From the Death of God to the Rise of Hitler*

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Abstract

Can weakened religiosity facilitate the rise of fascism? The Nazi Party set itself up as a political religion, emphasizing redemption, sacrifice, rituals, and communal spirit. This is highly correlated with its success: Where the Christian Church only had shallow roots, the Nazis received higher electoral support and saw more party entry. "Shallow Christianity" reflects the geography of medieval Christianization and the strength of pagan practices, which we use as sources of historical variation. We also find predictive power at the individual level: Within each municipality, the likelihood of joining the Nazi Party was higher for those with less Christian first names. Data from Italy suggests that the phenomenon is not limited to the German case: more religious Italian municipalities supported the fascist movement less.

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1 Introduction

> *"Once religious faith ... had gone, people desperately searched for a new system of beliefs ... they thus created an endless number of new "churches"..."*
>
> – Antonio Gramsci

Can weakened religiosity lead to the rise of totalitarian movements? Political theorists from Arendt and Gramsci to Voegelin have argued that the totalitarian ideologies of the 20th century—fascism, communism—reflected rising secularization and the "death of God".[1] Modern psychology reinforces this view: humans have deep spiritual needs from an early age, and religious thinking comes naturally to children (Papaleontiou-Louca, Esmailnia and Thoma 2023, Bloom 2007). The "political religion" interpretation argues that totalitarian movements stepped into a spiritual void as traditional religiosity declined. This perspective also offers a ready interpretation for what otherwise seems paradoxical——popular support for transitions from democracy to autocracy.[2]

Testing this hypothesis empirically is inherently difficult. Secularization is slow-moving. Formal affiliation with churches and religious institutions declined only gradually and often fails to capture genuine spiritual conviction. Trends are often national; cross-country variation is potentially contaminated by other factors. Some examinations of cross-sectional data have found no direct link between totalitarian movements and declining religiosity (Evans 2007, Steigmann-Gall 2000).

We argue that Shallow Christianity—a lack of deep-rooted Christian beliefs—was associated with a faster rise of the Nazi Party in interwar Germany. The movement's pseudo-religious message held greater appeal in some areas than in others: In the formerly Roman areas of Germany, Christianity spread as part of a grassroots movement during the first centuries AD. In others areas, it arrived more than 1,000 years later——imposed from above by kings and nobles rather than embraced from below. Where Christianity failed to develop deep roots, National Socialism filled the gap as an alternative faith. Contemporary audiences described how listening to the message of the Nazi movement's charismatic "Führer", Adolf Hitler, filled a spiritual void not least because of the "supernatural, superhuman powers" attributed to him.[3]

[1] Arendt (1951), Gentile (1990), Voegelin (1939).

[2] Classic models of political transitions emphasize expected utility—with a shift from autocracy to democracy (and not the reverse) guaranteeing greater redistribution or wider provision of common goods (Acemoglu and Robinson 2000, Lizzeri and Persico 2004).

[3] The concept of charisma is religious in origin, and emphasizes a leader's extraordinary, even supernatural powers. Max Weber (1968) famously considered charisma one of the three main forms of political legitimacy.

In Imperial Germany, conservative parties had mainly garnered support from bourgeois voters, often pursuing a nationalistic and anti-Semitic agenda without "charismatic" leaders and without offering a substitute religion. The Nazi Party, in striking contrast, gained a mass following across class divides (Falter 1991). It also regularly used religious language and imagery, emphasizing communal rituals, salvation and redemption through the Nazi party and its leader, and the sanctity of the fatherland. Hitler ended many of his speeches with the word "Amen". Nazi propaganda cast Hitler as Germany's "redeemer", and party members professed their "faith" in his mission to "resurrect" Germany's greatness. The party staged its congresses in "cathedrals of light" and celebrated the movement's martyrs, sanctifying relics ("blood banners", etc.). Leading Nazi figures like Heinrich Himmler and Alfred Rosenberg sought to marginalize the Christian churches and to replace Christian rites with pseudo-religious ceremonies (Voegelin 1939). The Nazi Party explicitly demanded "religious" fanaticism from its followers, many of whom described their commitment to the party in semi-religious language (Maier 2006).

We use three indicators to capture a lack of deep-rooted Christian religiosity in early 20C Germany. Because parents choose first names, they can provide unique insight into a family's worldview (Bazzi, Fiszbein and Gebresilasse 2020). Christian first names reflect the strength of Christian identity within families (Hacker 1999, Andersen and Bentzen 2022). We analyze first names in the German population at large, using data from lists of WWI casualties. We also use newly digitized data from the *Atlas der Deutschen Volkskunde (ADV)*, a nationwide survey of local folklore and traditions in the 1930s. It contains information on superstitious/pagan beliefs; these were markedly more common in areas with a lower frequency of Christian first names. As a third indicator of Christian religiosity in early 20th century Germany, we use data on the share of notable people with religious occupations. From these three components we extract the first principal component, and use it as a measure of Shallow Christianity.[4] We show that this indicator of Shallow Christianity and its constituent components predict higher Nazi vote shares across all elections as well as more frequent Nazi party entry.[5]

Medieval conversion was uneven. Monasteries were the primary agents of local Christianization. Conversely, hundreds of pagan places of worship have been documented across Germany – from *Heidenhöhlen* (pagan caves) to sites of ritual sacrifice, including human sacrifice. We collect data on distances to pre-1500 monas-

[4]The first principal component accounts for 42.9% of total variance; the proportional contributions are from name religiosity (47%), clairvoyance (39%), and share religious (14%).

[5]The one exception is the 1928 election, when the Nazi party's overall vote share was miniscule and it had not yet secured a base of mass support.

teries (Niedersächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften 2023) and on the locations of these pagan cult sites. These deep-rooted drivers of Christianization also predict Shallow Christianity in the 1930s – and they predict Nazi support.

Individual-level data support our conclusions: *Within each location*, those with more Christian names were *less* likely to be Nazi Party members – and even less likely to be in its leadership positions. In other words, relative to the location-specific norm, Nazi party members are less likely to have a Christian first name. The family in which children grew up, and the importance they gave to Christianity, is a relevant predictor of involvement with the Nazi movement. Nazi leadership in any one location was even less Christian in its naming pattern than either the local population or Nazi party members.

Protestantism also predicts Nazi voting. An important study by Spenkuch and Tillmann (2018) shows that it outperforms socio-economic variables in terms of predictive power, and concludes that this is partly due to Catholics having their own party, the Center Party (*Zentrumspartei*). What is unclear is *why* Protestantism is strongly associated with Nazi support. Protestantism across Europe spread markedly more in areas where conversion to the Christian faith came late (and often involuntarily). Because Shallow Christianity strongly predicts the spread of Protestantism, the share of Protestants in a county is a bad control for our analysis. We show that the adoption of Protestantism can be predicted by both Shallow Christianity and proximity to Wittenberg (as in Becker and Woessmann (2009)). Even within areas where Protestantism spread for plausibly exogenous reasons (i.e. those close to Wittenberg), we find that "shallower" Christianity predicts more support for the Hitler movement.

Is the pattern we document limited to Germany? To address this issue, we also analyze the case of Italian fascism. It similarly developed an elaborate fusion of political and religious imagery: by projecting Mussolini's image onto the Cathedral of Milan, the regime sought to symbolize the alignment of Fascism with Catholicism. Both Nazi and Fascist movements elevated their martyrs in quasi-religious ceremonies, demanded "faith" and sacrifice from followers in expectation of redemption, and attributed supernatural, "charismatic" powers to its leaders – a concept of religious origin that Max Weber considered a fundamental form of political legitimacy. We use data on first names from the fallen of WWI in Italy, and combine it with voting records as well as information on fascist political activity and party entry. Where people chose less religious names, the fascist party polled more strongly, and other indicators of support like party offices and political violence are higher. As in the case of Germany, those with more Christian names within any one location were

also less likely to be members of the fascist party.

These results shed light on spiritual needs as an important driver of political legitimacy[6] and sources of support for extremist movements. Hitler's and Mussolini's charisma may have propelled them into positions of quasi-religious leaders of political movements. Traditional models of populism and the rise of fascism emphasize economic hardship and a commitment to redistribution, or cultural and ethnic cleavages, as key motivators.[7] Marxist theories (Moore (1966), Hamilton (1982)) focus on big business support (the Nazi Party as an agent of monopoly capitalism) and "petty bourgeois" support. Modernization theory (Dahrendorf 1965) posits that fascism resolved and completed German society's "unfinished" modernization.

Totalitarianism theory (Arendt 1951, Ortega y Gasset 1985, Nolte 1965) argues that industrialization created "rootless masses" ready to be recruited. Along similar lines, work in political theory on political religions (Voegelin 1939, Gentile 1990, Maier 2006) emphasizes how totalitarian ideologies gather support by appealing to transcendental meaning. We examine the political religion hypothesis empirically.[8] Our results emphasize the importance of Shallow Christianity on the one hand, and the appeal of a movement harnessing the power of religious symbolism, myths, and supernatural powers of a leader. This study is the first to provide evidence based on granular data of a strong correlation between (susceptibility to) transcendental, otherworldly legitimacy on political outcomes. It contributes to the understanding of how large segments of a highly educated population can come to support an authoritarian movement.

2 Historical Background

In the first part of this section, we describe the spread of Christianity in Europe over the last two millennia. While all of Europe eventually became notionally Christian, late-converting areas never developed a deep-rooted attachment to the Christian faith and doctrine.[9] In the second part, we provide a brief overview of the Nazi Party's rise to power, and the pseudo-religious features of the party.

[6]This is a point distinct from religious legitimization whereby rulers justify their rule by divine election (Rubin 2017).

[7]Economic interpretations grapple with the challenge that the group most affected by the Great Depression, the unemployed, overwhelmingly supported the Communists, and not the Nazis. For recent evidence on the role of economic factors, cf. Doerr et al. (2022), Galofré-Vilà et al. (2021).

[8]Based on correlational patterns and anecdotal evidence (Steigmann-Gall 2000) concluded that Nazi support was not driven by a lack of religiosity.

[9]Greeley (1995, p.63) even argues that: 'there could be no de-Christianization of Europe ... because there never was any Christianization in the first place. Christian Europe never existed.'

2.1 The Spread of Christianity

Christianity spread slowly across Europe. More than a millennium separates the earliest dates of conversion from the final ones. In Southern Europe, the first Christian communities were founded in the first century. In contrast, it took until the 14th century before the last parts of Northern Europe converted to Christianity.[10]

Under Roman rule, "Christianity was a mass movement that spread primarily through personal efforts by the rank and file to convert their relatives, friends and neighbors" (Stark 2004, p. 104). Eventually, it became the official state religion in 380 AD under Emperor Theodosius I.[11] By late antiquity, under the Roman Empire, many areas had dense networks of churches (see Fletcher 1997, p. 47). Outside the Roman Empire, the Church "did little to evangelize the general population"(Stark 2004, p. 104).

After the fall of Rome, Christianity mainly spread through top-down conversions of rulers and the nobility, as was the case in Scandinavia and the Frankish kingdom. In Eastern Europe, Christianity was introduced by a mix of Christian settlers, Christian missionaries, and via crusades. Newly-founded monasteries contributed to the spread of Christianity, especially in Northern and Eastern Europe (Davis 2018).

Germany was home to early Christian communities in formerly Roman areas. At the same time, it took until the 13th century for the last German areas to convert to Christianity. The first major wave of conversions to Christianity in the German lands *beyond* the former borders of the Roman Empire occurred in 496 AD, when the Franks under Clovis became Christians. The last *Germanic* people on the territory of modern-day Germany converted to Christianity were the Saxons during the second half of the 8th century. The territory east of the rivers Elbe and Saale was populated by Slavic tribes. There, both crusades and Germanic settlers spread Christianity.[12]

Late conversion to Christianity – often ordered from above or under threat – was often skin-deep. Adam of Bremen (11th C) used the word "pseudo-Christians" to describe recent converts. Stark (2001) concluded that "neither the exclusive commitment to Christianity nor the high levels of personal piety exhibited by the early Christians ever developed among the majority of people in northwestern Europe."

The Reformation was more successful in North-Eastern Germany – the same

[10]Lithuanians were converted in the 1380s.

[11]Prior to this, the Edict of Milan in 313 had allowed Christians and Romans of all faiths 'liberty to follow that mode of religion which to each of them appeared best'. This, as well as Emperor Constantine's baptism in 337 AD, are generally seen as important contributors to the rapid rise of Christianity.

[12]Examples are the Wendish Crusades in the 12th century and the Prussian crusades in the 13th and 14th centuries, in which the Teutonic Order played an important role.

parts of the country where Christianity arrived late. Where Catholic doctrine was not firmly entrenched, the new faith spread more easily.[13] Protestantism also did not lead to effective indoctrination. As Parker (1992) observed: "[...] the surviving evidence indicates a widespread inability [...] to create an acceptably pious laity". Church visitations, designed and instituted to enforce religious doctrine, uncovered case after case of pastors preaching to empty churches, clerics not knowing the basics of the faith, and almost complete ignorance of church teachings among the laity (Strauss 1975). Martin Luther himself lamented:

> "*Dear God help us, what misery have I seen! The common man, especially in the villages, knows absolutely nothing about Christian doctrine; indeed, many pastors are in effect unfit and incompetent to teach. Yet they are all called Christians, are baptized, and enjoy the holy sacraments even though they cannot recite either the Lord's Prayer, the Creed or Commandments. They live just like animals ...*" (Parker 1992)

Differences in the timing and depth of Christian conversion have important repercussions to the present day. Using data from 16 European countries, Stark (1999) shows that the number of centuries since Christianization has a correlation coefficient of 0.89 with the share of Catholics in 1996 – Protestantism was more successful in areas that converted later. At the regional level, and focusing on popular religion, Rothkrug (1980) and Pfaff (2013) demonstrate that Protestantism was less successful where the cult of the saints was highly developed, such as in the Low Countries, the Rhineland, or the South of Germany. At the same time, Stark (1999) shows that the number of centuries since Christianization has a correlation of 0.72 with church attendance in the late 20th century, using the 1990-1991 World Values Survey. In other words, the timing of Christianization predicts both the success of the Protestant Reformation, and also popular participation in organized religion in the 20th century, *across* religious denominations.

2.2 The Rise of the Nazi Party

The Nazi Party was founded in Munich in 1920. Initially committed to an immediate, violent overthrow of democracy, it staged an ill-fated coup in 1923. Afterwards, the party was banned, its leaders in exile or in jail. Adolf Hitler was released from prison in late 1924. As restrictions on the party were repealed, it began to compete again in state and national elections.

In 1928, the party scored a paltry 2.6% of the national vote. It appeared destined for obscurity. Its electoral fortunes began to change after 1929, after the

[13] See Ekelund, Hébert and Tollison (2002), Bercea, Ekelund Jr and Tollison (2005).

onset of the Great Depression and the fall of the last democratic government with a parliamentary majority. In 1930, the party participated in a broad coalition of bourgeois and right-wing parties agitating against the Young Plan, a rescheduling of Germany's reparation obligations. In the national election in September 1930, the party achieved a major breakthrough, receiving 18.3% of the vote. As the German economy continued to deteriorate and the country's financial system collapsed, its vote share surged, becoming the largest party in parliament in 1932. Hitler was narrowly defeated in his bid to become President in 1932. Eventually, he was appointed Chancellor at the head of a coalition of right-wing parties in January 1933 (Fest 1973).

The Nazi Party as a quasi-religious movement. The Nazi Party itself used religious language and imagery aggressively, often casting itself as an alternative to established religion. For example, the party youth movement, the *Hitlerjugend*, used in its official song the following stanza:

> "*We are the happy Hitler Youth; We have no need for Christian virtue;*
> *For Adolf Hitler is our intercessor and our redeemer*
> *No priest, no evil one can keep us from feeling like Hitler's children.*
> *Not Christ do we follow, but Horst Wessel!*[14]
> *Away with incense and holy water pots ...*" (Helmreich 1979, p. 267)

Even simple, everyday activities like greetings were infused with quasi-religious imagery – "Heil Hitler" means, literally, "salvation Hitler." Party congresses regularly involved batteries of flak lights, forming "cathedrals of light" above the participants, lending an air of religious celebration to the political gathering.

Other rituals involved even more overt pseudo-Christian symbolism. In staged ceremonies, the "blood banner" of the movement, carried during the failed putsch of 1923, would be held over other flags, thereby "sanctifying" them during a ceremony known as *Fahnenweihe* ("banner consecration"). Similarly, in 1928, the party faithful gathered in the city of Kaub, on the Rhine, where Field Marshal Blücher's Prussian army had crossed in 1813 while chasing Napoleon out of the country. There, they cleansed themselves in the waters, washing away the "sin" of defeat in WWI and the allegedly shameful November revolution in 1918. Pagan rituals like celebrations of the summer and winter solstice were publicly celebrated, and leading Nazi organizations like the SS sought to replace church ceremonies for life events like weddings with their own celebrations.

Leading members conceptualized the party and its mission in religious terms.

[14] After being shot by Communists in 1930, the Nazi storm trooper Horst Wessel became a "martyr" of the Hitler movement.

Joseph Goebbels, who regularly referred to Hitler as a "demi-god", wrote in his diary in October 1928: "One day soon NS [national socialism] will be the religion of all Germans. My party is my church. And I believe I serve the Lord if I do his will and liberate my oppressed people from the fetters of slavery. That is my gospel." (Goebbels (1970), entry: 16 Oct 1928.)

Some of the Nazis' earliest success occurred in rural areas of Northern Germany, much to the party's own surprise. These are exactly the parts of Germany—like Dithmarschen, north of Hamburg—where Christianization arrived late and, as a result, was less deeply rooted.

Abel (1938) collected essays by Nazi party members on "how they came to join the party".[15] Abel's corpus offers unique insight into the mind of Germans joining the Nazi party. While clearly a selected sample, there are no other cases of open-ended documents written by individuals themselves, reflecting on their motivations. Many themes and topics are touched on in these essays (Merkl 1975). Here, we highlight the importance of religious symbols and concepts.

The submission of Agnes Mosler-Sturm, of Berlin-Spandau, illustrates the importance of religious imagery. She speaks about how

> "*a* ***revelation*** *illuminated us – he [Hitler] is the German* ***savior!*** *[...] civil war broke out, everything high and* ***holy*** *was trampled into the mud by the animalistic, jewish-marxist, ... masses. With [...] most* ***holy*** *indignation we fight for Hitler and his idea [...] a single scream of* ***redemption****: Adolf Hitler is chancellor [...] new hope, new* ***faith****, new power emerges from the German people like an enormous stream [...] a great, good, and strong people stand up courageously, to follow its only* ***god-given*** *Führer and* ***savior*** *– Adolf Hitler..."*

The word "holy" appears 227 times in the 344 transcribed biographies,[16] "faith" (glauben/Glaube) 575 times, "religion" 104 times, and "redemption" 10 times. For comparison – "Jew/Jews" gets 597 hits, "fatherland" 613, and Hitler, 1,858.

In what sense was the Nazi party a quasi-religious movement? Norenzayan (2010) emphasizes four main features of religions: counter-intuition, commitment, communion, and compassion, the four C's. The Nazi movement and its rhetoric spoke to all four of these dimensions: Hitler was cast in the role of Germany's saviour, sent by providence; the party emphasized the importance of costly sacrifice for the German nation; it staged emotion-arousing rituals, creating a sense of communion; and it promised to relieve existential anxieties by creating a glorious Thousand Year Reich,

[15] The party itself gathered similar evidence on motives for joining (Falter et al. 2022).

[16] Out of 597 biographies submitted, 344 have been transcribed by the Hoover Institution at Stanford.

giving meaning to the lives of ordinary party members.

