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## CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SITUATION OF CATHOLICISM IN 1800 AND IN 1852.

(From the *Count de Montalembert's* recent pamphlet, "*Des Intérêts Catholiques au XIX. Siècle.*")

(Continued from our last.)

Let us now pass in review the scenes which we have been contemplating, and cast a hasty glance at the most striking features of the new picture.

What encouraging and consoling symptoms are observable in Spain! Reduced by Napoleon's invasion to the consciousness of her force and her dignity, of which a long and miserable despotism had led her to doubt; and then thrown, as we have been, into the sanguinary horrors of revolution and civil war, she has seen Catholicism surviving the spoliation of the Church, the profanation and burning of her monasteries, and the murder of her monks. The new ideas in philosophy and religion have afforded her little more than parodies, pitiful counterfeits, the intelligence of which has only crossed the Pyrenees to excite the derision of the masters of the style. Two individuals alone, endowed with superior genius, taught Spain to believe that the days of her decline were nearly at an end; and these two men are Catholics. The one, Donoso Cortes, has obtained on sure ground the attentive admiration of Europe; the other, Balmez, who died in the flower of his age, an historian, philosopher, theologian, and more particularly a great politician, conversant with all the conditions of modern liberty, and at the same time, with all the infirmities of a democratical society, and knowing how to reconcile the luminous intelligence of his time with that rigid attachment to the immutable infallibility of the Church, without which no Spaniard is worthy of being considered a compatriot of Ximenes and Calderon. Catholic reaction in Spain having been so long silent and imperceptible, must be so much the more profound, since it has found such organs of expression. Such, at all events, is the estimate formed of it by the statesmen who govern that country, since they have just concluded with Rome one of the most advantageous concordats that the Holy See has ever for a long time obtained from a Catholic power, and of which the sincere execution will soon restore happy days both to the Church and the kingdom of Spain.

The system of concordats also exist in Germany; but executed as they are, unfaithfully, they have not been found sufficient to heal the wounds of religion in that great country. Other remedies and other lessons have been required: lessons have not been wanting, and remedies have succeeded them. At the present day, what a change and what progress is observable? German Protestantism, under the influence of the rationalism and pantheism which it has developed, has lost its soul; it has now only a corporeal existence, maintained by the energetic aid of the state. All actual life has abandoned it; and as for doctrine it has none, neither does it presume to teach any. Go now, and ask in the country of Luther, what is become of that famous doctrine of justification by faith alone, a doctrine so convenient that it is astonishing it has not become the creed of all the libertines in the world; it is no longer anywhere professed. Go now, and count the number of Protestants who would be willing to sign in its original form the Confession of Augsburg; they could all be contained in one small borough.

In that very place where Ronge, that pitiful counterfeiter of Luther, had prophesied, amid the vociferous applause of the democrats and philosophers, the final ruin of the papal Babylon; and in that very spot, monks, Jesuits, and Franciscans, again making their appearance in the detested habit, after ages of proscription, attract around their pulpits an eager, numerous, and indefatigable crowd, and render their missions one of the most striking events of contemporary history. In that place where Lola Montes, seduced by the example of the oracles of the tribune and the *feuilletonists* in France, encouraged by the friends of light and progress, sustained by the public or acknowledged sympathy of Protestantism and liberalism: in that very place where this shameless female had succeeded in representing herself as the victim of the Jesuits, and availed herself of her ignominious ascendancy to obtain the dismissal, from the king's councils, and from the professorships of the universities, of the most upright ministers and the most eminent of the literati; there, too, a Catholic association, established for the defence of religious liberty and constitutional monarchy, nobly revenges the outrages inflicted upon the Catholics, by maintaining the ancient loyalty of the Bavarian people, and by saying, through clerical influence, ungrateful royalty. In that place, where the Society of *Gustavus Adolphus*, which had undertaken, under the invocation of the devastator of Germany, to introduce Protestantism even into the last retreats of papal superstition, proudly flouted; there, again, the great associations of Pius XI, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Boniface, are planted, take root, and are daily seen to spread their branches more and more, marching in front, and with rapid steps, to the conquest of Germany by faith and charity.

