

**THE CHURCH IN FRANCE:
TWO LECTURES
DELIVERED AT THE
ROYAL INSTITUTION**

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The Church in France: Two Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution by John Edward Courtenay Bodley

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BY

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PREFACE.

THE work of a lecture is usually accomplished in the hour of its delivery. There seemed to be no reason why these lectures should make an exception to the rule, so at first I refused to have them printed excepting in the public press. But the many requests which were made to me, both by writers in the journals and by private correspondents, at last induced me to change my mind, for the following reason. It was after an illness, which for two years had stayed all progress in my long-promised work on *The Church in France*, that the lectures were given. I had hoped that their preparation might be the first step towards the resumption of a task, rendered more laborious by the fact that in the interval the ecclesiastical system in France had undergone a revolution. But the slight effort of writing and delivering the lectures laid me aside once again

for a month, and made it manifest that for many more months only a slow advance could be made towards the completion of a work begun nearly eight years ago.

It was pointed out to me that, meanwhile, although many people in England took a lively interest in the religious crisis in France, there was no book, large or small, in the English language to help them to understand the constitution of the Concordatory Church, now disestablished, or to follow the phases of the controversy, which has by no means come to an end with the passing of the Separation Law of last December. I therefore consented to the publication of the lectures in the hope that they may be of some little service to students of contemporary France, and that they may seem more satisfactory to the public than they are to the author. For in places a whole chapter of French history, the result of long labour and research, has had to be compressed into a single sentence; and while such brevity may be agreeable to the hurried reader, it makes

the writer conscious of a lack of proportion which is a feature of concise generalisation always apparent to the careful student.

With the exception of a few footnotes without importance and the modification of one passage the lectures are printed just as they were delivered. The rule of the Royal Institution forbids the discussion of controversial questions on its platform, and my cross-bench mind was well content with that restriction. For the two sides of a burning controversy cannot be summed up in a few words; and, moreover, easy as it is to criticise the excesses of clericals or of anti-clericals in France, it is less easy to foresee whither the issue of their latest and greatest battle will lead the Church and the nation. Only two things seem to be certain. The one is that the abrogation of the Concordat is the first serious breach made in the administrative fabric constructed by Napoleon, which for over a century has preserved France from anarchy through three revolutions and seven changes of régime. The other is that the