

THE WORSHIP OF GREAT-GRANDFATHER

BY ALBERT BUSHNELL HART

Sage is the advice to young people to begin life by providing themselves with ancestors reputable, and if possible distinguished. It is highly convenient in communities like ours, which not only know their own great-grandfathers, but on equal terms recognize the great-grandfathers of their neighbors; or in case of extreme need recognize that some of the neighbors may be admitted to intimacy who have never had great-grandfathers.

We are not all so fortunate in that respect as the Chinese gentleman, one of the literati, whom excellent Bishop Roots visited a few years ago. His ceremonious host found common ground in an ancestor, who though not a Roots nor a bishop, was a Christian, being in fact presumably that veritable Duke Koh Tszu who recorded himself upon the famous Nestorian Stone as a magistrate in the year A. D. 781. He not only protected Christians, but was himself a member of their sect, which had been transplanted from farthest west to farthest east of Asia. The visitor expressed pleasure and amazement in this relationship, whereupon the Chinese brought from another apartment his genealogical record in volumes sufficient to make a monument as high as a table, and was able to prove on the spot that his Christian ancestor was after all a *novus homo* inasmuch as the family record went back a little matter of two thousand seven hundred years.

Less than twenty-seven centuries is enough to arouse the pride of most Americans. I should be

gratified if I could count among my forebears Reverend Thomas Thacher, son of the Rector of St. Edmunds, Salisbury, and Reverend Peter Thacher the elder (Harvard, 1671), and Reverend Peter Thacher the younger (1706), together with John Oxenbridge, and Reverend John Prince of Boston, and Reverend Ralph Partridge of Duxbury, known to history for his trial for ill-using a slave woman, and Reverend Nils Hornell, sometime preacher at the Old Swedes Church at Philadelphia, and Stephen Hart, freeman of Massachusetts Bay Colony, and one of the founders of Connecticut, and Bushnells beyond computation, to say nothing of close relationship with John Hart, first graduate of Yale College.

Yet even if I could brag with the best of them as to qualifications for membership in the various organizations of Sons of the Past, I should forbear in these quarters, where colonial quarterings are so plenty; and why should any man exhibit his great-grandfather in a political community where even quite recent arrivals share in the privileges of voters, and their children go to Harvard College, and their grandchildren are in the army, and their great-grandchildren will be put up for the Somerset Club?

Not for indulgence in such pride of inheritance am I here today, but rather to sound a note of warning against a too indiscriminate and partial admiration for our ancestors; or rather to point out how inadequate, how incomplete, is a worship of the past in which we place our ancestors upon frosty pedestals content to observe their virtues rather than to repeat them. Nor shall the theme be wholly of the Colonials whom Isaiah Thomas and the Greens and the Bancrofts and the Lincolns had in mind when this worshipful society was founded. For we are not altogether sons of our fathers and mothers in the direct line; our ancestors are all those who were forerunners of our civilization, contributors to our religious beliefs, our language, our literature, our philosophy, our art, our

military system, our law, our international relations, our morals, and our standards. Out of the many strands that have combined to make up the great cable which holds us suspended from a viewless past, there are five which we particularly acknowledge, cherish and yet incompletely understand. In our church we are descendants of Israel; in our art and literature of Greece; in our statecraft of Rome; in our governmental traditions of the Teutons; in immediate race, traditions and ways of doing things, of our immediate Anglo-Saxon-American forefathers. How far do we really revere and follow any or all of these lines of intellectual ancestry?

I. ISRAEL

All adherents of the Christian faith, whether Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic or Protestant, have borrowed much of their theology, and some of their formal observances from that tough and passionate Jewish race which was thrown out of its own land centuries ago. It has all that time incurred the hostility of those Christians who drew upon it for sacred books, religious principles, and even the holy places of Christianity.

Asia, during the last few centuries has bowed the knee to western armies and western administrators; but Asia has notwithstanding conquered a large part of the world with its religions. Where are those western Druids, those Gods of the Walhalla? Where are the marble divinities whose shrines were once manifold in the groves and the headlands of Greece? Where the Roman Emperor-Gods so majestic, so scornful? Where the idols of the Arabs, and the king-gods of Egypt? They have all fled before one or the other of the great Asiatic religions. Buddha, Christ and Mahomet were all Asiatics; their religions are Oriental in their thought, their lofty diction, and their setting. We may well feel reverence for our

High Priest Melchisedec, for our grand old kinsman Abraham, for our shepherd King David; they were great-grandfathers of the founder of Christianity, though it was the Roman Cross of His Passion which has become the emblem of the Faith. While every one of the eleven venerated apostles, whose statues stand in thousands of chapels, was an Asiatic Jew.

