

CHAPTER VIII

My Relations with the Church

MUCH has been written and said about my relations with the Church. Even when I was still a prince and a student at Bonn, I realized the harmful influence of the "Kulturkampf" in its last phase. The religious rift did so much toward antagonism that once, for example, I was directly boycotted, while on a hunting expedition, by members of leading noble Rhenish-Westphalian families of the Rhineland belonging to the Ultra-Montane party. Even as far back as that I resolved, in the interests of the national welfare, to work toward creating a *modus vivendi* such as would make it possible for people professing the two creeds to live peacefully with each other. The "Kulturkampf," as such, had come to an end before the beginning of my reign.

I strove patiently and earnestly to be on good terms with the Bishops, and I was on very friendly terms with several, especially Cardinal Kopp, Archbishop Simar, Doctor Schulte, Prince-Bishop Bertram, Bishop Thiel, and, last but not least, Archbishop Faulhaber and Cardinal von Hartmann. All of these were men far above the aver-

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age and an ornament to the episcopate, who gave proof during the war of their patriotic devotion to Emperor and Empire. This shows that I had succeeded in clearing away the mists of the "Kulturkampf" and enabling my Catholic subjects, like others, to rejoice in the Empire, in accordance with the motto, "suum cuique" ("to each his own").

I was bound particularly closely all my life to Cardinal Kopp, Prince-Bishop of Breslau. He always served me loyally, so that my relationship to him was most trusting. Of much value to me was his mediation in dealings with the Vatican, where he stood in high honor, although he championed absolutely the German point of view.

FRIENDSHIP FOR POPE LEO XIII

Probably little is known by the general public of the friendly, trusting relationship that existed between me and Pope Leo XIII. A prelate who was close to him told me later that I had won the confidence of the Pope on my first visit by the absolute frankness which I showed toward him and with which I told him things which others intentionally kept from his ears.

Receptions by the Pope were conducted with tremendous pomp. Swiss and Noble Guards, in brilliant uniforms, servants, chamberlains, and ecclesiastical dignitaries, were present in large numbers—a miniature representation of the might of the Roman Catholic Church.

After I had traversed the courts, halls, and drawing-rooms, in which all these men had arrayed

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themselves, I seated myself opposite the Pope himself, in his little, one-windowed study. The distinguished gentleman, with the fine, noble-featured old face, whose eyes gazed piercingly at his visitor, made a deep impression upon me. We discussed many timely subjects. I was greatly pleased that the Pope spoke appreciatively and gratefully of the position occupied in Germany by the Catholic religion and its adherents, adding the assurance that he, for his part, would contribute toward having the German Catholics yield to no other Germans in love for their fatherland and in loyalty.

Pope Leo XIII gave evidences of friendliness toward me whenever he could. For instance, on the occasion of one of my visits to Rome, he accorded my suite and servants the honor of a special audience; he sent Prince-Bishop Kopp as Papal Delegate on the occasion of the consecration by me of the portal which I had had added to the cathedral at Metz, and was so kind as to inform me of the naming of Archbishop Fischer of Cologne as Cardinal, which was done to celebrate that day.

On the occasion of the Papal Jubilee in 1903 to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of his accession to the Papacy, I sent a special mission to convey my congratulations to the Pope, at the head of which was Freiherr von Loe, for many years intimately acquainted with him.

Not long after that—and only a few months before his death—I paid my third and last visit to the Pope. Though he was very weak, this

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ninety-three-year-old man came up to me, holding both his hands outstretched. Concerning this visit, which was characterized by great cordiality on both sides, I immediately jotted down some notes, which recently came into my possession again.

The Pope said, among other things, that he could not but give his full approval to the principles according to which I governed; that he had followed with interest my methods of governing and recognized with pleasure that I had built up my rule on a foundation of firm Christianity; that such lofty religious principles underlay it that it behooved him to ask the blessing of Heaven upon myself, my dynasty, and the German Empire, and to grant me his apostolic benediction.

"SWORD OF CATHOLIC CHURCH"

It was of interest to me that the Pope said to me on this occasion that Germany must become the sword of the Catholic Church. I remarked that the old Roman Empire of the German nation no longer existed and that conditions had changed. But he stuck to his words.

Then the Pope went on to say that he must thank me once more for my unflagging attention to the welfare of my Catholic subjects; that he had heard about this from so many sources that he was glad to tell me personally how grateful both he and the German Catholics were for this attention to their interests; that he could assure me that my Catholic subjects would stand by me, in good and bad times, with absolute fidelity. "Ils rest-

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ront absolument et infailliblement fidèles" ("They will remain absolutely and infallibly faithful").

