

THE
RELIGIOUS CRISIS IN FRANCE

By Count Albert de Mun

MEMBER OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY,
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Sole English Language: Catholic Truth Society.
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INTRODUCTION.

The nature and extent of the religious persecution in France are little known to English-speaking people. Whatever news is published in the Daily press comes through English channels, and is colored by English prejudices. The leader of the Catholic laity of France and one of the most gifted of French public men contributed the following remarkable article on the French crisis to the *National Review* of London. It is the best, the fairest and most comprehensive account of the situation in France that has yet appeared. It was written for English readers, and is republished by the Catholic Truth Society just as it appeared in the *National Review*. A study of it will disabuse any fair-minded and intelligent reader of any false sympathy towards the motley crowd of atheists, socialists, radicals and Continental Freemasons who, in the name of liberty and progress, would rob the French nation of the most fundamental rights—the right to worship God according to the dictates of conscience, the right to associate, the right to teach. The *National Review* is to be congratulated for giving the public a fair presentation of this great conspiracy against religion and liberty.

The Religious Crisis in France

By Count Albert de Mun.

When, last year, the *National Review* did me the honor to invite me to write an article on the subject of the religious crisis which agitates France, I was, to my great regret, unable to give an immediate assent to its kind request. I now, after an interval of several months, propose to discharge the debt which I then contracted; and though, perhaps, I owe an apology to the *Review* and to its readers for my long delay, I have, nevertheless, certain reasons for congratulating myself on my procrastination. The political situation in France is now, so far as the religious struggle is concerned, far more sharply defined than it then was. The march of events, which could have been foreseen a year ago by any one who was in a position to follow closely the natural development of affairs enables me to-day to substitute arguments based on actual facts for the conjectures which I should then have had to make in order to make myself intelligible to the English public. After stating what those events are, I shall attempt to demonstrate their logical connection, to examine their cause from the point of view of history and philosophy, and to discover what their probable consequences will be. I shall hope thereby to establish the fact that the struggle which is maintained in this country by the Catholics, with the support of the truly liberal section of the intellectual

community, far transcends the bounds of a purely political conflict and deserves the sympathetic attention of all foreigners who take an interest in the future of Christianity.

I do not deceive myself as to the difficulties attendant on the task which I have undertaken, for I know how different are the mental attitude, the manners and customs, and the intellectual habits of England and France, which, though they have become so familiar with each other owing to their geographical position and the relations produced by continual contact, are yet so widely sundered by their character, their historical developments and their social conceptions. I hope I shall not offend the readers of the *National Review* by saying that ignorance, more especially of the conditions in which the religious life of the two nations develops itself, is as great on one side of the Channel as on the other; and that many Englishmen, even among those who are animated by the most sincere Christian spirit, and perhaps even Catholic Englishmen, have failed to understand the character of the struggles to which, in the last few years, that development has given rise. That inability to accurately appreciate the position is, in my opinion, the outcome not only of the erroneous view of certain facts which is entertained by the Press, but springs from a remoter and deeper source, namely, from insufficient study (which need not surprise us in the case of Englishmen, inasmuch as very many Frenchmen are in the same boat) of that event, so great and complex both as regards its causes and its effects which, from the point of view of philosophy and social science, dominates the whole of our history: I mean the Revolution of 1789. In the course of this article I shall more than once have occasion to insist on the fact of that domination, for in my view

it lies at the very root of the question under consideration and alone can make clear the meaning of what is happening and threatens to happen in the religious world of France. For the sake of clearness, I must begin with a statement of the facts which have given rise to such a commotion in our midst.

I.

It is in this connection that the delay of which I have unintentionally been guilty has been actually advantageous; the facts can now be more clearly stated. Last year, at the time when this *Review* asked for my assistance, two particularly striking events had attracted its attention and that of the English public in general. One was the recent passing of an Act dealing with associations which had been introduced and championed in both Chambers by M. Waldeck-Rousseau, the President of the Council, whereby the religious Congregations were removed from the operation of the general law, and were subjected to special treatment; the other was the outburst of an excessively lively spirit of resistance, provoked by an abusive interpretation of that Act, and which, more especially in the Breton Departments, where religious faith is still an extremely active force, went so far as to give rise to violent conflicts with the authorities and with the armed forces which were summoned to assist them. I will examine each of these events in turn, and then will proceed to show how far more serious for the Catholics the situation has now become.

The mere fact that a law dealing with associations was a necessity in France suffices to prove the existence of a state of affairs which is peculiar to my country, and is calculated to surprise many of those who, like the English, are accustomed to

the various features of corporate life. At the very outset the influence of the French Revolution shows itself. Its chief social characteristic manifested itself in the establishment of the principle of individualism, and by the violent destruction of all organized bodies of spontaneous growth; and the religious associations, which are nowadays designated by the name of "Congregations," had less chance than any of escaping the results of that sweeping measure, for the reason that in the minds of the first members of the Constituent Assembly the feelings awakened by the philosophical doctrines of the eighteenth century allied themselves to the general mad passion for universal leveling.

All associations were abolished by the Revolution, and a few years later, when the reorganization of the new France was effected, the penal code gave the final sanction to the individualistic regime by a clause which prohibited all meetings of more than twenty persons. Corporate life, which for centuries had been as powerful and as productive in France as in the neighboring countries, was thus destroyed; and therewith disappeared the Province with its distinctive characteristics, the Commune with its franchises, and the trade guild with its special organization. Those institutions were forms of corporate existence in its political aspect, just as the monastic association was its religious manifestation. I say that it was destroyed, but I ought to say that it was left in a state of suspended animation, for it is not in the power of man to abolish for ever the effects of a natural right and of one of the inherent needs of humanity. Events soon proved the truth of this statement. The religious associations, for the reason that they answer to the requirements of certain characteristics of the Christian soul, in which faith lights the mystic flame of a spirit of self-

sacrifice and devotion, were the first to reappear, even before the revolutionary storm had completely lulled; and soon, by degrees, as the work of reconstituting the social edifice proceeded, the necessity of providing for the requirements of the homeless poor and for popular education, which had become almost entirely disorganized, induced the newly constituted authorities to seek their aid. To do so was one of the earliest acts of the First Consul. It is true that the laws which dissolved the associations were not formally abrogated; they merely became a dead letter, purely by reason of the moral and political circumstances of the age; and nowhere is it better understood than in England, where so many ancient statutes exist and nominally have the force of law, but in reality have ceased to exert the slightest influence, that desuetude may be tantamount to abrogation.

But how did it come to pass that in the new society, the product of the Revolution, these moral forces came so promptly to the assistance of the religious associations? Under the old regime, in which the Catholic Church and the Monarchy were so closely allied, politics and religion were intimately connected with each other. The King gave effect to the laws of the Church in his character of lay bishop, as the saying was, and monastic life, as everything else, was under his control. The ecclesiastic, bound by his vows as regards both spiritual and temporal matters, suffered from a form of disfranchisement which was almost equivalent to civil death; consequently, he was not a citizen in the sense in which others were citizens. The mighty blast of liberty, which swept away those institutions of a past age which had been undermined by long existing abuses and by the influence of the new doctrines, was bound to destroy the old concep-

tion of the religious life. The civil constitution of the monastic orders collapsed at the same time as all the other institutions of the old regime. In the eyes of the new society the members of religious bodies were simply citizens, subject, like others, to the general law, and, consequently, endowed with the rights and the liberties which belonged to all other members of the community. It is perfectly clear that one of those rights is the right to live with others, and to pray with others, to accept certain rules which merely bind the conscience without involving any civil consequences. This implies the right to worship and the right to teach, both of which are directly derived from liberty of conscience.

Such is the position of the religious orders in the French society which sprang from the Revolution in 1789; and I do not think that any Englishman will find therein anything contrary to the interests of the community. I will return to this point later on when I come to examine the arguments with which the enemies of the Religious Congregations attempt to justify the proscriptive measures of which those bodies have been made the victim.

