

# 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:



Buy me a coffee

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



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_jtvi-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jtvi-01.php)

JOURNAL OF  
THE TRANSACTIONS  
OF  
The Victoria Institute,  
OR,  
Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

---

EDITED BY THE SECRETARY.

---

VOL. XLI.



LONDON:

(Published by the Institute, 1, Adelphi Terrace House, Charing Cross, W.A.C.)

---

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

1909.

## 496TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING.

MONDAY, APRIL 19TH, 1909.

PROFESSOR E. HULL, LL.D., F.R.S. (VICE-PRESIDENT), IN THE  
CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read and confirmed.

The following paper was then read by the author :—

*THE PRESENT POSITION OF CATHOLICS IN  
FRANCE.* By ARTHUR GALTON, M.A., Vicar of Edenham,  
Bourne, Lincs.

**M**Y paper was announced on your list of subjects as "Modern Christianity in France," but what I wish to bring before you may be described more accurately, perhaps, as "The Present Position of Catholics in France." I venture, therefore, to substitute this title for the other, both as a convenience to my hearers and as a guidance to myself, through a tortuous and complicated labyrinth.

The present position of catholics in France can only be understood through a knowledge of their past, and I must begin by explaining some of their old positions, as briefly as I can.

From the fall of the Roman Empire in the west down to 1789, the gallican church was the most influential and one of the most wealthy organisations within the papal communion. It was also the most intensely national and, on the whole, the freest. All patronage worth having was at the disposal of the crown. The royal supremacy was more active and arbitrary than it ever was in England. No papal decrees or definitions had any validity until they had been scrutinised and accepted by the lawyers, ratified by the various parliaments, sanctioned by the king and promulgated by his executive. There was no

quarrel with Rome and no breach in the traditional fabric of catholic unity; but the monarchy secured most effectually that the pope should exercise no jurisdiction within the realm of France. The prerogatives of the State and the national autonomy of the church were guarded with the most jealous care. By this achievement, French statesmanship, as I venture to think, showed itself more enlightened and unselfish than some of our English politicians in the sixteenth century. At any rate, the church of France was not isolated in Christendom; its continuity could not be challenged; and it was the chief barrier, for the whole of Latin Christianity, against papal centralisation and aggression. As long as gallicanism flourished, the triumph of ultramontanism was impossible. This was a great achievement. It gives us a clue to all that has happened since, and we are not concerned at present with the manifold and internal defects of the old gallican church. Let us rather be grateful to it for this very difficult and important thing which it achieved, by which, as usual, France was a benefactor and a model to all the nations.

In 1789, all serious and educated laymen and the vast majority of parochial clergy, not only accepted, but welcomed the Revolution. They welcomed it as churchmen, because they saw in it an opportunity for securing those ecclesiastical reforms which the better part of the nation, enlightened by the philosophers, had long and earnestly desired. They recognised as well, with their admirable French logic, that the rights of man, as the Revolution enunciated them, are clearly deducible from the New Testament, and that the three words, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, which sum up the whole spirit of the Revolution, are also a summary of the gospel, so far as we are able to infer the conceptions of the Christ Himself. As, in those days, the church undoubtedly was the nation, and the nation was the church, it cannot be denied that French catholicism accepted the Revolution, and adapted it to its ecclesiastical affairs. In questions of doctrine, the French assemblies were rigorously and even scrupulously conservative; but in all matters of organisation they initiated reforms which made the church more national, more efficient, more equitable in government and patronage. We cannot enter into the details of the *Constitution Civile du Clergé*, so I will only say two things about it: first, that if ever we should be disestablished or reformed, and if in the process we do not let ourselves be annexed by an ambitious and aggressive clericalism, there is no ecclesiastical constitution which is more worthy of our serious consideration; and secondly,

if this constitution had had a fair trial, and had been maintained, religion in France and, consequently, in the largest part of Christendom, would have been in a much healthier condition than it is to-day.

The *Constitution Civile*, however, interfered with vested interests. The papacy opposed it on various flimsy pretexts, but really to maintain and extend its own authority, while the French bishops disliked it because it reduced their incomes and prerogatives. The papacy and the episcopate mis-led a king, who, like our own Charles I., was timid, unintelligent and insincere. They frightened a large number of the clergy, and they seduced that mischievous and credulous section of the laity which is always inclined to be more fanatical than the clergy themselves. They utilised and exacerbated the emigrant nobility, intrigued with hostile and reactionary governments, operated with foreign invaders, subordinated patriotism and even the national safety to professional interests; and by all these machinations played on the ignorance and fanaticism of the peasantry in many districts. These tactics led inevitably to reaction and reprisals on the part of the majority, and are chiefly responsible for the worst excesses and crimes of the revolutionary factions. Everybody talks glibly enough about the Reign of Terror. Few Englishmen realise what caused that terror, which was perfectly genuine and only too well founded; and still fewer know anything about the wholesale atrocities committed by the abominable White Terror, *i.e.*, by partisans of the pope, the bishops and the nobles.

In spite of all these violences on both sides the *Constitution Civile* did good work. It prospered, it was extending itself through the nation, and would have satisfied it. Unfortunately, it had an uncompromising enemy in Napoleon. It was far too liberal to suit his designs; and, for his own ends, he effected the concordat of 1801. It was not the first time that a French sovereign and a pope had sacrificed the interests of the gallican church to their own convenience. The result of the concordat was to end gallicanism, by leaving the French church exposed to ultramontane developments and aggressions; this, of course, was not Napoleon's intention, but the inevitable effects of the concordat were foreseen by Talleyrand, and by a few other wise men, who knew what gallicanism had been and who understood the papacy.

