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ART. I.—THE GENERAL SYNOD OF PROTESTANTS IN  
FRANCE.

From the French of Ed. de Pressensé in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, by  
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A FEW years ago the meeting of the Protestant Synod in Paris would have been an unnoticed event. The spirit of the time was that of Gallio, the Roman consul, who cared for none of these things. It is different now; the age is curious for all sorts of knowledge. It turns over all ideas, even at the risk of a superficial acquaintance. M. de Pressensé, in an article in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, leaves the news-loving Parisians without excuse for a superficial knowledge of the late Protestant Synod.

The last preceding official Synod had been held at Loudun, as long ago as the year 1659. It was assembled for the purpose of hearing from the mouth of the king's representative the decree of dissolution, closely followed by the *Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*. Thus, after two centuries and more, the Reformed Church of France found herself again in possession of her rights. It was an occasion of profound interest, and when the same Psalms were sung which used to be heard in those dark and bloody days of the Church, and when the eloquent pastor, M. Babut of Nismes, alluded to those glorious and sorrowful memories, many eyes were bathed in tears.

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The French Protestants formed the chivalry of the Reformation. Their grand characters, as Coligny and du Plessis Mor-nay, were true Christian gentlemen. The high-toned sentiments and ardent convictions generated by the Reformation, and expressed by such writers as Calvin and Beza, did more to clear the French language of its dross, and to form and render flexible

that marvellous instrument of precision—French prose—with its native and luminous dialectic, and its incomparable art of linking ideas, than all the polishing of the grammarians, and the labor of all the Vaugelas.

The consequences of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, were not so deplorable for the persecuted as for the persecutors. France was not only deprived of lucrative industries, but her middle class lost one of its most precious and liberal elements, as was clearly enough perceived at the great revolution.

The form of government of the French Reformed Church unites most admirably the genius of law with the genius of liberty. Calvin, so superficially judged by France, was its author: Calvin, who doubtless has none of the attractions of that royal skeptic who believed that "Paris was worth a mass," and so, jestingly, put away his faith that he might gain a crown; Calvin, in whose eyes the whole world would have been no compensation for the abandonment of his faith; Calvin, who has won for the reformed faith and for civil and religious liberty one entire portion of the civilized world, I mean the great Anglo-Saxon race. It was Calvin who gave it the most perfect model of that representative government which is its glory and its strength; and that model is none other than a Presbyterian Synod.

What may be called the Constituent Assembly of French Protestantism was held in Paris in May, 1559. Only eleven churches ventured to send delegates to this secret and outlawed convention. A Confession of Faith was prepared, which, stripped of theological details, might be summed up in two articles: The authority of Scripture takes the place of all human authority and of the Roman hierarchy; and salvation by faith in Christ puts the soul into immediate relations with God, without any priestly mediation.

Thus the Reform was distinguished from philosophy and from the Renaissance. It was not a simple system, it was a religion. Free inquiry was nothing for it but a point of departure; its point of arrival was a very definite creed. Yet, in maintaining direct divine authority, it achieved the liberation of thought and of conscience, in the face of all human authority.

After adopting the Confession, the Form of Government was discussed, and the entire frame-work of the Presbyterian polity

was elaborated and adopted. No better proof than this is needed of the capacity of the French mind for comprehending the conditions of liberty.

Everything moved on smoothly until the disaster of the Revolution. After that, the Synods could meet only occasionally and with great irregularity. Under Napoleon, in 1801, a new order of things came in. The Concordat with the Pope re-established the Roman Catholic religion. But from the Protestants, Napoleon took away about all the conditions of a genuine liberty. He wrapped them in the learnedly contrived network of the laws of Germinal. He made a show of accepting the laws of the Churches; in reality he modified them profoundly. The National Synod became a dead letter; elections were suppressed or made a farce. The pastors were named by the state on presentation by the Church sessions. The Church was left with no means of self-government, or of maintaining its doctrine or discipline. Napoleon made of it an affair of state; he believed he had quieted it forever by pensioning it. Yet it was to delegates of the pastors that he made his famous address in behalf of liberty of worship, which closed with the admirable saying: "The empire of law ends where conscience begins." A severer criticism of his own legislation could scarcely be made. It wounded the conscience in every point.