But before I proceed further I must conclude the brief historical retrospect which is absolutely essential to a clear comprehension of the subject. As I have already remarked, the religious Congregations were not the only victims of the individualistic doctrines proclaimed by the Constituent Assembly of 1789. At the same time, and under the influence of the same ideas, the ancient structure of the provincial and communal organization, which had been gradually undermined by the centralizing monarchical government, began to make room for a new administrative system, under which the State exercised control over all the elements of national

activity. At the same time also the corporations of artisans, the nature of which had been only too completely altered by the interfering action of the royal power, lost their ancient influence by reason of the introduction of a system of control conceived solely in the interest of the Crown and were utterly suppressed; the working classes being deprived even of the liberty of meeting and taking steps to protect their common interests, the legitimacy of which the State refused to recognize. This was so entirely contrary to the ordinary natural rights of humanity that, just as in the case of the laws which violated the liberty of conscience, it was inevitable that the necessities of social life should ultimately have their revenge. But whereas the spontaneous energy of religious faith and the pressing demands of charitable and educational needs soon sufficed to resuscitate the religious associations, in the economic world the revival came but slowly, for the reason that it was hampered by the existence of an unending state of war, by the resistance of successive governments in whom it produced an uneasy feeling, and by the opposition of the industrial magnates whose interests it threatened. The revival came, nevertheless, and proceeded to develop an ever-increasing vigor as the struggles to which the organization of labor gave rise rendered such development necessary. I shall not dwell upon the history of these social movements, with which England has been made familiar by the rise of trade unions; to do so would be to go beyond the bounds of my present subject. All that it is necessary to establish is the fact that, by virtue of the inherent strength of the natural rights of mankind, the freedom of economic association again became a recognized institution and vindicated its rights before the legislature. It was for the first time tenta-

tively recognized by a law passed in 1864, and received its definite legal sanction in 1884. All other civil associations were for a long time forbidden; and it was only in 1901 that the general freedom of association was partially established and recognized by law. I say partially, for we touch the kernel of the question, and the law, which might have been a charter of liberties for all citizens without distinction, was in reality a proscriptive enactment directed against a whole section of the community; so much so that it can far more fairly be described as a law directed against the Congregations than as a law dealing with the right of association. What was the reason, and how did it come about, that the recognized right of all citizens was refused to the religious orders? It will be my task to try to supply the answer to this question.

II.

For the sake of clearness, I must begin by explaining to my readers the legal position occupied by the Congregation three years ago when the new law was introduced. The Legislative Assemblies at the time of the Revolution, carried away by their hatred of Catholicism, which was made manifest at the very outset of their labors and consequently led to the commission of so many excesses, did not limit themselves to the abolition, as a natural result of the new principles, of the civil consequences of the vows pronounced by the religious orders. They first suppressed the monastic orders and then abolished all Congregations, not even excepting those the members of which were not bound by any perpetual vow and did not belong to the ecclesiastical profession. It is unnecessary for me to recall the sanguinary persecutions which accompanied these proscriptive edicts; the recollection of them is fresh

in the memory of all, and England, who gave generous hospitality to so many poor fugitive priests, will certainly not have forgotten them. But in spite of it all, the imperious call of the Faith, and the irresistible attraction possessed by the most sacred rights, soon brought about the resuscitation of some of the proscribed Congregations, and that, too, in the very center of persecution. I have pointed out how, as soon as the social reorganization of the country took place under the guidance of Bonaparte, the sovereign authority hastened to have recourse to their assistance in order to provide for the care of the sick and for the education of the children of the poor. Both these influences gained in intensity under the various forms of government which followed during the course of the nineteenth century, with the result that, as the needs of modern society made unceasing demands for fresh forms of self-sacrificing devotion, the Congregations, both male and female, continued to multiply. In some cases they attached themselves to institutions which existed under the old regime; in others they formed entirely new bodies; but in every case they consecrated themselves to devotional exercises, to almsgiving, to charity, to education, and to the work of healing; a large number devoting their zealous activities to distant mission-fields in the French colonies and in those of other countries where their services were readily and gratefully accepted. Nothing is more creditable to humanity, nothing proves more clearly the vital energy of religious faith, than that fruitful harvest of admirable work which was reaped on a soil which so recently had been devastated by such a frightful storm. It has often been pretended in the French Chambers and in the Press that these manifestations of energy were enabled to take place only in consequence of a

mistaken spirit of toleration, inasmuch as the Concordat, which was signed in 1801 by Pope Pius VII and the First Consul, forbade the reconstitution of the Congregations which had been dissolved by the Revolution, by the very fact that it did not expressly contemplate such reconstruction. But that is a gross error and a deliberate misreading of the documents. As a matter of fact, the first article of the Concordat of 1801 specifically states that "the Catholic religion shall be freely exercised in France." Now the liberty of the Catholic Church is complete and whole only if it can, free and untrammelled, fulfill its mission in its entirety, and if it is, as a necessary consequence, supplied with all the organs which are required in order to be able to do its work. Any other conception of liberty would amount to a complete negation of its existence; for the fundamental condition of liberty is freedom to make use of that liberty. If it is the fact that the existence of the religious orders is not an essential feature of Christianity, it is, at all events as far as the Catholic Church is concerned, a natural product of its teachings and a necessary factor in its organization: and this was so ever since the earliest centuries of the Christian era. I hope I shall have no great difficulty in making even my Protestant readers understand the object and the legitimate nature of those orders when I try to reply to the accusations leveled against them by their enemies in France. Looking at the question solely from the point of view of liberty, I say that the Catholic Church is obviously a better judge than its adversaries as to what factors constitute the sum total of its essential properties. The celebrated Portalis expressed this fact very neatly in the speech which he made in the Legislative Assembly when he presented the new Concordat in the name of the First

Consul. "When a new religion is sanctioned or an old one is maintained, the control which is exercised over it must be in accordance with the principles of that religion. The wish that is manifested and the power which it is desired to claim to arbitrarily improve religious ideas and institutions constitute a pretension which is contrary to the very nature of things."

Those words have an honest ring which proves that they were spoken in good faith. At the very moment when the discussion of the question of the Congregations was begun in France, Pope Leo XIII affirmed in an important document not only his affection for those institutions, but also the reasons, founded on principles and on facts, which both justify their existence and make it an essential condition of the free exercise of the Catholic religion. After that I think the question ought to be regarded as settled. Let me add that England—and it redounds greatly to the honor of that home of liberty—never dreamed of curtailing the privileges of the Catholic Church by means of restrictive laws affecting religious associations, since the day when religious quarrels were finally dropped and the Catholic Church was emancipated from the heavy fetters with which the old laws had bound her. This is the first and most important observation evoked by pretensions based on the silence of the Concordat of 1801 which is used as a weapon against the religious orders.

There is another argument in favor of those orders, deducible from the terms of the documents containing the negotiations which preceded the signing of the Concordat. Those documents have formed the subject matter of a most instructive publication by Count Boulay de la Meurthe. Now it is no doubt true and only natural that the Holy See

wished that express mention of the re-establishment of the religious orders should be made in the Concordat, and it is equally true that the First Consul refused his consent; but the terms in which that refusal was couched indicate its true meaning. At the last conference of the plenipotentiaries it was expressly declared that the re-establishment of the religious orders should do no more than form the subject matter of an encyclical, should the Sovereign Pontiff deem it advisable to issue one. It follows, therefore, that the desire of the head of the French Government was to establish the principle that henceforward the Congregations were to be looked upon as purely religious institutions, deriving their existence from the authorization of the Holy See, and receiving no civil sanction at the hands of the general law. As a matter of fact, if one wished to insist on the letter as well as on the spirit of our Concordat, one could logically deduce therefrom the complete liberty of the Congregations, rather than the necessity of an administrative authorization which is far less in conformity with the principles of modern society than with the spirit of the royal ordinances of the old regime.

Further, if the Concordat bears the meaning which some assign to it, how was it that the Government of the First Consul, as well as all succeeding Governments, immediately recognized the existence of such a large number of Congregations? Yet that was what happened; several male orders and a very large number of female institutions received prompt recognition. This fact leads me on to define and explain the position occupied by the Congregations in the last century in the eye of the law. Such an explanation is very necessary, as one of the chief complaints made against the majority of those institutions was that they were in a state of

rebellion against the law. I have reason to fear that this calumny, which has been frequently repeated in the French Press, and which has led and still continues to lead so many of my countrymen astray, has been propagated in neighboring countries also, and has deceived men of good faith as to the true position of affairs. After 1789, though the old regime was abolished in principle and in fact, succeeding Governments, as was natural in the case of a country where traditions of extreme antiquity possessed a powerful influence, continued to be imbued to a very great extent with the spirit, the methods and the mental attitude, if I may use the term, of the ancient monarchy, more especially with respect to all that concerned the exercise of the royal prerogative. It is a remarkable thing—or appears to be so at first sight, if one forgets the extent to which people are unconsciously influenced by the form of the intellectual inheritance bequeathed by their predecessors—that the French Republic, though it was founded more than thirty years ago and was the product of a reaction against former monarchical forms of government in general and the Napoleonic tradition in particular, should, nevertheless, have continued to be thoroughly imbued with those very forms. Throughout the present religious crisis it has been clear, as I shall prove hereafter, that the fundamental idea which animates our adversaries, as well as their ultimate aim, was, so to speak, inherited from the legislators of the revolutionary period, just as the doctrines which they invoke, and the conceptions of government to which they give their allegiance, closely resemble those entertained by Napoleon, and are, in consequence, in spite of appearances, practically identical with the principles of absolute monarchy. The Jacobins of the First Republic are responsible for

this confusion of ideas in that, under the influence of the teachings of J. J. Rousseau, they transferred to a collective body, to the people, the attributes, moral and intellectual as well as political, of supreme sovereignty. The mental attitude of the parliamentary majorities of the Third Republic is the same as that of the Jacobins. Napoleon wished to be the embodiment of both the old and the new order, and all the institutions with which he endowed France bear the mark of that besetting aspiration. The monarchical Government which succeeded him wrought no change in the social organization which his powerful hand had fashioned. When Louis XVIII was called to the throne. Napoleon remarked, "My bed is a good one; he has only got to change the sheets and lie down"; and this observation was equally applicable to the Restoration, to the subsequent Government of July, and to all succeeding Governments down to and including the present one. From the administrative point of view we are still in Napoleon's bed. Mr. J. E. C. Bodley has made the same remark in his excellent book on France, which has had many readers in England, viz., that no matter what the form of government may be, republican or monarchical, autocratic or parliamentary, the civic life of the nation is always regulated by the lasting and forceful mechanism of the Napoleonic machine.