For ultramontanism came in, like a rising flood, with the restoration of Pius VII. in 1814. It was due to three causes: First, to that political reaction which was a natural consequence

of the revolutionary excesses. The despotic sovereigns of Europe formed an Holy Alliance against the liberties of their people and the rights of nations. With this infamous and fatuous policy our various administrations were in sympathy, until our affairs were managed by the more generous, brave, and liberating intellect of Lord Palmerston, who was not only a great Englishman, but a wise, farseeing and beneficent European. Secondly, the growth of ultramontaniam was due to the re-establishment of the Society of Jesus, which is pledged above all things to the papal service; for its motto, *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*, always means the greater glory and jurisdiction of the pope. Its theologians in the sixteenth century drew the most logical conclusions from the claims of the mediæval papacy, and its men of action devoted themselves with heroic zeal to making these conclusions practical. The restored Jesuits not only controlled the policy of the Holy See, but they had almost a monopoly of both lay and clerical education. In other words, they leavened the theology and the mentality of the whole papal system. Their efforts culminated with the decree of infallibility in 1870: but the effects of their policy still remain to be proved; for their evolution of Romanism during the nineteenth century is not working out very successfully, so far as one can judge, in the twentieth. Thirdly, the spread of ultramontaniam owes much to those extravagant, sentimental, and fallacious notions of mediævalism which replaced the sturdier common sense of the eighteenth century. A scientific knowledge of the middle ages does not make either for catholicism or for papalism, or for an unqualified admiration of mediævalism itself, that mingled product of ignorance and barbarity; but the romantic movement of the early nineteenth century was not scientific, nor was any single one of its leaders either in France or England, either in history or in theology. It was, rather, ignorant and emotional and silly. It produced our thoroughly illogical English tractarianism, and it was utilised very cleverly by the more logical ultramontanes for their own purposes.

Besides these three causes for the growth of ultramontaniam, the ancient barriers of the gallican church against romanising were destroyed. They fell with the monarchy, and were not restored with it. The old national spirit of the church was broken. A breach was made between the church and the nation, which the reactionary politics and the romanising theology of the French ecclesiastics have widened continuously. Every possible mistake, that could be made, was made by the

clergy and their allies throughout the Restoration, the monarchy of Louis Philippe, the Second Empire, and the Third Republic. Lost causes, forsaken beliefs, unpopular names, impossible loyalties, ridiculous pretenders, and ignoble policies, were clung to with incredible folly, and served by the most reprehensible methods. There is little that is either noble or chivalrous in the story of the French reactionaries. Whenever the clerical party secured any power, they misused it. Their struggle has never been for liberty, but always for privilege and monopoly. Equality before the law, they have described as persecution; for, according to papal theories, the clergy may never be subordinated to the civil power. When they provoke reaction and reprisals, they complain of martyrdom. As Newman said, long ago, "Nothing will ever satisfy the Roman Catholics"; but, as usual, he was only half right. One thing satisfies them, namely supremacy over the civil power, and over every individual human being. This is inherent in ultramontanism. There is no escape from the consequences of ultramontane premisses, either for those who formulate the papal claims, or for those who accept them voluntarily, or for those unfortunates upon whom they can be imposed. Now ultramontanism is not a new thing. It was not invented in 1814, nor launched by the decree of 1870, for the principles of ultramontanism were enunciated clearly by the great mediæval popes, and they were inherent in the claims of the Roman court as far back as Leo I. in the fifth century.

But let us hold clearly to a broad principle, and then we shall understand that conflict which we are witnessing in France, and may have to deal with here; a struggle which may seem complicated to many outside observers, but which is in reality the simplest of all contemporary problems. The papal claims, infallibility, ultramontanism, are incompatible with all that is understood by the French Revolution, using that term in its good sense. They are incompatible with the rights of man; with all that Frenchmen have desired since 1789, and which they are gradually obtaining. They are incompatible with the ideals of modern society, and with the very foundations upon which our existing society rests. I need scarcely add that they are wholly incompatible with that mysterious entity, which we all know by instinct, but which none of us can define or handle: I mean the British Constitution. English institutions and the papal autocracy are absolutely incompatible, the one with the other. They cannot be combined without loss, and ultimately without destruction, to one or both. No compromise whatever

is possible between them : that is a lesson which we may learn from France. It is a lesson which we learned for ourselves, and practised, in the sixteenth century ; but there are many signs that we are in danger of unlearning it, through that sentimentalism, the fruit of ease and prosperity, which is one of the gravest dangers in our modern life, not only to the individual, but even more to States, and, as we should not forget, to churches. "A catholic atmosphere," as it is called in our fatuous and ignoble educational squabbles, whether anglican or roman, is absolutely incompatible with English citizenship.

From this little sketch two things, perhaps, will have emerged clearly ; the old gallican church was destroyed, both in form and spirit, by Napoleon's concordat. There was no longer a national church of France, in the old meaning of the term. Napoleon organised an ecclesiastical system, which he intended to be a department of State ; but his hierarchy, as was proved immediately, was wholly unprotected against papal interference. He enabled a foreign power to become supreme over a large body of Frenchmen. He gave to its representatives official rank and collective wealth, both of which endued it further with political influence ; and this hierarchical system easily secured for itself infinite and irresistible powers of expansion. In two directions, this expansion was immediate and systematic. The religious orders were not restored by the concordat. In fact, they were implicitly forbidden ; but, even before Napoleon disappeared, they were revived under one pretext or another ; and they increased continuously, prolifically, until the danger was tackled resolutely by the legislation of Waldeck-Rousseau and the administration of M. Combes.

The clergy also won back, by slower degrees, the control of education, a victory which they owed chiefly to the religious orders ; but, not content with privilege and supremacy and control, they were always trying to proscribe every other system which was devised by the State and desired by those who objected to the tone, the methods, and the results of clerical teaching.

