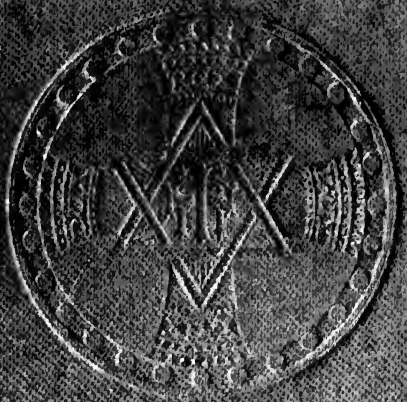

Handbooks of Catholic Faith and Practice

EDITED BY W. J. SPARROW SIMPSON, D.D.

RECENT FRENCH TENDENCIES

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FROM RENAN TO CLAUDEL

A STUDY IN FRENCH RELIGION

By

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RECENT FRENCH TENDENCIES

I

Fin de Siècle

THERE is no reason in the world why the end of a century should mean the end also of an intellectual era, but it is an undoubted fact that the two often coincide. The last years of a century seem to look back to what has gone before rather than forward to what is to come after. Certainly there was something very elderly about the close of the nineteenth century. It appeared to have exhausted itself with the magnificent achievements of its prime.

There was nothing of the vigour of youth about the eighties and the nineties. Like an aged *roué* they knew everything, and were tired and rather bored with everything, and could feel no fresh interest or raise no new enthusiasm except over trifles. There was more than a suspicion of decadence, a decadence which was most marked in literature. In England the century which had produced Dickens and Thackeray and Meredith ended in the *Yellow Book* and the cult of Oscar Wilde; while in France the boisterous young century which produced Balzac produced at the end, by way of Gustave Flaubert, Émile Zola and Anatole France. Religion also seemed in a bad way. Huxley and his friends were joyfully belabouring bishops and deans in the pages of the monthly reviews, fully confident that they were extinguishing the lights of heaven, and without the smallest suspicion that the ideas which seemed to them so incontrovertible

would in a few years be considered as antiquated as the crinoline and other Victorian oddities, and would only be living a precarious death in life in the columns of the *Freethinker* and the books of the ex-Franciscan, Mr. Joseph McCabe. What were then the convictions of the educated scientist in matters of religion are now simply the prejudices of the semi-educated artizan. But at the end of the nineteenth century these attacks on religion, combined with the menace of German criticism, seemed very serious. It was the same in France. There were many who thought that the Catholic religion had lived and that it only remained to give it a decent burial. The literary classes had almost entirely lost the belief in and abandoned the practice of religion. But the unbelief was something very different from the shouting hostility of Huxley. It sought to kill, not with a cudgel but with a smile. A kindly pity took the place of ferocity. There was an absence of seriousness of

which nobody could accuse Huxley, who loved to dance upon the bodies of his episcopal victims, like a scientific Dr. Hyde. In France at the beginning of the century we find a splendid rebel like Lamennais, at the end only a tawdry rebel like Renan. It is like the difference between a fallen archangel and a disrespectful Parisian *gamin*. But in those twenty years which closed the century the shadow of Renan lay over the intellectual life of the country and, unlike the shadow of Peter which cured, the shadow of Renan was like a blight on everything it touched: on religion, on patriotism, and on the belief in good.

i. The Shadow of Renan

Pauvre enfant, tes idées te mettront sur le pavé, Henriette Renan used often to say to her brother in his youth. Intelligence does not make a prophet, and in this matter Henriette was entirely wrong.

The ideas of Ernest Renan brought him name and fame and probably a reasonable competence. During the later years of his life he ruled as intellectual King of France, and his dominating influence lasted for several years after his death. It was not till the twentieth century had dawned that men began to examine the idol they had worshipped. They soon discovered the feet of clay. But that was after his death. During the last fifteen years of his life he reigned as serenely as Voltaire in his old age at Ferney or Dr. Johnson in the taverns of Fleet Street. What he said was law. His philosophy of life became the fashionable philosophy of life in the intellectual *coteries* of Paris, and some of those who have now emancipated themselves from his influence must look back to the time when they too were under the wand of the magician. For Renan was truly a magician. There was magic not only in his style but, seemingly, in his personality too. When one looks at his portrait

by Bonnot, and notices the shapeless and unwieldy body, the short arms, and the large face, partly the face of an archbishop and partly of a Long John Silver, it is evident that Renan was no ordinary man. A perfectly uncanny intelligence is visible in every line of the countenance, and as nothing appeals to the French like intelligence it is only natural that his influence, either for good or evil, was very great.

Unfortunately it was for evil. If one believes in the principles of dilettanteism, that nothing matters very much, and that the highest wisdom is to caress one's own thought in some quiet corner in peace without worrying over much about the world at large, it is evident that ideas like these are likely to be a solvent of both religion and patriotism, and perhaps of much else as well. And if one is convinced that nothing is of importance in the world except the things of intelligence it is quite clear that action will be discountenanced and that

men of action will be considered to belong to an inferior class. It was not a momentary feeling of irritation, nor a desire to snub the patriotism of his companions, that made Renan say when he was watching a French regiment in 1870 on its departure to the front: "In all those men there is not one capable of an act of virtue"; it was the expression of the most heartfelt conviction that perhaps Renan ever had. No one was ever more aristocratic in mind or more contemptuous of the vulgar herd who, after all, were doing the work of the world in the main field of action. It seems that the feeling was accentuated in his later years. It is perhaps worth while to notice in passing that such a philosophy is the philosophy of a defeated nation. If one is beaten in battle it is some consolation to hold that brute strength is a matter of no importance and proves nothing except its own strength, and that it is the things of the spirit alone that matter. This enables a man to

preserve his self-respect and to look down upon his conquerors as the agile-minded Greek looked down upon the Roman and the Roman of the decadence looked down upon his Barbarian master. Renan would not have agreed with Dr. Johnson that patriotism was the last refuge of a scoundrel ; he merely despised it as the refuge of the unintelligent. Consequently, in the years of his empire over men's minds, French patriotism notoriously lessened ; Alsace-Lorraine was forgotten ; the German Empire increased in arrogance and strength ; and Paul Déroulède ate his heart out in fruitless toil and undeserved neglect. It began to look as if France in a few years' time would disappear from the rank of a first-rate power, and, worse than all, it seemed as if many of the most influential people, especially among the professorial class, did not care. The way was open for the humiliation of Tangier.

No less disastrous was the influence of Renan on religion. It was not only that,

by the magic of his style and the clarity of his thought, he made the higher criticism popular and brought it to the notice of those who, if it had remained in German, would never have paid any attention to it, though he did that. He managed, as Brunetière has said, to disengage it from the pedantry with which it had been surrounded in Germany, and there was no one more capable of this task. Whatever hard names Renan may be called he can never, by any possibility, be accused of pedantry. But he did more than popularize the higher criticism. Religion has seen this done often since and has survived. Far more deadly was the tone he adopted with regard to religion. He did not violently attack it; he treated it often with a patronizing kindness. He said he had never known any but good priests. But Renan's sympathy was in itself an insult. The superior and self-satisfied manner in which he treated the person of our Lord and the story of "the

Galilean idyll " was far more exasperating than the bludgeonings of other foes of the Catholic faith. He thought that Christianity was in its last agony, and he gave the impression of a kindly doctor at the bedside of a dying man, insisting that the patient should be left alone and not worried, as being beyond all human power to help. But as the patient was quite sure he was not dying, and was not even sure that he was ill, there was something peculiarly irritating in the calm assumption of approaching extinction. Renan found it very difficult to believe that any intelligent person could really believe the Christian creeds. He liked, he said, to imagine St. Paul in his old age abandoned by his friends, a prey to scepticism and disillusion, with the scales a second time fallen from his eyes, sitting by some road-side in Spain and acknowledging that he had wasted his life. The truth is, that Renan was never really a Christian. He was a pagan in a cassock in his youth, and a pagan

in a frock-coat in his age ; that was the only difference. He liked to think of himself as having undergone a terrible crisis when he left Saint Sulpice, and no doubt the crisis was great, entailing an entire break with his past, but the pain he felt was not the pain of finding an empty heaven. It need not be supposed that Renan imagined that in a few years the Christian religion would disappear from the face of the earth. His contempt for the intelligence of the mass prepared him to expect that it might last for some time yet, but the Church of the future, as he conceived it, would consist of two classes of faithful : those, in the first place, who believed as in the middle ages ; the others sacrificing the letter but holding to the spirit. Renan could never away with the doctrine of an intellectual *élite*. It is always cropping up in his books. This was extraordinarily attractive to those who valued intelligence above everything, as was fashionable in the intellectual world of Paris at the end

of the last century. Renan was chiefly responsible for the destruction of Christian faith in a whole generation of young Frenchmen.

Intellectually Renan was always a Germanophile and owed almost everything to the Germans. When he was original, as in parts of his *Vie de Jésus*, it was rather objectionable and was entirely in the direction of frivolity. That certainly did not come from the humourless professors of Jéna or Berlin. We perhaps hardly realize the dominance of German thought, in the concluding fifteen years of the last century and the first few years of this, both in England and in France. Oxford and the Sorbonne were alike under the spell. Renan came under the influence far earlier, and he never emancipated himself from it. Germany was his spiritual home, and in his heart he worshipped the Germans with the same docility as Dr. Sanday.

Nor was the influence of Renan unfelt within the Catholic Church. During

these years of his unquestioned tyranny over thought there were clever young *abbés* reading his books and the books of the Germans and saying that something must be done if France was not to be lost to the Church. In the minds of a few of them it seemed that a new apologetic was needed, an apologetic acknowledging that there was a great deal of truth in the new teaching. It was the refusal to admit this, they thought, and the resolute walking in old ways, that lost Renan to the Church. Lacordaire and Dupanloup were out of date. This was the seed which flowered a few years later in the Modernist movement.

ii. Hippolyte Taine

That the generation which grew up to manhood in the twenty years which closes the nineteenth century grew up almost entirely destitute of religion was due not only to Renan. Taine likewise had his share in the dechristianizing

process. But his influence was very different from that of Renan. For one thing, he was intensely serious. The light-hearted dilettanteism of Renan had no attraction for him, and where Renan waved aside religion with a smile Taine dismissed it with an explanation. Taine was ready to explain anything by the help of his theory of the race, the *milieu*, and the moment, whether it was the genius of a Shakespeare or the sanctity of a Saint Teresa; and those who love a theory (and what Frenchman does not?) were naturally fascinated by such an attractive one as this. Besides Taine was the ideal scholar. He lived laborious days for the sake of his work. The usual pleasures and delights of youth he put away and would not touch. He was perfectly happy in the company of his books, as many passages in his letters testify. He reminds us of the great scholars of the Renaissance rather than the scholars of the nineteenth century. He served know-

ledge with a true devotion ; the devotion of a lover to his mistress or of a worshipper to his god, and it was this single-mindedness as much as his brilliant genius and wide range of learning that gave him his influence over the intellectuals of his country. There was also a curious aloofness about Taine. He regarded the world from the point of view of a curious Martian, and in the presence of the great masterpieces of human genius or devotion he was like a medical student dissecting a corpse. It was all purely scientific, and Taine discussed the affairs and the productions of man with the same interest and the same lack of passion with which M. J. H. Fabre described the loves and quarrels of the insects.

