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THE great revival wrought some twenty years ago in the Canton de Vaud, partly by English instrumentality, has opened Switzerland to the multiform Brito-Christian influences. The Dissenters there having manfully held out against the cold orthodoxy, and the avowed neology prevailing in the national church of the French Cantons, succeeded in having all their claims acknowledged by the Ecclesiastical law of December, 1839, four years only after the first concession, in the shape of civil marriage, had been made to them. They had the greater triumph of awakening, by their opposition, a new life in the national church. They grew strong not in numbers only, but in influence. The sect of the Sardonists in Iverdun, who attempted a re-introduction of the apostolic office and its miraculous powers, tried to walk on the lake, wore long beards, and sent their letters by messengers rather than by the post, had become extinct. Irvingism had once made an inroad in the theological school of the Geneva Evangelical Society, but soon proved too fantastic for a French population. The Dissenters on the whole kept a

sober middle course, and the tolerant principles pervading the Canton, encouraged them to make approaches to pious members of the national church. Points which had long separated the parties, were recognized as not essential; and in the Christian societies formed within the establishment, the voice of the Dissenting minister was scarcely less often heard than that of his "national" brother. Many members of the establishment appeared even ready to join the Dissenting churches, when on a sudden they saw the church Radicalism, to which they owe their offspring, carried to such an extreme as even to endanger their whole existence.

The pious H. Olivier, once a missionary in Upper Canada, then pastor of the Dissenting church at Lausanne, a preacher of considerable eloquence, surprised his congregation (1839) with the solemn declaration, that hitherto he had not preached to them the full truth, but that now the Holy Spirit had enlightened him on the subject of a Christian's faith. It soon became evident that Boucher, a French Wesleyan who taught the doctrine of perfection not without some French Charlatanism, had succeeded in convincing Olivier of the same. Justification by faith having for some time been preached nearly exclusively by the pious ministers of the Canton, occasionally in terms not warranted by Scripture, Olivier succeeded in creating a reaction. He smoothed over some points of Wesley's teaching, and in strange opposition to him, retained the doctrine of absolute predestination, combining it as well as he could with the light lately received. Many heard him with emotion, some prognosticated to him full success. Boucher, on the contrary, treated him as a man unable to comprehend the whole truth, and circulated a translation of Wesley's tract *On Perfection*, accompanying it with notes which exceeded by far all that Wesley had ever stated. The Dissenting congregation in Lausanne was greatly agitated by these differences. It split at first into two or three parties, one Calvinistic, one Calvino-Wesleyan, one proceeding to open Arminianism. Numbers of the national church, who had been ready to join the congregation, retraced their steps, and the old complaints that Dissenting churches are exposed to every wind of doctrine, were preferred by many. In this perplexing state of things, an influential member of the congrega-

tion called for Mr. Darby, the acknowledged leader of the Plymouth brethren.

John Darby, an Irishman of good family, educated for the law, but after his conversion having become a minister of the Episcopal church, had conceived doubts concerning the reality of the apostolic succession. From perceiving interruptions in that chain, he proceeded to reject it altogether, and ended in acknowledging no existing church as such. There remained to him only little assemblies of the children of God dispersed throughout the world, standing on the promise in Matt. xviii. 20. Having formed such an assembly with two or three, he soon found adherents, chiefly at Plymouth, where their number amounts to about 800. Smaller assemblies arose in London, Exeter, and some other places. Several of them are deeply imbued with truly *communistic* principles, giving freely of their property to poorer members, and promoting as far as lies in them an equality which is not of this world. Still the party did not realize the great expectations they had been led to form of their progress in England, and Darby went over to the continent, where he passed some years at Paris and Geneva. He was called in March, 1840, to heal the wounds of the Lausanne congregation, and was expected with no common anxiety. A man far famed for knowledge and power in the Scriptures, regardless of his property, with a simplicity of habits which reminds one of the apostolic age, humble or bold as circumstances may require, indefatigable in his movements, endeavouring to redeem his time so far as to take up the New Testament even during his frugal meals, in order to edify his guests : yet, we must add, confining his charity to those gained or to be gained to his purpose, and less intent on the conversion of souls from Heathenism or Romanism, than on uniting under his standard the converted found among peaceful tolerant communities, he was altogether a character formed for ruling a sect.