Now few things are so open to dispute as statistics. Even facts are hardly more controversial ; and the numbers of the French catholics are not an easy question to decide. I will, however, take a practical test, which I think proves a good deal, and impales those who dispute it on one or other horn of a dilemma. Since the earliest parliaments of the Restoration, under Louis XVIII., there has never been a clerical majority in France. There has never been even a respectable minority. The



papacy and the clergy have been able to threaten governments, to disturb the civil order, to impede public policy, and they have done this by influencing illiterate or semi-educated voters; but they have never been able to legislate directly, or to assume the responsibilities and power of office. Every election shows a decrease in the clerical and reactionary parties, not only in the Chambers, but in the departmental, the municipal, and the communal councils; a decrease, not merely in those who are elected, but a more significant shrinkage in those who vote. The reactionary parties are disappearing fast, even in those backward districts which used to be the strongholds of clericalism. This process has gone on steadily for the greater part of a century, and during the last forty years with an ever-growing rapidity. At present, the various reactionary parties are a negligible quantity in the legislature, and they seem tending to extinction in the electorate. France may thus be contrasted with Belgium, let us say, where liberals and clericals are almost equally balanced, and both sides are able to gain majorities, and form administrations. Though it should be added that this result is only obtained in Belgium, so far as the clericals are concerned, by a manipulation of the franchise which is not likely to be permanent.

Now the conclusions which I draw, with regard to France, are either that the roman catholics are a small and ever-diminishing fraction of the people; or that their leaders have not sense enough to organise the forces which they might control; or, granting the existence of such forces, then the bulk of the roman catholics are either apathetic, or they are out of sympathy with the policy and aims of their hierarchy, and above all of Rome. I think there is something to be allowed for in these two last reasons; but I hold that my first conclusion is entirely true, and that it explains the whole situation. Out of the 38,000,000 or so, of the French population in France, only a dwindling minority is even nominally catholic, and of that minority again only a still smaller section are practising and contributing to their religion. The actual numbers are not easily computed. Spain, with a population of 16,000,000, is given, by certain ultramontane authorities, only 4,000,000 of practising catholics, one quarter of the population. This is thought by many observers to be too large. In any case, the proportion in France is certainly much lower than in Spain; even when the figures are increased by those multitudes who, for domestic or social reasons, are christened, married, and buried by the clergy, but who have no other dealings with the church.

Now it should be self-evident that a liberal State and a reactionary church cannot live in peace together. When it is realised, further, that the Roman Court is chiefly a political and financial organisation, administered by diplomatic methods and principles, and only masquerading as a religious or theological institution, it is easy to see that there will be perpetual friction between church and State. In France, the battles caused by this friction have always turned ultimately on education: for obvious reasons. The State has said, with undeniable justice, universal suffrage postulates an educated electorate; therefore education must be compulsory. If it be compulsory, it must also, in justice, be gratuitous; and, in a country of various theologies and conflicting sects, it must also be unsectarian and neutral with regard to all such controversies. The logic of all this reasoning is unassailable, and is of universal application. The church, on the other hand, not only claims a monopoly in even the secular education of its subjects, but it challenges the claim of the State to educate at all. In practice, it has never had what we should call a right of entry without abusing it, and misusing education for political purposes. The clergy, and above all the religious orders, have inculcated principles which are absolutely opposed to the existing institutions, to the social and political ideals, of modern France. Moreover, they have seen in education a means of biasing the electorate, of influencing voters, and so of undermining the institutions of their country. Hence, the whole conflict between church and State, under the Third Republic; and, especially, the defensive legislation of the Republicans against the teaching orders.

Usually, the extreme clericals have combated the Republic directly and openly, either as agents or as dupes of the monarchical and reactionary parties. This was the policy of Pius IX. Leo XIII., with greater wisdom and astuteness, since he was a statesman of very unusual capacity, advised rallying to the Republic: by which he meant an ostensible peace, a quiet, stealthy acceptance and utilising of the educational and legislative machinery, so that the electorate might be leavened, the public service, the learned professions, and by degrees the Chambers, packed with clerical adherents, and thus legislation and administration would pass into ecclesiastical control; and then in due time the Republic would have been either mended, in a papal sense, or ended. This was an astute and a very able policy. It very nearly succeeded, I don't say in victory, but in producing a revolution. It was helped enormously by the follies and factions of the Republicans themselves. It was

checkmated, however, partly by the obstinacy and fanaticism of the extreme royalists and clericals, who opposed the methods and policy of Leo ; partly by the imprudence and over-haste of his supporters, especially the monks. These flung all caution to the winds, threw themselves into electoral contests, utilised malodorous pretenders like Boulanger, and proclaimed their policy openly by their abominable press, their shameless methods, and their innumerable organisations. The Republic was in the gravest danger from about 1886 onwards ; and its eyes were only opened effectually by the crimes and scandals of the Dreyfus case.

To meet these dangers the Republicans rallied and formed a united party, the *bloc*, under Waldeck-Rousseau, which faced the whole situation resolutely. It began by dealing with the unauthorised religious orders and their property, and then it passed on to education. Leo XIII. behaved, as always, like a statesman. He saw the shipwreck of his policy without any idle recriminations. He allowed no disturbance over the anti-monastic legislation ; and he resolved to make the best terms possible out of existing circumstances. As long as he lived, separation was not a practical question ; but, thanks to Pius X. and his advisers, the whole aspect of things was changed in the autumn of 1903. Cardinal Sarto was a nonentity, an average Italian parochial ecclesiastic ; a reader of nothing but his breviary, and not a scholar of that ; trained only in and by his seminary, and wholly undeveloped since ; absolutely unversed in great affairs ; speaking no language but his own, and that in a provincial dialect. He owed his election to the veto, ostensibly of Austria, but more probably of Germany. By this veto, Cardinal Rampolla, a great Secretary of State, the confidant of Leo XIII., and a warm friend of France, was excluded, though his election was absolutely certain, and was on the point of being declared. The new Pope chose as his Secretary of State a young man, half Irish, half Spaniard, and a British subject, but not a francophil, and evidently a blind tool of the Jesuits. Thus the diplomatic influence of Germany and of the Society of Jesus has been supreme in the Vatican since 1903, with the results which we have witnessed. It is a very dangerous and sinister alliance : of militarism and Jesuitism, of autocracy and theocracy. Fortunately, it has not been successful so far ; but circumstances might easily arise in which this combination would see a chance of realising their several ambitions through war, especially after the late encouraging experiences of Austria : to which we have been able to

oppose nothing except sonorous and self-righteous platitudes, which have naturally not counted in the scales of international justice against the weight of the Prussian sword.

