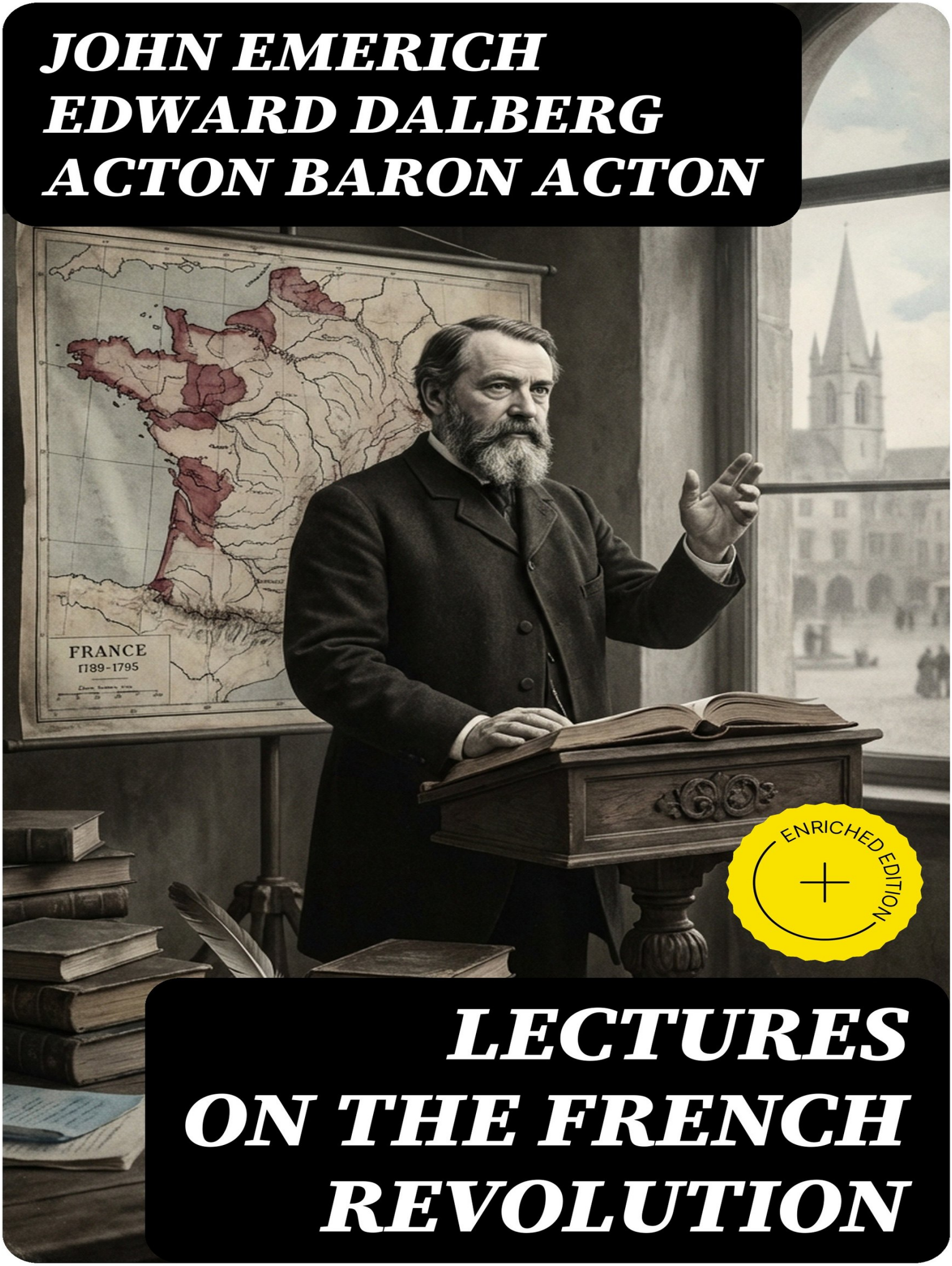
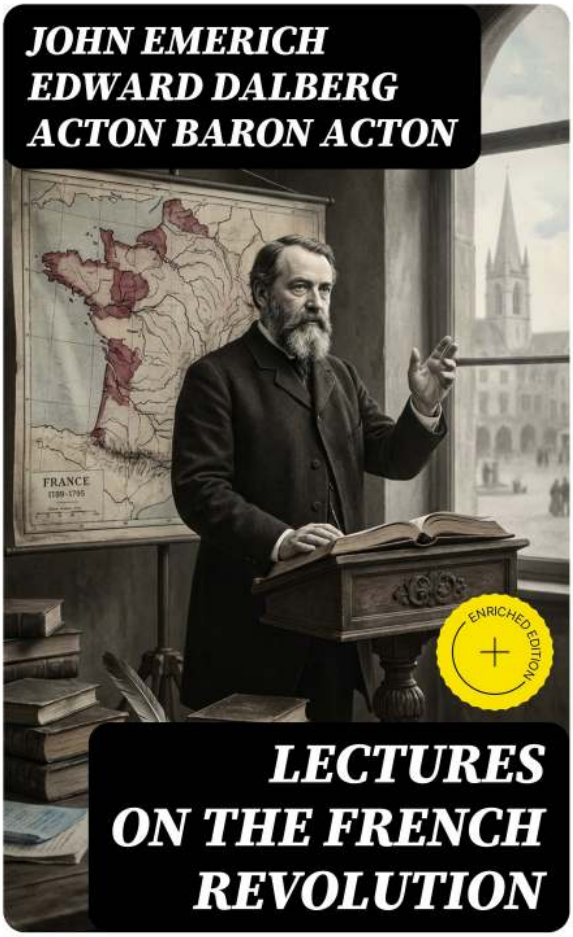
JOHN EMERICH EDWARD DALBERG ACTON BARON ACTON



