

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for the *Journal of Theological Studies* (old series) can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jts-os_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[1st page of article]

THE CHURCH OF FRANCE IN THE LATTER HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

IT required more than common courage to attempt to summarise in one volume the history of human activity during the nineteenth century; but no less than this is the aim of 'Un Siècle¹.' It is a volume of some 900 pages, and it is made up of contributions from over thirty writers. Amongst these articles there are several of considerable interest. M. Lamy, for instance, on the development of nationalities and M. Joly on the history of governments both show a characteristically French sense of proportion and faculty for generalisation. But the defect of these excellent qualities is a certain impatience of detail in dealing with complicated questions like the Eastern question or the causes of the Boer war. In another part of the book M. Tavernier has an entertaining article on the history of the press, and M. Brunetière's sketch of the literature of the century is full of vigorous and stimulating statements of his point of view. Still, in spite of much that is interesting in individual articles, 'Un Siècle' as a whole is disappointing; and it is as a whole, after all, that a book of this sort must be judged. The thirty writers who have contributed to it are all French Catholics, but this is not enough to give it a real unity. The common purpose which underlies their work is only occasionally apparent. That common purpose is a desire to protest against the secularisation of modern life, to point out in the various domains of human activity the abiding influence of Christian ideas, and to urge the necessity of solving modern problems in accordance with Christian principles. The last section deals directly with the religious history of the century. It is there that the soul of the book is most easily seen, and that we get furthest away from *résumés* and compila-

¹ *Un Siècle: mouvement du monde de 1800 à 1900.* Publié par les soins d'un Comité sous la présidence de Mgr. Péchenard (H. Oudin, Paris, 1900).

tions. The first thought of an English reader who turns to this brief history of the French Church will probably be one of surprise at its exuberant hopefulness. French Catholicism has not of late years found much favour in England. A partial reaction has taken place against the wild extravagances of the English press at the time of the Dreyfus case, but French Catholics are still currently spoken of as men of doubtful loyalty and undoubted intolerance. Their political leaders are suspected of aiming at a new coup d'état, and the recent interference of the State with the religious orders has been justified on the plea of legitimate self-defence. In spite of all this, here are thirty prominent French Catholics writing in a tone of buoyant hopefulness of the prospects of Catholicism in their country. The contrast is so striking that it must leave a sense of insincerity in the English reader's mind. Compare, however, the end of the nineteenth century with its beginning, and almost any degree of confidence is accounted for.

The Revolution was not originally anti-Christian any more than it was anti-monarchical, yet it ended in the outburst of a more than Voltairian spirit. The scepticism which the philosopher had wished to keep from his servants went abroad into the streets, and soon turned into that positive hatred of religion which so few Englishmen can understand. Yet the destructive work done by the terror and the violence of the mob were but the signs of a deeper evil. Christianity seemed to have lost all hold on the minds of men, and it looked at one time as if it would be counted among the anomalies of an age now happily past, a *ci-devant* like the foolish pomps of Versailles. It is one of the most remarkable instances of Napoleon's power of seeing realities that at the outset of his career he should have convinced himself of the latent strength of Catholicism in France; equally noteworthy is his willingness to set a limit, in religious matters, to the omnipotence of the state. A less clear-sighted man would have used his Italian victories to secure the recognition, if possible, of the new French national Church, but neither at Tolentino nor in the Concordat did Napoleon make a direct or formal attack on the independence of the Church. The eyes of other men were not so open. Strengthened and purified though it was by the persecution of the Terror, the French Church in 1800 was still

in a sense a Church of the Catacombs. The Concordat brought her out again into the light of day, and partially re-established the historic union between Church and State in France. Within a year Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme* initiated modern methods of apology. Starting from certain principles of 'reason,' which they thought common property, the older apologists endeavoured to meet the rationalists face to face, and to prove logically the credibility of Christianity. Chateaubriand's aim was to make Christianity admired and loved for its own sake, and, as the philosophical speculations of the nineteenth century have been concerned mainly with fundamental principles, Christian apologists, hopeless of a common basis, have turned more and more to his method. The *Génie* was read by everyone, but its success was due almost as much to the novelty of the topic as to that of the method. It was quite an original idea in 1800 for a man of letters to declare with enthusiasm that Christianity was beautiful and noble. Between 1800 and 1900 much has happened in France and in the French Church. She survived the friendship and the enmity of Napoleon, and the still more dangerous patronage of the Bourbons. Whatever may be said of the Church in France at the present day there can be no doubt that her hold, at least on educated men, is far stronger than it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century. There is no question as to her vitality. Hostility she may still arouse: no one can afford to treat her with contempt.

A striking account of the progress made by the French Church will be found in Montalembert's *Les Intérêts Catholiques au dix-neuvième siècle*—a work published in 1852 and intended as a protest against the second Empire. It sums up the results of half a century's history, and as we read its eloquent narrative of the victories of liberty and religion the thought suggests itself that little further progress has been made between 1850 and 1900. In some directions there has been a reaction; in others stagnation; where has there been progress? The following pages are intended as some attempt to deal with the history of French Catholicism during these fifty years.

