

ARTICLE IV.

GERMANY AND THE BIBLE.

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THE minds of many Christian people have been puzzled and pained by the thought that Germany and England are at war; Germany the land of Luther, Protestant, intelligent, cultivated, progressive, in deadly struggle with England, another Protestant country, full of enlightenment, liberty, and progress. What is the meaning of it all? There are certain political questions into which it is not our present purpose to enter, more particularly because, whatever may be said on these points, they represent the occasion rather than the cause. It seems necessary to get below the surface, and institute the inquiry as to the fundamental reasons for this terrible upheaval.

When the effort is made to proceed from occasion to cause, the question at once arises, whether there is any connection between the war and the view of the Bible which has prevailed in Germany for many years past. The inquiry calls for the greatest possible care, because of the danger of falling into the fallacy of generalizing from particulars. And yet it seems impossible to overlook and set aside the problem to which we now address ourselves. Lest it should be said that the writer is biased in favor of the British position, it may at least be urged that the views here enunciated are little more than the culminating convictions of several years past as the result of Biblical studies in modern German crit-

icism. It is of course true that many Biblical critics have no sympathy with militarist views; but, nevertheless, it is impossible to avoid noticing what Germany, as a whole, thinks about the Bible or to ignore at least the possible bearing of these ideas on the general life of leading men in the various parts of the German Empire.

I.

The first point to be considered, political though some of its aspects are, is recent German action. This has a definite bearing on the issue. For several years past it has been the fashion in Germany to despise everything English. Professor Cramb gives a vivid picture of England as it appears to German minds. The conception is that of a great yet unwarlike power "which possesses one-fifth of the world and an army at least as large as Switzerland's." Among other statements are these: "England, the successful burglar, an immense fortune amassed, has retired from business"; "a timorous, craven nation, sheltering behind its fleet"; "old England, old indeed and corrupt and rotten through and through"; "Germany has become convinced that England's power is an utter sham"; it is described as "weakness grimacing as power"; and yet this timorous, craven, and corrupt nation "possesses the richest parts of the earth" while the Germans have been shut within their boundaries, the Baltic, the Danube, and the Rhine. It is particularly striking that the professional class in Germany is so full of anti-British feeling. It is now well known how Treitschke, the great German historian, expressed his loathing of England,¹ and his successor

¹ "With the English, love of money has killed every sentiment of honour and every distinction between right and wrong, though they hide their poltroonery and their materialism under the unctuous phrases of religion" (written in 1874).

at Berlin, Professor Delbrück, has not been behindhand in his denunciation. Still another Professor of History has written: "The only danger to the peace of Europe, and that includes the peace of the world, lies in the morbid excesses of British Imperialism." And not long ago Professor Lamprecht regretted that in 1875 his country had not subjected France to utter humiliation. One more striking illustration of this hatred of all things English came to light the other day. It seems that the English language in China has spread beyond all other foreign tongues; and the result is that German missionaries and teachers have been ordered to give all medical instruction in the German language only. Further, some leading missionaries have actually seen a statement emanating from Germany which charged English and American missionaries with using their position for the purpose of national propaganda. A well-known American clergyman met several leading German scholars a year or so ago; and, in view of their claim to world-wide influence, he could not help feeling surprised at their ignorance of the English language. When he expressed this opinion to the wife of one of these scholars about her husband, she exclaimed: "Would you wish him to be unpatriotic!" The American clergyman naturally replied, "Madam, my journey to Germany for the purpose of learning all that I can about it does not make me any the less American."

Another feature of German action is seen in the relation to the native Hereros in German South Africa. The labor difficulty has hitherto proved insuperable; and one of the Government experts who was recently called in to instruct the members of the Reichstag on the principles of colonization spoke as follows:—

“The Hereros must be compelled to work, and to work without compensation and in return for their food only. Forced labour for years is only a just punishment, and at the same time it is the best method of training them. The feelings of Christianity and philanthropy, with which the missionaries work, must for the present be repudiated with all energy.”

The German Governor, General von Trotha, took very drastic action ten years ago with these people, and in a proclamation declared that

“the Herero people must now leave the land. If it refuses I shall compel it with the gun. Within the German frontier every Herero, with or without weapon, with or without cattle, will be shot. I shall take charge of no more women and children, but shall drive them back to their people or let them be shot at.”