In spite, however of this fidelity to tradition, the great social transformation accomplished in 1789 has lost none of its effects. Though the wielders of supreme power still maintain the pretensions and the theories pertaining to the monarchical Government of the old regime, the manners and customs and the conceptions which are the product of the Revolution tend more and more to develop the feeling for liberty and the need for it. This twofold

influence, which manifests itself in every department of public national life, produced from the very inception of the new society an exceptional state of affairs as regards the position of the religious Congregations. They preserved the character, imposed upon them by the Revolution, of associations of ordinary citizens whose private obligations are ignored by the civil Government; but in the eye of the law they could have no collective existence save by virtue of the authorization of the supreme power. Such associations as were recognized by the Government became legally existent entities; in their collective capacity they were enabled to acquire, to possess, and to alienate property, and to receive donations and legacies. Those that were not invested with that authorization remained mere associations of citizens, whose collective members constituted, as far as the rights of ownership were concerned, limited companies, for the regulation of which the law provides. Many merely rented the houses, whether schools or hospitals, which provided the field for their activity, from societies composed exclusively of lay members. These "unauthorized" Congregations were, as a matter of fact, just as lawful as those from which they were thus nominally distinguished. The sole difference was that the latter had a personal civil existence in the eye of the law with all its consequent advantages and liabilities, while the former neither enjoyed those advantages nor were subject to those liabilities. This state of affairs was sanctioned by all forms of government at all periods, and in the absence of any law defining and regulating the liberty of association, its existence was looked upon as the actual justification for the reappearance of the Congregations and their development in the light of day during the whole course of the century.

Short of actual abrogation, no clearer proof of the fact that the revolutionary laws had fallen into desuetude could be found. Consequently, in spite of any misapprehension to which a deceptive misdescription may give rise, no possible justification can exist for considering the so-called unauthorized Congregations as being in a state of revolt against the laws of the country; and the truth of this statement is proved by the fact that under every form of government the various State departments made formal arrangements with them—at one time with reference to the colonies, at another in connection with charitable undertakings and prison administration. Thus the first accusation leveled against the Congregations falls to the ground.

There is another accusation which has been spread broadcast by the Press, and which I will at once clear out of the way. An attempt has been made to persuade the people that the associations do not pay taxes like the rest of the community.

This allegation cannot be maintained, and any one who is in the least degree acquainted with French legislation is aware that it is mere calumny. The authorized Congregations, in the same way as other civil communities, pay the so-called "mortmain tax," to which the property of all analogous associations is subject, and which has the effect of preventing the accumulation of property in the hands of persons whose corporate existence never ceases and whose possessions consequently never become liable to the payment of succession duty. The unauthorized Congregations paid all the direct taxes payable by private citizens and, in addition thereto, a special tax to which they were subjected about twenty years ago in their character of religious associations. It is unnecessary to go further into the details of this fiscal question; these few

words have sufficed to prove that the members of the Congregation were neither privileged persons from the point of view of taxation, nor rebels against the general law.

But I should not have exhausted this aspect of the question if I omitted to say a word on the subject of the wealth of the Congregations; for that was one of the chief instruments employed in the attempt to arouse popular passions which are always easily awakened in a democratic society by arguments based on the antagonism of poverty and riches. M. Waldeck-Rousseau, President of the Council of Ministers, gave vent in a public speech, the echo of which reached far and wide, to the assertion that the value of the real property belonging to the Congregations amounted to a milliard of francs, and drew the conclusion, which afterwards served as the theme of the most violent attacks on the religious orders, that the immensity of that property, which he styled "the Congregational mortmain," constituted a serious economic danger to the nation. No accusation could be fraught with greater danger to its object or to the cause of the Catholic Church which is confounded with that of the Congregations; and none, by reason of its falsity and its perfidiousness, could be more unworthy of the head of a Government.

There is a great deal of so-called "mortmain" real property in France, i. e. property belonging to a body with a continuous existence; the departments, the communes, and the hospitals, for example, hold a very considerable amount, far more considerable, in fact, than that possessed by the Congregations. This is proved by the simple fact, which is established by official statistics, that the real property belonging to the Communes alone represents an area of 4,510,000 hectares; whereas that of all types

of Congregations taken together hardly extends to 48,000! As for the figures of a milliard, the Government tried to prove the correctness of the estimate by means of a Government inquiry, which was conducted, I may mention, in such a way that it was absolutely impossible to verify its conclusions. In any case, judging from such figures as the Commission produced, it is impossible, with good faith, to arrive at a total of more than 435,000,000 francs as representing the value of the real property owned by the Congregations; and, as a matter of fact, that is the figure adopted by those responsible for the Budget. So much for the only too notorious "milliard of the Congregations." But apart from the question of figures, how is it possible at the present day, and in the present state of the world in general, to maintain that collective ownership constitutes a public danger? The great feature of the economic development of the nineteenth century was the creation of collective enterprises. Every kind of industrial and commercial undertaking tends to take that form; every kind of social charitable, and philanthropic activity tends more and more to have recourse to the establishment of permanent societies. How is it possible for the principle of association, which has been encouraged everywhere to such an extent by the public authorities in particular and by the manners and customs of modern humanity in general, to constitute a public danger, more especially in the case of charitable institutions or religious schools, for the establishment of which the greater part of the real property owned by the Congregations was intended to be utilized? M. Leon Say, whose name has been rendered famous in England as well as elsewhere by his numerous works on economic and financial subjects, and who occupied one of the most im-

portant ministerial offices in the Republic, wrote ten years ago, "Possibly the clerical 'mortmain' will hereafter become a trifling matter in comparison with that of lay societies." All careful minds appreciate the truth of this remark. The reaction against the individualistic doctrines of the eighteenth century is universal; the principles of association, of organized co-operation and collective enterprise invades, in every country, the fields in which the most varied types of national activity are exercised. Workmen's associations, more particularly, daily increase in number, in strength, and in influence; and by degrees, as and when their right to acquire property is more freely recognized, as must inevitably be the case, the "mortmain" of the working classes will attain more considerable proportions and will exercise an influence of incalculable magnitude on the economic destiny of nations. How, then, can it be pretended in good faith that the existence of real property to the value of a few hundred million francs in the hand of a few thousand monks or humble nuns is becoming a public danger?

It would be difficult to abuse the public credulity in a more cruel manner, and the bait was rendered all the more alluring and deceptive by the fact that the people were induced to hope that the proposed confiscation and sale of the possessions which were denounced and thus made the object of popular cupidity would be utilized to the common profit—for that was M. Waldeck-Rousseau's view—for the establishment of a pension fund for the benefit of the working classes. The very fact that nearly all the real property belonging to the Congregations was not a revenue-producing character, but comprised establishments arranged with a view to special objects, such as the education of children or

the care of the sick, and consisted of colleges, hospitals and orphan asylums, made it perfectly obvious that it was of comparatively little value for selling purposes, and that it would be extremely difficult to find a purchaser. Such, however, were the sophistries and such were the calumnies on which the entire campaign against the Congregations was based.

III.

In order to maintain the campaign in Parliament and to convince the thinking public of its justice, other and more serious considerations had to be discovered. I will make a brief reference to them; but before doing so I must say a word as to the circumstances which gave rise to the attacks directed against the religious orders, and which seemed to explain the passing of the proscriptive laws of which they were the object. I believe that those particular circumstances produced, thanks to the intense activity of the Press, an exceptionally strong impression on the minds of foreigners in general and of Englishmen in particular. I speak of the unfortunate Dreyfus affair, which so profoundly stirred the passions of mankind and was, in France, the cause of such lamentable estrangements.

