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Tocqueville's Unfinished Manuscript on Ireland

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Abstract: In the summer of 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville visited Ireland. Within the travelogue that he kept while on his journey, there exists an incomplete manuscript in which Tocqueville uses the literary device of the tableau to attempt a general explanation of Ireland's political and religious problems. The present essay explains why this manuscript, whose uniqueness has not previously been recognized fully, must be separated from the rest of the Irish journals, studied in relation to other Tocquevillian tableaux, and scrutinized carefully for its teaching on religion and politics. The essay then attempts an interpretation of the manuscript, which Tocqueville titled *A Catholic Priest and a Protestant Minister in Ireland*, especially as it bears on the question of Christianity and politics in *Democracy in America*. It concludes by considering whether Tocqueville once considered revising *A Catholic Priest* for possible inclusion in *Democracy in America* and why Tocqueville eventually abandoned the manuscript.

On April 23, 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont, having just published *Democracy in America* and *Marie, or Slavery in the United States*, respectively, arrived in London for a ten-week stay in England that was followed by six weeks in Ireland. To those familiar with Tocqueville's copious travelogues, it almost goes without saying that he kept a journal during this trip. After the summer itinerary was complete, however, it was Beaumont who would go on to publish *Ireland: Social, Political, and Religious* in 1839, while Tocqueville neglected his notebooks on Ireland, instead turning his attention to a second volume of *Democracy in America*, which he published in 1840. Tocqueville devoted much of the subsequent decade to practicing statesmanship in France, and then, in the years after 1850, when he returned more exclusively to literary pursuits, his principal concern was hardly Ireland but rather *The Old Regime and the Revolution*. In 1860, however, while preparing his recently deceased friend's papers for publication, Beaumont recovered Tocqueville's travelogues of their Irish trip, which were by then twenty-five years old. Although Beaumont made them available to a wider, public audience, the journals have remained largely ignored even though they contain intriguing suggestions about their

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author's understanding of the relationship of democracy to Christian faith. This oversight is surprising, especially because Tocqueville's thought on religion and politics has become in recent decades a topic of intense interest. Even the least light that the Irish travelogues can cast upon this topic should therefore be most welcome to Tocqueville's readers, who often find the Frenchman's thoughts to contain keen insights into the religious yearnings of the democratic soul.

A significant correction to this regrettable trend of neglect is the research of University of Chicago Irish historian Emmet Larkin, whose edition and translation of the Irish travelogue appeared in 1990.[1] Larkin's basic historical work has not been followed up to good advantage, however. In particular, it has gone almost completely unnoticed that within Tocqueville's Irish journals is an unfinished manuscript titled *A Catholic Priest and a Protestant Minister in Ireland*, an intriguing and suggestive text worthy of the reflection of contemporary scholars. This manuscript has generally been presumed to be simply another entry in Tocqueville's obscure Irish journals, but further study reveals it to be a carefully constructed moral tale explaining Tocqueville's interpretation of Ireland's political and religious problems.

After presenting the case for greater attention to the Irish notebooks in general, the present essay will explain why *A Catholic Priest and a Protestant Minister in Ireland* must be distinguished from the other texts in the notebooks and understood as belonging to a different genre. This makes possible an examination of what the unfinished manuscript teaches about Christianity and politics, and especially about the separation of church and state. The essay concludes by taking up the questions of whether Tocqueville once considered revising *A Catholic Priest* for possible inclusion in the second volume of *Democracy in America* and why Tocqueville eventually chose to abandon the manuscript.

A Pattern of Neglect

Tocqueville's Irish journals first became readily available to modern scholarship through the work of the eminent Tocqueville scholar J.-P. Mayer, who, with the aid of André Jardin, published them in the definitive edition of Tocqueville's *Œuvres* in 1958 and, almost simultaneously, in English translation.[2] The translation, prepared with George Lawrence, was offered as

[1]Emmet Larkin, *Alexis de Tocqueville's Journey in Ireland, July–August 1835* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1990). Throughout the present essay, references to Larkin's volume will be given in parentheses in the text and will refer to page numbers.