It was not until the time of the second Napoleon, in 1852, that these arrangements were changed; and then it was done arbitrarily and without consulting the Protestants themselves. The principle of universal suffrage was established among the Churches, but no religious condition of any importance was required of the electors. The local Churches were subjected to presbyterial councils, elected every three years, and the consistories or sessions proportionably lost their power. A central council, named by the government, without any definite powers, was put at the head of the Church; it was nothing but a convenient screen for the civil authority.

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Such were the institutions under which French Protestantism was governed, until the decree of the 29th of November, 1871, when the General Synod was re-established.

Pressensé traces the decline of the Church to the period of comparative toleration which was enjoyed under Louis XVI.

Persecution ceased ; philosophers pleaded its cause. But the toleration was not sufficient to allow reorganization, and a relaxed discipline was the necessary result. Lower views of the supernatural prevailed extensively. The great religious movement in England with which the names of Whitefield and Wesley are connected, reached the French Church by way of Switzerland, in 1820. The result was an exodus from the National Church and the formation of independent Churches upon the plan of the ancient Protestant organizations. In the national Church itself, a fervid and rigorous orthodoxy, of a somewhat scholastic type, appeared. Adolph Monod was its most eloquent and impassioned preacher. The ancient rationalism was by no means disarmed, but rather consolidated itself, and proclaimed, in opposition to the Evangelical faith, a doctrine of universal tolerance, which reduced Protestantism by little and little to mere freedom of inquiry. This tendency was represented in Paris for forty years by M. Coquerel.

The differences between these two sections became much more serious, when the more pronounced and radical tendencies of the day suddenly took the place of the timid rationalism of the commencement of the century. This new school had its organ at Strasburg, founded by M. Colani ; and as the Church was without power of discipline, the pulpit was open to them equally with the press. In the view of this school, Christianity was no longer a revealed religion, but a simple evolution of humanity. The school was original not so much in its negations, as in its sincere desire to remain in connection with the Church, and to share in the services, notwithstanding their supernatural implications. The Ecclesiastical theory of the school is simple, being practically that of the more advanced Broad Churchmen of England. "The Protestant Church ought not to have any fixed symbol ; it should open itself to every sort of tendency." It is this doctrinal chaos that is expected to prove an exhaustless source of light.

For the last thirty years the struggles between these two parties have grown daily more lively. The books and pamphlets called out by the discussion would form a library. It divided the theological faculties at Strasburg and at Montauban. Renan's *Vie de Jesus* drew the questions from scholarly retirement and made them matters of public interest. The Church

of the Augsburg Confession (Lutheran) shared deeply in the agitation ; but the loss of the important district of Alsace, by which it was reduced to the consistories of Paris and Montbeliard, left it a mere wreck, and the settlement of the great problems of doctrine within its borders is indefinitely postponed.

At every new election in the National Protestant Church, the agitation was renewed. In 1849, at a General Synod, unrecognized by the Government, an effort was made to procure a Confession of Faith from the body. The attempt having failed, Elder A. de Gasparin and Rev. F. Monod left the National Church and joined the Independents, with whom they formed *The Union of the Evangelical Churches of France*. But the leaven was working in the national body. The evangelical party did not cease insisting, for a day, upon a religious character as a necessary qualification for the electorate. They formed a union which they called *The Evangelical Conference*. Wherever they had the majority, as in Paris, they excluded the opposing tendency from their Churches. But a general Synod was necessary to save the organization, as a whole, from anarchy. The new school, at first favorable to that measure, soon saw their danger from it, and did everything they could to hinder it. The decree of convocation was received by them with demonstrations of the liveliest repugnance, attended in some cases with public protestations.

#### THE PERSONELLE OF THE SYNOD.

At the moment of its assembling, the body found itself divided into two distinctly marked parties, the right and the left. The left centre was composed of the Moderates ; there was no distinct right centre, although such a term has been applied. All the most eminent men in the Church, with certain exceptions, had seats in the body. The superiority in discipline and in material belonged to the left, the liberal wing.

The best known name of the liberal side was that of Athanase Coquerel. He is equal to the inheritance of influence and of notoriety left him by his father. The sworn enemy of confessions of faith, it is to him that the declaration is attributed, that "if he was asked to sign a confession, that two and two make four, he would refuse." The unlimited liberty of thought was his constant theme in the Synod, which he advocated with fervor and brilliancy. His brother, Etienne, defends the same

side with the keen and ready pen of the polemic, but with less policy. He has long been at the head of the principal organ of the party. Two of their most distinguished preachers, MM. Niguier and Fontanès, of the consistories of Nismes and Havre, were present, with two of the most earnest men one could ever meet: M. Peraut who believes only in the moral miracle of the saintly perfection of Jesus, and M. Gaufrès.