Our own direct race ancestors had a wondrous liking for the Jewish heroes of the old dispensation, and made it manifest in the names of their children. Not everyone has had a living great-uncle Gad and a great-uncle Abiah; nor can every colonial family boast a succession like that of the Cape Cod Shearjashub Bournes. But Mordecais and Michaiahs, Mishmas, Zerihiahs, Kophas, Jephthas, Antiphias, and Abimelechs, can be found in many genealogies,—to say nothing of the milder Miriams, and Hadassahs, and Abigails and Tirzahs. Even the choice of names from the New Testament worthies was subject to a kind of fashion—there were plenty of Colonial Andrews and Johns and James and Thomases and Peters; yet what notable was called Philip, or Mark or Paul?

The Old Testament was after all a sacred book of the Christians, only because the founders of Christianity referred to it with love and veneration; its acceptance as a rule of faith and practice is one of the mysteries of the Protestant Reformation, and brought with it the singular belief that everybody mentioned in the Old Testament, unless with express terms of disapproval, was a saint. I learned my letters on the quarto family Bible, the one with the births and deaths in it, in which about two-thirds of the way along, a steel engraving caused wonderment to my youthful mind. It showed three men in outlandish garb, bending before a child in a cradle; but what was that other strange person who stood erect, higher than them all, with a haughty expression? I guessed it to be God, though I never ventured to ask anybody; and it was years later that a larger knowledge of

natural history made it possible to identify this occult being as a camel.

I have read the Bible through from cover to cover in my time, and I do not remember that I allowed myself the satisfaction of believing that Jacob was a person whom one would not wish to see a member of his club, or a partner in business. On the other hand I have always felt that Saul had not a fair show—so kingly and so grand, except for that unfortunate love of hitting people. On the face of it Jehu was ungenerous in his dislike of the seventy sons of Ahab, when he wrote to the “great men of the city which brought them up” to “take ye the heads of the men your master’s sons.” Then he stood up in the assembly and said to his tools “Ye be righteous. Behold I conspired against my master, and slew him: but who slew all these . . . so Jehu slew . . . all his great men, and his kinfolks, and his priests, until he left him none remaining.” There is an element of injustice in this transaction, it reminds one too much of the German Governor General Bissing of Belgium.

One sympathizes with the old lady who remarked one day, “I have just been readin’ the Old Testament; and, my, how they did act!” The truth is that neither our ancestors nor ourselves really worship the Old Testament worthies. Our New England forbears in their troubles with savage enemies and Antinomians were comforted by these massacres and acts of perfidy toward the heathen; but I have never got over the shock of learning some years ago that my pet great-great-great-grandfather was one of the Connecticut soldiery that destroyed the Pequots, root and branch.

Our Moslem brethren who have adopted some of the Old Testament’s great-grandfathers are less scrupulous. They do not hesitate, for instance, to dwell upon the softer and more intimate side of the character of King Solomon. To this day probably they relate to the visitor at the Great Wall of Baalbec their ex-

planation of how those three monster stones, sixty-four feet long, could be placed there. Their account is that when the time came to lay the wall, King Solomon one day assembled all the workmen and artificers of the kingdom, who began at dawn and strained and struggled till at dusk the first stone had been slid along into its proper bed. The next day the problem was more serious, for the second stone had to be lifted and placed upon the other. When the workmen could not budge it, King Solomon called upon all the soldiers of all his armies; they worked and stewed and pushed, and that evening their job was completed: the wall was two stones high. The third day the lift was doubled. Workmen and soldiers combined, labored and sweat without avail; evening approached with all the horror of a task incomplete, and a great king powerless,—when a happy thought occurred to Solomon, who summoned all his wives. They gathered about the mighty stone, crooked their little fingers under it, and presto, it soared into its place.

At some later time this incident will be questioned as an example of a lack of caution in accumulating historic data. It is stated as I heard it more than fifty years ago from a man who had been at Baalbec. Some clergymen nowadays venture to criticise Jacob, although it brings upon them the censure due to a man who questions the Scriptures. As the young theologian put it, in a sermon, "Cain was a bad man. Cain was a Bible critic, and he became an atrocious murderer."

There are some heroes of proof both in the Old Testament and the New. Gideon, forerunner of the three hundred at Thermopylae and of the Dutch at Leyden; patient Ezra and Nehemiah, rebuilders of the commonwealth, and David's soldier who risked his life to bring water to his chieftain. David himself is the most human character in the whole Old Testament, by turns good, fair to middling, and bad; but "a man after God's own heart," with all his deficien-

cies. To the modern mind, however, the noblest Biblical hero is Saul that was called Paul, the itinerant minister and evangelist, who went through all the harsh experiences of the frontier in the midst of the highest civilization of the times. An undaunted soul who well might say "I have finished the fight. I have kept the faith." Saul, the modern, fond of metaphysics, anxious to fit together a theological system, like Jonathan Edwards and Doctor Park and Dr. Lyman Abbott—is a human and a humane man, whom nevertheless, our godly ancestors used chiefly as a foundation on which to build impossible theories of the relation between God and His creatures.