We are not the first to highlight the pseudo-religious side of the Nazi party, and other totalitarian movements like Communism. The Italian historian Gaetano Salvimini, writing in 1932, already observed:

> "*Dictators need myths, symbols, and ceremonies to regiment, excite, and terrify the multitude and suffocate their every attempt at independent thought. The Catholic Church's fantastic and grandiose ceremonies and mysterious rituals in a strange language are masterpieces of their genre, and fascists and communists copied these models when they appealed to the irrational instincts of the crowd ...*"(cit. acc. to Gentile (2006))

Bracher (1971) similarly speaks of "grotesque practices" that "testified to the quasi-religious impact" of Nazi propaganda. Mosse (1975) observes that in Nazi gatherings, "...the symbolic content [...] took priority, the ritual expression of a shared worship that was so crucial to their sense of belonging." However, historians remain divided on the overall importance of religious elements for the appeal of the Nazi party. Schreiber (2009) contends that the notion of a quasi-religious cult was analytically "empty". Other historians argue that the religiosity of Nazi language was only skin-deep (Mommsen 2003). Steigmann-Gall (2000), analyzing cross-municipality patterns of church attendance, concluded that "enough evidence is at hand to discount categorically the long-held supposition that the Nazi movement got its strength primarily from Protestants who had lost their faith or experienced a Nietzschean 'Death of God'".[17] Finally, Evans (2007) concluded that "Nazism certainly did borrow language and ritual from religion, but far from attracting people searching for spiritual commitment in a secularized world, it was least attractive to the most secularized and most anti-Christian part of the population...".[18] However, despite forceful, and contradictory statements by leading historians, there is as yet no systematic, quantitative analysis of the "political religion" hypothesis.

[17]His analysis compares Nazi support in areas of high vs low church attendance. However, low-attendance areas are typically urban, where Nazi support was generally low. Steigmann-Gall does not control for confounding factors. Therefore, these broad correlational patterns offer little insight into the question whether lack of religiosity boosted support for the Nazi party.

[18]Relatedly, Selb and Munzert (2018) focus on Hitler's charisma and the electoral effect of his speeches. They find little or no effect. However, for logistical reasons, Hitler's appearances were scheduled in more populous urban areas, where the Nazi party in general struggled to find support.

3 Data

We use several of data sources. Here, we briefly summarize how we used them to compile our data. Table A.1 provides an overview of data descriptives.

3.1 The German Folklore Atlas

Over the period 1930-35, German anthropologists under Fritz Böhm conducted a systematic study of German folklore ("Atlas der Deutschen Volkskunde" - ADV). They sent out a total of five questionnaires with 243 items to about 14,000 locations all over Germany, asking questions ranging from harvest rituals to the meaning of certain birds in local culture and the restrictions placed on newly-weds (Harmjanz, Röhr et al. 1937). After 1945, the material – in the form of 4.5 million file cards – was transferred to the University of Bonn.

The anthropologists conducting the survey sought to cover all German-speaking areas. They sent questionnaires to even the smallest hamlets, typically to the local elementary school teacher. These locations were mapped onto a unique system of grid-cells. Since we are interested in the survival of pagan beliefs, we digitized all the file cards for question 176a in the ADV: "Are there certain people, according to the people's opinion, who have the power to see the future?" We chose this question because it is of general interest, and common to many pagan religions. The question was asked in 13,953 locations. Since many of the locations used in the ADV survey do not readily correspond to modern-day municipalities, we geocode the – finely-grained – grid-cell reference for each file card, and then aggregate the answers to the level of counties. In this way, we seek to reduce measurement error.[19]

3.2 German casualty lists and first name indices

Historians have long used Christian first names as markers of the Christian identity of the parents (Hacker 1999). To assess how Christian naming practices are in any one location, we need a representative sample of first names, and a method to assign religiosity to a particular name. We scrape the German casualty list for WWI from des.genealogy.net to obtain a distribution of male first names across localities. Germany suffered 7.8 million male casualties – 2 million dead and the rest wounded, missing in action or imprisoned – during the years 1914-18. Since

[19] Braun (2023) demonstrates the high reliability of the ADV respondents by exploiting the fact that some questions were asked repeatedly, in successive years, yielding multiple reports from different experts living in the same locality. He finds near-perfect agreement.

Imperial Germany used conscription, we consider the casualty list akin to a random sample.[20] We geocode the place of residence of each casualty and then assess how religious their first name is.

We define Christian first names as those used on major medieval churches in Germany,[21] e.g. St. Peter or St. Wolfgang, and compute the share of such names in the local population. To the extent that some names are more commonly used than others, there is a risk of classifying a name as Christian merely because it is used by many parents. To address this issue, following Andersen and Bentzen (2022), we construct a religious-names index (RNI) that assigns a higher score to names that are a) common on churches and b) rare among the population, using the approach in Fryer and Levitt (2004).

3.3 Share of religious notables

Using the comprehensive dataset on notable individuals collected by Laouenan et al. (2022), we examine the share of religious notables among all "famous" people in a location. This can serve as an indicator of how religious the more educated parts of the population are. We use the share of religious notables who died in 1900-1930 as an additional indicator of interwar religiosity.

3.4 Gravestones

Zelinsky (2007) argues that the incidence of religious symbols, iconography, or religious text (e.g. bible verses) on gravestones reveals the religiosity of the deceased and of the relatives choosing the headstone.[22] We scrape the images of gravestones from the website grabsteine.genealogy.net, and extract the years of birth and death of the deceased. We manually code whether a gravestone features a cross, or praying hands, and other markers of Christianity. We then compute the share of deceased whose gravestone features markers of Christianity as an alternative measure of religiosity at the county level.

3.5 Nazi voting

We use election data collected by Falter and Hänisch (1990). The source for their database are the official electoral statistics of the Weimar Republic (Statistik des Deutschen Reiches). The vote for each party is calculated as the ratio of the number

[20] Artillery caused most casualties, making them quasi-random.
[21] These are drawn from the data collected by Buringh et al. (2020).
[22] Others have used gravestones to study the effect of war on religiosity (Mill et al. 2024).

of valid votes received by a party, divided by the total number of valid votes cast. We use data for the parliamentary elections in 1928, 1930, 1932 (July and November) and 1933. We also use results of the first and second round of the Presidential Elections in March and April 1932.

3.6 Nazi party entry

Our starting point is the Nazi membership sample drawn by Jürgen Falter's research group, and described by Schneider-Haase (1991). It comprises close to 30,964 records of members that joined the party in the years 1928 to 1932, the five years before the Nazis come to power in January 1933. In addition, we hand-collected data from an additional 6,000 records on Nazi party entry at the German Federal Archive in Berlin. The German federal archives have sorted them alphabetically by family name, first name and date of birth. The Nazi membership records, originally kept in file drawers containing several hundred membership records each, are today available electronically as images. However, only every 50th card is electronically indexed. We deliberately focus on the year 1930, which is the first year when the Nazis made a substantial electoral breakthrough, dramatically increasing their number of seats in the Reichstag from 12 to 107, while becoming the second-largest party in parliament. Overall, we use 36,964 records in total.

3.7 Führerlexikon

To gather additional information on leading party members, we use information from the *Führerlexikon* (1934). Published to give an overview of the "New Germany" under the Nazis, it listed men in leading positions across the country. A total of 1,700 short biographies are presented. We allocate them to the 495 counties of their origin.

Figure A.1 shows a typical entry. August Herwegen was the president and highest-ranking judge at the Oberlandesgericht Breslau, the top tribunal in Silesia. Born in Cologne in 1879, he studied law in Switzerland and Germany, became a judge, and then served in World War I. In July 1932, he joined the Nazi party. We digitize all entries in the *Führerlexikon*, and analyse the first names of the Nazi elite. We allocate individuals to their place of birth. Figure A.2 gives an overview of the geographical origins of "leaders" in our source.

3.8 Medieval monasteries

While the travels of individual missionaries are only rarely documented, and information on the foundation years of local churches and chapels are patchy at best, the foundation years of monasteries have been recorded widely and accurately as a result of better record-keeping by monastic orders. We use information on monasteries collected by the Niedersächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften (2023) to measure the spread of "institutionalized Christianity" across the German lands. We focus on monasteries founded before 1500 since many monasteries were closed during the Reformation period.[23]

3.9 Places of pagan worship

All across Germany, for thousands of years before Christianization, people worshiped pagan gods. While local practices varied greatly, and few direct sources describe these practices, the remnants of rituals and symbolic centers of pre-Christian religion remain in many places. For example, near the city of Güstrow, we find the so-called "Stone Dance of Boitin" – a set of four concentric stone "circles". Constructed between 600 and 400 BC, archaeologists surmise that the area served as a prehistoric calendar and/or as a funerary chamber. In other places, there is evidence of use of the location for religious purposes until the time of Christianization. In Niederdorla, for example, a moor was used for pagan sacrifices (including human sacrifices). Bones and ceremonial gifts from the period 600 BC to 1100 AD have been excavated by archaeologists – a period of use of at least 1700 years, markedly longer than the total duration of Christian presence in the area up to the present.

We scrape the locations of all known pagan sites from the online reference resource www.digital-culture.de, and calculate distances to them for the municipalities in our main database. We use this data to show that "medieval religiosity" can be predicted by opposition to Christianization via the presence of places of pagan worship.

3.10 Control variables

We also use socio-economic correlates, collected by Falter and Hänisch (1990), derived from the 1925 census. These allow us to control for the number of inhabitants, the percentage of the population who are blue-collar workers, white-collar workers, population density, and a host of geographic and other demographic variables.

[23] Cantoni, Dittmar and Yuchtman (2018), Heldring, Robinson and Vollmer (2021).

4 Shallow Christianity in the Interwar Period

We combine three indicators of Shallow Christianity – the share of Christian first names, the surviving level of superstition, and the share of religious notables. Here, we describe these components and relationship to each other.

4.1 First names

Parents chose the first name of their children. Naming practices offer a unique window into the preferences and views of parents (Bazzi, Fiszbein and Gebresilasse 2020). Here, we analyze how Christian the names given to children in Germany were. We use the Andersen and Bentzen (2022) approach to determine how religious a name is. They create a religious-names index (RNI) by calculating

$$\text{RNI}_i = \frac{Pr(Name_i|Church)}{Pr(Name_i|Church) + Pr(Name_i|Person)}$$

The RNI gives greater weight to names that are a) common on churches and b) rare among people. For example, the name "Kornelius" is rare in the population, but more common on churches. Conversely, the most popular German male first name in our period, "Karl", is not present on any German church. The index is 1 for names that are only used on churches, and 0 for those only used by people.

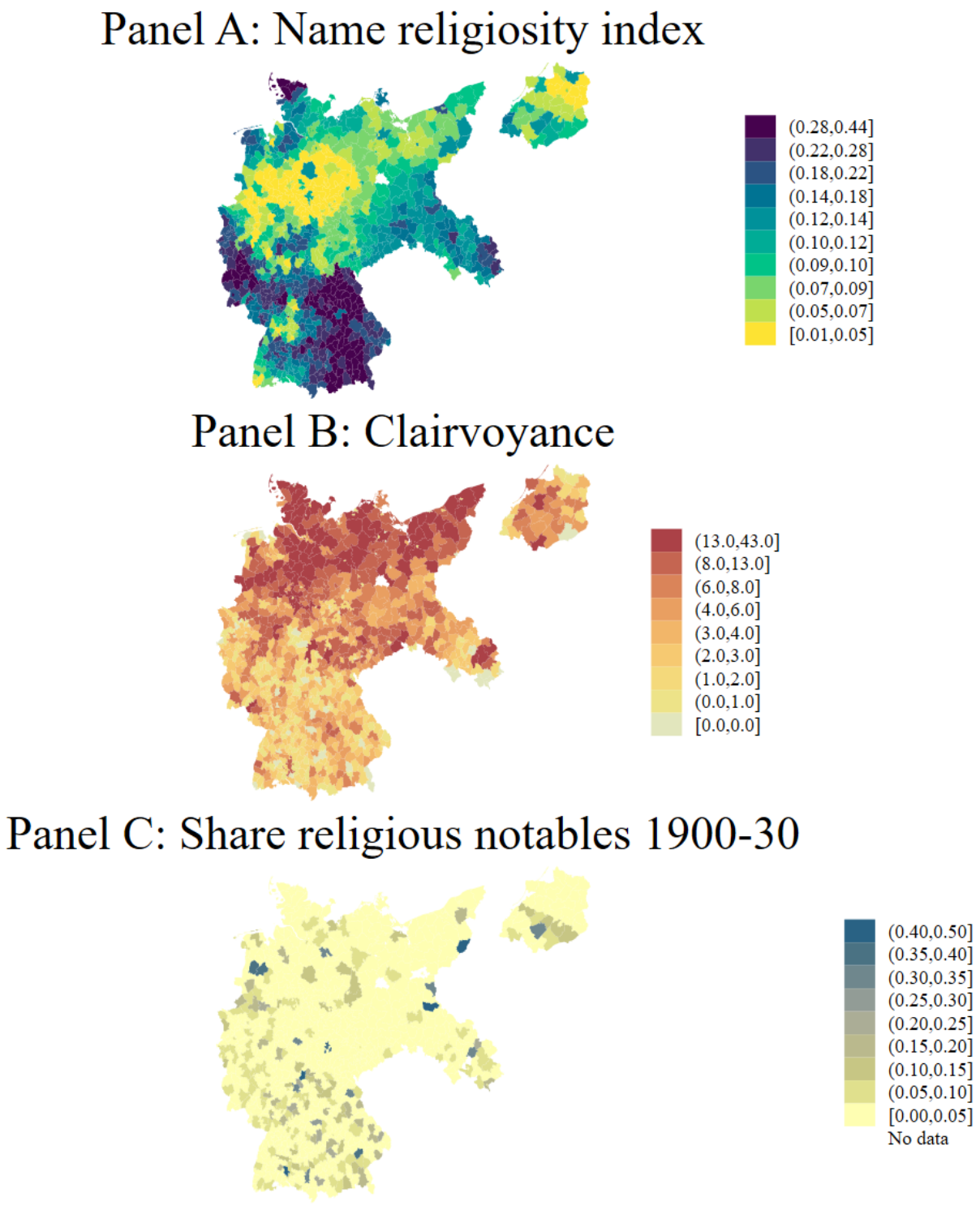
Figure 1, panel A gives an impression of how frequent Christian first names are in Germany, using data from the roll of WWI casualties ("Verlustlisten"). We use the RNI, which ranges from 0.01 to 0.44. This suggests marked differences in religiosity, as expressed through naming patterns. The highest values of the RNI occur in the South and in the West of the country, where Christianity spread earlier.

4.2 Superstition and Shallow Christianity

The German Folklore Atlas (ADV) asked numerous questions about local folklore and cultural practices. Here, we focus on clairvoyance. For each county, we calculate the number of places where people believe in the existence of "seers", people who have particular insight into what the future will bring.[24] In some parts of Germany, the local enumerators marked their papers "not known here" or "no such practice in living memory!" In many other locations, belief in seers was recorded.

[24]Since the ADV tries to achieve universal coverage of locations in very dis-aggregated grid cells, there is no need to standardize the count by area or population. Results are indeed similar with and without standardization.

FIGURE 1: CHRISTIAN FIRST NAMES, CLAIRVOYANCE AND RELIGIOUS NOTABLES IN GERMANY



Note: Panel A shows first-name religiosity name index within counties. Panel B displays our measure of beliefs in clairvoyance. Panel C shows the share of religious individuals among a county's notable people. For ease of exposition, values above 0.5 in Panel C are merged with that interval.

While there are substantial differences in this variable between the North and South of Germany overall, there is also ample, local variation (Figure 1, panel B).

4.3 Religious notables

Two of our measures of Shallow Christianity capture popular beliefs – naming practices and folklore. To also capture the religiosity of elites, we exploit information on the professions of notables from each county. We use the data in Laouenan et al. (2022) to calculate the share of notables in religious professions. We use all notables who died in the period 1900-1930, and allocate them to their place of birth.[25] When a country only produces lawyers and doctors of distinction, but no leading clerics, religiosity is arguably lower. Figure 1, panel C shows the distribution of this measure within Germany. While some areas register very high shares of up to 50%, many others show a share of zero.

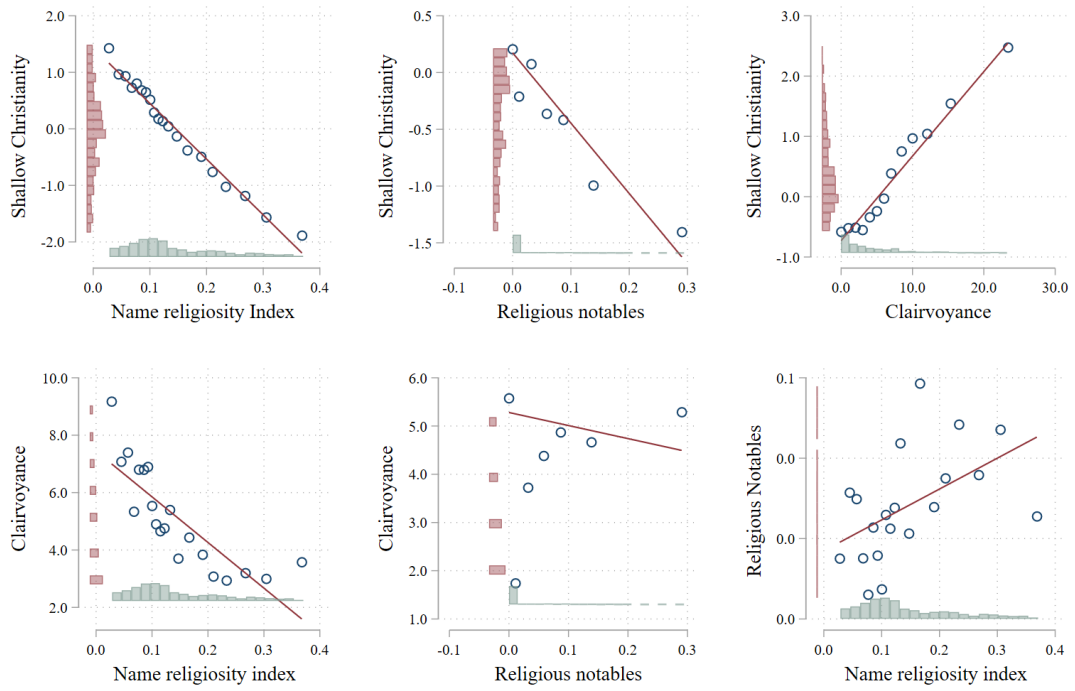
4.4 Summary measure and validation: Gravestone symbols

How plausible a measure of deep-rooted Christian beliefs are our three indicators? And how much do they agree with each other? Figure 2 shows that all three indicators are correlated with each other. Name religiosity at the county level predicts clairvoyance and a higher share of religious notables; religious notables are negatively correlated with clairvoyance. Because our three indicators appear to capture a single underlying dimension in our data, we use the *first principal component* of these three variable as our measure of "Shallow Christianity".

Ideally, these indicators are not only closely related to each other, but reflect an important, independent, and "costly" measure of Christian belief. Symbols on headstones can be used to examine this question (Mill et al. 2024). We use recently compiled data on more than 60,000 graves of people deceased 1900-1930, available for 519 German counties. Since we are missing almost half of all German interwar counties, we are not exploiting this information as a direct indicator – but we can use it to examine the plausibility of our Shallow Christianity index. In places with higher Shallow Christianity according to our index, gravestones are less likely to be decorated by a cross or similar Christian symbols.

[25]The share of religious notables is significantly correlated across time periods; we chose those who died 1900-30 to (a) avoid contamination with post-33 "treatment" and (b) reflect religiosity of elites close to the time of the Nazi takeover.

FIGURE 2: SHALLOW CHRISTIANITY AND ITS COMPONENTS



Note: Binscatter of the three main indicators of 20C religiosity – the Religious Names Index, clairvoyance, and the share of religious notables. The first row plots these against Shallow Christianity the first principal component of these three variables. The second row shows correlations between them.