LECTURES ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION


JOHN EMERICH
EDWARD DALBERG
ACTON BARON ACTON
FRANCE
1789-1795
ENRICHED EDITION
LECTURES
ON THE FRENCH
REVOLUTION

John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton Baron Acton

Lectures on the French Revolution

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Max Dillon

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Introduction

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Acton’s Lectures on the French Revolution revolve around the stubborn paradox that a movement launched in the name of liberty can inaugurate new forms of domination, compelling readers to measure political righteousness not by exalted intentions but by the disciplined restraints that prevent power, popular or princely, from overrunning conscience, law, and human dignity, and to consider how the fate of institutions, churches, courts, assemblies, and the press under sudden democratization reveals the true temper of modern freedom and the perilous speed with which vindication of rights can be converted into machinery of coercion when principle yields to necessity or acclaim.

Composed as a series of historical lectures on the upheavals that remade France and Europe at the close of the eighteenth century, this work belongs to the tradition of analytical political history rather than narrative chronicle. Acton, a historian and moral philosopher of public life, delivered these lectures during his tenure as Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge in the late nineteenth century, and they were published after his death in the early twentieth century. The setting is the Revolution’s intellectual and institutional theatre—Paris, the provinces, and the diplomatic stage—viewed with a European horizon that keeps national events in comparative perspective.

The premise is not to recount every decree and street battle but to probe the ideas, structures, and moral decisions that propelled and constrained revolutionary change. The reading experience is deliberative and exacting: Acton moves from antecedents to consequences with an eye for causes that are intellectual as much as material, weighing doctrines alongside personalities and procedures. His voice is measured yet insistent, erudite without pedantry, shaped by wide reading in European history. The style rewards attentive readers with carefully built arguments, lucid distinctions, and steady cross-references that replace spectacle with scrutiny and elevate judgment over excitement while preserving the drama of transformation.

Several themes recur with clarifying force. Acton examines the contest between sovereignty claimed by the people and the limits that safeguard liberty; he follows the trials of conscience where religious authority meets civil reform; he traces the struggle to define constitutionalism when emergencies demand swift action. He is attentive to the moral responsibility of actors who invoke necessity, to the diffusion of ideas across borders, and to the unintended outcomes that attend the reorganization of law, education, and property. The lectures persistently ask whether ends can justify means, and how a state’s machinery can be bound to justice when passions run high.