But let us return to France. Everything was done by Pius X. and his director Merry del Val, to exasperate the French government. Bishops were summoned to Rome, and deposed without consulting it. Both the letter and spirit of the concordat were ignored. French national feeling was wounded in the most galling way over the journey of President Loubet to Italy; and the insult was aggravated by the garbled despatches in which the matter was discussed with other powers. The Curia thought the Republic was afraid to deal with separation, but it was never more fundamentally mistaken. The policy was carried through calmly and steadily, without causing even a ripple of serious disturbance on the surface of public order, in spite of desperate efforts by the Vatican to inflame the population and to influence the Chambers. We must acknowledge that this satisfactory result was due very largely to the wise educational policy of Jules Ferry and the earlier statesmen of the Third Republic. Pius IX. could coerce and terrify the administration of Napoleon III., by playing through his clergy upon an uneducated electorate. Pius X. and his agents have proved themselves unable to ruffle public opinion in any single part of France.

The project of separation itself was just and moderate. There was no church property in France. It was all resumed by the nation, in 1789, with the acquiescence of the clergy, and the whole matter was ratified by Pius VII. in 1802. It was allowed by all French jurists, and admitted by the ecclesiastics, that no corporation, and therefore not the church, can have any claims against the State, which must be supreme in all questions of property. It was admitted, also, that the payments to the clergy under the concordat were in no sense an equivalent for the old ecclesiastical revenues. The roman catholic clergy, then, and the other ministers recognised by the State, were paid annual salaries. They were civil servants, as all State paid officials must be. There was thus no question of disendowment, properly speaking; no vexed and complicated problem of dealing with, or readjusting, vast quantities of property. Disestablishment in France meant literally a separation, officially, between church and State. It was thus in its financial aspects a very simple measure indeed, and not as it would be with us a very complicated matter. The budget of public worship had grown outrageously between 1814 and

1900. As the relative proportion of catholics declined, so the demands of the clergy and the contributions of the State increased. It is manifest, that an organisation and a budget which were devised when the nation and the church were practically identical, were no longer equitable when the church had dwindled into a fraction of the people. For that reason alone, a readjustment of the concordat was demanded. But there were the other and more imperious reasons, to which I have alluded, viz., that the nation and the church hold incompatible ideals, that their principles and methods are irreconcilable, and that through the growth of ultramontanism the French catholics, instead of being national in spirit, had succumbed wholly to the influence and control of a foreign power. The church in France was not only a rival system within the State, but it was a foreign, a hostile, and an aggressive organisation within the State; claiming and exercising a supreme control over property and persons, though deriving its influence to a very large extent from the revenues and position which it received from the government. All this, as French Liberals thought, quite reasonably, was anomalous, intolerable, and even suicidal. A nation certainly has the right to say whether it will or will not have official relations with any ecclesiastical system. It also has the right either to end or to modify existing relations.

The financial scheme of separation was not only just, but generous. All personal and existing interests were respected. The change was to be gradual. Salaries were to be paid in a diminishing scale for four, and in some cases for eight, years after the passing of the law. In some cases age, and in others length of service, entitled ecclesiastics to a life pension. Certain public chaplaincies continue to be paid by the State. But with regard to all parochial ministrations, the legislature decided that the majority of the nation no longer desired them; that the existing system was a sham, and was inequitable; and that all such services should be provided and paid for by those who wanted them.

With regard to fabrics, it must be remembered again that there was no ecclesiastical property in France. This was made plain by the concordat, which was only ratified by the State on condition that this was recognised by the clergy. The churches themselves were State property, so were the bishops' houses. The presbyteries were either national, or municipal, or communal property. In all cases they were public property, even under the concordat. There was, therefore, no confiscation,

and no application of a new principle by the separation law. In all cases, the use of the churches was made over to the existing occupants, subject to their proper usage and repair. Cathedrals and all important buildings were considered, as they have long been, historical monuments, for which the State holds itself responsible. In this matter, the separated church of France is treated more wisely and generously than are the cathedral chapters of our own established church. Legal associations were to be formed to deal with all questions of repairs and finance. Official inventories were to be made of all moveable property, at the desire of the catholic deputies, and solely in the interests of the catholics themselves, so that valuable and artistic objects might not be alienated or stolen. These associations were absolutely under the control of the bishops; and more than this, only those ecclesiastics were to be recognised as lawful occupiers of churches who were approved by the bishops and the Vatican. In all this, the State conceded everything the papacy can have desired or expected, and certainly more than it should have given. The majority of local catholics, and not the Pope, should have decided all such questions, and the State should have accepted their decision. At any rate, there was no attack by the State on ecclesiastical discipline, or on the hierarchical order, or on the papal authority. They were all safeguarded, and even guaranteed by the State, which not only did nothing to encourage schism, but exceeded its functions by devising an organisation that discouraged it.

