

HAVE LUTHERANS DEPARTED FROM LUTHER?



Manfred E. Haber, Th.D.

Theology in Germany

What Has Gone Wrong in the Land of the Reformation?

A Wake-Up Call for America

Friedrich-Alexander-Universität
Erlangen-Nürnberg



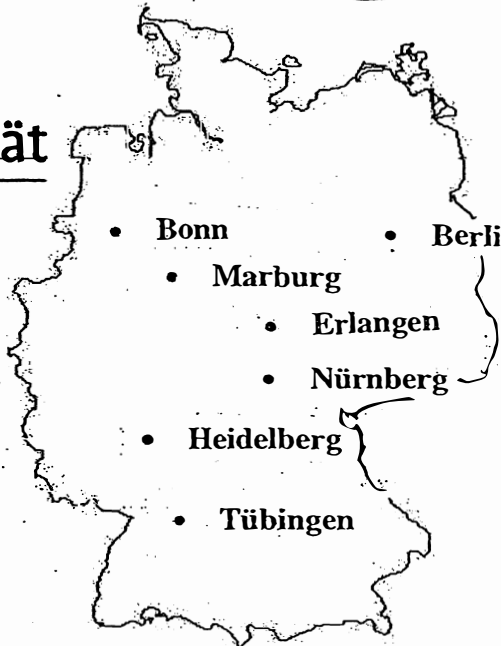
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Theology in Germany

by Manfred E. Kober, Dallas, Texas

OUTLINE:

1. The Schools:
 - a. Diverse Theology.
 - b. Disparaged Scholars.
 - c. Disillusioned Students.
2. The Scholars:
 - a. Practical Unbelief.
 - b. Profound Teaching.
 - c. Pious Appearance.
3. The Students:
 - a. Scholarly Interest.
 - b. Scriptural Ignorance.
 - c. Soteriological Indifference.
4. The Studies:
 - a. Unsound Doctrines.
 - b. Unwarranted Methods.
 - c. Unpromising Future.

It cannot be doubted that German theology is setting the pace for the rest of the world. The maxim is true, which is frequently heard, that America is twenty years behind Germany, as far as the field of theology is concerned. This therefore being the case, it is only right for Americans to examine the theological climate of Germany today and be thus informed as to the changes and trends which will become evident before long in their own country too. The following reflections are written by one who recently studied in Germany. The purpose of this article is primarily to record personal impressions and to give specific examples of contemporary belief, rather than to make a doctrinal analysis of German theology, for this alone would necessitate the writing of a little volume to do justice to the subject. For clarity's sake I will discuss German theology under four headings: the schools, the scholars or professors, the students, and the studies.

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The Schools

There are a number of well-known universities in Germany where Protestant theology is being taught. Among them are the universities of Heidelberg, Göttingen, Marburg, Tübingen, Erlangen, Bonn, Mainz, and Münster. I studied at Erlangen.

Diverse Theology

If there is anything typical of the schools of theology at these universities, it is the diverse theology. A person who expects to find Neo-Orthodoxy in Germany will surely be disappointed. A neat theological system of that nature just doesn't exist there. One of the students confirmed my observation when I asked him recently how he would characterize German theology. He unhesitatingly uttered, "It's a mess!" There are as many different types of theology here as there are theologians. Decades ago men like Barth, Brunner, and Bultmann nearly eclipsed all other theological directions and made many converts to their ideas, but their students, now professors themselves, have long since departed from their masters' methods. The theological spectrum is so variegated that one would have to study each theologian individually to understand German theology. Like the scholastics, each has his own little system, and perhaps the last verse in the book of Judges would describe the situation in Germany best of all: "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Disparaged Scholars

Also characteristic of Germany is the disparaging of other scholars who don't agree with *one's* views. The passion with which one professor belittles another is astounding. They seem to be following the old German principle, "Und willst du nicht mein Bruder sein, so schlag ich dir den Schädel ein?" (And if you do not wish to be my brother, I shall knock in your skull.) Teaching only a maximum of six hours per week, the prime task of the professors is to do research and to write books. These books are usually written against a treatise by some other professor. Then a third professor joins the dialogue with another volume to denounce both books as inanity and illogic. And so it goes on . . . each professor thinks that he alone has the truth. It is therefore little wonder that a crusade especially against conservative theologians is being carried on with the greatest vehemence. The university of Erlangen is known to be the most "conservative"