Naturally such a mind would have little sympathy with religion, and probably there has seldom been a man with less. For him the unseen world did not exist. He has told us how in his boyhood he abandoned all belief in Christianity,

and how the loss did not cause him the slightest pang. We can easily believe it. It is not to minds like his that religion appeals. It appeals to those who have a sense of the mystery of things and who understand something of the great world around them from experience, who have known danger and remorse and the agony of unsatisfied desire; in a word, to those who know something at first hand of what life really is. It appeals far less to quiet men in studies whose knowledge is gained almost entirely not from the world of life but from the world of books. For these, however, there often comes an awakening, and such an awakening came to Taine. The Commune of 1871, it seems, changed his whole outlook, and his intellectual loyalty drove him to express his new views in his series of books upon the Revolution. This gave great offence to many people; he was looked upon by some as a renegade to the causes he had hitherto supported,

but if he lost disciples in one camp he probably gained them in another. Even his life-long enemies were compelled to acknowledge his sincerity and to treat him with respect, and in certain strongly Catholic quarters he was treated before his death with something very like sympathy. It was entirely different with Renan. The Church thought it knew better and often did not hesitate to say so, while Renan retaliated by gently excusing their prejudices on the ground of invincible ignorance.

Still, though Taine to the end of his life was never within leagues of returning to the Catholic fold, his hostility to religion was so far lessened as to make him show a certain amount of sympathy with protestantism. And there was all the difference in the world between his influence and that of Renan. The influence of Renan produced a type of mind which was entirely incompatible with any Christian belief, for it was the mind of the intellectual mandarin thank-

ing the Positivist God that he was not even as the poor Catholic. The influence of Taine, on the contrary, favoured a type of mind that was disposed to Christianity because it insisted on the need of seriousness and sincerity and avoidance of prejudice. It is even possible to see in Taine, as in Nietzsche, a good Christian gone wrong and to argue that he had, despite himself, the *anima naturaliter christiana*. Some may even think that, if he had been born thirty-five years later, there would have been a more *éclatant* conversion than that of Brunetière ; but this is hardly likely. Taine appears to have been born with an atrophied religious instinct. Fortunately for his happiness he never even suspected his defect and, like the blind men in Mr. H. G. Wells's story, despised those who were better endowed. He ought to have been a good Catholic, but no one was ever further away from the Church.

iii. Signs of Spring

When Renan died in 1892 and Taine in 1893 nothing seemed more unlikely than a Christian, let alone a Catholic, *renaissance*. The tide seemed to have set strongly against the Church all over Western Europe. The scientific movement associated chiefly with the name of Darwin, and the biblical critical movement, whose chief home was in Germany, both seemed to be in the main hostile to revealed religion. It is true that there were some whose faith was stronger, and who had studied both these subjects, and who thought that they might be baptized so as to become helps and not hindrances to faith, but in practice this was not generally found to be the case. The majority of students, if they did not abandon all belief in religion, at any rate became lukewarm supporters and anticipated considerable changes in the Catholic creeds. Consequently the Church no longer confronted

the world with the same confidence and majestic port as of old. She was inclined to become apologetic and retiring, like a timid classical scholar in the company of a number of noisy and rather bumptious scientific men. And what Renan and Taine began among the educated, the anti-clerical movement completed among the uneducated. Anti-clericalism, from the days of Molière, has always been popular in France among those of irreligious tendency, for if your own morals are bad it is delightful to be able to argue that those of your neighbour are worse because he is a hypocrite as well. In the later years of the nineteenth century anti-clericalism seemed dominant in France. Through great districts of the country hardly anyone went to mass ; the local government almost everywhere was in the hands of the anti-clericals, and local, and often national, politics were dictated in secret sessions of the Masonic lodges. M. Homais was the real ruler of France,

and the Army and the Church shared in an unpopularity that drew them closer together. They bowed low before the anti-clerical blast and hoped for better times in the future when France should come to herself again and become once more the France of St. Louis and Jeanne d'Arc.

But Renan and Taine were hardly in their graves before there began to appear signs of a change. And, curiously enough, these signs began to appear in the educated classes ; among those, in fact, whom an unprejudiced observer would probably have described as lost for ever to the Catholic faith. Several startling conversions took place. It they did not show which way the wind was blowing, at any rate they indicated a possible change of wind. Two of the most remarkable were those of Joris Karl Huysmans and Ferdinand Brunetière.

Huysmans was a novelist who had graduated in the school of Zola and had attained considerable fame as a stylist.

He had tasted life in many ways and had even dabbled in diabolism. He seemed the most unlikely man in the world to become a Christian, for he had no Christian experience in his boyhood to fall back upon. He was brought up, he has told us, at a *lycée*, in entire indifference to all religion. Thus his conversion cannot be explained by the rising to the surface of ideas long hidden in the depths of the subconsciousness and only awaiting a favourable opportunity to assert themselves. It was very different, therefore, from the return of François Coppée to the practice of religion, for, in that case it was obvious that a severe and dangerous illness awakened what was merely dormant in the soul. With Huysmans, apparently, there were no such dormant ideas. His own explanation would certainly have been that it was his intense appreciation of the medieval art and music of the Church which forced him to believe that the religion which produced that art and that music

was true. In his novel, *En Route*, under the thin disguise of Durtal, he has practically described how belief came to him, and his next book, *La Cathédrale*, is simply a long pæan of praise of Chartres Cathedral and medieval art. No doubt there are many roads to God, and if some, like Wordsworth, are led by their love of nature, there is no reason why others should not be led by their love of art. But perhaps there was more behind which Huysmans himself did not guess at. It is not fantastic to see in him an example of the natural hunger of the soul for God. He wandered long in a far country, but he was oppressed by the boredom and flat unprofitableness of it all, and it is plain that sin had induced in him a deep disgust. There were some who sneered at his conversion as merely that of a decadent literary man in search of a new sensation, but this is not fair. His religion became everything to him, and in the last days of his life, when he was slowly dying of

a terrible and painful malady, it gave him both the strength and the consolation which he needed. No doubt there was little that was intellectual about the religion of Huysmans, but his conversion is at least evidence of the inability of the negations of atheism or agnosticism to satisfy the needs of the soul and is, consequently, a true sign of the coming spring.

If it was possible to depreciate the importance of the conversion of Huysmans, no such insinuation could be made in the case of Brunetière. Ferdinand Brunetière held an unique position in the intellectual world of Paris. Almost the foremost of French men of letters; the resolute opponent of the naturalist school; an opponent, no less, of dilettanteism in all its forms, and the director of the famous *Revue des Deux Mondes*, he had long been known as a fearless critic and a doughty controversialist. Some religion was necessary for him, and he tried for a time to find satisfaction in

Positivism. But this would not do. He could not stay where he was, and the devotees of natural science were one day scandalized to find Brunetière shouting from the house-tops that science was bankrupt. And when Brunetière shouted the world had to listen. He could make out a very good case for himself too. Science had unquestionably made all sorts of promises concerning the golden age that the reign of science would bring in, and, as unquestionably, these promises had not been fulfilled. Perhaps it was not an argument that proved anything very much except that men of science could be bad prophets. But there is authority for the statement that we should not be afraid of bad prophets, and, after Brunetière, men ceased to be afraid of the men of science. With one blow he had destroyed much of their prestige, and devout Christians who would never have dared themselves to speak irreverently of the scientists, breathed again as when a tyranny is

overthrown. Nor was this all. News presently came to Paris that Brunetière was in Rome and had been received by Pope Leo XIII, and before the anti-clericals had recovered from the shock, they heard that he had submitted to the Church and had become a Catholic. It looked as if they would have to revise their belief that Catholicism was a faith which could be "held by no sane man," for while it was quite possible to impugn M. Brunetière's critical judgment it was quite impossible to question either his sanity or his intellectual ability.

It was apparently the social side of Christianity that appealed to Brunetière. The Catholic religion is not only a method of individual salvation, it is also a great social and political power in the world. It is of course possible to differ, and to differ honestly, in opinion with regard to the beneficence of this power. There are some who believe that it has been exercised for

evil and not for good, and that the Church has been the great enemy of all human progress and enlightenment, and however much we may wish to feel the bumps of the gentlemen who believe this, their hostility is a thing to be reckoned with. In France especially their numbers are not small, and a good political machine will atone for many intellectual shortcomings. But there are others who believe that it is only the power of religion and the Church that keeps human society together, and that if the Church is destroyed or greatly weakened the future of European civilization is dark. The disintegrating forces would be too strong. Certainly the history of France, especially the recent history, can be quoted in favour of this idea. The growth of irreligion and anti-clericalism has coincided with a decline in national power and with the growth of anti-national forces. Brunetière became strongly convinced that the *rôle* played by the Catholic religion in the

national life was indispensable, and this was perhaps the chief cause of his conversion. He became a tower of strength to the Church and was indefatigable in writing and speaking on her behalf. His conversion and his advocacy were sources of enormous support to her cause. If there were some who thought that a new convert might be a little more modest and a little less ready to lay down the law and tell others their duty, they might have remembered that Brunetière was a dogmatist by nature, and that he could no more help lecturing than he could help breathing. He knew he had something to say and he meant to say it. But there were always some who suspected his orthodoxy up to the day of his death.

Before the end of the nineteenth century, then, there were signs that the Catholic religion was beginning to reassert its sway over the minds of the highly educated. But the majority still held aloof. In the opinion of a good

many it seemed that the chief cause of this was the intransigence of the Church and the attitude she had taken up with regard to the new scientific and historical knowledge. They hoped that a reconciliation between the Church and modern learning was not impossible. So was born the Modernist movement.

II

Modernism

THE Modernist movement, while it lasted, commanded the loyalty and the heartfelt allegiance of some of the best brains of the French clergy and of a handful of the laity. It never succeeded in making much impression upon the Church as a whole, which went on its way serenely indifferent to the new ideas. In one sense there was no movement at all, for the Modernists were not organized and had no common body of beliefs. Some approached the matter from the historical, some from the philosophical point of view, and there was no guarantee that the conclusions each reached would be in agreement with the conclusions of the rest. The

one point all had in common was the feeling that something was wrong; that the Church was out of touch with modern learning, and that the solution was not to be found in the direction of Liberal Protestantism. The real point of interest in the movement was this: Was it the last dying quiver of the theological thought of the nineteenth century, or the first vigorous kick of the twentieth? For some time this was in doubt, and there were some who thought the Modernists were men born before their time, and some who thought they were men who were born after. Another question was: What was the relation of the movement to German thought? Here again there was disagreement, for while there were some who held that the movement was really hatched in Germany and consequently entirely dependent upon the Germans for its intellectual artillery, there were others who claimed that it meant the emancipation of criticism from Teutonic domination. These ques-

tions can be answered now in the light of the later history of the movement, but at the time they were not so easy to answer.

i. The Origins of Modernism

The origins of Modernism may be sought far back in the history of the Church if the movement is regarded simply as one chapter in the long attempt of Liberal Catholicism to vindicate its right to at least a place in the Church. If this view is taken one precursor will undoubtedly be Erasmus, and another, as undoubtedly, Richard Simon, the Oratorian, who lived in the last half of the seventeenth century, who was the father of Old Testament criticism, and whose name has probably been preserved mainly owing to his controversies with Bossuet. It is possible that Simon's character was not equal to his ability (even his friends, it is said, had the poorest opinion of him) but theological controversy was merciless in those days, and,

maybe, Simon was not so black as he was painted. Theologians, he said himself, never bit anybody *sans emporter la pièce*. Things are different nowadays; theological opponents are on the whole civil, and theological quarrels are not to be compared, for zest of battle, with antiquarian. Whatever Simon's character he was the pioneer of a new line of study. His *Histoire critique* was an effort at the reconstruction of the literary history of the Jewish people; he insisted on the composite character of the Pentateuch; denied the Mosaic authorship; (though he seems to have thought it may have been written under the direction of Moses) and anticipated many of the critical conclusions of a later day. His name has been unfairly neglected, for he, more than anyone else, was the parent of the higher criticism. In this, as in his long battle with the ecclesiastical authorities, he too was a precursor of the Modernists. And they were never slow to acknowledge their debt to him.

