organizations in 1920. A central understanding for Hauer was the difference between religion on one hand and faith on the other; at the basis of any religious expression was the religious experience and the sense of holiness which could not be understood rationally, a notion much influenced by the scholar Rudolf Otto (Poewe, 2006, p.p.30). This expression was remembered and kept vital within the spheres of the Volk but made static and dogmatic in the structured concept of religion with guardians in shape of clergy safeguarding dogma and perceived truth, one reason for Hauer`s increasing disillusion with Christianity. This religious experience was universal in nature but would evolve into a cultural specific expression based on the distinct Volk, its values, culture and traditions. On this basis, Hauer asserted that Christianity was not the right kind of religious expression for the German Volk, being of Semitic and Near-Eastern origin. Rather he turned to ancient Paganism in Germany and Scandinavia, but also revered to Aryan connection and had great interest in the hidden knowledge found in Indian sources such as Bhagavad-Gita (Poewe, 2006, p.84/94).

Development of the religious expressions as well as society in general was made possible by a few, gifted individuals who displayed unique charismatic qualities and was in a harmonic resonance with the Volk, of which Hauer called “Führer” (Poewe, 2006, p.36).

Tannenbergbund, which evolved into the Bund für Deutsche Gotterkenntnis, was founded and led by the WW1 general Erich Ludendorff and his wife Mathilde. At the core of their teaching was the idea that every individual of Germanic race could achieve “self-salvation” through the divine properties in the blood of the racial character. The divine was thus not of a personal character, but rather an omnipotent, transcendental force which only could regain self-
consciousness in the Germanic race. The world consisted of races of light and shadow, where the Jews were eternally evil and conspiring to bring down the Germanic race at any opportunity. Christianity was the ultimate Jewish scheme to bring the light race into intellectual and physical impotence, a scheme done in league with the demonic forces of the world; Rome (Jesuits, the Catholic Church and Christianity in general), Judea (International Judaism, Marxism and freemasonry) and Tibet (theosophist, anthroposophist and occultists inspired by Oriental religions). Evidently, the contrast to Hauer’s acceptance of Indian influences and liberal Christianity is significant, whereas the Ludendorff’s also demanded their members to leave their Christian beliefs (Emberland, 2003, p.47-49).

3.3. Religion and NSDAP

The actual founders and early associates of the NSDAP (which at that point was called Deutsche Arbeiterpartei- DAP) were very involved in the organizational life of München, including its many völkisch and esoteric groups. In particular had the Thule-Gesellschaft, which teachings and members were closely associated with von List, many cross-references with DAP. The society supported DAP financially for a time, and its meetings were occasionally attended by figures such as Rudolf Hess, Alfred Rosenberg, Dietrich Eckhart, Hans Frank and Gottfried Feder. Proof however that the society was and continued to be a secret and occult power basis for NSDAP’s occult pretences through its existence has been promoted by writers such as Ravenscroft and Pauwel and Bergier but seems to be of little substance (Goodrick-Clarke, 1993, p.220-21). There are few indications that Hitler was ever recipient to occult authorities in any straightforward form- neither was he ever to have attended any meeting in Thule-Gesellschaft or any other occult society. As noted by Webb and Goodrick-Clarke, the influence was most likely indirect in terms of implementing concepts, myths and ideas from the vast field of nationalistic, völkisch rhetoric and philosophy, rather than an incorporation of the complete, occult Weltanschauung (Webb, 1976) (Goodrick-Clarke, 1993).

By emphasising the very distinct Catholic-völkisch environment in München before and after WW1, Hasting argues that völkisch Christianity did play a relevant role in NSDAP, at least in its early phase. He points to Dietrich Eckhart who defined himself as both Catholic, völkisch and anti-Semitic, and vocally opposed the anti-Christian sentiment from other völkisch oriented actors and called Nietzsche “the lunatic despiser of our religious foundations” (Hastings, 2010, p.60). Originally a supporter of Bayerische Volkspartei- BVP, Eckhart left in 1919 as he felt the party had abandoned its Christian identity and co-founded the same year
DAP. As the editor of the party’s newspaper Völkischer Beobachter he immediately made its desired appeal to Catholics know according to Hastings. The front page of its first edition was written by an anonymous Catholic priest and entitled “Can a Catholic be an anti-Semite?”, which aspired to show how Christianity not only was compatible with anti-Jewish sentiment but also encouraged it. The next editions featured lengthy articles on the anti-Semite stance of popes as well as contributions from several Catholic priests (Hastings, 2010, p.66-67).

A further indication of the renamed NSDAP’s orientation towards a Christian power basis is the use of the term “Positive Christianity” which emerges in Völkischer Beobachter as well as the formal platform of the party in 1920, the so-called 25 points. It stated that:

the party represents a standpoint on positive Christianity, without tying itself to a particular confession. It fights the spirit of Jewish materialism within us and without us and is convinced that a lasting recovery of our Volk can only take place from within, on the basis of the principle: public need comes before private greed (Steigmann-Gall, 2003, p.14).

The statement gives an indication of what the party defined as Christian:

- the fight against international Jewry
- creation of a new social ethic
- religious sentiment without confessional borders which could achieve national unity.

The combination of both nationalistic, völkisch as well as some sort of undefined Aryanized Christianity seems prominent. As noted by Steigmann-Gall the 25 points in general has been regarded as a confession to the genuine ambitions of NSDAP, while the point discussing religion and religiosity has been more or less regarded as a cautious, if not cynical, attempt to appease and appeal to the Christian voters (Ibid). The contradictory interpretation of the 25 points can be seen as a way to remove NSDAP from any idealistic and “genuine” core and display the party as populistic and demagogic already in its very beginning. There is of course no way of knowing what party members held of religious convictions, but it seems the Christian/Catholic profile was consistently held until late 1922/early 1923. At least for Eckhart Catholic faith was deep-felt and genuine, making the combability between the faith and National Socialism vital.

By early 1923 Hitler had regained full leadership within the party and inspired by Mussolini’s endeavours in Rome hoped to destabilize the Bavarian state through a coup. To strengthen the party’s power basis, NSDAP had entered into a coalition with other völkisch parties and movements to form the so-called Kampfbund. The most prominent actor in this coalition was the previously mentioned Erich Ludendorff who was both anti-Christian in general and anti-
Catholic in particular, thus alienation many of the initial supporters of NSDAP. When Hitler continued his political activity after the imprisonment 1923-25, Hastings asserts that the party never regained its distinct Catholic flavour, but continuing the mention of Positive Christianity with its implicit völkisch connotations in the party platform (Hastings, 2010, p.79). Even as the ruling party in Germany after 1933, there were leading members who held strong convictions of traditional Christian faith. Perhaps the most famous was Erich Koch, who simultaneously was gauleiter in East-Prussia 1928-1945 as well as president of the East-Prussian Protestant Church Synod and an enthusiastic promoter of the Martin Luther jubilee 1933 (Steigmann-Gall, 2003, p.72).

However, many members were not, and especially the figure of Alfred Rosenberg has been central in the discussion of the perceived Pagan tendency of NSDAP. The religious controversy surrounding him is related to Rosenberg’s book “Der Mythus des Zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts” from 1930 as well as his appointment by Hitler as the party’s leader on religious and spiritual matters in 1934. In his book Rosenberg drew a picture of a religious awakening through the mythos of the blood, where a new religion would praise racial purity and national honour as its furthermost value. Rosenberg underlined how he did not desire to awaken dead religious traditions or rituals, rather he saw the old Pagan symbols as well as Christ (whom Rosenberg believed to be an Aryan in the tradition from Chamberlain) as a manifestation of the inner, transcendent, spirituality of the Germanic race. Rosenberg’s Pagan aspirations was more ambivalent and abstract than the Ludendorff’s, but like them very opposed to Christianity in any organized, confessional sense which implied dogma, monistic tendencies, authority from foreign actors such as the Pope and a revering of (in his view) false associations to Judaism (Steigmann-Gall, 2003, p.99).

For scholars such as Irving Hexam, Rosenberg and Der Mythus is regarded as evidence of the hostile anti-Christian view of NSDAP and their aspiration to replace the Christian faith, doctrines and saints by their own creed, based on völkisch, neo-Pagan notions within a context of Nazism (Hexam, 2007). Steigmann-Gall on the other hand regards Rosenberg’s position as rather peripheral during the formative years of the 30s, and characterizes Der Mythus as a private initiative which was not in any way regarded or even intended as official party policy (Steigmann-Gall, 2003). Both scholars argue on the basis of statements from Hitler and other elite members, which can be equally difficult to interpret based on context, agenda and point in time and space. If one observes the words and actions of Hitler and NSDAP, no definite picture can be drawn. In Mein Kampf, Hitler was very explicit in his refusal in making NSDAP into a völkisch, religious movement, and when using the term
völkisch he emphasised how it implied no specific ideas, only assuming vague and indefinite forms (Hitler, 1992, p.344). It would seem that for Hitler anno mid-1920s, the term had a very flexible and non-committing content, without any established religious meaning. A sentiment he seems to have kept in the years to come; during a speak in 1938 he coherently stated that “The National Socialist Movement is not a cult movement; rather, it is a völkisch and political philosophy which grew out of considerations of an exclusively racist nature” (Burleigh, 2007, p.11). It can also be noticed that the neo-Pagan völkisch groups did not receive any favourable treatment after 1933, where many actually were forbidden after the ascension of NSDAP. Groups which did continue (such as the society of the Ludendorff’s) was devoid of any political outreach (Amm, 2012, p.133). Rather, SA-men were encouraged to participate in church services, and much attention was given by Hitler 1933-35 in achieving one, unified, non-confessional but still Christian “National Church” (Steigmann-Gall, 2003, p.260). The enormous strife among the Catholic and the Protestant Churches and institutions if opposition or compliance should be the response, is an indication that many Christians and their clerical guardians found some compatibility in the concept of “Positive Christianity”. The choice offered by Hitler and NSDAP might not have seemed much of a choice, but it indicates that Christian legitimacy was something the party considered useful, even desirable.

At the same time, the Pagan symbolism and overtones in NSDAP and its affiliated organizations cannot be denied, which in my view partly is related to the “polycratic” tendency of the party where almost autonomous elite members fought for power of definition if Hitler did not personally intervene. If party protocol or the “Führer befahl” was wage or lacking on an issue, these actors could contradict and oppose each other to a great degree without sanctions or consequences. Even small-time actors such as mayors could influence the situation locally, by for example deciding how much money would be given to the local churches and what role they should play in relation to education, social services etc. (Schuster, 2015, p.59). The polycratic system could hence lead to a multifaceted reaction towards religious institutions with major distinctions between actors and areas.

Among the more neo-Pagan as well as Blut und Boden oriented members where Heinrich Himmler (SS), Richard Walther Dareè (SS/Reich Minister of Food and Agriculture) and Baldur von Schirach (Hitler Jugend), and their religious sentiments was visible in their areas of authority. Himmler’s personal religious journey cannot of course be regarded as an expression of a collective tendency within the party but is telling of the many religious expression which could be implemented in NSDAP. Himmler was a very devout Catholic in his youth and an ardent supporter of BVP before joining the NSDAP, likely drawn to the
party because of its Catholic and völkisch rhetoric. Yet, in the early 1920s he problematized in his diary the combatability of his religious and political convictions, and at some point, he stopped attending mass and gradually became more interested in occultism as well as neo-Pagan teachings (Hastings, 2010, p.154-55). Many examples from the SS reveals Himmler’s inclination; the SS-runes which was officially chosen in 1932 was based on the rune teachings of Guido von List. He implemented several ceremonies in relation to baptism and marriage which was held in addition to the Christian versions, as well as introducing SS celebrations of Winter and Summer solstice. In 1935 Himmler, Darrè and the ancient history scholar Hermann Wirth founded Ahnenerbe, a research foundation aimed at the archaeological and cultural study of the Aryan race (Pringle, 2006, p.5). Wirth was later replaced by Walter Wüsst, who was an associate of Hauer. Hauer himself was made a member of SS in 1934 by Himmler personally and was given academic work for Ahnenerbe. The scholars of the foundation made many expeditions through the 1930s, among them to tumuli and petroglyphs of Norway and Sweden, continental Europe as well as Eurasia. Its most famous expedition was however to Tibet in 1938, a destination with heavy connotations within theosophical and occult circles (Pringle, 2006, p.145/165).

Another interesting yet fairly unknown example of the complexity of Pagan symbolism and the party’s own mysticism is evident in Hans Mallon Ehrenmal on the Baltic Sea island of Rügen. Mallon had been a local member of HJ who had been attacked and mortally wounded by Communists and hailed as a National Socialist martyr. The Ehrenmal was intended both as a memorial and as a mausoleum of the young Mallon, with an architecture based on the remains of a Germanic longhouse from the Bronze Age. The bronze door was ornamented with swastikas and stylized ancient shields, and above the entrance was the words from Hâvamâl carved: Ewig ist der Toten Tatenruhm (One thing now that never dies the fame of a dead man’s deeds) (Grunberger, 2013, p.24). Mallon was in death a member of a very honourable group of NSDAP martyrs, who like Christian martyrs had suffered and ultimately died for their faith. The first and thus most prominent of these where the so-called “blood martyrs” who were killed in the Beerhall putsch of 1923, and was given their own memorial in München which stated “Und ihr habt doch gesiegt! (And you triumphed nevertheless!). From the failed coup originated also one of the most treasured relics of the NSDAP, namely the “Blutfahne” (Blood flag) which was the flag used in the Putsch and subsequently drenched in the blood of the coup makers shot by the police during the battle. It was used at various Nazi ceremonies, in order to create “mystical ecstasy” and “holy mania” among the participants (Hastings, 2010, p.165). The most famous was the annual party rally where Hitler
held the flag and touched other flags and banners with the textile, in a way to sacralise or transmit its mystical qualities (Ibid).

All these examples have very patent religious connotations, varying from the Pagan, Christian and more diffuse spiritual associations, which is very characteristic of NSDAP. The party did not in my view have one definitive core of religion, but was as an extensive movement with a competitive and almost autonomous party elite shaped by individual perception as well as intellectual trends of the time. The völkisch intellectuality with its Aryanized Christianity and Neo-Pagan expressions both could find a place within NSDAP because the political approach, if not always the religious, had a basis of racial-nationalism, mysticism of blood and earth in addition to a striking anti-Semitism. It does not mean however that actors within the party was necessarily cynical or insincere in their religious aspirations. But, as underlined by Koehne, what it implied to be Christian or Neo-Pagan in a NSDAP context was a different matter than in conventional terms, and even in the concept of Positive Christianity lies an inclination towards ideas most confessional Christians would not find relevant (Koehne, 2014, p.787). NSDAP was not preoccupied with confessional categories, and allowed a wide spectrum of beliefs within their ranks. The pragmatism of NSDAP was nevertheless not based on tolerance, but rather on compatibility with party politics. It seemed to be more important for the party to subjugate and monopolize every viable religious expression in the realm rather than to promote one particular. For it must be emphasised that only religions deemed compatible with Nazi values and Weltanschauung was to be welcomed. Religions that failed to satisfy or actively opposed the political aims of the regime was not treated lightly, as the prosecution of many members of Jehovah’s witnesses and their stanchly pacifistic attitude is an example of (Penton, 2004). As such, I hesitate to call NSDAP a regime hostile to Christianity, anti-Christian or pro-Pagan, it was antagonistic towards any religion which could not or would not make themselves useful in the new world order. In a National Socialist perspective religion and race was not two binaural and independent entities, but so closely intersected that it could sometimes be hard to separate; to some race was the outmost expression of religion, making National Socialism itself a viable philosophy of life.
Chapter 4: Religion and National Socialism in interwar Norway

4.1 Introduction
The intellectual movements and tendencies described and discussed in the previous chapter was not exclusive to Germany, but spread and unified with the surges of other continental countries. Albeit much guided by the thoughts and actions of NSDAP, the new National Socialist parties and groups outside of Germany still tried to achieve a distinct national flavour where national history, national culture and national tradition was highly emphasised. Like within NSDAP the religious implications of the appreciation of the ancient was ambivalent with clear conflict lines between a more Christian and a more neo-Pagan wing. With this background I will discuss how religious expressions and national socialism interacted in Norway between 1920-1945 through the party Nasjonal Samling and the radical neo-Pagan group of Ragnarok.

4.2 The early presence of völkisch and radical right in Norway
Despite the relative late arrival of full-blown völkisch cosmology in Norway, the movement had several ardent supporters by 1920, fuelled by pro-German sentiments, the chaotic political situation in former kingdoms such as Germany and Russia, the fear of communist agitation and revolution, racial biology as well as apathy of modernism and urbanism. This lead to the founding of the first yet short-lived fascist group “Den nasjonale front” (The National League) in 1927 (Emberland, 2015, p.23-25). One of the most infamous representatives of the Zeitgeist is likely to be Erling Winsnes, who played a significant role in the radical right-wing circles of Norway generally (including the National League) and especially in the Ragnarok group despite Winsnes’ untimely death in 1935. His most prolific books were “Til en ukjendt Gud, slegternes vekst, blomstring og undergang” (To an unknown God, the growth, bloom and fall of the races) from 1919 and “Den neste stat” (The Next State) from 1924. Winsnes regarded himself primarily as a political writer, but as is evident in the case of the völkisch circles in Germany, there was no great distinction between political and religious connotations. Already the title of his first book is a noticeable undertone of dismay with the Christian status quo in society. These ideas were developed further in “The next state”, where Winsnes explicitly connected his divine principle of biological-Darwinism to Nordic
mythology and regarded the Nordic divinities as true manifestations of nature’s intended hierarchy and order. The cyclic perspective found in Nordic belief where rebirth follows the apocalyptic Ragnarok which again leads to rebirth, was placed within evolitional theory where the cycle of life and death by Winsnes is called “Livsfarens lov” (The law of mortal danger) (Winsnes, 1924, p.50). In this notion lies the contribution of Winsnes to the racial superiority of the Nordic people. Southern influence was foreign to the Nordic mind and would only degenerate the Volk’s willfulness, individuality and preciousness. Preferably, Winsnes advanced a so-called “Norwegian religion” as a cure to these illnesses, of which he dedicated the last chapter of his book. He presented Odin as the “father of our race” and writes: “A new paradise grew forth under the vault of his forehead; the realm of consciousness, experience and willpower” (Winsnes, 1924, p.143). He contrasted the paradise of Odin to the paradise of Christ: “Huddle masses nestle together in the South, afraid of the new issues facing our earth. They await the coming of paradise on earth” (Ibid).

But, as the Nordic typology was completely different from the South, they did not wish for the comfortable, and passive paradise of the Christians: “Our ancestor Odin pointed out our way; of toil, of labour, of growth. Towards rising ability, towards omnipotence. Our way is Norway, the way to the North” (Ibid).

Winsnes was not advocating any organizational, cultic worship of Odin, rather he saw the god and the rest of the pantheon as intimately connected to the Nordic people; their hardship, their resourcefulness and their independence was symbolically projected to the figure of Odin. The cosmology, the value-system and the lack of ethereal salvation was more in tune with the North, while Christianity was a product of the south and of a completely different context and thus foreign to Nordic core and sentiment. Through the symbolism of Nordic mythology, inhabitants of the North could understand their spiritual framework and inner being, but this resonance could only be found in individuals of Nordic blood. The influence of nature and climate was gradual and hereditary, and its manifestation is not transmissive outside of blood and ancestry.

