

THE RELIGIOUS QUESTION IN FRANCE

IN THE LIGHT OF HISTORIC FACTS
AND OF CURRENT EVENTS

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PREFATORY NOTE

"LE Cléricalisme—voilà l'ennemi." Gambetta, the gifted statesman and impassioned orator of the Third Republic, master of phrases as he was, never compressed more truth into a sentence than when he uttered this pungent and often quoted saying—"Clericalism—that is the enemy." Many of the European nations have known to their cost his meaning; but none has had more bitter reason to understand it than the country which, with all his faults, he loved with a true patriot's affection, and served with a penetrating and fearless statesmanship. It saddens the heart to imagine what, but for Clericalism, France might have been in Reformation days, and to think of what Christianity, in place of Clericalism, would have made the brilliant and lovable French people to-day.

In the course of the enquiry which, at the instance of the Trustees of His Excellency Dr R. H. Gunning, I made last autumn into the present religious and ecclesiastical situation in France, I was met with evidences everywhere that Gambetta's trumpet note has not only reverberated throughout the land, but found a response in multitudes of French minds and hearts. I visited not merely Paris, but other large cities—such as Lyons, Roanne, and St Etienne toward the east; Orleans, Angoulême, and Bordeaux toward the west; Clermont-Ferrand, Limoges, and Tulle in the centre; Bayonne, Montauban, and Toulouse toward the south. I enquired into Protestant missionary operations on the spot, more especially in Auvergne and Haute Loire, in the Charentes, and in Corrèze. I took note of what was to be seen at that great centre of Roman Catholic devotion and priestly traffic, Lourdes. I read carefully what was being said in the daily

journals and other periodicals of different complexions, in a time of considerable political ferment. I had opportunity of converse with many sorts and conditions of Frenchmen. And everywhere the impression was deepened upon my mind, not only that Gambetta's impeachment is true, but that France as a whole is awakened to its truth.

Interesting reports have already been given by competent observers, on four different occasions, regarding the Los von Rom movement in Austria. This time it has been found desirable to enter on a fresh field of investigation, which affords ample evidence also of how Rome, while gaining in England, is losing hold in Continental countries that have long been dominated by her.

I have thought it well to set forth, under the headings which follow, both the historic roots and the present aspects of the national problem which has been forced upon France by the Roman Curia.

EDINBURGH, *August* 1905.

CHAPTER I

PROTESTANTISM IN FRANCE, FROM THE REFORMATION (1512) TO THE REVOLUTION (1789)

The Eldest Son of the Church.

THE relations between France and the Papacy are of very ancient standing. The first of the Gallic chiefs to adhere to the Roman communion was Clovis, King of the Franks, who, along with some thousands of his warlike subjects, was baptized at Rheims in 496. The Pope blessed him as "the eldest son of the Church," a title proudly claimed by successive rulers in France down the centuries, and sometimes passed over to the nation itself, as "*la fille aînée*," the eldest daughter of the Church. By and by, Charles Martel vindicated the title in his doughty resistance to the Saracens, and Charlemagne gave it additional lustre in laying the persons and domains of the refractory Lombards at the feet of the Papal See. Many a time afterwards, during the dark ages, the oriflamme of France was at the service of the Roman Church, in European conquest, in the prosecution of the Crusades, and in the ruthless persecution of the Albigenses; and, though attempts were made, both before and after the establishment of the Estates-General by Philippe IV. in 1302, to safeguard national rights, the kingdom suffered more and more from Papal encroachments, for which the flattering title given to Louis XI., and subsequent kings, of "His most Christian Majesty" was but a sorry compensation.

Soon after Francis I. came to the throne in 1515, it was sought to secure by Concordat certain privileges for the Crown, such as the nomination of the Gallican bishops; but the defeat of Francis by Spain, at Pavia, brought the French King more than before under Papal domination: and, although he was a monarch of considerable force and enlightenment, much devoted to arts and literature, he was constrained to remain submissive to the yoke of Rome. It was during the reign of Francis that the Reformation movement became general in Europe—a religious and political upheaval, from which the great north-western nation could not remain exempt.

French Protestantism not an Exotic.

Looking at the map of Europe as it now presents itself, some have rashly argued that Protestantism has shown itself a religion suited only for Germanic peoples. Such have imagined, further, that in so far as Protestantism has ever had a footing in France it has existed there only as an exotic imported from Geneva. But this is to imagine a vain thing, and to betray a lamentable ignorance of history. The truth is, that French Protestantism was derived straight from the Bible; and Professor Doumergue of Montauban, the biographer of Calvin, has even maintained, with considerable plausibility, that the Reformation took hold of France sooner than of Germany. Certain it is, that in 1512, five years before Luther nailed up his theses and sounded the Gospel blast that startled and awakened Europe, Lefèvre, the pious and learned professor of the Sorbonne, had published his commentary on the Romans, in which he set forth in clear terms the cardinal Reformation doctrine—"It is God who gives us, by faith, that righteousness which, by grace alone, justifies to eternal life." It is matter of history, further, how the same devout French scholar published the Gospels in French in 1522, and the whole New Testament in 1524, by which time he had secured the earnest co-operation of his pupil William Farel, and (though unhappily only for a season) of his friend Count Briçonnet, the Bishop of Meaux.

France at the Parting of the Ways.

The story of the dawn of the Reformation in France is deeply interesting, and not a little sad. It gave promise of a day of singular brightness for that fair land, and of a future of unexampled spiritual prosperity for its gifted people. The Gospel found its way into the palace itself, and won an illustrious convert in Margaret of Valois, the sister of the King, who not only smiled on the congregational life first begun in Meaux, but greatly fostered it afterwards in her own kingdom of Navarre. Even after the martyrdoms had begun, she succeeded in having the Gospel preached freely by Roussel to many of the grandees of the Parisian Court, with results that were felt throughout the city: and such was her influence over Francis, that for a time it seemed as if Evangelism might conquer Romanism, and the Court refuse to bow to the pretensions of the Church. But Bede and the Sorbonnists who followed him, with their astute and unscrupulous Papal confederates, carried the day. By slander and agitation, and the setting afloat of threatening rumours, they roused the fanaticism of the mob to white heat, and wreaked in blood their

enmity to the Gospel. Paris may be said to have made its choice in 1533. It would not have the Gospel. And unhappily the choice of the capital became, under the same sinister Roman influence, the fateful choice of the country.

Early Progress of the Reformation.

We cannot trace in detail the story of the great religious struggle that ensued, or stay to picture the mighty actors that appeared on opposing sides in the arena. Francis himself, apparently, wavered, and is believed to have had secret personal leanings to the Reformation. But when, for what he counted politic reasons, he sought for his son Henry the hand of Catherine de Medici, niece of Pope Clement, the die may be said to have been cast for him. The King, from that time forward, was more and more inextricably involved in the Papal toils. He had his seasons of vacillation still. He had even fantastic projects for the uniting of Rome and the Reformation, which had some weight with what were known as "The Temporizers" on the Protestant side. But the cause represented by Calvin—who dedicated to Francis his famous *Institutes*, as a defence of evangelical doctrine and a plea for toleration, from his place of refuge in Geneva—could never coalesce with the cause of Clement. A reign of terror was the result, in which the "Chambres Ardentes" did their work, and the packed dungeons never left the gibbet and the pyre at a loss for victims. The King's good genius, his sister Margaret, had sorrowfully to withdraw to her own little kingdom by the Pyrenees, to make it an asylum for the persecuted, an oasis of religious freedom and social prosperity, and a type of "what might have been" for France. And when, in 1547, Francis, amid horrors of mind that outbade the pains of his bodily distemper, breathed his last, the work of massacre in Provence was at its height. Yet it is reckoned, that by the close of his reign from a sixth to a fourth of the French people had been won to the Reformation.

Under Henry II., son of Francis and husband of Catherine, the work of extermination went on apace. It was now that the Guises—Francis, the soldier, and Charles, the prelate—came to the front, "but for whom," says Mezeray, "the new religion would perhaps have become dominant in France." Even Catherine had seasons of slackness in her persecuting zeal; but these Popish leaders never had. Yet, in spite of all opposition, the Protestant community grew in numbers and in confidence daily. It found its adherents in all classes of society. Margaret of Valois had been succeeded by her yet more accomplished and resolute and devoted daughter,

Jeanne d'Albret. Among nobles who rallied to the Reformed banner were two princes of the Bourbon blood, the Duke of Vendôme and his brother the Prince of Condé: and most notable of all its defenders was the peerless Admiral Gaspard de Coligny.

The First National Synod (1559).

While Henry was engaged in his futile wars with Charles V., steps were taken to organize the French Protestant Church. A congregation was formed on the Geneva model in Paris itself, under M. de la Rivière as pastor, with elders and deacons, in 1555. The early church of Meaux rose from the dust, and obtained a settled pastor in the same year. Poitiers, where the Lord's Supper had been dispensed, for the first time in France, by Calvin in 1534, had likewise a congregation organized in 1555, which became the fruitful mother of churches in all that neighbourhood. Angers, Bourges, Blois, Tours, Angoulême, Pau, Montauban, Orleans, Rouen, Dieppe, Bordeaux, Nérac, St Jean d'Angély, La Rochelle, and a host of other places, including no fewer than sixty centres in the Provence, quickly followed. It is calculated that in Henry II.'s time there were 25,000 Protestants in Paris alone; and Coligny was able to present to Catherine a list of 2150 Protestant communities throughout the land. In May 1559, a National Synod was held in Paris, under the moderatorship of François de Morel, pastor in Paris and a friend of Calvin, at which the Gallican Confession of Faith and a Code of Discipline were drawn up. The Constitution then adopted was on a democratic basis, which recognized the gradation of courts—from the Consistory (for individual congregations), through the Colloquy (for groups of congregations), and the Provincial Synod (at which every congregation in a Province was represented), to the National Synod (composed of two pastors and two elders from each of the Provincial Synods): and it is a remarkable fact, that the French Protestant Church has not found it needful to modify essentially the Constitution thus framed by its first National Synod, in 1559. The Gallican Confession, it may be noted, is sometimes called the Confession of La Rochelle, because it was enlarged from thirty-five to forty articles and ratified at the Seventh National Synod, held at La Rochelle in 1571.

Henry II. died toward the end of 1559, and was succeeded by three of his sons in turn, each of whom was a more or less subservient tool in the hands of the crafty and ambitious Queen-mother, Catherine de Medici. Francis II., a physical and moral weakling, reigned for only a little over a year—by his

side our own Mary Stuart, niece of the Guises, who used their enhanced opportunity against "the religion" to the uttermost. When, in 1561, Charles IX. came to the throne, at the age of nine years, Catherine thought fit for a time to steer a middle course. The Huguenots, as the adherents of the Reformed religion were now commonly called (probably a Frenchifying, "Eignots," of the German "Eidgenossen," sworn comrades), she considered a sufficiently useful pawn to be played off against her rivals, the Guises, on the national chess-board.

The Poissy Conference (1561).

A religious conference, with the concurrence of the States-General, was held at Poissy in 1561, at which the Reformed faith was powerfully represented by Theodore Beza. Here the upright Chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital, amid loud clerical protests, urged the taking of "the Bible as the arbiter of all differences," and ventured the opinion, that "men might be loyal subjects of the King, though not of the King's faith, and good members of the nation, though not of the nation's church." But the bishops would have none of this doctrine of toleration, and brought the Conference of Poissy to an end. It was not, however, altogether fruitless, for it exalted Protestantism in public regard; and in the beginning of the following year, January 1562, the Assembly of Notables, under the Chancellor's lead, issued the "Edict of January," which gave the Huguenots legal sanction to assemble for worship, unarmed, "outside the cities, in open places," beneath the eye of the public officers. This concession alarmed the Pope and his French representatives, and two months later the massacre of Vassy, under the Duke of Guise, was the signal for an outbreak of pillage and death, against the adherents of the Reformed religion all over France. Then and not till then it was, that Admiral Coligny, Condé, Jeanne d'Albret, and the rest, stood to arms under the Huguenot banner, for that "liberty of worship" which, in face even of the January edict, was ruthlessly denied them.

St Bartholomew's Day (1572).

Then comes the terrible story, on which we cannot enter here, of what are called the civil wars of France—wars which were neither more nor less than organized and determined attempts, on the part of the Papacy, to stamp out the Protestant heresy from the soil of France, by the butchery of its supporters. Pius V. hounded on the King, and the Queen-mother, and the Dukes and Cardinals, in their bloody work; and what could not be done in open battle, in face of Coligny's military genius and the prowess of the Huguenots, was more

successfully effected by dissimulation and massacre. In a time of treacherous truce, Coligny and the flower of Protestant chivalry were lured within the walls of Paris, on occasion of the marriage of the King's sister to the young King of Navarre. At a given signal, the brave Admiral and thousands of other Protestants were done to death in Paris, in the early morning of St Bartholomew's Day, 1572; and, in the concerted slaughter which ensued all over France, from 50,000 to 70,000 Huguenots fell. The Vatican resounded with pæans of gratitude to God, and the Pope had medals struck, examples of which still remain, in commemoration of what was supposed to be, at length, the fatal blow dealt at pestilential heresy, in the *Ugonottorum Strages*—slaughter of the Huguenots. Even yet, however, the spirit of the Protestants was not quelled, as was testified by the miracles of bravery wrought at La Rochelle and elsewhere. The Huguenots still showed themselves a power in the land; and there were those in France, known as the *Politiques* of the Tiers Parti, who, without sharing the religious beliefs of the Protestants, had patriotism enough to revolt against the policy of extermination, and to declaim against the swarm of Italian and Spanish creatures of the Papacy, who so unscrupulously promoted it. When Henry III., in 1574, succeeded his brother Charles, he, too, threw his influence on the side of persecution. But, though Coligny was dead, there was still "Henry of Navarre" to reckon with; and, in his quarrels with the Popish League and the Duke of Guise, who was aiming at the throne, the French King was even fain to avail himself at times of Protestant support. When, having compassed the death of Guise at Blois, Henry III. himself, as the last of the Valois line, was struck down by the dagger of a monk in 1589, a Protestant by profession ascended the throne of France.

Henry of Navarre, and the Edict of Nantes (1598).

Henry IV., better known as Henry of Navarre, is one of the enigmas of the Reformation struggle in France. As the brilliant and lovable Knight of the White Plume, he did doughty service to the Protestant cause, and showed himself a worthy son of Jeanne d'Albret. But intelligence and courage may be hereditary where true piety is not, and Henry proved, in more respects than one, a man of easy morals. Confronted with the hostility of the Roman Catholic lords, he bethought him that "Paris was worth a mass," and, after some hesitation, he abjured his Protestantism to secure his throne. When the bishops made Henry swear "to drive from the lands under his sway all heretics denounced by the Church," they meant it, as they proceeded to show by deeds

of blood. But the King was minded, at most, to temporize with them, and secretly encouraged the League which the Protestants formed in their own defence. By and by, needing Huguenot help in his war with Spain, Henry ventured to grant the famous "perpetual and irrevocable" Edict of Nantes, on 15th April 1598. This decree, which has been called the Magna Charta of French Protestantism, secured full liberty of conscience to all, and the public exercise of "the Religion" in the places where it had been previously established, and in the suburbs of cities; it provided for the erection of courts for the protection of Protestant interests, and of four Protestant Colleges; it conceded the right of holding a triennial National Synod, and of publishing evangelical literature; it made an appropriation of State money toward the salaries of Protestant ministers; and, by way of guarantee, it gave 200 towns into the hands of the Protestants. A period of peace and of recuperative prosperity, such as France had not enjoyed for centuries, ensued. But it lasted for only twelve years; for, on 16th May 1610, a fanatical monk, Ravallac, sprang upon the royal carriage in one of the narrow streets of Paris, and struck a dagger into the heart of the King. The Papists had never forgiven the publication of the Edict of Nantes. A significant picture from the head college of the Jesuits in Paris shows Henry IV. being dragged by devils into hell, while the angels are bearing his murderer to heaven.

Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685).

In the reigns of Louis XIII. (1610-1643), and during the minority of Louis XIV. (who reigned 1643-1715), the statesman so far overcame the churchman in the astute Cardinal Richelieu and his successor Mazarin, as to secure for the Huguenots, who were now led by Duplessis-Mornay, at least a measure of their chartered rights; though they were subjected to frequent assaults, and their cautionary towns (*places de sureté*) were reduced per force from 200 to 2, Montauban and La Rochelle. But when Louis XIV. was old enough to take the reins into his own hand, his favourite maxim *L'état c'est moi* had, while cessation of foreign wars permitted, a masterful application to his Protestant subjects. Bribery had been freely practised, with indifferent result, to lure them from their allegiance to a higher King. Then the pitiless Dragonnades were set on foot. The provisions of the Edict of Nantes had been piecemeal set aside: and at length it was formally abrogated. The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, proclaimed on the 22nd of October 1685, was, with what succeeded upon it, the most cruel and drastic blow

struck at Protestantism in France, and at both the moral and the material well-being of the nation. The Reformed worship was declared illegal, Protestant churches were ordered to be demolished and schools to be closed, Protestant pastors were required to quit the realm within a fortnight, the Protestant laity forbidden to leave it under the severest penalties, and the "booted apostles" of the most Christian King were sent abroad over the country, on a converting mission among the Protestants, with orders to "compel them to come in." Though under pain of the galleys or of death, hundreds of thousands of the very flower of the French population succeeded in making their way, by various devices and under various disguises, to England and Germany and Holland, there to enrich the professions and trades, which their departure immeasurably impoverished at home. Thus, by this one fatuous act, Louis XIV., as has been truly said, did more to weaken France than all that Richelieu and Mazarin had done to strengthen her. But Bossuets and Massillons of the Roman Catholic pulpit applauded the pious work; medals were struck in celebration of "*Heresis extincta, et Religio Victrix*"; and Pope Innocent VI. had a *Te Deum* sung in Rome over the "conversion" of the Huguenots, and sent a special letter to the King, promising him the reward of God, and the everlasting praises of the Church.

The Church of the Desert, and its Synods.

Other parts of Europe, including our own land of Britain, greatly benefited from the incursion of Protestant refugees in 1685, and no doubt the English Revolution of 1688 was hastened by it. America, too, received many of the fugitives, who had afterwards much to do with laying the foundations of American independence. But for France itself the result was unspeakably deplorable. Of the million or, thereby of Protestants who remained, many reluctantly submitted to the Romish Church, under the name of "the new Catholics," while others, unable on any terms to practise hypocrisy, made their way to inaccessible mountains and forests and dens and caves of the earth, there to encourage one another, as opportunity might be given, in the primitive faith of the Gospel, and in the exercise of the simple, scriptural worship of "The Church of the Desert." Then came the hunting down of the Protestants in Languedoc and Dauphiné—"a chase," as Voltaire has called it, "in a wide ring"—which turned what had been a garden into a wilderness.

For the rest of the 18th century, the Protestant Church was out in the desert, where the Camisards, like our Scottish Covenanters, "worshipped God with the Bible in one hand

and the arquebus in the other." Yet, true to its motto, *Flagror, sed non comburor*, it found some degree of restoration even there. Young Antoine Court, whom the French Reformed call the Restorer of Protestantism, laboured in season and out of season for the organisation of the scattered remnants of the Protestant Church, and actually in 1715, while Louis XIV. lay a-dying, set on foot again the Synodal system of 1559. When Court afterwards, as Professor in Lausanne, gave himself to the work of preparing pastors for France, Paul Rabaut ("pasteur du désert") entered with remarkable zeal into his superintending labours on French soil. The Synode National du Désert actually met eight times between 1726 and 1763, in quarries and mountain solitudes; and fidelity was maintained, in face of fierce persecution, to the Confession of La Rochelle. The renaissance, toward the close of Louis XV.'s reign (1715-1774), began to make its influence felt in the direction of toleration—a doctrine powerfully preached by Voltaire, in his own way, and by the sentimentalists of the school of Rousseau. But not till 1787 was any sort of relief offered by Government to the persecuted Protestants; and even then the Edict of Malesherbes only granted them certain elementary civil rights and liberty of private worship, without remitting their religious disabilities.

But now the hour of the Revolution was almost on the strike, and bitter retribution for France's fatal earlier choice was just at hand.

CHAPTER II

PROTESTANTISM IN FRANCE, FROM THE REVOLUTION (1789) TO THE FALL OF THE SECOND EMPIRE (1870)

Causes contributing to the French Revolution.

THE French Revolution, accomplished not like the British by Act of Parliament but in blood, was a social cataclysm to which there were many contributing causes. Voltaire-ism, to which reference has just been made, was one. The overweening absolutism of the throne, and the extortionate rapacity of the King and the oligarchy of nobles, was another. The contagion of American ideas of independence was a third. But, undoubtedly, the infidelity rampant among the Roman clergy, and the demoralizing influence especially of the Jesuits, were largely responsible for the mad excesses of that terrible time of terror and blood. So judicial a writer as Dr Döllinger, the eminent leader of the Old Catholic movement, says, in his lectures on the Reunion of Churches—"In France, the Jesuits were the conscience-keepers of the Bourbons; and their spiritual children, Louis XIV. and Louis XV., paved the way for the Revolution and the destruction of the dynasty, or rather, one may say, made it inevitable. For the deep decay of the country, the neglect of the greater part of the Nation, and the profligacy spreading from the Court impressed on the first acts of the Revolution the destructive character, which has, to this day, hindered the recovery of France. And here, too, we must say of the French Church, that it was the Jesuits who, during the time they ruled it by means of the Royal patronage, so devastated and demoralized it, that even in the 18th century it was powerless to cope with Voltaire-ism, and was already falling to pieces, before it was finally overthrown by the Revolution."

It was a sad thing for France, that she had not accepted John Calvin, rather than the "Patriarch of Verney," as her liberator from Papal tyranny. But, to do Voltaire justice, he was animated by an honest hatred of priestcraft with all its works, and meant to direct his *écrasez l'infâme* ("crush the infamous thing") not against religion, as he explained in a letter to d'Alembert of 23rd June 1760, but against superstition. He and his collaborateurs on the Encyclopedia

undoubtedly did much to arouse public sentiment in France against the travesty of religion presented in the dominant church of his day and country. Unhappily, as de Pressensé expresses it, "in seeking to stamp out reverence, he not only plucked up the parasitic plant of superstition, but in some sort removed the vegetable soil itself, in which the roots of moral and religious sentiment are embedded." It seems certain that the negations of Voltaire's school—which were a poor substitute for Bible faith as a foundation for even civil liberty—and the Rousseau influence on pastors in hiding at Geneva, infected the life of the Reformed Church itself during the more tolerant period of twenty years or so that preceded the Revolution. And it has to be sorrowfully noted, that after the destructive horrors of the Revolution were past, such a spirit of religious laxity and accommodation became apparent among the Protestants of France, as to justify the affirmation, that Voltaire had done more hurt to the Reformed Church than had been wrought by Robespierre and his wild crew.

During the Reign of Terror, as is well known, all public worship was suppressed, and the Goddess of Reason was exalted in Notre Dame. But in the reaction that ensued, the principles originally adopted by the National Assembly of June 1789, of "liberty of worship and the eligibility of non-Catholics to all civil and military offices," again came into favour. Then, when the socially colossal figure of "le petit Caporal" appeared in the arena, and public order was restored, practical account was taken by Napoleon of the elementary rights of Protestants as of other religionists.

The Concordat of 1802.

