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Aristotle, that many improbable things will happen.<sup>1</sup> Is it not, after all, the "spiritual discernment" which we need, discernment to receive those things revealed and narrated in the Scripture of Truth, not the things only which our inner consciousness selects?



## The Decay of the Church of Rome.

By ARTHUR GALTON, M.A.

**E**XACTLY a year ago, in the *CHURCHMAN* for October, 1908, the present writer was discussing the Eucharistic Congress in London. In the course of his article he surveyed the general conditions of the Roman Catholic Church through the nineteenth century, drawing attention more particularly to that revival of ultramontaniam which followed the restoration of Pius VII. in 1814, and which was an almost inevitable reaction after the revolutionary excesses. The methods of the Holy Alliance were applied to the Churches of Europe as well as to the governments, to the elective Papacy as well as to the legitimist and hereditary dynasties. In secular administration this narrow policy failed almost as quickly as it deserved. The spirit of liberty and the growing sense of nationality were both fatal to it. Absolutism was irretrievably shattered in 1830; and, except for Prussia, it vanished from the larger States in 1848; for Russia and Turkey may be put aside, one as non-Christian, and the other as only semi-European. The evolution of the Churches, however, was precisely opposite. Absolutism, instead of declining in them, progressed, until it culminated in the definition of 1870. The principles which triumphed then have been applied with arrogant and pitiless logic during the half-century that has elapsed, and they have now produced the inevitable effects of autocracy and over-centralization. In the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by the Metropolitan of India in his "Notes on the Higher Criticism."

spheres of thought and of politics the Papacy declared war against modern society by the syllabus of 1864; but, as might have been expected, it has merely alienated the progressive nations from the Church. Nor is this the full extent of the evil, for the Church has not only lost in membership and in external influence, but it has suffered, and is suffering grievously, within itself. The bureaucracy of the Vatican has so usurped upon the local administrations that the episcopate only survives as an empty name. A Roman bishop no longer has any initiative or any administrative independence. He is not the head, but merely the figure-head, of his diocese. He is only a papal delegate, a representative of the Universal Bishop, holding his office by the grace of the Apostolic See, and subject to its capricious favour. National assemblies or large gatherings of bishops are not encouraged, and when they do meet the *agenda* of their business is prearranged in Rome. The only genuine episcopal functions which remain to them are the duty of confirming and the mechanical transmission of Orders; and even the exercise of their own Orders depends now on a Faculty which must be issued, and may be withdrawn, by Rome. Never was a venerable name so miserably degraded as by this transformation of ancient and responsible officials into phantoms. The results of this method of government are that virility has decayed throughout the papal system, and the Papacy itself is busily killing Roman Catholicism. For the evil extends downwards, and broadens as it descends. The parochial clergy are subjected to their bishops, as the episcopate is to the Papacy. As I expressed it last year, in the concluding words of my article, the Roman Catholic Church is "absolutely prostrate under the benumbing hand of Rome."

Since these words were written the whole question of Roman Catholic numbers has been examined most carefully by Mr. Joseph McCabe, and he has now published his conclusions in a volume which he has entitled "The Decay of the Church of Rome." This title indicates with sufficient clearness the conclusion which he has reached, and the contents of his volume