I rejoiced greatly at these words of appreciation from such an exalted source. I answered that I considered it the duty of a Christian sovereign to care for his subjects to the best of his ability, irrespective of creed; that I could assure him that, during my reign, everybody could profess his religion without interference and fulfill his duties toward his ecclesiastical overlord; that this was a fundamental principle of my life, from which I could not be swerved.

Because I showed my Catholic fellow countrymen from the very beginning that I wished to allow them complete freedom in the exercise of their religion, a quieter spirit was engendered in the land and the aftermath of the "Kulturkampf" disappeared more and more. But I did not conceal from myself the fact that, despite all politeness and friendliness, the prelates, with the sole exception of Cardinal Kopp, still continued to look upon me as the Emperor, and I was compelled to take into account that, in the Catholic south and west, this idea would never quite vanish. Grateful acknowledgment has repeatedly been made to me of the fact that the Catholics were as well off, during my reign, as they could possibly desire; but the constantly more uncompromising attitude of the Church on mixed marriages, and that of the Centrist party in politics, were certainly a sign that the antiheretical tendency still lived beneath the peaceful surface.

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This made all the more intense my desire for the firm union of the *Protestant Churches*—first, in Prussia, then in Germany, finally, in all Europe. My endeavors, in conjunction with the Chief Ecclesiastical Councilor, the General Superintendent, and so on, to find means of effecting this union, were most earnest. I hailed the Eisenach Conference with joy and followed its proceedings with interest. I assembled all the General Superintendents for the consecration of the Church at Jerusalem and also was able to greet invited deputations from Sweden, Norway, and so forth; and I did likewise on the occasion of the consecration of the Berlin cathedral, where, among many other deputations, the Church of England was represented by the Bishop of Ripon (W. Boyd-Carpenter), the pastor of Queen Victoria of England, equally prominent as a writer and preacher.

Whenever possible, I worked toward compromise, closer relations and union, yet nothing definite resulted. Though church union in Prussia has been a success, Lutherans and Reformists kept apart in other sections of the fatherland. Many local rulers kept sharp watch over their rights in relation to religions and, owing to this, were hostile to a closer union of the different creeds within their territory. Therefore, despite my endeavors, the German Protestant Church was not able to unite and make common cause against the elements hostile to it. Only through the emergency brought on by the revolution was

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this made possible. On Ascension Day, 1922, to my great joy, the "German Evangelical Church Union" was solemnly formed at the Schloss Church at Wittenberg.

DOCTOR DRYANDER'S INFLUENCE

During the first years of my military service at Potsdam I had felt deeply the inadequacy of the sermons, which often dealt only with dry dogmatic matter and paid too little attention to the person of Christ. In Bonn I became acquainted with Doctor Dryander, who made an impression on me lasting throughout my life. His sermons were free from dogma, the person of Christ was their pivotal point, and "practical Christianity" was brought into the foreground.

Later I brought him to Berlin and soon had him appointed to a post at the Cathedral and in my palace. Dryander was by my side for years, until long after the 9th of November, standing close to me spiritually, and bringing to me spiritual consolation. We often talked on religious matters and thrashed out thoroughly the tasks and the future of the Protestant Church. The views of Dryander—mild, yet powerful, clear, and of truly evangelical strength—made of him a pillar and an ornament of his Church, and a faithful co-worker with the Emperor, to whom he was closely bound, in the interests of the Church and its development.

Since the 9th of November, Doctor Dryander also has been exposed to persecutions, but he has

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stood his ground courageously; the hopes, beliefs, and trust of his King are with him and the Evangelical Church! The Church must again raise up the broken nation inwardly according to the gospel of "Ein'feste Burg ist unser Gott."

I cannot allow to pass without remark the influence exerted by the work—translated at my instigation—of the English missionary Bernard Lucas, entitled *Conversations with Christ*; as well as the sermons on Jesus by Pastor Schneller (Jerusalem), and the collections of sermons called *The Old God Still Lives* and *From Deep Trouble*, by Consistorial Councilor Conrad. These brought us much inspiration and comfort by their vital ability to absorb and hold readers and hearers.