This brings us to the famous Concordat, arranged by Bonaparte as the first Consul of the Republic—for he was not made Emperor till 1804—with Pope Pius VII., and passed into law in April 1802. This agreement has been much discussed in France in recent months and years, and it may be useful to note down here its chief provisions. These have regulated religious France for over a century, and some knowledge of them is essential to the appreciation of present controversies. The Concordat was negotiated, on the one hand by Napoleon and the acute Talleyrand, and on the other by the Pope and his equally wide-awake minister, Consalvi. But it was in the main the creation of Napoleon, who, though himself but little imbued with the religious spirit, saw in religions "an indispensable instrument of government." Professing himself a friend of liberty of conscience, "whose indefinite empire begins where the empire of law ends," he frankly owned that "he

needed religion as a basis of society, and Protestantism as a check upon Popery." Hence, what Bonaparte set himself to do was, to control on the one hand the anti-ecclesiastical zeal of triumphant democracy, and to curb on the other the pretensions of the Roman See. And though the Concordat was, in the nature of the case, a compromise, it afforded at least a *modus vivendi*, which, among the many changes through which France has passed, has lasted from the day when it was signed to the present time. Liberty of public worship was expressly guaranteed under it, to Protestants as well as to Romanists; their buildings were secured to them; and provision was made in the National Budget, under a system of concurrent endowment, toward the maintenance of the Reformed Church pastors as well as of the Roman Catholic priesthood.

The Organic Articles.

It is of special importance to note the terms of the first Article of the Concordat, because out of these have arisen most of the subsequent disputations. It runs as follows—"The Catholic religion, Apostolic and Roman, shall be freely exercised in France, and its worship shall be public, in conforming itself to the regulations of police which the Government shall judge necessary for the public tranquillity." In the latter clause of this provision, Napoleon, to whom as first Consul the Concordat conceded "the same rights and prerogatives enjoyed before him by the ancient government," found a leverage for bringing subsequent restrictive pressure to bear on the Papacy. [He had already insisted on the retention by the State of confiscated church property; on the exclusion of the old titular bishops, who had been hostile to the Republic; on the right of nomination by Government of new prelates, to be consecrated by Rome; and on a rearrangement of dioceses.] And now, before the Concordat was actually published under the law of "the 18 Germinal, year X"—that is, on 7th April 1802—he had what were called Organic Articles prepared for publication along with it, which were ostensibly the mere development or fuller statement of what is pointed to in the latter part of the first Article of the Concordat itself, as "police regulations judged necessary by the Government for the public tranquillity."

The Organic Articles prohibited such things as these—the publishing, without Government authorization, of the bulls, briefs, and decretals of the Roman Curia; the holding of ecclesiastical assemblies; the exercise of worship by foreign priests, and of jurisdiction in the dioceses by any but the bishops and archbishops; the leaving of their dioceses by bishops, without permission from the civil authority; the

holding of processions or religious ceremonies outside the buildings set apart for worship; the assumption of other titles besides those of citizen or monsieur; the wearing of ecclesiastical robes other than black and of shape *à la française*. They also required—prayer to be offered for the Republic; only one liturgy and one catechism to be used throughout France; visitation of their dioceses by the bishops, partly every year and entirely within five years; the restriction of ecclesiastical establishments to seminaries for training of priests, each of which had to register the number of its pupils; the teaching in these of the four articles of the Declaration of 1682 on the liberties of the Gallican Church; Government approbation for the curés nominated by the bishops. The Pope, of course, kicked against these prohibitions and demands, and vehemently protested against their promulgation along with the Concordat, as though they, equally with it, had been accepted by Rome. But Napoleon was not a man to be trifled with, especially when he had the National Assembly at his back. And the Vatican, in view of the advantages to be secured under the Concordat, was fain in the circumstances to let the strife cease—resolving, however, as far as possible, to make the curtailments imposed by the Organic Articles a dead letter. A policy in which, throughout the past century, it has been largely successful.

Protestantism in first half of Nineteenth Century.

As regards the Reformed Church, it too had to pay a price for its privileges. Its ministers were, as a whole, gratified by the advantages conferred under the Concordat, and pleased to be ranked at the Emperor's coronation as state functionaries next in place to the Cardinals. But the constitution imposed by Napoleon denuded it also of proper internal church authority. The right of holding National Synods was refused; and, at the other end of the scale, what we should call the Kirk-session was abolished, in the several congregations. Arrangement was made, instead, for consistorial groups of 6000 souls each, to be governed by boards, the lay members of which were chosen by those citizens who stood high on the rating list. With respect to numbers, the strength, or weakness, of the Reformed Church about the beginning of the 19th century is indicated by the fact, that in 1807 its churches numbered 68, of which 2 were in Paris, and its pastors 171.

Napoleon, becoming hard pressed, abdicated, in 1814, in favour of the Duke of Reichstadt, his infant son by Maria Louisa, whom he named Napoleon II. But the latter was

not recognised by the Senate, and the Bourbon dynasty reappeared, in the person of Louis XVIII. He was succeeded, in 1824, by Charles X. (of Artois), who was followed, after the Revolution of 1830, by Louis Philippe (of Orleans). The Papacy knew how to obtain advantages for itself under the Legitimists; and, especially in the time of the weak and superstitious Charles, the Jesuits attained a remarkable ascendancy. The Liberalism of the country began, however, to assert itself against Papal intrigue. A certain measure of press freedom was secured, and M. Guizot succeeded, early in Louis Philippe's reign, in introducing an educational system with the endowment of 35,000 primary schools.

Under the Second Empire.

At length, however, the extravagances and corruptions and exactions of Louis Philippe's régime culminated in the Revolution of 1848, which made "the Citizen King" and his Queen thankful to escape to British shores, under the unassuming *nom de guerre* of "Mr and Mrs Smith." The Republic, then established, was ere long mastered by Louis Napoleon, who actually made his way to the Presidentship, and, after centring the government in his own person by the *coup d'état* of December 1851, succeeded in restoring the Empire a year later, in December 1852. Among Louis Napoleon's first acts were, to put primary instruction into the hands of the priests, and to curtail the liberty of the press. His Spanish consort, the Empress Eugénie, as is well known, was completely under priestly domination, and used all her influence in favour of Papal ideas. The material prosperity and military "glory" of the Second Empire reconciled the French people to their disabilities under it for a time. But again corruption and national enervation did their work. The policy of brilliant foreign exploits, intended to divert a restless people's attention from domestic evils, at length brought Napoleon III. to grief. The fatuous attempt to crush the rising power of Protestant Germany, through what Eugénie called "my war," led to the crash of 1870, under which, in the disaster of Sedan, a few weeks after the war began, the Second Empire went down.

Evangelical and Liberal Parties arise.

Meanwhile the Protestant cause in France had been making some headway, in spite of internal differences, which unhappily showed themselves early in last century, and became more and more crucial as time went on. When quiet was restored, after the return of the Bourbons, two conflicting tendencies became apparent within the Protestant

Church, which the religious revival that affected France as well as Britain in the first half of the century, inevitably brought into clearer light. There then arose an open struggle, which has not yet ceased, between the Right (or Evangelical) and the Left (or Liberal) section of the Church. The Evangelicals, who had been quickened to seek the spread of the Gospel abroad through the institution, in 1822, of "La Société des Missions Évangéliques chez les Peuples non-Chrétiens," earnestly aimed at two things—to uphold and propagate the faith of the Huguenot fathers, and to restore the mutilated organisation of the Church to its ancient completeness. The Liberals determinedly opposed them in both endeavours. They were as a party imbued with the spirit of 18th-century rationalism, which, professing to make much of ethics, made light of dogmas, and sought the elimination of the supernatural from religion; and they kicked against the restoration of the Synodic system, as well as of doctrinal tests, fearing through it an encroachment, in the way of Church discipline, on individual liberty.

The Free Church formed.

At the Revolution of 1848, the conflict within the Reformed Church reached a crisis. In that time of chaos, a General Assembly—named a "Synode Officieux," though without State sanction—was called together for mutual deliberation. A section of the Evangelicals pressed for a definite utterance by the Synod on such essentials as the divinity of our Lord. They failed to carry their motion against a combined Rationalist and Opportunist vote. In consequence, M. Frédéric Monod, the Comte de Gasparin, and others, withdrew from the Established Church, and formed the "Union des Eglises Évangéliques Libres de France," more shortly known as the Église Libre, or Free Church, which has since grown from 13 congregations to about three times as many.

Into the particulars of the subsequent struggle within the National Reformed Church, we need not enter here. Pastoral conferences continued to be held, and by 1864, in one of these convened in Paris, the Evangelicals by 141 to 23 carried a resolution declaring unswerving loyalty to the hereditary faith of the Church, and also the Church's right to require adhesion to that faith from all its ministers—a resolution which was also adopted, later in the same year, at Nîmes, by 170 pastors and lay delegates from the churches in the south. The Liberals on the other hand, in their "Conférences," passed resolutions directed against what they counted narrowness in Church beliefs and ecclesiastical relations, going so far on one occasion as to declare, that "faith in the

supernatural agency of God in the universe is in no wise necessary to the development of religious life." The need of an *authoritative* National Synod or General Assembly was made every year more evident. But this was never conceded under the Empire. It was not until the Third Republic had been set up, under M. Thiers as its first President, that a General Synod, with Government authorization, met for the first time since 1659—on 2nd June 1872.

CHAPTER III

PROTESTANTISM UNDER THE THIRD REPUBLIC (1870-1905)

AS one of their own historians, Lamartine, has freely acknowledged, one of the failings of the French people has been their fickleness. This feature of the national character had abundant illustration in the first three-quarters of the 19th century; and when the Republic was set up in 1870 there were few onlookers prepared to prophesy for it a long life. But the Third Republic, tested now for 35 years, has apparently come to stay, and the great French nation, which so unhappily missed its way, or rather was hustled from the right path, in Reformation times, has greatly added, during this often stormy period, to its reputation for stability. The restless striving after "liberté" on the part of a really noble people, in face of a despotism which has cloaked itself under the guise of religion, has, meanwhile, been maintained and largely rewarded. One of the great dangers of the time—against which the principles of genuine Christianity are the proper safeguard—has been, and is, lest liberty should turn to licence, and provoke a reaction that might bring the dethroned despotism back to life again.

On 4th September 1870, two days after Sedan, a provisional Republican Government was set up in Paris. In February 1871, a National Assembly, one of whose main objects was to arrange for peace, was held at Bordeaux, and formally appointed M. Thiers first President of the Third Republic. He resigned in 1873, and was succeeded by Marshal MacMahon. In course of the Septennate during which this ruler, not conspicuously successful either as soldier or as statesman, held the reins of government, there were strong reactionary influences at work, and particularly in 1877 there were fears of a *coup d'état* for the restoration of the Empire. But the Republican sentiment of France, even in the army, proved too genuine and strong to give such an attempt the promise of success, and with the appointment of M. Grévy as President, in 1879, the acuteness of the danger passed. There have undoubtedly been intrigues since then, both Bonapartist and Legitimist, with Clericalism ever ready as an ally. At this hour, especially in Paris, reactionary forces of no despicable strength are at work. But Paris is not now, so much as

it once was, a synonym for France. The provinces have ceased to receive, obediently, "revolutions by mail" from the capital. The peasantry and the dwellers in smaller towns have come to know and appreciate their powers; and—though past experience of France should make one slow to prophesy—there is every reason to believe that the Republic is secure in the loyalty of at least three-fourths of the population.

Roman Catholic attitude to the Republic.

The leaders of the Roman Catholic Church in France have had growing reason to bemoan, that their lot has fallen on evil days. They have been drifting further and further apart from the Government, although, through sheer pressure of public opinion, they have been brought, under a concession wrung from the late diplomatic Pope Leo XIII., to yield an ostensible adherence to the Republic. Within the Church, as we shall see later, they have had to reckon with a serious leakage even from the ranks of the priesthood, and have completely lost all hold religiously of immense masses of the people. It is too obvious to be plausibly contradicted, that on the whole the clerical battle for the doctrine of the Syllabus and for the maintenance of Ultramontane ("beyond the mountains") interests, as against the hostile trend of the hated "modern civilisation," has been for these many years in France a losing game.

Protestantism in growing favour.

The Reformed Church, on the other hand, has been gradually gaining ground. The cause it stands for, though long misunderstood and mishandled in France, has been all along the cause of civil and religious liberty; and, in face of bitter opposition and base calumny on the part of the Roman hierarchy and its agents, the Protestant community has been steadily rising in the popular estimate, with a truer appreciation among the population generally of its character and aims. Outstanding members of successive Republican Governments, and influential public leaders, such as Jules Favre, Paul Casimir-Perier, Eugène Pelletan, Paul Bouchard, Turquot Malezieux, Frédéric Passy, have been avowed Protestants, among many others that might be named. In one of the early Cabinets, out of ten Secretaries of State five were Protestants, one was a Jew, three were Catholic Free-thinkers, and one "a Catholic supposed to go to mass." Well-known members of the professions, including that of journalism, have been Protestants. Philanthropic movements have been headed or largely promoted by Protestant brains and money. And even the evangelistic efforts of the Pro-

testant Churches, supported by the commendatory evidence of characters and lives permeated by the spirit of the Gospel, have disarmed opposition in unexpected quarters, and are finding a welcome at this hour, in rural districts as well as in the towns, such as would have been deemed all but impossible some forty years ago. Protestants are no longer scoffed at and persecuted, as suspected foreigners ("Anglais"), or their religion regarded as an importation. It is recognised that they can be as good Frenchmen as any, and that their faith is not a new and outlandish heresy, but a faith by which many of the fathers nobly lived, and for which not a few of them cheerfully died in France centuries ago.

This is not to say that everything has gone smoothly with the Reformed Church, since the inception of the Third Republic. It has had its difficulties to contend with, both without and within.

Protestant Difficulties from without.

As regards difficulties from without, there have been governmental limitations to reckon with. Though the right of holding a National Synod was conceded by M. Thiers in 1872, the requisite Government authorization for convening another was afterwards withheld, and other restrictions have been put on evangelical freedom. Thus we find M. Decoppet affirming before the first Pan-Presbyterian Council, held in Edinburgh in 1877, that "the freest man in France then was Mr M'All," who had been allowed to open 21 meetings in Paris, and to whom the chief of police had said, "Go on with your meetings, Mr M'All, for wherever they are held my policemen have less work to do." Nevertheless M. Decoppet has also to say—"The development of our Church is not very rapid, because we do not enjoy in France religious liberty. We are not allowed by the law to give a tract in the street, or to deliver any lecture, without a special permission, which is not now easily obtained." But, after the MacMahon régime was over, religious freedom was more and more fully gained, till now the whole of France, so far as Government interference is concerned, may be said to be open to the spread of the Gospel. Both the Reformed Church (the Église Réformée, established by law) and the Église Libre (whose origin in 1848 is noted in the preceding chapter), have made use of their opportunities. So have the Lutheran Church (Église Évangélique de la Confession d'Augsbourg), the Methodists, the Baptists, and the Independents. Of these, the Lutheran Church is the most considerable in point of size. Though it lost heavily in France through the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine by Germany, it numbers upwards

of 100 pastors and congregations still on French soil, and, like the other Protestant communions, greater and smaller, takes an active share in mission work.

Some Recent Protestant Statistics.

The following statistics, taken from the report of the Pan-Presbyterian Council held at Liverpool in 1904, will indicate the relative size of the Église Réformée and the Église Libre:—

	<i>Congregations.</i>	<i>Ministers.</i>	<i>Elders.</i>	<i>Communicants.</i>	<i>Sab. Schls.</i>	<i>Teachers.</i>	<i>Scholars.</i>
E.R.	533	638	3,000	86,000	600	2,000	10,000
E.L.	37	60	150	4,500	88	350	2,870

It should be noted, however, that congregations (as distinguished from parishes), if we include under that name communities of the faithful with auxiliary pastors or evangelists over them, are much more numerous than the above table would imply, and that fresh ground is being broken in districts where much good is being done, though they may not supply figures as yet for such a list. I find that in the "Agenda Annuaire Protestant" for 1904 (published at the Librairie Fischbacher, Paris), the Église Réformée and its Société Centrale are credited with having 860 places of worship (Temples and Oratoires), the Lutheran Church 80, the Église Libre 42, the Methodist Church 28, the Baptist Church 21, the Société Évangélique 26. These make together 1067 permanent places of worship, besides those of the Independent Churches, the Halls of the M'All Mission, and many smaller centres for religious service pertaining to the village "annexes" of congregations in outlying districts.

Internal trouble has arisen chiefly from the prevalence of rationalistic opinion in certain Protestant circles, and of an accompanying individualism in action which has broken in on Church unity and hindered harmonious and effective co-operation. Speaking generally, it may be affirmed of the Église Libre, pastors and congregations, that they are evangelical in belief and evangelistic in spirit. The same is true of the majority in the Église Réformée. But by no means of all. The old conflict between the Evangelical and Liberal parties, which broke out early in the 19th century within the State Church, cannot be said to have ended yet; though, when all is said about the taint of rationalism and so-called Christian Deism within the Reformed Church, it remains to be told, that it has never since the time of Napoleon's Concordat shown so much religious life as under the Third Republic.

Two Evidences of Protestant Vitality.

The vitality of French Protestantism during the last 35 years has revealed itself conspicuously in two ways—in internal conflict, and in wide-extending effort for the spread of Christ's kingdom.

The National Synod of 1872.

Conflict broke out at the meeting of the General Synod already referred to, which was convened in the Temple du Saint Esprit at Paris, from 2nd June to 10th July 1872. This, the 30th meeting of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in France, marked an epoch in the Church's history. There had been eight "Desert Synods" held between 1726 and 1763, as we have already seen; but the last National Synod *authorized by the State* was the one held at Loudon (Anjou) in Louis XIV.'s time, in 1659, and forcibly dissolved by that imperious King. The thread of Synodical history was thus taken up in 1872, after an interval of about 213 years, and the Synod set itself to frame a programme of organic legislation. There were 108 delegates in all (49 ministers and 59 laymen), of whom 62 turned out to be Evangelicals and 46 Liberals. Divergency of view emerged on three main points. As regards *Doctrine*, the Evangelicals held firmly by the two cardinal principles of the Reformation—the authority of Scripture, and justification by faith alone; the Liberals fought for unrestricted liberty of belief and teaching. In *Church government*, the Evangelicals sought the re-institution of what we should call a regular Presbyterian system, culminating in the General Synod; the Liberals wished practical independency, or would at least have denied to Church courts juridical powers in matters of doctrine. On *the relations of Church and State*, the Evangelicals stood for Church autonomy, and were jealous of State interference; the Liberals were Erastian enough to prefer State to Church control.

The leading debate took place over the motion by Prof. Charles Bois of Montauban for the adoption of a brief declaration of faith, which bears, that "The Reformed Church of France, on resuming her Synodical action . . . declares, through the organ of her representatives, that she remains faithful to the principles of faith and freedom on which she was founded. With her fathers and martyrs in the Confession of Rochelle, and with all the Churches of the Reformation in their respective creeds, she proclaims the sovereign authority of the Holy Scriptures in matters of faith, and salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of

God, who, died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification. She preserves and maintains, as the basis of her teaching, of her worship, and of her discipline, the grand Christian facts represented in her religious solemnities and set forth in her liturgies, especially in the Confession of Sins, the Apostles' Creed, and in the order for the administration of the Holy Supper." When the vote was taken, two members were absent; but 61 voted for, and 45 against, the adoption of this brief, scriptural confession. In the majority, along with Bois, Babut, Breton, Dhombres and others, was the eminent and venerable M. Guizot, affirming, as his last public act, his adherence to the faith of his ancestors. Among the minority were Colani, Pécaut, Rivet, and the Coquerels, who protested against the adoption of any creed, and especially to its application as a test, but announced their determination to hold their place in the National Reformed Church, and to ignore the Synod's action.

Evangelical and Liberal Conflict.

In November 1873, the Council of State affirmed the legality of the General Synod and the inutility of the minority's protest; and in February 1874, the publication of the Synod's Declaration of Faith was authorized by decree of the President of the Republic. No Government pronouncement was made, however, on the Synod's right to require adherence to the Confession from future candidates for the ministry, and to allow only those in a parish to take part in the election of ministers, who affirm hearty adherence to the Reformed Church of France and to the truths of revelation as contained in the Old and New Testaments. The division within the Church has continued; and State sanction has not been granted for the calling of another General Synod, which might deal authoritatively with the matters in dispute. M. Grévy, when appealed to in 1880, courteously declined to summon a Synod, unless both sections of the Church requested it—which, for obvious reasons, the Liberals, on their part, refused to do. Thus the two sections have continued to meet separately: the Evangelicals in unofficial Synod ("Synode Général Officieux," as it is called, though not "*Officiel*"), to which 19 out of 21 Provincial Synods have sent representatives, and the Liberals in "Conferences" of their "Délégation Libérale." A united conference was arranged at Lyons, where a joint-committee (La Commission Fraternelle) was appointed, that might approach Government on matters of common interest; but not much that is practical has come out of it.

The Liberal Party, as such, has certainly not grown, as the years have passed. It has secured some favours from those in power, as for instance in the electoral subdivision of Paris in 1882, which was so contrived as to give a small Liberal majority in one of the parishes, that of the Oratoire. But the party, on the whole, has tended to diminish in numbers, if not in tenacity, some of its leaders having found themselves more at home in politics, at the bar, or in trade, than in the rather heartless task of fighting for "a Christianity without the supernatural." The Evangelical Party, on the other hand, in which there are various shadings, from the moderately to the uncompromisingly orthodox, has gone on increasing, and certainly includes within it the main elements in the National Reformed Church that make for the religious regeneration of France. Of the Theological Faculties, of which, besides preparatory theological schools at Batignolles, in Paris, and at Tournon, there are two (viz. at Montauban and at Paris), it is said that the Faculty of Montauban is the more evangelically orthodox in its teaching.

Aggressive Gospel Work.

The long-continued and distressing feud within the National Reformed Church has certainly not tended to attract to Protestantism Roman Catholic outsiders who were cognizant of it. But struggle in such a case, and success in the battle for evangelicalism, is at least indicative of life. And happily there is other and more pleasing evidence of the spiritual vitality characteristic of the larger section of the Église Réformée—that, namely, which is seen in the aggressive Gospel work so vigorously and hopefully carried on in different parts of France. No doubt the influence of rationalism within the borders of the Established Church, which its most earnest members mourn, has clogged to some extent its missionary zeal. The cramping influence of an Erastian alliance with the State, as some of them recognize, has also had a good deal to answer for in the restraint of evangelistic effort. Easy-going pastors, content to regard themselves as state functionaries, have sometimes found in this an excuse for not trenching on the domain of the Roman Catholic curés, who are state functionaries as well: and there can be little doubt that dependence on State aid, as many of the evangelical ministers will acknowledge, has tended to check religious liberality and to restrain evangelistic zeal. Still, in the Église Réformée, as in the other branches of the Protestant Church in France, there has shown itself a genuine missionary spirit, which has found effective

expression, largely through various influential Gospel Societies, of which we shall now speak.

The Société Centrale.

The *Société Centrale Protestante d'Évangélisation* is the largest of the religiously aggressive Societies at work in France. It was founded in 1847, and is carried on under a board of directors belonging exclusively to the Église Réformée. Its head office, at 53B Rue St Lazare, Paris, is presided over by Pastor Boissonas, with Pastor Charles Merle d'Aubigné as auxiliary agent. The aim of the Society has been the reorganization of Protestantism in parts of France where the Reformed Church had fallen into desuetude; and from the first it has had encouraging results, both in the grouping together of scattered Protestants and in the winning of converts from Popery and indifferentism. Its basis of doctrine, to which every agent has to subscribe, is, it need hardly be said, distinctly evangelical. The whole of France has been mapped out into 15 sections, each with its own committee; and the local committees are under the direction of the Central Committee in Paris. The Society is doing work in 71 of the 86 Departments of France; and there is a sixteenth section for work in the Colonies—Algeria, Tunis, Indo-China, and New Caledonia. Under a rule that was in active operation till 1878, whenever congregations of 300 souls or more were gathered, they were adopted and subsidized by the State as regular charges. By that year, 42 congregations had in this way been added to the Église Réformée. But, with more economical handling of the Worship Budget, very few congregations have been thus "adopted" since then. The Society has work going on at present in 180 centres, under nearly 100 pastors, assisted by a body of evangelists who are placed under the brotherly supervision of neighbouring ministers. It maintains, as auxiliary to the preparatory Schools of Theology already mentioned, the École Felix Neff, for the training of evangelists, at Montpellier in Southern France. It has also an itinerating mission, and a postal mission, which distributes weekly nearly 5000 copies of the *Messenger du Dimanche*. The Society's annual money outlay is now about £20,000 a year.