The readiest and the most learned of their advocates probably was M. Colani, professor of theology in Strasburg before the war. As manager of the *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* he has played a considerable part in the "Emancipation" of French theology. He has the art of making science exceedingly charming, and his discussions of the most difficult points have all the vivacity of a pamphlet. He shows the same qualities in the professor's chair. Everything which could be invoked against the Christian idea of belief in order to Church membership, in the name of modern criticism, was said by Colani on the floor of the Synod, with a precision which rent every veil, and disclosed theological radicalism in its very depths.

Among the lay deputies were Clamageran, economist and politician of fiery address; Planchon, professor of pharmacy at Montpellier; and the defender of Belfort, Col. Denfert-Rochereau. The dean (senior member) of the party was pastor Paschoud, a friend to everything noble and humane, but the most resolute opponent which orthodoxy has had for sixty years.

Among the orthodox was pastor Bastie, of Bergerac, moderator of the Synod; large-minded, firm, not lacking in keenness, he was an excellent representative of the most enlightened of the orthodox. The right included several members of the National Assembly, as Gen. Chabord-Latour and Messrs. Metetal and Robert de Pourtales. From the opening of the Synod, universal regard was fixed upon that illustrious old man who bears so valiantly the weight of his eighty-four years; ever zealous, ever equal to himself, crowning his long life of honor and of fruitful labor with unreserved devotion to the cause of religion. Every one knows that it is chiefly to the labors of M. Guizot that the convocation of the Synod is due, and, though sentiments were widely divided on that measure, its author found nothing but affection and respect on its floor. He entered into the debates.

with all the energy of his nature and his convictions. The courtesy which he showed to his opponents was remarkable. No one was more earnest for the fullest latitude of debate than he. It was an impressive spectacle, to behold mounting the tribune of the Synod that veteran of our parliaments, that ancient governmental leader, one of the acknowledged masters of French eloquence. He preserved that mien of authority, that magisterial gesture, and that precise and picturesque language, which are so characteristic of his genius. His tone was most simple and natural even to the moment when he developed with amplitude his personal convictions upon the nature of religion, inseparable, in his view, from the idea of a revelation. It is evident that, in many respects, his views were rather remarkable for dignity and breadth than for penetration to the intimate reality of things. Nevertheless, his appearance at the Synod of 1872 left ineffaceable memories.

Prof. Bois, of the Seminary at Montauban, was one of the ablest orators of the right. He it was who in every grave crisis uttered the decisive word. M. Babut, whom we have seen opening the Synod with a sermon, frequently embarrassed his own party by the extreme delicacy which, in the stormiest debates, he showed to his adversaries. Of the laity, Messrs. Mettetal and Pernessin took an important part in the discussion. The debates, on the whole, were calm and dignified, although at times wearisome from the reappearance of the same subject under different forms. Some little of that tumult and sudden interruption which seems inseparable from a French deliberative body there was, but parliamentary rule was respected, and, above all, liberty of opinions was maintained. The decisive votes were, throughout, in the same proportion: 47 to 48 against 61 to 62. The complaints of ecclesiastical oppression, so habitual with the minority, for once were not heard; nevertheless they have their place in history. The principal Protestant Churches in other parts of the world,—America, Scotland, Switzerland,—were represented by deputations.

#### DEBATES AND DECISIONS.

The debates revolved around the single question: Can the Protestant Church remain in the condition of doctrinal anarchy which has so long been its fate? At the moment of its restora-

tion, should it solemnly decide in favor of the continuance of this state of things? Is it not bound, by the traditions of its own history, to substitute for it an ecclesiastical order accordant with the nature of the Christian Church, putting the universal beliefs of Christians at the base? The reply of the Evangelical party was well known; they had demanded the assembling of the Synod for the express purpose of putting an end to what, in their eyes, was most lamentable disorder. The opinion of the opposite party was equally decided. Should the question be decided in the orthodox sense, sooner or later schism must be the result. Without anathema or excommunication, a simple definition of faith would be sufficient to drive the heterogeneous elements asunder.

Such is the great question, at once theoretical and practical, which was debated in the Reformed Synod of 1872. It assumed three forms, all of which led to the same result. The first of these related to the competence of the Synod, the second to the Confession of Faith, the third to the obligatory character of that document.