Another prominent figure of the radical right was the architect Eugene Nielsen, an associate of Winsnes. Nielsen owned his own publishing house called “Antiforlaget” where he published books aiming at disclosing the masonic-Jewish world conspiracy. In addition to publications of Rosenberg, Nielsen published Norwegian translations to most of the Ludendorff’s literary works. The Ludendorff Weltanschauung which promoted the eternal battle between the Aryans and the Semites, as well as its anti-Christian connotations was shared by Nielsen, who corresponded with the general until the latter’s death in 1937.
Nielsen was also one of the founders of Norges Nasjonal-Socialistiske Arbeiderparti (Norway’s National Socialist Workers party) -NNSAP and gave economic supporter to its magazine called “Fronten” (The Front). The Pagan preference was quite explicit and influenced particularly by Mathilde Ludendorff. Yet, Nielsen shared one common attitude with Aryanized Christianity, namely a respect for Martin Luther, praising his anti-Semitism and national breach with Rome. Like the Ludendorff’s, Nielsen’s aversion of Christianity was particularly deep in relation to Catholicism. Despite being the main distributor of the teachings of Ludendorff and völkisch ideas in general, Nielsen did not convert many to his peculiar world view. But as emphasised by Emberland, his agitation was an introduction to political paranoia, as well as to neo-Paganism in general, for the many associating with this milieu (Emberland, 2003, p.119).

4.3 The Ragnarok group
The Ragnarok group was for a long-time a under communicated aspect of the right-wing scene in Norway during the 30s, which only in recent decades has been properly researched, most prominently and thorough by Emberland (2003). The group was in terms of number quite small but managed to distribute their monthly magazine (also titled Ragnarok) with an edition of approximately 3000. The group consisted of many sympathisers, a wide network of associates, and an inner core of active and most idealistic national socialists (Emberland, 2003, p.263). The magazine was consequently the group’s mouthpiece and would display their ideas and visions, shaped by völkisch and Neo-Pagan ideas from Germany as well as holding Winsnes in a particular high regard. In the sub-chapters I will present and discuss the statements of the Ragnarok group regarding religion as presented in their magazine and how the political and religious vision could be interrelated.

4.3.1 The enemies in Rome and Judea- the cosmological world view
When evaluating the Ragnarok publication spanning from 1935 to 1940, the most prolific impression is the all-embracing racial, anti-Semitic and anti-Christian profile, contrasted to an intense interest in Nordic Paganism and so-called “Nordic philosophy of life”. Already in the first edition was editor Hans S. Jacobsen very clear on the irrelevance of separating religion from politics: “Ragnarok has more than one meaning, without being Janus. Among other things are there several gods which shall be overthrown. And that requires battle” (Ragnarok, 1935, nr.1, p.2). As for Ludendorff and Nielsen, the Jewish conspiracy was present in politics, in the media and in art and literature. They had complete control by covering their
intentions behind the apparent contrasting masks of freemasonry, Marxism, Liberalism and Christianity. Because of this, a confrontation against Christianity was not purely a religious point of view; by attacking Christianity one indirectly attacked Marxism and vice versa, as both movements were expressions of the Jewish desire of world domination. As stated by Jacobsen:

Our enemies are named Judea and Rome- spiritual powers which have opposed us every day in our existence. The Norwegian people have fought them for 1000 years, and still is the people broken and cowered. From Judea through Rome we received our religion, from Judea through Rome we received capitalism (Ragnarok, 1935, nr.6-7 p.145).

Rome was thus a complicated and ambivalent concept, not only because of its close, spiritual connection to Judea but also because it represents the Weltanschauung of the South as described by Winsnes and hence foreign to Nordic thought. The almost demonic powers of seduction and infiltration offered by the Jews left little leverage for the Nordic race, and this paranoia displayed itself vividly in the use of religious rhetoric between the Nordic and the Semitic: there are the righteous and there the wicked, there is light and there is darkness. There are Jews and their conscious or unconscious associates, and there are the heroic Nordic/Germanic people.

Yet, the definition of the Jew was often very implicit and not always explained in a lexical manner. The concept was often used diffusely and deployed in explaining the various ailments of the world, not unlike how Satan often is used in a Christian context. One of most descriptive dissections of the Jew found in my collection of Ragnarok magazines was written by the author and sailor Lars Hansen in his article “Jødehat” (Hatred of Jews). Hansen stated in his text that it was easy to be envious of the Jews, they were usually very intelligent and displayed a wonderful sense of financial understanding and innovation. The core of the problem was that because of these racial qualities the Jews are almost unanimous in the financial elite as well as leaders of the press. Naturally they would prefer to keep this dominance, with all methods possible which is seen through the construction of both Marxism and Capitalism. Hansen emphasised however that the Jews were not to be blamed, they acted only according to their own mission and consciousness. But it required that the Germanic people would be firm when denying any kind of Jewish influence into the nation. In this manner opposition to Jews was not hatred or persecution, no less than when the poor masses revolt against a tyrannical ruler. Hansen writes: “It is nothing but self-defence. […] Our time is administrated and ruled according to an orderly and well-established order. The system:
world domination by God’s chosen people which is accomplished through callous force” (Ragnarok, 1935, nr.6-7, p.166). As such the problem was not the existence of Jews per se, or their individual activities, but the way their collective influence was systematized within structures of power hidden or inexplicable to most. A similar perspective can be found in the argumentation against Christianity; it was not the individual Christian that Ragnarok opposed, it was the control and power of definition Christianity have over people as well as politics. The same Hansen had 2 years later a discussion in Ragnarok with the vicar Devold on Christian virtue in society;

The thing is, if the earthly Bible and Christ would be removed, the Churches and the priest would not for that reason be superfluous […] Then we would not find a priest who is forced to speak of a truth that is not truth. If we develop this far at some point in time, then the priest would speak only of what he believes in. The inexplainable mysterious would be removed. One would have solid and firm soil to stand on (Ragnarok, 1937, nr.9-10, p.235).

The dogmatism and the forced yet hollow religiosity in the Christian institutions was in Hansen’s mind the actual hindrance to genuine knowledge of the divine. The distinction between religion as belief was starkly placed in contrast to organizational religion as according to Hauer, who was a source of inspiration as well as an associate to the Ragnarok group (Emberland, 2003, p.190). The spiritual longing could not be found in old mysteries and priests who were paid to repeat teaching, but on the sound and genuine path of the forefathers. One can easily see the contrast constructed by Hansen of the static Christian restriction on one hand and the flexible and ad-hoc worship of neo-Paganism.

4.3.2 Neo-Paganist belief and practice as opposed to Christianity

The contrasting figure to the Jew was of course the people of the North which was called by a number of terms; the Nordic race, the Germanic race and more rarely, the Aryan race. By racial and biological qualities, this people stood closest to superior, God-given ideal. But there was also a distinction spiritually where some individuals and groups were more in tune with their immanent, racial longings, which of course for Ragnarok was neo-Paganism. What a Neo-Pagan perspective meant to the individual member of the group, like in Germany, seems to have been of a functional rather than substantial definition of religion, which by Emberland is described as “a naturalistic pantheism- at best” (Emberland, 2003, p.177). A central figure in the group, Stein Barth-Heyerdahl, wrote in response to Christian attack on Neo-Paganism:
One ought to worship one’s God by living in accordance with the eternal laws and the best impulses in oneself. [...] The human is its own saviour. This belief as asserted here have ancient roots in our race and is as befitting for free men and women. It can appropriately be called “Nordic belief” (Ragnarok, 1936, p.165).

Another member of the group, Tor Strand, wrote on a similar note:

Our belief does not implicate that we desire to go back to atavism, to worship of logs and stones or hollow pictures of Odin and Tor, but rather that we fill this language of symbols with new content as modern human beings of purpose” (Ragnarok, 1943, p.29).

The closeness in thought to Wilhelm Hauer is no coincidence, the Ragnarok group felt a strong kindship with his assertions on the Germanic gods as symbols of an abstract, pantheistic force of divinity, as well as his ideas of religious expressions of the Volk. This philosophy of life would imply a piety expressed among the living, through dynamic action rather than in the kingdom to be. A Neo-pagan belief would in other words manifest itself through activity-believing by doing. This aspect of the group’s Weltanschauung was very prominent in their participation in the volunteer labour camps, where group members lived an agrarian lifestyle by clearing ground, removing stones from fields, digging dikes etc. After the passing of a group member, the sickly painter Christian Benneche, whose death was partly related to him exhausting himself at a volunteer labour camp in 1936, this religious basis gave comfort to the group. In the December edition of Ragnarok, much space was devoted to the interpretation of Benneche’s death. Jacobsen wrote: “An inexplainable fate tore him away before he became a great name. But fortunately, not before he became a great human being” (Ragnarok 9-10, 1936, p.185).

Another member, Per Imerslund wrote: The effort of Benneche [during the labour camp] was an intellectual performance of supreme quality. He showed us how will and intellectual powers triumph over a weak body” (Ragnarok 9-10, 1936, p.188). Perhaps even more telling of metaphysical ideas of Ragnarok was the farewell of Tor Strand:

We shall never meet him again. But every time the shovels ring concurrently with each other, every time huge boots boom through the trails of the forest, will we remember him with the greatest honour we can bestow on him: Fellow worker Benneche (Ibid).

As these excerpts clearly present, there were no illusions of any after-life in a personal, individual sense of the word. Strand concluded that they would never see him again, which can also indicate a refusal of any possibility that Benneche could visit them in the shape of a
spirit of ghost as asserted by the spiritual circles. Yet, Benneche had attained eternal life in a more abstract sense, where he through his own exhaustive labour created his own salvation; he would always be remembered among the living. The obvious connection to Nordic Paganism is made explicit by the composer Geirr Tveitt, who in his necrology of Benneche quoted Hāvamál: One thing now that never dies, the fame of a dead man’s deeds (Ragnarok 9-10, 1936, p.189).

This is further not only the reason why labour as a concept was so highly regarded by the Ragnarok group, but also why the preoccupation with the Volk and the nation was so formative: only through the homogeneity of thought, religion and culture can the individual be properly remembered and given eternal life. The modern society of individuality, consumerism and materialism has no room for this kind of religiosity, neither has it any place in Judeo-Christian tradition. As such, the resistance against these powers was not only founded in the struggle to secure the life of the living, but also of the eternal life of the dead. Politically it did not only imply a very deep-set anti-Christian sentiment, but also an encouraged a distinct social upheaval of the socio-economic status quo; a National Socialism in the literal sense of the word; socialism aimed at the nation and its designated people in the Volkgemeinschaft. The emphasis on “Norwegian socialism” similar to their ideas on “Norwegian religion” as promoted by Winsnes manifested the group’s ambition of the modern and the ancient; socialist implications within a sphere legitimized by Nordic and Pagan values. As stated by another Ragnarok-member, Walter Fürst: “We are vulgarised by materialism and industrialism, if we do not take the path to our ancestors. If we let that path be overgrown, we become alienated to ourselves” (Ragnarok, 1937, nr.9-10, p.251).

4.3.3 The relation to Nasjonal Samling - a conflict over religion
The Ragnarok-group had an ambivalent relation to Nasjonal Samling (NS), albeit most members joined the party shortly after its foundation in 1933, hoping to see a political initiative which incorporated their own Weltanschauung. Yet, after 2 years the most prolific members had left NS. The reasons for the breach with NS were many, but a central feature was the religious profile of the party as well as the personal qualities of its “Führer”, Vidkun Quisling. NS was founded officially on the 17th of May (the constitutional day of Norway) 1933 and was effectively abolished in May 1945, the reason being the party’s close collaboration with the German occupational forces 1940-45. Because of the close connection between NS and negative connotations of treason and violations, it was for decades customary to regard NS as a uniformed party without any ideological defragmentation, ruled by the will
of the Führer. As pointed out in the pioneer work by Sørensen (1989), several divisions within the party can be found, the most prominently being between socialism and pro-capitalism, and between nationalism and pan-Germanism (Sørensen, 1989, p.14). These divisions also had strong religious overtones, where the Christian wing often supported capitalism and nationalism, while the neo-Pagans adhered to socialism and pan-Germanism. As such the polarity between the National Socialism of Ragnarok and the National Socialism of NS had strong, interwoven political and religious connotations.

Like NSDAP, NS was very conscious to the glorious past of the country by vividly using symbols and allusions to the Viking and Medieval Era when Norway had been a power basis in the North. The emblem of the party gave an indication of the religious outreach of the party; the sun-cross penetrated by two swords. The sun-cross was a striking symbol in prehistoric Europe, alluding to sun worship and Pagan religion, while the cross gave the association of Christianity (Egenæs Lund, 1943). Further examples of interreligious symbolism were the vide use of runes symbolism, the reverence for Edda and the Nordic literature and general emphasis on the Viking mentality and achievements. In the initial phase this dynamic could even attract neo-Pagans from the ranks of the former NNSAP and Raknarok, although the celebratory preference of NS soon was heavily criticised. For the neo-Pagans, the celebration of St. Olaf, the patron saint of Norway and the king associated with introduction of Christianity to the country, was a particular nuisance. Medieval kings of Norway such as Sverre or Sigurd Jorsalfar, albeit Christians, could be respected in anti-Christian circles for their national and unifying factor (Emberland, 2003, p.187), but it would be impossible to overlook the potent Christian associations related to St. Olaf and the status he achieved within NS. The prominence of the king was obvious; every year the party held a great gathering at Stiklestad 29th of July, the time and place where the king fell and promptly became the Rex Perpetuus Norvegiae (Sørensen, 1989, p.28). A hostile strife was if the sun cross was to be called the more Pagan-sounding “sun cross”, or the Christian-oriented “Olav’s cross” by the party, which was seen by the neo-Pagans an admittance of moral and national bankruptcy. As Jacobsen wrote in Ragnarok some years later:

The sun wheel is a Nordic symbol. The Olav’s cross is not. The Olav’s cross is an expression of a universal idea. The Nordic thought can never be universal […] In the year when the Nordic-Germanic world woke to up to consciousness of its own life and broke open the straightjacket, Quisling planted the Olav’s cross in Norway, in infidelity against its own inmost (Ragnarok, 1937, nr.3, p.60).
The formal program of the party anno 1934 did not devote much space to explicit discussions of religion but stated in point 22 “the Christian baseline values are to be protected” (NSD). Like the program of NSDAP who valued “Positive Christianity” the definition was quite vague and implied a flexible content where both Aryan Christians and more traditional “state-church Christians” could find a place. Many of the early members of the movement were priests or otherwise affiliated with the State Church, who saw NS as a bolster against materialism and bolshevism rather than an independent ideology. The tendency was so clear that the party in its first years by historians has been labelled “a life stance party” (Dahl, Hagtvet, Hjeltnes, 1982, p.63). But the fact that point 22 was the only part of the program which members of the committee (among them Jacobsen) couldn’t agree on amicably but had to be formally voted on, is an indication religious conflicts within the party. (Emberland, 2003, p.254). Jacobsen and his allies sought not only to change point 22 from Christian to religious which provoked much conflict with the Christian wing of the party. This wing was loosely based around the garrison priest Kjeld Stub, a personal friend of Quisling, and characterized by an orientation towards cooperation among the conservative parties in Norwegian politics, lack of sympathies for socialist elements and opposing the radical anti-Semitism and racial theories of NSDAP (Brevig, 1979, p.102).

These actors not only had influence within the party because of their prominent positions in society, but also because NS indeed experienced most support in the initial phase by appealing to Christian voters by presenting the party as the last stance against godless Marxism. The contrast to Jacobsen and the radical national socialists was very obvious, as stated by Emberland: “It was not the desire of a radical social and spiritual renewal which drew them into NS, rather it was the reactionary angst of secularism” (Emberland, 2003, p.260). Quisling himself was not a clear-cut affiliate of the Christian wing, his perceptions was highly philosophical and his Christianity of a private, abstract nature. Until his death he wrote on a literary work that explained his Weltanschauung, a perspective he called “universism”. A central feature was a confirmation of the existence of a divine principle which was the origin of all things. Every religion was an expression of this divine will, and every religious expression thus had something good and valuable in their teaching. These ideas placed Quisling in a position of tolerance on religious sentiment and could explain how he freely could use both Pagan and Christian symbols in the context of the party (Barth, 1996, p.33-34). As such he had no philosophical objections to neo-Paganism, and likewise had a good relationship to Rosenberg, but he still felt a close connection between Christianity and Norwegian history, tradition and its people. The prestigious presence of Christian clergy was
an impossible position for the later Ragnarok-group and gave evidence to their already firm belief in the possibility of co-existence of National Socialism and Christianity. Again, the political and religious side of the disagreement seems to have been interrelated; the refusal of the Christian wing to see the necessity of anti-Semitism, socialism of the collective and the racial teaching was seen as symptomatic with the universal, confluent and thus Judaic spirit of Christianity. The fact that many within NS, and particularly within the Christian wing, were freemasons was another piece of evidence for the radical neo-Pagans; NS was infiltrated by the forces of evil.

By January 1935 a disillusioned had Jacobsen resigned from the party, as had many of his comrades. He and the others still believed deeply in a radical neo-Pagan Weltanschauung, and Ragnarok was established in order to influence the development of national socialism in Norway, not as a competing force to NS but rather as a complettive, directing voice. Their influence in terms of Realpolitik was small, but their provocative stance on Christianity and perhaps particularly one the figure of Christ did provoke some answers, where some of the critique was answered in arguments of some compromise. The previous mention dispute between Ragnarok-associate Hansen and the vicar Devold, began with a contribution from the vicar where he discussed the Confessional Church the conflict with NSDAP. On the one hand Devold was sympathetic to the “national consciousness of the great Kulturvolk” and the humiliation of the Versailles Treaty and the military and territorial restrictions on the German nation. His aim with the article was not criticism of NSDAP per se, which is evident in his emphasis of “The Confessional Church is not against the New Germany” (Ragnarok, 1937, nr.8, p.209). Devold’s objection was against the what he saw as an ultimatum by the new regime; between submission to the state and submission to Christ. The vicar aspired to display how this dilemma was artificial and counterargue the typical statement from Ragnarok and others that the universalism of Christianity was at odds with national pride and patriotism.

Devold wrote:

Do you love your people and desire its life, its justice and its honour, then Christ means nothing than the purity, the altruistic and faithfulness in your own life in his service and thereto the blessing of the living God” (Ragnarok, 1937, nr.8, p.210).

Interestingly, when describing Christ, Devold seemed conscious of the criticism relating to his apparent feminine and passive quality: “It is not the lifeless abstraction of the peace lamb-nonsense we are talking about” (Ibid). The norms of Ragnarok; masculine activity, heroic morale and vitality can all be found in Christ according to Devold, attempting to create some
dynamic between neo-Pagan values and Christian belief. Ironically, Devold appeared to think that religious confusion was a sign of a society in decay and degeneration, a societal perception partly shared by Ragnarok themselves.

4.4 The continuing religious conflicts within Nasjonal Samling
The fact that the most esteemed neo-Pagan National Socialists left NS in 1934-36 did paradoxically not end the religious lines of conflict within the party. Even though NS refused to compromise to the demands of the Ragnarok-group, it was still concerned with presenting the pre-Christian time of Norway as equally heroic and noble as the Christian Medieval. The vivid use of Pagan symbolism and allusions was regarded as too superficial by the neo-Pagans, but also distasteful and worrying to many committed Christians (Dahl, Hagtvet, Hjeltnes, 1982, p.140). Equally problematic for them was the heightened focus on anti-Semitism and racial theory, an influx more to do with the development in Germany than the early presence of neo-Pagans. The activity of Jacobsen and others in the party, albeit very briefly, was however perceived by many priests to be a symptomatic proof of anti-Christian sentiments within the party. The so-called “Kirchenkampf” in Germany between the German Christians and the Confessional Church was also a contributing force, where many of the clergy felt the involvement of NSDAP to be revealing to the party’s anti-Christian politics. In November 1935, one of the party’s leading members in the North, vicar Tveter, resigned from the party, naming the incompatibility between Christian faith and the changes in NS teachings as the reason. To Tveter, Nazism was by nature profoundly anti-Christian. (Thorsdahl, 2017, p.19). Many priests and other committed Christians were soon to follow in a member exodus from NS which has been described as “from party to sect” (Brevig, 1979). The defragmentation was in other words diverse; from the radical neo-Pagans who despised the Christian presence and the “bourgeois” tendencies in the party and from the Christian wing who though NS became to entangled in racial and anti-Semitic and thus anti-Christian arguments (Brevig, 1979, p.102).
In 1940, where NS through its ideology and cooperation with the German occupational forces, few of the original members in the Christian wing or the neo-Pagan circles were left. Individuals from both fronts returned to active membership, which revealed the difficult balance point in religious questions yet again. As before the official stance in NS was a preference for Christian values, and the approach was shifting between an attempt to present NS and National Socialism as the last defender against Communism, and to show the combability between Christian and National Socialist Weltanschauung. The first stance was
more of a political nature which could be used to relativize the Nazi ambivalence to the Christian churches, by referring to how the Communists closed churches, criminalized religion and created museums of atheism, displaying their own godlessness. In comparison, churches in Germany and Norway were still operational and more than allowed to co-exist, an evidence of the goodwill towards Christianity from the regime. This argument alone did not necessarily touch on the religious content of National Socialism per se but indicated clearly the only liable alternative was atheism under Communism (Sørlie, 2015, p.100-03).