But the immediate parent of the movement was Renan. It was his influence that awoke some Catholics to the need of a new apologetic, for, after his works, it seemed to them that it would be impossible for men ever to be again satisfied with the old. Renan's fatal dilettante influence on the youth of France has been already mentioned, so it is only fair to mention that he had another influence over some, namely, that of the devoted scholar, preoccupied with the search for truth. Men, after reading his books, felt that a new world in the realm of learning was opening before them, and that they could never look on things in the same way again. And at the same time there came a further thought. Was it necessary for an honest man, as Renan thought it was, to leave the Church directly he became convinced of the truth of the new ideas? Might not Renan, if he had lived a generation later, have been saved to the Church? Was it not rather the anti-

quated theology and philosophy of his teachers that drove him out, and not any real incompatibility or contradiction between the old faith and the new learning. These and similar ideas were in the air as the nineteenth century drew to its close, and the scheme of a new apologetic which would provide a new defence for the Catholic religion without falling out with what seemed the tolerably certain conclusions of modern science began to take shape in some minds. It looked indeed like a forlorn hope. Catholics on the whole did not want it; Protestants asserted its impossibility, and free-thinkers smiled. But now that the movement has ended in ruin and disaster it is only fair to remember the disinterested spirit, the noble aims, and the single-minded enthusiasm for truth with which it started.

The cradle of the movement was the *Institut catholique* of Paris, of which in 1880 Mgr. d'Hulst became rector. The *Institut catholique* was a small Catholic

university to which Catholics might go and be prepared for their examinations without imperilling their faith in the State institutions. Mgr. d'Hulst was a good priest of considerable learning, widely read, sympathetic to new ideas, and very desirous of making the Institute over which he ruled of real service to the Church of France. He was very anxious not to appear obscurantist, but he could be counted upon never to rebel against ecclesiastical authority. He perhaps hardly understood the difficulties of his task, and it is almost certain that he underrated the difficulties he would have to face. At his doors was the famous seminary of St. Sulpice, the students of which formed no inconsiderable part of the pupils of the *Institut*. This gave the superior-general of St. Sulpice a certain power of which M. Icard, the then holder of that position, was not slow to take advantage. By merely withdrawing his students from any lectures which he considered dangerous in tendency he

could at once throw a cloud of suspicion over the orthodoxy of the teaching given at the *Institut*. This power he exercised first in the case of the abbé Duchesne. M. Duchesne, as all the world now knows, is a historian of the first rank, with a Gallic gift of irony, and a taste for iconoclasm. This taste he satisfied by gaily destroying the legends of the apostolic origin of the Church of France. M. Icard was really shocked. It was bad enough if it was done with decent regret; it was deplorable if it was done in the spirit of a boy at a cocoa-nut shy. And there was worse behind, for M. Duchesne's lectures on the ante-Nicæan Church seemed to hint pretty plainly that all the Fathers were not orthodox on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. But the storm passed over and Mgr. d'Hulst refused to throw Duchesne to the wolves.

A more serious controversy broke out immediately afterwards; more serious because it was connected, not with

ecclesiastical history, but with the history of the Bible. It seemed that Mgr. d'Hulst was willing to go some lengths in the direction of the higher criticism. When Renan died, in 1892, he seized the opportunity to publish a long article on his life and career in the *Correspondant,* suggesting that perhaps the teaching he had received at St. Sulpice had helped him to lose his faith, and asking, practically, what would have happened if the less timid teaching of the *Institut catholique* had been available in those days. One can imagine the consternation of M. Icard, wounded not only in his own beliefs but in the insinuation against the seminary of which he was the head. It is probable, however, that he recognized the real position of affairs. Mgr. d'Hulst had fallen under the influence of a young professor whom he had brought up from the country, a former student at the *Institut,* the Abbé Alfred Loisy. The real danger came, not from Mgr. d'Hulst,but from M. Loisy.

ii. L'Abbé Loisy

Alfred Loisy was born in 1859 in the region of the Marne in Eastern France. He came of a family of small *cultivateurs*, and had it not been for his delicate health and fragile figure there is every probability that he would have lived and died as a small farmer in the Champagne. He had no other wishes for himself, and all his life he has been a man of singularly small ambitions. His disabilities for a country life seemed to mark him out for a career in the Church; he followed this as the line of least resistance, and presently found himself, after a very short experience of pastoral work, in the position of lecturer at the *Institut catholique* of Paris. Long before this his remarkable ability had been discovered by his masters, who looked upon him as one of the rising hopes among the younger clergy. It seemed possible that high preferment in the Church awaited him. But Loisy, if he

could not be a farmer, was determined to be a *savant*. He devoted himself particularly to the study of Oriental languages, and was advised by his teachers to attend the lectures of Renan at the *Collège de France*. Priests were not infrequent members of the audience, and Loisy has told us the story of a tall *abbé*, horrified at the lecturer's suggestion that Jeremiah might have had something to do with the composition of Deuteronomy, who dashed out of the room and banged the door. Loisy distinguished himself by no such display of ecclesiastical zeal; he sat quietly in his corner and attended to what the professor said. Already an idea was taking possession of his mind. *Mon ambition était de vaincre un jour Renan par ses propres armes, par la critique dont je m'instruisais à son école*, he wrote later, commenting on these days; but in the event, alas! it was Renan who won.

From the beginning Loisy appears to have been an advanced critic, and this

soon brought him into hot water with the authorities. His early publications were regarded with grave suspicion ; M. Icard again gave trouble, and poor Mgr. d'Hulst was worried nearly to death. He seems to have been mistaken in his estimate of Loisy's character, thinking him peaceable and pliable, whereas in reality the frail body of the little *abbé* concealed a determination of iron. And Mgr. d'Hulst little knew the travail that was going on in Loisy's mind, for Loisy was not a man of easy confidences. *Ni M. Duchesne, ni personne autre de mes amis ou relations n'a connu le drame qui se passait dans ma conscience. J'ai pu discuter avec tel ou tel les problèmes de critique biblique ou de théologie : nul ne savait ce que j'en pensais au plus intime de moi-même.* Mgr. d'Hulst, as has been said, was not an obscurantist, but all he desired at the present was to make a *reconnaissance* in force, ready to retreat at once if he found the opposition strong, and he was horrified to discover that

Loisy intended to give battle and would not withdraw a yard. He was torn in two. On the one hand the reputation for orthodoxy of his beloved *Institut* was at stake ; on the other, he liked Loisy and desired to save him, and, probably, in the main, believed that Loisy was right. But Mgr. d'Hulst was one of those men who, if conscience is not involved, will always yield if enough pressure is brought to bear, and in the end Loisy was sacrificed. He seems to have resented very bitterly this action of his superior, and certainly it was not easy to defend. It bore the unheroic appearance of the sacrifice of another in order to save his own position. Loisy left the *Institut catholique* and spent the next few years as chaplain of a girls' school kept by Dominican nuns at Neuilly.

iii. L'Évangile et L'Église

It was dangerous to turn the thoughts of Loisy to the subject of Catholic dogma, and especially to get him to teach it. But this is what Cardinal Richard did. At Neuilly part of his duties was to give instruction in doctrine, and he was soon preoccupied with the subject. Religion appeared to him more and more as the most important force in the world; the Catholic Church had played a great and commanding part in the past and might do so again, but the usual Catholic teaching concerning our Lord, the Church, and the sacraments, seemed impossible. He no longer believed literally in a single article of the Creed except that one which said that Jesus Christ was "crucified under Pontius Pilate." It was not long after this that Harnack's famous book on the essence of Christianity was published in Berlin. It gave an opportunity to Loisy to speak his mind.

Harnack's position was comparatively

simple. He asserted that the important thing for the Christianity of to-day was to get back to the teaching of Jesus, and he set out to discover what the teaching of Jesus really was. A study of the Gospels convinced him that this was simply the teaching of the Fatherhood of God. He argued therefore that everything else (Christology, the doctrine of the Church, the sacraments) was accretion and must be abandoned. Luther had only half done his work ; it remained for the Germans of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to complete it, and to purge Christianity from all its patristic and medieval accretions. The book attracted much attention, not in Germany alone but throughout Europe, and the fire of controversy was soon well alight.

Loisy determined to answer Harnack's book. But his answer would be very different from the answer of most Catholic controversialists who contented themselves with denying Harnack's facts. Loisy admitted many of his facts but

denied his inferences. He was not, however, willing to admit all his facts; for Harnack's theory that our Lord's teaching was solely the proclamation of the Fatherhood of God seemed to him mistaken. His reading of the Gospels had led him to believe that the burden of our Lord's teaching was not the Fatherhood of God but the Kingdom of God. Loisy was already convinced of the truth of what is now called the eschatological theory of the Gospels, a theory first mooted by Johannes Weiss and popularized later by Albert Schweitzer. This was his first grief against Harnack; his second was against Harnack's inferences. He would not allow that because a doctrine was not found in the Gospels and was not known by the first generation of Christians that therefore it must be thrown overboard. Harnack said: These things were not part of the Christian Creed in the earliest ages, therefore they are false and must go; Loisy said: It is true that they are not

to be found there, but it does not follow that they are not a true development. It was in the direction of a radical theory of development that he thought he might find light.

Of course the theory of development is not new, though it has never been looked upon by the authorities at Rome with a favourable eye. The best known of all such theories is that of Newman, and there can be little doubt that it was the study of Newman which suggested the idea to Loisy. The commonest theory of development is that which regards all doctrine as implicit, though not necessarily explicit, from the beginning. The only development that takes place is the becoming explicit, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, of what was previously implicit. The faith, then, as time went on, would grow, but there would never be any abandonment of any doctrine; everything would become fuller and rather more complicated; that was all. Loisy's theory was different from this,

as became evident when in 1913 he gave *L'Évangile et L'Église* to an astonished Church. The Gospel, according to him, was bound to take an outward form if it was to live, and the outward form it took was the Church. The truths of the Gospel are preserved through the ages by taking a symbolical form, and these symbolical forms may change. The symbols that were best adapted to one century might not be equally adapted for another, and new symbols might have to be discovered if the truth of the Gospel was to be preserved. The truth would always remain the same, but the symbols would change. The Church must always be prepared to restate her creeds. So, far from it being cause of valid objection against the Church because she has changed and is very different from the Church of the Upper Room, or the Church of the Catacombs, these differences are really the sign of life. Life implies development and implies change.

It may be imagined the consternation

which this book caused. While to a few it appeared as a ray of light in a dark room, by most it was intensely disliked. What would a priest moulded in the traditional teaching of his diocesan seminary have thought of the following ?

On peut dire que Jésus, au cours de son ministère, n'a ni prescrit à ses apôtres ni pratiqué lui-même aucun règlement de culte extérieur qui aurait caractérisé l'Évangile comme religion. Jésus n'a pas plus réglé d'avance le culte chrétien qu'il n'a réglé formellement la constitution et les dogmes de l'Église.

Or what would he say when he was told that none of the sacraments, not even the Eucharist, were instituted by our Lord Himself ; or when he began to suspect the many things which the book seemed to imply but did not expressly state ?

Nor was the argument likely to be more welcome to Protestants. They would not like to be told that *l'esprit chrétien a vivifié et vivifie encore des*

pratiques mesquines en apparence et qui peuvent devenir aisément superstiteuses, or to find a new defence for the cult of Mary and the Saints. It was exceedingly annoying just when they were rejoicing in the blows that Harnack had delivered against their old enemy, to find his weapons being calmly turned upon themselves.