The Société Évangélique.

The *Société Évangélique de France*, long associated with the names of Pressensé, Bersier, and Fisch, is the doyenne in respect of age, having been founded by M. Victor (father of Edmond) de Pressensé, and others, in 1833. It has for its one end the propagation of the Gospel in France, on the prin-

ciple, "Vous qui êtes sauvés, sauvez vos frères." It holds by the Evangelical Alliance basis, and does not work for any particular denomination. On its central board, at 20 Rue Jacob, Paris, there are members of the Église Libre and the Lutheran Church, as well as of the Église Réformée—to which last the present acting Director, Pastor Émile Bertrand (who has Pastor Cremer with him as Secretary), happens to belong. Its annual expenditure is about £6000. When congregations become self-supporting, they are free to join whatever Protestant denomination they may prefer. The Society has added at least 24 congregations to the Église Réformée, 9 to the Free Church, 2 to the Methodist, and 1 to the Lutheran. It has 35 agents, 23 regular stations, 68 annexes; has founded about 80 schools; and comes into touch, in the course of a year, with about 350 towns and villages. Its stations are in 10 Departments, including districts so far apart as Charente, Nièvre, and Yonne; but its most progressive work at present is among the rural and Highland population in the centre of France—Creuse, Haute-Vienne, Corrèze, and Cantal. In this region its labours are a distinct supplement to those of the Société Centrale, which has no workers there. It may be said that, through one or other of these two Societies (attempts to unite which have not yet succeeded), the Gospel has had an entrance into almost every part of France; excepting a few Departments, as in Brittany, which are too Popish readily to admit them, and a few others, which are perhaps too Protestant to have urgent need of their services. Both the Free Church and the Lutheran Church, it should be noted, have special mission work besides what they do in connection with the Evangelical Society.

The Mission Intérieure.

The *Mission Intérieure Évangélique* began just after the war, in 1871. Its object is to stimulate the zeal of Christ's disciples in all the churches, as witnesses and ambassadors for Him among their fellow-countrymen. The Central Committee is located at Marseilles, under the presidency of Pastor Houter, 27 Rue Pierre-Dupré. It employs only two regular itinerating agents, MM. Roux and Chapal, but has organised 150 "groupes" of voluntary Christian workers in different regions of France, who do what they can, by visits, meetings, classes, and the spread of tracts and other literature, to help on the Gospel cause. It is said to be the only Society which does not collect, but exists by the spontaneous offerings of the friends of evangelisation. M. Réveillaud and Dr de Pressensé were, in its early days, notable helpers of this mission; and it was under its auspices that our own venerable

world-gospeller, the late Dr Alexander Somerville, made one of his evangelistic journeys in Brittany, as well as to Lyons, Nîmes, and Marseilles. The Mission Intérieure took the initiative some years ago in the forming of a Federation, under which 11 evangelistic agencies in France are affiliated, for mutual encouragement and well-distributed effort. It was proposed that M. Houter should devote himself for a year to special work in this connection, in different parts of the country; but the Église Réformée, of which he is a valued pastor, had difficulty in sparing him so long from his important sphere in Marseilles, and it came out that the Director of Public Worship would not, except on the score of enfeebled health, have permitted him, as a State-paid pastor, so protracted an absence from his parish.

The M'All Mission.

The *Mission Populaire Évangélique de France*—better known in our country as “The M'All Mission”—was begun by the Rev. R. W. M'All, with meetings among the working men of Paris, in 1872. Since the lamented death of this eminent evangelist, the savour of whose name will linger long in France, the work has been carried on with characteristic devotion and energy by the Rev. Charles E. Greig, and a representative committee, on which the name of M. le Député Eugène Réveillaud, an early agent of the Society, still stands, along with those of such well-known helpers as Prof. Monnier and Pastor Henri Merle d'Aubigné. Though the work is largely under English direction still, most of the agents are now French—many of them, both men and women, being early fruits of the Mission, which has scattered its workers besides, as pastors, pastors' wives, and missionaries, to many different parts of the world. Large attention is given to the town populations of France; and there are now Salles de Réunion not only (to the number of 14) in Paris and neighbourhood, but also in other 33 populous centres, from Lille to Marseilles and from Nantes to St Etienne. More than 80 meetings are held in Paris and its environs every week. Some are indifferently attended; but others, such as those in the Rue de Rivoli and the Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle, have been crowded, I am assured, by changing audiences nightly for many years. One thoroughly acquainted with the work writes to me—“It seems a pity, but it cannot be helped, that the actual number of halls is, chiefly from want of funds, smaller than 20 years ago. But it is recognized as in the providential order that, when a hall has done its work of pioneering, and there are French pastors able and willing to take the work over, they should

do so, and that the Mission itself should go to new places where Christ has not been preached."

The two missionary boats (*salles flottantes*) of the M'All Mission—the *Bon Messager* and the *Bonne Nouvelle*—have been of unique service in rural districts approachable by water. They have lent themselves admirably to the holding of meetings, the distribution of literature, the teaching of classes, the button-holing of individuals in out-of-the-way places. The first has of late been on the Marne, in the neighbourhood of Trilport, and the latter on the Canal du Loing, about Nemours. It is pleasant to set in contrast these Gospel boats and their message of joy and peace with the dreary galleys, on which so many of the prisoners of the Lord, like our own John Knox, were chained to their oars and condemned to ply their fruitless labours on the rivers of France, in Reformation days. A specially interesting branch of the M'All work is that carried on among the young, in Sunday and week-day schools, and in children's meetings. But details of the service done, in town and country, through this pioneer mission would themselves fill a volume, and some of them are already, happily, familiar from the annual reports sent to British auxiliaries. It is very pleasing to find how the *Cantiques Populaires* have found their way into all sorts of corners in France, where they are helping to vehicle to heaven the praises of ransomed souls and thankful hearts.

Other Evangelising Agencies.

Other Gospel agencies and branches of effort are deserving of longer mention than we can give them. There is, for instance, the *Société Évangélique de Genève*, which was founded in 1831, and is thus the oldest existing society of the kind in French-speaking countries. It does large service annually in France, through about 80 colporteurs, under the direction of Pastor Dardier of Geneva. Besides founding a considerable number of stations, which have afterwards been put under the care of the French churches, this institution, which centres in the Geneva Oratoire, has contributed a number of pastors to France from its School of Theology. Earlier than it, however, came the *Société Biblique Protestante de Paris* (1818), which, with the younger *Société Biblique de France* (1864) is doing good work, in which it is powerfully abetted by the British and Foreign Bible Society. The latter sells annually in France as many as 190,000 volumes, half of which are disposed of through from 60 to 70 colporteurs. The National Bible Society of Scotland gives important help also, through its itinerating agents. It is a gladdening thing to know, that the French Protestant press sends forth, itself, no fewer than

93 religious journals of a healthy character, and that quite a number of minor societies, religious and philanthropic, are contributing their quota to the moral uplifting of the nation.

In closing this chapter, we must not omit to speak of the Paris Foreign Missionary Society (*Société des Missions Évangéliques, chez les Peuples non Chrétiens*, établie à Paris, 1822). Its efforts extend to Basutoland, Senegal, Zambesia, French Congo, Oceania, and Madagascar, with an annual home contribution to the work of from £25,000 to £30,000. The Basuto Mission, which is the oldest, employs 25 ordained missionaries (17 European and 8 native) and 154 native licentiates. It numbers 14,168 communicants. In Oceania, there are 40 ordained missionaries, 5 of whom are European. The cause of the Gospel in Madagascar, which was sorely threatened by the Jesuits, has been taken up by French Protestants, in recent years, with noteworthy zeal and generosity. There are now 13 European ordained missionaries there, and 65 native licentiates, with nearly 30,000 young people under school instruction. And it has been found, in France as elsewhere, that an outlay of means and effort for the Kingdom of Christ abroad, so far from implying a hurtful drain on Church resources, has reacted with beneficial effect on the kindred work at home.

CHAPTER IV

THE POLITICAL MOVEMENT AWAY FROM ROME

FOR many a long generation, Roman Catholicism has proved itself to be essentially a political, no less than a religious, system. The fundamental dogma of the Papacy—that the Pope is Peter's successor, and that Peter was Vicar of Christ—logically involves the claim that the Pope is universal sovereign, in things temporal as well as spiritual. This claim has been couched in different forms, the direct and the indirect, but it has never been relinquished. It is as persistently asserted to-day as ever it was. Though the Pope was shorn of the temporal *sovereignty* in 1870, over the petty Italian States, Rome's greater claim to the temporal *power*, which she professes to value and to use only for spiritual ends, has never been, and never can be, given up. And France, like other countries, has learned this to her cost.

In the Reformation age, France shared with Spain the distinction of being "butcher and banker to the Pope." She has long ceased to be his butcher—if we put out of sight the wars which, even in more modern times, she has waged at Papal instigation. But as banker to Rome she has continued voluntarily to contribute more to the Papal treasury than all other countries put together. It is significant, however, that in this rôle, too, she has latterly shown signs of weariness. "Peter's pence" have sadly diminished since the Third Republic became conscious of Rome's disfavour, and the time is apparently imminent when the direct State subvention to the Papacy in France will cease.

Political Romanism astir in 1904.

It was certainly Romanism as a policy, rather than as a religion, that was exercising men's minds in France, when I was there last autumn. The country was full of unrest over the conflict with the Curia. The eldest daughter of the Church was proving herself a damsel of stirring disposition, and, from the Papal point of view, of painfully independent mind. The national sentiment of "Liberté" was at open war with the aggressive power from beyond the Alps, which sought to make French interests subservient to the wishes of an Italian priest and his Jesuit servants,—or masters,—and presumed to

treat M. Loubet as a mere secular subordinate of the Pope in Catholic Gaul. It was being felt that ultramontane absolutism and a free Republic were incompatible with one another; and as France had been freed from monarchy in its latest form in 1870, her sons were setting themselves for freedom from the other despotism, which, though wearing a religious name, had not been able to hide its crafty efforts—in the family, the school, the polling booth—through the pulpit, the press, the confessional—in public offices, courts of justice, the army—to capture and control the national life and policy.

The hostility of all the reactionaries had itself provoked a strong reaction among the loyal supporters of the Republic. Many were loudly applauding the assertion of M. Combes in the Chamber—"You must decide between the road to Canossa, upon which I will not accompany you, and the road to separation, which my colleagues and myself have chosen, since the old tie has degraded religion, and degraded and imperilled society and the State." The mass of Frenchmen were more and more manifestly siding with the opinion and policy announced by M. Yves Guyot in the *Siècle* some years ago—"France must be uncatholicized." Many of them were cherishing the hope of seeing the fulfilment of the ideal suggested by Montalembert to Cavour, of "a free Church in a free State," or were at least determined to do what in them lay to secure for France what Crispi sighed for in Italy—"a National Church in whose bosom Patriotism and God could agree."

Three Storm Centres.

The popular agitation centred round three subjects. One of these was (1) *the disbanding of the Religious "Congregations"*; another (2) *the diplomatic rupture with the Holy See*; and the third (3) *the suggested propriety of putting an end altogether to the Concordat, and going in for a complete separation between Church and State.* Let us look at these three topics in their turn.

The Disbanding of the Religious Orders.

(1) *The Religious Orders in France* have frequently made themselves so obnoxious to the Government as to call for special measures of repressive legislation. In this respect, of course, France has not been singular. So hateful, even in Popish countries, did the Jesuits, for instance, become through their mischievous machinations all over Europe, that Pope Ganganelli (Clement XIV.) had to suppress the Order, in 1773, extirpating and abolishing, "for ever and to all eter-

nity," its offices, houses, and institutions. These political plotters, however, notwithstanding the perpetual ban of this infallible Pontiff, were reinstated in 1814, and continued to conduct themselves on the familiar principles which have required them to be expelled no fewer than 70 times by European Governments. Even Napoleon III. had to put limits on the exercise of their baneful activities: and what the great Napoleon thought of the Religious Orders generally, whose policy the Jesuits animated even while they themselves were disbanded, appears in a letter of date 12th September 1809—republished not long ago in the Socialist journal *L'Humanité*—in which he emphatically says to his Minister of Public Worship—"I do not intend to have missionaries pretending to be wandering preachers overrunning the Empire. . . . I hold you responsible if, by October 1st, there are still missionaries and religious orders in France."

No strange thing, therefore, has happened to France, in that the Republic has found it necessary to curb the aggressions of the Religious Orders.¹ Already during the MacMahon septennate, these were threatening the very existence of the Republic; and though the immediate danger of a *coup d'état* was warded off, they continued to press their noxious policy during the Duke of Broglie's ministry, in the domain of education and otherwise, by schemes which Gambetta and others like minded required all their wit and influence to countervail. Indeed, after Gambetta's time the numbers and wealth and power of the Orders continued to grow, until they became again a positive menace to national peace and stable government. Toward the end of the 19th century, they had at command milliards of property and hundreds of thousands of workers ready to support, without much scruple as to method, every assault on the Republic.

The Assumptionists: and others.

Clerical complicity was made painfully evident in connection with the miserable plottings and ugly subterfuges of the "affaire Dreyfus," which excited the French people almost to the point of civil war in 1899; and in the year 1900, proceedings had to be taken against the Assumptionists, a modern confraternity founded at Nîmes only some 40 years ago, who were outbidding even the Jesuits and the Dominicans in their daring and venomous hostility to the governing power in France. This wild and unscrupulous brotherhood, of which the notorious *La Croix* was the press organ, though acting under the cloak of religion, was essentially a political organisation, working for revolutionary ends, in the pursuit of which,

¹ See note in Appendix, p. 103.

according to the *London Times*, it owned "no restraints of patriotism, of morality, or of religion."

The suppression of the Assumptionists led to the adoption of wide-embracing measures soon after by the French Government, for the better control of monastic establishments generally. Apart from questions of political *motif* and intrigue, some of these Orders were highly objectionable on other grounds, material and moral. In 2500 cases, as M. Clemenceau brought out, they were nothing more nor less than huge trading organisations, battenning on France for the enrichment and strengthening of ecclesiasticism. Some of them had accumulated enormous fortunes through the manufacture and sale, wholesale and retail, of wines and liqueurs. In others, a highly lucrative traffic in lace and embroidery and the like was driven, within closely sealed convents, under a sweating system which reduced the workers practically to the position of immured and unpaid serfs, and subjected them, at the will of their governors, to the most tragic abuses. It came out, for instance, in connection with one Order—that of the Good Shepherd—that it held no fewer than 211 establishments, supervised by 7000 nuns and served by 48,000 women, bringing an annual income, from the unpaid labour of the *pensionnaires*, of not less than £600,000.¹

The Associations Bill of 1901.

With such facts before it, the Chamber of Deputies, in 1901, adopted what was called the Associations Bill, requiring all associations to be registered and to publish their constitution and rules of procedure, and putting limits on their property in real estate. A stiff fight was offered on behalf of the Orders; but such was the hostility they had provoked by their political activities, their trampling on individual rights, and their grasping and unfair trade competition, that the Bill was carried by 303 votes to 224. The Senate or Upper House also passed it, with a softening clause making a certain provision for impecunious members of dissolved Orders: and the Act was promulgated as Statute law in July of the same year. The immediate effect of this measure was very significant. Of the 16,468² monastic or conventual institutions in France, 8800 applied, just before the expiry of the time limit, for authorization. Most of these, being regarded as genuinely religious establishments, were authorized. The remaining 7668 were dissolved. Certain of the trading organisations, such as that of La Chartreuse, were transferred bodily to foreign countries. In some cases, the members of

¹ See *Our Latest Invasion*, by David Williamson (Religious Tract Society), for many interesting particulars on this whole subject.

² See note in Appendix, p. 103.

the dissolved Orders found their way to the shores of England and of America, there to set up new houses, or to strengthen those already established—very different immigrants, as Mr R. W. Perks, M.P., some time ago pointed out, from the Huguenot refugees welcomed by our forefathers. In other cases, they simply scattered themselves over France, where they were allowed to remain as individuals, and to serve the Church, if they chose, in other ways than as members of the unlawful confraternities.

Regulars and Seculars.

It should be observed that while there are, or were, about 90,000 male "religious" altogether in France, these are divided, in pretty equal proportions, into regular and secular clergy.¹ The "regulars" are those living within monastic and conventual walls under rule ("regula") as confraternities and friaries. The "seculars" are the members of the priesthood, in its several grades, who as curés, bishops, and so forth, do the Church's work out in the world ("seculum"). Now the legislation just referred to, with kindred measures following upon it, bore not on the secular but on the regular or monastic clergy—Dominicans, Franciscans, Benedictines, Carthusians, Assumptionists, Redemptorists, Carmelites, and the rest. It was these who, not being recognized or remunerated by the State, took liberties on which the State-paid and controlled clergy did not venture. They indeed contemned both Episcopal and State jurisdiction, seeking to be a law unto themselves for the Vatican's sake; and they went so far that, as in the case of Lochnaw's men and the enemy, there were only two alternatives—either they would "ding" the Government, or the Government would have to "ding" them. No doubt the disbanding laws have occasioned in their operation instances of individual hardship, which, especially in the case of the women's associations, have provoked not a little local sympathy. But gallantry cannot, after all, be allowed to override the dictates of self-preserving patriotism. As M. Yves Guyot expresses it—"The religious Orders are a State within a State, and capable of undermining the most solid edifice raised by a most united people."

"Les Deux Coquins."

I found, in autumn last, that the two names chiefly associated in the French mind—whether for honour or for opprobrium—with the Associations Bill and the line of action it initiated, were those of Waldeck Rousseau and Combes. The former statesman had just died, in the course

¹ See note in Appendix, p. 103.

of the summer, and a curious attempt was being made by some of the clerical papers to claim him as having been a penitent before the end, and to set his name in opposition to the more heartily execrated name of Combes. A circumstantial story was being given out, to the effect that Waldeck Rousseau had at the last sought reconciliation with the Church, and called in a priest to administer the last Sacrament to him before he died. This was, however, emphatically contradicted by a friend of his who was present, and who expressly declared that no priest was called, and that by the time an unsought priest arrived Waldeck Rousseau had breathed his last. This friend, therefore, maintained, that if the Sacrament was administered at all it was administered, as the phrase goes, "*sous condition*"—on condition, that is to say, that life was not extinct. As for M. Combes, he said of his predecessor, "He belongs to us even after his death, notwithstanding the efforts of the Church to monopolize him." It is, indeed, likely enough that the policy of Combes was a more drastic one latterly than Waldeck Rousseau was quite prepared for, though Combes has always maintained that it was only the logical and necessary following up of the other's interrupted work. But I noticed that in *L'Autorité* both statesmen came in for very impartial abuse from the pen of the passionate Imperialist, since dead, Paul de Cassagnac. In a furious article, entitled "Les Deux Coquins" (The Two Rascals), he fell foul of Waldeck Rousseau, as "a great malefactor," who had "stirred up the most ignoble passions, and let loose the most infamous appetites, in offering the milliard congregations as a prey to the sectarian canaille"—his crowning offence, however, being the nomination as his successor of Combes, "a carnivorous corpse-lifter, a veritable hyena, a mean-spirited, unscrupulous, cynical wretch"!

Certain it is that M. Combes, who has an inside knowledge of the Orders, having been in his youth a seminarist with the Assumptionists at Nîmes (wherefore, though he was never ordained, he is scoffed at by clericals as "the renegade" and "le petit Père"), has pursued unflinchingly the policy initiated by the passing of the Associations Bill. It has been found desirable, since 1901, to dissolve many of the registered houses, as well as the unauthorized, and to make provision for their total abolition within 10 years: and edicts to this effect have been unhesitatingly issued, including, as I found, the dispersion of the Sulpicians in July 1904.

English and Italian Analogies.

It may be here recalled that in England also, in the days when the nation was awake on the subject, there were two

Acts of Dissolution passed, as recorded by Froude, in 1537 and 1539. By the first, provision was made for putting an end to "the carnal and abominable living daily used and committed among the small abbeys, priories, and other religious houses of monks, canons, and nuns," and for "converting to better uses the possessions of said spiritual houses." By the second, which swept away the larger monasteries and nunneries, the axe was laid more thoroughly to the root of the evil tree, and the whole monastic system abolished. In Italy, too, by 1901, the Government had completely suppressed 45,337 religious corporations, and had nearly 20,000 others on the way to extinction. Their yearly income had been about $2\frac{1}{2}$ millions sterling, and yet they had paid no taxes. Well may Dr A. Robertson, after bringing out these facts in his "Roman Catholic Church in Italy," exclaim—"No wonder that Italy was poor, with these tens of thousands of vampires sucking her life's blood!"

In resisting the attempts of the bishops to favour the monastics even at the expense of the common priesthood, M. Combes took his stand on the Concordat, and stoutly declared—"We will defend the 40,000 secular priests. Whether you like it or not, we are the successors of the Christian kings, and claim the benefit of the clause in the Concordat, which transferred to the First Consul the prerogatives exercised by Royalty before the Revolution." Again, in applying to the schools legislation which was passed, though not made operative, 20 years ago, he showed himself thoroughly alive to the mischiefs wrought by the priest in education. His answer to the systematic attempts of the clergy to inoculate the youth of the country with anti-Republican ideas, came in July 1904, in the law then voted by the Senate to extrude clerical teachers from the schools altogether. The system of lay education now prevails throughout France, the several churches being left to supply what religious instruction they are minded to give, on Thursdays and Sundays. The closing of many schools that had been taught by monks and nuns—to the number of nearly 14,000 by September 1904—implies, again, no doubt, hardship to individuals; and many well enough disposed teachers have had to suffer with the unpatriotic. But, since it also means a very considerable addition (about half a million sterling) to public taxation, the general cheerfulness with which the additional burden has been accepted is highly significant. We have here one of the indications of how eager France is to be freed from clerical domination, and to prevent, if possible, a wrong bias being given in her schools, through the distortion of history and otherwise, to the plastic minds of her future citizens.

Rupture with the Holy See.

(2) *The diplomatic rupture with the Curia* was another constant topic of conversation and of press discussion in France last autumn. The subject had come to the front in two connections—the Papal protest against the friendly visit of President Loubet to the King of Italy, and the conflict that had arisen over the Bishops of Dijon and of Laval.

France and Italy, though alienated from one another in the closing years of the Empire, and though there was bad blood between them subsequently over the French protectorate of Tunis, have in recent years been drawing closer together. I found the impression prevalent in France, that Italy would have joined with her, and saved Alsace and Lorraine for her in 1870, had it not been for the Empress Eugénie's hostility to Victor Emmanuel's occupation of Rome as the capital of a United Italy. It has been the Papal policy, from selfish motives, to keep these two Latin powers apart, since then. But, in spite of the sinister influence of the Vatican, considerations of mutual benefit have led to what is really a natural rapprochement: and it has been among the happy omens for European peace that, following on the friendly understanding with Great Britain, France and Italy have come to a similar entente cordiale with one another.

President Loubet and the Vatican.

When the visit of the French President to Rome was mooted, the Government was given to understand, that it would be a matter of grave offence if the visit to the Quirinal were not at least preceded by a visit to the Vatican. In other words, before venturing to confer in a friendly way with King Victor Emmanuel, President Loubet was expected to pay deference to the Pope—to give diplomatic expression thus to sympathy with the captive head of the Papacy, suffering under Italian tyranny—and to take instructions, perhaps, from Pius X. and his Minister, Merry del Val, as to how he was to deal with Victor Emmanuel when he saw him. President Loubet did not choose, however, to be thus dictated to: and in this attitude he had the French Government with him. As M. Combes afterwards put it in the Chamber of Deputies—"We will not allow the Papacy to intermeddle in our international relationships, and we intend to have done once for all with the fiction of the Temporal Power." The President, accordingly, paid his visit to the Italian King in spring of last year, was received with tumult of acclaim by the Italian people, and left Rome without either calling to see the Pope, or making the slightest public reference to his existence.