II. THE GREEKS

Time was when the students of Harvard College all studied Hebrew in order that they might better understand the scriptures which so many of our ancestors were to expound from the pulpit. Those were the good old eighteenth-century days when Judah Monis, the proselyte from Hebraism, taught Hebrew to the students and owned a negro slave,—doubtless as a mark of dignity. None of them, however, followed in the footsteps of President Stiles of Yale with his intimate studies of the Targum. Nevertheless they all knew Greek,—or rather studied Greek and knew no more of it than most of their classically educated descendants.

Now in Greece there is something positive to worship, because we do not take our moral standard from that source; we may admire Pericles without approving the salon of Aspasia. How many years ago was it that I crossed from Brindisi to Corfu and so to Patras, along with a nephew of the greatest protagonist of Greek culture in the United States? As the steamer approached the strait between Epirus and Corfu my young friend looked about him dazed and asked, "How high is this above the sea?" Who that has approached those dramatic shores, has failed to catch

that thrill? There is nothing more beautiful than the most beautiful. When one has seen the blue mountains rising beyond blue waters against a blue horizon, or has watched the golden sky as it encloses the faint green outline of distant islands, the time has arrived to worship Greek great-grandfathers. The Harvard students of my earliest experience did so as a matter of conscience.

In those distant ages, forty years ago, there was nothing so admirable in American life, nothing so thrilling in its intellectual uplift, nothing so pedagogically exquisite as to be a professor of Greek, in an American college. The range of possible scholarship then was small, and it was a vast thing to corner the most spacious area of the human mind. The figure is mixed and so was the sensation! Take our venerated Professor William Watson Goodwin, for example, an excellent and genial character, whose personal friendship I greatly prized. He was professor of Greek, he had written an intolerable,—I mean an invaluable—book upon Greek Moods and Tenses, a work of learning and discrimination which justly brought him the laurel of a Cambridge doctorate and red gown. He was immersed in Greek—not in the Greek thoughts, which to the men of his time were looked upon rather as poles upon which to hang deductions as to the difference between the negative in *ou* and the negative in *me*. But his learning was the possession of the University and the Commonwealth, and he never grudged it to a fellow delver.

Professor Goodwin had a tale which I cannot forbear recording, for it deals with one medium of our approach to our intellectual Greek great-grandfathers. A friend, then, called one day and remarked, "Well, Goodwin, I am sorry to see that you are so down in the world that you have been obliged to sell your books." The Grecian looked about his library, as much as to intimate that some were left. "You must be selling off your books, because here is a Byzantine

Greek lexicon which I picked up at Bartlett's the other day." "How do you know it is mine?" "Because it has your name on the flyleaf written in your own hand." "That is not possible; but if it were really mine it would have my name also on the hundred and first page." Examination showed that he had written his name with his own hand on that page. There were divers other marginal notes unmistakably made by him. "That is singular," said the sage slowly, "because about six months ago I lent that book to a divinity student who said he could find no copy in the library. I hesitated, for it is a book that I might not use for a year and might want tomorrow; but the young man was very pressing, and I let him have it; and it has never been returned." "Well, that's clear enough, you had better send for the police, and see what is the general state of the book market." "No I can't do that, there may be something that we do not understand. Wait while I send a messenger with a note asking the immediate return of my lexicon." Forth goes the messenger, and presently returns with the lexicon—and due apologies. Confusion, doubt, dismay. The professor sets his mnemonic apparatus at work, and slowly the story comes back to him. He had a lexicon which he bought at the University Book Store; he put his name on the flyleaf and with a signed manual at page 101; he made notes in it; then he discovered that there was a signature missing in the book. He took it back and Sever gave him a fresh copy, into which he transcribed his annotations and recked not what became of copy number one. Men have been hanged on less conclusive evidence.

