

His declaration of what passed on that occasion will be found in the narrative.—He asserts in the most solemn form that in that chapel, in which there was no painting or statue whatever of the Blessed Virgin, he held her precisely as she is represented on the medal; that she made a sign to him to kneel down; and that, though she spoke not, she seemed to say "It is well."

The narrative will inform the reader of the results. We are, of course, prepared to hear that many members, even of our own body, reject with scorn the idea that the Blessed Virgin did appear to the unbelieving Jew on this occasion; and that his assertion proceeds from a mere "baseless vision." We need not enter into any discussion upon that point. The actual vision which Ratisbonne declares he had of the holy Mother of the Messiah may or may not have taken place. But the reality of the occurrence thus affirmed is not necessary to the maintenance of the argument in favour of the miraculous character of the conversion. It is the *subtlety of the change* in the Jew's mind—it is the instant fulness of his faith—it is the substitution in his breast, within one moment, of entire, unqualified belief in all the essential doctrines of our religion, for an utter, obstinate total *unbelief* in those doctrines; which appear to us to entitle the fact of this conversion to a place in the catalogue of miracles. If the conversion of St. Paul be justly considered miraculous, equally miraculous, in our humble judgment, is the conversion of Alphonso Ratisbonne. We have nothing further to offer upon this subject than to express our most fervent gratitude to Him who promised to be with his Church all days, even to the consummation of the world, for this manifest testimony of his presence with her in times so remote from the hour when those cheering words passed from his divine lips.

RELIGION IN FRANCE.

One of the great results of the restoration of the Bourbons in France, was the revival of the Catholic religion throughout the whole extent of its territory. It was encouraged in every possible way by Louis XVIII. and Charles X. Missions were established, and preachers gifted with more than the ordinary powers of eloquence, as if created specially for the times in which their exertions became so necessary, raised the banner of the cross every where—in the plain and the valley, and upon the mountain; the people flocked from all sides to hear once more those divine truths announced and enforced, which had passed in some districts almost into oblivion, through the evil agency of the great revolution. The result was a very general reaction in favour of religion, which was making rapid progress, when the revolution of 1830 interposed to check that reaction for a while. Such was the desire of the royal family to promote the interests of religion, that in the distribution of the patronage of the Crown, the religious qualifications of the party were usually taken into consideration,

It cannot be denied that this state of things was calculated to generate hypocrisy; those who had any favours to ask, took good care, knowing the feelings of the court upon the subject of religion, to assume at least the garb of the religious character, while vices remained in the heart altogether uncorrected. Candidates for place, who were disappointed in their objects, complained, of course, that none but hypocrites found protection at court; and their complaints were echoed through a press which had never ceased to be of what was then called a philosophical character—a character, let it be borne in mind, which was masqued, and to this hour continues to masquerade beneath it, doctrines of a tendency always revolutionary, always unfriendly to religion, which it looks upon, indeed, with a degree of hatred absolutely inexorable.

When people, therefore, in France, or in Germany, or in any other part of the continent, speak of *philosophy*, they mean anti-Catholicism. The one is put up and sustained as an antagonist to the other.—When in England we make use of the word *philosophy* we generally connect it with some art or science. For instance, we say, "the philosophy of art,"—"the philosophy of natural history,"—"the philosophy of architecture," and so on.—These, and many other things, have their philosophical aspects; and to such philosophy as this the Catholic religion always has given, and for ever will give, her best support. Indeed, it was in her cloisters and system, that philosophy of this kind was first matured into system, and inculcated with effect.

There is no pursuit really ancillary to the acquisition of sound and useful knowledge which she does not encourage and promote, not coldly either, as if she were afraid of it, but actively, warmly, and sincerely; for she is well aware that solid instruction, and the diffusion of the genuine light that comes down from heaven, are amongst the foremost of her duties. But to such philosophy as that which is so called upon the continent she is most decidedly opposed. That species of philosophy uniformly imports not merely latitudinarianism in matters of religion, but the substituting for religious doctrine a code of morality, which, if permitted to take root in the minds of youth, would, sooner or later, bring back upon Europe all the terrors, all the frenzy, all the wild atheism of the great revolution.

Now, the check given to the advance of religion in France by the event of 1830 has manifested itself in this way,—that the journals which, during the period of the restoration, were in some degree reduced to silence upon this subject, have, within these last ten years, more or less resumed their old tendencies to anti-Catholicism, to which they, and those who sympathize with them, have affixed the title of *philosophy*. They affect, occasionally, to mix under this title other studies: but this is done in order to entrap the unwary, just as decoy birds are placed on the snares of the bird-catcher, to attract the free tenants of the air. They point to these studies whenever they complain of invasion upon their real philosophy; and they cry out when their immoral doctrine is exposed, denounced, and resisted by

the ministers of our holy faith, it is astronomy that is sought to be put down—it is geology that is anathematized—it is the science of chemistry that is discountenanced—as if it were not notorious to all the world that some of the men who have obtained the highest degree of eminence in those pursuits were not also distinguished by their attachment to the Catholic faith.

