

On The Germanic Peoples by Professor Revilo P. Oliver
ON THE GERMANIC PEOPLES
by Professor Revilo P. Oliver (Liberty Bell, March 1988)

IF YOU ARE interested in the history of our unique race, you have a special interest in the Germanic peoples who, though called "barbarians" in the standard histories, assured the survival, and eventually the revival, of our civilization after the fall of the Roman Empire, and you have probably read such works as Francis Owen's *The Germanic People* (1960; reprinted, New Haven, Connecticut, College & University Press, 1966) and Earnest Sevier Cox's *Teutonic Unity* (Richmond, Virginia, privately printed. s.a. [1951]; reprinted, s.l., s.n.t. [Torrance, California, Noontide Press], s.a. [c.1967]).

As you know, in the kingdoms of the Germanic conquerors their native laws supplanted or greatly modified the Roman law as it had been codified in the later Empire by jurists who were not Roman. The celebrated Gaius, who was a contemporary of Marcus Aurelius, and his successors, Papinianus, Ulpianus, et al., all came from the Hellenized provinces of the Roman Empire and probably from Asia Minor, but we know nothing about their race: they may have been the descendants of Greek colonists or natives (e.g., Syrians) who had acquired Greek culture. Their foreign origin neatly accords with the fact that under the Empire, Roman law, although retaining much of the terminology, became quite different from what the law had been under the Republic.

If your studies have taken you this far, you will wish to consult an admirably concise article, "Another Look at the Origins of the Middle Ages: a Reassessment of the Role of the Germanic Kingdoms," by Professor Katherine F. Drew, in *Speculum*, LXII (1987), pp. 803-812.

The article treats an aspect of the subject that is seldom noticed, that the Germanic laws, whether they simply supplanted the Roman law, as did the Anglo-Saxon code (which was the source of the Common Law that was the acknowledged basis of American jurisprudence until the Jewish mentality took over), or they were superimposed on the Roman law, as in the Visigothic Kingdom, were based on a conception of the family as the unity to which an individual naturally and unalterably belonged by birth. The Germanic laws therefore reflected an organically cohesive society in which the family (parents, children, and both agnate and cognate kin) formed the basic unit, as is natural for Aryans. This conception differed radically from the conception that is natural to Semitic peoples and was foisted on us by Christianity and "democracy," according to which an individual is an isolated unit, having no necessary relation to any other human being. (A conception so alien to the Aryan character inevitably produces psychological stress and the terrible sense of loneliness that afflicts so many of our contemporaries.)

As the learned authoress points out, the Germanic conception of the family also determined the institution of slavery in the Germanic nations, often in conjunction with the Germanic code of what we would call criminal law, for here again we meet the native Aryan idea that the function of the state is not to punish crimes of violence, such as robbery and murder, by imprisoning or executing the guilty, but to give to the victim or his family such compensation as is possible in the circumstances, assigning to each crime a monetary value and obliging the criminal, if unable to pay the proper compensation, to work out the assessment by becoming, temporarily or permanently, according to the gravity of the offense, the slave of the victim of the crime or his heirs.

In the Germanic kingdoms the institution of slavery reverted to what it had been in the Roman Republic, as is obvious from the Latin word *familia*, which designates a man's household, i.e., all the persons subject to his authority:

his wife, his children (including adult sons who live at home and their wives), his free retainers, and his slaves. Likewise, in the Germanic kingdoms, slaves were no less members of a man's household ('family' in the limited sense) than the others. (1)

(1. Thus slaves differed little from other domestic servants, while in agriculture they were rendered unnecessary by the serfs and villeins, who continued, with Germanic modifications, the system of coloni and adscripti glebae of the late Roman Empire. In the Tenth Century, when many Slavs were sold in Europe by traders of Germanic conquerors, thus giving us the word 'slave' (earlier 'sclave,' from French esclave), they were, so to speak, a novelty.)

Having read this article, I thought it likely that the Germanic conception accounts for an odd linguistic fact. In Mediaeval Latin, servus, which in Classical Latin always designates a slave, came to be applied to a hired servant as well. This in turn, it seems to me, may account for the converse usage in English before the Nineteenth Century, the word 'servant' being often used to designate specifically a slave. The ambiguity thus latent in the word had disastrous results.

As everyone knows, the canonical "New Testament" specifically approves and sanctions slavery and emphatically commands slaves to obey their masters in all things except their private religious faith. But for a reason that is unknown, since the relevant part of the Reverend John Bois's record of the deliberations of the translators has been lost, the committee of review that fixed the final text of the King James version approved the use of the word 'servant' to translate the Greek doulos, which designates a slave. (2)

(2. In the translation of the Bible produced by Wycliff and his coadjutors and completed around 1382, 'servant' was used to translate servus, in preference to 'sclave,' which may have seemed a foreign word then, and to 'bondman,' which would have included serfs and villeins. The translators of the King James version may simply have taken the word from Wycliff, but surely some member of the committee would have pointed out the potential ambiguity before the text was finally approved. Given the anomalies of French conjugation, servant is the present participle of servir, which is the Latin servire ('to serve,' without defining the civil status of the person rendering the service). I do not know whether the use of the word in the English Bible influenced the common use by American slaveholders of 'servant' to designate a slave.)

Given the ambiguity, an uneducated person, reading his Bible in English, could read such an injunction as "Servants, obey your masters" without understanding that the religious command is addressed to slaves, and he could miss the point of Jesus's frequent mention of slaves without a hint of disapproval, and even of his explicit contrast between the status of a hired servant (diakonos) and that of a slave (doulos). That made it possible for the scurvy agitators called Abolitionists to lie to the ignorant masses and claim that the Christian religion disapproved of slavery. Thus, despite the protests of

honest clergymen, the malicious spielers succeeded in exciting fanatical emotions in the unthinking multitude and in precipitating the iniquitous invasion of the South that effectively rescinded the Constitution and ended the American Republic, while delivering first the North, and finally the conquered South, to financial pirates who looted the nation and gorged themselves on its disasters.

This article originally appeared in Liberty Bell magazine, published monthly by George P. Dietz from September 1973 to February 1999. For reprint information please write to Liberty Bell Publications, Post Office Box 21, Reedy WV 25270 USA.

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