These inquiries remain pressing today because they illuminate the dynamics of crisis politics that recur under new names. Contemporary societies debate emergency powers, the boundaries of protest, the reach of executive

authority, and the guardrails protecting minorities and dissent; Acton’s analysis supplies criteria for judgment that resist romanticism and cynicism alike. He shows how rhetoric about the people can mask concentration of power, how reform can fortify or erode accountability, and how legal continuity matters when legitimacy is fragile. Readers encounter not prescriptions for policy but habits of evaluation that help separate principled change from opportunism in polarized public life.

Methodologically, the work blends political thought with institutional history, testing ideals against constitutions, committees, courts, and diplomacy. Comparative moments place France within a continental debate about representation, rights, and the uses of force, so that the Revolution becomes a lens on modernity rather than a self-contained episode. Acton’s ethical framing does not demand agreement, yet it sharpens questions about responsibility and restraint that many narratives blur. He favors evidence weighed across time, not anecdotes, and he refuses the comfort of inevitability. The result is a reflective guide that equips readers to dispute conclusions while adopting the discipline of careful historical judgment.

Approached as a rigorous companion rather than a pageant, Lectures on the French Revolution invites patient engagement and rewards it with enlarged perspective. It steadies the reader amid competing myths by joining close attention to institutional detail with a consistent concern for liberty’s conditions. Without foreclosing interpretation, it challenges hasty analogies and the flattery of simple morals. In an era awash with accelerated change and

sweeping claims on behalf of justice, its pages advise vigilance about the uses of necessity and a cultivated respect for limits. To read Acton here is to train one’s political conscience as much as one’s historical understanding.

Synopsis

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Lectures on the French Revolution is a posthumous collection of Lord Acton’s teaching on 1789 and its aftermath, shaped by his role as a historian of liberty. John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, Baron Acton, approaches the Revolution not as a sequence of episodes but as a testing ground for moral and constitutional ideas. He places institutions, principles, and responsibility at the center, asking how a movement for rights became entangled with coercion. The lectures survey events while constantly weighing them against standards of conscience and law, using comparative references to other polities to illuminate choices open to French actors and their far-reaching consequences.

Acton begins by tracing underlying causes, linking fiscal breakdown and administrative centralization to older structures of privilege. He situates the intellectual ferment of the Enlightenment alongside the example of the American Revolution, yet distinguishes between theoretical sovereignty and workable constitutional checks. Competing notions of representation, the role of the parlements, and the growth of public opinion set the stage for a confrontation with monarchy that reform alone could not resolve. Throughout, he asks how prudential reform might have preserved liberty better than sweeping abstractions, establishing a central tension between ideals proclaimed in

universal terms and the practical safeguards needed to restrain power.

He then examines the early constitutional phase, from the transformation of the Estates-General into a national legislature to the abolition of feudal burdens and the proclamation of rights. Efforts to reconcile monarchy and nation reveal both creativity and fragility, as institutions are built while trust in the crown erodes. Municipal reforms, citizen militias, and an energized press expand participation but magnify volatility. Acton’s analysis highlights the promise of legal equality and open citizenship, yet stresses deficiencies in guarantees, the problem of concentrated sovereignty, and the growing influence of clubs and factions that displaced deliberation with pressure, surveillance, and orchestrated opinion.

Religious policy forms a crucial axis in his account. The reorganization of the Church, the requirement of oaths, and the resulting schism create a moral and political rift that radiates beyond Paris. Acton treats this conflict as a turning point: measures intended to bind allegiance disrupt consciences, provoke resistance in regions attached to traditional worship, and invite foreign scrutiny. He follows the diplomatic and social repercussions as authority seeks uniformity and believers claim exemption, showing how questions of spiritual jurisdiction and property ignite wider struggles. The religious divide becomes, in his telling, a catalyst for polarization and a test of tolerance.

War accelerates the transformation of politics. As external threats mount, emergency institutions arise, procedures harden, and suspicion becomes systemic. Acton

charts the passage from idealized citizenship to compelled conformity, examining how committees, tribunals, and surveillance apparatuses expand under the argument of necessity. He measures the resort to coercion against enduring principles, resisting any simple reconciliation between lofty aims and violent means. Leaders’ ideas and temperaments matter, but the structures they create, he argues, acquire their own momentum. The period’s rhetoric of virtue yields, in practice, to centralized control, revealing tensions between national defense, social equality, and the preservation of liberty.