The result was that many thousands were slain, and thousands more driven into a desert, where they perished of hunger and thirst. And yet they are described by a reputable writer as intelligent, vigorous, industrious, alert, and adaptable. The same thing is true as regards the Poles; for the Prussian policy has not only been marked by bad faith and by injustice, but has utterly failed to accomplish the purpose of Germanizing Prussian Poland.

German action in Belgium is sufficiently recent to be recalled; and, making every possible allowance for the exigency of war, it hardly seems possible to acquit Germany of breach of faith in regard to the neutrality of Belgium. A striking illustration of this occurred in September, when a German Professor, Dr. Kühnemann, was presenting the side of Germany to a Boston audience. When he had reached the point of Belgium, he laid great stress on the effort Germany had made in advance to induce Belgium to grant right of passage, and he said, “Our Chancellor has set before the world the wrong we did, and we shall try to make it right in indemnity or any other way, but we had to do it.” It is not surprising

to read that the Chairman remarked, with perfect courtesy and yet with perfect candor: "This is just the point that troubles us . . . to an American mind it seems entirely irrational to say we ought not to have done it and then to say we went and did it." The German Professor, unable to meet this point, endeavored to pass it off in a jocular way, by saying that life is always irrational, and then proceeded to impugn the motives of England. But it is not surprising that his hearers went away unconvinced.

It is also impossible to forget that when the Kaiser sent off his troops to the Peking Expedition, he bade them give no quarter and take no prisoners, but gain a reputation like the Huns under Attila.

Perhaps, however, the most striking illustration of German action of recent years is the Kaiser's relation to the late Sultan of Turkey, Abdul Hamid, whose atrocities in Armenia and elsewhere must have been as notorious in Germany as in any other country in Europe. And yet the Kaiser paid a visit of friendship to Constantinople and the East, spoke of the Sultan as "my friend," and did his utmost to foster the closest possible relations between Turkey and Germany. I happened to be in Palestine the year after the German Emperor's visit there, and I saw in a celebrated mosque in Damascus a gift from the Kaiser, with an inscription expressive of his admiration for Saladin.

All this seems to confirm the conviction that modern German action is very largely unmindful of some of the plainest and most obvious dictates of everyday morality and courtesy. An incident related a year ago has some bearing on recent events. A Frenchman was on intimate terms with a German who lived in Strassburg, and he happened to be staying in his house at a time when an annual dinner was being held to

celebrate the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine. To his astonishment his German friend invited him to the dinner. He replied that if the suggestion had come from any one but a close friend he would have supposed it to be a studied and most offensive insult. The German laughed it off and went out. His father was present, and when his son had left the room he turned to the Frenchman and said: "That is modern Germany. No German of my generation could have done such a thing; but this generation is devoid of feeling, — so much so that it cannot understand when it is insulting."

II.

From a consideration of German action it is essential to proceed to the inquiry whether German teaching is at all responsible for this state of things. It is well known that the Germans have for long been specially prominent in the realm of philosophy. How far, if at all, has German thought affected German action?

In the German press for several years past the doctrine of Pan-Germanism has been inculcated. The idea is that of an elect race who are to become the instructors of mankind and to save the world by transforming all nationalities into its likeness. On this view there is no hope for humanity except as it receives and reproduces Teutonic culture and philosophy. All this, and much more that might be said, has seemed to the stolid Briton either the utterance of insanity or the dream of mere enthusiasm; and, as such, it has been regarded as more worthy of laughter than of anything else. But the idea has taken hold of the entire nation, and has become a working conviction among many of the best thinkers and leaders. German books can be quoted to prove that in schools and colleges this doctrine is held and taught. An English

clergyman, not long ago, said that when he was in Germany three years back, inspecting some of the schools, he asked a bright German lad what he would like to do when he grew up. At once came the reply, while his hand flew to his head in military salute, "To take London for the Emperor, Sir." Things must surely have gone pretty far when a boy could give utterance to such an ideal.

This, too, has been the view of the now well-known military writer, General von Bernhardt, who teaches that "war is a biological necessity of the first importance"; says that "wars that have been deliberately provoked by far-seeing statesmen have had the best results," and holds that "courts of arbitration are pernicious delusions."