The progress made during the first half of the century was practically confined to the twenty years between 1830 and 1850. It was the French side of a European revival of religious enthu-

siasm—a movement noticeable in Germany, and ever memorable in England as the Oxford Movement. Its climax in France was during the second Republic. The revolution of July in 1830 had been distinguished by anti-religious demonstrations; churches had been sacked; priests had been compelled to hide themselves. In 1848, on the contrary, the mob brought their flags to be blessed at Notre Dame, and the country clergy were much in request for the blessing of numberless trees of liberty. The contrast struck everyone. Montalembert attributed it, and he was probably right, to the independent attitude of the Church during the Monarchy of July. The fall of the Bourbons had roused her from her legitimist slumbers. The bishops had had to reconsider their relation to the State. At the critical moment, in October 1830, Lamennais started the *Avenir*, and the Catholic movement was afoot. Very briefly, its aim was to break the link between the Church and the monarchies of Europe, to draw closer the ties with the Papacy, and to cement an alliance between the Church and the peoples. If Lamennais had had his way the Church would have bound itself as close to the cause of liberty as it had seemed bound to the cause of order. It is easy to see now that this was too sudden and too extreme a change to propose. A condemnation from Rome was practically inevitable. Lamennais had not foreseen this and his imperious spirit resisted. At the critical moment his ecclesiastical adversaries in France had not the generosity to respect his time of trial, and by their repeated attacks must be held partly responsible for the result. The great Ultramontane broke with Rome and the Church. That the movement should have survived this disaster is the best proof of the truth of Lamennais' essential position. Though their leader was lost to them his followers carried on the work in his spirit but without his exaggeration. After some months of bitter struggle Montalembert unreservedly accepted the Papal decision. He and Lacordaire remained to lead a definite Catholic movement partly religious, partly political, which culminated in the overthrow of the State monopoly of education in 1850. During these twenty years from 1830 to 1850 the progress of Catholic ideas and of Catholic influence was steady and consistent. It had its political and its intellectual side. There was a syste-

matic attempt to gain religious liberties by parliamentary means. The claims of the Catholics were based on principles of liberty and on the equality of all before the law. The struggle was against privilege, not for it. The cause was taken up by remarkable and attractive men. Besides the men of the *Avenir*—Montalembert, most eloquent of the 'sons of the Crusaders,' and Lacordaire, the man who first discovered how to preach the Gospel to nineteenth-century Paris—there were now men like Ozanam, most sympathetic of professors, most genuine of philanthropists, or Père de Ravignan, than whom no one could be better qualified to reconcile public opinion to the return of the Jesuits. These were some of the men who made Catholicism once more a power in the land, and who began to reconquer for Catholic ideas something of the position which they had held in the seventeenth century.

With the fall of the second Republic and the establishment of the Empire all was changed. There was henceforth no united Catholic party. The first breach had occurred in the very hour of victory. The Falloux Law, overthrowing the State monopoly of secondary education, had been carried in the teeth of a violent opposition from a Catholic party led by Louis Veuillot. The Law was based on a compromise. The State was to keep the monopoly of conferring degrees; it was to abandon that of managing the schools. But Veuillot and his paper the *Univers* were against all compromise, and it required the personal intervention of Pius IX in the matter to reconcile him to the law. Unfortunately the division thus disclosed was a profound one. It soon reappeared and remained for many a long year the curse and the weakness of French Catholicism.

It is difficult for an English onlooker to take an impartial view of this conflict. On the one side are Montalembert, Falloux, the Prince de Broglie, and other men of the same class, the 'bur-graves' as they were afterwards called. Their organ was the *Correspondant*, a fortnightly review, and their centre the Academy. Many of the more distinguished clergy were in sympathy with them,—Lacordaire, Dupanloup, Gratry, for instance. On the other side were the great mass of the clergy, especially the country clergy. Their most distinguished teacher was Mgr. Pie, bishop of Poitiers, but their real chief and spokesman was Louis

Veillot. His hold on the lesser clergy by means of the *Univers* was so complete, so unchallenged, that he can be taken as really the representative of their ideas. A threat from his paper would make the bishops themselves tremble; he spoke with all the *verve* of an accomplished journalist and all the authority of a Father of the Church. Of these two parties the first cannot fail to attract. To begin with, the presence of Montalembert would be an ornament to any body of men. He died in the spring of 1870, before the war; and that of itself is almost enough to remove him into a distant generation. His memory grew dim even in France: but Père Lecanuet's recently published volumes, not to mention other works on him and his time, have revived the remembrance of his fine character and described his method of dealing with problems as pressing now as they were in his day. The son of a French *émigré* and of a Scotch mother, brought up till he was nine in England by his mother's father, Montalembert seemed, as was once said of him, 'to be the perfect type of the union of the two races.' For many months an enthusiastic disciple of Lamennais, inspired with a profound aversion for the Ancien Régime, and at the same time by birth and friendship closely connected with the royalists and conservatives, he seemed also especially fitted for the task of uniting the democratic and aristocratic sides of French Catholicism. He attempted to effect this union on English and parliamentary lines. He hated arbitrary government of all kinds, whether by a mob or by an emperor. He saw in free discussion the only honourable method in which a great country could manage its affairs. He believed that in spite of all its drawbacks representative government was, under nineteenth-century conditions, the only possible form of liberty. More generally, Montalembert and his friends looked forward hopefully to a reconciliation between the Church and the spirit of the age. Their eyes were open wide to see the more Christian side of current thought, and they were by nature inclined to find at least good-will amongst their opponents. These are the men and the ideas which it is easy for an Englishman, bred and born in a country of compromise, to appreciate.

The influence of Louis Veillot, on the other hand, seems at first sight as if it had been altogether disastrous to his cause.

