

ness of doubt, or starve upon the barren mountains of negation. In concluding, I stated that it was not easy to see any solution to these difficulties, except by the evangelical portion of the Church breaking off their alliance with the State, and taking advantage of their freedom to preach more faithfully the truths for which their forefathers suffered so long and so heroically. I also hinted that symptoms were not wanting to show that the separation between Church and State in France might be effected by the State, if not by the Church, and at a date earlier than many expected. This I now believe to be a mistake, and I shall give in this letter some of the reasons why this separation is by no means likely soon to occur in France either on the part of the Church or of the State. In the first place, the evangelical portion of the Protestant Church, while admitting the soundness of the principle of separation between Church and State, are not agreed as to the *opportune*ness of such an event. In fact, the people are not prepared for such a step on the part of their ministers. Even those who belong to the evangelical section of the Church do not realize in any adequate manner the importance of emancipation from State control. M. Babut admits that the mass of the people don't understand much of the debates of the clergy in their conferences. As long as the traditional forms of worship are pretty closely observed, they take no alarm, and they often hardly perceive the daring character of radical preaching. For the most part they lean to the right or to the left, in conformity with personal or local influences. It is very doubtful, therefore, if they would follow their pastors should they see it their duty to withdraw.

Again, they refer you, when speaking on the subject, to the case of the Free Church, which was organized in 1849, and which formed an independent Synod under the name of the "Union of Evangelical Churches of France." This Church still exists, and although including some of the ablest ministers in France, is still, after the lapse of thirty-two years, in a weak and feeble condition. The people have not rallied to its support as they should have done, and hence the little band of devoted congregations have had to uphold and popularize in France the principle of a Christian Church, independent of State support and free from State control, chiefly by the material aid supplied from abroad. Their financial condition is far from encouraging, and of late years they have met with serious discouragement and loss. Three of their most prominent and talented pastors—M. Bersier, M. Theodore Monod and M. John Bost—resigned their connection with the Free Church and became members of the State Church. During the last year death deprived them of the invaluable services of Dr. Fisch who was long the chief motive power in the Free Church, and at a recent meeting of Synod the congregations shewed a considerable diminution. This experiment then has not had an encouraging influence to induce the rest of the pastors to renounce their alliance with the State, and throw themselves for support upon their congregations.

If, however, the evangelical pastors should feel it their duty to leave the State Church, and their flocks, or a large portion of them, should refuse to accompany them, what would be the result? Just what the radical or rationalist party desire. They would be left in possession of the churches, the revenues, a portion at least of the congregations, the parish schools, and full liberty to teach whatever doctrines they pleased, unrestrained by any influences outside themselves. And their flocks, chilled by the cold atmosphere in which they have been accustomed to live, would be perfectly satisfied to remain in this benumbed condition so long as they were not asked to contribute of their means for the support of ordinances. All warmth, all spiritual life would gradually disappear in such circumstances. Is it any wonder, then, that the evangelical portion of the pastors hesitate before committing themselves to a course which in all probability would be followed by such sad consequences?

But let us go a little further. What if all the sections of the Protestant Church should agree to give up connection with the State, and cast themselves upon the goodwill of the people for maintenance and support? Well, apart from other difficulties, there would still remain the Roman Catholic Church, recognized then as the *only* State Church, and therefore having all the prestige and authority which State patronage and support always confer. Might not the Protestant Church, in such circumstances, in case a reactionary Government were in power, find itself in a position

somewhat similar to that it occupied after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. It would undoubtedly become the subject of petty annoyances, and even persecution, so far as the spirit of the age would permit. It would certainly, to say the least, be wholly without influence in the country, having no voice in the parish schools, in the hospitals and in the army. While here and there a remnant would doubtless be found faithful to the traditions of the past, it is to be feared that in this easy-going age too many might be induced to lapse into indifference and infidelity, while others, for worldly reasons, would conform to the practices of their Roman Catholic neighbours. If this be so, is there not good reason why those responsible for the well-being of the Church should hesitate before entering on a course likely to lead to such a position of affairs?

If, then, as many pastors seem to think, a crisis of this kind is in the long run inevitable, does it not behove the evangelical portion of the clergy more generally to set about preparing their people for such an event, to leaven their minds with sound principles of independence and *self-reliance*, so that when the separation between Church and State shall arrive, it may prove salutary to all parties? I learn from the reports of several conferences held during recent years, that as a matter of fact this course has already been adopted by a few Synods where the evangelicals are in a majority. It is to be hoped that the example may be more generally followed.

