I

August Reichensperger: Background, Biography, and Political Philosophy

The Gothic Revival of the nineteenth century was an international movement. So strong were the forces that underpinned it—the religious impulses, the artistic revelations, the historical longings—that national borders could not contain them. England, France, and Germany each came under the influence of the revival and other countries followed suit. During the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the period of the movement's greatest triumphs, the pointed arch and the buttress cast their long shadows across the width of Europe and beyond.

Nonetheless, in each country the Gothic Revival charted its own distinctive course. In England the movement was closely linked to the Anglican church and to the revival of certain traditional forces, tending toward a Catholic form of liturgy, within her. In France, on the other hand, the greatest Gothic Revival architect, Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, was virtually indifferent to religious sentiment. He gave the revival the characteristic Gallic concerns of reason and rationality, and helped ensure that Gothic architecture would be looked upon in France as an affair of rational construction.

In Germany the situation was more complicated. In both England and France the Gothic Revival had flourished against the background of a national state with a national religion—English Anglicanism or French Catholicism. Germany was no national state, its political map a fractured archipelago of tiny kingdoms and feudal principalities. Nor was there a national religion. Catholic states such as Bavaria and Austria contended with Protestant ones, most notably Prussia and Hanover. Religious and political division was the rule, affecting cultural and artistic life throughout Germany. This division not only left deep marks on the German Gothic Revival but actually acted to galvanize the movement and to define its doctrines. Unlike those of England and France, the German revival was rooted in the Catholic–Protestant conflict and was profoundly political in character. Fatefully, perhaps inevitably, it was where the tensions of the political and religious conflict were strongest—in the predominantly Catholic Rhineland, then a province of Prussia—that the various elements of the German Gothic Revival coalesced.

August Reichensperger, more than any other man, was responsible for the political character of the German Gothic Revival. Between 1840, when he committed himself to the cause of completing Cologne Cathedral, and his death in 1895, he served as the principal theoretician of the Gothic Revival and the final arbiter of Gothic orthodoxy. But during those same decades Reichensperger also was a prominent politician and a key spokesman for the culture and autonomy of the Catholic Rhineland, defending Rhenish interests consistently before the National Assembly of 1848, the Prussian Parliament during the 1850s and 1860s, and the Reichstag during the 1870s and 1880s. When Reichensperger's political career began in 1848 there was no Germany; by the time he retired in 1885 there was not only a united national German state, but it had assumed the familiar political and cultural contours that, despite the upheavals of this century, remain recognizably German to this day: its strongly centralizing character, its polarization between right and left, its stress on both industry and art as expressions of national identity.

Reichensperger stood by at the birth of this modern German state; moreover, he was one of the few far-sighted Germans who had a coherent vision of what a united Germany might be. For most other political leaders, a German nation would be nothing more than an enlargement of their own particular region to national scale. Bismarck's Germany, at least into the 1870s, was projected as little more than a greater Prussia. But Reichensperger recognized that a national state, on the order of an England or a France, was of an entirely different magnitude than a regional kingdom. Problems of an entirely different scope would confront it—particularly where regional and national concerns diverged, wrenching social and cultural institutions between them.

Reichensperger's image of a modern German state was informed by the lesson of history, medieval as well as recent. Medieval society, he suggested, was strongly regional and decentralized by nature, and was a peculiarly apt model for a Germany with multiple religions and cultural centers. Recent history on the other hand, particularly that of the French Revolution and Napoleon, presented a stern warning about the dangers of the concentration of power. With remarkable singularity of purpose, Reichensperger sought to shape Germany according to these lessons. Applied to politics, this meant a distribution of political power among contending but interlocking institutions. Applied to art, it suggested as broad a distribution as possible of cultural and artistic institutions across the nation. Just as he battled the concentration of political power in Berlin, he struggled against the cultural monopoly of the future capital.

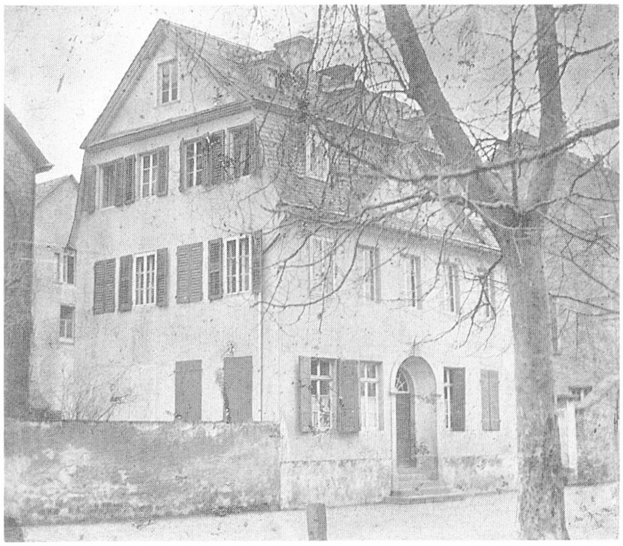
Both politician and architectural theorist, Reichensperger regarded these two aspects of his life as part of the same struggle. The war of ideas he waged in Berlin was played out on a larger scale and in more tangible form on the larger battlefield of German architecture. During Reichensperger's life Germany was defining itself as a nation, politically and culturally, and he sought to shape its identity. Delving deep into Germany's medieval past for inspiration and guidance, he proposed a Gothic image for a modern Germany, and a Gothic model for German nationhood.

August Reichensperger and the Rhineland

Reichensperger was tugged throughout his youth between the orbits of Paris and Berlin. In the years before his birth violent forces had propelled his native Rhineland into French control. The left bank of the Rhine had fallen to the armies of the French Revolution in the 1790s and was promptly organized into administrative departments.[1] Afterward, the right bank was seized by Napoleon in a series of quick steps in the first years of the nineteenth century, and organized in 1806 into the French-dominated Confederation of the Rhine. Not until 1814 was it wrested from French control.