It was on Monday, June 10, that the question of the competence of the Synod was reached. M. Jalabert opened the discussion by proposing an order of the day, which reduced the body to a mere organ of the wants, views and sentiments of the diverse parties in the Church, authorized and designed to perform a work of union and pacification. The entire left voted for this proposition. They would at any price bury the question of substance under a question of form. They did not feel the awkwardness of their position as advocates of the absolute liberty of negation which would deprive the Church of independence; for just in proportion as the Church declined to exercise its own authority as a representative body would that of the State be exerted over it. This attitude toward the State is not new. The radical party is condemned to be excessively political in ecclesiastical affairs, until the separation of Church and State takes place, which now for two years they have been demanding. The State is so much more accommodating than a Synod; it only concerns itself with external order. The local Churches might believe what they pleased, if dependent only on the state bureau of religion. All that would be changed the moment the Church regained its self-government.



Messrs. Jalabert, the lawyers Larnac and Penehinat, and Clamageran, of Paris, were the chief speakers in behalf of the movement to lessen the power of the Synod; their arguments were technical. They questioned the power of the body to assume such rights under the laws hitherto regulating ecclesiastical affairs in France. The Churches had not been properly consulted. By their calculations, no less than 160,000 Protestants were unrepresented. Let us be content to prepare the way for a true Synod, called under proper conditions.

They were effectively answered on both points. M. Guizot showed beyond question that the government designed to convoke a true deliberative and constituent Synod. It seemed remarkable, that just at that point, the illustrious orator felt called upon to celebrate the benefits of the union of Church and State. But the replies of Messrs. Babut and Bois put the matter upon its true and elevated grounds: "A strange spectacle, indeed," said the first. "The State demands of us, who we are; it offers us liberty, and prefers not to mix in our affairs; it recognizes the Church as sovereign in matters of religion; it returns to the Church, at its request, the institutions of its fathers; yet even the members of the Synod are heard saying to the State. Take care; do not give us too much liberty, lest we abuse it." M. Bois finished a speech which carried the vote with these words: "Our Synod, as a merely consultative body, would have less power than the humblest of our presbyterial councils." The order of the day was then adopted, to the effect that "the Synod, once more assembled according to the laws regulating the Reformed Church in France, its very convocation consecrated the liberties of the Church, which has only to use them, in order to reconstruct itself." This was voted June 12.

Next day began the second struggle. The question of legality and competence was eclipsed in that loftier one, of the faith of the Church. It was opened by M. Bois, proposing a solemn Declaration of the principles of faith and of liberty, which should be at the foundation of the Church as reconstructed. The Declaration began with these words: "With our fathers and martyrs in the Confession of Rochelle, with all the churches of the Reformation in their various symbols, we proclaim the supreme authority of the Holy Scriptures in matters of faith, and salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, the only Son of the

Father, who died for our sins, and rose for our justification." The proof that that faith has been maintained in the Church of France appears from its unaltered forms of worship. "The Reformed Church of France maintains and preserves the grand facts of Christianity represented in her sacraments, celebrated in her religious solemnities and expressed in her liturgies, notably in the confession of sins, the apostles' creed, and the liturgy of the Holy Supper."

Two counter projects were immediately offered; one from the extreme left, formulating nothing but unlimited liberty of opinion; the second, signed by the representatives of "the left centre," demanded the same thing in substance, but insisted besides upon the extraordinary character of the person of Christ, without otherwise hinting at the miraculous claims of the Gospel.

The question was thus stated in its broadest and most unequivocal form. No reserve was possible; certainly not after the utterance of M. Bois. "There is between us," said he, to the advocates of a purely philosophical gospel, "all the difference between two different religions." The debate was long and brilliant. The evangelical statement was assailed at every point. The orators of the left seemed to have had their particular parts assigned like the divisions of a well-conducted army of assault. One party had charge of the sentimental aspects of the case. They insisted earnestly upon keeping their place at the hearth of the family of Protestantism. This is no ideal Church, they said, distinct from the actual Church of to-day. In spite of all its divisions, it has a community of heroic memories, a high-toned and manly education not to be found elsewhere, and a glorious tradition of Christian liberality. Who could be blamed for the entrance within its limits of the great and sorrowful crisis of spirits which was the glory and the torment of our era? Who could make his boast of having escaped it? We have need of each other, both for ourselves and for acting upon our country. Isolation and impotence are not far apart. The Reformation, separating from Catholicism, has drawn up the bridge between those two grand divisions of Christianity, and it has not since been lowered. Let us seek union above the dogmas that divide, in a redoubling of piety, of zeal and of activity! We demand that

we be not proscribed from our religious country, whose boundaries cannot be defined even by general doctrinal lines.

