

Pope and bishops knew the consequences that were to follow; the spirit of the Government was not hidden from their eyes; it was an era of persecution.

War on Religion.

It is a lamentable fact that there is in France a party bent on the destruction of religion. The war is made on the Catholic Church, because she in France represents religion.

In reality, in intent, and in fact the war is against Christianity under any form, against religion of any kind, against the idea itself of a God reigning over man. The old spirit of Voltaire and the encyclopedists of the eighteenth century never died out in France.

This party of infidels and atheists is far from being France, but it is active, persistent, unscrupulous, and it forces itself with a vengeance to the front. It has grasped the helm of power, and it steers the ship of State into the darkest depths of mischief and irreligion. Yesterday it was Combes, the most brutal of all; to-day it is Clemenceau, somewhat more subdued in his hatred, but yet a leader in the fight.

With such men there reigns another idea, the omnipotence of the State. This was ever the plague of France, even when her rulers were devout Catholics. The State must control all agencies of power; it must brook no rival. Even the Church must be in the hands of the Government. So it was with Louis XIV. and with Napoleon; so it is with the Republic. The Republic is a name in France; it has been well said of it that it sleeps on the bed of Louis XIV. France has never understood the meaning of a Republic, which is respect for private and personal liberty, which is to leave as much as possible to the people, to take to the State only what is needed for the public weal.

Those in Power Intolerant.

The State is a great power, and all must think and act as the State wills. This is certainly the spirit of the infidels who now rule the country; and I am not at all sure it would not be, to some degree at least, the spirit of good Catholics, who, were they to be to-morrow in the ascendancy, would believe it their duty to make everyone go to Mass, as the present Government assumes it as its duty to let no one go to Mass.

I know France from the Channel to the Mediterranean; I know her cities and her villages; I know her people. The masses are not used to political life. For ages they were governed; they do not comprehend the art of governing. Nor is there among the masses the ambition to gain political victory. Paris for a century and a-half has ruled France. Establish a new regime, monarchical or republican, in Paris this evening and the provinces awaken to-morrow morning monarchical or republican. It will require long years to decentralise power in France, to give to each citizen consciousness of personal independence, to obtain through universal suffrage a true expression of national will.

The clergy, who are now the chief sufferers, are much to blame. They, too, have retained, even at the altar and in the pulpit, the spirit of passive obedience inherited from old regimes. Admirable in teaching the catechism, in administering the sacraments, they have never learned the virtues of public life; they have never quickened beneath the activities of the battlefield. Their example and their preaching have left their disciples in the same passivity, and these know nothing of the public defence of principles; saints before the altar, they are cowards before the electoral urn.

Then French Catholics have been unfortunate in many of their leaders and spokesmen. If the masses of the people have learned one thing it is this: that France is a Republic; that they are Republicans. The infidel, the Socialist, who solicits votes, cries out:—'The Republic is in peril; no Republican must cast his vote for a monarchist,' and the masses vote for the infidel or the Socialist in order that the Republic survive, trusting to the Republic to do in the long run what is most serviceable for France and even for religion itself.

The evil goes farther. There is an infidel or a Socialist candidate, and opposed to him a Republican, moderate, conservative, who clings to a peaceful, even religious France. But he is a Republican. Monarchists, generally well-known Catholics, put up a candidate of their own. The king must not be forgotten. If no kings live, scores of them have lived, and fidelity to them is the duty of the hour. What happens? The Moderate Republican is defeated; the infidel Socialist is elected.

No one understood France better than Leo XIII. He bade all Catholics seek the welfare of country and

of Church within the ranks of loyal adherents to the Republic. Had Leo been listened to, France in all probability would have escaped the religious persecution of the present day. Monarchical ideas and plottings have done dreadful injury to the Church in France.

THE 'NEW THEOLOGY'

THE POSITION SUMMED UP

In our issue of February 28 we made editorial reference to the sensation created by the Rev. R. J. Campbell, of the City Temple, London, who, while still professing to be a Christian minister, denied some of the fundamental dogmatic facts on which Christianity rests. Mr. Campbell is but one of many of the non-Catholic clergy who, having no anchorage of fixed principles, are driven hither and thither by every shifting wind of a destructive 'higher criticism'. He has followed the Protestant principles to the logical conclusion that was foreseen and predicted long ago by Catholic theological writers. As the secular newspapers continue to give Mr. Campbell—who, by the way, is said to be no biblical scholar—a great free advertisement, we give hereunder two comments which will be both instructive and interesting to our readers. The first is extracted from the recent Lenten Pastoral of the

ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE

and runs as follows:—

Great as is our gratitude to God for giving us the guidance of His Church in matters of discipline, much greater must it be for the blessing of being members of that mystical body which He established on earth for the preservation of the true faith and the custody of Christian morality. Considering the pride and perversity of the human mind, the Apostle declared that 'there must be heresies,' just as Our Lord said there must be scandals.

Since the days of the Apostles there have been

Cycles of Unbelief

and immorality. It may be stated, without any pessimistic exaggeration, that we are living in one of those cycles, and that in no former age were the foundations of Christian belief and morality more widely or persistently assailed. There are very few dogmas of faith or principles of morality left undisputed. The world witnesses a revival of nearly every form of ancient heresy, and every mode of sensual gratification. You will ask, what is the cause, and what is the remedy? The remote cause, undoubtedly, is the abandonment of the principle of authority, and the adoption of the principle of private judgment. When the authority of the Church was rejected, and the Bible, interpreted by private judgment, substituted as the Rule of Faith, it was foreseen and foretold what disastrous consequences to faith and morality would follow. At first it was claimed that the Bible was so plain and intelligible that all who ran might read. But if that was denied, it was contended that the illumination of the Holy Spirit made manifest to every sincere inquirer the true sense of even the dark and difficult passages of Holy Writ. When these two modes of interpretation were proved to be insufficient by the discordant and contradictory results to which they led, then the necessity of study and of other human aids was admitted. But study and the other human aids only served to lead to wider divergence and more definite contradiction. Then, in desperation, the

Authority of the Church

was again invoked and partially recognised. But this new Church was not the old authoritative Catholic Church, but a creation of the State, or of private individuals, liable to error, incapable of enforcing its interpretation of the Bible, and, therefore, of little practical use in determining its meaning. The result of all these varying standards of faith and contradictory interpretations of Scripture was—1st, the multiplication of sects; and, 2nd, the gradual diminution of the authority of the Bible. It was clearly established by experience that if God had given the Bible for the illumination of the world, He had not, according to the principles of its interpreters, given any trustworthy key to its meaning. In such circumstances it naturally occurred to men of weak faith and daring minds to question whether God had really given the Bible at all as a guide to men. This inquiry, carried on in a thoroughly rationalistic spirit, without reverence for God or for authority, has led to the denial of the inspir-