

Philosophy and Religious Thought in Germany.

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For the Review.

(Conclusion.)

I now proceed to speak of the religion of Germany. The fact first comes before us that there is a State Church, and that the church is subordinate to the Government; in manifest contradiction to the Great Teacher, who said, "My kingdom is not of this world." The distinction is lost sight of between Christian believers and the world. The Protestants, when religious statistics are taken, are not designated denominationally, but Evangelical, which is the legal and official designation of the State Church. All baptized by Protestant pastors are thus included, no matter what their character may be. The socialistic leaders are largely avowed materialists and atheists, who claim 12,000,000 adherents, are classed as Evangelical, all being church members. According to this method of calculation the Evangelicals number over 30,000,000. There is an intense opposition to Methodists, Baptists, and the Salvation Army, mainly because they insist on spiritual conversion; in other words, on the necessity of becoming real Christians and not merely in name. At a Conference a prominent pastor gave an address on the conversion of pastors, and a storm of indignation was aroused, because conversion was urged on men who entered the ministry. Not long since General Booth met in Berlin a company of select Christians who belonged to the State Church. A Count who was an earnest Christian worker, asked him, "Why do you not have the Sacraments in the Salvation Army?" The reply was: "We did have them in the beginning; but we found on the Continent that men of abandoned character come to the Lord's Supper, and then go back to their old life; and when they die, their baptism and the Lord's Supper are regarded as passports to heaven. This led us to abandon the Sacraments." No one present called in question his statement.

Even the external duties are neglected in respect to the people who are members of the State Church. An eminent German minister and author gives some striking facts, whose statement I here quote: "Pastoral calls, if not out of the question altogether, are necessarily limited. Even the sick and the dying cannot be visited. Very many of the people in their homes, and perhaps the majority make no effort to have him come. In many cases he would not be a welcome guest. As civil marriage prevails in Prussia, and as the performance of the rite by the minister, after the civil service, is optional, there are many thousands whose nuptials are not blessed by a minister of religion. Even many funerals have no preachers at the house or the grave. In 1891 there were in Berlin 29,204 funerals of Evangelical persons, but only 9,923 had religious services. Very many parents neglect the baptism of their children, and of the above funerals without pastors, 5,853 were those of unbaptized children of Evangelical parents."

The saintly and learned Prof. Tholuck of Halle, in an interview with an eminent American divine in the latter part of his life, said: "When I came to Halle I could go twenty miles across the country and not once find what, to use an English word is called 'an experienced' Christian. I was very unpopular, I was subjected to annoyances, even in my lecture-room, on account of my evangelical belief." The students of Tübingen, not far from the date of his appointment, ceremoniously burned the Bible.

But there is a flash of light and hope that beams upon us here. In 1870, when Tholuck completed the half century of his work at Halle, the event was celebrated. The occasion was grand. Germany had never been so represented on such an occasion before. Pastors of different cities, Professors of the Universities, were represented; and the Emperor William sent him the Star of the Golden Eagle. An immense torchlight procession of students made the night echo with Luther's hymn, "A Strong Tower Is Our God."

One great drawback to the progress of evangelical truth and life is what is styled "the higher criticism." This need not excite any great alarm; it will have its

run for a while, and will do some harm. One great reason for this is given by Joseph Cook, who says: "The brilliancy of a German Professor's success depends much on the size of his audience, and he is under no inconsiderable temptation to secure hearers by the novelty of his doctrines. The professor is chosen for his fame as a specialist; he attracts hearers by his fame as a specialist; his rank is estimated according to the extent of the additions he has made to knowledge as a specialist; ambition for scholarly renown leads him to seek perpetually to find or invent some new thing as a specialist." I may add that students have a great temptation to present or invent something novel in order to take high rank.

In the great University towns in Germany, Sunday schools and prayer-meetings are not known. Halle led in religious thought and life for a long period. But notwithstanding this, as Tholuck once said: "There are no devotional meetings in our churches worth attending. It may be said that, according to the Scottish and English idea, the State Churches of Germany have no prayer-meetings. I have been subjected to no distress in my lecture-room greater than that caused by the fact, that our churches leave unsupplied in the minds of students that devotional seriousness and elevation, which are the only fit preparations for scientific study of religious truth. I beseech you not to judge of the condition of Germany by the condition of the State Churches."

The need of another reformation there is most manifest. The conviction of this seems to be deepening. Said one of the most orthodox and spiritual pastors a while since, "Judgment and improvement must begin at the House of God. What we specially need is the living hope that there may be an improvement of the condition of the German people and the Evangelical Church." While the state of things is dark, there is ground for hope. Says Schwartz, the court preacher of Gotha: "So much is to be confessed, Seieirmacher's work has been incomparably more enduring, and quietly and inwardly transforming, than Hegel's. Seieirmacher's influences yet advance, while those of Hegel are exhausted and dead."

Some things should be said about Socialism in Germany. This is a thoroughly organized system. Politically and religiously it is a mighty power. We have scarcely any of it here. It has an extensive literature, and its advocates are systematically trained to oratory. The Socialists are exceedingly zealous, and so much so, that, if those not agreeing with them were equally so, Germany would soon have another Christian reformation. The Socialists, though members of the State Church, are generally of materialistic and atheistic tendencies. They are made up largely of the laboring classes. The churches and clergy have shown no special interest in these classes, and they are disposed to reject the Christianity that the Churches claim to represent. This is not to be wondered at. Lately a Count who often met Socialists, advised theological students not to engage in discussion with them. He said, "You will always get worsted in the conflict." Had the socialism of the New Testament been more exemplified by the Church, this movement would never have grown as it has. At a meeting of laborers in Berlin, one of their number exclaimed: "If we are made in God's image, then we ought to be able to live in a manner worthy of that image." An atheistic socialistic said, that "if the principles of Jesus Christ were practised by society there would be no ground for socialism."

I give a few facts showing the extent of the movement. In 1871 the social democrats cast 124,665 votes for members of Parliament. The number increased from year to year, until at the election in 1890 the votes ran up to 1,427,298, about one fifth of the votes of the Empire. It is claimed that these votes represent a total socialistic population of 10,000,000. In Berlin, the seat of the Empire, the social democrats cast over 20,000 votes, more than all the other parties together. Socialism has 123 journals, 74 political, and 54 economical.

We see that the condition of Germany is really appalling. The efforts made by Bismark and the Emperor to crush Socialism have failed. Nothing can save Germany but a radical Christian reformation—a revival of Christian truth and life.