Messrs. Vigié and Athanase Coquerel developed the same idea. "Have done with civil war," cried the latter speaker. "Let us not revive our internal dissensions while the Prussians are at the gates of our city. We have to fight atheism and superstition. Close up the ranks! Take the Church as it actually exists; one cannot question that our tendency has a large place in its bosom. Guard against a sterile dogmatism, which would mould the reality to its image, instead of taking it as it finds it." Of course M. de Coquerel treated us to his favorite theme, the rightfulness of an infinite variety of doctrines.

M. Colani criticised the proposed declaration skilfully and unmercifully. Taking each article separately, he showed that the milder orthodox of our day have scarcely any more right to that attribute than their opponents have. "You tie yourselves," said he, "to the doctrines of the Reformation; but none of you could carry that glorious and crushing burden. Those doctrines form a strong and logical system, an arch with the doctrine of absolute predestination for its keystone; what have you done with it, you advocates of free-will? You appeal to the supreme authority of the Scriptures, but you are in confusion as to its limits, for you deny the inspiration of the words. You do not even assert your cardinal dogma of the divinity of Christ in the strict sense of the Council of Nice. Your theories of expiation are not less wavering. The great supernatural facts which you oppose to us, as attested by the festivals of Christianity and by the Apostles' Creed, can be idealized, and cleared of the gross habiliments of the supernatural. Even the resurrection of Christ could receive that ideal interpretation which we already find in the Epistles of St. Paul." "We are not divided," said M. Fontanés, "except as to what became of the corpse of Jesus Christ." Both ended by declaring that an orthodoxy so uncertain and contradictory had no right to proscribe any tendency; and that it was of far more consequence to seek union upon the heights of religious feeling and of liberty.

The reply was as vigorous as the attack. The phantoms evoked by unbelief were speedily dissipated. To the charge of wishing to set up "the columns of Hercules" of the human intellect, it was answered that nothing was farther from their

intention. "We confess the faith of the Church, we do not create it," said Pastor De l'Hombres. "We would simply formulate precisely the fundamental conditions of a religious society." M. Bastie, the moderator, showed clearly that these conditions could be nothing but beliefs. "What!" said M. Guizot; "you would not establish a society of free trade without requiring adherence to the principle which it seeks to propagate; and you would preserve the Church upon other conditions! Impossible; reason itself, as well as faith, protests against it." Let it not be imagined that a sincere agreement can be based on those sentiments, reminiscences and aspirations to which it is proposed to reduce the tradition of the Reformation. It leads only to greater vagueness, greater uncertainty. Have we not seen a well known pastor refuse to explain to his consistory unsatisfactory language uttered in the pulpit, on pretence not merely that they, but that he himself, had no right to call himself to account for his thoughts?

Because the evangelical party of to-day have replaced the symbols of their fathers, by a simple and popular Confession of Faith, it is not fair to urge, with M. Colani, that they are barred from claiming their inheritance. Theological formulas vary without alteration of the substance of the belief. Much is said of religion as a feeling. Faith in Christ as a crucified and risen Redeemer reaches by its roots the depths of the Christian soul. "We laymen," exclaimed M. Pernessin, addressing the innovators, "are willing you should launch a new ship, provided you are not our pilots, and we are not constrained to be your passengers." The rights of the laity were effectively urged. The people have no remedy if a pastor is at liberty to preach what he pleases. The bugbear of schism has been brought into the discussion; but it is forgotten, in the effort to retain at any price the most heterogeneous elements, that one thrusts out of the Church all who cannot submit to such disorder. And what would there be novel in this Confession of Faith? Is it not contained already in the very liturgies which are read every Sunday by those who deny their doctrine? Is not Easter celebrated by the adversaries of the resurrection? If the declaration of the Synod should put an end to such inconsistency, where would be the harm? Vain efforts were made by the party of mediation to interpose in the discussion, and the declaration was finally

voted by 61 against 45. The second battle was gained by the evangelical party.

