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1928

## 713TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, MAY 7TH, 1928,

AT 4.30 P.M.

WILLIAM C. EDWARDS, ESQ. (TREASURER OF THE INSTITUTE), IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed, and signed.

The CHAIRMAN welcomed Monsieur Blocher—though regretting the illness which had prevented Dr. Saillens, under doctor's orders, to come over to this country—and thanked him for thus stepping into the breach, in the place of his father-in-law.

After the reading, in excellent English by Monsieur BLOCHER, of Dr. Saillens' paper on "Protestantism and Rationalism in France," the CHAIRMAN proposed a vote of thanks both to the author and reader of the paper.

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## *PROTESTANTISM AND RATIONALISM IN FRANCE.*

By PASTOR R. SAILLENS, D.D.

ONE of the most constant characteristics of the French mind is its love for logic, clarity of speech, and reason. An American writer has remarked that "the more one enters into the French mentality, the more one is compelled to see that the French have no quality more specifically theirs than their passionate devotion to philosophy, this word being understood in its larger sense."* This judgment is in agreement with general opinion. If the French are not always reasonable, they are at least great reasoners.

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* A free quotation from the French translation of *France To-day*, by Barrett Wendell.

This natural propensity accounts, no doubt, at least in part for the fact that Roman Catholicism has met, in this country, with a more persistent and successful opposition than from any other Latin race. As far back as the twelfth century, the *Albigenses*, or *Cathari*, held nearly the whole of southern France, and even when that "heresy" had been drowned in blood, it left ferments of discontent which made it possible for the Reformation of the sixteenth century to have a rapid success in that part of the country. One cannot pass over the name of *Peter Valdo*, the rich and godly merchant of Lyons, who raised up his protest against the Romish superstitions and priestcraft, and finally joined the Waldensians, in the Alpine Mountains. Valdo was not a Rationalist, and yet his protest was as much in the name of Reason as in the name of Faith. Let us also mention *Pierre Abélard*, a learned monk of the twelfth century, who was, for his time, a bold Rationalist. "He accepted dogma as being intangible, but he considered it, not as Truth in the absolute, but as a problem which can be demonstrated by reason. His theory of Redemption was very near that of modern Rationalism."* Abélard was followed by *Arnaud de Brescia*, *Pierre de Bruys*, and *Henri de Lausanne*. Even in the Middle Ages, and down to our own times, France, "the eldest daughter of the Church," has been a rather troublesome daughter.

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*The Sixteenth Century: The Humanists.*

The great movement, which was called *The Renaissance*, found in this country a most propitious field. From its very beginning two currents were predominant: the *Humanists*, who were entirely taken up with the rediscovery of Greek and Latin antiquity, and whose aim was to restore the rights of Reason and Learning against mediæval obscurantism, but who shunned, rather than welcomed, a great religious revolution; on the other side were the *Reformers*.

The greatest of the Humanists, probably, was *Erasmus of Rotterdam* (1467–1536). He has been called "the Prince of the Humanists" and "the Latin Voltaire." After having warmly applauded the first manifestations of the Reformation, and specially the first writings of Luther, he drew back, perhaps being

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* Ch. Schmidt, *Dict. Larousse.*

moved by a jealous feeling against the young and fiery monk of Wittemberg, and because he was at heart a Rationalist, neither Protestant nor Catholic. His influence was very great on the literary world, in France as elsewhere. He led in that middle course in matters of faith, which so many are ever ready to follow, and which is more dishonouring to God than downright infidelity.

We can only mention the names of *François Rabelais* and *Étienne Dolet*, both Rationalists; the latter was burned alive, in Paris, for his bold opposition to Rome (1546). But we must stop a moment at the remarkable figure of *Michel de Montaigne* (1533–92), a country gentleman, not so learned as Erasmus but more witty and genial. In his *Essays*, he does not dare openly to deny our need of a revelation from God, but his whole system is summed up in these words of his, so often quoted: "Que sais-je?" (What do I know?). The impotence of the human mind to penetrate the mysteries of Nature and of the soul led him to a quiet Epicurism, a mild and polite contempt for all strong religious convictions. That same sense of intellectual impotence led, one century afterwards, our great Christian philosopher, *Blaise Pascal*, to yield himself fully to Jesus Christ, in simple, childlike faith.

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*The Sixteenth Century: The Reformers.*

Side by side with the Humanists, and often closely allied with them, we find the Reformers. They, also, for the most part, were men of letters, and some were second to none in that respect. But to them it was given to see—not at once, perhaps—that learning is not an end in itself; that the great object of the present life is to appropriate the Life which is eternal. We can only mention one or two of these great names.

*Lefèvre d'Étaples* (1455–1536) was at first simply a student of antiquity. "For a long time," says he, "I was concerned with mere human learning, and only touched with my lips the brim of Divine knowledge. But even then such a striking light shone from afar to me that human learning seemed darkness itself in comparison. . . ."* In 1509, therefore, eight years before Luther came out, Lefèvre established, in his *Commentary on the Psalms*, the great Reformation doctrine: "Justification by Faith alone."

