

THE RISE AND FALL OF GERMANY'S FALSE *MESSIANIC HOPE.*

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The Kaiser's fall is the fall of Lucifer. It has an interesting history, which, in the light of events, may well be rewritten. Had the world taken more seriously the Kaiser's "deep religious nature", as some have called it, the psychology of modern German leadership would have been more intelligible; and possibly, the long drawn horrors of the world-conflict would have been averted.

"The Spirit of the Lord has descended upon me. I am the instrument of the Almighty." These are not the words of an ancient prophet, who uttered, in the Hebrew language, a similar speech, some half dozen or more centuries before the Christian era. (Isa. 61:1, 2.) Nor are they the words of Jesus, who quoted the words of the early prophet as applicable to Himself in His home town of Nazareth. They are the pronouncement of the German Kaiser, William the Discredited. It was near the outbreak of the war, when the Emperor was rallying his oriental allies to the task of world conquest and the inauguration of a "holy war" that he made this boasting, blasphemous claim. In this proclamation to the Army of the East in 1914, the Kaiser declared himself the world's modern Messiah, "the Anointed", the chosen instrument for working out God's plans in the universe.

But that was no exceptional, isolated pronouncement of one momentarily intoxicated by the exuberance of newborn hopes, expressed in swollen, effervescent speech. It was the claim of one who for a quarter of a century had been developing both a religious and a political megalomania—a disease which manifested itself near the very

beginning of his spectacular reign, even before he "dropped the pilot" in the dismissal of Bismarck, prime maker of the empire. The Kaiser's bizarre and dramatic entrance into Jerusalem, on a visit to Palestine (when he was laying the foundation of his great central empire sweeping through the heart of Europe and Asia from North Sea to Persian Gulf) was only an illustrative page in the volume of his messianic claims. Jesus, the Hebrew Messiah, rode into Jerusalem, but it was through the common gate of the people, "meek and lowly", upon an ass' colt. The German Kaiser rode in his chariot of state, through a new-made breach in the walls!

For more than a century the German people had been quietly appropriating to themselves, in relation to the modern world of nations, the relative place of merit held by the three great peoples of the ancient times—those that made the three most conspicuous and lasting contributions to the making of the world of today. These are the Greeks, the Romans and the Hebrews. Ancient Greece enriched the world with its culture, which has permeated modern civilization everywhere. So Germany's *Kultur* was to leaven the entire lump. Rome taught the world the art of military achievement and universal sway. The Germans had come into the ancient Roman heritage and were called to world-wide dominion. Repeatedly has the Kaiser been quoted as saying, "Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, Theodoric II and Napoleon aspired to set up world-empires. They failed. I shall succeed." The aspirations both of ancient Rome and of the later "Holy Roman Empire" pale into insignificance before the colossal ambitions of William the Mad. But not Greece and Rome only, but all the best of Hebrew claims must be thrown in, to make full the cup of the Kaiser. The Germans were the chosen people of God, men of finer stuff than the common folk of the baser clay. "We are the salt of the earth", said the Kaiser in Bremen in 1905. Ten years later, a German reporter (A. Friedrich, *Mit*

dem Auto an der Front) tells of a speech of the Kaiser to his troops fighting in the war: "We are fighting the fight of light against darkness. . . . O Germany, high in honor, thou *Holy Land* of faith." Thus were the culture of Greece, the military prowess of Rome and the spiritual leaven of the Chosen People, rolled up in one and held in complete possession by the Teuton.

"We feel ourselves to be the bearers of a superior culture." "Make the words, '*I am a German citizen*', mean more than ever the Roman meant by '*I am a Roman citizen*'." "'How shall I build up the Kingdom of God?' My answer is, '*Be a good German*'." These quotations are but typical of a state of mind built up in Germany during more than a century.