in Germany, because certain professors still hold to at least some historical details about the Bible. For example, the N. T. professor Stauffer insists that much of the gospel of John is historically accurate – notwithstanding current theological consensus. This causes him to be ridiculed everywhere. Whenever his name is mentioned in a lecture at some other university, like Heidelberg, for example, everyone howls. But this is nothing compared to the scorn that is heaped upon the true conservative theologians of a century or so ago. (There just are not any true conservative professors in Germany today, in the American sense of the word.) Their high esteem for the Bible, their efforts in the defense of the truth, these are touched upon in such a way that there is created a contempt for them among the students. Paul Althaus, considered by many as Germany's most "conservative" theologian, by-passed Theodor Zahn, who fought here in Erlangen so valiantly against the tide of liberalism and radicalism in the last century, with the words, "He was an extremely learned man but his greatest mistake was that he tried to defend the authenticity and infallibility of the Bible."

Notwithstanding the teaching at most other universities, many professors here still hold that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a historical fact and event, and therefore Erlangen is often ridiculed as being unscholarly and unprogressive.

Disillusioned Students

It is impossible to speak of German theology without mentioning the widespread disillusionment among the students. They are looking for something to believe, something objective and absolute. Their perplexity and discontent are understandable. Professors contradict each other in almost every area of theology. Whom then should the students believe? Which innovation are they to follow? In addition to this, studies are anything but conducive to a firm personal faith. It is really a saddening experience to see how theologians delight in the destruction of their students' faith. No wonder many students finally refuse to become pastors of the Staatskirche (Lutheran State Church), for which most theological students are preparing, once they have completed their studies. Typical is the comment which two graduates made: "We have now finished our studies at the university, but we have nothing which we can believe or preach. How can the church expect us to be preachers?!" Even my roommate, a brilliant student, decided that he would not enter the ministry –

after diligently studying theology for three years. To my question why he, who seemed so convinced of the value and rectitude of German theology, would suddenly turn his back on it, he gave a very illuminating answer: "If I want to have a personal faith which I should preach to the people, I can have nothing to do with this theological science. On the other hand, if I want to be a conscientious theologian and be true to theology's logical consequences, I must reject the possibility of a personal faith in the facts of the Bible." This disjunction between theology and a biblically oriented faith is discernible everywhere. In the words of one professor: "We must be honest and admit that we have two types of theology: a practical theology, which is that which we must preach, and a scientific theology, which is that which we really believe."

Scholars

Let us now look more closely at these men who are presently professors of theology.

Practical Unbelief

The unifying factor among professors today is an appalling unbelief relative to the contents of the Bible, though their other teachings and ideas might be as disparate as can be. Before coming to Germany, I surely thought that the great Bible teacher Dr. Charles Woodbridge was exaggerating when he stated that as far as he knew, there was not a single university professor in Germany today who believed in the inerrancy of the Bible. Now I am convinced that he was absolutely right. I would even venture to go one step further and say that it seems an utter impossibility for anyone subscribing to the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures to be ever able to become a professor at a German university. Such a primitive and naive concept of the Bible is unscholarly and unscientific, meriting only the greatest condemnation, we are told. It is said to be an utter impossibility and sign of abysmal ignorance to maintain that we can have a Bible-based system of theology, a true biblicism, in the light of 20th-century knowledge.

Profound Teaching

The great erudition of German scholars is universally recognized. Some of these men have mastered as many as eight or ten languages. Their knowledge in every area of theology is astounding to say the

least. In writing books they are very prolific. Despite these commendable factors, and upon their own admission, there is coupled with their teaching and writing an innate ambiguity. It is a standard joke that a book is of little value unless one has to read a sentence three times to understand its meaning. Clarity is tantamount to naivete. The lectures are often equally as unintelligible. To a student who is used to an easily-followed, clear outline in class, this vagueness and lack of clarity are a source of constant despair. A prime example of this ambiguity was a recent lecture held by a visiting professor from Mainz. Two hundred students listened over one hour to a lecture on a certain form of philosophical hermeneutics by Professor Pannenberg. Nobody knew what he tried to say; in fact, the whole discourse was so unintelligible, that a professor rose immediately subsequent to the peroratory and rebuked the lecturer for his excessive and unwarranted vagueness. This is no uncommon occurrence, by far. A logical outcome of such teaching is, of course, an equally ambiguous type of speech and expression on the part of the students – tomorrow’s pastors. Is it therefore any wonder that people no longer attend church (whereas churches were filled to capacity during the 17th century, when people “naively” believed the Bible)? One of the professors assured me that a typical Lutheran church in Germany has 3000 members; 300 members attend church; 30 come to the mid-week service; and there are 3 persons with whom the pastor can pray!

