

# JAIME BALMES

PROTESTANTISM AND  
CATHOLICITY

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*Protestantism and Catholicity Compared in their effects on the civilization of  
Europe:*

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# **Protestantism and Catholicity Compared in their effects on the civilization of Europe**

## **AUTHOR'S PREFACE**

Among the many and important evils which have been the necessary result of the profound revolutions of modern times, there appears a good extremely valuable to science, and which will probably have a beneficial influence on the human race, – I mean the love of studies having for their object man and society. The shocks have been so rude, that the earth has, as it were, opened under our feet; and the human mind, which, full of pride and haughtiness, but lately advanced on a triumphal car amid acclamations and cries of victory, has been alarmed and stopped in its career. Absorbed by an important thought, overcome by a profound reflection, it has asked itself, "What am I? whence do I come? what is my destination?" Religious questions have regained their high importance; and when they might have been supposed to have been scattered by the breath of indifference, or almost annihilated by the astonishing development of material

interests, by the progress of the natural and exact sciences, by the continually increasing ardour of political debates, – we have seen that, so far from having been stifled by the immense weight which seemed to have overwhelmed them, they have reappeared on a sudden in all their magnitude, in their gigantic form, predominant over society, and reaching from the heavens to the abyss.

This disposition of men's minds naturally drew their attention to the religious revolution of the sixteenth century; it was natural that they should ask what this revolution had done to promote the interests of humanity. Unhappily, great mistakes have been made in this inquiry. Either because they have looked at the facts through the distorted medium of sectarian prejudice, or because they have only considered them superficially, men have arrived at the conclusion, that the reformers of the sixteenth century conferred a signal benefit on the nations of Europe, by contributing to the development of science, of the arts, of human liberty, and of every thing which is comprised in the word *civilization*.

What do history and philosophy say on this subject? How has man, either individually or collectively, considered in a religious, social, political, or literary point of view, been benefited by the reform of the sixteenth century? Did Europe, under the exclusive influence of Catholicity, pursue a prosperous career? Did Catholicity impose a single fetter on the movements of civilization? This is the examination which I propose to make

in this work. Every age has its peculiar wants; and it is much to be wished that all Catholic writers were convinced, that the complete examination of these questions is one of the most urgent necessities of the times in which we live. Bellarmine and Bossuet have done what was required for their times; we ought to do the same for ours. I am fully aware of the immense extent of the questions I have adverted to, and I do not flatter myself that I shall be able to elucidate them as they deserve; but, however this may be, I promise to enter on my task with the courage which is inspired by a love of truth; and when my strength shall be exhausted, I shall sit down with tranquillity of mind, in expectation that another, more vigorous than myself, will carry into effect so important an enterprise.

# **PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION**

The work of Balmes on the comparative influence of Protestantism and Catholicity on European civilization, which is now presented to the American public, was written in Spanish, and won for the author among his own countrymen a very high reputation. A French edition was published simultaneously with the Spanish, and the work has since been translated into the Italian and English languages, and been widely circulated as one of the most learned productions of the age, and most admirably suited to the exigencies of our times. When Protestantism could no longer maintain its position in the field of theology, compelling its votaries by its endless variations to espouse open infidelity, or to fall back upon the ancient church, it adopted a new mode of defence, in pointing to its pretended achievements as the liberator of the human mind, the friend of civil and religious freedom, the patron of science and the arts; in a word, the active element in all social ameliorations. This is the cherished idea and boasted argument of those who attempt to uphold Protestantism as a system. They claim for it the merit of having freed the intellect of man from a degrading bondage, given a nobler impulse to enterprise and industry, and sown in every direction the seed of national and individual prosperity.



Looking at facts superficially, or through the distorted medium of prejudice, they tell us that the reformers of the 16th century contributed much to the development of science and the arts, of human liberty, and of every thing which is comprised in the word *civilization*. To combat this delusion, so well calculated to ensnare the minds of men in this materialistic and utilitarian age, the author undertook the work, a translation of which is here presented to the public. "What do history and philosophy say on this subject? How has man, either individually or collectively, considered in a religious, social, political, or literary point of view, been benefited by the reform of the 16th century? Did Europe, under the exclusive influence of Catholicity, pursue a prosperous career? Did Catholicity impose a single fetter on the movements of civilization?" Such is the important investigation which the author proposed to himself, and it must be admitted that he has accomplished his task with the most brilliant success? Possessed of a penetrating mind, cultivated by profound study and adorned with the most varied erudition, and guided by a fearless love of truth, he traverses the whole Christian era, comparing the gigantic achievements of Catholicity, in curing the evils of mankind, elevating human nature, and diffusing light and happiness, with the results of which Protestantism may boast; and he proves, with the torch of history and philosophy in his hand, that the latter, far from having exerted any beneficial influence upon society, has retarded the great work of civilization which Catholicity commenced, and which

was advancing so prosperously under her auspicious guidance. He does not say that nothing has been done for civilization by *Protestants*; but he asserts and proves that *Protestantism* has been greatly unfavorable, and even injurious to it.

By thus exposing the short-comings, or rather evils of Protestantism, in a social and political point of view, as Bossuet and others had exhibited them under the theological aspect, Balmes has rendered a most important service to Catholic literature. He has supplied the age with a work, which is peculiarly adapted to its wants, and which must command a general attention in the United States. The Catholic, in perusing its pages, will learn to admire still more the glorious character of the faith which he professes: the Protestant, if sincere, will open his eyes to the incompatibility of his principles with the happiness of mankind: while the scholar in general will find in it a vast amount of information, on the most vital and interesting topics, and presented in a style of eloquence seldom equalled.

"The reader is requested to bear in mind that the author was a native of Spain, and therefore he must not be surprised to find much that relates more particularly to that country. In fact, the fear that Protestantism might be introduced there seems to have been the motive which induced him to undertake the work. He was evidently a man of strong national as well as religious feeling, and he dreaded its introduction both politically and religiously, as he considered that it would be injurious to his country in both points of view. He thought that it would destroy the national

unity, as it certainly did in other countries.

"A very interesting part of the work is that where he states the relations of religion and political freedom; shows that Catholicity is by no means adverse to the latter, but, on the contrary, highly favorable to it; and proves by extracts from St. Thomas Aquinas and other great Catholic divines, that they entertained the most enlightened political views. On the other hand, he shows that Protestantism was unfavorable to civil liberty, as is evidenced by the fact, that arbitrary power made great progress in various countries of Europe soon after its appearance. The reason of this was, that the moral control of religion being taken away, physical restraint became the more necessary." The author, on this subject, naturally expresses a preference for monarchy, it being a cherished inheritance from his forefathers; but, it will be noticed that the principles which he lays down as essential to a right administration of civil affairs, regard the substance and not the form of government; are as necessary under a republican as under the monarchical system; and, if duly observed, they cannot fail to ensure the happiness of the people. This portion of the volume will be read with peculiar interest in this country, and ought to command an attentive consideration.

In preparing this edition of the work from the English translation by Messrs. Hanford and Kershaw, care has been taken to revise the whole of it, to compare it with the original French, and to correct the various errors, particularly the mistakes in translation. A biographical notice of the illustrious writer has also

been prefixed to the volume, to give the reader an insight into his eminent character, and the valuable services he has rendered to his country and to society at large.

Baltimore, November 1, 1850.

# NOTICE OF THE AUTHOR

James Balmes was born at Vich, a small city in Catalonia, in Spain, on the 28th of August, 1810. His parents were poor, but noted for their industry and religion, and they took care to train him from his childhood to habits of rigid piety. Every morning, after the holy sacrifice of mass, his mother prostrate before an altar dedicated to St. Thomas of Aquin, implored this illustrious doctor to obtain for her son the gifts of sanctity and knowledge. Her prayers were not disappointed.

From seven to ten years of age, Balmes applied himself with great ardor to the study of Latin. The two following years were devoted to a course of rhetoric, and three years more were allotted to philosophy; a ninth year was occupied with the prolegomena of theology. Such was the order of studies in the seminary of Vich. While thus laboring to store his mind with knowledge, Balmes preserved an irreproachable line of conduct. Called to the ecclesiastical state, he submitted readily to the strict discipline which this vocation required, and he was seen nowhere but under the parental roof, at the church, in some religious community, or in the episcopal library. At the age of fourteen he was admitted to a benefice, the revenue of which, though small, enabled him to complete his education. In 1826, he went to the University of Cervera, which at that time was the centre of public instruction in that part of Spain. It numbered four

colleges, in all of which an enlightened piety prevailed, affording the young Balmes a most favorable opportunity of developing his rare qualities. Here, the frame and habit of his mind were observable to all, in his deep and animated look, in his grave and modest demeanor, and in his method of study. He would read a few pages over a table, his head resting upon his hands; then, wrapt in his mantle, he would spend a long time in reflection. "The true method of study," he used to say, "is to read little, to select good authors, and to think much. If we confined ourselves to a knowledge of what is contained in books, the sciences would never advance a step. We must learn what others have not known. During my meditations in the dark, my thoughts ferment, and my brain burns like a boiling cauldron."

Devoted to the acquisition of knowledge, he cultivated retirement as a means of facilitating the attainment of his object. His thirst for learning was so intense, that it held him under absolute sway, and he found it necessary at a later period to offer a systematic resistance to its exclusive demands. Pursuing his favorite method of study, Balmes remained four years at the University of Cervera, reading no other works than the Sum of St. Thomas, and the commentaries upon it by Bellarmine, Suarez and Cajetan. If he made any exception from this rule, it was in favor of Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme*. "Every thing," said he, "is to be found in St. Thomas; philosophy, religion, politics: his writings are an inexhaustible mine." Having thus strengthened his mind by a due application to philosophical

and theological studies, he proceeded to enlarge his sphere of knowledge by reading a greater variety of authors. In taking up a work, he first looked at the table of contents, and when it suggested an idea or fact which seemed to open before him a new path, he read that part of the volume which developed this idea or fact; the rest was overlooked. In this way, he accumulated a rich store of varied erudition. At the age of twenty-two he knew by memory the tabular contents of an extraordinary number of volumes; he had learned the French language; he spoke and wrote Latin better than his native tongue, and had been admitted successively to the degrees of bachelor and licentiate in theology. The virtues of his youth, far from having been weakened by these studies, had acquired greater strength and maturity. As he approached the solemn period of his ordination, he became still more remarkable for the gravity and modesty of his deportment. He prepared himself for his elevation to the priesthood by a retreat of one hundred days. After his promotion to the sacerdotal dignity, which took place in his native city, he returned to the University of Cervera, where he continued his studies, and performed the duties of assistant professor. Here also he began to manifest his political views; but, always with that discretion and moderation for which the Spanish clergy have been with few exceptions distinguished during the last twenty years. At that period Spain was agitated by two conflicting parties, that of Maria Christina and the other of Don Carlos. Balmes avoided all questions which were rather calculated to encourage the spirit of

faction than promote the general interest of the country. In 1835 he evinced this circumspection in a remarkable degree, when the doctorate which had been conferred upon him, required him to deliver an address in honor of the reigning monarch. Maria Christina was then the queen regent, and civil war was about to commence in the mountains of Catalonia; but Balmes performed his task without allusion to politics, and without offending the adherents of either party.

After two years of study at Cervera, where he applied himself to theology and law, our author returned to Vich, where he determined to spend four years more in retirement, for the purpose of maturing his character and knowledge. In this solitude, he devoted himself to history, poetry and politics, but principally to mathematics, of which he obtained a professorship in 1837. During all these literary labors, Balmes was actuated by a lively faith, and a sincere, unassuming piety. Religious meditation, intermingled with scientific reflections, was the constant occupation of his mind; he did not neglect, however, the exterior practices of devotion. Besides the celebration of the holy sacrifice, he frequently visited the blessed sacrament, and paid his homage to the B. Virgin in some solitary chapel. The *Following of Christ*, the *Sum* of the angelic doctor, and the Holy Scriptures, were always in his hands, and he took pleasure in reading the ascetic writers of his own country. In this way did he prepare himself, until the age of thirty, to become one of the most solid and gifted minds of our time, and to act the important



part to which he was called by Divine Providence.

The first literary effort of Balmes before the public, was a prize essay which he wrote on clerical celibacy. This was soon followed by another production of his pen, entitled "Observations on the Property of the Clergy, in a social, political, and commercial point of view," which was elicited by the clamoring of the revolutionary army under Espartero for the spoliation of the clergy. The learning, philosophy and eloquence of the writer in this work, excited the wonder and admiration of the most distinguished statesmen in the country. Some months after, he published his "Political Considerations on the Condition of Spain," in which he had the courage to defend the rights of both parties in the country, and to suggest means of a conciliatory nature for restoring public order and tranquillity.

Amidst these political efforts, Balmes did not lay aside his peculiar functions as a minister of God. The edification of the faithful, the religious instruction of youth, and the defence of the faith against the assaults of heresy and rationalism, were constant objects of his attention. During the same year, 1840, he translated and published the "Maxims of St. Francis of Sales for every day in the year;" he also composed a species of catechism for the instruction of young persons, which was very extensively circulated. At the same time he undertook the preparation of the present work, in order to counteract the pernicious influence exerted among his countrymen by Guizot's lectures on European civilization, and to neutralize the facilities offered under the

regime of Espartero for the success of a Protestant Propagandism in Spain. The occasion and object of this work rendered it expedient that it should be published simultaneously in Spanish and in French, and with this view our author visited France, and afterwards, to extend his observations, passed into England.

On his return to Barcelona, towards the close of 1842, Balmes became a collaborator in the editing of the *Civilizacion*, a monthly periodical of great merit, devoted to literary reviews, and to solid instruction on the current topics of the day. His connection with this work lasted only eighteen months. He then commenced a review of his own, entitled the *Sociedad*, a philosophical, political, and religious journal, which acquired a great reputation during the one year of its existence. Driven soon after into retirement by the disturbances of the times, Balmes composed another philosophical work, *El Criterio*, which is a course of logic adapted to every capacity.

From the national uprising that overthrew the government of Espartero, there arose a general feeling of patriotic independence, which called for the cessation of civil strife, and the harmonizing of the two parties that divided the nation. Many of the adherents of Maria Christina, who were the nobility and the bourgeoisie, recognized the excesses of the revolutionary faction which they had called to their aid, while the Carlists were not all in favor of absolute monarchy, and numbered an imposing majority among the lower classes. All these men of wise and moderate views longed to see a remedy applied to

the wounds of their afflicted country; and with one accord they turned their eyes upon Balmes, as the only individual capable of conducting this important affair. He had already, in his *Political Considerations*, indicated the principal idea of his policy for putting an end to the national evils; it was a matrimonial alliance between the Queen and the son of Don Carlos. Under these circumstances he commenced in February, 1844, a new journal, entitled *Pensamiento de la Nacion*, the object of which was to denounce the revolutionary spirit as the enemy of all just and peaceful government, and to inspire the Spanish people with a proper reverence for the religious, social and political inheritance received from their ancestors, and with a due respect for the reasonable ameliorations of the age. In this spirit the different questions of the day were discussed with energy and calmness, and especially the project of an alliance between the Queen and the son of Don Carlos, which Balmes considered of the utmost importance. This measure, such as he proposed it, was, to use the language of his biographer, "the reconciliation of the past and the future, of authority and liberty, of monarchy and representative government." Such was the patriotism, dignity and force, with which our author conducted his hebdomadal, that it won the esteem of a large portion of the most distinguished men among the Carlists, while it also acquired favor among an immense number in the opposite party. To support its views, a daily journal, the *Conciliador*, was started by a body of young but fervid and brilliant writers, and nothing

it would seem was wanting to insure a triumph for the friends of Spain. Prudence, energy, moderation, reason and eloquence, with a majority of the people on their side, deserved and should have commanded success; but they could not prevail against diplomatic influence and court intrigue. Balmes learned with equal surprise and affliction, in the retirement of his native mountains, that the government had resolved to offer the Queen in marriage to the infant Don Francisco, and the infanta to the Duke of Montpensier. This was a severe stroke to the sincere and ardent patriotism of Balmes. He might have resisted this policy with the power and eloquence of his pen, but he preferred a silent resignation to the heat of political strife, and the *Pensamiento de la Nacion*, although a lucrative publication, was discontinued on the 31st of December, 1846.

During that same year, our author collected into one volume his various essays on politics, as well for his own vindication as for the diffusion of sound instruction on the condition of Spain. The following year he completed his "Elementary course of Philosophy." But his physical strength was not equal to these arduous labors. To re-establish in some degree his declining health, he travelled in Spain and France, and remained several weeks in Paris. The intellectual and moral corruption which was gnawing at the very vitals of the French nation, and threatened all Europe with its infection, filled him with increased anxiety. He predicted the dissolution of society, and a return to barbarism, unless things would take some unexpected turn through the

special interposition of Providence. This last hope was the only resource left, in his opinion, for the salvation of society and civilization, and he exulted when he beheld Pius IX opening a new career for Italy, and consecrating the aspirations and movements of all who advocated legitimate reform and rational liberty. The political ameliorations, however, of the sovereign Pontiff appeared to the opponents of liberalism in Spain, at variance with the great opposition which Balmes had always exhibited to the revolutionary spirit. Hence, it became necessary for him to pay the just tribute of his admiration to the illustrious individual who sat in the chair of Peter, and to proclaim the eminent virtues of the prince and the pontiff. This he did with surpassing eloquence, in a brochure entitled *Pius IX*, the brilliant style of which is only equalled by its wisdom of thought. In this work, he sketches with graphic pen, the acts of the papal policy, showing that the holy see is the best guide of men in the path of liberty and progress, that Pius IX shows a profound knowledge of the evils that afflict society, and possesses all the energy and firmness necessary to apply their proper remedy. Balmes was full of hope for the future, in contemplating the course of the great head of the church, and he cherished this hope to the last moment of his life. His essay on the policy of Pius IX was the last production of his pen. His career in literature was brief, but brilliant and effective. Eight years only had elapsed since his appearance as a writer, and he had labored with eminent success in every department of knowledge. The learned divine, the

profound philosopher, the enlightened publicist, he has stamped upon his age the impress of his genius, and bequeathed to posterity a rich legacy in his immortal works. In the moral as well as in the intellectual point of view, his merit may be summed up in those words of *Wisdom*: "Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time." chap. iv.

This distinguished ecclesiastic, the boast of the Spanish clergy and the Catalan people, died at Vich, his native city, on the 9th of July, 1848, in the same spirit of lively faith and fervent piety which had always marked his life. His funeral took place on the 11th, with all the pomp that could be furnished by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. The municipality decreed that one of the public places should be named after him.

Balmes was little below the middle height, and of weak and slender frame. But the appearance of feeble health which he exhibited, was combatted by the animation of his looks. His forehead and lips bore the impress of energy, which was to be seen also in his eyes, black, deep-set, and of unusual brightness. The expression of his countenance was a mixture of vivacity, openness, melancholy and strength of mind. A careful observer of all his sacerdotal duties, he found in the practices of piety, the vigor which he displayed in his intellectual labors. The distribution of his time was extremely methodical, and his pleasures consisted only in the society of his friends. To the prospect of temporal honors and the favor of the great, he was insensible; neither did he seek after ecclesiastical dignities or

literary distinctions. His aim was the diffusion of truth, not the acquisition of a great reputation. These qualities, however, with his eminent talents, varied erudition, and invaluable writings, have won for him a universal fame.

# **CHAPTER I.**

## **NAME AND NATURE OF PROTESTANTISM**

There is a fact in existence among civilized nations, very important on account of the nature of the things which it affects – a fact of transcendent importance, on account of the number, variety, and consequence of its influences – a fact extremely interesting, because it is connected with the principal events of modern history. This fact is Protestantism.

Like a clap of thunder, it attracted at once the attention of all Europe; on one side it spread alarm, and on the other excited the most lively sympathy: it grew so rapidly, that its adversaries had not time to strangle it in its cradle. Scarcely had it begun to exist, and already all hope of stopping, or even restraining it, was gone; when, emboldened by being treated with respect and consideration, it became every day more daring; if exasperated by rigour, it openly resisted measures of coercion, or redoubled and concentrated its forces, to make more vigorous attacks. Discussions, the profound investigations and scientific methods which were used in combating it, contributed to develop the spirit of inquiry, and served as vehicles to propagate its ideas.

By creating new and prevailing interests, it made itself powerful protectors; by throwing all the passions into a state



of fury, it aroused them in its favor. It availed itself, by turns, of stratagem, force, seduction, or violence, according to the exigencies of times and circumstances. It attempted to make its way in all directions; either destroying impediments, or taking advantage of them, if they were capable of being turned to account.

When introduced into a country, it never rested until it had obtained guarantees for its continued existence; and it succeeded in doing so everywhere. After having obtained vast establishments in Europe – which it still retains – it was transported into other parts of the world, and infused into the veins of simple and unsuspecting nations.

In order to appreciate a fact at its just value, to embrace it in all its relations, and to distinguish properly between them, it is necessary to examine whether the constituting principle of the fact can be ascertained, or at least whether we can observe in its appearance any characteristic trait capable of revealing its inward nature. This examination is very difficult when we have to do with a fact of the kind and importance of that which now occupies our attention. In matters of this sort, numbers of opinions accumulate in the course of time, in favor of all which arguments have been sought. The inquirer, in the midst of so many and such various objects, is perplexed, disconcerted, and confounded; and if he wish to place himself in a more advantageous point of view, he finds the ground so covered with fragments, that he cannot make his way without risk of losing

himself at every step.

The first glance which we give to Protestantism, whether we consider its actual condition, or whether we regard the various phases of its history, shows us that it is very difficult to find any thing constant in it, any thing which can be assigned as its constituent character. Uncertain in its opinions, it modifies them continually, and changes them in a thousand ways. Vague in its tendencies, and fluctuating in its desires, it attempts every form, and essays every road. It can never attain to a well-defined existence; and we see it every moment enter new paths, to lose itself in new labyrinths.

Catholic controversialists have pursued and assailed it in every way; ask them what has been the result? They will tell you that they had to contend with a new Proteus, which always escaped the fatal blow by changing its form. If you wish to assail the doctrines of Protestantism, you do not know where to direct your attacks, for they are unknown to you, and even to itself. On this side it is invulnerable, because it has no tangible body. Thus, no more powerful argument has ever been urged, than that of the immortal Bishop of Meaux – viz. "You change; and that which changes is not the truth." An argument much feared by Protestantism, and with justice; because all the various forms which are assumed to evade its force, only serve to strengthen it. How just is the expression of that great man! At the very title of his book, Protestantism must tremble: *The History of the Variations!* A history of variations must be a history of error.

(See [note](#) [1] at the end of the vol.)

These unceasing changes, which we ought not to be surprised at finding in Protestantism, because they essentially belong to it, show us that it is not in possession of the truth; they show us also, that its moving principle is not a principle of life, but an element of dissolution. It has been called upon, and up to this time in vain, to fix itself, and to present a compact and uniform body. How can that be fixed, which is, by its nature, kept floating about in the air? How can a solid body be formed of an element, the essential tendency of which is towards an incessant division of particles, by diminishing their reciprocal affinity, and increasing their repellent force?

It will easily be seen that I speak of the right of private judgment in matters of faith, whether it be looked upon as a matter of human reason alone, or as an individual inspiration from heaven.

If there be any thing constant in Protestantism, it is undoubtedly the substitution of private judgment for public and lawful authority. This is always found in union with it, and is, properly speaking, its fundamental principle: it is the only point of contact among the various Protestant sects, – the basis of their mutual resemblance. It is very remarkable that this exists, for the most part, unintentionally, and sometimes against their express wishes.

However lamentable and disastrous this principle may be, if the coryphæi of Protestantism had made it their rallying point,

and had constantly acted up to it in theory and practice, they would have been consistent in error. When men saw them cast into one abyss after another, they would have recognised a system, – false undoubtedly; but, at any rate, a system. As it is, it has not been even that: if you examine the words and the acts of the first Reformers, you will find that they made use of this principle as a means of resisting the authority which controlled them, but that they never dreamed of establishing it permanently; that if they labored to upset lawful authority, it was for the purpose of usurping the command themselves; that is to say, that they followed, in this respect, the example of revolutionists of all kinds, of all ages, and of all countries. Everybody knows how far Luther carried his fanatical intolerance; he who could not bear the slightest contradiction, either from his own disciples or anybody else, without giving way to the most senseless fits of passion, and the most unworthy outrages. Henry VIII. of England, who founded there what is called the liberty of thinking, sent to the scaffold those who did not think as he did; and it was at the instigation of Calvin that Servetus was burnt alive at Geneva.

I insist upon this point, because it seems to me to be of great importance. Men are but too much inclined to pride; and if they heard it constantly repeated, without contradiction, that the innovators of the sixteenth century proclaimed the freedom of thought, a secret interest might be excited in their favor; their violent declamations might be regarded as the expressions of

a generous movement, and their efforts as a noble attempt to assert the rights of intellectual freedom. Let it be known, never to be forgotten, that if these men proclaimed the principle of free examination, it was for the purpose of making use of it against legitimate authority; but that they attempted, as soon as they could, to impose upon others the yoke of their own opinions. Their constant endeavour was, to destroy the authority which came from God, in order to establish their own upon its ruins. It is a painful necessity to be obliged to give proofs of this assertion; not because they are difficult to find, but because one cannot adduce the most incontestable of them without calling to mind words and deeds which not only cover with disgrace the founders of Protestantism, but are of such a nature, that they cannot be mentioned without a blush on the cheek, or written without a stain upon the paper.[2](#)

Protestantism, when viewed in a mass, appears only a shapeless collection of innumerable sects, all opposed to each other, and agreeing only in one point, viz. in protesting against the authority of the Church. We only find among them particular and exclusive names, commonly taken from the names of their founders; in vain have they made a thousand efforts to give themselves a general name expressive of a positive idea; they are still called after the manner of philosophical sects. Lutherans, Calvinists, Zuinglians, Anglicans, Socinians, Arminians, Anabaptists, all these names, of which I could furnish an endless host, only serve to exhibit the narrowness of the circle

in which these sects are enclosed; and it is only necessary to pronounce them, to show that they contain nothing universal, nothing great.

Everybody who knows any thing of the Christian religion must be convinced by this fact alone, that these sects are not truly Christian. But what occurred when Protestantism attempted to take a general name, is singularly remarkable. If you examine its history, you will see that all the names which it attempted to give itself failed, if they contained any positive idea, or any mark of Christianity; but that it adopted a name taken by chance at the Diet of Spire; a name which carries with it its own condemnation, because it is repugnant to the origin, to the spirit, to the maxims, to the entire history of the Christian religion; a name which does not express that unity – that union which is inseparably connected with the Christian name; a name which is peculiarly becoming to it, which all the world gives to it by acclamation, which is truly its own – viz. *Protestantism*.[3](#)

Within the vast limits marked out by this name, there is room for every error and for every sect. You may deny with the Lutherans the liberty of man, or renew with the Arminians the errors of Pelagius. You may admit with some that real presence, which you are free to reject with the Calvinists and Zuinglians; you may join with the Socinians in denying the divinity of Jesus Christ; you may attach yourself to Episcopalians, to Puritans, or, if you please, to the extravagances of the Quakers; it is of no consequence, for you always remain a Protestant, for you protest

against the authority of the Church; your field is so extensive, that you can hardly escape from it, however great may be your wanderings; it contains all the vast extent that we behold on coming forth from the gates of the Holy City.[4](#)

## CHAPTER II.

# CAUSES OF PROTESTANTISM

What, then, were the causes of the appearance of Protestantism in Europe, of its development, and of its success? This is a question well worthy of being examined to the bottom, because it will lead us to inquire into the origin of this great evil, and will put us in a condition to form the best idea of this phenomenon, so often but so imperfectly described.

It would be unreasonable to look for the causes of an event of this nature and importance, in circumstances either trivial in themselves, or circumscribed by places and events of a limited kind. It is a mistake to suppose that vast results can be produced by trifling causes; and if it be true that great events sometimes have their commencement in little ones, it is no less certain that the commencing point is not the cause; and that to be the commencement of a thing, and to be its real cause, are expressions of a widely different meaning. A spark produces a dreadful conflagration, but it is because it falls upon a heap of inflammable materials. That which is general must have general causes; and that which is lasting and deeply rooted must have lasting and profound causes.

This law is true alike in the moral as in the physical order; but its applications cannot be perceived without great difficulty,



especially in the moral order, where things of great importance are sometimes clothed in a mean exterior; where each effect is found allied with so many causes at once, connected with them by ties so delicate, that, possibly, the most attentive and piercing eye may miss altogether, or regard as a trifle, that which perhaps has produced very great results: trifling things, on the other hand, are frequently so covered with glitter, tinsel, and parade, that it is very easy to be deceived by them. We are always too much inclined to judge by appearances.

It will appear from these principles, that I am not disposed to give great importance to the rivalry excited by the preaching of indulgences, or to the excesses which may have been committed by some inferiors in this matter; these things may have been an occasion, a pretext, a signal to commence the contest, but they were of too little importance in themselves to put the world in flames. There would be, perhaps, more apparent plausibility in seeking for the causes of Protestantism in the characters and positions of the first reformers; but this also would be unsatisfactory.

People lay great stress on the violence and fury of the writings and speeches of Luther, and show how apt this savage eloquence was to inflame men's minds, and drag them into the new errors by the deadly hatred against Rome with which it inspired them. Too much stress also is laid on the sophistical art, the order and elegance of the style of Calvin; qualities which served to give an appearance of regularity to the shapeless mass of new errors, and

make them more acceptable to men of good taste. The talents and other qualities of the various innovators are described in the same way with more or less truth.

I will not deny to Luther, Calvin, and the other founders of Protestantism, the titles on which their sad celebrity is founded, but I venture to assert that we cannot attribute to their personal qualities the principal influence upon the development of this evil, without palpably mistaking and underrating the importance of the evil itself, and forgetting the instructions of universal history.

If we examine these men with impartiality, we shall find that their qualities were not greater than those of other sectarian leaders, if so great. Their talents, their learning, and their knowledge, have passed through the crucible of criticism, and there is, even among Protestants, no well-instructed and impartial person who does not now consider the extravagant eulogiums which have been lavished upon them, as the exaggerations of party. They are classed among the number of those turbulent men who are well fitted to excite revolutions; but the history of all times and countries, and the experience of every day, teach that men of this kind are not uncommon, and that they arise everywhere when a sad combination of events affords them a fit opportunity.

When causes more in proportion to Protestantism, by their extent and importance, are sought for, two are commonly pointed out: the necessity of reform, and the spirit of liberty. "There

were numerous abuses," says one party; "legitimate reform was neglected: this negligence produced revolution." "The human intellect was in fetters," says another; "the mind longed to break its chains; Protestantism was only a grand effort for the freedom of human thought, a great movement towards liberating the human mind." It is true, that these two opinions point out causes of great importance and of wide extent: both are well adapted to make partisans. The one, by establishing the necessity of reform, opens a wide field for the censure of neglected laws and relaxed morals; this theme always finds sympathy in the heart of man, – indulgent towards its own defects, but stern and inexorable towards the faults of others. With respect to the other opinion, which raises the cry of the movement of religious liberty and the freedom of the human mind, it is sure to be widely adopted: there are always a thousand echoes to a cry which flatters our pride.

I do not deny that a reform was necessary; to be convinced of this, I need only glance at history, and listen to the complaints of several great men, justly regarded by the Church as among the most cherished of her sons. I read in the first decree of the Council of Trent, that one of the objects of the Council was the reform of the Christian clergy and people; I learn from the mouth of Pius IV., when confirming the said Council, that one of the objects for which it was assembled, was the correction of morals, and the re-establishment of discipline. Notwithstanding all this, I am not inclined to give to abuses so much influence as has been

attributed to them. I must also say, that it appears to me that we give a very bad solution of the question, when, to show the real cause of the evil, we insist on the fatal results produced by these abuses. These words also, "a new movement of liberty," appear to me altogether insufficient. I shall say, then, with freedom, in spite of my respect for those who entertain the first opinion, and my esteem for the talents of those who refer all to the spirit of liberty, that I cannot find in either that analysis, at once philosophical and historical, which, without wandering from the ground of history, examines facts, clears them up, shows their inward nature, their relations and connections.

If men have wandered so much in the definition and explanation of Protestantism, it is because they have not sufficiently observed that it is not only a fact common to all ages of the history of the Church, but that its importance and its particular characteristics are owing to the epoch when it arose. This simple consideration, founded on the constant testimony of history, clears up every thing; we have no longer to seek in the doctrines of Protestantism for any thing singular or extraordinary; all its characteristics prove that it was born in Europe, and in the sixteenth century. I shall develop these ideas, not by fanciful reasonings or gratuitous suppositions, but by adducing facts which nobody can deny.

It is indisputable that the principle of submission to authority in matters of faith has always encountered a vigorous resistance in the human mind. I shall not point out here the causes of this

resistance; I propose to do so in the course of this work; I shall content myself at present with stating this fact, and reminding those who may be inclined to call it in question, that the history of the Church has always been accompanied by the history of heresies. This fact has presented different phases according to the changes of time and place. Sometimes making a rude mixture of Judaism and Christianity, sometimes combining the doctrines of Jesus Christ with the dreams of the East, or corrupting the purity of faith by the subtilties and chicaneries of Grecian sophistry; this fact presents us with as many different aspects as there are conditions of the mind of man. But we always find in it two general characteristics, which clearly show that it has always had the same origin, notwithstanding the variation in its object and in the nature of its results: these two characteristics are, hatred of the authority of the Church, and the spirit of sect.

In all ages sects have arisen, opposing the authority of the Church, and establishing as dogmas the errors of their founders: it was natural for the same thing to happen in the sixteenth century. Now, if that age had been an exception to the general rule, it seems to me, looking at the nature of the human mind, that we should have had to answer this very difficult question, How is it possible that no sect appeared in that age? I say, then, error having once arisen in the sixteenth century, no matter what may have been its origin, occasion, and pretext – a certain number of followers having assembled around its banner – Protestantism forthwith presents itself before me in all

its extent, with its transcendent importance, its divisions, and subdivisions; I see it, with boldness and energy, making a general attack on all the doctrines and discipline taught and observed by the Church. In place of Luther, Zuinglius, and Calvin, let us suppose Arius, Nestorius, and Pelagius; in place of the errors of the former, let them teach the errors of the latter; it will all lead to the same result. The errors will excite sympathy; they will find defenders; they will animate enthusiasts; they will spread, they will be propagated with the rapidity of fire, they will be diffused, they will throw sparks in all directions; they will all be defended with a show of knowledge and erudition; creeds will change unceasingly; a thousand professions of faith will be drawn up; the liturgy will be altered, – will be destroyed; the bonds of discipline will be broken; we shall have to sum up all in one word, Protestantism.

How did it happen that the evil in the sixteenth century was necessarily so extensive, so great, and so important? It was because the society of that time was different from any other that had preceded it; that which at other times would only have produced a partial fire, necessarily caused in the sixteenth century a frightful conflagration. Europe was then composed of a number of immense states, cast, so to speak, in the same mould, resembling each other in ideas, manners, laws and institutions, drawn together incessantly by an active communication which was kept up alternately by rival and common interests; knowledge found in the Latin language an easy means of diffusion; in fine,

most important of all, there had become general over all Europe a rapid means of disseminating ideas and feelings, a creation which had flashed from the human mind like a miraculous illumination, a presage of colossal destinies, viz. the press.

Such is the activity of the mind of man, and the ardour with which it embraces all sorts of innovation, that when once the standard of error was planted, a multitude of partisans were sure to rally round it. The yoke of authority once thrown off, in countries where investigation was so active, where so many discussions were carried on, where ideas were in such a state of effervescence, and where all the sciences began to germinate, it was impossible for the restless mind of man to remain fixed on any point, and a swarm of sects was necessarily produced. There is no middle path; either civilized nations must remain Catholic, or run through all the forms of error. If they do not attach themselves firmly to the anchor of truth, we shall see them make a general attack upon it, we shall see them assail it in itself, in all that it teaches, in all that it prescribes. A man of free and active mind will remain tranquil in the peaceful regions of truth, or he will seek for it with restlessness and disquietude. If he find only false principles to rest on, – if he feel the ground move under his feet, he will change his position every moment, he will leap from error to error, and precipitate himself from one abyss to another. To live amid errors, and be contented with them, to transmit error from generation to generation, without modification or change, is peculiar to those who vegetate in debasement and ignorance;

there the mind of man is not active, because it is asleep.

From the point of view where we have now placed ourselves, we can see Protestantism such as it is. From this commanding position we see every thing in its place, and it is possible for us to appreciate its dimensions, to perceive its relations, calculate its influence, and explain its anomalies. Men there assume their true position; as they are seen in close proximity with the great mass of events, they appear in the picture as very small figures, for which others may be substituted without inconvenience; which may be placed nearer or farther off, and the features and complexion of which are not of any consequence. Of what importance, then, are the energy of character, the passion, and boldness of Luther, the literary polish of Melancthon, and the sophistical talents of Calvin? We are convinced, that to lay stress upon all this, is to lose our time, and explain nothing.

What were these men, and the other coryphæi of Protestantism? Was there any thing really extraordinary about them? We shall find men like them everywhere. There are some among them who did not surpass mediocrity; and it may be said of almost all, that if they had not obtained an unhappy celebrity, they would hardly have been celebrated at all. Why, then, did they effect such great things? They found a mass of combustibles, and they set them on fire. Certainly this was not difficult, and yet it was all they did. When I see Luther, mad with pride, commit those extravagances which were the subject of so many lamentations on the part of his friends – when



I see him grossly insult all who oppose him, put himself in a passion, and vomit forth a torrent of impure words against all those who do not humble themselves in his presence, I am scarcely moved by any other feeling than pity. This man, who had the extraordinary mania of calling himself the *Notharius Dei*, became delirious; but he breathed, and his breath was followed by a terrible conflagration: it was because a powder-magazine was at hand on which he threw a spark. Nevertheless, like a man blinded by insanity, he cried out, "Behold my power! I breathe, and my breath puts the world in flames!"

But, you will ask me, what was the real influence of abuses? If we take care not to leave the point of view where we now are, we shall see that they were an occasion, and that they sometimes afforded food, but that they did not exercise all the influence which has been attributed to them. Do I wish, then, to deny, or to excuse them? Not at all. I can appreciate the complaints of some men, who are worthy of the most profound respect; but while lamenting the evil, these men never pretended to detail the consequences. The just man when he raises his voice against vice, the minister of the sanctuary when he is burning with zeal for the house of the Lord, express themselves in accents so loud and vehement, that they must not always be taken literally. Their whole hearts are opened, and, inflamed as they are with a zealous love of justice, they make use of burning words. Men without faith interpret their expressions maliciously, exaggerating and misrepresenting them.

It appears to me to be clear, from what I have just shown, that the principal cause of Protestantism is not to be found in the abuses of the middle ages. All that can be said is, that they afforded opportunities and pretexts for it. To assert the contrary would be to maintain that there were always numerous abuses in the Church from the beginning, even in the time of her primitive fervor, and of that proverbial purity of which our opponents have said so much; for even then there were swarms of sects who protested against her doctrines, denied her divine authority, and called themselves the true Church. The case is the same, and the inference cannot be denied. If you allege the extent and rapid propagation of Protestantism, I will remind you that such was also the case with other sects; I will repeat to you the words of St. Jerome, with regard to the ravages of Arianism: "All the world groans, and is full of astonishment at finding itself Arian." I will repeat, again, that if you observe any thing remarkable and peculiar belonging to Protestantism, it ought not to be attributed to abuses, but to the epoch when it appeared.

I believe I have said enough to give an idea of the influence which abuses could exert; yet, as it is a subject which has occupied much attention, and on which many mistakes have been made, it will be well to revert to it once more, to make our ideas on the subject still clearer. That lamentable abuses had crept in during the course of the middle ages, that the corruption of manners had been great, and that, consequently, reform was required, is a fact which cannot be denied. This fact is proved

to us, with respect to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, by irreproachable witnesses, such as St. Peter Damien, St. Gregory VII., and St. Bernard. Some centuries later, even after many abuses had been corrected, they were still but too considerable, as is witnessed by the complaints of men who were inflamed with a desire of reform. We cannot forget the alarming words addressed by Cardinal Julian to Pope Eugenius IV., on the subject of the disorders of the clergy, especially those of Germany.

Having fully avowed the truth on this point, and my opinion that the cause of Catholicity does not require dissimulation or falsehood to defend it, I shall devote a few words to examining some important questions. Are we to blame the court of Rome or the bishops for these great abuses? I venture to think that they were to be attributed to the evils of the time alone. Let us call to mind the events which had taken place in the midst of Europe; the dissolution of the decrepit and corrupt empire of Rome; the irruption and inundation of northern barbarians; their fluctuations, their wars, sometimes with each other, and sometimes with the conquered nations, and that for so many ages; the establishment and absolute reign of feudalism, with all its inconveniences, its evils, its troubles, and disasters; the invasion of the Saracens, and their dominion over a large portion of Europe; now, let any reflecting man ask himself whether such revolutions must not of necessity produce ignorance, corruption of morals, and the relaxation of all discipline. How could the ecclesiastical society escape being deeply affected by this

dissolution, this destruction of the civil society? Could she help participating in the evils of the horrible state of chaos into which Europe was then plunged?

But were the spirit and ardent desire of reforming abuses ever wanting in the Church? It can be shown that they were not. I will not mention the saints whom she did not cease to produce during these unhappy periods; history proves their number and their virtues, which, so vividly contrasting with the corruption of the age, show that the divine flames which descended on the Apostles had not been extinguished in the bosom of the Catholic Church. This fact proves much; but there is another still more remarkable, a fact less subject to dispute, and which we cannot be accused of exaggerating; a fact which is not limited to individuals, but which is, on the contrary, the most complete expression of the spirit by which the whole body of the Church was animated; I mean, the constant meeting of councils, in which abuses were reprov'd and condemned, and in which sanctity of morals and the observance of discipline were continually inculcated. Happily this consoling fact is indisputable; it is open to every eye; and to be aware of it, one only needs to consult a volume of ecclesiastical history, or the proceedings of councils. There is no fact more worth our attention; and I will add, that perhaps all its importance has not been observed.

Let us remark what passes in other societies: we see that in proportion to the change of ideas and manners, laws everywhere undergo a rapid modification; and if manners and ideas come

to be directly opposed to laws, the latter, reduced to silence, are soon either abolished or trodden under foot. Nothing of this sort has happened in the Church. Corruption has extended itself everywhere to a lamentable degree; the ministers of religion have allowed themselves to be carried away by the stream, and have forgotten the sanctity of their vocation; but the sacred fire did not cease to burn in the sanctuary; the law was there constantly proclaimed and inculcated; and, wonderful spectacle! the men who themselves violated it frequently assembled to condemn themselves, to censure their own conduct, and thus to render more public and more palpable the contrast which existed between their instructions and their actions. Simony and incontinence were the prevailing vices; if you open the canons of councils, you will find them everywhere anathematized. Nowhere do you find a struggle so prolonged, so constant, so persevering, of right against wrong; you always see, throughout so many ages, the law, opposed face to face to the irregular passions, maintain itself firm and immovable, without yielding a single step, without allowing them a moment of repose or peace until they were subjugated. And this constancy and tenacity of the Church were not useless. At the commencement of the sixteenth century, at the time when Protestantism appeared, we find abuses comparatively less numerous, morals perceptibly improved, discipline become more strict, and observed with sufficient regularity. The time when Luther declaimed was not like that when St. Peter Damien and St. Bernard deplored the

evils of the Church. The chaos was reduced to form; order, light, and regularity had made rapid progress; and an incontestable proof that the Church was not then plunged in such ignorance and corruption as is alleged, is, that she produced the great assemblage of saints who shed so much lustre on the age, and the men who displayed their eminent wisdom at the Council of Trent. Let us remember that great reforms require much time; that they met with much resistance both from the clergy and laity; that for having undertaken them with firmness, and urged them with vigour, Gregory VII. has been charged with rashness. Let us not judge of men without regard to times and places; and let us not pretend to measure every thing according to our own limited ideas; ages move in an immense orbit, and the variety of circumstances produces situations so strange and complicated that we can hardly form an idea of them.

Bossuet, in his *History of the Variations*, after having differently classed the spirit which guided certain men, before the thirteenth century, in their attempts at reform, and having cited the threatening words of Cardinal Julian on the subject of abuses, adds: "It is thus that, in the fifteenth century, this cardinal, the greatest man of his times, deplored these evils, and foresaw their fatal effects; by which he seems to have predicted those that Luther was about to bring on all Christianity, and in the first place on Germany; and he was not deceived when he thought that the neglect of reformation, and the increased hatred against the clergy, was about to produce a sect more dangerous to the Church

than the Bohemians." (*Hist. des Variat.* liv. i.) It is inferred from these words that the illustrious Bishop of Meaux found one of the principal causes of Protestantism in the omission of a legitimate reform made in time. Nevertheless, we must not suppose from this that Bossuet meant, in any degree, to excuse the promoters of it, or that he had any idea of sanctioning their intentions; on the contrary, he ranked them as turbulent innovators, who, far from promoting the real reform which was desired by wise and prudent men, only served to render it more difficult, by introducing, by the means of their erroneous doctrines, the spirit of disobedience, schism, and heresy.

In spite of the authority of Bossuet, I cannot persuade myself to look upon abuses as one of the principal causes of Protestantism; but it is not necessary to repeat what I have said in support of this opinion. It may not, however, be useless to repeat, that the authority of Bossuet is misapplied when used to justify the intentions of the reformers, since the illustrious prelate is the first to declare them highly culpable, and to observe, that if abuses were in existence, their intention was not to correct them, but rather to make them a pretext for abandoning the faith of the Church, throwing off the yoke of lawful authority, breaking the bands of discipline, and introducing thereby disorder and licentiousness.

How, indeed, can we attribute to the reformers the real spirit of reform, when almost all of them proved the contrary by the ignominy of their own conduct? If they had condemned,

by the austerity of their morals, or by devoting themselves to a severe asceticism, the relaxations of which they complained, there might be a question whether their extravagances were not the effects of exaggerated zeal, and if some excess in the love of virtue had not drawn them into error. But they did nothing of the kind. Let us hear on this point an eye-witness, a man who certainly cannot be accused of fanaticism, since the connection which he had with the leaders of Protestantism has rendered him culpable in the eyes of many. Behold what Erasmus said, with his usual wit and bitterness: "The reform, as far as it has gone, has been limited to the secularization of a few nuns and the marriage of a few priests; and this great tragedy finishes with an event altogether comic, since every thing is wound up, as in comedies, by a marriage."