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* H. Lutteroth, in *Enc. des Sciences religieuses.*

*Guillaume Farel*, the great Reformation evangelist, was taught by Lefèvre that wonderful doctrine, which made him a happy man and a great winner of souls.*

The man from whom the French Reformation took its definite and permanent character was *Jean Calvin* (born in Noyon, 1509; died in Geneva, 1564). He was a true representative of the French mentality; a vigorous, clear-sighted logician, he was at the same time an intensely religious soul; in him Faith and Reason harmonized, Reason leading to Faith, and submitting to her. And this is certainly the main cause of the deep, extensive, and lasting influence which Calvinism has exerted, and still exerts, upon most of the Protestant nations: England, Scotland, Switzerland, Holland, Hungary, the United States of America, and other countries. Calvin's theology has even influenced some of the best elements in the Roman Catholic Church. Rome has never been in France quite what she was, or is in other lands, ever since *Calvin's Institutes* came to the light. Calvin's doctrine came to him, through St. Augustine and St. Paul, from the Divine Book; but Jansenius, the abbé de Saint-Cyran, Pascal, and all those great spirits of the seventeenth century, would not have rediscovered these truths if Calvin had not lived and worked before them.

"Is there anything nobler than Reason, by which man surpasses all animals?" asks Calvin. And this would mark him as a Rationalist. But he adds at once: "St. Paul does not condemn the natural intellect, or prudence, acquired by usage and experience . . . but he affirms that all this has no virtue to help us to acquire spiritual wisdom." And again: "The liberal arts and all the sciences are *the gifts of God*, but they have their limitations, for they cannot penetrate into the heavenly realm of God. *Therefore, they must be chambermaids, and not mistresses.*" (*See* Appendix, *Note* 1.)

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* "Thus it is manifest that the *French* Reformation was French to the core in its very origin. Lefèvre, and the few men who, at the dawn of the sixteenth century, had penetrated into the deep meaning of the Gospel, received the sacred spark direct from the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures recovered. "There has been no historic movement more national than the French Reformation . . . It came out from the inmost part of our national soul . . . I still go further: I believe that all, or nearly all, of the moral civilization of the seventeenth century had its roots in the Reformation of the sixteenth." Thus writes a distinguished writer of the present day, himself not a Protestant, M. L. Romier.

"Chambermaid, but not mistress!" This, then, is the proper *rôle* of Reason, according to Calvin. The chambermaid opens the door, lets in the visitor, and then leaves him alone with the master of the house. This is the true Protestant—yea, we are bold to say, the true Evangelical—view. A Christian after Calvin's fashion seeks his Master with his eyes opened; but when he has found Him, he follows Him with his eyes shut, at His bidding, through those regions of the ineffable and the mysterious where poor Reason would lose herself. The great, the all-important thing, of course, is to be quite sure that you have found your Master. And there it is that Reason, with our other faculties, helps us to discriminate between the rightful King and the pretenders.

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*Rationalism at the Beginning of the French Reformation.*

French Protestantism, thus established on a strictly doctrinal basis, and especially on the absolute authority of the Scriptures —an authority confirmed in the experience of the believer by the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit—made of its followers heroic men and women. Their faith gave them a supernatural strength, a miraculous capacity for suffering. Would to God they had better understood one of the most important principles of the Gospel: the liberty of choice left by God to every human being in matters of religion! Luther and Calvin would have been greater had they never met the Rationalists of their day otherwise than by argument.

However, we cannot pass over, without a short notice, the greatest Rationalist that Calvin encountered: *Michel Servetus*, the Spanish physician and philosopher, who was burned at the stake in Geneva (1553), chiefly because he refused to accept the dogma of Christ's Divinity. We deplore Calvin's grievous mistake: his error was that of his time, a remnant of his Romish education. Rome, even to-day, professes that a *Christian State* is bound to punish an heretic, even to death, if he persistently refuses to recant. But while deploring the intolerance of Calvin, we must acknowledge that Servetus' rationalistic ideas—which would to-day appear very mild—constituted a real danger for the early Reformed Churches.

The evil fire, however, was not quenched by the death of Servetus. Another rationalistic movement of much greater

importance was started by the two *Socins*, the uncle and the nephew.*

The Socinians denied the dogma of the Trinity, the Consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, the personality and Divinity of the Holy Spirit, original Sin, and Redemption by the death of Christ on the Cross; it was radical Rationalism. The only point on which these Antitrinitarians nearly agreed with the Orthodox was on Bible inspiration. They believed in a supernatural Revelation, which they tried to interpret in accordance with their own views: Higher Criticism was not yet born.

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*The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.*

Notwithstanding the subtle influence of Socinianism, which was more successful in Poland than in western Europe, French Protestantism remained orthodox during the seventeenth century; the only doctrinal difficulties which occurred during that period arose on the Calvinistic doctrine of Predestination . . . Generally speaking, the seventeenth century in France was an era of great devotion; never before or since has religion occupied such a large place in French thought and literature. It was the era of *Bossuet, Massillon, Bourdaloue, François de Sales, Vincent de Paul,* the noblest leaders and preachers of the Gallican Church; of the Jansenist movement, with *Saint-Cyran,* the *Arnaud and Lemaitre families,* and, towering over them all, *Pascal*; of Quietism, with *Madame Guyon* and *Fénelon.* Nor can we pass over without a brief mention the name of the great philosopher of the seventeenth century, *René Descartes* (1596–1650). Descartes was a Christian believer, but he aimed at establishing the truths of Christianity, and every kind of truth, by pure logical reasoning, starting from this intuitive axiom: "I think, therefore I am," all other facts being methodically deducted from that self-evident aphorism. His celebrated *Discours de la Méthode* inaugurated a new era in French philosophy, and by the emphasis it laid upon Reason prepared the way for the more radical Rationalism of the following century.

