

the religious journals that they read, have but half the story of what one actually finds in France. The encouragements with which the evangelists meet are chronicled and rejoiced over as well they may be, indeed. But the discouragements—the dark background of the picture—are seldom alluded to. Like the dwellers in Zabulon and Naphtalim in the time of our Lord, the great mass of the French People “sit in darkness” nay, even “in the region and shadow of death;” but as the former, when Jesus left Nazareth and came and dwelt among them, “saw great light,” so to the latter, now that His Gospel is being proclaimed in the land, “light is sprung up.” But, that “light” is, as yet, in the darkness of spiritual night, “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” Let us treat of these classes in detail:

I. **ATHEISTS.** Foremost among these, perhaps, are the *savants*, or leading scientific men of France, a large and influential class, able and ready to propagate their views by means of the platform and the press, and what is more significant, they have for their hearers and readers vast numbers of simple-minded people, who, unlike Englishmen, have very little, if any, true knowledge of God or His Revelation in Christ. Often, indeed, is their conception of the nature of Christianity of the crudest and most distorted kind. Their minds are not prepossessed by any religious ideas, and like the old Athenians, of whom they have more than once reminded me, they are ever ready to “hear some new thing.” The expulsion of the Jesuits from France is an indication of the power which Atheism wields in high places. “The votaries of Atheism,” writes Mr. Macall, “have found in the bitter hatred enkindled against Ecclesiastical tyranny, the weapons for an unsparing attack upon every feature of religious belief. They vow to exterminate the idea of a future life, and to blot out the very name of Deity. Scarcely could the deadly force of this assault be appreciated except by those residing on the spot; its impious daring, alike on the plat form and from the press, were believed to be literally unparalleled. All the arts of sophism and rhetoric were used to make it appear that the only escape from Jesuitism and priestly imposture is to be found in gross materialism. Would that every Christian in Britain and America might be stirred up to come to the aid of our French brethren, in seeking to stem this impetuous current, by the manly, affectionate, unsectarian proclamation of the Gospel. Of course, among this class must be reckoned the communists, of bloody memory, who, though pardoned

by their country for the crimes committed by them in 1871, and allowed to return from their exile last year, no sooner came back than they entered upon their old course with increased bitterness and activity, spreading broadcast their revolutionary ideas by platform and press. Evidence of this was seen in the appearance of a daily paper published for the first time last November, in Paris, entitled: *Ni Dieu ni Maître.* (*Neither God nor Master.*)

II. **DEISTS.** Under this head is included a very considerable portion of the peasantry and working classes of France. These have rejected “clericalism” by which they mean the domination of the bishops and priests of the Church of Rome. They have turned their back upon “Rome,” but they still believe in the existence of God, and many of them gladly welcome the sound of the Gospel when they hear it for the first time. But yet, they have only the faintest knowledge of God, scarcely more, indeed, than what conscience makes known to them, and in their case the voice of conscience is feeble enough.

III. **INDIFFERENT.** These include vast numbers who give themselves wholly to a life of pleasure, who have scarcely one serious thought. Outside of their working hours they are to be found at the taverns, almost without numbers, in Paris, and the boulevards, or in low and immoral theatres and ball-rooms. They crowd the race-courses on the Sabbath. They are like the rich man of the parable, save his possessions. Their motto is “eat, drink, and be merry.” They will not take the trouble to think on religious things, being dead in trespasses and in sins.

IV. **ADHERENTS OF THE CHURCH OF ROME.** It may perhaps be doubted, whether, in treating of the condition of the French people, I should describe the adherents of the above church, as sharing the Spiritual darkness so prevalent throughout France. In this case, I may be permitted to say, that, seeing is believing, and any one who has lived there and seen beneath the outside show, who has observed the life of these people in its true light, will turn from it a sadder but a wiser man. There are, of course, exceptions—souls that have found the truth in some of the many ways of God’s own teaching—but these are, alas, very few as compared with the whole. In general, they have no true conception of the plan of salvation, nor are they taught it. In fact, one word expresses the religion of the Roman Church, and that is **ULTRAMONTANISM.** The entire ascendancy of the Pope, in all matters both spiritual and temporal; in other words, in all matters of faith and practice; this is the end which bishops and