With the crest of revolutionary intensity past, Acton follows reaction, experimentation, and the gradual ascent of military authority. Thermidor brings relief but not security; the Directory governs amid factionalism, economic strain, and recurring coups. Constitutional devices multiply yet prove brittle under pressure. Into this uncertainty steps a commanding figure who concentrates power while retaining select reforms and projecting administrative efficiency. Acton underscores the paradox: the Revolution’s drive to abolish privilege yields an order that codifies equality before the law but entrenches centralization. The result mixes innovation and restraint, suggesting both continuity with earlier statecraft and a decisive redefinition of sovereignty.

The lectures close by assessing legacies rather than delivering a single verdict. Acton emphasizes what endures: the diffusion of rights language, the dismantling of feudal remnants, and the modern pattern of state authority claiming broad mandates. He invites readers to judge revolutions by the institutions they create and the moral

costs they accept, insisting on safeguards that protect conscience, minorities, and limits to power. Beyond French borders, his analysis links 1789 to later struggles over nationalism, church and state, and constitutional design. The work’s resonance lies in its sober measurement of ideals against outcomes, a framework that remains instructive without prescribing conclusions.

Historical Context

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John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, 1st Baron Acton, composed his Lectures on the French Revolution against the backdrop of eighteenth-century France's absolutist institutions. Under the Bourbon monarchy at Versailles, royal councils, intendants, and provincial parlements administered a centralized, privilege-laden society divided among clergy, nobility, and commoners. Fiscal pressures from long wars, including the Seven Years' War and support for the American Revolution, strained the crown. Reforming ministers like Turgot and Necker encountered entrenched resistance. The Estates system and corporate privileges shaped political representation, while censorship and police oversight coexisted uneasily with a growing urban public. This institutional context frames Acton's attention to law, authority, and accountability.

Intellectual currents of the Enlightenment provided language for criticism and reform. Montesquieu's Spirit of the Laws (1748) explored separation of powers; Rousseau's Social Contract (1762) emphasized popular sovereignty; Voltaire championed toleration. Salons, Masonic lodges, and a booming print culture circulated ideas that questioned arbitrariness. At the same time, mounting debt, regressive taxation, and failures of administrative reform produced a constitutional crisis. The Assembly of Notables met in 1787-1788 but refused blanket approval of new fiscal measures. The crown convened the Estates-General for May 1789,

reopening disputes over representation and voting by order or by head that would shape early revolutionary politics.

Events in 1789 transformed that crisis into revolution. The Estates-General opened on 5 May; on 17 June the Third Estate declared itself the National Assembly, and on 20 June deputies swore the Tennis Court Oath to draft a constitution. The storming of the Bastille on 14 July became a symbol of the collapse of royal authority. Rural panic and revolt during the Great Fear prompted the 4 August decrees abolishing many feudal privileges, followed by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen on 26 August. After the October Days, a constitutional monarchy emerged with the 1791 Constitution.

Religious policy quickly became a central fault line. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy (1790) reorganized the Church, made clergy salaried state officials, and required an oath of fidelity, splitting "juror" and "refractory" priests. Pope Pius VI condemned the measure in 1791. The king's attempted Flight to Varennes that year damaged confidence in constitutional monarchy. War with Austria began in April 1792, precipitating the fall of the monarchy and the September Massacres. The National Convention proclaimed a republic and tried Louis XVI, executing him in January 1793. These conflicts set the stage for emergency government and increasingly coercive revolutionary measures.

Facing foreign invasion and civil war, the Convention created the Committee of Public Safety, oversaw the levee en masse, and enacted policies historians label the Reign of Terror (1793-1794), marked by extraordinary tribunals and

extensive repression. De-Christianization campaigns and brutal conflict in the Vendee deepened the rupture between revolutionary authority and religious communities. The fall of Robespierre on 9 Thermidor Year II (27 July 1794) ended the Terror and led to the Directory, a fragile regime beset by coups. Napoleon Bonaparte's coup of 18 Brumaire Year VIII (9 November 1799) established the Consulate, followed by the Concordat of 1801 with the papacy.