This shows to conviction the true spirit of the innovators of the sixteenth century. It is clear that, far from wishing the reformation of abuses, they wished rather to increase them. This bare consideration of facts has led M. Guizot, on this point, into the path of truth, when he rejects the opinion of those who pretend, that the Reformation was "an attempt conceived and executed simply with the intention of reconstructing a pure and primitive Church. The Reformation," he said, "was not a mere attempt at religious amelioration, or the fruit of a Utopian humanity and virtue." (*Histoire Générale de la Civilisation en Europe*, douzième leçon.)

We shall have now no difficulty in appreciating at its just value



the explanation which the same writer gives of this phenomenon. "The Reformation," says M. Guizot, "was a great attempt at the liberation of human thought – an uprising of the mind of man." This attempt, according to M. Guizot, arose out of the energetic movement given to the human mind, and the state of inaction into which the Roman Church had fallen; it arose from this, that the human mind advanced rapidly and impetuously, while the Church remained stationary. Explanations of this kind, and this one in particular, are very apt to draw admirers and proselytes; these ideas are high, and placed on a level so lofty and extended, that they cannot be looked at closely by the generality of readers; and, moreover, they appear in brilliant imagery, which blinds the sight and prejudices the judgment.

That which restrains freedom of thought, as understood by M. Guizot and other Protestants is, authority in matters of faith: it was, then, against this authority that the uprising of the mind declared itself; or, in other words, the mind rebelled, because it advanced, while the Church, immovable in her doctrines, was, according to the expression of M. Guizot, "in a stationary state."

Whatever may be the disposition of mind of M. Guizot towards the dogmas of the Catholic Church, he ought, as a philosopher, to have seen that it was a great mistake to point out as the distinctive characteristic of one period, that which had been at every time a glorious title for the Church. For more than eighteen hundred years the Church has been stationary in her dogmas, and it is no equivocal proof that she possesses the truth:

the truth is unchangeable, because it is one.

What the Church was in the sixteenth century, she had been before, and she has been since. She had nothing particular, she adopted no new characteristic. The reason, then, by which it is attempted to explain this phenomenon, viz. the uprising of the mind, cannot advance the explanation a single step; and if this be the reason why M. Guizot compares the Church to governments grown old, we will tell him that she has had this old age from her cradle. M. Guizot, as if he had himself felt the weakness of his reasoning, presents his thoughts in groups, and as it were *pêle-mêle*; he parades before his readers ideas of different kinds, without taking pains to classify or distinguish them; one would be inclined to think that he meant to distract them by variety, and confound them by mixture. Judging, indeed, from the context of his discourse, the epithets *inert and stationary*, which he applies to the Church, do not appear, according to his intention, to relate to matters of faith; and he gives us to understand that he speaks rather of the pretensions of the Church with regard to politics and state economy. He has taken pains, elsewhere, to repel as calumnies, the charges of tyranny and intolerance which have been so often made against the court of Rome.

We find here an incoherence of ideas which was not to be expected in so clear a mind; and as many persons may scarcely be inclined to believe how far this incoherence extends, it is necessary to give his words literally: they will show us into what inconsistencies great minds can fall when they are placed in a

false position.

"The government of the human mind, the spiritual power," says M. Guizot, "had fallen into an inert and stationary condition. The political influence of the Church, of the court of Rome, was much diminished; European society no longer was ruled by it; it had passed under the control of lay governments. Nevertheless, the spiritual power preserved all its pretensions, all its *éclat*, all its external importance. There happened in this respect, what has more than once happened to old governments. The greater part of the complaints made against it were hardly better founded."

It is evident that M. Guizot, in this passage, does not point out any thing which is at all connected with liberty, any thing which is not quite of another kind: why does he not do so? The court of Rome, he tells us, had seen its political influence diminished, and yet it preserved its pretensions; the direction of European society no longer belonged to it, but Rome kept its pomp and its external importance. Is any thing here meant besides the rivalries of which political affairs had been the subject? Did M. Guizot forget what he himself said some pages before, viz. that it did not appear to him to be reasonable to assign the rivalry of kings with the ecclesiastical power as the cause of Protestantism, and that such a cause was not adequate to the extent and importance of the event?

Although all this has no direct connection with freedom of thought, still, if any one be inclined to attribute the uprising of the mind to the intolerance of the court of Rome, let him listen to

M. Guizot: "It is not true," says he, "that in the sixteenth century the court of Rome was very tyrannical; that abuses, properly so called, were then more numerous, more crying, than they had been at other times; never, perhaps, on the contrary, had the ecclesiastical power been more easy, more tolerant, more disposed to let things go their own way. Provided that it was not itself called in question, provided that the rights which it had formerly enjoyed were allowed in theory, that the same existence was secured, and the same tributes were paid to it, it would willingly have allowed the human mind to remain at peace, if the human mind had done the same in respect to it."

Thus M. Guizot seems to have forgotten what he had urged with the view of showing that the Protestant Reformation was a great attempt at the liberation of human thought – a rebellion of the mind of man. He does not allege any thing which was an obstacle to the freedom of man's thoughts; and he himself acknowledges that there was nothing to provoke this rebellion, as, for example, intolerance or cruelty; he has himself just told us that the ecclesiastical government of the sixteenth century, far from being tyrannical, was easy and tolerant, and that, if left to itself, it would willingly have allowed the human mind to remain tranquil.

It is, then, evident, that the great attempt at the liberation of the human mind is, in M. Guizot's mouth, only a vague, undefined expression, – a brilliant veil with which he seems to have wished to cover the cradle of Protestantism, even at the

risk of being inconsistent with his own opinions. He reverts to the political rivalries which he before rejected. Abuses have no importance in his eyes; he cannot find in them the real cause; and he forgets what he had just asserted in the preceding lecture, viz. that if necessary reform had been made in time, the religious revolution might have been avoided.

He tries to give a picture of the obstacles to the liberty of thought, and endeavours to rise to the general considerations which embrace all the importance and influences of the human mind; but he stops at *éclat*, at *external importance*, and *political rivalries*; he lowers his flight to the level of tributes and services.

This incoherence of ideas, this weakness of reasoning, and forgetfulness of assertions previously made, will appear strange only to those who are accustomed rather to admire the high flights of talented men than to study their aberrations. It is true that M. Guizot was in a position in which it was very difficult to avoid being dazzled and deceived. If it be true that we cannot observe attentively what passes on the ground around us without narrowing our view of the horizon, – if this method leads the observer to form a collection of isolated facts rather than compare general maxims, it is not less certain that, by extending our observations over a larger space, we run the risk of many illusions. Too great generalization borders on hypothesis and fancy. The mind, when taking an immoderate flight in order to get a general view of things, no longer sees them as they really are; perhaps sometimes even loses sight of them altogether.

Therefore it is that the loftiest minds should frequently remember the words of Bacon: "We do not want wings, but lead." Too impartial not to confess that abuses had been exaggerated, – too good a philosopher not to see that they could not have had so great an effect, – M. Guizot, who was prevented by his sense of dignity and decency from joining the crowd who incessantly raise the cry of cruelty and intolerance, has made an effort to do justice to the Church of Rome; but, unfortunately, his prejudices against the Church would not allow him to see things in their true light. He was aware that the origin of Protestantism must be sought in the human mind itself; but, knowing the age and epoch when he was speaking, he thought it was necessary to propitiate his audience by frequent appeals to liberty, in order that his discourse might be well received. This is the reason why, after having tempered the bitterness of his reproaches against the Church by a few soft words, he reserves all that is noble, grand, and generous for the ideas which produced the Reformation, and throws on the Church all the shadows of the picture.

While acknowledging that the principal cause of Protestantism is to be found in the human mind, it is easy to abstain from these unjust comparisons; and M. Guizot might have avoided the inconsistency to which we have alluded. He might have discovered the origin of the fact in the character of the human mind; he might, at the same time, have shown the greatness and importance of it, while simply explaining the nature and position of the societies in which it appeared. In fine,

he might have observed that it was no *extraordinary effort*, but a mere repetition of what has happened in every age; and a phenomenon, the character of which depended on the particular state of the atmosphere in which it was produced.

This way of considering Protestantism as an ordinary event, increased and developed by the circumstances in which it arose, appears to me to be as philosophical as it is little attended to. I shall support it by another observation, which will supply us with reasons and examples at the same time.

The state of modern society for three hundred years has been such, that all the events that have occurred have acquired a character of generalization, and consequently an importance, which distinguishes them from all the events of a similar kind which occurred at other times and in a different social state. If we examine the history of antiquity, we shall see that all the events therein occurring were isolated in some sort from each other; this was what rendered them less beneficial when they were good, and less injurious when they were bad. Carthage, Rome, Sparta, Athens, all these nations more or less advanced in the career of civilization, each followed its own path, and progressed in a different way. Ideas, manners, political constitutions, succeeded each other, without our being able to perceive any influence of the ideas of one nation on those of another, or of the manners of one nation on those of another; we do not find any evidence of a tendency to bring nations to one common centre.

We also remark that, except when forced to intermix, ancient

nations could be a long time in close proximity without losing their peculiarities, or suffering any important change by the contact.

Observe how different is the state of things in Europe in modern times. A revolution in one country affects all others, an idea sent forth from the schools agitates nations and alarms governments. Nothing is isolated, every thing is general, and acquires by expansion a terrible force. It is impossible to study the history of one nation without seeing all the others make their appearance on the stage; and we cannot study the history of a science or an art without discovering a thousand connections with objects which do not belong to science or to art.

All nations are connected, objects are assimilated, relations increase. The affairs of one nation are interesting to all the others, and they wish to take part in them. This is the reason why the idea of *non-intervention* in politics is, and always will be, impracticable; it is, indeed, natural for us to interfere in that in which we are interested.

These examples, although taken from things of a different kind, appear to me very well calculated to illustrate my idea of the religious events of that period. Protestantism, it is true, is thereby stripped of the philosophic mantle by which it has been covered from its infancy; it loses all right to be considered as full of foresight, magnificent projects, and high destinies, from its cradle, but I do not see that its importance and extent are thereby diminished; the fact itself, in a word, is unimpaired, but the real



cause of the imposing aspect in which it has presented itself to the world is explained.

Every thing, in this point of view, is seen in its just dimensions; individuals are scarcely perceived, and abuses appear only what they really are – opportunities and pretexts; vast plans, lofty and generous ideas, and efforts at independence of mind, are only gratuitous suppositions. Thence ambition, war, the rivalry of kings, take their position as causes more or less influential, but always in the second rank. All the causes are estimated at their real value; in fine, the principal causes being once pointed out, it is acknowledged that the fact was sure to be accompanied in its development by a multitude of subordinate agents. There remains still an important question in this matter, viz. what was the cause of the hatred, or rather the feeling of exasperation, on the part of sectarians against Rome? Was it owing to some great abuse, some great wrong on the part of Rome? There is but one answer to make, viz. that in a storm, the waves always dash with fury against the immovable rock which resists them.

So far from attributing to abuses all the influence which has been assigned to them on the birth and development of Protestantism, I am convinced, on the contrary, that all imaginable legitimate reforms, and the greatest degree of willingness on the part of the Church authorities to comply with every exigence, would not have been able to prevent that unhappy event.

He has paid little attention to the extreme inconstancy and

fickleness of the human mind, and studied its history to little purpose, who does not recognise in the event of the sixteenth century one of those great calamities which God alone can avert by a special intervention of his providence.[5](#)

# CHAPTER III. EXTRAORDINARY PHENOMENON IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The proposition contained in the concluding lines of the last chapter suggests a corollary, which, if I am not mistaken, offers a new demonstration of the divine origin of the Catholic Church. Her existence for eighteen centuries, in spite of so many powerful adversaries, has always been regarded as a most extraordinary thing. Another prodigy, too little attended to, and of not less importance when the nature of the human mind is taken into account, is, *the unity of the Church's doctrines, pervading, as it does, all her various instructions, and the number of great minds which this unity has always enclosed within her bosom.*

I particularly call the attention of all thinking men to this point; and although I cannot hope to develop this idea in a suitable manner, I am sure they will find in it matter for very serious reflection. This method of considering the Church may perhaps recommend itself to the taste of some readers on another account, viz. because I shall lay aside Revelation, in order to consider Catholicity, not as a Divine religion, but as a school of philosophy.

No one who has studied the history of letters can deny that the Church has, in all ages, possessed men illustrious for science. The history of the Fathers of the first ages of the Church is nothing but the history of the most learned men in Europe, in Africa, and in Asia; the list of learned men who preserved, after the irruption of the Barbarians, some remains of ancient knowledge, is composed of churchmen. In modern times you cannot point out a branch of human knowledge, in which a considerable number of Catholics have not figured in the first rank. Thus there has been, for eighteen hundred years, an uninterrupted chain of learned men, who were Catholics, that is, men united in the profession of the doctrines taught by the Catholic Church. Let us lay aside for a moment the divine characteristics of Catholicity, to consider it only as a school or sect; I say, that in the fact which I have pointed out, we find a phenomenon so extraordinary, that its equal cannot be found elsewhere, and that no effort of reason can explain it, according to the natural order of human things.

It is certainly not new in the history of the human mind for a doctrine, more or less reasonable, to be professed for a time by a certain number of learned and enlightened men; this has been shown in schools of philosophy both ancient and modern. But for a creed to maintain itself for many ages, by preserving the adhesion of men of learning of all times and of all countries – of minds differing among themselves on other points – of men opposed in interests and divided by rivalries, is a phenomenon new, unique, and not to be found anywhere

but in the Catholic Church. It always has been, and still is, the practice of the Church, while one in faith and doctrine, to teach unceasingly – to excite discussion on all subjects – to promote the study and examination of the foundations on which faith itself reposes – to scrutinize for this purpose the ancient languages, the monuments of the remotest times, the documents of history, the discoveries of scientific observation, the lessons of the highest and most analytic sciences, and to present herself with a generous confidence in the great lyceums, where men replete with talents and knowledge concentrate, as in a focus, all that they have learned from their predecessors, and all that they themselves have collected: and nevertheless we see her always persevere with firmness in her faith and in the unity of her doctrines; we see her always surrounded by illustrious men, who, with their brows crowned with the laurels of a hundred literary contests, humble themselves, tranquil and serene, before her, without fear of dimming the brightness of the glory which surrounds their heads.

We ask those who see in Catholicity only one of the innumerable sects by which the earth has been covered, to point out elsewhere a similar fact; to explain to us how the Church has been able to show us a phenomenon, constantly existing, so opposed to the ever-varying spirit of the human mind; let them tell us by what secret talisman the Sovereign Pontiffs have been able to do what other men have found impossible. Those men, who bowed their heads at the command of the Vatican,

who have laid aside their own opinions to adopt those of a man called the Pope, were not simple and ignorant men. Look at them attentively; you will see in the boldness of their mien their knowledge of their own intellectual power; you will read in their bright and penetrating eyes the flame of genius which burns in their breasts. They are the same men who have filled the highest places in the academies of Europe; who have spread their fame over the world, and whose names have been handed down to future generations. Examine the history of all ages, search all the countries of the world, and if you find anywhere such an extraordinary combination of knowledge in union with faith, of genius in submission to authority, and of discussion without breach of unity, you will have made an important discovery, and science will have to explain a new phenomenon. But you know well that you cannot do so. This is the reason why you have recourse to new stratagems in order to cast a shade on the brightness of this fact; for you feel that impartial reason and common sense must draw from it the conclusion that there is in the Catholic Church something which is not to be found elsewhere.

These facts, say our adversaries, are certain; the reflections which they suggest are dazzling at first sight; but if we examine the subject thoroughly, we shall see the difficulties they raise disappear. This phenomenon, which we have seen realized in the Catholic Church, and which is not found elsewhere, only proves that there has always been in the Church a fixed

system, which has been developed with uniform regularity. The Church knew that union is the source of strength; that union cannot exist without unity of doctrine; and that unity cannot be preserved without submission to authority. This simple observation established, and constantly maintained, the principle of submission. Such is the explanation of the phenomenon. The idea, we grant, is profoundly wise, the scheme is grand, the system is extraordinary; but they do not prove any thing in favor of the Divine origin of Catholicism.

This is the best reply which they can make; it is easy to show that the difficulty remains entire. Indeed, if it be true that there has existed a society on earth which has been for eighteen centuries guided by one fixed and constant principle – a society which has known how to bind to this principle eminent men of all ages and countries, the following questions must be asked of our adversaries: – Why has the Church alone possessed this principle, and monopolized this idea? If other sects have been in possession of it, why have they not acted on it? All the philosophic sects have disappeared, one after another; the Church alone remains. Other religions, in order to preserve some sort of unity, have been compelled to shun the light, to avoid discussion, to hide themselves in the thickest shades. Why has the Church preserved her unity while seeking the light, while publishing her books in open day, while lavishing all sorts of instruction, and founding everywhere colleges, universities, and establishments of every description, where all the splendor of

knowledge and erudition has been concentrated?

It is not enough to say that there was a plan – a system; the difficulty lies in the existence of this plan and this system; it consists in explaining how they were conceived and executed. If we had to do with a small number of men, in limited circumstances, times, and countries, for the execution of a limited project, there would be nothing extraordinary; but we have to do with a period of eighteen hundred years, with all the countries of the world, with circumstances the most varied, the most different, and the most opposed to each other; we have to do with a multitude of men who did not meet together, or act in concert. How is all this to be explained? If it were a plan and a system devised by man, we should ask, What was the mysterious power of Rome which enabled her to unite around her so many illustrious men of all times and of all countries? How did the Roman Pontiff, if he be only the chief of a sect, manage to fascinate the world to this extent? What magician ever did such wonders? Men have long declaimed against his religious despotism; why has no one been found to wrest the sceptre from his grasp? why has not a pontifical throne been raised capable of disputing the pre-eminence with his, and of maintaining itself with equal splendor and power? Shall we attribute it to his temporal power? This power is very limited. Rome was not able to contend in arms with any of the other European powers. Shall we attribute it to the peculiar character, to the knowledge or the virtues of the men who have occupied the Papal throne?



There has been, during these eighteen hundred years, an infinite variety in the characters and in the talents and virtues of the Popes. For those who are not Catholics, who do not see in the Roman Pontiff the vicar of Jesus Christ, – the rock on which He has built His Church, – the duration of this authority must be the most extraordinary phenomenon; and it is certainly one of the questions most worthy of being examined by the science which devotes itself to the history of the human mind; how there existed for many centuries an uninterrupted series of learned men, always faithful to the doctrines of the Roman See?

M. Guizot himself, in comparing Protestantism with the Roman Church, seems to have felt the force of this truth; and its light appears to have made him confused in his remarks. Let us listen again to this writer, whose talents and renown have dazzled, on this point, so many readers, who do not examine the solidity of proofs when they are clothed in brilliant images, and who applaud all kinds of ideas when they are conveyed to them in a torrent of enchanting eloquence; men who, pretending to intellectual independence, subscribe, without inquiry, to the decisions of the leaders of their school; who receive their doctrines with submission, and dare not even raise their heads to ask for the titles of their authority. M. Guizot, like all the great men among Protestants, was aware of the immense void which exists amid its various sects, and of the force and vigour which is contained in Catholicity; he has not been able to free himself from the rule of great minds, – a rule

which is explicitly confirmed by the writings of the greatest men of the Reformation. After pointing out the inconstant progress of Protestantism, and the error which it has introduced into the organization of intellectual society, M. Guizot proceeds thus: "People have not known how to reconcile the rights and necessities of tradition with those of liberty; and the cause of it undoubtedly has been, that the Reformation did not fully understand and accept either its principles or its effects." What sort of a religion must that be which does not fully understand and accept its principles or its effects?

Did a more formal condemnation of the Reformation ever issue out of the mouth of man? could any thing of the kind ever be said of the sects of philosophers, ancient or modern? Can the Reformation, then, after this, pretend to direct men or society? "Thence arises," continues M. Guizot, "a certain air of inconsistency and narrowness of spirit, which has often given advantages over it to its opponents. The latter knew very well what they did and what they wished; they ascended to the principles of their conduct, and avowed all their consequences. There never was a government more consistent, more systematic than that of the Church of Rome." But whence was the origin of a system so consistent? When we consider the fickleness and inconstancy of the human mind, do not this system, this consistency, and these fixed principles, speak volumes to the philosopher and man of good sense?

We have observed those terrible elements of dissolution which

have their source in the mind of man, and which have acquired so much force in modern society; we have seen with what fatal power they destroy and annihilate all institutions, social, political, and religious, without ever succeeding in making a breach in the doctrines of Catholicity, – without altering that system, so fixed and so consistent. Is there no conclusion to be drawn from all this in favour of Catholicity? To say that the Church has done that which no schools, or governments, or societies, or religions could do, is it not to confess that she is wiser than every thing human? And does it not clearly prove that she does not owe her origin to human thought, and that she is derived from the bosom of the Creator? This society – formed, you say, by men – this government, directed by men, has endured for eighteen hundred years; it extends to all countries, it addresses the savage in the forest, the barbarian in his tent, the civilized man in the most populous cities; it reckons among its children the shepherd clothed in skins, the laborer, the powerful nobleman; it makes its laws heard alike by the simple mechanic at his work, and the man of learning in his closet absorbed in the profoundest speculations. This government has always had, according to M. Guizot, a full knowledge of its actions and its wishes; it has always been consistent in its conduct. Is not this avowal its most convincing apology, its most eloquent panegyric; and shall it not be considered a proof that it contains within itself something more than human?

A thousand times have I beheld this prodigy with

astonishment; a thousand times have my eyes been fixed upon that immense tree which extends its branches from east to west, from north to south; I see beneath its shade a multitude of different nations, and the restless genius of man reposing in tranquillity at its feet.

In the East, at the period when this divine religion first appeared, I see, amidst the dissolutions of all sects, the most illustrious philosophers crowd to hear her words. In Greece, in Asia, on the banks of the Nile, in all the countries where, a short time before, swarmed innumerable sects, I see appear on a sudden a generation of great men, abounding in learning, in knowledge, in eloquence, and all agreeing in the unity of Catholic doctrine.

In the West, a multitude of barbarians throw themselves on an empire falling to decay; a dark cloud descends upon an horizon charged with calamities and disasters; there, in the midst of a people submerged in the corruption of morals, and having lost even the remembrance of their ancient grandeur, I see the only men who can be called worthy heirs of the Roman name, seek, in the retirement of their temples, an asylum for the austerity of their morals; it is there that they preserve, increase, and enrich the treasure of ancient knowledge. But my admiration reaches its height, when I observe that sublime intellect, worthy heir of the genius of Plato, which, after having sought the truth in all the schools, in all the sects, and with indomitable boldness run through all human errors, feels itself subjugated by the authority

of the Church, and transforms the freethinker into the great Bishop of Hippo. In modern times the series of great men who shone in the times of Leo X. and Louis XIV. passes before my eyes. I see the illustrious race still continue throughout the calamities of the eighteenth century; and in the nineteenth I see fresh heroes, who, after having followed error in all directions, come to hang their trophies at the gates of the Catholic Church. What, then, is this prodigy? Has a sect or religion like it ever before been seen? These men study every thing, dispute on every thing, reply to every thing, know every thing; but always agreeing in unity of doctrine, they bend their noble and intellectual brows in respectful obedience to faith. Do we not seem to behold another planetary system, where globes of fire revolve in their vast orbits in the midst of immensity, always drawn to their centre by a mysterious attraction? That central force, which allows no aberration, takes from them nothing of their extent, or of the grandeur of their movement; but it inundates them with light, while giving to their motion a more majestic regularity.[6](#)

# **CHAPTER IV.**

## **PROTESTANTISM AND THE MIND**

This fixedness of idea, this unanimity of will, this wisdom and constancy of plan, this progress with a firm step towards a definite object and end; and, in fine, this admirable unity, acknowledged in favor of Catholicism by M. Guizot himself, have not been imitated by Protestantism, either in good or evil. Protestantism, indeed, has not a single idea, of which it can say: "This is my own." It has attempted to appropriate to itself the principle of private judgment in matters of faith; and if several of its opponents have been too willing to accord it, it was because they were unable to find therein any other constitutive element; it was also because they felt that Protestantism, in boasting of having given birth to such a principle, labored to throw disgrace on itself, like a father who boasts of having unworthy and depraved sons. It is false, however, that Protestantism produced this principle of private judgment, since it was itself the offspring of that principle. That principle, before the Reformation, was formed in the bosom of all sects; it is the real germ of all errors; in proclaiming it, Protestants only yielded to a necessity which is common to all the sects separated from the Church.

There was therein no plan, no foresight, no system. The mere resistance to the authority of the Church included the

necessity of unlimited private judgment, and the establishment of the understanding as supreme judge; even had the coryphæi of Protestantism wished from the first to oppose the consequences and applications of this right, the barrier was broken, and the torrent could not have been confined.

"The right of examining what we ought to believe," says a celebrated Protestant, (*Germany*, by Mad. de Staël, part iv. chap. 2), "is the foundation of Protestantism. The first Reformers did not think thus; they thought themselves able to place the pillars of Hercules of the mind according to their own lights; but they were mistaken in hoping to make those who had rejected all authority of this kind in the Catholic religion submit to their decisions as infallible." This resistance on their part proves, that they were not led by any of those ideas, which, although erroneous, show, in some measure, nobleness and generosity of heart; and that it is not of them that the human mind can say: "They have erred, but it was in order to give me more liberty of action." "The religious revolution of the sixteenth century," says M. Guizot, "did not understand the true principles of intellectual liberty; it liberated the human mind, and yet pretended to govern it by law."

But it is in vain for man to struggle against the nature of things: Protestantism endeavored, without success, to limit the right of private judgment. It raised its voice against it, and sometimes appeared to attempt its total destruction; but the right of private judgment, which was in its own bosom, remained there, developed itself, and acted there in spite of it. There was no

middle course for Protestantism to adopt: it was compelled either to throw itself into the arms of authority, and thus acknowledge itself in the wrong, or else allow the dissolving principle to exert so much influence on its various sects, as to destroy even the shadow of the religion of Jesus Christ, and debase Christianity to the rank of a school of philosophy.

The cry of resistance to the authority of the Church once raised, the fatal results might be easily imagined; it was thus easy to foresee that that poisoned germ, in its development, must cause the ruin of all the Christian truths; and what could prevent its rapid development in a soil where fermentation was so active? Catholics were not wanting to proclaim loudly the greatness and imminence of the danger; and it must be allowed that many Protestants foresaw it clearly. No one is ignorant that the most distinguished men of the sect gave their opinions on this point, even from the beginning. Men of the greatest talent never found themselves at ease in Protestantism. They always felt that there was an immense void in it; this is the reason why they have constantly inclined either towards irreligion or towards Catholic unity.

Time, the best judge of opinions, has confirmed these melancholy prognostics. Things have now reached such a pass, that those only who are very ill instructed, or who have a very limited grasp of mind, can fail to see that the Christian religion, as explained by Protestants, is nothing more than an opinion – a system made up of a thousand incoherent parts, and



which is degraded to the level of the schools of philosophy. If Christianity still seems to surpass these schools in some respects, and preserves some features which cannot be found in what is the pure invention of the mind of man, it ought not to be a matter of astonishment. It is owing to that sublimity of doctrine and that sanctity of morality which, more or less disfigured, always shines while a trace is preserved of the words of Jesus Christ. But the feeble light which struggles with darkness after the sun has sunk below the horizon, cannot be compared to that of day: darkness advances and spreads; it extinguishes the expiring reflection, and night comes on. Such is the doctrine of Christianity among Protestants. A glance at these sects shows us that they are not purely philosophical, but it shows us at the same time that they have not the characters of true religion. Christianity has no authority therein; and is there like a being out of its proper element, – a tree deprived of its roots: its face is pale and disfigured like that of a corpse. Protestantism talks of faith, and its fundamental principle destroys it; it endeavors to exalt the gospel, and its own principle, by subjecting that gospel to private judgment, weakens its authority. If it speak of the sanctity and purity of Christian morality, it is reminded that some of its dissenting sects deny the divinity of Jesus Christ; and that they all may do so according to the principle on which it rests. The Divinity of Jesus Christ once doubted, the God-made man is reduced to the rank of a great philosopher and legislator; He has no longer the authority necessary to give to His laws the august

sanction which renders them so holy in the eyes of men; He can no longer imprint upon them the seal which raises them above all human thoughts, and His sublime instructions cease to be lessons flowing from the lips of uncreated Wisdom.

If you deprive the human mind of the support of authority of some kind or other, on what can it depend? Abandoned to its own delirious dreams, it is forced again into the gloomy paths which led the philosophers of the ancient schools to chaos. Reason and experience are here agreed. If you substitute the private judgment of Protestants for the authority of the Church, all the great questions respecting God and man remain without solution. All the difficulties are left; the mind is in darkness, and seeks in vain for a light to guide it in safety: stunned by the voices of a hundred schools, who dispute without being able to throw any light on the subject, it relapses into that state of discouragement and prostration in which Christianity found it, and from which, with so much exertion, she had withdrawn it. Doubt, pyrrhonism, and indifference become the lot of the greatest minds; vain theories, hypothetical systems, and dreams take possession of men of more moderate abilities; the ignorant are reduced to superstitions and absurdities.

Of what use, then, would Christianity have been on the earth, and what would have been the progress of humanity? Happily for the human race, the Christian religion was not abandoned to the whirlwind of Protestant sects. In Catholic authority she has found ample means of resisting the attacks of sophistry and error.

What would have become of her without it? Would the sublimity of her doctrines, the wisdom of her precepts, the unction of her counsels, have been now any thing more than a beautiful dream, related in enchanting language by a great philosopher? Yes, I must repeat, without the authority of the Church there is no security for faith; the divinity of Jesus Christ becomes a matter of doubt; His mission is disputed; in fact, the Christian religion disappears. If she cannot show us her heavenly titles, give us full certainty that she has come from the bosom of the Eternal, that her words are those of God Himself, and that He has condescended to appear on earth for the salvation of men, she has then lost her right to demand our veneration. Reduced to the level of human ideas, she must, then, submit to our judgment like other mere opinions; at the tribunal of philosophy she may endeavor to maintain her doctrines as more or less reasonable; but she will always be liable to the reproach of having wished to deceive us, by passing herself off as divine when she was only human; and in all discussions on the truth of her doctrines, she will have this fatal presumption against her, viz. that the account of her origin was an imposture.

Protestants boast of their independence of mind, and reproach the Catholic religion with violating the most sacred rights, by demanding a submission which outrages the dignity of man. Here extravagant declamation about the strength of our understanding is introduced with good effect; and a few seductive images and expressions, such as "*bold flights*" and "*glittering wings*," &c., are

enough to delude many readers.

Let the human mind enjoy all its rights; let it boast of possessing that spark of divinity called the intellect; let it pass over all nature in triumph, observing all the beings by which it is surrounded, and congratulate itself on its own immense superiority, in the midst of the wonders with which it has known how to embellish its abode; let it point out, as proofs of its strength and grandeur, the changes which are everywhere worked by its presence; by its intellectual force and boldness it has acquired the complete mastery over nature. Let us acknowledge the dignity and elevation of our minds to show our gratitude to our Creator, but let us not forget our weakness and defects. Why should we deceive ourselves by fancying that we know what we are really ignorant of? Why forget the inconstancy and variableness of our minds, and conceal the fact, that with respect to many things, even of those with which we are supposed to be acquainted, we have but confused ideas? How delusive is our knowledge, and what exaggerated notions we have of our progress in information? Does not one day contradict what another had affirmed? Time runs its course, laughs at our predictions, destroys our plans, and clearly shows how vain are our projects.

What have those geniuses who have descended to the foundations of science, and risen by the boldest flights to the loftiest speculations, told us? After having reached the utmost limits of the space which it is permitted to the human mind

to range over, – after having trodden the most secret paths of science, and sailed on the vast ocean of moral and physical nature, the greatest minds of all ages have returned dissatisfied with the results. They have seen a beautiful illusion appear before their eyes, – the brilliant image which enchanted them has vanished; when they thought they were about to enter a region of light, they have found themselves surrounded with darkness, and they have viewed with affright the extent of their ignorance. It is for this reason that the greatest minds have so little confidence in the strength of the human intellect, although they cannot but be fully aware that they are superior to other men. The sciences, in the profound observation of Pascal, have two extremes which meet each other: the first is, the pure natural state of ignorance in which men are at their birth; the other extreme is, that at which great minds arrive when, having reached the utmost extent of human knowledge, they find that they know nothing, and that they are still in the same state of ignorance as at first. (*Pensées*, 1 partie, art. 6.)

Catholicism says to man, "Thy intellect is weak, thou hast need of a guide in many things." Protestantism says to him, "Thou art surrounded by light, walk as thou wilt; thou canst not have a better guide than thyself." Which of the two religions is most in accordance with the lessons of the highest philosophy?

It is not, therefore, surprising that the greatest minds among Protestants have all felt a certain tendency towards Catholicism, and have seen the wisdom of subjecting the human mind, in

some things, to the decision of an infallible authority. Indeed, if an authority can be found uniting in its origin, its duration, its doctrines, and its conduct, all the characteristics of divinity, why should the mind refuse to submit to her; and what has it to gain by wandering, at the mercy of its illusions, on the most serious subjects, in paths where it only meets with recollections of errors, with warnings and delusions?

If the human mind has conceived too great an esteem for itself, let it study its own history, in order to see and understand how little security is to be found in its own strength. Abounding in systems, inexhaustible in subtilities; as ready in conceiving a project as incapable of maintaining it; full of ideas which arise, agitate, and destroy each other, like the insects which abound in lakes; now raising itself on the wings of sublime inspiration, and now creeping like a reptile on the face of the earth; as able and willing to destroy the works of others, as it is impotent to construct any durable ones of its own; urged on by the violence of passion, swollen with pride, confounded by the infinite variety of objects which present themselves to it; confused by so many false lights and so many deceptive appearances, the human mind, when left entirely to itself, resembles those brilliant meteors which dart at random through the immensity of the heavens, assume a thousand eccentric forms, send forth a thousand sparks, dazzle for a moment by their fantastic splendour, and disappear without leaving even a reflected light to illuminate the darkness.

Behold the history of man's knowledge! In that immense and

confused heap of truth, error, sublimity, absurdity, wisdom, and folly, are collected the proofs of my assertions, and to that do I refer any one who may be inclined to accuse me of having overcharged the picture.[7](#)

# CHAPTER V.

## INSTINCT OF FAITH IN THE SCIENCES

The truth of what I have just advanced with respect to the weakness of our intellect, is proved by the fact that the hand of God has placed at the bottom of our souls a preservative against the excessive changeability of our minds, even in things which do not regard religion. Without this preservative all social institutions would be destroyed, or rather never would have had existence; without it the sciences would not have advanced a step, and when it had disappeared from the human heart, individuals and society would have been swallowed up by chaos. I allude to a certain tendency to defer to authority – to the *instinct of faith*, if I may so call it – an instinct which we ought to examine with great attention, if we wish to know any thing of the human mind, and the history of its development.

It has often been observed that it is impossible to comply with the most urgent necessities, or perform the most ordinary acts of life, without respecting the authority of the statement of others; it is easy to understand that, without this faith, all the treasures of history and experience would soon be dissipated, and that even the foundation of all knowledge would disappear.

These important observations are calculated to show how vain



is the charge against the Catholic religion, of requiring nothing but faith; but this is not my only object here; I wish to present the matter under another aspect, and place the question in such a position as to make this truth gain in extent and interest, without losing any thing of its immovable firmness. In looking over the history of human knowledge, and glancing at the opinions of our contemporaries, we constantly observe that the men who boast the most of their spirit of inquiry and freedom of thought, only echo the opinions of others. If we examine with attention that great study which, under the name of science, has made so much noise in the world, we shall observe that it contains at bottom a large portion of authority; and that if a perfectly free spirit of inquiry were to be introduced into it, even with respect to points of pure reason, the greatest part of the edifice of science would be destroyed, and very few men would remain in possession of its secrets.

No branch of knowledge, whatever may be the clearness and exactitude of which it boasts, is an exception to this rule. Do not the natural and exact sciences, rich as they are in evident principles, rigorous in their deductions, abounding in observation and experience, depend, nevertheless, for a great many of their truths, upon other truths of a higher nature; the knowledge of which necessarily requires a delicacy of observation, a power of calculation, a clear and penetrating *coup d'œil*, which belongs to few?

When Newton proclaimed to the scientific world the fruit

of his profound calculations, how many of his disciples could flatter themselves that they were able to confirm them by their own convictions? I do not except from this question many of those who, by laborious efforts, had been able to comprehend something of this great man; they had followed the mathematician in his calculations, they had a full knowledge of the mass of facts and experience which the naturalist exposed to their view; they had listened to the reasons on which the philosopher rested his conjectures; in this way they thought that they were *fully convinced*, and that they did not owe their assent to any thing but the force of reason and evidence. Well, take away the name of Newton, efface from the mind the profound impression made by the authority of the man who made so extraordinary a discovery, and has employed so much genius in supporting it, – take away, I repeat it, the shade of Newton, and you will directly see, in the minds of his disciples, their principles vacillate, their reasonings become less convincing and exact, and their observations appear less in accordance with the facts. Then, he who thought himself a perfectly impartial observer, a perfectly independent thinker, will see and understand to how great an extent he was enthralled by the force of authority, by the ascendancy of genius; he will find that, on a variety of points, he *assented* without being *convinced*; and that, instead of being a perfectly independent philosopher, he was only an obedient and accomplished pupil.

I appeal with confidence to the testimony, not of the ignorant,

not of those who have only a smattering of scientific knowledge, but of real men of learning, of those who have devoted much time to the various branches of study. Let them look into their own minds, let them examine anew what they call their scientific convictions, let them ask themselves, with perfect calmness and impartiality, whether, even on those subjects in which they consider themselves the most advanced, their minds are not frequently controlled by the ascendancy of some author of the first rank. I believe they will be compelled to acknowledge that, if they strictly applied the method of Descartes even to some of the questions which they have studied the most, they would find that they believe rather than are convinced. Such always has been, and such always will be, the case. It is a thing deeply rooted in the nature of our minds, and it cannot be prevented. Perhaps the regulation is a matter of absolute necessity; perhaps it contains much of that instinct of preservation which God, with so much wisdom, has diffused throughout society; perhaps it is intended to counteract the many elements of dissolution which society contains within its bosom. Undoubtedly, it is often very much to be regretted that men servilely follow in the footsteps of others, and injurious consequences not unfrequently are the result. But it would be still worse, if men constantly held themselves in an attitude of resistance to all others, for fear of deception. Woe to man and to society, if the philosophic mania of wishing to submit all matters to a rigorous examination were to become general in the world; and woe to science, if this rigorous, scrupulous, and

independent scrutiny were extended to every thing.

I admire the genius of Descartes, and acknowledge the signal services which he has rendered to science; but I have more than once thought that, if his method of doubting became general for any time, society would be destroyed. And it seems to me that, among learned men themselves, among impartial philosophers, this method would do great harm; at least, it may be supposed that the number of men devoid of sense in the scientific world would be considerably increased.

Happily there is no danger of this being the case. If it be true that there is always in man a certain tendency towards folly, there is also always to be found there a fund of good sense which cannot be destroyed. When certain individuals of heated imaginations attempt to involve society in their delirium, society answers with a smile of derision; or if it allows itself to be seduced for a moment, it soon returns to its senses, and repels with indignation those who have endeavored to lead it astray. Passionate declamation against vulgar prejudice, against docility in following others and willingness to believe all without examination, is only considered as worthy of contempt by those who are intimately acquainted with human nature. Are not these feelings participated in by many who belong not to the vulgar? Are not the sciences full of gratuitous suppositions, and have they not their weak points, with which, however, we are satisfied, as if they afforded a firm basis to rest upon?

The right of possession and prescription is also one of the

peculiarities which the sciences present to us; and it is well worthy of remark that, without ever having borne the name, this right has been acknowledged by a tacit but unanimous consent. How can this be? Study the history of the sciences, and you will find at every step this right acknowledged and established. How is it, amid the continual disputes which have divided philosophers, that we see an old opinion make a long resistance to a new one, and sometimes succeed in preventing its establishment? It is because the old opinion was in possession, and was strengthened by the right of prescription. It is of no importance that the words were not used, the result was the same; this is the reason why discoverers have so often been despised, opposed, and even persecuted.

It is necessary to make this avowal, although it may be repugnant to our pride, and may scandalize some sincere admirers of the progress of knowledge. These advances have been numerous; the field over which the human mind has exercised itself, and its sphere of action, are immense; the works by which it has proved its power are admirable; but there is always in all this a large portion of exaggeration, and it is necessary to make a considerable allowance, especially in the moral sciences. It cannot justly be inferred, from these exaggerated statements, that our intellect is capable of advancing in every path with perfect ease and activity; no deduction can be drawn from it to contradict the fact which we have just established, viz. the mind of man is almost always in subjection,

even imperceptibly, to the authority of other men.

In every age there appear a small number of privileged spirits, who, by nature superior to all the rest, serve as guides in the various careers; a numerous crowd, who think themselves learned, follow them with precipitation, and, fixing their eyes on the standard which has been raised, rush breathlessly after it; and yet, strange as it is, they all boast of their independence, and flatter themselves that they are distinguishing themselves by pursuing the new path; one would imagine that they had discovered it, and that they were walking in it guided by their own light and inspirations. Necessity, taste, or a thousand other circumstances, lead us to cultivate this or that branch of knowledge; our own weakness constantly tells us that we have no creative power; that we cannot produce any thing of our own, and that we are incapable of striking out a new path; but we flatter ourselves that we share some part of the glory belonging to the illustrious chief whose banner we follow; we sometimes will succeed in persuading ourselves, in the midst of these reveries, that we do not fight under anybody's standard, and that we are only rendering homage to our own convictions, when, in reality, we are the proselytes of others.

Herein common sense shows itself to be wiser than our weak reason; and thus language, which gives such deep expression to things, where we find, without knowing whence they come, so much truth and exactitude, gives us a severe admonition on the subject of these vain pretensions. In spite of us, language

calls things by their right names, and knows how to class us and our opinions according to the leader that we follow. What is the history of science but the history of the contests of a small number of illustrious men? If we glance over ancient and modern times, and bring into view the various branches of knowledge, we shall see a number of schools founded by a philosopher of the first rank, and then falling under the direction of another whose talents have made him worthy to succeed the founder. Thus the thing goes on, until circumstances having changed, or the spirit of vitality being gone, the school dies a natural death, unless a man of bold and independent mind appears, who takes the old school and destroys it, in order to establish his own doctrines on the ruins.

When Descartes dethroned Aristotle, did he not immediately take his place? Then philosophers pretended to independence – an independence which was contradicted by the very name they bore, that of Cartesians. Like nations who, in times of rebellion, cry out for liberty, dethrone their old king, and afterwards submit to the first man who has the boldness to seize the vacant throne.

It is thought in our age, as it has been in times gone by, that the human mind acts with perfect independence, owing to declamation against authority in scientific matters, and the exaltation of the freedom of thought. The opinion has become general that, in these times, the authority of any one man is worth nothing; it has been thought that every man of learning acts according to his own convictions alone. Moreover, systems and

hypotheses have lost all credit, and a great desire for examination and analysis has become prevalent. This has made people believe not only that authority in scientific matters is completely gone, but that it is henceforth impossible.

At first sight there appears to be some truth in this; but if we look attentively around us, we shall observe that the number of leaders is only somewhat increased, and the time of their command somewhat shortened. Our age is truly one of commotions, literary and scientific revolutions, like those in politics, where nations imagine that they possess more liberty because the government is placed in the hands of a greater number of persons, and because they find more facility in getting rid of their rulers. They destroy those men to whom but a short time before they have given the names of fathers and liberators; then, the first transport being passed, they allow other men to impose upon them a yoke in reality not less heavy. Besides the examples afforded us by the history of the past century, at the present day we see only great names succeed each other, and the leaders of the human mind take each other's places.

In the field of politics, where one would imagine the spirit of freedom ought to have full scope, do we not see men who take the lead; and are they not looked upon as the generals of an army during a campaign? In the parliamentary arena, do we see any thing but two or three bodies of combatants, performing their evolutions under their respective chiefs with perfect regularity and discipline? These truths are well understood by those who



occupy these high positions! They are acquainted with our weakness, and they know that men are commonly deceived by mere words. A thousand times must they have been tempted to smile, when, contemplating the field of their triumphs, and seeing themselves surrounded by followers who, proud of their own intelligence, admire and applaud them, they have heard one of the most ardent of their disciples boast of his unlimited freedom of thought, and of the complete independence of his opinions and his votes.

Such is man, as shown to us by history and the experience of every day. The inspiration of genius, that sublime force which raises the minds of some privileged men, will always exercise, not only over the ignorant, but even over the generality of men who devote themselves to science, a real fascination. Where, then, is the insult which the Catholic religion offers to reason when, presenting titles which prove her divinity, she asks for that faith which men grant so easily to other men in matters of various kinds, and even in things with which they consider themselves to be the best acquainted? Is it an insult to human reason to point out to him a fixed and certain rule with respect to matters of the greatest importance, while, on the other hand, she leaves him perfectly free to think as he pleases on all the various questions which God has left to his discretion? In this the Church only shows herself to be in accordance with the lessons of the highest philosophy. She shows a profound knowledge of the human mind, and she delivers it from all the

evils which are inflicted by its fickleness, its inconstancy, and its ambition, combined as these qualities are with an extraordinary tendency to defer to the opinions of individuals. Who does not see that the Catholic Church puts thereby a check on the spirit of proselytism, of which society has had so much reason to complain? Since there is in man this irresistible tendency to follow the footsteps of another, does she not confer an eminent service on humanity, by showing it a sure way of following the example of a God incarnate? Does she not thus take human liberty under her protection, and at the same time save from shipwreck those branches of knowledge which are the most necessary to individuals and to society?[8](#)

# **CHAPTER VI.**

## **DIFFERENCES IN THE RELIGIOUS WANTS OF NATIONS – MATHEMATICS – MORAL SCIENCES**

The progress of society, and the high degree of civilization and refinement to which modern nations have attained, will no doubt be urged against the authority which seeks to exercise jurisdiction over the mind. In this way men will attempt to justify what they call the emancipation of the human mind. For my own part, this objection seems to have so little solidity, and to be so little supported by facts, that, from the progress of society, I should, on the contrary, conclude that there is the more need of that living rule which is deemed indispensable by Catholics.