Although only remotely successful because of the lack of support within the clergy, as the sole ruling party had opportunity to influence its definition through the Ministry of Church and Education. The official minister was Ragnar Skancke, but he showed little interest in Church politics which to a large extent was left in the care of vicar Sigmund Feyling. A deeply pro-German man already before the war, Feyling was active in many publications on the matter of faith within the NS-state; recurring subjects where the religious duty to subjugate to the will of the state, the true Christian core of NS and the refute of any apparent Pagan influence within the ideology. The necessity of an anti-Pagan guarantee reveals much confusion and polemic rhetoric made on the issue, which seemed so plausible to the general public to require an official reply.

A leading publication was an article written clerics, NS-members, authors etc on Christian relevance in the New Era, called “Under the sign of St. Olaf” from 1942. Again, the old conflict of Olaf’s cross or sun cross was brought back, where the use of the Christian term was to indicate the Christian preference of the party. Several of the articles dealt almost solely on the topic of Christian or Pagan content within National Socialism, where one of the contributors wrote “the most efficient weapon against the national resurrection in this country, is that it is supposed to be anti-Christian, yes; even that it aspires to introduce the old myths of Odin and Tor” (NS, 1942a, p.14). The reason for this misbelief was according to the authors antagonistic propaganda from political enemies, the lies from the leader of the Confessional Church Ludwig Niemüller and simple confusion. In order to enlighten the public, an explanation of the content of concepts was deemed necessary. For example, a term such as “Blut und Boden” with its neo-Pagan tendencies was by Feyling redefined:

The Church cannot but take a stance in the reality which lies in the words of Blut und Boden, or said in other words, race and Lebensraum. It is furthermore no difference to what is signified in the expression Volk and country (NS, 1942b, p.127).
Interestingly the concept of Jesus was rarely discussed except in terms of outward abilities given to his believers such as patriotism, courage, self-sacrifice, the discussion surrounding the Jewish or Aryan background of him was almost non-existent. Christ was displayed as the contrast to Jewish materialism and liberalism, but his apparent contrast to Jewish faith and Jewish context of Galilea was not. The “foreign” aspect of Christianity appeared almost more difficult to relate to, even for Christian-oriented members of NS, than the theological inclusion of Christianity within National Socialism.

Despite the formal Christian appearance of NS and the guarantees of its clergy, there were several prominent members who spoke in favour for a neo-Pagan orientation, and further problematized the religious profile of the party. The most significant of the Ragnarok-group was Hans S. Jacobsen, who was promoted to regional leader of NS in the Vika-area, while he still retained the editorial control of Ragnarok. Jacobsen knew Himmler personally, and he and his allies found most promise and like-minded actors within SS, and the later establishment of its Norwegian branch; Norges SS, later Germanske SS Norge. Central figures within this organisation was Minister of Police, Jonas Lie and Attorney General Sverre Riisnæs, who for a time formally was editor of the organizations magazine, “Germaniseren” (The Germanic). They were among the strongest supporters of pan-Germanism as well as neo-Paganism and was by default mistrusted by many within the more nationalistic, Christian wing of NS (Sørensen, 1989, p.86-87). Although also an early acquaintance of Himmler, little is written on Lie's religious perceptions, while Riisnæs in 1943 published a pamphlet titled “Nasjonalsosialistenes livssyn” (The life stance of the national socialists). It was published by the publishing house owned by Jacobsen, Kamban forlag, and held as speeches to members of Germanske SS Norge. In the foreword Riisnæs pointed out that the opinions raised in his text was not to be credited to the party or to Quisling but was his own personal ideas (Riisnæs, 1943, p.5), indicating again the tense conflict lines still surrounding “the new time”. Riisnæs however was very clear in his own religious ideas; of which he referred to Himmler as the ultimate consultant. In the chapter labelled “Our life stance is built on our belief in God” he asserted: “SS-comrades, we adhere to our ancestors’ belief in God […] God is great and stands high above us. He has created our kin, our Volk, our race, created our blood and our soil. He is the “homely God” (Riisnæs, 1943, p.12). The homely God of Riisnæs was not the Christian God; not unlike the divine concepts presented by neo-Pagans in Germany, Winsnes and the Ragnarok-group, God was seen immanent, impersonal and pantheistic. The connection between man and the divine was very much present, albeit indirect according to Riisnæs: “We individual humans, down to every one of us, are we
created- not directly, but on the sole reason of through our blood and our race. Only through your Volk is there a relation to God” (Ibid). As is evident, there is no personal identity to be found outside the collective; race is the main reference to who one is and what one is. As these measures were racial-biological and not spiritually in the tradition of Renan there was no way of escaping this reality, which abstract connotations paradoxically leave some tolerance of religious diversity. Riisnæs continued:

It is indifferent to what the individual among us feels about the matter in this or that way. We do not want a forced religiosity. On the contrary, we demand freedom for the individual’s religious life. It does not in any way create a hindrance between us if you recognise God as the almighty creator outside of our world, while I believe he is in the very blood of our race” (Riisnæs, 1943, p.13).

The important element of belief seemed to Riisnæs not to be of formal religious adherence, but rather an adherence to the teaching of National Socialism in race, blood and anti-Semitism. Race and religion could to him, seemingly not be separated and a following of the ancestral notions of the divine most in tune with the song of the blood. While the pamphlet was not explicitly anti-Christian, it was probably of little consolation to the Christian oriented members of NS; Riisnæs left little doubt of the foreign spirit he regarded Christianity to be: “We ought to now have reasonable experience of the curses which foreign spirituality has brought over us. After centuries of neglect have we now brought forth the Nordic spirit, the spirit of our ancestors- may it again grow and extend in our minds” (Riisnæs, 1943, p.21).

Riisnæs writings signifies the presence of neo-Pagan thought at an elite level in NS, although promoted and triggered by the German occupation. Through SS and Himmler particularly, the religious ideas of elite actors in NSDAP was reactivating the old religious conflicts within NS, again illustrating how multifaceted the religious expressions could be within National Socialist ideology and regimes.
Chapter 5: National Socialism and religion after 1945

5.1 Introduction
Actors oriented towards National Socialism were forced to reorganize and reinterpret their Weltanschauung after 1945 when the German Reich capitulated. The climatic death of Hitler and the hopeless continuation of a war which the German forces were bound to lose, reveals another element of National Socialist perspectives; the apocalyptic, all-devouring fight between races where ultimately might is right. The pavement towards a “new National Socialism” was in dire need of reconstruction in a multifaceted manner which was given both explicit and subtler religious connotations. This chapter will hence be devoted to the development of National Socialism from 1945, but being a very broad and complex matter, I will contain the discussion to essential lines and aspects which went through a particular process or became redefined in the post-war milieu. This involves the more explicit religious if not say occult presence in the political stance, as well as a geographical change from Germany and Western-Europe to the US, which became one of the main “exporter” of National Socialist thoughts in the decades to come.

5.2 The reconstruction of cosmology
It has been implied in the previous chapter that Hitler’s position in German spiritual life became that of the Messiah. For his followers, his death had to signify some kind of meaning, otherwise his role as a man of destiny as well as the deeper truth of National Socialism would render little sense. As is evident in many religious or ideological groups, an initial dismissal of the awaited prophecy or kingdom come, might not leave the teaching redundant but rather be submitted to a reinterpretation. A famous example can be found in the book “When prophecy fails” by the social psychologists Festinger, Riecken and Schachter, who followed a small UFO-group in Chicago during the 1950s. The group leader foretold destruction of the world and salvation for the true believers’ through extra-terrestrial intervention. The prophecy failed but was interpreted by the believers in such a way as to confirm their teachings (Festinger et.al, 2008). A complete comparison between the small UFO-group and the remaining Nazi scene is of course not applicable, but the study tells something of the ability for believers in a cause, to reinterpret and deconstruct their message when the expected
outcome did not happen and yet hold their beliefs intact. A further element which could be regarded as coinciding between the UFO-group and the Nazi scene after 1945 was the lack of social recognition as a way to increase their own disconfirmation. While the UFO-group wished to strengthen their preaching by social legitimation, National Socialism had previously held such social recognition, being the ideological basis for the administration of a state. The point of departure was hence different for the remaining National Socialists as well as the “new” National Socialists after 1945; social recognition once had was lost through a devastating war and grotesque war crimes— which forever would be associated with the movement. Any hope for social recognition and thus influence would not be easy to gain, which the adherence to the movement naturally were well aware of.

This dynamic has been eminently discussed in the concept of “The Cultic Milieu” by Campbell which aspired to understand comparable elements in oppositional subcultures in a globalized world. Although his approach was not specifically the Nazi scene, but a large variety of fringe groups and movements including neo-shamanism, animal rights and anti-cult networks, their perspective seems highly relevant to National Socialists after 1945. Cambell defined the “cultic milieu” as the cultural underground of society;

Campa**n**ell defined the “cultic milieu” as the cultural underground of society;

- a heterogeneous assortment of cultural items can be regarded despite its apparent diversity as constituting a single entity […] the basis of the unifying tendencies is the fact that all these worlds share a common position as heterodox or deviant items in relation to the dominant cultural orthodoxies. This fact gives rise to a common consciousness of deviance and the need to justify their own views in the light of the expressed ridicule or hostility of the larger society (Campbell, 2002, p.14).

The opposition to mainstream culture and perceptions have several implications, one of them being the ability to share common goals with expressed enemies who belongs to the same horizon of belief. An infamous example is how certain black and white racialist groups have come together and demonstrated against the unified enemy— the government. Although completely oppositional in most questions, they both share the same concept of race and hence confirm the cosmology of each other, creating some basis for agreement (Gardell, 2002, p.152). Another implication is the fluidness of thought where a variety of ideas and concepts from multifaceted sources can be integrated into very different groups, albeit all defined within the frame of Campbell’s cultic milieu. There is thus little distinction between concepts of religious or scientific origin, as scientific “heresies” also live well beyond the cultural fringe, together with abstract and flexible notions of mysticism. According to
Campbell, the emphasis on mysticism is very prominent within such milieus, where the individual approach of belief is accordingly open to miscellaneous impulses. This status quo often underlines the spiritual renewal or rebirth as a solution to problems of society, rather than socio-economic or political issues (Campbell, 2002, p.16).

The tendency has made itself known also within the National Socialist movement according to researchers such as Kaplan who have used the cultic-milieu model in approaching National Socialism. He writes that “the most distinct changes […] involve the increasingly open mysticism and indeed religiosity, which has always been the hidden face of the radical right” (Kaplan, 2002, p.238). Kaplan finds evidence of such an inclination in the common mixture of seemingly incompatible ideological pairs, such as Christian Identity and National Socialism, or National Socialism and Satanism (Ibid). It does not signify that everyone involved in National Socialism is an adherence to mysticism or occultism, some might even be quite hostile to these traits. But, according to Campbell and Kaplan, the movements display of opposition to the dominant culture will give leverage to impulses and thoughts from the whole axis of the cultic milieu and can be constructed into a non-dogmatic, flexible approach with a few unremovable dynamics. One of them is of course the blatant anti-Semitism, which as we have seen in previous chapters is essential in structure of the National Socialist cosmos. Interestingly, the spread of anti-Semitic conspiracies within the broader, and to a great extent non-political circles of so-called New Age, a sort of “conspirituality” might indicate a symbiotic relation between divisions of fringe movements and give credence to the concept of the cultic milieu (Ward, Voas, 2011)

5.2.1 The myth of Hitler and the meaningful sacrifice

With Hitler dead and the movement in ruins, explanations had to be found- not only for the devastating loss but also legitimation for continuing the teachings of National Socialism as an ideology always hailing the victors of struggle. One of the first and most “religious” reinterpretation of Hitler’s death, of which has gained considerable influence in later decades, was the thoughts of Savitri Devi. She adopted a cyclic approach of time as found in ancient Hindu teachings, and regarded the decline of the world through four cycles where the last stage, Kali Yuga, was entered around 3000 BC. Central in her teachings were the concept of Men in Time, Men above Time and Men against Time; men in time were active in the Kali Yuga and characterised by egoism and power-seeking ambitions (such as Genghis Kahn). Men above time were of the golden age Satya Yuga who were over-worldly sages and mystics (such as Akhenaton). Men against time combined the qualities of the two others by acting
violently to invoke a new golden age. These men could come in the shape of avatars of divine impulses, and the greatest man against time was according to Devi Adolf Hitler (Goodrick-Clarke, 2002, p.96-97). Another exponent of the deification of Hitler originated in the writings of the Argentinian diplomat Miguel Serrano and his notion of “esoteric Hitlerism”. Serrano was much inspired by Jung and his archetypes as well as Devi, and regarded Hitler as the embodiment or avatar of Wotan and the vril-power of divine origin, the so called “the white gods” (Goodrick-Clarke, 2002, p.177). Hitler had come to earth in order to begin a new cycle of the golden Age, meaning that Serrano viewed the third Reich in almost millennial terms. Serrano turned hence the despair of 1945 into only a minor setback before the ultimate triumph where suffering would be turned into success. A further distinction of Serrano was his insistence that the defeat of Nazism was not only temporal but also only in a physical sense in the outer world. Being of transcendent essence, Hitler continued his fight on a higher sphere in parallel universes or “astral wormholes” (Goodrick-Clarke, 2002, p.188-89). Like a true Messiah, Hitler had left his corporal body but was still “living”, not only in the hearts and minds of his followers but also on mystical spheres only accessible by those of divine association.

5.2.2 Elitism and the origin of the Aryan race
A further implication of the social isolation of the ideology was a fervent elitism of the Aryan race in general and the National Socialists believers specifically. Hierarchical thinking has always been relevant to the movement, but clearly became a way to deal with the social disconformity after 1945; there might not be many who share the political stance, but those who do take part in an exclusive membership in “the truth”. As such, inclusion in a selected group was not only possible through blood and race, but increasingly through sheer belief in the truth as a singular concept. A prominent writer who emphasised the elitism and potential loneliness in acquiring “the truth” was the Italian philosopher, esoteric and neo-fascists Julius Evola (1898-1974). Already in the 1920s Evola rejected Christianity because of its universalism and egalitarianism and published in 1928 a book called Imperialismo Pagano (Imperial Paganism), celebrating the ideal of Ancient Rome, denouncing churches and the secularity of the modern world. According to Evola, human history could be regarded in cycles of regeneration and degeneration where the Jews played a vital role, being the symbol of rule of money, individualism and economic materialism. In his view race hence had a metaphysical, spiritual dimension (Goodrick-Clarke, 2002, p.64). To him race was body-mind (religion, adherence to tradition) and soul (character, emotions) which determined the outer
form, to which Evola rejected the biological racism of the Third Reich (Goodrick-Clarke, 2002, p.65). The modern world according was to Evola, a social universe in the image of the Jews, to which the answer was destruction—nothing originating in Kali Yuga was worthy of survival where “active nihilist” could legitimately lash out against the modern societies of decadence (Goodrick-Clarke, 2002, p.67). This nihilism could in accordance with Hirschman’s division express itself both through exit and voice where withdrawal of society as well as violence against society is equally legitimate. Evola’s writings were perhaps better labelled as neo-fascistic than purely National Socialistic, but became quite influential beyond the borders of Italy. A famous example is fraction of the National Front (NF) in Britain where the younger members embraced Evola’s idea through the concept of “The political soldier.” The concept referred to the few elitist activists who spent all his time and resources fighting against the “forces of Evil swamping the entire globe in an ocean of filth, corruption and treason” (Goodrick-Clarke, 2002, p.69). A further detail to take note of was theirs and Evola’s deep resentment for USA, seen the country’s consumerism and multiculturalism as the ultimate climax of decay and decadence in the age of Kali Yuga, a notion which also can be found to an escalating extent among American members of the extreme right.

5.3 The US as influencer

A distinctive tendency of the American supremacist scene which stretches well beyond the devotees of National Socialism, has been the role of so-called “Christian Identity”. The term is really an umbrella concept for a great variety of theological notions and ministries but is very much influenced by British-Israelism which claimed that the nations of Northern-Europe and indirectly the US are the lost tribes of Israel. They are hence not only spiritually but also biologically the Chosen people of God, but the main actors of the Bible while the Jews were regarded as relatives of imposters. Black people are regarded as soulless creators or decedents of evil spirits, but the place of the archenemy is reserved for the Jews who by many Christian identity theologians are regarded as having a spiritual or even biological bloodline to Satan. As the people of Northern-Europe (often called Adamic) have a spiritual or extra-terrestrial, dimension to them, the main purpose of Jews is to destroy their mental connection to the divine, where world history is the cosmic battle between these two forces. After an apocalyptic final showdown, the non-white races will either perish or be enslaved, whereas the Adamic tribes will rule together with very non-Jewish Jesus Christ in the Heavenly Kingdom of Earth. As such, the basis of Christian Identity has by Gardell been distinguished as “white, racial Nationalism, anti-Semitic and largely Nation Socialist grounds” (Gardell,
As one can see, there is somewhat resemblance to the German Christians of inter-war Germany although originating from different sources. The system of belief is also more applicable to an American context where many do have strong associations to Christianity and prefer to view political stances in light of their Christian belief, while National Socialism in itself offer an independent cosmology. This dilemma is very present in the work of George Lincoln Rockwell, founder of the American Nazi Party, who was well aware of the difficulties in distancing his movement from Christianity. Before his death Rockwell had met with central actors within Christian identity movement to discuss the launching of a new party, as Rockwell felt the movement needed a Christian expression in order to appeal to the masses. He even proposed to establish a church organization called Christian Naturalist Church, in order to formalize a fusion of Christian belief and National Socialist ideals (Simonelli, 1999, p.119-20).

Another group explicitly connecting race to religion is the Church of Creation, founded by Ben Klassen in 1973. The Church has sixteen commandments the adherents are to follow, one of them is “our race is our religion”. The religious perception is pantheistic, non-supernatural and highly naturalistic with further commandments asserting the belief in “the eternal laws of nature” and “the law of nature” of which is transcendent, yet impersonal (Creativity Alliance a, 2017). The Church’s notion of RAHOWA (Racial Holy War) underlines the connection between religious blood mysticism and the cosmological battle currently raging, where the metaphysical essence of the white race is found in their racial properties of which one have a sacred, holy duty to defend against all evil. The root of all evil are the Jews who are behind most actions of chaos and deconstruction, where for example Christianity is rejected as “Jew-spawned poison” created to destroy the Roman Empire and ultimately the white race altogether (Creativity Alliance a, 2017).