The Greek professors worshipped the classic writers; and Greek would be in a very different condition in the educational world today if they had also worshipped the glorious ideas found in those pages. The true Grecian of the generation now passing by was Charles Eliot Norton, who though he had never been so happy

as to set foot in the country, made a fane of the Parthenon, and beloved friends of the columns and the statues and the vases. Who can help worshipping that glorious Hermes of Olympia, with the little chap perched upon his arm, at whom he looks as King Alkinoos looked upon his daughter Nausicaa, "And her father smiled, for he knows everything." Yet that is a cold god; give me rather the burial stelae in the Keramikos gateway of Athens, or the nearby Museum, where friend humanly stretches hand to friend, wife to husband, father to son, and even the dog shares in the universal grief; they all tell the same mournful tale; "Goodbye companion, goodbye wife, goodbye son, goodbye master, you are going the longest journey and I am left behind."

That illustrates the theme of this discussion; we all worship the stately dignity of the temples of Athens and of Pæstum and Girgenti; we are all reverent before the sculptures of the Parthenon and the glorious lady of Melos. We all preach the doctrine of balance, of majesty. Our Greek grandfathers liked that, but they also liked the grand and the terrible. Witness the terrific marbles of the altar of Pergamon. It is a figment that all the best Greek sculpture is in repose!

A fiddlestick for repose in art or in literature, if it deprive us of the human view! I worship the Greeks who sat in the theater by the hour and were roused to passion by Aeschulus or Sophocles. I like to think of them hearing the sublime tragedy, the Persians, when the messenger reports that "everything that has oars puts to sea," while the eager gaze of the auditors is stretching down past the Piræus to the very strait where the Persian galleys and their allies dug their oars into the water to get away from Salamis. I like to think of them too as roaring over the farces of Aristophanes, and as listening spellbound to Homer, great-grandfather of all mankind.

My limited study of Greek did give me an exquisite pleasure in the Odyssey, that delightful combination

of Sinbad the Sailor, Sir Francis Drake and Conrad's sea tales. I worship the freedom, the life, the courage, the experience, the loves and hates of men; and everybody who can think burns incense to the Greeks who in Thermopylæ and Marathon showed that small states have their place alongside great empires; and that the most crushing and overweening power may be brought low. In these days of might and aggregation, when the world cannot be saved short of the sacrifice of ten million good lives, I love to think of the power of the few.

It is not necessary here to go into the discussion of how far one must puzzle over Greek sentences and invoke the lexicon in order to penetrate the ideas of these ancients. What modern German philosopher was it who was reputed to read Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in a French translation? That road is open to all who venerate Greek literature. The Greeks themselves know no such thing as a Greek grammar, nor did they think a man of learning must potter about in Egyptian hieroglyphics or Assyrian cuneiforms.

The battle for the Greek language as a pabulum for school boys and girls is over. Greek has almost disappeared out of the American high schools, and in course of time will be read in colleges as Russian and Arabic may be read, as Anglo-Saxon and Provencal are read, as bases of a critical study of language. The American school boy was not taught to worship the real Greek, the statesman, the merchant, the adventurer, the civilizer. What American boy here present realizes that the heyday of Greek culture came long after the classic period; that the Greeks who made the world over were disciples of Alexander and not of Pericles; that the Greek language and the Greek spirit lingered in Constantinople till the successive strata of unspeakable Turks and Tartars broke up the Byzantine empire? As a practical, living, immediate, vital force, in the world of which it was a part, the city

state of Athens operated for a shorter time than the official existence of the United States of America down to the present year.

It is an amazing thing that Greeks of kindred culture could not be persuaded to act together by prodigious Aristotle, the Colossus among great thinkers; and William-James-like Plato, full of humanity; and healthful Socrates, the *New York Nation* of his day, and wily Themistocles, and Alcibiades, the political man-about-town of the age. The Greeks would rather be Persians than be portions of a powerful Greek state that could make head against Rome, that ancient Chicago rising in the west on the Tiber. Of what use to their race all this worshipful power of statement, this balance, this perfection of finish, this ease in doing great things, this clear insight into the woes of other nations? When the pinch came, intellectual Athens, and Teuton-like Sparta both failed, and it was left to the group of allied cities of the Achaean League to make a belated and unsuccessful attempt to combine against the Romans.

The gift of these great-grandfathers to mankind is immeasurable. The world without them would be like the Anglo-Saxon people without Shakespeare. They had not the genius of state building. The confusion and failure of the political world, the world of affairs, with the Greeks, is sufficiently illustrated by the present inability of the Balkan peoples to come to a common understanding. The Serbians took the birthplace of Alexander on their road to Constantinople; but the modern Greeks like their ancient forebears, think not solely of imperial things.

III. ROME

Another group of our worshipful masters is to be found in Rome, and they are much more great-grandfatherly than the Greeks; they have had a larger share in forming our language, and a much greater influence on the political thinking of the modern world.