Reichensperger was born in the midst of these convulsions on March 22, 1808, in Koblenz. His father was Franz Joseph Reichensperger (1768–1813), a German magistrate who, through an appointment by Napoleon, had been named general secretary to the Prefecture of the Rhein and Moselle Department of the French administration.[2] The Reichensperger family was part of that stratum of talented Rhinelanders who served the French administrative apparatus. From this stratum came the intellectual core in Koblenz that distinguished the cultural life of the Rhineland in the ensuing decades; the Reichensperger family was intimately acquainted with most of them: men such as the architect Johann Claudius von Lassaulx, the journalist and professor Joseph Görres, and the romantic poet Clemens Brentano. To these men, at least in the early days of the French occupation, France had represented the hope of an enlightened Europe.

When the elder Reichensperger died, the family home in Koblenz, a great baroque house under a flaring mansard roof, was abandoned (Fig. 2). Reichensperger's mother took the children, including Peter (1810–92) and his sisters Louise (1806–18) and Elisabeth (1812–77) to her parents' house in Boppard, fifteen miles upriver from Koblenz. Here they were supported by a pension granted by the French prefecture. Sustained by the French, they shared at first the popular enthusiasm for their occupiers, and their legacy of egalitarianism and reform. The French quickly dismantled the complicated system of regional autonomy and ancient feudal rights that had characterized the various Rhenish states, and replaced it with centralized rule. Many admired the anticlerical policy of the French, who disbanded the three electorates of the Rhineland: the bishoprics of Mainz, Cologne, and Trier.[3]



2. Reichensperger's birthplace, Castorhof 10, Koblenz, before its demolition in 1891.

Catholic since the Roman Empire, these cities had been the heart of medieval Germany. The French intent was to destroy nests of local privilege, and this they did.

Still, many soon came to realize that these same entrenched local interests, which traced their existence to distant feudal origins, had also acted as a constraint upon absolutism, guaranteeing that no one power could become supreme in Germany. The French removed this constraint. With the placement of the church under French administrative control and with the secularization of her lands in 1803, the Rhineland's principal cultural institution was rendered powerless. These measures angered many Rhinelanders, a significant body of whom had originally sympathized with the French Revolution. Now bristling under French coercive measures, the Rhineland soon abandoned its revolutionary sympathies.

The ravages of war played their role in this. French officers requisitioned the Boppard house, and Reichensperger later recalled Napoleon's aide General Bernadotte pacing in his headquarters in the upstairs salon, while distant Prussian troops took aim at the lighted windows. Reichensperger was six when on a cold New Year's Eve the first Cossack cavalry swept into Boppard. The following year Napoleon was vanquished at Waterloo and the French occupiers receded from the Rhine.

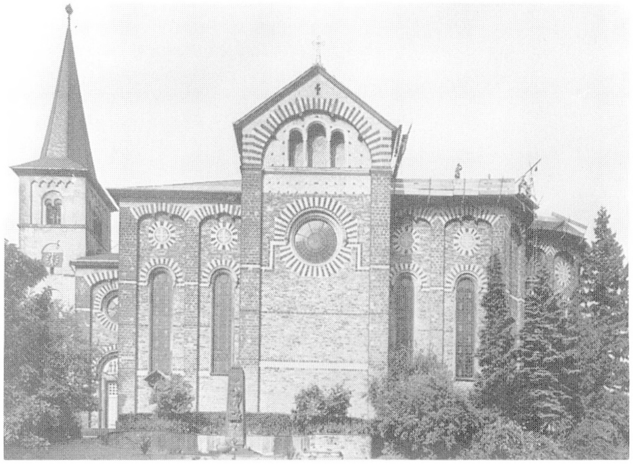
Despite the financial straits that ensued for the family, August and his brother Peter looked to a promising future. Benefiting from the network of family connections, both were groomed from early years for positions similar to their father's. The brothers attended the *Gymnasium* in Boppard and later studied privately in Cologne, where August entered the Marzellengymnasium in 1823. His debut there was not promising. Recalcitrant and undisciplined, he squandered his book money on the theater. Letters of warning were sent to his mother in Boppard and earnest pleas relayed back to her son in Cologne. But during his youthful sojourns through the medieval streets, Reichensperger came to know the city intimately. He later recorded the powerful impression that the image of the hulk of the unfinished cathedral exerted on him (see Fig. 8).

The Rhineland was now Prussian. In the Treaty of Vienna of 1815 the English had insisted on establishing a strong, populous, and well-armed rival to France across the Rhine; they never again wished to fight a unified Europe. Prussian annexation proceeded apace, welcomed on both sides. The Rhineland, caught in the sway of pan-German sentiment, hailed the Prussians as liberators. The Prussians for their part moved cautiously. Just as they had done in Silesia, the new rulers adopted a tolerant policy toward their Catholic citizens, while gradually and systematically grafting the new province onto the Prussian body. Shrewdly, they engineered a concordat with the Vatican, affirming the religious freedom of their Rhenish subjects. The bishoprics disestablished by the French were resurrected and reorganized under Prussian supervision. Cologne became the seat of the archbishop, administering the suffragan bishoprics of Trier, Münster, and Paderborn. In return for the rebirth of their church, the new Catholic subjects pledged perpetual loyalty to the Prussian king. The Prussians had every reason to expect that matters would run smoothly.

The seat of the new Prussian province was Koblenz, Reichensperger's birthplace, at the confluence of the Rhine and Moselle rivers (see Fig. 7), a site whose strategic importance had been recognized by strategists since Caesar, who had bridged the Rhine there in his campaign against the Gauls. From this outpost, Prussia's centralized bureaucracy set about transforming the Rhineland. The political and cultural landscape quickly assumed familiar Prussian contours. The French emancipation, which had dissolved the feudal estates and leveled the population into "citizens," was brushed aside. The system dividing the population into aristocrats and *Bürger* was reinstated, although it was far less suited to the commercial metropolises of the Rhine, with their rising middle class, than it was to agrarian eastern Prussia.