His book was also highly unwelcome to the moderate critics. They were persuaded that certain questions were, if not entirely closed, at any rate practically decided in their favour. They had become accustomed to tell their pupils that the higher criticism had sown its wild oats, and that the attack it had made on certain positions was now finally repelled. The authenticity of the Fourth Gospel, for example, or the character of St. Mark as an original authority, were, they imagined, now finally decided in favour of the orthodox view. It was very annoying to find that everything was again questioned,

and that the new criticism was even more revolutionary than the old. Naturally they did not like it. They were at ease in their comfortable house when Loisy, like a tiresome boy, sent a stone crashing through the window.

Nor was there much sympathy to be found abroad. The Germans were not particularly pleased at his invasion of their territory, nor with his free criticism of German Protestant ideas. They expected foreigners to bring incense and Loisy came with a sword. At the same time English critics, not expecting anything new from outside Germany, were bewildered at first. That they had anything to learn from a Frenchman and a Roman Catholic was a strange idea and one not assimilated at once. It is true that Auguste Sabatier had written a book on the religions of authority and the religion of the spirit which adopted very much the same position as Harnack and was undoubtedly a work that counted, but he was not well known in

England and probably a fair number of English scholars would have had some difficulty in distinguishing between him and his cousin Paul.

There were some, it is true, both in France and abroad who welcomed *L'Évangile et L'Église* on its appearance like a new gospel, and thought they saw a vision of a new and more powerful Catholicism released from the trammels of her past, reconciled with science, and going forth to new conquests. But they were not many in number, and that these ideas were perilous guests in the mind the history of the next few years was to show.

iv. Per ignem et aquam

It is true that the Modernists (to give them now the name which they were given later) were few in number, but what they lacked in quantity they made up in quality. Among them were some of the best brains of the Catholic Church,

and they carried into the battle the learning of the scholar coupled with the enthusiasm of the missionary: a formidable combination which carried dismay into many episcopal palaces; the more particularly because the strength of the movement was not yet known and it was suspected that there were sympathisers in every seminary. It must again be mentioned, however, that, at this time at any rate, there was no common body of opinions held by Modernists. They were agreed on certain principles, that was all. Many, perhaps most, of them did not agree with the extreme critical conclusions reached by Loisy, and Loisy himself seems to have had scant sympathy with the philosophers of the movement.

Thus in England the Modernist aims attracted the sympathy and enlisted the support of Baron Frederick von Hügel, that type of the ideal student, the authority on mysticism, a brilliant linguist and a scholar of perhaps wider and

more varied attainments than anyone else in this country, and, at the same time, through evil report and good report, a devoted son of the Catholic Church. Others might lose faith and patience, or be betrayed into temper and irritability, but von Hügel never. Then there was George Tyrrell, the Jesuit, an impulsive Irishman, a gifted writer, and a man of attained reputation as a spiritual guide, who was at this time finding his way to a position more and more incompatible with the received teaching of the Church. In Italy there was Romolo Murri, whose interests were, however, more social than intellectual, and the clever group of young laymen who were associated in the foundation of that brilliant and short-lived review, *Il Rinnovamento*, together with the novelist, Antonio Fogazzaro. Those who wish to understand the ideals of the Italian movement cannot be better advised than to read his novel, *Il Santo*. In France there was, in addition to the critical

school of Loisy, the philosophical school associated with the names of Maurice Blondel, of Laberthonnière, and of Le Roy; a school laying great stress on the value of experience, and, though not pragmatist, not uninfluenced by the pragmatism of William James and Schiller. Le Roy, it is true, was mainly indebted to Bergson, and his book to explain what dogma really is was a gallant attempt to enlist the philosophy of Bergson into the service of the Church. During these years the brilliantly-conducted periodical, *Demain*, from its home at Lyons, did its best to bring the knowledge of the new theories to a wider circle, an object which was more successfully achieved by the extremely clever but malicious books of the Abbé Houtin on the relations between scientific knowledge and theology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. And during all this period M. Paul Sabatier was busy as a kind of *commis-voyageur* of the new ideas in foreign countries and

bringing their scattered sympathisers, Catholic, Protestant, and free-thinking, into relations with one another.

But the chief interest of Modernism centred in France and in Loisy, and Loisy by this time was in mood of battle. He was a dangerous opponent. He never lost his temper or said anything he was sorry for later, and he never forgot to be ironical. He followed up the publication of *L'Évangile et L'Église* with an additional and explanatory volume, retracting nothing and calculated to increase the anxiety of the bishops, *Autour d'un petit livre*, together with a huge volume on the Fourth Gospel, setting forth his views on its allegorical and non-historical character. By this time he had probably made up his mind regarding the inevitable end of his sacerdotal career, though he would do nothing, beyond the publication of his books, to precipitate it. He had now left Paris, and after a short time at Bellevue, in the diocese of Versailles,

had retired to the country (his health being more than indifferent), and was living in seclusion at Garnay, a village a few miles from Dreux.

But Rome also was in the mood of battle. With the accession of Pius X to the see of Peter a new spirit reigned at the Vatican. And this spirit was in entire accord with the general temper of the Church. While Father Billot at Rome was utilizing his majestic learning to destroy the teaching of the Modernists, the French bishops, awakened to a sense of the peril threatening the Church, were issuing charge after charge against the new heresy. It was perhaps unfortunate for the Church that the bishop who was mostly brought into relation with M. Loisy was Cardinal Richard, the Archbishop of Paris. Loisy has described him as a man of another age, *la langue qu'il parlait ne me disait rien, et il n'entendait pas celle dont j'avais appris à me servir.* He was the last man in the world to understand the difficulties

or the mentality of a man like Loisy. He was shocked at the very idea of independent thought. *Nourrir une pensée propre, qui ne s'accordait pas avec la pensée de l'Église, était le fait d'un esprit orgueilleux, livré à Satan.* One is inclined to wonder sometimes, as the early Modernists wondered about Renan, whether the later history of Loisy might not have been different if the see of Paris in those critical years had been occupied by a more enlightened and sympathetic prelate. But it is not likely.

By the time that Loisy had retired to Garnay the matter was practically out of the hands of the bishops. Rome was really alarmed and was contemplating the severest measures against the Modernists. The danger was probably exaggerated, but there was a spirit of mutiny abroad that justified uneasiness. Some men were talking rebellion, and there was obviously a great deal of discontent below the surface which showed itself in a number of anonymous publications. No Govern-

ment could afford to neglect these symptoms, and the Church of Rome has always had a short way with revolutionaries. Loisy barely escaped excommunication after the publication of *L'Évangile et L'Église* and *Autour d'un petit livre*, but it was evident that it would not be long delayed unless he were willing to retract his errors and condemn himself to future silence. It is not even certain if silence would have saved him, and that he would not have been expected, as the price of peace, to burn what he had adored and adore what he had burned. And Loisy was the last man in the world to retract, unless it were proved to him that he was wrong. The method of condemnation left him unconvinced. During the four years from 1904 to 1908 he was, in his own phrase, *en marge de l'Église*. He still wore the *soutane* and, until the autumn of 1906, when he failed to obtain a renewal of the permission, continued to say mass privately in his own room. But he regarded himself as not only on the extreme edge

of the Church but as on the extreme edge of the Christian religion. He did not set himself up against the Church in matters which he considered the Church had the right to decide. He could only be a Christian on certain terms, and if the Church refused to have him on those terms he would not rebel against her decision and he would cease to be a Christian. There was never anything of the Protestant about Loisy. It was the Catholic Church or nothing. Nor would he defy the authorities. An Anglican would have cheerfully entrenched himself in a cathedral stall, provided by a kindly State, and laughed at all attempts to dislodge him. But such a position would have been inconceivable to Loisy. He wanted his ideas to be accepted, or at least tolerated, by the Church, not to be able to maintain them in defiance of his ecclesiastical superiors.

It was not long before Rome struck, first with the decree *Lamentabili*, then with the Encyclical *Pascendi*. Nothing

now could avert the storm, and Loisy no longer saw any reason for withholding the publication of his two mighty volumes on the Synoptic Gospels, which therefore appeared in January 1908, together with two small volumes, one a criticism on recent papal utterances, *Simples reflexions sur le décret Lamentabili et sur l'encyclique Pascendi*, and the other a collection of letters written at different times in the previous half-dozen years and published now as a measure of self-defence. If he had not already burnt his boats these publications would have been amply sufficient to entail condemnation. They also lost him many friends, for the commentary on the Synoptic Gospels, especially the chapter in the introduction entitled *La carrière de Jésus*, showed how very large a part of the story of our Lord's life was, in Loisy's opinion, legendary and unhistorical. Except for the theories, such as those of Drews, which denied any historical character to the person of Jesus, destructive criticism

could hardly go further. Loisy effectively shut the mouths of many friends who had hitherto supported him. Rome herself had probably long ago lost all hope of keeping him. It only remained to get rid of him in the way that would do least harm to the Church. So no one was surprised (himself least of all) when, on March 7, 1908, the sentence of major excommunication was decreed against him. Loisy, who was now living quietly at Ceffonds in his own Champagne country, ceased to wear the cassock and remained where he was until later in the year he became the successful candidate for the chair of the history of religions at the *Collège de France* in succession to Jean Réville. He thus passed out of the history of the Modernist movement.

Loisy was not the only victim. Others were silenced and their books condemned and the severest of measures were taken to stamp the Modernist poison out of the seminaries. To be suspected of Modern-

ist leanings was to shut the door on all hope of ecclesiastical promotion. Men had to declare themselves. It was a time of great anxiety and distress. The loss of Loisy was a blow comparable to the blow caused to the Oxford movement by the defection of Newman. The movement broke in two. There were some who perhaps for a considerable time had been riding for a fall, and there was a small exodus from the Church. But on the whole the number of these was insignificant. The majority, broken-hearted at the collapse of all their hopes, remained, because they were convinced that no advance was possible outside the Church. If the Church ordered silence they would obey. Nothing was further from their minds than secession or schism. Protestantism with its liberty and its many voices attracted them not at all. Theirs was a position which deserved much sympathy. Most of them had probably never followed Loisy in the extreme lengths to which he carried his criticism,

but now they found themselves tarred with the same brush. For the remainder of the pontificate of Pius X their position was deplorable. Their only consolation lay in the hope of brighter days to come. Within the Church the movement went underground; outside it became a branch of Liberal Protestantism or of free-thought.

V. The Failure of Modernism

If we ask what were the causes of the failure of Modernism the first answer to be given is that the Modernist leaders were offering to supply something of which very few people apparently felt the need. It started on the assumption that there was a number of persons who were much distressed in their faith by the irreconcilable line taken by the Church with regard to modern science. It was possible, they pointed out, to place a stumblingblock in the way of the intelligent and educated as well as in the way of the simple, and this they imagined the

Church was doing. There was some reason for the belief, as in the last years of the nineteenth century it was plain that the majority of those belonging to the intellectual classes were alienated from the Church. Nevertheless the diagnosis was not correct. It is quite clear now that, whatever were the causes of this almost complete abandonment of religious practice, dissatisfaction with the traditional teaching of the Church was not one of them, except in so far as this was part of the teaching of revealed religion as a whole. There was no demand, except among a few, for a new Catholicism. When men began to return to the Church they were quite contented with the traditional teaching and were strongly anti-modernist in tone and temper. The movement was singularly unable to make disciples among the young intellectuals.

The fact is that the difficulties of the Modernists were nineteenth-century difficulties and were not felt by those who

were growing to manhood in the early years of the twentieth century. They were the difficulties felt by those who had lived in their youth under the shadow of Renan and Taine, and who thought that their own difficulties would also be the difficulties of their children. But this is seldom the case. The Church moves on, and out of the reach of hostile attacks, like a liner distancing a submarine. Consequently to the younger men the Modernists seemed, not the procession of a twentieth century Catholicism, but simply rather old-fashioned. The Modernist movement really belongs to the history of the nineteenth century.