How is it to be accounted for? It is not altogether a unique phenomenon—this messianic attitude of mind; this feeling of national and racial superiority coupled with the sense of a mission to conquer and dominate the rest of the world. It is a national viewpoint of which the ancient Israelites may be taken as the best example—a viewpoint not in itself necessarily culpable; its moral quality being dependent upon the amount of truth that enters into it, and the mode of life and action which it incites. Strong and aggressive nations have not infrequently been influenced by it; usually under the power of some strong personality, or a succession of strong individual leaders, or by virtue of unusual successes, military or commercial. Hence there have arisen such expressions as "peculiar people", "children of fortune", "manifest destiny", and the like. Till this war broke, Americans were not altogether free from an occasional indulgence in this sort of self-flattery. In this *lick-all-creation* spirit, this sense of national superiority, the Germans have so completely out-classed the rest of mankind, however, that we begin to wonder how we could ever have been even touched by such self-complacent illusions and conceit.

It is quite a common mistake to go back only about forty years to account for the making of modern Germany. It would be better to go as far as the Reformation in the sixteenth century. That historic upheaval was political and economic, as well as religious. It found the German people a collection of Teutonic principalities, with their separate princes, customs and dialects. There was no national consciousness in any large sense. The reformers naturally made fervent appeal to national and racial self-respect, as against the domination of a foreign pope, who, more than once, had humiliated their rulers. But Martin Luther, by translating the Scriptures into one of the dialects of the German tongue, and placing a vernacular Bible into the hands of the German people, laid the foundation for a united Germany. For the people were thereby at length given a single, common written language, a common literature and a common religious faith. No people can long keep apart who speak the same tongue, read the same books and worship the same God. Professor Alois Brandl, of the University of Berlin, has declared that Martin Luther by his translation of the Bible into High German did more for the making of the united German Empire than did the three immediate fashioners of it, William I, Von Moltke, and Bismarck, in the year 1871.

Unfortunately, however, Luther, by a strange inconsistency, called to his aid the German princes, and fostered a state Church (or more correctly, states churches), laying the basis for religious formalism and the eventual domination of the Church by the state, to be used for its own political and military ends. It was, however, in the work of Luther that are to be found the beginnings of Germany's unity and national self-consciousness.

It was not till after the Franco-Prussian War, 1870-71, that this political unity found its full, definite and concrete expression. Then the German Empire came into being under the masterful hands of William, the strong

Prussian prince, Von Moltke, the competent, victorious general, and Bismarck, the statesman "of blood and iron". These men of indomitable will and undoubted power, succeeded in placing Prussia at the head of the German states and in making the Prussian King the German Emperor, while prostrate France lay bleeding.

The Hohenzollerns, among the oldest and most virile of all the ruling families of Europe, had occupied the Prussian throne for centuries. Frederick the Great, by his peculiar predatory gifts and egoistic daring, had given to the Prussian state a prominence never before possessed. Deeply embedded in the consciousness of this family of Hohenzollern was the ancient and now outworn doctrine (except in Germany) of *rule by divine right*. It was quite typical of the Hohenzollerns, when in 1849, Frederick William IV, kinsman of the late Emperor, peremptorily refused the proffer by representatives of a democratic federation of German people to be head of a new empire, on the ground that since he had been given the right to rule by the Almighty, he could not accept it from so inconclusive a source as a parliament of the people.

The rising tide of democracy, however, which at the close of the eighteenth century found its height in the French and the American revolutions, manifested itself even in Germany, especially through France. A humanistic movement was affecting powerfully the best German thought. Goethe, Schiller and others did much to liberate and universalize the German mind. But a new and unexpected influence, of a very different sort, coming from France, was destined to play a very different role in German thinking. The military successes of Napoleon had a very depressing effect upon the German people. Especially humiliating were they to the pride of the Prussians. The battle of Jena in 1806, followed in five days by Napoleon's triumphant entrance into Berlin, was crushing in its effects. The teacher and philosopher, Johann Gotlieb