The world of young Reichensperger, once French in nearly everything, was now stamped by Prussian institutions, Prussian values, and, most visibly, Prussian architecture. The roads and public squares of the Rhineland stiffened under the regimented facades of Prussian town halls, courts, prisons, and schools. This last group of buildings was particularly critical, for one of the most immediate and far-reaching changes in the Rhineland was the institution of Prussia's system of centralized education in place of the older fragmentary and church-centered system. An ambitious program of school building resulted, with the majority of the new schools designed by the Koblenz native Johann Claudius von Lassaulx (1781–1848), an old friend of the Reichensperger family. As the principal Prussian architect for the Rhineland province, Lassaulx served directly under the Berlin *Oberbaudeputation,* or central building authority, dominated by the towering personality of his friend Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Lassaulx's buildings—especially his schools and churches—were among Germany's most distinctive and portentous architectural achievements of the 1820s and 1830s. They bore witness to the fertile and tense exchange of ideas that characterized the Prussian presence in the Rhineland.[4]

Lassaulx's buildings were rising everywhere during Reichensperger's youth. His old family home in Koblenz was soon flanked by a pair of them. These buildings were in Lassaulx's characteristic style, a structurally articulated, round-arched mode marked by pilaster strips gathered into arcades just below the cornice. In their overall facade articulation and massing these early works were not very distant in character from Schinkel's contemporary arcaded projects; outposts of distant Berlin and Prussian order, they looked like Berlin buildings. But Lassaulx advanced beyond Prussian precedent. More than mere products of the distant Berlin building bureaucracy, his buildings were tributes to the history, tradition, and even the geology of the Rhineland (Fig. 3). His round-arched buildings had a much more local character than most Prussian provincial architecture; for inspiration they drew upon the forms of the Rhenish Romanesque, paying tribute to the architecture of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and to the period of the Rhineland's uncontested cultural and economic leadership. In the blazing color of their masonry—with tough pilasters of black basalt enframing sandstone spandrels, sandstone-rubble infill, yellow tufa dressings and trim, and gray slate roofs—Lassaulx's buildings offered a cross section of Rhenish geology. Perhaps he mused about the regional character of his architecture during one of his periodic visits to the Reichensperger household. But in Reichensperger's mind such concern for Rhenish identity would still have



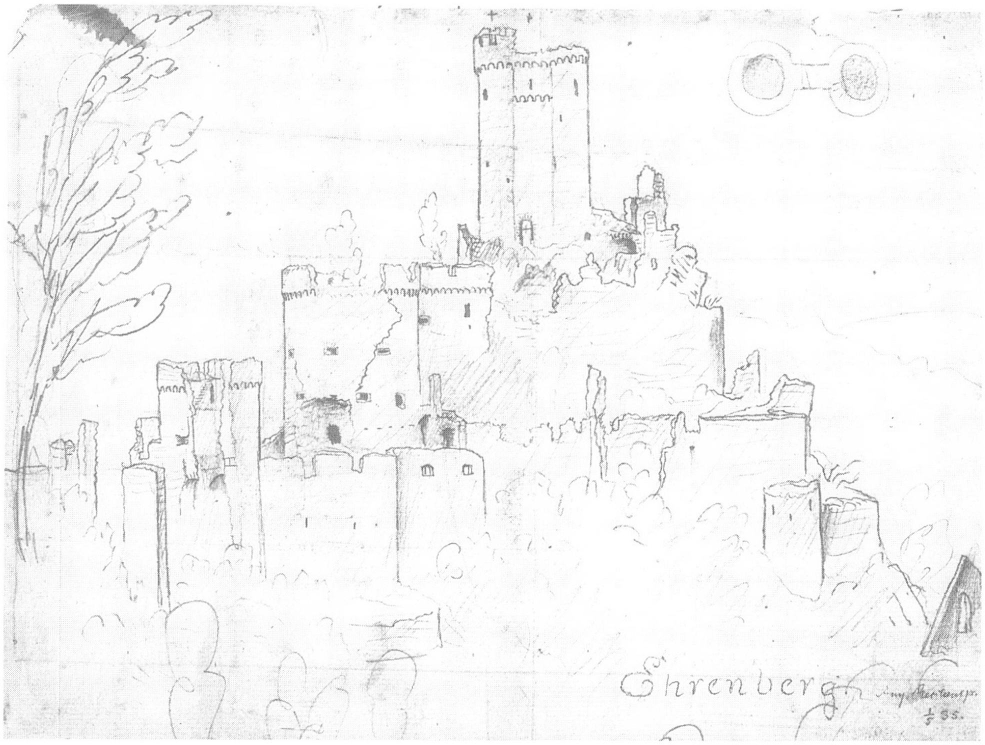
3. Johann Claudius Lassaulx, St. Arnulph's, Nickenich, 1848–50.

smacked of feudalism and separatism in the 1820s: his youth and upbringing during the revolution had trained him to think in terms of universals.

Reichensperger prepared for a legal career. He enjoyed the best of a German university education, studying at three of Germany's most venerable institutions: the universities of Bonn (1827–28), Heidelberg (1828–29), and Berlin (1829–30); here his liberal tendencies were reinforced by a mixture of Gallic and Germanic impulses. At Heidelberg he studied the Napoleonic Code, that proud monument to the Gallic preoccupation with legality and rationality. This legal system, introduced under Napoleon, had never been revoked and remained the enlightened legacy of the French occupation. Later, in Berlin, he attended the lectures of Hegel, who viewed history as an ongoing process by which the world inexorably moved forward to a more enlightened state. Hegel regarded the state as an instrument of divine order, embodying in itself this progressive historical process. He thus emerged as an important apologist for the liberal Prussia of the early nineteenth century, his philosophical system justifying both the legitimacy of the Prussian state and the course of reform upon which it had embarked. These were ideas to which Reichensperger, the young liberal, was keenly sympathetic.