To say that society in its infancy and youth may have required this authority as a check, but that this check has become useless and degrading since the human mind has reached a higher degree of development, is completely to mistake the connection which exists between the various conditions of our mind and the objects over which this authority extends. The true idea of God, the origin, the end, and the rule of human conduct, together with all the means with which God has furnished us to attain to our

high destiny, such are the subjects with which faith deals, and with respect to which Catholics contend that it is necessary to have an infallible rule. They maintain that without this it would be impossible to avoid the most lamentable errors, and to protect truth from the effects of human passions.

This consideration will suffice to show, that private judgment would be much less dangerous among nations still less advanced in the career of civilization. There is, indeed, in a young nation, a great fund of natural candor and simplicity, which admirably disposes it to receive with docility the instructions contained in the sacred volume. Such a people will relish those things which are easily to be understood, and will bow with humility before the sublime obscurity of those pages which it has pleased God to cover with a veil of mystery. Moreover, the condition of this people, as yet exempt from the pride of knowledge, would create a sort of authority, since there would be found within its bosom only a small number of men able to examine divine revelation; and thus a centre for the distribution of instruction would be naturally formed.

But it is far otherwise with a nation far advanced in the career of knowledge. With the latter, the extension of knowledge to a greater number of individuals, by augmenting pride and fickleness, multiplies sects, and ends by revolutionizing ideas and corrupting the purest traditions. A young nation is devoted to simple occupations; it remains attached to its ancient customs; it listens with respect and docility to the aged, who, surrounded

by their children and grand-children, relate with emotion the histories and the maxims which they have received from their ancestors. But when society has reached a great degree of development, when respect for the fathers of families and veneration for gray hairs have become weakened; when pompous titles, scientific display, and grand libraries make men conceive a high idea of their intellectual powers; when the multitude and activity of communications widely diffuse those ideas, which, when put in motion, have an almost magical power of affecting men's minds, then it is necessary, – it is indispensable to have an authority, always living, always ready to act whenever it is wanted, – to cover with a protecting ægis the sacred deposit of truths which are the same in all times and places; truths without the knowledge of which man would be left to the mercy of his own errors and caprices from the cradle to the grave; truths on which society rests as its surest foundation; truths which cannot be destroyed without shaking to pieces the whole social edifice. The literary and political history of Europe for the last three hundred years affords but too many proofs of this. Religious revolution broke out at the moment when it was capable of doing the most harm: it found society agitated by all the activity of the human mind, and it destroyed the control when it was most necessary.

Undoubtedly, it is necessary to guard against depreciating the mind of man by charging it with faults which it has not, or by exaggerating those which it has; but it is no less improper to

puff it up by exalting its strength too much. The latter would be injurious to it in several ways, and would be little likely to advance its progress; it would also, if properly understood, be little conformable to that gravity and discretion which ought to distinguish true science. Indeed, to merit the name, science ought to show the folly of being vain of what does not rightly belong to it; it ought to know its limits, and have sufficient candor and generosity to acknowledge its weakness.

There is a fact in the history of science, which, by revealing the intrinsic weakness of the mind, palpably shows the flattery of those unmeasured eulogies which are sometimes lavished on it, and also demonstrates to us how dangerous it would be to abandon it to itself without any guide. This fact is, the obscurity which increases in proportion as we approach the first principles of science; so that even in those sciences the truth, evidence, and exactness of which are considered the best established, it seems that no firm ground is to be obtained when we attempt to go to the bottom of them; and the mind, not finding any security, recoils in the fear of meeting with something to throw doubt and uncertainty on the truths of which it was convinced.

I do not participate in the ill-humor of Hobbes against the mathematics. Devoted to their progress, and deeply convinced as I am of the advantages which their study confers on the other sciences and on society, I shall not attempt to underrate their merit, or deny any of their great claims; but who can say that they are an exception to the general rule? Have they not their weak

points and their darksome paths?

It is true that, when we confine ourselves to the explanation of the first principles of these sciences, and the deduction from them of the most elementary propositions, the mind is on firm ground, where no fear of making a false step occurs to it. I put aside at present the obscurity which would be found in ideology and metaphysics, if they were to discuss certain points according to the writings of the most distinguished philosophers. Let us confine ourselves to the circle to which the mathematics are naturally confined. Who that has studied them is ignorant that you may reach a point in their theories, where the mind finds nothing but obscurity? The demonstration is before our eyes; it has been developed in all its parts; and yet the mind wavers, feeling within itself a kind of uncertainty which it cannot well describe. It sometimes happens that, after reasoning a long time, the truth rushes upon us like the light of day; but it is not until we have walked in darkness for a long period. When we fix our attention upon those thoughts which wander in our minds like moving lights, on those almost imperceptible emotions which, on these occasions, arise, and then die away in the soul, we observe that the mind, in the midst of its fluctuations, seeks instinctively for the anchor which is to be found in the authority of another. To reassure ourselves completely, we then invoke the authority of some great mathematicians, and we rejoice that the fact is placed beyond a doubt by the series of great men who have always viewed it in the same light. But perhaps our ignorance and pride

will not admit the truth of these reflections. Let us, then, study these sciences, or at least read their history, and we shall be convinced that they afford numerous proofs of the weakness of the intellect.

Did not the extraordinary invention of Newton and Leibnitz find many opponents in Europe? Were there not required to establish it, both the sanction of time and the touchstone of experience, which made manifest the truth of their principles and the exactness of their reasonings? Do you believe that, if this invention were again, for the first time, to make its appearance in the field of science, even fortified with all the proofs which have been brought forward to strengthen it, and surrounded with all the light which so many explanations have shed upon it, – do you believe, I say, that it would not need a second time the right of prescription, to regain its tranquil and undisturbed empire?

It is easy to suppose that the other sciences have no little share in this uncertainty arising from the weakness of the human mind; as I do not imagine that this assertion will be called in question, I pass on to a few remarks on the peculiar character of the moral sciences.

The fact has not been sufficiently attended to, that there is no study more deceptive than that of the moral sciences; I say deceptive, because this study, seducing the mind by an appearance of facility, draws it into difficulties which it is no easy matter to overcome. It may be compared to those tranquil waters which, although apparently but shallow, are in reality



unfathomably deep. Familiarized from our infancy with the language of this science, surrounded by its continual applications, and having before our eyes its truths under a palpable form, we possess a certain facility of speaking readily on many parts of the subject; and we have the rashness to suppose that it would not be difficult to master its highest principles and its most delicate relations. But wonderful as it is, scarcely have we quitted the path of common sense, and attempted to go beyond those simple impressions which we have received from our mothers, when we find ourselves in a labyrinth of confusion. If the mind gives itself up to subtilties, it ceases to listen to the voice of the heart, which speaks to it with equal simplicity and eloquence; if it does not repress its pride, and attend to the wise counsels of good sense, it will be guilty of despising those salutary and necessary truths, which have been preserved by society to be transmitted from generation to generation: it is then, while groping its way in the dark, that it falls into the wildest extravagances, the lamentable effects of which are so often exemplified in the history of the sciences.

If we observe attentively, we shall find something of the same kind in all the sciences. The Creator has taken care to supply us with knowledge necessary for the purposes of life, and for the attainment of our destiny; but it has not pleased Him to gratify our curiosity by discovering to us what was not necessary. Nevertheless, in some things He has communicated to the mind a power which renders it capable of constantly adding to its

knowledge; but, with respect to moral truths, it has been left sterile. What man is required to know, has been deeply engraven on his heart, in characters simple and intelligible; or is contained in the sacred volume; and moreover, he has had pointed out to him, in the authority of the Church, a fixed rule, to which he can apply to have his doubts explained. With respect to the rest, man has been placed in such a position, that if he attempt to enter into matters which are too subtle, he only wanders backwards and forwards in the same road, at the extremities of which he finds on the one side skepticism, on the other pure truth.

Perhaps some modern ideologists will urge, in opposition to this, the result of their own analytical labours. "Before men began to analyze facts," they will say, "and while they indulged in fanciful systems, and satisfied themselves with verbal disputes without critical examination, all this might be true; but now that we have explained all the ideas of moral good and evil, in so perfect a way, and have separated the prejudice in them from the true philosophy; now that the whole system of morality is based upon the simple principles of pleasure and pain, and we have given the clearest ideas of these things, such, for example, as the sensations produced in us by an orange; to maintain your assertion, is to be ungrateful towards science, and to underrate the fruit of our labours."

I am aware of the labours of some moral ideologists, and I know with what deceptive simplicity they develop their theories, by giving to the most difficult things an easy turn, which affects

to make them intelligible to the most limited minds. This is not the place to examine these analytical investigations, and their results. I shall, however, remark that, in spite of their promised simplicity, it does not appear that either society or science makes much progress through their means, and that these opinions, although but a short time broached, are already superannuated. This is not a matter of astonishment to us; for it was easy to perceive that, in spite of their positiveness, if I may be allowed to use the expression, these ideologists are as hypothetical as many of their predecessors, who are loaded by them with sarcasms and contempt. They are a poor, narrow-minded school, devoid of the truth, and not even adorned by the brilliant dreams of great men; a proud and deluded school, who fancy they explain a fact, when they only obscure it; and prove a thing, when they only assert it; and imagine that they analyze the human heart, when they take it to pieces.

If such is the human mind; if such is its inability in matters of science, whether physical or moral, that it has not advanced a single step beyond the limit prescribed by a beneficent Providence; what service has Protestantism rendered to modern society, by impairing the force of authority, that power which could alone present an effectual barrier to man's unhappy wanderings?[9](#)

# CHAPTER VII.

## INDIFFERENCE AND FANATICISM

In rejecting the authority of the Church, and in adopting this resistance as its only principle, Protestantism was compelled to seek its whole support in man; thus to mistake the true character of the human mind, and its relations with religious and moral truth, was to throw itself, according to circumstances, into the opposite extremes of fanaticism and indifference.

It may seem strange that these opposite errors should emanate from the same source; and yet nothing is more certain. Protestantism, by appealing to man alone in religious matters, had only two courses to adopt; either to suppose men to be inspired by Heaven for the discovery of truth, or to subject all religious truths to the examination of reason. To submit religious truths to the judgment of reason was sooner or later to produce indifference; on the other hand, private inspiration must engender fanaticism.

There is a universal and constant fact in the history of the human mind – viz. its decided inclination to invent systems in which the reality of things is completely laid aside, and where we only see the workings of a spirit which has chosen to quit the ordinary path in order to give itself up to its own inspirations.

The history of philosophy is little else than a perpetual repetition of this phenomenon, which the human mind shows, in some shape or other, in all things which admit of it. When the mind has conceived a peculiar idea, it regards it with that blind and exclusive predilection which is found in the love of the father for his children. Under the influence of this prejudice, the mind develops its ideas and accommodates facts to suit it; that which at first was only an ingenious and extravagant idea, becomes the germ of important doctrines; and if it arise in a person of an ardent disposition, fanaticism, the cause of so much madness, is the consequence.

The danger is very much increased when the new system applies to religious matters, or is immediately connected with them. The extravagances of a diseased mind are then looked upon as inspirations from Heaven; the fever of delirium as a divine flame; and a mania of being singular as an extraordinary vocation. Pride, unable to brook opposition, rises against all that it finds established; it insults all authority; it attacks all institutions; it despises everybody; it conceals the grossest violence under the mantle of zeal, and ambition under the name of apostleship. The dupe of himself rather than an impostor, the wretched maniac sometimes becomes deeply persuaded that his doctrines are true, and that he has received the commands of Heaven. As there is something extraordinary and striking in the fiery language of the madman, he communicates to those who listen to him a portion of his insanity, and makes, in a short time,

a considerable number of proselytes. The men capable of playing the first part in this scene of madness are not numerous, it is true; but unhappily the majority of men are foolish enough to be easily led away. History and experience sufficiently prove that the crowd are easily attracted, and that to form a party, however criminal, extravagant, or ridiculous, it is only necessary to raise a standard.

I wish to take this opportunity of making an observation which I have never seen pointed out – viz. that the Church, in her contest with heresy, has rendered an important service to the science which devotes itself to the examination of the true character, tendency, and power of the human mind. The zealous guardian of all great truths, she has always known how to preserve them unimpaired; she was fully acquainted with the weakness of the mind of man, and its extreme proneness to folly and extravagance; she has followed it closely in all its steps, has watched it in all its movements, and has constantly resisted it with energy, when it attempted to pollute the pure fountain of which she is the guardian. During the long and violent contests which she has had with it, the Church has made manifest its incurable folly; she has exhibited it on every side, and has shown it in all its forms. Thus it is that, in the history of heresies, she has made an abundant collection of facts, and has painted an extremely interesting picture of the human mind, where its characteristic physiognomy is faithfully represented; a picture which will doubtless be of great service in the composition of

the important work which is yet unwritten – viz. the true history of the human mind.[10](#)

Certain it is that the ravings and extravagances of fanaticism have not been wanting in the history of Europe for the last three hundred years. Their monuments still remain; in whatever direction we turn our steps, we find bloody traces of the fanatical sects produced by Protestantism, and engendered by its fundamental principle. Nothing could confine this devastating torrent, neither the violent character of Luther, nor the furious efforts which he made to oppose every one who taught doctrines different from his own. Impiety succeeded impiety, extravagance extravagance, fanaticism fanaticism. The pretended Reformation was soon divided into as many sects as there were found men with the ingenuity to invent and the boldness to maintain a system of their own. This was necessarily the case; for besides the danger of leaving the human mind without a guide on all questions of religion, there was another cause fruitful in fatal results, I mean the private interpretation of the sacred books.

It was then found that the best things may be abused, and that these divine volumes, which contain so much instruction for the mind, and so much consolation for the heart, are full of danger to the proud. How great will this be, if you add to the obstinate resolution of resisting all authority in matters of faith, the false persuasion that the meaning of the Scriptures is everywhere clear, and that, in all cases, the inspirations of Heaven may be expected to solve every doubt? What will happen to those

who turn over their pages with a longing desire to find some text which, more or less tortured, may seem to authorize their sophisms, subtilties, and absurdities?

There never was a greater mistake than that which was committed by the Protestant leaders, when they placed the Bible in the hands of all for self-interpretation; never was the nature of that sacred volume more completely lost sight of. It is true that Protestantism had no other method to pursue, and that every objection which it could make to the private interpretation of the sacred text would be a striking inconsistency, an apostasy from its own principles, and a denial of its own origin; but at the same time, this is its most decided condemnation. What claim, indeed, can that religion have to truth and sanctity whose fundamental principle contains the germ of sects the most fanatical – the most injurious to society?

It would be difficult to collect into so narrow a space, in opposition to this essential error of Protestantism, so many facts and convincing proofs of this, as are contained in the following lines, written by a Protestant, O'Callaghan, which, I have no doubt, my readers will thank me for quoting here. "Led away," says O'Callaghan, "by their spirit of opposition to the Church of Rome, the first Reformers loudly proclaimed the right of interpreting the Scriptures according to each one's private judgment; but in their eagerness to emancipate the people from the authority of the Pope, they proclaimed this right without explanation or restriction: and the consequences were fearful.



Impatient to undermine the papal jurisdiction, they maintained without exception, that each individual has an incontestable right to interpret the Scriptures for himself; and as this principle, carried to the fullest extent, was not sustainable, they were obliged to rely for support upon another, viz. that the Bible is an easy book, within the comprehension of all minds, and that the divine revelations contained in it are always clear to all; two propositions which, whether we consider them together or apart, cannot withstand a serious attack.

"The private judgment of Muncer found in the Scriptures that titles of nobility and great estates are impious usurpations, contrary to the natural equality of the faithful, and he invited his followers to examine if this were not the case. They examined into the matter, praised God, and then proceeded by fire and sword to extirpate the impious and possess themselves of their properties. Private judgment made the discovery in the Bible that established laws were a permanent restriction on Christian liberty; and, behold, John of Leyden, throwing away his tools, put himself at the head of a mob of fanatics, surprised the town of Munster, proclaimed himself king of Sion, and took fourteen wives at a time, asserting that polygamy is Christian liberty, and the privilege of the saints. But if the criminal madness of these men in another country is afflicting to the friends of humanity and of real piety, certainly the history of England, during a great part of the seventeenth century, is not calculated to console them. During that period an immense number of fanatics appeared,

sometimes together and sometimes in succession, intoxicated with extravagant doctrines and mischievous passions, from the fierce ravings of Fox to the more methodical madness of Barclay; from the formidable fanaticism of Cromwell to the silly profanity of 'Praise God Barebones.' Piety, reason, and good sense seemed to be extinct on earth, and to be succeeded by an extravagant jargon, a religious frenzy, and a zeal without discretion. All quoted the Scriptures, all pretended to have had inspirations, visions, and spiritual ecstasies, and all, indeed, had equal claims to them. It was strongly maintained that it was proper to abolish the priesthood and the royal dignity, because priests were the ministers of Satan, and kings the delegates of the whore of Babylon, and that the existence of both were inconsistent with the reign of the Redeemer. The fanatics condemned science as a Pagan invention, and universities as seminaries of antichristian impiety. Bishops were not protected by the sanctity of their functions, or kings by the majesty of the throne; both, as objects of contempt and hatred, were mercilessly put to death by these fanatics, whose only book was the Bible, without note or comment. During this time, the enthusiasm for prayer, preaching, and the reading of the sacred books was at the highest point; everybody prayed, preached, and read, but nobody listened. The greatest atrocities were justified by the Scriptures; in the most ordinary transactions of life, scriptural language was made use of; national affairs, foreign and domestic, were discussed in the phraseology of Holy Writ. There were scriptural

plots, conspiracies, and proscriptions; and all this was not only justified but even sanctified by quotations from the word of God. These facts, attested by history, have often astonished and alarmed men of virtue and piety, *but the reader, too much imbued with his own ideas, forgets the lesson to be learnt by this fatal experience; namely, that the Bible without note or comment was not intended to be read by rude and ignorant men.*

"The majority of mankind must be content to receive the instructions of others, and are not enabled to trust themselves. The most important truths in medicine, in jurisprudence, in physics, in mathematics, must be received from those who drink at the fountain head. The same plan has in general been pursued with respect to Christianity; and whenever the departure from it has been wide enough, *'society has been shaken to its foundation.'*"

These words of O'Callaghan do not require any comment. It cannot be said that they are hyperbolical or declamatory, as they are only a simple and faithful narration of acknowledged facts. The recollection of these events should suffice to prove the danger of placing the sacred Scriptures, without note or comment, into the hands of all, as Protestantism does, under the pretence, that the authority of the Church is useless for understanding the holy books; and that every Christian has only to listen to the dictates which generally emanate from his passions and heated imagination. By this error alone, if it had committed no other, Protestantism is self-reproved and

condemned; for it is a religion which has established a principle destructive to itself. In order to appreciate the madness of Protestantism on this point, and to see how false and dangerous is the position which it has assumed with regard to the human mind, it is not necessary to be a theologian, or a Catholic; it is enough to have read the Scriptures with the eyes of a philosopher or a man of literature. Here is a book which comprises, within a limited compass, the period of four thousand years, and advances further towards the most distant future, by embracing the origin and destiny of man and the universe – a book which, with the continued history of a chosen people, intermingles, in its narrations and prophecies, the revolutions of mighty empires – a book which, side by side with the magnificent pictures of the power and splendor of Eastern monarchs, describes, in simple colors, the plain domestic manners, the candor, and innocence of a young nation – a book in which historians relate, sages proclaim their maxims of wisdom, apostles preach, and doctors instruct – a book in which prophets, under the influence of the divine Spirit, thunder against the errors and corruptions of the people, and announce the vengeance of the God of Sinai, or pour forth inconsolable lamentations on the captivity of their brethren, and the desolation and solitude of their country; where they relate, in wonderful and sublime language, the magnificent spectacles which are presented to their eyes; where, in moments of ecstasy, they see pass before them the events of society and the catastrophes of nature, although veiled in mysterious

figures and visions of obscurity – a book, or rather a collection of books, where are to be found all sorts of styles and all varieties of narrative, epic majesty, pastoral simplicity, lyric fire, serious instruction, grave historical narrative, and lively and rapid dramatic action; a collection of books, in fine, written at various times and in various languages, in various countries, and under the most peculiar and extraordinary circumstances. Must not all this confuse the heads of men who, puffed up with their own conceit, grope through these pages in the dark, ignorant of climates, times, laws, customs, and manners? They will be puzzled by allusions, surprised by images, deceived by expressions; they will hear the Greek and Hebrew, which was written in those remote ages, now spoken in a modern idiom. What effects must all these circumstances produce on the minds of readers who believe that the Bible is an easy book, to be understood without difficulty by all? Persuaded that they do not require the instructions of others, they must either resolve all these difficulties by their own reflections, or trust to that individual inspiration which they believe will not be wanting to explain to them the loftiest mysteries. Who, after this, can be astonished that Protestantism has produced so many absurd visionaries and furious fanatics?[11](#)

# **CHAPTER VIII.**

## **FANATICISM – ITS DEFINITION.**

### **– FANATICISM IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

It would be unjust to charge a religion with falsehood, merely because fanatics are to be found within its bosom. This would be to reject all, because none are to be found exempt from them. A religion, then, is not to be condemned because it has them, but because it produces them, urges them on, and opens a field for them. If we observe closely, we shall find at the bottom of the human heart an abundant source of fanaticism; the history of man affords us many proofs of this incontestable truth. Imagine whatever delusion you please, relate the most extravagant visions, invent the most absurd system, if you only take care to give to all a religious coloring, you may be sure that you will have enthusiastic followers, who will heartily devote themselves to the propagation of your doctrines, and will espouse your cause blindly and ardently; in other words, you will have under your standard a troop of fanatics.

Philosophers have devoted many pages to declamation against fanaticism; they have, as it were, assumed the mission of banishing it from the earth. They have tired mankind with

philosophical lectures, and have thundered against the monster with all the vigor of their eloquence. They used the word, however, in so wide a sense as to include all kind of religion. But, if they had confined themselves to attacking real fanaticism, I believe they would have done much better if they had devoted some time to the examination of this matter in an analytic spirit, and had treated it, after so doing, maturely, calmly, and without prejudice.

Inasmuch as these philosophers were aware that fanaticism is a natural infirmity of the human mind, they could, if they were men of sense and wisdom, have had little hope of banishing the accursed monster from the world by reasoning and eloquence; for I am not aware that, up to the present time, philosophy has remedied any of the important evils that afflict humanity. Among the numerous errors of the philosophy of the eighteenth century, one of the principal was the mania for types; there was formed in the mind a type of the nature of man, of society, in a word, of every thing; and every thing that could not be adjusted to this type, every thing that could not be moulded into the required form, was so subjected to the fury of philosophers, as to make it certain, at least, that the want of pliability did not go unpunished.

But do I mean to deny the existence of fanaticism in the world? There is much of it. Do I deny that it is an evil? It is a very great one. Can it be extirpated? It cannot. How can its extent be diminished, its force weakened, and its violence checked? By directing man wisely. Can this be done by philosophy? We shall

presently see. What is the origin of fanaticism? We must begin by defining the real meaning of the word. By fanaticism is meant, taking the word in its widest signification, the strong excitement of a mind powerfully acted on by a false or exaggerated opinion. If the opinion be true, if it be confined within just limits, there is no fanaticism; or, if there *be* any, it is only with respect to the means employed in defending the opinion. But in that case there is an erroneous judgment, since it is believed that the truth of the opinion authorizes the means; that is to say, there is already error or exaggeration. If a true opinion be sustained by legitimate means, if the occasion be opportune, whatever may be the excitement or effervescence of mind, whatever may be the energy of the efforts and the sacrifices made, then there is enthusiasm of mind and heroism of action, but no fanaticism. Were it otherwise, the heroes of all times and countries might be stigmatized as fanatics.

Fanaticism, in this general sense, extends to all the subjects which occupy the human mind; thus there are fanatics in religion, in politics, even in science and literature. Nevertheless, according to etymology and custom, the word is properly applied to religious matters only; therefore the word, when used alone, means fanaticism in religion, whilst, when applied to other things, it is always accompanied by a qualifying epithet; thus we say political fanatics, literary fanatics, &c.

There is no doubt that in religious matters men have a strong tendency to give themselves to a dominant idea, which



they desire to communicate to all around them, and propagate everywhere. They sometimes go so far as to attempt this by the most violent means. The same fact appears, to a certain extent, in other matters; but it acquires in religious things a character different from what it assumes elsewhere. It is there that the human mind acquires increased force, frightful energy, and unbounded expansion; there are no more difficulties, obstacles, or fetters; material interests entirely disappear; the greatest sufferings acquire a charm; torments are nothing; death itself is a seductive illusion.

This phenomenon varies with individuals, with ideas, with the manners of the nation in whose bosom it is produced; but at bottom it is always the same. If we examine the matter thoroughly, we shall find that the violences of the followers of Mahomet, and the extravagant disciples of Fox, have a common origin.

It is with this passion as with all others; when they produce great evils, it is because they deviate from their legitimate objects, or because they strive at those objects by means which are not conformable to the dictates of reason and prudence. Fanaticism, then, rightly understood, is nothing but misguided religious feeling; a feeling which man has within him from the cradle to the tomb, and which is found to be diffused throughout society in all periods of its existence. Vain have been the efforts made up to this time to render men irreligious; a few individuals may give themselves up to the folly of complete irreligion; but

the human race always protests against those who endeavor to stifle the sentiment of religion. Now this feeling is so strong and active, it exercises so unbounded an influence on man, that no sooner has it been diverted from its legitimate object, and quitted the right path, than it is seen to produce lamentable results; then it is that two causes, fertile in great disasters, are found in combination, complete blindness of the understanding and irresistible energy of the will.

In declaiming against fanaticism, many Protestants and philosophers have thought proper to throw a large share of blame on the Catholic Church; certainly they ought to have been more moderate in this respect if their philosophy had been good. It is true the Church cannot boast of having cured all the follies of man; she cannot pretend to have banished fanaticism so completely as not to have some fanatics among her children; but she may justly boast that no religion has taken more effectual means of curing the evil. It may, moreover, be affirmed, that she has taken her measures so well, that when it does make its appearance, she confines it within such limits that it may exist for a time, but cannot produce very dangerous results.

Its mental errors and delirious dreams, which, if encouraged, lead men to the commission of the greatest extravagances and the most horrible crimes, are kept under control when the mind possesses a salutary conviction of its own weakness and a respect for infallible authority. If they be not extinguished at their birth, at least they remain in a state of isolation, they do not injure

the deposit of true doctrine, and the ties which unite all the faithful as members of the same body are not broken. With respect to revelations, visions, prophecies, and ecstasies, as long as they preserve a private character and do not affect the truths of faith, the Church, generally speaking, tolerates them and abstains from interference, leaving the discussion of the facts to criticism, and allowing the faithful an entire liberty of thinking as they please; but if the affair assumes a more important aspect, if the visionary calls in question points of doctrine, she immediately shows her vigilance. Attentive to every voice raised against the instructions of her Divine Master, she fixes an observant eye on the innovator. She examines whether he be a man deceived in matters of doctrine or a wolf in sheep's clothing; she raises her warning voice, she points out to all the faithful the error or the danger, and the voice of the Shepherd recalls the wandering sheep; but if he refuse to listen to her, and prefer to follow his own caprices, she separates him from the flock, and declares him to resemble the wolf. From that moment all those who are sincerely desirous of continuing in the bosom of the Church, can no more be infected with the error.

Undoubtedly, Protestants will reproach Catholics with the number of visionaries who have existed in the Church; they will recall the revelations and visions of a great number of saints who are venerated on our altars; they will accuse us of fanaticism, – a fanaticism, they will say, which, far from being limited in its effects to a narrow circle, has been able to produce the

most important results. "Do not the founders of religious orders alone," they will say, "afford us a spectacle of a long succession of fanatics, who, self-deluded, exercised upon others, by their words and example, the greatest fascination that was ever seen?"

As this is not the place to enlarge upon the subject of religious communities, which I propose to do in another part of this work, I shall content myself with the observation, that even supposing that all the visions and revelations of our saints and the heavenly inspirations with which the founders of religious orders believed themselves to have been favored were delusions, our opponents would not be in any way justified in throwing on the Church the reproach of fanaticism. And, first, it is easy to see that, as far as individual visions are concerned, as long as they are thus limited, there may be delusion, or, if you will, fanaticism; but this fanaticism will not be injurious to any one, or create confusion in society. If a poor woman believe herself to be peculiarly favoured by Heaven, if she fancy that she hears the words of the Blessed Virgin, that she converses with angels who bring her messages from God, all this may excite the credulity of some and the raillery of others, but certainly it will not cost society a drop of blood or a tear. As to the founders of religious orders, in what way are they subject to the charge of fanaticism? Let us pass in silence the profound respect which their virtues deserve, and the gratitude which humanity owes them for the inestimable benefits conferred; let us suppose that they were deceived in all their inspirations; we may certainly

call this delusion, but not fanaticism. We do not find in them either frenzy or violence; they are men diffident in themselves, who, when they believe that they are called by Heaven to a great design, never commence the work without having prostrated themselves at the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff; they submit to his judgment the rules for the establishment of their orders, they ask his instruction, listen to his decision with docility, and do nothing without having obtained his permission. How, then, do these founders of orders resemble the fanatics, who, putting themselves at the head of a furious multitude, kill, destroy, and leave everywhere behind them traces of blood and ruin? We see in the founders of religious orders men who, deeply impressed with an idea, devote themselves to realize it, however great may be the sacrifice. Their conduct constantly shows a fixed idea, which is developed according to a preconcerted plan, and is always highly social and religious in its object: above all, this is submitted to authority, maturely examined and corrected by the counsels of prudence. An impartial philosopher, whatever may be his religious opinions, may find in all this more or less illusion and prejudice, or prudence and address; but he cannot find fanaticism, for there is nothing there which resembles it.[12](#)

# CHAPTER IX.

## INFIDELITY AND INDIFFERENCE IN EUROPE, THE FRUITS OF PROTESTANTISM

The fanaticism of sects, which is excited, kept alive, and nourished in Europe, by the private judgment of Protestantism, is certainly an evil of the greatest magnitude; yet it is not so mischievous or alarming as the infidelity and religious indifference for which modern society is indebted to the pretended Reformation. Brought on by the scandalous extravagances of so many sects of *soi-disant* Christians, infidelity and religious indifference, which have their root even in the very principle of Protestantism, began to show themselves with alarming symptoms in the sixteenth century; they have acquired with time great diffusion, they have penetrated all the branches of science and literature, have produced an effect on languages, and have endangered all the conquests which civilization had gained during so many ages.

Even during the sixteenth century, and amid the hot disputes and religious wars which Protestantism had enkindled, infidelity spread in an alarming manner; and it is probable that it was even more common than it appeared to be, as it was not easy

to throw off the mask at a period so near to the time when religious convictions had been so deeply rooted. It is very likely that infidelity was propagated disguised under the mantle of the Reformation, and that sometimes enlisting under the banner of one sect and sometimes of another, it labored to weaken them all, in order to set up its own throne on the general ruin of faith.

It does not require a great effort of logic to pass from Protestantism to Deism; from Deism to Atheism, there is but a step; and there must have been, at the time when these errors were broached, a large number of persons with reasoning powers enough to carry them out to the fullest extent. The Christian religion, as explained by Protestants, is only a kind of philosophic system more or less reasonable; as, when fully examined, it has no divine character. How, then, can it govern a reflecting and independent mind? Yes, one glance at the first exhibitions of Protestantism must have been enough to incline all those to religious indifference who, naturally disinclined to fanaticism, had lost the anchor of the Church's authority. When we consider the language and conduct of the sectarian leaders of that time, we are strongly inclined to suspect that they laughed at all Christian faith; that they concealed their indifference or their Atheism under strange doctrines which served as a standard, and that they propagated their writings with very bad faith, while they disguised their perfidious intention of preserving in the minds of their partisans sectarian fanaticism.

Thus, listening to the dictates of good sense, the father of the

famous Montaigne, although he had seen as yet only the preludes of the Reformation, said, "that this beginning of evil would easily degenerate into execrable Atheism." A very remarkable testimony, which has been preserved to us by his son himself, who was certainly neither weak nor hypocritical. (*Essais de Montaigne*, liv. ii. chap. 12.) When this man pronounced so wise a judgment on the real tendency of Protestantism, did he imagine that his own son would confirm the justness of his prediction? Everybody knows that Montaigne was one of the first skeptics that became famous in Europe. It was requisite, at that time, for men to be cautious in declaring themselves Atheists or indifferentists, among Protestants themselves; and it may readily be imagined that all unbelievers had not the boldness of Gruet; yet we may believe the celebrated theologian of Toledo, Chacon, who said at the beginning of the last third of the sixteenth century, "that the heresy of the Atheists, of those who believed nothing, had great strength in France and in other countries."

Religious controversy continued to occupy the attention of all the savants of Europe, and during this time the gangrene of infidelity made great progress. This evil, from the middle of the seventeenth century, assumed a most alarming aspect. Who is not dismayed at reading the profound thoughts of Pascal on religious indifference? and who has not felt, in reading them, the emotion which is caused in the soul by the presence of a dreadful evil?

Things were now much advanced, and unbelievers were not far from being in a position, to take their rank among the schools



who disputed for the upper hand in Europe. With more or less of disguise, they had already for a long time shown themselves under the form of Socinianism; but that did not suffice, for Socinianism bore at least the name of a religious sect, and irreligion began to feel itself strong enough to appear under its own name. The last part of the seventeenth century presents a crisis which is very remarkable with respect to religion; – a crisis which perhaps has not been well examined, although it exhibits some very remarkable facts; I allude to a lassitude of religious disputes, marked by two tendencies diametrically opposed to each other, and yet very natural: one towards Catholicity and the other towards Atheism.

Every one knows how much disputing there had been up to this time on religion; religious controversies were the prevailing taste, and it may be said that they formed the principal occupation not only of ecclesiastics, both Catholic and Protestant, but even of the well-educated laity. This taste penetrated the palaces of kings and princes. The natural result of so many controversies was to disclose the radical error of Protestantism: then the mind, which could not remain firm on such slippery ground, was obliged, either to adopt authority, or abandon itself to Atheism or complete indifference. These tendencies made themselves very perceptibly felt; thus it was that at the very time when Bayle thought Europe sufficiently prepared for his infidelity and skepticism, there was going on an animated and serious correspondence for the reunion of the

German Protestants with the Catholic Church. Men of education are acquainted with the discussions which took place between the Lutheran Molanus, abbot of Lockum, and Christopher, at first Bishop of Tyna, and afterwards of Newstad. The correspondence between the two most remarkable men at that time in Europe of both communions, Bossuet and Leibnitz, is another monument of the importance of these negotiations. The happy moment was not yet come; political considerations, which ought to have vanished in the presence of such lofty interests, exercised a mischievous influence on the great soul of Leibnitz, and he did not preserve, throughout the progress of the discussions and negotiations, the sincerity, good faith, and elevation of view, which he had evinced at the commencement. The negotiation did not succeed, but the mere fact of its existence shows clearly enough the void which was felt in Protestantism; for we cannot believe that the two most celebrated men of that communion, Molanus and Leibnitz, would have advanced so far in so important a negotiation, unless they had observed among themselves many indications of a disposition to return to the bosom of the Church. Add to this, the declaration of the Lutheran university of Helmstad in favor of the Catholic religion, and the fresh attempts at a reunion made by a Protestant prince, who addressed himself to Pope Clement XI., and you have strong reasons for believing that the Reformation felt itself mortally wounded. If God had been willing to permit that so great a result should appear to have been effected in any way by

human means, the deep convictions prevalent among the most distinguished Protestants might perhaps have greatly contributed to heal the wounds which had been inflicted upon religious unity by the revolutionists of the sixteenth century.

But the profound wisdom of God had decided otherwise. In allowing men to pursue their own opposite and perverse inclinations, He was pleased to chastise them by means of their own pride. The tendency towards unity was no longer dominant in the next century, but gave place to a philosophic skepticism, indifferent towards all other religions, but the deadly enemy of the Catholic. It may be said that at that time there was a combination of the most fatal influences to hinder the tendency towards unity from attaining its object. Already were the Protestant sects divided and subdivided into numberless parties, and although Protestantism was thereby weakened, yet, nevertheless, it was diffused over the greater part of Europe; the germ of doubt in religious matters had inoculated the whole of European society. There was no truth which had escaped attack; no error or extravagance which had not had apostles and proselytes; and it was much to be feared that men would fall into that state of fatigue and discouragement which is the result of great efforts made without success, and into that disgust which is always produced by endless disputes and great scandals.

To complete the misfortune, and to bring to a climax the state of lassitude and disgust, there was another evil, which produced the most fatal results. The champions of Catholicity contended,

with boldness and success, against the religious innovations of Protestants. Languages, history, criticism, philosophy, all that is most precious, rich, and brilliant in human knowledge, had been employed in the noblest way in this important struggle; and the great men who were most prominent among the defenders of the Church seemed to console her for the sad losses which she had sustained by the troubles of another age. But while she embraced in her arms these zealous sons, those who boasted the most of being called her children, she observed in some of them, with surprise and dread, an attitude of disguised hostility; and in their thinly veiled language and conduct she could easily perceive that they meditated giving her a fatal blow. Always asserting their submission and their obedience, but never submitting or obeying; continually extolling the authority and divine origin of the Church, and carefully concealing their hatred of her existing laws and institutions under cover of professed zeal for the re-establishment of ancient discipline; they sapped the foundations of morality, while they claimed to be its earnest advocates; they disguised their hypocrisy and pride under false humility and affected modesty; they called obstinacy firmness, and wilful blindness strength of mind. This rebellion presented an aspect more dangerous than any heresy; their honeyed words, studied candor, respect for antiquity, and the show of learning and knowledge, would have contributed to blind the best informed, if the innovators had not been distinguished by the constant and unfailing characteristic of all erroneous sects, viz. hatred of

authority.

They were seen from time to time struggling against the declared enemies of the Church, defending, with great display of learning, the truth of her sacred dogmas, citing, with respect and deference, the writings of the holy fathers, and declaring that they adhered to tradition, and had a profound veneration for the decisions of councils and Popes. They particularly prided themselves on being called Catholics, however much their language and conduct were inconsistent with the name. Never did they get rid of the marvellous infatuation with which they denied their existence as a sect; and thus did they throw in the way of ill-informed persons the unhappy scandal of a dogmatical dispute, going on apparently within the bosom of the Church herself. The Pope declared them heretics; all true Catholics bowed to the decision of the Vicar of Jesus Christ; from all parts of the world a voice was unanimously raised to pronounce anathema against all who did not listen to the successor of St. Peter; but they themselves, denying and eluding all, persisted in considering themselves as a body of Catholics oppressed by the spirit of relaxation, abuse, and intrigue.

This scandal gave the finishing stroke to the leading of men astray, and the fatal gangrene which was infecting European society soon developed itself with frightful rapidity. The religious disputes, the multitude and variety of sects, the animosity which they showed against each other, all contributed to disgust with religion itself whoever were not held fast by the anchor of

authority. To establish indifference as a system, atheism as a creed, and impiety as a fashion, there was only wanting a man laborious enough to collect, unite, and present in a body all the numerous materials which were scattered in a multitude of works; a man who knew how to give to all this a philosophical complexion suitable to the prevailing taste, and who could give to sophistry and declamation that seductive appearance, that deceptive form and dazzling show, by which the productions of genius are always marked, in the midst even of their wildest vagaries. Such a man appeared in the person of Bayle. The noise which his famous dictionary made in the world, and the favor which it enjoyed from the beginning, show how well the author had taken advantage of his opportunity. The dictionary of Bayle is one of those books which, considered apart from their scientific and literary merit, always serve to denote a remarkable epoch, because they present, together with the fruits of the past, the clear perception of a long future. The author of such a work is not distinguished so much on account of his own merit, as because he has known how to become the representative of ideas previously diffused in society, but floating about in a state of uncertainty; and yet his name recalls a vast history, of which he is the personification. The publication of Bayle's work may be regarded as the solemn inauguration of the chair of infidelity in Europe. The sophists of the eighteenth century found at hand an abundant repository of facts and arguments; but to render the thing complete, there was wanting a hand capable of retouching

the old paintings, of restoring their faded colors, and of shedding over all the charms of imagination and the refinement of wit; there was wanting a guide to lead mankind by a flowery path to the borders of the abyss. Scarcely had Bayle descended into the tomb, when there appeared above the literary horizon a young man, whose great talents were equalled by his malice and audacity; Voltaire.

It was necessary to draw the reader's attention to the period which I have just described, to show him how great was the influence exercised by Protestantism in producing and establishing in Europe the irreligion, atheism, and fatal indifference which have caused so many evils in modern society. I do not mean to charge all Protestants with impiety; and I willingly acknowledge the sincerity and firmness of many of their most illustrious men, in struggling against the progress of irreligion. I am not ignorant that men sometimes adopt a principle and repudiate its consequences, and that it would, therefore, be very unjust to class them with those who openly accept those consequences; but on the other hand, however painful it may be to Protestants to avow that their system leads to atheism, it is nevertheless a fact which cannot be denied. All that they can claim of me on this point is, not to criminate their intentions; after that, they cannot complain if, guided by the instructions of history and philosophy, I develop their fundamental principle to the fullest extent.

It would be useless to sketch, even in the most rapid manner,

what has passed in Europe since the appearance of Voltaire: the events are so recent, and have been so often discussed, that all that I could say would be only a useless repetition. I shall better attain my object by offering some remarks on the actual state of religion in Protestant countries. Amid so many revolutions, and when so many heads were turned; when all the foundations of society were shaken, and the strongest institutions were torn out of the soil in which they had been so deeply rooted; when even Catholic truth itself could not have been sustained without the manifest aid of the arm of the Most High, we may imagine the fate of the fragile edifice of Protestantism, exposed, like all the rest, to so many and such violent attacks. No one is ignorant of the numberless sects which abound in Great Britain, of the deplorable condition of faith among the Swiss Protestants, even on the most important points. That there might be no doubt as to the real state of the Protestant religion in Germany, that is, in its native country, where it was first established as in its dearest patrimony, the Protestant minister, Baron Starck, has taken care to tell us, that "*in Germany there is not one single point of Christian faith which has not been openly attacked by the Protestant ministers themselves.*" The real state of Protestantism appears to me to be truly and forcibly depicted by a curious idea of J. Heyer, a Protestant minister. Heyer published, in 1818, a work entitled *Coup d'œil sur les Confessions de Foi*; not knowing how to get out of the difficulty in which all Protestants found themselves placed when they had to choose a symbol, he



proposed the simple expedient of *getting rid of all symbols*.

The only way that Protestantism has of preserving itself, is to violate as much as possible its own fundamental principle, by withdrawing the right of private judgment, inducing the people to remain faithful to the opinions in which they have been educated, and carefully concealing from them the inconsistency into which they fall, when they submit to the authority of a private individual, after having rejected the authority of the Catholic church. But things are not taking this course; and in spite of the efforts of some Protestants to follow it, Bible Societies, working with a zeal worthy of a better cause, in promoting among all classes the private interpretation of the Bible, would suffice to keep alive always the spirit of inquiry. This diffusion of the Bible operates as a constant appeal to private judgment, which, after perhaps causing many days of sorrow and mourning to society, will eventually destroy the remains of Protestantism. All this has not escaped the notice of its disciples; and some of the most remarkable among them have raised their voices to point out the danger.[13](#)

# **CHAPTER X.**

## **CAUSES OF THE CONTINUANCE OF PROTESTANTISM**

After having clearly shown the intrinsic weakness of Protestantism, it is natural to ask this question: If it be so feeble, owing to the radical defects of its constitution, why has it not by this time completely disappeared? If it bear in its own breast the seeds of death, how has it been able so long to withstand such powerful adversaries, as Catholicity, on the one hand, and irreligion or Atheism, on the other? In order to resolve this question satisfactorily, it is necessary to consider Protestantism in two points of view; as embodying a fixed creed, and as expressing a number of sects, who, in spite of their numerous mutual differences, agree in calling themselves Christians, and preserve a shadow of Christianity, although they reject the authority of the Church. It is necessary to consider Protestantism in this double point of view, since its founders, while endeavoring to destroy the authority and dogmas of the Roman Church, were compelled to form a system of doctrines to serve as a symbol for their followers. Considered in the first aspect, it has almost entirely disappeared; we should rather say it scarcely ever had existence. This truth is sufficiently evident from what I have said of the variations and actual condition of Protestantism in the various

countries of Europe; time has shown how much the pretended Reformers were deceived, when they fancied that they could fix the columns of Hercules of the human mind, to repeat the expression of Madame de Staël.

Who now defends the doctrines of Luther and Calvin? Who respects the limits which they prescribed? What Protestant Church distinguishes itself by the ardor of its zeal in preserving any particular dogmas? What Protestant now holds the divine mission of Luther, or believes the Pope to be Antichrist? Who watches over the purity of doctrine, and points out errors? Who opposes the torrent of sectarianism?

Do we find, in their writings, or in their discourses, the energetic tones of conviction, or the zeal of truth? In fine, what a wide difference do we find when we compare the Protestant Church with the Catholic! Inquire into the faith of the latter, and you will hear from the mouth of Gregory XVI., the successor of St. Peter, the same that Luther heard from Leo X. Compare the doctrine of Leo X. with that of his predecessors, you will always find it the same up to the Apostles, and to Jesus Christ himself. If you attempt to assail a dogma, if you try to attack the purity of morals, the voice of the ancient Fathers will denounce your errors, and in the middle of the nineteenth century you will imagine that the old Leos and Gregories are risen from the tomb. If your intentions are good, you will find indulgence; if your merits are great, you will be treated with respect; if you occupy an elevated position in the world, you will have attention paid

to you. But if you attempt to abuse your talents by introducing novelty in doctrine; if, by your power, you aspire to demand a modification of faith; and if, to avoid troubles or prevent schism, or conciliate any one, you ask for a compromise or even an ambiguous explanation; the answer of the successor of St. Peter will be, "Never! faith is a sacred deposit which we cannot alter; truth is immutable; it is one: " and to this reply of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, which with a word will banish all your hopes, will be added those of the modern Athanasiuses, Gregories of Nazianzen, Ambroses, Jeromes, and Augustins. Always the same firmness in the same faith, the same unchangeableness, the same energy in preserving the sacred deposit intact, in defending it against the attacks of error, in teaching it to the faithful in all its purity, and in transmitting it unaltered to future generations. Will it be said that this is obstinacy, blindness, and fanaticism? But, eighteen centuries gone by, the revolutions of empires, the most fearful catastrophes, an infinite variety of ideas and manners, the most severe persecutions, the darkness of ignorance, the conflicts of passion, the lights of knowledge, – none of these have been able to enlighten this blindness, to bend this obstinacy, or extinguish this fanaticism. Certainly a reflecting Protestant, one of those who know how to rise above the prejudices of education, when fixing his eyes on this picture, the truth of which he cannot but acknowledge, if he is well informed on the question, will feel strong doubts arise within him as to the truth of the instruction he has received; he will at least feel a desire of examining more

closely this great prodigy which the Catholic Church presents to us. But to return.