Similar teaching was given twenty years ago by Treitschke. His dominant idea was the greatness of Prussia, first dominating Germany and then the world. To him Britain was contemptible and had to be destroyed, and in his view "might made right."

Perhaps first of all in importance is the philosophy of Nietzsche, who is now familiar in connection with his doctrine of the Superman. He was a Pole, who became a professor at a German University. His mental balance was doubtful, and after several periods of insanity he had at last to be placed in a lunatic asylum, where he remained for twelve years and died in 1900. No one questions the brilliance of his writing, and many are equally sure of its diabolical wickedness. He carried the doctrine of Darwinian evolution into ethics, and declared that the goal of the human race was the emergence of a higher type of humanity, so high that it would transcend morality itself. Nietzsche had a supreme contempt for mediocrity and virtue. To him crime was no offense, and love and passion were merely the virtues of

slaves. As for religion it was a decadent human institution. Almost everything in Nietzsche indicates his passionate hatred of Christianity and its ideals. According to him, Christianity is a religion for the "herd." "A pang of conscience in a man is a sign that his character is not yet equal to his need." The idea of mutual assistance with a view to helping the weak was intolerable to him, and he is recorded as once telling a delicate lady, "A weak woman like you has not any right to live." He held that the species required "the suppression of the physiologically botched, the weak and the degenerate." To him life was the will to power; and since Christianity opposed this, he said that "the cross is a rallying-post for a conspiracy . . . against life itself." And yet it was probably due to the influence of the very Christianity he spurned that Nietzsche was not suppressed, but allowed to remain for years in a lunatic asylum until death removed him. It is, of course, easy to say that his writings were the ravings of a madman; but he was a genius who possessed remarkable ability, and to many in Germany his words appealed with force, especially to the military class and to many who, having denied all faith in Christian teaching, were on that account the more ready to give up Christian morality. Nietzsche singles out for special opprobrium the mistake made by the German people in the fifth century in abandoning the old gods of their fathers and taking for themselves the Christian religion of the fallen empire. While no one considers that the vast majority of the German people take this line of Nietzsche's, it is certain that many of their leaders have favored it, and the influence has descended to the people in the form of vivid pictures of the destiny of the German race. The following quotation from Professor Cramb's book will enable us to understand and appreciate the

extent to which Nietzsche was prepared to show his malignant hatred of Christianity:—

“Ye have heard how in old times it was said, Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; but I say unto you, Blessed are the valiant, for they shall make the earth their throne. And ye have heard men say, Blessed are the poor in spirit; but I say unto you, Blessed are the great in soul and free in spirit, for they shall enter into Valhalla. And ye have heard men say, Blessed are the peace-makers; but I say unto you, Blessed are the war-makers, for they shall be called, if not the children of Jahve, the children of Odin, who is greater than Jahve.”

It may be asked, however, why the Christian religion has been so powerless in Germany to stem the tide of such deplorable teaching. It would seem one reason is that there has been no cohesion among religious people which could oppose and bring pressure to bear upon a government when it outraged conscience. In England, as it has been pointed out, such teaching would quickly meet with the indignant opposition of Christian communities. Then, too, it must be admitted that religion has not been allowed to enter into German politics. Morality has been limited to personal and social life. and Bernhardt says that Christian morality cannot be political. Again, there has been a very serious divorce between personal religion and the study of theology. It is almost incredible to read that when Harnack endeavored to express his religious convictions in his book “The Essence of Christianity,” a well-known theologian, Jülicher, condemned it as not the proper work for a professor. Perhaps greatest of all is the fact that Christ as expressing God has been woefully ignored and neglected in Germany. It is true that the Kaiser has referred to God in various ways almost *ad nauseam*, and the motto on the soldiers’ belts is “God with us”; but no one can doubt that the conception of God

is Deistic rather than that of the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The genuine Christian position was well and forcibly stated in a book by a Cambridge scholar issued over a year before the war, but it would seem as though the attitude described has been largely ignored in Germany:—

"Where Christ has touched human character in earnest, the Bismarck ideals have been challenged at once, and the school of Bismarck has always realized the danger of a free gospel. A tame-cat clergy, with a gospel of the mallet fist, may be tolerable; but men in whom Christ lives, men prepared to champion their fellow-men in Christ's spirit—these are intolerable in any community ruled by the ideals of Bismarck, English, German, Russian or Roman" (Glover, *The Christian Tradition*, p. 159).

