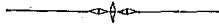


this moving of the waters we are called not to go back to the old ceremonial of the Aaronic priest, but to follow in the steps of the great Melchisedec: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: Thou hast the dew of Thy youth" (Ps. cx. 3).

W. R. FREMANTLE.



ART. II.—A. CENTURY OF REVOLUTION.

A Century of Revolution.—By WILLIAM SAMUEL LILLY. London: Chapman and Hall. 1889.

IT is but natural that the celebration of the centenary of the French Revolution should have produced a host of books, pamphlets, and papers in the periodicals, bearing on this far-reaching event in modern European history. In the volume before us we have one of the most thoughtful of these recent reflections on the French Revolution. No one appears to have noticed that the bicentenary of the "Revolution Settlement" of 1688 in this country passed away without even the breath of a suggestion of duly celebrating it, though in these days we are inundated with such celebrations, engaged as we are constantly in commemorating the dead, and in our life at high-pressure, as it were, trying to join these celebrities as speedily as possible. This omission suggests a vast difference between the revolutions in the two countries: one mainly political and national, but, though local, influencing other nations indirectly; the other social and international in its tendencies—as Mr. Lilly observes: "French, indeed, in its origin, but ecumenical in its influence, which has shaken to the foundation the political order throughout Continental Europe, and which aspires everywhere to re-make society in its own image and likeness." Hence the profound earnestness with which it has been studied ever since. Our author approaches the subject from the purely religious standpoint—for the first time, we believe, that the attempt has been made in this country—and, as in his "Chapters on European History," proves himself thoroughly competent to deal with such topics in the light of the philosophy of history.¹

¹ Perhaps we ought to mention, as an exception, the valuable work of Prebendary Jervis on "The Gallican Church and the Revolution," though its value consists chiefly in conscientious historical research, and the subject is treated here more from the ecclesiastic, than from the standpoint of philosophy, of history and religion, as now understood. See an article on "The Gallican Church before and after the Revolution," by the present writer in the *Foreign Church Chronicle and Review* for June, 1883.

“What, then, is the idea, the faith, the dogma underlying the Revolution?” The answer Mr. Lilly gives to this question, as put by himself, forms the subject-matter of the book, and may be stated briefly as follows: Its dogma is the declaration of the democratic creed as “the new gospel of the nineteenth century.” Its faith, a strong belief in social regeneration resting on the solidarity of mankind, and thus it is represented by the religion of humanity, Positivist in its tendencies. As the outcome of the “age of reason” inaugurating a new intellectual movement, it has left its deep impress on modern forms of thought, giving it a bent towards natural realism in science and realistic art which again reacts in religion. As to the first, in the declaration of the “rights of men,” the Revolution, according to Mr. Lilly, established a new order, reversing the “public order of Christianity”—*i.e.*, the order of authority with its “vast hierarchy of duties,” as it had existed for fourteen centuries, and establishing a new order of civil society with a multitude of sovereign human units, who—that is to say, the majority of whom—exercise their “sovereignty through their mandatories” (p. 14). With regard to the second, its social creed, that rests on the false assumption that all men are good, that all are born equal, that all, accordingly, may be presumed to have equal rights to an equal share in material good, which again militates against the Christian idea “that man is born with a fault, a taint, a vice of nature” (p. 53), and the Christian idea of subordination, co-ordination, with the discipline they afford for higher ends than material enjoyment. Respecting the third, he quotes M. Thiers’ words, “La république sera naturaliste où elle ne sera pas,” to show how the natural revival preached by Rousseau may be traced in the naturalism of M. Zola, and how thus the Revolution has been the powerful promoter of that fleshly view in Art and mechanical view of nature, which forms one of the tendencies of the “age of progress,” that, moreover, in thus promulgating “a new way of understanding life” it is opposed entirely to that “more excellent way” revealed in spiritual religion. It goes without saying that we are very far from agreeing with Mr. Lilly on all these points, and the triple view of the revolution of liberty, religion, science and art, as conceived by him and expressed in this volume. But, in the main, it must be acknowledged that, though a Romanist writer, he fights here on our side—*i.e.*, in the defence of the faith against what has been called the revolutionary superstition. Moreover, in not crediting the Reformation, as the parent of the Revolution, and as such responsible for all the individualistic excesses of the latter, and in abstaining from a cry for the counter revolution which is now being raised by the whole body of the clerical reaction among his co-religionists throughout the