Pious Appearance

It is impossible to tell whether or not these teachers are born-again Christians. There is much talk about faith and justification through grace, and yet, there is a deadness and a coldness in the lectures, sermons, and church life as a whole. One receives the unmistakable impression that something is missing. It may just be that the whole amalgamated theological system contains enough truth which the Holy Spirit would use to bring men to salvation, but it is difficult to see how men who deny or ignore the fundamentals of our Christian faith, such as the inerrancy of the Scriptures, the virgin birth of Christ, and the historicity of His resurrection, can really be loving Christ. Notwithstanding the erroneous and unbiblical teaching of the professors, their traditional and characteristic erudition is displayed with a personal piety and a Christian decorum which merits and obtains the respect of all. Among the theology students, the professors are practically honored more than God Himself, and

it is considered a real boon when a professor at times condescends to converse with a student. Of course, not all professors display such outward virtues of piety and gentility, but the exception merely confirms the rule. Therefore the common idea is unwarranted that all teachers of doctrinal error are naturally unlikable in appearance and obnoxious in demeanor. Satan himself employs only angels of light.

The Students

Scholarly Interest

German students evidence a tremendous thirst for knowledge. It is customary that students study at as many different universities as possible. They are a modern counterpart of the ancient Athenians who always ran to hear something new. When, for example, a visiting lecturer comes, the lecture hall will be crowded, no matter how insignificant and unimportant the subject matter of his lecture might be. Students will flock to hear a lecture on the derivation of some words in Hindu mythology with the same interest and participation as a discourse on *analogia entis* (the analogy of being) and the related critique of the basis of the dogmatic methodology. At most universities the lecture halls are filled to capacity and if a student hopes to get a seat, he will have to let a friend reserve a seat for him from the previous hour. Most Germans are studying for learning's sake and one must admire their zeal and dedication. Almost all theology students – and this includes women also – possess an amazing knowledge of at least Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

Scriptural Ignorance

Despite these admirable qualities listed above, the typical German student has a profound ignorance relative to the contents of the Bible. Being taught that it is unscientific and improper to use the Bible as a proof text, the students primarily learn the theories about and criticisms on the Bible, but little of what it contains. This is why some student borrowed my Bible before a lecture on 1 Corinthians 15 one day, so that he could see what its subject matter was. And this is why my fellow students, instead of citing the Bible, run to get their theology books, when I ask them about their personal beliefs. They can recite with astounding accuracy what this or that theologian has said about a given subject. They know how many redactors supposedly worked on a given book; where Babylonian myths or Greek thought can be traced in the Scriptures; or where the early

Church is said to have mutilated the text of the Scriptures and injected its own ideas; but it is impossible to ascertain what the students really believe. Few of them have any personal convictions.

Soteriological Indifference

In the light of the foregone observations it seems only natural that the current German theologies quench any evangelical zeal. The first reason for this appears to be the vagueness of the teachings on the matter of salvation and a misplaced emphasis in theology, lacking any real authority. And secondly, the Lutheran Church firmly adheres, at least in practice, to the doctrine of infant salvation. At "baptism" faith is given to the child and he or she becomes a disciple of Christ. This error is being taught in most churches.

An oft-repeated phrase heard in lecture halls from the mouth of professors, as they refer to some current teaching, is, "Sagt das ja nicht eueren Leuten!" ("Don't ever tell that to your people!"). For instance, we were recently exhorted not to tell our people at a funeral that it is a great fallacy to believe in the immortality of the soul. Professors and students alike are well aware of the fact that a multitude of church members would rise up in protest if they were exposed to certain teachings of this *neology* (one can hardly call it theology, for theology is the teaching about God). The ancient, sound church creeds and confessions of faith have their place in the church as they had in years gone by. But, as someone has well observed, "creeds and stated policies are but verbal opiates to tranquilize the unsuspecting into continued support of institutions that are antagonistic to biblical Christianity."

A third reason for this indifference relative to the Lord's command to preach the message of salvation to every creature is the tragic fact that a simple Bible Christianity has been replaced a long time ago by an involved theological science. Listening to professors and preachers, one cannot help but receive the impression that it is impossible for a person to have even the vaguest understanding of what the gospel is all about, unless he is a great scholar who has mastered four of five languages, is familiar with the "gains" of biblical criticism, and knows all the current theories about the Bible. While theologians are wrestling with the latest hypotheses and ideas about the proper understanding of the Bible, thousands are perishing because no one has ever told them the simple words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

The Studies

What are the problems and questions with which German theology concerns itself today? Can there be seen a uniform concept or idea which underlies the theological science and the tremendous amount of research and studying going on?