It is, therefore, no surprise that teaching in Germany, whether in the press, or in the Professor's chair, or among philosophers, has been permitted to reach such extraordinary and extravagant lengths.

III.

This consideration of German action as influenced by German teaching naturally and necessarily leads on to the further and more fundamental question of the German view of the Bible. The contribution of Israel to the religion of the world has been the greatest of any nation; and yet it is well known, that, in that very nation, there was the greatest departure from the religion proclaimed. The result was a judgment which has now lasted for centuries. It is scarcely possible to avoid thinking of similar results in connection with Germany. We know and are profoundly thankful for the important contributions made to Christian life and scholarship by Germany, in the person of some of her greatest names. The whole Christian world will ever be indebted to men like Luther, Melancthon, Tersteegen, Tholuck, Nean-

der, Lange, Luthardt, Gossner, and very many more; while the spiritual movement, known to-day as *Gemeinschaft*, is a joy to all who love the simple truth of the gospel. It is also a great satisfaction to realize that one of the profoundest historical critics, Niebuhr, was utterly different from scholars of his own country who are continually represented to us as such marvelous authorities.

But there is, unfortunately, another side; and it is this that makes the present time one of such profound significance to all who love the truth. It is well known that from Germany have come, during the past century, the most bitter and determined attacks upon the Person of our Lord. From the time of Strauss onwards the main tendency of German thought has been to weaken and destroy belief in the Deity of Christ. Then, too, the position of the Tübingen school in regard to the New Testament, though now very largely set aside, has deeply influenced Germany to this day in regard to the authenticity and authority of the New Testament books. Further, it is mainly from Germany that we have suffered for the last thirty years the weakening of the authority of the Old Testament. To men like Wellhausen the Old Testament is little more than a patchwork of untrustworthy documents without any supernatural element or sanction. That this statement is neither incorrect nor unfair may be seen from one simple fact. Many years ago Sir W. Robertson Nicoll was walking with Wellhausen in Greifswald and asked him whether, if his views were accepted, the Bible could retain its place in the estimation of the common people. "I cannot see how that is possible," was the sad reply.

But most serious and worst of all is the current and almost universal German view of the Lord Jesus Christ. Any one who reads Weinel's "Jesus in the Nineteenth Century" will

see that the whole tendency of German thought has been in the direction of a purely human and naturalistic Christ. Indeed, it was recently said by Professor Warfield that practically no reputable German theologian now believes in the orthodox doctrine of the Two Natures. Even men like Harnack, Herrmann, and Loofs, with all their earnestness and devotion, do not ring true to the complete New Testament doctrine of the essential deity of our Lord. It is surely significant that Wellhausen, who has now apparently turned aside from Old Testament criticism to the New, has written commentaries on the First and Third Gospels, and has commenced each with the third chapter, ignoring entirely, without comment or argument, the first two chapters, presumably because they contain the record of the Virgin Birth. Surely this cannot be called scholarly and scientific; it is hardly honest.

To show that all this teaching is not without its effect in ordinary life, it may be mentioned that a letter was addressed some time ago to the editor of a German paper, the *Allianzblatt*, and it is said to be a sample of what is taught throughout the length and breadth of Germany. Here is a translation of part of the letter addressed to the paper from a Berlin lady school teacher.

“The 27th chapter of Acts, the record of the Storm on the Sea, was being taken. Technically the treatment was perfect and fascinating. The girls were twelve years old. During the last quarter of an hour the application of the story was being impressed upon them. Thus:

Teacher: Why was not Paul afraid?

Scholar: Because he trusted in God.

Teacher: What did he know?

Scholar: That God would save him.

Teacher: How did he know it?

Scholar: An inward voice had told him.

Teacher: I am glad to get this answer. Why is this answer particularly pleasing to me?

Scholar: Because it was not replied that an Angel had told him.