We see the Protestant sects melting away daily, and this dissolution must constantly increase; nevertheless, we have no reason to be astonished that Protestantism, inasmuch as it consists of a number of sects who preserve the name and some remains of Christianity, does not wholly disappear; for how could it disappear? Either Protestant nations must be completely swallowed up by irreligion or atheism, or they must give up Christianity and adopt one of the religions which are established in other parts of the world. Now both these suppositions are impossible; therefore this false form of Christianity has been and will be preserved, in some shape or other, until Protestants return to the bosom of the Church.

Let us develop these ideas. Why cannot Protestant nations be completely swallowed up by irreligion and atheism, or indifference? Because such a misfortune may happen to an individual, but not to a nation. By means of false books, erroneous reasonings, and continual efforts, some individuals may extinguish the lively sentiments of their hearts, stifle the voice of conscience, and trample under foot the dictates of common sense; but a nation cannot do so. A people always preserves a large fund of candor and docility, which, amid the most fatal errors and even the most atrocious crimes, compels it to lend an attentive ear to the inspirations of nature. Whatever may be the corruption of morals, whatever may be the errors of

opinion, there will never be more than a small number of men found capable of struggling for a long time against themselves, in the attempt to eradicate from their hearts that fruitful germ of good feelings, that precious seed of virtuous thoughts, with which the beneficent hand of the Creator has enriched our souls. The conflagration of the passions, it is true, produces lamentable prostration, and sometimes terrible explosions; but when the fire is extinguished, man returns to himself, and his mind becomes again accessible to the voice of reason and virtue. An attentive study of society proves that the number of men is happily very small who are, as it were, steeled against truth and virtue; who reply with frivolous sophistry to the admonitions of good sense; who oppose with cold stoicism the sweetest and most generous inspirations of nature, and venture to display, as an illustration of philosophy, firmness, and elevation of mind, the ignorance, obstinacy, and barrenness of an icy heart. The generality of mankind, more simple, more candid, more natural, are consequently ill-suited to a system of atheism, or indifference. Such a system may take possession of the proud mind of a learned visionary; it may be adopted, as a convenient opinion, by dissipated youth; and in times of agitation, it may influence a few fiery spirits; but it will never be able to establish itself in society as a normal condition.

No, by no means. An individual may be irreligious, but families and society never will. Without a basis on which the social edifice must rest; without a great creative idea, whence

will flow the ideas of reason, virtue, justice, obligation, and right, which are as necessary to the existence and preservation of society as blood and nourishment are to the life of the individual, society would be destroyed; without the sweet ties by which religious ideas unite together the members of a family, without the heavenly harmony which they infuse into all its connections, the family would cease to exist, or at least would be only a rude and transient union, resembling the intercourse of animals. God has happily gifted all his creatures with a marvellous instinct of self-preservation. Guided by that instinct, families and society repudiate with indignation those degrading ideas which, blasting by their fatal breath all the germs of life, breaking all ties, upsetting all laws, make both of them retrograde towards the most abject barbarism, and finish by scattering their members like dust before the wind.

The repeated lessons of experience ought to have convinced certain philosophers that these ideas and feelings, engraven on the heart of man by the finger of the Author of nature, cannot be eradicated by declamation or sophistry. If a few ephemeral triumphs have occasionally flattered their pride, and made them conceive false hopes of the result of their efforts, the course of events has soon shown them, that to pride themselves on these triumphs was to act like a man who, on account of having succeeded in infusing unnatural sentiments into the hearts of a few mothers, would flatter himself that he has banished maternal love from the world. Society (I do not mean the populace or

the commonalty) – society will be religious, even at the risk of being superstitious; if it does not believe in reasonable things, it will in extravagant ones; and if it have not a divine religion, it will have a human one: to suppose the contrary, is to dream; to struggle against this tendency, is to struggle against an eternal law; to attempt to restrain it, is to attempt to restrain with a weak arm a body launched with an immense force – the arm will be destroyed, but the body will continue its course. Men may call this superstition, fanaticism, the result of error; but to talk thus can only serve to console them for their failure.

Since, then, religion is a real necessity, we have therein an explanation of the phenomenon which history and experience present to us, namely, that religion never wholly disappears, and that when changes take place, the two rival religions, during their struggles, more or less protracted, occupy successively the same ground. The consequence is, that Protestantism cannot entirely disappear unless another religion takes its place. Now, as in the actual state of civilization, no religion can replace it but the Catholic, it is evident that Protestant sects will continue to occupy, with more or less variation, the countries which they have gained.

Indeed, how is it possible, in the present state of civilization among Protestant nations, that the follies of the Koran, or the absurdities of idolatry, should have any chance of success among them? The spirit of Christianity circulates in the veins of modern society; its seal is set upon all legislation; its light is shed upon all



branches of knowledge; its phraseology is found in all languages; its precepts regulate morals; habits and manners have assumed its form; the fine arts breathe its perfume, and all the monuments of genius are full of its inspirations. Christianity, in a word, pervades all parts of that great, varied, and fertile civilization, which is the glory of modern society. How then, is it possible for a religion entirely to disappear which possesses, with the most venerable antiquity, so many claims to gratitude, so many endearing ties, and so many glorious recollections? How could it give place, among Christian nations, to one of those religions which, at the first glance, show the finger of man, and indicate, as their distinctive mark, degradation and debasement? Although the essential principle of Protestantism saps the foundations of the Christian religion, although it disfigures its beauty, and lowers its sublimity, yet the remains which it preserves of Christianity, its idea of God, and its maxims of morality, raise it far above all the systems of philosophy, and all the other religions of the world.

If, then, Protestantism has preserved some shadow of the Christian religion, it was because, looking at the condition of the nations who took part in the schism, it was impossible for the Christian name wholly to disappear; and not on account of any principle of life contained in the bosom of the pretended Reformation. On the other hand, consider the efforts of politicians, the natural attachment of ministers to their own interests, the illusions of pride which flatter men with

the freedom they will enjoy in the absence of all authority, the remains of old prejudices, the power of education, and such like causes, and you will find a complete solution of the question. Then you will no longer be surprised that Protestantism continues to retain possession of many of those countries where it unfortunately became deeply rooted.

# **CHAPTER XI.**

## **THE POSITIVE DOCTRINES OF PROTESTANTISM REPUGNANT TO THE INSTINCT OF CIVILIZATION**

The best proof of the extreme weakness of Protestantism, considered as a body of doctrine, is the little influence which its positive doctrines have exercised in European civilization. I call its positive doctrines those which it attempts to establish as its own; and I distinguish them thus from its other doctrines, which I call negative, because they are nothing but the negation of authority. The latter found favor on account of their conformity with the inconstancy and changeableness of the human mind; but the others, which have not the same means of success, have all disappeared with their authors, and are now plunged in oblivion. The only part of Christianity which has been preserved among Protestants, is that which was necessary to prevent European civilization from losing among them its nature and character; and this is the reason why the doctrines which had too direct a tendency to alter the nature of this civilization have been repudiated, we should rather say, despised by it.

There is a circumstance here well worthy of attention, and

which has not perhaps been noticed, viz. the fate of the doctrine held by the first reformers with respect to free-will. It is well known that one of the first and most important errors of Luther and Calvin consisted in denying free-will. We find this fatal doctrine professed in the works which they have left us. Does it not seem that this doctrine ought to have preserved its credit among the Protestants, and that they ought to have fiercely maintained it, since such is commonly the case with errors which serve as a nucleus in the formation of a sect? It seems, also, that Protestantism being widely spread, and deeply rooted in several countries of Europe, this fatalist doctrine ought to have exercised a strong influence on the legislation of Protestant nations. Wonderful as it is, such has not been the case; European moralists have despised it; legislation has not adopted it as a basis; civilization has not allowed itself to be directed by a principle which sapped all the foundations of morality, and which, if once applied to morals and laws, would have substituted for European civilization and dignity the barbarism and debasement of Mahometanism.

There is no doubt that this fatal doctrine has perverted some individuals; it has been adopted by sects more or less numerous; and it cannot be denied that it has affected the morality of some nations. But it is also certain, that, in the generality of the great human family, governments, tribunals, administration, legislation, science, and morals, have not listened to this horrible doctrine of Luther, – a doctrine which strips man of his free will,

which makes God the author of sin, which charges the Creator with the responsibility of all the crimes of His creatures, and represents Him as a tyrant, by affirming that His precepts are impossible; a doctrine which monstrously confounds the ideas of good and evil, and removes all stimulus to good deeds, by teaching that faith is sufficient for salvation, and that all the good works of the just are only sins.

Public opinion, good sense, and morality here side with Catholicity. Those even who in theory embrace these fatal religious doctrines, usually reject them in practice; this is because Catholic instruction on these important points has made so deep an impression on them; because so strong an instinct of civilization has been communicated to European society by the Catholic religion. Thus the Church, by repudiating the destructive errors taught by Protestantism, preserved society from being debased by these fatalist doctrines. The Church formed a barrier against the despotism which is enthroned wherever the sense of dignity is lost; she was a fence against the demoralization which always spreads whenever men think themselves bound by blind necessity, as by an iron chain; she also freed the human mind from the state of abjection into which it falls whenever it thinks itself deprived of the government of its own conduct, and of the power of influencing the course of events. In condemning those errors of Luther, which were the bond of Protestantism at its birth, the Pope raised the alarm against an irruption of barbarism into the order of ideas; he saved

morality, laws, public order, and society; the Vatican, by securing the noble sentiment of liberty in the sanctuary of conscience, preserved the dignity of man; by struggling against Protestant ideas, by defending the sacred deposit confided to it by its Divine Master, the Roman See became the tutelary divinity of future civilization.

Reflect on these great truths, understand them thoroughly, you who speak of religious disputes with cold indifference, with apparent mockery and pity, as if they were only scholastic puerilities. Nations *do not live on bread alone*; they live also on ideas, on maxims, which, converted into spiritual aliment, give them greatness, strength, and energy, or, on the contrary, weaken them, reduce them, and condemn them to stupidity. Look over the face of the globe, examine the periods of human history, compare times with times, and nations with nations, and you will see that the Church, by giving so much importance to the preservation of these transcendent truths, by accepting no compromise on this point, has understood and realized better than any other teacher, the elevated and salutary maxim, that truth ought to reign in the world; that on the order of ideas depends the order of events, and that when these great problems are called in question, the destinies of humanity are involved.

Let us recapitulate what we have said; the essential principle of Protestantism is one of destruction; this is the cause of its incessant variations, of its dissolution and annihilation. As a particular religion it no longer exists, for it has no peculiar faith,

no positive character, no government, nothing that is essential to form an existence; Protestantism is only a negative. If there is any thing to be found in it of a positive nature, it is nothing more than vestiges and ruins; all is without force, without action, without the spirit of life. It cannot show an edifice raised by its own hands; it cannot, like Catholicity, stand in the midst of its vast works and say, "These are mine." Protestantism can only sit down on a heap of ruins, and say with truth, "I have made this pile."

As long as sectarian fanaticism lasted, as long as this flame, kindled by furious declamation, was kept alive by unhappy circumstances, Protestantism showed a certain degree of force, which, although it was not the sign of vigorous life, at least indicated the convulsive energy of delirium. But that period has passed, the action of time has dispersed the elements that fed the flame, and none of the attempts which have been made to give to the Reformation the character of a work of God, have been able to conceal the fact that it was the work of human passions. Let us not be deceived by the efforts which are now being made; what is acting under our eyes is not living Protestantism, it is the operation of false philosophy, perhaps of policy, sometimes of sordid interest disguised under the name of policy. Every one knows how powerful Protestantism was in exciting disturbances and causing disunion. It is on this account that evil-minded men search in the bed of this exhausted torrent for some remains of its impure waters, and knowing them to contain a deadly poison,

present them to the unsuspecting in a golden cup.

But it is in vain for weak man to struggle against the arm of the Almighty, God will not abandon His work. Notwithstanding all his attempts to deface the work of God, man cannot blot out the eternal characters which distinguish truth from error. Truth in itself is strong and robust: as it is the ensemble of the relations which unite things together, it is strongly connected with them, and cannot be separated either by the efforts of man or by the revolution of time. Error, on the contrary, the lying image of the great ties which bind together the compact mass of the universe, stretches over its usurped domain like those dead branches of the forest which, devoid of sap, afford neither freshness nor verdure, and only serve to impede the advance of the traveller.

Confiding men, do not allow yourselves to be seduced by brilliant appearances, pompous discourse, or false activity. Truth is open, modest, without suspicion, because it is pure and strong; error is hypocritical and ostentatious, because it is false and weak. Truth resembles a woman of real beauty, who, conscious of her charms, despises the affectation of ornament; error, on the contrary, paints and ornaments herself, because she is ugly, without expression, without grace, without dignity. Perhaps you may be pleased with its laborious activity. Know, then, that it has no strength but when it is the rallying cry of a faction; then, indeed, it is rapid in action and fertile in violent measures. It is like the meteor which explodes and vanishes, leaving behind it nothing but darkness, death, and destruction; truth, on the



contrary, like the sun, sends forth its bright and steady beams, fertilizes with its genial warmth, and sheds on every side life, joy, and beauty.

# **CHAPTER XII.**

## **THE EFFECTS WHICH THE INTRODUCTION OF PROTESTANTISM INTO SPAIN WOULD HAVE PRODUCED**

In order to judge of the real effect which the introduction of Protestant doctrines would have had in Spain, we shall do well, in the first place, to take a survey of the present state of religion in Europe. In spite of the confusion of ideas which is one of the prevailing characteristics of the age, it is undeniable that the spirit of infidelity and irreligion has lost much of its strength, and that where it still exists it has merged into indifference, instead of preserving its systematic form of the last century. With the lapse of time declamation ceases; men grow tired of continually repeating the same insulting language; their minds resist the intolerance and bad faith of sects; systems betray their emptiness, opinions their erroneousness, judgments their precipitation, and reasonings their want of exactitude. Time shows their counterfeit intentions, their deceptive statements, the littleness of their ideas, and the mischievousness of their projects; truth begins to recover its empire, things regain their real names, and, thanks to the new direction of the public mind, that which

before was considered innocent and generous is now looked upon as criminal and vile. The deceitful masks are taken off, and falsehood is discovered surrounded by the discredit which ought always to have accompanied it.

Irreligious ideas, like all those which are prevalent in an advanced state of society, would not, and could not be confined to mere speculation; they invaded the domain of practice, and labored to gain the upper hand in all branches of administration and politics. But the revolution which they produced in society became fatal to themselves; for there is nothing which better exposes the faults and errors of a system, and undeceives men on the subject, than the touchstone of experience. There is in our minds a certain power of viewing an object under a variety of aspects, and an unfortunate aptitude for supporting the most extravagant proposition by a multitude of sophisms. In mere disputation, it is difficult for the most reasoning minds to keep clear of the snares of sophistry. But when we come to experience, it is otherwise; the mind is silent, and facts speak; and if the experience has been on a large scale, and applied to objects of great interest and importance, it is difficult for the most specious arguments to counteract the convincing eloquence of the result. Hence it is that a man of much experience obtains an instinct so sure and delicate, that when a system is but explained he can point out all its inconveniences. Inexperience, presumptuous and prejudiced, appeals to argument in support of its doctrines; but good sense, that precious and inestimable quality, shakes its head,

shrugs its shoulders, and with a tranquil smile leaves its prediction to be tested by time.

It is not necessary now to insist on the practical results of those doctrines of which infidelity was the motto; we have said enough on that subject. Suffice it to say, that those same men who seem to belong to the last century by their principles, interests, recollections, or for other reasons, have been obliged to modify their doctrines, to limit their principles, to palliate their propositions, to cool the warmth and passion of their invectives; and when they wish to give a mark of their esteem and veneration for those writers who were the delight of their youth, they are compelled to declare "that those men were great philosophers, but philosophers of the cabinet;" as if in reality what they call the knowledge of the cabinet was not the most dangerous ignorance.

It is certain that these attempts have had the effect of throwing discredit on irreligion as a system. If people do not regard it with horror, at least they look upon it with mistrust. Irreligion has labored in all the branches of science, in the vain hope that the heavens would cease to relate the glories of God, that the earth would disown Him who laid its foundations, and that all nature would give testimony against the Lord who gave it existence and life. These same labors have banished the scandalous division which had begun between religion and science; so that the ancient accents of the man of Hus have again resounded, without dishonor to science, in the mouths of men in the nineteenth century; and what shall we say of the triumphs of religion in

all that is noble, tender, and sublime on earth? How grand are the operations of Providence displayed therein! Admirable dispensation! The mysterious hand which governs the universe seems to hold in reserve for every great crisis of society an extraordinary man. At the proper moment this man presents himself; he advances, himself ignorant whither he is going, but he advances with a firm step towards the accomplishment of the high mission for which Providence has destined him.

Atheism was bathing France in a sea of tears and blood; an unknown man silently traverses the ocean. While the violence of the tempest rends the sails of his vessel, he listens attentively to the hurricane – he is lost in the contemplation of the majesty of the heavens. Wandering in the solitudes of America, he asks of the wonders of creation the name of their Author; the thunder on the confines of the desert, the low murmuring of the forests, and the beauties of nature answer him with canticles of love and harmony. The view of a solitary cross reveals to him mysterious secrets; the traces of an unknown missionary awaken important recollections which connect the new world with the old; a monument in ruins, the hut of a savage, excite in his mind thoughts which penetrate to the foundations of society and to the heart of man. Intoxicated with these spectacles, his mind full of sublime conceptions, and his heart inundated with the charms of so much beauty, this man returns to his native soil. What does he find there? The bloody traces of Atheism; the ruins and ashes of ancient temples devoured by the flames or

destroyed by violence; the remains of a multitude of innocent victims, buried in the graves which formerly afforded an asylum to persecuted Christians. He observes, however, that something is in agitation; he sees that religion is about to redescend upon France, like consolation upon the unfortunate, or the breath of life upon a corpse. From that moment he hears on all sides a concert of celestial harmony; the inspirations of meditation and solitude revive and ferment in his great soul; transported out of himself, and ravished into ecstasy, he sings with a tongue of fire the glories of religion, he reveals the delicacy and beauty of the relations between religion and nature, and in surpassing language he points out to astonished men the mysterious golden chain which connects the heavens and the earth. That man was Chateaubriand.

It must, however, be confessed, that the confusion which has been introduced into ideas cannot be corrected in a short time, and that it is not easy to eradicate the deep traces of the ravages of irreligion. Men's minds, it is true, are tired of the irreligious system; society, which had lost its balance, is generally ill at ease; the family feels its ties relaxed, and individuals sigh after a ray of light, a drop of hope and consolation. But where shall the world find the remedy which is wanting? Will it follow the best road – the only road? Will it re-enter the fold of the Catholic Church? Alas! God alone knows the secrets of the future; He alone has clearly unfolded before His eyes the great events which are no doubt awaiting humanity. He alone knows what will be the result

of that activity, of that energy, which again urges men to the examination of great political and religious questions; and He alone knows what, to future generations, will be the result of the triumphs obtained by religion, in the fine arts, in literature, in science, in politics, in all the operations carried on by the human mind.

As to us, carried away as we are by the rapid and precipitate course of revolution, hardly have we time to cast a fleeting glance upon the chaos in which our country is involved. What can we confidently predict? All that we can be sure of is, that we are in an age of disquietude, of agitation, of transition; that the multiplied examples and warnings of so many disappointed expectations, the fruits of fearful revolutions and unheard-of catastrophes, have everywhere thrown discredit upon irreligious and disorganizing doctrines, without having established the legitimate empire of true religion. Hearts sick of so many misfortunes are willingly open to hope; but minds are in a state of great uncertainty as to the future: perhaps they even anticipate a new series of calamities. Owing to revolutions, to the efforts of industry, to the activity and extension of commerce, to the progress and prodigious diffusion of printing, to scientific discoveries, to the ease, rapidity, and universality of communication, to the taste for travelling, to the dissolving action of Protestantism, of incredulity, and skepticism, the human mind certainly now presents one of the most singular phases of its history. Reason, imagination, and the heart are

in a state of agitation, of movement, and of extraordinary development, and show us at the same time the most singular contrasts, the most ridiculous extravagances, and the most absurd contradictions. Observe the sciences, and you will no longer find those lengthened labors, that indefatigable patience, that calm and tranquil progress, which characterized these studies at other epochs; but you will find there a spirit of observation, and a tendency to place questions in that transcendental point of view where may be discovered the relations subsisting between them, the ties by which they are connected, and the way in which they throw light upon each other. Questions of religion, of politics, of legislation, of morals, of government, are all mingled, stand prominently forward, and give to the horizon of science a grandeur and immensity which it did not previously possess. This progress, this confusion, this chaos, if you like to call it so, is a fact which must be taken into account in studying the spirit of the age, in examining the religious condition of the time; for it is not the work of a single man, or the effect of accident; it is the result of a multitude of causes, the fruit of a great number of facts; it is an expression of the present state of intelligence; a symptom of strength and disease, an announcement of change and of transition, perhaps a sign of consolation, perhaps a presage of misfortune. And who has not observed the fertility of imagination and unbounded reach of thought in that literature, so various, so irregular, and so vague, but at the same time so rich in fine images, in delicate feeling, and in bold and generous



thought? You may talk as much as you please of the debasement of science, of the falling off in study. You may speak in a tone of derision of the *lights of the age*, and turn with regret to ages more studious and more learned; there will be some exaggeration, truth and error, in all this, as there always is in declamation of this kind; but whatever may be the degree of utility belonging to the present labors of the human mind, never, perhaps, was there a time when it displayed more activity and energy, never was it agitated by a movement so general, so lively, so various, and never, perhaps, did it desire, with a more excusable curiosity and impatience, to raise a part of the veil which covers the boundless future. What will be able to govern elements so powerful and so opposite? What can calm this tempestuous sea? What will give the union, the connection, the consistency necessary to form, out of these repulsive and discordant elements, a whole compact and capable of resisting the action of time? Will this be done by Protestantism, with its fundamental principle which establishes and diffuses and sanctions the dissolving principle of private interpretation in matters of religion, and realizes this unhappy notion by circulating among all classes of society copies of the Bible?

Nations numerous, proud of their power, vain of their knowledge, rendered dissipated by pleasure, refined by luxury, continually exposed to the powerful influence of the press, and possessing means of communication which would have appeared fabulous to their ancestors; nations in whom all the

violent passions have an object, all intrigues an existence, all corruptions a veil, all crimes a title, all errors an advocate, all interests a support; nations which, warned and deceived, still vacillate in a state of dreadful uncertainty between truth and falsehood; sometimes looking at the torch of truth as if they meant to be guided by its light, and then again seduced by an *ignis fatuus*; sometimes making an effort to rule the storm, and then abandoning themselves to its violence; modern nations show us a picture as extraordinary as it is interesting, where hopes, fears, prognostics, and conjectures have free scope, and nobody can pretend to predict with accuracy, and the wise man must await in silence the dénouement marked out in the secret decrees of God, where alone are clearly written the events of all time, and the future destinies of men.

But it may be easily understood that Protestantism, on account of its essentially dissolving nature, is incapable of producing any thing in morals or religion to increase the happiness of nations, for it is impossible for this happiness to exist as long as men's minds are at war on the most important questions which can occupy them.

When the observer, amid this chaos and obscurity, seeks for a ray of light to illuminate the world – for a powerful principle capable of putting an end to so much confusion and anarchy, and of bringing back men's minds to the path of truth, Catholicity immediately presents herself to him, as the only source of all these benefits. When we consider with what *éclat*

and with what power Catholicity maintains herself against all the unprecedented attempts which are made to destroy her, our hearts are filled with hope and consolation; and we feel inclined to hail this divine religion, and to congratulate her on the new triumph which she is about to achieve on earth.

There was a time when Europe, inundated by a torrent of barbarians, saw at once overwhelmed all the monuments of ancient civilization and refinement. Legislators and their laws, the empire and its power and splendor, philosophers and the sciences, the arts and their *chef-d'œuvres*, all disappeared; and those immense regions, where had flourished all the civilization and refinement that had been gained during so many ages, were suddenly plunged into ignorance and barbarism. Nevertheless, the spark of light which had appeared to the world in Palestine, continued to shine amid the chaos: in vain did whirlwinds threaten to extinguish it; kept alive by the breath of the Eternal, it continued to shine. Ages rolled away, and it appeared with greater brilliancy; and when, perchance, the nations only expected a beam of light to guide them in the darkness, they found a resplendent sun, everywhere diffusing life and light: and who shall say that there is not reserved for her in the secrets of the Eternal, another triumph more difficult, but not less useful, not less brilliant? If in other times that religion instructed ignorance, civilized barbarism, polished rudeness, softened ferocity, and preserved society from being always the prey of the fiercest brutality and the most degrading stupidity, will it be less glorious

for her to correct ideas, to harmonize and refine feelings, to establish the eternal principles of society, to curb the passions, to remove animosities, to remove excesses, to govern all minds and hearts? How honorable will it be to her, if, while regulating all things, and unceasingly stimulating all kinds of knowledge and improvement, she can inspire with a proper spirit of moderation that society which so many elements, devoid of central attraction, threaten every moment with dissolution and death!

It is not given to man to penetrate the future; but in the same way as the physical world would be broken up by a terrible catastrophe, if it were deprived for a moment of the fundamental principle which gives unity, order, and concert to the various movements of the system; in the same way, if society, full as it is of motion, of communication, and life, were not placed under the direction of a constant and universal regulating principle, we could not fix our eyes on the lot of future generations without the greatest alarm.

There is, however, a fact which is consoling in the highest degree, viz. the wonderful progress which Catholicity has made in different countries. It is gaining strength in France and Belgium: the obstinacy with which it is combated in the north of Europe shows how much it is feared. In England its progress has been recently so great that it would not be credited without the most irresistible evidence; and in the foreign missions it has shown an extent of enterprise and fruitfulness, worthy of the time of its greatest ascendancy and power.

When other nations tend towards unity, shall we commit the gross mistake of adopting schism? at a time when other nations would be happy to find within their bosoms a vital principle capable of restoring the power which incredulity has destroyed, shall Spain, which preserves Catholicity, and alone possesses it full and complete, allow the germ of death to be introduced into her bosom, thereby rendering impossible the cure of her evils, or rather entailing on herself complete and certain ruin? Amid the moral regeneration towards which nations are advancing, seeking to quit the painful position in which they have been placed by irreligious doctrines, is it possible to overlook the immense advantage which Spain still preserves over most of them? Spain is one of those least affected by the gangrene of irreligion; she still preserves religious unity, that inestimable inheritance of a long line of ages. Is it possible to overlook the advantage of that unity if properly made use of, that unity which is mixed up with all our glories, which awakens such noble recollections, and which may be made so wonderful an instrument in the regeneration of social order?

If I am asked my opinion of the nearness of the danger, and if I think the present attempts of Protestants have any probability of success, I must draw a distinction in my reply. Protestantism is extremely weak, both on account of its own nature, and of its age and decaying condition. In endeavoring to introduce itself into Spain, it will have to contend with an adversary full of life and strength, and deeply rooted in the soil. This is the reason why I

think that its direct action is not to be feared; and yet, if it should succeed in establishing itself in any part of our country, however limited may be its domain, it is sure to produce fearful results. It is evident that we shall then have in the midst of us a new apple of discord, and it is not difficult to foresee that collisions will frequently arise. Protestantism in Spain, besides its intrinsic weakness, will labor under the disadvantage of not finding its natural aliment. Hence it will be obliged to take advantage of any support that is offered; it will immediately become the point of reunion for the discontented; and although failing in its intended object, it will succeed in becoming the nucleus of new parties and the banner of factions. Scandal, strife, demoralization, troubles, and perhaps catastrophes, – such will be the immediate and infallible results of the introduction of Protestantism among us. On this point I appeal to the candid opinion of every man who is well acquainted with Spain. But this is not all: the question is enlarged, and acquires an incalculable importance, if we consider it with reference to foreign politics. What a lever will be afforded to foreigners for all kinds of attempts in our unhappy country! How gladly will those, who are perhaps on the look-out for such an aid, avail themselves of it!

There is in Europe a nation remarkable for her immense power, and worthy of respect on account of the great progress which she has made in the arts and sciences; a nation that holds in her hands powerful means of action in all parts of the world, and knows how to use them with wonderful discretion and sagacity.

As that nation has taken the lead in modern times in passing through all the phases of political and religious revolution, and has seen, during fearful convulsions, the passions in all their nakedness, and crime in all its forms, she is better acquainted than all others with their causes.

Not misled by the vain names under which, at such periods, the lowest passions and the most sordid interests disguise themselves, she is too much on her guard to allow the troubles which have inundated other countries with tears and blood, to be easily excited within herself. Her internal peace is not disturbed by the agitation and heat of disputes; although she may expect to have to encounter, sooner or later, difficulties and embarrassments, she enjoys, in the mean time, the tranquillity which is secured to her by her constitution, her manners, her riches, – and, above all, by the ocean which surrounds her. Placed in so advantageous a position, that nation watches the progress of others, for the purpose of attaching them to her car by golden chains, if they are simple enough to listen to her flattery; at least she attempts to hinder their advance, when a noble independence is about to free them from her influence. Always attentive to her own aggrandizement, by means of commerce and the arts, and by a policy eminently mercantile, she hides her self-interest under all sorts of disguises; and although religion and politics, where she has to do with another people, are quite indifferent to her, she knows how to make an adroit use of these powerful arms, to make friends, to defeat her enemies, and to enclose

all within the net of commerce, which she is always extending in all quarters of the world. Her sagacity must necessarily have perceived how much progress she will have made in adding Spain to the number of her colonies, when she has persuaded the Spanish people to fraternize with her in religion; not so much on account of the sympathy which such a fraternization would establish between them, as because she would find therein a sure method of stripping the Spanish people of that peculiar character and grave appearance which distinguishes them from all others, by depriving them of the only national and regenerative idea which remains to them after so many convulsions; from that moment, in truth, Spain, that proud nation, would be rendered accessible to all kinds of foreign impressions, docile and pliable in bending to all opinions, and subject to the interests of her astute protectors. Let it not be forgotten that there is no other nation that conceives her plans with so much foresight, prepares them with so much prudence, executes them with so much ability and perseverance. As she has remained since her great revolutions, that is, since the end of the seventeenth century, in a settled condition, and entirely free from the convulsions undergone since that time by other European nations, she has been able to follow a regular political system, both internal and external; and her politicians have been formed to the perfect science of government, by constantly inheriting the experience and views of their predecessors. Her statesmen well know how important it is to be prepared beforehand for every event. They



deeply study what may aid or impede them in other nations. They go out of the sphere of politics: they penetrate to the heart of every nation over which they propose to extend their influence: they examine what are the conditions of its existence; what is its vital principle; what are the causes of the strength and energy of every people.

During the autumn of 1805, Pitt gave a dinner in the country to some of his friends. While thus engaged, a despatch was brought to him announcing the surrender of Mack at Ulm, with 40,000 men, and the march of Napoleon on Vienna. Pitt communicated the fatal news to his friends, who cried out, "All is lost; there is no longer any resource against him." "There is one still left," replied the minister, "if I can excite a national war in Europe; and that war must begin in Spain." "Yes, gentlemen," he added, "Spain will be the first country to commence the patriotic war which shall give liberty to Europe." Such was the importance attributed by this profound statesman to a national idea; he expected from it what the strength of all the governments could not effect, the downfall of Napoleon, and the liberation of Europe. But it not uncommonly happens that the march of events is such, that these same national ideas, which one time were the powerful auxiliaries of ambitious cabinets, become, at another, the greatest obstacles; and then, instead of encouraging, it becomes their interest to extinguish them. As the nature of this work will not allow me to enter into the details of politics, I must content myself with appealing to the judgment of those who have

observed the line of conduct pursued by England during our war and revolution, since the death of Ferdinand VII. If we consider what the interests of that powerful nation require for the future, we may conjecture the part which she will take.

The means of saving a nation, by delivering it from interested protectors, and of securing her real independence, are to be found in great and generous ideas, deeply rooted in the people; in feelings engraved on their hearts by the action of time, by the influence of powerful institutions, by ancient manners and customs; in fine, in that unity of religious thought, which makes a whole people as one man. Then the past is united with the present, the present is connected with the future; then arises in the mind that enthusiasm which is the source of great deeds; then are found disinterestedness, energy, and constancy; because ideas are fixed and elevated, because hearts are great and generous.

It is not impossible that during one of the convulsions which disturb our unhappy country, men may arise amongst us blind enough to attempt to introduce the Protestant religion into Spain. We have had warnings enough to alarm us; we have not forgotten events which showed plainly enough how far some would sometimes have gone, if the great majority of the nation had not restrained them by their disapprobation. We do not dread the outrages of the reign of Henry VIII.; but what we do fear is, that advantage may be taken of a violent rupture with the Holy See, of the obstinacy and ambition of some ecclesiastics, of the pretext of establishing toleration in our country, or some other

pretext, to attempt to introduce amongst us, in some shape or other, the doctrines of Protestantism. We certainly have no need of importing toleration from abroad; it already exists amongst us so fully, that no one is afraid of being disturbed on account of his religious opinions. What would be thus introduced and established in Spain, would be a new system of religion, provided with every thing necessary for gaining the upper hand; and for weakening, and, if possible, destroying Catholicity. Then would resound in our ears, with a force constantly increasing, the fierce declamation which we have heard for several years; the vain threatenings of a party who are delirious, because they are on the point of expiring. The aversion with which the nation regards the pretended Reformation, we have no doubt, would be looked upon as rebellion; the pastorals of bishops would be treated as insidious persuasions, and the fervent zeal of our priests as sedition; the unanimity of Catholics to preserve themselves from contagion would be denounced as a diabolical conspiracy, devised by intolerance and party spirit, and executed by ignorance and fanaticism. Amid the efforts of the one party, and the resistance of the other, we should see enacted, in a greater or less degree, the scenes of times gone by; and although the spirit of moderation, which is one of the characteristics of this age, would not allow the perpetration of excesses which have stained the annals of other nations, they would not be without imitators. We must not forget that, with respect to religion in Spain, we cannot calculate on the coldness and indifference which other

nations would now display on a similar occasion. With the latter, religious feelings have lost much of their force, but in Spain they are still deep, lively, and energetic; and if they were to come into open and avowed opposition to each other, the shock would be violent and general. Although we have witnessed lamentable scandals, and even fearful catastrophes in religious matters, yet, up to this time, perverse intentions have been always concealed by a mask, more or less transparent. Sometimes the attack was made against a person charged with political machinations; sometimes against certain classes of citizens, who were accused of imaginary crimes. If, at times, the revolution exceeded its bounds, it was said that it was impossible to restrain it, and thus the vexations, the insults, the outrages heaped upon all that was most sacred upon earth, were only the inevitable results, and the work of a mob that nothing could restrain. There has always been more or less of disguise; but if the dogmas of Catholicity were attacked deliberately, and with *sang froid*; if the most important points of discipline were trodden under foot; if the most august mysteries were turned into ridicule, and the most holy ceremonies treated with public contempt; if church were raised against church, and pulpit against pulpit, what would be the result? It is certain that minds would be very much exasperated; and if, as might be feared, alarming explosions did not ensue, at least religious controversy would assume a character so violent that we should believe ourselves transferred to the sixteenth century.

It is a common thing among us for the principles which prevail in politics to be entirely opposed to those which rule in society; it may then easily happen that a religious principle, rejected by society, may find support among influential statesmen. We should then see reproduced, under more important circumstances, a phenomenon which we have witnessed for so many years, viz. governments attempting to alter the course of society by force. This is one of the principal differences between our revolution and those of other countries; it is, at the same time, a key which explains the greatest anomalies. Everywhere else revolutionary ideas took possession of society, and afterwards extended themselves to the sphere of politics; with us they first ruled in the political sphere, and afterwards strove to descend into the social sphere; society was far from being prepared for such innovations; this was the cause of shocks so violent and so frequent. It is on account of this want of harmony that the government of Spain exercises so little influence over the people; I mean by influence, that moral ascendancy which does not require to be accompanied by the idea of force. There is no doubt that this is an evil, since it tends to weaken that authority which is indispensably necessary for all societies. But on more than one occasion it has been a great benefit. It is no slight advantage that in presence of a senseless and inconstant government there is found a society full of calmness and wisdom, and that that society pursues its quiet and majestic march, while the government is carried away by rashness. We may expect much from the

right instinct of the Spanish nation, from her proverbial gravity, which so many misfortunes have only augmented, and from that fact, which teaches her so well how to discern the true path to happiness, by rendering her deaf to the insidious suggestions of those who seek to lead her astray. Although for so many years, owing to a fatal combination of circumstances, and a want of harmony between the social and political order, Spain has not been able to obtain a government which understands her feelings and instincts, follows her inclinations, and promotes her prosperity, we still cherish the hope that the day will come when from her own bosom, so fertile in future life, will come forth the harmony which she seeks, and the equilibrium which she has lost. In the mean time, it is of the highest importance that all men who have a Spanish heart in their breasts, and who do not wish to see the vitals of their country torn to pieces, should unite and act in concert to preserve her from the genius of evil. Their unanimity will prevent the seeds of perpetual discord from being scattered upon our soil, will ward off this additional calamity, and will preserve from destruction those precious germs, whence may arise, with renovated vigor, our civilization, which has been so much injured by disastrous events.

The soul is overwhelmed with painful apprehensions at the thought that a day may come when religious unity will be banished from among us; that unity which is identified with our habits, our customs, our manners, our laws; which guarded the cradle of our monarchy in the cavern of Covadonga, and

which was the emblem on our standard during a struggle of eight centuries against the formidable crescent; that unity which developed and illustrated our civilization in times of the greatest difficulty; that unity which followed our terrible *tercios*, when they imposed silence upon Europe; which led our sailors when they discovered the new world, and guided them when they for the first time made the circuit of the globe; that unity which sustains our soldiers in their most heroic exploits, and which, at a recent period, gave the climax to their many glorious deeds in the downfall of Napoleon. You who condemn so rashly the work of ages; you who offer so many insults to the Spanish nation, and who treat as barbarism and ignorance the regulating principle of our civilization, do you know what it is you insult? Do you know what inspired the genius of Gonzalva, of Ferdinando Cortez, of the conqueror of Lepanto? Do not the shades of Garcilazo, of Herrera, of Ercilla, of Fray Luis de Leon, of Cervantes, of Lope de Vega, inspire you with any respect? Can you venture to break the tie which connects us with them, to make us the unworthy posterity of these great men? Do you wish to place an impassable barrier between their faith and ours, between their manners and ours, to make us destroy all our traditions, and to forget our most inspiring recollections? Do you wish to preserve the great and august monuments of our ancestors' piety among us only as a severe and eloquent reproach? Will you consent to see dried up the most abundant fountains to which we can have recourse to revive literature, to strengthen science, to reorganize legislation,

to re-establish the spirit of nationality, to restore our glory, and replace this nation in the high position which her virtues merit, by restoring to her the peace and happiness which she seeks with so much anxiety, and which her heart requires?



# **CHAPTER XIII.**

## **CATHOLICITY AND PROTESTANTISM IN RELATION TO SOCIAL PROGRESS.**

### **PRELIMINARY COUP D'ŒIL**

After having placed Catholicity and Protestantism in contrast, in a religious point of view, in the picture which I have just drawn; after having shown the superiority of the one over the other, not only in certainty, but also in all that regards the instincts, the feelings, the ideas, the characteristics of the human mind, it seems to me proper to approach another question, certainly not less important, but much less understood, and in the examination of which we shall have to contend against strong antipathies, and to dissipate many prejudices and errors. Amid the difficulties by which the question that I am about to undertake is surrounded, I am supported by a strong hope that the interest of the subject, and its analogy with the scientific taste of the age, will invite a perusal; and that I shall thereby avoid the danger which commonly threatens those who write in favor of the Catholic religion, that of being judged without being heard. The question may be stated thus: "When we compare Catholicity and Protestantism, which do we find the most favorable to

real liberty, to the real progress of nations, to the cause of civilization?" Liberty! This is one of those words which are as generally employed as they are little understood; words which, because they contain a certain vague idea, easily perceived, present the deceptive appearance of perfect clearness, while, on account of the multitude and variety of objects to which they apply, they are susceptible of a variety of meanings, and, consequently, are extremely difficult to comprehend. Who can reckon the number of applications made of the word liberty? There is always found in this word a certain radical idea, but the modifications and graduations to which the idea is subject are infinite. The air circulates with liberty; we move the soil around the plant, to enable it to grow and increase with liberty; we clean out the bed of a stream to allow it to flow with liberty; when we set free a fish in a net, or a bird in a cage, we give them their liberty; we treat a friend with freedom; we have free methods, free thoughts, free expressions, free successions, free will, free actions; a prisoner has no liberty; nor have boys, girls, or married people; a man behaves with greater freedom in a foreign country; soldiers are not free; there are men free from conscription, from contributions; we have free votes, free acknowledgments, free interpretation, free evidence; freedom of commerce, of instruction, of the press, of conscience; civil freedom, and political freedom; we have freedom just, unjust, rational, irrational, moderate, excessive, limited, licentious, seasonable, unseasonable. But I need not

pursue the endless enumeration. It seemed to me necessary to dwell upon it for a moment, even at the risk of fatiguing the reader; perhaps the remembrance of all this may serve to engrave deeply on our minds the truth, that when, in conversation, in writing, in public discussions, in laws, this word is so frequently employed as applied to objects of the highest importance, it is necessary to consider maturely the number and nature of the ideas which it embraces in the particular case, the meaning that the subject needs, the modifications which the circumstances require, and the precaution demanded in the case.

Whatever may be the acceptation in which the word liberty is taken, it is apparent that it always implies the absence of a cause restraining the exercise of a power. Hence it follows that, in order to fix in each case the real meaning of the word, it is indispensable to pay attention to the circumstances as well as to the nature of the power, the exercise of which is to be prevented or limited, without losing sight of the various objects to which it applies, the conditions of its exercise, as also the character, power, and extent of the means which are employed to restrain it. To explain this matter, let it be proposed to form a judgment on the proposition, "Man ought to enjoy liberty of thought."

It is here affirmed that freedom of thought in man ought not to be restrained; but do you speak of physical force exercised directly on thought itself? In that case the proposition is entirely vain; for as such an application of force is impossible, it is useless to say that it ought not to be employed. Do you mean to say that

it is not allowable to restrain the expression of thought; that is to say, that the liberty of manifesting thought ought not to be hindered or restrained? You have, then, made a great step, you have placed the question on a different footing. Or if you do not mean to say that every man, at all times, in all places, and on all subjects, has a right to give utterance to all that comes into his head, and that in any way he may think proper, you must then specify the things, the persons, the places, the times, the subjects, the conditions; in short, you must note a variety of circumstances, you must prohibit altogether in some cases, limit in others, bind in some, loosen in others; in fine, make so many restrictions, that you will make little progress in establishing your general principle of freedom of thought, which at first appeared so simple and so clear. Even in the sanctuary of thought, where human sight does not extend, and which is open to the eye of God alone, what means the liberty of thought? Is it owing to chance that laws are imposed on thought to which it is obliged to submit under pain of losing itself in chaos? Can it despise the rules of sound reason? Can it refuse to listen to the counsels of good sense? Can it forget that its object is truth? Can it disregard the eternal principles of morality? Thus we find, in examining the meaning of the word liberty, even as applied to what is certainly freer than any thing else in man, viz. thought – we find such a number and variety of meanings that we are forced to make many distinctions, and necessity compels us to limit the general proposition, if we wish to avoid saying any thing

in opposition to the dictates of reason and good sense, the eternal laws of morality, the interests of individuals, and the peace and preservation of society. And what may not be said of so many claims of liberty which are constantly propounded in language intentionally vague and equivocal?

I avail myself of these examples to prevent a confusion of ideas; for in defending the cause of Catholicity, I have no need of pleading for oppression, or of applauding tyranny, or of approving the conduct of those who have trodden under foot men's most sacred rights. Yes, I say, sacred; for after the august religion of Jesus Christ has been preached, man is sacred in the eyes of other men on account of his origin and divine destiny, on account of the image of God which is reflected in him, and because he has been redeemed with ineffable goodness and love by the Son of the Eternal. This divine religion declares the rights of man to be sacred; for its august Founder threatens with eternal punishment not only those who kill a man, those who mutilate or rob him, but even those who offend him in words: "He who shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire." (Matt. v. 22.) Thus speaks our divine Lord.

Our hearts swell with generous indignation, when we hear the religion of Jesus Christ reproached with a tendency towards oppression. It is true that, if you confound the spirit of real liberty with that of demagogues, you will not find it in Catholicity; but, if you avoid a monstrous misnomer, if you give to the word liberty its reasonable, just, useful, and beneficial signification, then the

Catholic religion may fearlessly claim the gratitude of the human race, *for she has civilized the nations who embraced her, and civilization is true liberty.*

It is a fact now generally acknowledged, and openly confessed, that Christianity has exercised a very important and salutary influence on the development of European civilization; if this fact has not yet had given to it the importance which it deserves, it is because it has not been sufficiently appreciated. With respect to civilization, a distinction is sometimes made between the influence of Christianity and that of Catholicity; its merits are lavished on the former, and stinted to the latter, by those who forget that, with respect to European civilization, Catholicity can always claim the principal share; and, for many centuries, an exclusive one; since, during a very long period, she worked alone at the great work. People have not been willing to see that, when Protestantism appeared in Europe, the work was bordering on completion; with an injustice and ingratitude which I cannot describe, they have reproached Catholicity with the spirit of barbarism, ignorance, and oppression, while they were making an ostentatious display of the rich civilization, knowledge, and liberty, for which they were principally indebted to her.