The Peasant Pope and his Leonidas.

Some of the French papers, hostile to the Government, could only sneer that Loubet's chief use for the Presidency was, to flatter himself with being treated as a friend by the crowned heads, and to make the Elysée, in turn, "the hotel of Europe." The powers that be at the Vatican were greatly incensed, and had not self-restraint enough to conceal their mortification. Pius X. himself, "the peasant Pope," is understood to have some excellent qualities; but he is a plain, blunt man, with little experience of affairs, and with but slight acquaintance with the delicacies of international relationship. And for Prime Minister, instead of the sagacious Leo's like minded adviser Rampolla, the "Fabius Cunctator of the Papacy," he has in the young Spanish Cardinal, Merry del Val, notwithstanding his admixture of English blood, a fiery "Leonidas," a proud aristocrat reared in the tradition of the Inquisition, and, though with more polish and finesse than his Papal master, predisposed to quick and trenchant methods. The two between them, possessed with a sense of the theocratic dignity of the Holy See, determined publicly to resent what they counted an unpardonable affront. Not content with lodging a remonstrance with the head of the French Government, they addressed a protest to the other Catholic powers, and added a sentence warning Roman Catholic sovereigns against following the evil precedent set by M. Loubet, and giving it to be understood, that if the Papal Nuncio remained in Paris still, it was simply due to grave considerations of order which were altogether special. To this latter intimation, which reached the French Government only indirectly, grave exception was taken in Paris: and relations between the Vatican and the Quai d'Orsay were strained almost to the breaking-point.

The Affair of the Two Bishops.

Just on the back of this contre-temps there came the affair of the two bishops—Monseigneur Le Nordez of Dijon and Monseigneur Geay of Laval. Several other members of the French episcopate were believed to have Liberal leanings, and to be in hearty accord with Republican sentiment; but these two had become more "kenspeckle" than the rest. For one thing, their attitude toward the recent educational policy, as well as toward the suppression of the Orders, had given dissatisfaction at Rome. Hence, in contravention of the Concordat, the Vatican addressed them directly in language of rebuke, and with a broad hint that the resigna-

tion of their Sees would be acceptable at the Curia. The hint was not taken; and they were both summoned to Rome, to answer to grave charges before the Holy Inquisition. Besides favour for Freemasonry, it was opportunely discovered that accusations of heresy or immorality might be preferred against them. The bishops, as required by the Concordat, promptly laid the summons to leave their dioceses before the French Government, which forbade them to leave France on so irregular a summons. They therefore continued for a season at their respective posts. And then it came to be a direct contest—in old-fashioned “pull devil, pull baker” style—between the Vatican and the Government, over the bodies of these unfortunate prelates.

The life of a monseigneur, in such circumstances, is not a happy one, and the two bishops began to vacillate. First Mgr. Le Nordez, under unbearable churchly pressure from the Curia, and face to face with excommunication, gave way and went to Rome. Then, later, Mgr. Geay also, suddenly and to the evident surprise of M. Combes, yielded. Arrived at the Eternal City, the bishops found themselves both cajoled and threatened, in an atmosphere wholly favourable to complete submission. They surrendered their bishoprics into the hands of the Pope. And now a surprising thing happened: instead of being submitted to trial by the Inquisition, they received letters from the Pope, acquitting them of every charge against them, and pronouncing them his honoured sons. All suggestions of immorality or heresy were forgotten; and they were permitted to return home in peace—minus their bishoprics. This was regarded at the Vatican as a notable “triumph of the moral force of Rome over the material force of the Republic.” As for the ex-bishops, their homecoming to France was rather rueful at the best. Mgr. Geay, though in losing a bishopric he had got a benediction, shamefacedly declared himself “not a rebel, but a man seeking to harmonize his equally sacred obligations toward each of the two powers from which he derived his authority,” and deplored the way in which “so many Catholics seek to render the fidelity of a good bishop incompatible with the duty of a good Frenchman.”

Breach between the Quai d'Orsay and the Vatican.

The French Government evidently could not allow matters to rest at the point they had now reached. On Friday the 29th July, Cardinal Lorinzelli, Papal Nuncio at Paris, was politely informed by M. Delcassé, Minister for Foreign Affairs, that his mission in France no longer served any useful purpose. That same evening he left for Rome.

Next day, M. de Courcel, the French Chargé d'Affaires at the Vatican, left for Paris. It happened that, just on the following day, the 31st, the elections for the Councils-General of Departments were taking place: and they showed a large gain for M. Combes. In the Chamber, the recall of the Ambassador was approved by 427 votes to 95. Thus the gage of battle was definitely accepted on the French side; and although the Pope resolutely declared—"Reason is on our side, and we are confident that God will assist His church in the mad struggle which the sectaries have begun against her," the victory achieved by the Vatican in the matter of the two bishops would appear to have been somewhat of the Pyrrhic order.

I was told that, including Dijon and Laval, there are nearly a dozen of the Episcopal Sees vacant at present in France. As matters stand, with the concurrence required under the Concordat between the French Government and the Papal See before an appointment can be made, it is evident that a deadlock exists, which may keep these bishoprics vacant for an indefinite length of time.

In other words, a pass has been reached which makes it an urgent question whether the Concordat itself is to be mended or ended.

Disestablishment made a Practical Question.

(3) *The Abrogation of the Concordat* was definitely brought into the region of practical politics by a speech made by M. Combes during my visit to France. I refer to the oration he delivered to a crowded and enthusiastic meeting at Auxerre, on 5th Sept. 1904. In that pronouncement by the responsible head of the Government, it was universally felt that the question of Church Disestablishment, which had been more or less under discussion for a considerable time, had become the touchstone of domestic politics in France.

Reformed Church's Views on Separation, in 1848, 1872, 1902.

It was already a serious issue, both in 1848 and in 1872, but the heads of the Government did not see their way then to carry it into effect. The attitude of the Reformed Church at these two epochs is noteworthy. At its Assembly of delegates in 1848, it was voted that "The Union with the State should be maintained under the express reservation of the dignity and liberty of the Church," And in point of fact certain concessions pleasing to the Church were made soon after this—regarding those entitled to an ecclesiastical vote, and the arrangements with respect to parishes and the

division of France into consistorial districts. Twenty-four years later, in 1872, at the General Synod convened by M. Thiers, although some members were in favour of separation the view was not pressed ; but a resolution contemplating that eventuality with considerable equanimity was adopted—"The General Synod, recognizing that the principle of reciprocal independence between the Churches and the State should be inscribed in the title of modern societies ; convinced, otherwise, that the Reformed Church of France is disposed, so far as it is concerned, to accept with confidence separation from the State, when the public authorities shall judge that necessary for all the cults, thinks it well to invite the Church to be prepared for that event." Again, in June 1902, at the Synode Officieux of Anduze—where the Liberals, however, were of course unrepresented—the Church declared itself "favourable in principle to separation," and "invited the Churches to occupy themselves with all measures fitted to assure their existence and their future."

The Recent Synod at Rheims (1905).

The Synode Officieux of May 1905, which assembled in Rheims, where Clovis was baptized in 496, kept in line with previous findings. Assuming that under Disestablishment the claims of the Church as regards right of association, the constitution of a central reserve fund, and the permanent use of public buildings devoted to worship would be conserved, the Synod declared itself "favourable to separation of the churches from the State, realised in a spirit of wisdom, of justice, and of true liberalism." This assemblage at Rheims was the 10th Synode Général Officieux since the definite breach between the Evangelical and Liberal parties. Of the previous nine, the first was held in Paris, two others in the north (at St Quentin and Sedan), three in the west (at Nantes, La Rochelle, and Bordeaux), and three in the south (at Marseilles, Vigan, and Anduze). The question was discussed at Rheims as to whether, in the event of separation, there should be an attempt made to hold a National Synode *Officiel* including the Liberals ; but the motion of M. Lacheret, President of the Permanent Committee, was adopted, to the effect that nothing should be done to enfeeble the Synode Officieux and to introduce fresh strife by reviving alongside of it now the Synode Officiel, and that therefore the calling of a special General Assembly of representatives of all the Reformed Churches for mutual deliberation immediately after separation would best meet the case. It may be mentioned, in passing, that another important subject dealt with at Rheims was a request from certain young pastors, who,

while earnestly professing evangelical principles, wished for some modification of the form of adhesion demanded at ordination to the Declaration of Faith of 1872. The Synod received the application sympathetically; but, instead of modifying the question used at consecration, it invited the petitioners to bear in mind and to act with full liberty of conscience on the declaration of the Synod of Anduze, which proclaimed "freedom for theology to raise its systems on the basis of the fundamental facts of Christianity."

* *Tentative Proposals for Separation.*

Within the last two years, and even less, proposals pointing to separation of the Churches from the State (*la séparation des Eglises et de l'État*) have been frequent, and have found growing support both in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate. M. Déjeante, for instance, with other Collectivists; M. Roche, supported by MM. Turigny, Lepelletier and others; M. Fr. de Pressensé and the Socialist group; M. Boissy d'Anglas and the well-known M. Clemenceau, senators; M. Flourens, an ex-Minister of Public Worship; MM. Réveillaud, and Lhoumeau and others; and MM. Grosjean and Berthoulet and their following—have in turn made drastic propositions, some of which came within measurable distance of adoption, though ultimately defeated by a Government motion denying urgency. Really significant shape was given to the separation movement, however, when, under a remit from the Chamber, a Committee with M. Briand as chairman, and MM. Réveillaud and Fr. de Pressensé (both Protestant deputies) and others assisting, produced an elaborate proposal which, though not actually ratified in detail by the Chamber, has furnished the basis of the Act of Disestablishment for which France is looking to-day.

M. Briand's Bill.

M. Briand's Report began by laying down the principles on which his project rests:—

(1) "The Republic guarantees liberty of conscience, and the free expression of religious opinions; it guarantees the free exercise of worship, under restrictions noted in the interest of public order."

(2) "The Republic neither adopts, nor salaries, nor subsidizes, directly or indirectly, under any form or on any ground whatever, any worship (culte). It does not recognize any minister of worship. It does not furnish gratuitously any place for the exercise of a worship, or the accommodation of its ministers."

The measure then goes on expressly to annul the Con-

cordat and the subsequent legislation connected with it; to suppress the Papal Embassy and the Ministry of Public Worship; to withdraw State salaries to ecclesiastics and the gratuitous use of ecclesiastical buildings, while providing for certain pensions proportioned to the years of past service, and allowing, under certain conditions, the accumulation of a common fund.

Next, it provides that all Church buildings which had been lent, under the Concordat, for religious purposes should revert to the State as inalienable, but may be let to Civil Associations representing the Churches for a period of 10 years, at a rent of not more than 10 per cent. of the annual average revenue of the religious congregations using them—the conditions of lease to be revised after that time. Buildings which had been erected since the institution of the Concordat on lands that belonged to the religious communities, or which had been purchased by these with their own money, would remain their property.

It sanctions, as amended, the formation of parishes, dioceses, synods and the like for spiritual purposes, but declares that religious gatherings shall be regarded as public meetings and dealt with as such; guards religious worship from disturbance, but forbids the holding of political meetings in ecclesiastical buildings; and subjects to fine or imprisonment preachers who attack the Government or incite to violation of the law.

It requires for religious processions, the ringing of bells, and the like, the sanction of the municipality; regulates Church placards and announcements; frees from special forms of oath; claims the cemeteries for the civil authorities; insists on freedom in the hours and forms of sepulture, and abrogates restrictions of place put on the burial of suicides and unbaptized.

Auxerre Speech of M. Combes (September 1904).

Now, it was with proposals such as these—some of which are no doubt Erastian enough—before him, and with the recent strife over the bishops fresh in the popular mind as well as in his own, that M. Combes made the speech of last September at Auxerre, to which I have referred. In that speech he, the Premier of the day, nailed his disestablishment colours to the mast. He frankly declared that he was not to engage in “the dupe’s occupation” of trying to piece together the Concordat, which the Roman Church had thought fit to tear in pieces: it was to be not mended, but ended. The time had come for “a divorce,” which he was sure the Republican Party would effect “not in a spirit of

hostility to the Christian conscience, but in a sentiment of social peace and religious liberty." As to subordinate questions about buildings and pensions, "there was no reasonable concession that he, for his part, would not be disposed to recommend, in order that the separation of the Churches and the State might inaugurate a new and lasting era of social concord, in guaranteeing to the religious communions a real liberty, under the undisputed sovereignty of the State." To the Protestant pastor in Auxerre, M. Combes spoke cordially, saying—"Up to the present *we* have got on very well together; if we have to separate, let us hope to part as good friends." The local Roman Catholic clergy were conspicuous by their absence from the great gathering—designedly giving the Premier the cold shoulder, and refusing to compromise their sacerdotal dignity by countenancing "a sectarian and Jacobin Government."

The speech was succeeded by quite a babel of conflicting voices in the press next day. *L'Humanité* hailed it with joy, in name of the French democracy. *Le Radical* echoed, "Divorçons!" *La Lanterne* thought Combes did not go far enough. *L'Action* cried out for "a divorce, frank, absolute, from all the pontiffs of all the cults." *La République* received the pronouncement coldly. *Le Gaulois* was recalcitrant. *Le Temps* insinuated that Combes had shown himself unable to refuse anything to the Socialists, and mildly rebuked his bellicose passions. *L'Autorité* (Imperialist) and *La Gazette de France* (Royalist and Ultramontane) were vehemently adverse. *Le Figaro*, with prophetic soul, announced that "much water would go under the bridge before the end was reached." In the provinces, the same diversity of press opinion was reflected. The Toulouse *Dépêche*, and Republican papers generally, rejoiced that Combes had crossed the Rubicon. *La Petite Gironde*, a moderate Republican paper, tried to take up a middle position, maintaining that energetic resistance to the pretensions of the Vatican was essential, but questioning whether this could be more successfully offered without the Concordat than with it, and whether liberty and justice could be conserved under the Premier's proposals. On the other hand, *Le Nouvelliste* of Bordeaux, with other papers of its type, was furiously hostile to this sequel to "the brutal hunt of the Sisters and the Orders, and the lock-picking of monasteries," by "the man of Pons, the apostate," whose "insolent and senile provocations" it resented. For Combes to speak about promoting tranquillity was, it said, "the idiocy of a bandit, trying to fetter his victim by persuasion, in order to abuse him afterwards because of his impotence." It would assure him that "his

faithful allies, the Socialists, might want something more than the Church to satisfy their hungry stomachs, and perhaps his vision of a continued majority might not be realized any more than that of a Gallican Church."

Subsequent Action of the Combes Government.

Meanwhile M. Combes held unflinchingly on his way. Separation, he maintained, was necessary, from incompatibility not of temper but of principle: and when he met Parliament, later in the autumn, he announced a Bill in that sense—more drastic in some respects than M. Briand's measure. "What is wanted," he said, "is a rational, decent, and courteous divorce, on the broad basis of the Briand Bill, securing temporary enjoyment of buildings and budgets, with opportunity to the Churches to create for themselves an autonomous life, under the ægis of the common law." Support in the Lower House was well assured; but, more significant still, there was, in November, a majority of 88 in the Senate, in favour of definite steps being taken for the separation of Church and State. When it was urged by some, that Disestablishment would "throw the country into the arms of infidelity," it was replied, that this was a poor account to give of the Church and her spiritual influence, and that the United States, for example, is not exactly a hive of infidelity, though the Churches there are without State aid. To the threat that the Protectorate of Christians in the East—which is of some political importance in Syria and Asia Minor—would be withdrawn from France, and given to Germany, or Austria, or even Turkey (!), Combes had the answer ready, that "the Protectorate is a privilege more embarrassing than glorious, and for its retention it is certainly not worth while to submit to the Caudine Forks of Rome."

But those who had predicted trouble for M. Combes with his majority turned out to be within their reckoning, before the winter was far advanced. Some of his followers had become frightened at the pace, and under various influences—not all of them connected with the Church question—certain members of the Republican "bloc" began to falter in allegiance to him as their chief. In a division which he was pleased to regard as a vote of confidence, his majority fell as low as 12. While still holding that Republican France was behind him, he now felt that his own continuance in power, in face of the Parliamentary dissidents, might hinder rather than help forward the reforms which he had sketched. In the beginning of February of this year (1905), therefore, he resigned; and M. Rouvier, who held the Finance port-

folio in the Combes Ministry, took his place as President of the Council. Combes was well pleased with this appointment, and expressed his confidence that M. Rouvier, or failing him M. Bourgeois or M. Brisson, would carry through the projected Republican programme.

The Rouvier Government's Bill.

M. Rouvier, the present French Premier, has the reputation of being a man of intellectual force and indomitable industry. He is not new to office, having been Minister of Commerce under Jules Ferry in 1884, himself Prime Minister in 1887, and Minister of Finance in the Waldeck Rousseau Cabinet of 1899, as well as in the Combes Ministry which succeeded it. His method will probably be less provocative than that of his combative predecessor; but it is believed that, with the constituencies at his back, he will have firmness to maintain a continuity of policy on the Church question, as on certain other leading questions of the hour.

The Rouvier Ministry was scarcely formed, when the subject of Church and State was pushed to the front. On 10th February, M. Morlot, a member of the Extreme Left, made an interpellation on the subject of the ecclesiastical policy of the Government. He said that two courses were open—either the strict application of the Concordat, or complete separation—which latter he advocated. After discussion, M. Bienvenu-Martin, Minister of Public Worship, said, on behalf of the Government, that separation was the only remedy for the present abnormal situation. Finally, the motion of M. Sarrien was passed, by no fewer than 586 votes to 111—"The Chamber realizing that the attitude of the Vatican makes the separation of Church and State inevitable, trusting that the Government will have a vote taken on the subject immediately after the Budget, passes to the order of the day." At a subsequent meeting, M. Bienvenu-Martin laid his Separation Bill on the table of the Chamber, and it was referred to a committee without discussion. When it came to be voted on, later, in the Chamber, Article I. was adopted on 12th April by 422 votes to 45—"The Republic guarantees freedom of conscience. It guarantees the free exercise of public worship, limited only by the restrictions hereinafter enacted in the interest of public order." Article II. was adopted on 15th April, by 336 votes to 236—"The Republic neither recognizes, pays salaries to, nor subsidizes any form of worship."

It will be seen that the principle of the measure, thus adopted, is practically that of the Briand Bill already described. In detail, also, the proposals are very similar, being

somewhat less harsh than those put forward by M. Combes in the autumn. The third clause, relating to ecclesiastical property, was adopted on 17th April, by 341 votes to 222. It leaves the arrangements about the leasing of ecclesiastical buildings, free use of which is granted for two years to begin with, somewhat stringent still—churches which were State property being liable to be sold after twelve years and manses after seven. And the pensions proposed are certainly not extravagant. None of them will exceed £48 a year, and many are as low as £16. Present holders of benefices, with less than twenty-five years of service behind them, will receive a full salary for the first year, and then a payment on a declining scale, which will wholly cease in four years from the enactment of the law. But the provisions under this and other heads, even when passed in the Chamber, are, of course, subject to revision and possible emendation by the Senate.¹

It may be noted that, even in the past, individual churches as such have not been recognized as holders of property, which has had to be held on their behalf by "civil associations." A French pastor, M. Coste of St Etienne, in explaining to me this regulation—that "*l'église n'a pas la personnalité civile*"—mentioned a case in point, which brought the rule painfully home to himself. A lady, wishing to be helpful, had left some thousands of francs to his congregation; but the money was lost because it had been bequeathed to the church, and not, as it should have been, to the *société civile* connected with and representing his congregation.

Effect of Separation on Protestant Churches.

As regards the effect of séparation on the Protestant Churches, the Eglise Réformée and the Lutheran Church have, between them, enjoyed an annual State subsidy of nearly 1,600,000 francs and the Jews of about 134,000 francs. The withdrawal of State aid will, therefore, mean a considerable moneyloss, which may tend to hamper certain missionary operations for a time, and may even mean the suppression of some weak congregations. Some of the pastors will also regret the loss of prestige and influence associated with the position of a State functionary that is dear to a French heart, and to other hearts besides. But it is hoped and believed, that the money difficulty will be got over, through the enlargement of Christian liberality consequent on self-dependence: and the relative value of State prestige will be reduced, when the Roman Catholic priests are also shorn of it. A more serious matter has been felt to be the restriction of liberty threatened in respect of the right of general church association and the

¹ See note in Appendix, p. 103.

holding of a central church fund. It was actually proposed by M. Combes to restrict the association of the adherents of any particular religion to persons residing within the limits of a single Department, and rigorously to prohibit the maintenance of a central fund, from which local churches could be helped. These suggested regulations, as M. Combes himself admitted, were not aimed at the Protestant Churches at all, and they called forth very natural and necessary protests, which have led to modifications in the direction of larger liberty. Association over as many as ten Departments was originally conceded in the Bill of M. Bienvenu-Martin, and then over the whole country; and the restriction in the matter of a central fund has not been pressed, though there are checks put on the undue accumulation of worldly wealth. Such limitations as were originally proposed, would evidently have been specially crushing in the case of widely scattered Protestant congregations, and would have condemned these sometimes to absolute isolation, if not to speedy dissolution. Even the suggestion of such despotic regulations has awakened fears lest the real object in view with many politicians should be, not "*l'église libre dans l'état libre*," but "*l'église soumise dans l'état souverain*." It is to be hoped that such fears will be disappointed, and that the rulers of a free Republic will not be tempted, in the reaction against Rome's policy of encroachment, to traverse the essential principles of both civil and religious liberty.

The Papacy to be the heaviest Loser.

The Roman Catholic Church, however, will evidently be the heaviest loser through Disestablishment. As regards money, it receives 35½ millions of the 43 millions of francs paid annually from the "*Budget des Cultes*." The withdrawal of this subvention, in days of declining Peter's Pence, is itself a serious consideration. It will doubtless mean the extinction of congregations in many parishes, and the uniting of parishes where, as has been true in too many cases, not more than a dozen persons can be got together at Mass. It is told that Leo XIII., in receiving a French bishop once, kept groaning over the bondage of the Concordat—"Monsignore, quel Concordato . . . é una catena, una catena!" "Yes, Holy Father," replied the prelate, "but it is a *golden* chain." To be deprived of State *éclat* will also mean much to the hierarchy in France: and even the humble curé will know the difference, when he ceases to be a *fonctionnaire*, and cannot claim even clerical dress as an exclusive distinction. The determination of the Government to clip the claws ("*rogner les ongles*") of the Papacy opens out a

specially anxious prospect for the humbler clergy, which makes them little thankful for the defiant theocratic policy at Rome, that has induced Gallican reprisals. As things are, multitudes of baptized Catholics have lived practically outside of Catholicism. They will not permit celibate priests to visit in their homes ; they are in favour of civil marriages and interments. How will it be, when the services of the Church, where asked, will have to be personally paid for ? After all, the clerics are not beings quite exalted above physical necessities. As one of themselves ruefully expressed it, "the priest has not only a soul, but also a body, and this body wants to eat, drink, and be clothed : and all that needs money, a deal of money."

One can sympathize with the working clergy in such anxieties. One can even admire the ring of spiritual independence, to be detected in the vehement utterance of the Bishop of Orleans, at a memorial service held at Rheims in February—"The Church of the Concordat will be succeeded either by a free Church or by a tyrannized Church. If it be a free Church, we will work together to make a new existence for it, suited to the new conditions. Should it be a tyrannized Church, we are resolved, even at the risk of our heads, to conquer for the faithful and ourselves all the rights of citizens." To such protestations it is pertinent, however, to reply in the spirit of the tolerant Cowper—

"Grant them the rights of men : and, while they cease
To vex the peace of others, grant them peace ;
But trusting bigots—whose false zeal has made
Treachery their duty—thou art self-betrayed !"