As soon as he arrived in Lausanne, he was greeted by the pious as their only prop. Even the ministers who had been acting along with Olivier began to learn anew at his feet : now we have found the man who can lead us into a thorough knowledge of Scripture. And in a short time Wesleyanism was preached down ; not, however, without a number of hard judg-

ments passed on the low amount of vital religion among the Methodists of England. By such polemics, Darby had even the triumph of convincing Olivier of his error; and he, with his congregation, placed himself as humbly under his guidance as the other ministers had done. The little flock of decided Methodists did not, however, follow him, but found a new centre in the excellent Cook, who diminished the chasm between his party and the national church, and soon gained the general esteem of sober Christians, but was treated with unmerciful bitterness by Darby and his friends.

Darby had been called to put down Wesleyanism in Lausanne, but he looked upon this as only the introduction to his real mission. With true *strategical* art, he called upon the souls excited and justly displeased with the sad present, to follow him into the mysteries of prophecy, and learn what was to be the futurity of the church. He commenced evening lectures on the present expectations of the church, and a mixed public thronged to hear him. He there, above all, enlarged on the truth, that a Christian has not only to make sure of being in the father's house, but also of all the privileges to be enjoyed therein. If the children of God knew what their heavenly calling implies, it would influence them to walk here below as pilgrims and strangers. The details are shortly these. Sin has been manifested in two great apostasies; the church apostasy. (Matt. xiii. 36; 1 Tim. iv. 1; Jud. &c.) most apparent in popery, and the political apostasy (since the reformation.) The powers of this world arraigned against God will realize the fourth beast; (Dan. vii.) and the powers of the church will, like the harlot of Rev. xvii., sit on the beast, that is to be the soul and spring of the political rebellion against God. Occasionally it was given to understand that the apostasy of the state has already taken place, and that our dispensation is on the point of closing. All this mass of corruption will cease with Christ's advent, when an awful judgment will overwhelm the apostates. No judgment for the righteous: it is announced only to comfort and warn them of any compromise with the apostasies. The whole tendency of prophecy is this, to separate at once the Christian who has an ear to hear from all the causes which bring on the judgment. The speaker has nothing to do with politics, he warns against them, and begs

all his hearers to leave worldly systems and listen to the grand promises of the future church, the restoration of the Jews to form the earthly congregation, the collection of the Gentile Christians in clouds to meet their Saviour in heavenly places. The whole concludes with a dualistic prospect of the earthly Jerusalem, and its throne manifesting God's righteousness ; and of the heavenly Jerusalem with the tree of life for the healing of the Gentiles : there Jews, here Gentiles, there the Jehovah of the Old Testament, here the grace and truth of the New Testament. Let none oppose to this full revelation of the truth passages such as 1 Cor. ii. 2. Let none confine himself to know of Christ *aussi peu que possible*, let none promise to keep God's commandments, which the Israelites did at Sinai, and were lost ; but let us know and enjoy all the fruits of the salvation brought by Christ.

His success was astonishing. The key to secrets hid for thousands of years was found, the lectures were printed and speedily translated into English and German.

Many hearers of the national church had left the ground on which their church principles were based without observing it, and this chiefly because Darby from the first declared he recognized no distinction between Dissenters and national brethren. So cautiously did he avoid allusions to church questions, that persons who heard him for a long time thought he only spoke of salvation in Christ ; free grace was inculcated so clearly and effectually, that the other ministers appeared as apostles of the law rather than of the Gospel, though before hand these very men had been accused of neglecting to treat of our moral obligations. Whatever came from Darby, the strongest condemnations of theological erudition, the most artificial and sometimes contradictory explanations of types and promises, the most recondite allusions and relations discovered between Scripture and Scripture, all were received as oracles, and nourished in his hearers the unlovely spirit of measuring all men by his standard, and condemning the most worthy for being no Darbys.

Thus the revolution which he had planned, was effected before the unexperienced hearers even perceived it. Darby had become the leader of the congregation without being chosen, without any mention of his Anglican ordination : those who

hitherto had ministered with an authority conferred on them by the congregation, were reduced to cyphers: they indeed did still teach sometimes, but the Lord's Supper was administered every Sunday by Darby and laymen, without any reference to the discipline of the Dissenting churches.