Reichensperger's education groomed him to be a model Prussian public servant, convinced of the liberal mission of the Prussian bureaucracy and certain that the centralized administration of France was a valid model for emulation. Nonetheless, in his circle of friends at Heidelberg Reichensperger was exposed to another set of ideas, which remained with him, unresolved and troubling, even as he continued to prepare himself dutifully for a career in the Prussian administration.

At Heidelberg Reichensperger had gathered around him a group of friends united in their appreciation of German folk culture and art. These were committed Romantics. Among them were Karl Nadler (1809–49), an author committed to reviving the dialect of the Rhenish Palatinate, and Anton Zuccalmaglio (1803–69), a young writer interested in assembling a collection of German folktales. Within this circle Reichensperger cultivated his love of medieval art and styled himself as a young Romantic, dabbling in poetry and landscape drawing.[5] He acquired a taste for Byron and Jean Paul. Between university sessions he took lengthy trips on foot, traveling in 1829 with Zuccalmaglio to Switzerland. These pilgrimages became an annual affair: in 1830 he walked from Berlin to Munich by way of Dresden; in 1832 he traversed a long stretch of the Moselle. At his side was his sketch pad, wherein he recorded picturesque way stations (Fig. 4). For Reichensperger the Romantic, such foot trips were a nearly indispensable duty, not so much pilgrimages to a destination but restorative journeys that paid homage to the German landscape and Germany's historic cities. These wanderings glorified the past, but they also examined

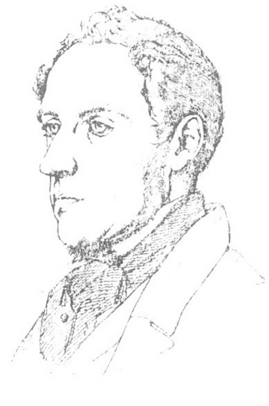


4. August Reichensperger, sketch of Ehrenberg on the Moselle River, 1835.

the present. Newer and more modern sites were visited, and were compared—invariably unfavorably—with Germany's older monuments. Reichensperger chafed at the monotonous regularity of neoclassical Karlsruhe, while appreciating the picturesque ensembles of buildings in Nuremberg and Regensburg. Even as he was being indoctrinated in the ideology and philosophy of the modern enlightened state, he was learning to appreciate nostalgic and nationalist qualities in art, architecture, and literature. These doctrines—that of the progressive enlightened state, and that of romanticism—were fresh and full of vitality, and mingled in the minds of the young students of Reichensperger's generation.

Reichensperger came of age in a Rhineland in which the assumptions of both French and Prussian liberalism seemed equally valid and compatible. The legacy of French reform persisted in large part in the Rhineland, having been modified, but not overturned, after the Prussian annexation. And the Prussian provincial bureaucracy itself, in which Reichensperger would assume a position, was based on observation of the French model and had extracted the best of that system. The reputation of Prussia at this time was by no means the autocratic one it later earned. Indeed, the progressive policies of the Prussian ministers the Prince of Hardenberg and Freiherr vom Stein in the first two decades of the century still claimed the allegiance of progressive Germans. Romanticism, of course, also percolated in Prussia. But the mixture of enlightened political philosophy and notions of Romantic nationalism that Reichensperger encountered in the universities in the years around 1830 did not seem an unnatural combination. Each set of ideas argued for change; each formed a rallying point from which a fresh and youthful liberalism could challenge the older order. On the one hand, the model of political centralization cast off the cluttered apparatus of local interests and feudal privileges that comprised the German political landscape. On the other, interest in German folklore and tradition distinguished the young nationalists from preceding generations, with their Francophile mores and manners. Both visions of the world marched hand in hand. The young liberal of Reichensperger's generation believed firmly in the ideal of a rational and progressive state; he also cloaked the state with a mystic mantle of folk tradition, folk character, and national mission. This was not thought a contradiction. As long as the relationship of modern Prussia to a future united Germany remained imprecise, it was possible to hold both ideals. There was no sense that the medievalizing Romanticism of the early nineteenth century was drawn from a different well than the rationalizing, modernizing, and centralizing impulses governing the Prussian bureaucracy.

The inherent contradictions between Romantic nationalism and the doctrine of the progressive modern state became apparent to Reichensperger during the course of the 1830s. In 1830 he was appointed *Auskultator,* an assistant attorney to the *Oberlandesgericht,* or district court, in Münster.[6] Early the following year he transferred to the court in Koblenz, where he was to remain for a decade. Gradually he grew out of his early Romantic phase, eventually abandoning his sketch pad and poetry. His career now claimed his energies. In March 1833 he argued his first case, defending a thirteen-year-old thief. Nervous at first, he later confided in his diary his pleasure at discovering the persuasive power of his speaking voice. Soon rewarded with a steady rate of promotions—he was appointed *Assessor* to the provincial court in Koblenz in 1835 and made a member of the *Landgerichtsrat* (provincial superior court) in Cologne in 1841—Reichensperger had successfully charted a course for a high position in the Rhenish provincial administration, following his father's example. His future seemed secure (Fig. 5).


5. Reichensperger, c. 1835.

On July 16, 1833, he began a five-month study trip to Paris, where he wanted to hear lectures in the *Code Civil,* or Napoleonic Code, the great modern legal system that continued to play a crucial role in the Rheinland. Between lectures he characteristically devoted much of his energy to observing the local life, and was surprised to find no wild-eyed, unshaven Romantics of the type he had known from the German universities. He found the French jaded. If they tolerated Romantics, he concluded, it was only because of the thrill of the "new and piquant" and not because of the Romantic's ability to perceive "the infinite within us."[7] He also made repeated pilgrimages to Versailles, where the pomp and splendor of Louis XIV fascinated and scandalized him. "No monarch was ever more repugnant," he railed, "than this gaudy, heartless, strutting theater-king."[8] Beneath the gilding and the brocade he perceived a tomb and "the stench of death." For a young intellectual, born in the French-occupied Rhineland in the early nineteenth century, it was difficult to feel any other way.