There was another reason for the failure. Modernism seemed to the young men to be too intellectual and too German a thing, and intellectualism and Germanism they were out to destroy. Some ages are mainly ages of thought while others are mainly ages of action. The early years of the twentieth century, especially after 1905, have been years

when most respect is paid to action. It was action, then, men thought, that would restore France and free her from the German peril. And to help them in this they wanted a church that was strong. France had become great through the Catholic religion and they believed she would not retain her place among the nations without it. This was felt by Brunetière before the end of the nineteenth century; it was felt with far greater force by the men of the twentieth. And the tendency of Modernism was, it seemed to them, to undermine her power. Consequently they regarded it with disfavour. They were not overmuch troubled with the intellectual difficulties of the nineteenth century and they did want very much a Church that should be an inspiration and a rallying point in the anxious years which they truly saw lay ahead for their country. It is not to be wondered at that Modernism in its later years lost many of its earlier disciples and made no new ones. The interest had shifted.

CHAPTER III

The Catholic Renaissance

IN the opening years of the twentieth century nothing looked more unlikely than a Catholic revival. Many people at home, and most abroad, thought that the Catholic religion had not borne a very creditable part in the *affaire Dreyfus*; the Modernist movement appeared formidable because no one knew to what extent Modernist principles had spread; while anti-clericalism appeared to have gained greatly in power and to be meditating a new offensive against the Church. Altogether it was a dismal prospect, and no one can wonder that there was a feeling of depression among Catholics and a gnawing fear that the

Catholic religion had lived in France and that the principles of the Revolution were on the eve of their final triumph.

i. The Dawn of a New Day

They were evil days for France as well as for Catholicism. The Dreyfus affair had left behind it a bad legacy of hatred, suspicion and mistrust. The temper that produces civil war was in the air, and perhaps few people would have been surprised if it had broken out. Young Frenchmen as they grew up were taught to look upon other young Frenchmen as their chief foes, and the hatred of clerical for anti-clerical and anti-clerical for clerical was greater than the hatred either felt for the German. In those years the anti-clerical was at the top. He had gained possession of the government machine and was supported by the majority of the electorate of the country. He found it was excellent to have a giant's strength because it enabled him to use it like a giant.

A series of smashing blows was contemplated against the Church. The religious orders were first marked down for destruction. They had increased enormously in France, and their wealth was popularly supposed to be very great. Unfortunately some of them, the Jesuits and Assumptionists in particular, had been exceedingly active in the anti-Dreyfusist campaign, and there was excuse for regarding them as mainly political agencies, plotting for the overthrow of the Republic. A cleverly engineered campaign succeeded in extending the odium to the religious orders as a whole. Nothing could have been more unfair. Even if the charges against the Jesuits and the Assumptionists were true (and even in these cases there is little doubt there was exaggeration) there was no excuse whatever for extending the charges to others. The majority of the monks and nuns were either contemplatives, engaged almost wholly in prayer, or were employed in useful work such as

teaching the young, or tending the poor, or nursing the sick. Almost all the hospital nursing in France was in the hands of religious. But their merits and the fact that they were serving their country as well as the Church did not save them. No one is more merciless than a politician. With the passing of the Associations Act the decree of expulsion was made, and thousands of poor women, who had never touched politics with one of their fingers, and whose only crime it was that they desired to serve God and their country in peace, were driven out of their homes to begin a new life in exile among strangers in a foreign land. For in the eyes of such a Government as that of M. Combes it was a crime to desire to serve God. Clericalism was the enemy to be stamped out at whatever cost of suffering to individuals.

But there was the prospect of worse to come. The tiger had tasted blood and was not likely to remain satisfied. Hitherto no one had dreamed of the

suppression of the *concordat*. Whatever else was likely to go, few people believed the connexion between Church and State was doomed. But the Government thought otherwise. Since Napoleonic days the Church had enjoyed, in return for the lands alienated at the Revolution, a pittance for her bishops and clergy. The temptation to put the *curé* out into the street was too strong to be resisted. It is true that some of the wiser anti-clericals saw that the existence of the *concordat*, securing as it did the nomination of bishops to the French State, was far more a source of weakness than of strength to the Church, and suspected consequently the wisdom of its overthrow. But the majority did not agree with them. They knew that the Church did not desire the separation between itself and the State, and that was enough for them. They were, besides, entirely convinced that the Church's day was over, and the last idea that crossed their minds was the possibility of a Catholic *renaissance*. So

the work of Napoleon was undone ; the *concordat* was abolished, and the connexion terminated between the French Church and State. The clergy were robbed of their tiny stipends, and even their possession of their churches was rendered insecure. It was an age of persecution. Every annoyance that could be given was resorted to. In the Army an officer going to mass knew that by doing so he was risking all chance of professional advancement, and no Radical politician would ever have dared to do so. From the death of MacMahon to the outbreak of the war no practising Catholic has been President of the French Republic.

The outlook for France, then divided in two by these bitter religious animosities, was gloomy enough. But in the very hour of the anti-clerical triumph the German menace, that nightmare which ever since 1871 had oppressed the waking dreams of Frenchmen, revived. The Tangier incident of 1905 showed France

that she was within measurable distance of war. It was more than a shock; it was an awakening. The majority had come to disbelieve in the possibility of a new European war. They were determined not to provoke one themselves, and they did not believe in the warlike ambitions of the German Emperor. Probably the chief reason why, in election after election, an anti-clerical majority was returned to the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, was that the people knew that they would, under no circumstances, provoke war. They were not so certain of the Nationalist party and less certain still of the monarchical party. It was feared that these might engage in warlike schemes abroad in order to further their political aims at home. Consequently again and again the electorate, often even in Catholic districts, returned the anti-clerical candidate to the Chamber of Deputies. *Nous ne voulons pas les Allemands chez nous* was the principle on which they gave their votes. They

would run no risk whatever of countenancing French aggression. Even Alsace-Lorraine was almost forgotten. But now it began to appear in a perfectly unmistakable way that there was a real danger of German aggression. They might be willing enough to let Germany alone, but that would not help them much if Germany was determined not to let them alone. In the affairs of nations it does not take two to make a quarrel. France was at ease in her own house, unsuspicious of any danger from abroad, with pacifist, internationalist, and syndicalist opinions every day gaining ground, when the horrid spectre of war suddenly lifted up its head and looked at them. The danger passed away; things soon settled down again, and the politicians, after the way of politicians, decided that it was a false alarm, and that their abilities would be sufficient in the future, as in the past, to ward off the peril of war. Many of them believed, like so many politicians in England, that another great European war

was inconceivable. But there were some who had learned the lesson.

It soon became evident that there was a new spirit abroad in France, especially among the young. The details of it may be read in M. Dimnet's pages. Some would qualify this new spirit as purely reactionary, because it set up again for admiration the things that men had come to think lightly of, especially the Army and the Church, and did not bow the knee to science, or socialism, or the spirit of the Revolution. The unhappy anti-clerical began to find himself in a new world, and a world not at all to his liking, where the principles which he had come to believe were incontestable were treated as the follies of the past. It must have seemed to him a topsy-turvy world. He had always posed as the man of the future, and here were these young men treating him disrespectfully as a relic of the past. And the worst of it was that he could not laugh them out of court as unintelligent or unlearned, as

they were plainly the pick of the younger generation. Consequently in the sheepfolds of the masonic lodges there were great searchings of heart. Notwithstanding their pacifism they might not have minded so much the revival of patriotism ; it was the revival of religion that caused consternation.

The cause of the Catholic *renaissance* was, as has been said, largely due to the political situation. Men turned to Rome because they felt that the Church could give what France needed. Scepticism and dilettantism had eaten deeply into the character of the nation and there was a spirit abroad of unrest and dissatisfaction. Disbelief in everything had been almost the fashion. What France needed was a faith and a discipline. Without these the nation was on the high road to ruin, and these, it seemed, the Church alone could supply. That meant that it was the Church alone that could save France. These were the ideas which the logic of events was forcing upon the

notice of the French people, especially upon the notice of the young.

But there were some among the older men who had been preaching this for some time, notably among them being the novelists Paul Bourget and Maurice Barrés. The Englishman as a rule refuses to take either the novel or the play seriously. He regards them as intended solely to amuse and to while away an idle hour. Their chief end is to serve as recreation for the tired business man who has spent the day upon the really important business of life at his office, and does not want to be made to think in the evening. England is therefore the paradise of the sentimental and the sensational novelists. The French do not despise this class of work; they have their Georges Ohnet and their Maurice Leblanc; but they regard the best novels as vehicles of ideas and expect them to be serious contributions to the thought of the day. The result is that novelists in France have a great influence on the

intellectual life of the country, and the support of a great novelist such as Maurice Barrés or Paul Bourget is a tremendous asset to a cause.

Maurice Barrés, who at the present day is one of the chief influences in France, began his literary career by writing decadent novels of a Nietzschean type, proclaiming the *culte du moi*. But he soon outgrew this and for many years past has been a serious politician and writer. He is a Frenchman of the East, sprung from Lorraine, and the martyred provinces have always had in him the staunchest of friends. When others forgot, he remembered. In politics he has long been deputy for one of the divisions of Paris; he first entered upon a political career during the Boulanger episode in the later eighties of the nineteenth century, and he has all along been one of the mainstays of the Nationalist party. Although not himself a believer he has always been on the side of the Church and has rendered her most valuable support in the Chamber

of Deputies. His eloquent plea on behalf of the village churches of France, which in many cases were being allowed by the State or local authorities to fall into ruin, is an instance in point. Even if he is not a Catholic writer his voice has always been raised on behalf of the right, on behalf of freedom, patriotism and justice. It is very hard to overestimate what France owes him; a debt, moreover, much increased since the beginning of the war. His indirect influence on the Catholic revival has also been considerable. Like Charles Maurras, and the writers of the *Action Française*, he may not believe in Jesus Christ, but he does believe in the Church.

Paul Bourget, on the other hand, is a Catholic novelist, though he too did not begin as one. But for a good many years now he has been an ardent missionary of Catholic ideas. In *L'Étape* he proclaimed the value of a Christian education, contrasting it with the evil results which sprang from an education without God;

in *Un divorce* he put forward a powerful plea for the Christian view of marriage, while in *Le démon du midi*, published on the eve of the war, he set himself to show the disastrous results which follow from the adoption of Modernist principles. And the book he has produced since the war began, *Le sens de la mort*, is a powerful contrast between suffering and death as they appear to a devout Catholic and suffering and death as they appear to an atheistic man of science. A war hospital forms the background to the story, the poignant sadness of which is only relieved by the picture it gives of strong Christian faith triumphant over pain and death. Bourget is probably the most popular of French novelists and the most widely read, and it would not be easy to exaggerate the influence of his persistent advocacy of the value of religion. But Bourget's religion is entirely of the traditional type; he accepts the Catholic faith wholly and without question, and has no sympathy for any form of Modernism.