Rome, the city, is an inspiration to the late time Americans. One of my friends from Wisconsin told me once that he found himself in a Roman pension sitting side by side with a compatriot from a similar longitude, who intimated that he meant to do Rome thoroughly while he was there. This was at dinner. The next forenoon the wayfarer was found dragging his own trunk across the passage, and when asked if he were changing his room replied, "Changing my room, no sirree, I'm leaving. Me and my friend started out early this morning in a hack. We've driven around this city and seen every darned building that has a roof on it, and as for those that haint any roofs, I say let bygones be bygones. We are going to take the two o'clock train for Paris!" For most visitors it is not so easy to throw off the magic of our Roman great-grandfathers. It is an unending pleasure to circumnavigate the walls, to wander about the Campagna among the wild cattle and the foundations of the former arches of the aqueducts. Athens is after all only a ruin; Rome is a ruined city, which is a different thing! The more you know the city, however, the stranger it seems that the world should have received such an impression of the Roman Republic as to have all but dominated France and tinged our own Revolution.

Here again we worship great-grandfather, not so much for the splendid things he did as because we have read about him in our schoolbooks. We are all completely aware that there was a Roman Republic which existed for centuries, and was directed by marvels of Republican virtue, which slowly succumbed to the tyrant Julius Caesar and was transformed by Augustus into an arbitrary empire. It must have been a Republic because we read of elections, debates in the senate, public meetings, and funeral orations, till we get the impression that the Pincian was only another Beacon Hill in which the only thing lacking was a Constitutional Convention.

This admiration of ancient republicanism is not due to our reading of history, because it is only very recently that men like Ferrero have ventured to treat Roman history from the point of view that the Romans were human beings, animated by much the same principles of state policy as the Republic of the United States today. We worship great-grandfather Cincinnatus and Scipio Africanus and Brutus and Cicero, chiefly because of Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*, combined in due proportion with Caesar's *Gallic War* and Smith's *History of Rome*, than which a more juiceless book was never dealt out to candidates for entrance to Harvard College! It seems impossible for us to compare Caesar with, say, Napoleon, both of whom had great notions of creating an empire that would stay put. Cicero is to us like Demosthenes—a megaphone for lofty sentiments; whereas Cicero was the Disraeli of his time; an opportunist, a declaimer, a shrewd politician, yet withal a genuine lover of his country.

Why multiply parallels? The main thing about the worship of Rome is that the story of the Republic is a glorious story, which seems as we look back upon it to be studded with great men as a bag pudding is with plums. All the Romans, good or bad, seem magnificent, from Pompey the Great, down to Catiline—that Roman Aaron Burr; and still further down to Clodius and his Tammany associates. Yet only a handful of those great ones have survived in our own popular apprehension. Two thousand years hence people will look back upon these three centuries of American history as crammed with greatness, but they will all stand on the same footing: John Winthrop, John Paul Jones, George Washington, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Grover Cleveland, Theodore Roosevelt, General Grant, Miles Standish—all thrown upon one background. The truth is—a happy phrase for the critic—that Rome was really about as republican as Austria-Hungary was down to 1918. The real

government being a small group of self-chosen families who had a form of national government, but really the decisions were all made within a single city. The Emperor Charles and his associates were singularly like the republican government of Rome in its last days, with outlying provinces practically governed from headquarters.

Even among the small number of persons who had the right to vote in Rome and thus to make decisions for the Republic, there were masterpieces of sharp practice; the graffiti on the walls of Pompeii bear curious evidence to the methods of calling attention to nominees for office, under the accumulation of political influences which we should term "combines" and "bosses," with a dash of the labor union.

The Roman Republic really owes a great part of its extraordinary hold on the imaginations of twenty later centuries to its casual connection with literature—Cicero against Verres, Livy's so-called History, Plutarch's Lives, and Caesar's Commentaries, were not written as school books, and quite artificially became vehicles of the Latin tongue to unwilling boys. The formal study of ancient history in this country came in quite as an adjunct to the classics; would it not be a good thing on the whole for a boy who was studying Latin to have something more than the accidental contact with the passages for the day, and to study a consecutive narrative of Roman history, which however was not obtained from the textbooks of forty years ago? The closer study of the classics in Europe led to a splendid tradition of the Republic, best exemplified by the pseudo-classicism of the French Revolution, in which Citizen Robespierre proscribed Citizen Danton as General Sulla in his time proscribed General Marius. Even in our Constitutional Convention of 1787 there was some loose talk about the virtues of the Roman Republic.

What was the Rome that remade the world, that feebly blazed up in the Holy Roman Empire, the Rome

continued in tradition at Byzantium, the Rome whose example of world dominion has caused the Germans to put themselves forward as the modern Romans? Their lack of the Roman qualities of understanding of other races, of justice between man and man, of obligation to the dependencies, has caused their edifice to crash together before it was completed.