[2]Alexis de Tocqueville, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 5.2, *Voyages en Angleterre, Irlande, Suisse et Algérie*, ed. J.-P. Mayer and A. Jardin (Paris: Gallimard, 1958); Tocqueville, *Journeys to England and Ireland*, ed. J.-P. Mayer and trans. G. Lawrence (New Haven:

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one part of a larger collection titled *Journeys to England and Ireland*. Yet, by far the majority of the volume's pages were devoted to England—not only to Tocqueville's 1835 journey there, but also to earlier and later trips in 1833 and 1857, as well as to a series of Tocqueville's other, occasional reflections and papers on England. Indeed, in the introduction to the volume, Mayer devotes only a single page to the Ireland journals, and even then treats them largely as a contrast to Tocqueville's reflections on England.[3] Even more telling is the following remark that concludes his preface to the volume: "With the publication of this book I have perhaps fulfilled what I set out to do in 1938 when I began working on Tocqueville: to define through him the principles underlying British politics, which he analysed against the background of the American and the French political mind."[4] Whatever one thinks about Mayer's goal of reading Tocqueville in order to understand Britain, it is easy to see that the notebooks on Ireland are not likely to be well appreciated in the context of such a project.

The emphasis Mayer put on Tocqueville's thought about England increased dramatically in the work of another influential Tocqueville scholar, Seymour Drescher. In 1964, Drescher published his now classic essay, "Tocqueville's Two *Démocraties*," as well as a more complete explication of his ideas in the monograph *Tocqueville and England*.[5] While the essay points to the significance of the year 1835 as the beginning of a crucial turn in the development of Tocqueville's thought and discusses that year's journey to England, it does not mention the Ireland trip, even though, as Tocqueville's biographer Jardin states about the respective journals, "Tocqueville's notes on Ireland are relatively abundant compared to his notes on England."[6] In the monograph, Drescher does offer a brief discussion of the travels in Ireland, but interprets them principally as a backdrop for understanding Tocqueville's thoughts on England. Thus, like Mayer, Drescher understands Tocqueville's notebooks on Ireland principally as a foil for the journals on England, about which he makes the following strong assertion: "The impact of the

Yale University Press, 1958). Throughout the present essay, quotations of the French from the Irish journals will be taken from the *Œuvres complètes* edition of Mayer and Jardin.

[3]Mayer, *Journeys*, 18–19; see also J.-P. Mayer, "Tocqueville's Travel Diaries," *Encounter* 10, no. 3 (1958): 54–60. This pattern of reading Tocqueville on England but not Ireland began at least as early as Ada Zemach, "Alexis de Tocqueville on England," *Review of Politics* 13, no. 3 (1951): 329–43.

[4]Mayer, *Journeys*, 11.

[5]Seymour Drescher, "Tocqueville's Two *Démocraties*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 25, no. 2 (1964): 201–16; Drescher, *Tocqueville and England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964).

[6]André Jardin, *Tocqueville: A Biography*, trans. Lydia Davis with Robert Hemenway (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1988), 238.

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English journey on the culminating theme of the *Démocratie* in 1840, and on the point of departure of the *Ancien Régime* in 1856, was decisive."[7]

From this emphasis on the English journey of 1835 emerges Drescher's famous conclusion that the first or 1835 volume of *Democracy in America* is quite different from the second or 1840 volume, so much so that the second volume is not principally about America at all. From 1964 on, this question of the "two *démocraties*" has influenced—and in some circles dominated—Tocqueville scholarship.[8] In an article published in 2006—forty-two years after his now classic studies—Drescher still emphasizes the importance of the journey to England in 1835 for understanding Tocqueville but does not mention that the journey was continued in Ireland.[9] By 1840, Drescher maintains, Tocqueville has become concerned with a "democratic type" with roots in England rather than with America herself. Regardless of how one assesses this thesis, sustained study of the Irish notebooks was clearly outside Drescher's research plan and, given his extensive influence on Tocqueville scholarship, it is easy to understand why the Irish journals could continue to be overlooked.