When at the close of 1899 M. Waldeck-Rousseau introduced the Bill which nominally dealt with associations in general but which was in reality particularly directed against the Congregations, he justified it not only by presenting the clerical "mortmain," of which I have spoken, in the light of an economic danger, but also by pointing to the national peril involved by the education of a section of the youth of the nation in colleges directed by members of the Congregations. It was of this argu-

ment that the Press, the orators and the writers belonging to the Ministerial party made the most persistent use. It was directed more especially against the Jesuits, whose colleges and preparatory schools were in a flourishing condition prior to the passing of the new laws. A relatively large number of officers came from those establishments and, naturally, all of them were animated by Christian sentiments, the fruit of their home education rather than of the special character impressed upon them by school influences. The campaign initiated at the end of 1897 in favor of Dreyfus attained in 1898 and 1899 its maximum of intensity, and was deliberately—this was both obvious and instructive—mixed up with and made part of the campaign against the Congregationalist Colleges. It was affirmed and reaffirmed, it was printed in all the newspapers of Europe, that the Jesuits (a generic name under which all the Congregations were lumped together) had their hand upon the French army, and that the Dreyfus affair was the outward and visible sign of their teaching.

This twofold accusation is familiar to my readers, for it filled the columns of the English Press during all those years of heated polemics. I have no intention of reviving old discussions or of touching on the essential features of an affair the mention of which is, in spite of the efforts of a few individuals, intolerable to all Frenchmen, whether they be partisans of the condemned man or convinced of his guilt. I will keep my reply to that accusation strictly within the limits imposed by the subject of this article, and will use only facts for arguments; more especially as I have, since 1899, treated the same question at greater length in two documents with which a good many Englishmen are acquainted, viz., in a communication addressed to the editor

of the *Times*, and in a letter written in answer to one received from Lord Russell of Killowen, in which he had taken the trouble to interrogate me on this very subject. If the Dreyfus affair was in fact, as some had pretended, the result of the practical application of the teachings of the Jesuits, their pupils must have been responsible for all that was done in 1894 and since that date, in connection with the arraignment, the trial, and the conviction of the accused man. If that is not proved, the whole argument falls to the ground. And how can it be true? Not one of the generals or superior officers who were mixed up in the case, neither the Generals Mercier, Billot and Gonse, nor the Colonels du Paty de Clam and Henry, nor yet Major Esterhazy, came from Jesuit schools. General de Boisdeffre, who spent two years of his childhood in one of those institutions, and completed his education in one of the State Colleges, was the sole exception. Not one single pupil of the Jesuits was on his staff, and among the, roughly speaking, sixteen hundred members of the General's staff there were but nine or ten such pupils. Among the members of the court martial of 1894 there was not one, of those who sat in 1899 there was only one who had been educated by the Jesuits, and he was generally supposed to have voted in favor of an acquittal. Of the sixty witnesses six were ex-pupils of the Jesuits, and three of them gave evidence in favor of the accused. These are the facts.

Among all the ecclesiastics who have been the object of calumny one has been more atrociously maligned than the others, namely, the Rev. Father P. du Lac, who, after being more than twenty years ago rector of the great preparatory school of the Jesuits, was for ten years, during which he was the Director of the French School at Canter-

bury, known, esteemed and respected by many Englishmen by no means the least important of their nation, and for the last ten years had dedicated himself exclusively to the work of preaching and to labors among the working classes. I have had the honor of his friendship for thirty years, and entertain for him a feeling of the most respectful affection, and all his numerous acquaintances revere him highly as I do. But, in order to crystallize and give a concrete form to their generalities, the enemies of the Jesuits required the name of a definite individual as a peg on which to hang their accusations. The fact that his name was well known, that he maintained relations with officers who had been his pupils, that he was in touch with politicians engaged, like myself, in party warfare, and, above all, his friendship for General de Boisdeffre, whom he had known in the dark days of the war of 1870, marked him out for martyrdom of a peculiarly cruel type. He was overwhelmed with insults, he was accused, and the entire press repeated the tale of having violated the secrecy of the confessional, by denouncing to General de Pellieux one of his penitents as being the "veiled lady" whose chimerical personality created such a stir during the trial. I was the comrade at the École Militaire of General de Pellieux, who died of grief occasioned by the terrible trial to which he was subjected in the course of that sad affair. I asked him if there was any possible apparent justification for the accusation, and he told me, on his word of honor, that he had never seen the Rev. Father P. du Lac or received any communication from him, either directly or indirectly. I published his declaration, but it was of no avail. I seized the present opportunity of repeating it, in order to avenge that saintly

priest, who, being attacked in his ecclesiastical capacity, and his honor as a father confessor being impugned, had no weapon but silence wherewith to confront his calumniators. That is the whole truth as to the share which the Jesuits took in the Dreyfus affair. I leave it without comment to the good faith and the impartiality of my readers.

It is easy to understand what a baleful effect such a grievous calumny had on public opinion, and the state of excitement into which, five years ago, all minds were thrown by that painful discussion. I have lingered over it on account of the echo which those passionate slanders found, to my knowledge, on the other side of the channel. As a matter of fact, they were only one of the weapons which were employed to render the inattentive masses more susceptible to the influence of an accusation which served to mask the general attack directed against the Congregations. That accusation may be summed up in a single phrase: "The religious orders ferment the spirit of political hostility to the Government."

In order to appreciate the full import of that accusation and the danger of it, one must know the effect that such a phrase is capable of exercising in a country like ours, in which the principle of centralization is carried to excess, which is accustomed to bear the yoke imposed by governmental authority, and is ignorant of the most elemental conditions of true liberty. All the traditions bequeathed by the Revolution revealed themselves the instant the phrase is pronounced. It sufficed a hundred years ago to put men beyond the pale of the law, and to drive the most innocent of victims to the scaffold. Though, nowadays, its effects are less sanguinary, its baleful influence has in no sense diminished. In the present case it had no justifica-

tion whatever. The religious orders take no active organized part in politics. If, in fact, some of their members are not devoted and convinced partisans of the republic, the majority respect it as being the established government, and all agree in asking nothing from it except the right to exercise their religion in peace.

If I were not afraid of abusing the patience of my readers, it would be easy to prove the truth of this assertion by adducing numerous facts in its support. One solitary contemporary fact alone may seem to contradict it. A religious congregation, that of the Assumptionists, had founded a popular journal, *La Croix*, which was very well conducted which immediately obtained a great success, and, as might be expected, vigorously combated the anti-religious policy. It may be that its activity was ill-timed; but it is hard to see how the right of all citizens alike to make use of the freedom of the press can be denied to a section of them, merely because it happens to consist of ecclesiastics. However, after the Dreyfus affair, the political attitude of the *Croix* supplied one of the favorite arguments used by the directors of the attacks on the religious orders in justification of their campaign. The insincerity of that argument has now been proved by the fact that to-day it is not merely the Jesuits and the Assumptionists who are proscribed, but an indiscriminate attack is made on all religious orders, whether male or female, even on the humblest teaching friars, on the most venerable Sisters of Charity, and they, at all events, in no way interfere in politics.

IV.

The doom of the religious orders was pronounced for other reasons which lie far deeper and are more

important. What they are I will proceed to indicate, now that I have brushed aside the vain and slanderous pretext by which it was attempted to justify that condemnation.

The chief argument invoked against all religious orders indiscriminately by M. Waldeck-Rousseau and other enemies who took their cue from him is, I fancy, of a nature calculated to surprise many Englishmen who are used to seeing such absolute respect paid to personal liberty. "By contracting certain engagements which bind your conscience, and by pronouncing the three vows of obedience, of poverty and of chastity, you violate the civil law, which forbids alienation of things which are not allowed to be dealt with, and you transgress the principles of modern society, even the general rules of humanity. By the vow of obedience you make yourselves slaves; by the vow of chastity you cease to be useful members of society; by the former you surrender your personality, and by the latter you break the moral law."

It is hard to imagine a more outrageous sophism. What? If men or women influenced by the attractive force possessed by the conception of self-sacrifice and self-devotion, by the need of fulfilling the fundamental law of Christianity by an act of self-abnegation, and moved by a generous religious feeling, determine to renounce the pleasures, the ambitions and the riches of this world, in order to employ all the ardor of their soul in prayer or in charity, but in either case in the service of God, and God alone, and choose to carry their renunciation so far as to include even the joys of family life, in order to devote themselves entirely to the life which they have embraced; and if, in order to complete the sacrifice, they voluntarily resign their will into the hands of superiors, to whom they give themselves

up as to the representative of the Divine Master, is it to be said that those men and women have been guilty of an immoral act, and are thenceforward to be looked upon as unworthy members of society and as deserving of expulsion therefrom: Can those be called slaves who, by the very act of sacrificing their liberty, have made the most decisive use of that liberty?