No wonder men still worship the Rome—the Empire—whose tremendous benefits to mankind are obscured by the yellow press headlines of the time of Nero and Caligula and Heliogabalus, who were accidental ships on the current; indeed Nero rendered a service to mankind by giving an opportunity for the German author's comparison between the Roman emperor and the late German emperor, for the fun of writing which the term of imprisonment was a light expense.

Of course the modern Roman empire is the British empire with its small home country, its imperial decisions made by the fifteen million or so constituents of the House of Commons, the British Empire imposing its Pax Britannica on immense areas of Asia, Oceania, and Africa—a power with a truly Roman sense of holding the provinces together by mutual attraction.

Indeed Britain might have revolutionized the world but for the insuperable British objection to “marrying a nigger”—even though the elite black is a beautiful brown princess, descended from a dynasty of Indian kings. Not so Anthony, who became intimately acquainted with an Egyptian queen; not so the Roman soldiers, who took to themselves wives of the daughters of Heth wherever they were stationed and thus founded the composite populations of Italy, Switzerland, France, and Spain. England though once half Romanized has nothing to show of Roman blood and almost nothing of Roman institutions.

The most solid and stable erection of the Romans, more complete than the Coliseum, more enduring than the Pantheon, more lofty than the Pont du Gard, is the Roman law, which all the world knows was codified

by the Byzantines after Rome, the parent, was a desolation. Part of it is lodged in the common law which has helped to preserve the universal sense of Rome; but the Roman law has spread far beyond the ancient bonds of the Roman empire; is at the basis not only of the Latin powers, including more than half the two Americas, but of German jurisprudence. It is easy to worship Augustus or Hadrian, but Justinian is the great-grandfather whose work is most enduring. Roman history is essential for the modern world, inasmuch as the fibers of Roman thought and organization have penetrated into every Western language and into all our forms of government. Election is a Roman word, and so are candidate, representative, president, kaiser, primary, initiative, referendum, justice, executive, governor, senator, congress,—most of our political dictionary. Only let us study and let us teach our children the Rome that counts, the Rome that was, the Rome that fell because it attempted the impossible task of absorbing all European civilization and dealing it out to the barbarians who fringed the Empire. After all perhaps the greatest lesson of Rome is that universal dominion is impossible, that the world must be carried on by understandings, associations, leagues, world organization. The world has outlived the Roman system of government from above down.

IV. THE TEUTONS

The fourth series of great-grandfathers is a ticklish subject in these times, when we have learned to know the character and aims of the German great-grandchildren of our Teutonic ancestors. A western school board has thrown out a textbook which spoke favorably of the ancient Germans. It is even unsafe to own to a knowledge of the German language, lest it pervert our minds with the fallacious maxims of a Treitschke, or the materialistic views of Nietzsche. I own that I value the privilege of testing my ability to resist the

worse reason put for the better in the original crabbed type.

These efforts to prevent the publication of German ideas, even to give them opportunity to refute themselves, puts me in mind of an old gentleman who listened with impatience to a lecturer who was trying to set forth the truth that ancient Rome was not made up of the men and women whom one meets strolling through the pages of Martial and Juvenal; that there were honest fathers and affectionate mothers and beautiful children among the ancient folk. At last the good old gentleman rose, shaking with indignation, and interposed "Sir, I protest at this barefaced attempt to deprive us of the vices of 'the ancient Romans'!" I protest also at being deprived of the opportunity to swear at the Kaiser in his own language.

As for the great-grandfathers, we may stand on safe ground if we recognize that all Germans are Teutons, but all Teutons are not Germans—we among the rest. I like to recall our Teutonic ancestors who hurled stones and epithets across the Rhine at the Roman legions; who came as Anglo-Saxon pirates to carry their outlook on life and their name to England; who as Norman earls crossed with William the Conqueror. We Americans run closer to ancestral form than the people who are now trying to arrogate to themselves the essence of the Teutonic spirit. We are good Teutons—the Germans are bad Teutons.

Our true and distant Teutonic great-grandfathers deserve our respect and gratitude, first for the reasons which made Kipling admire "Fuzzy-wuz"—"For ye bruk a British square." Who was it that smashed the Roman Empire, as the Allies are now smashing the German Empire? Who sacked the Eternal City, founded royal dynasties in Sicily, in Spain, in Northern Africa? Who settled Britain and laid the foundations for Danes and others to complete the job? Who established the enlightened countries of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland? Who were the

first Europeans to reach the shores of America? Teutons of various degrees. Those times when all Europe was frontier have passed by; the Teutons have separated into many branches. One of them still imagines the world to be the booty of the freebooter who has lost conscience. The present war is in a way an attempt to revive those plundering voyages, those descents of swift ships on the enemy's coast, those harrings of the land, those drives on the towns, that murder and rapine, that burning of bridges, that enslavement of captives from which the rest of western Europe has painfully emerged.