justify the thesis which he places before his readers. Everybody is aware, more or less, of the stupendous numbers which are assigned popularly to the Roman Catholic Church, and which are not only accepted, but vaunted, by its professional apologists. These numbers vary from 250,000,000 to 270,000,000. A recent estimate, indeed, has even soared up to 353,000,000. If these calculations were anywhere near the truth, Romanists would far outnumber all other Christians. That at one time was undoubtedly the case, for after the first enthusiasm the Reformation ebbed; the Catholic Reaction triumphed, and won back for Rome a great deal that had been lost. By the end of the Thirty Years' War, England, Scotland, Scandinavia, Holland, with parts of Switzerland and of North Germany, were all that remained of the Protestant countries. There was a Protestant minority in France, which was soon to be expelled; and Protestantism was practically exterminated in Italy, in Spain, and throughout the various dominions of Austria. France in the west, and the Holy Roman Empire in the east, dominated Europe; while the Spanish Monarchy was enormous in area, and still had the appearance of being strong. French and Spanish colonies extended over both American continents; and such European influences as then existed in Asia were in Catholic hands. The gains of the Papacy in the New World more than counterbalanced its losses in the Old. Not only were all the greatest Powers actually Catholic, but the future, with all its possibilities, seemed to be in the hands of the Papacy. Even so late as the eighteenth century a volume could be written to show that Protestantism was a failure, not only in religion, but in politics, and in all other social concerns. But since the argument of Balmez was constructed, the relative positions of Protestantism and of Catholicism have been reversed. "Rome has now far less than 200,000,000 followers," says Mr. McCabe; "the Protestant Churches have some 300,000,000;" and, besides Protestants, there are many millions of Oriental Christians who do not accept, and never have accepted, the claims of Rome or the jurisdiction of the Papacy.

Nevertheless, one hears continually about the growth and spread of Romanism as compared with other Christian bodies, especially in those countries which used to be regarded as exclusively or predominantly Protestant. But the assertion of relative growth is as fallacious as the claim to overwhelming numbers, and it melts away under a cool examination of the facts. Mr. McCabe has examined all the ascertainable facts with commendable thoroughness, and he has analyzed them with remarkable skill. His survey includes the whole world in which Roman Catholicism exists. For convenience and clearness he arranges the Papal Church under three broad classifications: The Latin world, which includes France, Italy, Portugal and Spain, and their American descendants; the English-speaking world, which contains Great Britain with its colonies and dependencies, and the United States; the Germanic nations, which include the Prussian confederation, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, and Holland. Russia is considered separately, and missionary countries are regarded as belonging to one or other of the previous divisions. Thus the whole ground is covered; and Mr. McCabe's censorial method is far more comprehensive than the decree of Caesar Augustus, for the Roman Church even now is more extensive than was the Roman Empire.

He points out, as he begins, that the inflated estimates to which we have been used are only obtained by enumerating the whole population of certain countries, such as France, which were once Catholic in reality, but are now only Catholic in theory. He sets to work, therefore, to analyze these figures; and to arrive, if possible, at some definite conclusion about them. It is admitted, even by Romanist authorities, that there is in all countries a very serious difference between reality and theory, between the popular estimates of nominal Catholics and the actual numbers of those who practise their religion and support their Church. The only serious controversy, then, should be as to the amount of this difference. Let us take a definite case, and the most important of all, namely France, for which, as Mr. McCabe says, "we can make a fairly precise determination

of the fortunes of the Church of Rome. Within half a century it has fallen from the position of a Church of 30,000,000 in a population of 36,000,000, to a shrunken body of (at the most) 6,000,000 in a population of 39,000,000." Mr. McCabe's estimate is not mere guesswork or sectarian assertion. He tests his figures by the statistics of religious marriages, birth-rates, Church-attendance and accommodation, the numbers of the clergy as compared with estimates of laity, the returns of Easter duties, educational reports, the analysis of political votes, and the amount of political influence which is exercised by the clerical parties. He owns frankly that in this matter official returns are usually both deceptive and defective, and that a religious census is the least reliable of all official statements. Allowing for the uncertainties in official returns, though by no means ignoring them, by working his calculations along the various lines which have just been indicated, by applying every ascertainable test to a very complicated and elusive matter, he always reaches the same general conclusion, and on this he bases his argument for each individual country, that is for every national Church within the Papal obedience.