Unsound Doctrines

It is unwarranted to engage in any universal condemnations, but one certainly has the right to ask what German theology has in common with historic evangelical Christianity, and whether or not there is any evidence that it is moving in that direction. It cannot be denied that every theological system stands or falls upon its concept of the the Bible. It is legitimate to say that German theology is antagonistic to the biblical doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration. The fact of the matter is that the term "Verbalinspiration" is like a red flag to German theologians and they seem unable to heap sufficient scorn and ridicule upon those who adhere to this blessed teaching.

Dr. Edward J. Young, in his most penetrating book on the biblical testimony to its own inerrancy and infallibility, *Thy Word Is Truth*, rightly observes that a false concept of the Bible is really rooted in a false form of theism or view of God. What kind of a God is this who cannot even reveal Himself to men in words free of error and human modification? Certainly not the almighty and holy God of Truth whom the Bible reveals. And if God has passed on even a few words void of any error – all would admit that He has – why could He not have done it with all of the Scripture? And in the Scriptures we find unmistakable evidence that He has. Therefore the fact being true that in German theology the foundation – the view of the Bible – is faulty, it would hardly follow that the superstructure could be built properly. Consequently, since theologians expect and attempt to find flaws and errors in God's Word of Truth because their whole system is built upon an errant Bible, there remains not even the remotest possibility that they shall ever return to the biblical and historic Christian view of an inerrant, pure Word of God. This false view of the Bible brings with itself, of necessity, a shift in authority. The Bible is no longer our rule of faith and practice, for we must first determine, through diligent scholarship, what is the true text of the Bible. Reason exalts itself above revelation. The Bible can no longer be accepted as it stands.

Unwarranted Methods

Men like Bultmann have attempted to remove the so-called myths from the Bible. This process of *Entmythologisierung* (demythologizing) has been carried out to the nth degree by Bultmann's students, so that hardly anything stands before the pen-knife of the critics. Many theologians now completely deny the personality of God and make Him to be some kind of an inter-personal relationship between men.

Besides the term "de-mythologizing", one often hears the term "kerygma" (preaching) mentioned. We should direct our efforts, we are told, to find out the most central teachings in the sermons of the apostles and the early Church, to determine what we really must believe. Everything else, the Old Testament, and most of the New Testament doctrines are merely secondary, unimportant. They may or may not be believed. Along these lines, Dr. Frör, one of the professors here, told us recently that if anyone had difficulties with miracles, he need merely ignore the miraculous elements and go to something more appealing. The core of the kerygma, to which we ought to adhere here at Erlangen, is the death and resurrection of Christ. The inspiration of the Scriptures, the virgin birth of Christ, His deity and His return are no longer believed. The problem is, that few people agree what the absolute minimum for our faith really is. At other universities the resurrection of Christ is likewise denied. Thus for these theologians, of the fundamentals of the Christian faith, only Christ's death remains. But this is not the substitutionary, expiatory death of Christ, for their Christ is not the Christ of the Bible. He is the Christ of their imagination and "scholarship." Refusing to believe the biblical account of the origin of Jesus of Nazareth, they are left to their own devices to account for this miraculous person. One day Professor Stauffer, who has devoted his entire life to the study of the person of Christ, stood in front of his class, while discussing John 1, and exclaimed almost with despair: "The writer of the gospel of John evidently doesn't know where Christ came from; I have no idea where Christ came from; and you, ladies and gentlemen, probably don't know either." This then is the result of a life-time searching for the truth while rejecting the Word of Truth: plain, unadulterated agnosticism. Incidentally, this same professor has developed a very elaborate system of five steps as to how one can determine the true words of Jesus Christ. This, he says, is necessary, because the gospel writers obviously attributed many words to Christ which in reality they made up. Thus, for example, it can

be said with certainty that only those words are from Christ which are original, that is, which were not and could not have been spoken by someone before Him. Furthermore, the true words of Christ were always a *scandalon*, a reproach or an offense to someone. It is rather ironic that the professor down the hall has developed a system of three steps to ascertain the words of Christ; but his prerequisites are virtually the opposite of those taught by Stauffer. Pity the poor student who wants to know what Christ really spoke! – These then are some of the methods employed by German theologians as they study the Scriptures.