A third point remained. It was necessary to know whether the Confession was a mere banner displayed upon the building, or whether it should have an obligatory character. This would depend upon the details of the reorganization. A law assigning to the various presbyterial bodies their particular powers, was brought forward, and rapidly voted by the Synod. The Presbyterian form of government was unanimously declared to be that of the Reformed Church of France. Spite of lively resistance, the duty of guarding the doctrinal instruction given to the Churches was recognized, according to the ancient discipline, as belonging to the provincial Synod. The General Synod (Assembly) should consist of representatives from each district, (*circonscription*), at the rate of one for every six pastors. The Presbytery chooses representatives to the provincial Synod; the latter chooses delegates to the General Synod. The pastors are nominated by the Presbyteries, on condition of the approval of the Session. In case of conflict an appeal lies to the General Synod. It was voted, after lively debate, that it would no longer suffice to qualify one as an elector, to have been admitted to the Lord's Supper, and to declare himself an observer of the forms of the Church. He must also profess "his adherence to the truth as revealed in the Scriptures." Ruling Elders were required to subscribe to this formula; but not to the Confession of Faith which had just been adopted.

Over the question whether pastors should be required to subscribe to this Confession, the third battle was fought. The orthodox contented themselves with requiring such subscription from the new pastors only. The left complained that in cutting off their supplies, a direct blow was aimed at them. The young pastors would be tempted to hypocrisy or would become passive organs of a dead tradition. The liberals among the laity deplored the prospect of losing their proper spiritual guides in the theological crisis of the day. The third party, with M. Jalabert at their head, pretended that subscription to a creed was contrary to the spirit of Protestantism; the more so as that creed could be modified from Synod to Synod. It would be enough simply to forbid candidates attacking the creed. The orthodox repelled the idea that subscription is contrary to the true spirit

of the Reformation. The Churches must not be surrendered unconditionally to every bachelor of theology. We have grasped with heart and head the grand Christian doctrine, that the supernatural cannot be separated from redemption. It is to that alone that we are willing to open our pulpits. M. Delmas, always ready with an anecdote, told of a radical pastor who in answer to his question whether he would carry out to its extreme results his principle of unbounded liberty of pastoral teaching, had replied that he would not object to the dogma of the immaculate conception in a Protestant pulpit! There was an outcry of dissent from the left at this, which the orator, with great tact, seized upon as showing that, after all, they would admit some limit to the liberty of teaching; and if so, what remained except to fix it conformably to the faith of the Church? To the absurd declaration that subscription would make the young pastor a hypocrite, it was urged that the reciting of a liturgy in which he did not believe would much rather betray a lack of sincerity. One does not abjure the dignity of thought in openly accepting a creed which leaves such wide range for inquiry. The creed is in fact a safeguard of liberty. No one can require of the theologian anything more than adherence to the broad formula which has been presented for his acceptance.

The vote was reached July 5. All amendments were rejected and the proposition was adopted in its original form. From that day, the task of the Synod was ended. Other matters of less importance occupied it until the 11th, when it adjourned after being in session a month.

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These transactions reveal the existence of two opposing principles or rights in the bosom of the Reformed Church of France: the religious right, and the historical right. The religious right, maintained by the orthodox, is the only true notion of a Church, which cannot be a combination of contraries. The historical right is that of an opposing tendency, which has grown up in a State Church, which has no article in its contract of union, or concordat, stipulating clearly for the maintenance of a definite creed.

To claim, say the orthodox, that Christianity retains its true character when stripped of miracle, and when its founder is reckoned as no more than a Jewish philosopher, is as rational

as to pretend to be a Platonist, while rejecting the doctrine of ideas. Lavish encomiums of the Gospel are idle. Reduced to a mere book of philosophy, it is no longer itself. We are of the opinion of Ajax ; let us fight in the light and not in the darkness. Nothing is gained by equivocation. As to alterations in the creed, so long as Christianity is regarded as a supernatural intervention of divine free-will in the history of man, for accomplishing his redemption, its essence is preserved. The explanations of the fact may and should vary ; nothing is destroyed ; it would be strange to shut up religious thought in a circle of special theology, which is after all but a human essay at interpretation. On what ground does one deny to a Church the right of defining its doctrinal belief ? That would be to question the very conditions of its existence. From the beginning the Christian Church has never been founded on any other basis. Nothing is more liberal than a religious society which displays its creed as a flag, and offers it for the intelligent acceptance of all, without imposing it upon any. The most important and most independent Churches in the world, those of England and the United States, have no other mode of enlargement.