As Table A.2 shows, shallow Christianity correlates with fewer Christian symbols on headstones. The more Christian naming and religious notables in a location, the fewer the use of religious symbols on graves. Importantly, the lower the fraction of Christian symbols on headstones in the local graveyard, the more support there was for the Nazi party

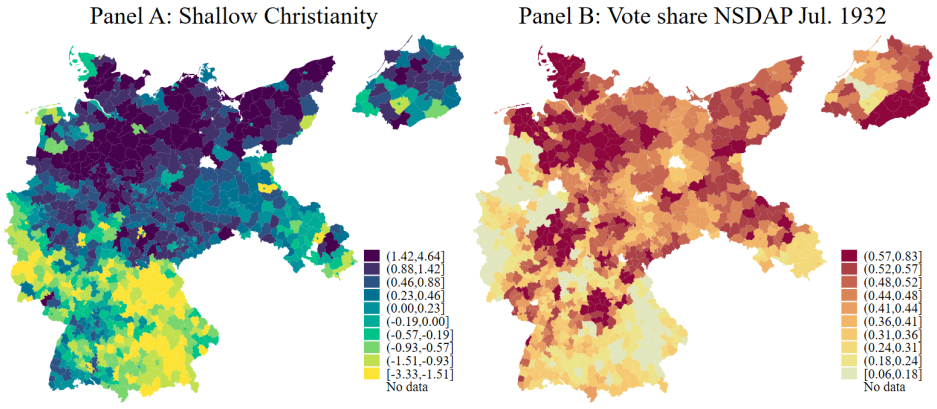
5 Main empirical results

In this section, we examine the link between Shallow Christianity in the interwar period and Nazi support. Starting from bivariate patterns in the data, we move to OLS regressions. We examine the influence of Protestantism, and then explore drivers of Shallow Christianity, based on medieval (Christian) religiosity.

5.1 Basic patterns

Figure 3 compares the geography of Shallow Christianity and of Nazi voting in July 1932, at the peak of the party's electoral success prior to coming to power. It shows a broad pattern of similarity between these two indicators. Counties with "shallower" Christianity and high Nazi vote shares are often in the North and East of the country. However, there is important regional variation within broader regions. In our regressions below, we add province fixed effects to avoid results being driven by aggregate patterns.[26] Figure A.5 in the appendix shows binned values for each measure of Nazi support – seven elections and party entry rates – plotted against Shallow Christianity.

FIGURE 3: MAPS OF SHALLOW CHRISTIANITY & NAZI PARTY VOTES, 7/1932



Note: Data in maps is aggregated and displayed at the county level. A darker blue colour in the first map indicates "shallower" Christianity. A darker red colour in the second map shows a higher NSDAP vote share.

In Table 1, we show our main OLS results, with and without controls. We find highly significant coefficients for the Shallow Christianity index for all elections from 1930 onward, as well as for party entry.[27] When we add controls (panel B), including province fixed effects, results remain highly significant and only decline slightly in size. In 1928, when the Nazi party was small, we find inconsistent coefficients

[26] Adding province fixed effects absorbs 35% of the variation of Shallow Christianity, and 12-18% of the variation of the indicators of Nazi support. Cf. Figure A.4.

[27] While we find a negative, significant coefficient in 1928, the sign reverses in Panel B and turns significant and positive in Panel C. Note that we display p-values, and not standard errors, in parentheses in all regression tables.

across specifications. Tables A.3, panels A-C show corresponding results for each of the constituent parts of our Shallow Christianity measure. How strong is the correlation between Shallow Christianity and Nazi support? We find that every standard deviation increase in Shallow Christianity is associated with an additional 0.17 to 0.4 standard deviations of Nazi support, 1930-33. For the July 1932 election, for example, a one standard deviation increase in shallowness implies going from 39 percent of support for the Nazi party – the sample mean – to 44 percent (Panel A) or 42.6 (Panel B).

Table A.4 examines balance in our data. When comparing areas with above and below median levels of Shallow Christianity, we find that the areas with shallow religiosity are located more in the North and the East. Population density is lower, and the share of blue collar workers is higher. There are many fewer Catholics, and markedly more Protestants; the share of white-collar employees is statistically indistinguishable. Because balance is rejected for many variables, we next conduct a geographic matching exercise.

Panel C shows the results from using a simple nearest neighbor matching estimator to pick, for each location with above median shallowness scores in our dataset, the nearest three neighboring locations with below-median values. On average, these are very close – half of all observations are 37km apart or less, and fully 75% are less than 61km apart. Figure A.6 shows the distribution of locations with above and below median shallowness in our data. While a clear North-South and East-West gradient exists, there is a rich set of areas where both locations are very close to each other. The power of the geographical matching exercise is made clear when we put the correlates from our balance test on the left-hand side: Table A.4 shows that we obtain statistical indistinguishable results under matching for all variables except for population density, share Jewish, and white collar share. We find substantial differences in Nazi support based on geographical matching; voting is 3-6 percentage points higher for 1930 to 1933, as is party entry.

Table 1: OLS Results - Nazi Support and Shallow Christianity

(a) Panel A: No controls

	Vote share NSDAP, all elections							Party entry
	1928	1930	Pres. Mar./Apr. 1932		Jul. 1932	Nov. 1932	1933	1928-32
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Shallow	-0.135***	0.277***	0.278***	0.399***	0.385***	0.329***	0.290***	0.197***
Christianity	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	935	953	938	938	938	877	877	936
R^2	0.018	0.077	0.077	0.159	0.148	0.109	0.084	0.039

(b) Panel B: Full controls and FE

	Vote share NSDAP, all elections							Party entry
	1928	1930	Pres. Mar./Apr. 1932		Jul. 1932	Nov. 1932	1933	1928-32
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Shallow	0.046	0.185***	0.254***	0.262***	0.260***	0.234***	0.234***	0.170***
Christianity	(0.294)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	909	910	898	898	898	849	849	910
R^2	0.288	0.299	0.272	0.331	0.339	0.313	0.349	0.295

(c) Panel C: Nearest-neighbor matching on geography (m=3)

	Vote share NSDAP, all elections							Party entry
	1928	1930	Pres. Mar./Apr. 1932		Jul. 1932	Nov. 1932	1933	1928-32
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Shallow	0.144*	0.220**	0.418***	0.364***	0.308***	0.358***	0.454***	0.213**
Christianity	(0.051)	(0.012)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.028)
N	935	953	938	938	938	877	877	936

Note: p-values in parentheses. Significance indicated by * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Panels A and B: Measures of Nazi sympathy regressed on Shallow Christianity, the first *principal component* of Christian names, clairvoyance and religious notables (1900-1930), with and without controls. The table reports beta coefficients. In the full specification we control for population density, share white collar, share blue collar, and province fixed effects. Panel C: Nearest neighbor matching with 3 nearest neighbors. Treatment: above and below median Shallow Christianity. Matching variables: Latitude and longitude. Panel C coefficients are standardized: the raw ATT is divided by the standard deviation of the outcome, giving effect size equivalents in terms of SD units of the outcome (comparable in scale to the beta coefficients in Panels A and B).

An alternative, simple method to assess relative importance is to use Shapley values from a machine learning exercise. We predict Nazi voting in July 1932 using random forest estimation. Then, we calculate a measure of importance from the

Shapley values, derived from changes in the RMSE of the prediction of models that either contain or do not contain the variable in question (Schonlau and Zou 2020). Figure A.7 in the Appendix shows the result. We find that both geographical variables and province fixed effects exhibit significant predictive power. Shallow Christianity is the fourth-strongest predictor of Nazi voting in our sample, ahead of the occupational composition of the workforce and population density.

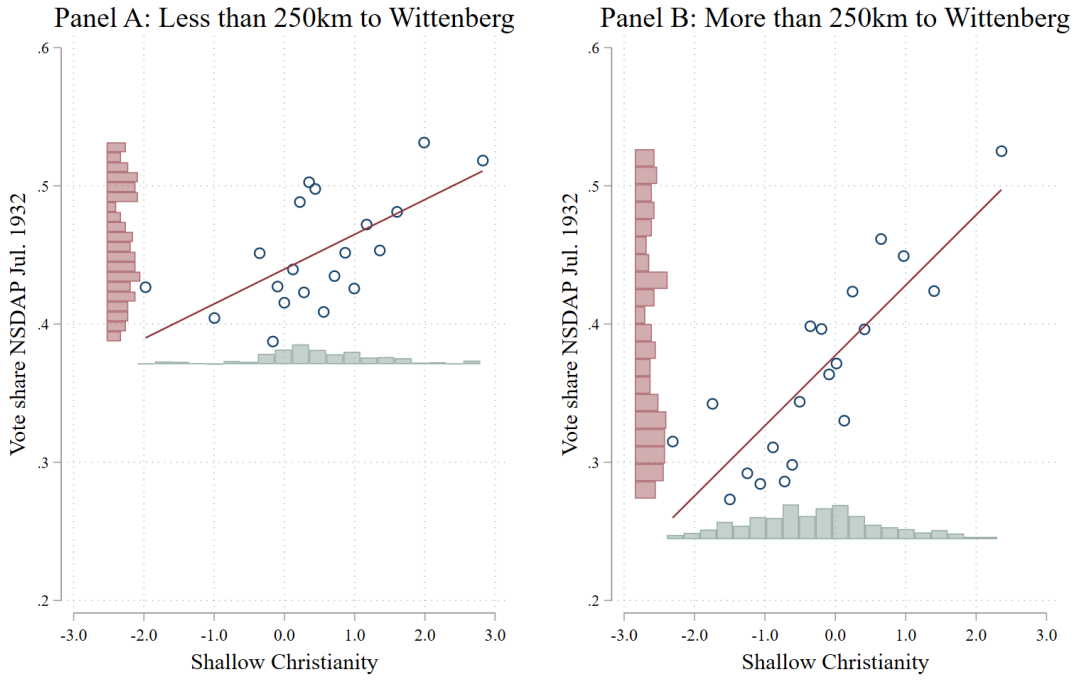
5.2 The Role of Protestantism

Protestantism is the strongest single predictor of Nazi voting (Spenkuch and Tillmann 2018) – it has greater predictive power than any economic or other demographic variable. At the same time, Protestantism is strongly correlated with Shallow Christianity. Figure A.8, Panel A, shows how much Shallow Christianity and the share of Protestants in 1925 correlate. This is an important feature of our data: Protestantism spread first and more rapidly in areas where Christianity arrived late, was not firmly rooted and faced opposition from pre-existing pagan beliefs. Throughout Europe, areas that converted late to Christianity were much more likely to become Protestant. The further a location is to a medieval monastery (panel B), the later the nearest monastery was founded (panel C), and the closer it is to a place of pagan worship (panel D), the higher the share of Protestants in the population in 1925. Econometrically, this makes the share of Protestants a "bad control" for our analysis: The same factors that determined the spread of Protestantism – the late arrival of the Catholic Church – also influence the strength of religious practices in interwar Germany. Here, we examine the role of Protestantism in three steps.

First, in Table 2, Panel A, we control for the share of Protestants directly. As expected when adding a bad control, this absorbs a large part of the variation. We still find positive coefficients for 7 elections from 1930-33 and for party entry; and significant effects for March 1932, July 1932, March 1933, and for party entry.

Next, we examine the effect of Shallow Christianity in a part of Germany where the adoption of Protestantism reflects historical accident, not deep-rooted historical factors. We stratify by distance to Wittenberg, where Martin Luther started the Protestant Reformation (Becker and Woessmann 2009, Cantoni 2012).

FIGURE 4: NAZI VOTING AND SHALLOW CHRISTIANITY - 2 SAMPLES



Note: The graph shows binscatters for all counties in our dataset, for locations with a distance of up to 250km (left panel) and over 250km (right panel). The figure show shows that, even in the heartland of Protestantism, Shallow Christianity is closely associated with Nazi voting.

Figure 4 shows binscatters of Nazi voting against the share of Christian first names, close to Wittenberg (<250 km) or far away. Even within the area of exogenously induced conversion, close to Wittenberg, the share of Christian names is a strong predictor of Nazi voting, and the slope associated with it is not different from that in the rest of the sample. Note that this is an area of exceptionally high Protestant presence – within 250km of Wittenberg, the median share of Protestants in our sample is 92.2%.[28] Figure A.9 in the Appendix generalizes this approach, and compares binscatters of Nazi voting against Shallow Christianity for areas that are overwhelmingly Protestant (>75%) or overwhelmingly Catholic. For both groups, there is a clear, positive relationship between Nazi support and Shallow Christianity.

Panels B of Table 2 presents results using distance to Wittenberg as a control. Even after including this proxy for Protestantism, Shallowness of Christianity predicts Nazi voting, with significance and magnitude of the coefficient barely changing.

[28]Protestantism and distance to Wittenberg are highly, inversely correlated ($\rho = -0.44$), but Nazi voting and distance to Wittenberg are not ($\rho = -0.06$ for the election result in 1933, for example). This suggests that the *exogenous* component of Protestantism is not strongly correlated with Nazi voting.

Table 2: OLS — Nazi Support, Shallow Christianity and Protestantism

	Vote share NSDAP, all elections						Party entry
	1928	1930	Pres. Elect. Mar./Apr. 1932	Jul. 1932	Nov. 1932	1933	1928–32
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Panel A: Share Protestant								
Shallow Christianity	−0.279***	−0.050	−0.108***	−0.029	−0.060**	−0.087***	−0.060*	−0.034
	(0.000)	(0.115)	(0.000)	(0.236)	(0.011)	(0.002)	(0.059)	(0.338)
Share Protestant 1925	0.269***	0.601***	0.710***	0.792***	0.825***	0.773***	0.650***	0.428***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	918	936	921	921	923	875	875	936
R^2	0.070	0.331	0.434	0.603	0.630	0.532	0.384	0.168
Panel B: Distance to Wittenberg								
Shallow Christianity	−0.170***	0.246***	0.244***	0.350***	0.343***	0.296***	0.295***	0.156***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Distance to Wittenberg	−0.120***	−0.105***	−0.115***	−0.165***	−0.142***	−0.118***	0.016	−0.137***
	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.641)	(0.000)
N	935	953	938	938	938	877	877	936
R^2	0.031	0.087	0.089	0.184	0.166	0.121	0.085	0.056

Note: p-values in parentheses. Significance indicated by * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Note: Measures of Nazi sympathy regressed on Shallow Christianity — the *principal component analysis* of Christian names, clairvoyance and religious notables (1900–1930). Panel A: no controls, no fixed effects, controlling for the share of Protestants. Panel B: no controls, no fixed effects, controlling for distance to Wittenberg. The table reports standardised beta coefficients.

5.3 Drivers of Shallow Christianity: Reduced form evidence

Shallow Christianity was not randomly assigned. At the same time, there are few instruments with a plausible exclusion restriction – whatever drove the early conversion to Christendom likely affected a host of other variables as well.

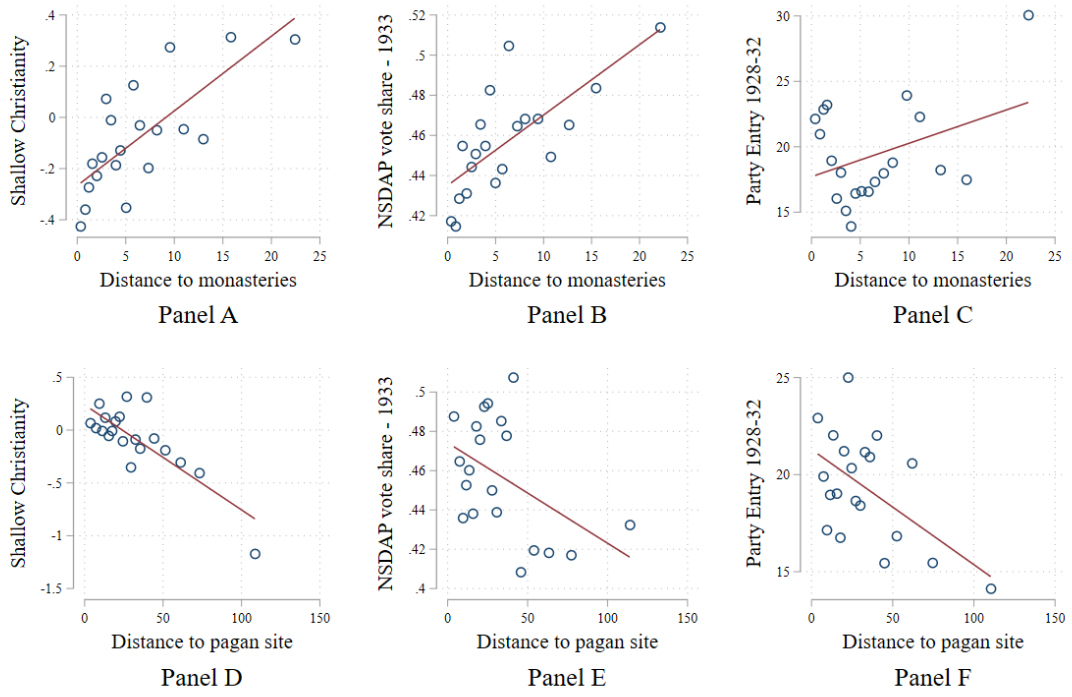
To examine the co-movement with deeper parameters that plausibly affected the spread of Christianity, we present reduced form regressions. We use two main variables – distance to pre-1500 monasteries, and distance to sites of ancient pagan worship.

In Germany as elsewhere, monasteries were a key driving force of Christianization, especially outside the formerly Roman areas. In Figure 5, we binscatter the Shallow Christianity index against the distance to the closest monastery. As Panel A shows, there is a strong, highly significant relationship between Shallow Christianity and proximity to a pre-1500 monastery. We also find a strong reduced-form relationship with Nazi voting, using the 1933 election as an example; the pattern is near-identical for other elections. The same is visible for party entry. Interestingly, the time since the founding of the nearest monastery within 50km is also strongly predictive of name religiosity, and more broadly, of Shallow Christianity (Figure A.10). This means that the longer an area was exposed to a monastery in relatively close proximity, the more religious it was by the 1930s.

In addition, conversion was slower and more difficult in places where the local population was strongly associated with pagan beliefs. One way to proxy for the strength of these beliefs is to use archaeological information on places of pagan worship. These include sites where sacrifices (including human sacrifices) took place, as well as locations with ritual symbols and structures. Our assumption is that, where pagan rituals were held for centuries prior to the arrival of Christianity, the latter's hold over the minds of worshipers was potentially weaker. Figure 5 shows how strongly proximity of pagan worship sites predicts Shallow Christianity; it is also highly correlated with Nazi voting and membership entry rates (Panels D-F).[29]

[29]Note that as Panel D in Figure A.8 shows, distance to nearest pagan shrine is also strongly and negatively correlated with Protestantism.

FIGURE 5: SHALLOW CHRISTIANITY, NAZI SUPPORT AND MEDIEVAL DRIVERS OF RELIGIOSITY



Note: Binscatters of Shallow Christianity (Panels A and D) and measures of Nazi support (Panels B, C, E, F) on distance to nearest pre-1500 monastery (row 1) and nearest place of pagan worship (row 2). All data at the county level. Data is restricted to counties within the geographical boundaries of modern Germany. Rate of party entry is per 10,000 inhabitants.

Section 4.1 already showed that areas with more Shallow Christianity were more likely to support the Nazi party. We now use our two measures of medieval religiosity in a reduced form setting.[30] Table 3, Panel A shows the results.[31] With the exception of the 1928 election, we find significant, large effects of distances to pagan places of worship (negative) and to monasteries (positive), ranging from beta coefficients of 0.08 to 0.17 (for monastery distance) and -0.1 to -0.25 (for distance to pagan sites). As in the OLS, we do not find consistent, significant effects on voting in 1928, when the party had only just returned to the polls after a long period of illegality (and only received 2.6% of the overall vote).[32]

[30]One might be tempted to use the Roman Limes in a spatial RDD, to build on the contrast between grass-roots and top-down Christianization. In fact we find consistently less Shallow Christianity, and less support for the Nazi Party, in the areas conquered by Rome (see Table A.5). This is consistent with our main results. However, the identification assumptions for using a 2,000 year-old border seem too daunting.