The Pagan connection was also heavily developed in the context of the US and Canada, where Gardell has ascertained that “during the 1990s racist paganism emerged as one of the most dynamic trends of the increasingly radicalized but highly fragmented and schismatic radical-racist milieu in the United States” (Gardell, 2003, p.1). In understanding the aspirations of the more current National Socialist groups, Gardell suggests a division between three connected yet distinct nationalist projects, namely:

- ethno-nationalism which believes ethnicity is the foundation of any nation
- racial nationalism which claims every race is entitled to a nation
- religious nationalism which holds that every adherence of a religion ought to be given its own state (Gardell, 2003, p.2-3).
For many Pagan national socialists, the second and the third typology of nationalism is most compatible with their notion of race and religion. One such example is David Lane (1938-2007). According to Lane, the racial and spiritual ancestor of Aryans was Odin, and only through a spiritual reconnection with this Aryan archetype could white people hope to survive as a race. As such, Odinism was not only an existential choice of belief, but a metaphysical realisation residing dormant in every Aryan. Alien gods destroy a race’s idea of uniqueness and capacity for survival according to Lane, making the religious identity of an Aryan a vital choice (Goodrick-Clarke, 2002, p.272-73).

The country is not only in danger of being dominated by international Jewry, as often was presented by NSDAP to be the case in Germany. According to many American National Socialists, the country is already ruled by the Jews and has been for centuries; every development regarded by these actors as negative such as civil rights movement, voting for women and coloured, secularisation, sexualisation, liberalism etc has been orchestrated by the Jews. A concept often applied to this notion is “ZOG” (Zionist Occupational Government), referring to a situation of “the deep-state”, where politicians, democratic processes and the media are controlled by Jewish actors. And because of their inherited and metaphysical aversion of Aryans, they will do everything in their power to subjugate and eventually exterminate the white race. This goal is achieved through the promotion of mixed marriages, sexual promiscuity, abortion, feminism, immigration and socio-economic devaluation of the middle class. Even though National Socialists often regard themselves as patriots, it is not the government they hail loyalty to but rather the community of race and the nation of the Aryans, the international Volksgemeinschaft, which transcend country borders and citizenships (Kaplan, 1998, p.57). Survival or communal feeling is hence not found in the traditional nation but rather in the imaginative community of white pride worldwide.

5.4 The development in Norway: a short overview

Generally speaking, Norway largely followed the patterns and developments in wider Europe and US. One of the first groups to gain widespread notoriety was the party “Norsk Front” (Norwegian front) established by Erich Blücher in 1975 with the high school teacher Olav Hoaas as primary ideologist and theorist. NF vigorously denied any connotations to Hitler or NSDAP and openly refuted the label of “Nazi or “Neo-Nazi”, although their cosmology was very similar to the prototypical Nazi with references to racial warfare, Jewish conspiracies and legitimate violence against the state as an act of defence. According to the sources available to me, NF did not have an explicit religious policy, but like most groups of the
spectre frequently used Nordic symbolism og presented the Viking Era with positive remarks. Olav Hoaas however wrote a pamphlet called “Forræderi og kristendom” (Treason and Christianity). The main argument of Hoaas in associating treason and Christianity is found in the religions claim of universalism, internationalism and compassion, which ultimately leads to a weakness in the soul of the people. The “Christian” hence stance gives legitimacy to immigration, as well as a compromising attitude towards the internationalism of communism and liberalism. Hoaas gave few indications of disinclination towards Christianity based on its Jewish roots, but in another work called “Germanernes fortid og fremtid- omriss av et historiesyn” (The past and the future of the Germanic people- an outline of a perception on history), Hoaas discussed Christianity based on more historic and theological premises. He ascertained that “Christianity is an Aryan religion […] but on its way the religion was polluted by trespassing thoughts” (Hoaas, 1971, p.26). This pollution was according to Hoaas related to the influence of Judaism and the influx of Jews in the leading positions in the early Christian clergy, and places himself hence in the tradition of the Aryan Christ and Christian identity. Hoaas seemed to share this notion of Christ and not to mention the critique given against the feminine picture presented of him by later sources, and asserted that: “Perhaps it was these kind of people [Jews] who suppressed the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth […] he was now made to a mild, kind, meek and humble female mourner in the shape of man (Hoaas, 1971, p.27).

It is of course difficult to know with certainty if the ideas of Hoaas were shared by the rest of NF and their associates or if they were completely his own. If one regards the few direct discussions of religion in the NF magazine called “Nasjonalisten (The Nationalist), there are indications of an acceptance in variety of religious ideas- not unlike NSDAP itself. While one actor referred to “higher powers which has created Man for the purpose of rule within the boundaries of natural law”, another supported the ideas of Quisling, another called for an “ethnical consciousness in accordance with natural law” and yet another asserted that “the evangelic-Lutheran religion is the nation’s only and public religion, and the state church must keep its role in the preaching of the religion”. Although the latter source added “the preaching must undergo- with the respective rituals- a new reformation reverting back to its original form” (Bangslund, 1984, p.237). If the statement is regarded in relation to Hoaas, it could indicate that Christianity is regarded as a formative and acceptable factor in Norwegian society, but of which must be cleansed of all Jewish and degenerated properties.

An important change in the platforms of interaction in later decades is according to Lööw how music is used as a propaganda tool in spreading National Socialist belief (Lööw, 2016, p.203).
In Norway this interaction of music and political stance resulted not only in more “traditional” white power music (where Blücher was a main exponent in the 80s and early 90s) but also through a peculiar transfusion seen in the more occult milieus earlier; that between National Socialism and Satanism. The Norwegian Black Metal scene of the early 1990’s combined in their own accord Satanic belief, a strong preference for Nordic Paganism and an equally distaste for Christianity as well as concepts taken from the National Socialist underground. It is important to note that for many of the actors involved the connection to National Socialism seemed to be more indirect with the power of provocation than a strong political conviction. An important statement indicating as such came from the individual perhaps most closely related to the scene in retro perspective, namely Varg Vikernes. Initially Vikernes denied any connection to National Socialism, and pointed to the swastikas poignant, evil symbolism as the reason for his use of it (NRK, 2007). The system of thought was nevertheless closely related to National Socialism; the adoration of the strong and the detestation of the weak, the promotion of Paganism as the “true” religion of ethnic Norwegians and the mocking of Christian humbleness and perceived feebleness, the often-degraded view on women, homosexuals and immigrants etc. When Vikernes by the mid-1990s openly embraced National Socialism and racial Odinism, one could argue that neither his religious or political stance had changed significantly but rather his priorities and associations within a similar cosmology (Kaplan, Bjørgo, 1998, p.111-13).

The first National Socialist group with an explicit Pagan orientation emerged in 1998 in the shape of Vigrid, led by Tore Tvedt. Although labelling Hitler as a saviour and denying any exterminations of Jews during the war, the organisation preferred to publicly express a Neo-Pagan and racial platform rather than National Socialist adherence. The group can be placed both within a geographical as well as religious developmental pattern, where a confrontation between the more racial aligned spectres neo-Pagan belief and the more inclusive Ásatrú. Although overlapping, a general divergence is often made between Odinism and Ásatrú. Odinism is regarded as more linked with racialism and extreme right milieus where the Australian lawyer Alexander Rud Mill and Else Christensen, while Ásatrú is more perceived as linked to the Pagan revival of which Wicca and Goddess-groups also are included. Their political perceptions are hence of a greater variety or even lacking completely (Asprem, 2008, p.45). Vigrid placed themselves clearly within a Odinist tradition, where religion often is considered intimately connected to ethnicity which is why Nordic Paganism was regarded as most compatible with Norwegian ethnicity. Unsurprisingly, Christianity was evaluated as “foreign” to the Norwegian soul and racial values should be dismissed completely both on an
individual and societal level. Interestingly Tvedt did not display any deep interest in the völkisch movement before WW2 and had no recollection of the endeavours of the Ragnarok group of the 1930s but paradoxically promoted the figure of Quisling as the true champion of the Nordic race (Asprem, 2008, p.60).
The example of Vigrid might be a concluding remark on the fluidness and approximately relation between groups and movements both in space and time. The influence can be explicit through reading and studying of former ideas, but also indirect where the actor does not know or cannot recognise the sources of influence. Both within and without a perceived cultic milieu the sources of influence are so many and so waste that it would be improbable for a single actor to be accountable of them all. Because of this, the historic, cultural and religious associations can come together in a higher realization without apparent contradiction because the political and religious is so tightly interwoven. For example, I suspect it would make little difference to Tvedt’s perception of Quisling if he previously had an in-depth understanding of the Ragnarok-group. Both actors shared his political aspiration and while Quislings was not favourably tuned for Pagan intervention, his association to National Socialism and the dawn of the new era h makes him by default a “team player”. Similarly, estimations indicate there are few genuine “hitlerists” within the current National Socialists scene in the traditional sense of the words (Borge, Digernes, 2018). Meaning, there are likely few who share in the ideas of Devi or Serrano literally, but the retelling of the “grand story of Hitler” has created an aura of mysticism and attraction around him and indirectly National Socialism as well. The construction of being a man of destiny with a metaphysical cause which NSDAP was eager to create, lives on in these notions and invoke a sense of affinity and interpreted relevance to the newer generations. Mystical Nazism can thus be perceived as a glossy version where tyranny, torture and war crimes become degraded in myth and legends.
Chapter 6: The current struggle; religion defined and discussed by DNM

6.1 Introduction
I will begin by analysing the political and ideological programs which has been written and approved by DNM and function as a presentation of their core beliefs and political aspirations. Then I will discuss sources debating religion presented more informally by DNM, consisting of articles, reportages and editorial comments from their official website in Norway- Frihetskamp.net.

6.2 Den nordiske motstandsbevegelsen
“Den nordiske motstandsbevegelsen” (DNM) emerged in its current form in the 00s and is a relatively recent organization of the extreme right in Norway. The original movement was founded in 1997 under the name Svenska Motståndsrörelsken (The Swedish Resistance Movement) in Sweden, which hosted and still hosts the most influential National Socialist scene among the Nordic countries. The founder is a well-known figure within the Swedish Neo-Nazi scene, Klas Lund. Lund was previously an activist of Vitt ariskt motstånd (White Aryan Resistance) of the 80s and early 90s, and several of his old comrades from VAM came together in the foundation of the Resistance Movement (Lööw, 2015, p.174). The organisation is per definition trans-Nordic and has cooperation divisions both in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland with their own national leaders, which again is subjugated to the central leadership of DNM (Frihetskamp, 2017). The leader of the Norwegian branch is Haakon Forwald, a former black-metal musician. Forwald was for some time the bassist of the Swedish death metal band “Dissection” as well as member of the occult group “Misanthropic Luciferian Order” which incorporated Satanic elements of belief. Forwald left the band in 2005, accordingly in “order to focus on his esoteric and exoteric work in Norway” (Whiskey-Soda, 2005). Although he often visits Norway, he currently lives in the small Swedish town in Ludvika, which illustrate the Swedish basis of the movement. In Sweden DNM also consist of a parliamentary branch which aspires to gain entrance into the Swedish Parliament. (Frihetskamp a, 2017). Forwald is also running for candidate in the municipal elections as well as for county parliament in Sweden, a fact which indicates the movement’s firm interest in power of definition and forcible, political change (Ibid). The perhaps most
distinct feature of DNM which separates them from many similar groups is their most explicit self-identification as National Socialists. Their websites (Frihetskamp.net in Norway and Nordfront.se in Sweden) is brimming with adorating references to Hitler, NSDAP, NS as well as post-war Nazi activity in general. According to their own definition, the group is “revolutionary National Socialist” (Frihetskamp a, 2017). Because of the preoccupation with the Nazi movement of the past, many articles are equally devoted to historical topics as to current matters.

A further consequence of the interaction with the National Socialist past, the group is also very vocal in their racial thinking; unlike some groups which prefer the less “tainted” word culture or ethnicity, DNM use the term race frequently. They understand the concept of race as “a material (biological) phenomena which can be study scientifically” and “the biological heritage which is the fundament every other feature rests on” (Saxlind, 2018). Their aim is hence to create a racial Nordic state with one common currency, armed forces, media and central bank, where the main reason for citizenship is racial. Those who do not belong to the Nordic Volksgemeinschaft are to be returned to their respective homelands and barred re-entrance (Frihetskamp a, 2017).

My main reason for using DNM as a main feature in my analysis is partly because of their explicit connection to National Socialism in general and the regime of Hitler specifically, which makes their religious perceptions particularly interesting and fortunate in terms of comparability. Further the group is perhaps the most well-organized and vocal organisation in Norway and the Nordic countries currently, with a strictly hierarchical structure and close interaction beyond country borders with meetings, camps, demonstrations etc. The enforced hierarchy and well-organized publication platforms also imply that the formal written are approved by DNM’s trans-Nordic leadership centrally where much time has been used to perfect and clarify their message. The sources found on Frihetskamp.net have additional purposes in addition to displaying the policies and legitimate the world view of DNM. The sources are submitting news and events from both Norway and the world, where their cosmology is used as a tool to understand what forces are at play behind the formal news presented by mainstream media.

6.2.1 Religious perceptions in the political program of DNM

A natural point of departure in the source collection is the most formalised aspects of DNM’s written words, meaning their political program where their main ambitions and visions are presented. The program is called “Vår vei- en politikk for en ny tid” (Our way- politics for a
new time”), and written respectively by Simon Lindberg, Pär Öberg, Emil Hagberg and Fredrik Vejdeland who constitute the “privy council” of DNM in Sweden (Nordfront, 2015b). The translation and preparation for the Norwegian version was conducted by the leader of the Norwegian DNM, Haakon Forwald, who is credited as editor and will be referred to as the source of the Norwegian version (Forwald, 2016).

Like programs for mainstream political parties, the wording and rhetoric is very matter-of-fact and concrete where a problem is presented, and a solution is firmly established. The only explicit reference to religion is found in chapter 4, concerning freedom of speech and religion, where DNM promise to protect religious freedom for anyone (Forwald, 2016, p.22). The program does not state if this promise includes every kind of religious expressions or only those which are deemed compatible with the Nordic sensibility as was implicit in the program of NSDAP. Like the political program of NSDAP, the commitment to any particular religious tradition is not thoroughly enforced although NSDAP mentioned the importance of Christian values. In DNM’s program, no references to Christianity or Norway as a Christian nations are to be found.

The only religious group mentioned directly by name are the Jews, who are accused of religiously legitimated notions of world domination (Forwald, 2016, p.10). “The global Zionist elite” is a frequent concept traditionally not only found in the teachings of NSDAP but also currently in the Nazi scene the shape of “ZOG” etc. The program is emphatical in explaining to the reader that mass immigration as a phenomenon is orchestrated by the same Zionist elite: “The goal of the global Zionist elite today is not only to promote the state of Israel, but also to work for long-time instability in nations which potentially could threaten their power structure. This includes naturally ethnic homogenic nations in the West” (Forwald, 2016, p.10) As such, the deeper reason to the change of ethnic homogeneity in Norway and Europe in general are to be found within Zionism. In the section concerning the Zionist elite, there is a small but potentially significant reference to the dilemma between National Socialism and Christianity which, as discussed previously, was quite essential in the 20s and 30s. The program asserts that “even non-Jews form part of their [The Zionists] power structures, motivated by both religious and/or egocentric motives” (Ibid). Although the religious motives are not connected to any particular religious group, it seems logic to take the wording to mean Christians, due to its close proximity to Judaism historically and theologically. The referral is likely related to the state of Israel, which many Christians support precisely because of religious motivations, and to DNM Israel is the representation of
Zionistic globalism. In the program, it does not seem that a Christian identity is problematic, but any potential relation to Israel is deemed incompatible with their world view (Ibid). Any particular mention or reverence for Nordic Paganism equally is lacking in the pamphlet, neither as an expression of faith or culture. While the program is mostly concerned with the homogenous culture of the people which he regards as the basis of any form of government as the people acts as a legitimization of rule (Forwald, 2016, p.17) there are no explicit worry about the religious homogeneity of the people. Given that any description of religious homogeneity is missing and in addition to DNM`s promise of religious freedom, there seems to be some notion of religious pluralism in the utopian future. A further question which only Forwald and the leadership of DNM can answer is of course their understanding of the concept of culture. To many an implicit part of Norwegian culture is Christianity as well as the State Church although no religious sentiment needs to be present in this perception. As no definition on the content of culture is given, the status of churches, lay religiosity etc remains at least in the formal documents in ambiguity. As such, DNM reveal themselves yet again to be very distant from the perspectives of “Christian Identity” as found in the US and the more Christian-oriented Nationalists.

Another potential double-sides definition is found in chapter 5, where the program accuses cultural Marxism and other subversive ideological movements to “dissolute morale and norms” in order to confuse, disintegrate and destabilise (Forwald, 2016, p.24). Moral is thus a concept of great importance to DNM, which is even more emphasised in the chapter on crime, where the author states: “The morale and spirit of society designs crime. A criminal state creates criminal individuals” (Forwald, 2016, p.46). The expression is of course compatible with the general position of National Socialism as an idealistic ideology where change can be established through the attitude and spiritual quality of the individual and the collective. The statement can further be connected to the National Socialist ideal of the “new man” which was very prevalent in the reign of NSDAP, where a new era required a new set of morality and a change of bourgeois norms. Certain aspects of the moral compass seem to be very compatible with Christian world view of the most conservative disposition. An important feature of DNM in recent years has been the struggle against what they perceive to be the “homo lobby”. In the section concerning family politics, the program launches an unyielding sortie against homosexuality which “is a weapon in the arsenal against the people and the family- hostile cultural Marxism […] in their struggle to destroy the so-called heteronormativity- which constitute the natural structure in any healthy society” (Forwald, 2016, p.36). As a consequence, DNM wish to prohibit homosexual marriages as well as the
possibility for adoption, prohibit homosexual expressions in the public sphere and “criminalize the homo-lobby and other people-hostile propaganda which actively oppose and aspire to resist the natural order of things” (Forwald, 2016, p.37).

It seems clear that DNM understand the “homo-lobby” as a puppeteer of cultural Marxism and thus indirectly of the global Zionist elite. If compared to the previous model, NSDAP was also famously active in their antagonism of homosexuals, who could risk imprisonment or death in one of the regimes many concentration camps. The formal reason for the disapproving of homosexuals within the Reich was that homosexuality did not lead to children and the much-desired rise in the population, which hence was a sexual practise of no function or outcome. Because child rearing was the primary meaning of human sexuality, homosexuality was in opposition to the natural and by default artificial and perverted. The stance appealed to and was on a societal level influenced by the biblical condemnation of homosexual practice, but the religious spectre of the argument was not its central feature, although Heinrich Himmler often emphasised the illegality of homosexuality in the ancient Pagan Germania (Sigmund, 2008, p. 203-204). The argument of DNM against homosexuality is more oriented towards society than religion, where their role is disintegration and distraction from the forces of the Zionist evil. In one sense homosexuals could be considered of “false consciousness” as the puppets cannot understand their role in the play organised by the puppet masters, which are the Jews. Deviant sexuality is hence a distraction from seeing the world as it truly is.