If they did not wish to fathom the intimate connection between Catholicity and European civilization, if they had not the patience necessary for the long investigations into which this examination would lead them, at least it would have been proper to take a glance at the condition of countries where

the Catholic religion has not exerted all her influence during centuries of trouble, and compare them with those in which she has been predominant. The East and the West, both subject to great revolutions, both professing Christianity, but in such a way that the Catholic principle was weak and vacillating in the East, while it was energetic and deeply rooted in the West; these, we say, would have afforded two very good points of comparison to estimate the value of Christianity without Catholicity, when the civilization and the existence of nations were at stake. In the West, the revolutions were multiplied and fearful; the chaos was at its height; and, nevertheless, out of chaos came light and life. Neither the barbarism of the nations who inundated those countries, and established themselves there, nor the furious assaults of Islamism, even in the days of its greatest power and enthusiasm, could succeed in destroying the germs of a rich and fertile civilization. In the East, on the contrary, all tended to old age and decay; nothing revived; and, under the blows of the power which was ineffectual against us, all was shaken to pieces. The spiritual power of Rome, and its influence on temporal affairs, have certainly borne fruits very different from those produced, under the same circumstances, by its violent opponents.

If Europe were destined one day again to undergo a general and fearful revolution, either by a universal spread of revolutionary ideas or by a violent invasion of social and proprietary rights by pauperism; if the colossus of the North,

seated on its throne amid eternal snows, with knowledge in its head, and blind force in its hands, possessing at once the means of civilization, and unceasingly turning towards the East, the South, and the West that covetous and crafty look which in history is the characteristic march of all invading empires; if, availing itself of a favorable moment, it were to make an attempt on the independence of Europe, then we should perhaps have a proof of the value of the Catholic principle in a great extremity; then we should feel the power of the unity which is proclaimed and supported by Catholicity, and while calling to mind the middle ages, we should come to acknowledge one of the causes of the weakness of the East and the strength of the West. Then would be remembered a fact, which, though but of yesterday, is falling into oblivion, viz. that the nation whose heroic courage broke the power of Napoleon was proverbially Catholic; and who knows whether, in the attempts made in Russia against Catholicity, attempts which the Vicar of Jesus Christ has deplored in such touching language – who knows whether there be not the secret influence of a presentiment, perhaps even a foresight of the necessity of weakening that sublime power, which has been in all ages, when the cause of humanity was in question, the centre of great attempts? But let us return.

It cannot be denied that, since the sixteenth century, European civilization has shown life and brilliancy; but it is a mistake to attribute this phenomenon to Protestantism. In order to examine the extent and influence of a fact, we ought not to be content with



the events which have followed it; it is also necessary to consider whether these events were already prepared; whether they are any thing more than the necessary result of anterior facts; and we must take care not to reason in a way which is justly declared to be sophistical by logicians, *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*: after that, therefore on account of it. Without Protestantism, and before it, European civilization was already very much advanced, thanks to the labors and influence of the Catholic religion; the greatness and splendor which it subsequently displayed were not owing to it, but arose in spite of it.

Erroneous ideas on this matter have arisen from the fact, that Christianity has not been deeply studied; and that, without entering into a serious examination of Church history, men have too often contented themselves with taking a superficial view of the principles of brotherhood which she has so much recommended. In order fully to understand an institution, it is not enough to remain satisfied with its leading ideas; it is necessary to follow all its steps, see how it realizes its ideas, and how it triumphs over the obstacles that oppose it. We shall never form a complete idea of an historical fact, unless we carefully study its history. Now the study of Church history in its relations with civilization, is still incomplete. It is not that ecclesiastical history has not been profoundly studied; but it may be said that since the spirit of social analysis has been developed, that history has not yet been made the subject of those admirable labors which have thrown so much light upon it in a critical and dogmatical

point of view.

Another impediment to the complete comprehension of this matter is, that an exaggerated importance is given to the intentions of men, and the great march of events is too much neglected. The greatness of events is measured, and their nature judged of, by the immediate means which produces them, and the objects of the men whose actions are treated of; this is a very important error. The eye ought to range over a wider field; we ought to observe the successive development of ideas, the influence which they have exercised on events, the institutions which have sprung from them; but it is necessary to see all these things as they are in themselves, that is, on a large scale, without stopping to consider particular and isolated facts. It is an important truth, which ought to be deeply engraven on the mind, that when one of those great facts which change the lot of a considerable portion of the human race is developed, it is rarely understood by those who take part in it, and figure as the principal actors. The march of humanity is a grand drama; the parts are played by persons who pass by and disappear: man is very little; God alone is great. Neither the actors who figured on the scene in the ancient empires of the East, nor Alexander invading Asia and reducing numberless nations into servitude, nor the Romans subjugating the world, nor the barbarians overturning the empire and breaking it in pieces, nor the Mussulmen ruling Asia and Africa and menacing the independence of Europe, knew, or could know, that they were

the instruments in the great designs whereof we admire the execution.

I mean to show from this, that when we have to do with Christian civilization, when we collect and analyze the facts which distinguish its march, it is not necessary, or even often proper, to suppose that the men who have contributed to it in the most remarkable manner understood, to the full extent, the results of their own efforts. It is glory enough for a man to be pointed out as the chosen instrument of Providence, without the necessity of attributing to him great ability or lofty ambition. It is enough to observe that a ray of light has descended from heaven and illumined his brow; it is of little importance whether he foresaw that this ray, by reflection, was destined to shed a brilliant light on future generations. Little men are commonly smaller than they think themselves, but great men are often greater than they imagine; if they do not know all their grandeur, it is because they are ignorant that they are the instruments of the high designs of Providence. Another observation which we ought always to have present in the study of these great events is, that we should not expect to find there a system, the connection and harmony of which are apparent at the first *coup d'œil*. We must expect to see some irregularities and objects of an unpleasant aspect; it is necessary to guard against the childish impatience of anticipating the time; it is indispensable to abandon that desire which we always have, in a greater or less degree, and which always urges us to seek every thing in conformity with our own

ideas, and to see every thing advance in the way most pleasing to us.

Do you not see nature herself so varied, so rich, so grand, lavish her treasures in disorder, hide her inestimable precious stones and her most valuable veins of metal in masses of earth? See how she presents huge chains of mountains, inaccessible rocks, and fearful precipices, in contrast with her wide and smiling plains. Do you not observe this apparent disorder, this prodigality, in the midst of which numberless agents work, in secret concert, to produce the admirable whole which enchants our eyes and ravishes the lover of nature? So with society; the facts are dispersed, scattered here and there, frequently offering no appearance of order or concert; events succeed each other, act on each other, without the design being discovered; men unite, separate, co-operate, and contend, and nevertheless time, that indispensable agent in the production of great works, goes on, and all is accomplished according to the destinies marked out in the secrets of the Eternal.

This is the march of humanity; this is the rule for the philosophic study of history; this is the way to comprehend the influence of those productive ideas, of those powerful institutions, which from time to time appear among men to change the face of the earth. When in a study of this kind we discover acting at the bottom of things a productive idea, a powerful institution, the mind, far from being frightened at meeting with some irregularities, is inspired, on the contrary,

with fresh courage; for it is a sure sign that the idea is full of truth, that the institution is fraught with life, when we see them pass through the chaos of ages, and come safe out of the frightful ordeals. Of what importance is it that certain men were not influenced by the idea, that they did not answer the object of the institution, if the latter has survived its revolutions, and the former has not been swallowed up in the stormy sea of the passions? To mention the weaknesses, the miseries, the faults, the crimes of men, is to make the most eloquent apology for the idea and the institution.

In viewing men in this way, we do not take them out of their proper places, and we do not require from them more than is reasonable. We see them enclosed in the deep bed of the great torrent of events, and we do not attribute to their intellects, or to their will, any thing that exceeds the sphere appointed for them; we do not, however, fail to appreciate in a proper manner the nature and the greatness of the works in which they take part, but we avoid giving to them an exaggerated importance, by honoring them with eulogiums which they do not deserve, or reproaching them unjustly. Times and circumstances are not monstrously confounded; the observer sees with calmness and *sang froid* the events which pass before his eyes; he speaks not of the empire of Charlemagne as he would of that of Napoleon, and is not hurried into bitter invectives against Gregory VII. because he did not adopt the same line of political conduct as Gregory XVI.

Observe that I do not ask from the philosophical historian an impassive indifference to good and evil, to justice and injustice; I do not claim indulgence for vice, nor would I refuse to virtue its eulogy. I have no sympathy with that school of historic fatalism, which would bring back to the world the destiny of the ancients, a school which, if it acquired influence, would corrupt the best part of history, and stifle the most generous emotions. I see in the march of society a plan, a harmony, but not a blind necessity; I do not believe that events are mingled up together indiscriminately in the dark urn of destiny, nor that fatalism holds the world enclosed in an iron circle. But I see a wonderful chain stretching over the course of centuries, a chain which does not fetter the movements of individuals or of nations, and which accommodates itself to the ebb and flow which are required by the nature of things; at its touch great thoughts arise in the minds of men: this golden chain is suspended by the hand of the Eternal, it is the work of infinite intelligence and ineffable love.

# **CHAPTER XIV.**

## **DID THERE EXIST AT THE EPOCH WHEN CHRISTIANITY APPEARED ANY OTHER PRINCIPLE OF REGENERATION?**

In what condition did Christianity find the world? This is a question which ought to fix all our attention, if we wish to appreciate correctly the blessings conferred by that divine religion on individuals and on society, if we are desirous of knowing the real character of Christian civilization. Certainly at the time when Christianity appeared, society presented a dark picture. Covered with fine appearances, but infected to the heart with a mortal malady, it presented an image of the most repugnant corruption, veiled by a brilliant garb of ostentation and opulence. Morality was without reality, manners without modesty, the passions without restraint, laws without authority, and religion without God. Ideas were at the mercy of prejudices, of religious fanaticism, and philosophical subtilities. Man was a profound mystery to himself; he did not know how to estimate his own dignity, for he reduced it to the level of brutes; and when he attempted to exaggerate its importance, he did not know how to confine it within the limits marked out by reason and nature:

and it is well worthy of observation, that while a great part of the human race groaned in the most abject servitude, heroes, and even the most abominable monsters, were elevated to the rank of gods.

Such elements must, sooner or later, have produced social dissolution. Even if the violent irruption of the barbarians had not taken place, society must have been overturned sooner or later, for it did not possess a fertile idea, a consoling thought, or a beam of hope, to preserve it from ruin.

Idolatry had lost its strength; it was an expedient exhausted by time and by the gross abuse which the passions had made of it. Its fragile tissue once exposed to the dissolving influence of philosophical observation, idolatry was entirely disgraced; and if the rooted force of habit still exercised a mechanical influence on the minds of men, that influence was neither capable of re-establishing harmony in society, nor of producing that fiery enthusiasm which inspires great actions – enthusiasm which in virgin hearts may be excited by superstition the most irrational and absurd. To judge of them by the relaxation of morals, by the enervated weakness of character, by the effeminate luxury, by the complete abandonment to the most repulsive amusements and the most shameful pleasures, it is clear that religious ideas no longer possessed the majesty of the heroic age; no longer efficacious, they only exerted on men's minds a feeble influence, while they served in a lamentable manner as instruments of dissolution. Now it was impossible for it to be otherwise: nations



who had obtained the high degree of cultivation of the Greeks and Romans; nations who had heard their great sages dispute on the grand questions of divinity and man, could not continue in the state of simplicity which was necessary to believe with good faith the intolerable absurdities of which Paganism is full, and whatever may have been the disposition of mind among the ignorant portion of the people, assuredly those who were raised above the common standard did not believe them – those who listened to philosophers as enlightened as Cicero, and who daily enjoyed the malicious raileries of their satirical poets.

If religion was impotent, was there not another means, viz. knowledge? Before we examine what was to be hoped from this, it is necessary to observe, that knowledge never founded a society, nor was it ever able to restore one that had lost its balance. In looking over the history of ancient times, we find at the head of some nations eminent men who, thanks to the magic influence which they exercised over others, dictated laws, corrected abuses, rectified ideas, reformed morals, and established a government on wise principles; thus securing, in a more or less satisfactory manner, the happiness and prosperity of those who were confided to their care. But we should be much mistaken if we imagined that these men proceeded according to what we call scientific combinations. Generally simple and rude, they acted according to the impulses of their generous hearts, only guided by the wisdom and good sense of the father of a family in the management of his domestic affairs: never did these

men adopt for their rule the wretched subtilties which we call theories, the crude mass of ideas which we disguise under the pompous name of science. Were the most distinguished days of Greece those of Plato and Aristotle? The proud Romans, who conquered the world, certainly had not the extent and variety of knowledge of the Augustan age; and yet who would exchange the times or the men?

Modern times also can show important evidences of the sterility of science in creating social institutions; which is the more evident as the practical effects of the natural sciences are the more visible. It seems that in the latter sciences man has a power which he has not in the former; although, when the matter is fully examined, the difference does not appear so great as at the first view.

Let us briefly compare their respective results.

When man seeks to apply the knowledge which he has acquired of the great laws of nature, he finds himself compelled to pay respect to her; as, whatever might be his wishes, his weak arm could not cause any great *bouleversement*, he is obliged to make his attempts limited in extent, and the desire of success induces him to act in conformity with the laws which govern the bodies he has to do with. It is quite otherwise with the application made of the social sciences. There man is able to act directly and immediately on society itself, on its eternal foundations; he does not consider himself necessarily bound to make his attempts on a small scale, or to respect the eternal laws of society; he

is able, on the contrary, to imagine those laws as he pleases, indulge in as many subtilties as he thinks proper, and bring about disasters which humanity laments. Let us remember the extravagances which have found favor, with respect to nature, in the schools of philosophy, ancient and modern, and we shall see what would have become of the admirable machine of the universe, if philosophers had had full power over it. Descartes said, "Give me matter and motion, and I will form a world!" He could not derange an atom in the system of the universe. Rousseau, in his turn, dreamed of placing society on a new basis, and he upset the social state. It must not be forgotten that science, properly so called, has little power in the organization of society: this ought to be remembered in modern times, when it boasts so much of its pretended fertility. It attributes to its own labors what is the fruit of the lapse of ages, of the instinctive law of nations, and sometimes of the inspirations of genius; now neither this instinct of nations nor genius at all resembles science.

But without pushing any further these general considerations, which are, nevertheless, very useful in leading us to a knowledge of man, what could be hoped from the false light of science which was preserved in the ruins of the ancient schools at the time we are speaking of? However limited the knowledge of the ancient philosophers, even the most distinguished, may have been on these subjects, we must allow that the names of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle command some degree of respect, and that amid their errors and mistakes they give us thoughts which are really

worthy of their lofty genius. But when Christianity appeared, the germs of knowledge planted by them had been destroyed; dreams had taken the place of high and fruitful thoughts, the love of disputation had replaced that of wisdom, sophistry and subtilties had been substituted for mature judgment and severe reasoning. The ancient schools had been upset, others as sterile as they were strange had been formed out of their ruins; on all sides there appeared a swarm of sophists like the impure insects which announce the corruption of a dead body. The Church has preserved for us a very valuable means of judging of the science of that time, in the history of the early heresies. Without speaking of what therein deserves all our indignation, as, for example, their profound immorality, can we find any thing more empty, absurd, or pitiable?[14](#)

The Roman legislation, so praiseworthy for its justice and equity, its wisdom and prudence, and much as it deserves to be regarded as one of the most precious ornaments of ancient civilization, was yet incapable of preventing the dissolution with which society was threatened. Never did it owe its safety to jurisconsults; so great a work is beyond the sphere of action of jurisprudence. Let us suppose the laws as perfect as possible, jurisprudence carried to the highest point, jurisconsults animated by the purest feelings and guided by the most honest intentions, what would all this avail if the heart of society is corrupt, if moral principles have lost their force, if manners are in continual opposition with laws? Let us consider the picture of Roman

manners such as their own historians have painted them; we shall not find even a reflection of the equity, justice, and good sense which made the Roman laws deserve the glorious name of written reason.

To give a proof of impartiality, I purposely omit the blemishes from which the Roman law was certainly not exempt, for I do not desire to be accused of wishing to lower every thing which is not the work of Christianity. Yet I must not pass over in silence the important fact, that it is by no means true that Christianity had no share in perfecting the jurisprudence of Rome; I do not mean merely during the period of the Christian emperors, which does not admit of a doubt, but even at a prior period. It is certain that some time before the coming of Jesus Christ the number of the Roman laws was very considerable, and that their study and arrangement already occupied the attention of many of the most illustrious men. We know from Suetonius (*In Cæsar. c. 44*) that Julius Cæsar had undertaken the extremely useful task of condensing into a small number of books those which were the most select and necessary among the immense collection of laws; a similar idea occurred to Cicero, who wrote a book on the methodical digest of the civil law (*de jure civili in arte redigendo*), as Aulus Gellius attests. (*Noct. Att. lib. i. c. 22.*) According to Tacitus, this work also occupied the attention of the Emperor Augustus. Certainly these projects show that legislation was not in its infancy; but it is not the less true that the Roman law, as we possess it, is in great part the product of later ages. Many of the

most famous jurists, whose opinions form a considerable part of the law, lived long after the coming of Jesus Christ. As to the constitutions of the emperors, their very names remind us of the time when they were digested.

These facts being established, I shall observe that it does not follow that because the emperors and jurists were pagans, the Christian ideas had no influence on their works. The number of Christians was immense in all places; the cruelty alone with which they had been persecuted, the heroic courage which they had displayed in the face of torments and death, must have drawn upon them the attention of the whole world; and it is impossible that this should not have excited, among men of reflection, curiosity enough to examine what this new religion taught its proselytes. The reading of the apologies for Christianity already written in the first ages with so much force of reasoning and eloquence, the works of various kinds published by the early Fathers, the homilies of Bishops to their people, contain so much wisdom, breathe such a love for truth and justice, and proclaim so loudly the eternal principles of morality, that it was impossible for their influence not to be felt even by those who condemned the religion of Christ. When doctrines having for their object the greatest questions which affect man are spread everywhere, propagated with fervent zeal, received with love by a considerable number of disciples, and maintained by the talent and knowledge of illustrious men, these doctrines make a profound impression in all directions, and affect even

those who warmly combat them. Their influence in this case is imperceptible, but it is not the less true and real. They act like the exhalations which impregnate the atmosphere; with the air we inhale sometimes death, and sometimes a salutary odor which purifies and strengthens us.

Such must necessarily have been the case with a doctrine which was preached in so extraordinary a manner, propagated with so much rapidity, and the truth of which, sealed by torrents of blood, was defended by writers such as Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Irenæus, and Tertullian. The profound wisdom, the ravishing beauty of these doctrines, explained by the Christian doctors, must have called attention to the sources whence they flowed; it was natural that curiosity thus excited should put the holy Scriptures into the hands of many philosophers and jurists. Would it be strange if Epictetus had imbibed some of the doctrines of the Sermon on the Mount, and if the oracles of jurisprudence had imperceptibly received the inspiration of a religion whose power, spreading in a wonderful manner, took possession of all ranks of society? Burning zeal for truth and justice, the spirit of brotherhood, grand ideas of the dignity of man, the continued themes of Christian instruction, could not remain confined among the children of the Church. More or less rapidly they penetrated all classes; and when, by the conversion of Constantine, they acquired political influence and imperial authority, it was only the repetition of an ordinary phenomenon; when a system has become very powerful in the social order,

it ends by exerting an empire, or at least an influence, in the political.

I leave these observations to the judgment of thinking men with perfect confidence; I am sure that if they do not adopt them, at least they will not consider them unworthy of reflection. We live at a time fruitful in great events, and when important revolutions have taken place; therefore we are better able to understand the immense effects of indirect and slow influences, the powerful ascendancy of ideas, and the irresistible force with which doctrines work their way.

To this want of vital principles capable of regenerating society, to all those elements of dissolution which society contained within itself, was joined another evil of no slight importance, – the vice of its political organization. The world being under the yoke of Rome, hundreds of nations differing in manners and customs were heaped together in confusion, like spoils on the field of battle, and constrained to form a factitious body, like trophies placed upon a spear. The unity of the government being violent, could not be advantageous; and moreover, as it was despotic, from the emperor down to the lowest proconsul, it will be seen that it could not produce any other result than the debasement and degradation of nations, and that it was impossible for them to display that elevation and energy of character which are the precious fruit of a feeling of self-dignity and love for national independence. If Rome had preserved her ancient manners, if she had retained in her



bosom warriors as celebrated for the simplicity and austerity of their lives as for the renown of their victories, some of the qualities of the conquerors might have been communicated to the conquered, as a young and robust heart reanimates with its vigor a body attenuated by disease. Unfortunately such was not the case. The Fabiuses, the Camilluses, the Scipios, would not have acknowledged their unworthy posterity; Rome, the mistress of the world, like a slave, was trodden under the feet of monsters who mounted to the throne by perjury and violence, stained their sceptres with corruption and cruelty, and fell by the hands of assassins. The authority of the Senate and people had disappeared; only vain imitations of them were left, *vestigia morientis libertatis*, as Tacitus calls them, vestiges of expiring liberty; and this royal people, who formerly disposed of kingdoms, consulships, legions, and all, then thought only of two things, food and games,

"Qui dabat olim  
Imperium, fasces, legiones, omnia, nunc se  
Continet, atque duas tantum res anxius optat,  
Panem et Circenses." – Juvenal, *Satire X*.

At length, in the plenitude of time Christianity appeared; and without announcing any change in political forms, without intermeddling in the temporal and earthly, it brought to mankind a twofold salvation, by calling them to the path of eternal felicity, but at the same time bountifully supplying them with the only

means of preservation from social dissolution, the germ of a regeneration slow and pacific, but grand, immense, and lasting, and secure from the revolutions of ages; and this preservative against social dissolution, this germ of invaluable improvements, was a pure and lofty doctrine, diffused among all mankind, without exception of age, sex, and condition, as the rain which falls like a mild dew on an arid and thirsty soil. No religion has ever equalled Christianity in knowledge of the hidden means of influencing man; none has ever, when doing so, paid so high a compliment to his dignity; and Christianity has always adopted the principle, that the first step in gaining possession of the whole man is that of gaining his mind; and that it is necessary, in order either to destroy evil or to effect good, to adopt intellectual means: thereby it has given a mortal blow to the systems of violence which prevailed before its existence; it has proclaimed the wholesome truth, that in influencing men, the weakest and most unworthy method is force; a fruitful and beneficial truth, which opened to humanity a new and happy future. Only since the Christian era do we find the lessons of the sublimest philosophy taught to all classes of the people, at all times and in all places. The loftiest truths relating to God and man, the rules of the purest morality, are not communicated to a chosen number of disciples in hidden and mysterious instructions; the philosophy of Christianity has been bolder; it has ventured to reveal to man the whole naked truth, and that in public, with a loud voice, and that generous boldness which is the inseparable

companion of the truth. "That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light; and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the housetop." (Matt. x. 27.)

As soon as Christianity and Paganism met face to face, the superiority of the former was rendered palpable, not only by its doctrines themselves, but by the manner in which it propagated them. It might easily be imagined that a religion so wise and pure in its teachings, and which, in propagating them, addressed itself directly to the mind and heart, must quickly drive from its usurped dominion the religion of imposture and falsehood. And, indeed, what did Paganism do for the good of man? What moral truths did it teach? How did it check the corruption of manners? "As to morals," says St. Augustine, "why have not the gods chosen to take care of those of their adorers, and prevent their irregularities? As to the true God, it is with justice that He has neglected those who did not serve Him. But whence comes it that those gods, the prohibition of whose worship is complained of by ungrateful men, have not established laws to lead their adorers to virtue? Was it not reasonable that, as men undertook their mysteries and sacrifices, the gods, on their side, should undertake to regulate the manners and actions of men? It is replied, that no one is wicked but because he wishes to be so. Who doubts this? but the gods ought not on that account to conceal from their worshippers precepts that might serve to make them practise virtue. They were, on the contrary, under the obligation of publishing those precepts aloud, of admonishing

and rebuking sinners by their prophets; of publicly threatening punishment to those who did evil, and promising rewards to those who did well. Was there ever heard, in the temples of the gods, a loud and generous voice teaching any thing of the kind?" (*De Civit.* lib. ii. c. 4.) The holy doctor afterwards paints a dark picture of the infamies and abominations which were committed in the spectacles and sacred games celebrated in honor of the gods – games and shows at which he had himself assisted in his youth; he continues thus: "Thence it comes that these divinities have taken no care to regulate the morals of the cities and nations who adore them, or to avert by their threats those dreadful evils which injure not only fields and vineyards, houses and properties, or the body which is subject to the mind, but the mind itself, the directress of the body, which was drenched with their iniquities. Or if it be pretended that they did make such menaces, let them be shown and proved to us. But let there not be alleged a few secret words whispered in the ears of a small number of persons, and which, with a great deal of mystery, were to teach virtue. It is necessary to point out, to name the places consecrated to the assemblies – not those in which were celebrated games with lascivious words and gestures; not those feasts called *fuites*, and which were solemnized with the most unbridled license; but the assemblies where the people were instructed in the precepts of the gods for the repression of avarice, moderating ambition, restraining immodesty; those where these unfortunate beings learn what Perseus desires them to know, when he says, in severe

language, 'Learn, O unhappy mortals, the reason of things, what we are, why we come into the world, what we ought to do, how miserable is the term of our career, what bounds we ought to prescribe to ourselves in the pursuit of riches, what use we ought to make of them, what we owe to our neighbor, in fine, the obligations we owe to the rank we occupy among men.' Let them tell us in what places they have been accustomed to instruct the people in these things by order of the gods; let them show us these places, as we show them churches built for this purpose wherever the Christian religion has been established." (*De Civit.* lib. ii. c. 6.) This divine religion was too deeply acquainted with the heart of man ever to forget the weakness and inconstancy which characterize it; and hence it has ever been her invariable rule of conduct unceasingly to inculcate to him, with untiring patience, the salutary truths on which his temporal well-being and eternal happiness depend. Man easily forgets moral truths when he is not constantly reminded of them; or if they remain in his mind, they are there like sterile seeds, and do not fertilize his heart. It is good and highly salutary for parents constantly to communicate this instruction to their children, and that it should be made the principal object of private education; but it is necessary, moreover, that there should be a public ministry, never losing sight of it, diffusing it among all classes and ages, repairing the negligences of families, and reviving recollections and impressions which the passions and time constantly efface.

This system of constant preaching and instruction, practised

at all times and in all places by the Catholic Church, is so important for the enlightenment and morality of nations, that it must be looked upon as a great good, that the first Protestants, in spite of their desire to destroy all the practices of the Church, have nevertheless preserved that of preaching. We need not be insensible on this account to the evils produced at certain times by the declamation of some factious or fanatical ministers; but as unity had been broken, as the people had been precipitated into the perilous paths of schism, we say that it must have been extremely useful for the preservation of the most important notions with respect to God and man and the fundamental maxims of morality, that such truths should be frequently explained to the people by men who had long studied them in the sacred Scriptures. No doubt the mortal blow given to the hierarchy by the Protestant system, and the degradation of the priesthood which was the consequence, have deprived its preachers of the sacred characteristics of the Holy Spirit; no doubt it is a great obstacle to the efficacy of their preachers, that they cannot present themselves as the anointed of the Lord, and that they are only, as an able writer has said, *men clothed in black, who mount the pulpit every Sunday to speak reasonable things*; but at least the people continue to hear some fragments of the excellent moral discourses contained in the sacred Scriptures, they have often before their eyes the edifying examples spread over the Old and New Testament, and, what is still more precious, they are reminded frequently of the events in the life of Jesus

Christ, – of that admirable life, the model of all perfection, which, even when considered in a human point of view, is acknowledged by all to be the purest sanctity *par excellence*, the noblest code of morality that was ever seen, the realization of the finest *beau idéal* that philosophy in its loftiest thoughts has ever conceived under human form, and which poetry has ever imagined in its most brilliant dreams. This we say is useful and highly salutary; for it will always be salutary for nations to be nourished with the wholesome food of moral truths, and to be excited to virtue by such sublime examples.

**CHAPTER XV.**  
**DIFFICULTIES WHICH**  
**CHRISTIANITY HAD TO**  
**OVERCOME IN THE WORK**  
**OF SOCIAL REGENERATION.**  
**– OF SLAVERY. – COULD**  
**IT BE DESTROYED WITH**  
**MORE PROMPTNESS THAN**  
**IT WAS BY CHRISTIANITY?**

Although the Church attached the greatest importance to the propagation of truth, although she was convinced that to destroy the shapeless mass of immorality and degradation that met her sight, her first care should be to expose error to the dissolving fire of true doctrines, she did not confine herself to this; but, descending to real life, and following a system full of wisdom and prudence, she acted in such a manner as to enable humanity to taste the precious fruit which the doctrines of Jesus Christ produce even in temporal things. The Church was not only a *great and fruitful school*; she was also a *regenerative association*; she did not diffuse her general doctrines by throwing them



abroad at hazard, merely hoping that they would fructify with time; she developed them in all their relations, applied them to all subjects, inoculated laws and manners with them, and realized them in institutions which afforded silent but eloquent instructions to future generations. Nowhere was the dignity of man acknowledged, slavery reigned everywhere; degraded woman was dishonored by the corruption of manners, and debased by the tyranny of man. The feelings of humanity were trodden under foot, infants were abandoned, the sick and aged were neglected, barbarity and cruelty were carried to the highest pitch of atrocity in the prevailing laws of war; in fine, on the summit of the social edifice was seen an odious tyranny, sustained by military force, and looking down with an eye of contempt on the unfortunate nations that lay in fetters at its feet.

In such a state of things it certainly was no slight task to remove error, to reform and improve manners, abolish slavery, correct the vices of legislation, impose a check on power, and make it harmonize with the public interest, give new life to individuals, and reorganize family and society; and yet nothing less than this was done by the Church. Let us begin with slavery. This is a matter which is the more to be fathomed, as it is a question eminently calculated to excite our curiosity and affect our hearts. What abolished slavery among Christian nations? Was it Christianity? Was it Christianity alone, by its lofty ideas on human dignity, by its maxims and its spirit of fraternity and charity, and also by its prudent, gentle, and beneficent conduct?

I trust I shall prove that it was. No one now ventures to doubt that the Church exercised a powerful influence on the abolition of slavery; this is a truth too clear and evident to be questioned. M. Guizot acknowledges the successful efforts with which the Church labored to improve the social condition. He says: "No one doubts that she struggled obstinately against the great vices of the social state; for example, against slavery." But, in the next line, and as if he were reluctant to establish without any restriction a fact which must necessarily excite in favor of the Catholic Church the sympathies of all humanity, he adds: "It has been often repeated that the abolition of slavery in the modern world was entirely due to Christianity. I believe that this is saying too much; slavery existed for a long time in the bosom of Christian society without exciting astonishment or much opposition." M. Guizot is much mistaken if he expects to prove that the abolition of slavery was not due exclusively to Christianity, by the mere representation that slavery existed for a long time amid Christian society. To proceed logically, he must first see whether the sudden abolition of it was possible, if the spirit of peace and order which animates the Church could allow her rashly to enter on an enterprise which, without gaining the desired object, might have convulsed the world. The number of slaves was immense; slavery was deeply rooted in laws, manners, ideas, and interests, individual and social; a fatal system, no doubt, but the eradication of which all at once it would have been rash to attempt, as its roots had penetrated deeply and spread widely in the bowels of

the land.

In a census of Athens there were reckoned 20,000 citizens and 40,000 slaves; in the Peloponnesian war no less than 20,000 passed over to the enemy. This we learn from Thucydides. The same author tells us, that at Chio the number of slaves was very considerable, and that their defection, when they passed over to the Athenians, reduced their masters to great extremities. In general, the number of slaves was so very great everywhere that the public safety was often compromised thereby. Therefore it was necessary to take precautions to prevent their acting in concert. "It is necessary," says Plato (*Dial. 6, de Leg.*), "that slaves should not be of the same country, and that they should differ as much as possible in manners and desires; for experience has many times shown, in the frequent defections which have been witnessed, among the Messenians, and in other cities that had a great number of slaves of the same language, that great evils commonly result from it." Aristotle in his *Government* (b. i. c. 5) gives various rules as to the manner in which slaves ought to be treated; it is remarkable that he is of the same opinion as Plato, for he says: "That there should not be many slaves of the same country." He tells us in his *Politics* (b. ii. c. 7), "That the Thessalians were reduced to great embarrassments on account of the number of their Penestes, a sort of slaves; the same thing happened to the Spartans on account of the Helotes. The Penestes have often rebelled in Thessaly; and the Spartans, during their reverses, have been menaced by the plots

of the Helotes." This was a difficulty which required the serious attention of politicians. They did not know how to prevent the inconveniences induced by this immense multitude of slaves. Aristotle laments the difficulty there was in finding the best way of treating them; and we see that it was the subject of grave cares, I will transcribe his own words: "In truth," he says, "the manner in which this class of men ought to be treated is a thing difficult and full of embarrassment; for if they are treated mildly, they become insolent, and wish to become equal to their masters; if they are treated harshly, they conceive hatred, and conspire."

At Rome, the multitude of slaves was such that when, at a certain period, it was proposed to give them a distinctive dress, the Senate opposed the measure, fearing that if they knew their own numbers the public safety would be endangered; and certainly this precaution was not vain, for already, a long time before, the slaves had caused great commotions in Italy. Plato, in support of the advice which I have just quoted, states, "That the slaves had frequently devastated Italy with piracy and robbery." In more recent times Spartacus, at the head of an army of slaves, was the terror of that country for some time, and engaged the best generals of Rome. The number of slaves had reached such an excess, that many masters reckoned them by hundreds. When the Prefect of Rome, Pedanius Secundus, was assassinated, four hundred slaves who belonged to him were put to death. (*Tac. Ann.* b. xiv.) Pudentila, the wife of Apulcius, had so many that she gave four hundred to her son. They became a matter of pomp,

and the Romans vied with each other in their number. When asked this question, *quod pascit servos*, how many slaves does he keep, according to the expression of Juvenal (*Sat.* 3, v. 140), they wished to be able to show a great number. The thing had reached such a pass that, according to Pliny, the cortege of a family resembled an army.

It was not only in Greece and Italy that this abundance of slaves was found; at Tyre they arose against their masters, and, by their immense numbers, they were able to massacre them all. If we turn our eyes towards barbarous nations, without speaking of some the best known, we learn from Herodotus that the Scythians, on their return from Media, found their slaves in rebellion, and were compelled to abandon their country to them. Cæsar in his Commentaries (*de Bello Gall.* lib. vi.) bears witness to the multitude of slaves in Gaul. As their number was everywhere so considerable, it is clear that it was quite impossible to preach freedom to them without setting the world on fire. Unhappily we have, in modern times, the means of forming a comparison which, although on an infinitely smaller scale, will answer our purpose. In a colony where black slaves abound, who would venture to set them at liberty all at once? Now how much are the difficulties increased, what colossal dimensions does not the danger assume, when you have to do, not with a colony, but with the world? Their intellectual and moral condition rendered them incapable of turning such an advantage to their own benefit and that of society; in their

debasement, urged on by the hatred and the desire of vengeance which ill-treatment had excited in their minds, they would have repeated, on a large scale, the bloody scenes with which they had already, in former times, stained the pages of history; and what would then have happened? Society, thus endangered, would have been put on its guard against principles favoring liberty; henceforth it would have regarded them with prejudice and suspicion, and the chains of servitude, instead of being loosened, would have been the more firmly riveted. Out of this immense mass of rude, savage men, set at liberty without preparation, it was impossible for social organization to arise; for social organization is not the creation of a moment, especially with such elements as these; and in this case, since it would have been necessary to choose between slavery and the annihilation of social order, the instinct of preservation, which animates society as well as all beings, would undoubtedly have brought about the continuation of slavery where it still existed, and its re-establishment where it had been destroyed. Those who complain that Christianity did not accomplish the work of abolishing slavery with sufficient promptitude, should remember that, even supposing a sudden or very rapid emancipation possible, and to say nothing of the bloody revolutions which would necessarily have been the result, the mere force of circumstances, by the insurmountable difficulties which it would have raised, would have rendered such a measure absolutely useless. Let us lay aside all social and political considerations, and apply ourselves

to the economical question. First, it was necessary to change all the relations of property. The slaves played a principal part therein; they cultivated the land, and worked as mechanics; in a word, among them was distributed all that is called labor; and this distribution being made on the supposition of slavery, to take away this would have made a disruption, the ultimate consequences of which could not be estimated. I will suppose that violent spoliations had taken place, that a repartition or equalization of property had been attempted, that lands had been distributed to the emancipated, and that the richest proprietors had been compelled to hold the pickaxe and the plough; I will suppose all these absurdities and mad dreams to be realized, and I say that this would have been no remedy; for we must not forget that the production of the means of subsistence must be in proportion to the wants of those they are intended to support, and that this proportion would have been destroyed by the abolition of slavery. The production was regulated, not exactly according to the number of the individuals who then existed, but on the supposition that the majority were slaves; now we know that the wants of a freeman are greater than those of a slave.

If at the present time, after eighteen centuries, when ideas have been corrected, manners softened, laws ameliorated; when nations and governments have been taught by experience; when so many public establishments for the relief of indigence have been founded; when so many systems have been tried for the division of labor; when riches are distributed in a more equitable

manner; if it is still so difficult to prevent a great number of men from becoming the victims of dreadful misery, if that is the terrible evil, which, like a fatal nightmare, torments society, and threatens its future, what would have been the effect of a universal emancipation, at the beginning of Christianity, at a time when slaves were not considered by the law as *persons*, but as *things*; when their conjugal union was not looked upon as a marriage; when their children were property, and subject to the same rules as the progeny of animals; when, in fine, the unhappy slave was ill-treated, tormented, sold, or put to death, according to the caprices of his master? Is it not evident that the cure of such evils was the work of ages? Do not humanity and political and social economy unanimously tell us this? If mad attempts had been made, the slaves themselves would have been the first to protest against them; they would have adhered to a servitude which at least secured to them food and shelter; they would have rejected a liberty which was inconsistent even with their existence. Such is the order of nature: man, above all, requires wherewith to live; and the means of subsistence being wanting, liberty itself would cease to please him. It is not necessary to allude to the individual examples of this, which we have in abundance; entire nations have given signal proofs of this truth. When misery is excessive, it is difficult for it not to bring with it degradation, stifle the most generous sentiments, and take away the magic of the words independence and liberty. "The common people," says Cæsar, speaking of the Gauls (lib. vi. *de*



*Bello Gall.*), "are almost on a level with slaves; of themselves they venture nothing; their voice is of no avail. There are many of that class, who, loaded with debts and tributes, or oppressed by the powerful, give themselves up into servitude to the nobles, who exercise over those who have thus delivered themselves up the same rights as over slaves." Examples of the same kind are not wanting in modern times; we know that in China there is a great number of slaves whose servitude is owing entirely to the incapacity of themselves or their fathers to provide for their own subsistence.

These observations, which are supported by facts that no one can deny, evidently show that Christianity has displayed profound wisdom in proceeding with so much caution in the abolition of slavery.

It did all that was possible in favor of human liberty; if it did not advance more rapidly in the work, it was because it could not do so without compromising the undertaking – without creating serious obstacles to the desired emancipation. Such is the result at which we arrive when we have thoroughly examined the charges made against some proceedings of the Church. We look into them by the light of reason, we compare them with the facts, and in the end we are convinced that the conduct blamed is perfectly in accordance with the dictates of the highest wisdom and the counsels of the soundest prudence. What, then, does M. Guizot mean, when, after having allowed that Christianity labored with earnestness for the abolition of slavery, he accuses

it of having consented for a long time to its continuance? Is it logical thence to infer that it is not true that this immense benefit is due exclusively to Christianity? That slavery endured for a long time in presence of the Church is true; but it was always declining, and it only lasted as long as was necessary to realize the benefit without violence – without a shock – without compromising its universality and its continuation. Moreover, we ought to subtract from the time of its continuance many ages, during which the Church was often proscribed, always regarded with aversion, and totally unable to exert a direct influence on the social organization. We ought also, to a great extent, to make exception of later times, as the Church had only begun to exert a direct and public influence, when the irruption of the northern barbarians took place, which, together with the corruption which infected the empire and spread in a frightful manner, produced such a perturbation, such a confused mass of languages, customs, manners, and laws, that it was almost impossible to make the regulating power produce salutary fruits. If, in later times, it has been difficult to destroy feudality; if there remain to this day, after ages of struggles, the remnants of that constitution; if the slave-trade, although limited to certain countries and circumstances, still merits the universal reprobation which is raised throughout the world against its infamy; how can we venture to express our astonishment – how can we venture to make it a reproach against the Church, that slavery continued some ages after she had proclaimed men's fraternity with each

other, and their equality before God?

# **CHAPTER XVI.**

## **IDEAS AND MANNERS OF ANTIQUITY WITH RESPECT TO SLAVERY. – THE CHURCH BEGINS BY IMPROVING THE CONDITION OF SLAVES**

Happily the Catholic Church was wiser than philosophers; she knew how to confer on humanity the benefit of emancipation, without injustice or revolution. She knew how to regenerate society, but not in rivers of blood. Let us see what was her conduct with respect to the abolition of slavery. Much has been already said of the spirit of love and fraternity which animates Christianity, and that is sufficient to show that its influence in this work must have been great. But perhaps sufficient care has not been taken in seeking the positive and practical means which the Church employed for this end. In the darkness of ages, in circumstances so complicated or various, will it be possible to discover any traces of the path pursued by the Catholic Church in accomplishing the destruction of that slavery under which a large portion of the human race groaned? Will it be possible to do any thing more than praise her Christian charity? Will it be

possible to point out a plan, a system, and to prove the existence and development of it, not by referring to a few expressions, to elevated thoughts, generous sentiments, and the isolated actions of a few illustrious men, but by exhibiting positive facts, and historical documents, which show what were the *esprit de corps* and tendency of the Church? I believe that this may be done, and I have no doubt that I shall be able to do it, by availing myself of what is most convincing and decisive in the matter, viz. the monuments of ecclesiastical legislation.

In the first place, it will not be amiss to remember what I have already pointed out, viz. that when we have to do with the conduct, designs, and tendencies of the Church, it is by no means necessary to suppose that these designs were conceived in their fullest extent by the mind of any individual in particular, nor that the merit and all the prudence of that conduct was understood by those who took part in it. It is not even necessary to suppose that the first Christians understood all the force of the tendencies of Christianity with respect to the abolition of slavery. What requires to be shown is, that the result has been obtained by the doctrines and conduct of the Church, as with Catholics, (although they know how to esteem at their just value the merit and greatness of each man,) individuals, when the Church is concerned, disappear. Their thoughts and will are nothing; the spirit which animates, vivifies, and directs the Church, is not the spirit of man, but that of God himself. Those who belong not to our faith will employ other names; but at least we shall agree in

this, that facts, considered in this way, above the mind and the will of individuals, preserve much better their real dimensions; and thus the great chain of events in the study of history remains unbroken. Let it be said that the conduct of the Church was inspired and directed by God; or that it was the result of instinct, that it was the development of a tendency contained in her doctrines; we will not now stay to consider the expressions which may be used by Catholics, or by philosophers; what we have to show is, that this instinct was noble and well-directed; that this tendency had a great object in view, and knew how to attain it.

The first thing that Christianity did for slaves, was to destroy the errors which opposed, not only their universal emancipation, but even the improvement of their condition; that is, the first force which she employed in the attack was, according to her custom, the *force of ideas*. This first step was the more necessary, as the same thing applies to all other evils, as well as to slavery; every social evil is always accompanied by some error which produces or foment it. There existed not only the oppression and degradation of a large portion of the human race, but, moreover, an accredited error, which tended more and more to lower that portion of humanity. According to this opinion, slaves were a mean race, far below the dignity of freemen: they were a race degraded by Jupiter himself, marked by a stamp of humiliation, and predestined to their state of abjection and debasement. A detestable doctrine, no doubt, and contradicted by the nature of man, by history and experience; but which,

nevertheless, reckoned distinguished men among its defenders, and which we see proclaimed for ages, to the shame of humanity and the scandal of reason, until Christianity came to destroy it, by undertaking to vindicate the rights of man. Homer tells us (*Odys.* 17) that "Jupiter has deprived slaves of half the mind." We find in Plato a trace of the same doctrine, although he expresses himself, as he is accustomed to do, by the mouth of another; he ventures to advance the following: "It is said that, in the mind of slaves, there is nothing sound or complete; and that a prudent man ought not to trust that class of persons; which is equally attested by the wisest of our poets." Here Plato cites the above-quoted passage of Homer (*Dial.* 8, *de Legibus*). But it is in the *Politics* of Aristotle that we find this degrading doctrine in all its deformity and nakedness. Some have wished to excuse this philosopher, but in vain; his own words condemn him without appeal. In the first chapter of his work, he explains the constitution of the family, and attempts to state the relations of husband and wife, of master and slave; he states that, as the wife is by nature different from the husband, so is the slave from the master. These are his words: "Thus the woman and the slave are distinguished by nature itself." Let it not be said that this is an expression that escaped from the pen of the writer; it was stated with a full knowledge, and is a *résumé* of his theory. In the third chapter, where he continues to analyze the elements which compose the family, after having stated "that a complete family is formed of free persons and slaves," he alludes particularly to

the latter, and begins by combating an opinion which he thinks too favorable to them: "There are some," he says, "who think that slavery is a thing out of the order of nature, since it is the law itself which makes some free and others slaves, while nature makes no distinction." Before combating this opinion, he explains the relations between master and slave, by using the comparison of artist and instrument, and that of the soul and body; he continues thus: "If we compare man to woman, we find that the first is superior, therefore he commands; the woman is inferior, therefore she obeys. The same thing ought to take place among all men. *Thus it is that those among them who are as inferior with respect to others, as the body is with respect to the soul, and the animal to man; those whose powers principally consist in the use of the body, the only service that can be obtained from them, they are naturally slaves.*" We should imagine, at first sight, that the philosopher spoke only of idiots; his words would seem to indicate this; but we shall see, by the context, that such is not his intention. It is evident that if he spoke only of idiots, he would prove nothing against the opinion which he desires to combat; for the number of them is nothing with respect to the generality of men. If he spoke only of idiots, of what use would be a theory founded on so rare and monstrous an exception?