It is to him something that the world, and especially France, needs, for the consequences of its rejection are disastrous. He is not so much interested in Christian thought as being the truth among many conflicting intellectual systems; what he cares for is the Christian life as the great practical need of the world. It is likely that this attitude has had considerable influence among the younger men, and it would be an interesting study to estimate the amount of pragmatism there is in the recent religious revival. There is more perhaps than some would be willing to allow.

ii. A Voice from the Past: Anatole France

While Barrés and Bourget have both greatly changed since the days some thirty years ago when they published their first books, Anatole France remains exactly where he was and survives in the twentieth century as a relic of the

nineteenth. He is a true child of Renan, both in his ideas and in his style, though what Renan would have thought of his incursions into anarchical politics it is impossible to guess. From a purely literary point of view he is beyond question the most gifted of French writers. A master of perfect French, worthy to be ranked with the most famous names in French literature, he is a story-teller of nothing less than genius and a critic who has done very fine and delicate work of a highly subjective character. Criticism is not to him, as to Brunetière, the application of rules to an individual case ; it is simply " the adventures of the soul among masterpieces." With these endowments M. France might have played a greater part than either Barrés or Bourget in the regeneration of his country if he had chosen ; as a matter of fact it is not his fault that the youth of France did not become entirely degenerate and corrupt. He has been the bitter foe of both religion and patriotism.

His attitude to religion is a combination of the velvet-gloved hostility of Renan with the naked animosity of M. Combes. Or, rather, it is not a combination of the two ; it is sometimes the one and sometimes the other. His stories are generally in the vein of Renan, his political writings in the vein of Combes. Some of his books give one the impression of an elderly satyr trampling on a crucifix. He loses no opportunity to depreciate religion. Thus in one of his short stories, *Le Procurateur de Judée*, he describes the last days of Pilate, grown old and enormously fat, at an Italian watering place. There arrives an old friend of Judæan days, and they begin to talk of old times. The conversation turns on a girl they had known, and the friend mentions that the last time he saw her she had become a disciple of a man named Jesus whom Pilate had crucified. Did Pilate remember anything about it, he asks ? And Pilate, after a moment's search among his memories, replies : ' No, I don't remem-

ber it at all." This is the sort of thing to wound Christian sentiment, and M. France was never happier than when he was so employed. He has even gone so far as to suggest that there was an element of deliberate fraud in the introduction of Christianity. The whole tendency of his books is to destroy belief in religion and to leave nothing in its place except an arid scepticism and a disbelief in everything. He could destroy (no one could do that better) but he had nothing to give in return for what he took away.

If M. France's influence has been bad for religion, it has been no less evil for patriotism. The glories of his country's past leave him cold. Since the outbreak of war he has shown some signs of penitence and has, we are told, applied for the right to wear the uniform of the army which he had persistently defamed. But his past speaks for itself. His Life of Jeanne d'Arc was an endeavour to depreciate the maid whom the younger

men have united to honour, and his satirical history of France, *L'Île des Pinguins*, is a diabolically clever attempt to cover his country's past with ridicule. It is impossible to exaggerate the disastrous amount of harm which this book was calculated to do. We may believe in M. France's tardy conversion to patriotism when he has withdrawn it from circulation, not before. It is the sort of book to make a Frenchman feel hot with shame that another Frenchman should have written it. There was no need for the Germans to throw mud at France when M. Anatole France was doing it for them. It has done the less harm, however, because for some years now M. France has ceased to be an influence among the younger men. He has proved singularly powerless to arrest the Catholic revival.

iii. The Influence of Bergson

Meanwhile a strong influence in favour of religion, and an influence that has

counted for much in the change of spirit that has taken place among the young, is the philosophy of Henri Bergson. Of course, as is well known, M. Bergson is not a Christian himself, but he is certainly not entirely without sympathy for Christian aims or contemptuous of Christian beliefs. Seldom has a philosopher obtained so great and so startling a success in his own lifetime. His lectures are attended and he is eagerly read not only by professed students of philosophy, but by men of letters, men of action, men and women of the world. His lecture-room at the *Collège de France* is as popular as a theatre, and in London and Edinburgh he won similar successes. Nor is this owing to any playing to the gallery or to one of those inexplicable fashions which last a year or two and then disappear. It is possible that Bergson's is the greatest name that has appeared in the history of philosophy since Kant, and certainly it will always remain among the number of the few

really original philosophers. The only concession he has made to popularity has been to write with a limpidity and a colour that are French in the best sense of the word, and his books are literature as well as philosophy. He has a magical power of apt illustration, so much so that some have thought he is liable to be carried away by his analogies.

It would be easy to exaggerate the direct influence of Bergson's philosophy in favour of religion, for it certainly seems doubtful if, taken as a whole, it leaves much room for the Christian God. Where he has helped has been in his criticisms of the statements which, till he began to write, had been taken for granted. Thus, since Kant, it has generally been taken for granted that there is no real knowledge except scientific knowledge, and no means of knowledge except the intellect. Bergson denies both these statements. He teaches that the mind is something much greater than the intellect, which is only a part of the

whole, the part, that is, formed by evolution for the purpose of dealing with matter. The intellect has been developed for certain purposes, and if it trespasses outside these limits it is likely to lead astray. For dealing with matter it is our only instrument, but for dealing with movement and life there is intuition. Bergson has been accused of depreciating intellect. This is not true. All he has done is to put intellect and science into their place, and to warn them off the territory over which they had usurped dominion. For those who had long groaned under the lash of scientific tyranny his books came as a veritable emancipation from an odious slavery. The extent of his success may be measured by the childish anger of some of the men of science who discovered to their horror that the ground which they believed to be so firm beneath their feet was but quicksand after all, and that their religious house, in whose stability they had so trustingly believed, was not built

upon a rock. Moreover, Bergson's criticism of the determinism which had for so many years been taken for granted was very effective. Even if one did not accept his own rather extreme theory of free-will he had at least shown that the deterministic fortress was vulnerable if it was attacked from any but a strictly scientific point of view.

It was not so much, then, that Bergson provided a philosophy that might be a Christian philosophy of life as that, like a modern Jack the Giant Killer, he has mortally wounded the giant who had held us all in thrall. The climate has changed. He has created a philosophical atmosphere in which it is possible for a Christian to breathe. To take one instance. According to the scientific hypothesis, miracles were impossible. They did not happen. This was a dogma which you could not deny without forfeiting your claim to be a man of the modern world. But Bergson's philosophy leaves room for the occurrence of miracles. Again,

it does more than leave room for mysticism; it is almost a philosophy of mysticism in itself. What wonder then that many young men became his enthusiastic disciples, welcoming in him the deliverer from a soul-destroying tyranny.

To this we can add the blow he delivered against the dominion of Germanism in France. For many years German thought had been supreme. In the learned world, in history and exegesis, German methods and principles were almost blindly worshipped and were taught at the Sorbonne and the École des Chartes as the last word of human wisdom. Mommsen reigned in history as the German higher critics laid down the law in exegesis. In philosophy Hegelianism exercised the same undoubted sway as it did at Oxford. Bergson pricked the bubble in one direction, and in this the young men were his eager disciples. Those who later took up arms so readily to resist German

domination and arrogance in the world of affairs had already some years previously rebelled against the same arrogance and domination in the world of thought.

They were also grateful to him for the support his philosophy gave to religion. For some of them it was the gate through which they came to the Church. One of them has written: "Je ne sais plus quel Athénien, dans *le Banquet de Platon*, déclare qu'il ne vit vraiment que depuis qu'il a connu Socrate; j'en dirais autant de Bergson, si, depuis que je l'ai connu, je n'étais redevenu chrétien. C'est l'étude de sa philosophie, étude que j'ai commencée dans le plus épais matérialisme, qui m'a ouvert le chemin de la délivrance. Jusqu'en 1902, j'eus l'esprit bouclé par Taine et Renan: c'étaient les dieux de ma jeunesse."

Nor would M. Bergson himself object to this. He has himself proclaimed the religious tendency of his philosophy. "Les considerations exposées dans mon *Essai sur les données immédiates* aboutis-

sent à mettre en lumière le fait de la liberté ; celles de *Matière et mémoire* font toucher de doigt, je l'espère, la réalité de l'esprit ; celles de l'*Évolution créatrice* présentent la création comme un fait : de tout cela se dégage nettement l'idée d'un dieu créateur et libre, générateur à la fois de la matière et de la vie, et dont l'effort de création se continue du côté de la vie, par l'évolution des espèces et par la constitution des personnalités humaines."

So Bergson, standing outside, held a lantern which showed men the way back to the Church.

IV

Les Jeunes

IF the ghost of Renan were to revisit the scenes he knew when he lived on earth he would find himself in a new world. Nor is it a world which he would appreciate. When he died in 1892, the young men of that day were his devout disciples, contemptuous of religion and patriotism, and considering the chief joys of life to be the joys of thought. The average young Frenchman of to-day has abandoned the attitude; he is intensely patriotic and probably religious as well, and rates the joy of action far above the joy of thought.

It has already been mentioned that the Tangier incident of 1905 first awoke

Frenchmen to an immediate sense of the imminent German peril. The Agadir incident of 1911 was a second intimation, and a graver one, of the nearness of the danger, and probably after that there were few who thought that war could be ultimately averted. But in 1911 France was readier to meet it than in 1905. The intervening years had witnessed a revolution which was carried still further in the three years that elapsed before the outbreak of the European conflict.

i. Patriots and Catholics

In the first place these years showed a wonderful recrudescence of patriotism. The young men of the beginning of the century thought they believed in internationalism and did not love their mother country. But they found out they did when Germany kicked her, just as M. Gustave Hervé discovered, when war broke out, that he was a Frenchman first and a pacifist and anti-militarist after-

wards. Renan had said that it did not matter under what government an intelligent man lived so long as he had a quiet corner in which he could think in peace, but in 1914 every Frenchman found that this philosophy was false because it did not work when the Prussian was everywhere crossing the frontier. One and all thought that under what government they lived was a thing that intensely mattered.

This revival of patriotism was mainly the work of the young, but it owed a good deal also to the work of some of the older men who had long been preaching in the desert and suddenly found after 1905 that the young men were listening. Among these older men were Maurice Barrés, Paul Bourget, Count Albert de Mun, Paul Deroulède, François Coppée, and others. The character of the new patriotism may be known by the fact that it was accompanied by an extraordinary extension of the cult of Jeanne d'Arc. Catholics and free-thinkers alike

vied to do her honour. She inspired the new patriotism far more than did the memory of the age of Louis XIV, or even than Napoleon himself. And this was because patriotism was connected in the minds of the young with the military and Catholic glories of the past, the past which Anatole France so persistently reviled, of which Jeanne d'Arc was the most splendid example. In the patriotic revival she, being dead, yet speaketh, and among *les morts qui parlent* hers is the voice that is heard most clearly to-day.

As one result of the revival of patriotism there went also almost a desire for war. For one thing it was believed that, sooner or later, it was bound to come, and anything was better than the perpetual uncertainty. *Plutot la guerre que cette perpétuelle attente.* But this was not the only reason. There was also something of the old mediæval idea of war as the great game of all, and a suspicion, which was hardly perhaps

a belief, that it was only in the great school of war that the French spirit which glowed so brightly in them would find its perfect expression. Their delight too in action and the life of action made them contemplate without fear the possibility of war. The growing delight in sport also perhaps acted in the same direction. But their idea of war was the English idea that it is to be played like a game, in accordance with the rules of the game ; it had nothing in common with the German theory that it is a lapse into savagery where chivalry and honour are no longer virtues to be sought but weaknesses to be crushed. To these young men the life of action appeared the one thing worth having, and they envied the English the opportunity their Empire gave them of satisfying this desire. They have had their fill of it by now, and it is only right to remember that these ideas of the young men of the highly educated class were never shared by the mass of the nation, which still

regarded war as the worst of evils and expected its statesmen to avoid it if possible. But these young men, even if mistaken in their view of war, lived and dreamed the noble life. They were very different from their elders of the previous generation, sipping their absinthe on the terrace of a Parisian *café* at the *heure des apéritifs.*

It is not to be supposed that every young man who cared for his country was an ardent Catholic as well. This of course was not the case. Some were convinced free-thinkers and others shared the curious position of Charles Maurras, but certainly the tendency was not only to respect religion, but to become practising Catholics as well. Of the students at the *École normale* whereas about the year 1900 there were only about three or four practising Catholics out of about a hundred and fifty, ten years later there were forty ; all of them intensely earnest and intensely proud of their faith. When they went to mass

they did not, like Balzac's César Birotteau, sneak surreptitiously into church as if it was a house of ill-fame ; they went with their heads in the air for all the world to see.