Across the Channel, Britain debated the Revolution while entering war with France in 1793. Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790) warned against radical change, while Thomas Paine's Rights of Man (1791-1792) defended revolutionary principles. Pitt's government prosecuted radicals and tightened controls during the 1790s. The ensuing British constitutional discourse, alongside the tradition of limited government, strongly informed Acton's outlook. A Roman Catholic liberal in a polity where Catholic civil rights were only secured in 1829, Acton later wrote to Bishop Mandell Creighton in 1887 that "Power tends to corrupt," insisting on moral accountability for rulers and revolutionaries alike.

Acton's scholarly formation was cosmopolitan. He studied in Munich with Ignaz von Döllinger, absorbed German historical methods associated with Leopold von Ranke, and cultivated vast reading in European archives and libraries. During the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) he opposed the definition of papal infallibility, aligning with liberal Catholic critiques of ultramontanism while remaining within the Church. Appointed Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge in 1895, he delivered his inaugural lecture "On

the Study of History," promoted source-based, comparative scholarship, and launched The Cambridge Modern History. He maintained that historians must judge abuses of power, a principle that shapes his analysis of revolution.

Lectures on the French Revolution crystallizes these concerns. Prepared for Cambridge teaching in the mid-1890s and assembled from Acton's manuscripts and student notes, the volume appeared posthumously in 1910, edited by John Neville Figgis and Reginald Vere Laurence. It assesses the Revolution through themes of constitutional liberty, conscience, religious policy, and the dangers of concentrated power. While attentive to the Declaration of Rights and institutional innovation, it is sharply critical of coercive expedients and dictatorship from Jacobin to imperial forms. The work thus reflects late Victorian and Edwardian liberal historiography: cosmopolitan, source-driven, morally exacting, and wary of any regime that claims necessity to override law.

Lectures on the French Revolution

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THE HERALDS OF THE REVOLUTION

The revenue of France was near twenty millions when Lewis XVI[1]., finding it inadequate, called upon the nation for supply. In a single lifetime it rose to far more than one hundred millions, while the national income grew still more rapidly; and this increase was wrought by a class to whom the ancient monarchy denied its best rewards, and whom it deprived of power in the country they enriched. As their industry effected change in the distribution of property, and wealth ceased to be the prerogative of a few, the excluded majority perceived that their disabilities rested on no foundation of right and justice, and were unsupported by reasons of State. They proposed that the prizes in the Government, the Army, and the Church should be given to merit among the active and necessary portion of the people, and that no privilege injurious to them should be reserved for the unprofitable minority. Being nearly an hundred to one, they deemed that they were virtually the substance of the nation, and they claimed to govern themselves with a power proportioned to their numbers. They demanded that the State should be reformed, that the ruler should be their agent, not their master.

That is the French Revolution[1q]. To see that it is not a meteor from the unknown, but the product of historic influences which, by their union were efficient to destroy, and by their division powerless to construct, we must follow for a moment the procession of ideas that went before, and

bind it to the law of continuity and the operation of constant forces.

If France failed where other nations have succeeded, and if the passage from the feudal and aristocratic forms of society to the industrial and democratic was attended by convulsions, the cause was not in the men of that day, but in the ground on which they stood. As long as the despotic kings were victorious abroad, they were accepted at home. The first signals of revolutionary thinking lurk dimly among the oppressed minorities during intervals of disaster. The Jansenists**[2]** were loyal and patient; but their famous jurist Domat**[3]** was a philosopher, and is remembered as the writer who restored the supremacy of reason in the chaotic jurisprudence of the time. He had learnt from St. Thomas, a great name in the school he belonged to, that legislation ought to be for the people and by the people, that the cashiering of bad kings may be not only a right but a duty. He insisted that law shall proceed from common sense, not from custom, and shall draw its precepts from an eternal code. The principle of the higher law signifies Revolution**[2q]**. No government founded on positive enactments only can stand before it, and it points the way to that system of primitive, universal, and indefeasible rights which the lawyers of the Assembly, descending from Domat, prefixed to their constitution.