Let us not forget Holland, for there also we discover precious elements of regeneration which are being developed to the eyes of the astonished observer. Yes, in that Holland, where persecution against Catholics has been for half a century so active and so effectual; that country which has so cruelly pursued the missionaries, religious men, all the soldiers of truth, in the two hemispheres, both by sea and by land, in Asia as in America; which has utterly destroyed, together with the Portuguese sway, the hopes of the Church in the Indies; and which having arrived at the term of its colonial conquests, had itself become a sort of colony of incredulous and Jansenist writers; in that Holland, where the existence of Catholics was as it were unknown to the whole world, they have by degrees reconquered the power and importance which are due to the half of a people. Their number already amounts to two-fifths of the entire population. The gravity of their manners, the fervor of their faith, their pious munificence, have secured for the Church in that country an eminent and honored existence. Protestant intolerance is alarmed at this unexpected progress; the old Reformers of Dordrecht seek to conceal the nothingness in which their own doctrine has fallen, by maintaining the ancient yoke upon the necks of their victims. Like the false mother in Solomon's judgment, they demand the death of the child which continues to live, to console themselves for having extinguished the life of their own offspring. In the place of liberty and equality between all confessions, to which the constitution of the country guarantees an existence, a system of universal exclusion is substituted, by virtue of which the Catholics are deprived of all participation in public situations, and even in the elective functions. Secret societies bring to this work of iniquity the aid of their perverse and powerful action. But, aided by the press and the invincible courage of a few independent writers, the Catholics have not shrunk from the contest; they have already obtained the full liberty of their relations with Rome: they are disputing step by step the ground which the law secures to them, for which arbitrary power and prejudice strive with them; they resist with that generous perseverance which God ever puts to the test, but which he is always pleased to crown; and every day witnesses the increase of their numbers and the extent of their courage.

But it is more especially in France that the transformation is calculated to strike the attention of the most casual observer. Is this indeed the same country which appeared, thirty years ago—ten years even—not to know how it could sufficiently express its repugnance for the influence of the clergy, its contempt for religious institutions? What now is become of that formidable unpopularity with which the least manifestation of Catholic thought or of Catholic action was assailed? Whither have departed those doctors, those writers, who found, in the resuscitation of stale diatribes against the monks and priests, an inexhaustible source of profit and honors? It might have been imagined that there was no echo, no credit, no publicity to anything but their invectives: and yet the Church appears again more powerful, more beloved, more popular than in any other epoch of our modern history! All succeeding powers invoke her support and her sympathy; they all, in their turns, show her their respect, their confidence, their humble devotedness; they all dispute the honor of proclaiming her indispensable influence, and to loosen, if not to destroy, the fetters by which she had been bound. We, poor slaves of political life, so long despised by all parties—so long classed in the rank of tiresome dreamers, and disregarded petitioners—even we have triumphed; not indeed for ever, nor, perhaps, for any long period, but quite sufficient to make known the secret of our power, and the value of our support. Liberty in education; so long called for in vain, has at length been obtained; it has been voted even by the very men who had stoutly refused it. More houses are offered to the bishops than they can possibly direct: to the Jesuits, more pupils than they can instruct. To the Jesuits! do we say? Yes, those Jesuits, for the dispersion and complete extinction of whom every effort was exerted at Paris and at Rome, are now peacefully reinvested with the only right to which they have ever laid claim—that of devoting themselves to the salvation of souls! Behold them once more recalled by public authority itself, to fill those missions which are most conformable to the indefatigable flexibility of their institution; to the government of the colonies of children in Algeria, to the moral reform of the penal settlements of Cayenne! As for the other religious orders, they are settled; and in free operation, on the soil from whence they were banished by so many laws, still