Members of the national church partook of it freely. "Il est extrêmement large—how wide his heart! he urges none to leave the national church." Thus the Dissenting church and the regular ministry were actually annihilated without any consultations on the point, and his admirers said, "he is an enemy of all separations, of all forms which favour it, he only wishes to unite all the children of God."

The next step was to destroy Dissent altogether, and to form free assemblies without any church organization, by attracting all the lively members of the national church. The less there remained of organized forms, the freer the space opened to Darby's overpowering personality. As Puseyism conquered its ground by the tracts for the times, so did Darby, by a gradually progressing publication of his sentiments on church matters. These small treatises contained little to read, little on which to think, and much to act; they went off rapidly. First the Christian church of 18 centuries was felled by the little axe, entitled, "the apostasy of the present dispensation." Then followed "on the formation of churches" wherein he warns of the crime of forming new churches, and gives the death-blow to Dissent. The "liberty of ministry" superseded all regular ministry by the universal priesthood of the saints. The "promise of the Saviour" (Matt. xviii. 20,) raised the standard, under which new assemblies were to collect. And "the schism" branded as schismatics all Christians who should hesitate to join these free assemblies.

The less we say of this atomistic system, the better. Here are the leading features. Israel as a whole, apostatised from its dispensation by worshipping the golden calf. The Christian church fell from its normal state, as kept together by the body of the apostles; first, because they appointed no successors; secondly, on account of the anti-christian powers beginning to work in the church. (!) In consequence the whole church came under the curse; the dispensation is already over (dehuc, entierement

dehuc, dans un etat de ruine) but not yet closed. Some few souls are saved, but not by the power of this dispensation, (which yet is called the dispensation of grace!) but by a work of grace altogether independent from church means, running through no appointed channel, a free effusion of God's mercy on the few, without any human intervention. All church institutions, from the days of the apostles, whether Romanist or Protestant, are of this world, and far from helping in any way, in the salvation of souls, only serve to hasten the judgments coming. Dissent errs by supposing that it is the will of God that new churches be formed; for can God reinstate the dispensation which has failed? No, he removes it. Rom. xi. 22. It errs by supposing that power is given to man to attempt new formations,—a deceitful work of the same spirit which exhorts men to establish his own righteousness, after it has failed (with the Sinai dispensation.) What is then required from us? repentance, viz., the consciousness that the church is altogether ruined. Little churches only nourish pride: (l'homme, la chair, ses droits, y sont mis constamment à la place de l'esprit.) True humility requires that the believer takes on himself the curse of this whole dispensation, and refrain from all church organization. Therefore, when Darby was asked to reorganize the Lausanne congregation, he refused to do so, his humility requiring that the greatest possible liberty be left for his movements. He would have been consistent if he had preached the perfect isolation of the elect individual: for his new assemblies, however freely constituted, cannot but contain, like every meeting of man with man, the elements of a new church form. He says they will effect as much, and more than unwarrantable church constitutions; but who prevents us from asserting on the ground of his system, that meetings of two or three must be the utmost length to which an after apostolic flock of Christians may proceed with safety; and that isolation is the very best way for the individual to receive the mercies said to flow down without any intervening church means, and to eschew the dangers of any anti-christian attempt at union. But the contradictions in the system are many. In the one place we learn, that no office, no title of pastor or doctor could exist in the primitive church, that all were like little children, none in any way eminent above others. On the other hand, we learn

that there *were* church-forms and officers in the apostolic church, of which we have become deprived by the apostasy. Darby must have been somewhat slumbering when he pronounced these opposite statements. His universal ministry is, he feels, somewhat contested by Eph. iv. 11, &c. ; but he helps himself by a sophistry which we confess we cannot understand.