The fact that I could deal with religious and church questions with complete objectivity "sine ira et studio" is due to my excellent teacher, Professor Doctor Hinzpeter, a Westphalian Calvinist. He caused his pupil to grow up and live with the Bible, eliminating, at the same time, all dogmatic and polemical questions; owing to this, polemics in religion have remained alien to me, and expressions like that autocratic one, "orthodox," are repulsive to me. As to my own religious convictions, I set forth what they were years ago, in a letter to my friend, Admiral Hollmann, made public at the time, part of which is reproduced at the end of this chapter.

I was enabled to bring joy to the hearts of my Catholic subjects when I presented the plot of

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ground known as the "Dormition," acquired by me from the Sultan in 1898 as a result of my sojourn in Jerusalem, to the German Catholics there. The worthy, faithful Father Peter Schmitz, representative of the Catholic Society in Jerusalem, expressed to me the heartfelt thanks of the German Catholics on the spot in eloquent words at the ceremony of taking possession.

THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

When I conferred with him as to future building operations and as to the selection of persons to occupy the place, the old expert on Jerusalem advised me to select none of the order of monks there, since all were more or less mixed up in the intrigues and quarrels concerning the "loci sacri" (sacred spots). After my return a delegation of the German Knights of Malta, under Count Prashma, appeared before me to express their gratitude. The design for the church, made by a very talented Cologne architect and skillfully adapted to the local style, was submitted to me. After the completion of the church I decided that the Benedictine monks of Beuron should take over the "Dormition"; they did so in 1906, also taking over the monastery built next the new St. Mary's Church.

I was on friendly terms for many years with the Benedictine monks of the Beuron Congregation, with whose Archabbot, Wolter, I had become acquainted at Sigmaringen. In mediæval times the order always stood well with the Ger-

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man Emperors, of whom scarcely one failed to visit, in connection with his journeys to Rome, the magnificently situated Monte Cassino. When the Benedictine monks asked permission to establish a settlement on the Rhine I had the splendid Romanesque abbey of Maria Laach—unused at the time—turned over to them. The order, which counts among its members excellent artists, including Father Desiderius, has brought new glory to the abbey, which had fallen into neglect and decay, by magnificent interior decorations. Often have I visited Maria Laach and rejoiced in the progress of its restoration, as well as in conversations with the intelligent abbots and in the hearty, simple reception on the part of the faithful brethren.

When I visited the monastery of Monte Cassino I became acquainted, in the person of Archabbot Monsignor Krug, with a man of extraordinary mental gifts and comprehensive culture, who had traveled a great deal about the world. He could express himself with equal fluency in Italian, English, and French, and his mother tongue, German. In his address to King Victor Emmanuel of Italy and me, he pointed out that nearly all the German Emperors, as well as the Lombard Kings before them, had paid visits to Monte Cassino. He presented me with a magnificent collection of copies of documents of the time of the Emperor Frederick II, taken from the library of the order, and I reciprocated by presenting him with the works of Frederick the Great.

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Agriculture flourishes in the environs of the monasteries maintained by the Benedictine Order, being carried on by the lay brothers with all the latest improvements, to the benefit of the backward peasantry of the region; and in the country and town communities of the order church singing and organ playing are zealously cultivated by the monks, who have attained a high degree of artistic skill. The art of the goldsmith also flourishes among the monks, likewise art embroidery among the Benedictine nuns.

I caused to be reproduced in its full size the Labarum (standard) of the Emperor Constantine the Great, designed in accordance with the researches made by Monsignor Wilpert: one copy I presented to the Pope, another to my Palace Chapel at Berlin. The latter was stolen from the chapel by the mob during the days of the revolution. The metal work was done entirely by monks, the embroidery by nuns of the order, both excellently. One of the places inhabited by nuns of this order is the convent of Saint Hildegard, above Rudesheim, which I visited in 1917.

My letter to Admiral Hollmann was due to the excitement aroused by a lecture entitled "Babel and Bible," delivered by Professor Delitzsch before the German Orient Society, of which Admiral Hollmann was one of the Board of Managers.

SCHOLARSHIP AND RELIGION

The first part of the letter, which deals primarily with Professor Delitzsch's statements, has been

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omitted from the reproduction of the letter printed below:

Feb. 15, 1903.

MY DEAR HOLLMANN:

I should now like to return once again to my own standpoint regarding the doctrine or view of revelation, as I have often set it forth to you, my dear Hollman, and other gentlemen. I distinguish between two different kinds of revelation: a progressive, to a certain extent historical revelation, and a purely religious one, paving the way to the future coming of the Messiah.