As to Protestantism, sad to say, it was persecuted by all those parties together, including the Jansenists, although these were

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* Lelius Sozzini, or Socin, born at Sienna in 1525, died at Zurich in 1562. Fauste Socin, born at Sienna, 1539, died in Poland, 1604.

far more akin to Calvinism than to Jesuitism! The Protestants were absorbed, all through that century, by the defence of the few liberties which the Edict of Nantes, granted by Henri IV in 1598, had left them, and which were torn away from them shred after shred, until the Edict was finally revoked (October 16th, 1685) and the profession of Protestantism made illegal. Their great preachers—*Abbadie*, *Jurieu*, *Claude*, and many others—had to leave the country. The few ministers and lay-preachers who managed to remain, hiding themselves in woods and caves, could only attend to the needs of a few members of their scattered flocks; Bibles were scarce, and religious books almost inexistent. Nor did the controversies between Calvinists and Arminians help much the spiritual life of the poor Protestant remnant. (*See* Appendix, *Note* 2.)

It is difficult to form a proper estimate of the state of French Protestantism during the hundred years that elapsed between the Revocation (1685) and the Revolution (1789). Nearly all the Protestant aristocracy seems to have recanted, when, the wars of religion being ended, there was no more hope of ever establishing the Protestant Religion on a legal basis. The leaven of Socinianism was present, though hidden. And yet some great Christian men worked and suffered during that time, thus saving French Protestantism from utter annihilation. *Claude Brousson*, who died a martyr at Montpellier in 1698, is one of the most attracting figures of our history. *Antoine Court* (1696–1760) restored the organization of the Protestant Church, and founded at Lausanne a Seminary which sent out to France a great number of ministers. *Paul Rabaut* (1718–94), by his long and faithful ministry, maintained the fire burning in the south of France.

Higher Criticism, strange to say, was born in France, chiefly through a Roman Catholic priest, *Richard Simon*, who published a *Critical History of the Old Testament* in 1678. He was followed by *Pierre Bayle* (1647–1706), the son of a Protestant minister; he published his famous *Historical and Critical Dictionary* much in the same spirit as that of Erasmus. "My gift," said he of himself, "is to gather doubts." In 1753, *Jean Astruc*, also the son of a Protestant minister, published his *Conjectures on the Original Documents of which it seems that Moses made use to compose the Book of Genesis*. In that work there appears for the first time the famous hypothesis of the composite character of Genesis based on the various names of God: "Elohim" and

"Jehovah"; an hypothesis which has broadened since then: Higher Criticism is discovering every day new authors of the Pentateuch!

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We have now come to the period which has seen the climax of Rationalism in this country, the spell of which is still upon us. The title of Thomas Paine's famous book, *The Age of Reason*, indicates the spirit which then began to prevail, and which found its expression in the writings of the two greatest writers of that century: Voltaire and Rousseau.

*Pierre Arouet de Voltaire* (1694–1778) was at first a student in a Jesuits' school. Still in his youth, he spent three years in England, where he became the friend of some of the leading English writers of that time: *Bolingbroke*, *Shaftesbury*, and *Chesterfield*. Their infidelity strengthened his own, and he returned to France a mere deist, as he had been before.

*Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (1712–78), was born in Geneva from a Protestant father, who was a descendant of Huguenot refugees. Jean-Jacques kept, through all his life, the temper of a Protestant philosopher. While Voltaire wrote ironically, and often blasphemously, of the Romish religion and even of the Christian mysteries, Rousseau's Rationalism was ever respectful and moderate. His well-known homage to the Gospel and to Christ (in the *Confession de Foi du Vicaire Savoyard*) would class him among the apologists of the Christian faith, if that homage had not been followed with reservations and denegations which utterly contradict it. Rousseau was, in fact, the most eloquent spokesman of Protestant Rationalism as it exists to-day. His initial error—which was also that of Erasmus, Montaigne, Voltaire, and the Encyclopedists, the error of the Rationalists of all times—was to believe in the natural goodness of human nature, which renders unnecessary and meaningless the intervention of Divine Grace.

Rousseau was the spiritual father of the French Revolution. His *Contrat Social* was the inspiration of the men who started, and led in, that tremendous upheaval. He died a few years before the Revolution began, but his preparatory work was greatly helped by another Protestant Rationalist, *Benjamin Franklin*, who was in Paris in the latter years of the Monarchy as the ambassador of the new-born United States of America.

Thus, it is a remarkable fact that modern France has had two godfathers both Protestant, and both Rationalists. It is worthy of notice that Rousseau was born and bred in Protestant Geneva, at a time when the Geneva Church was cold and formalist; and that Voltaire, also, spent twenty-five years of his life in the village of Ferney which, although on French soil, is but a suburb of Geneva, which city Voltaire swamped with his writings. *Necker*, the Minister of Finance of Louis XVI at the beginning of the Revolution, and his daughter, *Madame de Staël*, who had a great influence as a writer, were also nominal Protestants and came from Geneva. Several prominent members of the National Assembly, of the Constituante, and of the Convention, were Protestants, some of them pastors: *Rabaut St. Étienne*, *Rabaut Pommier*, *Jean Bon Saint-André*, and others, all more or less tainted with Rationalism.

Even while it was still being persecuted—in the second half of the eighteenth century—French Protestantism imbibed much of the spirit of Rousseau. A few ministers, however, kept loyal to the Evangelical faith: such were *Paul Rabaut* and *Gachon*, this latter having been under the influence of some Moravian Brethren who had visited the "Churches under the Cross," and preached to them salvation through the blood of Christ.