But we have no need of conjectures as to the real intention of the philosopher, he himself takes care to explain it to us, and tells us at the same time for what reason he ventures to make use of expressions which seem, at first, to place the matter



on another level. His intention is nothing less than to attribute to nature the express design of producing men of two kinds; one born for slavery, the other for liberty. The passage is too important and too curious to be omitted. It is this: "Nature has taken care to create the bodies of free men different from those of slaves; the bodies of the latter are strong, and proper for the most necessary labors: those of freemen, on the contrary, well formed, although ill adapted for servile works, are proper for civil life, which consists in the management of things in war and peace. Nevertheless, the contrary often happens. To a free man is given the body of a slave; and to a slave the soul of a free man. There is no doubt that, if the bodies of some men were as much more perfect than others, as we see is the case in the image of the Gods, all the world would be of opinion that these men should be obeyed by those who had not the same beauty. If this is true in speaking of the body, it is still more so in speaking of the soul; although it is not so easy to see the beauty of the soul as that of the body. Thus it cannot be doubted that there are some men born for liberty, as others are for slavery; a slavery which is not only useful to the slaves themselves, but, moreover, just." A miserable philosophy, which, in order to support that degraded state, was obliged to have recourse to such subtilties, and ventured to impute to nature the intention of creating different castes, some born to command and others to obey; a cruel philosophy, which thus labored to break the bonds of fraternity with which the Author of nature

has desired to knit together the human race, pretending to raise a barrier between man and man, and inventing theories to support inequality; not that inequality which is the necessary result of all social organization, but an inequality so terrible and degrading as that of slavery.

Christianity raises its voice, and by the first words which it pronounces on slaves, declares them equal to all men in the dignity of nature, and in the participation of the graces which the Divine Spirit diffuses upon earth. We must remark the care with which St. Paul insists on this point; it seems as if he had in view those degrading distinctions which have arisen from a fatal forgetfulness of the dignity of man. The Apostle never forgets to inculcate to the faithful that there is no difference between the slave and the freeman. "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free." (1 Cor. xii. 13.) "For you are all children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; *there is neither bond or free*; there is neither male or female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. iii. 26-28.) "Where there is neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian or Scythian, bond or free; but Christ is all and in all." (Colos. iii. 11.) The heart dilates at the sound of the voice thus loudly proclaiming the great principles of holy fraternity and equality. After having heard the oracles of Paganism inventing doctrines to degrade still more the unhappy slaves, we seem to awake from a painful dream, and to

find ourselves in the light of day in the midst of the delightful reality. The imagination delights to contemplate the millions of men who, bent under degradation and ignominy, at this voice raised their eyes towards Heaven, and were animated with hope.

It was with this teaching of Christianity as with all generous and fruitful doctrines; they penetrate the heart of society, remain there as a precious germ, and, developed by time, produce an immense tree which overshadows families and nations. When these doctrines were diffused among men, they could not fail to be misunderstood and exaggerated. Thus there were found some who pretended that Christian freedom was the proclamation of universal freedom. The pleasing words of Christ easily resounded in the ears of slaves: they heard themselves declared children of God, and brethren of Jesus Christ; they saw that there was no distinction made between them and their masters, between them and the most powerful lords of the earth; is it, then, strange that men only accustomed to chains, to labor, to every kind of trouble and degradation, exaggerated the principles of Christian liberty, and made applications of them which were neither just in themselves, nor capable of being reduced to practice? We know, from St. Jerome, that many, hearing themselves called to Christian liberty, believed that they were thereby freed. Perhaps the Apostle alluded to this error when, in his first epistle to Timothy, he said, "Whosoever are servants under the yoke, let them count their masters worthy of all honor; lest the name of the Lord and His doctrines be blasphemed." (1 Timothy vi. 1.) This

error had been so general, that after three centuries it was still much credited; and the Council of Gangres, held about 324, was obliged to excommunicate those who, under pretence of piety, taught that slaves ought to quit their masters, and withdraw from their service. This was not the teaching of Christianity; besides, we have clearly shown that it would not have been the right way to achieve universal emancipation. Therefore this same Apostle, from whose mouth we have heard such generous language in favor of slaves, frequently inculcates to them obedience to their masters; but let us observe, that while fulfilling this duty imposed by the spirit of peace and justice which animates Christianity, he so explains the motives on which the obedience of slaves ought to be based, he calls to mind the obligations of masters in such affecting and energetic words, and establishes so expressly and conclusively the equality of all men before God, that we cannot help seeing how great was his compassion for that unhappy portion of humanity, and how much his ideas on this point differed from those of a blind and hardened world. There is in the heart of man a feeling of noble independence, which does not permit him to subject himself to the will of another, except when he sees that the claims to his obedience are founded on legitimate titles. If they are in accordance with reason and justice, and, above all, if they have their roots in the great objects of human love and veneration, his understanding is convinced, his heart is gained, and he yields. But if the reason for the command is only the will of another, if it is only man against man, these thoughts

of equality ferment in his mind, then the feeling of independence burns in his heart, he puts on a bold front, and his passions are excited. Therefore, when a willing and lasting obedience is to be obtained, it is necessary that the man should be lost sight of in the ruler, and that he should only appear as the representative of a superior power, or the personification of the motives which convince the subject of the justice and utility of his submission; thus he does not obey the will of another because it is that will, but because it is the representative of a superior power, or the interpreter of truth and justice; then man no longer considers his dignity outraged, and obedience becomes tolerable and pleasing.

It is unnecessary to say that such were not the titles on which was founded the obedience of slaves before Christianity: custom placed them in the rank of brutes; and the laws, outdoing it if possible, were expressed in language which cannot be read without indignation. Masters commanded because such was their pleasure, and slaves were compelled to obey, not on account of superior motives or moral obligations, but because they were the property of their masters, horses governed by the bridle, and mere mechanical machines. Was it, then, strange that these unhappy beings, drenched with misfortune and ignominy, conceived and cherished in their hearts that deep rancor, that violent hatred, and that terrible thirst for vengeance, which at the first opportunity exploded so fearfully? The horrible massacre of Tyre, the example and terror of the universe, according to the expression of Justin; the repeated revolts of the Penestes in

Thessaly, of the Helotes in Sparta; the defections of the slaves of Chio and Athens; the insurrection under the command of Herdonius, and the terror which it spread in all the families of Rome; the scenes of blood, the obstinate and desperate resistance of the bands of Spartacus; was all this any thing but the natural result of the system of violence, outrage, and contempt with which slaves were treated? Is it not what we have seen repeated in modern times, in the catastrophes of the negro colonies? Such is the nature of man, whoever sows contempt and outrage will reap fury and vengeance. Christianity was well aware of these truths; and this is the reason why, while preaching obedience, it took care to found it on Divine authority. If it confirmed to masters their rights, it also taught them an exalted sense of their obligation. Wherever Christian doctrines prevailed, slaves might say: "It is true that we are unfortunate; birth, poverty, or the reverses of war have condemned us to misfortune; but at least we are acknowledged as men and brethren; between us and our masters there is a reciprocity of rights and obligations." Let us hear the Apostle: "You, slaves, obey those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your hearts, as to Jesus Christ himself. *Not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men*, but, as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With a good will serving, as to the Lord, and not to men. Knowing that whatsoever good things any man shall do, the same shall he receive from the Lord, *whether he be bond or free*. And you, masters, do the same thing to

them, forbearing threatenings, knowing that the Lord both of them and you is in heaven, and *there is no respect of persons with Him.*" (Eph. vi. 5-9.) In the Epistle to the Colossians he inculcates the same doctrine of obedience anew, basing it on the same motives; for, to console the unfortunate slaves, he tells them: "You shall receive of the Lord the reward of inheritance: serve ye the Lord Christ. For he that doth wrong shall receive for that which he hath done wrongfully, and there is no respect of persons with God" (Colos. iii. 24, 25); and lower down, addressing himself to masters: "Masters, do to your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." (iv. 1.)

The diffusion of such beneficent doctrines necessarily tended to improve greatly the condition of slaves; their immediate effect was to soften that excessive rigor, that cruelty which would be incredible if it were not incontrovertibly proved. We know that the master had the right of life and death, and that he abused that power even to putting a slave to death from caprice, as Quintus Flaminius did in the midst of a festival. Another caused one of these unfortunate beings to be thrown to the fishes, because he broke a glass of crystal. This is related of Vedius Pollio; and this horrible cruelty was not confined to the circle of a few families subject to a master devoid of compassion; no, cruelty was formed into a system, the fatal but necessary result of erroneous notions on this point, and of the forgetfulness of the sentiments of humanity. This violent system could only be supported by

constantly trampling upon the slave; and there was no cessation of tyranny until the day when he, with superior power, attacked his master and destroyed him. An ancient proverb said, "So many slaves, so many enemies." We have already seen the ravages committed by men thus rendered savage by revenge, whenever they were able to break their chains; but certainly, when it was desired to terrify them, their masters did not yield to them in ferocity. At Sparta, on one occasion when they feared the ill-will of the Helotes, they assembled them all at the temple of Jupiter, and put them to death. (*Thucyd.* b. iv.) At Rome, whenever a master was assassinated, all his slaves were condemned to death. We cannot read in Tacitus without a shudder (*Ann.* l. xiv. 43) the horrible scene which was witnessed when the prefect of the town, Pedanius Secundus, was assassinated by one of his slaves. Not less than four hundred were to die; all, according to the ancient custom, were to be led to punishment. This cruel and pitiable spectacle, in which so many of the innocent were to suffer death, excited the compassion of the people, who raised a tumult to prevent this horrid butchery. The Senate, in doubt, deliberated on the affair, when an orator named Cassius maintained with energy that it was necessary to complete the bloody execution, not only in obedience to the ancient custom, but also because without it it would be impossible to preserve themselves from the ill-will of the slaves. His words are all dictated by injustice and tyranny; he sees on all sides dangers and conspiracies; he can imagine no other safeguards than force and terror. The following



passage is above all remarkable in his speech, as showing in a few words the ideas and manners of the ancients in this matter: "Our ancestors," says the senator, "always mistrusted the character of slaves, even of those who, born on their possessions and in their houses, might be supposed to have conceived from their cradle an affection for their masters; but as we have slaves of foreign nations, differing in customs and religion, this rabble can only be restrained by terror." Cruelty prevailed, the boldness of the people was repressed, the way was filled with soldiers, and the four hundred unfortunate beings were led to punishment.

To soften this cruel treatment, to banish these frightful atrocities, ought to have been the first effect of the Christian doctrines; and we may rest assured that the Church never lost sight of so important an object. She devoted all her efforts to improve as much as possible the condition of slaves; in punishments she caused mildness to be substituted for cruelty; and what was more important than all, she labored to put reason in the place of caprice, and to make the impetuosity of masters yield to the calmness of judges; that is to say, she every day assimilated the condition of slaves more and more to that of freemen, by making right and not might reign over them. The Church never forgot the noble lesson which the Apostle gave when writing to Philemon, and interceding in favor of a fugitive slave named Onesimus; he spoke in his favor with a tenderness which this unhappy class had never before inspired: "I beseech thee," he says to him, "for my son Onesimus. Receive him as

my own bowels; no more as a slave, but as a most dear brother. If he hath wronged thee in any thing, or is in thy debt, put that to my account." (Epis. to Phil.) The Council of Elvira, held in the beginning of the fourth century, subjects the woman who shall have beaten her slave so as to cause her death in three days to many years of penance; the Council of Orleans, held in 549, orders that if a slave guilty of a fault take refuge in a church, he is to be restored to his master, but not without having exacted from the latter a promise, confirmed by oath, that he will not do him any harm; that if the master, in violation of his oath, maltreat the slave, he shall be separated from the communion of the faithful and the sacraments. This canon shows us two things: the habitual cruelty of masters, and the zeal of the Church to soften the treatment of slaves. To restrain this cruelty, nothing less than an oath was required; and the Church, always so careful in these things, yet considered the matter important enough to justify and require the invocation of the sacred name of God.

The favor and protection which the Church granted to slaves rapidly extended. It seems that in some places the custom was introduced of requiring a promise on oath, not only that the slave who had taken refuge in the church should not be ill-treated in his person, but even that no extraordinary work should be imposed on him, and that he should wear no distinctive mark. This custom, produced no doubt by zeal for humanity, but which may have occasioned some inconveniences by relaxing too much the ties of obedience, and allowing excesses on the part of slaves, appears

to be alluded to in a regulation of the Council of Epaone (now Abbon, according to some), held about 517. This Council labors to stop the evil by prescribing a prudent moderation; but without withdrawing the protection already granted. It ordains, in the 39th canon, "That if a slave, guilty of any atrocious offence, takes refuge in a church, he shall be saved from corporal punishment; but the master shall not be compelled to swear that he will not impose on him additional labor, or that he will not cut off his hair, in order to make known his fault." Observe that this restriction is introduced only in the case when the slave shall have committed a heinous offence, and even in this case all the power allowed to the master consists in imposing on the slave extraordinary labor, or distinguishing him by cutting his hair.

Perhaps such indulgence may be considered excessive; but we must observe that when abuses are deeply rooted, they cannot be eradicated without a vigorous effort. At first sight it often appears as if the limits of prudence were passed; but this apparent excess is only the inevitable oscillation which is observed before things regain their right position. The Church had therein no wish to protect crime, or give unmerited indulgence; her object was to check the violence and caprice of masters; she did not wish to allow a man to suffer torture or death because such was the will of another. The establishment of just laws and legitimate tribunals, the Church has never opposed; but she has never given her consent to acts of private violence. The spirit of opposition to the exercise of private force, which includes

social organization, is clearly shown to us in the 15th canon of the Council of Merida, held in 666. I have already shown that slaves formed a large portion of property. As the division of labor was made in conformity with this principle, slaves were absolutely necessary to those who possessed property, especially when it was considerable. Now the Church found this to be the case; and as she could not change the organization of society on a sudden, she was obliged to yield to necessity, and admit slavery. But if she wished to introduce improvements in the lot of slaves in general, it was good for her to set the example herself: this example is found in the canon I have just quoted. There, after having forbidden the bishops and priests to maltreat the servants of the Church by mutilating their limbs, the Council ordains that if a slave commit an offence, he shall be delivered to the secular judges, but so that the bishops shall moderate the punishment inflicted on him. We see by this canon that the right of mutilation exercised by private masters was still in use; and perhaps it was still more strongly established, since we see that the Council limits itself to interdicting that kind of punishment to ecclesiastics, without saying any thing as to laymen. No doubt, one of the motives for this prohibition made to ecclesiastics, was to prevent their shedding human blood, and thus rendering themselves incapable of exercising their lofty ministry, the principal act of which is the august sacrifice in which they offer a victim of peace and love; but this does not in any way detract from the merit of the regulation, or at all

diminish its influence on the improvement of the condition of slaves. It was the substitution of public vengeance for private; it was again to proclaim the equality of slaves and freemen with respect to the effusion of their blood; it was to declare that the hands which had shed the blood of a slave, had contracted the same stain as if they had shed that of a freeman. Now, it was necessary to inculcate these salutary truths on men's minds in every way, for they ran in direct contradiction to the ideas and manners of antiquity; it was necessary to labor assiduously to destroy the shameful and cruel exceptions which continued to deprive the majority of mankind of a participation in the rights of humanity. There is, in the canon which I have just quoted, a remarkable circumstance, which shows the solicitude of the Church to restore to slaves the dignity and respect of which they had been deprived. To shave the hair of the head was among the Goths a very ignominious punishment; which, according to Lucas de Tuy, was to them more cruel than death itself. It will be understood, that whatever was the force of prejudice on this point, the Church might have allowed the shaving of the hair without incurring the stain which was attached to the shedding of blood. Yet she was not willing to allow it, which shows us how attentive she was to destroy the marks of humiliation impressed on slaves. After having enjoined priests and bishops to deliver criminal slaves to the judges, she commands them "not to allow them to be shaved ignominiously." No care was too great in this matter; to destroy one after another the odious

exceptions which affected slaves, it was necessary to seize upon all favorable opportunities. This necessity is clearly shown by the manner in which the eleventh Council of Toledo, held in 675, expresses itself. This Council, in its 6th canon, forbids bishops themselves to judge crimes of a capital nature, as it also forbids them to order the mutilation of members. Behold in what terms it was considered necessary to state that this rule admitted of no exception; "not even," says the Council, "with respect to the slaves of the Church." The evil was great, it could not be cured without assiduous care. Even the right of life and death, the most cruel of all, could not be extirpated without much trouble; and cruel applications of it were made in the beginning of the sixth century, since the Council of Epaone, in its 34th canon, ordains that "the master who, *of his own authority*, shall take away the life of his slave, shall be cut off for two years from the communion of the Church." After the middle of the ninth century, similar attempts were still made, and the Council of Worms, held in 868, labored to repress them, by subjecting to two years of penance the master who, of his own authority, shall have put his slave to death.

# **CHAPTER XVII.**

## **MEANS EMPLOYED BY THE CHURCH TO ENFRANCHISE SLAVES**

While improving the condition of slaves and assimilating it as much as possible to that of freemen, it was necessary not to forget the universal emancipation; for it was not enough to ameliorate slavery, it was necessary to abolish it. The mere force of Christian notions, and the spirit of charity which was spread at the same time with them over the world, made so violent an attack on the state of slavery, that they were sure sooner or later to bring about its complete abolition. It is impossible for society to remain for a long time under an order of things which is formally opposed to the ideas with which it is imbued. According to Christian maxims, all men have a common origin and the same destiny; all are brethren in Jesus Christ; all are obliged to love each other with all their hearts, to assist each other in their necessities, to avoid offending each other even in words; all are equal before God, for they will all be judged without exception of persons. Christianity extended and took root everywhere – took possession of all classes, of all branches of society; how, then, could the state of slavery last – a state of degradation

which makes man the property of another, allows him to be sold like an animal, and deprives him of the sweetest ties of family and of all participation in the advantages of society? Two things so opposite could not exist together; the laws were in favor of slavery, it is true; it may even be said that Christianity did not make a direct attack on those laws. But, on the other hand, what did it do? It strove to make itself master of ideas and manners, communicated to them a new impulse, and gave them a different direction. In such a case, what did laws avail? Their rigor was relaxed, their observance was neglected, their equity began to be doubted, their utility was disputed, their fatal effects were remarked, and they gradually fell into desuetude, so that sometimes it was not necessary to strike a blow to destroy them. They were thrown aside as things of no use; or, if they deserved the trouble of an express abolition, it was only for the sake of ceremony; it was a body interred with honor.

But let it not be supposed, after what I have just said, that in attributing so much importance to Christian ideas and manners, I mean that the triumph of these ideas and manners was abandoned to that force alone, without that co-operation on the part of the Church which the time and circumstances required. Quite the contrary: the Church, as I have already pointed out, called to her aid all the means the most conducive to the desired result. In the first place, it was requisite, to secure the work of emancipation, to protect from all assault the liberty of the freed – liberty which unhappily was often attacked and put in great



danger. The causes of this melancholy fact may be easily found in the remains of ancient ideas and manners, in the cupidity of powerful men, the system of violence made general by the irruptions of the barbarians, in the poverty, neglect, and total want of education and morality in which slaves must have been when they quitted servitude. It must be supposed that a great number of them did not know all the value of liberty; that they did not always conduct themselves, in their new state, according to the dictates of reason and the exigences of justice; and that, newly entered on the possession of the rights of freemen, they did not know how to fulfil all their new obligations. But these different inconveniences, inseparable from the nature of things, were not to hinder the consummation of an enterprise called for both by religion and humanity, and it was proper to be resigned to them from the consideration of the numerous motives for excusing the conduct of the enfranchised; the state which these men had just quitted had checked the development of their moral and intellectual faculties.

The liberty of newly-emancipated slaves was protected against the attacks of injustice, and clothed with an inviolable sanctity, from the time that their enfranchisement was connected with things which then exercised the most powerful ascendancy. Now the Church, and all that belonged to her, was in this influential position; therefore the custom, which was then introduced, of performing the manumission in the churches, was undoubtedly very favorable to the progress of liberty. This custom, by taking

the place of ancient usages, caused them to be forgotten; it was, at the same time, a tacit declaration of the value of human liberty in the sight of God, and a proclamation, with additional authority, of the equality of men before Him; for the manumission was made in the same place where it was so often read, that before Him there was no exception of persons; where all earthly distinctions disappeared, and all men were commingled and united by the sweet ties of fraternity and love. This method of manumission more clearly invested the Church with the right of defending the liberty of the enfranchised. As she had been witness to the act, she could testify to the spontaneity and the other circumstances which assured its validity; she could even insist on its observance, by representing that the promised liberty could not be violated without profaning the sacred place, without breaking a pledge which had been given in the presence of God himself. The Church did not forget to turn these circumstances to the advantage of the freed. Thus we see that the first Council of Orange, held in 441, ordains, in its 7th canon, that it was necessary to check, by ecclesiastical censures, whoever desired to reduce to any kind of servitude slaves who had been emancipated within the enclosure of the church. A century later we find the same prohibition repeated in the 7th canon of the fifth Council of Orleans, held in 549.

The protection given by the Church to freed slaves was so manifest and known to all, that the custom was introduced of especially recommending them to her. This recommendation was

sometimes made by will, as the Council of Orange, which I have just quoted, gives us to understand; for it orders that the emancipated who had been recommended to the Church by will, shall be protected from all kinds of servitude, by ecclesiastical censures.

But this recommendation was not always made in a testamentary form. We read in the sixth canon of the sixth Council of Toledo, held in 589, that when any enfranchised persons had been recommended to the Church, neither they nor their children could be deprived of the protection of the Church: here they speak in general, without limitation to cases in which there had been a will. The same regulation may be seen in another Council of Toledo, held in 633, which simply says, that the Church will receive under her protection only the enfranchised of individuals who shall have taken care to recommend them to her.

In the absence of all particular recommendation, and even when the manumission had not been made in the Church, she did not cease to interest herself in defending the freed, when their liberty was endangered. He who has any regard for the dignity of man, and any feeling of humanity in his heart, will certainly not find it amiss that the Church interfered in affairs of this kind; indeed, she acted as every generous man should do, in the exercise of the right of protecting the weak. We shall not be displeased, therefore, to find in the twenty-ninth canon of the Council of Agde in Languedoc, held in 506, a regulation

commanding the Church, in case of necessity, to undertake the defence of those to whom their masters had given liberty in a lawful way.

The zeal of the Church in all times and places for the redemption of captives has no less contributed to the great work of the abolition of slavery. We know that a considerable portion of slaves owed their servitude to the reverses of war. The mild character which we see in modern wars would have appeared fabulous to the ancients. Woe to the vanquished! might then be said with perfect truth; there was nothing but slavery or death. The evil was rendered still greater by a fatal prejudice, which was felt with respect to the redemption of captives – a prejudice which was, nevertheless, founded on a trait of remarkable heroism. No doubt the heroic firmness of Regulus is worthy of all admiration. The hair stands upon our head when we read the powerful description of Horace; the book falls from our hands at this terrible passage:

"Fertur pudicæ conjugis osculum  
Parvosque natos, ut capitis minor,  
Ab se removisse, et virilem  
Torvus humi posuisse vultum." – Lib. iii. od. 5.

Nevertheless, if we lay aside the deep impression which such heroism produces on us, and the enthusiasm at all that shows a great soul, we must confess that this virtue bordered on ferocity; and that, in the terrible discourse of Regulus, that is a cruel

policy, against which the sentiments of humanity would strongly recoil, if the mind were not, as it were, prostrated at the sight of the sublime disinterestedness of the speaker. Christianity could not consent to such doctrines; it could not allow the maxim to be maintained that, in order to render men brave in battle, it was necessary to deprive them of hope. The wonderful traits of valor, the magnificent scenes of force and constancy, which shine in every page of the history of modern nations, eloquently show that the Christian religion was not deceived; gentleness of manners may be united with heroism. The ancients were always in excess, either in cowardice or ferocity; between these two extremes there is a middle way, and that has been taught to mankind by the Christian religion. Christianity, in accordance with its principles of fraternity and love, regarded the redemption of captives as one of the worthiest objects of its charitable zeal. Whether we consider the noble traits of particular actions, which have been preserved to us by history, or observe the spirit which guided the conduct of the Church, we shall find therein one of the most distinguished claims of the Christian religion to the gratitude of mankind.

A celebrated writer of our times, M. de Chateaubriand, has described to us a Christian priest who, in the forests of France, voluntarily made himself a slave, who devoted himself to slavery for the ransom of a Christian soldier, and thus restored a husband to his desolate wife, and a father to three unfortunate orphan children. The sublime spectacle which Zachary offers us, when

enduring slavery with calm serenity for the love of Jesus Christ, and for the unhappy being for whom he has sacrificed his liberty, is not a mere fiction of the poet. More than once, in the first ages of the Church, such examples were seen; and he who has wept over the sublime disinterestedness and unspeakable charity of Zachary, may be sure that his tears are only a tribute to the truth. "We have known," says St. Clement the Pope, "many of ours who have devoted themselves to captivity, in order to ransom their brethren." (*First Letter to the Corinth.* c. 55.) The redemption of captives was so carefully provided for by the Church that it was regulated by the ancient canons, and to fulfil it, she sold, if necessary, her ornaments, and even the sacred vessels. When unhappy captives were in question, her charity and zeal knew no bounds, and she went so far as to ordain that, however bad might be the state of her affairs, their ransom should be provided for in the first instance. (*Caus.* 12, 5, 2.) In the midst of revolutions produced by the irruption of barbarians, we see that the Church, always constant in her designs, forgot not the noble enterprise in which she was engaged. The beneficent regulations of the ancient canons fell not into forgetfulness or desuetude, and the generous words of the holy Bishop of Milan, in favor of slaves, found an echo which ceased not to be heard amid the chaos of those unhappy times. We see by the fifth canon of the Council of Mâcon, held in 585, that priests undertook the ransom of captives by devoting to it the Church property. The Council of Rheims, held in 625, inflicts the punishment

of suspension from his functions on the bishop who shall have destroyed the sacred vessels; but with generous foresight, it adds, "for any other motive than the redemption of captives;" and long afterwards, in the twelfth canon of the Council of Verneuil, held in 844, we find that the property of the Church was used for that merciful purpose. When the captive was restored to liberty, the Church did not deprive him of her protection; she was careful to continue it, by giving him letters of recommendation, for the double purpose of protecting him from new trouble during his journey, and of furnishing him with the means of repairing his losses during his captivity. We find a proof of this new kind of protection in the second canon of the Council of Lyons, held in 583, which ordains that bishops shall state in the letters of recommendation which they give to captives, the date and price of their ransom. The zeal for this work was displayed in the Church with so much ardor, that it went so far as to commit acts of imprudence which the ecclesiastical authority was compelled to check. These excesses, and this mistaken zeal, prove how great was the spirit of charity. We know by a Council, called that of St. Patrick, held in Ireland in the year 451 or 456, that some of the clergy ventured to procure the freedom of captives by inducing them to run away. The Council, by its thirty-second canon, very prudently checks this excess, by ordaining that the ecclesiastic who desires to ransom captives must do so with his own money; for to steal them, by inducing them to run away, was to expose the clergy to be considered as robbers, which was a dishonor to

the Church. A remarkable document, which, while showing us the spirit of order and equity which guides the Church, at the same time enables us to judge how deeply was engraved on men's minds the maxim, that *it is holy, meritorious, and generous to give liberty to captives*; for we see that some persons had persuaded themselves that the excellence of the work justified seizing them forcibly. The disinterestedness of the Church on this point is not less laudable. When she had employed her funds in the ransom of a captive, she did not desire from him any recompense, even when he had it in his power to discharge the debt. We have a certain proof of this in the letters of St. Gregory, where we see that that Pope reassures some persons who had been freed with the money of the Church, and who feared that after a time they would be called upon to pay the sum expended for their advantage. The Pope orders that no one, at any time, shall venture to disturb either them or their heirs, seeing that the sacred canons allow the employment of the goods of the Church for the ransom of captives. (L. 7, ep. 14.)

The zeal of the Church for so holy a work must have contributed in an extraordinary way to diminish the number of slaves; the influence of it was so much the more salutary, as it was developed precisely at the time when it was most needed, that is, in those ages when the dissolution of the Roman empire, the irruption of the barbarians, the fluctuations of so many peoples, and the ferocity of the invading nations, rendered wars so frequent, revolutions so constant, and the empire of



force so habitual and prevailing. Without the beneficent and liberating intervention of Christianity, the immense number of slaves bequeathed by the old society to the new, far from diminishing, would have been augmented more and more; for wherever the law of brute force prevails, if it be not checked and softened by a powerful element, the human race becomes rapidly debased, the necessary result of which is the increase of slavery. This lamentable state of agitation and violence was in itself very likely to render the efforts which the Church made to abolish slavery useless; and it was not without infinite trouble that she prevented what she succeeded in preserving on one side, from being destroyed on the other. The absence of a central power, the complication of social relations, almost always badly determined, often affected by violence, and always deprived of the guarantee of stability and consistency, was the reason why there was no security either for things or persons, and that while properties were unceasingly invaded, persons were deprived of their liberty. So that it was at that time necessary to fight against the violence of individuals, as had been formerly done against manners and legislation. We see that the third canon of the Council of Lyons, held about 566, excommunicates those who unjustly retain free persons in slavery; in the seventeenth canon of the Council of Rheims, held in 625, it is forbidden, under the same penalty, to pursue free persons in order to reduce them to slavery: in the twenty-seventh canon of the Council of London, held in 1102, the barbarous custom of dealing in men, like animals, is

proscribed: and in the seventh canon of the Council of Coblentz, held in 922, he who takes away a Christian to sell him is declared guilty of homicide; a remarkable declaration, when we see liberty valued at as high a price as life itself. Another means of which the Church availed herself to abolish slavery was, to preserve for the unfortunate who had been reduced to that state by misery, a sure means of quitting it.

We have already remarked above that indigence was one of the causes of slavery, and we have seen that this was frequently the cause among the Gauls, as is evidenced by a passage of Cæsar. We also know that by virtue of an ancient law, he who had fallen into slavery could not recover his liberty without the consent of his master; as the slave was really property, no one could dispose of him without the consent of his master, and least of all himself. This law was in accordance with Pagan doctrines, but Christianity regarded the thing differently; and if the slave was still in her eyes a property, he did not cease to be a man. Thus on this point the Church refused to follow the strict rules of other properties; and when there was the least doubt, at the first favorable opportunity she took the side of the slave. These observations make us understand all the value of the new law introduced by the Church, which ordained that persons who had been sold by necessity should be able to return to their former condition by restoring the price which they had received. This law, which is expressly laid down in a French Council, held about 616 at Boneuil, according to the common opinion, opened a wide

field for the conquests of liberty; it supported in the heart of the slave a hope which urged him to seek and put into operation the means of obtaining his ransom, and it placed his liberty within the power of any one who, touched with his unhappy lot, was willing to pay or lend the necessary sum. Let us remember what we have said of the ardent zeal which was awakened in so many hearts for works of this kind; let us call to mind that the property of the Church was always considered as well employed when it was used for the succor of the unfortunate, and we shall understand the incalculable influence of the regulation which we have just mentioned. We shall see that it was to close one of the most abundant sources of slavery, and prepare a wide path to universal emancipation.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT

The conduct of the Church with respect to the Jews also contributed to the abolition of slavery. This singular people, who bear on their forehead the mark of proscription, and are found dispersed among all nations, like fragments of insoluble matter floating in a liquid, seek to console themselves in their misfortune by accumulating treasures, and appear to wish to avenge themselves for the contemptuous neglect in which they are left by other nations, by gaining possession of their wealth by means of insatiable usury. In times when revolutions and so many calamities must necessarily have produced distress, the odious vice of unfeeling avarice must have had a fatal influence. The harshness and cruelty of ancient laws and manners concerning debtors were not effaced, liberty was far from being estimated at its just value, and examples of persons who sold it to relieve their necessities were not wanting; it was therefore important to prevent the power of the wealthy Jews from reaching an exorbitant extent, to the detriment of the liberty of Christians. The unhappy notoriety which, after so many centuries, attaches to the Jews in this matter, proves that this danger was not imaginary; and facts of which we are now witnesses are a

confirmation of what we advance. The celebrated Herder, in his *Adrastus*, ventures to prognosticate that the children of Israel, from their systematic and calculating conduct, will in time make slaves of all Christians. If this extraordinary and extravagant apprehension could enter the head of a distinguished man, in circumstances which are certainly infinitely less favorable to the Jews, what was to be feared from this people in the unhappy times of which we speak? From these considerations, every impartial observer, every man who is not under the influence of the wretched desire of taking the part of every kind of sect, in order to have the pleasure of accusing the Catholic Church, even at the risk of speaking against the interests of humanity; every observer who is not one of those who are less alarmed by an irruption of Caffres than by any regulation by which the ecclesiastical power appears in the smallest degree to extend the circle of its prerogative; every man, I say, who is neither thus bitter, little, nor pitiful, will see, not only without being scandalized, but even with pleasure, that the Church, with prudent vigilance, watched the progress of the Jews, and lost no opportunity of favoring their Christian slaves, until they were no longer allowed to have any.

The third Council of Orleans, held in 538, by its 13th canon, forbids Jews to compel Christian slaves to do things contrary to the religion of Jesus Christ. This regulation, which guaranteed the liberty of the slave in the sanctuary of conscience, rendered him respectable even in the eyes of his master: it was besides a

solemn proclamation of the dignity of man, it was a declaration that slavery could not extend its dominion over the sacred region of the mind. Yet this was not enough; it was proper also that the recovery of their liberty should be facilitated to the slaves of Jews. Three years only pass away; a fourth Council is held at Orleans; let us observe the progress which the question had made in so short a time. This Council, by its 30th canon, allows the Christian slaves who shall take refuge in the church to be ransomed, on paying to their Jewish master the proper price. If we pay attention, we shall see that such a regulation must have produced abundant results in favor of liberty, as it gave Christian slaves the opportunity of flying to the churches, and there imploring, with more effect, the charity of their brethren, to gain the price of their ransom. The same Council, in its 31st canon, ordains that the Jew who shall pervert a Christian slave shall be condemned to lose all his slaves; a new sanction given to the security of the slave's conscience – a new way opened to liberty. The Church constantly advanced with that unity of plan – that admirable consistency – which even her enemies have acknowledged in her. In the short interval between the period alluded to and the latter part of the same century, her progress was more perceptible. We observe, in the canonical regulations of the latter period, a wider scope, and, if we may so speak, greater boldness. In the Council of Mâcon, held in 581 or 582, canon 16, Jews are expressly forbidden to have Christian slaves; and it is allowed to ransom those who are in their possession

for twelve sous. We find the same prohibition in the 14th canon of the Council of Toledo, held in 589; so that at this time the Church shows what her desire is; she is unwilling that a Christian should be in any way the slave of a Jew. Constant in her design, she checked the evil by all the means in her power; if it was necessary, limiting the right of selling slaves, when there was danger of their falling into the hands of Jews. Thus we see that, by the 9th canon of the Council of Châlons, held in 650, it is forbidden to sell slaves out of the kingdom of Clovis, lest they should fall into the power of Jews. Yet the intention of the Church on this point was not understood by all, and her views were not seconded as they ought to have been; but she did not cease to repeat and inculcate them. In the middle of the seventh century there were found clergy and laity who sold their Christian slaves to Jews. The Church labored to check this abuse. The tenth Council of Toledo, held in 657, by its 7th canon, forbids Christians, and especially clerics, to sell their slaves to Jews; the Council adds these noble words: "They cannot be ignorant that these slaves have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ; wherefore they ought rather to buy than sell them."

This ineffable goodness of a God made man, who had shed His blood for the redemption of all men, was the powerful motive which urged the Church to interest herself with so much zeal in the enfranchisement of slaves; and, indeed, was it not enough to inspire horror for so degrading an inequality, to think that these same men, reduced to the level of brutes, had been, as well

as their masters, as well as the most powerful monarchs upon earth, the objects of the merciful intentions of the Most High? "Since our Redeemer, the Creator of all things," said Pope S. Gregory, "has deigned, in His goodness, to assume the flesh of man, in order to restore to us our pristine liberty, by breaking, through the means of His Divine grace, the bonds of servitude, which held us captives, it is a salutary deed to restore to men, by enfranchisement, their native liberty; for, in the beginning, nature made them all free, and they have only been subjected to the yoke of servitude by the law of nations." (L. 5, lett. 72.)

During all times the Church has considered it very necessary to limit, as much as possible, the alienation of her property; and it may be said that the general rule of her conduct in this point was to trust very little to the discretion of any one of her ministers individually; she thus endeavored to prevent dilapidations, which otherwise would have been frequent. As her possessions were dispersed on all sides, and intrusted to ministers chosen from all classes of the people, and exposed to the various influences which the relations of blood, friendship, and a thousand other circumstances, the effects of difference of character, knowledge, prudence, and even of times and places, always exercise, the Church showed herself very watchful in giving her sanction to the power of alienation; and, when requisite, she knew how to act with salutary rigor against those ministers who, neglecting their duty, wasted the funds confided to them. We have seen that, in spite of all this, she was not stopped by any consideration when



the ransom of captives was in question; it may be also shown that, with respect to property in slaves, she saw things in a different light, and changed her rigor into indulgence. When slaves had faithfully served the Church, the Bishops could grant them their liberty, and add a gift to assist them in maintaining themselves. This judgment as to the merit of slaves appears to have been confided to the discretion of the Bishops; and it is evident that such a regulation opened a wide door to their charity; at the same time, it stimulated the slaves to behave themselves, so as to deserve so precious a recompense. As it might happen that the succeeding Bishop might raise doubts as to the sufficiency of the motives which induced his predecessor to give liberty to a slave, and attempt afterwards to call it in question, it was ordained that they should respect the appointments of their predecessors on this point, and leave to the enfranchised not only their liberty, but also the gratuity which had been given to them in lands, vineyards, or houses: this is prescribed in the 7th canon of the Council of Agde in Languedoc, held in the year 506. Let it not be objected that manumission is forbidden by the canons of this Council in other places; they speak only in general terms, and allude not to cases where slaves had merited well. Alienations or mortgages made by a Bishop who left no property were to be revoked. This regulation itself shows that it alludes to cases in which the Bishops had acted against the canons. Yet if he had given liberty to any slaves, the rigor of the law was mitigated in their favor, and it was ordained that the enfranchised should

continue to enjoy their liberty. This is ordained by the 9th canon of the Council of Orleans, held in 541. This canon only imposes on the enfranchised the obligation of lending their services to the Church; services which were evidently only those of the enfranchised. On the other hand, she recompensed them with the protection which she always granted to men in this condition.

As another proof of the indulgence of the Church with respect to slaves, may be cited the 10th canon of the Council of Celchite, in England, held in 816, the result of which must have been to enfranchise, in a few years, all the English slaves of the Churches existing in the countries where the Council was observed. Indeed, this canon ordained that, at the death of a Bishop, all his English slaves should be set at liberty; it added, that each of the other Bishops and Abbots might enfranchise three slaves on the occasion, by giving each of them three sous. Such regulations smoothed the way more and more, and prepared circumstances and men's minds, so that, some time later, was witnessed that noble scene, where, at the Council of Armagh, in 1172, liberty was given to all the English who were slaves in Ireland.

The advantageous conditions enjoyed by the slaves of the Church were so much the more valuable, because a regulation newly introduced prevented their losing them. If they could have passed into the hands of other masters, in this case they would have lost the benefits which they derived from living under the rule of so kind a mistress. But happily, it was forbidden to exchange them for others; and if they left the power of the

Church, it was for freedom. We have a positive proof of this regulation in the decretals of Gregory IX. (l. 3, t. 19, chaps. 3 and 4). It should be observed that in this document the slaves of the Church are regarded as consecrated to God; thereon is founded the regulation which prevents their passing into other hands and leaving the Church, except as freemen. We also see there that the faithful, for the good of their souls, had the custom of offering their slaves to God and the Saints. By placing them thus in the power of the Church, they put them out of common dealing and prevented their again falling into profane servitude. It is useless to enlarge on the salutary effect which must have been produced by these ideas and manners, in which we see religion so intimately allied with the cause of humanity; it is enough to observe, that the spirit of that age was highly religious, and that which was attached to the cause of religion was sure to ride in safety.

Religious ideas, by constantly developing their strength and directing their action to all branches, were intended in a special manner to relieve men by all possible means from the yoke of slavery. On this subject we may be allowed to remark a canonical regulation of the time of Gregory the Great. In a Council at Rome, held in 595, and presided over by that Pope, a new means of escaping from their degraded state was offered to slaves, by deciding that liberty should be given to all those who desired to embrace the monastic life. The words of the holy Pope are worthy of attention; they show the ascendancy of religious motives, and how much these motives preponderated

over considerations and interests of a worldly nature. This important document is found in the letters of St. Gregory; it may be read in the notes at the end of the volume.

To imagine that such regulations would remain barren, is to mistake the spirit of those times: on the contrary, they produced the most important effects. We may form an idea of them by reading in the decree of Gratian (*Distin.* 54, c. 12), that they led to scandal; slaves fled from the houses of their masters and took refuge in monasteries, under pretext of religion. It was necessary to check this abuse, against which complaints arose on all sides. Without waiting to consider what these abuses themselves indicate, is it difficult to imagine that these regulations of the Church must have had valuable results? They not only gained liberty for a great many slaves, but also raised them very much in the eyes of the world, for they placed them in a state which every day gained importance and acquired an immense prestige and a powerful influence. We may form an idea of the profound change which took place every day in the organization of society, thanks to these various means, by fixing our attention for a moment on what resulted with respect to the ordination of slaves. The discipline of the Church on this point was in accordance with her doctrines. The slave was a man like other men, and he could be ordained as well as the greatest noble. Yet while he was subject to the power of his master, he was devoid of the independence necessary for the dignity of the sacred ministry; therefore it was required that he should not be ordained until

he had been previously set at liberty. Nothing could be more just, reasonable, and prudent, than the limit thus placed on a discipline otherwise so noble and generous – a discipline which was in itself an eloquent protest in favor of the dignity of man. The Church solemnly declared that the misfortune of being a slave did not reduce him below the level of other men, for she did not think it unworthy of her to choose her ministers from among those who had been in servitude. By placing in so honorable a sphere those who had been slaves, she labored with lofty generosity to disperse the prejudices which existed against those who were placed in that unhappy condition, and created strong and effective ties between them and the most venerated class of freemen. The abuse which then crept in of conferring orders on slaves, without the consent of their masters, is above all worthy of our attention; an abuse, it is true, altogether contrary to the sacred canons, and which was checked by the Church with praiseworthy zeal, but which is not the less useful in enabling the observer duly to appreciate the profound effect of religious ideas and institutions. Without attempting in any way to excuse what was blamable therein, we may very well make use of the abuse itself, by considering that it frequently happens that abuses are only exaggerations of a good principle. Religious ideas accord but ill with slavery, although supported by laws; thence the incessant struggle, repeated under different aspects, but always directed towards the same end, viz. universal emancipation. It appears to us that we may now the more confidently avail ourselves of this

kind of argument, as we have seen the most dreadful attempts at revolution treated with indulgence, on account of the principles with which the revolutionists were imbued and the objects which they had in view; objects which, as every one knows, were nothing less than an entire change in the organization of society. The abuse to which we have alluded, is attested by the curious documents which are found collected in the decree of Gratian (*Dist.* 54, c. 9, 10, 11, 12). When we examine these documents with attention, we find, 1st, that the number of slaves thus freed was very considerable, since the complaints on this subject were almost universal: 2d, that the Bishops were generally in favor of the slaves; that they carried their protection very far; that they labored in all ways to realize these doctrines of equality; indeed, it is affirmed in these documents that there was hardly a Bishop who could not be charged with this reprehensible compliance: 3d, that slaves were aware of this spirit of protection, and were eager to throw off their chains and cast themselves into the arms of the Church: 4th, that this combination of circumstances must have produced in men's minds a movement very favorable to liberty; and that this affectionate communication established between slaves and the Church, then so powerful and influential, must soon have weakened slavery, and rapidly have promoted the advance of nations towards that liberty which completely triumphed a few centuries later. The Church of Spain, whose civilizing influence has received so many eulogiums from men certainly but little attached to Catholicity, equally displays her

lofty views and consummate prudence on this point. Charitable zeal in favor of slaves was so ardent, the tendency to raise them to the sacred ministry so decided, that it was necessary to allow free scope to this generous impulse, while reconciling it as much as possible with the sacredness of the ministry. Such was the twofold object of the discipline introduced into Spain, by virtue of which it was allowed to confer sacred orders on the slaves of the Church, on their being previously enfranchised. This is ordered by the 74th canon of the fourth Council of Toledo, held in 633; it is also inferred from the 11th canon of the ninth Council of Toledo, which ordains that Bishops shall not introduce the slaves of the Church among the clergy without having previously given them their liberty.

It is remarkable that this regulation was extended by the 18th canon of the Council of Merida, in 666, which gives to parish-priests the right of selecting clerks among the slaves of their own church, with the obligation of maintaining them according to their means. This wise discipline prevented, without any injustice, all the difficulties that might have ensued from the ordination of slaves; while it was a very mild way of effecting the most beneficent results, since in conferring orders on the slaves of the Church, it was easy to choose from among them such as were most deserving by their intellectual and moral qualifications. At the same time, it was affording the Church a most favorable and honorable mode of liberating her slaves, by enrolling them among her ministers. Finally, the Church by

her generous conduct towards slaves, gave a salutary example to the laity. We have seen that she allowed the parochial clergy, as well as the bishops, the privilege of setting them free; and this must have rendered it less painful for laymen to emancipate their slaves, when circumstances seemed to call the latter to the sacred ministry.