Unpromising Future

The forced methodology in the study of God's Word cannot but have a devastating effect on the students and ultimately on the churches and on the country as a whole. The spiritual atmosphere at such institutions of learning, where men supposedly are trained to be servants of God, may be briefly illustrated by relating what occurred at a certain meeting. The professor of practical theology, Dr. Frör, was asked by an evangelical group within the student body to speak to them, and anyone else who wished to attend, on the topic: *Hat die Bibel wirklich recht?* (Is the Bible indeed inerrant?) Hundreds of students crowded into the lecture hall as the professor started his tirade against the authority and inerrancy of the Scriptures. The first twelve chapters of Genesis were dismissed as myths, which nevertheless have a deep and lasting lesson for us. He never pointed out just what that lesson was. Next he dealt with the subject of prophecy in the most ambiguous terms and finally dismissed prophecy as an impossibility – for how could man foretell future events? Thus he went on for over an hour, concluding his lecture by assuring us that despite all, we still could trust the Bible! There was a time for questions and I expected at least some of the more conservative students from evangelical churches to rise up in protest. But for thirty minutes this and that point were discussed and yet, not a single student disagreed with what the professor had said. Indeed, the students obviously agreed with him. Finally I ventured to ask why prophecy should be an impossibility in the light of 2. Peter 1:20-21 and 2. Tim. 3:16, which passages clearly indicate the divine origin of prophecy and the divine enablement of the writers. Why should it be impossible for the Holy Spirit to reveal events which happened in pre-historic time (such as the creation) or events yet many years in the future?

Without answering my question, the professor asked whether or not I really believed that God had formed Eve out of a part of Adam. When I answered this question with a convinced "yes", these "evangelical" students held their breath in disbelief, while Dr. Frör, with a sneer on his face, exclaimed, "we better stop our discussion right here, sir, because we might destroy your faith." Thus fares the German theology. The students have been conditioned to accept every form of unbelief.

The future indeed looks dark for Germany. Unbelief is rampant and the blame for this rests primarily with those who train the ministers – the university professors. For what else but agnosticism and unbelief can one expect, when even at this university, with Germany's most "conservative" theological faculty, there is a professor of dogmatics who questions the personality of Satan and has no idea what books really should be in the Bible; there is an Old Testament professor who doubts that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ever existed; there is a New Testament professor who has no idea where Jesus Christ came from; there is a professor of church history whose pet peeve is the fable of the empty tomb; there is a professor of hermeneutics who denies the possibility of prophecy, and there is a pastor responsible for the thousands of students whose only answer to a girl enquiring about salvation was that he is not so sure there is a life after death after all.

Unfortunately, this then is what studying theology in Germany is like. One is compelled here to cry out with Goethe the imploring words which he directed to a friend: "Give me the benefit of your convictions, if you have any; but keep your doubts to yourself, for I have enough of my own." May God have mercy on Germany and bring about another reformation, if it be His will! The time for it is ripe. And may God grant that all of us might "give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." (Heb. 2 : 1).

THE DILEMMA OF CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY

LIBERALISM -
1850

NEO-EVANGELICALISM -
1956

NEO-ORTHODOXY -
1919

FUNDAMENTALISM -
1909

Friedrich Schleiermacher



Karl Barth



Billy Graham



Robert T. Ketcham



DENIES THE MIRACULOUS	DELETES CERTAIN DOCTRINES
DESTROYS ORTHODOXY	DISMISSES FUNDAMENTALISM AS BIBLIOLATRY
DISBELIEVES IN THE DEITY OF CHRIST	DETRACTS FROM CHRIST'S DEITY BY VAGUENESS
DEVELOPED THE SOCIAL GOSPEL	DEPENDS ON A LEAP IN THE DARK

DEEMPHASIZES MAJOR DOCTRINES	DEFENDS THE FUNDAMENTALS
DISASSOCIATES ITSELF FROM FUNDAMENTALISM	DEMANDS SEPARATION FROM DOCTRINAL DEVIATION
DIALOGUES WITH EVERYONE	DELIGHTS IN THE THEANTHROPIC SAVIOR
DISSEMINATES THE CULTURAL MANDALE	DECLARES THE OLD- FASHIONED GOSPEL

BIBLE

CHURCH

CHRIST

SALVATION

Irreligion in Germany

Irreligion is prevalent in Germany. In a time of near-universal adoption of Christianity, Germany was an intellectual centre for European freethought and humanist thinking, whose ideas spread across Europe and the world in the Age of Enlightenment. Later, religious tradition in Germany was weakened by the twin onslaughts of Nazi rule during World War II and that of the Socialist Unity Party in East Germany during the Cold War. In common with most other European societies, a period of secularisation also continued in the decades that followed. While today Christianity remains prevalent in the west of Germany, in the east relatively few Germans identify with any religion whatsoever.

As of 2023, approximately 46% of Germans are irreligious,^[1] with a much higher concentration of irreligious citizens in the former East Germany. Eastern Germany, which was under communist rule, is one of the least religious regions in the world.