Continent, he observes a tone of wise tolerance and judicious calm, whilst the volume throughout bears witness to the devout earnestness of the writer in his vindication of Christianity and Christian philosophy as against the anti-Christian fervour of revolutionary atheism. Without being captious, we may, however, point out one error of some importance, which is not committed by others, writing, as our author does, from the Roman Catholic standpoint. In Bishop Freppel's recent brochure on the Revolution, and the writings of others, it has been shown once more that the real change from the old order to the new was effected before the outbreak of the Revolution, by the undermining process of the rationalistic ideas prevailing under, and profoundly influencing the policy of the *ancien régime*. But we would go further back even than this, and attribute the change which had passed over men's minds on the subject of the Divine right of kings, the Divinely-appointed order of nobility, and the Divine mission of the Church to the natural effects of misrule and incompetence, the abuses of absolute power, and the moral defection of the pillars of society, the selfishness of the higher orders, and servility of the clergy. Thus the halo which had surrounded the ancient monarchy and seignorial rule, as the survival of feudalism, had disappeared, and had not been eclipsed by the philosophy of Voltaire, "the very eye of the eighteenth century illumination;" it had ceased to give shine to the world, and thus its glory had departed. The ancient society, as Mr. Lilly points out, as M. Taine, Carlyle and others have shown before this, had become "corrupt and outworn"; it only shone like rotten wood in the dark. It had become an oppressive system of prescription and privilege, and had lost its spell; the Divine light had gone out of it, and then it finally was extinguished in the horrors of the Revolution.

There is another passage in which Mr. Lilly's historical criticism is incorrect, if not somewhat unfair; it is the following:

Mediæval history, considered as a whole, is the history of the gradual emancipation of all the forces which make up individual life, and of the assignment to them of their due place in the public order. . . . The gradual vindication of man's right to be himself, to live out his own life, was wrought by men who felt the ineffable greatness of man, and the infinite value of life (pp. 31, 32).

In thus comparing the mediæval with the modern sense of the dignity of personality in favour of the former, he certainly misinterprets history and slightly misrepresents historical facts. The claims of individual rights and the unfettered use of powers, in other words, civic and religious freedom and liberty of conscience, or, as Mr. Lilly speaks of it, the "autonomy of conscience," are, as he justly points out, the result of the spread

of Christianity. It was a flower of slow growth, struggling for the light throughout the dark ages; but it did not actually come into bloom before the Reformation. As M. Quinet in his work on "Christianity and the Revolution," and Mr. F. Seebohm in his monograph on the "Era of the Protestant Revolution," have shown—neither of them interested to extol the Reformation—it was owing to the spirit of freedom in the Reformed Churches that Protestant countries were saved from the violence of revolution. For as the Reformation in this country was a return to primitive religion, so its revolution was a vindication of ancient liberties, not, as in France, an attempt to create a new order of things, but a return to the old. To "*decatholicize*" France is still the avowed attempt of those who hold to the revolutionary idea, because the Church represents the party of reaction, and is supposed to be the enemy of social emancipation and political liberty. The Swiss Reformers and Calvin founded their new order on a republican basis, whilst, as Mr. Seebohm puts it, in France the middle term is wanted since the banishment of the Huguenots between the religious and reformatory elements.¹ Mr. Lilly is more successful in showing how the claims of individual liberty and the final triumph of individualism as a matter of course brought modern society face to face with the new social problem, how to reconcile equivalence of political rights with inequality of possession, since, as he points out forcibly enough, "liberty is rooted and grounded in inequality" (p. 35). "Laissez faire, laissez aller," or free competition, was the demand of the Economistes, those philanthropic precursors of the Revolution, who imagined that "natural liberty"—*i.e.*, liberty of contract, freedom from trade restrictions and regal regulations—would restore the equilibrium to the finances, open new avenues to commerce, and spread comfort and contentment among all classes in opening a free career to all the talents. The real outcome of the Revolution has been, according to our author, the "chaos of hostile individuals," and the great social problem of the hour is, therefore, how to satisfy the rising democracy, armed with powers of outvoting the minority, who are in possession of the wealth of the country, "legislating away the property of one class and transferring it to another;"² further, how to recollect the atoms of society "disconnected," as Burke predicted a hundred years ago, "into the dust and powder of individuality," in the absence of those corporate social institu-

¹ "Le Christianisme et la Révolution française" par E. Quinet, p. 290 *et seq.* "The Era of the Protestant Revolution," by Frederic Seebohm, pp. 197, 211.

