

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### THE PROTESTANT CHURCH IN FRANCE.—II.

MR. EDITOR,—In my last letter I tried to condense into a brief space some of the most prominent events—external and internal—which helped to make the Reformed Church of France what it is at the present day. Amongst the external incidents were the Edict of Nantes, granted by Henry IV., and subsequently revoked by Louis XIV.; the life of the Church in the desert; the Edict of Toleration, passed by Louis XVI.; the Concordat, by Napoleon I., binding the Church to the State; and the decree of Napoleon III., in 1852, modifying the laws of his predecessor. Then, as regards the internal events which tended to modify the doctrines of Calvin, I noticed the teachings of Samuel Vincent at Nismes, who had adopted the subjective theory of Schleiermacher, and taught "the religion of good works dictated by the conscience." The difference between the so-called Liberal party and the Evangelicals was still further marked by the appearance of the "Révue de Strasbourg"—the organ of the ultra-negative criticism of Strauss and Baur—which received with favour the thoroughly anti-Christian "Vie de Jésus," by Renan, when it appeared in 1863. Then, again, there was the refusal of the Kirk Session and Consistory of Paris to renew the license of Rev. Athanase Coquerel, jun., a member of the Rationalistic party, in 1864, and the separation between the Right and the Left in their "Pastoral Conferences"—the latter declaring that "faith in the supernatural agency of God in the universe is in no wise necessary to the development of religious life," while the Right adhered to the "reality of Christian supernaturalism." This brings the *resume* of events down to the time of the meeting of the General Synod in 1872; and in order to understand the precise position occupied since then, doctrinally and otherwise, between the two parties whose antagonism constitutes the "most obvious fact in the religious history of France during the nineteenth century," I shall give in this letter the substance of the paper by M. Babut, which appeared in the "Catholic Presbyterian" for October, 1879, comparing his statements with M. Bersier's "History of the . . . Synod of the Reformed Church," as my former letter contained the salient points of M. Wheatcroft's article of April, 1880, supplemented by M. Felice's "Histoire des Protestants."

#### THE EVANGELICALS AND THE LIBERALS.

1st. In regard to doctrine, the Evangelical party retains, as essential to the Protestant faith, the *formal* principle and the *material* principle of the Reformation—the authority of the sacred Scriptures, and the justification of the sinner through faith in Jesus Christ. In the Liberal party there are two sections—the one avowedly rationalistic, the other feebly supernaturalistic—but both agree in affirming and defending, as a sacred and inviolable position, unlimited liberty of belief and of teaching in the bosom of the Church.

2nd. In regard to Church government, the Evangelical party, in all its aims and efforts, seeks the definite re-establishment and regular operation of the Synodical government, as instituted by their fathers. The Liberal party inclines in general towards Independency; or if there be a central representation of the Church, it desires that it shall be limited to purely administrative functions, and shall not inquire into, or give judgment on, any question of doctrine.

3rd. The two parties are not less opposed on the question of the relations between Church and State. The Evangelical party lays down as a fundamental principle the autonomy of the Church, and regards the interference of the State with jealousy and anxiety; the Liberal party cordially maintains the rights and privileges of the State, seeing in them a safeguard against extravagance on the part of the official majority of the Church—a tendency which it deems more dangerous to liberty than State control.

Such were the relations between the two parties as stated by M. Babut when

#### THE MEETING OF SYNOD OF 1872

took place. The first National Synod of the Reformed Church was held at Paris in May, 1559, and was attended by deputies from only eleven churches. Just 100 years after—in 1659—the twenty-ninth and last General Synod was held at London, Louis XIV. assigning as a reason, or rather excuse, for putting a

stop to them, the great sum it cost, and the trouble and fatigue it gave those who attended. Now, again, after an interval of more than 200 years, the Reformed Church was permitted by M. Thiers to hold another—its thirtieth—Synod at Paris in June, 1872, when the two parties so clearly defined above met face to face—the Evangelicals to the number of sixty-two, and the Liberals forty-six. Four important decisions were arrived at, after lengthened discussions from 2nd June to 10th July. First, in opposition to the allegations of the Left, that the Synod possessed but the functions of a deliberative assembly, the majority affirmed the authority and legality of the Synod of 1872; secondly, by the same majority, the Synod adopted a Confession of Faith, proclaiming the supreme authority of the Scriptures in matters of doctrine, and salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification; thirdly, it was decided that every candidate for the ministry, before receiving the imposition of hands, should formally express his adherence to the faith of the Church as set forth and defined in the preceding declaration; and fourthly, the Synod resolved that before any one could be inscribed in the electoral register of a parish it was necessary to make a declaration that he heartily adhered to the Reformed Church of France, and to the truths of revelation as contained in the sacred books of the Old and New Testaments.