extant in our own codes, and but recently appealed to against us. Our bishops, who were but recently forbidden to communicate even by writing, have been allowed to assemble without opposition, and present to astonished Christendom the spectacle of thirteen provincial councils, held with all the majesty of the ancient law, rivalling one another in zeal and eloquence, in the expression of their solicitude for the moral interests of France, of their devotedness to the prerogatives of the Holy See. These conquests of Catholic liberty, I am well aware, are no longer, or are not yet, placed under the sanction of the laws; that the organic articles, so unworthily annexed to the sacred text of the concordat, are not abrogated; neither an ignorant of the fact that, in the arsenal of legislation, there are still many formidable weapons available; but in a country in which the written code is condemned to undergo variations so sudden and frequent, we may be allowed to look upon the facts that we have just enumerated as being stamped with a serious and incontestable authority.

Let us, however, cross over the Straits, and contemplate, with respect and gratitude, one of the most astonishing spectacles that God ever gave to the world. England, that sovereign nation, the heiress and rival of ancient Rome in point of extent and power, in the permanent majesty of her institutions, the energy of her political system, the perseverance of her designs; England, so long the cherished and faithful ally of the Church, which subsequently revolted against her mother, and, in her apostasy, arose to the summit of human prosperity; England, whose power nothing can resist, and which braves, with imprudence and impunity, the perils to which all other states have succumbed; that imperious and all-powerful England now finds herself invaded, braved, and vanquished, by the invincible weakness of that Church which she has so often expected to annihilate. She hears attached to her loins, with the ever-present and indelible stigma of her capital offence, the instrument of her punishment, which may become, whenever she may be disposed to receive it, that of the divine mercy towards her. Ireland, so long the forgotten of all Europe—even Catholic Europe—has never abandoned her faith. She has outlived a long period of suffering, the martyr of her indomitable love for the Roman Church. Three centuries of confiscation, persecution, famine and degradation, have passed over her head, without intimidating her, or forcing her to yield. At length she produced an avenger of her wrongs; but an avenger after the manner of Christ, who saves while he punishes us. A man arose, who, without having ever occupied any official station: without having ever asked or received a favor, title, or decoration, reigned over his country during thirty years—reigned over the hearts, the arms, and even the purses of five millions of his countrymen. He reigned without ever shedding one drop of blood; without giving rise to a single violent or illegal struggle, but solely by the mere force of his eloquence—of that eloquence at once both free and restricted, which the wonderful institutions of England permit to be exercised even by the adversaries of her domination. He reigned, and his reign was more serviceable to the Catholic cause than that of any modern king. His fellow-countrymen bestowed on him the appellation of *Liberator*, and posterity will continue to award him the title, not merely as the deliverer of his country, for others might have accomplished that, but as the deliverer of the Church of God, in the most powerful empire of the world, which had not then been granted to any individual to effect. He it was, who, with Ireland at his back, knocked at the door of the English parliament in the name of his people. It was opened, and the Catholics of the three kingdoms were admitted with him, and for ever. The conqueror of Napoleon delivered up his arms to the moral chief of a people unarmed, but rendered invincible by the force of right, and precluding the defeat of their oppressors by the victory which they obtained over their own intemperance. The great and glorious act of *Catholic Emancipation*, after fifty years of discussion, was consummated.

The Irish race, prolific as it is faithful, thronging from all parts to the manufactories, workshops, and public works, and especially to the colonies, carry with them the true faith henceforth enfranchised; and that immense British empire, extending over the five parts of the globe, and upon which, it may be truly said, that the sun never sets, becomes like the Roman empire of old, a vast nursery of Catholic episcopal sees and missions. And in order that England may not be humiliated by this victory, obtained by a foreign and subjugated race, God permits that there should be developed in the very bosom of the Anglican clergy an unforeseen and prodigious movement towards the traditions, the authority, the unity of Rome. The faith of the great Alfred of St. Anselm, and St. Thomas of Canterbury, is resuming