Another feature of the natural approach is the distinct “Blut und Boden” prevalence in the chapter concerning nature, animals and environmental issues, where the concept of “natural life” is directly related to rural living (Forwald, 2016, p.26-27). The contrast between urban life and elitism is most explicit in the program which states that the urban areas “should first and foremost be home for the political, financial and military elite, in addition to trade and industry. Urban areas are seemingly not a healthy living environment for humans, as the cities degenerates and alienates humans from both nature and other human beings (Forwald, 2016, p.25). There seems to be placed great value and worth in the concept of nature, perhaps even some sense of force or presence which is not possible in city areas. It is not specified how and why big cities have the ability to degenerate and alienate, but one must at least assume that nature does the opposite; inspire and connect human beings in a spiritual sense of no comparable manner. The blood and the soil of the people is hence intimately affixed in a way of almost metaphysical characteristics, yet not explicitly mentioned or explained, which can indicate an expectation that readers know of the concept and need no further explanation.
6.2.2 Religious perceptions in the philosophical program of DNM

Another important pamphlet which is of the backbone of DNM’s ideological presentation is called “Nationalsozialismen- den biologiske verdensanskuelsen” (National Socialism- the biological Weltanschauung). It was launched by DNM publisher, Nordfront, in 2016 and translated to Norwegian by Haakon Forwald who also features as chief editor, but the text itself was written by the prominent Danish Neo-Nazi Povl H. Riis-Knudsen in 1987. The Swedish website of DNM, Nordfront has given a high degree of prominence to the pamphlet through free download as well as the possibility to buy the text as hardcover and audiobook (Nordfront, 2010), The political editor of Nordfront, Fredrik Vejdeland, moreover stated that “Our way [title of the party program] is nevertheless different from the German model. Our National Socialism is more inspired by the Dane Povl Riis-Knudsen and his thoughts” (Nordfront, 2015a). The writing is in other words given deep significance and meaning within DNM both in Norway and Sweden, and is structurally on the website’s download area to be found at the very top, only rivalled by the political program of “Our way”.

Riis-Knudsen was the sole writer and the pamphlet was composed in a context similar but not identical to DNM, many years prior to the groups establishment. The status of the text is by DNM’s own accord undisputable, but simultaneously one must be careful to acknowledge every single statement and opinion presented by Riis-Knudsen 30 years ago to be of equally importance to DNM currently. It is after all presented as a source of teaching, not a source of authority, but can be perceived as the spiritual source of DNM like some researchers believe “Mythos of the twentieth century” by Alfred Rosenberg was to NSDAP. Many statements presented in the program which I found lacking in description and clarity is explained and contextualised in “The Biological Weltanschauung”, which creates a symbiosis between the two writings where one is completing the other.

Riis-Knudsen began his writing by distancing National Socialism from what the ideology is not. He writes: “in difference to murky, bewildered, meaningless philosophers living in ivory towers, and oriental mysticism, National Socialism is constructed on common sense and find its arguments in the real world” (Riis-Knudsen, 2016, p.5). As such, Riis-Knudsen aspired to remove National Socialism from ideas which to him seems otherworldly and without potential for action and change, which he believed philosophers and mystics generally to be. Interestingly, he did not refute mysticism per se- only oriental mysticism. The question remains of course if this turn of phrase was used because Riis-Knudsen indeed opposed mysticism in general, but only associate the term to the Orient, or if he distinctly separated
mysticism of the east and west. If so, then his statement could find resonance in the teachings of the Ludendorffs who, as discussed, were very hostile to mysticism of any Oriental origin such as Hinduism or Tibetan masters. The Ludendorffs is yet a reminder that someone that disapprove of mysticism might not necessarily reject religious perspectives altogether, but rather used the phrase in discrediting manner to religious sentiments they disapproved of. An example of a potential religious sentiment which easily could invoke religious meaning, is Riis-Knudsen’s ascertaining that National Socialism represents “the relentless search in finding the absolute truth and make this truth the fundament of human society (Ibid). It seems clear that Riis-Knudsen perceived the ideology as something more, something beyond the religious spectre of every-day life. On the next page he described National Socialism as “a complete philosophy of life which covers all aspects of human existence” (Riis-Knudsen, 2016, p.6). He emphasised further how “the Weltanschauung is the basis for a National Socialist’s attitude to religion, ethics, politics, economy- the way they organise their lives” (Ibid). It would seem that Riis-Knudsen has a similar approach to religion as NSDAP, where religion was tolerated as long as it did not contradict the political convictions, meaning National Socialism was the guiding principle of any further intellectual endeavours. Although not without religious implication, Riis-Knudsen appears to prefer the term of “life philosophy” or “Weltanschauung” when describing National Socialism, as the word religion to him apparently was a concept of negative connotations. He discussed further on the failed power ambitions of Christianity as well as Islam, and concluded merely that “the reason for this failure is quite simply that these religions are based on blind faith and not reality” (Riis-Knudsen, 2016, p.7) Clearly, Riis-Knudsen felt National Socialism to be more in touch with reality, where for example the title of the pamphlet where the word “biologic” probably is to infer the world of human sense and rationality of science. Yet, Riis-Knudsen was not blind to the spiritual needs of humans, rather he saw little need for additional input outside of National Socialism; “National Socialists do not require any foreign elements to satisfy their spiritual want. National Socialism can give satisfactory answers to each question a human can ask” (Riis-Knudsen, 2016, p.8). The affirmation is a profess of a spiritual content within National Socialism, but Riis-Knudsen was very emphatical in separating this metaphysical aspect to any religious meaning. Yet, by doing so he inevitably established a sense of mythos surrounding the ideology counteracting the previous reasoned rhetoric. When explaining the emergence of National Socialism, Riis-Knudsen activated a language which bears striking resemblance to the mystic origin of the
birth of a religion. He wrote: “National Socialism has never been invented- it has transpired from the eternal laws of nature which has existed as long as the universe, and which has governed life since the first primitive organism came to be” (Riis-Knudsen, 2016, p.9). First and foremost, Riis-Knudsen indicated some sort of divine or sublime content which resides within the so-called eternal laws of nature and constitutes the driving force of the universe and hence everything happening or developing there. While a Christian could claim that the Bible is in complete harmony with the will of God, Riis-Knudsen could argue that a National Socialist could claim to live in complete harmony with the universe itself.

The religious sentiment is not less prominent when Riis-Knudsen recited a quote from no other than Savitri Devi to elaborate his view (Ibid). The quote expands on the inner being of National Socialism which transcends time and space as “an expression for the mystical and unswerving wisdom from where nature lives and creates; the impersonal wisdom of the wildwood, seabed and the unilluminated space” (Ibid). The use of “impersonal” is of great consequence, as it seems to confirm the concept of a pantheistic yet impersonal life force which resides in nature and in human beings. It is a cosmology which invokes religious sentiment and awe- yet without any formal association to any particular religious tradition. The perspective can, as is evident in the spiritual history of Europe, be combined with a Christian belief, or be independently present without any further religious commitments.

Again, I see a close resemblance to the völkisch circles, particularly notable is the refusal of regarding potential religious aspects as religious. As discussed in chapter 4, many völkisch actors were most emphatical in denying that their group was religious in the general sense of the word, rather it was a group concerned with self-salvation through blood mysticism. The divine guiding principle was omnipotent and transcendental which could not administer eternal life as presented in Christian scripture; preferably an awaked self-consciousness of the world, of the races and its origin could be revealed. Another relevant approach could be that of Hauer who separated the concepts of religion and faith where religion is the negative, structures religion and faith is the sense of holiness which cannot be understood rationally and hence is beyond human perception.

In such an interpretation, most religious rites and system, even Neo-Pagan worship would strictly speaking be superfluous- and Riis-Knudsen did not at all mention any wish to implement any alternative religious system like Nordic Paganism. Naturally I cannot know to what degree Riis-Knudsen was familiar with the religious context of pre-war National Socialism, but he gave much credence to the individual realisation of the truth found in nature and the eternal struggle for survival. This constitutes the biological aspect of National
Socialism, where Riis-Knudsen refuted the possibility of equality as the basis for a functioning society. The cruel live or die principle of nature, and the distribution of skills and abilities is not fair or equal, so any society aspiring to transgress these irrefutable facts will ultimately degenerate and disintegrate both the society itself and the people residing in it (Riis-Knudsen, 2016, p.12).

A major reason for this naïve ambition did Riis-Knudsen find in Christianity, which interestingly is presented as the intellectual model of which both liberalism and Marxism hail from. For the first time in the pamphlet, Riis-Knudsen dismissed Christianity not only as an intellectual influence in European history but also as a living community of faith. He asserted that being a National Socialist implies that one “totally rejects Christianity, of which unnatural dualism is the point of departure for the “moral” codex of the status quo- even when this codex is camouflaged behind a liberal/humanistic or Marxist etiquette” (Riis-Knudsen, 2016, p.13). A more thorough discussion of the faults and evils of Christianity is then presented, which is quite reminiscent of the early anti-Christian arguments in the tradition of Nietzsche. As such Riis-Knudsen brings little new to the table.

The underlying critique is Christianity’s influence on European society, but most of the concrete criticism is of a theological nature- particularly concerning the Christian concept of soul and afterlife. Riis-Knudsen maintained that the Christian understanding of soul is wrong because it teaches that the soul is universal and non-biologic which hence give little credibility to race and the difference in racial and cultural features. Further, the Christian promise of eternal life in a paradisal condition of bliss was to Riis-Knudsen a false pretence which results in nothing but lack of action and powerless hopes for a better life in the next world instead of making a better life in this world. Christianity is:

A religion for losers and dreamers which cannot comprehend the challenges of life, but only quiescent move on in the hope that the last shall be the first and the first shall be the last […] It places innocence before the mother, the monk before the pater familias, the weak and suffering before the strong and the victorious- quite simply the dead before the living (Riis-Knudsen, 2016, p.13).

The preoccupation with life essence and strength as independent values is quite remarkable and finds a natural place within the pre-war völkisch critique of Christianity as an enfeebling religion with a preference for the week which could not be the basis of a society of tomorrow. The Aryan-Christian emphasis on the Aryan, masculine, warriorlike features of Christ was a rhetorical manner to avoid this critique, and although Riis-Knudsen actually never during the pamphlet mentioned Christ by name it seems clear that he had little regard for this system of
thought. Neither did Riis-Knudsen throw himself out in any discussion surrounding the Jewish conspiracy surrounding Christianity as a tool to subjugate the Germanic race, he only rather drily commented that “our belief of this concept [of divinity] is in absolute contrast to the Judeo-Christian Yahweh (Riis-Knudsen, 2016, p.14).
It is however of equally importance to him to underline that National Socialists were not atheistic, but that their perceptions only are quite different from those of a cultural-Christian society. A divine basis for National Socialism is hence explicitly commented in the work; We are not atheists […]. For National Socialism only one true divinity exists; the mystical, creative force which manifests itself everywhere in nature. It is this divinity we worship by displaying deference and respect towards the wisdom in the laws of nature” (Ibid).
This quote, I believe, can serve as some sort of religious tenet for National Socialism as seen from the perspective of Riis-Knudsen. The implications are concrete and relative at the same time; the perception effectively excludes any religion which basis is a personalized divinity with a strict set of rules and guidelines that is the variable of eternal salvation or damnation. As such all the Judeo-Christian religions are deemed incompatible with National Socialism. The tenet can however be incorporated in a Neo-Pagan context, with some modifications. A Neo-Pagan worship where the gods are perceived as real and personified would likely be felt as to close to “religion”- as presented the term has obvious negative connotations to the author. But a Neo-Pagan deference where the divinities of Odin and Thor etc are perceived as symbols and representations of the eternal life force which resides in nature, as was relevant in the Ragnarok-group, might be regarded as compatible with a National Socialist lifestyle. One can perhaps speculate there is, as Nordic Paganism has been presented as included many treasured values for National Socialism such as courage, self-sacrifice, strength, the natural cycle of life and death etc, but it is however not stated.
Although it must be noted that despite Riis-Knudsen’s focus on race and eternal laws of nature, he gave little explanation to how and why this race has emerged or if the ancient Nordic Era is of a particular status. The many myths of the emergence of the Aryan/Germanic/Nordic/white race are not present in Riis-Knudsen despite his use of Devi as a source. He did not give the races any mythical origin except as a result of the eternal laws of nature. Religious life to National Socialists, in accordance to Riis-Knudsen, is not rituals or worship; rather it is life itself. By living in accordance with the laws of nature, one worships its mystic and arcane wisdom, i.e. by preserve the unique qualities of one’s race and abide by its lines of separation. To put it bluntly; racial exclusiveness and “pure-blooded” breathing is the core of the metaphysical perspectives. An implication in regard to moral conduct would be
that the only “blasphemous” or “perverse” action possible would be to not abide by this rule, and that moral conduct can be quite relative and left to individual interpretation. If the eternal laws are upheld, the moral laws are more in tune with the Dionysian latitude of the übermensch as discussed by Nietzsche.

Despite Riis-Knudsen’s assurances that National Socialism was not atheistic, it indicated a strong need for rational and scientific language and perception. I suspect one reason for the frequent use of the word “biological” and the explanation of the difference in the understanding of religiosity is related to this objection. There is admittedly much insistence on the spiritual qualities of National Socialism, where Riis-Knudsen wrote “It is thus not enough to satisfy the material needs of the people in order to establish a sound economic sector. It is necessary to see to the spiritual needs as well!” (Riis-Knudsen, 2016, p.15). Yet, Riis-Knudsen was also conclusive that little comfort was to be given within National Socialisms to those struggling with the agonies of death and clinches to the safety of eternal life. According to him: “This need [the assurance of spiritual serenity] is behind every religion, but in difference to them is National Socialism concentrating on fulfilling these needs on earth” (Riis-Knudsen, 2016, p.15). It would seem that National Socialism as interpreted by Riis-Knudsen and indirectly DNM still aspire to constitute a “third way” not only in a political sense between cynical Capitalism and heartless Marxism, but also in a religious sense between dogmatic religion and godless atheism. The metaphysical perspective is indeed present, but in a more this-worldly, everyday sense, in a Weltanschauung which in some ways transgress the pantheistic claim that God resides in nature. To the National Socialism presented in the pamphlet, the divine is the biological fibres humans are made of and most directly express itself through race. As such, unlike the occultist Aleister Crowley famous declaration of “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law”, a National Socialist modification could be “Do what thou wilt, but race shall be the whole of the Law”.

6.3 Religious perceptions presented at Frihetskamp.net

The website Frihetskamp.net has its own designated category named “Verdensanskuelse” (Weltanschauung/ Life stance) where related issues of philosophical and religious nature are discussed. One important article to be found in this section is “Nasjonalsosialismen- vår ledestjerne” (National Socialism- our guiding star) written by an uncredited author in 2018, but which probably originates from one of the editorial staff.

The references to the work of Riis-Knudsen is evident and referred to both explicitly and implicitly. There are also attempts to describe and explain more fully what certain aspects of
the Riis-Knudsen text implicate, one such example is the concept of “the eternal laws of nature”. These laws are concentrated on two major approaches;

- the law of life as an eternal struggle
- the law of survival of the fittest (Frihetskamp, 2018a).

Although examples from nature is used to illustrate the importance of strength and will for survival, the notion is placed within a political context of current, global events. The challenges of mass immigration are also subordinated to the laws of nature, where the Nordic people face extinction in a struggle where immigration is not the enemy per se but the tool of the enemy. Again, one can feel the hidden shadow of ZOG lurking behind every word. The only option is struggle and the only hope of survival is victory; “The individual, the race or the specie which is not adequately strong, will not survive […] We must fight and be strong in order to survive” (Ibid)

The survival of the Nordic people is, as in the formal program of DNM, of the utmost important, but while the foregoing sources have emphasised the ethnic and racial uniqueness of the Nordics, this article is also dedicated to the cultural properties. The definition of race presented is consisting of two segments, namely the racial and cultural heritage. The article states: “Culture is with its tradition the spiritual and material heritage of which, in addition to the genetical, our ancestors bequeathed to us after their physical death. But through us, in our blood and in our genes, they live on after “death”. (Ibid)

This is a revealing paragraph I think, as it not only explains the role of ancient symbols within the group, but also yet again on the properties of death and their understanding of eternal life as in opposition of the Christian understanding. Culture is the connection between the past and the present, where the dead ancestors are giving eternal life through their remembrance, which is why the word death is given in quotation mark: Death within a tribal collective is only apparent. As such, this is a key to understanding how DNM can display Nordic runes and revere the Viking past, without any obvious Neo-Pagan connections; ancestral culture plays a role in the legitimation of the eternal laws of nature. The ancestors struggled and survived in a harsh climate against war, famine and oppression and yet overcame and gave birth to the next generation. Members of the Nordic people currently living is the mere evidence of their triumph as well as their racial and cultural worth, creating a bond between blood and soil as indicated in the political program of DNM. By cherishing their memory, one can be in contact with the same laws and the same strength to rise above all challenges. The relation between past and present is as evident as in the early National Socialism; by knowing and revalue the past, one can create an illustrious future.
To be aware of this connection between racial and cultural properties under the eternal laws of nature does not only serve as reverence for ancestry, this understanding is explicitly related to the most existential of all philosophical questions; the meaning of life. The article expresses that notions very clearly:

Through hardship and struggle is the individual as well as the race shaped and hardened to perfection. What is required of both is the will to survive and reproduction [...] That is why every single person must struggle with perseverance against all adversaries in order to achieve perfection, so that the heritage can be passed on even after death. This struggle affects every biological organism. This is the meaning of life! (Ibid)

The quote displays effectively how the National Socialism presented by DNM can invoke a metaphysical dimension in their teaching, yet without needing a divine source or any promises of salvation or eternal life of the soul. The meaning of life is found through living and through reproduction where the race reveals its supernatural properties. The cycle of life, if not individual life, has the ability of immortality. In a way this perspective dethrones the unique position humans have in nature, and places them in the same world and under the same rule of law as other animals, which is yet another approach in the understanding of National Socialism as the “biological Weltanschauung” both in the sense of Riis-Knudsen but also of the National Socialism of the 20s and 30s where the Darwinist approach was essential. The closeness in thought between DNM, Riis-Knudsen and intellectuals such Erling Winsnes and the Ragnarok-group is striking, not only their emphasis on pantheistic nature but also on survival through struggle where hardship and suffering was regarded as positive features. Religiosity is conducted through action where believing is doing, not necessarily a firm set of dogmas secured by orthodoxy.

It must however be noted again that a “biological” understanding of life and death not necessarily excludes religious belief if desired by the individual, even though it is not essential in the collective order. The article “Det nordiske folkets naturlige verdensanskuelse” (The natural Weltanschauung for the Nordic people), written by the leader of DNM, Simon Lindberg à 2018, discusses the role of religious worship within the organisation. He writes:

As a National Socialist one can, if one wishes, have a religious faith as long as it does not compromise these core values. It is possible to relate to nature as God or Odin, and in the scientific understanding of eternal life through a continuity of blood are there of course possibilities for religious interpretation (Lindberg, 2018).
The quote enhances the argument of religious combability rather than religious preference to be the guiding principle of faith within DNM, where a similarity with the perspective of NSDAP can be found. Nonetheless, it is difficult to know if the God which Lindberg has in mind is the Christian God, as there are several critical manoeuvres against Christianity to be found on Frihetskamp.net, including the very article of Lindberg (Ibid). Although the same ambiguity towards Christianity was present within NSDAP, what is missing in DNM compared to NSDAP is actors who explicitly support and display partiality for Christianity. Seemingly these actors are lacking both in the formal and more pluralistic writing of DNM as presented on Frihetskamp.net. To involve the scholarly debate concerning if “true” Christians can also be National Socialists, I personally do not believe that DNM’s lack of Christian references can be taken as a final verification to the anti-Christian sentiment of the ideology beyond time and space. Rather I think that National Socialists like most others are children of their time and that the perception of religion is evidence of that. I would suppose that most of the DNM members and sympathizers generally have been raised in less Christian households than members of NSDAP, and there is hence no wonder that they don’t feel any need to involve explicit Christian thinking within their cosmology. It does not however mean they actively oppose or have hostile feelings towards the religion, it can be equally probable that that the lack of refence is more related to the post-modern distance and detachment to Christianity.