[31]Note that the number of observations in the RF evidence is slightly smaller because we only use locations in Germany in its modern borders (the pagan site indicator is not systematically available for former German territories).

[32]In other words, the component of Nazi support driven by Shallow Christianity reflects broader,

Table 3: Nazi Support and Shallow Christianity – RF Estimates

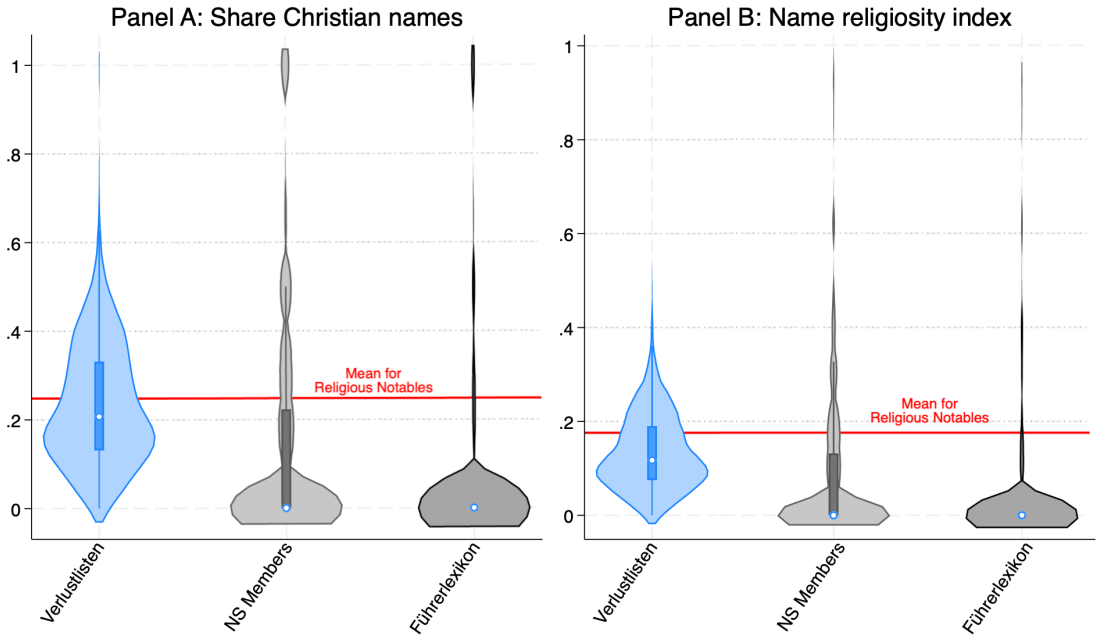
	Vote share NSDAP, all elections							Party entry
	1928	1930	Pres. Elect. Mar./Apr. 1932		Jul. 1932	Nov. 1932	1933	1928–32
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Distance to medieval monastery	-0.024	0.076**	0.177***	0.179***	0.148***	0.145***	0.169***	0.096***
	(0.496)	(0.027)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.005)
Distance to pagan place	0.018	-0.111***	-0.187***	-0.253***	-0.252***	-0.241***	-0.126***	-0.103***
	(0.607)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.003)
N	827	846	829	829	830	782	782	842
R^2	0.001	0.017	0.062	0.090	0.080	0.074	0.041	0.018

Note: p-values in parentheses. Significance: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Measures of Nazi sympathy regressed on distances to monasteries and to places of pagan worship. Since the latter are only available for modern-day Germany, we restrict the sample to these locations.

5.4 Individual-level Evidence: Christian First Names and Nazi Party Membership

So far, we have used Christian first names at the county level, for the population as a whole. Now, we exploit the fact that names are specific to individuals, and examine whether people who joined the Nazi party had less Christian first names. Do Nazi Party members *within any given location* have less Christian names? Our hypothesis predicts that Christian upbringing, as reflected in family names, reduces involvement with and commitment to the Nazi ideology. Using within-municipality variation allows us to sidestep any potential concerns about spatial correlation.[33] Additionally, we can analyze whether these patterns hold all the more for *leading* Nazis.

FIGURE 6: CHRISTIAN NAME DISTRIBUTIONS IN THE GENERAL POPULATION AND AMONG NAZIS



Note: The panels compare the religiosity of Nazi first names with the general population at the county level using a "violin plot". The central dot represents the median; the thick bar in the center represents the inter-quartile range. Panel A shows the distributions of the share of Christian names. Panel B shows the distribution of the Religiosity Names Index. The distribution in the general population is taken from the roll of WWI casualties, the "Verlustlisten." Names of NSDAP members stem from party entry records, and names of leading Nazis come from the Führerlexikon (1934).

We first analyze naming practices for Nazi Party members and compare them

public appeal – and not the"hard core" support of the party's early years.

[33]We examine the issue of spatial correlation separately in the robustness section.

with the general population. In Figure 6, left panel, we calculate averages of the share of Christian first names by county for the German population—defined as names found on churches—as a whole (taken from the roll of WW1 casualties), for Nazi party members, and Nazi leaders. We compare this with the share of religious names among religious notables. The right panel repeats the exercise using name religiosity.

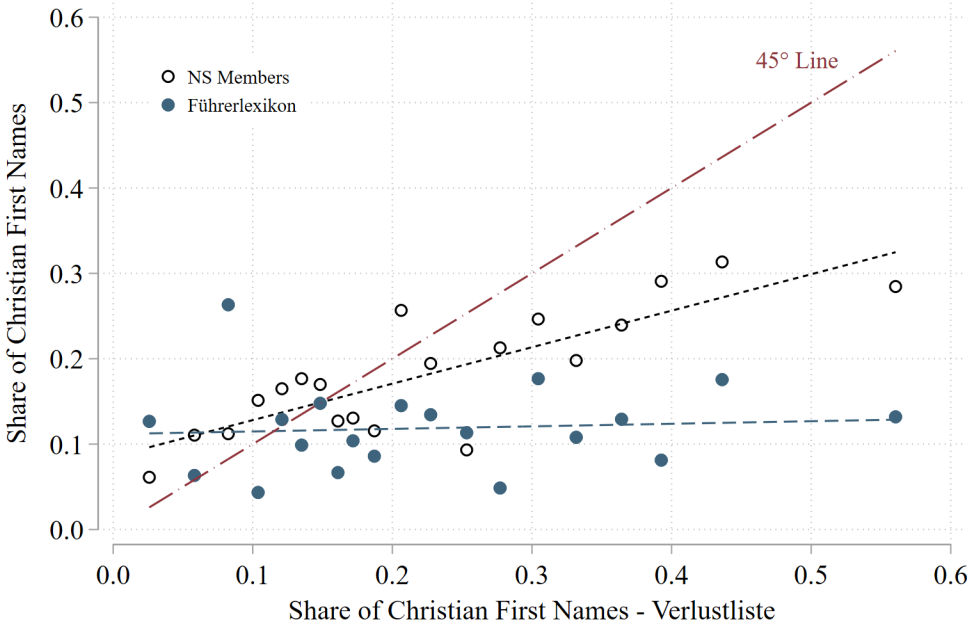
As is immediately apparent, religious notables had a higher share of Christian names than the general population – especially when we use the name religiosity index, where the value of 0.18 is equivalent to the 75th percentile of the overall distribution. In turn, Nazi party members were less likely to have Christian first names than the average German. The same pattern can be seen in the right panel, which uses the Religious Names Index.

The different distributions in Figure 6 could reflect different geographical origins of Nazi party members and the general population. If Nazis overwhelmingly came from areas with low shares of Christian first names, these patterns may not necessarily indicate that they come from *families* with lower commitment to the Christian church than other, similar, compatriots, in the same location.

In Figure 7, we compare religiosity by Nazi affiliation within each county. We binscatter the share of Christian first names among Nazi party members, county by county, against the share of Christian first names in the general population. Observations along the 45° line would indicate that Nazi members are as likely to have Christian first names as the population in their county of residence. For the vast majority of counties, we find points below the 45° line, suggesting below-average Christian naming practices. Nazi party leaders are even less likely to have Christian first names. Table A.6 shows the size and significance of the statistical patterns. Independent of specification, the share of Christian names or the religiosity of Nazi names responds much less than 1:1 to higher local levels of Christian name prevalence/religiosity of names. For Nazi leaders' names, there is no association with local naming practices.

In the overwhelming majority of municipalities, Nazis are much less likely to have a religious name than the general population. These results – at the individual level, effectively controlling for location fixed effects – strongly suggest that religiosity, as reflected in naming conventions, is a clear, negative predictor of Nazi involvement.

FIGURE 7: NAME RELIGIOSITY BY LOCATION – GENERAL POPULATION AND NAZI PARTY MEMBERS



Note: Share of Christian names among Nazi party members and persons listed in *Das deutsche Führerlexikon* compared to the share in the general population. Data is at the county level. The area below the 45° line shows a lower share of Christian names among Nazis than in the general population.

6 Support for Italian Fascism

Germany was not the only country to fall victim to totalitarian rule during the interwar period. In particular, Italy became a fascist dictatorship under Benito Mussolini in the 1920s already. In this section, we examine the extent to which the patterns we find in Germany generalize to the second important fascist dictatorship in interwar Europe – the Italian case.[34]

6.1 The Rise of the Fascist Party in Italy

The Partito Nazionale Fascista (National Fascist Party) was founded in 1921, and grew out of a paramilitary organization, the Fasces of Combat founded by Benito Mussolini in 1919. The party ran on a nationalist platform, promoting a return to Roman greatness by incorporating additional areas into Italy, as well as colonial expansion abroad. Economically, it promoted a corporatist agenda, aiming to

[34]The Spanish case is arguably different. While the Falange had some popular support, it was a military putsch, not electoral success, that brought Franco to power.

overcome the class antagonism between workers and employers.

The party systematically fought the socialist party across the country; its paramilitary, known as blackshirts, soon controlled the Po Valley. In the 1921 elections, the Fasci had received 7% of the popular vote. In 1922, with support of the army and large parts of the business elite and the bourgeoisie, Mussolini marched on Rome with 30,000 blackshirts. The King handed him power on 31 October 1922, appointing Mussolini as head of the government.

As in the German case, Italian fascism made aggressive use of symbols, signs, rituals, and myths. All have a quasi-religious dimension. The 1922 regulations for blackshirts exhort him to serve *"Italy in purity, his spirit ... pervaded by profound mysticism, subject to an immutable faith... sacrifice is the ultimate aim of his faith; he is convinced of the weight of his terrible apostleship..."*(Gentile 1996, p.19). Purity, a mystic spirit, immutable faith, and apostleship are not political categories; they are religious ones. This was deliberate. In 1920, Mussolini wrote of the need to "give Italians a 'religious concept of the nation'... to lay the foundations of Italian greatness." (Gentile 1996, p.21).

Just as in Germany, the Italian fascist party – and above all, its paramilitary squads – celebrated their flag with religious fervor. Flags were consecrated for the movements by its leaders; Aldo Finzi, a fascist MP, wrote to the recipients of such a flag (Gentile 1996): *"A flag is always a symbol of faith, and above all of sacred duty... When with indomitable ardor I blessed it, I felt a religious sense that the mission of Italianhood contained in that symbol would be pursued by all of you with purity."*

The cult of the fallen was central to the quasi-religious rites. One year prior to the "March on Rome", the entombment of the Unknown Soldier had been organized as a quasi-religious ritual (with major participation of the fascist party) . The coffin was moved by rail; wherever it passed, large crowd were kneeling by the tracks. A pamphlet of the fascist party in 1923 described memorials for fallen comrades in moving terms: *"A militia, which faces death on command... offering [life] as a sacrifice, has a true sense of that mystery which is the basic theme of religion, affirming truths that ... are dogmas of a faith."* (Gentile 1996, p.26). The names of dead fascists would be called out during public roll calls; the attending masses would then shout 'present', suggesting their metaphysical attendance. Martyrs of the movements were central to its celebration of sacrifice for the good of the nation; Gentile describes the roll call as 'the supreme rite of Fascism, the principal testimony to [its] religiousness.' In the Casa Littoria, headquarter of the Fascist Movement, a 'chapel' contained an eternal flame commemorating its fallen comrades.

By the early 1930s, the fascist regime sought to blend its legitimacy with that of the Church. In 1933, the 11th anniversary of Mussolini coming to power was celebrated with nighttime projections of the Duce's image on the Cathedral of Milan. Followers of the Duce also used religious language copiously: One convert to fascism described how he *"joined the Fascist party out of a sense of duty and in the flush of a religious enthusiasm..."*; another saw fascism as a way to resolve *"an age-old spiritual problem: how to discover a faith that would arouse history in a personal way..."* (Gentile 1996, p. 57). By the same token, critics of fascism realized its religious dimension immediately. In 1923, Giovanni Amendola wrote: *"The possession of power is not enough for fascism: it needs to possess the private conscience of all its citizens, it demands the 'conversion' of Italians. ... Fascism makes the same claims as a religion. ... Fascism has the supreme ambitions and inhuman intolerance of a religious crusade."*(Gentile 2006, p. 33).

6.2 Name Secularity and Fascist Support in Italy

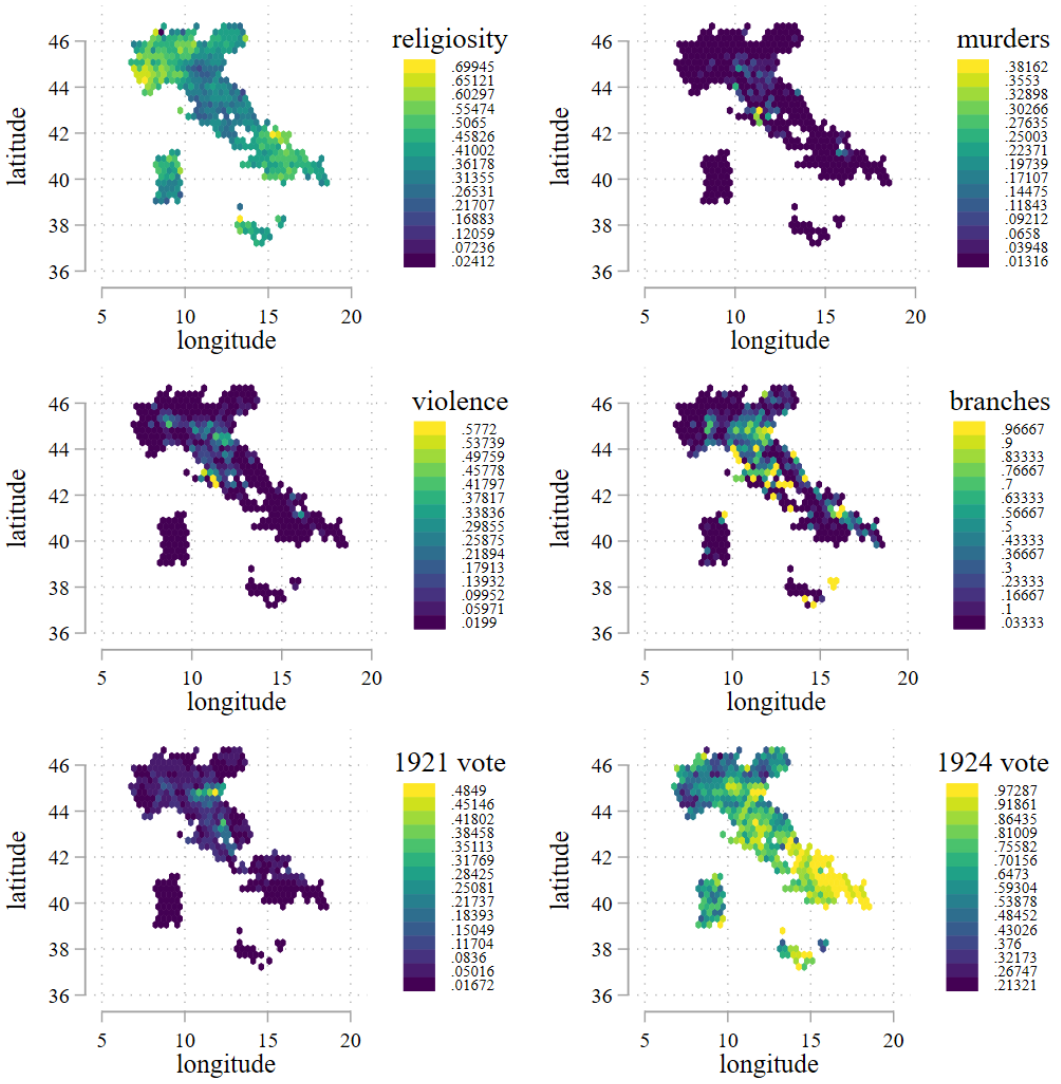
Not all data sources used in the German case are available for Italy. We focus on name religiosity, derived from data on Italy's fallen during WWI ("Caduti"). While some areas had as few as 2.4% religious first names, the average is higher than 40%; the most religious communities registered almost 70% of Christian first names (i.e. those on medieval Italian churches). Figure 8, panel A, shows the distribution of name religiosity. We use the same measure as before. Note that there is no particular North-South gradient. While some areas stand out – like parts of Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany with low rates of religious first names – we find pockets of high religiosity in both the North and the South.

We use five main indicators of support for the Fascist movement: vote shares in 1921 and 1924, the presence of Fascist party offices, and the geography of political violence including murders in the early 1920s (Acemoglu et al. 2022). Figure 8 gives an overview. While the vote distribution in 1924 shows the familiar North-South gradient characteristic of many outcomes in Italy, the other panels show no such patterns. There is stronger support in 1921 in the Po valley for the fascists, and the Northern industrial areas contain numerous branches, but so does the middle of the country; political murders were mainly centered on the area between Rome and Milan.

In Table 4, we analyze these patterns quantitatively. Panel A reports simple OLS regressions; Panel B a saturated specification with controls and fixed effects. We find large and positive effects of Shallow Christianity on all outcome variables except for political murders in the saturated specification. The coefficient on 1924 voting,

for example, implies that moving from the 25th to the 75th percentile of shallowness is associated with a change in fascist voting of 4 percentage points, equivalent to 15% of a standard deviation. The equivalent figure for 1921 is 1.3 percentage points and 19% of a standard deviation.

FIGURE 8: OUTCOME MEASURES - FASCIST SUPPORT - ITALY



Note: The six panels show a) the religiosity of first names, b) fascist political murders in the run-up to the 'March on Rome', c) the distribution of political violence, d) the location of Fascist party branches, e) 1921 Fascist party vote shares, f) 1924 Fascist party vote shares.