I believe that all Protestant souls, however wide the gulf which sunders them from the doctrines, the feelings and the practices of the Catholic Church, will be revolted by such an audacious proposition. During my visits to England I had the opportunity of coming too closely in contact with some such souls not to know with what fervor and what sincerity some of them aspire to a perfect imitation of Jesus Christ, and what an attractive influence the counsels and rules of conduct which are found in the New Testament have for them. Was it not that very aspiration which, now sixty years ago, moved the heart and the intelligence of Pusey when he expressed the wish that the Anglican Church also had its Sisters of Charity, and when he stood by the death-bed of his daughter Lucy and charged her to "Pray, so soon as she should stand before the face of the Redeemer, for those institutions of which she herself had hoped to become a member?" Is it not from the little seed planted at that period that the numerous convents have sprung which have enriched the Established Church by their existence?

In any case, without insisting any further on what is necessarily a delicate subject when a Catholic is discussing with persons of a different faith, I am convinced that respect for the liberty of conscience and for personal liberty in their most sacred aspects suffices to bring about the condemnation of the theory which our lawyer-politicians have in-

vented as a means of concealing behind the mask of civil law an attempt to subject men's souls to an oppressive and tyrannical system. We have, in fact, to deal with a vast conspiracy against liberty; and the further I go the clearer the proof which the statement of the various phases of the situation, and of the facts, affords. The truth will appear still clearer when we examine the last of the accusations directed against the Congregations by the authors of the new law.

The Congregations have been accused of being in a state of rebellion, but I have proved that, on the contrary, their attitude could not possibly have been more legitimate. They have been accused of claiming to occupy a privileged place in the State; but I have proved that the position which they occupied in the modern social system was purely that of associations of ordinary citizens, who fulfilled the duties which are incumbent on all their fellows, and at the same time claimed the rights to which they are strictly entitled. They have been accused of violating the fundamental principles of society by contracting vows which are contrary to nature; but I have shown that such an accusation is neither more nor less than a downright outrage on the conscience of religious humanity.

Reference must be made to another matter which provided the real battle-ground on which the enemies and defenders of the Catholic religion in France come in conflict with each other, and where the attack directed against liberty is more open and defined than elsewhere. I mean the education question.

I have already touched on this point when engaged in refuting the calumnies directed against the Jesuits. The growing animosity of which the Christian Colleges were the object, and the uneasy

feeling engendered in the minds of their adversaries by their ever-increasing success, undoubtedly played a considerable part in the campaign undertaken against them at the time of the Dreyfus affair. It was the decisive reason which gave rise to the new legislation inaugurated in 1901, applied with tyrannical brutality ever since, and now finally completed by the passing of laws which destroy the last vestiges of Christian education.

What, as a matter of fact, was the nature of the position occupied by that education in the eyes of the law? Like everything else, it was the result of the great transformation of 1789. In France, during many centuries, education was under control of the Church. This fact was due neither to an abuse of power, nor to an encroachment on the rights of the State, but was merely the natural result of the natural Constitution. The monarchy had preserved an almost ecclesiastical character: a relic of its original features. The monarch, being himself occupied in fighting in order to bring about the unity of the kingdom, left the care of governing the souls and cultivating the intelligence of his subjects to the Church; and this was the history of public education in France down to the fourteenth century. As soon as the University, which was begotten of the Church and organized by a combination of forces, arose, it had recourse to the King in order to obtain a guarantee for its privileges against the encroachment of rival schools. This was the second phase of public education. The law-makers then began to crystallize, so far as it affected the Church, the idea of the sovereign State. The King, as supreme ruler, was the incarnation of that idea, but, as the elect of God, continued to be the defender of the Church, and consequently the protector of its educational system. The struggles between the

University and the religious orders took place in the bosom of the Church. When the reform came and destroyed the unity of the Church and State, the royal power attempted to maintain that unity; and it was no doctrine of State authority that it tried to impose, for no such conception as yet existed, and it was always the educational rights of the Church that it insisted upon. But the doctrines of free thought swept away the ancient edifice; the Revolution broke out; uniformity of belief was destroyed; the Christian religion ceased to be a national constituent principle, and the State, theoretically separated from the Church, no longer recognized her exclusive right to educational control. The minds of men, as well as their consciences, were freed from the fetters which had bound them, and from that day forth, educational freedom, accepted in theory, became an absolute necessity.

It was in vain, as soon as the revolutionary period of violence and chaotic upheaval came to an end, that Napoleon, believing that he could establish his empire over the souls of men by the force of doctrines, founded the new University of France, which still controls our public education, and was destined, in his view, to instruct the entire youth of France by virtue of the exclusive prerogative conferred upon it. No sooner had Napoleon disappeared than the special privilege was assailed from all sides. Believers and unbelievers alike demanded liberty, which successive new forms of government, imbued, as I have shown, by the Napoleonic spirit, persisted in refusing; and the resultant strife, with which the name of Count de Montalambert, so illustrious and so well known in England, is closely connected, occupied thirty years of our history. Eventually, however, the principle of liberty, foreshadowed by the Charter of 1830, intro-

duced into public education by M. Guizot in 1833, and included in the terms of the constitution of 1848, became a recognized institution by virtue of the law of 1850.

That law was the result of a compromise, creditable to all parties, which was arrived at between the defenders of State education, on the one hand, and the partisans of absolute freedom, on the other. That law, which was eloquently upheld by M. Thiers before the National Assembly, gave the final sanction to the principle of liberty for all citizens alike (subject, of course, to the control which the State continued to exercise over educational programmes and examinations); and the members of religious orders, as citizens, were not excluded from its operation, higher education, which is the concern of the various faculties, and not of the colleges, alone continued to be the exclusive appanage of the University. It was not emancipated until 1875, and then only to a very relative extent. Such, in a very small compass, is the history of education in France.

So soon as the Third Republic was established, it began its reaction against the seemingly definitive measure of progress that had been attained. Its action was the result of a twofold influence; of the anti-religious passions which animated it from the very moment of its establishment, and of the Napoleonic tradition, the persistent influence of which I have already indicated. Twenty-five years have now passed since that first attack was made on the liberty of Christian education. Then, as now, political circumstances provided the necessary opportunity and justification for the campaign. Immediately after the election which resulted in the defeat of the monarchial and religious parties, Marshal MacMahon, who had been their leader in the

fray, was compelled to resign the Presidency of the Republic.

Intoxicated by success, the leaders of the Republican party, henceforth masters of the country, wished to retaliate on their adversaries; and M. Gambetta, in one celebrated phrase, provided the new policy with a party cry which was destined to resound far and wide: "Clericalism, that is the enemy!" His notion was to present his policy to the country, not as a policy of hostility to religion, but merely as one of repression directed against the electoral activity of the clergy. It certainly was an ingenious cry, inasmuch as it apparently spared the religious feelings of a large section of the population, but the perfidiousness of it was bound to be exposed before long. As a matter of fact, as events have proved in the past, and now proved more clearly than ever, in spite of the cloak of pretense with which it is attempted to hide the truth, it is really Catholicism which is attacked under the name of Clericalism. During the whole course of the campaign which was then initiated against the religious congregations it was the principle of the right to teach which came in for all the hard knocks. M. Jules Ferry proposed to deprive all the so-called "unauthorized congregations" of that right; and, though his proposal—which was not only repudiated by the Catholics but, owing to the influence of M. Dufaure and M. Jules Simon, produced a veritable upheaval of liberal feeling—was rejected by the Senate, its painful effects were felt, and the Government, as a substitute for actual legislation, issued proscriptive edicts against the members of the Congregations. These repressive measures were initiated in 1880, and marked the beginning of the religious crisis which was revived four years ago, after a long period of calm.

In any case, M. Jules Ferry had great statesman-like qualities, and when, on the death of Gambetta, in 1883, he became leader of the Republican party, he understood that no government of a country in which religious belief still possesses such a powerful influence could make shift with a policy of violent repression. He undertook the task of making possible to some extent the co-existence of the right to teach and of a powerfully organized system of State education which was to be completely secularized both as regards subjects and teachers, and devoted all his energies to a realization of that system. The party in power followed his lead, and faithfully seconded his efforts. The execution of the task which he had undertaken was the great achievement of the Republic of that period.

While some of the new laws increased the strength, the prestige and the authority of the University in every possible manner, others decreed and organized the absolute secularization of public popular education; that is to say, of the educational system to the maintenance of which the whole body of taxpayers contributes. The primary schools belonging to the State, to which the ministers of religion had hitherto been given access, which in many cases were confided to the care of instructors who were members of the Congregations, and in which religious instruction formed part of the curriculum, were declared to be thenceforth, in theory at all events, entirely neutral; that is to say that, though they were denuded of all sectarian characteristics, though even the idea of their duties towards God was no longer imparted to the pupils, though the moral instruction given was not allowed to be based on any form of definite belief, at all events assurances were given that no word should ever be uttered in those schools which might shock

or alarm the faith of a child or his family.