The search word “kristendom” (Christianity) on Frihetskamp.net results in only 42 results, whereas a majority mentions the word Christianity or Christian in an explanatory sense in order to present or describe a person’s background. A frequent use of the word is particularly found in the connection to Zionism and Israel, where the religious identity indicates an implied motive for subjugating to the Zionist power structures so essential to the teachings of DNM. One of the few posts which actually do debate Christianity in a religious perspective is the article “Vi har vind i seilene og behøver enighet nå – ikke splittelse” (We have wind in our sails and need unity now- not division) by Adrian Jacobsen who has contributed with articles and comments on the website for several years. The main point of the article is the potential for division the author sees within the National Socialist milieu because of religious differences. The central aspect of the discussion is according to Jacobsen “not concerned if God exist or not, but rather if Christianity represents or at all can represent us as Nordic people (Jacobsen, 2016). Despite the ascertainment to the presence of these conflict lines, there is no introduction to the historical context of this discussion or how it influenced the policies of NSDAP. Rather, Jacobsen dismisses the whole discussion as irrelevant; “the
Nordic countries are first and foremost built on Nordic values. Religion is in this instance a reflection of the people and not vice versa. It is, in other words, not Christianity or Paganism which defines the Nordic people, but their extraordinary biological conjunction” (Ibid) Again, one can see a consensus with the other texts on Frihetskamp.net presented in this chapter, namely:

- there is a distinction between values as a moral guiding point and religion as a system of faith
- the racial qualities of the Nordic people are biologically oriented, whereas culture and religion primarily are manifestations of the race and not contrariwise.

The logical implications of Jacobsen’s article would be that the religious identity of the individual and the Nordic countries are not all that important, as the theological differences would not have any impact on the race. Because of this perception, the whole discussion concerning Christianity’s proximity to Judaism and even the racial status of Jesus is of lesser consequence. On that particular matter Jacobsen only express modest interest; “Was Jesus a Jew or not? Who knows? There are numerous theories and speculations on this topic” (Ibid). The content of these numerous theories is not discussed further, and it is evident how little Jacobsen care for the dilemma. By only contextualising the ethnic properties of the Nordic people and not the spiritual, he effectively makes the discussion of the Aryan Jesus so prominent in last centuries, superfluous. Jacobsen states in the article that he is not a Christian and was not raised in a Christian home, and his moderate interest towards Christianity actually might indeed be a symptom of the post-modern detachment to Christianity discussed previously (Ibid). Unlike Riis-Knudsen and even the “Satanists” of the early 1990s, there is little anger and call for vengeance in the text of Jacobsen. He remains aloof it would seem, and even degrades the importance of religion altogether by stating: The people and the struggle must always have precedence! When the struggle is won, and the future of our children are secured, then we can take use of the privileged freedom of debating religion with each other” (Ibid).

It does however not mean that Jacobsen is completely indifferent to religious matters, but like in the other sources presented there is a strong emphasis on the ideological basis as the primary factor. This point of departure is very evident in Jacobsen’s assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of Christianity; what he abhors is “the weakness in the “turn the other cheek” mentality” and the “pro-Zionistic evangelic churches in the US” (Ibid). In this statement he remains close to Riis-Knudsen who dismissed Christianity on this very basis, but unlike Riis-Knudsen Jacobsen also find positive features in the religion. What he favours
within Christianity is what his enemies abhors “the approach to moral and ethics in contrary to the unhealthy moral relativism [of the cultural Marxists] (Ibid). The old proverb of my enemy’s enemy is my friend is hence very present in the thinking of Jacobsen, where he expresses sympathy for Christianity because:

the current society of Cultural Marxism consciously aspires to break down the fundamental “Christian” values such as the nuclear family and traditional gender roles through the promotion of feminism and homosexuality in the mass media and schools. These are values I, as a National Socialist, share with most Christians, and which I wish to preserve” (Ibid).

Similarly, in the program of DNM, there is an understanding of the perversity of homosexuality compatible to both the biological perspective as ventured by DNM and the theological perspective as ventured by some conservative Christians- although the reasoning and inner logic of argument is quite different. The relation of DNM to Christianity can, at least in the eyes of Jacobsen, be characterised as similar to the stance of NSDAP; a Christian can be a National Socialist, but a National Socialist doesn’t have to be a Christian. As such, DNM is closer to the official policy of NSDAP than NS or the Ragnarok-group; their lack of emphasis of the importance of Christian heritage as well as the lack of references to Nordic Paganism or even repeated, consistent anti-Christian sentiments is making such an approximation difficult.

6.4 Islam and the conflict lines of DNM

Voices within DNM, ranging from writers such as Jacobsen to leaders like Lindberg, have a somewhat different approach to Christianity than Riis-Knudsen in 1987 who thoroughly dismissed Christianity as totally incompatible with National Socialism. In addition to an expanding personal distance towards organised religion in general and Christianity in particular, one reason for moderate acceptance of Christianity in some National Socialist milieus is the change of the religious mosaic within Europe in the shape of Islam. To some, Christianity has become some sort of defensive wall against Islam, to which formal and not necessarily personal adherence to religion has been given a cultural flavour of identity.

The relation of DNM towards Islam can give some indications to the possibility of this notion. As mentioning previously, there is little in the formal program of DNM which refers to Islam as a collective force or Muslim as a collective group. There is perhaps little surprise that Riis-Knudsen remarked nothing on the matter, as his work was written in 1987 and hence before the escalating attention given to Islam in the context of immigration and terror. The lack of
references in DNM’s formal program is more significant, as is a statement given by Lindberg in an interview with the American branch of the Greek far right party “Golden Dawn”. In the interview he stated that:

To us it is quite uninteresting if you worship Jesus or Odin, or Muhammed for that matter, or if you don’t believe in God at all. Because we know that it is not the religion which determines your culture, your values, your moral and your IQ. It is your blood- your race, which determines who you are or how the culture of your nation will be” (Jacobsen, 2016).

If taken literary, the statement of Lindberg would imply that a Muslim could be welcomed into the ranks of DNM, if he or she was of Nordic ethnicity. Such an approach would be consistent with the recurring priority of race before religion as stated by the sources hereby presented. Lindberg’s understanding of the dynamic between religiosity and race is hence quite different from earlier völkisch circles, and even to racial Odinists ala Lane, Vikernes or Tvedt who saw an intimate relation between what a Volk is (racially) and what it believes and thinks. At least in this quote, Lindberg does not hail one particular tradition closer or more natural to the Nordic race and places the status of race and religion hierarchal; race is the main influencer. It should also imply that when mass immigration and immigration in general is discussed on Frihetskamp.net, the primary emphasis ought to be on the ethnic component rather than the religious. Infamously, forces within DNM are very opposed to immigration, but the general tendency seems indeed to indicate little care for the various background of the immigrants; the most common distinction given is between white/non-whites, not “Muslim-immigrant” contra “Christian-immigrant”.

A contagious indication can be found in the publications on the website of DNM. The search word “Islam” on Frihetskamp.net results in over 200 matches and the search word “Muslim” results in almost 160 matches; yet only a few of them deals with the religion as a conceptual problem (Frihetskamp, 2018g/h). The most frequent context where the terms are mentions is news events relating to IS, Boko Haram, the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the war in Syria etc. However, when discussing the perceived results of mass immigration such as crime, sexual assaults etc, the apparent clear distinction between race, religion and culture becomes somewhat muffled. The rhetoric often has the underlying tension of invasion of the foreign, and disharmony of the normative, where Islam is treated as a foreign force out of place in Europe. This force seems to have both cultural, religious features, but the ethnic component is very central even in this context. In articles where Islam as well as immigration is discussed, one can find statements such as “these immigrants will wallow in our women, convert them to
their group and exploit them more or less voluntarily” (Karlsen, 2016) and “for feminized Nordic men is immigration from patriarchal countries a catastrophic, because women generally are attracted to more or less dominant men” (Persson, 2016). The aggression towards the ethnic component is very explicit, but Islam per se is not treated as the main adversary. An illustrating example of such can be found in an article by Simon Lindberg which discusses the terror attack in Stockholm in 2017. He writes:

> The rumours are that the suspect is a Muslim and a IS-sympathizer. Does this mean that the terror attack is the fault of Islam or the Islamic state? Yes, the first statement is at least what those in control of the opposition will have you believe, and the latter is what the media and the politicians will have you believe (Lindberg, 2017)

What Lindberg is arguing, is that hostility against Islam is nothing but a distraction from the real forces at play; the presence of Islam in the Nordic countries is a result of immigration, and immigration according to DNM is a desired event orchestrated by the Zionist elite and their pawns within Cultural Marxism. As Lindberg graciously concludes: “The Zionists and their dirty lackies in the media houses and the Swedish government are those who are responsible for the event” (Ibid).

Islam is even indirectly regarded with some sense of admiration, not for any theological qualities but for its behavioural correction and thus strength it invokes in the believers’ life. In an article signed by the editorial staff which advocates the relevance of Rosenberg’s “Mythos”, the statement reads:

> Simultaneously we are invaded by people who, unlike us, seem to have both morale, loyalty, family values, child births, stay-at-home-mums, many siblings, unity, adherence of their family, friends and religion; a people who one day will make us a minority in our own countries. Maybe we deserve it? (Frihetskamp, 2015a)

Terms like “invade” and “minority” indicate aggression as well as negative connotations and because of the ethnic component of these foreign people there is no desire to replicate or join them. But the religion (although not explicitly named likely is a reference to Islam) is considered an intellectual source which aims for the same objectives and values as National Socialism. The quote reinforces the notion displayed multiple times that National Socialism according to DNM is a complete Weltanschauung which can both supplement and transcend any traditional religious belief but is also a reminder of evaluation of religion within DNM as a force which moves men. As Jacobsen discussed in relation to Christianity’s emphasis on
family values and morality, Islam is given esteemed properties for identical reasons, namely those which is deemed compatible with the DNM life stance.

In this vacuum, Islam is frequently treated as a tool to subjugate Europe to global Zionism; the Zionists have intellectually crippled Europe through Cultural Marxism and afterwards introduced ethnic groups with a clear sense of devotion and moral in order to defragment the continent even further. The relations between anti-racist groups, feminists, left-wing voters and sympathetic notions towards immigration is regarded as an example of this scheme.

Generally, I would suppose there is little actual approval to be found within DNM towards Islam, and many articles on Frihetskamp.net does grade the religion as foreign and out of custom with Nordic temperament. But according to their view, placing blame on Islam would be to obfuscate the real powers at play and foreclose the Jewish influence. Because the root of the problem is not Islamic per se or even religious per se, DNM do not seem to regard Christianity as any necessary bulwark against invading forces of neither physically or spiritually origin. Although the change from open aggression in Riis-Knudsen to indifference or moderate approval as found in DNM today, can of course at some level be an expression of changing perceptions due to a heightened focus on religious identity in the wake of Islam. It is however not stated explicitly. But as only National Socialists are in a position to reveal the Zionist scheme, this is likely to be the only real solution to the problem according to DNM.

Again, the Weltanschauung is more important than any religious identification. Their political program consigns the logic behind this approach; the group aspires to deport every ethnic foreign individual from the Nordic countries and as there generally is a connection between a Muslim identity and non-Nordic ethnicity. The influence of Islam would hence be declining rapidly in this scenario: The few remaining Muslims would be ethnic Nordics who could and would be included in the Volksgemeinschaft of the future. As such, Zionism is more dangerous than Islam, as Lindberg contested in the previously mentioned interview with Golden Dawn.

6.5 The enigmatic enemy of DNM: the Jews

Another question is how DNM regard Judaism, a concept which transcends their preferred division between race and religion, yet is fundamental to their own cosmology. As race is a vital compass of navigation to DNM, a likely assumption would be that the group regards the category of Jew as primarily an ethnic label. A very significant article concerning the dynamic of Judaism is “The role of the Jews” (Jødenes rolle), published by an unknown author in 2012 as one of the very first articles in the segment of “Weltanschauung”. The familiarity of thought not only to NSDAP but to the statements given by Hansen in the Ragnarok-magazine
is evident. The ingress promises to present the role of the Jews from ancient times up to the present, indicating a clear sense of Jewish homogeneity which has been preserved through space and time and can be identifiable in any historical period. A great portion of the text concerns itself with the Jewish conspiracy vis-à-vis Hitler and the German Reich as well as the asserted myth of Holocaust, where the historical context features as evidence to the Jewish aspiration for world domination. The individuals presented in the articles are categorised as “Jews” or “Jewesses” without any formal adherence to the religious dimension of Judaism, an aspect which is very evident in the frequent use of the term “Jewish communist”, a concept implying someone who is not religiously devoted on a personal level (Frihetskamp, 2012).

Aspects found in the religious writings of Judaism, such as the Talmud, is also used to legitimize the Jewish need for world domination; “[in such texts] one can find both a deep hatred and a wrath against our people and our race” (Frihetskamp, 2012). There seems to be no real difference between the ethnic and religious component of Judaism, where the latter implicitly is regarded as a manifestation as well as a legitimation of the will and desires of the Jewish people, not a conventional religion of otherworldly aspirations. This is an attitude also found in “Mein Kampf” where Hitler simply wrote “The Jew has always been a people with definite racial characteristics and never a religion; only in order to get ahead he early sought for a means which could distract unpleasant attention from his person” (Hitler, 1992, p.278). As such, the Jewish religion is nothing but a scheme to seem more innocent and accommodating, and not related to a true longing for the divine. This attitude could easily be seen in relation to Koehne’s assertions of ethnotheism where the racial capacity for spirituality would render Judaism as a sort of non- or even mock-religion.

One apparent metaphysical properties about Jews seems to be their inherit evil which has presided for many thousands of years. The evidence is multifaceted and found in their own religious teachings, in the words of Jesus and more recently in the emergence of modern capitalism and the Russian revolution. The so-called “Jewish project” is made possible by divergence and deceit, where DNM argue that Jewish millionaires in the US and Great Britain sent capital to Russia to help dethronized the Tsar. The logic is clear; despite apparent contrasts in ideology and perception, these actors could easily collaborate since they all were aware of the collective and apparent homogenous identity Jews; the singular premise of membership in the secret and elitist brotherhood for world domination. The Jews are hence recognisable by following marks according to DNM:
• An ethnically distinct people with their well-defined religious and cultural expression, who are recognisable by the obsessive desire to rule the world and subjugate every other people and race.

• Hatred of the Nordic race and a will to do anything to stop their advancement and happiness. Measures at hand is initiations of wars, control over the financial sector, intellectual indoctrination through decadence and degeneration etc.

• The pathological desire for world domination is preserved intact from Antiquity until today without much change in time and space. Evidently there is an intuitive connection between this collective and ancient thirst for domination and the wish and dreams of the individual Jew.

• An ability to influence history to their own advantage for a long time, as seen in their involvement in the Russian revolution. Thus, every action taken against the Jews which might be perceived as anti-Semitic is justifiable as a measure to stop their global aspirations.

The presentation of Jews is evidently very close to the rhetoric used by NSDAP, the Ragnarok-group and other actors in the 20s and 30s, and like them DNM have problems offering explanations to who the Jews “really” are beyond the point of mythology and sagas. As is presented in the background chapter, much time and resources were devoted by both völkisch and National Socialist actors in explaining the creation myth of respectively Jews and Aryans, a trait which also has a prominent place in current groups.

The hatred against Jews is very prominent on Frihetskamp.net, yet few articles discuss the questions of why and how of their perceived “Jewish problem”; why are the Jews seeking world domination, why do they hate the Nordic race, how have they taken care of their aspirations from ancient times, even the basic question of what kind of race they constitute? Frihetskamp.net merely assess the existence of the Jewish race, the inner logic of the statement is not debated or explained much further. One reason for the lack of mythology can reluctance to be associated with the more occult/mystical understandings of the nature of the Jews. As DNM are presenting themselves as rational, biological and not affiliated with organised religion, to take use of these old fables heavily infused by legend and religious cosmology would likely be in collision with this identity. Another reason can be their dependence on NSDAP-sources where the “hows and whys” of Jews are given historical premises, and certain aspects of the article does point to a proximity to sources and traditions beyond DNM.
One such example is the description of the horrors of the Jewish-initiated Russian Revolution where the article points out that:

The Soviet Union and Communism as a through-and-through Jewish project. The liquidation of the Tsar and his family (women and children included!), the burning of churches (something neither Hitler nor NSDAP argued for) and Christian symbols, the horrible gulags and the execution of Christian priests etc, is only the top of the horrible and gruesome iceberg in the Communist sea (Frihetskamp, 2012).

A similar distinction can be found in a speech Fredrik Vejdeland made in court in September 2015 where he stated, “If a member of the Communist Party hails Vladimir Lenin, I would not assume that this person was hailing the mass murder of millions of Christians” (Frihetskamp, 2015c)

The emphasis of the crimes against Christians conducted by Communists was very present in the rhetoric in the 20s and 30s, and admittedly many Christians both in Germany and Norway embraced respectively NSDAP and NS for their anti-Bolshevik stance rather than their own ideological features. Marxism as a tool of Judaism is hence a consistent force of degeneracy and equally relevant today as before, in somewhat new clothing. DNM offer few examples of specific concern for Christians beyond the Russian revolution, which underlines the use of pioneer texts of the 20s and 30s, but is likely also promoted to display the irrationality of Christians supporting Israel. The conflict line is thus not between Christianity and Judaism per se, but between Christianity and the perceived kowtow for Israel as the representative of Zionist globalism. Any devotion towards Israel would likely cross the premises set by DNM; religious perspectives are tolerated as long as it does not contradict the core ideology of the group. The unsurprising refutation of Israel and Christianity however implicates complicated issues related to the status of Christianity, the properties of Judaism and the emphasis on race.

6.6 Jewish influence on Christianity

As previously mentioned, DNM have no explicit references to the theory of the Aryan Jesus, and some contributions on Frihetskamp.net seem to acknowledge the fact that Jesus ethnically and socially was a Jew. Further, as is vividly expressed in the discussions concerning Cultural Marxism, the decaying power of the Jews are at work both physically and intellectually, where thoughts are deemed dangerous or unwanted for the Nordic race partly because their origins can be traced back to Jews (such as the emergence of the Russian revolution). There
seems to be a contradiction between race as the only valuable identity marker and the potential for spiritual enforcement by the Jews, which implies admittance to the danger of intellectual movements originating within Judaism. If all these assumptions are correct, how can Christianity, if regarded as a Jewish-inspired religion, be perceived as acceptable within a National Socialist life stance?

Two possible responses have been discussed earlier, namely the Aryanized Christ and the Neo-Pagan refusal of Christianity altogether. DNM appear not to embrace either alternatives. Another response to this dilemma is to ignore the dubious origins of Christianity and rather regard the religion as adequately assimilated within a European context where the Jewish components somehow have been neutralised. Such a stance can also applicable if indeed race is the main influencer as indicated by Lindberg. One example which can give support for this notion is an article written by the editorial staff concerning the celebrations of Saint Lucy’s day 13th of December. The article writes on the mixed Pagan and Christian impulses of the feast day by stating “Pagan and Christian traditions have through the last thousand years been mixed to such a degree that it might be difficult separating which is which” (Frihetskamp, 2017e). Regardless of the religious hybrid of the celebration, DNM do not seem to have a problem with its presence in Nordic mentality: “Despite its origin, is this a holiday with long traditions here in the Nordic countries. We will seize the opportunity, and wish all our readers a happy celebration of the day” (Ibid)

It is of course difficult to know if this notion of assimilation can be used in as a general principle within DNM, but it can be a basis for legitimizing Christianity as a European more than a Jewish religion. The fact that this dilemma is not discussed explicitly invokes ambiguity of the religious status of Christianity where a nod towards the Aryan Jesus-theory or a complete rejection of Christ easily could have been implemented in the arguments presented so far. When a discussion is completely lacking, the absence can also be open to interpretation; either a signal of the irrelevance of Christianity as perceived by DNM or as a conscious non-disclosure where the debate is seen as distraction to the cause as indicated by the article of Jakobsen. It can also be defined as an admittance to underlying tension between Christians, Pagans and non-believers within the ranks of DNM, where an open and explicit discussion is not regarded as fortunate. Some answer might be found in an article written by the founder of DNM, Klas Lund, where he writes:

Foolishness such as “why do I exist and what is the meaning of life” is best left for children. The problem is that our society no longer is able to answer such basic questions simply and correct […] DNM do not ask “why”. We are tightly
interconnected with the people, whose roots descend into the deep of the past we are born to safeguard, and whose branches and leaves stretch up to the future we are born to secure (Lund, 2011).