He was before all things the opponent of compromise. He was convinced that the great evil of the time was secularism, or, as it has been called, 'naturalism'—the complete neglect of God and the supernatural in the whole social and political order. In this there are few Christians who would not agree with him; but Veillot went on to urge uncompromising hostility not only to the principle of secularism, but to the whole structure of modern society in which he found this principle imbedded. The temper of his mind led him to emphasise the difference between Christian ideas and those current at the time, and there can be little doubt that he, more than any man, was responsible for the impression common in France long after his time, that no reconciliation was possible between the Church and the 'Age.' He did more than emphasise differences—he imagined them where they did not exist. He formed for himself what he considered a consistent theory of the place of the Church in the world, and applied it to all times and conditions. Naturally he would allow no free discussion: an opponent was at once a heretic, a traitor in the camp. He once called the Edict of Nantes 'un chef-d'œuvre d'iniquité et d'impuissance,' and he was even less inclined to toleration within the Church. Even men who accepted his general point of view were disgusted 'by his intolerable personal attacks. He may have thought that the Divine Revelation was so extensive as to cover the whole domain of human thought and to leave no room for human inquiry: but he can have had no excuse for the humiliations which for a time he practised, and taught some of the clergy to practise, before the Emperor. Probably no incident in the recent history of the French Church was more fatal to her than her acceptance of Napoleon III's overtures and the almost universal acquiescence with which she looked on the despotic system he established. It was so strange an experience to find deferential 'préfets,' to be permitted to found new orders, to see bishops meeting in synod, to be allowed, in other words, to do some of the things which in England or America are matters of daily practice, that the French bishops seem to have quite lost their heads. They proclaimed Napoleon III a Charlemagne, the saviour of society and the pillar of the Church. In all this policy, which sacrificed for the ephemeral friendship of a dishonest and arbitrary

government many of the advantages gained during a twenty years' struggle, the *Univers* took a leading part. Veuillot himself had no pity for parliamentary government, 'un bourbier de servilisme et de corruption,' as it was called one day in his paper. He tore off ruthlessly all those convenient insincurities, those decent conventions, which make a representative system, if not a very logical, at any rate a possible and a practical check on arbitrary power. Constitutional checks from within the State were illogical. The only genuine government was a Napoleonic absolutism, and the only real limitations on it those imposed by the Church from outside. Parliamentarism did not seem to him in the least an essential of 'democracy.' Père Lecanuet has told the story of this ill-fated alliance with care and sincerity¹. The task was a necessary though an ungrateful one, for those early years of the Empire form a unique period in the recent history of the French Church, a period in which the State professed to show favour to the Church and to allow the free development of her institutions. The adversaries of the Catholics have never allowed those years to be forgotten. It is still a commonplace of anti-clerical argument to represent the principles proclaimed by Veuillot and his friends as the normal attitude of the Catholic Church towards popular liberties.

At first sight it would seem simpler to attempt no extenuation of Veuillot's policy. Of course it was not wholly bad; but there are cases in which it is more truthful simply to condemn than by explaining to give the impression that there is a great deal to be said on both sides. This, however, is not such a case. Louis Veuillot is too complex a personality to have justice dealt to him in a simple verdict. If we compare him to Montalembert and his friends, we find in him something more French than in them, something therefore more inexplicable. Montalembert with his avowed fondness for English institutions, his devotion to representative government, his passion for 'liberty,' his fainter appreciation of 'equality,' is really a statesman formed in an English mould. In many of these points his friends resembled him. They would most of them have been quite at home in English politics. This is of itself sufficient to show that they were partially out of touch with the mass of the French people.

¹ *Montalembert*, tome iii, cc. iv, v.

Parliamentarism has never, in France, become a part of the national life, and Veillot's distrust of the system was really a mark of his instinctive sympathy with the popular point of view. By birth altogether a man of the people, he had made his way by mere force of talent and of a gift of language which made him an incomparable journalist. From first to last he remained a democrat, hating the Revolution partly at least because it seemed to him to have profited solely the bourgeois. Though for a time he worked loyally under the leadership of Montalembert, and though they agreed throughout on fundamental questions, there were differences of temperament and of method so extreme that practically they amounted to differences of principle. Veillot seems always to have had an instinctive distrust of these well-bred gentlemen who introduced refinements of manners, and points of honour, even into questions of dogma. The schism in the Catholic ranks must really have brought him a sense of relief. It made him his own master, with nothing to prevent him from throwing himself heart and soul into this new crusade against open enemies and false friends. His methods can indeed only be justified by such military metaphors, and not always by them. This is not and cannot be a real justification, and none should be attempted. Controversy after all is not war.

It is more important to examine Veillot's general position apart from his peculiar methods. It might be briefly described as the conviction that everything else must be sacrificed to the protest against 'naturalism,' that at any cost the purity of the Church's doctrine must be maintained, and all infiltrations from current thought contrary to that doctrine excluded. Putting aside questions of method, this was the line adopted by an overwhelming mass of Catholic public opinion at this time. In face of the extraordinary progress made by the sciences and of the state of mind it had produced—the self-satisfied positivism of the middle of the nineteenth century—the first instinct of Catholics was to fall back on their supernatural dogmatic basis, and at all costs to secure that. Now this was to be done, in the first place, not so much by controversy with prevalent ideas on absolute freedom of thought or on the secularisation of society, as by a development of Catholic piety, by increased earnestness in prayer and

the use of the sacraments, and by a restatement of traditional doctrines. The very existence or possibility of a revealed, authoritative, dogmatic religion, was being on every side arrogantly disputed. It was therefore essential to analyse the process by which the Church professed to teach authoritatively, and this not immediately for the sake of controversy with adversaries outside, but to give strength and light to Catholics themselves. It is for this reason that it is possible to say that, just as the Reformation produced the Council of Trent, so the philosophical speculation of the middle of the nineteenth century led to the Vatican Council. So far practically all Catholics were agreed; Montalembert and Veillot in France, Newman and Ward in England, all felt the importance of asserting the supernatural, dogmatic character of Catholicism. This fundamental agreement was every now and then admitted by the leaders; it was often ignored in the heat of controversy. The so-called 'liberals' could not get out of their century. The men of less independent temperament felt an intellectual discomfort at being cut off from the main stream of political and speculative thought. The more vigorous minds knew that there is life in the Church, and that therefore there must be change in the expression of truth. They were full of anxiety lest the intellectual and political life of Catholics should be unnecessarily cramped by too close an adherence to ancient formulas or to mediaeval politics, and they dreaded a hasty ecclesiastical decision which might condemn truth and error alike. The conservative school, on the other hand, thought more of the condemnation of error than of the necessity of discrimination. Feeling, and, from a Catholic point of view, feeling rightly, that what was essential was the assertion of dogma and of the supernatural basis of society, they were careless to distinguish between good and bad elements in an un-Christian current of thought. It has always been the practice of the Church to assert dogmatic truth by condemning error, and, encouraged by this, the extremists of this party clamoured for and interpreted in their most extreme sense Papal condemnations of the various phases of secularism. They claimed, too, an arrogant monopoly of orthodoxy; as Newman said, 'They made the heart of the just sad, whom the Lord hath not made sorrowful.'

