

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE III.

PAN-GERMANISM: ITS METHODS AND ITS
FRUITS.

BY CHARLES W. SUPER, ATHENS, OHIO.

THE cataclysmic war that broke out in Europe in 1914 will furnish all future historians of civilization with phases of group-psychology wholly new. Moreover, they will have at their command a wealth of material far greater than all their predecessors. For one thing, we see at the head of the central alliance a people who in the past made notable contributions to the arts and sciences, to literature and philosophy, and especially to music, joining hands with another people who never contributed anything whatever to the progress of the world, whose slow march across the world's stage has been marked with destruction only. For another, we see a people who have developed an educational system that has been admired and copied by other countries for several decades, and by means of which it has brought its entire population to the highest pitch of collective efficiency, but whose moral standard has not advanced beyond what it was three, perhaps thirteen, centuries ago. We have here a demonstration that a state system of education may become a curse quite as much as a blessing to mankind. Ever since the foundation of our Republic it has been proclaimed from pulpit and platform, in books and periodicals without number, that its perpetuity depends upon popular education. It has been assumed, because regarded as needing no proof, that

an educated people is also an enlightened people, a humane people, a moral people.

German education has demonstrated that an educated people may be a docile people, a people who do not think for themselves, but blindly accept as true and right what a small class among them stamps with its approval. In this country we educate the future citizen to think for himself, because we believe he will think rightly on most problems, if not on all, that may be placed before him. Germany educates her future citizens solely for the purpose of inducing them to think as little as possible except within prescribed limits, and to follow blindly a self-constituted class whom the state has appointed as leaders. The familiar dictum, "Knowledge is power," remains unshaken; but henceforth it will occupy a very subordinate place in the discussion of educational problems. The present century has demonstrated that intellectual power is purely material force, to be classed with dynamite, with steam, or with electricity. Misguided power is a curse. Only when directed by proper motive does it become a blessing. A recent number of a New York periodical contained a cartoon representing the devil and a German professor. The latter asks how he can make more enemies, and receives the answer that there is no way, since the entire world is already his enemy. In other words, German professors have done their best to shock the moral sense of the world; and the tragedy of the situation is that they have all the while been unconscious of what they were doing. The German professor has made it clear that knowledge when expressed in terms of power has no ethical quality whatever. He has proved to his own satisfaction, and to that of his countrymen, that one can distill a religion of Hate from what was originally a religion of Love. He has proclaimed even from the

pulpit that the Good Samaritan was a fool, and Jesus a coward and weakling.

The central European alliance is dominated by a dynasty that has been in power for about five centuries, and its present representative exhibits all the bad traits of the family, and not all the good ones. The political morality of the Hohenzollerns was perhaps not worse than that of most of their contemporaries; albeit the brutality exercised by most of them in their households gives them a distinction all their own. Besides, the methods of Frederick II. were at times so outrageous, so perfidious, that they shocked almost all of his contemporaries, crooked as most of them were in their own transactions. Whether the Prussians are more brutal by nature than the rest of the Germans, and whether the Hohenzollern dynasty is more brutal than the rest of the Prussians, we have no very accurate means of knowing. When we take into consideration that all of them were soldiers, although not all were warriors; that military discipline is more severe in Germany than anywhere else; that the Emperor is never seen in public except in uniform; that all Government officials wear the same mark of distinction; that the entire people, from the highest to the lowest, are excessively proud of their army and navy, — when we consider all these, we have strong reasons for believing it to be a Prussian no less than a Hohenzollern doctrine that the sword is the final arbiter in all questions of supreme importance, whether national or international.

Whether the German people taken as a whole are more brutal by nature than any others of Europe, except the Turk, is also a difficult problem to solve. That they are less kindly than the Slavs is admitted by all who are familiar with both. What evidence does history furnish on this point? The out-

standing series of events in the annals of Germany is comprehended under the name of the Thirty Years' War. Although that terrible conflict did not concern Germany alone, and was not fought by Germans alone, it was mainly a German war. The atrocities committed by Germans on their own countrymen, as told by German historians, were of such a fiendish character that we can accept the testimony only when substantiated by unimpeachable evidence. Religion was the pretext: it may have been the underlying cause. But the war soon degenerated into a quest for plunder. Soldiers often changed sides merely because the change promised larger opportunities for pillage. The soldiers did not always take the trouble to go over to the enemy, but plundered friend and foe with diabolical impartiality. They were not restrained by religion, nor by patriotism, nor by human sympathy. The recent deeds of the Germans in Belgium and northern France seem to have been done by the reincarnate spirits who did their best almost three hundred years ago to make of Germany a desert. When we compare the German civil war with the strife in England that was contemporary during part of its course, we see the difference between the two peoples. There was some hard fighting, but almost no plundering by either party. As one party hoped to maintain its supremacy over the land and the other expected to gain it, neither saw any reason for inflicting serious injury upon its economic welfare.