Let it not be forgotten that Protestantism confers no absolute character upon its symbols ; it does not assume the air of infallibility. It lays down conditions of order which are necessary to save any society from anarchy. The evangelical portion of the Synod of Paris has done nothing strange, therefore, in excluding from its basis of reorganization the anarchical theory which allows in the same pulpit the most flagrant contradictions on the very essence of the faith, and in refusing to cover, with the veil of a treacherous unity, two distinct and even opposite religions.

Yet it is to be remembered that in the situation given, the orthodox cannot apply their principles. The Reformed Church became a national establishment, in which the opposing tendency developed itself unmolested. It avails nothing to appeal to documents of the past. Neither party can put their hands upon the legal papers and say : "The house is mine, you must leave !" It was well to make the creed obligatory ; but the State cannot be asked to exclude those who do not submit, while invoking what we have called their historic right. Hence the orthodox have been constrained to reduce their programme considerably.

They have not ventured to require a satisfactory declaration from the electors; that which they proposed has already been interpreted in a very vague sense. More; they did not require of the elders subscription to the Confession which they imposed upon the pastor, in violation of the Protestant principle of the universal priesthood. They will not be able to overcome the resistance which is preparing, because they are unwilling to have recourse to the civil authority.

Accordingly they have never disguised their wish for an amicable separation; each party to retain its share of government support. This would be an equitable arrangement; the orthodox could scarcely wish the tie between Church and state to be perpetuated on other grounds. Yet it would be extremely difficult to carry it out, particularly in small places. How determine the exact portion of each? "How think the great unknown," said Lamartine in his essay, *Sur l'Etat, l'Eglise et l'Enseignement*, where he treats this identical problem: "Would you dare affirm before God that you could not be mistaken, and that your figures had fairly indicated the statistics of conscience?" Yet the grand difficulty was not there; it was in the resistance of the radical party. They did not wish separation at any price. It would reduce them to a dangerous isolation. It would, in fact, overthrow their great ecclesiastical principle of an indefinite variety of religious instruction. In practice it requires the coexistence of two opposing tendencies. In resisting schism they defend their own ground of existence (*sa raison d'etre*).

It is plain, the Reformed Church of France is disturbed by a contradiction not to be overcome in its present situation. This is the fate of all the State Churches, which have been reached by the stormy breath of the philosophical crisis of the times. They cannot exist except upon two very different conditions: either they must submit to an immutable *credo*, of which the State is the jealous guardian, or they must sleep the sleep of indifference. When once the religious and intellectual life has awaked, the opposing tendencies appear; the administrative enclosure becomes the arena of the hottest and the most perplexing conflicts, because the civil tie preserved a fictitious unity. It is a true torture of Mezentius (tying corpses face to face with living persons). When Churches reach this point, there is nothing for them but to separate from the State, not only as a matter of right



and justice, but for more serious reasons, drawn from the beliefs themselves. Suppose the Reformed Church places itself to-day, like its sisters in Scotland and America, outside of all State arrangements, the noise of the conflict ceases at once ; each tendency would organize for itself. None could then accuse the Evangelical party of any wrong to liberty by their Confession of faith, because it would not have authority for any but those who should have accepted it. The friends of a merely philosophical Christianity will rally their forces without giving offence to believers, who cannot hear, without pain, the denial of the resurrection of Christ in the pulpit of their Church. So obviously was this the conclusion to which the Synod's deliberations tended, that the wish for a separation of Church and State was formally expressed by the most eminent representatives of both tendencies. It was singularly softened and generalized in the final vote, which was nothing more than an invitation to the Churches to prepare for the moment when the grand principle shall be proclaimed for the whole country. The Protestants say to one another and especially to the Catholics : " You go first, we will follow." Beyond doubt, the religious party which takes the initiative in this noble temerity for the sake of true liberty and order in the Church, will gain at once the position of moral supremacy. We are not ignorant of the honorable scruples which detain some of the most conscientious. In any case destiny will have its way ; the logic of events will triumph over all compromises. The Synod of Paris, after having relieved the idea of the Christian Church of a mass of sophistical obscurity, has marked the end towards which it is moving, and the inextricable difficulties which it will meet in applying its own decisions, will hasten the day of complete emancipation.