We cannot help believing that, if in the course of that wonderful period—1789-92—when all opinions were free, and the right of speech was absolute—a new Farel, a French Whitefield or Wesley, had arisen, the Gospel in hand, and had raised his voice among the Parisian crowds, the fate of France would have been different. The all but complete absence of Gospel testimony at that unique moment in our history must be looked upon as one of the greatest misfortunes that has ever befallen our country. Long persecution, and the scarcity of truly consecrated and gifted preachers, had made French Protestantism very weak: this is the only extenuating circumstance that can be invoked as an excuse. In the inscrutable Providence of God, the hour had not yet come. But some of us live in the hope that the hour has not passed, and that there shall yet be in this country a powerful manifestation of the transforming power of the Gospel, a great religious Revival on Gospel lines.

A land in which a persecuting Church has been dominant for many centuries and has monopolized the training of the people, could not, when at last shaking its old fetters, be otherwise than intoxicated with her newly found freedom, and go into extremes.

The French Revolutionaries persecuted their former persecutors; they even persecuted those who had been so long fighting for liberty: the Huguenots. Every form of religion was, for a short time, forbidden. Priests and pastors were compelled, to save their lives, to renounce their "superstitions" on the altar of the goddess Reason. That mad religion lasted only a few months, and was replaced by the worship of *l'Être Suprême* (the Supreme Being), pure Deism being made by *Robespierre* the national creed. After the fall of Robespierre, a new attempt was made to establish a cult without anything of the supernatural. It went by the name of *Theophilanthropy*, a magnificent, if somewhat clumsy, appellation. In that religion Christ was put on the same level with the great philosophers of antiquity. The cathedrals and churches were put at the disposal of this new cult, which was celebrated every *décadi* (the first day of the decade, which had taken the place of the week on the new Republican calendar), with orations and fine music, all at the expense of the State. Notwithstanding all this, the new religion did not succeed; the people were utterly indifferent to those grand speeches and concerts in the honour of "the Divinity." It is said that one of the founders of the Theophilanthropy—*Laréveillère-Lepaux*, who was one of the five directors at the head of the Republic—complained to Talleyrand of this unexplainable failure. "Let me give you my advice," said Talleyrand, who had been a bishop in the Romish Church. "Die and be buried, and rise again on the third day; I warrant you that your religion will have a tremendous success!"

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*The Nineteenth Century and the Present Times.*

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, French Protestantism was in a deplorable state. Most of the ministers who had studied in Geneva or Lausanne were imbued with Rationalistic ideas. The lay-people could not but share, somewhat, in the general feeling of gratitude for the memories of Voltaire, Rousseau, and the other liberal philosophers of the eighteenth century, to whom they were indebted for their new-found liberty. When Bonaparte established the Protestant Churches on the same basis as the Catholic, not only granting full liberty of worship, but appointing a salary for every regular minister either Reformed or Lutheran, he was hailed by many as the Restorer of Religion

and the Benefactor of the Churches. Our fathers did not perceive that the protection of the State might become as great a hindrance to the freedom and expansion of their Faith as persecution had been.

God, however, had great blessings in store for the poor weather-tossed Protestant Churches of France. In a quiet way, the Moravian brethren had visited some of them, and a few of the ministers had seen and accepted the truth with regard to the necessity of the new birth and of the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit. When, in 1816, *Robert Haldane*, that great and good man, visited Geneva, he found one or two ministers ready for his message ; he was able, by God's grace, to bring to the full light of the Gospel a few young men, most of whom were theological students, whose names were to become famous : *Frédéric Monod*, *Merle-d'Aubigné*, *César Malan*, *Louis Gaussen*, and *Henri Pyt*. These young men, filled with sacred fire, were instrumental in bringing about a revival of the French Protestants, along with *Oberlin*, *Charles Cook*, and a few others. Another British Christian, *Thomas Erskine*, was the means of bringing to the full assurance of faith a young minister, *Adolphe Monod*, who became illustrious as an Evangelical preacher. In some parts of France it was like a resurrection from the dead.

I wish I could say that all the ministers and churches were aroused, and that they abandoned their cold and formal Deism. But has there been, at any time, a real Revival which did not encounter opposition ? We cannot enter into the detail of the strife which was then raised ; it is a long story, which is not closed yet. We prefer to point to the fact that most of the institutions which were needed for the very life of the Protestant Churches were born out of this Revival of the old Faith. Sunday Schools, a French Bible Society, a Tract Society, a Religious Books Society, and the Paris Missionary Society, with lesser but most useful Institutions, were all born at that time. Help in men and means came to us generously from our British brethren. All honour to them, with our lasting gratitude ! (*See* Appendix, *Note* 3.)

Strange contradiction ! Our Revival came mainly from England, through Robert Haldane, Charles Cook, and the early " Methodists " (which was then a sort of generic name for all those who professed and taught the Evangelical Faith) ; the British and Foreign Bible Society helped us to furnish our Protestant families with copies of the Scriptures, which had been

lacking for a long time ; and, at the same time, from Germany, the land of Luther, came to us a flood of Rationalism. Our Faculties of Theology were more or less poisoned with it. While the lay-people read orthodox books, many of which were translated from English writers, their pastors fed themselves on the writings of the German Higher Critics, which began to make themselves prominent : *Strauss, Schleiermacher,* and many others ; in the more recent days, *Harnack* and *Welhausen.* As said the Christian philosopher, Charles Secrétan of Lausanne : " in matters of religion, the lay-people think English, while the ministers think German." That contradiction, thank God, was not general ; we had then, and have still, a number of thoroughly Evangelical preachers. But the Rationalists have grown bolder with each successive generation. (*See* Appendix, *Notes* 4 *and* 5.)

