

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 *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

death. We can never realize what atonement means if our view of sin is inadequate and wrong. All the serious heresies of ancient and modern days have somehow or other been associated with false or defective views of sin, and, as a consequence, with false or defective views of the Divine Person and redemptive work of our Lord.



An English Churchman in France.

BY THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP THORNTON.

WE all go abroad nowadays, and it may be doubted whether train connection by tunnel with our next neighbour on the Continent (which seems an assured sequel, ere long, of the *entente cordiale*) can largely augment the stream of English-speaking folks already pouring constantly into France and back again!

What impressions does an occasional visit to that country—out of the tourist season—leave on an English Churchman, as such—that is, not as regards the attractiveness of French manners, dress, and menage—about which there can be no question—but as regards the healthiness of its moral, and religious, and ecclesiastical phenomena?

Superficial his impressions will have to be called, of course; but they need not on that account be misleading, if he checks them by studying French literature of the time as he goes about, keeps his eyes and ears wide open, and attends the churches freely.

I am bound regretfully to say that my own have hardly been favourable. They have been derived from observation in a variety of directions, and of some things too small to bear specification, though none the less significant. But I will mention a detail or two.

I wonder how many I picked over of the bookstalls in prominent thoroughfares in Paris and French towns! It seems

a strong statement, but truly I found it hard to discover in them any literature whatever fitted to interest a reader of clean and commonly intelligent mind ; while that of frivolity and foulness in all degrees, refined or coarse, was copiously *en évidence*. You can hardly meet, it would seem, with French "light literature" (corresponding to our *Windsor* or *Pearson's*) which you would endure to see in your boy's or girl's hands for ten minutes. A friend gave me three samples of French fiction, "quite innocent." The first was in sprightly French, but the thinnest twaddle ; of the next, the first chapter described an atheist's suicide, the second the leading astray of a wife by her husband's friend ; and I threw it out of the train window. The third I did not risk polluting my mind with.

Many of our English hoarding advertisements are unedifying enough, and our placarded election addresses are no models of candour and Christian moderation ; but I never read such outputs of vituperation, or saw such collections of prurient pictures, as are allowed to deface outside walls in French towns, those of churches, even, included.

As for the newspapers, how miserably inferior almost all of them seem as regards moral tone, as well as regards correct and recent information, to our own !

Now go inside the cathedrals and churches. By the way, why are their (often beautiful) bells jangled "cacophonically," with no sequence at all ?

The places of Protestant worship are few indeed, though well attended ; far and away predominant is the religion of Rome. But how significant of the relation, in France, of "religion" to life is the use of its French equivalent ! I read on a tombstone of some dear "Amélie" of twenty-four, that she was four months "in religion" before her death—*i.e.*, a nun. A sister will tell you one of her brothers is religious : she does not mean that the others are irreligious, only that they are not ecclesiastics.

The inference I draw from my experience (of course, it *may* have been strangely unlucky) is that, except at some *belle*

cérémonie, or special *conférence* by a preacher of renown, France, broadly speaking, does not assemble in the churches. When congregations gather, they represent the local womanhood almost exclusively; and the absence of any manifest participation in what is being performed is surprising. Kneeling is rare, following with a service-book very exceptional. True, outside the times of service bending figures—mostly female—are generally seen in front of some favourite shrine or candle-girdled image. On special occasions images are chaired round a church, or in the roads (this last was very noticeable, it seems, in Naples and the neighbourhood at the eruption time), reminding the Britisher painfully of the nid-nodding “guys” formerly borne about on November 5, and the scholar of the use to which pagan Rome occasionally put her idols!

Beyond all reasonable dispute, the prominent feature in French devotion is the cult of the Blessed Virgin. Usually she is presented in exalted, imperial guise, in strange contrast to the drooping, mangled figure on the Cross. Of Christ, the “Sacred Heart” is a favourite object of special homage. Next to hymns with the refrain, “Mother Mary, pray for us,” I have heard oftenest, “Save Rome and France, we plead the Sacred Heart!” Popular prayers and discourses speak of the voice, feet, hands, face, mind, and even *heart*, of the Sacred Heart. The famous Père Combé, in a sermon at Lourdes not long since, invoked Mary under the title of “the Warrior Virgin,” crying in conclusion, “To battle, under the standard of the Sacred Heart! It is a sign, not of peace, but war!” “In its image,” said the *Univers* (a paper of repute), “imprinted in the midst of the French flag, the devil recognises his conqueror!”