This great controversy, which moved about the topics enumerated in the *Syllabus* of 1864 and culminated in the Vatican decrees of 1870, absorbed most of the intellectual activity of the French Church under the Empire. It was a domestic quarrel, and though of great moment to Catholics made little impression on the outer world. It produced no literature of importance, for the leaders on both sides were scholastic theologians, orators, or journalists, and, for Catholics, one phase of it was closed by the proclamation of Papal infallibility in moderate terms at the Vatican Council. Except in its very general outlines it has little interest to-day, and it gives an air of intellectual barrenness to the period during which it raged. Historical and biblical studies were at a very low ebb.

Even the Benedictine revival and the liturgical movement directed by Dom Guéranger for the time being retarded, though they should have advanced, historical studies. In his zeal for the liturgy Dom Guéranger endeavoured to attribute a special historical value to the lessons in the Breviary. Though he denied that it was a question of infallibility, he acted on the principle that any legend thus incorporated in the liturgy was *prima facie* evidence and was not to be disputed except for very grave reasons. Meanwhile the old stories about the early origin of a number of French churches were being revived by diocesan historians. The best known of these is the legend attributing the foundation of the Church of Provence to Lazarus, Martha, and St. Mary Magdalen. Tillemont, Dom Calmet, and other learned Benedictines of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, had long ago denied any serious historical value to these stories, and they had been almost forgotten. None the less, from the moment of their revival charges of Jansenism and rationalism were freely levelled against any writers who ventured to treat them in a critical spirit¹.

Very little was known in the French seminaries of the biblical studies which were being pursued in Germany, and when Renan published his *Vie de Jésus* in 1863, the line he adopted was as unexpected to the immense majority of French Catholics as it seemed insidious. We are now so familiar with the biblical

¹ Cf. *La Controverse de l'Apostolicité des Eglises de France au XIX^e siècle*, by the Abbé Houtin. Paris, 2nd edition, 1901.

critic who denies the divinity of Christ without questioning the perfection of His humanity, that it is difficult to understand the general outburst of indignation which greeted Renan from every school of French Catholic thought. To them the Voltairian was still the classical enemy. Here was a new attack on the very essence of Christianity, a travesty of the Divine Master presented for the admiration, but not for the adoration, of men. The attack seemed to bear about it all the marks of a betrayal. It was a blow in the back delivered by an old disciple. Indignation ran so high that no serious attempt was made to reply to Renan by a scientific examination of the German critics from whom he had derived his ideas. That seemed paying him too much honour. Montalembert's diary¹ shows that even by him the *Vie de Jésus* was taken as a personal outrage, to be answered best of all by an act of faith and love.

It would be going far beyond the purpose and the limits of a short article to attempt the story of the practical activity of the French Church under the Empire. That activity took many forms—missionary enthusiasm in distant lands, the revival of religious life and piety at home, the organisation of the secular clergy, the foundation and development of new religious orders, and especially a devotion to social work, both by the rapid extension of charitable orders, such as that of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and by the lay work of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul founded by Ozanam. The self-sacrifice of French Catholics was to be put to a severer test. The great trial came, and the French Church was not found wanting. Whatever disorder in the social, political, or military organisation the War and the Commune may have revealed, it brought striking testimony to the soundness and patriotism of the French Catholics, and the nation turned to them in the hour of danger.

The National Assembly which met at Bordeaux in 1871 was, of all the assemblies of the century, the most conservative and the most freely elected. There had been neither the time nor the opportunity to organise parties or canvass votes, and the result was a body in which the monarchists formed the largest group, and the republicans hardly more than a quarter of the whole. The great majority of the Assembly was conservative and Catho-

¹ Lecanuet's *Montalembert*, iii 461.

lic, composed, that is to say, partly of monarchists, partly of men of conservative temper not definitely royalists but concerned before all in the restoration of order. The conservatives had no leader of their own. They were practically compelled to accept the leadership of Thiers, who had been elected in twenty-six departments. He was declared 'head of the executive power of the French Republic,' but at the same time he pledged himself to be neither monarchist nor republican, and to leave to the future the settlement of a definite constitution. The prospects of the Church had never looked so hopeful, and the terrible episode of the Commune seemed to remove still further the danger of an anti-clerical republic. To French Catholics the history of the National Assembly must be a melancholy one. It is true that it performed admirably the first part of its task. It procured the evacuation of the French territory, it paid the indemnity, it reorganised the army, it made France once more a power in Europe. But it was unable to establish a definite constitution. The task, indeed, was a more difficult one than at first sight it appeared to be. To begin with, the monarchists themselves were divided into Legitimists and Orleanists; the first adhered to the Comte de Chambord, the others to the Comte de Paris. Then from the first, and in spite of his pledge, Thiers began to work silently against a Restoration. His position was a very strong one: it was something between that of an American President and an English Prime Minister. He was practically President, and at the same time the head of the Government in the Assembly. It was a position from which an able and an ambitious man would naturally not wish to descend. In November, 1872, he openly declared for a Republic. At this time the majority of the Assembly was frankly royalist, and Thiers had no right to expect it to follow his advice. In the following year, both the steps necessarily preliminary to a Restoration were taken. Thiers was dismissed by the Assembly, and Legitimists and Orleanists were reconciled. Mac-Mahon was put in Thiers's place, with the definite object of bringing in the new king. All seemed ready for the final act of the drama, but the chief actor refused to appear. The rejection of the tricolor was the Comte de Chambord's way of saying that he would have nothing to do with modern ideas of monarchy; it alienated all the moderate men on whose support the royalists

had depended, and stultified the whole policy of the conservative majority.