# **CHAPTER XIX.**

## **DOCTRINES OF S. AUGUSTINE AND S. THOMAS AQUINAS ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY. – RÉSUMÉ OF THE SUBJECT**

Thus did the Church, by a variety of means, break the chains of slavery, without ever exceeding the limits marked out by justice and prudence: thus did she banish from among Christians that degrading condition, so contrary to their exalted ideas on the dignity of man, and their generous feelings of fraternity and love. Wherever Christianity shall be introduced, chains of iron shall be turned into gentle ties, and humiliated men shall raise their ennobled heads. With what pleasure do we read the remarks of one of the greatest men of Christianity, S. Augustine, on this point (*De Civit. Dei*, l. xix. c. 14, 15, 16). He establishes in a few words the obligation incumbent upon all who rule – fathers, husbands, and masters – to watch over the good of those who are under them: he lays down the advantage of those who obey, as one of the foundations for obedience; he says that the just do not rule from ambition or pride, but from duty and the desire of doing good to their subjects: "Neque enim dominandi cupiditate imperant, sed officio consulendi, nec

principandi superbia, sed providendi misericordia;" and by these noble maxims he proscribes all opinions which tend to tyranny, or found obedience on any degrading notions; but on a sudden, as if this great mind apprehended some reply in violation of human dignity, he grows warm, he boldly faces the question; he rises to his full height, and, giving free scope to the noble thoughts that ferment in his mind, he invokes the idea of nature and the will of God in favor of the dignity of man thus menaced. He says: "Thus wills the order of nature; thus has man been created by God. He has given him to rule over the fishes of the sea, the birds of the air, and the reptiles that crawl on the face of the earth. *He has ordained that reasoning creatures, made according to His own image, shall rule only over creatures devoid of reason. He has not established the dominion of man over man, but that of man over the brute.*" This passage of S. Augustine is one of those bold features which shine forth in writers of genius, when grieved by the sight of a painful object, they allow their generous ideas and feelings to have free scope, and cease to restrain their daring energies. Struck by the force of the expression, the reader, in suspense and breathless, hastens to read the succeeding lines; he fears that the author may be mistaken, seduced by the nobleness of his heart, and carried away by the force of his genius. But, with inexpressible pleasure, he finds that the writer has in no degree departed from the path of true doctrine, when, like a brave champion, he has descended into the arena to defend the cause of justice and humanity. Thus does S. Augustine now appear to

us: the sight of so many unfortunate beings groaning in slavery, victims of the violence and caprice of their masters, afflicted his generous mind. By the light of reason and the doctrines of Christianity, he saw no reason why so considerable a portion of the human race should be condemned to live in such debasement, wherefore, when proclaiming the doctrines of submission and obedience, he labors to discover the cause of such ignominy; and not being able to find it in the nature of man, he seeks for it in sin, in malediction. "The primitive just men," says he, "were rather established as pastors over their flocks, than as kings over other men; whereby God gives us to understand what was called for by the order of creation, and what was required by the punishment of sin; for the condition of slavery has, with reason, been imposed on the sinner. Thus we do not find the word slave in the Scriptures before the day when the just man, Noah, gave it as a punishment to his guilty son; whence it follows that this word came from sin, and not from nature." This manner of considering slavery as the offspring of sin, as the fruit of the Divine malediction, was of the highest importance. By protecting the dignity of human nature, that doctrine completely destroyed all the prejudices of natural superiority which the pride of free men could entertain. Thereby also, slavery was deprived of all its supposed value as a political principle or means of government: it could only be regarded as one of the numberless scourges inflicted on the human race by the anger of the Most High. Henceforth slaves had a motive for resignation, while the absolute power of masters

was checked, and the compassion of all free men was powerfully excited. All were born in sin, all might have been in a state of slavery. To make a boast of liberty would have been like the conduct of a man who, during an epidemic, should boast of having preserved his health, and imagine that on that account he had a right to insult the unhappy sick. In a word, the state of slavery was a scourge, nothing more; like pestilence, war, famine, or any thing else of the kind. The duty of all men was to labor to remedy and abolish it. Such doctrines did not remain sterile. Proclaimed in the face of day, they were heard in all parts of the Catholic world; and not only were they put in practice, as we have seen by numberless examples, but they were carefully preserved as a precious theory, throughout the confusion of the times. After the lapse of eight centuries, we see them repeated by one of the brightest lights of the Catholic Church, S. Thomas Aquinas (I. p. q. xcvi. art. 4). That great man does not see in slavery either difference of race or imaginary inferiority or means of government; he only considers it as a scourge inflicted on humanity by the sins of the first man.

Such is the repugnance with which Christians have looked upon slavery: we see from this, how false is the assertion of M. Guizot: "It does not seem that Christian society was surprised or much offended by it." It is true there was not that blind disturbance and irritation which, despising all barriers and paying no attention to the rules of justice or the counsels of prudence, ran with foolish haste to efface the mark of degradation and

ignominy. But if that disturbance and irritation are meant which are caused by the sight of oppression and outrages committed against man, sentiments which can well accord with longanimity and holy resignation, and which, without checking for a moment the action of charitable zeal, nevertheless avoid precipitating events, preferring mature arrangement in order to secure a complete result; how can this perturbation of mind and holy indignation be better proved to have existed in the bosom of the Church than by the facts and doctrines which we have just quoted? What more eloquent protest against the continuance of slavery can you have than the doctrine of these two illustrious doctors? They declare it, as we have just seen, to be the fruit of malediction, the chastisement of the prevarication of the human race; and they only acknowledge its existence by considering it as one of the great scourges that afflict humanity.

I have explained, with sufficient evidence, the profound reasons which induced the Church to recommend obedience to slaves, and she cannot be reproached on that account with forgetting the rights of humanity. We must not suppose on that account that Christian society was wanting in the boldness necessary for telling the whole truth; but it told only the pure and wholesome truth. What took place with respect to the marriages of slaves is a proof of what I advance. We know that their union was not regarded as a real marriage, and that even that union, such as it was, could not be contracted without the consent of their masters, under pain of being considered as void. Here was

a flagrant violation of reason and justice. What did the Church do? She directly reprobated so gross a violation of the rights of nature. Let us hear what Pope Adrian I. said on this subject: "According to the words of the Apostles, as in Jesus Christ we ought not to deprive either slaves or freemen of the sacraments of the Church, so it is not allowed in any way to prevent the marriage of slaves; and if their marriages have been contracted in spite of the opposition and repugnance of their masters, nevertheless they ought not to be dissolved in any way." (*De Conju. Serv.*, lib. iv. tom. 9, c. 1.) And let it not be supposed that this regulation, which secured the liberty of slaves on one of the most important points, was restricted to particular circumstances; no, it was something more; it was a proclamation of their freedom in this matter. The Church was unwilling to allow that man, reduced to the level of the brute, should be forced to obey the caprice or the interest of another, without regard to the feelings of his heart. St. Thomas was of the same opinion, for he openly maintains that, with respect to the contracting of marriage, slaves are not obliged to obey their masters (2a. 2, q. 104, art. 5).

In the hasty sketch which I have given, I believe that I have kept the promise which I made at the beginning, not to advance any proposition without supporting it by undeniable documents, and not to allow myself to be misled by enthusiasm in favor of Catholicity, so as to concede to it that to which it is not entitled. By passing, rapidly it is true, the course of ages, we have shown, by convincing proofs, which have been furnished by times and

places the most various, that it was Catholicity that abolished slavery, in spite of ideas, manners, interests, and laws, which opposed obstacles apparently invincible; and that it has done so without injustice, without violence, without revolutions, – with the most exquisite prudence and the most admirable moderation. We have seen the Catholic Church make so extensive, so varied, and so efficacious an attack on slavery, that that odious chain was broken without a single violent stroke. Exposed to the action of the most powerful agents, it gradually relaxed and fell to pieces. Her proceedings may be thus recapitulated: —

First, she loudly teaches the truth concerning the dignity of man; she defines the obligations of masters and slaves; she declares them equal before God, and thus completely destroys the degrading theories which stain the writings even of the greatest philosophers of antiquity. She then comes to the application of her doctrines: she labors to improve the treatment of slaves; she struggles against the atrocious right of life and death; she opens her temples to them as asylums, and when they depart thence, prevents their being ill-treated; she labors to substitute public tribunals for private vengeance. At the same time that the Church guarantees the liberty of the enfranchised, by connecting it with religious motives, she defends that of those born free; she labors to close the sources of slavery, by displaying the most active zeal for the redemption of captives, by opposing the avarice of the Jews, by procuring for men who were sold, easy means of recovering their liberty. The Church gives an example

of mildness and disinterestedness; she facilitates emancipation, by admitting slaves into monasteries and the ecclesiastical state; she facilitates it by all the other means that charity suggests; and thus it is that, in spite of the deep roots of slavery in ancient society – in spite of the perturbation caused by the irruptions of the barbarians – in spite of so many wars and calamities of every kind, which in great measure paralyzed the effect of all regulating and beneficent action – yet we see slavery, that dishonor and leprosy of ancient civilization, rapidly diminish among Christians, until it finally disappears. Surely in all this we do not discover a plan conceived and concerted by men. But we do observe therein, in the absence of that plan, such unity of tendencies, such a perfect identity of views, and such similarity in the means, that we have the clearest demonstration of the civilizing and liberating spirit contained in Catholicity. Accurate observers will no doubt be gratified in beholding, in the picture which I have just exhibited, the admirable concord with which the period of the empire, that of the irruption of the barbarians, and that of feudality, all tended towards the same end. They will not regret the poor regularity which distinguishes the exclusive work of man; they will love, I repeat it, to collect all the facts scattered in the seeming disorder, from the forests of Germany to the fields of Bœotia – from the banks of the Thames to those of the Tiber. I have not invented these facts; I have pointed out the periods, and cited the Councils. The reader will find, at the end of the volume, in the original and in full,



the texts of which I have just given an abstract – a *résumé*: thus he may fully convince himself that I have not deceived him. If such had been my intention, surely I should have avoided descending to the level ground of facts; I should have preferred the vague regions of theory; I should have called to my aid high sounding and seductive language, and all the means the most likely to enchant the imagination and excite the feelings; in fine, I should have placed myself in one of those positions where a writer can suppose at his pleasure things which have never existed, and made the best use of the resources of imagination and invention. The task which I have undertaken is rather more difficult, perhaps less brilliant, but certainly more useful.

We may now inquire of M. Guizot what were the *other causes*, the *other ideas*, the *other principles of civilization*, the great development of which, to avail myself of his words, was necessary "to abolish this evil of evils, this iniquity of iniquities." Ought he not to explain, or at least point out, these causes, ideas, and principles of civilization, which, according to him, assisted the Church in the abolition of slavery, in order to save the reader the trouble of seeking or divining them? If they did not arise in the bosom of the Church, *where* did they arise? Were they found in the ruins of ancient civilization? But could these remains of a scattered and almost annihilated civilization effect what that same civilization, in all its vigor, power, and splendor, never did or thought of doing? – Were they in the *individual independence of the barbarians*? But

that individuality, the inseparable companion of violence, must consequently have been the source of oppression and slavery. Were they found in the *military patronage* introduced, according to M. Guizot, by the barbarians themselves; patronage which laid the foundation of that aristocratical organization which was converted at a later period into feudality? But what could this patronage – an institution likely, on the contrary, to perpetuate slavery among the indigent in conquered countries, and to extend it to a considerable portion of the conquerors themselves – what could this patronage do for the abolition of slavery? Where, then, is the idea, the custom, the institution, which, born out of Christianity, contributed to the abolition of slavery? Let any one point out to us the epoch of its formation, the time of its development; let him show us that it had not its origin in Christianity, and we will then confess that the latter cannot exclusively lay claim to the glorious title of having abolished that degraded condition; and he may be sure that this shall not prevent our exalting that idea, custom, or institution which took part in the great and noble enterprise of liberating the human race.

We may be allowed, in conclusion, to inquire of the Protestant churches, of those ungrateful daughters who, after having quitted the bosom of their mother, attempt to calumniate and dishonor her, where were you when the Catholic Church accomplished in Europe the immense work of the abolition of slavery? and how can you venture to reproach her with sympathizing with servitude, degrading man, and usurping his

rights? Can you, then, present any such claim entitling you to the gratitude of the human race? What part can you claim in that great work which prepared the way for the development and grandeur of European civilization? Catholicity alone, without your concurrence, completed the work; and she alone would have conducted Europe to its lofty destinies, if you had not come to interrupt the majestic march of its mighty nations, by urging them into a path bordered by precipices, – a path the end of which is concealed by darkness which the eye of God alone can pierce.[15](#)

## **CHAPTER XX.**

# **CONTRAST BETWEEN TWO ORDERS OF CIVILIZATION**

WE have seen that European civilization owes to the Catholic Church its finest ornament, its most valuable victory in the cause of humanity, the abolition of slavery. It was the Church that, by her doctrines, as beneficent as elevated, by a system as efficacious as prudent, by her unbounded generosity, her indefatigable zeal, her invincible firmness, abolished slavery in Europe; that is to say, she took the first step towards the regeneration of humanity, and laid the first stone for the wide and deep foundation of European civilization; we mean the emancipation of slaves, the abolition for ever of so degrading a state, – universal liberty. It was impossible to create and organize a civilization full of grandeur and dignity, without raising man from his state of abjection, and placing him above the level of animals. Whenever we see him crouching at another's feet, awaiting with anxiety the orders of his master or trembling at the lash; whenever he is sold like a beast, or a price is set upon his powers and his life, civilization will never have its proper development, it will always be weak, sickly, and broken; for thus humanity bears a mark of ignominy on its forehead.

After having shown that it was Catholicity that removed

that obstacle to all social progress, by, as it were, cleansing Europe of the disgusting leprosy with which it was infected from head to foot, let us examine what it has done towards creating and erecting the magnificent edifice of European civilization. If we seriously reflect on the vitality and fruitfulness of this civilization, we shall find therein new and powerful claims on the part of the Catholic Church to the gratitude of nations. In the first place, it is proper to glance at the vast and interesting picture which European civilization presents to us, and to sum up in a few words its principal perfections; thereby we shall be enabled the more easily to account to ourselves for the admiration and enthusiasm with which it inspires us.

The individual animated by a lively sense of his own dignity, abounding in activity, perseverance, energy, and the simultaneous development of all his faculties; woman elevated to the rank of the consort of man, and, as it were, recompensed for the duty of obedience by the respectful regards lavished upon her; the gentleness and constancy of family ties, protected by the powerful guarantees of good order and justice; an admirable public conscience, rich in maxims of sublime morality, in laws of justice and equity, in sentiments of honor and dignity; a conscience which survives the shipwreck of private morality, and does not allow unblushing corruption to reach the height which it did in antiquity; a general mildness of manners, which in war prevents great excesses, and in peace renders life more tranquil and pleasing; a profound respect for man, and all that belongs

to him, which makes private acts of violence very uncommon, and in all political constitutions serves as a salutary check on governments; an ardent desire of perfection in all departments; an irresistible tendency, sometimes ill-directed, but always active, to improve the condition of the many; a secret impulse to protect the weak, to succour the unfortunate – an impulse which sometimes pursues its course with generous ardor, and which, whenever it is unable to develop itself, remains in the heart of society, and produces there the uneasiness and disquietude of remorse; a cosmopolitan spirit of universality, of propagandism, an inexhaustible fund of resources to grow young again without danger of perishing, and for self-preservation in the most important junctures; a generous impatience, which longs to anticipate the future, and produces an incessant movement and agitation, sometimes dangerous, but which are generally the germs of great benefits, and the symptoms of a strong principle of life; such are the great characteristics which distinguish European civilization; such are the features which place it in a rank immensely superior to that of all other civilizations, ancient and modern.

Read the history of antiquity; extend your view over the whole world; wherever Christianity does not reign, and where the barbarous or savage life no longer prevails, you will find a civilization which in nothing resembles our own, and which cannot be compared with it for a moment. In some of these states of civilization, you will perhaps find a certain degree of

regularity and some marks of power, for they have endured for centuries; but how have they endured? Without movement, without progress; they are devoid of life; their regularity and duration are those of a marble statue, which, motionless itself, sees the waves of generations pass by. There have also been nations whose civilization displayed motion and activity; but what motion and what activity? Some, ruled by the mercantile spirit, never succeeded in establishing their internal happiness on a firm basis; their only object was to invade new countries which tempted their cupidity, to pour into their colonies their superabundant population, and establish numerous factories in new lands: others, continually contending and fighting for a few measures of political freedom, forgot their social organization, took no care of their civil liberty, and acted in the narrowest circle of time and space; they would not be even worthy of having their names preserved for posterity, if the genius of the beautiful had not shone there with indescribable charm, and if the monuments of their knowledge, like a mirror, had not preserved the bright rays of Eastern learning: others, great and terrible, it is true, but troubled by intestine dissensions, bear inscribed upon their front the formidable destiny of conquest; this destiny they fulfilled by subjugating the world, and immediately their rapid and inevitable ruin approached: others, in fine, excited by violent fanaticism, raged like the waves of ocean in a storm; they threw themselves upon other nations like a devastating torrent, and threatened to involve Christian civilization itself in their

deafening uproar; but their efforts were vain; their waves broke against insurmountable barriers; they repeated their attempts, but, always compelled to retire, they fell back again, and spread themselves on the beach with a sullen roar: and now look at the Eastern nations; behold them like an impure pool, which the heat of the sun is about to dry up; see the sons and successors of Mahomet and Omar on their knees at the feet of the European powers, begging a protection, which policy sometimes affords them, but only with disdain. Such is the picture presented to us by every civilization, ancient and modern, except that of Europe, that is, the Christian. It alone at once embraces every thing great and noble in the others; it alone survives the most thorough revolutions; it alone extends itself to all races and climates, and accommodates itself to forms of government the most various; it alone, in fine, unites itself with all kinds of institutions, whenever, by circulating in them its fertile sap, it can produce its sweet and salutary fruits for the good of humanity. And whence comes the immense superiority of European civilization over all others? How has it become so noble, so rich, so varied, so fruitful; with the stamp of dignity, of nobility, and of loftiness; without castes, without slaves, without eunuchs, without any of those miseries which prey upon other ancient and modern nations? It often happens that we Europeans complain and lament more than the most unfortunate portion of the human race ever did; and we forget that we are the privileged children of Providence, and that our evils, our share of the unavoidable patrimony of



humanity, are very slight, are nothing in comparison with those which have been, and still are, suffered by other nations. Even the extent of our good fortune itself renders us difficult to please, and exceedingly fastidious. We are like a man of high rank, accustomed to live respected and esteemed in the midst of ease and pleasure, who is indignant at a slighting word, is filled with disquietude and affliction at the most trifling contradiction, and forgets the multitude of men who are plunged in misery, whose nakedness is covered with a few rags, and who meet with a thousand insults and refusals before they can obtain a morsel of bread to satisfy the cravings of hunger.

The mind, when contemplating European civilization, experiences so many different impressions, is attracted by so many objects that at the same time claim its attention and preference, that, charmed by the magnificent spectacle, it is dazzled, and knows not where to commence the examination. The best way in such a case is to simplify, to decompose the complex object, and reduce it to its simplest elements. *The individual, the family, and society*; these we have thoroughly to examine, and these ought to be the subjects of our inquiries. If we succeed in fully understanding these three elements, as they really are in themselves, and apart from the slight variations which do not affect their essence, European civilization, with all its riches and all its secrets, will be presented to our view, like a fertile and beautiful landscape lit up by the morning sun.

European civilization is in possession of the principal truths

with respect to the individual, to the family, and to society; it is to this that it owes all that it is and all that it has. Nowhere have the true nature, the true relations and object of these three things been better understood than in Europe; with respect to them we have ideas, sentiments, and views which have been wanting in other civilizations. Now, these ideas and feelings, strongly marked on the face of European nations, have inoculated their laws, manners, institutions, customs, and language; they are inhaled with the air, for they have impregnated the whole atmosphere with their vivifying aroma. To what is this owing? To the fact, that Europe, for many centuries, has had within its bosom a powerful principle which preserves, propagates, and fructifies the truth; and it was especially in those times of difficulty, when the disorganized society had to assume a new form, that this regenerating principle had the greatest influence and ascendancy. Time has passed away, great changes have taken place, Catholicity has undergone vast vicissitudes in its power and influence on society; but civilization, its work, was too strong to be easily destroyed; the impulse which had been given to Europe was too powerful and well secured to be easily diverted from its course. Europe was like a young man gifted with a strong constitution, and full of health and vigor; the excesses of labor or of dissipation reduce him and make him grow pale; but soon the hue of health returns to his countenance, and his limbs recover their suppleness and vigor.

# **CHAPTER XXI. OF THE INDIVIDUAL – OF THE FEELING OF INDIVIDUAL INDEPENDENCE ACCORDING TO M. GUIZOT**

THE individual is the first and simplest element of society. If the individual is not well constituted, if he is ill understood and ill appreciated, there will always be an obstacle to the progress of real civilization. First of all, we must observe, that we speak here only of the individual, of man as he is in himself, apart from the numerous relations which surround him when we come to consider him as a member of society. But let it not be imagined from this, that I wish to consider him in a state of absolute isolation, to carry him to the desert, to reduce him to the savage state, and analyze the individuality as it appears to us in a few wandering hordes, a monstrous exception, which is only the result of the degradation of our nature. Equally useless would it be to revive the theory of Rousseau, that pure Utopianism which can only lead to error and extravagance. We may separately examine the pieces of a machine, for the better understanding of its particular construction; but we must take care not to forget the purpose for which they are intended, and not lose sight of the

whole, of which they form a part. Without that, the judgment we should form of them would certainly be erroneous. The most wonderful and sublime picture would be only a ridiculous monstrosity, if its groups and figures were considered in a state of isolation from its other parts; in this way, the prodigies of Michael Angelo and Raffael might be taken for the dreams of a madman. Man is not alone in the world, nor is he born to live alone. Besides what is he in himself, he is a part of the great scheme of the Universe. Besides the destiny which belongs to him in the vast plan of creation, he is raised, by the bounty of his Maker, to another sphere, above all earthly thoughts. Good philosophy requires that we should forget nothing of all this. It now remains for us to consider the individual and individuality.

In considering man, we may abstract from his quality of citizen, – an abstraction which, far from leading to any extravagant paradoxes, is likely to make us thoroughly understand a remarkable peculiarity of European civilization, one of the distinctive characteristics, which will be alone sufficient to enable us to avoid confounding it with others. All will readily understand that there is a distinction to be made between the man and the citizen, and that these two aspects lead to very different considerations; but it is more difficult to say how far the limits of this distinction should extend; to what extent the feeling of independence should be admitted; what is the sphere which ought to be assigned to purely individual development; in fine, whatever is peculiar to our civilization on this point. We

must justly estimate the difference which we find herein between our state of society and that of others; we must point out its source, and its result; we must carefully weigh its real influence on the advance of civilization. This task is difficult; I repeat it, – for we have here various questions, great and important, it is true, but delicate and profound, and very easily mistaken, – it is not without much trouble that we can fix our eyes with certainty on these vague, indeterminate, and floating objects, which are connected together by no perceptible ties.

We here meet with the famous *personal independence*, which, according to M. Guizot, was brought by the barbarians from the North, and played so important a part, that we ought to look upon it as one of the chief and most productive principles of European civilization. This celebrated publicist, analyzing the elements of this civilization, and pointing out the share which the Roman empire and the Church had therein, in his opinion, finds a remarkable principle of productiveness in the feeling of individuality, which the Germans brought with them, and inoculated into the manners of Europe. It will not be useless to discuss the opinion of M. Guizot on this important and delicate matter. By thus explaining the state of the question, we shall remove the important errors of some persons, errors produced by the authority of this writer, whose talent and eloquence have unfortunately given plausibility and semblance of truth to what is in reality only a paradox. The first care we ought to take, in combating the opinions of this writer, is not to attribute

to him what he has not really said; besides, as the matter we are treating of is liable to many mistakes, we shall do well to transcribe the words of M. Guizot at length. "What we require to know," he says, "is the general condition of society among the barbarians. Now it is very difficult, now-a-days, to give an account of it. We can understand, without too much trouble, the municipal system of Rome, and the Christian Church; their influence has continued down to our times; we find traces of them in many institutions and existing facts. We have a thousand means of recognising and explaining them. The manners, the social condition of the barbarians, have entirely perished; we are compelled to divine them, by the most ancient historical documents, or by an effort of imagination."

What has been preserved to us of the manners of the barbarians is, indeed, little; this is an assertion which I will not deny. I will not dispute with M. Guizot about the authority which ought to belong to facts which require to be filled up by an effort of the imagination, and which compel us to have recourse to the dangerous expedient of divining. As for the rest, I am aware of the nature of these questions; and the reflections which I have just made, as well as the terms which I have used, prove that I do not think it possible to proceed with rule and compass in such an examination. Nevertheless, I have thought it proper to warn the reader on this point, and combat the delusion into which he might be led by a doctrine which, when fully examined, is, I repeat it, only a brilliant paradox. "There is a feeling, a fact," continues

M. Guizot, "which it is above all necessary to understand well, in order to represent to ourselves with truth what a barbarian was: this is, the pleasure of individual independence – the pleasure of playing amid the chances of the world and of life, with power and liberty; the joys of activity without labor; the taste for an adventurous destiny, full of surprises, vicissitudes, and perils. Such was the ruling feeling of the barbarian state, the moral necessity which put these masses of men in motion. To-day, in the regular society in which we live, it is difficult to represent to one's self this feeling, with all the influence which it exercised over the barbarians of the fourth and fifth centuries. There is only one work, in my opinion, in which this character of barbarism is described with all its force, viz. *The History of the Conquest of England by the Normans*, of M. Thierry – the only book where the motives, the inclinations, the impulses which actuate man in a social state bordering on barbarism, are felt and described with a truth really Homeric. Nowhere do we see so clearly what a barbarian was, and what was his life. We also find something of this, although in a very inferior degree, in my opinion, in a manner much less simple, much less true, in the romances of Mr. Cooper on the American savages. There is in the life of the savages of America, in the relations and feelings which exist in those forests, something which reminds one, to a certain extent, of the manners of the ancient Germans. No doubt these pictures are a little ideal, a little poetical; the unfavorable side of barbarian life and manners is not displayed in all its crudity. I do

not speak merely of the evils which these manners produce in the individual social condition of the barbarian himself. In this passionate love of personal independence, there was something more rude and coarse than one would imagine from the work of M. Thierry; there was a degree of brutality, of indolence, of apathy, which is not always faithfully described in his pictures. Nevertheless, when one examines the thing to the bottom, in spite of brutality, coarseness, and this stupid *egotism*, the taste for individual independence is a noble moral feeling, which draws its power from the moral nature of man: it is the pleasure of feeling himself a man – the sentiment of personality, of spontaneous action in his free development. Gentlemen, it was by the German barbarians that this feeling was introduced into the civilization of Europe; it was unknown to the Roman world, unknown to the Christian Church, unknown to almost all the ancient civilizations: – when you find liberty in the ancient civilizations, it is political liberty, the liberty of the citizen. It is not with his personal liberty that the man is prepossessed, but with his liberty as a citizen. He belongs to an association – he is devoted to an association – he is ready to sacrifice himself for an association. It was the same with the Christian Church: there prevailed a feeling of great attachment to the Christian corporation – of devotion to its laws – a strong desire of extending its empire; the religious feeling produced a reaction on the man himself – on his soul – an internal struggle to subdue his own will, and make it submit to the demands of his faith. But the feeling of



personal independence, the taste for liberty showing itself at any hazard, with hardly any other object than its own satisfaction – this feeling, I repeat, was unknown to the Roman and Christian society. It was brought in by the barbarians, and placed in the cradle of modern civilization. It has played so great a part, it has produced such noble results, that it is impossible not to bring it to light as one of the fundamental elements thereof." (*Histoire Générale de la Civilisation en Europe*, leçon 2.) This feeling of personal independence, exclusively attributed to a nation – this vague, undefinable feeling – a singular mixture of nobleness and brutality, of barbarism and civilization – is in some degree poetical, and is very likely to seduce the fancy; but, unfortunately, there is in the contrast, intended to increase the effect of the picture, something extraordinary, I will even say contradictory, which excites the suspicion of cool reason that there is some hidden error which compels it to be on its guard. If it be true that this phenomenon ever existed, what was its origin? Will it be said that it was the result of climate? But how can it be imagined that the snows of the north protected what was not found in the ardent south? How comes it that the feeling of personal independence was wanting precisely in those southern countries of Europe, where the feeling of political independence was developed with so much force? and would it not be a strange thing, not to say an absurdity, if these different climates had divided these two kinds of liberty between them, like an inheritance? It will be said, perhaps, that this feeling arose from the social state.

But in that case, it cannot be made the characteristic mark of one nation: it must be said, in general terms, that the feeling belonged to all the nations who were in the same social condition as the Germans. Besides, even according to this hypothesis, how could that which was peculiar to barbarism have been a germ, a fruitful principle of civilization? This feeling, which must have been effaced by civilization, could not even preserve itself in the midst thereof, much less contribute to its development. If its perpetuation in some form was absolutely necessary, why did not the same thing take place in the bosom of other civilizations? Surely the Germans were not the only people who passed from barbarism to civilization. But I do not pretend to say that the barbarians of the north did not present some remarkable peculiarity in this point of view; and I do not deny that we find in European civilization a feeling of personality, if I may so speak, unknown to other civilizations. But what I venture to affirm is, that it is little philosophical to have recourse to mysteries and enigmas to explain the *individuality* of the Germans, and that it is useless to seek in their barbarism the cause of the superiority which European civilization possesses in this respect. To form a clear idea of this question, which is as complicated as it is important, it is first of all necessary to specify, in the best way we can, the real nature of the barbarian *individuality*. In a pamphlet which I published some time ago, called *Observations Sociales, Politiques, et Economiques, sur les Biens du Clergé*, I have incidentally touched upon this individuality, and attempted

to give clear ideas on this point. As I have not changed my opinion since that time, but, on the contrary, as it has been confirmed, I will transcribe what I then said, as follows: "What was this feeling? Was it peculiar to those nations? Was it the result of the influence of climate, of a social position? Was it perchance a feeling formed in all places and at all times, but which is here modified by particular circumstances? What was its force, its tendency? How far was it just or unjust, noble or degrading, profitable or injurious? What benefits did it confer on society; what evils? How were these evils combated, by whom, by what means, and with what result? These questions are numerous, but they are not so complicated as they appear at first sight; when once the fundamental idea shall be cleared up, the others will be understood without difficulty, and the theory, when simplified, will immediately be confirmed and supported by history. There is a strong, active, an indestructible feeling in the human heart which urges men to self-preservation, to avoid evils, and to attain to their well-being and happiness. Whether you call it self-love, instinct of preservation, desire of happiness or of perfection, egotism, *individuality*, or whatever name you give to it, this feeling exists; we have it within us. We cannot doubt of its existence; it accompanies us at every step, in all our actions, from the time when we first see the light till we descend into the tomb. This feeling, if you will observe its origin, its nature, and its object, is nothing but a great law of all beings applied to man; a law which, being a guarantee for the

preservation and perfecting of individuals, admirably contributes to the harmony of the universe. It is clear that such a feeling must naturally incline us to hate oppression, and to suffer with impatience what tends to limit and fetter the use of our faculties. The cause is easily found; all this gives us uneasiness, to which our nature is repugnant; even the tenderest infant bears with impatience the tie that fastens him in his cradle; he is uneasy, he is disturbed, he cries.

"On the other hand, the individual, when he is not totally devoid of knowledge of himself, when his intellectual faculties are at all developed, will feel another sentiment arise in his mind which has nothing in common with the instinct of self-preservation with which all beings are animated, a sentiment which belongs exclusively to intelligence; I mean, the feeling of dignity, of value of ourselves, of that fire which, enkindled in our hearts in our earliest years, is nourished, extended, and supported by the aliment afforded to it by time, and acquires that immense power, that expansion which makes us so restless, active, and agitated during all periods of our life. The subjection of one man to another wounds this feeling of dignity; for even supposing it to be reconciled with all possible freedom and mildness, with the most perfect respect for the person subjected, this subjection reveals a weakness or a necessity which compels him in some degree to limit the free use of his faculties. Such is the second origin of the feeling of personal independence. It follows from what I have just said, that man always bears

within himself a certain love of independence, that this feeling is necessarily common to all times and countries, for we have found its roots in the two most natural feelings of man – viz. *the desire of well-being and the consciousness of his own dignity*. It is evident that these feelings may be modified and varied indefinitely, on account of the infinity of situations in which the individual may be placed, morally and physically. Without leaving the sphere which is marked out for them by their very essence, these feelings may vary as to strength or weakness on the most extensive scale; they may be moral or immoral, just or unjust, noble or vile, advantageous or injurious. Consequently they may contribute to the individual the greatest variety of inclinations, of habits, of manners; and thereby give very different features to the physiognomy of nations, according to the particular and characteristic manner in which they affect the individual. These notions being once cleared up by a real knowledge of the constitution of the heart of man, we see how all questions which relate to the feeling of individuality must be resolved; we also see that it is useless to have recourse to mysterious language or poetical explanations, for in all this there is nothing that can be submitted to a rigorous analysis. The ideas which man forms of his own well-being and dignity, the means which he employs to promote the one and preserve the other, these are what will settle the degrees of energy, will determine the nature and signalize the tendency of all these feelings; that is to say, all will depend on the physical and moral state of society

and the individual. Now, supposing all other circumstances to be equal, give a man true ideas of his own well-being and dignity, such as reason and above all the Christian religion teach, and you will form a good citizen; give false, exaggerated, absurd ideas, such as are entertained by perverted schools and promulgated by agitators at all times and in all countries, and you spread the fruitful seeds of disturbance and disorder.

"In order to complete the clearing up of the important point which we have undertaken to explain, we must apply this doctrine to the particular fact which now occupies us. If we fix our attention on the nations who invaded and overturned the Roman empire, confining ourselves to the facts which history has preserved of them, to the conjectures which are authorized by the circumstances in which they were placed, and to the general data which modern science has been able to collect from the immediate observation of the different tribes of America, we shall be able to form an idea of what was the state of society and of the individual among the invading barbarians. In their native countries, among their mountains, in their forests covered with frost and snow, they had their family ties, their relationships, their religion, traditions, customs, manners, attachment to their hereditary soil, their love of national independence, their enthusiasm for the great deeds of their ancestors, and for the glory acquired in battle; in fine, their desire of perpetuating in their children a race strong, valiant, and free; they had their distinctions of family, their division into

tribes, their priests, chiefs, and government. Without discussing the character of their forms of government, and laying aside all that might be said of their monarchy, their public assemblies, and other similar points, questions which are foreign to our subject, and which besides are always in some degree hypothetical and imaginary, I shall content myself with making a remark which none of my readers will deny, viz. that among them the organization of society was such as might have been expected from rude and superstitious ideas, gross habits, and ferocious manners; that is to say, that their social condition did not rise above the level which had naturally been marked out for it by two imperious necessities: first, that complete anarchy should not prevail in their forests; and second, that in war they should have some one to lead their confused hordes. Born in rigorous climates, crowding on each other by their rapid increase, and on that account obtaining with difficulty even the means of subsistence, these nations saw before their eyes the abundance and the luxuries of ample and well-cultivated regions; they were at the same time urged on by extreme want, and strongly excited by the presence of plunder. There was nothing to oppose them but the feeble legions of an effeminate and decaying civilization; their own bodies were strong, their minds full of courage and audacity; their numbers augmented their boldness; they left their native soil without pain; a spirit of adventure and enterprise developed itself in their minds, and they threw themselves on the Empire like a torrent which falls from the mountains, and

inundates the neighboring plains. However imperfect was their social condition, and however rude were its ties, it sufficed, nevertheless, in their native soil, and amid their ancient manners; if the barbarians had remained in their forests, it may be said that that form of government, which answered its purpose in its way, would have been perpetuated; for it was born of necessity, it was adapted to circumstances, it was rooted in their habits, sanctioned by time, and connected with traditions and recollections of every kind. But these ties were too weak to be transported without being broken. These forms of government were, as we have just seen, so suited to the state of barbarism, and consequently so circumscribed and limited, that they could not be applied without difficulty to the new situation in which these nations found themselves almost suddenly placed. Let us imagine these savage children of the forest precipitated on the south; their fierce chiefs precede them, and they are followed by crowds of women and children; they take with them their flocks and rude baggage; they cut to pieces numerous legions on their way; they form intrenchments, cross ditches, scale ramparts, ravage the country, destroy forests, burn populous cities, and take with them immense numbers of slaves captured on the way. They overturn every thing that opposes their fury, and drive before them multitudes who flee to avoid fire and sword. In a short time see these same men, elated with victory, enriched by immense booty, inured by so many battles, fires, sackings, and massacres, transported, as if by enchantment, into a new



climate, under another sky, and swimming in abundance, in pleasure, in new enjoyments of every kind. A confused mixture of idolatry and Christianity, of truth and falsehood, is become their religion; their principal chiefs are dead in battle; families are confounded in disorder, races mixed, old manners and customs altered and lost. These nations, in fine, are spread over immense countries, in the midst of other nations, differing in language, ideas, manners, and usages; imagine, if you can, this disorder, this confusion, this chaos, and tell me whether the ties which formed the society of these nations are not destroyed and broken into a thousand pieces, and whether you do not see barbarian and civilized society disappear together, and all antiquity vanish without any thing new taking its place? And at this moment, fix your eyes upon the gloomy child of the North, when he feels all the ties that bound him to society suddenly loosened, when all the chains that restrained his ferocity break; when he finds himself alone, isolated, in a position so new, so singular, so extraordinary, with an obscure recollection of his late country and without affection for that which he has just occupied; without respect for law, fear of man, or attachment to custom. Do you not see him, in his impetuous ferocity, indulge without limit his habits of violence, wandering, plunder, and massacre? He confides in his strong arm and activity of foot, and led by a heart full of fire and courage, by an imagination excited by the view of so many different countries and by the hazards of so many travels and combats, he rashly undertakes all enterprises, rejects

all subjection, throws off all restraint, and delights in the dangers of fresh struggles and adventures. Do you not find here the mysterious individuality, the feeling of personal independence, in all its philosophical reality and all the truth which is assigned to it by history? This brutal individuality, this fierce feeling of independence, which was not reconcileable with the well-being or with the true dignity of the individual, contained a principle of eternal war and a continually wandering mode of life, and must necessarily produce the degradation of man and the complete dissolution of society. Far from containing the germ of civilization, it was this that was best adapted to reduce Europe to the savage state; it stifled society in its cradle; it destroyed every attempt made to reorganize it, and completed the annihilation of all that remained of the ancient civilization."

The observations which have just been made may be more or less well founded, more or less happy, but at least they do not present the inexplicable inconsistency, not to say contradiction, of allying barbarism and brutality with civilization and refinement; they do not give the name of an eminent and fruitful principle of European civilization to that which a little further on is pointed out as one of the strongest obstacles to the progress of social organization. As M. Guizot, on this last point, agrees with the opinion which I have just stated, and shows the incoherence of his own doctrines, the reader will allow me to quote his own words. "It is clear," he says, "that if men have no ideas extending beyond their own existence, if their intellectual

horizon is limited to themselves, if they give themselves up to the caprices of their own passions and wills, if they have not among them a certain number of common notions and feelings, around which they rally; it is clear, I say, that no society can be possible among them; that such individual, when he enters into any association, will be a principle of disturbance and dissolution. Whenever individuality almost absolutely prevails, or man only considers himself, or his ideas do not extend beyond himself, or he obeys only his own passions, society, I mean one with any thing of extent or permanency, becomes almost impossible. Now such was the moral condition of the conquerors of Europe at the period of which we speak. I have pointed out, in the last lecture, that we owe the energetic feeling of individual liberty and humanity to the Germans. Now, in a state of extreme rudeness and ignorance, this feeling is egotism in all its brutality, in all its unsociability. From the fifth to the eighth century, such was the case among the Germans. They consulted only their own interests, their own passions, their own wills; how could this accord with the social state? It was attempted to make them enter it; they attempted it themselves; they soon left it from some sudden act, some sally of passion or misunderstanding. Every moment we see society attempted to be formed; every moment we see it broken by the act of man, by the want of the moral conditions necessary for its subsistence. Such, gentlemen, were the two prevailing causes of the state of barbarism. As long as they lasted, barbarism continued." (*Histoire Générale de la*

With respect to his theory of *individuality*, M. Guizot has met with the common fate of men of great talents. They are forcibly struck by a singular phenomenon, they conceive an ardent desire of finding its cause, and they fall into frequent errors, led away by a secret tendency always to point out a new, unexpected, astonishing origin. In his vast and penetrating view of European civilization, in his parallel between this and the most distinguished ones of antiquity, he discovered a very remarkable difference between the individuals of the former and of the latter. He saw in the man of modern Europe, something nobler, more independent than in the Greek or Roman; it was necessary to point out the origin of this difference. Now this was not an easy task, considering the peculiar situation in which the philosophical historian found himself. From the first glance which he took at the elements of European civilization, the Church presented herself to him as one of the most powerful and the most influential agents on the organization of society; and he saw issue from her the impulse which was most capable of leading the world to a great and happy future. He had already expressly acknowledged this, and had paid homage to the truth in magnificent language; in order to explain this phenomenon, should he again have recourse to Christianity, to the Church? This would have been conceding to her the whole of the great work of civilization; and M. Guizot was desirous, at all hazards, of giving her coadjutors. Therefore, fixing his eyes upon the

barbarian hordes, he expects to discover in the swarthy brows, the savage countenances, and the menacing looks of these children of the forest, a type, somewhat rude but still very just, of the noble independence, the elevation, and dignity which the European bears in his features.

After having explained the mysterious personality of the Germans, and shown that, far from being an element of civilization, it was a source of disorder and barbarism; it is besides necessary to examine the difference which exists between the civilization of Europe and other civilizations, with respect to the feeling of dignity; it is necessary to determine with precision what modifications have been undergone by a feeling, which, considered by itself, is, as we have seen, common to all men. In the first place, there is no foundation for this assertion of M. Guizot, *that the feeling of personal independence, the taste for liberty, displaying itself at all hazards, with scarcely any other object than its own satisfaction, was unknown to Roman society*. It is clear that in such a comparison, it is not meant to allude to the feeling of independence in the savage state, in the state of barbarism; for as well might it be said that civilized nations could not have the distinctive character of barbarism. But laying aside that circumstance of ferocity, we will say that the feeling was very active, not only among the Romans, but also among the other most celebrated nations of antiquity. "When you find in ancient civilization," says M. Guizot, "liberty, it is political liberty, the liberty of the citizen. It is not with his

personal liberty that the man is prepossessed, it is with his liberty as a citizen; he belongs to an association, he is devoted to an association, he is ready to sacrifice himself for an association." I will not deny that this spirit of sacrifice for the benefit of an association did exist among ancient nations; I acknowledge also that it was accompanied by remarkable peculiarities, which I intend to explain further on; yet it may be doubted whether *the taste for liberty, with scarcely any other object than its own satisfaction*, was not more active with ancient nations than with us. Indeed, what was the object of the Phœnicians, the Greeks of the Archipelago and of Asia Minor, the Carthaginians, when they undertook those voyages which, for such remote times, were as bold and perilous as those of our most intrepid sailors? Was it, indeed, to sacrifice themselves for an association that they sought new territories with so much ardour, in order to amass there money, gold, and all kinds of articles of value? Were they not led by the desire of acquiring *to gratify themselves*? Where, then, is the association? Where do you find it here? Do you see any thing but the individual, with his passions and tastes, and his ardour in satisfying them? And the Greeks – those Greeks so enervated, so voluptuous, so spoiled by pleasures, had they not the most lively feeling of personal independence, the most ardent desire of living with perfect freedom, with no other object but to gratify themselves? Their poets singing of nectar and of love; their free courtesans receiving the homage of the most illustrious citizens, and making sages forget their philosophical

moderation and gravity; and the people celebrating their festivals amid the most fearful dissoluteness; did they also only sacrifice on the altars of association? Had they not the desire of gratifying themselves? With respect to the Romans, perhaps it would not be so easy to demonstrate this, if we had to speak of what are called the glorious times of the Republic; but we have to deal with the Romans of the empire, with those who lived at the time of the irruption of the barbarians; with those Romans, greedy of pleasures, and devoured by that thirst for excess of which history has preserved such shameful pictures. Their superb palaces, their magnificent villas, their delicious baths, their splendid festive halls, their tables loaded with riches, their effeminate dresses, their voluptuous dissipation; do they not show us individuals who, without thinking of the association to which they belonged, only thought of gratifying their own passions and caprices; lived in the greatest luxury, with every delicacy and all imaginable splendour; had no care but to enjoy society, to lull themselves asleep in pleasure, to gratify all their passions, and give way to a burning love of their own satisfactions and amusements?

It is not easy, then, to imagine why M. Guizot exclusively attributes to the barbarians *the pleasure of feeling themselves men, the feeling of personality, of human spontaneousness in its free development*. Can we believe that such sentiments were unknown to the victors of Marathon and Plataea, to those nations who have immortalized their names by so many monuments? When, in the fine arts, in the sciences, in eloquence, in poetry,

the noblest traits of genius shone forth on all sides, had they not among them the pleasure of feeling themselves men, the feeling and the power of the free development of all their faculties? and in a society where glory was so passionately loved, as we see it was among the Romans, in a society which shows us men like Cicero and Virgil, and which produced a Tacitus, who still, after nineteen centuries, makes every generous heart thrill with emotion, *was there no pleasure in feeling themselves men, no pride in appreciating their own dignity? Was there no feeling of the spontaneousness of man in his own free development?* How can we imagine that the barbarians of the north surpassed the Greeks and Romans in this respect? Why, then, these paradoxes, this confusion of ideas? Of what avail are these brilliant expressions meaning nothing? Of what use are these observations, of a false delicacy, where the mind at first sight discovers vagueness and inexactitude; and where it finds, after a complete examination, nothing but incoherency and revery?



## CHAPTER XXII.

# HOW THE INDIVIDUAL WAS ABSORBED BY ANCIENT SOCIETY

IF we profoundly study this question, without suffering ourselves to be led into error and extravagance, by the desire of passing for deep observers; if we call to our aid a just and cool philosophy, supported by the facts of history, we shall see that the principal difference between the ancient civilizations and our own with respect to the individual is, that, in antiquity, *man, considered as man, was not properly esteemed*. Ancient nations did not want either *the feeling of personal independence, or the pleasure of feeling themselves men*; the fault was not in the heart, but in the head. What they wanted was the comprehension of the dignity of man; the high idea which Christianity has given us of ourselves, while, at the same time, with admirable wisdom, it has shown us our infirmities. What ancient societies wanted, what all those, where Christianity does not prevail, have wanted, and will continue to want, is the respect and the consideration which surround every individual, *every man, inasmuch as he is a man*. Among the Greeks the Greeks are every thing; strangers, barbarians, are nothing: in Rome, the

title of Roman citizen makes the man; he who wants this is nothing. In Christian countries, the infant who is born deformed, or deprived of some member, excites compassion, and becomes an object of the tenderest solicitude; it is enough that he is man, and unfortunate. Among the ancients, this human being was regarded as useless and contemptible; in certain cities, as for example at Lacedæmon, it was forbidden to nourish him, and, by command of the magistrates charged with the regulation of births, horrible to relate! he was thrown into a ditch. He was a *human being*; but what matter? He was a human being who would be of no use; and society, without compassion, did not wish to undertake the charge of his support. If you read Plato and Aristotle, you will see the horrible doctrine which they professed on the subject of abortion and infanticide; you will see the means which these philosophers imagined, in order to prevent the excess of population; and you will be sensible of the immense progress which society has made, under the influence of Christianity, in all that relates to man. Are not the public games, those horrible scenes where hundreds of men were slaughtered to amuse an inhuman multitude, an eloquent testimony to the little value attached to man, when he was sacrificed with so much barbarism for reasons so frivolous?