In the context of this statement, the concept of “asking why” which is essential in most religions is not deemed as very useful. Nor harmful for that matter, as Lund labels such questions as simplistic and matter-of-factly. The fundamental premise is the Nordic people and the people’s future, where any evaluation of the good of religion seems to depend on this point of departure. The ideology with its very own religious connotations is dominant, traditional expressions of religion secondary and dependent on the combability with the primary factor.
Chapter 7: The mystic heritage of NSDAP and the occult

7.1 Introduction
In this chapter I will discuss the compatibility between DNM and the wider concepts invoking religious meaning. I will also evaluate DNM in the context of the theory of “the Cultic Milieu”. I will begin by presenting and discussing the role of Hitler and prominent members of NSDAP as well as elements which has invoked particular mystification in recent decades including SS, the martyrs and blood mysticism, the demise of the war as well as post-war individuals with a well-known inclination towards the occult and religious. It can also be a supplementary understanding of the religious universe of DNM where religion might be present in dimensions often overlooked by traditional definitions of religion as indicated by Smart. Even if DNM cannot be connected to any specific religious traditions, there can still be levels of religiosity and religious cosmology which can be difficult to assess in more conventional terms.

7.2 The mythos of Hitler
A central feature to DNM, as to most explicit National Socialist groups, is Adolf Hitler. The group does little to hide their admiration for the man, and the search word “Hitler” results in 320 results published regularly from 2011 to May 2018- indicating a continued perspective of importance. (Frihetskamp, 2018j). The founder, Klas Lund, stated simply in an article in 2014 that “Adolf Hitler was in my opinion one of the 20th Century’s greatest personalities […] An important task for us should be to rehabilitate Adolf Hitler and make him seize his rightful place in history” (Lund, 2014). The uniqueness and singularity of Hitler as an individual is very emphasised in most textual sources found on Frihetskamp, describing him as “the soldier, politician, artist and the chosen leader of the people” and as “a liberator and an absolute hero” (Frihetskamp, 2018 c). A further example of Hitler’s significance is the launching of the propaganda campaign of April 2018 called “Make Hitler great again”, which is explained by Haakon Forwald that “an important task in our National Socialist struggle for freedom is to reconquer our history” (Frihetskamp, 2018f). Frihetskamp.net even offer a 6-part long serial written by the editorial staff called “The History of Adolf Hitler”, a dedication
given to no other individual and yet another indication of the vitality of Hitler in the eyes of DNM (Frihetskamp, 2018c).

However, the preoccupation with Hitler seems mostly profane and this-worldly and although overtly positive generally based on his real biography. In his article from 2014, Lund even advises very strongly against any religious veneration of Hitler, and writes:

It is not only the outside world which has problems with Hitler and the idea he represented, we do too. We who acknowledge him as one of the greatest reformators, should not let us be included in any kind of cultic or religious worship of him. Such an irrational element will not help us in the struggle. Hitler was a human like everyone else, with strengths and weaknesses. (Lund, 2014).

Lund is hence not only sceptical of any religious understanding of the man and the mission principally, but of any organizational structure which adheres to such beliefs: “[…] The struggle we lead cannot be allowed to be transformed to anything sectarian or orthodox because of the strong light from the third Reich. Such tendencies in our organization must be fought because they are not constructive (Ibid).

The general impression of the writings and documents found on Frihetskamp.net seems to support the claim made by Lund; DNM are emphatically claiming their independence from National Socialism of the 20s and 30s. A marked example is a news article from 2016 concerning a study circle by fight groups in the Eastern part of Norway, where the writings to be studied was respectably “Mein Kampf” by Adolf Hitler and the DNM party program “Our Way” (Frihetskamp, 2016a). The equal prominence given to the two texts naturally implies the importance of Hitler, but not any hierarchical dominance compared to the party program; the writings complete and supplement each other, the first as a pioneer-text and the latter as of current relevance. One can further notice how Hitler is not mentioned in the party program, and also in the work of Riis-Knudsen is the role of Hitler relativized. Riis-Knudsen writes “In other words was not National Socialism invented by Adolf Hitler, rather it consists of the conscious expression for the fundamental laws of nature which guide our lives” (Riis-Knudsen, 2016, p.9-10)

According to Riis-Knudsen can Hitler only be perceived as a transmitter or translator of the metaphysical force of nature, not the inventor or founder of it. Yet, the potential religious undertones in such an understanding is ambivalent; a transmitter of a message can easily be regarded as a Messiah- he is not divine but the representative of the divine and thus closely, not to say intimately, related to divine forces. This distinction seems not always vigorously imposed and can give indications of the fluidness of the religious perceptions within DNM.
The perhaps most obvious example is the very quote by Riis-Knudsen, where his own statement concerning Hitler is more or less a commentary of a previous quote by no other than Savitri Devi- the woman who regarded Hitler as an avatar and encouraged cultic worship of him. The Devi- quote retrieved by Riis-Knudsen in his text is undeniable in its religious undertones which presents National Socialism as mystic and unfailing wisdom of nature of which has been revealed to the Aryans because of the efforts of Hitler; “it served Hitler greatly that he not only returned to this wisdom, but also that he made it be reborn into practical politics of worldwide extent” (Riis-Knudsen, 2016, p.9). Hitler is hence more than just a prophet who preached of this ancient, transcendent wisdom- he was also a modern politician who has the ability to transform ideas into action. Yet at the same time he was also much more than an ordinary politician, assuming that most political representatives are not in touch with the ethereal wisdom in nature. As such, Hitler could be perceived as a kind of shaman-politician with one foot in the rational, everyday world and one foot in the otherworldly, metaphysical world of arcane forces. While this understanding does not necessarily invoke cultic worship as refuted by Lund (and preferred by Devi), it still places Hitler in an exclusive position where his legitimacy as a leader and as a “man of history” not only is found in his life and actions but also in the category of skills, ideas and perceptions of quasi-religious properties.

Similarly, there are indications this perspective on Hitler in more articles found on Frihetskamp.net. One example is the article “The National Socialist vision” written by Trond Helgeland which describes the ideal society according to National Socialist principles. The fundamental core of this society is according to the author the teachings of Adolf Hitler:

> Our society must be built on the guidelines who Adolf Hitler gave to the world, and these guidelines shall be so deeply rooted in the soul of the people that it is as natural to work for the welfare of the people as for the sun to rise in the east”

(Trond Helgeland, 2017).

The religious connotations are recognisable; the message of Hitler was given to the world to be valid beyond space and time. If one would swap the names of Hitler and Christ; the sentence would give equally meaning to a Christian.

Yet another example is the recurring publication 20th of April which celebrates the birth of Hitler. Both the version of 2016 and 2018 concludes with this remark: “Today, the 20th of April, we commemorate Adolf Hitler. We do not grief over his passing, because he lives, now and forever- through National Socialism” (Frihetskamp, 2015b/Frihetskamp 2018d). The idea of the dead living on in the memory of one tribe difficult to understand without the
metaphysical concepts as found in Riis-Knudsen, of which Hitler is included as a participant in the eternal struggle. He is however not a common-place participant due to his relationship with the eternal laws of nature but can perhaps best be placed in the context of martyrs and blood witnesses.

7.3 DNM understanding of eternal life and the concept of martyrdom

DNM as a group is very much preoccupied with individuals who have died for the National Socialist cause, and who explicitly are called martyrs, a concept which gives associations to the religious; Christian martyrs of antiquity or martyrs hailed within Islamic contexts. The term is used in an exclusive and absolute positive manner and is probably the most complimentary description to be found on Frihetskamp.net. As discussed in the previous chapter the only promise of eternal life given by DNM is through remembrance and the meaningful sacrifice, a concept which gives little credence to the individual life as compared to the collective “cause”. Yet, certain fates seem to be more memorable than others; some individuals rise through the collective. One such individual is of course Adolf Hitler, others are the so-called blood witnesses and martyrs. Although the importance given to sacrificial actions of past and current members, almost every person labelled as martyr by Frihetskamp.net either belongs to the “fighting years” of NSDAP or can be placed in time period of the 20s and 30s. The histories of the individual martyrs are treated thoroughly in independent articles, yet with some stylized features similar to the old martyr legends of Christian Antiquity:

- The struggle against evil (both against “the system” in general and Communists in particular) is the only defining and meaningful feature of their lives
- Their deaths are characterized by an almost religious emphasis on death-resurrection-eternal life where the articles conclude that the will never be forgotten.
- The recognition of Hitler, Goebbels or other leading members act as “salvation” in the remembrance of their spirits.

One martyrdom account which is kept very much in tone with these premises is the article “The Martyrs of Chemnitz” which tells the saga of Edgar Steinbach and Heinrich Gutsche. The two young men were respectively killed and severely wounded in a street fight with Communists, and Gutsche survived a couple of hours in hospital. The article writes the following of Gutsche’s demise; “When Hitler arrived at his bed post to be with him in his last moments, the young SS-man lights up. He dies as he embraces the white lilies which Hitler brought with him, and his last words were: Heil Hitler!” (Frihetskamp, 2018i).
Interestingly, no individual of present time has been given the title of martyr by Frihetskamp, but the preoccupation with the martyrs of the past is deeply emphasised as equally relevant today. One example is the “weekend of struggle” which was held 23rd to 25th of February 2018 to commemorate the birthday of the perceived martyr Horst Wessel, a prominent SA-man in Berlin killed by Communists in 1930 (Frihetskamp, 2018). Forwald gave a similar authority to the martyrs during a speech held at a rally in Germany in November 2017, where he stated: “Today we are gathered here to honour the fallen […] They are martyrs whose names echo in eternity […] Let them serve as beacons of light, strength and hope – connecting the past to the present (Frihetskamp, 2017d) The concept of connecting the past and the present is of importance in this context; DNM seem not only to accept the blood martyrs of NSDAP, but also to accept the distinct blood mysticism and its sacred connotations supposed by the party.

It must be noted that even though DNM like previous National Socialist groups indeed have a preference for struggle, individuals can become martyrs and given eternal life through unbloody, civil activities as well- the main principle is the willingly and voluntarily sacrifice. Similarly, to the untimely death of Benneche in the Ragnarok-group, the individual struggle against mainstream society is given an equal chance of eternal life through remembrance. Struggle is not perceived only as concrete action, but also as a way of life where loyalty and adherence to the cause is one road by daily toiling contrasted by struggle and death. Again the idea of believing by doing is prevalent. The concept of the “political soldier” seems relevant, although usually referred to as “dedicated activist” by DNM. One article by the chief editor of Nordfront, Martin Saxlind, explains this view in a brief article summary with the title “Fight and live forever!” The article states:

How do you want to live your life? Are you to squander it away and be a participant to the extinction of our race? Or are you to fight and struggle to become one of the immortals, who forever lives on in the memory of our race?

(Saxlind, 2014).

Like the behavioural correction of any religious of philosophical system, right thinking is only the beginning of the process which is followed by right action and right conduct. Belief in the National Socialist cause gives thus corrections of though, of behaviour and of priorities which is shared by the community and creates collective as well as individual meaning.
7.4 DNM understanding of occultism and religiosity within NSDAP

DNM have written multiple articles on prominent members of NSDAP who was involved in the religious dynamic of the party. Interestingly, this aspect of their life stance is not deemed relevant in the articles on Frihetskamp.net. The perhaps most significant indication is the complete lack of prominence given to the one elite actor in NSDAP who had a confirmed interest in the occult and a religious reorganisation on the Nazi cause; Heinrich Himmler. Despite the number of articles on members of NSDAP, ranging from Hitler to Goebbels to Heydrich; Himmler is mentioned only in passing or as a peripheral reference. The omission is especially abnormal to a Norwegian context concerned with displaying the close relation between Norway and Germany and to assess the necessity for the German invasion of Norway in 1940 to relativize the association of treason of their own political stance. Himmler was deeply fascinated by Norway for its ancient culture and elevated quality of race, and even took the time in the busy year of 1941 to visit the country, see petroglyphs, listen to folklore music and evaluate Norse architecture (Emberland, Kott, 2012, p.182). For DNM not to give any kind of attention to this figure is unusual.

A further signal of DNM’s seemingly avoidance of the more “mystical” aspects of NSDAP is an article on Frihetskamp concerning the Castle Wewelsburg. Wewelsburg was acquired by SS in 1934 and was intended to be a museum as well as a school for the ideological education of fervent SS-members. Eventually Himmler desired to change the castle into “the cultic and religious centre point of a new Aryan world order” and began to construct several of the rooms in the castle after his own taste. Expressions of his taste would include a crypt with a swastika with “open arms” in the roof, study rooms furnished after figures from Nordic mythology etc. The most famous element from the castle is however a marble floor with a great sun-wheel consisting of 12 zig-zag sig-runes (Goodrick-Clarke, 2002, p.125). The symbol is also known as “black sun” in esoteric and occult circles and has in post-war times been associated with circle around Wilhelm Landig in Vienna and “Nazi-mysteries” and “SS-mysticism” more in general. The castle itself has functioned as a pilgrimage for esoteric-oriented National Socialists. A well-known example was Miguel Serrano who went there at least one time in order to perform “Nazi-religious rites” (Goodrick-Clarke, 2002, p.189). Not a word of the occult implications of the castle is mentioned in the article on Frihetskamp.net; rather drily is the castle described as “a school where the leaders of SS would be educated in history, mythology, astronomy, art and archaeology” “a cultural centre for SS” and finally “a meeting place for high-ranking SS-men” (Frihetskamp, 2018b). The castle is obviously seen as important or relevant to the National Socialist cause to gain its own
article online, but strictly in a matter-of-factly manner. The “black sun” of the castle is briefly described, but as to avoid any implications to its esoteric use, the editorial staff writes in regard to the symbolism and the crypt that “the function for both of these rooms is unknown” (Ibid). The occult connotations of the post-war decades are not discussed or even mentioned at all, and the silence on the topic is noticeable. It is of course difficult to know if the information omitted can be taken as antagonism towards such cultic tendencies, but I believe it is safe to assume that at very least it’s perceived to be irrelevant. As far as I could find by extensive searches and readings on frihetskamp.net, not one article or contribution deals with any assumed occult aspects or hidden mysticism of NSDAP. It’s not ridiculed, it’s not refuted; it’s simply completely missing. The only reference, albeit small, I could find was the image displayed in the article “National Socialism- the natural Weltanschauung for the Nordic people” which features a prominent picture of a strong, masculine warrior with a sword fighting against an evil-looking serpent. The background of this motive is a black sun, similar to the one of castle Wewelsburg (Lindberg, 2018). The symbol of the black sun has as mentioned become a pregnant symbol within Neo-Nazi circles both as a political and esoteric sign- something which is very evident in a new musical sub-category found on Youtube called “fash wave” (Jacobsen, 2017). A significant number of these musical videos displays the black sun-emblem, stimulating the collective understanding of the symbol. But yet again, it is very difficult to assess the reason of DNM in using this picture; it can of course be a conscious choice as the black sun has gain popularity but void of esoteric meaning, but it can also have been a picture found randomly where the warrior and the snake was the desired motif- not the background.

As a general evaluation, it would seem that DNM do not want to partake in any explicit occult mystification of NSDAP and the Nazi past and hence avoid one of the primary developments in the post-war scene according to Kaplan, namely the acceptance of occult and esoteric tendencies as well as to understand the Nazi failure in ethereal terms. If true, a potential challenge arises when DNM for a variety of reasons will have to relate to central figures of the Neo-Pagan or occult development.

7.5 DNM understanding of the dynamic between NS and Ragnarok
In political terms the main inspiration or “pioneer text” of DNM is undoubtedly NSDAP and Hitler who is referred to very frequently and given much attention in the “great story” of National Socialism of which DNM is currently writing. The group seems however consciously aware of the premises of Nasjonal Samling as well as the Ragnarok-group, unlike
some groups like Vigrid. Albeit the sources and the selection of perspectives does indicate little notice or even regard for the ideological as well as religious differences between NS and Ragnarok. Quisling is first of all characterized as a National Socialist, a title of honour in a DNM context which is the admittance of approximation and reverence. Quisling is hence “one of the boys”. Further evidence of some perceived relevance of his figure is found in flowers placed on Quisling’s grave by a local division of DNM as well as devoting an “evening of study” to the book “Quisling has said” consisting of his most memorable quotes (Frihetskamp 2016c) (Frihetskamp, 2016 b). Despite of the obvious respect given to Quisling, little information is found on Frihetskamp nor are there any articles devoted to his persona like in the case of Hitler and other leading members of NSDAP. The only article which delves into the life and teachings of Quisling is a longer text written by another Norwegian National Socialist webpage called “Solkorset” (The Sun Cross). Unlike practically any other person of interest on Frihetskamp, the main source of information is written by someone outside the circles of DNM. The absence of any religious sentiment within NS or even any scarcity of Quisling’s own philosophical clarification in universism is thus by the fault of Solkorset not DNM, where the only expression of religious connotation is found in the comparison of Quisling to St. Olaf (Solkorset, 2016).

The Ragnarok-group is primarily introduced through two articles concerning two prominent members of the group; respectively Per Imerslund and Geirr Tveitt. The article on Imerslund is more descriptive and, unsurprisingly, mostly concerned with his heroic and warrior-like life and less with the actual ambitions of the group (Frihetskamp, 2017a). The article on Geirr Tveitt is more thorough where the anti-Christian attitudes of Ragnarok is mentioned;” They [Ragnarok] considered Quisling’s party too reactionary and came with strong critique of how Christianity was implemented within the movement” (Frihetskamp, 2017c). The fact that Ragnarok not only had anti-Christian views but also displayed a strong preference for Neopagan religiosity is oddly enough not mentioned at all, the group and its magazine is merely described as grounded in “socialism, the racial questions and was very radical” (Ibid). But again, these facts are treated as lexical information in order to establish some understanding of the individuals’ persona and presumably their relevance to DNM. The relevance of Tveitt or Imerslund or Quisling is hence of ideological properties where their National Socialist ideas or even their connections to elite actors of NSDAP is regarded as of primary importance. The religious notions and conflicts between Ragnarok and NS is not presented as an issue; again, it is difficult to know if this lack of reference is a conscious omission or simply a lack of information. Considering the little emphasis of the religious
divisions of the 30s, it would seem plausible that the reason why the anti-Christian views of Tveitt are thematised at all is the source cited as main origin on the article regarding Tveitt. The source is the ground breaking and before-mentioned book of Emberland on the Neopagan activity of Norwegian National Socialists where a majority of the material on Tveitt`s alleged sympathies are presented. Hence, the perspective of the source used is the religious connotations of the ideological beliefs of Ragnarok, meaning it would be difficult or even counterproductive for DNM to remove this element. If the group is not taking an active stance in the religious conflict lines within National Socialism, neither historically nor currently, as my research suggest, it would render little sense to devoid the topic altogether. The mentioning of the topic is not constant and seems not to be driven by any logical structure; the explicit remark on Tveitt`s religious ideas while refraining from any allusion to the very strong Neopagan tendency of Ragnarok is example of such. The perceived Christianity of NS or the anti-Christian perspectives of Ragnarok is neither condemned nor applauded; it is simply stated as facts without any commentary from DNM-authors or editorial staff as is common with the news articles or texts concerning current political events. The religious perceptions of National Socialism do exist to DNM, but apparently more in the peripheral spheres than in the milieu around Ragnarok as well as NS.