CHAPTER V

THE PRIESTLY MOVEMENT AWAY FROM ROME

THE troubles of the Papacy in France are not confined to the conflict with the Government. There are internal forces at work that give anxiety—foes within the household, whose restiveness is more difficult, in some respects, to deal with, than opposition from without. It is the policy of Rome to present, as far as possible, the appearance of perfect solidarity, and she succeeds wonderfully in keeping from the outside world a knowledge of the surge and strife that go on within. But even she cannot hide everything, and it is now perfectly well known, that the Roman Catholic clergy in France are by no means a homogeneous and happy family.

Number of Annual Priestly Defections.

One evidence of this is, the number of open defections that are taking place every year from the ranks of the priesthood. M. Maurice Guillemot, Editor of the *Siècle*, in an article of 21st July 1904, on "Those who are going," states the number of priests who send in their demission and re-enter civil life at "about 200 annually." From the confirmatory evidence of several close observers of the movement, whom I have met in Paris and elsewhere, I have ground for believing, that this somewhat startling figure is not an exaggeration. It, of course, includes priests who leave for all sorts of reasons, and does not imply that all of those who quit Rome become good Protestants. But the number of actual demissions is, from the Roman point of view, a serious matter, both in itself and because of the internal unrest it indicates.

It is no doubt the case, that among a considerable section of the priesthood there is not much of the spirit of enquiry, or of a disposition to quarrel with the conditions of their professional existence. The secular clergy of France, numbering 38,000 or thereby,¹ are recruited almost entirely from the poorer classes. This is more the case than ever, since the blow struck at conscience, and at even the measure of intellectual liberty formerly allowed within the Roman pale, by the Vatican Council of 1870. It has been observed that the French Roman Catholic Church has now no outstanding

¹ See note in Appendix, p. 103.

names to compare with the Dupanlous, Loysons, Lamennais, Gratrys, and Perrauds, who stood in its front rank at that time, the explanation offered being, that the priesthood are so largely drawn from those to whom the cassock means an easy rise in the social scale, a secure maintenance, and the position and influence of a functionary.

Emancipating Influences among the Priesthood.

Nevertheless, since the institution of the Republic, though aspirants to the priesthood are withdrawn very early—about the age of twelve—from contact with the world, and have a miserably obscurantist and distorted education, the clergy have been subjected to awakening influences which could not fail to arouse at least a section of them from moral and intellectual torpor. The year of compulsory military service, for one thing, from which the young seminarists are not exempt, has brought them into contact with actual society, as they were not before. They have been introduced to literature and to ways of thinking, in the freer atmosphere of the Republic, to which the older generation of priests were strangers. The fact that the marriage of priests is recognized by the State as legal has helped to make some of them the more impatient of the Church's invasion of personal liberty in that connection. There has been an infiltration of Protestant ideas on various topics even into the priestly mind; and the influence of "Americanism" has excited, in many, a spirit of enquiry and of courage, that is far from welcome at Roman headquarters. The tyranny of the hierarchy, and its pact with all the parties hostile to the Republic, have also roused to something of independence men who will not cease to be nationally French, because they are ecclesiastically Roman, and who sigh for the time when the curés will not be serfs absolutely at the arbitrary mercy of the 84 bishops, as they all at present are under the Concordat, excepting 3425 who are "curés inamovibles."

The Conservative and Ultramontane section of the clergy do not conceal their "alarm, astonishment, and indignation," to quote the words of one of them, the Abbé Ch. Maigney, "at the audacity and illusions of our young clergy." The older priests sigh for the good old days, when Louis Veuillot used to castigate "Liberal Catholicism," and they often seek relief for their feelings in bewailing the age, banning the Republic, and cursing the triumphs of Freemasonry—whose reunions are assumed to be hostile to the Church, and are said to be presided over by Satan, sometimes enthroned visibly in the midst of them! But the Liberal clergy cannot

be scolded out of their new opinions and independent tendencies. They go on, reading and discussing as before. They may, for the most part, be "chiens muets" (dumb dogs) in public, but they have much to say "à mi-voix" (under their breath), that is by no means complimentary to their supervisors, including the Pope himself. And sometimes their convictions are strong enough to find wonderfully frank expression, from men who have no formulated intention of leaving the Roman Communion.

Reference may be made to the publications of Abbé Loisy, as a notable instance of the assertion of liberty on the intellectual side. This scholarly Sorbonne professor, in his books on "The Gospel and the Church" and on "The Fourth Gospel," gave utterance to critical opinions, which incurred the denunciation of the Archbishop of Paris, and a demand for their retractation. Loisy appealed to Rome. The diplomatic Leo, who did not himself wish to seem illiberal, and also knew that a large section of the French priesthood shared Loisy's views, and much preferred Kant and Harnack to his favourite Aquinas, appointed a Commission, with some Liberals upon it, to enquire into the whole subject of Bible criticism. Before the Commission was able to report, however, the Inquisition took the matter up, and put Loisy's writings on the Index—with the emphatic concurrence by that time of the Pope. Loisy was, confessedly, "greatly embarrassed about the terms of his retractation." But, though he had awakened expectations of a braver course, his doctrine of the Church proved too strong for his critical courage, and he decided to accept the allotted censure and to remain among the "Protestants secrets" within the Roman pale. Yet, that sentiments like his have many adherents is endorsed by the circumstance that, a few years ago, 700 Liberal priests, *malgré* the bishops, met in conference at Bourges, to discuss the problems of the time, and specially the problem of how—"on some such principles as those of Hecker and his Paulists, and other Americanists"—to bring their Church more fully into line with modern civilisation. The signs of revolt against mediævalism in thought and policy were many: and not on that occasion only, or in that group of clergy merely, have men been heard using in effect the language of Abbé Naudet—"I am of the Church of to-day and of to-morrow, and not of that of 100 years ago."

A Dream of the Liberal Priesthood.

I observe in a recent number of *France et Évangile* an interesting article on "Le Clergé Libéral" by a priest, M. J. Ferrière, in which he gives his forecast of what will happen

after separation from the State. He pictures, with unconcealed glee, the consternation of the bishops at the prospect lying before them, of being denuded of their power and prestige, when the priests and laity will no longer bend their trembling knees before their omnipotence; and he derides their sorrowful anxiety, as to whether the crook with which they have been maltreating the sheep will serve any more, when they are no longer backed by the secular arm, to keep the flock together. Then he predicts, that as soon as the Concordat is torn up, the clergy will be seen dividing themselves into two camps—the Liberals and the Ultramontanes, of whom the former, comparatively few at first, will end by becoming the great majority. Gathering beneath the banner of the Church, "Catholic, Apostolic, and French," they will far outbid in moral and religious worth the slaves who will permit themselves to be governed by the Roman Jesuits. Episcopal consecration will not be, even at first, a difficulty, and, in future, bishops will be elected, he says, by the whole of the curés of the diocese, while the curés will be themselves elected by the flock. In words which echo sentiments we have often heard uttered nearer home, he says—"The scandal will no longer be seen, so frequent to-day, of pastors imposed by force on unwilling congregations." The new clergy, not taking their orders from abroad, will be patriotic—that is, Republican; though the Pope will be still regarded as supreme judge in matters of faith and morals. "It is on these conditions," he concludes, "that France can remain the eldest daughter of the Church; but, just because the Papacy calls her the eldest daughter, it is high time that this great and glorious national Church should herself regulate her own affairs."

Whether this dream can possibly be realized, with the Pope still recognized as "the supreme judge in matters of faith and morals," is open to serious question. But these aspirations after a national Gallican Church are widespread among the clergy of France, and are highly significant. At the time of the great French Revolution, at least half of the priests, mindful of the Pragmatic Sanction, were in favour of a distinctly Gallican Church: and it is interesting to know, that there is still one flock in Paris holding by that view and claim, and calling itself "l'Église Gallicane." Its pastor, M. l'Abbé Volet, was lately interviewed by the editor of *La Patrie*, and explained that their faith is that of the ancient Church of France, which existed before the Concordat; and that they maintain that Pius VII. had no right to suppress the 30 ancient titular bishops who resisted Napoleon, and one of whom, M. de Themines of Blois, who alone ultimately held

out, considered himself the true and only possessor of his See till his death in 1834. They hold the ancient tradition that the bishops should be elected by the faithful, but they have, in the circumstances, fallen back for priestly consecration on the Archbishop of Utrecht; and they have "groupes" in Dauphiné, Charolais, La Vendée, L'Ain, and Fougère, who scrupulously practise the observances of the Catholic religion, and recognize all its dogmas save those which have been created since 1789—the Immaculate Conception (1854), and the Infallibility (1870).

The Mixed Company of the Évadés.

It is time, however, to say something more definite about the "anciens prêtres," the *évadés* (escaped ones) as they are sometimes called, who have actually made their exit from Rome. Concerning these, I have had interesting interviews with men who can speak authoritatively on the subject, such as MM. Meillon and Bourrier, themselves ex-priests, and Mr Hathaway, formerly an evangelist in France and now secretary in England for the "Œuvre des Prêtres Convertis."

As already indicated, the average annual leakage from the priesthood in France is about 200. They constitute a miscellaneous company, who, as they issue from the Church, stand in need of "sorting." A few of them have not voluntarily resigned, but have been bundled out of office for immoral conduct. Among the respectable majority, there is great diversity, in respect both of intellectual equipment and of spiritual earnestness. As regards the first of these qualifications, it is alleged that the bishops do not, except in special cases, encourage young scholars to take university degrees, for fear of putting into their hands a diploma which might serve one day for their enfranchisement. In any case, though the ex-priests are fair samples of their Order, a considerable proportion of them are found to be distinctly below par in the matter of really serviceable education. This is how the *Siècle* describes many of the applicants for employment at the bureau instituted for their help—"They arrive there disabled; ill at ease in life, of which they have been quite ignorant hitherto, birds of night, whom the full day dazzles. They ask a situation, and have no aptitude for any. To have said the Mass, to have uttered their breviary, to have confessed their penitents has not prepared them for anything. The greater part have not even the first diploma: those who are licensed are not easier otherwise to settle." However, it has been possible for ex-priests to find their way into a great many different professions, as advocates, journalists, photographers, printers, librarians, and the like; and not a few of

them, rather than continue the uncomfortable dishonesty of professing beliefs they no longer hold, have been found ready to become shop assistants, railway men, and artisans of various kinds. The joy of personal emancipation has seemed to them an abundant recompense often, for a good deal of material hardship, inevitably incurred in starting off on a new career.

As regards moral earnestness and spiritual enlightenment, there is also, as might be expected, considerable diversity. When one remembers that even John Calvin's own elder brother, Charles, who had been a priest at Noyon, died a libertine and an infidel in the same year in which John published his immortal "Institutes," we must be prepared for occasional disappointments. There are, unhappily, those among the *évadés*, whose revolt from Rome means the abandonment of all religious beliefs. Some of them, of whom Charbonnel may be mentioned as a typical instance, have degenerated into mere blatant and atheistic demagogues; and there are others, not so objectionable, who have a very imperfect hold of Bible truth, and rather an undeveloped moral sense—men who have got out of the charnel house, but have some of the grave-clothes still about them. But, on the other hand there is a considerable number of the ex-priests, who, having been really devout and enthusiastic in the days of their ignorance, have carried their sincerity and devotion with them in quitting Rome, and, knowing and loving the pure Gospel now themselves, have been doing admirable service on behalf of the Evangel, in connection with one or other of the Protestant Churches of France. Of these, the lamented M. Corneloup might be named as a typical example.

Two Societies in Aid of ex-Priests.

This leads me to speak of two societies that have been organized in Paris, expressly for the purpose of aiding priests in a crisis of their lives when they sorely need the help of a sympathizing heart and guiding hand. The two societies, though not identical in plan, are kindred enough to be in some sense complementary to one another.

Ex-Abbé Bourrier and Le Chrétien Français.

It may be convenient to mention first, though it does not come first in time or in importance, the "Société d'Évangélisation par les Anciens Prêtres," which is presided over by ex-Abbé André Bourrier, and is conducted on broad, not to say latitudinarian, principles. Its bureau is situated at 12 Rue Vivienne, Paris, and though there is not now a

Maison Hospitalière in connection with it, M. le Pasteur Bourrier (for he is now a pastor of the Église Réformée), besides arranging with other Christian families to give timely shelter to ex-priests, seeks to make his own manse at Sèvres a place of welcome, a "Villa Bon Accueil," to these in the hour of need.

In a conversation which I had with the ex-Abbé at his bureau, he impressed me as being a shrewd and tactful man, possessed with the idea that he has a mission before him. It was in pursuit of this that he separated himself a few years ago from the other society, which is conducted on more strict confessional principles, in order that he might have a freer hand in dealing with a class of priests—many of them still in Rome, as well as some of them now outside it—whom no existing evangelical agency seemed likely to reach. M. Bourrier edits a fortnightly journal called *Le Chrétien Français*, with the sub-title "Organe de la Réforme Évangélique dans le Catholicisme," in which he expounds his aims and methods very frankly, and to whose columns he welcomes contributions from priests who have not yet left the Roman pale. He puts in the forefront, that "the essential thing is not to be Catholic or Protestant, but Christian": and I gathered from him, in conversation, that in his opinion the Church of the future for France will be some ideal organisation—eclectic as regards both creed and cult—not distinctively either Catholic or Protestant, but leaving room for a wide diversity of religious and philosophical doctrine, and a large liberty in matters of worship and ritual.

His favourite mottoes are—"Where Christ is, there is the Church," and "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." He claims withal that his society has prepared at least a dozen pastors now at work in the Reformed and Lutheran Churches, and that it has aided four evangelists and one priest, whose convictions led them rather to the Old Catholic Communion. He proclaims himself very desirous of encouraging all Reforming parties within the Church of Rome, and, as concerns priests who leave it, he is particularly anxious that the way should be made easier for them to enter on civil life. Being in close touch with many actual priests, he is satisfied that demissions would be counted by hundreds more, if only one could promise a self-supporting position, however modest, to all those who long for independence. That M. Bourrier's line of work, whatever its defects, is fitted to serve a useful purpose, is evidenced, on the one hand, by the recommendation given to him and *Le Chrétien Français* by outstanding Protestants like MM. Réveillaud and Jalabert, and by pastors such as

MM. Decoppet, Wilfred Monod, Frank Puaux, Jean Monnier ; and, on the other hand, by the maledictions hurled by the Jesuits at the ex-Abbé and his coadjutors, because of the "infiltrations Protestantes" among the clergy, for which they are held responsible.

M. Meillon and L'Œuvre des Prêtres Sortis.

The other society, which commands, no doubt, a more unreserved sympathy and confidence from evangelical Protestants in this country, is that known as "L'Œuvre des Prêtres sortis de l'Église Romaine," which was founded in Paris as far back as 1884, by M. Eugène Réveillaud, Prof. L. J. Bertrand, Pastors Fourneau, Arbousse-Bastide, and others. The French Committee of Management has M. le Pasteur Isaac Picard, of Rue Poisson, Paris, for President, and includes such well-known ministers of the different Protestant Churches as MM. H. Cordey (Église Libre), Jean Meyer (Lutheran), H. Merle d'Aubigné (Réformée). There is also an English Auxiliary Committee, of which Lord Kinnaird and Lord Overtoun are Presidents, and Mr W. F. Hathaway is Secretary. As an important adjunct to the Society's work, there is a Maison Hospitalière, at 45 Rue Victor Hugo, Courbevoie (Seine), of which M. le Pasteur Félix Meillon, formerly pastor for nine years at Nérac, and himself an ex-priest, is Director.

I have had the pleasure of meeting and corresponding with M. Meillon, and regard him as a man kindred in enlightened piety and zeal to his predecessor in the Directorate, the late M. Corneloup. This Society, also, like the other, has a journal of religious reform, issued monthly by M. Meillon as editor, from 18 Rue du Lunain, Paris. Its former name, *Le Prêtre Converti*, has lately been changed for the more comprehensive title, *France et Évangile*, and, while its staff are mainly ex-priests, it has a column to which actual priests may contribute—it being, of course, understood that the individual writers are alone responsible for the opinions therein expressed.

The grand definite aim of the Œuvres des Prêtres, presided over by M. Meillon, is the spiritual benefit of the priests, by communicating to them a knowledge of 'true Christianity, and leading them to a cordial faith in Christ and consecration to His service. If they give evidence of a serious call to the holy ministry, facilities are furnished on their formal request, and after necessary probation, for prosecuting their studies at a Protestant faculty of theology. If they prefer a civil life, material assistance is afforded them in the search

for suitable employment. No case of a priest is taken up by the Society, however, without a careful enquiry into his past, and regarding the motives that led him to break with Rome. I understand that of the 200 priests annually quitting the Roman Communion, about 70 in the year apply to this Society, of whom some 30 or 40 receive help. Only four or five annually, with the means at disposal, can be trained for the ministry—at a cost each of about £80 per annum—at Neuchatel, or some other approved Protestant College. But it is an interesting and gratifying fact, that at the present time there are 75 ex-priests or seminarists at work as ordained pastors or evangelists in connection with the several Protestant Churches or Societies in France. Such names as those of MM. Corby, Costa, and Louis may be mentioned, the last of whom, a very winning preacher, has been making an impressive evangelistic progress lately through the provinces.

It is remarkable that even among priests who have not seen their way to break altogether with Rome, there are men largely imbued with the principles of the Reformed religion, and trying to defend their people from error. Thus one writes, while still a Roman Catholic curé, to *Le Prêtre Converti*—"I send 10 francs for the work, 3 as my subscription for the journal, and 3 for a large New Testament. I am still at my post of battle, and preach ever the Gospel, the whole Gospel, and nothing but the Gospel, which I learned through your Church." In the case of this man, "that which letteth" may still be taken out of the way, so that he may come alongside yet of Abbé Reix, who sent in his resignation lately to his bishop in the following decided terms—"I believe in Christ; but I do not believe in the priests. I believe in the Gospels; but I do not believe in your canons. I believe in God; but I do not believe in His vicar on earth—the sole depositary of the secrets of salvation and of doctrinal infallibility. . . . Let others make of these doctrines a trade, and a means of attaining honours and profit. I cannot, in conscience, continue to serve a Church, which is now only an instrument of rule in human politics."

Doctrinal Basis and Practical Aim of this Society.

In April 1898, the "Œuvre des Prêtres" was reorganized on the basis of certain definite articles, one of which, of much significance, runs as follows—"It is not attached, in particular, to any of the Protestant Communions; but its activities are based on the two fundamental principles of the Reformation Churches—the sovereign authority of the Holy Scriptures in matters of faith, and salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, who

died for our offences and was raised again for our justification." The Society has been severely criticized by scores of priests to whom it could not offer aid, as being "too strict, too severe, and too religious." But, as it is a society which aims principally at the evangelisation of France, and desires to utilize the aid of suitable ex-priests for that all-important end, such strictures are accepted as a welcome certificate. It is indeed desirable that all priests who quit Rome should be encouraged in well-doing, when they betake themselves to civil life. But those the Society wishes specially to get alongside of are, not mere malcontents, or *libres-penseurs*, or free lances, but priests who have left Rome for conscientious reasons, and who, as themselves genuinely religious men, desire to continue in the service of the Gospel.

The motto taken by this Society is not the vague one, "Pas Protestants, mais Chrétiens" (Not Protestants, but Christians); but, rather, "Protestants parce que Chrétiens" (Protestants, because Christians). Its purpose is, to have the Gospel preached; and, that this may be effectually done, to have the Gospel conserved by Protestantism. As M. Meillon expresses it—"To be content with a work of demolition, in attacking the absurdity, the venality, the immorality of Catholicism, is to work for free-thought. It is not worth while, to pass a bachelorship in theology to preach anticlericalism. Enough of these preachings of religious philosophy, which, before stupefied audiences, subordinate faith to science, reconcile the Pope to Jesus Christ, and pretend to bring Protestantism and Catholicism into a superior synthesis, that is to say, into the nothingness of a common tomb."

It is recognized to be highly important that all *evadés* should be taught what Protestantism really is,—a subject on which many of them are profoundly ignorant; that they should have, as far as possible, liberty of choice open to them as regards a future profession; and that, by the bestowal, in deserving cases, of necessary material aid, they should not be constrained to play the hypocrite, by the presentation to them as the only two alternatives—"The Bible, or starvation." But the promoters of the "Œuvre des Prêtres," while having all this in view, are no doubt also right in holding, that it is only a defined, intelligent, and spiritually vital Protestantism that can save France, both from the Scylla of superstition and from the Charybdis of irreligion.

If, as some expect, the separation of Church and State should lead to a *débâcle* of many more priests than have yet shaken themselves free from the Papal system, there will be greater need than ever to sift applications, and to make provision for the probation and training of those who propose

to aid in the work of evangelisation in France. But, with these safeguards, it may be anticipated that agents will then be found in increased numbers among priestly converts, who, knowing Romanism from within, will* prove themselves valuable coadjutors of the sons of the Huguenots in Gospel work among the Roman Catholic population.

CHAPTER VI

THE POPULAR MOVEMENT AWAY FROM ROME

SERIOUS as the breach with the French Government is for Rome, and ominous as the defections from the priesthood are, there is something still more grave for the Papacy in France: and that is, the alienation of the people.

We are accustomed to rank France among Roman Catholic countries, but it is questionable if in so doing we place it in the proper category. There is nothing more obvious to one who travels through France to-day, than that the Papal Church, so far as a permeating moral or religious influence is concerned, has utterly lost its hold on the great mass of the French people. Out of a population of nearly 39 millions,¹ about 36 millions are, indeed, ostensibly Catholic. But I was assured, again and again, by intimate observers, that not more than four or five millions of these can be reckoned as really devout adherents of the Papacy. Multitudes of nominal Roman Catholics are quite apathetic, where they are not positively hostile to the Church.

Three Types of Catholicism.

I read an article by M. Bourrier, entitled "Trois Catholicismes," in which, computing the force and value of existing Catholicism in France, he distinguishes its adherents into three kinds. The *Ultramontanes*, who believe or think they believe in the Infallibility of the Pope, and hold by the Syllabus, and require the Italian stamp on everything, he sets down at two millions or thereby—basing his estimate on facts supplied by a recent book of M. Yves Guyot. This is a party of importance as regards wealth and social standing, but is not a party of much intellectual power or popular force. The *Gallicans*, he says, are a far more numerous body. These have little concern about the Pope, but are forward to criticize their priests and bishops, and the dogmas and practices of their Church—for which they have a use mainly at Christmas and Easter, and in connection with outstanding family events. They prefer the French to the Italian stamp; and, so long as their churches remained open, and there was provision for the priest performing the functions of marrying,

¹ At the census of 24th March 1901, the "legal" population of France (including soldiers, officials, etc., resident abroad) was 38,961,941.

baptizing, and burying, they would be little moved by a rupture with Rome. The *Intellectuals*, next, are "freethinkers who repudiate the name of atheist, and believe that man is a religious animal." They call themselves Catholics, by reason of tradition and family convenience; but they will have none of priests, sacraments, or dogmas. There remains to them "the God of love and peace, of whom Christ is the highest expression"; their Gospel is summed up in "Love one another," and their Liturgy in the Lord's Prayer (*l'Oraison Dominicale*); and, though not churchmen, they will welcome a sermon now and then, and may be found occasionally in adoration before a crucifix, as the symbol of love and sacrifice. M. Bourrier owns that the last named are comparatively few as yet; but he is bold enough to predict that they will by and by be the most numerous, gaining to themselves "the mass of freethinkers who imagined they were atheists, but who were anti-religious only because religion was for them the dogma and the priest."