To put the matter in a sentence, the education proposed to the people by the State was denuded of not only all sectarian admixture, but even of the most elementary conception; assuredly an audacious proposition, and one which was well calculated to disturb and terrify all Christian consciences. We must note, however, for it is essential to a clear comprehension of what is taking place to-day, that the laws which, from 1882 to 1886, gave effect to that proposition, proclaimed the liberty of private instruction, subject, however, to University control.

This was the system which, eighteen years ago, was forced, after a series of memorable struggles, upon the Catholics, who, after loyally fighting against this imposition, courageously accepted the accomplished fact. Christian schools, founded by them at the price of considerable pecuniary sacrifices (rendered all the more meritorious by the fact that the Catholics had at the same time to pay their share of the tax which provided for the support of the rival form of education), covered the country. Never has a finer example of devotion been seen; never was a more noble or generous use made of liberty, which, though curtailed and supervised, yet preserved its most essential features.

At the same time the tacit consent of successive Ministers permitted the reconstitution of the proscribed Congregations and the colleges which they had founded continued, in the hands of lay proprietors, their educational work, with the assistance of some of the members of those bodies. The few Catholic universities, though limited to a curriculum devoid of all possibility of expansion, owing to the fact that the conduct of examinations and the conferment of degrees was a State monopoly, succeeded in maintaining their various chairs. The

ever-increasing confidence which they inspired in the middle classes, as well as in the aristocracy, in Republican circles no less than in those which still preserved the monarchical tradition, and the numerical increase of the pupils of the primary schools, bear striking witness to the existence of that moral and intellectual need to which, in the eyes of a large section of the population, educational liberty responds. The existence of that need was all the more self-evident, owing to the fact that the futility of the effort which had been made, under cover of the neutralization of the Government schools, to reassure the Catholic conscience, became every day more flagrantly conspicuous. In spite of all philosophical efforts, of all pedagogic formulas, of all pamphlets, manuals and lectures, the impossibility of establishing for masters and pupils alike a clear and practical basis of morality, independent of all belief and all religious sanction, became clear to all. In the lecture room of the various faculties the diversity of doctrine was unceasingly on the increase; from the dregs of spiritualism to the various hypotheses of evolution and transmutation, everything had its turn; the so-called State method of instruction was in course of utter pulverization. In the colleges education was thrown on its beam end by this confusion of ideas and by the futility of official methods. A gigantic parliamentary inquiry, directed with authoritative ability and wide-minded impartiality by M. Ribot, the most eloquent parliamentary orator of the Moderate party, who was several times Minister, made clear to all eyes, at the very moment of the inception of the present crisis, the bankruptcy, so to speak, of the State educational system.

In the primary schools the disease was of a still more aggravated form, more deep-set, more bru-

tally defined. Only too often the teachers in the public schools, being subject to political influences of the most advanced type, violated every rule of neutrality to an ever-increasing extent. Outrages on the Catholic Faith, even on the very foundations of religious belief, were innumerable; not moral instruction only, but lectures on history, on botany, on zoology, provided at every turn the opportunity for an attack. Under every possible circumstance a declared hostility against every form of positive religion manifested itself in the ranks of the official teaching body. M. Ferdinand Buisson, one of the most conspicuous contemporary politicians, who, by virtue of his official position at the Ministry of Public Instruction, was for many years the real organizer of the so-called "lay" educational system, and who is to-day the ringleader of the enemies of Congregational instruction, wrote, a few years ago, in an important book entitled, "Religion, Morality and Science; Their Conflict in the Field of Contemporary Education," the following significant words:

"In all this story about God and the world which Catholic dogma presents to us, there is not one single word which does not provoke, I will not say indignation, for in order to be indignant one would have to believe, but a mute and melancholy denial.

. . . With its ideas about the necessity of redemption and of expiatory sacrifice the Christian moral system presents nothing more or less than a coarse ideal, against which our consciences revolt, and which would throw us back two thousand years.

. . . The only possible result of all rational education must be the evolution of the religion of the past into the irreligion of the future."

Is there a Christian worthy of the name, let alone a Catholic, who is prepared to accept such a theory as the basis of education, or who would conscien-

tiously accept the consequences which it must have for his children?

It is certainly not in England that an affirmative answer could be given to such a question with any prospect of receiving the support of public opinion. This is clearly proved by the recent Education Bill, which strongly maintains the principle of sectarian education, but at the same time, while favoring the Protestant churches, leaves the Roman Catholics in complete enjoyment of their liberty, and has, in consequence, merited and received their approbation. If the French Catholics, in view of the direction which was given to public education, failed to prevent the application of the new system to the country at large, were they not bound to demand complete liberty to give, in any case to their own children, that type of education which is in conformity with the tenets of their faith, and to provide them with instructors of a nature to guarantee the fulfillment of their desires in this respect? Every person of good faith, or who is in the least degree animated by a spirit of equity, will unhesitatingly recognize the fact that it was their right and their duty so to act, and, as I have shown, the legislators of 1882 and 1886 proved that they understood, to some extent at all events, the existence of that duty by leaving the Catholics a small modicum of liberty, which they proceeded to utilize with a natural and legitimate alacrity.

After fifteen years of unquestioned exercise by the Catholics of their comparative freedom, the Radical and Socialistic section of the Republican party, taking advantage of the circumstances which had been brought about by the Dreyfus affair, and reviving in a more violent form the movement which had been initiated by Gambetta and Jules Ferry, but which good sense and mature reflection

had almost immediately toned down, suddenly imposed on the country a despotic and openly un-Christian policy, the direction of which was assumed, to his misfortune, by M. Waldeck-Rousseau. The law of 1901 was the expression of that policy, the only apparent object of which was to oblige all religious associations to apply to the Legislature for authorization, on pain of dissolution and of seeing their property seized and sold; but in reality the spirit of the law went infinitely further. One of the principal orators in the Socialist Party, M. Rene Viviani, gave this to be understood in the most frankly audacious manner, when he proved the impossibility of taking steps against the Congregations without at the same time attacking the Church, for the reason that they are to one another "as the blood is to the flesh"; and he proceeded to repudiate the empty distinction drawn between Clericalism and Catholicism, and to give back to Gambetta's formula its true and original meaning by pointing to the Catholic Church and saying, "That is the enemy." His speech was the dominating feature of the entire debate, and the fight entered on a new phase. It passed above and beyond the Congregations, and involved not only the Catholic Church, but the Christian Faith itself, and therewith the very foundations of spiritual liberty. When the debate ended in the defeat of the Catholics and the Liberals, it was evident that it marked the inception of a war to the knife against Christianity and liberty. On the last day of the discussion I addressed M. Waldeck-Rousseau from the tribune of the Chamber of Deputies, and gave vent to my gloomy forebodings in these words: "I wait to see what will happen so soon as the law is put into execution. In order to preserve your majority and to keep yourself in

power you will be compelled, now that you have opened the floodgates, to let yourself be borne along by the tide, no matter how far it may carry you."

V.

We shall see how violent and impetuous was the rush of that tide. The law of 1901 was passed in the month of July. It allowed the Congregations three months' grace in which to make their submission: that is to say, to ask for the necessary authorization. The Jesuits and the Assumptionists, who had been specially aimed at by the Government and the parliamentary majority, knowing that it was the deliberate intention to refuse that authorization, thought it wiser and more dignified to dissolve of their own motion, and condemned themselves either to voluntary exile or to a painful and cruel process of dispersion. It was the same with the Benedictines, to whom the idea of peacefully carrying on their admirable and learned labors in a foreign land seemed preferable to the continued maintenance of a hopeless struggle. Like them, too, numerous female Congregations sacrificed themselves in silence, and transferred their charitable activity to distant fields. But the majority of the religious orders, relying on the text of the law and on the solemn promise that had been made them, petitioned Parliament to authorize their continuance. This was the case with 54 male and 80 female Congregations. Nothing could have been more correct than their action, or have proved more clearly the spirit of loyal obedience to the laws by which they were animated. We shall see in a moment what sort of reception it met with.