The National Assembly lived two years longer ; but it was like the tag end of an ill-told tale. Royalists without a king, the French conservatives had to become republicans ; they made the constitution which, with a few changes, has lasted to this day, and then dissolved themselves. The first legislature under the new constitution was composed of a republican Chamber and a conservative Senate. With the support of the Senate Mac-Mahon was able to retain the presidency till 1879, but he had lost all real power in 1877. On May 16 in that year he suddenly dismissed his ministers and with the help of the Duc de Broglie made an ill-advised but legal attempt to recover a conservative majority. The attempt failed, and in spite of the efforts of the Government the elections produced a Chamber as republican as the last. The final blow came in 1879. The Senate was then partially renewed, and the majority became republican. Mac-Mahon resigned and his place was taken by Grévy. Gambetta became President of the Chamber.

Though the governments that have succeeded each other so rapidly from 1879 to the present day have nearly all been anti-clerical in tone, it does not follow that the conservative government of the early seventies was strictly a Catholic government. The division was not a religious one. No doubt the interests of Catholicism were largely bound up with those of the conservatives ; it seemed, indeed, impossible to explain the political failure of the French Church without this brief sketch of the fortunes of the royalists. Still the division was very much on political lines. Throughout Louis Veillot and his party were nearly always girding at the conservatives. This was due partly to a revival of the old ecclesiastical quarrel—for the National Assembly had put into office the 'burgraves,' the party of Montalembert and the *Correspondant*—partly to the instinctive democratic spirit of the lesser clergy whom Veillot represented. These disliked the Assembly both because it was aristocratic and because it was parliamentary, that is to say moderate, ready to compromise with the republicans and unwilling to carry things to extremes. There can indeed be little doubt that the conservatives became out of touch with the people. They did not take enough trouble to

secure the enormous advantage they had gained in 1871. They thought that their good intentions and honest government would secure them enough votes, and they sadly under-estimated the strength of the republican movement in the country. The reaction back to republicanism began very soon after the Commune. At nearly all the by-elections republicans were elected. As soon as the effects of the war began to wear away men slipped back into their normal state of mind, their French dislike of an aristocracy and their ineradicable distrust of a clergy whom they suspected of exercising political influence. Both the moderate countenance which the Church received from the State and the attacks of the *Univers* on most modern ideas were now remembered against Catholics and treasured up by the chiefs of the anti-clerical crusade. The truth is, as one of the leaders¹ of the conservative party has recently admitted, the nation was more republican and less religious than the Assembly. So much does this seem to be the case that one is inclined to doubt whether the monarchy could ever have been permanently restored. Perhaps the Comte de Chambord was after all more clear-sighted than his friends. A dictatorship in some form or other is always possible in France, for that is a form of government which does not shock the French sense of equality: a monarchy seems inseparable from an aristocracy, and is far less adapted to the present temperament of the French people.

Since 1879 to the present day there has been little change in the government of France or in the political position of the Catholics. One ministry has succeeded another, sometimes with dazzling rapidity; but in religious matters all have been more or less inspired by the spirit of Gambetta and Ferry, the founders of this second phase of the Third Republic. Gambetta was a consummate demagogue. A hot-headed southerner, he had at his command a ready and a fiery rhetoric. He was a man of intense ambition, but at the same time honestly devoted to his country. He was indeed an enthusiastic patriot, for he could be nothing without enthusiasm. Though he shouted from the tribune the famous phrase 'Le cléricalisme, c'est l'ennemi!' he was not an anti-religious doctrinaire, and once he had convinced himself that the republic was safe from all danger of a monarchical restora-

¹ The Vicomte de Meaux in the *Correspondant* for April 10, 1902, p. 11.

tion, he might not improbably have come to terms with the Church. Jules Ferry, on the other hand, was a much more systematic, a more cold-blooded, and a much more dangerous adversary. Though Gambetta got the credit, Ferry was the real founder of the present French system, and the bill which he introduced within two months of the change of government in 1879, to prevent Jesuits and members of some of the other religious orders from taking part in public or private education, inaugurated a policy which has been since very patiently followed. It aims at regaining for the State the monopoly of education.

The history of Catholic politics since the disaster of 1879 is, on the whole, the history of a failure. For some years the conservatives formed a respectable minority in the Chamber. They were sufficiently numerous to help in the defeat of a ministry by a momentary alliance with some section of the republicans, but they were not strong enough to offer much resistance to anti-religious legislation. On this subject their enemies formed as a rule a compact majority. The policy of the republican party was a very simple one. It consisted in identifying the Catholics with the defeated monarchists. Every one who opposed the 'concentration républicaine' on religious or conservative grounds was a proclaimed monarchist and the enemy of the existing constitution. It was therefore as necessary now as it had been in 1830 to maintain the Church's independence of any specific form of government. The future of the Church could not wait on the unlikely chance of a Restoration. No one saw this more clearly than the Pope, and in an encyclical addressed to the French people in 1884 he urged the bishops not to oppose the Republic as such. In 1890 he went much further. In a speech at Algiers Cardinal Lavignerie declared that the perils of the times required all good Catholics to accept 'sans arrière-pensée' the republican form of government. The speech aroused the indignation of the monarchists, but a letter from Rome showed that the Cardinal had really been speaking the mind of the Pope. The strong support thus given by Leo XIII to the Republic not unnaturally appeared to many of the old conservatives an excessive interference of the spiritual power in political matters. Whatever may be thought of the pressure put on the royalists, the advice was certainly sound. Nearly all witnesses are agreed that there