The Rationalistic movement received a great impetus from the celebrated book of *Charles Darwin* on *The Origin of Species,* and from the theory of Evolution which was derived from that book. That theory, which is, so far, a mere hypothesis without real scientific foundation, has become " the law and the prophets " in our State schools of all grades. Add to this the influence, which was prodigious at one time, of the great writer *Ernest Renan,* by his *Life of Jesus* and other works of religious criticism. The views of Darwin, Renan, and Welhausen were adopted by a large number of theologians, much to the damage of the Evangelical cause in our French-speaking countries.

We must never lose sight of the fact that the natural heart is opposed to the Truth, which humiliates, and exacts the full obedience of holiness from those who profess it. To have *ascended* from the monkey is less humiliating, to the carnal mind, than to have *fallen* from God. For that reason, Rationalism finds a ready response in unregenerated man. At all times, and in every country, the way of the Lord has been, and ever will be, the *narrow way.*

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*Conclusions.*

We must limit ourselves to the above condensed facts, a mere bird's-eye view of our religious history. After all, there is little difference to be made between Nationalities in the realm of religion. Everywhere trees of the same kind bear the same kind of fruit. Modernism is raging among Protestants of all countries, and its fruits are the same everywhere.

(1) Modernism has changed into a mere *Evolution* the doctrine of the new birth as it is set forth in Scripture, where it is shown to be nothing less than a *Revolution*. To have "passed from death into life," thus, and only thus, becoming "a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven," is considered an obsolete theory. Religion, for most Christians so called, is but a mere family tradition, a new form of Judaism. Personal contact with the living God has given place, in many cases, to a sentimental respect for ancestral religious forms, myths and memories. The sepulchres of the prophets are built by the very people who, if the prophets were alive, would scorn and persecute them.

(2) Christendom, under the spell of Rationalism (or Modernism) is becoming more and more akin to the heathen world. The difference between an educated "Heathen" and an educated "Christian" is being reduced to a minimum. Family life is increasingly desecrated. The Lord's Day, which, in memory of His Resurrection, ought to be set apart as a day of worship, has lost its meaning and has almost ceased to exist as a day of religious observance. Theatrical and other worldly entertainments are introduced in the very precincts of the Churches.

(3) While the Missionary Societies are still being supported, yet, for the Modernists, the word "Missions" has lost its primitive meaning. It does not mean, in their view, the effort of the Church of Christ in obedience to His last command, "to seek and to save that which is lost," but simply the work of civilizing the heathen. There is no "wrath to come," from which all men should be urged to flee; Sin has lost its tragic aspect, and its wages are nothing worse than the temporal and hereditary consequences of the infringement of natural laws; there is no hell, except misery on earth. "To make the world better," to improve the state of human society, so as to bring about a new social order, this is the great aim to be pursued. As to the next world, there is little mention of it, and one may be a Modernist "Christian" without much faith in its existence. All the concerns of the Modernist are of the earth. The Church, therefore, is to become, in this view, a temporal and political power for the good of the people. Her duty is to interpose herself, whenever she deems it necessary and possible, for the rightful settlement of this world's affairs.

This is the very principle professed by the Church of Rome, and never more loudly than at present. That principle leads, inevitably, to an alliance between the Church and the State,

the latter bringing in the help of the sword, if need be, for the furtherance of the Church's benevolent intentions. Of course, we readily admit that a true Christian, being also a citizen, has a duty to fulfil in this latter capacity. But *the Church's citizenship* is in Heaven; her kingdom is not of this world. This fundamental principle has been sinned against, more or less, by all the forms of corporate Christianity throughout the ages. It is high time that we should realize the wholly spiritual character of the true Christian Church.

(4) Modernism substitutes "Social Salvation by Social works" to the great doctrine of the Reformation: "Salvation by Faith." This is another trait of resemblance between Modernism and the Church of Rome.

(5) Finally, the Bible being discredited and discarded, ceases to be the sovereign rule of Faith and Practice. There is, therefore, no spiritual authority to which a final appeal may be brought on any question relating to the soul and its destiny. The poor, fickle, unsteady individual conscience, and, at the same time, the pronouncements of great Congresses linking all Churches together in a superficial and shallow unity, these are the only spiritual authorities recognized by the "Modernist." By this attitude towards the Bible, and towards the Christ of the Bible, the Churches born out of the great Reformation movement are denying their origin and renouncing their inheritance. They cease to be a part of a Divinely created Society with a Divinely given Charter; they become mere Associations for philanthropic and social purposes. This tremendous change in their fundamental principles gives to the Church of Rome the right to pose as the only "Defender of the Faith," particularly as regards the Divinity of Christ and the inspiration of Scripture, both of which are, she boldly declares, denied by the majority of the Protestant theologians.

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The future of the true Church of Christ would appear very dark if we had not the Lord's promise that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against her." At the times of the deepest gloom, God has never been without true witnesses in this world of ours. His Word has ever been sounding, bringing to life dead souls. "His Word remaineth for ever." If evil is progressing, so is Truth. There is not a day, not an hour, but that some sinner, somewhere on this earth, comes to Christ and is being saved. Thousands of faithful preachers and missionaries are at

work. In France, revivals are taking place here and there. Where Modernism is powerless Evangelicals are called to the rescue, and they succeed, by God's grace, in awakening dead souls and dead Churches. For all this we thank God and take courage, and we are looking forward to the coming of Him who, by His glorious appearing, shall put an end to all sin, to all error, to all apostasy, and shall make manifest the reality and universality of the true Church, clothed in the immortal beauty of Truth, Holiness and Love!