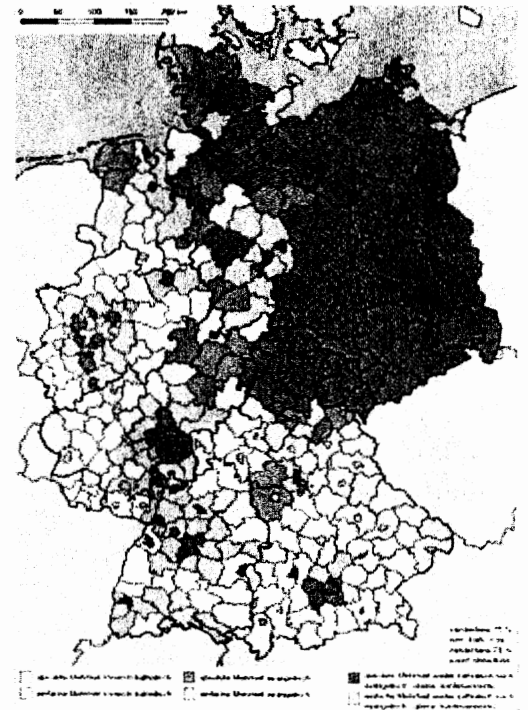
History

One early irreligious German philosopher was Ludwig Feuerbach, who developed a theory of anthropological materialism in his book *The Essence of Christianity*. Feuerbach's work influenced contemporaries Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in their writings against religion.^[2] The Freethought movement gained support in Germany during the 19th century. The secular coming of age ceremony Jugendweihe was developed in the 1850s, and Ludwig Büchner founded the German Freethinkers League in 1881.^[3]




After its unification in 1871, the German Empire sought to resist attempts by the Catholic Church to impose its authority over the empire's sovereignty. During the Kulturkampf, Germany passed several laws that limited the power of religious authorities over the state.^{[4][5]}

The Weimar Republic guaranteed freedom of religion when its constitution came into effect in 1919. After the Nazi Party took control of the country in 1933, constitutional protection was ignored in Nazi Germany.

After World War II, Germany was divided into West Germany and East Germany. While West Germany allowed for religious protection, East Germany enacted a system of state atheism and persecuted Christian groups for the first several years of its existence, resulting in East Germa⁷⁷⁻



Majority religion according to the 2022 census

-  Protestant
-  Catholic
-  Unaffiliated

Dark: absolute majority (>50%)

Light: relative majority (<50%)

Chief Among Non-Believers

Only the Old Embrace God in Former East Germany

Belief in God varies greatly between different countries, but the percentage of believers in the former East Germany is lower than anywhere else, "anchoring the secular pole" internationally, according to a new report by an American research organization. But even in this unipious region, the rate of believers increases with age.

19.04.2012, 16.20 Uhr



Many living in the formerly communist Eastern German states say they are non-believers. Foto: Ingo Wagner/ dpa

Dieser Beitrag stammt aus dem SPIEGEL-Archiv. [Warum ist das wichtig?](#)

The after effects of the communist regime in East Germany are still being felt in the former nation's houses of worship more than 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. A new study released by an American research organization found that just 13 percent of people in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) say they have always believed in God.

PASSPORT

Are East Germans the world's most godless people?

It was Leipzig-born Friedrich Nietzsche who wrote that "God is dead" in the 1880s. As far as his fellow East Germans are concerned, he may have been on to something. A recent study by University of Chicago sociologist Tom Smith looks at survey data on belief in God in 30 countries between 1991 and 2008. ...

East Germany: Most Godless Place on Earth

Matthias Kamann & Gernot Facius Die Welt May 15, 2012

BERLIN -- Bad news for all those who'd hoped Christianity might make a comeback now that the Cold War-era German Democratic Republic (DDR) is becoming an ever more distant memory. Atheism, according to a new study, is very much alive and well in the eastern part of Germany.

The statistics are most striking among those under 28 years old: more than 71% of eastern Germans in this age group say they have never believed in the existence of God. That's nearly as many as in the 38-47 group, of which 72.6% are non-believers.

The Most Godless Region of the World: Atheism in East Germany

(<https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1045&context=younghistorians>)

Abstract

With a population of 52.1% presently identifying as atheists, East Germany ranks as the most atheistic region of the world. This anomaly can be explained through the economic lenses of supply-side theory and demand-side theory when analyzing the changes instated by the Communist Party during the life of the German Democratic Republic, from 1945 to 1989. Through a process of secularization and religious oppression, the Communist Party lessened the supply of religious goods in East Germany. On the other hand, it also minimized religious demand by providing secular alternatives to traditional religious practices, and institutionalizing anti-religious sentiment. These actions combined have caused the number of citizens subscribing to religious institutions to decrease steadily over the past century.