Are there real Catholics in France?

Another writer, M. Deschanel, professor in the Collège de France and a member of the Senate, goes further, and raises the question—Are there any real Catholics now in France? Though he himself counts as a Catholic, the answer he gives is, that there are next to none! He first excludes the multitude of merely tacit members, who are counted Catholics because they have never made any explicit declaration of non-Catholicism; then the geographical Catholics, who, like vegetables, grow where they were planted, and are Catholics because their mothers and nurses were; then the æsthetic Catholics, who worship Gothic art, and are in love with Raphael's Madonnas; then the professional Catholics—a priesthood largely unbelieving and corrupt; then the political Catholics, for whom clericalism is a matter of statecraft; then the fashionable Catholics, for whom religion is a question of position and *bon ton*; then the democratic Catholics, who are really out of sympathy with the Church, and out of favour with its dignitaries. And, as I have said, the conclusion he reaches is, that "true Catholicism, pure, disinterested, sincere faith," is hardly to be found among these several classes, and that there are next to no genuine Catholics in France!

Now this is, doubtless, too sweeping an indictment, though it comes from a member of the Roman Catholic Communion. But there are unmistakable tokens that the moral and religious influence of that Church over the French people is at a very low ebb. This is being irresistibly brought home to the minds of the clergy themselves. Thus a priest,

writing on the condition of the Church in France, laments, after careful enquiry, that "while in some villages a number of people still attended Mass, in others the church was so deserted that on Sunday morning the attendance consisted only of the priest, his servant, and the sexton: the case had even been observed of priests being unable to find an acolyte and a sexton, while in some churches grass was growing between the stones of the floor." Similarly, a French provincial paper reported recently, as the result of a religious census which it took of the Department of Seine and Marne, that in 516 Communes, with about 216,000 persons, there were only 5200 adult persons—or 2.40 per cent.—who attended Sunday Mass. In every village of 500 inhabitants, it was found that only ten on the average go to church.

The Negative Movement away from Rome.

Besides deserted churches, there is a good deal for the Papacy to deplore at present in the condition of things in France. The prevalence of civil marriages and interments has already been alluded to, as an indication of the popular mood of independence toward the Church, as well as the alarming decrease, for a number of years, in the French contributions to "Peter's Pence." In connection with the latter, the Vatican has apparently fallen between two stools. Many subscriptions were withheld by patriotic Frenchmen, because the Papacy was inimical to the Republic. Then, when Pope Leo at length thought it politic to recommend that the Republican form of government should be at least tranquilly endured, the rich monarchists were heard exclaiming, as they buttoned up their pockets—"We do not ask this Italian to make friends with the King of Italy: what right has he to ask us to reconcile ourselves to the Republic?" Another significant clerical grievance is, that the "bons journaux," favoured by the Church because favourable to her—such as *La Croix*, *La Libre Parole*, *L'Autorité*, *L'Intransigeant*, and *L'Univers*—are not having anything like the circulation secured by the papers indifferent or hostile to Rome. The last named, *L'Univers*, openly deplored the fact, in August last, that "the mass of Catholics speak of the good press with open contempt," while another Roman Catholic authority laments, that "people will not advertize in religious newspapers or even read them when presented gratuitously." It is, further, a notorious fact, that the schoolmaster is often a much more influential personage now in country districts than the curé, and often commands a large following as the leader of a radical club. It is also frequently the case, that where efforts are put forth to

stay the plagues of alcoholism and licentiousness, which are making dreadful ravages even among the French peasantry of to-day, the temperance and purity leaders have to be found, not among the clergy, but among social reformers who do not hesitate to call themselves freethinkers, because, confounding clericalism with Christianity, and counting it a failure if not a sham, they have been led to abjure the only religion they have known.

Unhappily, for the reason just hinted at, anti-clericalism develops all too frequently into hostility to all religion. This comes out not only in individual cases, but in connection with large movements in France for the complete secularisation of society : so that, if France cannot properly be called a Catholic country, it certainly cannot be called, either, in any positive and evangelical sense, a Protestant country. It is largely, meanwhile, a land of religious negations, whose inhabitants are strenuously bent on asserting the Rights of Men, while paying little deference to the claims of God. There is unquestionably a tendency at work, to substitute for the Infallibility of the Pope the irresponsible omnipotence of the State ; and there is too much reason for that respectable Roman Catholic magazine *Le Correspondant*, to deplore what it calls "the renaissance of paganism in morals" (*la renaissance du paganisme en morale*), and to declaim against the de-Christianizing of the national life. In the recoil from clerical abuses, theories of secular education are being pushed to an extreme that is at once absurd and dangerous. It is boldly proclaimed in influential quarters, that positivism must henceforth reign supreme ; that society is to be organized without God ; that the young are to be carefully guarded from the prejudices of what is called faith ; that the educator, instead of saying *believe* is only to say *verify* ; that science is to anticipate and supplant religion in the minds of the young, who are to be trained not to believe except at the dictate of reason and reflection. It is evident that all this is aimed at realizing, only in a bloodless way, the ideals sought, suddenly and through carnage, at the time of the French Revolution, and would end as before in a hapless worship of the Goddess of Reason and the consequent ruin both of religion and of morality.

Free-thought annexing Socialism.

There is an ominous junction of forces going on in France, too, between Free-thought and Socialism. This came out very plainly, for instance, at the Free-thought Congress held in Rome, under the very shadow of the Vatican, last September. It was meant to be an Œcumenical Council of its

kind, and there were delegates present from most European countries. Not only distinctively free-thought newspapers, such as *La Raison* and *L'Action*, but many radical-socialist journals throughout France, made assiduous preparations for its success, publishing lists of "moral adhesions" to the number of about 40,000, most of which had been accompanied by a small money contribution. The French delegates numbered 700, including such men as MM. Buisson, Renaud, Havet, Paul Dupuy, and Maurice Vernes. In the centre of the platform, which was hung in red velvet, stood "a statue of Liberty, governing the world by Science." At the opening sitting, a letter was read from the distinguished M. Berthelot, a member of the honorary committee, in which he gave energetic expression to his anti-Roman and anti-religious sentiments. His affirmation, that "science suffices, quite alone, for the direction of the world in all departments, industrial, political, military, educational, and especially moral," was loudly applauded, as were also the utterances of various speakers on behalf of "a freethinking socialism," which proclaims, along with the reign of science, "the equality of all human beings." M. P. Doumergue acutely observes, in that excellent fortnightly *Foi et Vie*,¹ that the freethinkers, while so clamorously opposing reason to faith, were really in their Congress performing an act of faith, without knowing it, when they proclaimed their belief "that science can do everything here below—can create justice, solidarity, goodwill, happiness."

An Anxiety to Protestant Pastors.

The deliberate attempt of free-thought, in imitation of clericalism, to make use of politics, and in particular to master the radical and radical-socialist press, is matter of serious concern to others besides Romanists in France. Protestants hailed the Republic from the first as promising liberty of conscience to all; and the great majority of them, in their hatred of clericalism, have thrown their weight into the radical scale as the most frankly anti-clerical. But free-thought, not content with working anti-clericalism for all that it is worth, has been more and more boldly substituting for an ideal of impartial lay government the ideal of an atheistic and irreligious Republic, and is seeking, by every means in its power, to draw its political allies along with it. Thus the daily reading of Radical journals of a freethinking class by their parishioners is becoming, in certain districts of the country, a grave anxiety to Protestant pastors, who find the persuasion gaining ground among some of their people, that "just as it was formerly necessary to be an anti-clerical

¹ See note in Appendix, p. 103.

in order to be a good Republican, so now, to be a good anti-clerical one must become a materialistic and atheistic *libre-penseur*."

Could Romanism and Protestantism unite?

So threatening are the forces now arrayed against religion and morality in France, that the somewhat fantastic idea has been broached of a possible reunion, in face of the common foe, of the Catholic and Protestant Churches. The results of a symposium on the subject, given in *Foi et Vie* of 15th October last, bring into relief, as was to be expected, insuperable obstacles on both sides to the carrying out of such a project. The very name of church is, of course, denied by Rome to non-Catholic communities (however much better than her own their claim is, to be catholic in the true sense of the word); and any union with her would simply mean absorption within the Roman pale—a pushing back of the hands upon the clock, that no intelligent reader of French history and lover of France could for a moment contemplate without the greatest horror. Nor is anything practical likely to come of the suggestion, that a great confederation might be formed outside of the churches, which should have its general assemblies, its treasury, its publications, and should consist of "all those who for the service of God and of humanity are prepared, without detaching themselves from their respective churches, to give of their efforts and means in defence of the faith in the Heavenly Father, in God, who is Spirit, Light, and Love, and in Christ who makes Him known—liberty of conscience being absolutely respected, and all intolerance in the past, the present, and the future condemned."

It is at least significant of the dire and menacing condition of France, from the religious and moral point of view, that such nebulous suggestions as these should have been made and seriously discussed; but it is not along any such lines that the true remedy can be discovered or applied. The regeneration of France will be attained only in one way—through permeating the national life with the spirit of Bible religion—through bringing to bear on the hearts of the people the uplifting, renewing, energizing power of "the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

A Visit to Lourdes described.

That Romanism can do little to counteract the godless materialism that is threatening, in its overbearing march, to sweep everything before it in fair France, is abundantly evident. Superstition is but a poor solvent to offer for

national unbelief, and this seems to be all that, even where it is apparently most in earnest, Romanism has to present by way of staying the plague of irreligion.

It was my fortune to visit Lourdes, "the Mecca of Roman Catholic France," in September, just at the time when the pilgrim season was at its height. The year 1904 marked the Jubilee of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary; and, by the grace of Pius X., indulgences were being lavishly bestowed, from 15th June to 15th December, on all who fulfilled the conditions laid down for receiving them. These conditions were—Confession and Communion; one visit each to the Grotto, the Church of the Rosary, and the Upper Basilica; and the performance once of the exercise of the Way of the Cross. It should be explained that, from being an obscure village inhabited by a few unsophisticated peasants, and visited only by the occasional tourists who found their way to the romantic valley of the Pyrenees in which it quietly nestled, Lourdes has grown into a large and handsome town, whose hotels and churches are thronged during "the season" by all kinds and conditions of travellers, and whose streets then literally swarm with priests and nuns. It is the centre of a very lively and lucrative traffic, carried on in booths in which German, English, Spanish, and other languages are spoken, and in which the faithful may provide themselves with images, pictures, candles, crucifixes, rosaries, and similar articles affected by the devout. On the day when I was there, no fewer than 16 pilgrimages—some of them requiring several excursion trains for their accommodation—arrived from different parts of France or from foreign countries. These, with priests at their head, were to be seen making their way in procession, by programme, to the holy places, there to offer their gifts and go through the exercises prescribed for those in quest of blessing.

An Impressive but Saddening Spectacle.

I must confess that the scene was, in its way, an impressive and memorable one, especially in the neighbourhood of the Grotto of the Apparition, where the simple peasant girl Bernadette Soubirons is supposed to have seen the Virgin on 11th February 1858, and to have heard from her the announcement, "Je suis l'Immaculée Conception"—with a gracious request that a chapel might be built near the spot, and the sick invited to drink or to bathe in the waters of the miraculous spring then graciously disclosed for their healing. The cave is now fitted up as a chapel, in which, ablaze with candles, Mass was being continuously celebrated, behind a

grating, by relays of priests, in presence of throngs of worshippers. These were afterwards led in procession past the image of our Lady of Lourdes, which is perched in a conspicuous spot just above the entrance to the Grotto, and did humble obeisance as they passed. It was especially touching to see scores of sick folk, in all ranks of life—some of them in the last stages of disease—brought in chairs or on litters, that they might turn their wistful gaze in the direction of the idol, or partake of the healing waters.

The whole neighbourhood was alive with "pilgrimages," who were being harangued by their priestly leaders, or singing hymns in praise of the Virgin, before advancing in their turn to the Grotto, or proceeding to climb the various stages of the Via Dolorosa, which leads up the neighbouring ascent to "Calvary." Mary's supposed request to build a chapel has certainly been attended to in handsome style; for the adjoining Church of the Rosary, with the Basilica above and the Crypt below, constitutes one of the most gorgeous ecclesiastical edifices in France. In a weekly print of which I obtained a copy, *Le Journal de la Grotte de Lourdes*, published by the chaplains of the Sanctuary, I found descriptions of recent reputed cures, in "the land of miracles"; statistics of the gifts brought to the sacred shrine; notes anent pilgrimages; directions for confession; offers of indulgence; appeals to pilgrims for contributions toward the enlargement and embellishment of the facsimile of the Lourdes Grotto in the gardens of the Vatican; and—last but not least significant—warnings to the faithful not to read, or even to have in their possession, books of Protestant origin offered for sale upon the streets, "en particulier, le Nouveau Testament de N.S. Jesus Christ."

On the whole, I felt Lourdes to be a saddening spectacle. It is said that about two millions of pilgrims find their way there in the course even of an ordinary year; and no doubt in a sense Lourdes pays, as it is intended to pay, the Roman Catholic Church well. The crowds who seek the fabled shrine—gentle and simple, old and young, rich and poor, honest peasants and worn-out citizens of the world—speak touchingly enough of a consciousness of need, and of a wild hope doubtless in many cases, that there it may be somehow met. But a materialistic superstition can only in the end bring to its votaries disappointment. There may be a few cases of apparent bodily cure, explainable on psychological principles, effected at Lourdes. But neither its waters nor its Avés can bring healing to the soul, and the multitude whom its mummeries repel far exceeds the crowd whom they attract. What France needs is, to be directed, not to our

Lady of Lourdes, who can do nothing for her, but to another Physician, with whom is the fountain of life, and who in His Gospel has a balm for the worst wounds of humankind.

The True Solvent for the Ills of France.

The bankruptcy—not material but moral—of Roman Catholicism in France being only too apparent, the question arises, is there no alternative for Frenchmen but blank irreligion? This is a question which has been pressing itself on thoughtful minds, and many have been discovering that there is an alternative. Protestantism, it is found, has a message which makes appeal, stronger the better it is understood, alike to the head and to the heart of the French people. In governing and commercial circles, it has not escaped notice, that the Protestant nations are forging ahead in the world, while the Catholic are falling back; and Roman Catholic writers have been brought to acknowledge, that “if the religious problem is to be solved in France, something must be taken from this Reformation, which has always kept united religion and science, order and liberty, and has strongly upheld a high standard of morality, by spreading a Gospel which is a conscience within the conscience.” It is in a magazine for Catholic youth that the following frank acknowledgment is made, by a writer seeking to stir up his readers to worthy emulation—“Protestantism has more influence on the masses than one would expect from so small a handful of men, were these not inspired by the principles of tolerance, righteousness, and justice, which alone can carry moral and social reform. In France, everything which is expressive of moral strength—the struggle against intemperance, against immorality, against all social evils whatever they may be—is the work of Protestants.”

The Positive Gospel Movement among the Peasantry.

As for the peasantry, they have come, in many cases, to associate Protestantism not only with a higher morality and a truer liberty, but with an evangel of hope for both the life that now is and that which is to come, of which Romanism had left them in deplorable ignorance. Whole districts have in recent years been laid open in a remarkable way to Protestant influence, and in some of them congregations have been formed and regular pastors appointed, in places where Protestant worship had been in abeyance for 300 years or more. In towns, too, as well as in the country, tokens are not wanting that the French heart, beneath an outward seeming of frivolous gaiety and sceptical *abandon* and

indurated worldliness, is crying out for something more satisfying than irreligious negations. But it is in the rural districts, undoubtedly, that the truth and influence associated with Protestantism have found, in recent years, their most remarkable welcome.

This leads me to speak of the Gospel movement among the peasantry of France in three districts conspicuously affected by it, which I visited last autumn—

(1) Auvergne and Loire.

(2) Les Charentes.

(3) La Corrèze.

Some account of what has been transpiring in these several regions will bring out, by way of sample, the fact that, in addition to the negative aspects of the popular movement away from Rome—which we have as yet chiefly considered—there is a positive side to that movement, which is fitted to stimulate the efforts of those who are aiming at the evangelisation of France, and which, if it falls short in some cases not only of hopes but of expectations, is at least such as to rebuke despair for the religious future of the French people.

(1) AUVERGNE AND LOIRE.

Auvergne, which includes the Departments of Cantal and Puy de Dôme, is, with Brittany, one of the two most densely Popish, just as Drôme and Gard are the two most distinctively Protestant, districts in France. A friend advised me, before penetrating to this region, not to go in ministerial garb, else I might meet with unpleasantness in certain places. "Dress as much like a Frenchman as possible," said he, "and, above all, wear a large tall-crowned French straw hat with black ribbon, and you will get on much better." Whether it was due to my observance of this precaution or not, I am bound to say that I met with nothing but the greatest courtesy, both here and in every other part of France which I visited. It used to be a common epithet of contempt or hatred applied to Protestant converts, "You are Anglais." But, besides that Protestantism is becoming better known even in the country districts than formerly, there is no doubt that the recent entente cordiale, so happily initiated by King Edward and President Loubet in April of last year, has wrought a marvellous change for the better in the popular sentiment of the French people toward the British: so that "Anglais" seems to be less a term of suspicion or reproach now, than a passport to general favour and ready welcome. It appears to be pretty commonly recognized, that the entente with Great Britain is more natural and better worth the having than the

strange and expensive but not very fruitful alliance, which at a time of isolation the Republic was glad to enter into with autocratic and bureaucratic Russia.

I approached the Auvergne district by way of Lyons, the city of Irenæus and Peter Waldo, where, as I gathered from one of the six pastors of the Église Réformée, M. Corbière, the Protestant population numbers nearly 20,000. The Église Libre and the Lutheran Church are also represented. For a time the M'All Mission had several Salles in the city. There are 11 Protestant schools, which are well attended on the Thursdays, when religious instruction, as is customary over France, is imparted by the pastors and their assistants. M. Corbière belongs, I found, to the Liberal section of the Reformed Church, and is one of the few Protestant pastors I met, who were frankly opposed to Disestablishment, both on religious and on political grounds. He assured me, that the Roman Catholic population is much more accessible now than it used to be, in Lyons, to Protestant influence. Frequently at the cemeteries, when several burials are going on simultaneously, the different companies of mourners will gather round a Protestant pastor, to listen devoutly to the service he is conducting: and my informant said that, in nine out of ten cases of mixed marriages in the city, the household becomes Protestant rather than Catholic.

M. Delattre of Roanne.

From Lyons I made my way to Roanne, a considerable manufacturing town in Department Loire, with an intensely radical and socialist population, whose animus against clericalism has unhappily led to unconcealed indifference, if not antipathy, to all religion. Civil marriages and interments are here the vogue, and priestly influence is at a heavy discount. My main object in visiting Roanne was to meet with M. le Pasteur Samuel Delattre, of the Église Libre, one of the most devoted and successful evangelists in France. In conversation with him and his like-minded wife, who speaks English fluently, I learned a good deal about the extensive and impressive work which M. Delattre and his coadjutors have been carrying on in Auvergne during the past ten years. At first, he had to encounter violent opposition. The Protestant workers were sometimes stoned; trees were laid across the country roads at night, to cause, if possible, a carriage accident; and the mayors of certain villages, as well as the curés, connived at the persecution. But there has been a great improvement in this respect of recent years, and in some of the places where opposition was fiercest, there are

now churches or halls established, in which little Protestant congregations worship unmolested. Through the agency of two pastors (M. Delattre himself and M. De Perrot of Clermont), three evangelists, and three colporteurs, no fewer than 100 villages have been "evangelized," in the sense of having had the Gospel preached in them, and tracts and other religious literature disseminated, at the fairs and from house to house. M. Delattre spoke modestly enough about results. In some cases, he said, there had been a great show of welcome, which came to little when the novelty was past. But the Protestant cause has been well rooted in such places as Riom, Chateaugay, Beauregard, Orléat, and Sarraix, which have become centres of evangelistic influence on the region around.

M. Delattre impressed me as a man of singularly devout spirit, and of a glowing zeal which aims at no mere Protestantizing of the communities he seeks to influence, but at the winning of men's souls to Christ. He is under no illusions as to the difficulty of the work he has on hand. He spoke rather despondingly of the disappointments sometimes to be met with, in the melting away of what had seemed, in places, a movement big with promise. He did not minimize the forces of indifference, impurity, fanaticism, drunkenness, ignorance, to be encountered by the Gospel; and he showed himself well aware of the tactics of the Papal Church, which, by the appointment of zealous, clever, insinuating curés in places which show signs of yielding to the Protestant evangel, sometimes succeeds, with a liberal use of both threats and promises, in staying the progress of the work. But his face brightened again, as he recalled to mind the presence and the power of Jesus Christ, and bethought him of what the result would be for France, were those who know and love the Gospel to seek the enduement of the Spirit, and, falling back on Apostolic methods, to go forth two and two to win the nation for Christ. M. Delattre has sought, by an *École d'Évangélisation*, to do something to realize his own ideal. He has had a little group of disciples gathered round him for instruction in evangelistic methods, and above all for prayer and study of the Scriptures; and it is part of his ambition to see, in addition to those who give all their time to such work, a class of artisan evangelists, who might settle in different villages, there to ply their trades, and at the same time to make the Gospel known, and to be Aquilas and Priscillas to the less instructed who come under Gospel influence in the places where they live.

Roanne itself M. Delattre has found to be a peculiarly difficult soil to work. "It is a population living without God

and without hope : it absolutely confounds clericalism and Christianity : it does not wish to hear mention made of God." He finds it almost useless to invite the people to enter his chapel ; but by conversation and literature he does what he can to dissipate prejudice, and he has repeatedly attended the reunions of the League of the Rights of Man, and found opportunity, in face of a good deal of interruption, to bear his testimony and deliver his message there. In the surrounding country, évangélisation has been found much easier, notwithstanding the opposition of the priests. The Gospel has come to the country folk with all the attractiveness of novelty. It is easy to get enthusiastic audiences, of people wearied of the yoke of the priests and tired of clerical instruction, people, many of whom had come to the conclusion, even while they went on reciting their *Avés* and *Paternosters*, that death ends all. The great difficulty is to awaken in them the sense of sin ; but even in gatherings the most sceptical there are frequent tokens, that consciences, though sophisticated or asleep, are not wholly dead.

Evangelisation by Motor Car.

Shortly before I met with him, M. Delattre had engaged, along with M. Sainton, in a deeply interesting evangelistic circuit of two months' duration, in the course of which they had been enabled, through the use of an automobile, to preach the Gospel from fair to fair within a radius of 100 miles round about Roanne. They had, besides, scattered thousands of tracts and popular leaflets, and had sold no fewer than 2600 New Testaments. This work at the *foires*, which all the peasants frequent, prepares the way for the holding of conferences and reunions afterwards in the several villages. One of M. Delattre's enthusiasms when I saw him was, not unnaturally, the usefulness of the motor car as an instrument of rural evangelisation. He maintained that, in a region like that in which he is directly interested,—larger in area than the whole of Switzerland—two agents with an automobile at their disposal could do more work than twenty evangelists with only the ordinary means of transit. I trust that the good man's ambition to have such a car completely at the service of his mission has since been realized ; for I am inclined to subscribe to the opinion of another experienced missionary, that " a dozen motor-car evangelists well qualified for their task might go over the whole of France, and be instrumental in bringing about a great religious awakening." M. Delattre, certainly, would not be slack about fulfilling his part of such a programme.

With M. de Perrot of Clermont-Ferrand.

At Clermont-Ferrand, the strikingly situated capital of Puy de Dôme, I enjoyed most pleasant fellowship with M. le Pasteur Bernard de Perrot, who is the principal coadjutor of M. Delattre in the work of the Auvergne, and also, like him, a pastor of the Église Libre. M. de Perrot is a Swiss by birth, and had part of his theological training in Edinburgh. Besides carrying on his own pastoral work he has opened, in the heart of Clermont, an evangelistic hall, into which crowds throng who would not be induced to enter a Protestant church. Among these, in addition to earnest and direct preaching of the Word, a much-needed and hopeful work on Gospel temperance lines has been begun. M. de Perrot likewise keeps himself in touch with the mission outposts which are held, under M. Delattre and him, by approved evangelists and colporteurs.