is no future for monarchy in France, and the division between the royalist aristocratic Catholics and the republican Catholics was fatal to the interests of religion. The future is to the Catholic republicans. But the immediate effect of the Papal policy was to still further weaken the conservative minority in the Chamber; the royalists were divided and disheartened, the 'ralliés' distrusted by the electorate. The use of the word 'republican' is one of the difficulties which a foreigner finds most hard to overcome. It should mean a man who frankly accepts a republican form of government, but in France it has come to mean a member of the party which has been in power since '79. A 'conservative republican' is all but nonsense. This narrow interpretation of the word is encouraged by its official owners. They claim for their party the loyalty which is due to the constitution. They refused to open the door of their political tabernacle to the 'rallié.' The policy of Leo XIII was not, indeed, altogether without fruit. A minister, M. Spuller, spoke in the Chamber of 'the new spirit' and of the end of anti-religious legislation. But a few months later the Bourgeois cabinet imposed a special tax on religious associations. Again in 1896 there was a brief period of political and religious peace. It ended with the Dreyfus case.

This is the tale of the political misfortunes of the French Church under the Third Republic. The last thirty years of the century compare very ill with the twenty from 1830 to 1850. During the earlier period there were distinguished leaders, a definite policy, a steady progress, and finally the conquest of liberty of education. At the end of the century there have been remarkable speakers in the Chamber, like Dupanloup and the Comte de Mun, but no political leaders. There has been no policy; the Catholics have been reduced to the defensive. Step by step their early conquests are being lost. The endowments of the clergy have been cut down, their exemption from military service repealed, the few religious observances left in the army and navy abolished, the nuns are being turned out of the hospitals, special taxes have been laid on religious orders over and above those imposed on lay associations, the very existence of some of these orders has been attacked, and finally a steady and systematic policy has been long undermining freedom of education, and the

citadel itself, the Falloux Law, is now definitely threatened. All the while the Catholic members in the Chamber have protested eloquently, but have prevented little or nothing. What is worse, the Church seems to have no hold on the electorate. One election follows another but, except in Paris, all the efforts of the Catholics and all their legitimate grievances are barren of any result on the votes. One 'député' succeeds another with varying shades of radicalism or opportunism. For the time at least, political power has passed away entirely from the hands of the old families; it rests at present with a particular class of the bourgeoisie over whom religion has the least possible hold. Among Catholics themselves there are many elements of political weakness—monarchist aloofness and a want of enterprise among young men of family on the one hand, on the other the extravagances of anti-Semitism and attempts to win popularity by exhibitions of 'chauvinism.' It is, however, only fair to remember that in France, at least in the provinces, an Opposition candidate has an almost hopeless task before him. The forces arrayed against him are overwhelming. There is first the pressure of the Government, its agents, and all the far-reaching interests—education, woods and forests, railways, &c.—connected with the Government. More difficult to deal with still is the settled conviction in the provincial voter's mind that 'la politique' is something very contemptible, but that, from a business point of view, it is important to have a 'député' who is a friend of the 'préfet' and popular with the offices in Paris. Finally, an Englishman should notice that universal suffrage means something different in England and in France. In England, even if we had absolute universal suffrage, the great mass of the voters readily follow the lead of the educated classes. There is with us a saving virtue which is called snobishness when it is absurd, and which renders government infinitely more easy to carry on. In France there is a contrary virtue, that of independence, degenerating often into an overmastering suspiciousness of one's betters. This gives a great opportunity to the demagogue, and may lead to a situation in which the immense weight of educated opinion is on one side, and the majority of the voters on the other.

Thus though the cause for which the Catholics are fighting and the future may promise much, the present is full of perils.

The mere fact that the 'Loi Falloux,' the special fruit of Catholic progress in 1850, is directly threatened by the present government, is sign enough that the political situation of the party has changed for the worse. But in France this does not mean as much as it would in England. French indifference to politics is a common topic amongst the critics of that country, and those who have read Mr. Bodley's book will remember how much stress he lays on this indifference of the ordinary citizen to the character or ideas of his representative. Even the Panama scandal made very little difference at the polls, and men whose guilt was admitted were returned without difficulty at the next election. Frenchmen will account for this by saying that the parliamentary system has never been acclimatised in France, that the ordinary routine of government is carried on by the permanent officials, that the pursuit of art, literature and the sciences is a more worthy expenditure of human energy. Whatever may be the value of these explanations the fact is clear enough, political power is in France an uncertain test of the real importance of opinions. During the years from 1850 to 1880 the Catholic vote was still of great weight in the country. Louis Napoleon thought it worth his while to do much to conciliate it. After 1870 Catholics and Conservatives formed a large majority; even in 1879 they amounted to a considerable minority in the Chamber. Yet during these thirty years Catholic ideas had extremely little hold on educated public opinion. Of the poets, novelists, artists, philosophers, learned and scientific writers of the period, only a few can be claimed by the Catholics. Victor Hugo had grown more and more anti-Catholic, Renan had left seminary and Catholicism alike, Taine's attitude was at that time frankly positivist; when Littré was elected to the Academy, Dupanloup though it necessary to resign. Hardly any, if indeed any, of the Frenchmen of great international reputation belonged to the religion which was still accepted by the majority of their fellow countrymen. The chiefs were not without followers. There were few practising Catholics at the University. There was little outward sign of religion amongst men in society or amongst the officers of the army. The positivism and irreligion which prevailed in high places had become popular in Paris and in some of the large towns. This democratic anti-clericalism burst out

during the Commune with what Burke once called 'that old Paris ferocity.' Meanwhile the rest of the country was still very Catholic in sentiment; ideas move slowly in a peasantry, even when it is French. Primary education was still mainly in the hands of the clergy and the religious orders, whether of men or women. No doubt there was a sceptical movement in progress, but its results in the provinces were much less evident than they are at the present day. There are large country districts now where men are seldom seen in church, but this was not the case under the Empire or in the early seventies. Since then both indifference and positive anti-religious fanaticism have increased amongst the poorer classes.