A brief examination of the history of England discloses the radical difference between its government more than four centuries ago and that of the German Empire as it is to-day. During the Hundred Years' War these four principles were gradually evolved in England: (1) that Parliament shall control taxation; (2) that it shall examine all accounts; (3) that

it shall make definite appropriations; and (4) that all financial legislation shall originate in the House which is most nearly representative of the people. These four principles have become the foundation on which all constitutional governments are based. Conversely, when the German Government wants money, the Emperor or his Chancellor comes before the Reichstag, tells its members how much money he needs, and orders them to provide it forthwith.

It has been maintained by Catholic writers for almost four centuries, during the last few decades with the utmost vehemence and with an astonishing display of erudition, that the revolution inaugurated by Luther was not in any sense a reform so far as it concerned Germany, and that it retarded rather than promoted the progress of the country. Whatever may be the verdict of unbiased historians on this broad question, it is a matter of common knowledge that all the German monarchs, whatever their religious profession, always arrogated to themselves the right to determine the creed of their subjects. Whether there has been a recent change in this respect I do not know, nor am I informed whether such a law is general. Not many years ago, however, no religious body, unless it was recognized by the state, could hold property in its corporate capacity in some of the German states. All church edifices built by dissenters were owned by individuals. Many Germans of the present *régime* do not regard Luther as a religious reformer. To them he is a reincarnation of the god Thor, who, with his giant's hammer, smote into fragments the old order of things, and that the time for reconstruction had not fully come until the present Emperor ascended the throne. Their watchword is: "Luther destroyed only in part. We will take up his work with renewed vigor

and unprecedented thoroughness, in order to lay such foundations as may seem to us best."

In England there was a considerable measure of religious liberty as early as the reign of Queen Elizabeth: it was somewhat extended in the early years of the seventeenth century. This becomes evident to the reader of George Fox's Journal and of Bunyan's brief sketch of his prison life. In some parts of the old empire the Germans often suffered terribly for their religion, and there was no relief for them but to emigrate. Protestant as well as Catholic potentates were generally ready to join hands when it seemed to them advisable to suppress any movement toward freedom of worship. Germany never produced a champion for tolerance like Voltaire and other Frenchmen scarcely less conspicuous. It has even been alleged that Kepler returned to the bosom of the Catholic Church because of Protestant intolerance.

The author of "The World in the Crucible" declares that "the German race has always been preëminent for barbarity in war. Germany's conquests have largely been barren because of the brutality of her methods. During the campaign in France, in 1814 and 1815, the atrocities of the Prussian troopers shocked their allies, who were not squeamish or over nice. When General Belliaud entered Chateau Thierry he found the women killing the wounded Prussians, and was told that it was an act of vengeance for wholesale plunder, outrage on women of all ages, and cold-blooded murder." A little later Robert Southey wrote from Belgium to a friend: "You will rejoice to hear that the English are well spoken of for their deportment in peace and war. It is far otherwise with the Prussians. Concerning them there is but one opinion: of their brutality and intolerant insolence I have had but too many proofs." The Duke of Wellington wrote to his mother:

"I can assure you that from the General of the Germans down to the smallest drummer boy in their legion the earth never groaned with such a lot of murdering, infamous villains. They murdered, robbed, and ill treated the peasants wherever they went." Plunder and indemnities are always in the mind of the German military staff. In 1914 it promised the people that the war would be short and without cost to them, as it would be paid for by the vanquished. It is the hope of plunder that prompts the thief and the robber to risk their lives.

The last three pages of Heine's "Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland" contain a remarkable prophecy and a subtle analysis of the German *psychē*. The prophecy may never come true, but the diagnosis will stand the most careful scrutiny.