The French bishops, by large majorities, were willing to accept all this legislation; but they were over-ruled by the Vatican, which played the desperate game of disapproving every law, and rejecting every financial scheme. Its reasons are obvious. It hoped the government would retaliate, and that the disturbing cry of persecution might be raised. It wanted to see churches closed, services forbidden, and ecclesiastical life suspended. The government was too alert and wise to fall into this trap, and also too faithful to its liberal principles. Not a church nor a service was interfered with, and the ritual business of France has gone on uninterruptedly, as usual. Salaries and pensions have been paid as the law intended, though the papal repudiation of the law should, strictly, have vitiated the whole scheme and relieved the State from any further responsibility. There have been a few disputes over the use and rents of presbyteries, but in all cases the courts have decided impartially between ecclesiastics and the local

authorities. Public opinion has not been moved, and apparently does not seem interested by the situation which the Pope created; but the bishops have been deprived of an immense deal of property, on which they were relying for diocesan administration, and the lower clergy have suffered still more grievously. Rome also has suffered indirectly, and in two ways. The French church can hardly pay its way or meet its own diocesan and parochial obligations, therefore it has less and less to spare for external purposes. For this reason the Peter's Pence from France must have shrunk ominously, and is probably still shrinking; and the foreign missions, to which France contributed so lavishly in money, so devotedly in men, and which are so important an item in the papal propaganda, must be declining very much as Peter's Pence is.

It may now be asked why the papacy embarked on this reckless and apparently foolish policy: first, it miscalculated the effects of separation, just as it had miscalculated the possibility of it. It thought the country would be roused, and it wasn't. Evidently, the Vatican did not realise the position of catholicism in France. Secondly, it not only disliked but feared the precedent, that France should be able to carry through so fundamental a change without even consulting the Holy See. In the opinion of the French government, separation was a purely national question, in which foreigners had no concern. The Vatican urged that it was chiefly a papal question, which could not be settled without the pope. The French view has proved more correct, and the difficulty did not exist in fact. The dangerous precedent has been created, and has shown that it is workable. It may, therefore, be followed with impunity by other governments. That is why separation in France is the most grievous blow to the papal authority which has happened since the sixteenth century. In view of its threatened authority, which it has not saved after all, the Vatican cared little about the interests of the French clergy, and treated their sufferings with its usual cynical indifference. Let us add, if we would be just, that the French clergy have endured manfully for what they were told was right. They have been heroically loyal to their conceptions of authority and order; but it has been a desperate and a very dubious policy. It must have disillusioned a great many of the clergy, and it is bound to have more illuminating effects on the coming generation of ecclesiastics.

There certainly has been one tragic disillusion for the French catholics. Many of the more enlightened were favourable to

separation. They thought it would clear the air, end many obvious unrealities, and stimulate zeal by forcing the laity to accept their responsibilities. Above all, they hoped to realise the ideal of a free church in a free or at any rate a neutral State. Certainly the State has become neutral. Subject only to its ordinary laws of police and of corporate finance, the Roman catholics are free. Indeed, the ordinary laws of public meeting have been relaxed in their favour. But they are less free than they were before. Under the concordat, if there were some State control, which was more nominal than real, there was also some theory of protection and guarantee. This has all been swept away; and what is called the French church has become merely an outlying department of the Vatican administration. The choice of bishops was not given back to the people, or even to the clergy. It is solely in the hands of Rome. The bishops are now, both in fact and theory, mere papal delegates, made and unmade at pleasure, with no security of tenure, no powers of initiative, no genuine responsibility, and an ever dwindling power of administration. The parochial clergy, in like manner, are absolutely dependent on their bishops. The canon law, and the possession of corporate endowments, especially in land, made the old French clergy both free and strong, as against Rome, while the royal supremacy was an additional protection. All this was modified or destroyed by the Revolution and the concordat. Though the *Constitution Civile* would have secured the freedom of the church, against both the papacy and the politicians, the concordat was no protection against either. It was illogical in its conception, blundering in its methods, and mischievous in its results, from the beginning; and its century of life only made these defects more glaring. But the present state of French romanism is far worse, and can only end in moral and intellectual disaster. Every institution must bear the defects of its principles and qualities. Of all institutions which human beings have devised for their moral, intellectual, political, social, and material undoing, a theocracy is the worst. It is the most prolific in itself of mischief; the most obstinate in ill-doing; the most opposed to progress, and to intellectual or civic freedom; and it is the most difficult to over-turn. To reform a theocracy is, indeed, impossible; for it is a contradiction in terms. Whenever deities have been established and endowed, they have always shown themselves incorrigible.

Now the Vatican is a theocracy; and it has added to this original disease the next most pernicious of administrative



abuses, viz., a bureaucracy. Through the steady growth of Vaticanism, since 1814, through modern methods of communication, through the decline of lay influence and of public control, this ecclesiastical bureaucracy has become more powerful and centralised. It has encroached upon all the churches, and absorbed all the jurisdiction which used to be inherent in the episcopate. The religious orders, too, are now centralised, and every conventual organisation has a superior in Rome. The bureaucracy of the Vatican is, moreover, not only centralised but ubiquitous, and is in immediate contact with the whole of its international organisation. The mediæval popes may seem terrifying, as we idealise them; but a modern pope, almost deified in his shrine, relieved from political anxieties and fetters, speaking through a myriad newspapers, communicating with an universal hierarchy through telephones and wireless telegraphy, and commanding the abject obedience of those with whom he deigns to communicate, would be far more dangerous if he could rely, as his predecessors did, on the secular arm and on popular support. But these two essential elements of power are no longer with the papacy, and popular support is receding from it more and more. Besides, Vaticanism is tending inevitably to destroy such elements of strength as it may still command. Its principles compel it to sterilise and emasculate its own subjects. Men cannot be governed like slaves and children with impunity. The Society of Jesus would have proved irresistible long ago, in a loose and divided world, if the very process which moulds a Jesuit did not weaken him intellectually and morally by tampering with the qualities on which his individuality and strength depend. The Society has had the pick of roman catholic material ever since it was founded, it has never degenerated like the other orders, its effort has been unceasing and its zeal heroic, and yet it has never produced a single genius, or a man of the first rank in any line. Its general standard is wonderfully high, but everything is sacrificed to that standard; and thus, the Society, in spite of all its talent and zeal, has been little more than a vast machine for the production of mediocrity. Failure is writ large over its history, much larger than success. A similar process is now at work throughout the papal hierarchy and the priesthood: and in both, it will be far more destructive than in the case of a religious order, which starts with picked men; for the average parochial minister is not a picked man. He is, perhaps, below the general average of laymen; and the present centralised methods of ruling the Church will keep him below that