Notes

With a population of 52.1% presently identifying as atheists, East Germany ranks as the most atheistic region of the world. This anomaly can be explained through the economic lenses of supply-side theory and demand-side theory when analyzing the changes instated by the Communist Party during the life of the German Democratic Republic, from 1945 to 1989. Through a process of secularization and religious oppression, the Communist Party lessened the supply of religious goods in East Germany. On the other hand, it also minimized religious demand by providing secular alternatives to traditional religious practices, and institutionalizing anti-religious sentiment. These actions combined have caused the number of citizens subscribing to religious institutions to decrease steadily over the past century.



Religionsgespräch zwischen Luther und Zwingli. (Nach Prof. Hoads Gemälde.)

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The Unbiblical Teachings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

I spent many years as a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America until I led my congregation out for a more Biblical branch of Lutheranism. "Liberal" is no longer the word for the ELCA, it has become radical. Here is what I mean:

The ELCA pays for abortion for any reason in the denomination's healthcare plan which is funded by offering dollars. That's right, "your offering dollars at work" can go to kill unborn children.

The ELCA ordains practicing homosexuals and now also transgender pastors.

Two summers ago, 31,000 ELCA teenagers attended the ELCA's youth gathering. Popular ELCA pastor Nadia Bolz-Webber led the students to say after her "I renounce the lie that queerness is anything other than beauty". At the youth gathering an 11-year-old boy who thinks he is a girl was put on stage to promote transgenderism.

This past summer the ELCA in convention passed an interfaith resolution stating that we do not know what God thinks of non-Christian religions. A delegate got to the microphone to offer an amendment, saying that we do know because John 14:6 says that Jesus is the only way of salvation. His amendment was voted down by 97 percent.

A Chicago newspaper asked ELCA head bishop Elizabeth Eaton if Hell exists. Her response: "It may, but I think it is empty."

Recently the Christian Post reported on the ELCA promoting a prayer to "Mother God." If you go to herchurch.org., you will find an ELCA congregation in California which worships "Our Mother who is within us..." The church's pastor led the women on a retreat in which she gave each a lump of clay to fashion their own Asheroth goddess statue so they could worship the "forbidden divine feminine." My alma mater, the ELCA's Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, held a commemoration service for the Transgender Day of Remembrance in which the transgender preacher led the students in the Lord's Prayer, saying "Our Mother in heaven."

I am on a Facebook page that includes pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, some of whom believe it is sexist to pray exclusively to God as Father. I responded that Jesus taught us to pray "Our Father" and we are in no position to correct Him. A music minister at an ELCA church in Virginia didn't like my comment and responded: "The Lord's Prayer is a pattern for prayer. Do you still say it in Arabic? Hebrew? Then shut up. I'll call God Father, Mother, Sister, Brother, anything I want. Doesn't change my salvation."

Notice what is going on in this comment. Lutherans believe we are saved by grace alone and not by our good works—which is gloriously true (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). But some Lutherans practice "grace abuse" and say "Because I'm saved by grace, I can live like the devil and do whatever I want". Or, as the Apostle Paul put it: "Shall we continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be!" (**Romans 6:1**). Yes, we are saved by grace alone, but grace never is alone, it always changes our lives. Good works do not save us, but they are the evidence that we have been saved by Christ.

So, no, we are not free to worship God as "Mother, Sister, Brother, anything I want". The grace of Christ moves us to want to obey God, not to treat Him with contempt and remold Him into "anything I want."

Sadly, the ELCA has become the denomination of "anything I want." Martin Luther believed that "the Bible alone" is the highest authority for the Church and he would grieve if he could see what the ELCA has become. In fact, some of us think ELCA really stands for "Everything Luther Cautioned Against."

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Baptism

God's
Greatest
Gift



Lutheran Christians Believe:

Baptism is the way God adopts us into the family. We become the sons and daughters of God.
Baptism is entirely a gift. We do nothing to deserve it.
Baptism is our new birth and when God saves us.
Baptism is when we receive the Holy Spirit.



Baptisms
Christmas Eve
7:00 p.m. Service

Infants: because it's a gift of family from God.

Adults: because it's the way we become a part
of Christ's church.

Call Church Office at 243-7691 to inquire about your baptism.