Of the first, this is to be said: There is not the smallest doubt in my mind that God constantly reveals Himself through the human race created by Him. He has "breathed His breath into mankind," or, in other words, given it a piece of Himself, a soul. He follows the development of the human race with a Father's love and interest; for the purpose of leading it forward and benefiting it, he "reveals" Himself in some great savant or priest or king, whether among the heathens, Jews, or Christians.

Hammurabi was one of these, likewise Moses, Abraham, Homer, Charlemagne, Luther, Shakespeare, Goethe, Kant, Emperor William the Great. These men were selected by Him and made worthy of His grace; of achieving for their people, both in the spiritual and the physical domain, splendid and imperishable things, in accordance with His will. How often did my grandfather clearly emphasize that he was but an instrument in the hand of the Lord.

The works of great minds are gifts of God to the peoples of the earth, in order that they may improve themselves on these models and grope forward, by means of them, through the confusion of that which is still unexplored here below. God has certainly revealed Himself in different ways to different peoples,

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according to their standing and degree of culture, and He is still doing it now. For, just as we are overcome most by the greatness and majesty of the splendor of Creation when we contemplate it, and are amazed at the greatness of God as revealed therein, so also may we, in contemplating whatever is great or splendid in the works of a man or a people, recognize therein with gratitude the splendor of the revelation of God. He works directly upon us and among us! The second kind of revelation, the more religious kind, is that which leads to the coming of the Lord. It is introduced from Abraham onward, slowly but with foresight, all-wise and all-knowing; for without it mankind would have been doomed.

And now begins the most astounding influence, the revelation of God. The tribe of Abraham, and the people descended from it, consider the holiest thing of all, unescapable in its logical consequences, the belief in one God. This belief they must have and cultivate. Scattered by the captivity in Egypt, the separate parts are welded together by Moses for the second time, and still they try to maintain their "monotheism." The direct intervention of God is what brings regeneration to this people.

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And thus it goes through the centuries, until the Messiah announced and foreshadowed by the Prophets and Psalmists shall at last appear. The greatest revelation of God in the world! For He Himself appeared in the body of His Son; Christ is God, God in human form. He saved us. He inspires us, we are led to follow Him, we feel His fire burning within us, His pity strengthening us, His dissatisfaction destroying us, but also His intercession saving us. Sure of victory, building solely upon His word, we go through work, scorn, grief, misery, and death, for in Him we have the revealed word of God, and God never lies.

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That is my view of this question. The Word, especially for us of the Evangelical faith, has become everything on account of Luther; and Delitzsch, as a good theologian, should not forget that our great Luther taught us to sing and believe: "Das Wort sie sollen lassen stehn" ("The Word they must allow to stand").

It is self-evident that the Old Testament contains a large number of parts which are of purely human-historical character and not "God's revealed Word." These are purely historical descriptions of events of all sorts, which occur in the life of the people of Israel in the domain of politics, religion, morals, and spiritual life.

For instance, the giving out of the Law on Mount Sinai can be looked upon only symbolically as having been inspired by God, since Moses had to turn to a revival of laws perhaps known of old (possibly drawn from the Code of Hammurabi), in order to bring coherence and solidarity to the framework of his people, which was loose and little capable of resistance. Here the historian may perhaps find a connection, either in sense or words, with the laws of Hammurabi, the friend of Abraham, which may be logically right; but this can never affect the fact that God had inspired Moses to act thus, and, to that extent, had revealed Himself to the people of Israel.

Therefore, my view is that our good professor should rather avoid introducing and treating of religion as such in his lectures before our association, but that he may continue, unhindered, to describe whatever brings the religion, customs, and so on of the Babylonians, and so on, into relation with the Old Testament.

As far as I am concerned, I am led by the above to the following conclusion:

- (a) I believe in one only God.
- (b) We men need, in order to teach Him, a *Form*, especially for our children.

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(c) This *Form* has been, up to now, the Old Testament, as we now know it. This *Form* will be essentially changed by research, inscriptions, and excavations; but that will cause no harm, nor will the fact that, thereby, much of the halo of the Chosen People will disappear, cause any harm. The kernel and content remain always the same: God and His influence.

Religion was never a result of science, but something flowing from the heart and being of man, through his relations with God.

With heartiest thanks and many greetings, I remain
always

Your sincere friend,
(Signed) WILHELM I. R.