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APPENDIX.

*Note* 1.

"The knowledge of all the sciences is but smoke when the heavenly science of Christ is not in it; and man with all his subtlety is as stupid at understanding the mysteries of God *as a donkey is unfit for the accords of music.*"—*Jean Calvin.*

*Note* 2.

*Jean de Labadie* (1610–74), canon of Amiens cathedral, when converted to Jansenism, established in his own house meetings for the reading of the Bible and religious exercises. He even went so far as to administer in these meetings communion, with bread and wine! That, of course, could not be tolerated in the Roman Catholic Church. He became a "Réformé," and his numerous wanderings led him to Geneva, where his sermons were much appreciated; but the ecclesiastical authorities forbade these private meetings, which were practically *ecclesiolæ in ecclesia*, and to which he held so much. At Geneva he had among his hearers *Spener*, who became his friend, and who seems to have borrowed from him the fruitful idea of those brotherly meetings (*collegia pietatis*) which became so much in use among the Moravian Brethren, and, later, in early Methodism.

*Note* 3.

The most intelligent among the opponents of the Revival, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was *Samuel Vincent*, one of the pastors of the Reformed Church of Nîmes. Although he was himself a "liberal," he admired the zeal of the "Methodists," and blamed his "liberal" colleagues' intolerance towards them. He advised these Rationalist ministers to take example by the simplicity of the Methodists' preaching, and by their ardour in the work which they pursued.

*Note* 4.

*Émile Faguet*, who died a few years ago, was a literary critic of great value, a Member of the French Academy, and a nominal Roman Catholic. This is a fragment of an article of his* concerning the great Protestant preacher, Adolphe Monod, who was ejected from the ministry of the Reformed Church at Lyons in 1831, at the request of the Consistory of that Church, which was, and has remained to this day, Rationalistic:—

"All through his life, which was short, for he lived only about fifty years, and preached only for twenty-five years, Adolphe Monod had never

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* Émile Faguet, *Propos Littéraires* (4ème série).

a thought which was not in the Service of God. One may say that there was nothing earthly about him, and that he literally lived the eternal life, in constant communion with the Infinite. He was, in the absolute sense of the word, a Christian Soul.

"Of course, that made him appalling when he began his ministry in Lyons. The hearers looked at one another with bewilderment. Who was this one? Not at all 'the gentleman in decent dress who delivers honest discourses,' as Joseph de Maistre described the Protestant minister. Not at all the Rationalist, adorning with a few vague quotations from the Bible the profession of faith of the *Vicaire Savoyard*. Not at all the professor of ethics to whom dogma seems to be unknown, and who shows himself as good a teacher of Christianity as La Bruyère might have been. 'People ask for ethical preaching,' said Bossuet, somewhat disdainfully, 'and they are right, provided it be understood that Christian ethics are founded upon the mysteries of Christianity. What I preach to you, I say, is a great mystery in Jesus Christ and His Church; and that mystery is the foundation of that beautiful morality in which all Christians unite.'

"Adolphe Monod did not understand these matters differently; he did not draw back from dark truths which had to be made clear, or, which is braver still, from dark realities which had to be acknowledged and tremblingly worshipped; he appeared, to these Lyons gentlemen, about the year 1825, as a ghost from the sixteenth or seventeenth century, a Luther or a Bossuet, a Calvin or a Saurin, and it was a great scandal, a scandal such that they compelled him to come down from that pulpit from which fell words too austere and truths too hard to be listened to.

"The puny Rationalist protest of these gentlemen, breathing the pure philosophical spirit of 1780, is worth reporting in part:—

> "'The agitations which have taken place elsewhere by the imprudent zeal of a few ministers *eager to exhume ancient doctrines which common sense and the reason of man, better developed than they were at the time of the Reformation, had wisely set* under seal, had not yet, happily, invaded the threshold of our Church . . . The outbursts of M. Monod, the anathemas which he throws at the human species, his own person being excepted, *his teaching of an ecstatic faith preferable to all works*, . . . all this cannot be tolerated side by side with the more *rational* and evangelical discourses of our other pastors . . . Let it not be in our Church that he should spread an uneasy feeling (*malaise*) and wound *Reason, emanated from the Divinity*.'
>
> "Excellent *vicaires savoyards*!" (The italics are Faguet's.)

*Note* 5.

In a Pastoral Conference, about fifty years ago, we remember having heard the celebrated Professor Auguste Sabatier make the following statement: "There are two men in me: one is the son of a Huguenot mother, who was a believer in the old fashion; the other is the intellectual son of a German philosopher."

## Discussion.

The Chairman said: Whilst grateful to Mr. Blocher for coming in the place of his honoured father-in-law, Dr. Saillens, yet we feel greatly disappointed at the absence of the latter, and especially sorry that it should be caused by illness. Dr. Saillens is a veteran and trusted leader of Evangelicals in France, the founder and head of the Bible Institute at Nogent on the historic river Marne, and heart and soul with every good Gospel movement in France, and of conventions, such as that at Morges. He is one of the most eloquent preachers in France to-day. Had he been here I should have asked him to favour us with some of his paper in French, that we might appreciate the eloquence that yet lives in the French pulpit and enjoy the majesty and pathos of the French language.