Teacher: There are still some people who believe that; but, children, you must not believe it. There are also some people who think that everything good comes from above, that is not true. Goodness rests in the individual's own heart. God has put it there.

A few more questions followed, and finally these:

Teacher: We know another Man Who remained quiet in a storm, Who was that?

Scholar: Jesus.

Teacher: Why did He remain quiet?

Scholar: Because He trusted in God.

Teacher: What did He also know as Paul knew?

Scholar: That God would not let Him sink.

Teacher: Why not?

Scholar: Because He had still a task to fulfill on earth.

Teacher: You must not believe that Jesus really stilled the storm and the sea. He never did that, He just remained quietly trusting in His Father."

After the lesson there was a short discussion, and a clergyman present praised the teaching very highly, and said that if such religious instruction were given everywhere it would be better for the German people. Only one of the twenty teachers present took her stand on the side of the Lord Jesus Christ and boldly spoke up for him.¹

Now it is surely impossible that such teaching can be without its effect. "If the foundations are destroyed, what will the righteous do?" Is it any matter of surprise that, having denied the Divine claims of Christ, the German leaders should come to emphasize power and force more and more, and righteousness and love less and less? When there is no sin, no redemption, no new birth in the teaching, it is hardly to be wondered at that the outcome is what we have seen. Germany has done more than all other so-called Christian nations

¹From the Quarterly Paper of the Bible League, London, England, October, 1914.

put together to destroy faith in the supernatural. And it is a matter of profound regret that so much British and American scholarship has sat at the feet of Germany for the past generation. It has meant a theology based on rationalism, and divested of the supernatural. Holy Scripture has had practically no authority, Christ is not God, his cross is not an Atonement, inventions have been put forth to explain the Pentateuch, and almost the entire work of Biblical criticism has been vitiated in the same way. Under a claim to be scientific it has been hopelessly unscientific and unscholarly.

IV.

What are the lessons to be learnt from this state of affairs? The first is that no one need be afraid of scholarship and criticism, if only the three kinds of criticisms are continually kept together. The Lower Criticism of the text is of course essential as a foundation. The Higher Criticism, which deals with date, authorship, substance, strata, is also necessary and important. But these two must never be separated from the "Highest" Criticism, the criticism of the contrite heart. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word." If only we allow the word of God to criticize us (Heb. iv. 12), there need be no hesitation whatever in accepting to the full all the really assured results of the Lower and the Higher Criticism, but they will have to be assured and not merely assumed.

The only danger is to be found in critical presuppositions which deny the miraculous and the supernatural. When Baur attempts to explain the conversion of Saul on purely natural grounds; when Kuenen refuses to see anything unique in the history of Israel; when J. Weiss and Wrede will not allow anything supernatural in connection with the

Apostle Paul, it is time to ask ourselves whether such criticism is of any real value. A statement made by the late Principal Caven, of Knox College, Toronto, not long before his death, has been recently quoted in a Toronto newspaper, and it is certainly of the greatest pertinence at the present time:—

“It is not the Higher Criticism that does the mischief, but the rationalistic preconceptions, the disbelief in the supernatural altogether. There are men on both sides of the critical controversy, among those who have adopted the results of Higher Criticism as well as among those who reject and oppose them, to whom Macaulay’s words regarding Burke might be applied. ‘He chose his position like a fanatic and defended it like a philosopher.’ When a man chooses his position without regard to all the facts, when he refuses to see that there are problems which must be faced, not all the learning or logic at his command will be of any avail. After all, the old saying is true: ‘It is the heart that makes the theologian.’”

Not long ago I heard an account given of a recent visit to the East, when it was remarked that a missionary, visiting another missionary station, heard a lesson being given to the children on “Neither is there salvation in any other” (Acts iv. 12); and on being told, in answer to his inquiry, that such was the teaching given, he replied, “You are far behind the times.” At the same meeting another significant incident was mentioned of a sermon preached in a Japanese church on the Deity of our Lord. After the sermon a Japanese Christian went up to his pastor, and asked whether it was necessary to believe what they had heard that morning. The reply was, “If you are able, it will be better; but if not, it is not altogether necessary.” When the supreme authority of the Bible is denied it is simply impossible to say where a man will go. Such an attitude must affect morality; for, when authority is destroyed, there is no real basis for ethics.