As already noted, a major exception to this trend of neglect occurred in 1990 when Larkin published his edition of the Irish travelogue. Rather than return to the Mayer and Jardin edition in the *Œuvres complètes*, Larkin based his new English translation directly on the handwritten manuscripts. He was able to correlate the journal entries with Tocqueville's personal correspondence, to identify and provide biographical information for many of the people Tocqueville interviewed on the journey, and even to discover newspaper accounts of some of the events Tocqueville describes. Furthermore, whereas Mayer and Drescher, to the extent that they considered the Irish journals, had tended to be almost exclusively interested in economic and governmental issues, Larkin is a historian of nineteenth-century Irish Catholicism, which better enabled him to comment upon Tocqueville's analysis of the religious situation of the island. Larkin's gains, however, have largely gone unnoticed;

[7]Drescher, *Tocqueville and England*, 73.

[8]James T. Schleifer offers a helpful summary of the debate in "How Many *Democracies*?," in Schleifer, *The Making of Tocqueville's "Democracy in America,"* 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2000), 354–68. On the question of differences in Tocqueville's thought on religion in the two volumes, very helpful are Catherine Zuckert, "Not by Preaching: Tocqueville on the Role of Religion in American Democracy," *Review of Politics* 43, no. 2 (1981): 259–280 and "The Role of Religion in Preserving American Liberty—Tocqueville's Analysis 150 Years Later," in *Tocqueville's Defense of Human Liberty: Current Essays*, ed. Peter Augustine Lawler and Joseph Alulis (New York: Garland, 1993), 224–33.

[9]Seymour Drescher, "Tocqueville's Comparative Perspectives," in *The Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville*, ed. Cheryl B. Welch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 27–29, 31.

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it is now twenty-two years since his translation was published, and the Irish journals still slumber in relative obscurity.

The Unfinished Manuscript

The longest item in Tocqueville's Irish notebooks—by far—is an unfinished first-person narrative extending to over 6000 words that he himself titled *A Catholic Priest and a Protestant Minister in Ireland*. The structure of the narrative corresponds rather closely to its title; the manuscript features a visit by Tocqueville to a Catholic priest and then turns to a visit by Tocqueville to a Protestant minister. The two visits are sandwiched between an introductory section in which Tocqueville sets out from Tuam to visit "the village of X" and a conclusion featuring his reflections on the two visits from atop a hill overlooking the homes of both clergymen. Only the introductory section and the visit to the priest are drafted in a narrative form; the visit to the Protestant minister and the conclusion consist merely of sets of notes sketching what was to be included in them.

Although *A Catholic Priest* is found within the Irish travelogue and therefore seems at first to be just another, albeit much longer and more developed, journal entry,[10] it is actually a draft of a moral narrative or tale about Ireland and its religious and political divisions. It contains, then, not simply a record of what Tocqueville saw and heard, but rather a sustained reflection on the meaning of the Irish political situation and the beginning of an attempt to communicate those reflections to an audience.

Why should this particular manuscript be isolated from the rest of the journal and elevated, as it were, into something more important in Tocqueville's corpus? The answer to this question will consist of two parts: (a) the chronology of the manuscript is historically impossible, which suggests that it is not a journal entry but a contrived story; (b) the contents of the manuscript are borrowed from several other journal entries dated both before and after the manuscript was begun, which suggests that the manuscript is a montage of events that Tocqueville has shaped and molded into his own tale.

Larkin himself identified the most basic chronological problems of *A Catholic Priest*: The title page of the manuscript says that work on the narrative began at Cork on July 28, 1835, but the very beginning of the narrative refers to Tocqueville's just having arriving in Tuam—an event that another journal entry unequivocally states occurred on August 4. Moreover, the events of the narrative are said, internally, to begin on Saturday and to extend into Sunday, but in 1835 August 4 fell on a Tuesday. Larkin concludes that these

[10]Thus Mayer, *Journeys*, 18–19, and "Tocqueville's Travel Diaries," 60; Drescher, *Tocqueville and England*, 108; Doris S. Goldstein, *Trial of Faith: Religion and Politics in Tocqueville's Thought* (New York: Elsevier, 1975), 103.

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inconsistencies make it impossible to date the manuscript accurately, which leads him to entertain the possibility that the chronology is simply contrived so that Tocqueville can structure his story as he wants: "The internal evidence in this episode, however, also raises another possibility—that this episode *actually* never took place in its integrity, but is *really* a montage, or composite 'set-piece' that is morally rather than historically true. In other words, it is really a moral tale or essay based on a series of actual events" (148).