Fichte, was just coming into prominence as a lecturer. He prepared a series of able *Addresses to the German People*, in which he attempted to win them from the depression and humiliation of defeat, and to fire them with enthusiasm for the future. He insisted that Germany alone of modern nations had preserved its pure and unpolluted blood, and so was alone capable of the highest culture. It therefore had a unique and glorious mission of leadership, and was destined to play a foremost role in the future of the world. These addresses marked an epoch in the people's spirit and thinking. The University of Berlin was at once brought into existence and Fichte made its first head, in the year 1810. The leaders, and the people themselves, were not slow to believe Fichte's prophecies of Germany's coming greatness and unique mission to the rest of mankind.

But Fichte was soon succeeded by the distinguished Hegel as head of the University and a new chapter is opened. For Hegel taught the Germans a doctrine of the state, which was seen at once by the house of Hohenzollern to fit in admirably with their own mind and scheme of life. It is the teaching that the state is absolute in its authority, amenable to no law whatsoever, outside of itself. The state makes law, and need obey none, not even the moral law. *It can do no wrong.* Here, too, we find sources from which the unscrupulous members of the gang at Potsdam and the generals in the field draw their perverted inspiration for the frightfulness and grim brutality, the breach of national covenant and perfidy which over-ran Belgium, devastated France, sank passenger ships without warning, drowned women and children, bombed hospitals, terrified defenseless cities, violated virtue and every decency—for the state knows no law, but its own will, or its own necessity.

Here again we must go back to a great philosopher to find a spring, which though much polluted has run into the making of the stream of the thought of modern Ger-

many. It is Immanuel Kant—a great name, and strange as it may now seem, a staunch advocate of peace. Kant found the source of all moral conduct in the human will. Whence come the oft-repeated expressions, *the will to power, the will to victory*, and so forth, which have so frequently fallen from the Kaiser's lips during the progress of the war.

Fichte, Hegel and Kant are a notable trio. But more recent teachers were found to be responsible for the stress and perversion of the teachings of these leading German philosophers. Specially should be mentioned Professor Treitschke of Berlin, who was one of the most popular lecturers in the university. Hundreds of young men, coming leaders of the German thought of their day, sat and listened to this man's fascinating exposition of the doctrine of the state, and the way to Germany's greatness. "It is necessary", said Treitschke, "*to choose between public and private morality*, and since *the state is power*, its duties must rank differently from those of the individual. Many which are incumbent upon him have no claim upon it. The injunction to assert itself remains always absolute. Weakness must always be condemned as the most disastrous and despicable of crimes, the unforgivable sin in politics." This was his message.

The Germans rather more than any other people have also been influenced in their thinking by the theory of Charles Darwin, that the fittest survives in the struggle for existence. This theory when left to move simply upon the plane of the animal, naturally gives the law of the jungle the right of way. The way of the beast becomes the law of human relations as well. This theory of life reached its climax in Nietzsche, the paranoiac German philosopher, of whom so much has been written, especially since the outbreak of the war with its beastly atrocities. Nietzsche boldly declared that strength, aggression, achievement are the greatest of all virtues, and weakness, mercy, kindness the cardinal sins. It is the

business of the strong to eliminate the weak and to fatten upon his fall. Jesus, who taught humility, meekness, self-sacrifice and love, was the arch-enemy of the race. Christianity therefore is its greatest menace. Might knows no law but might, and war is the noblest of all agencies for the regeneration of mankind. Says Nietzsche (in *Thus Saith Zarathustra*): "Ye say it is a good cause that halloweth even war. I say unto you, it is a good war which halloweth every cause." There are no bad wars. Says he again: "Man shall be trained for war, and woman for the re-creation of the warrior."

It was General Bernhardi who was the chief military exponent of this view in Germany. Said he: "War must be taken as a part of the divinely appointed order." Again, he writes: "War is both justifiable and moral, and the ideal of perpetual peace is not only impossible, but immoral as well." "It is fought in the interest of biological, social and moral progress."