Delighted to return home from Paris, "that colossal pleasure machine,"[9] in time for Christmas, Reichensperger heard disturbing news: the same Napoleonic Code in which he had so vigorously immersed himself was now in peril. Ever since the establishment of Prussian control in the Rhineland the code had remained in force, just as it did in many of the other countries that had been occupied by the French. But by the early 1830s there was growing dissatisfaction with it on the part of Prussian administrators, who felt that a unified legal code should prevail in all the Prussian territories. The Prussian minister of justice, K. C. A. H. von Kamptz (1769–1849), marshaled forces to have the French system in the Rhineland repealed out of hand; others, less dogmatic, felt that a synthesis of French and Prussian law could be created. This second, less radical proposal was presented in 1833 in an anonymous pamphlet entitled *Andeutungen über den Entwurf eines rheinischen Provinzial-Gesetzbuches* (remarks on the drafting of a Rhenish provincial legal code).[10] Reichensperger read it shortly after his return. Even this allegedly more moderate proposal left him outraged.

In response, just after the start of the new year, Reichensperger drafted a passionate defense of the French code entitled *Beleuchtung der Schrift: Andeutungen über den Entwurf eines rheinischen Provinzial-Gesetzbuches.*[11] Wary of repercussions, he too took steps to have his manuscript published anonymously. He moved swiftly and by January 23, 1834, was revising proofs. That night he described with uncharacteristic reticence and ambivalence the appearance of his first published work:

> This morning a very singular pamphlet was here for corrections, one that hopes to show some teeth to another proposal for a Rhenish legal code. This latter work wants to rip our whole legal system to shreds, and then stick a couple of old Prussian patches on it. One has to fight this as best one can, despite the fear of disfavor on the part of the ministry, which is certainly the

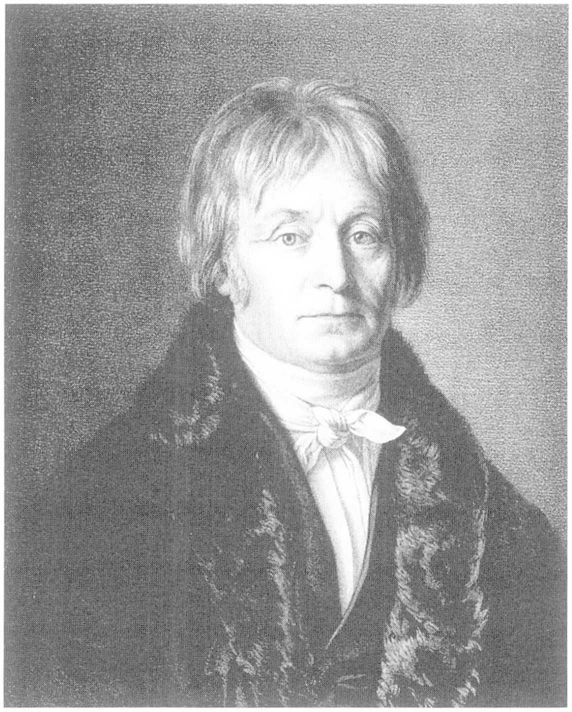
> case here. Now, after the printing, I am not at all satisfied with it; it looked better in manuscript. It all seems disconnected and fragmentary. Doesn't matter. Perhaps I will remain anonymous, as I greatly wish. Thus everything must first be begun and mastered, even the writing of books.[12]

Reichensperger was moved to write by his attachment to the Napoleonic Code, in which he had been educated and for which he maintained considerable respect. But there were other motives as well. He felt that legal reform should be resolved according to legal issues and necessities, not dictated by abstract notions of uniformity and centralization. He acted on the notion that the Rhineland had the right to determine its own legal system, with reference to its own tradition, needs, and history. Although he argued the legal issue on its own merits, he had introduced a principle that could be extended to other institutions and traditions of the Rhineland. Reichensperger had begun his gradual transformation into a champion of Rhenish autonomy.

The Crisis of 1837

In the late summer of 1830 Reichensperger passed briefly through Munich, returning from a walking tour of southern Germany. While there he visited the university to hear a lecture by Joseph Görres, a friend of his mother and in years past a visitor to the Reichensperger household in Koblenz (Fig. 6). Görres (1776–1848) was a linguist, political philosopher, and historian who had taught at the Koblenz *Gymnasium* until his flight in 1819, hours ahead of his arrest by the Prussian authorities. He had collided with Prussian censorship and written himself into exile with a caustic book attacking Prussian reaction following the Congress of Vienna. Now, at the express invitation of King Ludwig I and to the extreme displeasure of the Prussians, he taught history and philosophy in Munich.[13]

Görres was a curious figure. In his youth he had been a champion of the French Revolution and had once visited Paris in the hope of winning support for a revolutionary Cisrhenish Republic, to be based in Koblenz. But by the time of Napoleon he had emerged as a champion of pan-German nationalism, which he called upon to rise up and defeat the French usurper. In the pages of his *Rheinischer Merkur,* his influential Koblenz newspaper, he foretold a united Germany that would overthrow French domination; this caused Napoleon to bridle and to number him, after England, Russia, and Germany, "the Fourth Ally." Following his banishment to Munich Görres had entered a third stage of activity: no longer the Jacobin firebrand or the Romantic German nationalist, he now emerged as a critic of Prussian excesses and a friend of Rhenish autonomy.