It is not difficult to account for this change. It is due partly to the natural process by which the ideas current amongst the educated classes gradually permeate the classes below them by means of the press and cheap literature, partly also to political causes, to the defeat of the conservatives and the old aristocracy, and to the passing of political power into the hands of men who looked upon conservatism and religion as alike their enemies. The anti-religious spirit which animated the old republican Liberal of the Gambetta or Jules Ferry type has now passed to the Socialists, and its forms and varieties can be easily studied in their speeches in the Chamber or in those of M. Brisson. The change in the system of primary education has also done its work. Ever since 1870 one of the chief aims of the Republican party was the introduction of free, compulsory and secular education. The teaching in the schools was first made free and compulsory, then secular. Since 1879 the secularists have been able to do as they liked with the State schools, and it is hardly an exaggeration to say that in France secular schools are all more or less anti-religious. They were certainly so at first. Efforts were made to teach a 'civic catechism' in these schools, to instruct the children in morals without religion. It is admitted on all hands that the experiment has failed. 'We talk to them a great deal about the ministry' was the reply of a schoolmaster to an official who inquired how the lessons in civic duty were given. The outcry raised by the clergy against the 'écoles sans Dieu' may have been sometimes excessive and impolitic, but the crisis was a very serious one. By the efforts of the laity and of religious

orders and congregations like that of the Christian Brothers, free religious schools have been started all over France and a good deal has been done to counteract the tendencies of secular education.

It would be a long and a difficult task even to mention the different charitable and social institutions, the 'œuvres' and 'patronages' of various kinds, which have been founded by French Catholics to deal with social difficulties and to keep Christianity alive amongst the French working classes. But it is impossible not to refer to the 'Cercles Catholiques' started by M. de Mun soon after the War. His aim was to restore the mediaeval guild, to organise industry on vertical, not on horizontal lines, to combine masters and men of one trade in one locality, not to combine the men in trade union fashion with one another and against the masters. The 'Cercles' have not been as successful as their founder hoped. Probably, for one thing, they left too much to the masters. But the self-sacrifice and enthusiasm of their eloquent founder did much to start a form of Christian Socialism which has done wonders in the North of France. In some of the constituencies of the 'Nord,' one of the most industrial departments in France, the Socialists, usually supreme in such centres, are now regularly beaten at the polls. One of the members for this department, the Abbé Lemire, has won a real position for himself in the Chamber. Allowing, however, for all exceptions, the working classes in France, as a Frenchman lately put it, seem to have been passing through their eighteenth-century period of development. When the educated classes were Voltairian, sceptical and contemptuous of religion, the country people were still in the seventeenth century. Amongst educated Frenchmen aggressive irreligion is getting less common every day; but anti-clericalism with its 'civic baptisms' and 'civic burials,' its mockery of the Church and her liturgy, its sneers at the celibacy of her priests and nuns, and its gross materialism, still flourishes amongst the Socialists and numbers of the working classes. It was only a few months ago that a Socialist in the Chamber complained of the idealistic character of the philosophy taught at the Sorbonne. It had the drawback, he explained, of being used as a basis for religion. Where could a Frenchman find sounder philosophy, he asked, than in the writings of Diderot, Helvétius, and Holbach?

This spirit is disappearing amongst educated men, and even amongst the population of Paris. It was noticeable how little anti-clericalism there was in Paris at the recent election, and during the debates on the Associations Bill the greater part of the Paris press was opposed to the measure. Even in the country there was no popular agitation in favour of the Bill: it was a parliamentary, not a popular measure. There are more unmistakable signs of a new spirit, of the closing of the breach between the French Church and French genius. The submission to the Church of a number of men of letters, of MM. Brunetière, Coppée, Bourget, and Huysmans for instance, would at any time have been remarkable. At present it is part of a movement, and it emphasises the contrast between the end of the nineteenth century and the days of the Second Empire. The movement is not confined to France, and cannot be explained by purely French conditions. There has been a general reaction against the self-confident positivism of the sixties and seventies. No one nowadays would have the courage to prophesy the approaching disappearance of Christianity. The 'theological' period is certainly fated to survive for some time to come. Christianity, being more respected, has been more closely studied, and has shown its power of appealing to the minds of men. In France the movement has been a double one. Men of letters have on the one hand felt the charm of religion, on the other French Catholicism has shown itself more ready to appreciate the good in modern ideas, and the French clergy have even modified their teaching on a number of points in accordance with the results of scientific study and research. Christian philosophy, while it still talks the Latin of the Scholastics in the seminaries, has endeavoured to come into closer relations with contemporary thought. This was for many years the aim of M. Ollé Lapruné. A staunch Catholic and at the same time professor of philosophy at the Ecole Normale, no one could be in a better situation for such a task. In his efforts to struggle against the sceptical spirit which he must have so frequently found amongst clever young men at the 'Ecole,' he did not endeavour to build up a positive intellectual system, but insisted on the importance of the moral and active life. Following in the footsteps, as he himself had pointed out, of Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme*, he did not attempt to deal directly with

rationalist attacks, but he endeavoured to show how well suited Christianity was to the intellectual and moral development of men. After his death his line of argument was adopted with some important modifications by one of his disciples, M. Blondel. There has been much controversy among French Catholics as to the desirability of a 'new apologetic'; and it is sufficient to say here, tentatively enough, that there is a tendency to adopt a less purely logical and technical method. Greater attention is paid to careful psychology and to the treatment of man as a being composed both of intellect and will. It was not unnatural that this change of method should lead men to Cardinal Newman's writings and to his protest against excessive confidence in logical argumentation.