The reader is now prepared to appreciate the nature of the complaint with which the Paris journals, such as the *Constitutionnel*, the *Siecle*, and others of that shade, have teemed during the last week, against such of the Catholic bishops and clergy as have ventured to raise their voices, either through the pulpit or the newspapers, against the "philosophical" lectures in the University of Paris, in other schools and colleges, in other different parts of France, and in lecture-rooms, established solely for the propagation of "philosophy." In the projected law for secondary instruction the prelates do not think that sufficient provision is made for placing education upon the basis of religion; and this the journals describe as an attempt to raise the Church above the Charter, and the Pope above the King—an attempt which they stigmatize as an usurpation.

Now, we cannot understand by what right either the Charter or the King can interpose in matters connected with religion solely, without the assent of the Church. In France, especially, no such right can now be assumed, without a real usurpation; because, although the Charter does acknowledge the existence of the Catholic religion, it does not treat it as an establishment united with the state. The care of souls—or in other words, of religion—belongs entirely to the clergy; and the doctrine is sound and irresistible which maintains, that in France the Church is above the Charter, and the Pope is above the King, or rather, indeed, has nothing whatever, to do with his Majesty in this matter.

"The war," says the *Constitutionnel*, "is now completely organized; and it is 'philosophy' at which the militant Abbots take their aim. Philosophy is in truth, the natural enemy of religion, such as our devotees would wish to make it; the study of man, and of his faculties, does not square with the mysticism which is now inculcated by those who desire to renew amongst us all the superstitions of the middle ages. The champions of the Church, who never regard their means when they are anxious to accomplish an object, proceed in their work by denunciations. At Toulouse, at Strasburg, at Lyons, at Paris,—every place, in short, where philosophy was taught with success, a sudden chorus has been raised of complaint and reprobation. Anathemas without end were fulminated against the professors, and malediction were poured out against the age."

We might cite much more of this kind of language, which we have found lately in the Paris Journals; but we have submitted enough of it to the reader to show the species of abuse which they fling upon religion, under the pretext, first, that

the philosophy so attacked is nothing more than a mere synthesis of history recently published by one of the writers in the *Journal des Debats*,—"a synthesis of history," it says, "more ingenious than true." The Catholic reader will very easily understand what is meant by the "superstitions of the middle ages." Yes, we can go back to the middle ages, and to ages still earlier than these, for the doctrines of our religion; and what is meant to be here attacked are not practices really deserving to be denounced as superstitions, but conduct more strictly consonant with the precepts of our faith than the latitudinarians deem it necessary to pursue. Frequent confessions and approaches to the Holy Communion are, with the philosophers of the present day, 'superstitions of the middle ages!' and the preachers who advocate such pious practices are only so many anathematizers of their precious "philosophy."

The admirable Bishop of Chartres—the Dr. Doyle of France—has drawn upon himself the particular wrath of the *Constitutionnel*, because he has published a series of letters against the University, and exposed the dangerous tendencies of the lectures given by some of its present professors. And then the government is complained of, which does not put down such letters as inconsistent with the spirit of the Charter. Certainly, if the Charter was intended to be the bulwark of "philosophy," the sooner it is itself put down the better. But the charge is ridiculous; and the worst of all is this—that this very philosophy, the *Constitutionnel* and its associates in the press, seem resolved to kindle a civil war in France, the issue of which no man can foresee. Any man acquainted with the state of that country well knows that other elements of contention abound in it to a most perilous extent. But when to these are added a strife between religion and philosophy, desperate, indeed, are the destinies to which that country has to look forward.

Let us, however, hope and pray that those destinies may still be averted from France. There are many circumstances connected with religion there which furnish us with reasons for looking forward with cheerfulness to her religious fortunes, whatever changes may take place in her civil condition. At no former age could her annals present so many, or such able, energetic, fervent, highly-informed, and intrepid prelates, as those who at this moment occupy the sees of her religious kingdom. Her clergy, we may say universally, are models of piety, charity, and zeal; and the result of their exertions is most striking in the numerous congregations with which the churches are filled during the solemn services not only of the mass but of the vespers. The sermons delivered at the high mass are of necessity limited; but lengthened discourses are given at evening prayers, by preachers of distinguished talent, which attract such crowds to the churches, that any person desirous of the accommodation of a chair, must enter the church full half an hour before the service is commenced.