To return to the particular case of France, many other observers, both native and foreign, clericals and anti-clericals, have reached very similar conclusions. Everyone admits that France is no longer predominantly Catholic. The only controverted fact is the size of the Catholic minority. Some calculators put it at 8,000,000. M. Paul Sabatier, whose opinion is always to be respected, puts it as low as 4,000,000. Mr. McCabe's estimate is half-way between the two, and therefore it may be regarded as safe, or, at any rate, as not too low. And some such estimate is borne out irresistibly by an analysis of French politics. Neither the number of clerical deputies nor the amount of Catholic influence postulates a larger proportion of voting power; and it must be remembered also that the Catholic vote is swelled artificially by the votes of political reactionaries who work with the clericals, and utilize them, without themselves having any genuine Catholic sympathies or

beliefs. It is highly probable that the Pope has not anything like 4,000,000 convinced and effective adherents left in France. If he had had even a respectable minority, Separation would probably not have been proposed, and certainly would not have been carried, as it was, with absolute tranquillity, not to say indifference. Pius IX. could disturb the population and coerce governments ; it is clear that Pius X. can do neither, in spite of his more centralized administration and his ubiquitous Press : and the moral is obvious. French Catholicism is a negligible quantity ; and there is a strong presumption, from undeniable facts, that Mr. McCabe's estimates with regard to France are not very far from the truth.

We cannot follow him through all the countries, but we take France as a typical instance, and also because it is the foremost Latin country, whose example is likely to be imitated by the others. To sum up : " Catholic countries are disappearing from the map of the world." " France is more effectively lost than Germany was in the sixteenth century." " In mind and heart the nation has turned definitely away from Rome, and the fault is largely Rome's."

Similar reasonings and methods are applied to all the other countries, and invariably with similar results, though the balance of loss is far greater in France than anywhere else. In the United States to a large extent, and in South America to a less extent, immigration has to be considered, as well as the other elements of the problem. It has been forgotten by many effusive writers that every million added to American Romanism implies an equal loss in some European country ; in Ireland, in Italy, in Germany, as the case may be. But, even with these enormous exterior and artificial accessions, Romanism is not holding its own in the United States. It is decreasing proportionately ; and the leakage from it is even more enormous than the growths from immigration and the birth-rate. In Germany, too, there is a steady relative decrease as compared with the general population. In both these cases the problem is deeply interesting, and the conclusion is not in accordance

with prevailing opinion. Mr. McCabe may be mistaken in details, but we think his general position is unassailable. We must, however, leave his readers to examine the whole matter fully for themselves.

For we must now occupy ourselves with England, which is our chief concern. And here Mr. McCabe's conclusions will be most surprising. "Apart from France," he says, "the Roman Catholic Church has lost more heavily in the English-speaking world than it has done in the Latin world." He estimates the English Romanists at 100,000 in 1800, out of a population of about 10,000,000. Since then the general population has quadrupled, so that English Romanists, apart from immigration, should number about 400,000. But, since the last quarter of the eighteenth century, at least 1,000,000 Irish, besides many hundred thousands of other Roman Catholics, have migrated into this country; and their natural increase must be allowed for, too, if we would understand what the Roman Catholic population of England should be. According to the normal rate of increase, and not allowing for conversions, it should amount to between 3,000,000 and 4,000,000. As a matter of fact, it numbers only some 1,200,000 in England and Wales. The leakage is manifestly disastrous, and completely swamps any small and dubious gain from conversions. But the stream of converts has ebbed significantly, both in quality and numbers, since the middle of last century.

Compared to what it should be, English Romanism presents a shortage of about 2,000,000 since 1850. "The clergy now know," says Mr. McCabe grimly, "that they are fighting a stern fight to preserve, not to extend, their domain in England." The absolute increase from 100,000 in 1800 to 1,200,000 in 1900 may seem alarming, or striking, or triumphant, according to the prepossessions of the inquirer; but there is nothing "miraculous" about it when we realize that there has been an immigration of perhaps 1,500,000 during this period. Both in itself, and as compared with the general population, English Romanism has lost heavily during the nineteenth century.



Ireland has lost even more heavily through emigration ; and the loss to the Church in the United States by the lapse or neglect of these emigrants and their descendants is on a far greater scale. Similar conclusions, on a smaller scale, are forced upon us when we examine the statistics of Australasia and Canada. For the whole British Empire Mr. McCabe gives a Roman Catholic population of 9,570,000, including about 1,500,000 natives in Ceylon and India. The total population of the Empire is estimated at 392,846,835.