Larkin does not press the matter further, but what he considers only a "possibility" can be shown to be a reality by appealing to parallels between the events of *A Catholic Priest* and journal entries and letters that Tocqueville wrote while in Ireland. A great many of these parallels exist, only three of which can be considered here.

The first set of parallel texts has its origin in a journal entry from Kilkenny dated July 26. The entry contains Tocqueville's report on a dinner conversation that included a Catholic bishop whom Larkin has identified as William Kinsella (4, 5, 59). In what he terms "a democratic tirade" against the aristocracy in general and the Marquis of Sligo in particular, Tocqueville reports the bishop as saying,

> Who supports the poor in Ireland today? It is the poor. The rich man looks at the poor over the top of the walls of his beautiful park. … He has big and fat dogs and his fellow creatures die at his door. Who feeds the poor? The poor. The unfortunate who has 100 bushels of potatoes for himself and his family gives annually 50 to men more unfortunate still who present themselves starving at the door of his cottage. Is it right that this man wears ragged clothes, does not send his son to school, and lays on himself the hardest privations to relieve the misery to which the rich landlord remains insensible? (78–79)

This journal entry must be compared with a passage in *A Catholic Priest* that occurs within a lengthy conversation between Tocqueville and the unnamed priest whom Tocqueville visits. At one point, Tocqueville asks the priest why the Marquis of Sligo does not come to the aid of the poor in the priest's parish, since the Marquis is the aristocrat who owns a great deal of land in the area. The priest replies,

> Do you know, Sir, what prevents the poor man from dying of hunger in Ireland? It is the poor man. In Ireland, Sir, it is the poor who provide for the needs of the poor. … A farmer who has only thirty acres and who gathers only a hundred bushels of potatoes, puts aside a fifth of his harvest to distribute annually to those unfortunates who are the most in need. The starving man presents himself without fear at the door of the thatched cottages; he is sure to receive something to appease his pressing hunger. But at the door of the mansions he will meet only liveried lackeys or dogs better fed than he, who drive him harshly away. In order to give alms the farmer will spare the manure for his field, he will wear rags, his wife will sleep on straw, and his children will not go to school. (116–17)

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Even though the Kilkenny entry's 50-percent figure for donated potatoes has been changed to the more plausible one-fifth in *A Catholic Priest*, the parallels between these two passages are so clear that one cannot avoid concluding that the speech Tocqueville has placed in the mouth of the priest in *A Catholic Priest* is a reworking of what he had recorded in his journal from the Catholic bishop Kinsella two days earlier.

A second set of parallel accounts is based on Tocqueville's visit to a ruined abbey, which Larkin has ingeniously identified as Muckross Abbey and dated to July 30 (89). In the journal entry describing this visit, Tocqueville says that the priest who directed his tour guided him toward "a cluster of great trees." There he showed Tocqueville the ruined church, whose roof had collapsed but whose walls still stood. A "gothic portal" that was "covered with moss and ivy" was visible among the trees that had grown up even within the sanctuary, and ivy-covered Gothic windows and "columns and capitals" could also be seen. He says that his guide "sat a moment on the monument of the abbot" and, after casting "a look full of melancholy" on the ruins, explained that the stone cross that once stood on top of the abbey church was pulled down by the Protestants, but that the local population had erected a wooden one in its place. It remained a holy place in their eyes, he said, and they continue to bury their dead next to the sanctuary (89–91).

In a particularly poignant scene in *A Catholic Priest*, the anonymous priest takes Tocqueville on his rounds through the countryside, eventually inviting Tocqueville to inspect a ruined church in a clump of trees:

> We thus came in a few moments to the place the priest had pointed out to me. Three large walnut trees, loaded with nuts, bent with age, shaded a small country cemetery. Fifty paces further on were the ruins of an ancient church of which the Gothic arches covered with ivy remained still standing and were surmounted by a wooden cross, all worm-eaten. Beside these venerable ruins rose a small, quite new Catholic chapel surmounted by a cross of stone. The priest stopped for an instant in this place, and leaning against the trunk of one of the walnut trees, he cast a melancholy glance on the ruins and a look of satisfaction on the small chapel, which seemed to be risen from the midst of these remains.
>
> The ruins you see, Sir, he told me, are the only remains of one of the most beautiful churches built by the piety of our fathers. The Protestants destroyed it, but it is much easier to knock down stones than it is to root out religion from the hearts of men. The heretics have devastated the sanctuary, they have allowed their flocks to graze among the remains of the altar, but they have not been able to prevent the veneration of the people being attached to these insensible stones. We have not been able to come to pray where our fathers prayed, but we have continued to bury our dead in a place that has been blessed of old and that holds their ashes. Since we have had freedom of conscience, we have not tried to rebuild this broken monument. We were too poor for that, but we have at least set up on top of these ruins a wooden cross. (121–22)