Certain it is, that the dissolution of the churches was begun with amazing success. The Darbyists fancy that they occupy the position of the primitive Christians as opposed to a heathenish world: they covet also some petty persecution, which now and then they have attained at the hands of simple-minded perplexed village authorities. Sacred ties are broken with the most reckless temerity: all is called flesh which revolts against the realization of the dissolution system. The Dissenters of the Canton, though in general anxious to regulate the vocation and authority of their ministers, had now and then treated them somewhat cavalierly; but Darbyism accomplished their degradation. When Darby was absent from head-quarters, others had to take the word. On such occasions, the old ministers were treated as persons who ought first to strip themselves of their office, and renounce "that carnal pre-eminence they had arrogated to themselves." To supplant them, Darby founded in his house a sort of seminary, where select minds were to be initiated into his views of Scripture. Several of them would speak in the assemblies: and the little table even, before which the former teachers had taken their stand, was removed by one of the fanatical youths, with the sneer, "Why put this chimney again here?" But this levelling system was not without its exceptions: if the leaders of the assemblies in Darby's absence were asked how they managed to keep things in order, they would answer, "we sit together and consider the necessary measures." So we have here again an embryo of the abhorred church form: as the gifts of each become manifested, the parts for ministering to the saints by various functions are assigned to each. A number of tracts also have proceeded from the hands of the younger members, as well as from Darby's pen, some of them written with much power. By these means, as well as by the continued wanderings of Darby, the system spread in the neighbourhood of Lausanne, first to the Dissenting church of

Bourg de four, Geneva, where Darby exhorted one of the ministers in a long letter, to begin with laying down his office, in which case he (Darby) would recognize him as pastor by the sole calling of God. The commotion there has come to this issue, that the old congregation has returned, and continues under its old ministers, with the exception of forty members constituting a Darbyan assembly. In the Vaud Canton there is hardly a congregation of Dissenters, nor one of the national church, in which the great revival had found entrance, where Darbyism has not caused separations or confusions. Many are the complaints of most exemplary pastors, that the souls in which once they had reason to rejoice most, have now withdrawn all confidence from them, and manifest a most lamentable arrogance; they accuse Darby's missionaries of boastful impudence, joined to the most insinuating address, of a remorseless habit of handling certain Scriptures for their purposes, coupled with awful ignorance of the whole Bible. Also the Dissenters of Berne have had their troubles, though at present the former pastor has resumed his office, and reunited nearly the whole of his flock. Even in Lyons, and some other parts of France, Darby has made impressions, and the seed sown has spread to Southern Germany.

It is a most characteristic feature of Darbyism, that it seeks entrance nearly exclusively among the awakened, and preaches, not so much the truth of salvation—of which, comparatively speaking, there was no dearth in those Cantons—as those favourite darling church views. How different from the reformation, to which Darbyism professes to be so much superior! How different from the beginning of Methodism, which these puny spirits attack with such bitterness, though they have never yet preached to the miners, and other illiterate crowds of perishing men! Darby professes to labour for two objects, the conversion of souls, and the union of the converted under the Plymouth standard. But in practice the second object is the first, and the Darbyist missionaries avow openly that they go where they find "open doors!" There they enter, and forgetting the lowliness of the cross, magnify the glorification of God's children, till the congregation is split in pieces. Soon, they say, very soon the believer will meet their

Lord in the air, and awful will be the lot of those who meet not with the Darbyists. Not that Darby himself preaches in these terms, though in private he expresses his sure hope to be spared for the coming of the Lord (which according to "the scarlet thread" takes place very soon, *encore un peu, tres peu de tems.*)

The Lord's Supper is divested of all its former decency, chiefly in the new country assemblies. Two or three assembled in Christ's name, have suddenly without any preparation, without even repeating the words of the institution, broken bread between themselves and passed the wine to each other.

With regard to baptism, Darby is inconsistent enough to baptize infants here and there, (why not exhort the parents to use their ministerial rights in this case? why at all retain pædo-baptism, one of those "old channels?") The hearer is now and then disagreeably startled by expressions derogatory to the dignity of the Old Testament, reproaches about preaching only Christ crucified, obscure recommendations, "to view Christ not only from our side, but also from God's side, so that we in the spirit rise beyond Him and stand between Him and God," &c.

We now come to speak of the reaction which Darbyism has at last called forth. When the Dissenting ministers observed that the sword they had used against their adversaries, was turned against themselves, they were at first amazed, and some went to pour out their heart to pastors of the national church, whom they had long avoided. Aversion to church anarchy recalled their sympathies for the greater order of an establishment. But it was chiefly among themselves that they began to consult, when they came to the resolution to hold a convocation in Lausanne (September, 1842,) for the purpose of examining if the views of Darby concerning the apostasy of the present economy be scriptural. However meekly Darby was invited to attend, spoiled as he was by the unbounded veneration he enjoyed, he refused to appear. Having been urged strongly from motives of brotherly love, he came with ten disciples, saying, that he protested against the whole business; that he came to be amongst brethren, but not to take any part in the meeting, it not being of God. It was long before he would take part in the discussions, and spoke at last, less yielding than overcome by the entreaties of the assembled. What he said, astonished all,

even his steadfast admirers, so boldly he ventured into the most contradictory remarks, the most undefined propositions, the most unfair changing of his themes. The discussion ended in complete disorder, after all the harsh, proud, unyielding elements of Darby's character had been revealed, so that even to many of his followers he appeared stripped of his super-human *nimbus*. Others of course ascribed to him a complete victory.