St. Johns Lutheran Church

Sixth Avenue and Keo Way, Des Moines, Iowa 50309

- 2 d. The Roman Catholic Church traditionally has taught that baptism saves by washing away all original sin. The popular manual on religion, My Catholic Faith, takes the standard approach:

127. The Sacrament of Baptism

WHAT IS BAPTISM?—Baptism is the sacrament that gives our souls the new life of sanctifying grace by which we become children of God and heirs of heaven.

Baptism is the very *first* sacrament we may receive. Unless we are baptized, we are forbidden to receive any other sacraments. Baptism has the three essentials of a sacrament: (a) it was instituted by Christ; (b) it is a sensible sign; and (c) it confers grace.

1. The sacrament of Baptism was *instituted* by Christ at His own Baptism, and commanded at His *Ascension*.

He said to the Apostles: "Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). The Apostles obeyed His command on the very day of Pentecost. In answer to the question of the multitudes, "What shall we do?" after Peter's first sermon, Peter said, "Repent,

and *be baptized* every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38). About 3000 persons were baptized.

2. Christ instituted Baptism as the sacrament of *spiritual rebirth*, making the baptized members of God's family. Baptism infuses grace into their souls, making them supernaturally like to God.

As children of God they are given the right to enter heaven, and to gain merit by their good work. "Unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

3. The *sacramental grace* of Baptism is a regenerative grace that helps those baptized to live well the supernatural life they have begun as children of God.

This sacramental grace entitles them to actual graces needed to live a Christian life.

St. Peter said: "He baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins: and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

WHAT SINS DOES BAPTISM TAKE AWAY?

Baptism takes away original sin, and also actual sins and all the punishment due to them, if the person baptized be guilty of any actual sins and truly sorry for them.

1. Baptism is the only sacrament that can *remit original sin*. It cleanses us from all sin, original and actual, and remits all punishment due.

If an adult receives baptism with the proper dispositions, that is, with faith and contrition, his actual sins are taken away with original sin, as well as all temporal punishment due to his actual sins. Thus if an adult dies immediately after baptism, *he goes straight to heaven*, whatever the sins he may have committed. "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

2. When Baptism takes away original sin, it gives our souls the new life of *sanctifying grace*. Thus by Baptism we are born again.

(pp. 268, 269)

1A. The Addition of Good Works:


1b. False concepts:

- 1c. Roman Catholicism: Good works are necessary for salvation which may be lost and restored through penance. Very telling is the official publication of the Roman church below, which clearly shows the difference between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. The writer states that Luther, in addition to his many other errors, "taught that faith *without* good works would secure man's salvation, contrary to the Catholic doctrine, which teaches that men are saved by faith *with* good works." (italics in the original)

BIBLE HISTORY

FOR THE USE OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES

BY
RIGHT REV. RICHARD GILMOUR, D.D.,
Bishop of Cleveland




A LETTER FROM
His Holiness, Pope Leo XIII.

TRANSLATION.

We have received with thanks the copy of The Bible History, together with the expressions of devotion, which Bishops or Brethren, Publishers, have sent us through the Bishop of Basil, and we give our Apostolic Benediction to them and to their Bishops, that their very always tend to the good of Religion.

Leo P. P. XIII.

LUTHER AND THE REFORMATION



Protestant Reformation. In 1520 his doctrines were condemned by the Pope and he himself excommunicated.

4. In 1522 Luther translated the Bible into German, and with it proclaimed the doctrine of "an open Bible and free interpretation" as a fundamental doctrine. He also denied the supremacy of the Pope, the authority of the Church, the calibacy of the clergy, the efficacy of the sacraments, the doctrine of purgatory, and the teachings of the Church on justification and original sin.

5. He forbade his followers to honor the Saints or to obey the commandments of the Church, rejecting all the sacraments except Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He also taught that faith *without* good works would secure man's salvation, contrary to the Catholic doctrine, which teaches that men are saved by faith *with* good works.

THE FORMULA OF FAITH

EPHESIANS 2

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

8 τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι
- For by grace ye are having been saved
διὰ πίστεως· καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν,
through faith; and this not of you,
θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον· 9 οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μὴ
of [is] the gift; not of works, lest
God

τις - καυχῆσθαι. 10 αὐτοῦ γὰρ ἐσμεν
anyone should boast. For of him we are
ποίημα, κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ
a product, created in Christ Jesus
ἐπὶ ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς, οἷς προητοίμασεν
unto works good, which 'previously prepared
ὁ θεὸς ἵνα ἐν αὐτοῖς περιπατήσωμεν.
- 'God in order that in them we might walk.

correct view: Grace + Faith = Salvation + Works

corrupt view: Grace + Faith + Works = Salvation

MK