Table 4: Shallow Christianity and Fascist Support in Italy

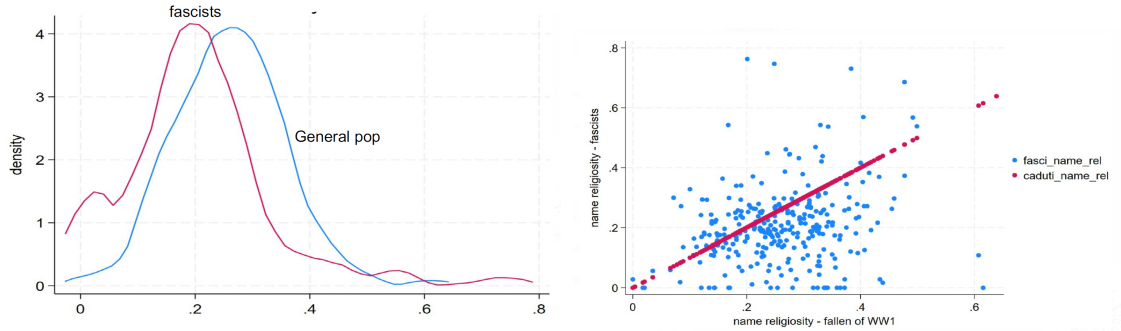
	Dependent variable				
	violence	murders	branches	1921-votes	1924-votes
Panel A: OLS					
Name Secularity	0.151***	0.057***	0.694***	0.123***	0.372***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Constant	0.073***	0.023***	0.290***	0.077***	0.697***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Observations	5,775	5,775	5,775	5,358	5,775
Controls	No	No	No	No	No
Fixed effects	No	No	No	No	No
Panel B: OLS with controls and fixed effects					
Name Secularity	0.052**	0.013	0.291***	0.047***	0.189***
	(0.016)	(0.265)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Population density	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	−0.000***
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)
Share of day laborers in 1921	0.272***	0.065***	0.503***	0.151***	0.586***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Industrial workers	0.024***	0.005	0.144***	−0.001	−0.072***
over male population in 1911	(0.009)	(0.140)	(0.000)	(0.768)	(0.000)
Constant	−0.010	−0.001	0.063***	0.028***	0.544***
	(0.294)	(0.815)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Observations	5,775	5,775	5,775	5,358	5,775
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: p-values in parentheses. Significance indicated by * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Note: Measures of fascist support regressed on name secularity— 1-name religiosity—with and without controls/fixed effects. In the full specification we control for population density, share of day laborers in 1921, share of industrial workers over male population in 1911, and region fixed effects.

6.3 Local Naming Patterns in Italy

As in the German case, we can compare names of fascist party members and the Italian population at large within each community. We only have data on local fascist party members for two provinces, Torino and Arezzo. Figure 9 shows (panel A) that fascists, on average, were less likely to have Christian names than the population at large; the difference is substantial, with the median share of Christian names among fascists below 20%, compared with a median of 30% in the population at large. Panel B shows that this is true within locations in our dataset. The x-axis indicates the share of Christian names in any one location; the blue dots reflect the share of Christian names for fascist party members for that location. The red dots form the 45 degree line, where Christian names are equally frequent in both groups. The share of Christian names varied widely; independent of the aggregate level, fascists were markedly *less* likely to have a Christian name than the local 'norm'.

FIGURE 9: NAME RELIGIOSITY BY LOCATION – GENERAL POPULATION AND FASCIST PARTY MEMBERS



Note: Panel A: Share of Christian names among Italian fascist party members compared to the share in the general population. Panel B: Religiosity of names of fascist party members and the population, by location. Data is at the county level. The area below the 45° line represents locations where Christian names were more rare among Italian fascists than in the general population in the same location.

7 Robustness and alternative interpretations

In this section, we demonstrate the robustness of our results and examine whether our findings survive the inclusion of a set of alternative controls used in the literature. We also examine the role of spatial error correlation, the importance of outliers, and we perform permutation tests to validate statistical significance.

7.1 Alternative explanations and additional controls

The rise of the Nazi party has attracted substantial scholarly attention in recent years. To what extent does Shallow Christianity constitute a separate, additional explanation? Or does it simply reflect other, already-examined variables? We focus on three types of variables: medieval pogroms (Voigtländer and Voth 2012, Becker and Pascali 2019), the presence of the Danat Bank (Doerr et al. 2022), Germany's second-largest bank that collapsed during the 1931 banking crisis, and the density of clubs and associations (Satyanath, Voigtländer and Voth 2017). In Table 5 we add these variables to the basic regression setup from Table 1, one at a time. Each line in Table 5 shows the coefficient on Shallow Christianity for a different election/entry rate; the first row is the baseline from Table 1. We then report how the coefficients on Shallow Christianity change as we add pogroms, bank exposure, or a measure of social capital. Coefficient sizes and significance are remarkably stable.

We find that the coefficient of interest, Shallow Christianity, is largely unchanged when we add variables capturing alternative drivers of Nazi support. This should not be surprising. Many papers in this literature have focused on explanations that vary at the level of towns and cities, such as big bank exposure. One of the advantages of our approach is that, instead of focusing on municipalities, we analyze counties. This allows us to say something also about the countryside, where a significant share of Nazi supporters lived. Here, much of the sample is not affected by the explanatory variables used in earlier studies. For example, most counties had neither a Jewish presence in the Middle Ages nor big banks in the interwar years because they were too small and not densely populated enough. The same logic applies to associations, which only become more common above a certain population size. It is therefore unsurprising that the effect of Shallow Christianity remains largely unaffected when controlling for these additional explanatory variables.[35]

7.2 Spatial errors

Our analysis is based on cross-sectional differences in Shallow Christianity and Nazi support. Spatial auto-correlation can lead to understated standard errors. We first examine the extent to which our data exhibit spatial auto-correlation, and then adjust standard errors using the Conley and Müller-Watson corrections.

In Figure A.11 we show Moran's I statistic for three main variables: Nazi voting

[35] Table A.7 shows further evidence of coefficient stability of Shallow Christianity when controlling for a series of geographic distance variables (e.g distance to river, canal, railway, airfield, as well as latitude and longitude.

TABLE 5: ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS

	Vote share NSDAP, all elections							Party entry
	1928	1930	Pres. Mar./Apr. 1932		Jul. 1932	Nov. 1932	1933	1928-32
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Baseline	0.046	0.185***	0.254***	0.262***	0.260***	0.234***	0.234***	0.170***
	(0.294)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Pogrom 1347-9	0.051	0.189***	0.259***	0.268***	0.265***	0.238***	0.236***	0.172***
	(0.245)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Sum pogroms	0.044	0.184***	0.252***	0.260***	0.258***	0.230***	0.233***	0.168***
	(0.317)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Danat exposure	-0.027	0.246**	0.273***	0.197**	0.226**	0.244**	0.280***	0.193*
	(0.743)	(0.015)	(0.006)	(0.036)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.002)	(0.081)
All clubs p.c.	0.144*	0.306***	0.359***	0.367***	0.367***	0.388***	0.414***	0.153*
	(0.085)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.082)

Note: p-values in parentheses. Significance: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Each entry in the table is the coefficient on *Shallow Christianity*. Row 1 shows coefficients from the baseline specification in Table 1, Panel B, controlling for province fixed effects and other covariates. Each row uses an alternative, additional explanatory variable (not reported) – we report the coefficient on Shallow Christianity when this additional explanatory variable is included in the OLS regressions. Pogrom 1349: dummy for medieval pogroms Voigtländer and Voth (2012). Any pogrom: pogrom incidence 1400s-1900s Becker and Pascali (2019). Danatbank exposure: county's exposure to Danatbank's failure Doerr et al. (2022). Density of associations Satyanath, Voigtländer and Voth (2017).

in July 1932, Shallow Christianity, and distance to medieval monasteries, at a range of distances (from 100km to 1,000km). The left panel shows the pattern without fixed effects; the right panel with fixed effects. In the un-transformed data, spatial dependence is lowest for Nazi voting, and highest for medieval religiosity. Some spatial dependence remains substantial at distances of up to 400km. As in our regressions, we add fixed effects (Panel B). Spatial errors fall dramatically, and at a distance of 200km, there is no remaining evidence of spatial dependance.

We also implement the spatial unit root tests of (Müller and Watson 2024). Table A.8 shows that with the exception of the NSDAP 1928, all our dependent variables are likely to contain a spatial unit root.

To examine how much standard errors are affected by auto-correlation, we use the methods in Colella et al. (2023) and in Müller and Watson (2024) (using the Stata implementations in Becker, Boll and Voth (2026)). Table A.9 shows the specifications in Table 1, with and without full controls, using the Conley correction. For Nazi voting, we find highly significant results independent of the assumed distance cut-off. For membership entry, we obtain somewhat larger standard errors. All previously significant coefficients remain significant at the 5% level or better.

Because the Müller-Watson test for strong spatial dependence rejects the null of stationarity for almost all our variables, we transform the dependent variable and re-estimate our regressions. Table A.10 reports the results. We find slightly larger standard errors in the basic specification, analogous to 1, Panel A; significance overall is not affected. For the fully saturated specification from 1, Panel B, we find *smaller* standard errors for seven of the eight outcome variables we use (party entry being the exception).

Note that when we repeat this exercise for the Italian case, we find less evidence of spatial unit roots (Table A.11). Corrections with Conley standard errors (Table A.12) or the MW-procedure (Table A.13) leave our substantial conclusions unaffected, except in the basic specification for political violence and fascist branches. With MW-correction, political murders in the full specification are no longer significant (as in our saturated baseline).

7.3 Permutation tests

While we have taken care to estimate coefficients with conservative, saturated specifications using province fixed effects, it is possible that the assumptions underlying asymptotic statistics are not fully satisfied in our case. In particular, we might be understating standard errors. To examine this possibility, we perform permutation tests in the spirit of Young (2019).

Table A.14 gives the results. We perform a Monte Carlo simulation, permuting observations 1,000 times and recording the number of regressions where the coefficient on Shallow Christianity is greater than the one using actual data under OLS (reported as c). Except for the 1928 election, which is never significant in our analysis, there are no cases of permuted data showing a stronger t-statistic than the one we obtain using actual data.

7.4 Outlier analysis

Are outliers driving our results? We first re-estimate the basic regression in Table 1 using robust regressions as in Li (1985). These first drop all observations with a Cook's distance greater 1 and then perform Huber and biweight iterations. Results are reported in Figure A.12 for all election results. We find that OLS and robust regression results are near-identical for all dependent variables.

It is also possible that a single province is behind the statistical results presented so far. We first plot raw averages for Nazi support for below/above median levels of Shallow Christianity, in each province/state (Figure A.13). While the high shallowness areas do not *always* register higher levels of Nazi support, this is still overwhelmingly the case in our data. The only exception is the 1928 election. To demonstrate that statistical results are not driven by a single province, we drop one province at a time and re-estimate the baseline regression in Table 1. Figure A.14 shows the results. While coefficients change slightly with the sample, no single province is driving our results.

8 Conclusion

> *"Choosing Hitler was not an act of political decision, not the choice of a known programme or ideology; it was simply joining a quasi-religious mass movement as an act of faith."*
>
> – Walter Laqueur 1962

The Nazi Party never won an absolute majority, but from 1932 onward it was the largest party in Germany. Why did millions follow Hitler in the 1930s? Classical explanations centered on economic distress and unemployment do not go far: most unemployed voters supported the Communists, not the Nazis (Falter 1991, Brey and Facchini 2024).

We examine a different mechanism: the idea that totalitarian movements succeed where traditional religion is weak."Political religion" theorists argued that modern

dictatorships filled a spiritual void (Voegelin 1939, Gentile 2006, Arendt 1951). We test this using three independent measures of Shallow Christianity: superstitious belief in clairvoyance from a unique anthropological survey, the share of notables in religious occupations, and the religiosity of first names.

We measure superstition directly: Belief in clairvoyance is strongly associated with support for the Nazi Party and with joining the movement. Naming patterns tell the same story: places with fewer Christian first names voted more for the Nazis, produced Nazi members with less religious names, and Nazi leaders were even less likely to carry them. Our third measure – how many members of local elites entered religious professions – points in the same direction. A common factor across the three variables——Shallow Christianity——strongly predicts Nazi voting and party entry, even after accounting for Protestantism.

Why did the depth of Christian roots differ so much across German regions? Two very different modes of conversion shaped Europe: slow, voluntary conversion in late antiquity, and rapid, often violent conversion in the Middle Ages. Germany displays huge variation in both timing (300–1300 AD) and mechanism. Monasteries played a central role in medieval Christianization, especially in the North and East. We use distance to pre-1500 monasteries and proximity to pagan cult sites as historical drivers of how deeply Christianity took hold. Where pagan centers were close and monasteries distant, Christianity was weaker. These places later show higher levels of Shallow Christianity.

The Nazi movement's quasi-religious character exploited this vacuum. The party created rituals, martyrs, sacred symbols, and a cult around Hitler as "redeemer". Historians have long noted this, but treated it mainly as rhetoric. Our results show that these features were most strongly associated with Nazi support where traditional Christianity had shallow roots. Hitler's "charisma"—in Weber's sense of magical authority—resonated most in places where supernatural claims carried weight and established religion was less influential.

The pattern is not unique to German fascism. Italian fascists there were also less likely to have Christian first names, and areas with fewer Christian first names showed markedly higher voting for the *fascisti*.

In combination, our evidence points to an important element behind fascist mass support: a long-standing spiritual emptiness in large parts of Germany. The Nazis rejected Christian morality and offered powerful substitute beliefs. Nominal Christianity remained widespread, but much of the educated middle class had long embraced a secular worldview. Where Christianity arrived late and never developed deep roots, people were more open to new forms of faith. The same counties that

turned to the Nazis had earlier embraced the Reformation. Protestant susceptibility to Nazism was likely not driven by Lutheran doctrine itself, but by a common underlying factor: shallow, weakly internalized Christianity.

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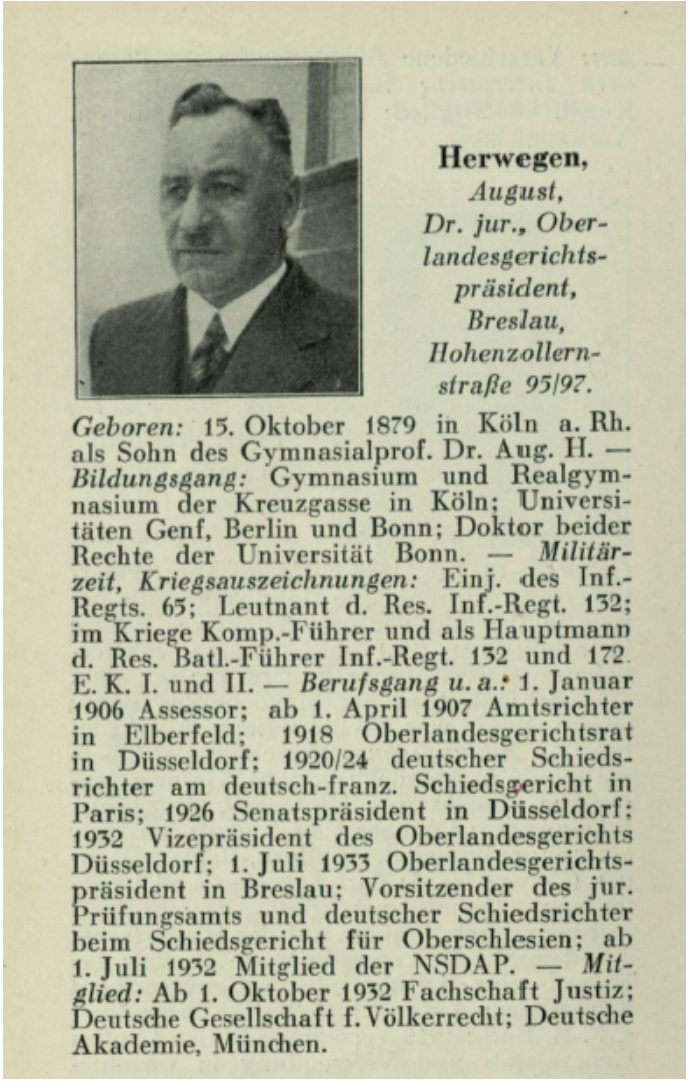
Online Appendix

Figures

FIGURE A.1: SAMPLE ENTRY: FÜHRERLEXIKON

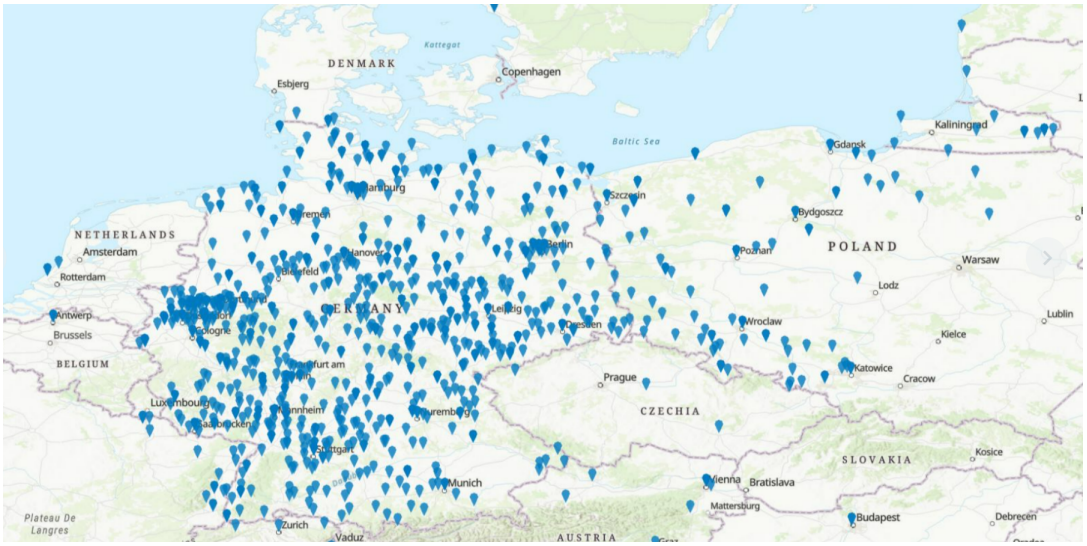


Herwegen,
August,
Dr. jur., Oberlandesgerichtspräsident,
Breslau,
Hohenzollernstraße 95/97.

Geboren: 15. Oktober 1879 in Köln a. Rh. als Sohn des Gymnasialprof. Dr. Aug. H. — *Bildungsgang:* Gymnasium und Realgymnasium der Kreuzgasse in Köln; Universitäten Genf, Berlin und Bonn; Doktor beider Rechte der Universität Bonn. — *Militärzeit, Kriegsauszeichnungen:* Einj. des Inf.-Regts. 65; Leutnant d. Res. Inf.-Regt. 132; im Kriege Komp.-Führer und als Hauptmann d. Res. Batl.-Führer Inf.-Regt. 132 und 172. E. K. I. und II. — *Berufsgang u. a.:* 1. Januar 1906 Assessor; ab 1. April 1907 Amtsrichter in Elberfeld; 1918 Oberlandesgerichtsrat in Düsseldorf; 1920/24 deutscher Schiedsrichter am deutsch-franz. Schiedsgericht in Paris; 1926 Senatspräsident in Düsseldorf; 1932 Vizepräsident des Oberlandesgerichts Düsseldorf; 1. Juli 1933 Oberlandesgerichtspräsident in Breslau; Vorsitzender des jur. Prüfungsamts und deutscher Schiedsrichter beim Schiedsgericht für Oberschlesien; ab 1. Juli 1932 Mitglied der NSDAP. — *Mitglied:* Ab 1. Oktober 1932 Fachschaft Justiz; Deutsche Gesellschaft f. Völkerrecht; Deutsche Akademie, München.

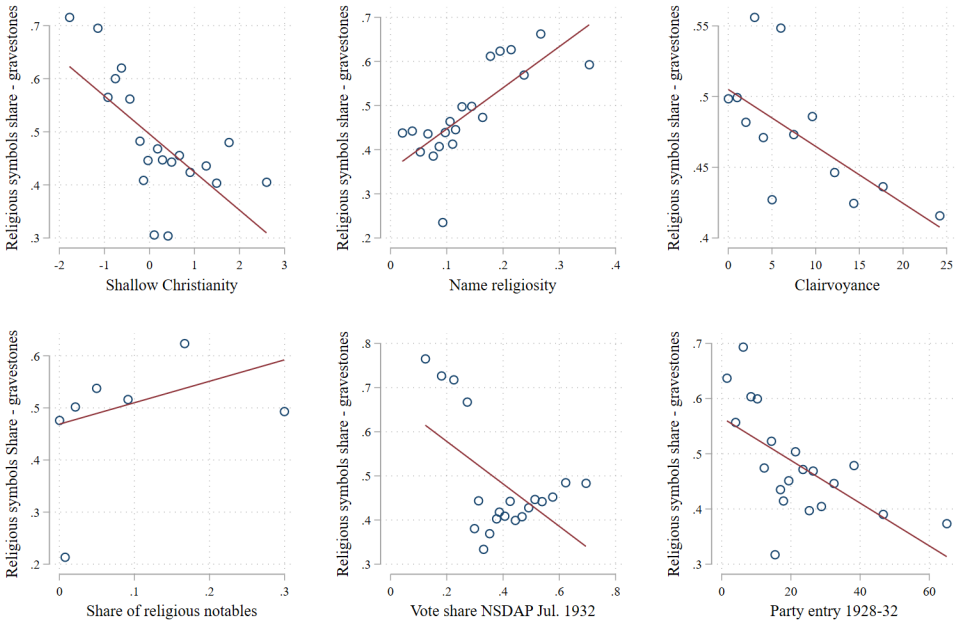
Note: Sample entry from (1934).