"Do not be afraid, ye German republicans; the German revolution will not turn out to be so much the milder and more gentle because the 'Critique' of Kant, the transcendentalism of Fichte, and even the Philosophy of Nature preceded it. By means of these revolutionary doctrines forces have been developed and they only await the day on which they may burst forth and fill the world with amazement and admiration . . . Christianity — and this is its noblest service — has somewhat tamed the brutal German lust for fighting, but it could not destroy that lust. When some time, the restraining talisman, the cross, breaks in pieces, the fury of the warrior will again burst forth, the senseless Berserker frenzy of which the northern poets have so much to sing and to relate. That talisman is decayed and will break into pieces miserably. Then will the old gods rise again out of the forgotten rubbish, rub the dust of a thousand years out of their eyes, and Thor with his giant's hammer finally leap forth and break in pieces the Gothic cathedrals. . . . The thought precedes the deed as the lightning precedes the thunder. And while it is true that the German thunder is also German and therefore not very nimble and comes rolling up somewhat slowly, it will come, and you Frenchmen, when you hear such a crashing as there never has been in the history of the world, you will know that the German thunder has at length hit its mark. . . . A drama will be played compared with which the

French Revolution was a harmless idyll. . . . Be on your guard. I mean well by you, and for this reason I tell you the bitter truth. You have more to fear from free Germany than from the entire Holy Alliance, together with all the Cossacks and Croats."

Heine says the Germans do not like the French, and he cannot understand why. On one occasion he overheard, when in a beer saloon in Göttingen, a young German of the old school declare that we must take vengeance on the French for having beheaded Conradin of Staufen at Naples.

"You Frenchmen doubtless forgot this long ago, but we Germans forget nothing. You will see that if some day the nation makes up its mind to quarrel with you we shall not be lacking for good reasons. No matter what happens in Germany, whether the Crown Prince or Dr. Wirth is at the head of affairs, be always ready, remain always at your post weapon in hand. I mean well by you; for this reason it almost frightened me when I learned recently that your minister intends to disarm France. In spite of your Romanticism you are born Classicists; you know Olympus. Among the naked gods and goddesses who there make merry over their nectar and ambrosia stands a goddess who, although surrounded by so much joviality and pastime, always wears her armor and her helmet on her head, and holds her spear in her hand. It is the goddess of wisdom."

It is interesting to read, at this time, what Hegel, certainly a competent judge, wrote about his countrymen more than a century ago. I select some passages from the little volume by one of his disciples, Karl Köstlin, entitled "Hegel Considered in his Relation to Philosophy, Politics, and Nationalism."

"Although the political spirit of the Germans is rarely very much alive, they have from the earliest times exhibited a remarkable hankering for the honors of official position, and have held to the opinion that the office and the title make the man. They have believed that one could, in almost every case, gauge the importance of individuals and the honor due them by the difference in the titles which they bore. . . . The Germans are a passive people: they are passive, in the first place, with regard to existing conditions; and, in the second place, if existing conditions are revolutionized. Other peoples wrought changes and we looked on

calmly. The law of elective affinities, discovered by Richter, attracted no attention until Englishmen and Frenchmen spoke of Richter, made use of his labors, and gave them importance. In like manner, Goethe's theory of color will attract no attention until some Englishman or Frenchman takes it up and expresses his views and defends them. This is not to be bewailed, since it is even the German way, except when some wretched stuff like Gall's phrenology is promulgated. Newton obscured Kepler's reputation, and appropriated it for himself. So much authority have the English arrogated to themselves, and we Germans looked on quietly and said nothing. . . . The Germans have always talked a great deal about their fidelity and honesty, but could not be brought to maintain, in a substantial way, this state of mind, and have used the universally recognized rights of citizens to conceal their inability to do anything for the state against princes and the emperor, unaware of the inconsistency between their praiseworthy sentiments and their fidelity and honesty."

In a similar vein Ratzenhofer expresses himself in his "Positive Ethik" (1901):—

"In like manner as the Reformation had its origin in Britain, ethical studies had there also their earliest, most persistent, and most profound development. Less disturbed by political crises than the other peoples of Europe, the British and the Scotch are better fitted for seeking the sources of an ethical view of life, in respect to the relations of men, and to test conditions founded on reason by means of the experiences of the social organism and the conduct of human life. In this respect British ethics is characterized as a moral philosophy that has been able to gain the most profound insight into the moral nature of man; while the other peoples who have engaged in philosophical discussions have perhaps called into existence ideas of prime importance, but have frequently wandered far from the right path of ethical insight or have confused it. . . . Because, if a thorough comprehension of human motives and of organic beings in general is essential to a comprehension of obligation, it follows that the step which Darwin and his coadjutors took into the natural sciences was of the greatest importance for ethical cognition. We should not fail to note that between the precedence which British ethics has before all other nations, with the sole exception of Spinoza, and between the precedence which the British natural sciences from Newton to Darwin there is an intimate intellectual nexus. The same method of proceeding from actual facts had the same influ-

ence upon the natural sciences and upon ethics because, on the basis of the actual, all the sciences approach one another when they become a science of nature at all that is permeated by philosophy."