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These parallel accounts are interesting not only because they show that in *A Catholic Priest* Tocqueville is borrowing from his earlier journal account of a visit to Muckross Abbey, but also because they provide an opportunity to observe important differences in the two accounts. The "great trees" of the journal entry have become "three large walnut trees" that bear fruit in *A Catholic Priest*. In *A Catholic Priest*, a new Catholic chapel is said to have arisen next to the ancient ruined stone church; the new chapel is much inferior to its stone predecessor, but it does have a stone cross, as opposed to the wooden one that both accounts place above the ancient, ruined church. Perhaps most importantly, the priest in the Muckross Abbey account has a look only of melancholy, but the priest in *A Catholic Priest* not only looks with melancholy upon the ruins but also with satisfaction upon the new chapel. In other words, in *A Catholic Priest* Tocqueville not only wants to draw our attention to the romantic appearance of the old Catholicism of Ireland, but also to the new Catholicism that is emerging from the ancient ruins.

A third set of parallel texts finds its source in a journal entry of August 6, which Tocqueville writes from the small town of Newport-Pratt. Serious famine had broken out there, and he and Beaumont had seen a plea for help written by the town's Catholic priest—a Fr. Hughes—in a newspaper while they were in Castlebar. Tocqueville says, "We thought that we should go there to see Ireland in all its wretchedness" (129). In the journal entry, Tocqueville describes Fr. Hughes and a room in his house:

> A man of about fifty. An open and energetic face. A little stout. Strong accent. A little common. Dressed in black with riding boots. … The walls are covered with colored engravings of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, the Pope and one or two religious scenes. … On the table are newspapers. The furniture is old but comfortable. (130)

The journal entry also includes the comments of two of Fr. Hughes's companions in the priesthood, who are quoted as saying of the conditions in the west of Ireland, "This state of society is intolerable and cannot last" (133). The entry also records the following remarks on education by Fr. Hughes:

> The priest added: The only effectual way to raise up again the demoralized spirits of these unfortunates is to educate them with open hands. Consequently, that is what we have undertaken, and we are doing it with all our might. You will see our schools tomorrow.[11] The Protestants

[11]The journal entry does not record Tocqueville's visit to the schools in Newport-Pratt. *A Catholic Priest*, however, does include a passage in which the priest takes Tocqueville to visit the school in the village of X. In a marginal note to that passage, Tocqueville says, "Un asile. Fait venir des livres," which Larkin translates "A sanctuary. Send some money" (119). Since Tocqueville seems to have been genuinely moved by the depth of the poverty in Newport-Pratt, it seems entirely possible that the marginal note in *A Catholic Priest* is actually a reminder to himself to send

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> maintain we like the darkness. They will soon see that we do not fear the light. (135)

In *A Catholic Priest*, while the unnamed priest reads Tocqueville's letter of introduction, Tocqueville says the following about the man's room and physical appearance:

> A square room, simple, but very clean and very well lighted. Some engravings representing religious subjects hung along the walls, a little ebony crucifix on the mantelpiece. On the table, a breviary and newspapers. By the side, a wooden chair against which leaned a thick knotted stick surmounted by a broad-brimmed black felt hat. … The priest seemed to me a man in the prime of life; his muscular limbs and sunburnt skin testified to an active and healthy life. He was dressed and wore his hair like a layman. (114)

The unnamed priest in *A Catholic Priest* has been made younger and more romantic, but he shares the energy of Fr. Hughes. Both are men of the outdoors, although Hughes is apparently richer because he rides while the poorer unnamed priest only walks. Newspapers are prominent in the room of each man. The unnamed priest in *A Catholic Priest* is so exasperated with the situation of the Irish Catholics in the village of X that he says directly to Tocqueville at one point: "Do you not say as I do that such a state of things cannot be tolerated much longer?" (116). Finally, in *A Catholic Priest*, Tocqueville at one point asks the unnamed priest whether he is concerned that the spread of education and enlightenment might undermine the faith of the Irish Catholics. The priest replies,