Figure A.2: Geographical distribution: Führerlexikon



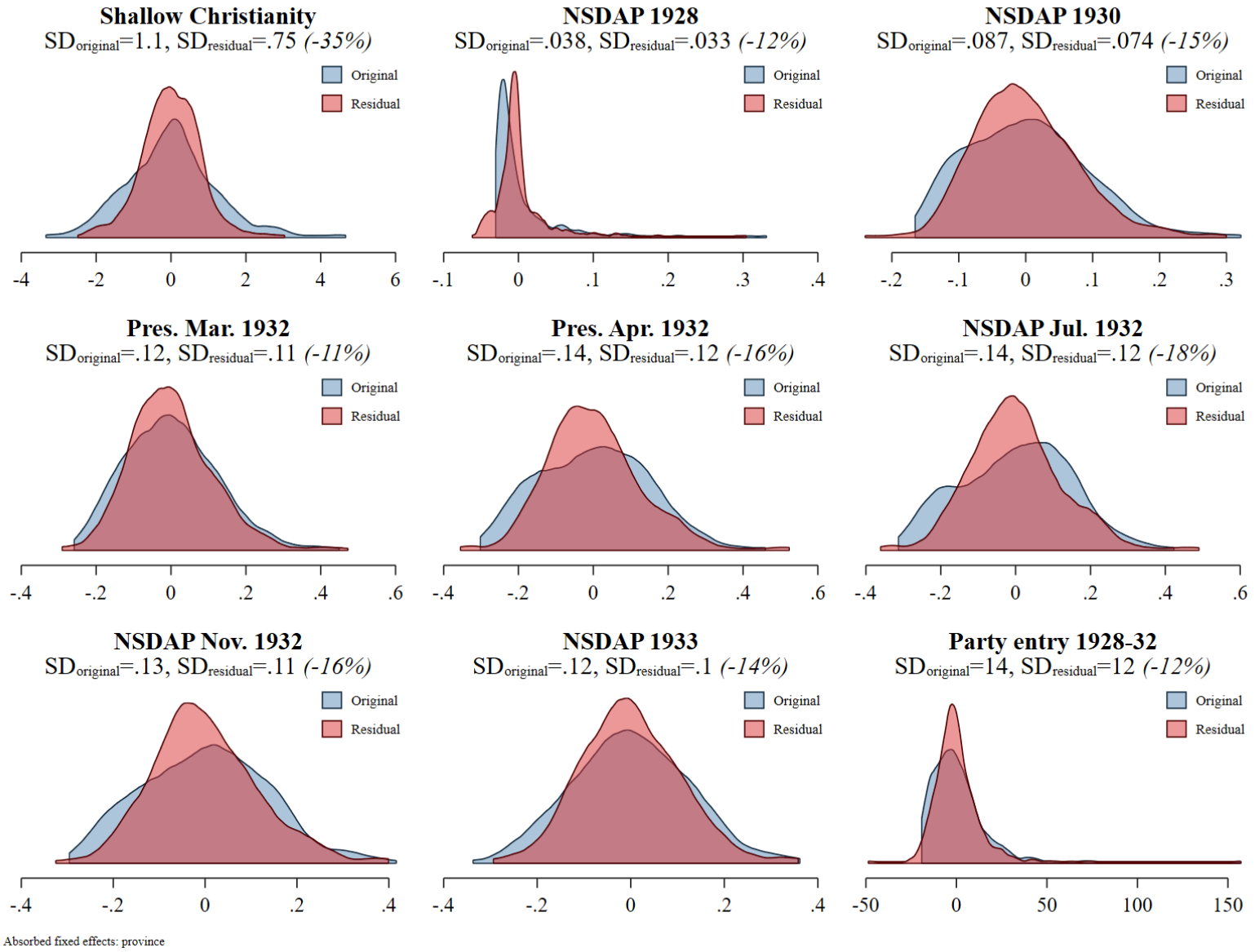
Note: Geographical distribution, places of birth of Nazi leaders, from (1934). Every blue dot indicates a place of birth taken from the *Führerlexikon*.

Figure A.3: Christian Symbols on Gravestones, Shallow Christianity, and Nazi Support



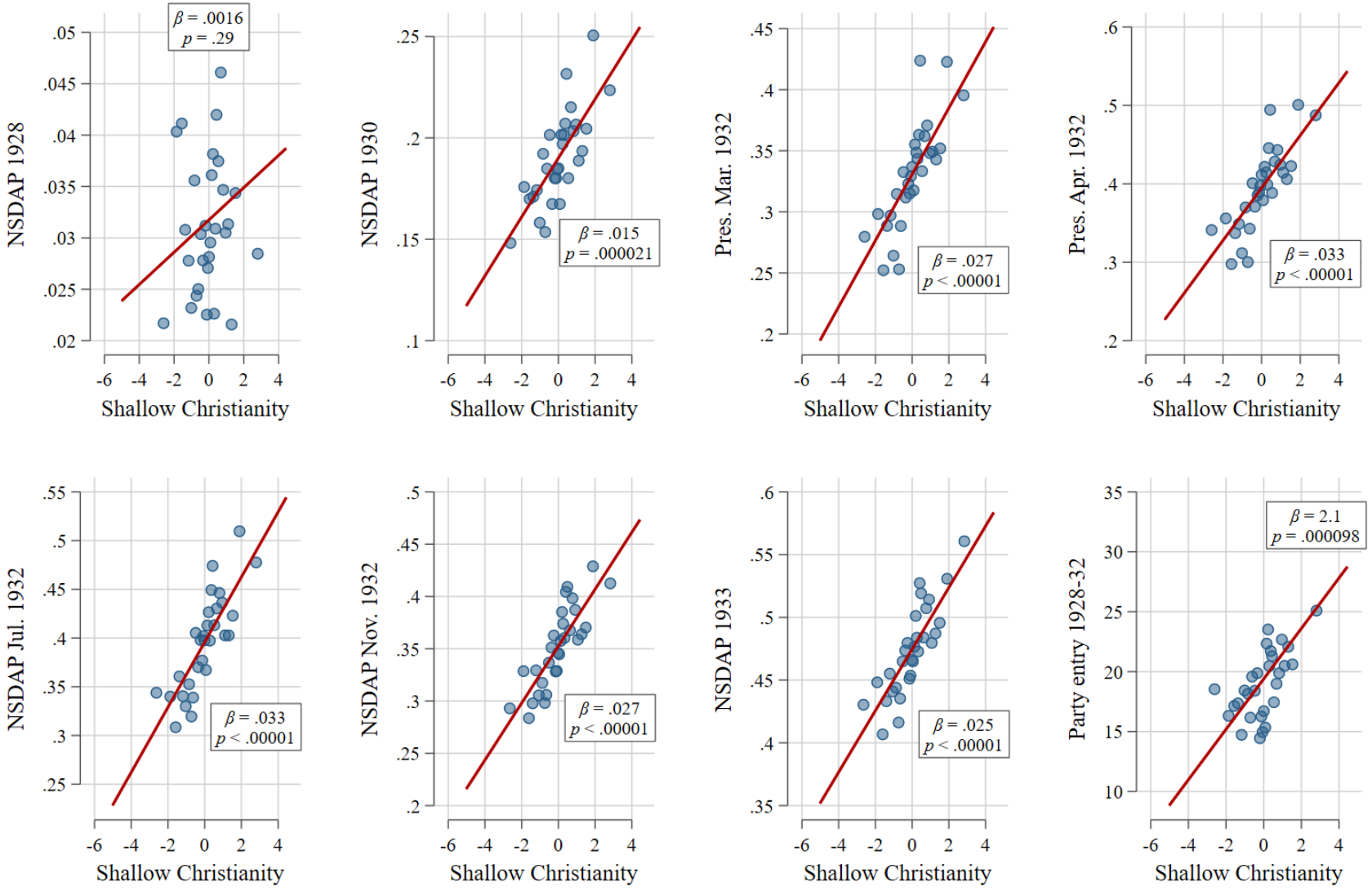
Note: The binscatters show the likelihood of a Christian symbol being used on a gravestone, across 519 counties containing 192,330 gravestones for 260,155 individuals.

FIGURE A.4: VARIABLE DISTRIBUTIONS - ABSORBING FE VARIANCE



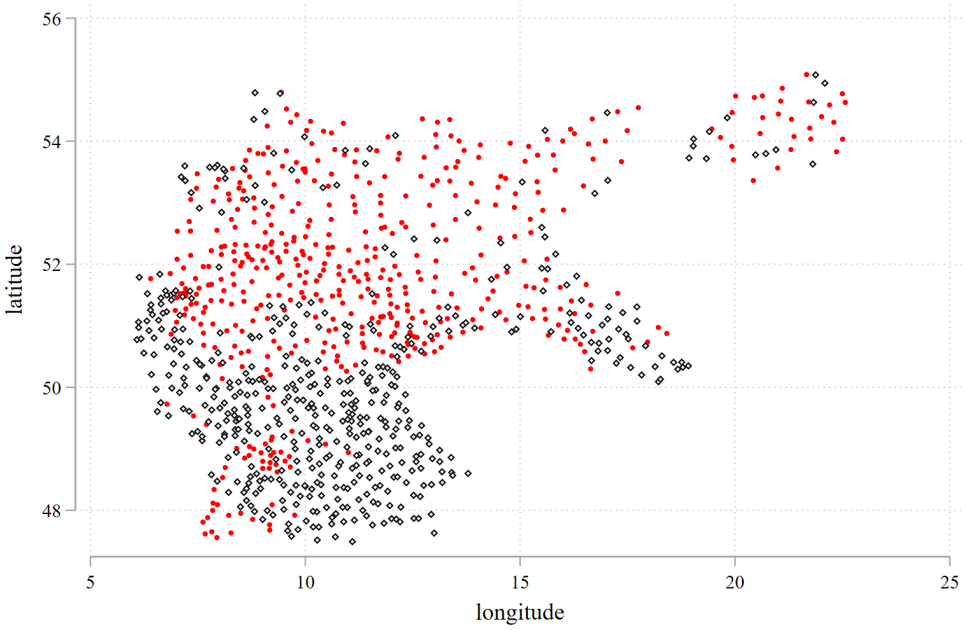
Note: The graphs illustrates the distributions of variables after absorbing variance from fixed effects. Each distribution is presented as original and residual density plots, where the x-axis represents the values of the variable, and the y-axis shows the frequency of observations. Additionally, for each distribution, standard deviations (SD) are presented as a measure of the spread between the original and residual distributions, with the percentage difference enclosed in parentheses.

Figure A.5: Binscatters - Elections and Nazi Party Entry vs. Shallow Christianity



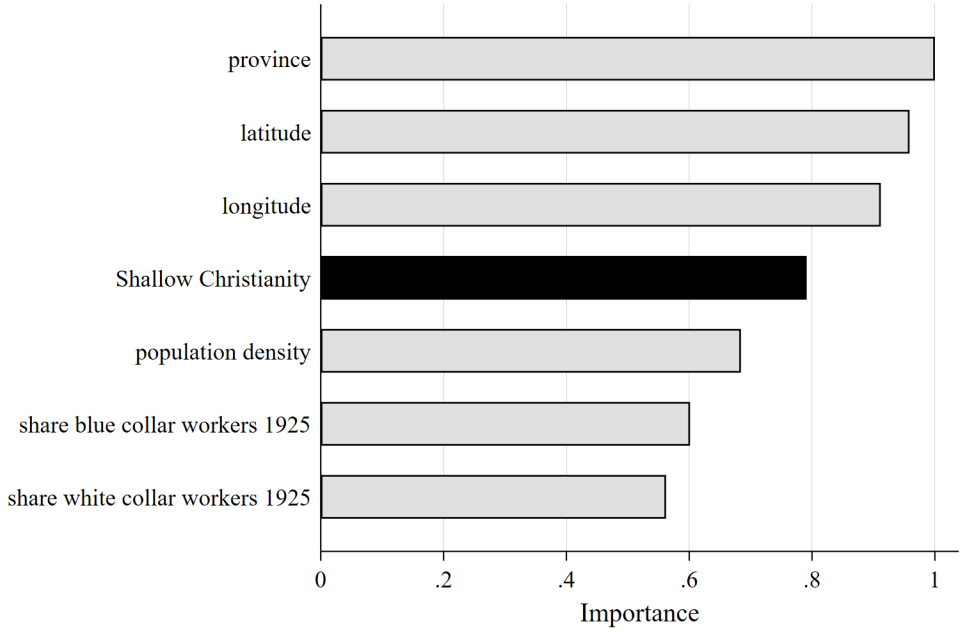
Note: Each graph shows a binned scatterplot of electoral outcomes/party entry vs Shallow Christianity, as defined in the text. We control for the share of white and blue collar workers and population density, as well as province fixed effects. Coefficients and p-values are reported with each binscatter. Raw reported coefficients differ from the beta-standardized ones in Table 1.

FIGURE A.6: DISTRIBUTION OF LOCATIONS WITH ABOVE/BELOW MEDIAN SHALLOW CHRISTIANITY



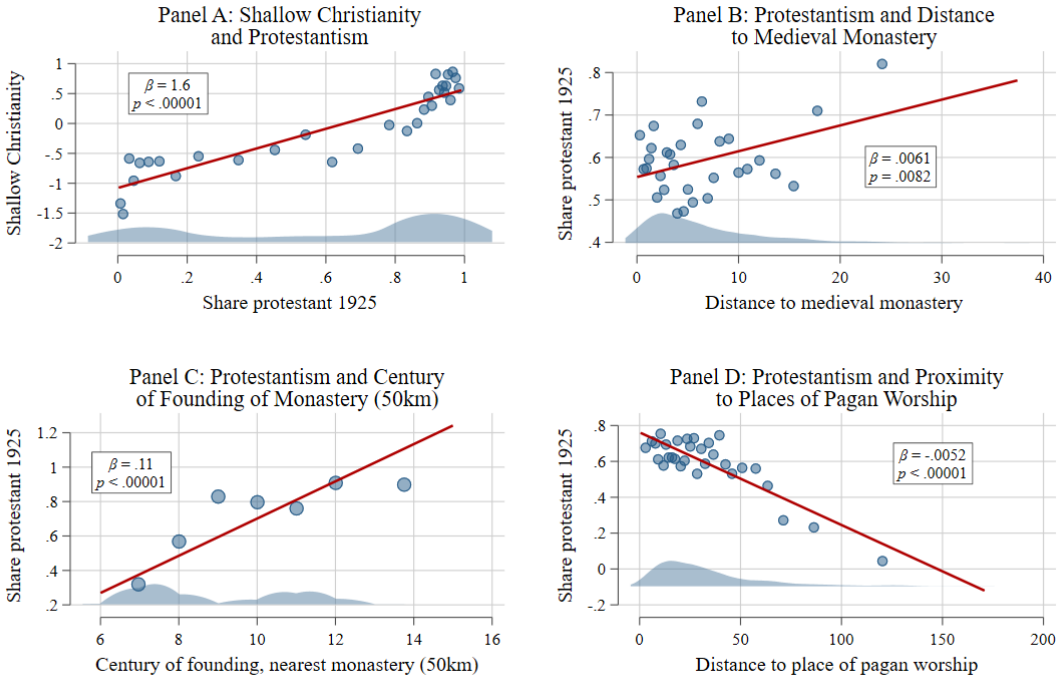
Note: Every red circle indicates a location with above-median values for shallowness; every black diamond, one for below-median values.

FIGURE A.7: VARIABLE IMPORTANCE FROM RANDOM FOREST ESTIMATION (DEPENDENT VARIABLE: NSDAP VOTE JULY 1932)



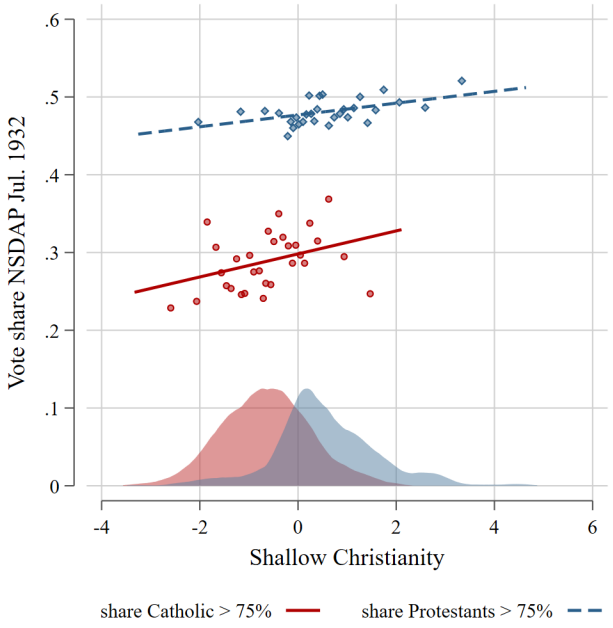
Note: The graph shows the Shapley values for different prediction variables from a random forest exercise with 10,000 iterations. Higher values indicate greater predictive performance (greater contributions to the reduction of the RMSE) across possible combinations of regressors.