Without laying undue stress upon the fact that the original Prussians were not Germans, they were the last of the peoples now a part of the German Empire to be Christianized by the drastic methods in vogue in former times. Their subsequent history proves that the work was very superficially done. If all civilization is but a veneer, as is sometimes asserted, it is a mere gloss on the Prussian. Prussia has no part in the Old- nor in the Middle-High German literature. Waitz, in his "*Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte*," says: "The German race would never of its own qualities and without external compulsion and a rupture of its traditions have arrived at a superior development." Zimmermann, in his "*History of Germany*," is of the same opinion. Heeren admits that the Germans became civilized in the fertile fields of Gaul and Italy. Moser gives it as his opinion that every nation has its great native principles: "In Germany it is obedience; in England it is freedom; in Holland it is trade; in France it is the honor of the king." This dictum may have been true of all the countries named at the time it was written; it is still true of the Germans.

During the last years many of us have read: "We Germans are the freest people in the world, because we know how to obey." The wretched fallacy in this declaration is that it fails to discriminate between a mere official command and a moral law such as the Golden Rule or the Categorical Imperative. It is a salient fact in the history of the Germans that the tribes which settled in Switzerland made the first onslaught on a despotic overlord, and resisted with such vigor and tenacity that they ultimately regained their freedom. In

the field of literature and philosophy little Württemberg plays a larger part than do Bavaria and Austria combined; and we shall probably not go far astray if we add Prussia proper. Prussia has produced no philosopher of the first rank, as Kant was in part Scotch. Goethe was born near the French border, while his paternal ancestors were Thuringians. Kepler and Reuchlin were Swabians. Heidelberg, Freiburg, and Basel were among the first universities founded in Germany. Strasburg was at an early period an important educational center, and the location of the first printing press in the world. All the German universities were, however, established later than those of Italy, France, and England.

It is a matter of common remark in Germany that the Bavarian and the Austrian Germans are a good-natured, easy-going folk. But they have recently earned an unenviable reputation for barbarity and bestiality because they have been only too ready to learn from their Northern masters. Their fondness for drink overslaughed their native qualities, and the wine cellars of Belgium and France transformed soldiers into wild boars. In the typical Prussian there is no kindness. He is always fighting or ready to fight, whether it be with a physical or human enemy. The signs of war are always in sight, and the men in uniform are never out of sight even in times of peace. All civilians are virtually slaves without being aware of it. The emperor's coat is not merely a badge of honor: it is also a badge of sanctity. The officer belongs to a class and is responsible only to his peers. The civil law has no terrors for him, because he is not amenable to it. This class maintains its supremacy by persistently parading before the people the fiction that some other nation, or it may be more than one, is always preparing to fight Germany. It is easy to understand how the average man can be duped by such a

baseless clamor. But when we see the intellectuals doing their part, and more than their part, to keep alive the delusion, we are at a loss to decide whether they are knaves or fools.

German commentators on the "Germania" of Tacitus are wont to linger with particular satisfaction over the passage in which the author alleges that the Germans consider their women to be endowed with a sort of divine and prophetic gift, and that women are consulted on affairs of state, and their advice is heeded. The Roman historian adds that it is a matter of tradition among the Germans that wavering lines of battle have been restored, and combats renewed, by women who bared their breasts to the warriors, and depicted the horrors of slavery. Evidently women were not admired by the Germans for their gentleness, for the attributes that are regarded almost everywhere as peculiarly feminine, but for their masculine attributes. Whether the Prussian women are more ferocious than their sisters in other parts of the Empire we have no means of knowing; but it is quite within bounds to assert that such an outburst of savagery as that exhibited by the Germans, both at home and in foreign lands, over the destruction of the Lusitania, is without precedent and will forever remain without imitation. Local outbreaks of barbarism have now and then occurred in well-governed countries by reason of exceptional deeds of violence; but that an entire people should publicly exult over a calamity in which exultation even the children were induced to participate, in the drowning of women and children who could by no possible means and under no conceivable circumstances do the partakers in the festivities any harm, exhibits a depth of depravity that will forever stand out as a conspicuous landmark on the pages of history.