average, both in intelligence and virility. The papacy is tending inevitably to destroy roman catholicism. That is why separation is not dangerous to the State in France, as many liberals imagined. It would have been exceedingly dangerous if the papacy had its old influence; if it could coerce governments and manipulate voters. But the pontificate of Pius X. has revealed that it cannot. And so long as education is diffused and efficient, the papacy and the clergy will not regain those powers. On one side, we have an educated and a progressive democracy; on the other, an over-centralised, and therefore a weakened, hierarchy, an under-educated parochial clergy, and a horde of quite uneducated and obscurantist religious orders. These are the elements with which France has to deal. As long as these qualities on both sides are maintained, or still more as they are developed, the breach between the church and the nation must grow wider. After all, in spite of many superficial appearances, the papal church even at present is not a very solid building. It has a pretentious façade, with nothing much behind it. It has an imposing hierarchy, but not much popular support; while the hierarchy itself is crushed by the papacy, and undermined by the religious orders; and the priesthood is becoming always more negligible intellectually. No system can endure permanently under these conditions. It may long be powerful for mischief, since it is built on traditional ignorance, and trades on atavistic fears; but the papacy cannot dominate a world which it is no longer capable of leading. All the newer forces which are influencing mankind are against it; and no religious organisation can subsist in the face of a truth and a morality which are higher than its own.

Even within the church, these forces, which seemed dormant for so long, are now becoming visible and audible. The papal church may have appeared stagnant since 1870, but it was really germinating with new life. This life is described by the insufficient and misleading term of modernism. It is a thing easy to understand, but much less easy to define, as even the Pope has found. Modernism is not, as the Pope has asserted, a system of philosophy or a school of thought, with fixed aims and exclusive rules; it means being in touch and sympathy with the intellectual world of to-day, with this age in which we live. It implies knowing the best that has been thought and said in the great world of the past; handling and judging this knowledge by our present scientific methods, and applying it to the highest purposes. Some modernists are philosophers, some are theologians, some philologists, some anthropologists

and students of comparative religion; others are biblical scholars and orientalists; others are hellenists, archaeologists, antiquaries, historians; many are philanthropists and explorers of social questions. Most of them have come to see that the papal claims are dubious, or worse; that episcopacy is not what it represented itself to be through so many credulous centuries; that ecclesiastical organisation and theology are both subject to development; that the present state of the papal church is practically unendurable and theoretically indefensible. In these conclusions, the modernists should have the sympathy of all educated people. In trying to reform the church, they are only doing what anglicans took upon themselves to do in the sixteenth century; and the modernists have come now to many of the conclusions which were reached by our own reformers then. Modernism is dissolving the papal claims and the mediæval theology just as the new learning dissolved them in the sixteenth century, only with more certitude and finality.

Now the Vatican, for its own obvious purposes, has tried to identify modernism exclusively with biblical criticism, in order to divert protestant sympathy from the modernists, and to draw the attention of the British public from its own abominable methods of dealing with them. For the papacy still works by violence, in its traditional ways. It uses the Index for writings, and the Inquisition for writers. Behind both is a system of spying and of delation. Within both are secret processes, long since condemned and repudiated by all civilised governments: there are trials in which the accused are not heard, and do not even know their accusation; the accusers are not confronted with their victims, and witnesses are not examined openly, and judgments are given from which there is no appeal. Beyond these injustices, are excommunication, the boycott, professional ruin, and every species of social persecution or domestic pressure; all aggravated a thousand-fold by the lies, calumnies, and outrages of the clerical press, the vilest instrument of tyranny and spite and slander and falsehood and corruption and blackmail now existing in the world. It is traditional that the papacy should use these methods; but it is lamentable that English people should be duped by them, and their want of sympathy with those who suffer is culpable. For there is no royal road to learning, and there is no autocratic or despotic way to truth. It has to be reached by labour and hypothesis and experiment, and by much pondering, and often only through many errors and mistakes. These are inevitable in all human research, and they do not matter if the intention be

honest. Truth and scholarship will always find their level if they be unimpeded. Error will inevitably be detected and exposed, when there is freedom of research and of speech. These have been, hitherto, our English methods; and we should have no sympathy with those who violate them systematically, flagrantly, cynically, especially by misusing the press to deceive the people, and to undermine those liberties of which it should be a strenuous guardian.

Now it may be asked, What is the present position of modernism, and what are its prospects?

First, there has been no general movement; but it must not be supposed that modernism is dead. It has not been killed by Pius X. I have explained that the State remained neutral, and gave no encouragement to ecclesiastical secessions. Indeed, by its financial arrangements, it went beyond a strict neutrality, and made any liberating process difficult. And the leading modernists do not want to move. Some of them have, indeed, and against their wishes, been moved out, but not one of them has been an aggressor. They do not wish to establish new organisations, adding one or more to the too numerous Christian factions. They also recognise the difficulty, or even the impossibility, of organising new churches, on theological and ecclesiastical bases, after the manner of the sixteenth century. The day for such enterprises and institutions is manifestly over. What the modernists aim at and hope for is to leaven the existing organisation; preserving, if they can, its international character, and its priceless heritage of unity and long tradition. They do not see why an organisation which might be utilised for good, which for a long time will certainly be capable of mischief, should be surrendered without a blow to obscurantists, and fanatics, and autocrats. Only the future will prove whether these hopes can be fulfilled.