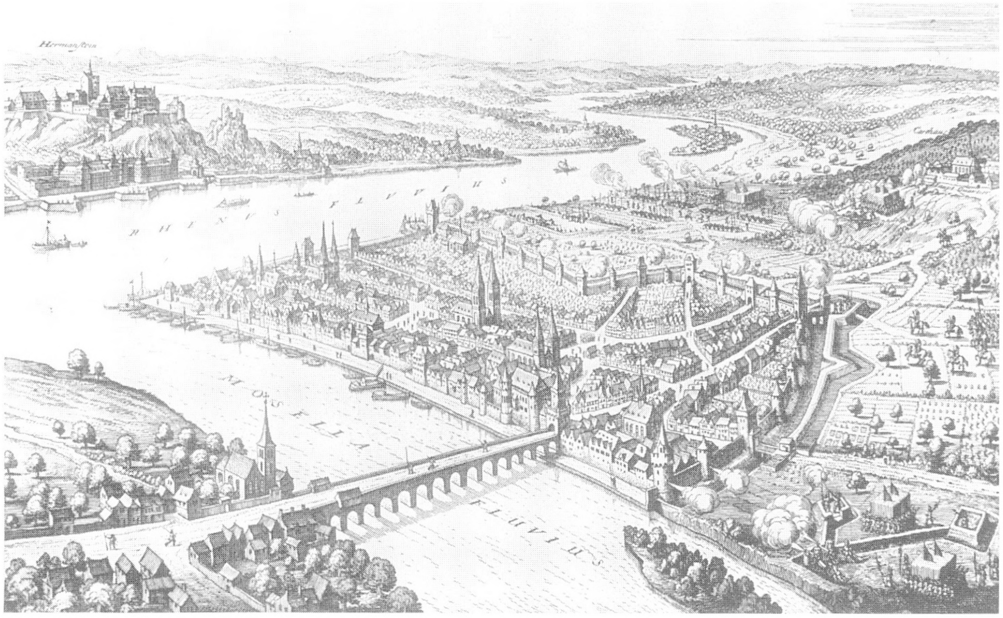


6. Joseph Görres.

The prospect of meeting this notoriously outspoken figure, who had feared neither Napoleon nor the Prussian king, piqued Reichensperger's curiosity. But the lecture was not at all what he expected. Görres had rediscovered his Catholicism while in Munich and now, to Reichensperger's embarrassment, he kept rolling his eyes toward heaven as he spoke. The young agnostic left unimpressed: Görres, he wrote, was "monotonous and apathetic."[14]

The incident was characteristic: into the 1830s Reichensperger had little to do with religion, except to mock it. He had been estranged from the Catholic church since his university days. Even in his Romantic phase in Heidelberg, he had looked with suspicion on "clerical" tendencies and had no use for the Christian art of the Nazarenes. When Reichensperger met pious Romantics, such as the eccentric medievalist Christian von Stramberg (who greeted Reichensperger clad as a woman, costumed like a medieval abbess), he could only remark condescendingly that they made better company than "dry businessmen."[15] Religion itself only rarely preoccupied him. In 1833 he confided in his diary that he would like to recover his childhood belief in God, but that it was no longer possible; it had been "philosophized away."[16]

For Reichensperger's generation such a detached attitude toward religion was characteristic, particularly with regard to its role in public life. This was what he had found so embarrassing in Görres's lecture. For nearly two hundred years religion had been banished from German politics, the legacy, in large measure, of the



7. Koblenz under siege in the Thirty Years' War, 1632, in an engraving by Matthias Merian.

Thirty Years' War. Koblenz itself had been ravaged (Fig. 7). Wearied by the protracted struggle of that war, the princes of Germany had established through the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia the doctrine that "as the prince worshiped, so must the people." No longer should religious strife lead to war. As a consequence, Germany was ingeniously rent into a patchwork quilt of Lutheran and Catholic states; Prussia in the northeast and the predecessor principalities of Hanover and Hesse in northern and central-western Germany were the leading Lutheran territories. The Catholics claimed Bavaria, Austria, Silesia, and the various electorates along the Rhine, the diminutive "duodecimal states" of Germany. For nearly two centuries this great compromise of Westphalia had ensured the religious peace of Germany.

The division of Germany into Protestant and Catholic states was overtaken by the course of eighteenth-century events, largely because of increasing Prussian hegemony. In 1742 Catholic Silesia was annexed by Protestant Prussia in a harsh campaign that portended ill for her other immediate neighbors. Prussia's Catholic population was further augmented by the three partitions of Poland between 1772 and 1795. For the first time in over a century, sizable areas claimed for one faith had come under the political control of the other.

The situation was unstable, but its instability was latent and unrecognized. Several factors acted to mitigate the effects of the annexations. One legacy of the Thirty Years' War was a lasting German aversion to religious fanaticism, and the Prussians tended to be tolerant rulers. Immediately after the annexation of Silesia, for example, a Catholic cathedral was erected in Berlin as a conciliatory gesture.

The Hedwigskirche (1747–78) was designed by the French architect Jean Laurent Legeay, among others, as a modern replica of one of Catholicism's most enduring symbols: the Roman Pantheon. It was a guarantee that Catholic interests would not be slighted in the Prussian capital. But it was also a signal that Catholics should look to Berlin and not to distant Rome for their spiritual leadership. At the Hedwigskirche, architecture served politics, just as it would a century later at Cologne Cathedral.

The Prussian administration swiftly and efficiently assimilated its new territories and there arose no lasting opposition to its rule on either national or religious grounds. But Silesia was relatively backward, and trisected Poland, despite an ancient democratic heritage, was not able to muster its forces for action. Far different was the case of the Catholic Rhineland in the years after 1815.

The prolonged experience with French administration had prepared the Rhineland for the strongly centralized Prussian bureaucracy, which was itself deeply indebted to the French model. Reichensperger worked easily for the Prussian state, just as his father had served the French. Still, other experiences at French hands made the Rhinelanders less pliable. For in the Rhineland, unlike Silesia or Poland, there existed a tradition of political discourse that had survived the jolt of annexation. Liberal French policy concerning the press and censorship had encouraged the growth of political self-expression there. Young intellectuals and would-be revolutionaries gathered in Koblenz and, to a lesser extent, Cologne to air their grievances. Having learned the habit of speaking out under the rule of the French, they now found it difficult to unlearn under that of the Prussians. The exiled Görres was one of their champions.