The Catholicism they wanted was Catholicism of the traditional type. They were not troubled with intellectual difficulties ; they wanted to be told what to believe. Their interests were in action ; they needed religion and desired to practise it, but not to think about it. And they needed discipline as well, both discipline of life and a discipline of the spiritual life. They would do as well as believe what they were told, and what they wanted most was a definite voice speaking with authority. For such men as these Modernism had no temptations. It was concerned with a state of mind which was not theirs at all. The difficulties in the way of acceptance of the Catholic faith which had so obsessed the early Modernists were not felt by them. They were good Catholics, impatient of

anything that looked anti-catholic. Religion was not in the first place an intellectual problem, as it was to the men of the latter half of the nineteenth century; it was a life to be lived. This indifference to ideas was their immediate strength, but may prove to be their future weakness.

Secondly, their Catholicism had in it a tinge of mysticism. This is especially to be noticed in writers like Paul Claudel, Ernest Psichari, and Charles Péguy. It is this, and not the anti-intellectualism of the movement, that promises most for the future. The golden ages of French religion, like the age of St. François de Sales and St. Chantal, or like the age of Pascal, or like the age of Fénelon, have been the times when mysticism has been valued. But for many years the French Church has produced no mystic of the first rank and has been rather anti-mystical in temper.

Thirdly, the new Catholic movement has been almost entirely the work of

laymen. This has been another source of strength. The French Church has always produced a particularly noble type of Catholic layman, devout, intelligent, and full of common sense. In the past she produced men like Pascal and Montalembert, and she has produced men like Paul Thureau-Dangin, Étienne Lamy, Albert de Mun, and Denys Cochin in the last fifty years. Now she has succeeded in winning the heartfelt allegiance of some of the most select souls among the younger generation.

Among the latter, when August, 1914, dawned there were none whose names stood higher, or of whom more was hoped, than Ernest Psichari and Charles Péguy. Unhappily these hopes have not been fulfilled. Both men fell in battle in the very early days of the war : Psichari on August 22, 1914, at Rossignol, in Belgium, during the French retreat from Charleroi, which corresponded to the British retreat from Mons ; and Péguy, a fortnight later, on the first

day of the battle of the Marne. Psichari was in his thirty-first and Péguy in his forty-second year. They will be sadly missed, but no doubt they gave their lives willingly. In the previous year Psichari had written, in answer to a question addressed to him concerning the young men of the present day :

" Il me semblent que les jeunes sentent obscurément qu'ils verront de grandes choses, que de grandes choses se feront par eux. Ils ne seront pas des amateurs, ni des sceptiques. Ils ne seront pas des touristes à travers la vie. Ils savent ce qu'on attend d'eux."

These words seem almost prophetic, and, indeed, the young men of France have seen and done great things since they were written. The retreat from Charleroi, the Marne, the Aisne, Verdun, are imperishable memories. It is grievous indeed that the losses have been so heavy. Literature especially has suffered. Maurice Masson has gone, a literary historian and critic of the first

rank, the writer of admirable books on Fénelon and Mme. Guyon, on Vigny and on Rousseau. Émile Clermont, perhaps the most brilliant and promising of all the younger novelists, who sprang suddenly into fame with the publication of *Laure*, has also fallen; and André Lafon, the author of that charming story *L'Élève Gilles*, and a delicate and true poet, died at the age of thirty-two in a military hospital at Bordeaux. Nor are these all. It is true there are many left: the brothers Tharaud, Robert Vallery-Radot, and many more, including those of a slightly older generation, like Paul Claudel and Francis Jammes; and no doubt there will arise a new literature after the war, a literature of purified and noble aims and splendid memories. There will be young men in the trenches scribbling to-day their thoughts on the backs of old envelopes, which are perhaps the first drafts of some glorious masterpieces of the future; but, notwithstanding the new men who will come, neither Psichari nor

Péguy will be forgotten. They represent the spirit of young France of the last ten years.

ii. Ernest Psichari

The spiritual history of Ernest Psichari was of the strangest. The grandson of Ernest Renan and the son of a determined foe to religion, we can easily imagine how he was brought up. Intellectually his surroundings were of the most stimulating, but, spiritually, it was a desert. The shadow of Renan lay over his whole education. Anti-Catholicism and anti-militarism were the psychological climate of his early years, and it is wonderful that he should have emancipated himself so completely from family influences. What determined him may, however, be discovered from his books *L'Appel des Armes*, published in the year before the war, and *Le Voyage du Centurion*, which has only recently, nearly two years after the writer's death, seen

the light. Its value is increased by a touching and perfectly worded preface from the pen of Paul Bourget. *L'Appel des Armes* attracted much attention on its first appearance. This, perhaps, was not entirely due to its great merits. Paris found it very *piquant* that such a book should come from Renan's grandson, and it was eagerly read. If Renan turned uneasily in his grave the old priests of Tréguier had at last their revenge. The book is a pæan in praise of the military career. It tells the story of a young man, Maurice Vincent, who was brought up in similar anti-religious and pacifist circles to those which surrounded the youth of Ernest Psichari himself, but came to change his opinions through the influence of an artillery officer, Timothée Nangès; adopted a military career, and fought through a campaign in Africa, where he was wounded and incapacitated for further service. Nangès himself is, so M. Bourget tells us, the *porte-parole avoué du romancier*, and for him there are

but two things that really live : the army and the Catholic religion. Modernism of every kind is distasteful to him.

" Il sentait qu'il représentait une grande force du passé, la seule, avec l'Église, qui restât vierge, non souillée, non décolorée par l'impureté nouvelle. Les soldats ne sont pas des hommes du progrès. Le cœur n'a pas changé, ni les principes, ni la doctrine. Cette pureté, cette simplicité barbares qui sont à eux et leur bien, Nangès les retrouvait là, merveilleusement préservées de toute contamination. Le progrès, c'est une des formes de l'Américanisme, et l'Américanisme le dégoutait."

Nangès looks to the past, and to the ancient glories of France, where he finds a strict alliance between the Army and the Church. *L'Armée et l'Église ne transigent pas*, he says, and this is the secret of their attraction for him. He wishes the young Vincent to become converted to Catholicism as well as to militarism. All seems incomplete without that.

" Ce qu'il lui fallait alors, c'etait une pensée catholique. Non point celle des *Fioretti*. Il allait à Pascal ou à J. de Maistre. Tout naturellement, il se tournait vers ces belles tiges droites, sans branches adventices ni nodosités, et où toute la sève sa précipite vers le ciel, jaillit, verticale, de la terre vers le zénith. Voilà la seule beauté qui lui convenait."

There is one other thing that casts a spell over the soul of Ernest Psichari, besides the Army and the Church ; it is the intoxication of Africa. When Maurice Vincent, after his wound, is invalided out of the army, he obtains a place in a government office. But there the homesickness for Africa pursues him. In the great building on the left bank of the Seine there rises before him continually the vision of the dry sands and the hot sun of the Sahara ; *jamais il ne se guérirait d'avoir connu l'Afrique.*

Africa is also the scene of his posthumous book. It is hardly a novel. It

describes, often in almost mystical language, how an officer finds his way to the belief in and the practice of the Christian religion. He is already convinced of much : of the worth of France and of the glory of the military career. But something is wanting. Catholicism draws him like a magnet. It is first one thing and then another. A friend sends him a picture postcard of the Virgin of La Salette, with a few lines written on the back, saying that the writer has been praying for him, and begging him to listen ; a Moor points to the sun at dawn and says, " God is great," and these and other experiences give him the impression of the Good Shepherd stretching out to him his bloodstained hands. Resistance becomes weaker and weaker. The title of one chapter is " A finibus terræ ad te clamavi," and this is really the keynote of the book. It reminds one very much of Francis Thompson's poem *The Hound of Heaven*, and of the strong feet which follow and will not relinquish

the chase. The book ends, *Le soldat s'agenouille.*

In the solitude of the desert, Maxime, the officer, communes, almost argues, with God. M. Paul Bourget thinks that these pages recall, by their eloquence and their pathos, Pascal's *Mystery of Jesus*, and that they are among the finest in French mystical literature. This is hardly an exaggeration. Psichari has written nothing more beautiful, nothing more instinct with true religious emotion :

" Je veux, dit Dieu, que ta maison soit en ordre, et que d'abord tu fasses le premier pas. Je ne me donne pas à celui qui est impur, mais à celui qui fait pénitence de ses fautes, je me donne tout entier, comme mon Fils s'est donné tout entier.

" C'est une dure exigence que la vôtre, ô Seigneur. Ne pouvez-vous d'abord toucher mes yeux ?

" Ne peux-tu donc me faire crédit un seul jour ?

" Vous pouvez tout, Seigneur !

" Tu peux tout, ô Maxime. Voici que dans tes mains mortelles, tu tiens la balance, avec le poids juste et le contrôle infaillible. Je t'ai liberé du joug et de l'aiguillon. O Maxime, il n'est pas de bornes à ta liberté—que mon amour."

When the German shell ended the gallant career of Ernest Psichari, the loss to French literature was equal to that sustained by English literature when the precious life of Rupert Brooke ebbed away in an Ægean hospital.

iii. Charles Peguy

L'Appel des Armes is dedicated to Charles Péguy, and the terms of the dedication show the affectionate admiration of the younger for the older man :

" A celui dont l'esprit m'accompagnait dans les solitudes de l'Afrique, à cet autre solitaire en qui vit aujourd'hui l'âme de la France, et dont l'œuvre a courbé d'amour notre jeunesse, à notre Maître

Charles Péguy, ce livre de notre grandeur et de notre misère."

Péguy's origin was very different from that of Psichari. Intellectually, the latter was born in the purple ; Péguy, on the other hand, like Loisy, sprang from the people. His ancestors were vine-growers in La Beauce, the great plain which stretches south of Chartres, the twin towers of whose cathedral, " like a ship for ever a-sail in the distance," as Walter Pater said, are visible for miles. Although his mother was employed to look after the chairs in the cathedral of Orleans, the boy seems to have grown up with little or no religion. He soon found his way to Paris, where he became one of the rising hopes of the Socialist party, and started a little publishing and book-selling business on the south side of the Seine, near Saint-Sulpice. The famous series " Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine " was started by him, and he wrote many of the volumes. It was in this series that appeared Paul Desjardins' famous com-

ments on the Abbé Loisy, *Réflexions d'un profane sur l'affaire Loisy,* and at that time it is likely enough that this represented more or less Péguy's own views on religion. But a change was at hand. A friend has described how one day he went to see him, and how Péguy said, with his eyes full of tears : *" Je ne t'ai pas tout dit . . . J'ai retrouvé la foi, je suis catholique."* *" Ah ! pauvre vieux,"* replied the friend, with great emotion, *" nous en sommes tous là."* That was true enough ; in those years there was a great return of the *jeunes universitaires* to the Faith. And all these young men looked up to the slightly older Péguy as to a master. His love of France, his enthusiastic devotion to Jeanne d'Arc (he said once that he could go on writing books about her all his life) appealed to them with irresistible force. The little bookseller, with his stooping figure, short-sighted eyes, and chestnut beard ; always in a hurry ; always dressed in black, black coat, shabby black felt hat, and

black trousers baggy at the knees, aroused a wealth of affection such as is given to but few. As one of his greatest friends has said, he was not France's greatest writer, nor the finest of contemporary poets, but he was Péguy. His memory will remain fragrant ; his friends will not forget him, and we shall hear more of him when the war is over, and the young men take up their pens again.