² "Popular Government," by Sir Henry Sumner Maine, K.C.S.I., LL.D., F.R.S., etc., p. 106.

tions which the Revolution abolished; and, in the last place, how to avert the danger of the "coming slavery" in the "people's state," if social democracy is to obtain the upper hand. Where is the remedy and the clue to a solution of these questions which universal suffrage, liberty of contract, and socialistic agitation, the result of the principles of 1793, have called into existence? The answer can be given best after a short consideration of the revolutionary method of solving the last problems of life and mind. The Revolution was, and still is, as Mr. Lilly shows, the determinate enemy of the "theistic idea;" refusing any spiritual explanation of the universe, which regards nature as "a veil, a parable, and a sacrament." But atheism, as "la passion de la cervelle," is closely allied to materialistic socialism, as "le passion de l'estomac;" for those who no longer look forward to a heavenly paradise, demand an earthly one: the demand follows on the part of the materialized and unchristianized masses for an ample share of temporal enjoyment. "The real question of our day is not political, but social—what there is to devour, and who shall devour it?" (p. 169). Thus the freedom of the Revolution becomes a liberation of the passions, whereas real freedom, in the words of Mr. Green, quoted by Lilly under this head, ought to be, "the liberation of the powers of all men equally for contributing to a common good." This can be brought about by the power of Christianity alone; and from what has been said, it follows that to it we must look for a solution of the problem.

As shortly after the restoration succeeding the Revolution in France a number of men rose up, like Chateaubriand and Lamartine, to lead the world back to a more spiritual view of things, and Romanism was strengthened in its alliance with Romanticism from Paris to Moscow, so, too, now there is a turn in the tide from materialistic views of life to "spirituality," of which the Romanist revival and the Ritualist movement in our own Church, in their æsthetic and mystical tendencies, are a sign and token. As an attempt to turn the world from mercenary and mechanical modes of life, as a relief from materialistic absorption in worldly pursuits, they command some sympathy and respect; but at the same time it must be observed that not in a return to mediæval forms of pietistic mysticism, but in robust forms of rational belief in the power of Christianity, lies the hope of the society of the future, now wistfully looking forward to the "coming revolution." It is faith in the social mission of Christianity as the greatest spiritual force to transform this egotistical age, as the most powerful bond of union to keep together the "fortuitous congeries of sovereign human units" dispersed by the centrifugal forces let loose by the Revolution, as the most potent of guiding influences to teach the many-

headed and multitudinous sovereign the right use of his newly-acquired powers, that we must look for this purpose.

Democracy, as a form of government, may or may not be the best. On this we pronounce no opinion. Its irresistible progress, regarded with dread by some of the foremost representatives of culture at home and abroad, is not doubted by any. Even Mr. Lilly, who speaks of its difficulties and fragility, does not for a moment anticipate its failure in the immediate future. Under these circumstances, is it not better to face the unavoidable in a fearless manner, and direct its onward course into safe channels? True, its development in modern France is not encouraging, but that, in great measure, is owing to the characteristics of the French people, and not to their political and social institutions. A glance across the Atlantic, and the effects of the rule of individualism and the "triumph of democracy" in the United States, may produce a more reassuring effect. There, too, no doubt, the social problem exists, and even in some of its graver aspects. But there, too, as De Tocqueville pointed out thirty years ago in his work on *American Democracy*, the visible faith of the people, who are an essentially religious people, has saved democracy from its own worst passions:

Religious people are naturally strong precisely in the place where democratic peoples are apt to be weak, hence we may learn how important it is for men to retain their religion in becoming equals.

The Americans show practically how they recognise the necessity to moralize democracy through religion. What they think on this head, as far as they are concerned, is a truth with which every democratic nation ought to be penetrated.¹

The growth of democracy in this country, on which Mr. Lilly pronounces judgment in his last chapter, entitled "The Revolution of England," is undoubted; but even here Mr. Lilly is not desponding. If it is to be of that superior type characterized by himself as "a temperate, rational, regulated democracy," it must be interpenetrated by the Christian spirit. If, in the words of Montalembert, quoted by him, "the problem of this century is to keep in check and to regulate democracy without vitiating it, to organize it in a limited monarchy or Conservative republic" (p. 197), surely it is one of the functions of the National Church of this country, as its spiritual organon, to help in thus solving it.

M. KAUFMANN.

¹ *Œuvres Complètes de Alexis de Tocqueville*, tome iii., pp. 36, 233.