The normal dissolution of the Chamber of Deputies took place in 1902, and the elections were held in May. The struggle was a fierce one, and the

Government of M. Waldeck-Rousseau threw its whole weight into the scale. French politics cannot be properly understood if the preponderating influence which the authority of the Administration exercises on the course of the elections is not appreciated. It is the natural result of excessive centralization, of the imperfect organization of the system of universal suffrage, and of the immensity of the number of officials who are of necessity subject to Ministerial influence. The election of 1902 proves to be more characteristic in this respect than any of its predecessors, and in the whole electorate the Government obtained a majority of, roughly speaking, no more than 200,000 votes, which is practically the figure represented by the body of Government officials. It is none the less a victory, the credit and the spoils of which the Socialists claimed for themselves, with the assurance which always enables the violent members of society to force the acceptance of their views on more moderate individuals. It must, however, be observed that the design which the Socialists alone openly avowed of destroying Christian education root and branch, and of openly making war on the Catholic Church, *was carefully concealed from the electors by the majority of candidates*, who subsequently, as Deputies, were compelled to give their docile adherence to the plan, though possibly it was repugnant to their feelings to do so.

M. Waldeck-Rousseau, having received the approval of the electors in 1892, and having paved the way for the inevitable development of his policy, voluntarily surrendered his place of power, and M. Combes, the present President of the Council, succeeded him at the head of a Ministry which represents the socialistic and, more especially, the anti-religious tendencies of the new Chamber; hence

the programme of the new Cabinet is directed solely to the satisfaction of these latter. The application, if that is the right term, of the new law was promptly proceeded with. It was precisely the incidents to which that application gave rise during the summer of 1902, especially in Brittany which attracted the attention of the *National Review* and induced it to inquire into the matter. I will not recite those incidents in detail, but, avoiding all passion, and repressing all personal feelings, will limit myself to the indication of their characteristics and their consequences.

I must remind my readers of the fact that the law of 1901 was in no sense aimed at the so-called "authorized" Congregations—on the contrary, its object was to bring all other associations into line with those bodies—and that it in no wise interfered, as was expressly stated from the tribune of the Chamber, with existing legislation which established the principle of educational liberty as regards private instruction. Nevertheless, the authorized female Congregations and the free schools, which were supposed to be protected by law were its first victims. By the issue of arbitrary and unexpected decrees four thousand such schools established in houses which, for the most part, belonged to lay proprietors either in their individual capacity or as members of associations, were closed, in spite of the protestations, the appeals of the law courts, and the resistance of a population roused to fury by such a brutal outrage on its liberty. In order to overcome that resistance it was necessary to have recourse to armed force to break open the doors of the condemned schools and to forcibly expel the humble nuns who, in many cases, had taught there for half a century. Such, and such alone, was the origin of the scenes which were witnessed in Brittany.

The English, who are said to cherish the principle that though the wind and the storm may enter the house of a citizen uninvited, the King himself cannot do so, will no doubt be surprised by such a strange violation of domiciliary, educational and proprietary rights in the absence of all statutory justification or legal decision to support it. In order to avoid scandal and to spare the nuns the pain consequent on violent expulsion, many Congregations preferred to yield to the inevitable and voluntarily to quit their schools. It was thus that a very large number of these evictions, of which there were more than eight thousand in all, were apparently enabled to be effected under relatively peaceful conditions.

The emotion produced by these events was at its height when the moment arrived to bring before Parliament the applications for authorization which had been formulated by the Congregations. Instead of those applications being submitted to the whole body of Parliament, as the law and the Constitution required, they were brought by a trick of administrative procedure, before the Chamber of Deputies only. It was proposed, instead of making a separate examination of each petition, to reject them all en bloc, and as a matter of fact, in spite of the energetic resistance offered by the Catholic and Liberal minority, the fifty-four male and eighty female Congregations were, after a few days' summary discussion, condemned and dissolved! Their members were obliged to leave the educational establishments, colleges or popular schools, two thousand in number, in which, untouched by the law, they had taught for so many years; and the very houses in which those schools had been carried on were marked out for attack and made the subject of a huge system of compulsory judicial

liquidation directed against the lay associations whose property they are.

Then began the lamentable exodus of those thousands of monks and nuns who were compelled to leave their homes and to give up not only their collective spiritual life, but also the profession which provided them with the means of subsistence; who, in order to be able—though their functions were curtailed and their action was hindered in every possible way—to continue their activity were obliged either to strip themselves of their character as members of a religious order and even of their distinctive dress, or to seek in exile a refuge for their lacerated feelings and hearts torn in two by an ardent love for their native soil and by an invincible attachment to the vows with which their conscience had bound them.

One single male Congregation, whose occupation was the instruction of poor children, escaped the effects of that terrible storm. It is a famous society, and one which is known all over the world. It has existed ever since the seventeenth century. It was the founder of all the systems of popular instruction which are used at this day in the public schools and created establishments in which the youthful members of the lower orders can educate themselves for a commercial or an industrial career. Its two thousand schools, which are attended by more than 350,000 pupils, are scattered over the whole of France and her colonies. The decree by which Napoleon created the University recognized the existence of those schools and admitted them as educational factors to participation in the great complex life of the Commonwealth. Its founder was a great man, at once humble and illustrious, Jean Baptiste de la Salle, whom the Catholic Church includes in the number of her saints. I refer to the

institute of the "Freres des Ecoles Chretiennes" (Brothers of the Christian Schools).

Besides this male Congregation, four hundred female Congregations, duly authorized according to law, had also been preserved. Among the number were those admirable "Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul," of whom one may say that the whole world has learned to revere them, and to look with admiration on the distinctive dress and white hood which is so often seen by the bedside of the sick and the wounded, the poor and the young. They in their turn have been brought before the tribunal of Parliament: the consideration of their case is being begun at the very moment when I write these pages, and before they have been published a condemnatory verdict, arrived at in advance, will have been pronounced. The two thousand schools which they direct will be affected thereby, and the Sisters will have to leave them. Those Congregations which exist only for the educational purposes will be dissolved, and those which at the same time maintain hospitals or alms houses will be tolerated only until the time, which cannot be far distant, when the State succeeds in obtaining the needed recruits with more or less of the necessary professional qualifications and the Sisters can be turned away. It is an event of incalculably far-reaching importance. Christian education, reduced to dependence upon lay instructors, hitherto numerically insufficient and lacking the needful qualifications, has received a terrible blow, destined to be rendered fatal by a last act of violence which has already been announced, viz., by the final abolition of the last vestige of a form of liberty which has already practically ceased to exist.

Such then is the present position of affairs. The results of a whole century of effort of self-sacrifice

and of devotion are crumbling away in the midst of a kind of universal stupor. The effects are apparent to every one in his native town or village, where the house in which he himself and his father before him were educated, and his children were being brought up, and which belonged to him, is suddenly shut up, closed in the face of those who so long inhabited it and threatened with unjustifiable confiscation. Every one, either in his own house or in that of his neighbors, sees humble women, relations or revered friends, bowed by the outrage of which they have been the victims, coming to beg in sorrow for a refuge which they can no longer find in the convent from they have have been expelled. Sixteen hundred thousand children, who had been voluntarily confided to the care of Christian instructors in fifteen thousand schools, have now either to be satisfied with such hastily improvised instruction as chance may give them, or are condemned to endure the torture of submitting to a form of education which is deliberately hostile to the religious belief of their families. A thick and heavy veil of mourning is cast over the whole of Christian France. I prefer not to lift it any further.

VI.

Before I conclude, now that I have finished my statement of the facts, I must throw a last glance on the ideas which engendered them, and which in all probability—for so fatal and so sweeping is their influence—will entail still graver consequences in a country such as mine, where the logic of conceptions is so terribly powerful. One can already foresee that the reasoning process which provided the pretended justification for denying the right to teach to members of Congregations, on the ground that had pronounced vows of obedience and of

chastity, will be applied in all its sophistical force to all members of the Catholic clergy who submit to their superiors and are vowed to celibacy; and as a matter of fact a proposal to forbid them to teach has already been laid before Parliament.

The Jacobinic notion goes much further still. It propounds the theory that the mere fact of obedience to the Pope in all matters which concern religious doctrine and discipline, subjects all ecclesiastics to a sort of *diminutio capitis*, which renders them incompetent, in a country which is officially withdrawn from the operation of any form of religious authority—where the human law declares itself to be independent of the divine—to exercise any social function whatsoever, such, for example, as the bringing up of the young. It obviously follows that the same incapacity is attributable to all citizens without distinction who profess the Catholic faith, which involves, no less than in the case of the priests and members of the religious orders, submission to the head of their Church in all matters which concern the faith. Assuredly such a conception seems monstrous, at the beginning of the twentieth century, to all countries in which the modern principles of liberty of conscience and of worship are recognized as constituting the very foundation of the Commonwealth, and more especially in a State in which the vast majority of the citizens belong to the Catholic faith. Nevertheless, it is in conformity with the political traditions of the French Revolution, and it reappears to-day as the natural result of a process of evolution backwards, in the minds of those who strive to resuscitate those traditions.