The next consequence was, that one of the dissenting ministers began anew to collect an auditory at Lausanne, without however giving the Lord's Supper there: and soon the two most respected ministers of Dissent began to write against Darby. A. Rochat of Rolle, a favourite writer of Sermons and other works, exhibiting no common knowledge, both of the Scriptures and of the human heart, had from the first watched the progress of the new movement so closely, that Darby was once heard to observe, "we should be masters of the land if it were not for Rochat." But though on the whole he succeeded in preserving his church from the raging distemper, two ladies, converted by his instrumentality, were induced to quit both him and the congregation in which God had richly blessed them, and preferred taking the Lord's Supper between themselves in their closet, to the danger of encouraging "schism." This sad experience prompted Rochat to write in 1842 his "*fil pour aider les simples fideles*," etc., to which Darby replied immediately, saying, amongst other utterances of an excited spirit, that Rochat's writings look as the words of a man accustomed to see all his declarations received as infallible, that he appears unaccustomed to treat others as equals, etc. But this did not prevent the readers from perceiving that Darby's principle, "it is unfair to explain one passage of Scripture by another," was ably overturned by Rochat's showing, that all false doctrine originates in isolating Scriptures from Scriptures. Rochat maintains that there is still a spiritual unity of the church, whereas Darby involves himself in two opposite statements, by first declaring, that with the apostles all unity, outward and inward, was irremediably lost until the time be come for reviving apostolical authority; that each part of the church is responsible for the other on account of the unite' societaire, through which the apostasy of one section causes the ruin of the whole—whilst on the other hand he strangely

enough accepts of Rochat's definition, "the church the assembly of the elect," and even pretends to say that he did not teach the abolition of this dispensation. He talks of the church as existing to this day! and Rochat could attest to him that Darbyists used to call themselves the church of the place, in imitation of the old Dissenters. Rochat easily disposes of that doctrine subversive of all ministry, *que le culte doit se faire par le moyen du St. Esprit and non par le moyen d'un president*: and proves that pastors and elders are indeed the same thing (1 Pet. v.), that gifts of God do not exclude the appointment by the church. He shows how inconsistent it was in Darby, to demand that *des frères graves* should lead the worship, how opposed to his own fundamental principles to admit even of a meeting of believers.

The other opponent was F. Olivier, the brother of Henry Olivier, once minister of the establishment (as Rochat has been.) He had in a measure withdrawn from the Lausanne congregation after the manifestation of its ultra democratic spirit. He often preached in the oratoire of the national church, nor was his language less sharp, than it had been amongst the Dissenters, who on that very account had obliged him to withdraw. F. Olivier is in many respects too exclusive a preacher of repentance to be as acceptable to a church as his brother Rochat and Darby are, but he is undoubtedly superior to these three in point of theological erudition and keenness of argument. He had written strongly against Methodism at the time when his brother joined it, he now proceeded to mark the failings of Dissent however violently opposed to the national system. After having admired Darby for a while, he re-opened his assemblies, justifying the step with the declaration that Darby's manner of preaching did not appear to him to satisfy all the existing wants. Having become marked by the Darbyists as schismatic, he wrote an essay *Sur le royaume de Dieu*, and when answered by Darby in a pamphlet full of unlovely insinuations and personalities, (f. i. I can understand that Mr. Olivier is accustomed to lead the service and wishes to do so, but I doubt if he can show me any thing analogous in the New Testament.) Olivier published a defence of his principles. He therein avows that Darby's mission had been blessed to himself and others, but is sorry to see it compromised by his