Péguy's Catholicism was closely allied with his love of France. Of him, as also of Psichari, it might almost be said that they were Catholics because they were Frenchmen. A non-Catholic Frenchman seemed a monstrosity, something cut off from the true life of his country. Some Catholicism is international or indifferent to country, with almost the motto, " What matters country so long as the Church survives ? " But that is not the Catholicism of these young Frenchmen, nor the Catholicism of the recent religious revival. It is intensely national, though without a tinge of Gallicanism. Péguy

was constantly expressing this in his books and poems. In one of the finest of the latter he extols the happiness of those who die for their country.

" Heureux ceux qui sont morts pour la terre charnelle,
Mais pourvu que ce fut dans une juste guerre.
Heureux ceux qui sont morts pour quatre coins de terre.
Heureux ceux qui sont morts d'une mort solennelle.

Heureux ceux qui sont morts dans les grands batailles,
Couchés dessus le sol à la face de Dieu.
Heureux ceux qui sont morts sur un dernier haut lieu
Parmi tout l'appareil des grandes funerailles.
* * *
Heureux ceux qui sont morts, car ils sont retournés
Dans la première argile et la première terre.
Heureux ceux qui sont morts dans une juste guerre.
Heureux les épis murs et les blés moissonnés."

Well, the opportunity came to Péguy, and he will have welcomed it. He died

for his country, in a just war, and in one of the greatest battles of history. Somewhere north of Meaux his body lies in that French soil which he loved so well, and gave his life to defend. Much as his friends will regret his loss, and great as is the gap he has left behind him, no one can deny the appropriateness of his death. It is what he himself would most have wished.

iv. Paul Claudel

M. Claudel is no longer one of the young men, for he is approaching the *cinquantaine*, but he has so great an influence over them, and his ideas are so largely their ideas, that his natural place is in this chapter. The Catholic *renaissance* has in him a really great poet, one who is perhaps not even yet as well known among his countrymen as he deserves, but one whose fame is likely to grow rather than to diminish. Like Psichari and Péguy, indeed like all those

who express in literature the aspirations and desires of the Catholic revival, he is moved chiefly by two things: France and the Catholic religion. The latter especially is his continual inspiration.

Claudel is not a man of letters by profession; he has served for years in the consular service of his country, and lived for some years in the Far East. This sojourn abroad seems to have intensified both his love for his country and his religion. For a Frenchman to live abroad is almost always to be an exile, with the thoughts continually turning towards home. An Englishman will settle down and will often be entirely content, without forgetting the land of his birth, to make a new home in a foreign land. Not so the Frenchman. He counts the days till he can return. Amid the old civilization of China and the sun-baked streets of a teeming Chinese town he has the nostalgia for the boulevards or for the cool rivers and the straight poplar-lined highways of his own land. And Claudel

felt more than this. He felt too the oppression of heathenism like a weight on his soul, and in the midst of the temple of a strange worship he longed for the dear Catholic sanctuaries of France. His memory went back to hours of prayer in loved Paris churches :

" O mon Dieu, je me rappelle ces ténèbres où nous étions face-à-face tous les deux, ces sombres après-midis d'hiver à Notre-Dame,
Moi tout seul, tout en bas, éclairant la face du grand Christ de bronze avec un cierge de 25 centimes."

Or as he said at another time :

" Poëme de Paul Claudel qu'il composait en Asie,
Loin de la vue de tous les hommes, au temps de la grande Apostasie,

Flûte basse, sous le bruit profane insolente comme une trompette,
Articulation dans le chaos de la phrase forte et nette.

Vers arides et trait ardent de son cœur vers la patrie,
Comme il marchait le long des murs de Cambaluc, écoutant le coucou de Tartarie.

Ou sous un saule vermineux, près d'une grande
tache de sel,
Sur une terre à moitié détruite, mangée d'eau sale
et de ciel.

Ah, que ma langue se dessèche, expire en moi le
souffle même,
Si mon âme jamais s'oublie de toi, Jérusalem ! "

Amid the stifling heat of Pekin he longs for the sea, *la mer libre et pure*, but the sea itself is symbolic and represents the spirit of God binding all things together :

" Ainsi du plus grand Ange qui vous voit jusq'au
caillou de la route et d'un bout de votre
création jusqu'à l'autre,
Il ne cesse point continuité, non plus que de
l'âme au corps ;
Le mouvement ineffable des Séraphins se pro-
page aux Neuf ordres des Esprits,
Et voici le vent qui se lève à son tour sur la terre,
le Semeur, le Moissoneur !
Ainsi l'eau continue l'esprit, et le supporte, et
l'alimente,
Et entre
Toutes vos créatures jusqu'à vous il y a comme
un lien liquide."

Claudel is more than a poet, he is a great mystic as well, and it would be possible

to illustrate much of the teaching of the mystics from his poems. Thus the mystic tells us to find God within, and the day he does that is always the day from which he dates his start on the mystic way. And Claudel tells us the same :

" Entends l'évangile qui conseille de fermer la porte de ta chambre,
Car les ténèbres sont extérieures, la lumière est au dedans.
Tu ne peux voir qu'avec le soleil, ni connaître qu'avec Dieu en toi."

In the inner sanctuary of the soul God may be found :

" Voici de nouveau pour nous une maison pour faire notre prière,
Un temple nouveau dont le rage de Satan n'éteindra point les lampes ni ne sapera les voûtes adamantines.
Pour la clôture de Solesmes et de Ligugé voici une autre clôture !
Je vois devant moi l'Église catholique qui est de tout l'univers ! "

The mystics have sometimes, through the great stress they have laid on the

interior, been inclined to neglect or despise the exterior. There is a tendency among some to look upon exterior rites as helpful to beginners but unnecessary and even harmful to those who have outgrown them. Such spiritual pride has always been a danger that has dogged the mystic way, but there is no trace of it in Claudel. He is a true mystic but he is a devout and humble Catholic as well. His latest book *Corona Benignitatis Anni Dei* is a kind of magnificent and splendid *Christian Year*, a series of poems on the great Catholic festivals, full of exultation in the ritual and the liturgy of the Catholic Church. Nor is there anything of the Modernist about Claudel. He wants to practise his religion, not to treat it as an intellectual problem. The questions that interest the Modernist he simply puts aside :

" Ce n'est point mon affaire de comprendre, mais de prier dans l'amour et le tremblement.
Faites que je vous voie, Seigneur Jésus, avec ces yeux pleins de larmes, dans le jour de votre second Avènement ! "

Or again :

" Je crois sans y changer un seul point ce que mes pères ont cru avant moi,
Confessant le Sauveur des hommes et Jésus qui est mort sur la croix."

It is the spiritual life that interests him, and not only the adventures of the soul on the mystic way, but the difficulties, the temptations, and the trials of the humble Christian. The *Chemin de la Croix* is full of tender feeling and real spiritual insight. There is a true knowledge of the spiritual life in the lessons which the three Falls of our Lord are made to teach. The first :

" Sauvez-nous du premier péché que l'on commet par surprise ! "

The second :

" Sauvez-nous de la seconde chûte que l'on fait volontairement par ennui."

And the third :

" Sauvez-nous du troisième péché qui est le désespoir ! "

Could the masters of the spiritual life add anything to this?

The three poems he has written on the war are full of the enthusiasm for Catholicism and for France, *la France, terrible comme le Saint-Esprit.* The thought is continually present of a crime that brings its own punishment, and of a vengeance of which the dead were partly the ministers:

"Il y a une grande armée sans aucune bruit qui se rassemble derrière vous!
Depuis Louvain jusqu'à Réthel, depuis Termonde jusques à Noméný,

* * *

Écoute, peuple qui est parmi les autres peuples comme Caïn!
Entends les morts dans ton dos qui revivent, et dans la nuit derrière toi pleine de Dieu,
Le souffle de la résurrection qui passe sur ton crime populeux!"

Bread, he says, will be tasteless, and his thirst unassuaged.

"Armées des vivants et des morts, jusqu'à ce que nous ayons bu ensemble dans le Rhin profond."

Patriotism with Renan was a folly, with Claudel it is a religion. So the present war becomes a crusade. In this attitude he is the true representative of the youth of France.

Epilogue

IT is a far cry from Renan to Claudel, and it is difficult to realize that it is not yet twenty-five years since Renan died, so great is the gulf between then and now. A young Frenchman attending the lectures of Renan at the Collège de France in the eighties of the last century might personally be excused if he had thought that religion was in its agony and that in a few years it would disappear entirely from amongst intelligent men. He would certainly not have anticipated either Ernest Psichari or Paul Claudel. So the history of the last twenty years makes one shy of prophesying what the history of the next twenty years will be, or what will be the result of the war on

French religion. As is well known, the declaration of war was followed in France by a great and generous outburst in religious feeling. Churches almost everywhere were crowded; in certain villages the whole of the population used to meet every evening for Benediction, and the old division between clerical and anti-clerical in some places almost disappeared. The courageous conduct of the bishops and clergy, especially in the parts overrun by the first German advance, helped enormously to make people respect, if not to practise, religion. In the army too there was an outburst of religion, helped, no doubt, by the large number of priests serving in the ranks.

It is now possible to see more clearly exactly what has happened. The Church has gained back a large number of the lapsed, but, on the whole, those who were irreligious before are irreligious still. The great change is a change that was growing among the young in the years preceding the war; namely, a growth of toleration.

The old bitter feeling which Frenchmen felt for Frenchmen in the opening years of the century has almost entirely disappeared, and only survives among politicians who are too old to learn and too obstinate to recognize that times have changed. After the war there will not be two Frances, as in the past, but one ; a France welded together by suffering and by a respect for political and religious opponents learned by sharing the same dangers against a common foe. But beyond this it would be dangerous to say much.

Nor is it possible to say what will happen when the present exalted mood concerning both religion and patriotism (a mood exemplified especially in the war poems of Paul Claudel) wears off. Both France and Germany have been fighting, in a mood of exaltation, for an idea. This has not been the case with England. All attempts to create such a mood in her have failed. She has entered upon the war not as a crusade, but with the simple

thought (the same thought, it may be recalled, that inspired her in the conflict with Napoleon) : Here's a bully to be thrashed ; and anxious only to get the unpleasant job over and done with as soon and as thoroughly as possible. Which mood will give most strength in the long run remains to be seen. The mood of exaltation certainly entails the greater risk of reaction. This may prove to be a danger to French religion in the years that follow the war.

Nor is it certain that there are not weaknesses in the Catholicism of the younger generation in France which will become more evident as the years go by. Religion is for Claudel and the young Frenchmen inspired by him, as it is for Chesterton and the younger generation of Catholics in England, a glorious and satisfying adventure and a life to be lived rather than an explanation of the Kosmos. But that side of religion is not one that can be permanently neglected. Modernism failed, it is true, but it does not follow

from that that the work which the early Modernists set out to do did not need doing.

If this work is ever to be done it is France that will do it. There are some who think that it may be the work of the Church of England to show what a liberal Catholicism can be. This, however creditable it may be to their Anglican loyalty, does little credit to their appreciation of the real state of religion in the world to-day, or to their appreciation of the unimportance of the Church of England until she has purged herself. It is a work that cannot be done with dirty hands. But, from a combination in France of those inspired by the enthusiasm and the mysticism of the new movement and those who, while sympathizing with the Modernist aims, yet escaped the pit-falls into which many of the Modernists fell, there is much to be hoped.

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