its rights over the souls of its repentant sons. After a long and fruitless struggle, inspired by the delusive hope of discovering a mean term between truth and error, between unity and division, the *élite* of the Anglican clergy are detaching themselves, and, sacrificing livings, riches, ties of friendship, family connexions,—coming to recruit the legitimate militia of the sanctuary, or to edify the world by the humble fervor of their secular virtues. We have never entertained the dangerous dreams of those who would wish to rekindle antiquated antipathies against a nation so essential to the destiny of Catholicism throughout the whole world. But we hail with joy those gradual conquests of truth upon a soil from which it had so long been banished; those churches, those monasteries, and especially those schools, which, under the influence of the most complete liberty of instruction, are arising daily by the side of the ancient cathedrals and universities founded by Catholicism, and from which Catholicism is excluded; those twelve bishoprics, which are scarcely adequate to the spiritual wants of a kingdom, in which, a century ago, a singular apostolic was all that was required for the direction of a handful of the faithful, scattered up and down. These are the pledges of a gradual, but certain, regeneration. England's return to Catholicity no longer depends, as it did under the reign of James II, upon the will of a sovereign—an intrigue of the court and the cabinet: it is placed, together with liberty itself, under the safeguard of that truly glorious constitution, founded, in the first instance, by the Catholics, sanctioned afterwards, at their cost, in 1688, but forming, at the present day, their shield and their haven of security.

Ah! the fanaticism of heresy will certainly not allow itself to be conquered in a day: vulgar prejudices, the apprehensions of statesmen, the perfidious rancor of lawyers (almost everywhere the enemies of the Church,) still continue to lay snares for, and to prepare struggles to try the patience and courage of the English Catholics. They will still be subjected to more than one exaction, have more than one fine to pay, more than one campaign to endure, such as that of the *Ecclesiastical Titles Bill*. But none of these circumstances will ever succeed, any more than that bill has succeeded, in creating a serious obstacle. Nothing of this nature will make any change in the fundamental state of things. Nothing will impair the incomparable force which the Catholic cause derives from the publicity, the equity, the discussion, and the whole political customs and liberal institutions of England. Already have the most eminent statesmen, the depositaries of the great political principles of Sir Robert Peel, generously advocated, at the expense of their momentary popularity, the rights of their Catholic fellow-countrymen; and, since the last general election, the Catholic phalanx returned by Ireland to the House of Commons is becoming, amid the conflict of parties, mistress of the field. Were these Catholic members but capable of conducting themselves with prudence and loyalty, had they some chief capable of directing them, the future success of Catholicism in England would be certain. O the mystery of the mercy and the omnipotence of God! A century has not yet elapsed since the first petition, praying for the emancipation of the Catholics, was ignominiously kicked under the bar of that same House of Commons, in which at the present day the elect of Catholics are the arbitrators of English politics!

Finally, the crowning point of this Catholic regeneration, which we have the happiness to witness, is the place which the papacy has regained in the world. We should certainly have to go back to a very remote period in history, to find a time when the Holy See occupied, moved, and ruled the human mind to that extent which it has done since the accession of Pius IX. Destined, like Him of whom he is the vicar, to pass during his mortal career, through all the vicissitudes of greatness and affliction, sometimes the object of the most flattering popularity, at others, besieged in his palace, a fugitive, an exile, he has constantly attracted the attention of the world, and established the incomparable majesty of the Roman pontificate, whether by reviving the sympathy of the indifferent and incredulous, or by exciting in the episcopacy, and among all the faithful, the manifestations of union in the obedience and subordination to the Church, their mother and mistress, to such an extent as was not surpassed in the most flourishing period of the middle age. Worthy to love and to comprehend the nature of liberty, he wished to bestow it, to the extent that was consistent with justice and their welfare, on a people whom democratical agitations had rendered utterly incapable of appreciating it. But amid all the vicissitudes of this difficult position, by his celebrated allocution of the 29th