But the *Univers* is altogether outdone in such references by *La Croix* and its illustrated supplement, *Le Pèlerin*.

Where, in Scripture, or the records of the primitive Church, is there the least authority for such devotion as I have referred to? Seriously, is externalism of this class likely to leaven French society with regenerative moral and spiritual influences?

But is there not a Protestant Church of France? There is.

Then, is it "live," and strong, and progressive, and influential?

What is the true answer?

Its numbers are returned as under 600,000, and a pamphlet by a prominent Nîmes pastor estimates its real and loyal adherents as 200,000 only, as against 38,000,000 Roman Catholics in a population of 40,000,000. There are barely 700 Protestant "temples," as against 40,000 Roman Catholic parish churches. Eighteen departments contain no Protestants; nineteen more have one "temple" only apiece. Mr. Bodley, according to his recent lectures before the Royal Institution, considers Protestantism "not in conformity with the French temperament and traditions." Paul Sabatier (a religious man and no Romanist) says: "Protestantism, for which I have the highest possible respect, and a little admiration, is looked upon as a great historical fact, but a fact of the past. . . . As a religion, its influence is almost nil." And his translator, Mr. Dell (evidently familiar with French matters), expresses the opinion that "Protestantism has not the smallest chance of obtaining any effective hold on France, any more than on Spain or Italy." Of course, in quoting this view of the case, one is not responsible for endorsing it.

Certainly the financial position of the French Protestant Church seems critical. The Separation Law has terminated the State subsidy which maintained it, and there is no "tariff of ceremonies" in Protestantism such as furnishes Rome with a large income; while its pastors are no celibates, but generally family men. Moreover, French Protestantism is in division: "Orthodoxy" and "Liberalism" within her—differing, apparently, as to the desirableness of a Confession of Faith—do not trust each other, and their administrative combination will be hard to effect.

The past of Protestantism in France explains much of its state and prospects. In no land was the policy of its extirpation more relentlessly pursued. Till the Revolution the nation was against it; the Revolution itself showed scanty sympathy

with it; the Restoration even less: subsequently its lot has been "concurrent endowment," and cold toleration with control.

So far from sharing the view that organic connection with a nation's life is ruinous to reformed Christianity, I attach great value to it in that regard. Countries in Europe in which the Protestant Reform was a national movement are religiously free and progressive to-day; where that has not been the case (as in Russia, Italy, Spain and France) Protestantism makes little way. It was, practically, almost crushed out of the last two countries by religious persecution, which is often successful in its immediate object. One can almost forgive the renegade Henry IV. for the sake of the Edict of Nantes; Louis XIV. sank far below the level of our Tudor tyrant in its revocation and the reasons he gave for it! It was a disastrous fact, morally and religiously, for France.

The mutilated stock of Protestantism has survived there, but rooted loosely in uncongenial soul, expanding sluggishly under unfavourable skies.

The eye of the occasional visitor is met everywhere by Rome, hardly anywhere by French Protestantism. The impression made upon him is that, religiously and morally, it scarcely "counts."

And now as to the disestablishment of the Churches, a *fait accompli* since January last.

Here are the main features of the "Law of Separation."

The Concordat effected with Rome by Napoleon on July 15, 1801, is torn up. Governmental sanction is no longer required for Church appointments or synods, but no State or civic support is any longer allowed either to Rome, Protestantism, or the Jews, except to chaplains of secondary schools, hospitals, and prisons. (This releases nearly two millions a year, in relief of taxation.)

It is pleaded for Rome that the State subsidy was a debt contracted by the expropriation of her ecclesiastical property at the Revolution, on which Protestants had no claim; but it must be remembered (*a*) that the clergy surrendered the tithes to the

nation on August 4, 1789; (*b*) that the Pope in the Concordat undertook not to disturb the possessors of alienated ecclesiastical property, without conditions as to the guarantee of a State subsidy; (*c*) that the plea ignores the wholesale confiscation of Protestant property when the Nantes Edict was revoked.

Pensions (but not exceeding £60, even for the highest clergy), proportioned to age and length of service, are assigned to the disendowed ministers.