Under the edict of Nantes**[4]** the Protestants were decided royalists; so that, even after the Revocation, Bayle, the apostle of Toleration, retained his loyalty in exile at Rotterdam. His enemy, Jurieu, though intolerant as a divine, was liberal in his politics, and contracted in the

neighbourhood of William of Orange the temper of a continental Whig. He taught that sovereignty comes from the people and reverts to the people. The Crown forfeits powers it has made ill use of. The rights of the nation cannot be forfeited. The people alone possess an authority which is legitimate without conditions, and their acts are valid even when they are wrong. The most telling of Jurieu's seditious propositions, preserved in the transparent amber of Bossuet's reply, shared the immortality of a classic, and in time contributed to the doctrine that the democracy is irresponsible and must have its way.

Maultrot, the best ecclesiastical lawyer of the day, published three volumes in 1790 on the power of the people over kings, in which, with accurate research among sources very familiar to him and to nobody else, he explained how the Canon Law approves the principles of 1688 and rejects the modern invention of divine right. His book explains still better the attitude of the clergy in the Revolution, and their brief season of popularity.

The true originator of the opposition in literature was Fénelon**[5]**. He was neither an innovating reformer nor a discoverer of new truth; but as a singularly independent and most intelligent witness, he was the first who saw through the majestic hypocrisy of the court, and knew that France was on the road to ruin. The revolt of conscience began with him before the glory of the monarchy was clouded over. His views grew from an extraordinary perspicacity and refinement in the estimate of men. He learnt to refer the problem of government, like the conduct of private life, to the mere standard of morals, and extended further than any

one the plain but hazardous practice of deciding all things by the exclusive precepts of enlightened virtue. If he did not know all about policy and international science, he could always tell what would be expected of a hypothetically perfect man. Fénelon feels like a citizen of Christian Europe, but he pursues his thoughts apart from his country or his church, and his deepest utterances are in the mouth of pagans. He desired to be alike true to his own beliefs, and gracious towards those who dispute them. He approved neither the deposing power nor the punishment of error, and declared that the highest need of the Church was not victory but liberty. Through his friends, Fleury and Chevreuse, he favoured the recall of the Protestants, and he advised a general toleration. He would have the secular power kept aloof from ecclesiastical concerns, because protection leads to religious servitude and persecution to religious hypocrisy. There were moments when his steps seemed to approach the border of the undiscovered land where Church and State are parted.

He has written that a historian ought to be neutral between other countries and his own, and he expected the same discipline in politicians, as patriotism cannot absolve a man from his duty to mankind. Therefore no war can be just, unless a war to which we are compelled in the sole cause of freedom. Fénelon wished that France should surrender the ill-gotten conquests of which she was so proud, and especially that she should withdraw from Spain. He declared that the Spaniards were degenerate and imbecile, but that nothing could make that right which was contrary to the balance of power and the security of nations. Holland

seemed to him the hope of Europe, and he thought the allies justified in excluding the French dynasty from Spain for the same reason that no claim of law could have made it right that Philip II. should occupy England. He hoped that his country would be thoroughly humbled, for he dreaded the effects of success on the temperament of the victorious French. He deemed it only fair that Lewis should be compelled to dethrone his grandson with his own guilty hand.

In the judgment of Fénelon, power is poison; and as kings are nearly always bad, they ought not to govern, but only to execute the law. For it is the mark of barbarians to obey precedent and custom. Civilised society must be regulated by a solid code. Nothing but a constitution can avert arbitrary power. The despotism of Lewis XIV. renders him odious and contemptible, and is the cause of all the evils which the country suffers. If the governing power which rightfully belonged to the nation was restored, it would save itself by its own exertion; but absolute authority irreparably saps its foundations, and is bringing on a revolution by which it will not be moderated, but utterly destroyed. Although Fénelon has no wish to sacrifice either the monarchy or the aristocracy, he betrays sympathy with several tendencies of the movement which he foresaw with so much alarm. He admits the state of nature, and thinks civil society not the primitive condition of man, but a result of the passage from savage life to husbandry. He would transfer the duties of government to local and central assemblies; and he demands entire freedom of trade, and education provided by law, because children belong to the

State first and to the family afterwards. He does not resign the hope of making men good by act of parliament, and his belief in public institutions as a means of moulding individual character brings him nearly into touch with a distant future.