> We would not know how to acknowledge such a consequence, Sir, replied the priest vigorously, religion rests on proofs too strong to fear the light. Besides, how do you expect, Sir, that these poor people should ever succeed in resisting the oppression that crushes them, if, on the side where wealth and strength are found, is also found knowledge? … The Protestants say the Catholic population is half barbarous, that it is ignorant and lazy. … These people will one day govern themselves; this moment is approaching, it cannot be far off; what would become of society if the poor, in becoming powerful, remain plunged in ignorance? (119–20)

If space permitted, it would be possible to multiply parallels between other journal entries and letters and other parts of *A Catholic Priest*.[12] These three

some money (or books) to the school at Newport-Pratt (rather than to an imaginary school in the contrived village of X).

[12]For example, the portrait of the Protestant minister was to be based at least in part on a journal entry from August 2 recording a visit by Tocqueville to a Protestant church in Galway (cf. 128 with 100; even the English word "pews" is preserved in

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suffice to show, however, that the unnamed priest in *A Catholic Priest* is a composite modeled upon Bishop Kinsella from the supper in Kilkenny on July 26, the unnamed priest who served as tour guide at Muckross Abbey on July 30, and the visit to Fr. Hughes at Newport-Pratt on August 6. The conclusion to be drawn is that the manuscript Tocqueville titled *A Catholic Priest and a Protestant Minister in Ireland* cannot be viewed as an eyewitness account of Tocqueville's experiences at some unnamed village of X, but must be understood as belonging to a different genre—one that begins with Tocqueville's historical experiences in Ireland but extends far beyond them. *A Catholic Priest* therefore should be separated from the rest of the Irish journals and interpreted as a different sort of document. But just what sort of writing did Tocqueville intend it to be?

The Unfinished Manuscript as a "Tocquevillian travel tableau"

A Catholic Priest belongs to a genre that Tocqueville uses not infrequently during this stage of his writing career, especially in his travel writings; this genre can be termed the "Tocquevillian travel tableau." In order to demonstrate this claim, it is best to begin by reviewing briefly four of Tocqueville's earlier tableaux, two very famous ones from *Democracy in America* and two from *A Fortnight in the Wilderness*.

The tableaux from the *Democracy* are both found in the notable chapter on the three races that concludes the first volume of the work; this chapter is thought to have been added in late 1834—perhaps less than a year before Tocqueville's drafting of *A Catholic Priest*.[13] In the first of these passages, Tocqueville says that he once stopped by a spring near an Alabama pioneer's dwelling and encountered a small white girl being attended by a black slave woman and an Indian woman. The native American looks at Tocqueville, the European, scornfully, and runs off into the forest; the black woman fawns over the white girl. Tocqueville intends the scene to symbolize the basic problems of the three races in America: the Indian maiden, like her people, flees civilization to preserve independence; the white child already knows it is born to dominate; and the slave woman serves. In concluding the scene, Tocqueville states, "It often happened that I saw individuals belonging to the three human races that people North America gathered in the same places; … but in the picture [*tableau*] that I have just described there was

both accounts); also, the beginning of *A Catholic Priest* is clearly based in part on a letter of July 26 from Tocqueville to his cousin, the Countess Grancey (cf. 111–12 with 7–8, 11).

[13]See the chronological information for the writing of *Democracy in America* offered by Schleifer in *The Making*, 17–21; also 515 note a.

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something particularly touching."[14] This famous Alabama tableau had been recorded originally, however, in Tocqueville's travel journals. There he begins the account by stating that "Near Montgomery in the State of Alabama, I saw a little sight that made me reflect."[15] He says that the event occurred outside the dwelling of a planter, but he does not say that it was near a spring, as he does in the *Democracy* account. The journal entry goes on to describe in less detail and with less eloquence the scene later painted so beautifully and to such effect in the *Democracy*.