Throughout the world Mr. McCabe reckons the papal Church at 190,000,000. This includes over 2,000,000 for foreign missions. It may be said that 190,000,000 people are a solid fact not easily explained away, and that is true ; but it is always useful to analyze facts if we wish to ascertain their value. Mr. McCabe points out : First, that one quarter, at least, of all the Romanists in the world are in the Spanish American States ; that the majority of them are wholly illiterate ; and that vast numbers are savages in the lowest stages of civilization. Secondly, out of the 190,000,000 at least 120,000,000 are illiterates. They have little influence, then, on the progress of the world. This gives us a more or less effective remainder of some 70,000,000 to be divided among all the nations. If we count half of these as technically "infants," non-citizens (and this is far too low an estimate), we have remaining 35,000,000 ; and we must divide these again into men and women. If we admit that half are men, which is too high a proportion, and that all these men are both practising Catholics and effective citizens, we have a voting-power of about 17,000,000 distributed through all the States. It is not much ; and if we give to France its due proportion, as estimated by its general population and the presumed number of Catholics, we shall find that the analysis of political results during the last forty years tends to bear out this deduction.

By a similar mode of reckoning the Catholic vote in England would work out somewhere not far from 300,000, distributed very unequally through all the constituencies. It

seems obvious that our politicians and the Press are far too deferential to this handful of people, whose clamour is out of all proportion to their strength. The Catholics of London are estimated at 120,000; and Mr. McCabe adds significantly that in the whole English-speaking world there are probably not 1,000,000 Romanists of Anglo-Saxon blood.

To sum up, he says that the Roman Church, since the middle of last century, so far from progressing, has lost nearly a third of its dominion: that is, it is short of what it should be by some 80,000,000. "The process of decay has been increasingly accelerated of late years." "The Church of Rome is rapidly decaying, and only a dramatic change in its whole character can save it from ruin." "Fully 80 per cent. of the actual supporters of the Vatican belong to the illiterate masses of the population;" and, as education spreads, allegiance to the Vatican tends to disappear.

I pointed out last year that it was easy "to collect a vast assemblage, to make a striking show, to organize a gorgeous pageant"; easy, also, to manufacture an artificial grievance out of the bungling of a singularly obtuse Home Secretary. But, I asked, behind the Cardinals and Prelates, who were then assembled, what population is there, what forces, what vitality, what progress do they represent? Mr. McCabe has now answered some of these questions, or, at any rate, he has given us a clue for answering them. The value of his book is that he enables us to know, more clearly than we have known before, both the problems and the forces with which we have to reckon.

The Church of Rome is not unlike some of the Roman churches. It has an imposing and highly-decorated façade with a very mean and rickety building behind it, and that building generally deserted. It is very significant that the motto of the next Pope is *Religio Depopulata*. The Church certainly loses in numbers. It will lose even more rapidly and disastrously in learning if the present policy continues. I began by pointing out the political and administrative absolutism which led up to the Vatican decree, and so to the disasters which have

resulted from it. I cannot end without speaking of the intellectual tyranny which the present Pontiff is establishing, and which is only a further logical application of Roman absolutist theories, but which in the end will be more disastrous to the Papacy than any other of its previous mistakes. This matter is treated fully and clearly in the *Contemporary Review* for September, and I wish to draw attention most particularly to its valuable and illuminating article on Roman Imperialism.



### Ruskin's Grave.

By E. H. BLAKENEY, M.A.

CLOSER than, in life, I stood,  
 Here beside thee, dead, I stand ;  
 At my feet the sunlit lake,  
 Slumbering hills on either hand.

Past thy grave the multitudes—  
 Idle gazers—come and go,  
 Marvelling at the cross that stands  
 Guardian of the bones below.

Spirit, if in realms unknown  
 Thou art mindful of this place  
 Where of old thy footsteps ranged,  
 Where of old thou lovedst to trace

Secrets of the lowly field,  
 Splendours of the inviolate cloud,  
 Witchery of the woods when Eve  
 Casts her raiment like a shroud

O'er the world—ah ! can it be  
 That, within thine orb of calm,  
 Some far thrill of earthly things  
 Dares intrude ? some sweet alarm ?