The right of the strongest was exercised among the ancients in a horrible manner; and this is one of the causes to which must be attributed the state of annihilation, so to speak, in which we see the individual with respect to society. Society was

strong, the individual was weak; society absorbed the individual, and arrogated to itself all imaginable rights over him; and if ever he made opposition to society, he was sure to be crushed by it with an iron hand. When we read the explanation which M. Guizot gives us of this peculiarity of ancient civilizations, we might suppose that there existed among them a patriotism unknown to us; a patriotism which, carried to exaggeration, and stripped of the feeling of personal independence, produced a kind of annihilation of the individual in presence of society. If he had reflected deeply on the matter, M. Guizot would have seen that the difference is not in the feelings of antiquity, but in the immense fundamental revolution which has taken place in ideas; hence he would easily have concluded, that the difference observed in their feelings must have been owing to the differences in the ideas themselves. Indeed, it is not strange that the individual, seeing the little esteem in which he was held, and the unlimited power which society arrogated to itself over his independence and his life, (for it went so far as to grind him to powder, when he opposed it,) on his side formed an exaggerated idea of society and the public authority, so as to annihilate himself in his own heart before this fearful colossus. Far from considering himself as a member of an association the object of which was the safety and happiness of every individual, the benefits of which required from him some sacrifices in return, he regarded himself as a thing devoted to this association, and compelled, without hesitation, to offer himself as a holocaust

on its altars. Such is the condition of man; when a power acts upon him, for a long time, unlimitedly, his indignation is excited against it, and he rejects it with violence; or else he humbles, he debases, he annihilates himself before the strong influence which binds and prostrates him. Let us see if this be not the contrast which ancient societies constantly afford us; the blindest submission and annihilation on the one hand, and, on the other, the spirit of insubordination, of resistance, showing itself in terrible explosions. It is thus, and thus only, that it is possible to understand how societies, whose normal condition was confusion and agitation, present us with such astonishing examples as Leonidas with his three hundred Spartans perishing at Thermopylæ, Sævola thrusting his hand into the fire, Regulus returning to Carthage to suffer and die, and Marcus Curtius, all armed, leaping into the chasm which had opened in the midst of Rome. All these phenomena, which at first sight appear inexplicable, are explained when we compare them with what has taken place in the revolutions of modern times. Terrible revolutions have thrown some nations into confusion; the struggle of ideas and interests, inflaming their passions, has made them forget their true social relations, during intervals of greater or less duration. What has happened? At the same time that unlimited freedom was proclaimed, and the rights of individuals were incessantly extolled, there arose in the midst of society a cruel power, which, concentrating in its own hands all public authority, inflicted on them the severest blows. At such periods, when the

formidable maxim of the ancients, the *salus populi*, that pretext for so many frightful attempts was in full force, there arose, on the other hand, that mad and ferocious patriotism which superficial men admire in the citizens of ancient republics.

Some writers have lavished eulogiums on the ancients, and, above all, on the Romans. It seemed as if, to gratify their ardent wishes, modern civilization must be moulded according to the ancient. They made absurd attempts; they attacked the existing social system with unexampled violence; they labored to destroy, or at least to stifle, Christian ideas concerning the individual and society, and they sought their inspiration from the shades of the ancient Romans. It is remarkable that, during the short time that the attempt lasted, there were seen, as in ancient Rome, admirable traits of strength, of valor, of patriotism, in fearful contrast with cruelties and crimes without example. In the midst of a great and generous nation there appeared again, to affright the human race, the bloody spectres of Marius and Sylla; so true it is that man is everywhere the same, and that the same order of ideas in the end produces the same order of events. Let the Christian ideas disappear, let old ones regain their force, and you will see that the modern world will resemble the ancient one. Happily for humanity, this is impossible. All the attempts hitherto made to produce such a result have been necessarily of short continuance, and such will be the case in future. But the bloody page which these criminal attempts have left in history offers an abundant subject for reflection to the philosopher who

desires to become thoroughly acquainted with the intimate and delicate relations between ideas and facts. There he will see fully exhibited the vast scheme of social organization, and he will be able to appreciate at its just value the beneficial or injurious influence of the various religious and the different philosophical systems.

The periods of revolutions, that is to say, those stormy times when governments are swallowed up one after another like edifices built upon a volcanic soil, have all this distinctive character, *the tyranny of the interests of public authority over private interests*. Never is this power feeblener, or less lasting; but never is it more violent, more mad. Every thing is sacrificed to its safety or its vengeance; the shade of its enemies pursues it and makes it continually tremble; its own conscience torments it and leaves it no repose; the weakness of its organization, its instable position, warn it at every step of its approaching fall, and in its impotent despair it makes the convulsive efforts of one dying in agony. What, then, in its eyes are the lives of citizens, if they excite the slightest, the most remote suspicion? If the blood of thousands of victims could procure for it a moment of security, and add a few days to its existence, "Perish my enemies," it says; "this is required for the safety of the state, that is, for mine!" Why this frenzy, this cruelty? It is because the ancient government, having been overturned by force, and the new having been enthroned in the same way, the idea of right has disappeared from the sphere of power. Legitimacy does

not protect it, even its novelty betrays its little value; every thing forebodes its short existence. Stripped of the reason and justice which it is obliged to invoke in its own support, it seeks for both in the *very necessity of power*, a social necessity, which is always visible, and it proclaims that the safety of the people is the supreme care. Then the property and lives of individuals are nothing; they are annihilated in the presence of the bloody spectre which arises in the midst of society; armed with force, and surrounded by guards and scaffolds, it says, "I am the public power; to me is confided the safety of the people; it is I who watch over the interests of society."

Now, do you know what is the result of this absolute want of respect for the individual, of this complete annihilation of man in presence of the alarming power which claims to represent society? It is that the feeling of association reappears in different directions; no longer a feeling directed by reason, foresight, and beneficence, but a blind, instinctive feeling, which urges man not to remain alone, without defence, in the midst of a society which is converted into a field of battle and a vast conspiracy; men then unite either to sustain power, when, influenced by the whirlwind of revolution, they are identified with it, and regard it as their only rampart, or to overturn it, if, some motive having urged them into the opposite ranks, they see their most terrible enemy in the existing power, and a sword continually suspended over their heads. These men belong to an association, are devoted to an association, are ready to sacrifice themselves for it, for

they cannot live alone; they know, they comprehend, at least instinctively, that the individual is nothing; for as the restraints that maintain social order have been broken, the individual no longer has a tranquil sphere where he can live in peace and independence, confident that a power founded on legitimacy and guided by reason and justice watches over the preservation of public order and the respect due to individual rights. Then timid men are alarmed and humbled, and begin to represent that first scene of servitude where the oppressed is seen to kiss the hand of the oppressor, and the victim to reverence the executioner. Daring men resist and contend, or rather, conspiring in the dark, they prepare terrible explosions. No one then belongs to himself; the individual is absorbed on all sides, either by the force which oppresses or by that which conspires. The tutelary divinity of individuals is justice; when justice vanishes, they are no more than imperceptible grains of dust carried away by the wind, or drops of water in the stormy waves of ocean. Imagine to yourself societies where this passing frenzy does not prevail, it is true, but which are yet devoid of true ideas on the rights and duties of individuals, and of those of public authority; societies where there are some wandering, uncertain, obscure, imperfect notions thereon, stifled by a thousand prejudices and errors; societies under which, nevertheless, public authority is organized under one form or another, and has become consolidated, thanks to the force of habit, and the absence of all other government better calculated to satisfy urgent necessities; you will then have



an idea of the ancient societies, we should rather say, societies without Christianity, and you will understand the annihilation of the individual before the force of public power, either under an Asiatic despotism or the turbulent democracy of the ancient republics. And what you will then see will be precisely what you have observed in modern societies at times of revolution, only with this difference, that in these the evil is transitory and noisy, like the ravages of the tempest, while among the ancients it was the normal state, like the vitiated atmosphere which injures and corrupts all that breathe it.

Let us examine the cause of these two opposite phenomena, the lofty patriotism of the Greeks and Romans, and the state of prostration and political degradation in which other nations lay, and in which those still lie who are not under the influence of Christianity; what is the cause of this individual abnegation which is found at the bottom of two feelings so contrary? and why do we not find among any of those nations that individual development which is observed in Europe, and which with us is connected with a reasonable patriotism, from which the feeling of a legitimate personal independence is not excluded? It is because in antiquity man did not know himself, or what he was; it is because his true relations with society were viewed through a thousand prejudices and errors, and consequently were very ill understood. This will show that admiration for the patriotism, disinterestedness, and heroic self-denial of the ancients has been sometimes carried too far, and that these qualities, far from

revealing in the men of antiquity a greater perfection of the individual, a superior elevation of mind to that of the men of modern times, rather indicate ideas less elevated and feelings less independent than our own. Perhaps some blind admirers of the ancients will be astonished at these assertions. Let them consider the women of India throwing themselves on the funeral-pile after the death of their husbands, and slaves putting themselves to death because they could not survive their masters, and they will see that personal self-denial is not an infallible sign of elevation of mind. Sometimes man does not understand his own dignity; he considers himself devoted to another being, absorbed by him, and then he regards his own existence only as a secondary thing, which has no object but to minister to the existence of another. We do not wish to underrate the merit which rightly belongs to the ancients; we do not wish to lower their heroism, as far as it is just and laudable, any more than we wish to attribute to the moderns an egotistical individuality, which prevents their sacrificing themselves for their country: our only object is to assign to every thing its place, by dissipating prejudices which are excusable up to a certain point, but do lamentable mischief by falsifying the principal features of ancient and modern history.

This annihilation of the individual among the ancients arose also from the weakness and imperfection of his moral development, and from his want of a rule for his own guidance, which compelled society to interfere in all that concerned him, as if public reason was called upon to supply the defect of private

reason. If we pay attention, we shall observe that in countries where political liberty was the most cherished, civil liberty was almost unknown. While the citizens flattered themselves that they were very free, because they took part in the public deliberations, they wanted that liberty which is most important to man, that which we now call civil liberty. We may form an idea of the thoughts and manners of the ancients on this point, by reading one of their most celebrated writers, Aristotle. In the eyes of this philosopher, the only title which renders a man worthy of the name of citizen, seems to be the participation in the government of the republic; and these ideas, apparently very democratic and calculated to extend the rights of the most numerous class, far from proceeding, as one would suppose, from an exaggeration of the dignity of man, was connected in his mind with a profound contempt for man himself. His system was to reserve all honor and consideration for a very limited number; the classes of citizens who were thus condemned to degradation and nullity were all laborers, artisans, and tradesmen. (*Pol.* l. vii. c. 9, 12; l. viii. c. 1, 2; l. iii. c. 1.) This theory supposed, as may be seen, very curious ideas on individuals and society, and is an additional confirmation of what I have said respecting the eccentricities, not to say monstrosities, which we see in the ancient republics. Let us never forget that one of the principal causes of the evil was the want of an intimate knowledge of man; it was the little value which was placed upon his dignity as man; the individual, deprived of guides to direct him, could

not conciliate esteem; in a word, there was wanting the light of Christianity, which was alone capable of illuminating the chaos.

The feeling of the dignity of man is deeply engraven on the heart of modern society; we find everywhere, written in striking characters, this truth, that man, by virtue of his title of man, is respectable and worthy of high consideration; hence it is that all the schools of modern times that have foolishly undertaken to exalt the individual, at the imminent risk of producing fearful perturbations in society, have adopted as the constant theme of their instructions, this dignity and nobility of man. They thus distinguish themselves in the most decided manner from the democrats of antiquity; the latter acted in a narrow sphere, without departing from a certain order of things, without looking beyond the limits of their own country; in the spirit of modern democrats, on the contrary, we find a tendency to invade all branches, an ardent propagandism which embraces the whole world. They never invoke mean ideas; *man, his reason, his imprescriptible rights*, these are their perpetual theme. Ask them what is their design, and they will tell you that they desire to level all things, to avenge the sacred cause of humanity. This exaggeration of ideas, the pretext and motive for so many crimes, shows us a valuable fact, viz. the immense progress which Christianity has given to ideas with relation to the dignity of our nature. When they have to mislead societies which owe their civilization to Christianity, they find no better means than to invoke the dignity of human nature. The Christian religion, the

enemy of all that is criminal, could not consent to see society overturned, under the pretence of defending and raising the dignity of man; this is the reason why a great number of the most ardent democrats have indulged in insults and sarcasms against religion. On the other hand, as history loudly proclaims that all our knowledge and feeling of what is true, just, and reasonable on this point, is due to the Christian religion, it has been recently attempted to make a monstrous alliance between Christian ideas and the most extravagant of democratic theories. A celebrated man has undertaken this enterprise; but true Christianity, that is, Catholicity, rejects these adulterous alliances; it ceases to acknowledge its most eminent apologists when they have quitted the path of eternal truth. De Lamennais now wanders in the darkness of error, embracing a deceitful shadow of Christianity; and the voice of the supreme Pastor of the Church has warned the faithful against being dazzled by the illusion of a name illustrious by so many titles.[16](#)

# **CHAPTER XXIII.**

## **THE PROGRESS OF INDIVIDUALITY UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF CATHOLICITY**

IF we give a just and legitimate meaning to the word individuality, taking the feeling of personal independence in an acceptation which is not repugnant to the perfection of the individual, and does not oppose the constitutive principles of all society; moreover, if we seek the various causes which have influenced the development of this feeling, without speaking of that which we have already pointed out as one of the most important, viz. the true notion of man, and his connections with his fellows, we shall find many of them which are quite worthy of attention in Catholicity. M. Guizot was greatly deceived when, putting the faithful of the Church in the same rank with the ancient Romans, he asserted that both were equally wanting in the feeling of personal independence. He describes the faithful as absorbed by the association of the Church, entirely devoted to her, ready to sacrifice themselves for her; so that, according to him, it was the interests of the association which induced them to act. There is an error here; but as this error has originated in a truth, it is our duty to distinguish the ideas and the facts with

much attention.

There is no doubt that from the cradle of Christianity the faithful have had an extreme attachment to the Church, and it was always well understood among them, that they could not leave the communion of the Church without ceasing to be numbered among the true disciples of Jesus Christ. It is equally undeniable that, in the words of M. Guizot, "There prevailed in the Christian Church a feeling of strong attachment to the Christian corporation, of devotion to its laws, and an ardent desire to extend its empire;" but it is not true that the origin and source of all these feelings was the spirit of association alone, to the exclusion of all development of real individuality. The Christian belonged to an association, but that association was regarded by him as a means of obtaining eternal happiness, as the ship in which he was embarked, amid the tempests of the world, to arrive safe in the port of eternity: and although he believed it impossible to be saved out of the Church, he did not understand from that that he was devoted to the Church, but to God. The Roman was ready to sacrifice himself for his country; the Christian, for his faith. When the Roman died, he died for his country; the faithful did not die for the Church, but for God. If we open the monuments of Church history, and read the acts of the martyrs, we shall then see what passed in that terrible moment, when the Christian, fully arousing himself, showed in the presence of the instruments of torture, burning piles, and the most horrible punishments, the true principle which acted on

his mind. The judge asks his name; he declares it, and adds, "I am a Christian." He is asked to sacrifice to the gods. "We only sacrifice to one God, the Creator of heaven and earth." He is reproached with the disgrace of following a man who has been nailed to the cross; for him the ignominy of the cross is a glory, and he loudly proclaims that the Crucified is his Saviour and his God. He is threatened with tortures; he despises them, for they are passing, and rejoices in being able to suffer something for his Master. The cross of punishment is already prepared, the pile is lighted before his eyes, the executioner raises the fatal axe to strike off his head; what does it matter to him? all this is but for a moment, and after that moment comes a new life of ineffable and endless happiness. We thus see what influenced his heart; it was the love of his God and the interest of his eternal happiness. Consequently, it is utterly false that the Christian, like men of the ancient republics, destroyed his individuality in the association to which he belonged, allowing himself to be absorbed in that association like a drop of water in the immensity of ocean. The Christian belonged to an association which gave him the rule of his faith and conduct; he regarded that association as founded and directed by God himself; but his mind and his heart were raised to God, and when following the voice of the Church, he believed that he was engaged with his own individual affair, which was nothing less than his eternal happiness. This distinction is quite necessary in an affair which has relations so various and delicate that the slightest confusion



may produce considerable errors. Here a hidden fact reveals itself to us, which is infinitely precious, and throws much light upon the development and perfecting of the individual in Christian civilization. It is absolutely necessary that there should be a social order to which the individual must submit; but it is also proper that he should not be absorbed by society to such an extent that he cannot be conceived but as forming part of it, and remains deprived of his own sphere of action. If this were the case, never would true civilization be completely developed; as it consists in the simultaneous perfecting of the individual and of society, it is necessary, for its existence, that both should have a well determined sphere, where their peculiar and respective movements may not check and embarrass each other.

After these reflections, to which I especially call the attention of all thinking men, I will point out a thing which has, perhaps, not yet been remarked; it is, that Christianity has eminently contributed to create that individual sphere in which man, without breaking the ties which connect him with society, is free to develop all his peculiar faculties. From the mouth of an Apostle went forth that generous expression which strictly limits political power: "We ought to obey God rather than man." (Acts v. 29.) "Obedire oportet Deo magis quam hominibus." The Apostle thereby proclaims that the individual should cease to acknowledge power, when power exacts from him what he believes to be contrary to his conscience. It was among Christians that this great example was witnessed for the first

time; individuals of all countries, of all ages, of both sexes, of all conditions, braving the anger of authority, and all the fury of popular passions, rather than pronounce a single word contrary to the principles which they professed in the sanctuary of conscience; and this, not with arms in their hands, in the midst of popular commotions, where their impetuous passions are excited, which communicate to the mind temporary energy, but in the solitude and obscurity of dungeons, amid the fearful calmness of the tribunals, that is, in that situation where man, alone and isolated, cannot show force and dignity without revealing the elevation of his ideas, the nobleness of his feelings, the unalterable firmness of his conscience, and the greatness of his soul. Christianity engraved this truth deeply on the heart of man, that individuals have duties to perform, even when the whole world is aroused against them; that they have an immense destiny to fulfil, and that it is entirely their own affair, the responsibility of which rests upon their own free will. This important truth, unceasingly inculcated by Christianity at all times, to both sexes, to all conditions, must have powerfully contributed to excite in man an active and ardent feeling of personality. This feeling, with all its sublimity, combining with the other inspirations of Christianity, all full of dignity and grandeur, has raised the human mind from the dust, where ignorance and rude superstitions, and systems of violence, which oppressed it on all sides, had placed and retained it. How strange and surprising to the ears of Pagans must have been

those energetic words of Justin, which nevertheless expressed the disposition of mind of the majority of the faithful, when, in his Apology, addressed to Antoninus Pius, he said, "As we have not placed our hopes on present things, we condemn those who kill us, death being, moreover, a thing which cannot be avoided."

This full and entire self-consciousness, this heroic contempt of death, this calm spirit of a man who, supported by the testimony of intimate feeling, sets at defiance all the powers of earth, must have tended the more to enlarge the mind, as they did not emanate from that cold stoical impassibility, the constant effort of which was to struggle against the nature of things without any solid motive. The Christian feeling had its origin in a sublime freedom from all that is earthly, in a profound conviction of the holiness of duty, and in that undeniable maxim, that man, in spite of all the obstacles which the world places in his way, should walk with a firm step towards the destiny which is marked out for him by his Creator. These ideas and feelings together communicated to the soul a strong and vigorous temper, which, without reaching in any thing the savage harshness of the ancients, raised man to all his dignity, nobleness, and grandeur. It must be observed that these precious effects were not confined to a small number of privileged individuals, but that, in conformity with the genius of the Christian religion, they extended to all classes; for one of the noblest characters of that divine religion is the unlimited expansion which it gives to all that is good; it knows no distinction of persons, and makes its voice penetrate

the obscurest places of society. It was not only to the elevated classes and philosophers, but to the generality of the faithful, that St. Cyprian, the light of Africa, addressed himself, when, summing up in a few words all the grandeur of man, he marked with a bold hand the sublime position where our soul ought to maintain itself with constancy. "Never," he says, "never will he who feels himself to be the child of God admire the words of man. *He falls from his noblest state who can admire any thing but God.*" (*De Spectaculis.*) Sublime words, which make us boldly raise our heads, and fill our hearts with noble feelings; words which, diffusing themselves over all classes, like a fertilizing warmth, were capable of inspiring the humblest of men with what previously seemed exclusively reserved for the transports of the poet:

Os homini sublime dedit, cœlumque tueri  
Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere cultus.

The development of the moral life, the interior life, that life in which man, reflecting on himself, is accustomed to render a circumstantial account of all his actions, of the motives which actuate him, of the goodness or the wickedness of those motives, and the object to which they tend, is principally due to Christianity, to its unceasing influence on man in all his conditions, in all situations, in all moments of his life. Such a progress of the individual life in all that it has most intimate,

most active, and most interesting for the heart of man, was incompatible with that absorption of the individual by society, with that blind self-denial, in which man forgot himself, to think only of the association of which he formed a part. This moral and interior life was unknown to the ancients, because they wanted principles for supporting, rules for guiding, and inspirations for exciting and nourishing it. Thus at Rome, where the political element tries its ascendancy over minds, when enthusiasm becomes extinguished by the effect of intestine dissensions, when every generous feeling becomes stifled by the insupportable despotism which succeeds to the last agitations of the republic, we see baseness and corruption develop themselves with fearful rapidity. The activity of mind which before occupied itself in debates of the Forum and the glorious exploits of war, no longer finding food, gave itself up to sensual pleasures with an abandonment which we can hardly imagine now-a-days, in spite of the looseness of morals which we so justly deplore. Thus we see among the ancients only these two extremes, either the most exalted patriotism, or the complete prostration of the faculties of the soul, which abandons itself without reserve to the dictates of its irregular passions; there man was the slave either of his own passions, of another man, or of society.

Since the moral tie which united men to Catholic society has been broken, since religious belief has been weakened, in consequence of the individual independence which Protestantism has proclaimed in religious matters, it

has unhappily become possible for us to conceive, by means of examples found in European civilization, what man still deprived of real knowledge of himself, his origin and destiny, must have been. We will indicate in another place the points of resemblance which are found between ancient and modern society in the countries where the influence of religious ideas is enfeebled. It is enough now to remark, that if Europe had completely lost Christianity, according to the insane desires of some men, a generation would not have passed away without there being revived among us the individual and society such as they were among the ancients, except the modifications which the difference of the material state of the two civilizations would necessarily produce.

The doctrine of free will, so loudly proclaimed by Catholicity, and sustained by her with such vigour, not only against the old Pagan teaching, but particularly against sectarians at all times, and especially against the founders of the pretended Reformation, has also contributed more than is imagined to develop and perfect the individual, to raise his ideas of independence, nobleness, and dignity. When man comes to consider himself as constrained by the irresistible force of destiny, and attached to a chain of events over which he has no control – when he comes to suppose that the operations of his mind, those active proofs of his freedom, are but vain illusions – he soon annihilates himself; he feels himself assimilated to the brute; he ceases to be the prince of living beings, the ruler of

the earth; he is nothing more than a machine fixed in its place, which is compelled to perform its part in the great system of the universe. The social order ceases to exist; merit and demerit, praise and blame, reward and punishment, are only unmeaning words. If man enjoys or suffers, it is only in the same way as a shrub, which is sometimes breathed upon softly by the zephyrs, and sometimes blasted by the north wind. How different it is when man is conscious of his liberty! Then he is master of his destiny; good and evil, life and death, are before his eyes; he can choose, and nothing can violate the sanctuary of his conscience. There the soul is enthroned, there she is seated, full of dignity, and the whole world raging against her, the universe falling upon her fragile body, cannot force her will. The moral order is displayed before us in all its grandeur; we see good in all its beauty, and evil in all its deformity; the desire of doing well stimulates, and the fear of doing ill restrains us; the sight of the recompense which can be obtained by an effort of free will, and which appears at the end of the path of virtue, renders that path more sweet and peaceful, and communicates activity and energy to the soul. If man is free, there remains something great and terrible, even in his crime, in his punishment, and even in the despair of hell. What is man deprived of liberty and yet punished? What is the meaning of this absurd proposition, a chief dogma of the founders of Protestantism? This man is a weak and miserable victim, in whose torture a cruel omnipotence delights; a God who has created him in order to see him suffer; a tyrant

with infinite power, that is, the most dreadful of monsters. But if man is free, when he suffers, he suffers because he has deserved it; and if we contemplate him in the midst of despair, plunged into an ocean of horrors, his brow furrowed by the just lightnings of the Eternal, we seem to hear him still pronounce those terrible words with a haughty bearing and proud look, *non serviam, I will not obey*.

In man, as in the universe, all is wonderfully united; all the faculties of man have delicate and intimate relations with each other, and the movement of one chord in the soul makes all the others vibrate. It is necessary to call attention to this reciprocal dependence of all our faculties on each other, in order to anticipate an objection which may be made. We shall be told, all that has been said only proves that Catholicity has developed the individual in a mystical sense. No, the observations which I have made show something more than this; they prove that we owe to Catholicity the clear idea and lively feeling of moral order in all its greatness and beauty; they prove that we owe her the real strength of what we call conscience, and that if the individual believes himself to be called to a mighty destiny, confided to his own free will, and the care of which belongs entirely to him, it is to Catholicity he owes that belief; they prove that Catholicity has given man the true knowledge which he has of himself, the appreciation of his dignity, the respect which is paid to him as man; they prove that she has developed in our souls the germs of the noblest and most generous feelings; for she has raised



our thoughts by the loftiest conceptions, dilated our hearts by the assurance of a liberty which nothing can take away, by the promise of an infinite reward, eternal happiness, while she leaves in our hands life and death, and makes us in a certain manner the arbiters of our own destiny. In all this there is more than mere mysticism; it is nothing less than the development of the entire man; nothing less than the true, the only noble, just, and reasonable individuality; nothing less than the collected powerful impulses which urge the individual towards perfection in every sense; it is nothing less than the first, the most indispensable, the most fruitful element of real civilization.

# **CHAPTER XXIV.**

## **OF THE FAMILY. – MONOGAMY.**

### **– INDISSOLUBILITY OF**

### **THE CONJUGAL TIE**

WE have seen what the individual owes to Catholicity; let us now see what the family owes her. It is clear that the individual, being the first element of the family, if it is Catholicity which has tended to perfect him, the improvement of the family will thus have been very much her work; but without insisting on this inference, I wish to consider the conjugal tie in itself, for which purpose it is necessary to call attention to woman. I will not repeat here what she was among the Romans, and what she is still among the nations who are not Christians; history, and still more the literature of Greece and Rome, afford us sad or rather shameful proofs on this subject; and all the nations of the earth offer us too many evidences of the truth and exactness of the observation of Buchanan, viz. that wherever Christianity does not prevail, there is a tendency to the degradation of woman. Perhaps on this point Protestantism will be unwilling to give way to Catholicity; it will assert that in all that affects woman the Reformation has in no degree prejudiced the civilization of Europe. We will not now inquire what evils Protestantism

has occasioned in this respect; this question will be discussed in another part of the work; but it cannot be doubted, that when Protestantism appeared, the Catholic religion had already completed its task as far as woman is concerned. No one, indeed, is ignorant that the respect and consideration which are given to women, and the influence which they exercise on society, date further back than the first part of the 16th century. Hence it follows that Catholicity cannot have had Protestantism as a coadjutor; it acted entirely alone in this point, one of the most important of all true civilization; and if it is generally acknowledged that Christianity has placed woman in the rank which properly belongs to her, and which is most conducive to the good of the family and of society, this is a homage paid to Catholicity; for at the time when woman was raised from abjection, when it was attempted to restore her to the rank of companion of man, as worthy of him, those dissenting sects that also called themselves Christians did not exist, and there was no other Christianity than the Catholic Church.

It has been already remarked in the course of this work, that when I give titles and honours to Catholicity, I avoid having recourse to vague generalities, and endeavour to support my assertions by facts. The reader will naturally expect me to do the same here, and to point out to him what are the means which Catholicity has employed to give respect and dignity to woman; he shall not be deceived in his expectation. First, and before descending to details, we must observe that the grand ideas of

Christianity with respect to humanity must have contributed, in an extraordinary manner, to the improvement of the lot of woman. These ideas, which applied without any difference to woman as well as to man, were an energetic protest against the state of degradation in which one-half of the human race was placed. The Christian doctrine made the existing prejudices against woman vanish for ever; it made her equal to man by unity of origin and destiny, and in the participation of the heavenly gifts; it enrolled her in the universal brotherhood of man, with his fellows and with Jesus Christ; it considered her as the child of God, the coheirress of Jesus Christ; as the companion of man, and no longer as a slave and the vile instrument of pleasure. Henceforth that philosophy which had attempted to degrade her, was silenced; that unblushing literature which treated women with so much insolence found a check in the Christian precepts, and a reprimand no less eloquent than severe in the dignified manner in which all the ecclesiastical writers, in imitation of the Scriptures, expressed themselves on woman. Yet, in spite of the beneficent influence which the Christian doctrines must have exercised by themselves, the desired end would not have been completely attained, had not the Church undertaken, with the warmest energy, to accomplish a work the most necessary, the most indispensable for the good organization of the family and society, I mean the reformation of marriage. The Christian doctrine on this point is very simple: *one with one exclusively, and for ever*. But the doctrine would have been powerless, if

the Church had not undertaken to apply it, and if she had not carried on this task with invincible firmness; for the passions, above all those of man, rebel against such a doctrine; and they would undoubtedly have trodden it under foot, if they had not met with an insurmountable barrier, which did not leave them the most distant hope of triumph. Can Protestantism, which applauded with such senseless joy the scandal of Henry VIII., and accommodated itself so basely to the desires of the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, boast of having contributed to strengthen that barrier? What a surprising difference! During many centuries, amid circumstances the most various, and sometimes the most terrible, the Catholic Church struggles with intrepidity against the passions of potentates, to maintain unsullied the sanctity of marriage. Neither promises nor threats could move Rome; no means could obtain from her any thing contrary to the instructions of her Divine Master: Protestantism, at the first shock, or rather at the first shadow of the slightest embarrassment, at the mere fear of displeasing a prince who certainly was not very powerful, yields, humbles itself, consents to polygamy, betrays its own conscience, opens a wide door to the passions, and gives up to them the sanctity of marriage, the first pledge for the good of the family, the foundation-stone of true civilization.

Protestant society on this point, wiser than the miscalled reformers who attempted to guide it, with admirable good sense repudiated the consequences of the conduct of its chiefs;

although it did not preserve the doctrines of Catholicity, it at least followed the salutary impulse which it had received from them, and polygamy was not established in Europe. But history records facts which show the weakness of the pretended reformation, and the vivifying power of Catholicity. It tells us to whom it is owing that the law of marriage, that palladium of society, was not falsified, perverted, destroyed, amid the barbarous ages, amid the most fearful corruption, violence, and ferocity, which prevailed everywhere, as well at the time when invading nations passed pell-mell over Europe, as in that of feudality, and when the power of kings had already been preponderant, — history will tell what tutelary force prevented the torrent of sensuality from overflowing with all its violence, with all its caprices, from bringing about the most profound disorganization, from corrupting the character of European civilization, and precipitating it into that fearful abyss in which the nations of Asia have been for so many centuries.

Prejudiced writers have carefully searched the annals of ecclesiastical history for the differences between popes and kings, and have taken occasion therein to reproach the Court of Rome with its intolerant obstinacy respecting the sanctity of marriage; if the spirit of party had not blinded them, they would have understood that, if this intolerant obstinacy had been relaxed for a moment, if the Roman Pontiff had given way one step before the impetuosity of the passions, this first step once made, the descent into the abyss would have

been rapid; they would have admired the spirit of truth, the deep conviction, the lively faith with which that august see is animated; no consideration, no fear, has been able to silence her, when she had occasion to remind all, and especially kings and potentates, of this commandment: "They shall be two in one flesh; man shall not separate what God has joined." By showing themselves inflexible on this point, even at the risk of the anger of kings, not only have the popes performed the sacred duty which was imposed on them by their august character as chiefs of Christianity, but they have executed a political *chef d'œuvre*, and greatly contributed to the repose and well-being of nations. "For," says Voltaire, "the marriages of princes in Europe decide the destiny of nations; and never has there been a court entirely devoted to debauchery, without producing revolutions and rebellions." (*Essai sur l'Histoire générale*, t. iii. c. 101.)

This correct remark of Voltaire will suffice to vindicate the pope, together with Catholicity, from the calumnies of their wretched detractors: it becomes still more valuable, and acquires an immense importance, if it is extended beyond the limits of the political order to the social. The imagination is affrighted at the thought of what would have happened, if these barbarous kings, in whom the splendor of the purple ill disguised the sons of the forest, if those haughty seigneurs, fortified in their castles, clothed in mail, and surrounded by their timid vassals, had not found a check in the authority of the Church; if at the first glance at a new beauty, if at the first passion which, when enkindled

in their hearts, would have inspired them with a disgust for their legitimate spouses, they had not had the always-present recollection of an inflexible authority. They could, it is true, load a bishop with vexations; they could silence him with threats or promises; they might control the votes of a particular Council by violence, by intrigue, by subornation; but, in the distance, the power of the Vatican, the shadow of the Sovereign Pontiff, appeared to them like an alarming vision; they then lost all hope; all struggles became useless; the most violent endeavors would never have given them the victory; the most astute intrigues, the most humble entreaties, would have obtained the same reply: "One with one only, and for ever."

If we read but the history of the middle ages, of that immense scene of violence, where the barbarian, striving to break the bonds which civilization attempted to impose on him, appears so vividly; if we recollect that the Church was obliged to keep guard incessantly and vigilantly, not only to prevent the ties of a marriage from being broken, but even to preserve virgins (and even those who were dedicated to God) from violence; we shall clearly see that, if she had not opposed herself, as a wall of brass, to the torrent of sensuality, the palaces of kings and the castles of seigneurs would have speedily become their seraglios and harems. What would have happened in the other classes? They would have followed the same course; and the women of Europe would have remained in the state of degradation in which the Mussulman women still are. As I have mentioned the



followers of Mohammed, I will reply in passing to those who pretend to explain monogamy and polygamy by climate alone. Christians and Mohammedans have been for a long time under the same sky, and their religions have been established, by the vicissitudes of the two races, sometimes in cold and sometimes in mild and temperate climates; and yet we have not seen the religions accommodate themselves to the climates; but rather, the climates have been, as it were, forced to bend to the religions. European nations owe eternal gratitude to Catholicity, which has preserved monogamy for them, one of the causes which undoubtedly have contributed the most to the good organization of the family, and the exaltation of woman. What would now be the condition of Europe, what respect would woman now enjoy, if Luther, the founder of Protestantism, had succeeded in inspiring society with the indifference which he shows on this point in his commentary on Genesis? "As to whether we may have several wives," says Luther, "the authority of the patriarchs leaves us completely free." He afterwards adds that *"it is a thing neither permitted nor prohibited, and that he does not decide any thing thereupon."* Unhappy Europe! if a man, who had whole nations as followers, had uttered such words some centuries earlier, at the time when civilization had not yet received an impulse strong enough to make it take a decided line on the most important points, in spite of false doctrines. Unhappy Europe! if at the time when Luther wrote, manners had not been already formed, if the good organization given to the

family by Catholicity had not been too deeply rooted to be torn up by the hand of man. Certainly the scandal of the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel would not then have remained an isolated example, and the culpable compliance of the Lutheran doctors would have produced bitter fruits. What would that vacillating faith, that uncertainty, that cowardice with which the Protestant Church was seen to tremble at the mere demand of such a prince as the Landgrave, have availed, to control the fierce impetuosity of barbarous and corrupted nations? How would a struggle, lasting for ages, have been sustained by those who, at the first menace of battle, gave way, and were routed before the shock?

Besides monogamy, it may be said that there is nothing more important than the indissolubility of marriage. Those who, departing from the doctrine of the Church, think that it is useful in certain cases to allow divorce, so as to dissolve the conjugal tie, and permit each of the parties to marry again, still will not deny that they regard divorce as a dangerous remedy, which the legislator only avails himself of with regret, and only on account of crime or faithlessness; they will see, also, that a great number of divorces would produce very great evils, and that in order to prevent these in countries where the civil laws allow the abuse of divorce, it is necessary to surround this permission with all imaginable precaution; they will consequently grant that the most efficacious manner of preventing corruption of manners, of guarantying the tranquillity of families, and of opposing a firm barrier to the torrent of evils which is ready to inundate society,

is to establish the indissolubility of marriage as a moral principle, to base it upon motives which exercise a powerful ascendancy over the heart, and to keep a constant restraint on the passions, to prevent them from slipping down so dangerous a declivity. It is clear that there is no work more worthy of being the object of the care and zeal of the true religion. Now, what religion but the Catholic has fulfilled this duty? What other religion has more perfectly accomplished so salutary and difficult a task? Certainly not Protestantism, for it did not even know how to penetrate the depth of the reasons which guided the conduct of the Church on this point. I have taken care to do justice in another place to the wisdom which Protestant society has displayed in not giving itself up entirely to the impulse which its chiefs wished to communicate to it. But it must not be supposed from this that Protestant doctrines have not had lamentable consequences in countries calling themselves reformed. Let us hear what a Protestant lady, Madame de Staël, says in her book on Germany, speaking of a country which she loves and admires: "Love," she says, "is a religion in Germany, but a poetical religion which tolerates very freely all that sensibility can excuse. It cannot be denied that in the Protestant provinces the facility of divorce is injurious to the sanctity of marriage. *They change husbands as quietly as if they were arranging the incidents of a drama*: the good nature of the man and woman prevents the mixture of any bitterness with their easy ruptures; and as there is among the Germans more imagination than real passion, the most curious

events take place with singular tranquillity. Yet it is thus that manners and characters lose all consistency; the paradoxical spirit destroys the most sacred institutions, and there are no well established rules on any subject." (*De l'Allemagne*, p. 1, c. 3.) Misled by their hatred against the Roman Church, and excited by their rage for innovation in all things, the Protestants thought they had made a great reform in secularizing marriage, if I may so speak, and in rejecting the Catholic doctrine, which declared it a real sacrament. This is not the place to enter upon a dogmatical discussion of this matter; I shall content myself with observing, that by depriving marriage of the august seal of a sacrament, Protestantism showed that it had little knowledge of the human heart. To consider marriage, not as a simple civil contract, but as a real sacrament, was to place it under the august shade of religion, and to raise it above the stormy atmosphere of the passions; and who can doubt that this was absolutely necessary to restrain the most active, capricious, and violent passion of the heart of man? The civil laws are insufficient to produce such an effect. Motives are required, which, being drawn from a higher source, exert a more efficacious influence. The Protestant doctrine overturned the power of the Church with respect to marriage, and gave up matters of this kind exclusively to the civil power. Some one will perhaps think that the increase of the secular power on this point could not but serve the cause of civilization, and that to drive the ecclesiastical authority from this ground was a magnificent triumph gained over exploded

prejudices, a valuable victory over unjust usurpation. Deluded man! If your mind possessed any lofty thought, if your heart felt the vibration of those harmonious chords which display the passions of man with so much delicacy and exactness, and teach the best means of directing them, you would see, you would feel, that to place marriage under the mantle of religion, and to withdraw it as much as possible from profane interference, was to purify, to embellish, and to surround it with the most enchanting beauty; for thus is that precious treasure, which is blasted by a look, and tarnished by the slightest breath, inviolably preserved. Would you not wish to have the nuptial bed veiled and strictly guarded by religion?

## CHAPTER XXV. OF THE PASSION OF LOVE

But it will be said to Catholics, "Do you not see that your doctrines are too hard and rigorous? They do not consider the weakness and inconstancy of the human heart, and require sacrifices above its strength. Is it not cruel to attempt to subject the most tender affections, the most delicate feelings, to the rigor of a principle? Cruel doctrine, which endeavors to hold together, bound to each other by a fatal tie, those who no longer love, who feel a mutual disgust, who perhaps hate each other with a profound hatred! When you answer these two beings who long to be separated, who would rather die than remain united, with an eternal Never, showing them the divine seal which was placed upon their union at the solemn moment, do you not forget all the rules of prudence? Is not this to provoke despair? Protestantism, accommodating itself to our infirmity, accedes more easily to the demands, sometimes of caprice, but often also of weakness; its indulgence is a thousand times preferable to your rigor." This requires an answer; it is necessary to remove the delusion which produces these arguments, too apt, unhappily, to mislead the judgment, because they begin by seducing the heart. In the first place, it is an exaggeration to say that the Catholic system reduces unhappy couples to the extremity of despair. There are cases

in which prudence requires that they should separate, and then neither the doctrines nor the practice of the Catholic Church oppose the separation. It is true that this does not dissolve the conjugal tie, and that neither of the parties can marry again. But it cannot be said that one of them is subject to tyranny, they are not compelled to live together, consequently they do not suffer the intolerable torment of remaining united when they abhor each other. Very well, we shall be told, the separation being pronounced, the parties are freed from the punishment of living together; but they cannot contract new ties, consequently they are forbidden to gratify another passion which, perhaps, their heart conceals, and which may have been the cause of the disgust or the hatred whence arose the unhappiness or discord of their first union. Why not consider the marriage as altogether dissolved? Why should not the parties become entirely free? Permit them to obey the feelings of their hearts, which, newly fixed on another object, already foresee happier days. Here, no doubt, the answer seems difficult, and the force of the difficulty becomes urgent; but, nevertheless, it is here that Catholicity obtains the most signal triumph; it is here it clearly shows how profound is its knowledge of the heart of man, how prudent its doctrines, and how wise and provident its conduct. Its rigor, which seems excessive, is only necessary severity; this conduct, far from meriting the reproach of cruelty, is a guarantee for the repose and well-being of man. But it is a thing which it is difficult to understand at first sight; thus we are compelled to develop this

matter by entering into a profound examination of the principles which justify by the light of reason the conduct pursued by the Catholic Church; let us examine this conduct, not only in respect to marriage, but in all that relates to the direction of the heart of man.

In the direction of the passions there are two systems, the one of compliance, the other of resistance. In the first of these they are yielded to as they advance; an invincible obstacle is never opposed to them; they are never left without hope. A line is traced around them which, it is true, prevents them from exceeding a certain boundary; but they are given to understand that if they come to place their foot upon this limit, it will retire a little further; so that the compliance is in proportion to the energy and obstinacy of their demands. In the second system, a line is equally marked out to the passions which they cannot pass; but it is a line fixed, immovable, and everywhere guarded by a wall of brass. In vain do they attempt to pass it; they have not even the shadow of hope; the principle which resists them will never change, will never consent to any kind of compromise. Therefore, no resource remains but to take that course which is always open to man, that of sin. The first system allows the fire to break out, to prevent an explosion; the second hinders the beginning of it, in the fear of being compelled to arrest its progress. In the first, the passions are feared and regulated at their birth, and hopes of restraining them when they have grown up are entertained; in the second, it is thought that, if it is difficult to



restrain them when they are feeble, it will be still more so when they are strengthened. In the one, they act on the supposition that the passions are weakened by indulgence; in the other, it is believed that gratification, far from satiating, only renders them every day more devouring.

It may be said, generally speaking, that Catholicity follows the second of these systems; that is to say, with respect to the passions, her constant rule is to check them at the first step, to deprive them of all hope from the first, and to stifle them, if possible, in their cradle. It must be observed, that we speak here of the severity with respect to the passions themselves, not with respect to man, who is their prey; it is very consistent to give no truce to passion, and to be indulgent towards the person under its influence; to be inexorable towards the offence, and to treat the offender with extreme mildness. With respect to marriage, this system has been acted on by Catholicity with astonishing firmness; Protestantism has taken the opposite course. Both are agreed on this point, that divorce, followed by the dissolution of the conjugal tie, is a very great evil; but there is this difference between them, that the Catholic system does not leave even the hope of a conjuncture in which this dissolution will be permitted; it forbids it absolutely, without any restriction; it declares it impossible: the Protestant system, on the contrary, consents to it in certain cases. Protestantism does not possess the divine seal which guaranties the perpetuity of marriage, and renders it sacred and inviolable; Catholicity does possess this

seal, impresses it on the mysterious tie, and from that moment marriage remains under the shadow of an august symbol. Which of the two religions is the most prudent in this point? Which acts with the most wisdom? To answer this question, let us lay aside the dogmatical reasons, and the intrinsical morality of the human actions which form the subject of the laws which we are now examining; and let us see which of the two systems is the most conducive to the difficult task of managing and directing the passions. After having considered the nature of the human heart, and consulted the experience of every day, it may be affirmed that the best way to repress a passion is to leave it without hope; to comply with it, to allow it continual indulgences, is to excite it more and more; it is to play with fire amid a heap of combustibles, by allowing the flame to be lit, from time to time, in the vain confidence of being always able to put out the conflagration. Let us take a rapid glance at the most violent passions of the heart of man, and observe what is their ordinary course, according to the system which is pursued in their regard. Look at the gambler, who is ruled by an indefinable restlessness, which is made up of an insatiable cupidity and an unbounded prodigality, at the same time. The most enormous fortune will not satisfy him; and yet he risks all, without hesitation, to the hazard of a moment. The man who still dreams of immense treasures amid the most fearful misery, restlessly pursues an object which resembles gold, but which is not it, for the possession thereof does not satisfy him. His heart can only exist amid uncertainty,

chances, and perils. Suspended between hope and fear, he seems to be pleased with the rapid succession of lively emotions which unceasingly agitate and torment him. What remedy will cure this malady – this devouring fever? Will you recommend to him a system of compliance? will you tell him to gamble, but only to a certain amount, at certain times, and in certain places? What will you gain by this? Nothing at all. If these means were good for any thing, there would be no gambler in the world who would not be cured of his passion; for there is no one who has not often marked out for himself these limits, and often said to himself, "You shall only play till such an hour, in such a place, and to such an amount." What is the effect of these palliations – of these impotent precautions – on the unhappy gambler? That he miserably deceives himself. The passion consents, only in order to gain strength, and the better to secure the victory: thus it gains ground; it constantly enlarges its sphere; and leads its victim again into the same, or into greater excesses. Do you wish to make a radical cure? If there be a remedy, it must be to abstain completely; a remedy which may appear difficult at first, but will be found the easiest in practice. When the passion finds itself deprived of all hope, it will begin to diminish, and in the end will disappear. No man of experience will raise the least doubt as to the truth of what I have said; every one will agree with me, that the only way to destroy the formidable passion of gambling is to deprive it at once of all food, to leave it without hope.

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