Fichte had declared that one who is in the right is under obligation to compel the right in others by force. "He is master, armed with compulsion and appointed of God." But the distinguished philosopher did not say who is to determine which line of conduct is right and which is wrong; though it must be said to Fichte's credit that his distinction was moral—between *right* and *wrong*. His successors, however, used the same line of reasoning, but substitute *strong* and *weak* for right and wrong. The strong is "armed with compulsion and appointed of God" to destroy the weak and appropriate his goods.

It is little wonder, then, that the German leaders only laughed to scorn President Wilson's humanitarian papers. For what they are pleased to call *Gefühlpolitik*, or politics of sentiment for humanity, they have had only the feeling of derision and utter contempt. As one of their leading publicists has said: "Public policy, prompted by the emotions is stupidity. Humanitarian dreams are imbecility. The German people are always right because

they number eighty-seven million souls." "This right of the Germans arises, let it be said once more, out of the German civilization, the best on earth. . . . Forward then into the fight for German aims, as far as the hammer is hurled let the earth be ours", for

"We are the race of the Thunderer
We will possess the earth,
That is the old right of the Germans
To win land with the hammer."

Thus did the modern German jingoist hark back to the old Saxon deity Wodin, the Thunderer, with his hammer, as the god to whom Germans must pray, even as the Kaiser appealed to his people to reincarnate in themselves the spirit of the barbaric Huns. It was he, and not the enemy, who gave to the Germans this ancient name of brutality incarnate.

The extent to which this viewpoint took hold upon the people of Germany may be seen in the fact that from among the greatest religious leaders the same opinions were boldly expressed. Adolf Deissmann, professor of New Testament in the University of Berlin, speaking of this war, said: "What they (the Allies) call barbarism history will call primitive strength. . . . We proclaim, no, we do not proclaim, for it reveals itself, the *religion of strength*." The Rev. Dr. Vogel, pastor of the Imperial Court of Germany, writes in the Berlin *Lokal-Anzeiger*: "Nations are fighting and destroying one another to decide to whom shall belong the mastery and leadership of the universe for now and all time. On the one side is the covetousness of the hordes of Asia, the vengefulness of the unfaithful Latins, and the greedy cupidity of a mercantile race, knowing only the rule of the dollar mark, to the brutal exclusion of everything that does not pertain to the god of Mammon. On the other is arrayed the shining figure of the Archangel Michael, the true symbol of the deep and serious Germanic consciousness, filled with the fear of God and respect for the written word. This

is the summation of German idealism, the crowning virtue that Germany alone can convey to the rest of the world. . . . Germany is the heart of Europe and the conscience of the world."

Rudolf Eucken, the theologian of Jena, a few years ago heralded as one of the greatest of spiritual forces in the world of modern thought, author of *Can We Still be Christians?* has said: "Fichte was right in calling us the people of the soul. . . . The destruction of the German nation would rob the world-history of its deepest meaning."

Professor Haeckel, also of Jena, but lately declared that "one single highly cultivated German warrior, who, alas, are falling in thousands, represents a higher intellectual and moral value than hundreds of raw children of nature, whom England, France, Russia and Italy oppose to them."

Such are the thought-currents that shaped Germany and pulled the roof of the world down upon its head. Given a combination of Fichte's "manifest destiny" of the German people, Hegel's absolutism of the state, Kant's will to conduct; and to these add Germany's marvelous military successes, over Austria first, then over Denmark and next over France till she was bled white with billions of indemnity, laying the foundations for Germany's commercial expansion unparalleled in a single generation; given also the Emperor's dashing individuality shaped by imperialistic thinking in terms of divine right and messianic mission; and the further fact that the entire machinery of government, the military, the educational and ecclesiastical systems, home, church, literature, science, art, music, all were shaped to propagate the doctrine of German superiority, absolute and unquestioning obedience to the state, loyalty to the Fatherland, symbolized and incarnate in the Kaiser's person—given all these and more, and it is not difficult to understand the situation into which Germany plunged herself and the world with her.