The churches are handed over gratuitously to the religious bodies, so long as they are kept up, and not diverted from their original purpose (no political meetings may be held or denunciation of public officials take place in them); and public money may be granted for the repair of some as historical monuments. If sold, it would seem that a right of pre-emption of Church property is granted to the religious bodies.

Bishops' houses and parsonages must be surrendered, in the case of the former in two, of the latter in five years. No doubt it is expected that they will be bought in, and possibly fresh arrangements for tenancy, more or less favourable, according to the attitude of authorities in the future, may be made.

No religious emblems can hereafter be publicly erected, except inside churches or cemeteries. Observance as public holidays of Sundays, Christmas, Ascension, the Assumption of the Virgin, and All Saints, is maintained. No minister is eligible, for eight years, for municipal office; ecclesiastical students are exempted from military service, provided they receive ministerial appointments by the age of twenty-six.

The churches are to be represented by "Associations Cultuelles," which can be registered without difficulty, and with a very small minimum of membership; but they must produce yearly accounts; and though they may contribute to each other, they may not accumulate reserves beyond a fixed amount. If two or more "associations" set up rival claims, the civil authority decides between them—which has it, therefore, in its power to promote schisms.

The inventories of all Church properties required by the Law

to be taken have occasioned indignation, and even serious riots, but only in a few places, and with little public sympathy. They were only a prudent precaution, if the transference the Law prescribed was to be carried out ; and the requirement was inserted in the law at the instance of the clerical opposition, and created very little discussion in Parliament.

Indeed, the law seems to have been carried, after full debate, by large majorities in both Chambers, without precipitation or excitement. The attitude of the nation towards it was one neither of eager approval nor of dissent. A few days after it came into effect a third of the Senate had to be elected ; with hardly an exception, those who had voted for it were returned ; while, the following week, the Congress elected one of its avowed supporters President of the Republic. Four months later, at the General Election, it was approved in effect by universal suffrage.

There is no doubt that the Roman clergy had alienated the French people by their political attitude, in regard to the temporal power of the Pope, monarchy, Boulangism, and anti-Semitism—the discreditable fiasco of the Dreyfus affair being largely set down, on scape-goat principles, to their account.

And it will be remembered how the visit of the President of the French Republic to Rome in April, 1904, without paying his respects to the Pope, evoked denunciations from the latter which issued in the rupture of French diplomatic relations with the Vatican.

The Protestants have welcomed the Law, as on the whole favourable to real religious liberty. Whether, however, the permanent restriction of the “ associations ” within certain doctrinal limits may not involve strife, and hindrance to reform in the future, seems to me doubtful. To my mind, the Law makes the prospects of neo-Catholicism—the development of religious freedom within the Roman Church itself—more gloomy than ever. It extinguishes Gallicanism ; it hands the Church over absolutely to the Pope.

Rome seems pledged by no few official utterances—notably

the Encyclicals of February and August—to absolute condemnation of the Law (the Pope calls it “a grave offence against our own person”); but what she will, or can, do to thwart it is not evident. “Passive resistance” is spoken of, but how can it be applied? We must wait to see what will happen between now and December, when the new law comes into force.

An English Churchman can only look on with keenest interest. The ultimate triumph of the Law in France would doubtless strengthen the hopes of disestablishers in England; albeit the case of a sound and Scriptural Church organically linked up with all the nation’s history and life, without derogation to the freedom and progressiveness of either, and with no financial dependence of the former on the State, differs in very material respects indeed from that presented on the other side of the Straits of Dover!



Lawful Ritual in the Church of England.

BY THE REV. CHANCELLOR LIAS, M.A.

I HAVE undertaken to say a few words on the Report of the Commission on Ritual from the point of view of an old-fashioned Churchman who has always been loyal to his Prayer-Book. I will confine myself to “significant” breaches of the law. At the outset I will mention several principles which I believe at this crisis ought carefully to be borne in mind. The first is, that if our Church is to maintain her present position as the National Church, established by the State, she must pay some little regard to the opinions and feelings of the nation at large. So far as I have been able to interpret the language of some of the Bishops and clergy examined before the Commission, they seem to imagine that their only concern is with congregations and communicants; so that, in a diocese or parish, all a Bishop or a parish priest has to do is to drive away people from church,