sectarian spirit. He shows that the kingdom of God (visible church) at first one and the same with the church (invisible church) has been much impaired by corruption and apostasy, but what matters it that Christ is not every where obeyed. He is still King in his kingdom, and at any moment souls converted to him may form into a church, and thus realize in their part the true church, in which case the apostolic directions for organizing the body become again valid rules. He forces Darby to the avowal that the expression "apostasy of the church," is inaccurate. Darby turns like an eel to avoid the subtle reasonings of this logician, who deals most cleverly with the legion of contradictions observable in Darby's system. Yet is Olivier's doctrine also open to castigation. Darby shows to him that his notion of the church (as "completely materialized by infant baptism") is too narrow. But let us hear this separatist, who acknowledges as the salutary consequence of Darby's theory "the violent destruction of one human work by another," dilate somewhat on its evil fruits: "How painful the agitation of the souls, when they hear continually in able expositions those horrid dark phrases: the dispensation is ruined, all is lost, the Church has apostatized! how sad the dissensions sown between Christians; one party hating in extreme enthusiasm, the other withstanding instinctively even the truth mixed up with those doctrines! What a joy to the worldly spectators of this combat! how indelicate the inroads on the fields wherein others have laboured, (2 Cor. x. 15,) based on the principle, that a teacher in the church is teacher anywhere and not bound to any special church! how many the points of comparison between the ways of Darbyistic missionaries and those of another society, (Jesuits?)! You insinuate yourselves into a congregation, and what is the consequence? With your system of anarchy you draw in the very first net all the discontented, all the disagreeing with pastors or members, all light-minded neophytes, unsettled lovers of novelties, persons of excited imagination, all who are unwilling to hear of their sins. This volcanic matter you use to blow up the church, and the dignity of its shepherd. Mr. Darby has so well described this process, "wherever the true gift of an elder or pastor be manifested, the leader of the service would become liable to dismissal, an operation which would inflict the

deepest wounds on a society of Christians, looking like ingratitude and self-will, and probably viewed by many as revolutionary, better therefore not appoint any leader!" Why then, O brother, do you and yours feel so little compunction in performing such operations? and what at last is the secret spring of all these revolutions? Is it not the famous *ôte toi de là que je m'y mette* (make room for me.) What a self-sufficiency in the new-born preachers starting from this school, see how they despise whatever lies beyond their horizon. We discover that this system opens the mouths of those who had better remain silent, and it closes the lips of men who have a commission to speak, since it forces them first to give up their ministry that they may be heard with safety. There being none to guide the whole, no remedy is at hand to heal disorders, to correct those speaking without preparation, experience or caution, to fill up the long pauses—marks of ill-concealed poverty,—to add decency to the meetings, and especially to the holy communion." He then remarks how all preparation is avoided by those who think the spirit can work best where no human means are used. But it is to be confessed that the first revival of the Canton had already made all, that falls short of extemporaneous effusion, profane and carnal to the eyes even of good ministers.

The Evangelical Society of Geneva having opposed Darby in their yearly report of 1841, one of its scholars, Mr. Wolf, defended publicly (in 1843), his theses about the ministry in opposition to the hierarchism and still more to the religious radicalism. (Acts xx. 28—30.) This clever work being published, Darby was induced to write also about the ministry, its nature, source, power and responsibility: he maintains his system by the old artifice of adopting current terms, giving to them stealthily very different meanings.

In conclusion, we may say that this disturbance of the Vaud churches is considerably on the decline; the Darby meetings are deserted in many places, the hearers become tired by the unintelligible phrases of his adepts, the leaders are low-spirited and more modest, and Darby himself feeling rather uncomfortable has left for France. As his partisans admit that he has gone too far, it is not very likely that he will return to abide much longer in such an atmosphere—he has also left his Irish assemblies to

themselves. The commotion will then probably die a natural death, chiefly as it is of foreign offspring. The wildest revolutionists in Switzerland are foreign refugees. The people themselves are not fond either of political or church anarchy. One voice has begun to advocate Puseyism as a remedy to the Plymouthian Radicalism : but the time may not be very distant when the Swiss churches will perceive in Puseyism and Darbyism only different sides of the same aberration. Intelligent Christians strive to purify the revival of the last 20 years from its two primary defects ; its being too dogmatical, and yet full of contempt for science, so that religion and theology had become identified to the detriment of both. May the Spirit of truth guide and sanctify the manifold powers, lying dormant or partly developed within this branch of the Catholic church !