Figure A.8: Shallow Christianity and Protestantism



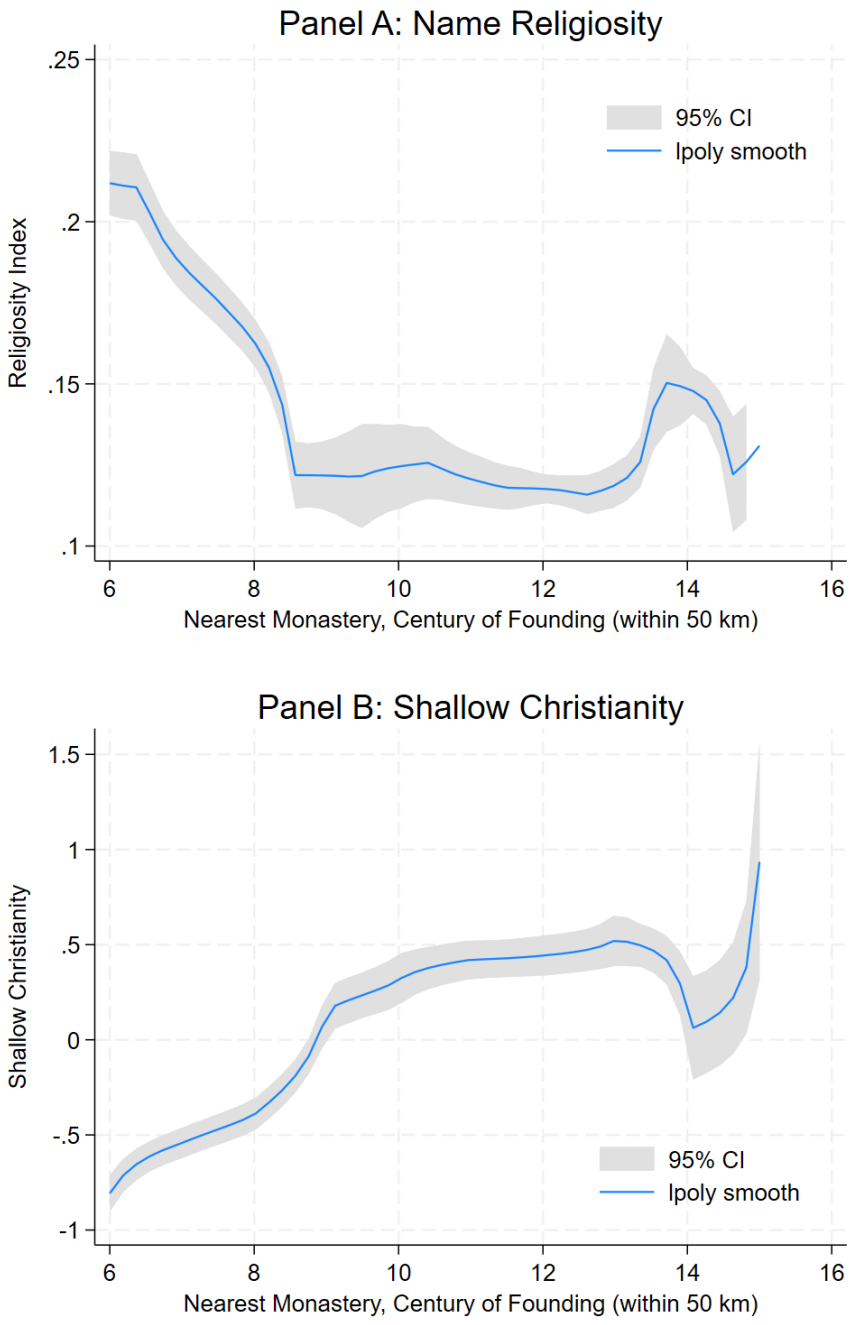
Note: Panel A shows the relationship between Shallow Christianity and share of Protestants in the population in 1925. Panel B shows the share of Protestants and distance to nearest medieval monastery. Panel C shows the share of Protestants and the century of founding of the nearest monastery within 50 km. Panel D shows the share of Protestants and the distance to the nearest place of pagan worship.

Figure A.9: Predominately Catholic and Protestant Counties and Shallow Christianity



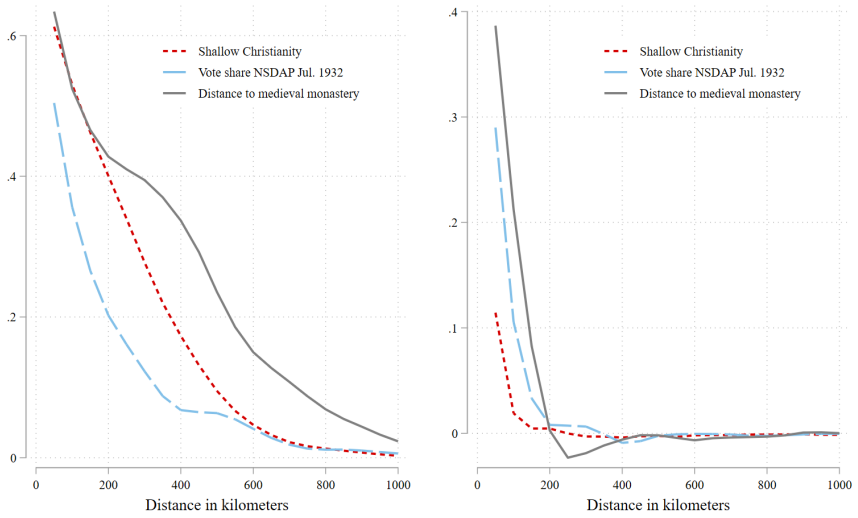
Note: The figure shows binned values for Nazi voting in July 1932, in predominantly Protestant (blue) and Catholic (red) areas, where predominantly is defined as 75% according to the 1925 census or more. On the x-axis, we plot the kernel densities of Shallow Christianity scores for each subsample. Estimation with the same controls and fixed effects as in Table 1.

FIGURE A.10: SHALLOW CHRISTIANITY, NAME RELIGIOSITY, AND TIME SINCE FOUNDATION OF MONASTERY



Note: Local polynomials of religiosity and year of foundation of nearest monastery (within 50km). Panel A shows name religiosity as a function of the date of founding of the nearest monastery (within 50 km); Panel B does the same for Shallow Christianity.

Figure A.11: Moran's I by distance

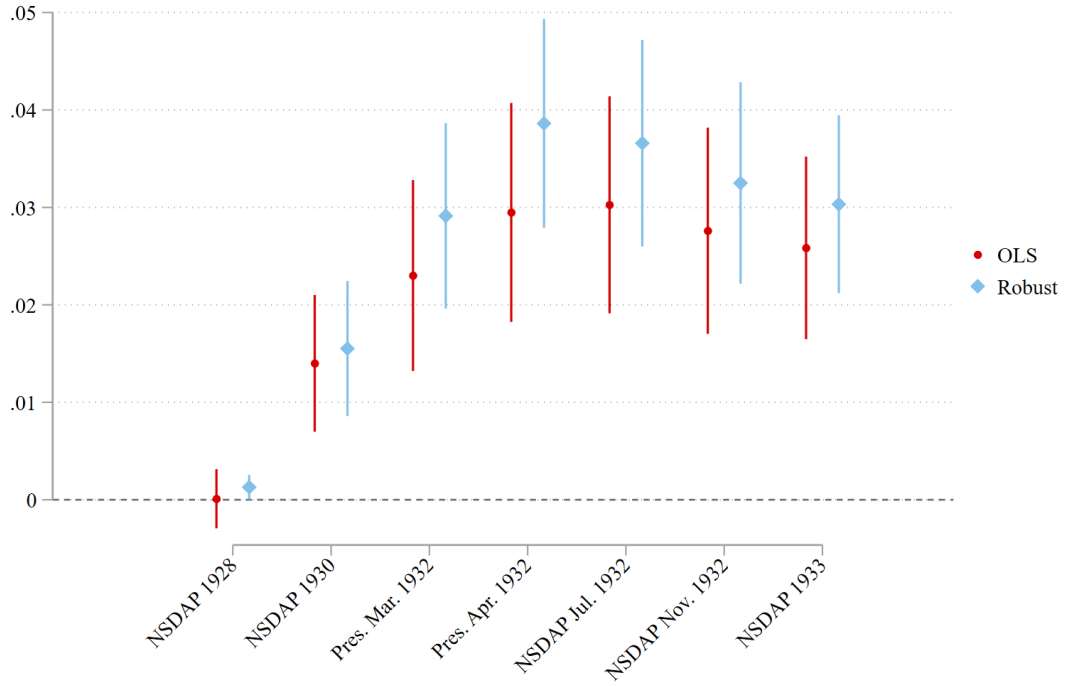


Panel A: Without Fixed Effects

Panel B: Fixed Effects

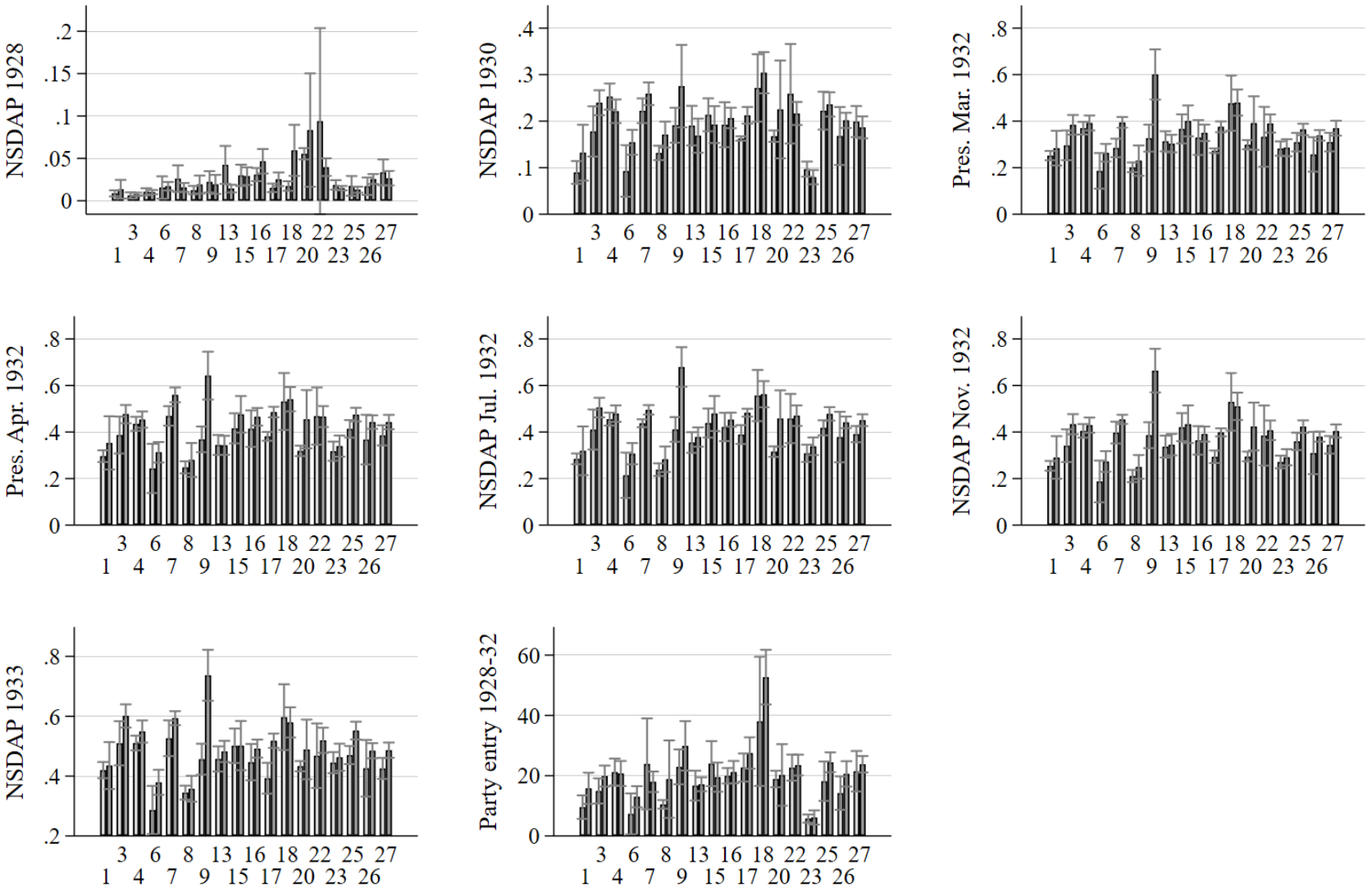
Note: The graphs show the value of Moran's I as a function of distance. Panel A is for the untransformed data; Panel B for the residualized values after controlling for province fixed effects. Estimated with the `moransi` Stata routine (Kondo 2016).

Figure A.12: OLS vs Robust Coefficients



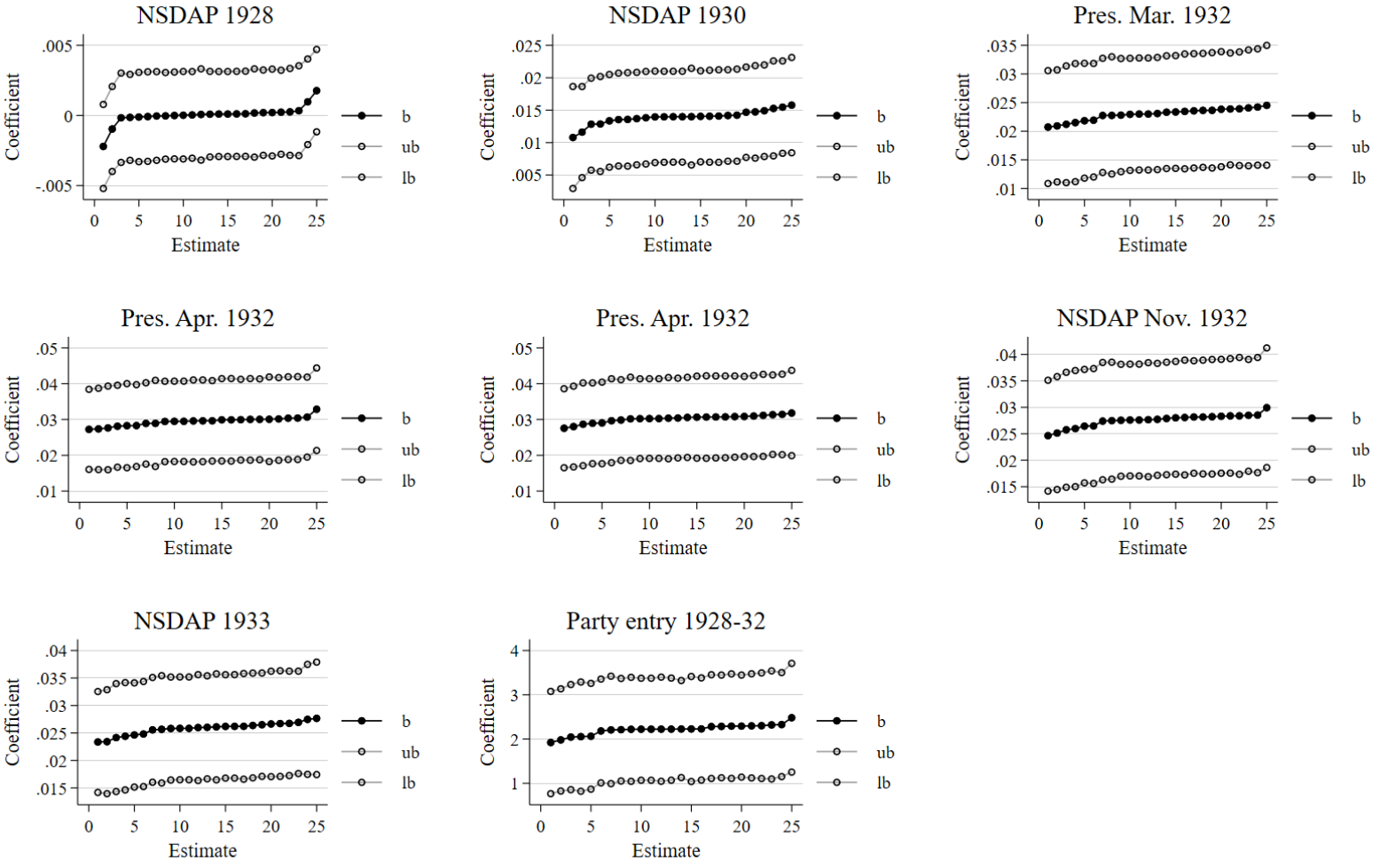
Note: The graphs show pairs of OLS and robust coefficients, for all elections 1928-33. Red squares and error bars are for OLS; blue diamonds and bars for robust estimation.

FIGURE A.13: NAZI SUPPORT BY LEVEL OF SHALLOW CHRISTIANITY - BY PROVINCE



Note: The graphs shows raw averages of Nazi support for all elections 1928-33 and Nazi party entry, by province. Blue bars are for counties with above median levels of Shallow Christianity; red bars are for counties below the median. Results reported for provinces with more than 10 observations.

Figure A.14: Dropping Provinces - Sensitivity Check



Note: The graphs show coefficients on Shallow Christianity when dropping one province at a time, for all dependent variables; ub is the upper bound, lb the lower bound, and b designates the coefficient estimate. Graphs are sorted by coefficient size, from smallest to largest.

Tables

Table A.1: Summary Statistics

	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
Panel A: Shallow Christianity and components					
Shallow Christianity (PC1)	0.000	1.135	-5.023	4.447	953
Name religiosity index (RNI)	0.145	0.089	0.012	0.439	1005
Clairvoyance (ADV 176a)	5.129	5.878	0.000	43.000	1005
Share religious notables (1900–30)	0.038	0.101	0.000	1.000	953
Panel B: Nazi support					
NSDAP vote share 1928	0.032	0.040	0.001	0.362	985
NSDAP vote share 1930	0.190	0.090	0.010	0.588	1004
Hitler pres. vote Mar. 1932	0.330	0.122	0.067	0.800	987
Hitler pres. vote Apr. 1932	0.393	0.147	0.086	0.877	987
NSDAP vote share Jul. 1932	0.393	0.148	0.059	0.830	988
NSDAP vote share Nov. 1932	0.348	0.135	0.053	0.764	926
NSDAP vote share 1933	0.471	0.122	0.133	0.830	926
NSDAP entry per 10,000 (1928–32)	19.208	15.271	0.000	175.563	986
Panel C: Controls					
Share Protestant (1925)	0.608	0.369	0.002	0.993	986
Share white collar (1925)	0.123	0.068	0.024	0.379	960
Share blue collar (1925)	0.381	0.117	0.113	0.923	960
Population density	544.404	1538.548	17.588	32256.334	986
Latitude	51.012	1.844	47.492	55.083	1005
Longitude	11.289	3.419	6.084	22.569	1005
Share Jewish (1925)	0.005	0.006	0.000	0.055	977
Panel D: Name religiosity by source					
Share Christian names – population	0.235	0.141	0.000	1.000	998
Share Christian names – NSDAP members	0.184	0.274	0.000	1.000	813
Share Christian names – Fuehrerlexikon	0.119	0.265	0.000	1.000	495
Name religiosity index – population	0.136	0.084	0.000	0.517	998
Name religiosity index – NSDAP members	0.111	0.177	0.000	0.972	813
Name religiosity index – Fuehrerlexikon	0.068	0.165	0.000	0.937	495

Note: The table reports summary statistics for the full analysis sample. Shallow Christianity is the first principal component of the name religiosity index (RNI), clairvoyance from the ADV survey (question 176a), and the share of religious notables who died 1900–1930, by their place of birth. The sign is flipped so that higher values indicate more secular / Christianity. Panel D reports county-level averages of name religiosity across three sources: WWI casualty lists (population benchmark), NSDAP membership records, and the *Führerlexikon* (leading Nazis).

TABLE A.2: GRAVESTONE SYMBOLS, RELIGIOSITY, AND NAZI SUPPORT

	Christian symbol on gravestone						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	umn1c(5)	(6)	(7)
Name religiosity - individual	0.035***						
	(0.000)						
Shallow Christianity		-0.095***					
		(0.005)					
Name religiosity - county			0.096**				
			(0.022)				
Clairvoyance				-0.019			
				(0.382)			
Share religious notable					0.070***		
					(0.009)		
Vote share NSDAP Jul. 1932						-0.104***	
						(0.002)	
Party entry 1928-32							-0.072***
							(0.006)
N	61,062	60,893	61,062	61,062	60,231	60,398	60,766
R^2	0.001	0.009	0.009	0.000	0.005	0.011	0.005

Note: Standardized beta coefficients; p-values in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. The table reports beta coefficients of linear probability models, regressing the likelihood of a headstone displaying a Christian religious symbol, on individual level name religiosity (col. 1), Shallow Christianity and its constituent components (col. 2-5), as well as two key indicators of Nazi support, Nazi voting and party entry (col. 6 and 7). The measures of name religiosity are as discussed in subsection 4.1.