The tensions that slowly mounted in the decades after the nationalist euphoria of 1815 were at first political, rather than religious. Only in the 1830s did the conflict begin to develop along sectarian lines. Several factors brought matters to a head. The French 1830 revolution deposed Louis XVIII and sent aftershocks through Germany, unsettling Prussia and making it act more heavy-handedly. Suspicions about the loyalty of the Rhineland, its newest province, which had flickered intermittently during the preceding decades, flared anew. Furthermore, a new archbishop had been enthroned in Cologne in 1835, Clemens August Droste-Vischering (1773–1845), whose qualities the Prussian authorities had not yet measured. By all accounts a gentle but stubborn man, the archbishop was determined to uphold traditional church law. Trying decisions awaited him.

For some years a quiet conflict had been smoldering: the increasing interaction between Protestants and Catholics in the Rhineland province was leading to an ever-growing number of mixed marriages. According to Prussian usage, the children of these unions were to take communion according to the sex of the parents;

sons were to take the religion of the father, and daughters that of the mother. Such a compromise had worked in Prussia's Protestant territories. It was a different matter in the predominantly Catholic Rhineland. Archbishop Vischering asserted the traditional Catholic policy on the subject: that the parents in a mixed marriage must agree that all children be raised as Catholics. He felt certain of his right to make pronouncements on such spiritual matters. In Berlin, however, marriage was a civil and not a purely religious matter. Prussia's ministers felt that the archbishop had overstepped the bounds of his authority and exerted pressure on him to recant. When Droste-Vischering unexpectedly refused to yield, the Prussians acted peremptorily. On November 20, 1837, police officials arrested him at his residence, not far from the unfinished torso of Cologne Cathedral. The spring that had been coiling since 1815 was now tripped.

The events that followed soon became known as the *Kölner Wirren,* or the Cologne Troubles.[17] Indignation flared, at first disjointed and unchanneled, but gradually focused and organized, as the Rhineland rallied behind the archbishop. Droste-Vischering's arrest gave the signal for the return to the church of many apostates, including prominent intellectuals who had left her during the French occupation. Prussia in response only hardened its position, threatening to hold the archbishop prisoner until he recanted. Other Catholic centers were anxiously watched. When the eastern Prussian bishop of Gnesen-Posen insisted on the same doctrine with respect to mixed marriages, he too was arrested. Prussia was determined to exact obedience. Naturally, these measures produced the opposite of the intended effect. Contrary to its own expectations and intentions, Prussia had helped put an end to the long prostration and demoralization that had afflicted the Catholic church in the Rhineland since the late eighteenth century.

The movement that ensued, although sparked by events in the church, was not led by the clergy. As pointed out by Lord Acton, a shrewd contemporary observer and a later associate of Reichensperger, the Catholic revival was essentially lay in character:

> The clergy, as a body, were not in a condition to take an active part in literature. Their place in the van was supplied by laymen—often recent converts, seldom trained scholars, and all rather inspired by the lessons of recent history than versed in the older details of theological discussion.[18]

The Rhineland needed a champion and unexpectedly one came forward. Still exiled in Munich, the old revolutionary firebrand Görres provided a channel for the turbulent Catholic sentiment along the Rhine. Out of the crisis he assembled a political manifesto that formed the foundation for the Catholic revival of the next decade. This was his *Athanasius,* his most scathing book and the most complete statement of his thought on church–state relations. The Prussian campaign against the church, Görres insisted, was much more than an assault on that one institution; it was part of a systematic leveling of all indigenous Rhenish institutions that might challenge the Prussian power monopoly. The book inspired the Rhineland as nothing had for decades. Within weeks of its publication in 1838 a fourth edition was demanded.[19]

Reichensperger had been in turmoil since the arrest of the archbishop, burning to discuss the recent events with someone. His reflections during these first confused weeks, though vivid and fervid, were still unfocused; he wondered at the deeper implications of the affair, as he confessed breathlessly to his friend Albert von Thimus in early 1838.[20] Not until the middle of the year, when he read Görres's *Athanasius,* did his views crystallize. The work hit him, by his account, "like a tempest."[21] As a theologian or Catholic apologist, Görres would not have reached Reichensperger. But *Athanasius* portrayed the Cologne Troubles not in their theological dimension, but as an aspect of a general Prussian campaign against the indigenous institutions and culture of the Rhineland, and this Reichensperger understood. It was an argument he had himself raised during his struggles to defend the distinct legal system of the Rhineland.

Athanasius began Reichensperger's reconciliation with the Catholic church. Görres had cast a new light upon religion: no longer was it the instrument of reaction and repression that it had seemed to Reichensperger during his student days; rather, it was itself an oppressed and shackled victim, struggling to assert the autonomy of the Rhineland. Political and religious motives mixed in Reichensperger's return to Catholicism, although he discussed only politics in detail in his public writings. The religious side of his reconciliation with the church he treated as a private matter. The transformation, long prepared for by his growing concern for the institutions of the Rhineland, took little time. Within a few years after his encounter with *Athanasius* he had established deep and far-reaching contacts with the principal leaders of the Catholic church throughout the Rhineland. The anticleric had become a champion of Catholicism.

The ten years between the publication of Görres's book and the revolution of 1848 were the most active decade of Reichensperger's life. He surged into the cultural life of the Rhineland like those steam-powered ships, quivering at top speed, which were then plying the Rhine for the first time. His chosen form of activity was the *Verein,* or private association, whose importance Görres had stressed and which flourished in the wake of the Cologne Troubles. Their usual political organs circumvented, the citizens of the Rhineland now found expression in social, artistic, and literary channels. At the popular level there was a profusion of newly founded Catholic lay brotherhoods. These brotherhoods, some devotional and others guild-

or trade-affiliated, had been suppressed between 1795 and 1815. Now they flourished, refounded by private initiative rather than direct church action.[22] Among other men involved in this movement was Adolph Kolping (1813–65), who founded the first of a series of workingmen's associations in 1846. Reichensperger himself was at or near the forefront of several key institutions. In 1844 he helped to found the Borromäusverein, dedicated to the dissemination of family reading material; in 1848 he was instrumental in establishing a Vincenzverein in Germany, based on a French charitable brotherhood.[23] He also was a fervent supporter of the Broschürenverein, which sought to publish pamphlets devoted to Catholic social and cultural issues. Of course the most conspicuous of these organizations was the Dombauverein, the society dedicated to the completion of Cologne Cathedral.