Professor Simon N. Patton, lately of the University of Pennsylvania, in a little volume issued prior to our entrance into the war, entitled, *Culture and War*, undertakes to interpret sympathetically the German point of view. It is given by Professor Patton somewhat as follows: The superiority of any living thing is disclosed in its ability to *appropriate* all with which it comes into contact. There is in the world a sort of *super-reality* (this is of course Germany) a permanent vitality which grows and must continue to grow by the process of taking up within itself all lesser realities. (These, of course, are all other things not German.) It incorporates all the values of all the civilizations, and in this way, all values are given permanance, realizing themselves by losing themselves in the one and only permanent super-reality. What, then, is this super-reality? The Germans have found it in their *Kultur*—which, of course, is made in Germany. All the lesser forces, influences, civilizations, nations, peoples, must at last be absorbed into and controlled by the one permanent living reality, the German civilization.

There were, according to Professor Patton, three keywords to German thought, *Dienst*, *Ordnung* and *Kraft*. *Dienst* is the sort of service which the individual renders in absolute and unquestioning obedience. *Ordnung* is regulation, order, system, which alone makes for efficiency and success. *Kraft* is power, which leads to achievement. Thus the German thinks not in terms of subjective right and wrong, but in objective good and bad. That is good which achieves, that is bad which fails to achieve. This efficiency, or achievement, comes only through *Krieg*, or struggle. Darwin's struggle for existence becomes, as with Hegel, the interaction of two contending forces by which alone progress is possible. So the state struggles against other states and there emerges the super-state whose duty it is to subdue and absorb all weaker states. Hence, the benign blessing of war, through which the

state functions in its struggle for supremacy. The German state therefore must eventually master the world. God willed it, when He made the Germans the super-race and enriched them with a superior culture.

It was Israel's Messianic hope that her sway should stretch "from the River to the ends of the earth". The wealth of all nations would pour into her. Germany was only making a beginning when she took up the slogan, "Berlin to Bagdad", or "Hamburg to Herat". The entire earth was ultimately to be her oyster, which would be opened with the sword. The Messianic "day of the Lord" became, on German lips, simply *Der Tag*. As Israel was entrusted with "the oracles of God", Germans had their *Kultur*, the hope of the world. A German writer years ago undertook to show, indeed, that the Germans are *The Ten Lost Tribes of Israel*. As God gave to the Hebrews a pre-eminent place among the peoples of the earth, Germany was destined to have a "place in the sun". The Kaiser's spectacular entrance into Jerusalem, the Germans' attempt to colonize Palestine, as offset to the Zionist movement among the Jews were further evidences of this pseudo-messianic insanity. God, to whom the Kaiser could pray as "Our Ally who art in Heaven"—one who was his accomplice and exclusive confederate in a divine-human *plunderbund* and kingdom of pelf, had commissioned the Germans to "subdue and have dominion". The German people functioned through the state. The state in turn functioned through the person and will of the German Emperor, the anointed mouth-piece of the Most High. The will of the Kaiser therefore was clearly the voice of God. *Vox Kaiseris, vox dei*.

But these messianic hopes have been crushed. The world at large never took them seriously. They failed, not because Germany was conscious of a high destiny, but because her God was not a moral God and her policies were founded on force and not upon righteousness. She must therefore be satisfied with "a place in the—moon",

or in some lesser satellite. She staked all upon the sword and lost all by the sword.

Luther, when translating the Scriptures, said he had no easy task in making the Hebrew prophets speak German. Those spiritual seers proclaimed a God of righteousness and saw Israel's future hope in national morality. So even when she lost her national existence she became the world's teacher of religion and morals. Great nations have made their best contributions to mankind when they have died into the common life of the world. Will Germany's real mission to mankind be realized in the very overthrow of her national hopes?