

**THE ROMAN
CHURCH AND
MODERN SOCIETY**

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The Roman Church and Modern Society by E. Quinet & C. Edwards Lester

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E. QUINET & C. EDWARDS LESTER

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ROMAN CHURCH
AND
MODERN SOCIETY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF PROF. E. QUINET,
OF THE COLLEGE OF FRANCE.

EDITED BY
C. EDWARDS LESTER.

NEW YORK:
GATES & STEDMAN, 114 WILLIAM STREET.

1845.

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to the Catholic Church, ...

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PREFACE.



THE Author of this work, M. Quinet, holds the Professorship of the Literature of the South of Europe, in the College of France. In the progress of his course he has been led to examine into the effects and condition of the Roman Church at the present day, and the present work is merely a publication of his Lectures on that subject. The book has excited a very extraordinary degree of attention all over Europe. And no doubt, though prohibited in Italy, as well it might be, it has found its way even into that oppressed and down-trodden land, and is silently producing its effects there.

In France, where a strong religious feeling is springing up of late years, a feeling which the Jesuits have endeavored to avail themselves of for their own purposes, this work has exerted a most salutary influence. By delineating the Roman Church as it actually is, by showing the spirit which actuates it, and the hands that direct it, and by the contrast he draws between these and the true spirit of Christianity, the true Catholicism, M. Quinet has ren-

Tuttle 12 Dec 1952

dered a service to the cause of Religion in France which cannot be estimated too highly.

But it is not in France and Italy alone that this work is destined to have an influence. The depth and comprehensiveness of the Author's views, the vast scope of his thought, the extent and minute accuracy of his historical researches, and the consummate skill with which he applies the whole of history to his subject, render it a work of universal interest and importance.

We see here clearly pointed out the elements of the greatness of the Roman Catholic Church in former times, and the causes which have led to its present state of decadence—the means it has employed in all ages to accomplish its designs of universal dominion, and the reasons of their failure—the agencies it is bringing to bear upon modern society, and the course it is necessary to pursue in order to baffle its designs.

We see also in what respects it is the antagonist of LIBERTY, though scrupling not to make use of that sacred name, whenever it can subserve its purposes of despotic authority. We see how instead of sympathizing in that spirit of progress which is the life of modern society, it is ever struggling to preserve that state of utter immobility, or rather to

bring about that retrograde movement which leads to spiritual death. Have not these things an importance and an interest for us on this side of the Atlantic, as well as for Europeans?

Moreover, this is not an affair of the Roman Catholic Church alone. Every Church, every Sect of Christendom may here learn a lesson. A lesson of Christian toleration and brotherly kindness—a lesson of moderation in the midst of zeal—a lesson of perpetual progress.

The effects of this discussion in Europe are already apparent. The Jesuits, that powerful association, whose malign influence rested like an incubus upon the Clergy, and through them upon the people of France, have already been compelled to abandon her soil. The mode also of their departure is remarkable, as differing entirely from their usual manner of proceeding. They have not waited to be expelled by the government, but they have voluntarily retired. They have given up the contest in France. They have felt that public opinion was too strong for them.

This result is in a great measure to be attributed to the labors of M. Quinet, and of his friend and colleague, M. Michelet. The work of which this is a translation, and the joint work of both these eminent men upon the Jesuits, have, by enlighten-

ing the public as to their real character, been mainly instrumental in relieving France from their presence.

One word for the Translator. He has endeavored, first of all, to be correct. To give, in another language, the precise shade of meaning of any writer, is at times no easy task. It has been rendered doubly difficult in this instance, by the fact that the work was originally printed directly from the notes of the author's lectures, without revision, and is full of phrases and modes of expression peculiar, so to speak, to the lecture-room. The translator has thought best to give as literal a translation as was consistent with the different idioms of the two languages, believing that the nervous and energetic, though sometimes rugged style of the original, would best harmonize with the frequently sublime eloquence of the thought.

If this book should produce in the minds of its readers, any of those pleasurable emotions and elevated thoughts which it has produced in the mind of the translator,—if they derive from it, as he believes they will, any new views in regard to the position which religion should hold in modern society, his object in translating it will have been accomplished.

New York, Nov. 11, 1845.

I.

OF THE CATHOLIC KINGDOM PAR EXCELLENCE, SPAIN.

IN order to qualify myself to speak of the South of Europe, I have made the tour of Spain. At the point we had reached, and under existing circumstances, I felt that to pronounce a serious word upon the genius of the south, and of the Catholic nations, it was indispensable for me to visit that one which, in the midst of all its convulsions, has not ceased to personify Roman Orthodoxy in its most inflexible rigor. I considered this task as part of the duty I had to fulfil here. I set out for Spain with the support of no one, against the advice and wishes of all my friends, who, in their solicitude, only presaged ruin and disaster for me in that land of misery.

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Two reasons led me to Spain. The first was altogether literary. The books of a modern nation may be for me the object of private study; but I make it a point of conscience to say nothing of them in public, as long as I have not touched with my hands, and seen with my eyes, the places, the monuments, the things, the men who are the perpetual commentary upon them. To speak at my ease of the expeditions of the Catholic Kings, I must needs have followed their traces across the defiles: I should