He is the Platonic founder of revolutionary thinking. Whilst his real views were little known, he became a popular memory; but some complained that his force was centrifugal, and that a church can no more be preserved by suavity and distinction than a state by liberty and justice. Lewis XVI., we are often told, perished in expiation of the sins of his forefathers. He perished, not because the power he inherited from them had been carried to excess, but because it had been discredited and undermined. One author of this discredit was Fénelon. Until he came, the ablest men, Bossuet and even Bayle, revered the monarchy. Fénelon struck it at the zenith, and treated Lewis XIV. in all his grandeur more severely than the disciples of Voltaire treated Lewis XV. in all his degradation. The season of scorn and shame begins with him. The best of his later contemporaries followed his example, and laid the basis of opposing criticism on motives of religion. They were the men whom Cardinal Dubois describes as dreamers of the same dreams as the chimerical archbishop of Cambray. Their influence fades away before the great change that came over France about the middle of the century.

From that time unbelief so far prevailed that even men who were not professed assailants, as Montesquieu, Condillac, Turgot, were estranged from Christianity. Politically, the consequence was this: men who did not

attribute any deep significance to church questions never acquired definite notions on Church and State, never seriously examined under what conditions religion may be established or disestablished, endowed or disendowed, never even knew whether there exists any general solution, or any principle by which problems of that kind are decided. This defect of knowledge became a fact of importance at a turning-point in the Revolution. The theory of the relations between states and churches is bound up with the theory of Toleration, and on that subject the eighteenth century scarcely rose above an intermittent, embarrassed, and unscientific view. For religious liberty is composed of the properties both of religion and of liberty, and one of its factors never became an object of disinterested observation among actual leaders of opinion. They preferred the argument of doubt to the argument of certitude, and sought to defeat intolerance by casting out revelation as they had defeated the persecution of witches by casting out the devil. There remained a flaw in their liberalism, for liberty apart from belief is liberty with a good deal of the substance taken out of it. The problem is less complicated and the solution less radical and less profound. Already, then, there were writers who held somewhat superficially the conviction, which Tocqueville made a corner-stone, that nations that have not the self-governing force of religion within them are unprepared for freedom.

The early notions of reform moved on French lines, striving to utilise the existing form of society, to employ the parliamentary aristocracy, to revive the States-General and the provincial assemblies. But the scheme of standing on

the ancient ways, and raising a new France on the substructure of the old, brought out the fact that whatever growth of institutions there once had been had been stunted and stood still. If the mediæval polity had been fitted to prosper, its fruit must be gathered from other countries, where the early notions had been pursued far ahead. The first thing to do was to cultivate the foreign example; and with that what we call the eighteenth century began. The English superiority, proclaimed first by Voltaire, was further demonstrated by Montesquieu. For England had recently created a government which was stronger than the institutions that had stood on antiquity. Founded upon fraud and treason, it had yet established the security of law more firmly than it had ever existed under the system of legitimacy, of prolonged inheritance, and of religious sanction. It flourished on the unaccustomed belief that theological dissensions need not detract from the power of the State, while political dissensions are the very secret of its prosperity. The men of questionable character who accomplished the change and had governed for the better part of sixty years, had successfully maintained public order, in spite of conspiracy and rebellion; they had built up an enormous system of national credit, and had been victorious in continental war. The Jacobite doctrine, which was the basis of European monarchy, had been backed by the arms of France, and had failed to shake the newly planted throne. A great experiment had been crowned by a great discovery. A novelty that defied the wisdom of centuries had made good its footing, and revolution had become a principle of stability more sure than tradition.

powers and a more federalist/decentralized policy than the Jacobins.

48 The Temple was a medieval fortress in Paris converted into a prison during the Revolution; members of the royal family, including Louis XVI, were confined there after August 1792.

49 Maximilien Robespierre (1758–1794) was a leading figure of the French Revolution, prominent in the Jacobin Club and the Committee of Public Safety, and a central architect of the Reign of Terror until his overthrow and execution in 1794.

50 Tyburn was the principal site of public executions in London from the late medieval period until the late 18th century, synonymous in contemporary writing with hanging and capital punishment.

51 Joseph Priestley (1733–1804) was an English chemist, dissenting clergyman, and political writer, noted for his scientific work (including studies of gases) and for his reformist views; he was elected to French bodies in 1792 but declined the seat.

52 The Te Deum is an early Christian Latin hymn of praise and thanksgiving traditionally sung or sung in public religious ceremonies to mark great events or victories.