An Italian who was in Berlin several months after the outbreak of the war relates a conversation with a female of the human species, and adds his comments.

"I asked her if any of her relations had been wounded. 'Yes,' she replied, 'one of my sons. He was sent back here for two weeks, but now he has recovered and gone back to the front again.' I could not help admiring the old lady; she was thinking only of the success of the campaign, and very little of the danger that her son might never come back. The German woman has remained, in this way, the wife of the fierce, barbarous warrior of Attila, in peace time counted as a slave, or at best as a nurse for the children, but ready to buckle on the breastplate of her man and to kiss him good-by with dry eyes when the moment for fighting comes. In times of peace one has the impression that this type of woman has disappeared from Germany, and that her place has been taken by the provincial type—sentimental up to her wedding day, practical after—or by the coquettish city type of woman who tries to copy the Parisienne or the Viennese, and only succeeds in being the caricature of the smart woman, handicapped as she is by a certain clumsiness of body and spirit."

It is this unconscious imitation of what is foreign on the part of the lower classes, and the assumption of superiority for *Kultur* on the part of the higher, that make their pretense to originality and superiority so tragic and yet so ridiculous. The older generations were under no illusions in this regard. Herder, Lessing, Schiller, Goethe, and their contemporaries freely acknowledged their indebtedness to France and England. Germany has had no uninterrupted succession of great writers and even of great scientists, such as these countries have to show; and we may even add Italy. Few persons outside of Germany will claim that its literature of the later years of the nineteenth century is the peer of that of the three countries just named, or even of Russia and of Scandinavia. Notwithstanding this manifest inferiority in things spiritual, and notwithstanding the fact that for more than a generation the German people have devoted all their

energies to the attainment of efficiency in things material, they have the effrontery to accuse the British with trying to surpass them or circumvent them in world dominion in the domain of commerce. What a caricature they often make of the thing they imitate is strikingly shown in what they call their constitution.

It is a mere shadow of the real substance. The common people are beguiled by the intellectuals into the belief that they elect their rulers, when in fact the popular elections are a mere sham. When the people ask for bread, the Government gives them a stone, and they make the best of their indigestible food. Verily, Hegel spoke the truth when he declared that the Germans are a passive people. Ardently do we hope, and fervently do we pray, in common with the great majority of mankind, that when this war shall end, the last stronghold of absolutism will have been captured and destroyed.

It is impossible for any normally constituted man to believe that a government can long endure which has outraged the moral sense of almost the entire world, although it has never been very keen. It makes one shudder to read the blasphemies uttered by an emperor who calls himself God's ally, and at the same time bestows the highest honors on the fiend in human shape who sank the *Lusitania*, who applauds the massacre of the Armenians, and for whom the author of the following sentiments is spokesman:—

“No object whatever is served by taking any notice of the accusation of barbarity levelled against Germans by their foreign critics. Frankly, we are and must be barbarians. We owe no explanations to any one. Every act of whatever nature committed by our troops for the purpose of discouraging, defeating and destroying our enemies is a brave act, a good deed, and is fully justified. It is of no consequence whatever if all the monuments

ever erected, all the pictures ever painted, all the structures ever built by the great architects of the world be destroyed, if by their destruction we promote Germany's victory over the enemies who have vowed her complete annihilation."

Verily, the Germans are a passive people, a docile people, a stupid people, for accepting and putting in practice these frightful doctrines to save a military caste which tries to make them believe that a fate is impending over them which all of the Allies, together and separately, have repeatedly and vehemently disavowed. May we not hope as we gaze through our tears, upon the great struggle now going on, that it will not have been in vain?

Is it too much to hope that it is rapidly bringing nearer a realization of the prophet's vision when the nations of the earth shall learn the art of war no more? May we not expect to see at least the beginning of a regenerated world as it appeared to the revelator when the ineffable glory of the vision so filled his soul with ecstasy that it somewhat confused his rhetoric? It is well to keep in mind that Christianity and Judasim are the only religions of hope of progress, of betterment. These words are not in the vocabulary of paganism, nor of Confucianism, nor of Buddhism, nor of Mohammedanism. While the struggle is not primarily between Christianity and alien religions, it is fundamentally a struggle between what is best in human nature and what is worst. While men are fighting on the land and the sea, principles are fighting in the air.