Table A.3: OLS Results - Nazi Support and Individual Components of the Shallow Christianity Index

(a) Panel A: Christian Names

	Vote share NSDAP, all elections							Party entry
	1928	1930	Pres. Mar./Apr. 1932		Jul. 1932	Nov. 1932	1933	1928-32
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Christian Name Index	0.185***	-0.199***	-0.136***	-0.252***	-0.269***	-0.209***	-0.138***	-0.103***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)
N	985	1004	987	987	988	926	926	986
R^2	0.034	0.040	0.019	0.064	0.072	0.044	0.019	0.011

(b) Panel B: Clairvoyance

	Vote share NSDAP, all elections							Party entry
	1928	1930	Pres. Mar./Apr. 1932		Jul. 1932	Nov. 1932	1933	1928-32
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Clairvoyance	-0.077**	0.176***	0.259***	0.333***	0.285***	0.259***	0.279***	0.150***
	(0.015)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	985	1004	987	987	988	926	926	986
R^2	0.006	0.031	0.067	0.111	0.081	0.067	0.078	0.022

(c) Panel C: Religious Notables 1900-1930

	Vote share NSDAP, all elections							Party entry
	1928	1930	Pres. Mar./Apr. 1932		Jul. 1932	Nov. 1932	1933	1928-32
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Share notable religious	-0.082**	-0.189***	-0.185***	-0.226***	-0.229***	-0.212***	-0.180***	-0.125***
	(0.013)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	935	953	938	938	938	877	877	936
R^2	0.007	0.036	0.034	0.051	0.052	0.045	0.032	0.016

Note: p-values in parentheses. Significance indicated by * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Measures of Nazi support regressed on the three individual components of Shallow Christianity: the Christian name index (Panel A), clairvoyance (Panel B), and the share of religious notables, 1900-30 (Panel C) without controls. More Christian first names and a higher share of notables in religious professions reduces Nazi support; more superstition (clairvoyance) increases it. The table reports beta coefficients.

Table A.4: Balance: Unmatched vs. Nearest-Neighbor Matched Samples

	Unmatched			Matched (nn, $m = 3$)		
	Above	Below	Diff.	ATT	(SE)	p-value
Latitude	51.9103	50.1376	1.7728***	0.0586**	(0.0279)	[0.036]
Longitude	11.6672	10.8793	0.7879***	0.0533	(0.0524)	[0.310]
Population density	385.0	692.4	-307.4***	-710.4***	(222.5)	[0.001]
Share blue collar (1925)	0.4172	0.3472	0.0700***	0.0092	(0.0108)	[0.393]
Share Jewish (1925)	0.0033	0.0060	-0.0027***	-0.0023***	(0.0004)	[0.000]
Share Catholic (1925)	0.1828	0.5356	-0.3528***	-0.0273	(0.0197)	[0.166]
Share Protestant (1925)	0.7904	0.4439	0.3465***	0.0363*	(0.0191)	[0.058]
Share white collar (1925)	0.1163	0.1297	-0.0134***	-0.0537***	(0.0076)	[0.000]
N	477	476		$N = 477$, matched to 3 nn		

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Unmatched columns report raw means above/below median Shallow Christianity and a two-sided t-test. Matched columns report the average treatment effect on the treated (ATET) from nearest-neighbor matching with 3 neighbors on latitude and longitude (Mahalanobis distance), with Abadie–Imbens robust standard errors.

Table A.5: Differences along the Limes

	Shallow	Elections							Party entry
	Christianity	1928	1930	Mar. 1932	Apr. 1932	Jul. 1932	Nov. 1932	1933	1928-32
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
				50 km					
Roman side of Limes	-0.181**	-0.006	-0.119	-0.177**	-0.195***	-0.134*	-0.116	-0.041	-0.119
	(0.012)	(0.939)	(0.113)	(0.019)	(0.010)	(0.073)	(0.133)	(0.594)	(0.114)
N	174	167	179	176	176	179	169	169	178
R^2	0.035	0.000	0.014	0.031	0.038	0.018	0.013	0.002	0.014
				100 km					
Roman side of Limes	-0.250***	-0.073	-0.145***	-0.205***	-0.228***	-0.155***	-0.137**	-0.026	-0.156***
	(0.001)	(0.194)	(0.007)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.004)	(0.014)	(0.643)	(0.004)
N	319	321	338	332	332	337	322	322	336
R^2	0.062	0.005	0.021	0.042	0.052	0.024	0.019	0.001	0.024
				150 km					
Roman side of Limes	-0.298***	-0.136***	-0.162***	-0.212***	-0.252***	-0.173***	-0.166***	-0.026	-0.205***
	(0.000)	(0.004)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.596)	(0.000)
N	425	434	452	444	444	450	434	434	448
R^2	0.089	0.019	0.026	0.045	0.064	0.030	0.028	0.001	0.042
				200 km					
Roman side of Limes	-0.303***	-0.114**	-0.205***	-0.227***	-0.289***	-0.211***	-0.205***	-0.049	-0.187***
	(0.000)	(0.010)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.274)	(0.000)
N	498	510	528	518	518	521	499	498	524
R^2	0.092	0.013	0.042	0.052	0.083	0.045	0.042	0.002	0.035
				250 km					
Roman side of Limes	-0.290***	-0.133***	-0.244***	-0.256***	-0.330***	-0.264***	-0.239***	-0.078	-0.199***
	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.064)	(0.000)
N	565	581	599	589	589	592	563	562	590
R^2	0.084	0.018	0.060	0.065	0.109	0.070	0.057	0.006	0.040

Note: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. p-values in parentheses. The table shows the value of a dummy for the Roman side of the Limes (beta-standardized), the defensive line built during the Roman Empire, for different bands of distance to the Limes (50, 100, 150, 200, and 250km). Christianity is less shallow in areas under former Roman control, and electoral results for the Nazi party as well as rates of entry are lower.

Table A.6: Within-Location Name Analysis: NSDAP Members vs. General Population

	NSDAP members			Nazi leaders		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Share of Christian first names						
Share Christian names (population)	0.425*** (0.069)	0.421*** (0.094)	0.431*** (0.098)	0.027 (0.092)	-0.017 (0.120)	0.005 (0.125)
N	810	807	774	494	491	469
R^2	0.045	0.065	0.071	0.000	0.055	0.064
Controls	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Province FE	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Panel B: Name religiosity index (RNI)						
Name religiosity (population, RNI)	0.487*** (0.072)	0.441*** (0.100)	0.464*** (0.105)	0.010 (0.097)	-0.008 (0.129)	-0.001 (0.136)
N	810	807	774	494	491	469
R^2	0.053	0.074	0.081	0.000	0.053	0.067
Controls	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Province FE	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Note: The table reports OLS regressions at the county level. In columns (1)–(3), the dependent variable is the share of Christian first names among NSDAP members in each county; in columns (4)–(6), among persons listed in the *Führerlexikon*. The key regressor is the corresponding name measure for the general population (from WWI casualty lists). A coefficient of 1 would indicate that NSDAP members are as likely to have Christian names as the local population; coefficients below 1 indicate systematically less Christian naming among Nazis. Standard errors in parentheses. Controls: share white collar, share blue collar, population density. Significance indicated by * ¡0.1,** < 0.05, *** ¡0.01.

Table A.7: OLS with Extended Controls

	Vote share NSDAP, all elections							Party entry
	1928	1930	Pres. Mar./Apr. 1932		Jul. 1932	Nov. 1932	1933	1928-32
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Shallow Christianity	0.033	0.189***	0.240***	0.246***	0.257***	0.240***	0.267***	0.216***
	(0.516)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Dist. to River	0.025	0.074**	0.133***	0.123***	0.123***	0.133***	0.133***	0.050
	(0.461)	(0.022)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.117)
Dist. to Canal	-0.045	0.054	0.034	0.015	0.036	0.073*	0.024	0.037
	(0.333)	(0.228)	(0.452)	(0.721)	(0.393)	(0.090)	(0.564)	(0.407)
Dist. to Railway	-0.022	0.038	0.016	0.019	0.034	0.043	0.060*	-0.019
	(0.534)	(0.263)	(0.636)	(0.546)	(0.282)	(0.186)	(0.058)	(0.567)
Dist. to Airfield	-0.027	-0.023	-0.065*	-0.082**	-0.088**	-0.065*	-0.069*	-0.046
	(0.502)	(0.559)	(0.098)	(0.027)	(0.017)	(0.083)	(0.061)	(0.239)
Share White Collar 1925	0.195***	0.149***	-0.126***	-0.092**	-0.031	-0.069*	-0.143***	0.118***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.003)	(0.020)	(0.435)	(0.090)	(0.000)	(0.005)
1925 Population	-0.063	-0.096**	-0.102***	-0.105***	-0.113***	-0.110***	-0.110***	-0.108***
	(0.111)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.005)
Share Jewish Pop. 1925	0.049	0.112***	0.072*	0.063	0.096**	0.129***	0.108***	0.070*
	(0.260)	(0.008)	(0.087)	(0.113)	(0.016)	(0.002)	(0.007)	(0.098)
Share Blue Collar 1925	-0.048	-0.048	-0.168***	-0.142***	-0.121***	-0.097**	-0.227***	-0.052
	(0.247)	(0.227)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.011)	(0.000)	(0.191)
Pop. Density	-0.016	0.006	0.026	0.029	0.025	0.017	0.029	0.006
	(0.695)	(0.868)	(0.501)	(0.421)	(0.480)	(0.639)	(0.426)	(0.866)
Latitude	0.182	0.328***	0.424***	0.595***	0.402***	0.430***	0.117	0.137
	(0.130)	(0.005)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.285)	(0.234)
Longitude	-0.046	0.100	0.066	0.076	0.086	-0.038	0.327***	0.057
	(0.709)	(0.405)	(0.581)	(0.502)	(0.441)	(0.738)	(0.004)	(0.634)
N	789	789	784	784	789	782	783	789
R^2	0.281	0.328	0.330	0.411	0.409	0.391	0.405	0.336

Note: p-values in parentheses. Significance indicated by * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Standardised beta coefficients. All regressions include province fixed effects.

TABLE A.8: SPATIAL UNIT ROOT TESTS

	$I(0)$ test		$I(1)$ test		
Variable	LFST	p-value	LFUR	p-value	Diagnosis
Key independent variable					
Shallow Christianity	3.124	0.001	7.574	0.213	Spatial unit root
Dependent variables					
NSDAP 1928	1.749	0.223	9.702	0.033	Stationary
NSDAP 1930	2.753	0.006	7.522	0.214	Unit root likely
Pres. Elect. Mar. 1932	1.816	0.173	8.489	0.115	Unit root likely
Pres. Elect. Apr. 1932	2.643	0.012	6.396	0.377	Unit root likely
NSDAP Jul. 1932	2.377	0.023	7.239	0.252	Unit root likely
NSDAP Nov. 1932	2.117	0.063	8.086	0.149	Unit root likely
NSDAP 1933	2.504	0.015	7.094	0.266	Unit root likely
Party Entry 1928–32	2.269	0.032	8.052	0.148	Unit root likely

Note: Spatial unit root tests following Müller and Watson (2024), implemented via the `spur` Stata package (Becker, Boll and Voth (2026)). The $I(0)$ test has H_0: variable is spatially stationary; rejection suggests strong spatial persistence. The $I(1)$ test has H_0: variable has a spatial unit root; rejection suggests stationarity. "Spatial unit root" diagnosis: reject $I(0)$ or fail to reject $I(0)$, and fail to reject $I(1)$. "Stationary" diagnosis: reject $I(1)$. Tests use $q = 15$ weighted averages, 10,000 replications, and lat/long coordinates for spherical distances. Sample: all counties with non-missing coordinates and outcome (N varies by variable, 926–1,005).

Table A.9: Conley spatial errors

Dep. var.	(1) SE	(2) 50 km	(3) 100 km	(4) 150 km	(5) 200 km
Panel A: Basic specification					
NSDAP 1928	0.001	0.002	0.003	0.003	0.003
NSDAP 1930	0.002	0.004	0.005	0.005	0.004
Pres. Elect. Mar. 1932	0.003	0.008	0.011	0.011	0.008
Pres. Elect. Apr. 1932	0.004	0.010	0.013	0.012	0.009
NSDAP Jul. 1932	0.004	0.009	0.012	0.011	0.007
NSDAP Nov. 1932	0.004	0.008	0.011	0.010	0.007
NSDAP 1933	0.003	0.006	0.009	0.008	0.007
Party Entry 1928–32	0.406	0.706	0.963	0.999	1.054
Panel B: Full specification (controls + province FE)					
NSDAP 1928	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.001
NSDAP 1930	0.003	0.005	0.004	0.005	0.004
Pres. Elect. Mar. 1932	0.005	0.008	0.007	0.009	0.008
Pres. Elect. Apr. 1932	0.005	0.009	0.008	0.009	0.008
NSDAP Jul. 1932	0.005	0.009	0.008	0.009	0.008
NSDAP Nov. 1932	0.005	0.009	0.007	0.009	0.007
NSDAP 1933	0.005	0.007	0.006	0.007	0.006
Party Entry 1928–32	0.541	0.636	0.764	0.876	0.949

Note: Each cell reports the standard error on the Shallow Christianity variable. Column (1) shows the original OLS SE; columns (2)–(5) report Conley standard errors for various distance cut-offs. We estimate the Conley SE using the acreg Stata routine Colella et al. (2023).

Table A.10: Mueller–Watson spatial unit root correction

Dep. var.	(1) OLS SE	(2) MW SE	(3) SE ratio	(4) MW coef.	(5) MW t-stat
Panel A: Basic specification					
NSDAP 1928	0.001	0.001	1.333	0.002	1.36
NSDAP 1930	0.002	0.003	1.222	0.008	2.71
Pres. Elect. Mar. 1932	0.003	0.004	1.139	0.029	7.48
Pres. Elect. Apr. 1932	0.004	0.004	1.093	0.033	7.74
NSDAP Jul. 1932	0.004	0.004	1.050	0.028	6.84
NSDAP Nov. 1932	0.004	0.004	1.054	0.026	6.62
NSDAP 1933	0.003	0.004	1.187	0.030	7.28
Party Entry 1928–32	0.406	0.642	1.581	1.301	2.03
Panel B: Full specification (controls + province FE)					
NSDAP 1928	0.002	0.002	1.012	0.007	4.68
NSDAP 1930	0.003	0.003	0.913	0.017	5.59
Pres. Elect. Mar. 1932	0.005	0.004	0.842	0.026	6.39
Pres. Elect. Apr. 1932	0.005	0.004	0.815	0.030	6.80
NSDAP Jul. 1932	0.005	0.004	0.794	0.030	7.00
NSDAP Nov. 1932	0.005	0.004	0.791	0.027	6.33
NSDAP 1933	0.005	0.004	0.883	0.026	6.31
Party Entry 1928–32	0.541	0.626	1.157	2.601	4.16

Note: Each cell in columns (1) and (2) reports the standard error on the Shallow Christianity variable. Column (1) shows the original OLS SE; column (2) shows the SE after applying the LBM-GLS spatial differencing transformation of Müller and Watson (2024). Column (3) reports the ratio MW SE / OLS SE; values >1 indicate that OLS understates uncertainty due to spatial unit roots. Columns (4) and (5) report the MW-corrected coefficient and t-statistic. Panel A uses no controls; Panel B controls for share white collar workers, blue collar workers, population density, and province FE. The MW correction uses the `spur` Stata package (Becker, Boll and Voth (2026)) with $q = 15$ weighted averages and the LBM-GLS transformation (default).

Table A.11: Spatial unit root tests — Italy

	$I(0)$ test		$I(1)$ test		
Variable	LFST	p-value	LFUR	p-value	Diagnosis
Key independent variable					
Name Secularity	1.908	0.061	9.095	0.052	Ambiguous
Dependent variables					
Violence	1.836	0.086	10.189	0.015	Stationary
Murders	1.805	0.106	10.773	0.006	Stationary
Branches	1.863	0.075	9.579	0.028	Stationary
1921 votes	2.265	0.019	9.527	0.032	Reject both
1924 votes	2.874	0.001	9.718	0.031	Reject both

Note: Spatial unit root tests following Müller and Watson (2024), implemented via the `spur` Stata package (Becker, Boll and Voth (2026)). The $I(0)$ test has H_0: variable is spatially stationary; rejection suggests strong spatial persistence. The $I(1)$ test has H_0: variable has a spatial unit root; rejection suggests stationarity. "Ambiguous" diagnosis: borderline on both tests. "Stationary": fail to reject $I(0)$ and/or reject $I(1)$. "Reject both": reject $I(0)$ and reject $I(1)$, suggesting fractional integration or intermediate persistence. Tests use $q = 15$ weighted averages, 10,000 replications, and lat/long coordinates for spherical distances. $N = 5{,}775$ Italian communes.

Table A.12: Conley spatial errors — Italy

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Dep. var.	SE	50 km	100 km	150 km	200 km
Panel A: Basic specification					
Violence	0.026	0.092	0.128	0.128	0.110
Murders	0.012	0.026	0.036	0.038	0.035
Branches	0.054	0.227	0.362	0.396	0.352
1921 votes	0.011	0.071	0.097	0.095	0.076
1924 votes	0.040	0.158	0.197	0.185	0.166
Panel B: Full specification (controls + region FE)					
Violence	0.022	0.043	0.052	0.050	0.032
Murders	0.012	0.012	0.013	0.013	0.011
Branches	0.044	0.124	0.187	0.198	0.166
1921 votes	0.010	0.019	0.021	0.020	0.023
1924 votes	0.037	0.097	0.084	0.055	0.071

Note: Each cell reports the standard error on the Name Secularity variable in the Italian regressions. Column (1) shows the OLS standard error (robust in Panel B). Columns (2)–(5) report Conley standard errors for various distance cut-offs. Panel A uses no controls; Panel B controls for population density, share of day laborers, industrial workers, and region FE (16 Italian regions, 1921 boundaries). We estimate the Conley SE using the `acreg` Stata routine (Colella et al., 2023).

TABLE A.13: MUELLER–WATSON SPATIAL UNIT ROOT CORRECTION — ITALY

Dep. var.	(1) OLS SE	(2) MW SE	(3) SE ratio	(4) MW coef.	(5) MW t-stat
Panel A: Basic specification					
Violence	0.026	0.030	1.158	0.138	4.66
Murders	0.012	0.015	1.221	0.062	4.24
Branches	0.054	0.055	1.022	0.510	9.20
1921 votes	0.011	0.008	0.748	0.074	8.77
1924 votes	0.040	0.031	0.790	0.191	6.08
Panel B: Full specification (controls + region FE)					
Violence	0.027	0.030	1.090	0.053	1.78
Murders	0.013	0.015	1.127	0.019	1.28
Branches	0.055	0.054	0.982	0.209	3.85
1921 votes	0.011	0.008	0.775	0.033	3.87
1924 votes	0.035	0.031	0.891	0.121	3.85

Note: Each cell in columns (1) and (2) reports the standard error on the Name Secularity variable. Column (1) shows the original OLS SE; column (2) shows the SE after applying the LBM-GLS spatial differencing transformation of Müller and Watson (2024). Column (3) reports the ratio MW SE / OLS SE; values >1 indicate that OLS understates uncertainty due to spatial unit roots. Columns (4) and (5) report the MW-corrected coefficient and t-statistic. Panel A uses no controls; Panel B controls for population density, share of day laborers, industrial workers, and region FE (16 Italian regions, 1921 boundaries). The MW correction uses the `spur` Stata package (Becker, Boll and Voth (2026)) with $q = 15$ weighted averages and the LBM-GLS transformation (default).

TABLE A.14: PERMUTATION TESTS

indicator	OLS	c	n	p=c/n
NSDAP 1928	0.0016	70	1000	0.070
NSDAP 1930	0.0145	0	1000	0.000
Pres. Elect. Mar. 1932	0.0271	0	1000	0.000
Pres. Elect. Apr. 1932	0.0335	0	1000	0.000
NSDAP Jul. 1932	0.0334	0	1000	0.000
NSDAP Nov. 1932	0.0272	0	1000	0.000
NSDAP 1933	0.0245	0	1000	0.000
Party entry 1928-32	2.1054	0	1000	0.000

Note: The table shows the results of permutation tests for each of our dependent variables. We randomly reshuffle observations 1,000 times, using the Stata `permute` command, and estimate the coefficient on Shallow Christianity in our baseline regression with the share of white and blue collar workers, population density, and province fixed effects as controls. We use the `seed(0)` option. The column marked 'c' records the number of cases when the coefficient on Shallow Christianity exceeds the one under OLS. Except for 1928, there is not a single case in our results.