Reichensperger was also active in the formation of a Catholic political press. New magazines and newspapers were founded and older ones revitalized and reoriented to uphold regional interests. For the first time there was a serious alternative to the Prussian-dominated semiofficial press. Among the foremost of the Catholic organs were the *Kölner Volkszeitung,*[24] and other influential new journals of opinion, such as the *Historisch-politische Blätter*. Older journals included *Die Katholik,* published as a church organ in Mainz since 1821, and Franz Dieringer's *Zeitschrift für das katholische Deutschland,* also begun in 1821; both now turned their attention to political affairs. Reichensperger supported these with contributions, but he also helped establish a new newspaper. Together, he and his brother Peter were instrumental in 1840 in founding the *Rhein- und Moselzeitung,* the most politically engaged and critical of all the Catholic publications.

Reichensperger's connections soon reached far beyond Koblenz, running both along church conduits and through his own network of politically like-minded Rhinelanders. When the revolution of March 1848 broke out, he was one of the foremost civic leaders of the region. This was the direct legacy of *Athanasius*. Before 1837 his political views had united a mixture of French progressive ideas and Prussian liberalism of the Hardenberg era with a leavening of Romanticism. But these ideas were cornerstone and not capstone to Reichensperger's still-incomplete political philosophy; the missing element was provided by the Cologne Troubles, by Görres, and by his own reconciliation with the Catholic church. This affair, with the lessons he drew from it, was the central political event of his life. It completed the political philosophy that, with little change or deviation, Reichensperger maintained until his death. And most dangerously, it made of the dutiful Prussian official a troubled critic of the very state he had sworn to serve.

By the early nineteenth century it was possible to look at society in the abstract: as the sum of a complex of interconnected institutions in an evolving but stable equilibrium. This new objectivity changed the nature of both conservatism and liberalism. The conservatism of the nineteenth century, unlike the older form, which had been grounded in ideas of God-given order and authority, was rooted in pragmatic and objective analysis—in sociological ideas about economics and the dynamics of political bodies. Such ideas were not limited to Reichensperger. What was new was that he, working from Catholic historians and theologians—especially Joseph Görres—was able to apply these ideas to the relationship between church and state. Reichensperger's vision of the church in society no longer had to be defended on theological grounds; it could now be defended on solely pragmatic foundations, on the idea of power distribution in society. These ideas were acceptable to non-Catholics, even non-Christians. At the same time, this model permitted him to endorse some medieval institutions, such as guilds, and regional political autonomy. His theoretical background enabled him to sanction these institutions on the ground of principle, and not nostalgia.

Distinctive in Reichensperger's political thought was the honored place given to art and architecture. Very early in his thinking he began to champion the notion of the Gothic as the architectural equivalent of his political position. His second life as a theoretician and critic of the arts, though parallel to his political life, was not independent of it, and the same principles that motivated his political program shaped and sculpted his architectural program. He conceived his Gothic Revival as an inherently regional phenomenon, based on the expression of local tradition, custom, and materials. It must be free of the control of the academies, which were modeled on the French system—just as German society must rediscover its democratic roots, shunning the centralism and bureaucracy of France. It must spring instead from communal and fraternal organizations, such as the late-medieval building lodge, just as the revival of these fraternal and private organizations would overturn the power monopoly of the autocratic state.

The Gothic cause was only one aspect of Reichensperger's spacious political vision, but it was a crucial aspect. It was the forge in which he tested and tempered some of his most important political ideas. Not only did it precede his parliamentary career, but in one sense it initiated it. Long before Reichensperger appeared in Frankfurt in 1848 as spokesman for the interests of the Catholic Rhineland, there were portents of his growing competence and capability for action. The first concrete sign of this appeared as early as 1840, when he emerged as a cultural leader—fittingly, at the same site where Archbishop Droste-Vischering had been arrested three years earlier: Cologne Cathedral, which was about to undergo its long-contemplated and long-postponed completion.

II

August Reichensperger and Cologne Cathedral

For August Reichensperger, architecture and politics intersected at Cologne Cathedral. Political events first drew him to the cause of the cathedral in 1840, just as political events prompted his controversial boycott of the dedication ceremony over forty years later; during the intervening decades politics touched frequently and powerfully upon the building and upon those struggling for its completion. If the cathedral transformed Reichensperger into a champion of the Gothic, it also determined that his commitment to architecture would not be a detached, aesthetic one, but would be firmly anchored by social and political considerations. In this he differed from most of the German Gothic enthusiasts who preceded him.

Throughout 1838 and 1839 Archbishop Droste-Vischering sat in prison and the atmosphere in the Rhineland remained tense and acrid. In these years Reichensperger completed his return to the church. The centerpiece of this reconciliation was a pleasure tour to Italy in late 1839 that became a pilgrimage. His earlier travels had been centered in Germany and France, recapitulating the way that Berlin and Paris had shaped his education and values. Now Rome drew him.

Reichensperger's route took him through Paris in late October to Marseilles, where he embarked for Genoa.[1] In Paris he met Guido Görres, son of the professor, and struck up an easy friendship. In his letters home Reichensperger warned his mother not to mention their meeting: the name Görres still rankled in Prussia. Forging southward, on December 15, 1839, he caught his first glimpse of the great dome of St. Peter's.

He had expected that the first sight of St. Peter's would cause him to fall to his knees, overcome with emotion, but because of his exhaustion from the trip he instead felt curiously detached. Nonetheless, ten days later, Christmas found him awash with religious feeling. He slipped into the Sistine Chapel for a Christmas Eve mass and on Christmas morning visited the great early-Christian church of Santa Maria Maggiore. But most moving of all were Christmas Eve vespers at St. Peter's, where he stood within ten feet of the pope as his procession passed by, the pontiff carried on the backs of eight noblemen dressed in black silk.