But when the Republic becomes fully established in the country, and sufficiently strong to maintain order at home and resist aggression from abroad, will it not abolish the Concordat, and put every denomination on the same footing, allowing each to work out its own destiny as best it can? A growing party in France advocate this, and one or more Bills will be introduced in the present Parliament to rid the State of all obligations to the Church, by withdrawing its support from all—the Roman Catholics, the Lutherans, the Reformed and the Jewish. Were it not for the mighty power of the Roman Catholic Church, this party would undoubtedly gain their end, and solve the problem which has long been exercising the thoughts of the astutest politicians of Europe. But in the presence of such a consolidated spiritual despotism, opposed to the principles and policy of the Republic, and guided and directed by an able, subtle and ever-watchful foreign Court, ready to take advantage of every error on the part of its adversaries to advance its own interests and substitute a monarchy allied to itself in the room of a Republic, the State dare not surrender its supervision and control of the Church of Rome. For its own safety, it is true, the French Republic has passed measures restricting the teaching powers of the Jesuits and others, and the present Government, according to a statement made a few days ago, by M. Paul Bert, the Minister of Public Worship, while ready to carry out to the letter all the laws of the Concordat, will demand of Parliament power to annul all the acts of legislation by which the weakness of former Governments has permitted the Church to escape from its agreements with the State, and take possession of a large portion of the civil power and revenues of the State—in fact, to return to the prescriptions of the year 1802—to the Concordat and the organic articles inseparable from it. In this way the Government hopes to find the surest guarantees against the encroachments of the Catholic Church. But that it has any intention of giving up its control of the churches, asylums, monasteries and educational institutions to the Romish hierarchy, there is not the remotest prospect or probability.

Having thus sketched, perhaps at too great length, the dark, or at least less favourable side of the Protestant Church of France, I shall now turn to the brighter and more hopeful side, and briefly shew the missionary work it is doing throughout the country, and the measure of success which these evangelistic efforts have attained.

Paris, 6th December, 1881.

T. H.

A TWISTED DOCTRINE.

MR. EDITOR,—Mr. Moffat, in controverting Christadelphian errors and misrepresentations, has, I fear, laid himself open to a *tu quoque*. Is there not a little "twisted doctrine" in the assertion that "believers at death do immediately enter into glory?" I know that the Confession and Catechism say so, but it requires considerable twisting of Scripture, I think,

to make it teach that. If by entering into glory, Mr. Moffat means entering into rest and blessedness, then I am at one with him; but if, as it seems to me, he holds that it is the full blessedness and glory of the believer that is entered into, then I think that both he and the Confession are wrong. That is a view not only wholly unsupported by Scripture, but one opposed to its plainest teaching.

Let us take the "proofs from Scripture," as given in the Shorter Catechism. The first given—Heb. xii. 22 23: "But ye are come unto Mount Zion," etc.—is wholly irrelevant, as it is spoken of believers now in the flesh, and not what shall come to them at death. The next is 2 Cor. v. 1: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Now let us go on and see what the apostle means: "For in this we groan, not that we would be unclothed (disembodied), but clothed upon (with the heavenly house), that mortality might be swallowed up of life." Now, when *is* mortality to be swallowed up of life? The apostle himself tells us (1 Cor. xv. 54) that it will be when "this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality;" "then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." There *is* *then*, in this "proof" passage, no reference whatever to the state of the soul between death and resurrection. It is the resurrection house of which the apostle speaks and longs for.

The next passages given are those in which Paul speaks of being "absent from the body and present with the Lord," "which is far better" (2 Cor. v. 8; Phil. i. 23). To have full communion with Christ—which all believers doubtless have after death—though "unclothed," is "far better" than to be in the body; and "absent from the Lord," have only partial communion. But the fullest communion possible to disembodied spirits is not glory—the glory of being "clothed upon with the house which is from heaven."

The last passage given is the Lord's words to the penitent thief: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." It is assumed that paradise is heaven, and that our Lord went there at death; but that could not be, for He said to Mary: "I am not yet ascended to My Father;" and further, if for a redeemed spirit to be in paradise is to "enter into glory," then did the thief enter into glory before the Lord died, for He was not glorified until He ascended. "In the New Testament," says Parkhurst, "the word Paradise is applied to the state of faithful souls between death and the resurrection, when, like Adam in Eden, they are admitted to immediate communion with God in Christ, and to a participation of the true tree of life." When Jesus died, His spirit went to the place where are the spirits of the perfected just, and not to heaven. He could not ascend up thither until He had completed the work which His Father gave Him to do. It was not yet completed, for not only had He to die for men, but to "rise again for their justification," and that He "might be declared to be the Son of God with power."

The passage from Ecclesiastes, quoted by Mr. Moffat, is spoken of departed spirits in general, and is not in point. The parable of Lazarus, to which he also refers, proves only that the spirits of just men are in a state of happiness. "Abraham's bosom," says Bishop Ryle, "is probably a proverbial expression, signifying a place of rest and safety, to which all believing Jews were carried after death. Abraham was the father of the faithful, and the head of the whole Jewish family, and to be with him after death implied happiness."

Having shewn that the "proofs from Scripture" fail to teach the doctrine that "believers at death do immediately pass into glory," let me trespass on your space a little further, in order that I may quote a few passages to shew when they do so. In Rom. viii. 3, Paul speaks of "the glory that shall be revealed in us," and says that "the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God," which he tells us takes place "at the redemption of the body." "Henceforth," says he to Timothy, "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day. And not to me only, but to all them also that love His appearing." "Looking for that blessed hope," he writes to Titus, "and the glorious appearing of the great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ." Why is the appearance of Christ a blessed hope? Because then, and not till then, the believer is to be