We must not forget that the trouble with the Germans is that they consider themselves the most modern and highly cultured nation on earth, while thinking the thoughts and practicing the deeds of two thousand years ago. They have gone back to Thor, the hammerer, and the people have been systematically taught, from babes in the kindergarten up, that virtuous nations were those which have the biggest and most effective armies; that Germany is a very virtuous nation; then, that it is so virtuous that it may dispense with the restraints of Scripture, the church, international law, and civilization. Therefore the whole land was kept waiting till Authority should unchain the big dogs of war to rush upon and destroy the enemy. Then Germany was to fix up the world on the principle of the gospel according to Attila.

What we thank our Teutonic ancestors for is not the fathering this barbaric branch of the great race but for several direct services to mankind in none of which the Germans have shared. Tacitus was not particularly fond of the Germans, yet he gave them credit for an unextinguishable love of personal freedom, which the present Germans have ignored. The seaboard Teutons were magnificent seamen. It took skill and pluck for the Angles and Danes and Norwegians to cross the seas and to occupy Britain, a task too great for modern Germans. The great fleet, in

building for twenty years, has once ventured off soundings, and did not venture to repeat the experience. The Teutons had a national assembly—progenitor of Parliament and Congress: the German Reichstag is like the little man who foretells the weather by smiling appearance when there is nothing doing, by disappearance whenever a storm is expected. The notion of even representation of large communities, unknown to the ancients, is a Teutonic idea, which the Germans have steadfastly refused to carry to its logical conclusion of "one man one vote." What the Germans lack is an admixture of tempering blood with their too-rank Teutonism. Other Teutonic races have learned that brotherhood of races and common humanity is stronger than Blood and Iron.

The Germans have revised an ancient Teutonic worship, from which more favored branches of the great race are free. They have returned to heathenism, and have set up for their ideal a Moloch of a creature which they call the Good Old German God. The *Libre Belge*, that fiery sheet which somehow finds its way into the bedroom of the German Governor General, and which dares to satirize the All Highest, in one of its issues relates an incident which has recently happened in Paradise. The German Chancellor, it appears, presented himself at the gate, and announced that he had come to call on God, "I am very sorry," said Peter, "but I don't think you can see him." "Why not, you do not understand that I come from the All Highest." "That's just the trouble God isn't very well today. We are afraid that—well, he goes about Heaven muttering to himself and saying 'I am the kaiser, I am the kaiser'—you understand." "Oh, is it as bad as that? Well, I'll leave a message which perhaps will lessen the strain upon the poor soul. Tell him that I was commissioned by the emperor to bestow upon him the initial rank of German nobility, so that from henceforth he may be known as 'the Baron von Gott'."

V. THE AMERICANS

In our private minds we hold that we have inherited all the good and permanent and laudable things from our nearest great-grandfathers by blood: we do not stop to ask where they gained the wealth of institutions which they transmitted to us. I have tried to show the powerful sources from which they drank. Our great grandfathers are really almost the only ancient thing in the United States. We cherish few old buildings, little in colonial furniture and gear, few manuscripts, scanty portraits. John Vassal of Cambridge bequeathed his rich suits of clothes to his son—most of us have received only precepts, principles and epitaphs.

We worship Great-Grandfather for worshipping God according to the dictates of his own conscience. We thank him for religious toleration—but he never would have thanked us for admitting Baptists and Episcopalians and possibly theists into the American Antiquarian Society. It was a noble thing for Great-Grandfather to exile himself in pursuit of religious liberty—but why put so many stumbling blocks in the way of other people intent on worshipping God according to the dictates of their own consciences? John Winthrop and Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards served their day and generation—but put alongside them Roger Williams, William Penn and John Wesley—which did most for the happiness and ultimate salvation of men and women by providing a genuine and general religious liberty?

May we worship Great-Grandfather for his course of life, his private conduct? Doubtless the standards of the community were high, but every reader of colonial letters, diaries and journals knows that the cord was stretched too taut. Goodly men not only called themselves miserable sinners, but occasionally made it true. What means the judge's record of his call upon a lady at 9 p. m.? What is the Yankee Bundling against which Edwards preached? What

was that Scarlet A that Hawthorne resurrected? The Colonial Puritan was a delightful man for a Great-Grandfather, but not for a household companion. There was a vein of cruelty in him. Even Whitefield found it a necessary road to godliness to whip the little boy aboard ship that could not say his prayers; and Jonathan Edwards wrote his daughter that he would rather see her dead than unconverted.