One of the leaders of the Parliamentary majority, a Senator who has long held, and still holds, a position of considerable influence in the French Legislature—M. Clemenceau—expounded, also in the

pages of the *National Review*, the theory which he has often maintained of the incompatibility of the principles and the doctrines of the Romish Church with the life and the development of contemporary civil society. He tried to establish his theory on the basis of historical considerations arising from the part played by the Papacy throughout the ages, and of the effects which, in his eyes, the dogmatic definitions of the Roman pontiffs and of the Councils are liable to have in the political world. The discussion of a thesis of such magnitude would extend this article beyond all proper proportions, and I will only remark that if it were well founded it would be so in other countries just as much as in France; but from an examination of the political situation in the principal States of Europe that does not appear to be the case.

Belgium, for example, offers the spectacle of a nation which for more than twenty years has been governed by Catholic Ministers supported by majorities animated by the same sentiments as their leaders, and not only is it impossible to affirm that liberty has suffered thereby, but, on the contrary, it is an indisputable fact that the liberty of the Press, of opinions, and of discussion, parliamentary and otherwise, and (to speak more especially on the subject in hand) the right to teach, are more unrestricted in that country than in many others; and in no State are social legislation and active democratic organization more developed.

The German Empire, under the impulsion of Prince Bismarck, engaged during the first years of its existence in a memorable struggle with the Catholic Church, not unlike that which was undertaken in France by the Ministers of the Third Republic. Not only did that struggle come to an end when Prince Bismarck had to appeal to the

Catholics for their assistance against the Socialists, but the aspect of the situation has entirely changed since the accession of William II. A considerable degree of liberty has been restored to the Catholic Church, the Sovereign seeks for every possible opportunity to manifest towards it his sentiments of respect and of sympathy, and far from considering it as a force which is fraught with danger to the Empire, treats its representatives and its adherents as valuable allies.

May I not add that England also gives a striking example to the civilized nations of what the spirit of liberty can do for the satisfaction and the peace of men's consciences? I believe that since the time when religious quarrels were extinguished by Catholic emancipation and the old cry of "No Popery" ceased to resound, the country has had no reason to complain of the part which has been played in English society by the bishops and the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church, and that neither their loyalty nor that of their pupils has ever been doubted for a moment. Were it necessary to consider the question from the point of view of their solicitude for the interests of the people and of their capacity to understand its needs, the great services rendered by Cardinal Manning would at once force themselves upon our memory.

Facts, therefore, in a most eloquent and decisive manner refute a theory which is based upon historical reminiscences interpreted with passionate impartiality, wholly inapplicable to the conditions of contemporary society, and serving only to resuscitate the disputes of the past; or which is founded upon doctrinal dissertations the meaning of which has been insufficiently studied and wherein the most essential distinctions, to which the Church itself has continually drawn attention, are entirely

neglected.

But, as I have proved by an historical statement which appears to me to be far stronger than all the theoretical discussions of my opponents, it is not merely against the Catholic Church and its doctrines that the "lay" movement, as it is called in our country, is directed, but against Christianity itself. In vain do certain minds, by reason of the direction imparted to them, in early years by their French Protestant education, from the influence of which they have, by the way, emancipated themselves, attempt in this connection the maintenance of impossible distinctions, and strive thereby to justify their conceptions in the eyes of neighboring nations in general and of England in particular. More than a hundred years have passed since Burke, in his "Reflections on the French Revolution," in the course of his demonstration of the fact that religious principles are far more necessary in the case of a democratic than in that of a monarchical government, answered those very pretensions with these words: "Violently condemning neither the Greek nor the Armenian, nor, since passions have subsided, the Roman system of religion, we prefer the Protestant; not because we think it has less of the Christian religion in it, but, because, in our judgment, it has more. We are Protestants, not from indifference, but from zeal." This reply might be addressed to-day to those who seek the approbation of interested parties for their anti-Christian campaign.

In reality the term "anti-Christian" is not strong enough; for the attack is, in fact, directed against the very idea of religion. An important member of the present ministerial majority, who intervened with decisive effect in the Senate in connection with the abrogation of the last guarantees of the scholas-

tic liberty, said two years ago: "The triumph of the Galilean has lasted twenty centuries; it is now His turn to die. The mysterious voice which once in the mountains of Epirus announced the death of Pan, to-day announces the end of that false God Who promised an era of justice and peace to those who should believe in Him. The deception has lasted long enough; the lying God, in His turn, disappears." The politician who spoke in these terms, M. Delpech, adds to the authority which his parliamentary position gives him that conferred by the lofty functions which he exercises in the realms of Freemasonry. I doubt if the true meaning of this fact is quite understood by my readers, who are accustomed as far as I can judge, to look upon Freemasonry as a charitable and harmless institution. France was the victim of that illusion at the end of the eighteenth century, and has had only too good reasons for curing herself of it. To-day all anti-Christian legislation, all hostile measures directed against the Catholics are prepared and forced on the country by a Masonic body, which has all the force of a political caucus. It is at Masonic assemblies more than elsewhere that all laws directed against educational liberty were, and still are, elaborated, preparatory to their being dictated to the Ministers and submitted to Parliament.

Well informed writers have often noted traces of the same inspiration in the history of the Revolution. Thus, from every point of view, the present crisis brings before our eyes the tradition of that decisive epoch, and at the same time makes manifest the strange contradiction existing between the principles of liberty in the realms of politics proclaimed in 1789 and the intellectual despotism in the realm of philosophy inaugurated by the hatred of Christianity, which dates from the same period.

The existence of that contradiction is freshly THIRTEEN—Religious Crisis in France—April 24 affirmed in our own day by the pretension which the modern Jacobins tried to force down our throats; by the attempt made, as in times past, under cover of the catch words supplied by the principle of the essential unity of the State, to establish a certain doctrine which is incompatible with the very idea of liberty of conscience. M. Clemenceau has tried, no doubt, to save the principle of liberty from the inevitable consequences of his anti-Catholic theory, and to maintain that the former could remain intact, and even be developed to the highest degree, even after the latter had received its definite consecration by the destruction of all Christian education. But none of his opponents and few of his friends considered that he had succeeded, and the latter clearly pointed, as the former had foreseen had been the case, to the supremacy of State teaching and State education as the normal outcome of the new legislation.

This essay should naturally terminate with an attempt to forecast the ultimate issue of the religious crisis from which France is now suffering, but that would necessarily entail an examination of the whole problem of the relation of Church and State, of which the question of the Congregations and of education is but one of the aspects; and my readers, whose patience I have tried only too severely, will doubtless understand that I cannot, at this stage, begin the treatment of a new and so extensive development of my subject. It will suffice if I state my conviction that the idea of the separation of Church and State—which is extolled by her adversaries as the necessary end of the struggle and is constituting a new governmental formula—is, in the present condition of our political institutions

and of our religious habits, a dangerous chimera. Here again the lessons of history provide an ample proof. The outcome of the experiment which was made, from 1795 to 1799, in the direction of such separation, under the influence of the same ideas and of the same violent passions, was a ferocious persecution of the Catholic clergy and religion. The result would be the same to-day. To the attempt originated by the Revolution an end was put by the signing of the Concordat, the determining cause of which was, in the mind of Bonaparte, the spontaneous revival of the Catholic faith after the bloody period of the Terror. If the situation has altered in our days, it has changed in the sense that the religious movement has, in spite of certain political phenomena, become more intense and more deliberate than it formerly was, no less in intellectual circles than among the people.

While the governing classes, victims of an incomprehensible blindness, strive to tear up the imperishable tree of Christianity, it is putting forth fresh roots, which are penetrating ever deeper and deeper into the souls of men. Banished from its place in the laws and institutions of our country and in the ranks of officialdom, the Church is daily winning an unexpected place in the life of the nation as the result of the very fact that it has been persecuted and of the natural spiritual needs of mankind. Now more than ever it appears in the light of a moral force, immense and indispensable, whose influence no prudent government can possibly misapprehend. An attempt may be made to combat it, but to ignore it is impossible; sooner or later they will have to come to terms with it. Whatever the extent, the duration and the effects of the present crisis may be, that must be the inevitable conclusion, for that alone can guarantee that

measure of religious liberty which is compatible with the conditions of the age in which we live.

High above the disputes, the passions and the excesses of all political parties, one fact dominates the history of these last years: though obscured by the thick cloud in which religious discord has involved us, it has yet been clear to all who can penetrate into the heart of the nation. I mean the existence of an immense, a universal aspiration towards reconciliation and appeasement; of an imperious desire, which must triumph in the end, to see the hearts of all drawn closer to each other; and to see all those who are already united by the strong and indissoluble bonds of patriotism fuse and combine in a single-minded devotion to the service of the welfare of our country.