In France, then, on the surface, the modernists are vanquished, silenced, excommunicated, solitary; but, below the surface, modernism is fermenting and spreading. It cannot be excluded, even from the schools and seminaries, unless catholics can be debarred from education, and isolated from social intercourse. The two main difficulties of the French bishops at present are the want of men, and the want of money. Men are wanting, partly because there are not funds enough to educate them; but also because the ecclesiastical career is unpromising financially, and even more unpromising intellectually. Both in quality and in quantity, the supply of priests will diminish under the existing conditions. The church will die of

intellectual and moral atrophy if ultramontanism prevail. The papacy will inevitably be transformed if modernism prevail; and nothing short of a catastrophe to civilisation can check it.

In Italy, modernism is more widely spread among the clergy than in France. It is both more practical and more intense; as it is allied closely with a great deal of socialistic and revolutionary enthusiasm. The policy of the reigning Pope has led to more anti-clericalism than Italy has experienced since Arnold of Brescia. The growth of the religious orders, since 1870, has been steady, and in Rome itself has become very serious. The governing classes minimise the friction; but the feeling of the urban populations is strong. There might conceivably be a working alliance between modernists and socialists which would possibly overthrow the Curia, and perhaps even eliminate the monarchy. At any rate, there is a significant counter-alliance at present between the Italian ministry and the supporters of the Vatican.

In Germany, the modernist movement has only been kept under with difficulty, through the sympathetic understanding between the papacy and the Prussian bureaucracy. The centre party has no longer the full confidence of the catholic populations. There was much discontent in Germany about the manner in which modernism was condemned by Pius X. The matter of his Encyclicals filled intelligent Germans with contempt or despair; and the methods advocated by him for dealing with the modernists revolted Germanic notions of justice and fair play. Several German professors have been threatened by the Vatican, and if they had been French they would certainly have been condemned; but the papacy hesitated to offend the government, and the government feared to irritate popular feeling by sacrificing German professors to the rancour of Italian ecclesiastics. Between German science and ecclesiastical obscurantism there can be no permanent alliance; and the existing calm in Germany is probably the calm which precedes a storm. It will be for the good of the world if that storm ends the alliance between the Vatican and Berlin, and helps to overthrow the autocracy of both.

The example of France will not be lost, we may be sure, on the other Latin countries, steeped as their clergies are in corruption and stagnation.

In Australia and in the United States, modern ideals and British institutions have been gradually transforming catholicism, even among the Irish settlers. In Canada, these influences have made the catholics very different from their reactionary

kinsmen in France itself. Between Americanism and Vaticanism there can be no lasting agreement. They can never coalesce. There have already been collisions between them, and their divergencies must grow. One principle must yield to the other; and it is not likely that the younger and more vigorous element will succumb. The more fit of the two will assuredly survive.

To the shame and the danger of English romanism, England has practically no modernists; for there is no country in which the clergy are more abjectly in the power of their bishops, or where the bishops are more impeded by the religious orders. Both these conditions are favourable to that *espionage* which is recommended by Pius X., and which is comparatively easy in a small and exclusive sect, given over to the narrowest parochialism, with all its attendant and petty gossip. There can be no deliverance for the anglo-roman clergy until there is an educated lay opinion, capable of supporting them against papal and episcopal usurpations. And the education of the laity will be very slow, as long as they are deluded by a muzzled press, which is wholly under ecclesiastical control.

But Ireland alone among the nations is the hopeless and helpless victim of a dominating clergy, which terrorises the peasantry, devours wealth, and diminishes the population. It is enabled to do all this chiefly by the connivance and the fatuous encouragement of the English administration. For this lamentable state of things, both our parties are equally responsible and culpable. The nationalistic members, even the Redmondites, have sunk into being tools and allies of the clergy. Whatever else Home Rule might do, it would probably end Rome Rule; for it would certainly produce an active and a militant anti-clericalism, of which all the elements are now in solution, and are only waiting to be precipitated. Short of this, the only way of salvation for Ireland is through a reformed and rigorous primary education, freed entirely from ecclesiastical influences. Thirty years of this, working steadily, influencing three generations, would lay the foundation of a regenerated, a prosperous, and a contented Ireland. No other remedies will have much effect until this remedy has been applied; though every other reform would accompany and follow education. Primary education is the key of the Irish problem, as it has always been of the whole papal question; and if Irish education were dealt with properly, the other so-called problems would either vanish, or solve themselves as they do among all civilised people. But the way not to solve Irish problems is to leave

primary education unreformed, in the hands of the clergy; and to endow sectarian or theological colleges, out of public money, by liberal votes, under the pretence of establishing national universities. It is recognised in all roman catholic countries that a clerical college is not a catholic university, but English protestants are incapable of seeing the distinction, especially if they are political dissenters. As long as these and similar follies are committed, the last state of this unhappy country will be worse than any that has gone before.

Ireland may show us that it is not the corruption, but the perfection, of the papal system which is ruinous to a country. History shows us that the record of the papacy is a sufficient refutation of the papal claims. History asks in vain what good the papacy has done, either to churches or to nations. And modernism is answering these questions, and stating these problems, more authoritatively than they have been dealt with before. Both the name and the spirit, like so many other good things, are due to France; which is not only the most intellectual, but, on the whole, the most religious, country in the world.

#### DISCUSSION.

The paper having been read, the CHAIRMAN said:—The thanks of the meeting were due to Mr. Galton for a clear and able historical document. Terrible indeed was the condition of religion in France. In many other places they might see the decadence of Romanism leading to atheism, of which the reader of the paper had given such striking confirmation. In France the degradation of the Church through Rome had given rise to the belief among many that Christianity was false. Some great revival was needed, and he trusted that many might be led, perhaps through Modernism, to Protestantism. As an Irishman he could not help applying much that had been said to his own country.