7.6 Relation to the occult in the post-war Nazi scene

Although the majority of articles and contributions on Frihetskamp.net deals with individuals belonging to the world of the 20s and 30s, some attention is given to the post-war scene as well. One of them, who rises high in the process of combining the political and religious aspects of National Socialism, is Savitri Devi. The choice might seem peculiar if DNM indeed wish to distance themselves from the occult tendencies of later decades, and although a central figure in the post-war Nazi scene it would not have been an absolute necessity to include her on the website. One probable reason for the inclusion might be the fact that Riis-Knudsen refers to her explicitly in his work which is regarded as a central book of guidance to DNM. Members and sympathizers reading the text might wonder who Savitri Devi was, as she is practically the only individual mentioned by name in the whole composition— in addition to Hitler. This fact would imply importance and unique qualities in need of explanation. As such, an inclusion of Devi on the website could be seen as a display of a forced hand, where the mentioning might be seen as an expression of the preferences of Riis-Knudsen rather than DNM.
The article begins by describing Devi as “a National Socialist philosopher and writer”, a rather stolid presentation for a person like Devi. Most of the article concerns itself with retelling her life and places great emphasis on her political activity, travels and connections with leading post-war National Socialists, all aspects which within a DNM-context would imply respectability and legitimacy. Mid-way through the article her religious views are presented; the description is rather “lexical” and neither any enthusiasm, support nor criticism are given: “[Her book- The lightening and the Sun] deepens her political and philosophical thoughts, as well as present criticism of the modern, materialistic world of today. The Book also evaluates National Socialism from an Indo-European and Hindu perspective” (Frihetskamp, 2017b). It is interesting how Devi’s ideas first and foremost are understood as philosophy, despite the fact that her thought could easily be transformed to cultic worship, and further that the religious elements are explicitly connected to Hinduism. In the first segment of the article Devi is defined as a “convert to Hinduism” and any explanation to where her Hinduism ends, and her National Socialism begins is not really elaborated, neither her potential relevance for DNM or any other dedicated National Socialist. In the last segment another reference of interest is made “[Devi] was the primary inspiration to Miguel Serrano and his theories”. (Ibid). As far as I can see, this is the only time on Frihetskamp.net where his name is at all mentioned, despite the very implicit remark. For this sentence to make sense the editorial staff must either assume the readers know of Serrano’s theories or have just added the sentence of more lexical reasons- the article does not reveal their intent or reasons for such a mentioning. As such the article of Devi seems somewhat out of place; unlike the articles on NSDAP-members there is no obvious reason for alluding to this spectre of the National Socialist scene.

The fact that the mentioning of the more occult aspects of National Socialism is held at a minimum is further present in the complete lack of reference to another important figure of the post-war scene; Julius Evola. Although more of a fascist/traditionalist by orthodox standards than a National Socialist, as is evident in chapter 5 his role and influence is undeniable beyond his own political circles of Italy. The reasons for his non-existence on Frihetskamp.net may of course be multiple, but one obvious reason is Evola’s dismissal of racial features as a singular biological process where he placed much emphasis on the spiritual features of race rather than the purely biological. It would again seem that DNM do not feel any allegiance or responsibility to present and represent the whole spectre of post-war National Socialism, but only aspects deemed necessary or compatible with their own.
There is however one article which can indicate some acceptance for the cosmological perspectives of Devi, if not her notions of esoteric hitlerism. The article “The Generation which does not deserve a place in the history books”, is written by the Fin Janne Moilanen and first published on the Finnish site of DNM. But, as the editorial staff has allowed its publication on Frihetskamp.net, one can assume his opinions are deemed acceptable by DNM in Norway. Moilanen writes:

The followers of the Veda believe in a cyclic time span where time and history move forward in a four-parted wheel. Civilization is born in the golden age (Satya Yuga) where humans, nature and the divine are one. From there one descends to the silver age (Treta Yuga) and further on to the bronze age (Dwapara Yuga) and finally to the dark age (Kali Yuga) […] Doesn’t this sound familiar, when one reflects on the phenomena in our time within popular culture as well as politics? (Moilanen, 2017)

This cyclic categorisation of time is very much present in ancient Hindu thought and not at all invented by Devi- but the question arises where it would be likely that a person of seemingly National Socialist orientation would gain knowledge on such matters? There is at least some likelihood that Devi has been the inspirational source of this assertion, and its presence on Frihetskamp.net yet again seems to confirm the hypothesis that DNM perceives various religious perspectives to be admissible in their Weltanschauung as long as it is compatible with their ideological core. A perception of a golden age descending into darkness is well-matched with their almost Manichean cosmology where forces of goodness and utter darkness is fighting for survival and dominance.

It is a reminded that although DNM do not seem to desire a close interaction or association to the occult and esoteric tendencies within the National Socialist scene of today, it does however not mean that they are excluded from all features of the “cultic milieu” model which is as previously mentioned characterized by:

- Syncretisation facilitated and reinforced by overlapping communication structures
- An ideology of seekership which arises from and reinforce the consciousness of the deviant status
- The religious expressions are fluid and eclectic and infused by “deviant science and technology” (Kaplan, 2002, p.14-17).

Writings found on Frihetskamp.net functions as a collection of sources from a great variety of sources; established newspapers in Norway and abroad, podcasts, YouTube-videos, blogs, comments etc. The primary function is to puzzle together the evidentiary image of “the truth”.

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Unlike many groups within the “cultic milieu” model, the basic truth to DNM is not fluid, changeable or individual. Being a hierarchical, highly-organized group there seems to be certain “truths” impossible to disagree on, namely; that National Socialism is the only sustainable ideology, that the Jews are trying to destroy our civilization and culture and that Hitler was only trying to stop their global dominance. This is the core. Beyond these premises there is a sense of syncretisation which displays itself as pragmatism of ideas; Christianity, Paganism, philosophy, non-belief can be incorporated within the life stance. An interesting example is how founder Klas Lund admonishes against mysticism and orthodoxy, while Frihetskamp.net still can publish articles on “Die Blutfahne” or Savitri Devi. There seems to be an urge to construct order out of chaos, where the National Socialist scene is to be mapped and categorised to differentiate friends from foes and gain knowledge and information to support “the truth” as well as who “we” are as opposed to “them”. The perhaps most prominent example is the presence of what has been labelled “conspirituality” where conspiracy theories is the context of where mysticism and spirituality rather than explicit adherence to particular religions or religious identities is the primary factor. The conspiracies of the Jewish world order, the secret ambitions to destroy the Nordic countries and Europe besides, the lack of trust in public figures, politicians, the cultural elite, the media; all appeals to the hidden, the mystical and the deranged. Conspiratorial thinking is of course nothing new within National Socialism, many ideas presented by DNM today is almost identical to NSDAP, NS and similar groups like Ragnarok some 80 years ago. But its relevance and actuality today offer some nuances to their cosmological thinking. As such, DNM do not completely fall into the most typical attributes with their seemingly reluctance to openly embrace occult and spiritual aspects of National Socialism, their inclination to be evaluated as a political, rational and “biological”. Yet, their illustrations of their enemies, their cosmology, their conspiratorial thinking and their constant emphasis on their uniqueness, their elitism and soldiers-at-the-front against overwhelming forces is an indication of their remoteness and deviant status relevant in the “cultic milieu” model. The approach of inclusion and pragmatism of various, sometimes almost contradictory impulses and religious ideas, can be seen as an expression of not only the primary role of the ideology compared to other belief systems but also of the subcultural role National Socialism in today’s society. Not unlike the modest beginning of NSDAP in München, the ideology is influenced by its own context in time and space where the syncretistic, somewhat pragmatic approach is not only an expression of cultural opposition but also of the culture which it resides in.
Chapter 8: Concluding remarks

8.1 Introduction
In this chapter I will aspire to summarize my findings as well as give some conclusion to my research; its discoveries, its limitations, its potential as well as its relevance. I will also give some predictions to future developmental traits of DNM as well as suggestions of aspects of interest which could be viable for further research.

8.2 The main findings of my research
In the introduction I stated that I wished to discover the religious policies of DNM as well as religious perceptions which could be found on their website Frihetskamp.net and compare these discoveries to the historical entities of NSDAP, NS and the Ragnarok-group.

The first part of my aim was relatively easily accessible in the political and ideological program. Although many similarities could be established between the political ambitions of DNM and NSDAP, ranging from the anti-Jewish sentiments to social welfare to a somewhat surprising inclusion of “Blut und Boden” mindset; no real religious policy could be found. Despite its controversial presence in the party program of NSDAP, there were an explicit mention of “Positive Christianity” as a desirable feature in the new state. The statement that “the core values of Christianity is to be protected” in the program of NS implies a kindred promise; inclusion but in a diffuse and a non-committing language. In the DNM program any reference to Christianity, the Christian traditions of Norway or the state church arrangement is sorely missing, their only assurance is that of religious freedom to everyone and with no direct inclusion or exclusion of any particular religion.

The ideological program of Riis-Knudsen “The Biological life stance” is nevertheless of a different language, a different rhetoric and of course different objectives. While the political program wishes to take part in the political context of Norway, the ideological program was written in order to define National Socialism in the tradition of yet independently of NSDAP. An important characteristic of the program is the explicitly opposition towards Christianity, seemingly not because of its proximity to Judaism as was a problematic issue in the interwar period, but mostly of theological stipulations. These stipulations include Christianity’s hostility towards the body and corporal desires, it’s unrealistic demands of self-effacing and humility as well as the emphasis on the next life. All these features are weakening both the individual and the collective, where the argument is highly related to Nietzschean notions of
weak versus strong, artificial versus natural. Natural is a concept of great consequence which is related to values of positive connotations; the longing for the natural, the genuine and the healthy. There is an implicit contrast between civilisation and culture as found in the völkisch circles of early 20th Century where the natural is the opposite of the cultural. In the eyes of Riis-Knudsen and presumably DNM the principle of the natural is a guiding light to be followed politically as well as religiously; National Socialism is in touch with the natural because of their adherence to the laws of nature, their Blut und Boden mentality and their understanding of the function of biology through racial teachings. Nature is not regarded as identical to God in a clear-cut pantheistic evaluation; nature is yet somehow spirited and of infused meaning. National Socialism is as such spiritual and religious through its emphasis on so-called natural laws and race. Commitment to racial teachings is one of the basic principles which cannot be overlooked; it is the expressions of religiosity and the point of departure any other religious tradition must be compatible with. Although orthodox in the approach to race, it leaves a certain pragmatism in the relation to other religious tradition, as long as the religious is subjugated this principle. This approach leaves DNM in relative tolerance towards Christianity, Neo-Paganism and at least in theory- even to Islam. Although in the latter occurrence the clear division between ethnicity and religion is not always upheld, neither is the question of spiritual tainting of the Nordic race. If DNM fear the intellectual pollution of the North by Cultural Marxism and the Zionists it must be a real possibility than foreign systems of thought can constitute danger, why is influences posed by religions such as Christianity or Islam not regarded with equally caution? Yet, generally speaking DNM follow the policy of NSDAP where the will and possibility of subjugation and combability was the tipping point between acceptance and persecution of a religion. It implies of course that the ideology is the primary motivator which cannot handle any type of competition for the power of definition; as such the question is not if a Christian can be a National Socialist but if a Christian can be National Socialist first and Christian second. This dilemma is likely what the Christian wing of NS was troubled by and deemed incompatible with their religious perceptions; Christ through race was to many a distortion of the unique position of the gospel. The matter was entirely different to the Ragnarok-group who defined their religiosity in direct relation to National Socialism where Neo-Paganism was their guiding point towards the natural life stance of race. Their conflict lines were more of power issues where their own elitist perspectives and self-understanding not always was in a perfect understanding with the hierarchical and authoritarian system NSDAP and later NS implemented in their new state.
In this context the use of Koehne’s term of “ethnotheism” seems appropriate; the decisive factor is combability and not theological premises or values. The concept is further useful in the evaluation of DNM’s understanding of the Jews and Judaism; because the identity as a Jew can both be of ethnic as well as religious orientation, there is apparently to DNM no real distinction between the two, unlike some statements concerning Islam. While some quotes might indicate that at least actors within the leadership of DNM appreciate a divergence between the ethnicity of most Muslims and the theoretical faith of Islam, no such contrast is made between Jews, Judaism and Zionism, the latter a word of very widespread use as the ultimate term of abuse on Frihetskamp.net. The lack of separation, even explanation can be seen in relation to the implicit elements of DNM life stance which easily can, and in the past has been, given religious content. There is no real clarification of who the Jews “really are”, their everlasting, ancient hatred of the Nordics, who the Nordics “really are” and the how’s and why’s of the perceived global dominance of the Zionists. As such, much of the Weltanschauung which is presented as rational, natural and biological, is immersed in what has been labelled “conspirituality”. The conspiratorial thinking implies a whole cosmology of hidden power structures, dualistic almost Manichean between absolute goodness on one side and inherit evil on the other, of subjugation and brainwash through culture and politics which can be revealed through the language of symbolism and association of motives. All these elements rely heavily on an almost mythic world view where heroic figures are fighting an overwhelming struggle against seemingly all-power chaos beings; the conspiracies can easily be given spiritual content. What is perceived as cowardly attacks can in this approach be transformed into noble and necessary self-defence. The lack of explanation on “the Jewish problem” is yet another indication of the difficulty in applying an ancient conspiracy of Jews beyond time and space without reverting to the religious cosmology and mythic interpretation. This realisation is perhaps one reason why the group is very emphatical in their partial refutation of and partial silence on the more religious divisions of the National Socialist scene. In the dynamic of group mentality defining who “we” in the group are as opposed to “them”, DNM seem to prefer a more matter-of-factly and sober self-understanding where an explicit religious or occult understanding of National Socialism and the rise and fall of Hitler and NSDAP can be contradictory to their claims. As such it would seem that DNM is quite aligned to the definition of Hitler; the group is not a religious cult, but a movement based on racial philosophy. At least it would seem that the term religious or spiritual is of negative connotations to many actors within the group, playing on the Nietzschean affiliation of religion as weak-willed, other-worldly and passive, even feminine. This perspective is very
present in Riis-Knudsen, albeit more infrequently in current articles. As such the group’s perceptions of religion can be placed within a context of the post-modern where religion is voluntarily and of variable connotations; even of negative orientation. The presence of religion is decisively apparent in some dimensions, as according to the model of Smart. DNM cannot be perceived as a religious organisation, but in certain dimensions there are religious tendencies and connotations as seen in their comprehension of eternal life, the meaning of human existence, the embodiment of nature and the world and its connection to the one, true teaching of National Socialism, and not to mention the cosmology of the world order. The previous mentioned mythical “necessity” in relation to the Jewish question begs the question if anti-Semitism as a core value to National Socialism is possible without its heavily contrasted dynamic between good and evil and the religiously infused rhetoric surrounding the concept. Unlike the Christian wing of NS who would not see the compartmentalization of their faith, both elite members of NSDAP and Ragnarok placed equal emphasis on racial and religious dimensions as they were interchangeable.

Yet the DNM-leadership is cautious and perhaps not even particularly interested in displaying any particular religious sentiment although the lack of a spiritual horizon is one of the criticism of the perceived materialism and sexual vulgarity of Cultural Marxism. It would seem that the religious connotations and spiritual meaning preferred by DNM is the undefined, fluid and unnamed which has its mostly implicit function and role to play. One reason to the implicit nature of the religious is related to the pioneer-role which especially NSDAP plays in the grand narrative of the movement. Certain premises and values have been decided a long time ago, of which the group seem to implement without too much concern, like concepts related to specific relics of the party like the blood martyrs and the “Blutfahne”. The multifaceted religious tendencies within the party and the lack of a coherent religious profile, which even bewilders and activates renowned scholars, is likely also a factor in the implicit presence. If NSDAP had been consistently and unified in one religious policy and one religious identity, DNM would have had more incentive to thematise this presence. But it would not necessarily require a heightened awareness of religious notions. As seems evident from the sources found at Frihetskamp.net; one does not have to be religious to be a National Socialist. The inner spirituality of National Socialism can be adequate for some. Further, although DNM regard themselves as belonging to the heritage of NSDAP, they are also emphatical in their independence of thought vis-à-vis the movements of the 20s and 30s. While the core notions of the ideology remain the guiding principle of orientate
on, issues relating to religion can obviously be regulated and adapted to fit the desired ambition and context. This flexibility of approach does not necessarily reveal a cynical stance on religion in my view, rather it is telling of the priorities of dimensions; which are voluntarily- even expendable, and which are deeply required in the puzzle of the National Socialist cosmology. As such, the perceptions of DNM can, not unlike NSDAP, truly be defined as religion through race.

8.3 Suggestion for future research

As stated in the introduction, the main limitation of this thesis is its exclusive reliance on historical sources and current textual sources, removing the voices of the actors within DNM. The textual sources can however also become a great strength for future research as a basis for comparison of more personal collection of sources. Through in-depth interviews and personal reflection on religious matters by members of DNM, a whole different system of thought could be established where contrasting the formal, textual sources and the human sources could lead to even greater understanding of the nuances and preferences in the member basis. It could even cast some light on the previous referred to question of As of now, my findings reflect the formal, official assertions of DNM which likely have some sense of resonance with its members. But it is important to remember that the textual sources I have collected also constitutes the way DNM wishes to be portrayed and understood. Although the leadership and editorial staff of Frihetskamp (and seemingly Nordfront) has little concern for the religious conflict lines within the National Socialist scene or the occult tendencies of later decades, it does not follow that every member feels the same way. Some articles and contributions can be interpreted in this manner. As is very evident both in NSDAP, NS and to some degree the Ragnarok-group, even hierarchical movements with strong leadership can contain great difference of opinion. If a comparison between textual and human sources could be made, it would further be interesting to see in what sense and what particulars difference between top-bottom could be found. It would similarly be very interesting if no great breach between formal and informal perceptions can be found; could it mean that religious perspectives is of little consequence to potential recruits and they easily assimilate to DNM life stance, or is there a greater understanding of the religious implication of a National Socialist Weltanschauung when a recruit is drawn to the group? Such an approach would of course only work if DNM or at least individual members willingly accepted scholarly interference through interviews and questions of a highly personal nature, but if managed it would constitute a more thorough and in-depth apprehension. Not only the religious horizon
of DNM members concretely, but also on their self-understanding of the connection to the Nazi-past and the religious policies and perceptions promoted by NSDAP and related movement.

Another, yet related, research approach would be to broaden the scope to include a wider geographical area. As stated in the introduction, my thesis can in a strictly sense only be valid within a Norwegian context as only Frihetskamp.net has been studied methodically. I have suggested that my findings likely is relevant to more divisions of DNM, considering their close cooperation and exchange of articles and news. But only a wider investigation could affirm or refute this hypothesis, which also would throw light on if geographical differences are present within DNM as the group is active in countries with resembling, but not identical, contexts of history, culture, religion etc. An even wider scope would be to group the national divisions of DNM in respectively Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland (in the process of establishing) as representing countries of a Protestant tradition and compared them to groups of an explicit National Socialist ideology in predominantly Catholic and Orthodox areas. As the churches in these countries often are more present and more incorporated into society and every-day life, it would be of great interest how National Socialist groups define their religious stance, how they relate to the religious communities in their countries and if they evaluate the ideology as containing any particularities of spiritual importance. To me there seems to be a multitude of various religious expressions and symbols deemed compatible with the ideology, not only in Norway or the Nordic countries but also more generally.

The questions are many, and answers can help explain ambitions, appeal and latitude of the heightened emergence in later years which either are National Socialist or flirts with the ideology and its symbols. One evidence of the relevance of this research was evident to me when I watched a documentary on the Greek party of Golden Dawn. In one telling moment two leading, female members of the party are standing side by side at an event; one is wearing a cross, the other is wearing a Burzum t-shirt displaying the burned-down stave church of Fana, the first of many alleged Satanist attacks on church property during the 1990s in Norway (NRK, 2017). The question of coincidence or conscious symbolism is difficult to assess, which leads me to believe further research on this topic is both relevant and helpful in understanding the whole spectre of the National Socialist Weltanschauung.
Chapter 9: Biography

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