

GERMANY'S RELIGIOUS TURMOIL.

"MORE than one solemn voice is being raised within the Protestant churches of Germany, voices of warning, seriously asking the Church to prepare for the coming of evil days. Three terrible enemies beset the Reformed faith; and these carry on a war of the most ruthless character, and give absolutely no quarter, just as they expect none.

"There is, first, the old enemy, Rome, ceaselessly on the watch perpetually pushing forward her advanced positions, taking advantage of every slip and error in the opposite camp, sleepless, indefatigable, unscrupulous in her methods. The organization of the Church of Rome in Germany is far superior to anything which the Evangelical churches can show. The discipline of her clergy is perfect. These are apparently not bothered by racking doubt as to the faith that is in them. They have no questions to decide about theological chairs, and 'positive' and 'liberal' professors. Their supply of divinity students is not falling off. Their exchequers are full to overflowing, and a recent report of the Archbishop of Ratisbon boasted that never before in the history of German Catholicism has so much been subscribed by the faithful for purposes of religion. Their associations for young men and young women show a full list of members, and are all financially sound. And their great annual political gatherings, at which they send messages to Pope and Kaiser and receive congratulations in return from both these potentates, are full of enthusiasm and give unmistakable evidence of an advancing cause.

"What is being done by the Evangelical churches of Germany to weaken the Church of Rome, either spiritually or politically? I fear absolutely nothing. There are Gustavus Adolphus associations and Protestant Alliances, and many another society with resounding names: but what are they *doing*? Where are the proofs of their

progress? One asks in vain, and the fact remains that throughout the land Rome is united, compact, strong, growing stronger, militant; while the Protestant churches are torn with internal troubles, feeble, presenting no united front, and above all distracted by religious doubts.

SOCIALISM VERSUS CLERICALISM

"Arrayed against Protestantism to probably a far greater extent than against Catholicism is the whole force of the Social Democrats. Few people outside Germany have any conception of the hatred with which the Socialist leaders follow the Evangelical churches. To a very large extent their hatred is returned with interest by the leaders of the Church. The feeling of hatred against the Church is easily enough explained. It exists in all countries with a State Church, but in Germany to a still greater extent than – say, in England. In England, although parson and squire had common interests and were invariably united against the poor man, there was always, even at the worst of times, an eminently respectable residuum which threw in its lot with the poor man, and defended him against his oppressors. But in Germany, especially in Prussia, this residuum has hardly existed, and the great landowner and the great manufacturer have invariably had the pastors at their back.

"The pastors in Germany, with few exceptions support every measure which tells against freedom. They support universal military service, and are identified in every way with the crushing military life of the country. They support the antiquated electoral system of Prussia, which practically excludes every poor man from the poll. During the exciting times of four years ago, when the proposed new taxes on breadstuffs rent the country into two warring camps, I do not remember a single clerical voice raised on behalf of cheap bread and against the utterly selfish agrarianism of the big landlords. In a word, they are opposed to reform as the people understand reform, and in consequence there is a gulf fixed between the representatives

of the working classes and the representatives of the Church which it is impossible to bridge over. At almost every election throughout the country the pastor's candidate is opposed by a Socialist, the two men representing diametrically opposite ways of political thought.

PROTESTANT UNBELIEF A FOE

"But no enemy of the Protestant Church in Germany is so potent and destructive as unbelief. Were only unbelief removed, Rome and Socialism might vainly unite their forces. The believing Church is invincible against all attacks; the unbelieving Church falls a prey to any and every enemy. What can we think of the controversy which has been raging lately in a portion of the Protestant Church press as to the exact number of 'positive' and 'liberal' professors of theology in German universities? By 'positive' is meant those who believe in Christ as very God; by **[R3628 : page 278]** 'liberal' is meant those who do not believe either in the divinity of his person or of his teaching. It is significant of the whole situation that these leading Protestant journals are busily engaged in collecting such statistics. And what do these statistics reveal? A very terrible state of affairs, viz., that the number of unbelieving professors far surpasses the number of believers – 96 liberals and only 79 positive. This is a state of affairs causing jubilation in the ultramontane camp. Hear the leading and most popular Roman Catholic journal in Germany: –

"We can, however, still believe that of those Protestants who still interest themselves in Church affairs there is probably a 'positive' majority. The most remarkable thing about this classification into 'liberal' and 'positive' is that both parties belong to one and the same Church. And yet here are two totally distinct religions, as distinct as Lutheranism and Catholicism. **[R3629 : page 278]** Ninety-six 'liberals' and seventy-nine 'positives' adorning the same Church, teaching the same doctrines – the former absolutely *agnostic*, the latter anything the government wishes them to be.'

"And listen to another voice from the press: 'Inside the Lutheran-Evangelical churches there seems to be a perpetual war of factions, each eager to obtain an ascendancy over the other, and this chiefly with a view to the loaves and fishes. It is not which can do God the best service, or which can do most to promote God's Kingdom at home and abroad; it is not which faction or section can do most to elevate the masses, to make their homes happier and brighter. Instead of these laudable subjects for emulation and rivalry, we have petty disputes about the Canon of Scripture and the authenticity of the Gospels, and endless and rancorous quarrels about the filling of certain theological chairs. It is always a thankless task to prophesy, but we can safely assert that if things go on for another twenty years as they have been going, there will be no theological chairs to fill in any Protestant German University.' This extract is from a secular paper well known for its moderation and fairness.

INFIDELITY RAMPANT IN GERMANY

"The works of agnostic professors and their followers are flooding the country and are being eagerly read. In the windows of every book-shop one passes they are displayed in rows. Quite a sensation is being made with a book by Dr. Daniel Wolter, 'Egypt and the Bible.' The author proves to his own satisfaction that the 'myths' of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses are directly derived from Egyptian sun myths; and that consequently these Old Testament worthies were simply characters from these mythological tales of the Egyptians, filtered through a Hebrew imagination.

"There is another still more dangerous class of book engaged in discussing 'the historical Christ': and, under a vast show of learning and much appearance of critical fairness, the authors one and all come to the conclusion that no such person as Jesus Christ ever existed; and that if he did, he certainly does not deserve, owing to the imperfections of his character and teaching, the adoration of mankind. This is the whole trend of Eduard von Hartmann's 'The

Christianity of the New Testament,' which is now in everyone's mouth. The eminent philosopher sees nothing in Christ's teaching or character. He describes him as 'an amiable and modest young man, who, through a remarkable concatenation of circumstances, came to the idea, at that time epidemic, that he was the expected Messiah, and who perished in consequence.' According to Hartmann, some of his ideas were admirable, some doubtful, some eminently trivial; but even the most admirable of them have no claim to immortality, and have been better expressed and more powerfully brought home to men by other teachers, both before and after him."

– *M. A. M., in The London Quarterly Register.*

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