Let us be truthful even about our ancestors. They were men and women of vigor, earnest and passionate, not very different in temperament from reputable folk nowadays. As for the submerged tenth, they had their population of roisterers and criminals, their vile sons of godly fathers. Doubtless there were ameliorations, witticisms, familiar sayings, feastings and laughter; Reverend John Davenport was celebrated for his love of a joke, and Reverend Mather Byles was the Doctor Holmes of his time—with his quip on the British troops in Boston—"Now all our wrongs will be red-dressed." Nevertheless the atmosphere of godly colonial life was chill.

We have great reason to be grateful to Great-Grandfather for his rugged virtues of thrift and honesty and perseverance, for his effort to gain the high values of living, and for his political sagacity. Perhaps he was not always above the tricks of the boss. When the Boston Town Meeting was voting upon adding to the Granary Burying ground "John Pigeon was seen to put in ten votes with the word 'yea' written on every one of em"—but John Pigeon was forthwith fined ten shillings—the machinery of the corrupt practices act worked quickly.

Great-Grandfather is also entitled to all praise for his success in popular government. The town meetings and colonial legislative bodies were as near democratic bodies, debating and voting for the public good, as the limited suffrage allowed. This political sense made the Revolution succeed, the times produced a surprising number of active minds which worked together, to build a commonwealth.

In no respect is worship of the bygone more reasonable than for the constructive political skill of that epoch. "In those days there were giants,"—starting from the clumsy and imperfect charters and practices of the colonies, they arrived at successful state governments, and the crowning triumph of a national government. All honor for that service! But we must remember that they were successful because they were experiments. We cannot worship them without recognizing what a departure it was from previous experience. They were bold in tackling new problems; they had a genius for documents; they instilled respect for the fundamental law—but nowadays the Fathers of the Constitution would be classed as dangerous theorists who were the firebrands of the time; the image breakers, the fanatics, those who as Confucius said, "Will still be doing in these impracticable times." James Otis, Oxenbridge Thacher, John Adams, Sam Adams, John Dickinson, John Rutledge, Peyton Randolph, Patrick Henry, George Washington. Those were the radicals of their time. the demanders of change, the Apostles of Revolution. The staid and gentlemanly Tories looked upon them as we look upon the I. W. W.!

From worship of the Constitution makers we have become worshippers of the work of their hands; we bow down to the wood and stone of the forms of government which they established on the ruins of their old institutions. I have of late heard many voices urging people not to disturb the sacred phrases of a constitution 130 years old. I do what they did, I claim the right to start afresh, to readjust the machinery of government to the necessities of the times.

The rules of this honorable society forbid the discussions of questions more recent than the Civil War. I yield to that edict; but to discuss the present Constitutional position of Massachusetts and other weakly governed communities is no more than to appeal to Great-Grandfather, who taught the world the salutary

lesson of making your political machinery agree with your needs. The Fathers of the Constitution threw over their old governments, introduced new political methods, expanded the suffrage, put off the shackles of the governors, and put them on the legislatures, set up new courts and a novel system of legislation, made the referendum a part of their legal process. A good job, worthy of admiration—must we stop there?

What will Great-Grandsire say about the apathy of this day and generation—when the world is on fire? Will he not upbraid us for lauding his character and ignoring his example? Will he not set us down as weaklings who cannot do what he did—make our state governments adequate for the times?

In the midst of a myriad of vexing details, there is but one problem of government that stares us in the face. Forms are only man made, no portion of any government is sacred. The one essential of government is that it should act. If inherited forms restrict, they must give way. The one essential, mature governmental force, is the will of the people concerned. We are precluded from venerating the Declaration of Independence and then shirking from its conclusion. I have heard in the last two years dozens of arguments of which the pith was that the people of this Commonwealth were too weak and too ignorant and too unfair to be trusted with government. But somebody must govern. If not the people, then a part of the people, and a self-designated part at that!

No, Great-Grandfather, we shall not throw overboard your splendid principles of human liberty—we are carefully giving Europe time to adapt them. We shall not overthrow the main portions of your intention. But we shall somehow make it fit for our times—for our cities—laborers, business, social welfare, order, defenses. What the states refuse to do will be done for them by the nation at large. The federal government is teaching us the truth of Napoleon's maxim: "What is possible is already done. What is impossible must be done."

The American people is a Samson, sometimes wavering, sometimes beguiled, but a creature of vast ultimate power. Samson may permit himself to be bound with green withes—but he breaks them when he will. Even if you put out his eyes, he will still be strong enough to pull down your Republic over your heads unless you give scope for his vast strength to build up the community.

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.