It is much to be desired that some of the British and American followers of German criticism will be enabled, through this war, to see the logic of the situation. Already serious concern is felt about the morality of German politics and the ethics of German national life, and it is to be hoped that the source of all this will be seen in the denial of the supreme authority of the Holy Scripture. When the spirit is lost in the letter, and philosophy is divorced from life; when the critical study of the literature of the Bible is severed from the spiritual truths of the Christian faith, it is not at all surprising that the supernatural is denied, that religious skepticism possesses the educated, and brute force dominates national life. An English daily paper of August 31 last, *The Standard*, speaks with true discernment and great force in regard to the painful influences of German criticism on English religious and theological thought:—

“For many years German criticism has been permitted to exercise in this country an immense influence over theological speculation. We have been overwhelmed by a welter of theories in the sphere of both Old and New Testament criticism—both ‘lower’ and ‘higher’—of Eschatology, of Christology, of Christian origins, of primitive Christian institutions, and the like, all ‘made in Germany.’ Many of our English divinity professors, university lecturers, and writers of religious literature have been busy expounding these Teutonic notions as though they constituted a fresh revelation of truth. From the universities they have spread to the schools, to societies for religious study, to Church reading unions, and even to the systems of religious instruction framed for children. Every effort has been made to popularise them far and wide. Recently, however, there have been observable the beginnings of a reaction; accepted assumptions are called in question under the pressure of hostile facts. English and American scholars are growing restive under German domination, and critics who certainly could not be described as conservative are in revolt against the extremes and extravagancies of Teutonic dogmatism. The disillusion was bound to come; the only cause for wonder has been the long run enjoyed by so gigantic an imposture. The latter term is not too strong to be applied to a systematic attempt to palm off,

as embodying the results of 'scholarship,' a number of speculative theories really dictated by unbelief in the Christian Revelation, and a determination to eliminate the miraculous from human history."

As one result of this war it is a consummation devoutly to be wished that there shall arise in Great Britain and America a true Biblical criticism which will insist upon the supernatural, and refuse to be dependent any longer on German rationalism. Several years ago Dr. Orr pointed out the absolute impossibility of fitting the supernatural into a naturalistic framework, and some of his words are particularly timely at the present juncture:—

"I dare to say with a full sense of responsibility that if many of the things which are found in our approved text-books were openly or undisguisedly preached in our pulpit next Lord's day throughout the land, there would be nothing less than a revolution in our Churches. Christian people simply would not stand for it."

To the same effect is the teaching of "Reasonable Biblical Criticism," by the late Professor Beecher. If men would only face the issues stated in that book, they would easily be enabled to see and indorse a criticism which is at once "reasonable" and "Biblical."

But, beyond all else, the present moment constitutes a call to all who love pure, simple, unadulterated, Biblical religion. We must proclaim the Bible as a Divine revelation, as perhaps we have never done before, and insist that God has spoken therein to mankind. With unfaltering accents we must preach Christ as the Divine Redeemer. To adopt some language of Sir J. Y. Simpson, our message is not the 'mailed fist' but the pierced hand, not the way of Cain but the way of Christ. We must also declare the Cross, without any hesitation or qualification, as the means of Divine redemption. Even though it has, and always will have, its

offense and humiliation, it is still the conquering principle of Christianity. It is the religion of the Divine sacrifice, which is first to be accepted and then exemplified in the believer's life. The Cross is the core of the gospel. We must also emphasize the Divine regeneration, the gospel of the New Birth, the gift of the Spirit from above, as the essential starting point of all true religion. And we must insist on Divine renovation, getting back to prayer, trust, holiness, and obedience as the essential features of Christian living. Not least of all, we must teach, with unhesitating language, the great New Testament doctrine of the Lord's coming as the blessed hope of the Church, the culminating point of Christianity, and the satisfaction of all aspirations.

Thus the Christian gospel as embodied in the Bible is found in three short and familiar passages: "It is I," the Divine Person; "It is finished," the Divine Work; "It is written," the Divine Warrant. When these are combined and emphasized, they give the true view of Christianity which, whether in Germany or elsewhere, is the only "power of God unto salvation."