That language can sing like the birds amidst the blossoms of spring-time, but it is also like a great organ that has hidden within it mighty thunderings that orators like Dr. Saillens can call forth. It was once said of a good man "that he loveth our nation," and of no man can that be more truly said than of Dr. Saillens—"he loveth our nation." He loves it because of its witness to Truth—Bible Truth—and because he has here so many spiritual relatives, brothers and sisters in Christ, and that love is, I am sure, reciprocated by every one who knows Dr. Saillens, his life and his work.

Had Dr. Saillens been here, I should have introduced him as the beloved friend of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and what greater compliment could I pay him? or what better introduction and recommendation could he receive to the audience now before me?

The valuable and beautiful paper to which we have listened with so much pleasure is full of points for discussion. It is my duty, as Chairman, to propose a vote of thanks both to the reader and the writer of the paper, and to open the discussion.

What is Protestantism? It is NOT a verbal explosion against some error or evil, but a protestation FOR and concerning Eternal verities, based upon the sure foundation of Holy Scripture—the all-inspired Word of God—"The Bible, and the Bible alone is the

Religion of Protestants." I feel tempted to say a few words for Calvin, whom I regard as one of the greatest of uninspired teachers since the days of the Apostles. He is blamed for everything that happened amiss in Geneva. It is the same as in our own country: every wrong committed here between 1648 and 1658 is debited to Cromwell. Calvin was plagued by perverse and wicked men among the 200 who ruled Geneva at that time. Those wasps and gnats are gone and forgotten, but the giant reformer remains.

Referring to Servetus, I remember to have read that Calvin wrote a letter in which he said that he tried to save the life of Servetus; but those efforts were, of course, verbal, and the only evidence is found in the letter. Our lecturer has paid generous tributes to Bossuet, Massillon, and others, although they were Roman Catholics. Their sermons are still vibrant with power, and the strongest opponents of that Apostate Church can yet appreciate their moral value. Did not Louis XIV say of Massillon: "I am often satisfied with my chaplains, but when I hear Massillon I am dissatisfied with myself?" As regards Fénelon, I am afraid that we must take him off the roll of honour, for his secret letters discovered in the Archives of Paris show him as aiding and abetting the dreadful persecutions of the Huguenots.

I am glad that in the Appendix of the paper Saurin's name appears. He was a great preacher. I remember years ago to have read one of his sermons, which made a great impression upon me. It is the one on Paul before Felix, and he says—I translate freely and quote from memory:—"How many times has a prisoner trembled before his judge? but here for the first time in the history of the world the judge trembles before his prisoner—his Christian prisoner."

A word about the Huguenots. I hold in my hand an old pamphlet, dated 1686, describing the awful persecutions that preceded and followed the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in 1685. One can only groan like Habakkuk when reading these harrowing details. Why was it permitted? Maybe this visitation saved the Reformed Church of France from Rationalism and Apostasy, and many Churches of other nations from the same abyss. Those fires of persecution purified that visible Church, and out of that furnace there came to us in England, as a gift from God, a purified people.

Our so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688 was largely influenced

by the sight of what was done by the Romish King and Government in France to the spiritual élite of that nation—the most intelligent and industrious people of that kingdom. Their coming helped us in 1688, and probably saved our country from the tragedy which overwhelmed France a century later.

Perhaps more than half of the audience before me can boast of Huguenot connections. I see some who, like myself, are Fellows of the Huguenot Society. We have not only a sense of *spiritual* fellowship with French Protestants, but *real blood* relationship. Let our hearts go out in love to them. Let our prayers ascend to God on their behalf.

Mr. W. HOSTE, from his experience of some years lived in Paris, remarked how difficult it is for us to understand our neighbours across the Channel. Sometimes one hears over there criticisms of ourselves, which also are current here of them. For instance, though it might be difficult to find a society like the Victoria Institute, where such papers as the one to which we have listened could be heard, yet French Christians know what is going on in the great Ecclesiastical circles, and they may think we, too, are eaten up with Rationalism, or are all going back to Rome, and they may ignore much earnest work going on unseen and unadvertised.

While deploring there, as here, the spread of religious infidelity and superstition, let us not forget the good testimony that Evangelicals like MM. Saillens and Blocher, and many others, are carrying on in their country.

We must not forget how much French blood has been shed for Christ in the past centuries, nor how much we owe to those persecutions which drove into our arms thousands of the noblest sons of France, who brought with them a rich blessing to our land. All Christians in England should pray for their brethren in France, who are seeking faithfully to preach Christ and walk in the old paths.

Dr. H. C. MORTON expressed his appreciation of the paper, and greatly wished that Dr. Saillens could have been present in person. He thought, perhaps, that it was important that the Philosophic Society of Great Britain should make it quite clear

that the Rationalism of which the lecturer spoke was not the philosophic Rationalism, but the religious Rationalism. In Philosophy, Rationalism is a system of thought which regards knowledge and experience as impossible apart from certain fundamental elements or principles supplied immediately by Reason itself. For his part he had no quarrel with that Rationalism: but Rationalism in the religious sense as opposed to supernaturalism makes Reason, exclusive of Revelation, our authoritative guide in faith and conduct. It is important to keep strictly to definition; and what Dr. Saillens says on p. 228, namely, that the initial error of all Rationalism has been to believe in the goodness of all human nature, appears to confuse one of the results of Rationalism with Rationalism itself. Religious Rationalism affirms that Reason is our sole guide and our adequate guide in faith and conduct.