Rev. CHANCELLOR LIAS said that as one of the oldest members of Council he had great pleasure in rising to move a vote of thanks to his old friend Mr. Galton for his able and scholarly paper. Mr. Galton's work on French ecclesiastical affairs marked him out as one

specially fitted to deal with the subject. For his own part, he had only a superficial acquaintance with the subject, gained by personal intercourse with some of the French priests, more than a thousand in number, who have left the Church of Rome during the last fifteen years. He had also studied carefully their organs in the press. They might, presumably, regard the Revolution of 1789 as the moment when the tide of public indignation arose which had now submerged Papal domination in France. He had to thank Mr. Galton's volume for a better comprehension of the true character of the settlement of affairs ecclesiastical attempted at the Revolution. In England they had been too ready to accept the description of the measures then taken to reform ecclesiastical affairs from the one-sided utterance of Ultramontane writers. Mr. Galton had shown that the *Constitutions Civiles* were really a statesmanlike attempt to deal with the situation, though they survived only a short time, being replaced before many years by the famous *Concordat* of Napoleon. That was an attempt to make the Emperor the absolute master of the situation. The old franchises of priests and bishops were swept away; the priests were at the mercy of his bishop, the bishop at the mercy of the Pope, and the Pope a prisoner in the hands of Napoleon. The situation thus created was beautifully simple. Only Napoleon forgot that institutions are usually longer lived than individuals. The Papal authority had lasted somewhere about a thousand years, and might have been expected to live another thousand. Napoleon, on the most favourable computation, could hardly expect to live so long. The return of the monarchy placed the Pope once more at the head of affairs, instead of the sovereign. The restoration of the Empire left things as they were, and it was long before the Third Republic, surrounded by difficulties, attempted to grapple with the Church. The conflict was precipitated by the famous Dreyfus case, which showed that the clergy were in league with the army to destroy the Republic. A great deal of sentiment has been wasted on the supposed oppression of harmless and holy men and women by the impiety rampant in France. But as a matter of fact the Church had been treated, as Mr. Galton showed, with the greatest consideration. The conflict would never have arisen had not the Church intrigued to overthrow the Government, and the Orders might have remained in France had they submitted to the regulations laid down for their observance



by the State. Many of these Orders were amassing riches by undertaking trade and manufactures, and it was felt that the money thus obtained was being used to overthrow the constitution of the country, and if the atheism rampant in France was condemned, it was only fair to ask whether the Church, which for more than ten centuries had uncontrolled power over the religious training of the people, must not bear her full share of the blame for the baneful results of her teaching.

The present religious situation was certainly a deplorable one. The churches were for the most part vested still in the hands of the bishops. The attempt to form *Associations Cultuelles* independent of the Pope and to carry on worship in the churches apart from his authority, had been resisted by the State, and in some cases the *gens d'armes* had been called in to prevent the churches being used by any religious body but the one in whose hands the law still vested them. The great majority of the people of the land refused to worship at the accustomed altars, and at present no religious movement existed which was capable of winning them over to a purer form of Christianity. The members of the Institute were much indebted to Mr. Galton for the information he had given them of the actual state of affairs. It was much to be hoped that what he had said might serve to correct the numerous and gross misconceptions which were so widely spread, and might induce them to take a deeper and more generous interest in the religious perplexities into which a great nation had been plunged by the caricature of Christianity which for centuries had been taught to them instead of the genuine doctrine of Christ.

Rev. A. IRVING, D.Sc., said that, as no one else seemed inclined to speak, he would like to have the privilege of seconding the vote of thanks to the author for his valuable, trenchant, and most illuminating paper. From his perusal of Mr. Galton's book he had expected much, and his expectations had been more than realised. Many of the points discussed had received very able treatment in the columns of the *Guardian* for some years past by the Roman Catholic Correspondent of that journal, who writes under the *nom de plume*, "Cis alpine." From such sources mainly the speaker had been able to obtain pretty clear ideas of what has passed behind the scenes in recent years in the policy of the Roman Curia, more especially in its relations with the French Government and the

French Episcopate. He had thus come to regard the present *impasse* of ecclesiastical affairs in France as a drawn battle between Ultramontanism and the great principle of National Churches; and, as a staunch Anglican Churchman, he would fain still hope that, in the working of Divine Providence, a way would be found for the great historic Gallican Church to again raise its head and resume its ancient "Gallican Liberties," to the humiliation of the Roman See with its monstrous pretensions to lord it over the other churches of Christendom.

Dr. Irving went on to say that he had had this matter forced upon his serious attention from the way in which, by perversion of history, the "Italian Mission" in this country had been pushing its way in his own neighbourhood, through an outlying settlement in Bishop's Stortford in connexion with St. Edmund's College at Ware, the modern Douai. It was a gratification to him to find that the position which he had taken up in controversy with the Romanists in the local paper for several years past—and more especially at the time of cruel, crushing treatment which the French Episcopate had to endure from Pius X. and the Curia in August, 1907—was fully supported by what Mr. Galton had put before us in his most able paper.

In conclusion he would like to ask the author of the paper if it was not a fact that the ideas of Pascal and the Port Royalists were becoming daily a greater intellectual force in the minds of thoughtful religious Frenchmen, and if he did not join in the hope that through the growth of those ideas, strengthened by the recent translation of the Bible from the original tongues into French, the religious life of the French nation might emerge from the present chaos through the evolution of an order of things on a broad and tolerant basis, such as we are familiar with in this country.

Mr. J. T. MATTHEWS and Mr. H. S. WILLIAMS also spoke, after which the CHAIRMAN put the vote of thanks, which was carried by acclamation.

Mr. GALTON replied briefly and the meeting terminated.