These decisions have been met by strong and obstinate opposition both by Liberal ministers and laymen. And now a few words as to how they were received by the State. In November, 1873, the Council of State passed a minute declaring the legality of the Synod; and a decree of the President of the Republic, dated 28th February, 1874, authorized the publication of the Synod's Declaration of Faith. Nothing, however, was said about the Synod's decision as to future pastors. A circular from the Minister of Worship, December, 1873, communicated to the Presbyterian Councils the religious conditions of the parochial electorate, but those councils which were inclined to Liberalism refused to comply with those instructions, and by a formal vote annulled the new conditions for electorship. The elections held in 1874 were, in these circumstances, declared illegal by the Minister of Worship. Still, the refractory members took no notice of this, and the elections of 1877 were all finally approved by the State in whatever way they were held. Since then the several Governments have rather taken the side of the Liberals, and put the Evangelicals on the defensive, and in fact "the Church has been turned into one of the public services, paid and administered by the State, with little beyond the shadow of independence." Each of the two parties holds one or more conferences annually, without formal delegation, and discuss Church matters. At the meetings of the Evangelicals, discussions frequently take place in the direction of self-government and emancipation from the State; and although they are not courageous enough to take this step at present, it seems pretty certain that they will be ere long compelled to do so if they desire to retain any of the characteristics of a living Church of Christ. If the present Government remain in power, it is probable that the application of the Concordat will be but of short duration. A motion will shortly be made in the Chamber of Deputies by a prominent Republican, backed by some eighty members, to put an end to the present connection between Church and State; and M. Paul Bert, the Minister of Worship, in addressing the other day some of the delegations from the churches, admitted that the strict execution of the Concordat was but a provisional expedient, as the movement which had commenced in the country would undoubtedly lead in time to the separation of Church and State. It is believed, therefore, that this has been decided on in principle by the Ministry, and that its execution is only a matter of time. The Reformed Church of France, therefore, may be released from its present state of bondage earlier, and in a different way than it expects.

T. H.  
Paris, November 29th, 1881.

#### WHAT IS BEING DONE FOR THE CHINESE IN AMERICA.

MR. EDITOR,—That the Chinaman in America is subject to many unnecessary hardships and much cruel oppression is a fact as disgraceful as it is undeniable. This, however, is but one side of the question;

and having lately seen statements in print to the effect that even the Christian Churches, while professing great zeal for the Chinese at a distance, were entirely neglecting those in our own midst, I have been led to make some inquiries into the matter. The result I now place before your readers. It will, I think, shew that not only is the charge of "indifference," brought against the Church, unfounded, but that a very earnest and successful work is being carried on among the Chinese of this continent.

#### NEW YORK.

The late census places the number of Chinese in this city at 750. There are six Chinese Sabbath schools in connection with the Presbyterian Church, one in connection with the Methodist Church, and one with the Baptist—eight in all. The average attendance is eighty, while the number of names on the roll is very much larger.

There are also week evening schools for Chinamen, in which religious as well as secular instruction is imparted, and apparently much good done. The report of one of these says: "The school during the year has been full of interest. The largest number on the roll for one month has been forty-five, the smallest number thirty-four, average thirty-eight. The new pupils entering the school during the year were 106. Thirty-six former scholars have returned, some having been absent several years. One had been away nearly seven years, another six, and two others four years. They gave good evidence that the school had not lost its power and influence over them."

#### BROOKLYN.

Present number of Chinese here 159. Christian work commenced in the summer of 1879 by Mr. S. S. Parsons, 163 Broadway, New York. In a private letter Mr. Parsons says: "Our average attendance for nearly eighteen months was about twenty-five; the largest number at one session thirty-nine. One pupil, after being in the school for a single year, wrote Mr. Parsons a letter in 'a good, plain hand, correctly spelled.' The following is an extract: 'I am going home to China. I am sorry to leave the school, but I hope to come back in the spring. I shall try not to forget what I have learned, and I thank you all for teaching the Chinese.' Another pupil writes: 'When I lived in China I worshipped idols. Now I know it is wicked. I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and love Him.'"

"The sad fact," says Mr. Parsons, "that our people compel the Chinese to work on the Sabbath is a hindrance to us, but the Chinese soon learn that all the people here are not Christians. One of the pupils who went to Ashbury Park last summer closed his laundry every Sabbath, putting up a sign on the window and inside, 'No work delivered on the Lord's Day.'"

At present there are five Chinese Sunday schools in Brooklyn. Mr. Parsons says: "Teaching these people I consider a real mission work, and one that pays well. I look upon the days spent in the work as among the most profitable of my life. It needs patience and care, for the Chinese are easily offended, and they want a regular teacher."

#### SAN FRANCISCO.

Here there are no less than 21,000 Chinese. Christian work was commenced in 1852. At present the Presbyterian Church alone has in this city no less than nine missionary labourers, besides the superintendent, Rev. A. W. Loomis, D.D. Dr. Loomis, in his last report, says: "The chapel services have been more interesting during the past year than ever before. The congregations are always well attended, the average being about eighty-five. Ten persons were received into communion with the Church during the year. The whole number received from the beginning, on profession of faith, is 118.

"There is a school every evening in the week, where secular and religious instruction is given. The attendance is from 90 to 120.

Some of those who have been thus educated and hopefully converted have returned to their native country, and have proved themselves faithful followers of the Lord Jesus there. Most interesting letters are being constantly received from such. "This," says the report, "is the way by which the work of evangelization in China is to be carried on, through the influence of missions here co-operating with missions in China, much more rapidly and efficiently than if those China missions were left to work on without the aid of those who return from America, and who go