

The British Weekly
24. October 1929

75

Autumn Politics: The German Point of View

We have read with sincere interest an article in the newly published issue of *Le Christianisme social* which is entitled "Germany To-day" ("L'Allemagne d'aujourd'hui"). The author, Dr. Joachim Müller, is a young Protestant scholar who writes from Geneva. His sympathies are never in question, and the editor of the review, M. Elie Gounelle, is obliged to correct him about the Berne Conference declaration (1926) on the subject of war-guilt. But his frank survey of the present outlook in Germany has its lessons for us at home as well as for foreign readers. We comment on a few noteworthy passages.

The Loss of the Colonies

Liberals have long realised that the German people cannot be indefinitely excluded from a place in the sun. The right of colonisation will be restored to them, and already projects have been mooted. Dr. Müller has visited the reconstructed districts in Northern France, and has understood "how the isolation of the land of one's birth may infuriate a people." Because she took from France and Belgium lands which were their

heritage, Germany is to-day, as Dr. Müller puts it, "a people without territories." The loss of the Colonies is a never-ending sorrow. Hans Grimm has told the story in his novel on the life of a German settler in South-West Africa.

Affinities With Russia

Separated by the fortune of war from western Europe, Germany has forged new psychological links with the Slavic world. By her geographical position she is an intermediary between an Asiatic and a European culture, the Slavonic and the Latin faiths.

"The German attitude," says Dr. Müller "is nearer at this moment to that of the Slavs than to that of the Latin races, although it has a share in both. This is evident from certain tendencies which might become important factors. The same currents of thought may be found in Germany and Russia. Look, for instance, at the radical way in which a great number of the German people are getting rid, in theory and in practice, of what they call 'ideology.' The change may be discerned in political, economic and social affairs, no less than in the moral and religious life of individual citizens. The tendency is strongest of all in the region of sexual morality."

The Barthian school of theology, we are reminded, has felt itself strangely drawn towards the teachings of Dostoevsky. The writings of Thurneysen, the chief disciple of Barth, have directed the minds of many young German pastors to the great Russian, who "discovered light in the depth of darkness, and in the collapse of all human effort laid hold on the grace of God."

"That faith, which sees the creative might of God fulfilling itself in human weakness, is the cardinal principle of one of the most impressive German theological systems of our time."

Dr. Müller remarks that in post-war international conferences the leaders of charitable enterprises in Germany felt themselves closely

war international conferences the leaders of charitable enterprises in Germany felt themselves closely attracted to their Russian brethren. Each group had gone through such terrible experiences in the war years that their way of thought had acquired an "eschatological" range and tendency. The hope of the future lies with the "Youth" movement, whose leaders, at their Whitsuntide gathering, "declared unanimously in favour of disarmament and arbitration as the basis of international friendship. These leaders represented nationalist as well as pacifist associations, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat."

In closing, Dr. Müller refers to the economic privations which prevent the free development of the national life. The prosperity which impresses the passing tourist is "une vie superficielle." War-burdens press heavily on the masses. As confirmation, we may quote these words in a letter we received this week from a young English novelist who is spending October in an ancient Rhenish city:

"If the life here is typical of German post-war poverty, the country must be poor indeed. They live here on about what we in England would waste."

Karl Barth on the Rhine

Die Christliche Welt announces that Professor Karl Barth has accepted an invitation to the Chair of Systematic Theology at Bonn. His departure from Münster will transfer him from a comparative backwater to one of the main routes of European travel. He was born in 1886 at Bâle, where the Rhine is already a broad stream, with the strength of the mountains in its green, swiftly flowing waters. At Bonn the river has flowed through landscapes of surpassing beauty, beneath castles, cities and vineyards. Soon it will reach Cologne and then widen out, "freshening its current and spotted with foam as it draws to the ocean." There have been changes in the Barthian theology, from the energy and turbulence of its Swiss mountain course, to the more tranquil windings of the plains. The famous theologian is only in his 44th year, and his best work may lie ahead.