A Visit to Orléat.

He and I visited one of these together, at the village of Orléat, some fifteen miles out of Clermont. We there met with M. Servien the evangelist, and had interesting interviews with some of the "amis," or friends of the Gospel, in the neighbourhood. The happy countenance of one of these rustic converts, a peasant woman of 72 years of age, comes before me still. One of the first things the old lady did, when she was converted four years ago, was to set about learning to read! This not only gave her direct personal access to the treasures of the Bible, but enabled her to minister to others around, who were hungering for the truth. A glance at her face, or at her home, at once suggested the Psalmist's declaration—"The entrance of Thy Word giveth light." As regards the Auvergne peasantry as a whole, they are, when not subdued to alcoholism, a hardy and industrious people, thrifty even to penuriousness; and when they are really won to Christ, and illumined by the Spirit, they develop qualities which show them to have been "well worth saving."

In and around St Etienne.

From Clermont I found my way to an important industrial centre in Loire, viz. St Etienne. There I hoped to see something of the religious-social work of M. Comte among the anarchists; but he happened to be from home, as was also Dr Burroughs of the M'All Mission. I was fortunate, however, in finding M. le Pasteur Coste, of the Église Libre, with whom I had an informative conversation about the general ecclesiastical situation in France, as well as about the state

of things religiously in and around St Etienne. There, as at Roanne, a somewhat gross form of materialism seems to prevail. In the town and neighbourhood, there are at least 14,000 miners, who live practically without religion, and have recourse to the church only on occasion of baptisms, marriages, and funerals—if even then; and the population generally is of a hard and worldly type. But, besides several Protestant congregations of different sects, there are various societies doing good work, whose adherents seek to encourage one another by reunions, held from time to time, of all in St Etienne who are seeking to advance Christ's Kingdom.

A very striking missionary development, of which M. Coste told me, has taken place quite recently in the neighbourhood, at a village called Malataverne, numbering some 300 inhabitants. The Roman Catholic authorities were so manifestly indifferent to the religious well-being of those poor people, that in disgust they began to enquire what Protestantism could do for them. There happened to be a colporteur in the neighbourhood, a former millworker, and he proved to be of great service to those hungering for the truth. A number of the villagers possessed themselves of New Testaments; and, though they had not entered a church for years, they were soon ready to welcome religious services held by M. Coste and others. The result is, that practically the entire village is now Protestant, and services are regularly conducted in the recently erected chapel, by ordained pastors from St Etienne and elsewhere when they can get them, but more usually by a resident lay helper, with such occasional assistance as he is able to secure. It is not improbable that the experience of Malataverne may be indefinitely repeated throughout France, if Disestablishment is accompanied by an outpouring of God's Spirit among the people.

(2) THE CHARENTES.

La Charente and La Charente Inférieure present conditions much more favourable for speedy evangelisation than are to be found in Auvergne and Loire; and, in point of fact, there is no part of France in which the Gospel work has made more marked progress in recent years. Here we find ourselves in a region which was at one time largely Protestant, and that for 150 years, but whose plains were soaked with the blood of the Huguenots during the terrible dragonnades. Notwithstanding the work of extermination then so pitilessly wrought, the light of Bible truth has never been wholly extinguished here. Lingering memories have survived of the heroes of La Rochelle, Pons, Jarnac, St

Jean d'Angély, and the rest, and subtle spiritual influences have continued to operate, that make the minds and hearts of the population even now, it would appear, more open and susceptible than they are elsewhere to evangelical impression. There has been, in consequence, a remarkable and cheering resuscitation of Protestantism in Saintonge, as the old Province was called. Whereas the 51 Reformed churches of 1598 had been reduced by 1807 to three (in La Rochelle, Saintes, and La Tremblade) there were present at the "Congress for the Evangelisation of the Charentes," held at Jarnac in 1900, no fewer than 43 agents (three of them converted priests) engaged in the service of the Gospel in this district—a number which has been added to since then.

On the way to the Charentes from Paris, I was interested to find the Reformed Church represented by well-organized congregations in Orleans, Blois, Tours, and Poitiers—in the last named of which the evangelisation of France may be said to have been originated. It began through the little community of believers whom Calvin gathered about him there, and among whom, so far as history records, the Lord's Supper was celebrated for the first time in France after the Protestant form, in a cave not far from the town, which still is known as "Calvin's Grotto." In Angoulême, too, the capital of the Charente Department, there is a considerable congregation belonging to the Église Réformée. But it is in the outlying districts, rather than in the larger towns, that the evangelical movement shows the chief signs of vitality.

The Beginnings of Revival at Barbezieux.

The present-day revival of Protestantism in Charente may be said to date back to the year 1882, when Pastor Théophile Duproix of Barbezieux was approached by two Roman Catholic parents from Tâtre, a neighbouring village, asking baptism for their recently born children. They had quarrelled with their priest; but it also turned out that they were sick of Roman Catholicism. After instructing them in the meaning of the ordinance, the pastor consented to baptize their children. The address given at the ceremony awakened widespread interest. A month or two later, Pastor Duproix was invited to hold an evangelical service in Tâtre, as the result of which 50 persons gave in their adherence to Protestantism. He was afraid at first that the enthusiasm might be nothing better than a "blaze of straw"; but the movement has continued to spread until more than 100 places in Charente have been influenced by it. Protestant communities were founded successively in Baignes, Chillac,

Saint-Maigrin, Guimps, Mérignac-le-Pin, Guizengeard, Viresse, Medaillac, Cressac, and other places. Pastor Duproix, an indefatigable worker, had on his own shoulders, practically, the burden of superintending the whole work for a number of years, but he has latterly had four or five other helpers associated with him. The work continues to grow, and is furthered by the establishment of religious libraries in various centres, and by the diffusion of literature generously supplied by the Tract Society of Paris (*Société des Traités Religieux de Paris*). I am informed that the work at Mérignac has been specially living of late, under Pastor Émile Durand, who has started services in 14 neighbouring villages. He and his band of young helpers are meeting with much encouragement. As an instance, a lady visitor who went from door to door in a certain village before a meeting met with no refusals, and succeeded in gathering an audience of 70 persons—in the front row of whom sat the organist and church choir of the priest, singing the Gospel hymns most lustily.

M. Robert, and the Work at Pons.

Another highly important centre—in Charente Inférieure—about 25 miles to the west of Barbezieux, is Pons, where the work is managed also by a special committee, under the patronage of the Conseil Presbytéral of the parish. Here the moving spirit is Pastor Benjamin Robert, a man who rivals Pastor Duproix in energy and power of initiative. The two co-operate in the production of a weekly Protestant journal for the whole district entitled *La Réforme des Charentes*; and M. Robert issues, in addition, from the domestic hand-press worked by the manse family, an occasional print entitled *Œuvre de Propagande Évangélique de Pons*.

It was in the year 1895 that the religious awakening in the Pons district, though it did not originate then, received an impulse which has been felt ever since, through the conversion of M. le Curé Frédéric Bonhomme, of St Palais-de-Phiolin. He announced his break with Rome to his flock from the pulpit on Sabbath, the 23rd July of that year, and on the following Sabbath took part in an evangelical service. After theological education at Paris and Neuchatel, and a period of probation, he became an ordained pastor of the Église Réformée in 1900, and is now doing good work at Vinsobres in Drôme. By the date of M. Bonhomme's ordination, about 1000 souls in the Pons district had adhered to the evangelical faith; 14 villages had instituted regular services; and in 18 others the Gospel had been welcomed by the inhabitants. Since then the work has further progressed.

By the end of 1903, the names of 1262 heads of families won from Romanism had been entered in the church rolls of the evangelical community of Pons, and others have been added during the past year, of "such as are being saved."

M. le Pasteur Robert himself resides in Pons, which has again become an important evangelistic centre, as it also was long ago under Anton, one of Calvin's converts, in Reformation days. But he is in personal contact with what is going on in the 34 Protestant "annexes" or outposts in the region round about. He conducts 12 or 13 services himself every week, but is aided in the work, which he calls "a work of Huguenot restoration," by other five pastors and evangelists, who operate on groups of villages from such sub-centres as Marignac, Puy Haut, St Martial, St Palais, and Montils. Pastor Robert I found to be in full sympathy with the ecclesiastical policy of M. Combes, who, by the way, has been for 31 years the Mayor of Pons, where he has had his home since he was 14 years of age. I asked M. Robert what effect he expected separation of Church and State to have on Protestant progress. He replied that he would anticipate a large accession to the ranks of Protestantism in France generally, and not least in his own neighbourhood, where the Protestant spirit abounds already, and where the people have not quite forgotten or forgiven the persecutions to which their forefathers were subjected by the Roman Church.

M. Robert carries on his work on broader lines, perhaps, than those on which the work in the Auvergne, for instance, is conducted. He speaks strongly about the importance of the ranks being closed among all Protestants, State Church or Free Church, Orthodox or Liberal, for more effective aggression on the forces of unbelief and superstition. He believes also in variety of method, in trying to interest and arouse those he seeks to benefit in the highest sense. The magic-lantern and the phonograph are used as attractions to his winter evening conferences, and he has established "Popular Circles" in different places, with lecture rooms and circulating libraries, etc., as adjuncts to his main work. But there can be no doubt that what Pastor Robert longs for is, the true conversion of France to the Gospel, and that what he himself supremely seeks is, to get at the consciences and hearts of the people for Christ. As regards clerical opposition to his work, he told me that, though there is an ecclesiastical college at Pons with between 300 and 400 students, the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in the neighbourhood is of the most superficial character—as may be gathered from the fact that in localities where they have several hundreds of nominal followers the curés do not assemble more than three

or four persons to Mass. It will not content M. Robert to have these nominal Catholics merely changed into nominal Protestants: what he and his co-labourers desire to make of them is, genuine and well-instructed Christians. I came away with very pleasant recollections of both Pastor and Madame Robert and their bright home circle of helpers-together in faith, and joy, and holy duty, and with very distinct impressions of the vitality and value of the work that radiates from the manse at Pons.

Villefagnan, Chasseneuil, and Lapéruse.

Apart from the leading centres already specified, there is quite a number of other separate stations in the Charentes where an interesting Gospel work is going on. Some of these I visited. At Villefagnan, a very quiet village, where nobody had apparently seen or would give change for an English sovereign, I met with M. Lassueur, an earnest evangelist of the Société Centrale, who seems to be encouraged in his work. A secondary but important fruit of evangelisation had attention called to it shortly before, in connection with a criminal case from this district which was being tried at Angoulême. The magistrate, wishing for reliable witnesses, asked the evangelist of Villefagnan if there were Protestants in the Commune: because he had recognized, he said, that the evidence of Protestants was more sincere and frank than that of other inhabitants. This was a significant testimony to the ethical value of Protestantism, worth putting alongside the testimony to its religious value borne by a dying woman, in the presence of her freethinking husband, to the priest who came and proposed to administer to her the last Sacrament—"I have ceased to be a Roman Catholic," she said, "to become a Christian."

At Chasseneuil, a place to the north-east of Angoulême, I did not find Pastor Lhoumeau (Église Réformée) at home, but I met with one of his elders, M. Kühn, and visited the little "Temple," which bears on its façade the inviting motto, "Viens et Vois" (Jean 1/39). The Protestant community here, including some who come from a considerable distance, numbers about 150 adherents, and from what I learned is in good heart. It is in close touch with Fontafie and other stations near. Having some time to spare, I made bold to visit the village curé of Chasseneuil. He was an old gentleman of somewhat vinegar aspect, but received me courteously enough. He appeared to take rather a dismal view of the ecclesiastical future, though he sought comfort, after the manner of Browning, from the reflection that God is in His heaven, that "le bon Dieu" reigns.

Lapéruse, some ten miles from Chasseneuil, is a post held by the Société Évangélique. The Gospel was carried to it from Chasseneuil by a young railwayman, who, having suffered from an accident, had to give up his work there and return to Lapéruse. The hearts of the people were open to receive the Scriptures, and a desire was shown for Gospel meetings, in different places in the neighbourhood. Mr W. F. Hathaway, now of Bournemouth, took up the work, which so grew that he had to call in other help. The station with its five surrounding annexes is held at present by a bright and active young evangelist, M. Boniteau, who told me that they were hoping to have a church built in the spring-time. A good deal of hostility had to be encountered formerly from the priests and their confederates. But "les amis" had for the most part stood firm, and M. Boniteau affirmed, that if women converts were often harder to win from Romanism than men, they were found to be specially "fidèles," when won, in face of whatever persecution. Here, as elsewhere, I could perceive that the consistent characters of those who have embraced the Gospel form one of the most powerful arguments with the people on behalf of Protestantism. As a peasant said to me—"C'est le Christianisme pratique."

St Cybardeaux, Rouillac, Matha, and St Jean d'Angély.

In another direction, to the north-west of Angoulême, I visited, at St Cybardeaux, M. Lacuve, an experienced evangelist of the Société Centrale, whose work there and at St Genis-d'Hiersac, with its interesting annex Neuillac, has been making encouraging progress. In the last-named place, there had been formerly, some 40 years ago, a Protestant place of worship. M. Lacuve found, in visiting Neuillac in 1899, some old people who had actually belonged to the congregation before the church was, for whatever reason, closed. He had the building re-opened; and at a meeting called in the spring of 1900, he gave an exposition of Protestant principles, and then asked all to stand up and give in their names who were resolved to worship God according to the Gospel. There were 45 who responded, declaring that they meant to live and die in the Reformed Church: and the number has since increased to a membership of about 100. Rouillac, where I had the pleasure of meeting M. Auboin, an esteemed evangelist of the Église Libre, is a quaint old village a few miles to the west of St Cybardeaux. There, as at Matha, also an Église Libre centre, under Pastor Monnier, at which I touched on the way to St Jean d'Angély, there is a genuine and progressive, if undemonstrative, Gospel work going forward.

At St Jean d'Angély, I had hoped to meet with M. Réveillaud, the Deputy for Charente Inférieure, who is one of the most steadfast and influential friends of Protestantism in France. He was visiting his constituents, but, to my great regret, had left just before I arrived. M. Réveillaud was once himself a Roman Catholic, and afterwards became a freethinker; but in July 1878 he was converted to the evangelical faith. He has been the subject of virulent attacks from the Jesuits. Taking, however, as his motto, "I believe, and therefore speak," he has continued, by voice and pen, fearlessly and eloquently to proclaim the truth of the Gospel. Different missionary societies, including the M'All Mission, have found in him an active ally, and I believe he is still Director of the Paris Tract Society. He is not ashamed to preach the Gospel in the midst of his constituents; and it is a significant thing that, in present-day France, he and other politicians who might be named do not suffer at all in popularity because of the outspokenness of their Protestant opinions. This I was assured of by M. le Pasteur Caris, whose Sunday service I was privileged to attend, and who knows M. Réveillaud well.

A Link with Scotland.

The congregation in the town of St Jean d'Angély is not a large one, but Gospel work is carried on in four neighbouring stations, where the pastor has the co-operation of M. Besançon as evangelist. I was reminded by M. Caris, that John Welsh, the son-in-law of John Knox, was one of his predecessors in office, having been pastor to the Protestant congregation of St Jean d'Angély in 1621, when the city was girt round by the armies of Louis XIII. Welsh inspired the defenders to a stout resistance by his example of consummate bravery, but the most they could secure at last was favourable terms of surrender. Persecutions followed, and for a time Protestantism seemed to be practically extinct. It was in 1840 that the work was entered on which has resuscitated the Reformed cause, in such measure, in this historic old town and neighbourhood.

The Progress of Huguenot Restoration.

What has been said may suffice as an indication of how the work of "Huguenot restoration" is progressing in the deeply interesting region of the Charentes, as well as in the neighbouring Gironde, in such places as St Aubin-de-Blaye, near Bordeaux, where there has been a remarkable Gospel movement under Pastor Faivre and others. A discovery made in Montargis, a sequestered village in another part of France, where the Gospel had not been preached for 200 years, is symbolic of

much that is taking place in this whole south-western district of the country. An old Carmelite chapel had been bought, and was being adapted for Protestant worship. While certain repairs were going on, a stone was laid bare, on which there ran the inscription in old French—"C'est ici la maison de Dieu; c'est ici la porte des Cieux" (Gen. xxviii. 17). And what was for centuries a Carmelite chapel, but had been before a Huguenot place of worship, is now a Protestant church restored.

(3) LA CORRÈZE.

The Corrèze is a different type of district from that which we have just visited. It is a Highland and rather sterile region in the central plateau of France, to the south-west of the mountains of Auvergne. The inhabitants are for the most part poor, ill-educated, and superstitious. There are traces among them still of a kind of nature worship, such as prevailed in heathen Gaul. Many of the peasantry believe in the Naiads and Nereids of antiquity. They bow to the arts of sorcery, and themselves present offerings of cakes, and salt, and pieces of money to the pools, and wells, and fountains, in order to propitiate the genii, and secure blessing from the saints, associated with them. But this people sitting in darkness have lately seen the great Light. The Dayspring from on high has visited them.

The Awakening of the Corrèze.

Six years ago, there was only one small Protestant community in the whole of the Corrèze—the congregation, namely, at Brive, ministered to by M. le Pasteur E. Fallourd. Now, there are seven leading centres, each with its annexes, manned by the Société Évangélique, with nine pastors or evangelists doing what in them lies to carry the torch of truth from village to village, in response to the invitation that reaches them from all sides—"Come over and help us! Bring to us the Gospel—the same as at Madranges!" What this last expression means will appear immediately.

I approached the district by way of Brive, where, unfortunately, I failed to find M. Fallourd at home, and Tulle, a manufacturing town and the seat of a bishopric. At the latter place, where Pastor Bourquin had just succeeded M. Mourgue, but also happened to be from home, I met with one of the agents of the Société Évangélique, who gave me useful information about the work going on in the Department. Following his directions, I found my way into the hill country, by means of the recently opened light railway (chemin de fer régional) to Treignac, a town of about 3000 inhabitants, picturesquely situated on the Vézère. Here I

made my headquarters for several days, and found it both an agreeable and a convenient coign of vantage for a survey of the Corrèze Gospel work.

A Visit to Madranges.

Madranges, mentioned above, is the place where the movement had its origin. It is about six miles to the south of Treignac, and I had very pleasant intercourse there with Pastor Beau and his family. In the pretty little stone church, at the forenoon Sunday service, I found an audience of about 60 persons, listening devoutly to the Gospel message, and joining heartily in the church praise, which was led by Miss Beau on a harmonium presented to the congregation by Mr Hathaway. From the walls, such texts as these looked down upon us: "Dieu est amour," "C'est ici la maison de Dieu," "Sois fidèle jusqu' à la mort." The evening attendance is larger, I believe, than the morning one. Fully half of those present were men, but there was also a number of neatly attired peasant women, some of them young mothers with their babies, who helped them to illustrate very aptly during the sermon, both on the literal and on the spiritual side of its meaning, the apostolic counsel—"Desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." The service was certainly an impressive contrast in its primitive simplicity to the elaboration and formality usually associated with public worship in Roman Catholic countries. At the close, I visited the Sunday School, which has a roll of 50 or 60 pupils, and heard the peasant boys and girls vie brightly with one another in answering their catechism and repeating their Bible portions.

There was one man whose hand I grasped with special warmth: I mean M. Dupuy, the Concierge, who is at once church officer, member of the church council, librarian, and—hero of the congregation of Madranges. This brave veteran, whose son is now an evangelist, has been a valiant leader of the Protestant movement here from the beginning. To his earnestness and fidelity, though he is but a simple villager, the whole of the Corrèze may be said to owe a debt of gratitude.

The Gospel Hunger at Madranges.

This leads me to speak of the rise of the evangelical movement in Madranges. It began in this wise. The village had been for about a century without a resident priest, its religious interests being nominally served by the curé of Lonzac, five miles away. Latterly, this dignitary had not been finding it convenient to pay even his fortnightly visit,

and insisted on the people going rather to him, if they wished the services of the Church, and on the children trudging all the way, winter and summer, to Lonzac, by seven o'clock in the morning, for their instruction in the catechism. The men of Madranges grew more and more indifferent, and at last, when the health of the children began to suffer and one of them died, the women altogether rebelled. The children were forbidden by their parents to go any more to Lonzac, and the Madranges population was sinking into a state of utter religious destitution. But in some hearts there was a spiritual hunger, and in others there was at least a desire for the outward decencies of religious observance. A written and signed appeal was accordingly sent to the Bishop of Tulle. But in vain. In the deadlock which ensued, Madranges, so far as the clerical authorities were concerned, was left practically derelict for eighteen months.

Then it was that M. Dupuy, the sacristan, who had served the Mass for more than 30 years in the Roman Catholic Church, came to the front. He had come into possession of a Bible, which brought light to his own soul: and now he undertook the religious instruction of the children, he read the prayers at funerals, and—while the nuptial benediction had to be sought from a priest in a neighbouring parish by those who were not content with a civil marriage—discharged generally in his own humble way a pastor's functions. Every Sabbath evening, M. Dupuy presided at a religious gathering in the church, where the people sang hymns and counted their beads, after he had read from beside the altar the Gospel for the day.

Protestant Help invoked.

Fretted by their isolation, however, he and the other devout people in the village bethought them of turning to the Protestants, of whose good work one and another of them had heard, for help. A letter signed by a number of the leading villagers was addressed to the Pastor at Brive, in August 1898, expressing their "desire to have a worship which would keep them from sinking back to the primitive state," and asking if the Protestants could aid them. The letter was forwarded to the Société Évangélique in Paris, and M. Fallourd, by appointment, went to Madranges for conference on August 16th. He was received with every mark of enthusiastic welcome, by a crowd too great to be accommodated in the Roman Catholic church; and, from beneath a tree in the centre of the village, he preached from John iii. 16 a direct Gospel sermon, that made a profound impression on the hearers. A few days later, he was asked back to preside at a burial service in the Roman Catholic

church, where he read the Word of God to the people under the glimmer of a taper held by the sacristan. Next, he was besought to hold another conference on the feast day of the patron of the village—St Bartholomew! He complied, and he and M. Émile Bertrand of Paris, Director of the Evangelical Society, celebrated that memorable anniversary by holding a warm and simple Gospel service in a Roman Catholic building, among a crowd of persons who had entered the chapel dipping their fingers in the holy water and making the sign of the Cross! The appetite of the hearers was so great that, between Saturday evening and Monday morning, they insisted on having no fewer than five religious services. Then the church was put at the disposition of M. Fallourd, who continued for about two months preaching the Gospel in it almost every day. The inhabitants now pressed for the appointment of a regular Protestant pastor; and, in response to a petition with 157 signatures, the Committee of the Société Évangélique decided, in October 1898, on making Madranges one of their evangelistic stations. During that winter, M. Fallourd, who undertook the provisional direction of the work, laboured for it with great fortitude and zeal.

A Clerical Reaction.

The clerical authorities had now, naturally, taken alarm, and eagerly sought to stay the plague. Madranges was no longer to be left without a curé. A young abbé, selected by the Bishop of Tulle as being well known and liked in the neighbourhood, arrived to represent the interests of the Church. His first visit was made to the sacristan; but M. Dupuy's answer sadly disconcerted him—"M. le Curé, I cannot serve the Mass for you; I am Protestant." The abbé turned to the son of the sacristan—"Well, Denis, you will serve the Mass for me." "Oh! me, M. le Curé?" was the answer; "still less than my father!" Next day the priest had 22 villagers at the Mass, while the pastor had more than 100 hearers. The following Sabbath, the curé and a colleague posted themselves as pickets at the church door, before the Protestant service began, in the hope of intimidating intending worshippers. This made M. Fallourd a little anxious; but what was his joy when he saw a troop of young lads and girls marching in before him, beneath the eyes of the priest, singing with all their might (*à tue-tête*) the hymn—"Jusqu' à la mort, nous te serons fidèles!"