In a very real sense the lecture we have heard is a sad one. So, likewise, would be any lecture delivered in Paris upon Protestantism and Rationalism in Great Britain. We are faced with a strange contradiction. Protestantism is New Testament religion, and yet Protestantism is infected with Rationalism. It is a terrible fact, which Dr. Saillens affirms on p. 232, namely, that Modernism is raging among Protestants of all countries, and Modernism is essentially Rationalism. *Why* is this the case? It would be most interesting to learn something about the atmosphere of French Protestantism. What is the character of its preaching? Does it preach human sin and human need? Does it exalt Christ? The atmosphere produced by such preaching would be deadly to Rationalism. But if Protestant preaching has been switched off such lines, the way has been paved for the exaltation of Reason above Revelation. On a recent visit to France, at Biarritz and Pau, I felt saddened to find no Protestant services on the Sunday evening, but the streets crowded, and the Roman Churches busily at work.

Professor William James, in his famous volume, *The Will to Believe*, has argued cogently that it is certain influences born of the intellectual climate which make hypotheses possible or impossible for us. Speaking in his lecture room to Americans, he said: "Here in this room we all of us believe in molecules and the conservation of energy; in democracy and necessary progress; in Protestant

Christianity; and the duty of fighting for the immortal Munroe—all for no reason worthy of the name." Perhaps it is an extreme statement and a little bit flippant, but there is no doubt about the truth underlying it. Then what is it in the intellectual atmosphere of French and other Protestantism which has favoured the exaltation of Reason, and frowned on the authority of Revelation? In British history we know that Protestantism was born in revivals, and whilst the revival spirit survived in its preaching, Modernism was kept far away. Here, it has been a change of mental climate which gave Rationalism its opportunity. Has French Protestantism the same history? Has it had revivals? Has it experienced revivals like those of Britain? And to what extent has its preaching retained the revival note?

Protestants may wisely remember that Rationalism sounds the death-knell of Protestantism, and gives Rome her special opportunity. Humanity never long stands upright without a prop outside itself: and when it ceases to believe in Revelation, it is apt to lean upon the arm of the priest.

Mr. AVARY H. FORBES: I feel deeply grateful to Dr. Saillens for his valuable and interesting paper. There is only one sentence in it on which I venture to join issue with the doctor, *viz.*—"We deplore Calvin's grievous mistake"—in the matter of the burning of Servetus at Geneva in 1553. Servetus had gone about Europe for twenty years speaking and writing against the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. "If he comes to Geneva," wrote Calvin, "I will never permit him to depart alive." To us these words savour of bigoted cruelty; but they were at that time the voice of Christendom.

Servetus was arrested in France, tried before the Inquisition at Vienne, found guilty and sentenced to be "*burned in a slow fire.*" He escaped, however, and went to Geneva. Calvin just then was far from being the dictator he had been. There was, in fact, a fierce quarrel raging between him and his enemies, the Libertins and the Geneva Council. Calvin's fall, with sentence of death—or at least of banishment—was fully expected by his foes. And it was, no doubt, relying on this that Servetus came to Geneva.

Calvin accused Servetus, and drew up the indictment against him ; it was, indeed, *part of his official duty.* Servetus was arrested, but, still believing that Calvin would be condemned, and that he himself would succeed him, he loaded the reformer with abuse and charged him with grievous crimes. Calvin was not condemned, but his influence on the Council was now at zero, for he and the Consistory had been stripped of all ecclesiastical power. Servetus was tried before the Council, but before deciding on a verdict they took the opinion of the magistrates and churches of Basel, Bern, Zurich and Schaffhausen. These all voted for a capital sentence, and the Geneva Council accordingly condemned him to be burned. The verdict was that of Reformed Switzerland, and with it Calvin had personally NOTHING TO DO. Calvin implored the Council to employ the sword instead of the stake ; but they would not listen to him. Servetus besought that Calvin would visit him in prison. To interest oneself now in any way in Servetus was dangerous. Yet Calvin visited him in prison. " Not without danger to my life," he wrote afterwards, " I offered to deliver him from his errors."* Servetus apologized to Calvin, but would not recant.

Five years later Calvin published his *Defence of the Secret Providence of God*, in which, referring to the tragedy, he says : "*Pro quo tamen me fuisse deprecatum, testes sunt ipsi judices*" (For whom I earnestly interceded, as his judges themselves are witnesses). He was indeed the only person who appealed for mitigation.

True, Calvin threatened Servetus from the first with death. True, he framed the accusation. True, he approved the death sentence. But it is *not* true that he was responsible for the verdict, nor that he approved the mode of execution. Protestants may condemn Calvin—and Melanchthon and many others—for his view of the matter. But it was an age of intolerance. Servetus had already been condemned by the Church of Rome, and the tribunal at Vienne demanded that Servetus should be sent back to them to undergo the first sentence—a demand which Servetus, with tears, implored the Council to refuse. To the Papal Church Servetus was " a monstrous heretic . . . unworthy to converse with men "

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* *Calvini Refut. Errorum Serveti*, viii, p. 511. Ed. Amstel.

(*Bungener*, p. 239); and his death was, to that Church, nothing more than one of the 40,000 "heretics" burnt by the Inquisition in the same century.

Wylie, in his *History of Protestantism*, gives chapter and verse from Rilliet, Ruchat, Gaberel, and others for the foregoing facts.