It is unnecessary in this Review to do more than refer to the work done for historical and biblical studies by Mgr. Duchesne and the Abbé Loisy. What concerns us particularly is the effect of that work on the French clergy. Mgr. Duchesne's success is certain and permanent. He plunged boldly into the old controversy on the origin and antiquity of the sees of Gaul. By his lectures, by his articles in the *Bulletin Critique*, by his book *Les Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule*, he did much to revive the ancient reputation of French ecclesiastical historians. The legendary stories which have been referred to are now abandoned, even by diocesan historians. The eventual result of M. Loisy's work is still uncertain. But he has probably done more than any other man to stimulate interest in and study of biblical questions among the French clergy. Many of the seminarists are throwing themselves into these studies. This, at any rate, is permanent gain. It was not to be expected that either of these advantages could be secured without a severe struggle. Mgr. Duchesne's criticism assailed the religious, local, and patriotic feelings of the diocesan clergy. For a period in 1886 the bishops suspended his course of lectures. But in his case orthodoxy was not directly involved, and patience was sure to ensure success. The biblical question was much more difficult. It seemed inextricably involved with dogma. The clergy of the old school, the readers of the *Univers*, the successors of the conservatives of the time of the Empire, the large majority of the French clergy that is to say, would have preferred simply to

reaffirm the decrees of the Councils of Trent or the Vatican, and to have treated biblical critics with uncompromising hostility. They were so anxious to keep the light of faith alive that they did not seem to mind its being set under a bushel. In this double struggle the assistance afforded by the Catholic Institute of Paris and by its rector, Mgr. d'Hulst, was of incalculable value.

In 1875 one of the last acts of the Conservative National Assembly was to extend the Falloux Law to superior education, to allow the formation of universities independent of the State. A Catholic Institute was at once founded at Paris, and a theological faculty added three years later. The Abbé Duchesne lectured on ecclesiastical history, and the Abbé de Broglie on apologetic. In 1881 the Abbé Loisy joined the staff. This combination and the constant support of their rector supplied a force which could hardly have been found elsewhere. Mgr. d'Hulst was probably the greatest French ecclesiastic of recent years. Those who have seen and heard him preach one of his Lenten sermons in Notre Dame will not easily forget the impression made by his dignified and striking personality. His words were admirably chosen, and if his delivery seemed cold to Frenchmen, it appeared to an English hearer admirably suited to reinforce his words without distractingly excessive gesture. His oratory was thoroughly appropriate to the grey severity of the nave of Notre Dame and to an audience which came to listen to a man of intelligence and spiritual insight rather than to be touched or excited. Before he was made rector of the new Institute he had been some years the vicar-general and right-hand man of the Archbishop of Paris; throughout he had the support and friendship of Cardinal Langénieux of Reims; later on he became the representative of the French Church in the Chamber of Deputies. Too distinguished a man to be made a bishop, he occupied a position of more than episcopal importance, and used the whole weight of his influence to encourage the men who were seeking for terms of reconciliation between Catholic truth and contemporary thought and criticism. In 1894, at the height of the controversy on the origins of the French Church, it required some courage to refer, as he did in a Catholic Congress at Brussels, to the cherished theory of apostolicity as one of those 'bicoques inutiles' which it was useless to defend. M. Houtin describes this speech as an Edict

of Nantes in favour of the defenders of historical enquiry. No one henceforth attempted to impugn their orthodoxy at any rate. Thanks then to Mgr. d'Hulst, the Institut Catholique and the ideas it represented have survived the critical period of infancy. Both have now gained an accepted position in the French Catholic world. The teaching in the more important seminaries has been widened and deepened. More scientific textbooks have been introduced ; more opportunities are given for special studies. At the same time more interest is taken in subjects outside the special province of theology. The *Revue du Clergé Français* affords convincing proof of the widened scope of French ecclesiastical education. Amongst the 'petit clergé' of the country there is also life and movement. With them it is more active than speculative. The congresses of clergy which have recently been held dealt mainly with practical questions, with parish work and with the relations between the curé and his flock. When the young seminarists some years ago were compelled to do their military service like any one else, their adversaries certainly hoped that the withdrawal of the exemption would diminish the number of vocations. For a year or two the vocations were fewer. Now the numbers have risen again to their former level, the clergy are strengthened by the experience, and the moral tone of some of the regiments has been improved. In spite then of the political dangers which face them, French Catholics have every right to be hopeful. So far they have not suffered seriously from the hostility of the State, for every fresh act of hostility has roused them to fresh exertions. Unfair treatment, persecuting laws, like other forms of evil, often lead to good—though this is no excuse for those that have done the evil.

An attempt has been made in this article to cover fifty crowded years of the life of a great Church. The difficulty of the task must excuse in the reader's eyes much that is superficial or too shortly expressed to be clearly intelligible. But the writer has had to face a more serious danger than that of superficiality. It is notorious how difficult it is for people of different countries to understand one another, and this often in spite of patient inquiry, complete accuracy of detail, and a prolonged residence in the country. In these few pages there is probably a good deal of inaccuracy of detail, for much has been written from memory or

hearsay, and many sentences which have been put down roundly are the expression of a hesitating opinion. It is impossible to write with perpetual qualifications of 'perhaps' or 'probably.' Finally an English Roman Catholic cannot but feel guilty of some presumption, some want of generosity, when he writes of the obvious faults of the French Catholic body, of that spirit of uncompromising and narrow orthodoxy into which their zeal for the Faith too often leads them and which shows them a heretic in every opponent. English Catholics are always received with such gracious hospitality by every section of their French brethren that it is a far pleasanter task to turn to those qualities which they all possess, their lively faith and acute sense of the things which are not seen and that cheerful self-sacrifice which has covered France with good works and the world with the most devoted of missionaries.

F. F. URQUHART.