Persecution, of course, followed, and was persisted in. Another and more resolute curé was appointed, and everything that calumnies, promises, threats, bribes could do has

been attempted, to win Madranges back to Romanism. But, though these methods have succeeded in some cases, the cause of the Gospel has been maintained, and its adherents have for the most part been steadfast. The Roman Catholic building had, of necessity, to be surrendered. Meetings were held in Dupuy's house and in a barn for a time. Then, on 11th March 1900, the present Protestant church, packed with nearly 400 people, was inaugurated by M. le Pasteur Isaac Picard of Paris; and it has been, ever since, the spiritual home of an attached and live congregation, among whom the fruits of righteousness continue to appear.

Progress of the Gospel Movement.

Mention should here be made of the efforts put forth by the friends of the Gospel for the material well-being of the poor people at Madranges. Mademoiselle Beau, the accomplished daughter of the pastor there, who has studied in England and speaks English well, has been teaching the women and girls lace-making—an art which about 100 of them have readily acquired, and by which they can earn from 60 centimes to a franc per day. Many of them occupy themselves with it, while watching their flocks, or in the intervals of household duty. This industry has spread from Madranges to other districts, with good results in more respects than one. The male population, also, have been helped, through the establishment of agricultural societies (*solidarités agricoles*), by which newer methods and appliances of cultivation have been made known, and a system set on foot of mutual aid in cases of sickness and loss. In these ways, the conditions of country life have been made more tolerable even in the rather barren regions of the Corrèze, and the temptation to seek the by no means unmixed advantages of the town has been correspondingly reduced.

As regards the progress of the Gospel in the adjoining district, the doings of the people of Madranges, as was inevitable, were soon noised abroad, and many in other Highland villages were heard asking, not only what these things meant, but whether the Gospel message, which had found such a welcome there, might not be good news intended also for themselves. The example of courageous independence of priestly influence, set in the one village, speedily began to be emulated elsewhere; and requests for instruction in Protestant doctrine came pouring in from different quarters, not only in the name of individual inhabitants, but often in name of the municipality, with the Maire at their head. When it is mentioned that such a cry has come from no fewer than 40 villages, in 30 of which the Gospel is now more or less regu-

larly preached, it will be seen how widespread as well as earnest a desire for the Bread of Life has been developed in La Corrèze.

Treignac again unfurls the Gospel Banner.

Treignac was naturally one of the first places to which the Madranges movement spread: and here, too, the Gospel has taken firm hold of a considerable section of the population. In Reformation days this was also true, under the influence of Roussel, the chaplain of Margaret of Navarre, who visited this region. After various vicissitudes during the civil war, the Protestants in 1562 had a church yielded to them, which still exists, though it has now been converted into the Treignac Town-house (*Hôtel de Ville*). Fire and sword afterwards did their deadly work, so that the Huguenot religion was almost completely stamped out. Yet, even 30 years after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes there remained, according to a contemporary Papal Report, a goodly number of "suspects" in the Treignac neighbourhood. Then, after the lapse of two centuries, the Gospel banner was again unfurled here, and there is now in Treignac a new Church of the Reformation, of which the original members subscribed this unambiguous declaration—"We, the undersigned, declare that we abjure and abandon absolutely the Romish Papal Church, and attach ourselves voluntarily to the form of Evangelical Christianity known as Protestant, according to the teaching of the Bible in the Old and New Testaments. And we desire for ourselves the ministry of a Protestant evangelical pastor."

Enemies have been on the alert. But the municipal authorities at Treignac have been, on the whole, friendly. They have not gone the length of restoring their Town-house for Protestant Church uses, but they have permitted meetings to be freely held in the market square, and have approved the purchase of a site near by, for the building of a modest but commodious place of worship. The church, which I saw in course of construction and which is no doubt finished and opened by this time, is the more necessary, now that Treignac is in touch with the railway system and is likely, from its picturesque situation and agreeable climate, to grow in importance in the near future.

It was at the call of 40 heads of families that M. Gaydou, who had been holding meetings in the town before, became the first pastor of Treignac, in November 1899. He laboured with much acceptance and success, in face of a good deal of hardship, until, in about a couple of years, he was called to another post in Switzerland. The work was threatened with a backset, owing to M. Gaydou's departure; but it was

taken up with much enthusiasm by M. François Martin, who, with the co-operation of his son-in-law M. Garais, soon more than recovered the lost ground, and gathered about him sometimes as many as 150 to 180 hearers. When the services of M. Garais were required elsewhere, owing to the extension of the work to Gourdon and Bugeat, M. Martin was joined by Pastor Schütz, who still labours along with him, not only in Treignac, but in the surrounding annexes, such as Chaumeil, Auxillac, Chamberet, Lauve, and Usange.

With M. Martin at Treignac.

M. Martin was present in Treignac during my stay there, though M. Schütz happened to be away, and I had pleasant fellowship and informing conversation with both him and his excellent helpmeet. What I saw of M. Martin and his work impressed me very favourably. He addressed the Sabbath evening reunion with much evangelic fervour, and there was an unmistakable spirit of responsiveness in the hearty gathering of old and young assembled in the workshop, where for the time the meetings had to be held. At the close there was a good deal of cordial handshaking, the "amis" being evidently glad to meet with a Protestant from a thoroughly Protestant country. One thing that particularly struck me was the heartiness of the singing. In Treignac, as in other places affected by the evangelical revival, hymn singing is extremely popular, especially among the younger people, just as was the case in the 16th century revival, under both Luther and Calvin. Sometimes the pastor, when he visits the neighbouring annexes, is accompanied by a youthful escort singing hymns all the way. Joint Bible-reading is another feature of the movement in the Corrèze, where a good many Bibles, that had been gifted by the Swiss to the soldiers of Bourbaki when driven across the frontier in 1871, have been kept as souvenirs, and are now put to practical and delightful use. This custom enables the young people to give very apt and sometimes embarrassing answers to the curés and others who try to lead them away from their adherence to the Protestant cause. When baffled in argument, or reached by an arrow from the Bible quiver, these meddlers can only fall back on abusive names, such as "hypocrites," "heretics," "Prussiens," "Anglais," "traitors," or try, when occasion offers, what "boycotting" will do.

Extension of the Work in and beyond Corrèze.

Passing reference has already been made to the work of M. Garais in the neighbourhood of Gourdon and Bugeat. It grows in importance yearly, and has in turn extended itself

to such villages in the higher plateau as Millevaches, Saint Sulpice, and Chavanac, where M. Béal, a pupil of the School of Félix Neff, is now evangelist pastor. At Morciel and Marcillon also, there have been interesting developments, as well as at Vernejoux, a place some nine miles from Madranges. The Vernejoux movement is led by two men, of whom one is a blacksmith and the other a lay teacher, head of one of the schools which the clericals denounce as godless. The petition that brought the Madranges pastor at first to Vernejoux was signed by 57 of the inhabitants, and the reunions held since then have sometimes numbered upwards of 200 persons. In another district, at Objat, with Vignols and Segonzac as annexes, Pastor Dumas has met with much encouragement, as has also Pastor Fallourd at Meyssac, La Brette, and other stations near Brive.

In short, wherever the Gospel is carried in La Corrèze, audiences are found ready to listen to the good tidings of great joy, not only with their ears, but, as one observer has graphically put it, "with their eyes and their mouths." No wonder that *La Croix* has sounded the trumpet—though in vain—"contre l'invasion protestante," and that among the petitions hung up, with a votive offering, in the Virgin's grotto at Lourdes, there is one that reads—"Prayers are asked for a whole region in France, which is on the point of passing to Protestantism." Nor is the "invasion" confined to La Corrèze. There is a notable if a less pervasive work going on in the neighbouring Departments too, as at Aurillac in Cantal, Aubusson in Creuse, and St Yrieix in Haute Vienne, where an ex-priest, M. Corby, is doing good service in connection with the M'All Mission.

What a Priest said, and what the People feel.

A Roman Catholic priest whom I interviewed in the train said to me, that "religion is in a bad way in Central France." Much, of course, depends upon the point of view from which one speaks. Even a devout Romanist should be thankful for the answer the Corrèze is giving to those who flout at faith of every kind, and say that "in France, at any rate, religion has had its day." And evangelical Christians should be further thankful, that in this remote but interesting region the French Highlanders are being shaken out of superstition as well as unbelief, and are bidding welcome to the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. "It is," said one of them, very expressively, "as if you had been all your life in a cave, and you were suddenly transported into the full light of day." Or, as another touchingly put it, using a different figure, racy of the soil, "We here were like poor people who had never

eaten any but black bread, and did not know if white bread were good. Till now, in the matter of religion, people have given us only black bread. Eh bien ! Nous voulons goûter du pain blanc ! ”

May God, who is blessing the Église Libre in its work in the Auvergne, and the Église Réformée with its Société Centrale in its work in the Charentes, continue to speed the labours of the Société Évangélique in the Corrèze, while it seeks, in so far as men and means enable it, to meet the necessities of the souls who are hungering there with a hunger to be satisfied only with the Bread of Life !

CHAPTER VII

THE OUTLOOK

"IN the 16th century, France was awanting to Protestantism ; in the 20th century, may Protestantism not be awanting to France!" This prayer of a good French pastor is a prayer that should find an echo in the heart of every friend of France, and every lover of the Gospel.

The Pope's Reading of French History.

What Romanism has been to that nation is patent to all the world. The present occupant of the Papal Chair has, indeed, his own peculiar reading of French history. In addressing, on 8th September last, a so-called "pilgrimage of the France of labour," he attempted to maintain the thesis, that "the epochs in which France attained the splendours of glory, when she shed over her children the advantages of real prosperity, have been those in which she listened to the salutary counsels of the Church": and he added, "France knows that she owes her preponderance in the world to the Catholic Church, and that the sequel of her apostasy would be her downfall." But Frenchmen have learned to read history for themselves. This Papal allocution called forth—as in the *Dépêche* of Toulouse—biting comments on "Le Pape Historien," leading up to the conclusion that French history, properly read, reveals the Papacy as the grand "promoter of our hatreds, of our civil wars, of our worst crimes, and of our worst miseries." And there are many in France to-day, who have not missed the lesson rubbed into the French mind by M. Yves Guyot and others, that "the Catholic nations—Spain, Italy, Austria, France—are on the decline, while, next to them, the Protestant nations bloom and prosper."

A Frenchman's Verdict on the Papacy.

There can be no doubt whatever that France, as a whole, is heartily sick of the Papacy. Men have lost faith in it as a religion ; they have become exasperated with it as a policy. Both as a religious and as a political system, it is regarded by multitudes as nothing better than a cheat. It is from the pen of a Frenchman, who was himself brought up within the

Roman pale, though no longer within it, that the following indictment, for example, comes—"Owing to her organisation, her framework, and her sacerdotal hierarchy, Roman Catholicism has every appearance of strength and grandeur; but spiritual life has gone out of her. It is with her as with the Pontiffs of Rome, who are covered after their death with the richest pontifical robes, crowned with the tiara, dressed in the stole, and carried thus triumphantly before crowds who prostrate themselves as if the Pope could still bless them. Take away the draperies, shake off the bandages—you will find decomposition and worms. The Angel of Death has passed over her."

We have noted, in the preceding pages, how the revulsion from Romanism has been practically expressing itself in France. Among the politicians—by measures of repression and separation; among the priesthood—by the defection of hundreds upon hundreds of the clergy from the church; among the people—negatively, by the abandonment, in countless instances, of all profession of religion, and positively, in cases not a few, by an earnest quest elsewhere for that pacifying of the conscience and satisfying of the heart and mind which Rome has proved herself unable to provide. That this threefold movement away from Rome will, on the whole, work for the highest good of the nation, the present writer, at any rate, cannot doubt.

An Optimistic Clerical Forecast.

It is always possible, of course, that there might be a recrudescence of clerical influence in France, under the new conditions now opening out there. This, apparently, is hoped for in certain quarters. In prospect of the complete rupture between Church and State, Abbé Garnier, for example, wrote in *Le Peuple Français*—"In France, the people are getting ready for the break, by founding a central fund for the support of the priesthood, to replace the 'Budget des Cultes.' When one sees the Catholics giving every year more than two hundred millions of francs for their operations, one feels it will be easy to find other forty or fifty millions. . . . With the bishops and the priests freed from the chains of the official bureaucracy, and solely occupied in making true Christians, well-instructed, enlightened, and convinced, we shall not be slow to bless M. Combes: he will have become, without wishing it, the greatest benefactor of the Church in France." Some of the bishops, interviewed by the *Siècle*, have been similarly whistling to keep their spirits up; and writers in *Le Correspondant*, too, I observe, have tried in quite an elaborate way to persuade themselves and others that Dis-

establishment—their aversion from which at the same time they cannot conceal—will set the Church free to be a more formidable force in the country than before.

A Darker View of the Outlook.

This optimistic view, however, is not generally shared by the adherents of the Papacy. The Pope himself, "who humbly holds on earth the place of God,"—to quote his modest description of himself—says, in an encyclical of 27th March, relative to France, that "it is unfortunately to be believed, that it will not be long before we are face to face with a catastrophe." Then comes the veiled threat of reactionary mischief—"We bitterly regret the fate of the French people, whom we love with all our soul: for every harm done to the Church reacts on public affairs." So Abbé Loisy, while seeking to be cheerful about the ultimate future of Catholicism, sees in the abolition of the Concordat a terrible blow to the Church—"Public worship will be suppressed in half the rural parishes for want of funds, and in various districts the peasants will soon grow accustomed to dispense with the offices of the Church in the most important events of their lives,"—an opinion which chimes with the testimony of a country priest—"I know the peasant character well: I have lived among them many years. I say that if tomorrow the Government suppressed the 'Budget des Cultes,' these people would not give us sixpence." As for the wealthier Catholics, their hands, as Loisy says, are so full with the maintenance of free schools and charities, that they cannot assure public worship in 37,000 parishes. What British Roman Catholics, again, think of the prospect is not very flattering to their brethren in France, if we are to accept the following forecast from one of their leading journals in this country, the *Catholic Times*—"French Catholics are a poor lot, as their apathy and indifference have shown, and to expect them to pay for the support of their priests and bishops, is to expect to gather grapes off thorns and figs off thistles. Without a subsidy from the State, religion would shrivel up like a starfish on a sunbeaten shore. The clergy would starve, their parishes dwindle, and within a couple of decades three-fourths of the churches be vacant of ministers and worshippers."

A Grave Risk of the Situation.

Time will show which of the rival vaticinations is correct; and also whether or not there is to be, after Disestablishment, a Gallican schism, as some surmise, within the Papal Church. In any case, it is evident that the outlook for Roman Catho-

licism is extremely hazardous ; and it is certain that the religious future of France, in any genuine spiritual sense, is a dark one indeed, in so far as that communion is concerned. One of the gravest risks of the situation, moreover, lies in this—the proneness of many to confound Romanism with Christianity, and to swell the popular cry, “ Le Clergé a tué la religion ! Let us be done with religion altogether ! ” The fear of Christian patriotism is not foundationless, that “ if an atheist of genius were to arise at this hour in France, he might lead the nation into the abyss.”

France's Lesson from the Past.

But let us take comfort, with Browning and the old curé of Chasseneuil whom I formerly quoted, from the reflection that “ God is in His heaven.” And let us trust that the French people have really learned the lessons of their own religious history. If this should prove to be the case, it will be well. A further opportunity is being given to them, such as seldom comes to a nation, to reverse the fateful choice of the long ago. Restive under the Roman yoke, they have in time past sought various makeshifts in the endeavour to be rid of it, without having recourse to the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. But, quick-witted though they are as a people, such inventiveness in the religious sphere has come to little that was either good or lasting. The worship of Reason—the ethical code which Robespierre was left to interpret and apply : “ detestation of tyranny, punishment of tyrants, help of the miserable, respect for the oppressed, and justice for all ”—the later “ Theophilanthropism,” whose leading note was the love of God and regard for man, and “ whose worship consisted in meetings of the people to hear political news, moral discourses, and stories of civic bravery and devotion ” :—a réchauffé of poor stale devices like these will do little for France in the future as in the past, when they threw the nation back on Roman Catholicism, with such a *modus vivendi* for religious freedom and progress as was afforded under the Concordat of Napoleon and the Pope. In days when the cry is, “ Away with the Concordat ! À bas le Cléricalisme ! ” it is in the direction neither of license, nor of superstition, nor of philosophic spiritualism that France must look for salvation.

Hope and salvation for France are to be found in that Gospel, which those who once dominated her destinies despised and rejected, but for which, as the foregoing pages tell, many of her children have hungered, and are hungering more and more. Facts prove that the French people, in turning from superstition, will not rest in mere negation.

The work of evangelisation, among all classes and conditions of them, has in these recent days gone beyond the stage of mere experiment. And it is not for nothing that, in Divine Providence, the Church of the Reformation, which had to fight for its life against the bitterest persecution for more than two centuries, and has had to carry on its work under disabilities of various kinds even during most of the century just ended, lives at this hour, and is probably more alive than ever it has been since the days of the Reformers.

Present Calls and Opportunities for Protestantism.

The responsibility laid upon the Protestant churches in France at present is a heavy but an honourable one. It may be hoped that they will be encouraged to rise to the height of God's great Providential argument, by the assurance that the churches of the Reformation in other lands are not only looking on with sympathetic eye and prayerful heart, but are ready to extend a helping hand, for the evangelisation of the land that gave birth to Calvin and was so freely saturated with the blood of the Huguenots. What the Papal organs in France speak of as "the Protestant peril" should be a subject of interest, and a theme of thankfulness and hope, with Protestants everywhere. It does not concern France alone; but, as it has been suggestively phrased, "What the advancement of Romanism in England is for Rome, the victories of Protestantism in France ought to be for evangelicals all over the world."

Avowed Protestants, it is true, are vastly fewer as yet in France than they certainly would have been with anything like fair treatment in the past. But it is cheering to know that there are upwards of 1000 evangelical congregations scattered now throughout this nominally Roman Catholic country; and the progress of the last 25 years may be safely taken as the pledge of greater things to come. Protestantism is every year becoming better understood. The bearing of its tenets, both on the life that now is and on the life that is to come, is growingly appreciated among the people. Even in the remote country districts, these do not imagine, as Dr Fisch related in Edinburgh that they sometimes used to do, that Protestants are monstrosities, "shaggy creatures with cloven feet"; but they recognize in them good citizens and good Christians too. They are often eager to have the moral and religious training of their children put into Protestant hands, even when they themselves have not formally adopted the Protestant faith. It is dawning on the minds even of the least instructed, that French Protestantism is not an English or a German product of recent importation, but represents a

cult that had an independent, Scriptural origin on French soil, and had identified with it once some of the most brilliant names in French history. So that the era now opening is one of special opportunities, as well as calls, for a faith that is prepared to work by love.

Compensation for Losses under Disestablishment.

Disestablishment may have a somewhat crippling effect for a time. It means, no doubt, a money loss to the Église Réformée and the Lutheran as well as to the Roman Catholic Church: for decree is sought for "*la séparation des Églises et l'État.*" It will also, as we have noted, take from the social prestige of their pastors, as functionaries of the State. On these grounds, it has been received with hostility by certain leaders and members of the State-aided churches. But such losses will not be without their compensations. The Christian liberality of the people will doubtless be developed by the change, so as more than to supply the lack of the State endowment: and perhaps the pastorate in some cases, as has been hinted by very friendly critics, may become both more popular and more spiritually influential, when there is about it less of the air of State officialdom. A more serious matter is the probability of limitations being imposed by the State, even after separation, on the spiritual liberties of all the churches. But important modifications have already been secured of some of the most objectionable of the legislative clauses—such as those referring to the right of Synodical association, and the legitimacy of gathering a central fund: and it may be hoped that the independence of Christ's Church in the spiritual domain will be yet further vindicated from the encroachments of a frankly Erastian government, which no doubt finds it difficult adequately to check an aggressive political Romanism, without inflicting hardships that are undeserved on more purely religious communions.

*Assertion of Spiritual Affinities, and Union of
Spiritual Forces.*

One result almost certain to accrue from Disestablishment is, a rapprochement and early union between the Église Libre and the evangelical and largely preponderating section of the Église Réformée. This is a consummation devoutly to be wished, and greatly preferable to the promiscuous fusion of the Evangelicals and Liberals in the Reformed Church, which some would seek by dropping the vexed question of creeds altogether, and accepting the position, practically, of a Church without a confession. A free and

unconventional Christianity, so far as traditional methods and outward forms are concerned, may be what is needed to win the masses of the French people. But an emasculated and creedless Protestantism is another matter : and that will never conquer France for Christ. Rather, therefore, than adopt any unworthy compromise, such as the pulling down and folding up of the confessional flag, it will be immeasurably better for the Reformed Church Evangelicals to seek their true spiritual affinities among their Free Church brethren, and to leave the type of Liberals whose cry is "Down with creeds" to find their affinities—elsewhere. It may be confidently predicted that a Church instinct with the Gospel spirit that animated the Huguenot fathers, and faithful to a recognizable banner displayed for the cause of the truth as it is in Jesus, will be far more effective, though numerically smaller at first, than a composite body based on the adoption of a looser policy would be, for the spiritual conquest and salvation of France.

APPENDIX

- P. 37. M. Réveillaud regards it as the capital point of the question—that the legislation of 1790 and 1792 on the congregations had, “en droit,” abrogated and in fact dissolved all these forms of association, as contrary (by reason of the perpetual vows) to the autonomy and liberty of the individual. Since this legislation has never been annulled by subsequent legislatures, it was in contempt of the French law that such congregations and communities of men and of women were reconstituted; and the ministries of Waldeck-Rousseau and Combes have thus only returned, in this particular, to the principles of the Revolution.
- P. 38. M. Combes in his Auxerre speech puts the number of “établissements congréganistes” considerably higher than the 16,468 mentioned in *Our Latest Invasion*. Between teaching establishments (16,904) and mixed establishments, partly for hospitality or contemplation (3919), he brings out the formidable total of 20,823. About 14,000 of the “établissements enseignants” had been closed when he spoke, in September 1904.
- P. 39. The secular clergy, I find, preponderate, the priests numbering about 56,000 (38,000 of whom have been State-paid) and the monks about 30,000. The nuns number, in addition, several times as many as the monks. I have seen them stated as high as 200,000.
- P. 52. The Separation Bill, after careful discussion at fifty sittings, was passed by the Chamber of Deputies on 4th July 1905, by 341 votes to 233—a majority of 108. In its final form it includes softening provisions regarding pensions, and the free use, under certain safeguards, of edifices for public worship. It also concedes the right of general association, and of holding reserve funds; and, as M. Briand the rapporteur contended, the Bill, generally speaking, has during the three months’ debate been wrought into a shape that has won for it the approval, in the main, of public opinion in France. It has been passed *without modification*, after five sittings, by the Senate’s Commission, whose report will come before the Senate itself in October.
- P. 55. The figure 38,000 refers to the State-paid clergy. In *l’Annuaire du Clergé* the priests are stated at 56,000 in all; of whom, however, only the proportion above mentioned have received subsidies under the Concordat.
- P. 70. *Foi et Vie* is a fortnightly Review, on matters “religious, moral, literary, social, and artistic,” which may be strongly commended to those who wish to see such subjects freshly and comprehensively dealt with from the French Protestant point of view. The magazine is ably edited by M. le Pasteur P. Doumergue, and it is supplied fortnightly to subscribers out of France, for 12 francs in the year, by the publisher—M. C. Street, 17 Quai Voltaire, Paris—or through Messrs Hachette & Co., London.

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