53 The levée en masse (decree of 23 August 1793) was a mass conscription measure of Revolutionary France that mobilized large classes of the population for national defence and greatly expanded the French armies.

54 La Vendée refers to a region in western France and to the counter-revolutionary Catholic and royalist uprising

there (beginning in 1793), which became a major internal conflict of the Revolution.

55 The Conciergerie is a medieval palace-prison on the Île de la Cité in Paris where many revolutionary-era prisoners, including Marie Antoinette, were detained before trial and execution.

56 Jacques-René Hébert was a radical Parisian journalist and political leader whose followers, called Hébertists, promoted extreme revolutionary measures and dechristianisation; he was arrested and executed in 1794.

57 Pierre-Gaspard Chaumette was an influential member of the Paris Commune who championed the Cult of Reason and the closure of churches during the Revolution; he was arrested and executed in 1794.

58 Anacharsis Cloots (Jean-Baptiste du Val-de-Grâce) was a Prussian-born revolutionary orator who advocated universal republicanism and world citizenship and took part in Parisian radical politics before being executed in 1794.

59 A civic-religious festival instituted by Maximilien Robespierre in June 1794 to promote a deistic ‘Supreme Being’ and public virtue as a replacement for revolutionary atheism and the Cult of Reason.

60 The law of 22 Prairial (French Revolutionary calendar) refers to a June 1794 decree that sharply curtailed legal protections in political trials before the Revolutionary Tribunal, accelerating convictions and executions.

61 The Vieux Cordelier was a short-lived political journal published by Camille Desmoulins (late 1793–early 1794) that argued for clemency and criticized excesses of the Terror.

62 The 9th of Thermidor is a date in the French Revolutionary calendar corresponding to 27 July 1794, commonly cited as the day Robespierre was overthrown, marking the end of the Reign of Terror.

63 François de Charette (François Athanase de Charette de la Contrie) was a leader of the Royalist and Catholic insurrection in the Vendée during the French Revolution, commanding guerrilla forces along the Atlantic coast in 1793–1796.

64 Noirmoutier is an island off the Atlantic coast of western France near the mouth of the Loire; it was a strategic stronghold contested during the War in the Vendée and changed hands between Royalist and Republican forces in 1793–1794.

65 l'Aiguillette was a fort commanding the entrance to the harbour of Toulon; possession of it determined control of the ships in the docks and the guns of the arsenal during the 1793 siege.

66 Toulon is a major French Mediterranean naval port that rebelled against the revolutionary government in 1793 and invited British and Spanish forces to garrison its fleet and arsenal, an episode that led to a Republican recapture and helped launch Napoleon Bonaparte's early military reputation.

67 Jeunesse Dorée (literally ‘gilded youth’) was the informal name for groups of young men in post-Thermidor Paris who adopted distinctive dress, performed street violence against Jacobin supporters, and symbolized the social reaction after the Reign of Terror.

68 A prominent moderate French politician of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras who served in the National Assembly and Convention; here he is noted for formally presenting the Constitution to the Assembly.

69 Insurgent royalist guerrillas active especially in Brittany and other parts of western France during the 1790s; the term also denotes the broader Chouannerie movement of rural resistance.

70 The title borne by Charles, the youngest brother of Louis XVI, who lived abroad as an émigré and later ruled as King Charles X of France (reigned 1824–1830); during the Revolution he was a focal point for royalist hopes.

71 Originally the eleventh month in the French Revolutionary calendar; by extension it names the Thermidorian Reaction of July 1794, when Robespierre was overthrown and the most extreme phase of the Terror ended.

72 Short for 'cahiers de doléances', the written lists of grievances and instructions prepared in 1789 by local communities and the three estates to present to the Estates-General ahead of the revolutionary deliberations.

73 Refers to the Treaty(s) of Basel concluded at Basel, Switzerland; in the Revolutionary period this usually denotes the 1795 agreements by which France made peace with several members of the First Coalition (notably Prussia and Spain), signed in different months of 1795.

74 The Chouannerie denotes royalist, guerrilla-style uprisings in western France (notably Brittany and Maine) during and after the Revolution, led by fighters known as Chouans, active roughly in the 1790s.