The second passage from the *Democracy* to be considered here is the one containing the striking depiction of the different effects of freedom and slavery on the peoples inhabiting the north and south banks of the Ohio River. Tocqueville explains that the soil on each side of the river is equally fertile, but farming, economic activity, and life in general are far different in Kentucky than in Ohio, for the former permits slaves but the latter does not: "The traveler who, placed in the middle of the Ohio, allows himself to be carried along by the current to the mouth of the river in the Mississippi, therefore, navigates so to speak between freedom and servitude" (1.2.10; 331). Tocqueville principally concerns himself with the different attitudes toward labor in the two states. Since slavery dishonors labor, there is relatively little laboring occurring in Kentucky. Since freedom liberates the desire for material well-being, Ohio is bustling with industry. Once again, however, an earlier version of the portrayal in the *Democracy* exists in Tocqueville's American travelogue, and in particular in the notes recorded there from a conversation that Tocqueville had with Mr. Walker on December 3, 1831.[16] The notes in the journal are relatively sparse; Tocqueville has greatly expanded them for use in the *Democracy*.

The second set of tableaux to be considered here is found in *A Fortnight in the Wilderness*. This work has its origins in the journey Tocqueville and Beaumont took from Buffalo to Saginaw in July of 1831. *A Fortnight* is especially relevant to *A Catholic Priest* because of two depictions of mothers it contains. The first of these is a pioneer mother; Tocqueville describes her within what he intends as a portrayal of a typical pioneer's settlement in the forests of America. He begins his account by saying, "Since these settlements perfectly resemble each other, whether they are found deep in Michigan or at the door of New York, I am going to try to describe them

[14]*Democracy in America* 1.2.10, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 307. All further quotations of *Democracy in America* used in the present essay will be taken from this translation. References will be given in parentheses in the text itself and will be to volume, part, and chapter, followed by the page number in the Mansfield and Winthrop translation.

[15]Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journey to America*, ed. J.-P. Mayer and trans. George Lawrence (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 169.

[16]Ibid., 97–98.

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here once and for all."[17] Tocqueville thus announces that his portrayal will be a detailed depiction in which the particular stands for the universal. After telling his readers about the pioneer's farming practices and his log house, he turns to the pioneer's wife, whom he describes as an exhausted and melancholy yet courageous woman who has left the finery of civilization in order to gain a footing in the wilderness. She "rocks her youngest son on her knees" while surrounded by her chores and her other children, of whom Tocqueville says, "to see their strength and her weakness, you would say that she has exhausted herself by giving life to them, and that she does not regret what they have cost her."[18] Although Tocqueville did not publish *A Fortnight*, he did excerpt his depiction of the pioneer's wife and publish it in a footnote to a chapter of the second *Democracy*, where he calls it a "portrait" or *peinture* (2.3.10 note XX; 699).

The second passage from *A Fortnight* that is relevant to *A Catholic Priest* occurs within Tocqueville's depiction of the "half-breed" settlement on the banks of the Saginaw, across the river from the dwellings of the native Americans: "On the other bank of the Saginaw, near the European clearings and so to speak on the borders of the Old and the New World, arises a rustic cabin more comfortable than the wigwam of the savage, more crude than the home of the civilized man. This is the dwelling of the half-breed."[19] Tocqueville says that upon approaching the cabin, the travelers heard from within "a soft voice that chanted hymns of penitence to an Indian tune." Upon entering, the two observed a young woman making moccasins; Tocqueville narrates, "With her foot she rocked an infant whose coppery color and features announced its double origin." Apparently trying to ascertain the language spoken by the young mother, Tocqueville and Beaumont initiate the following conversation with her: "We asked her if she was French. 'No,' she answered smiling. 'English?' 'Not that either,' she said; she lowered her eyes and added: 'I am only a savage.'"[20] The account in *A Fortnight* continues on to lament the difficult situation of the half-breed; Tocqueville pauses at one moment in the narrative to ask, "Where to find in a more narrow frame [*dans un cadre plus étroit*] a more complete picture [*tableau*] of the miseries of our nature?"[21]

These four passages contain certain elements, the enumeration of which will aid in understanding *A Catholic Priest*. First, the actual word *tableau* is used by Tocqueville in speaking of the scene in Alabama as well as the

[17]Alexis de Tocqueville, *A Fortnight in the Wilderness*, trans. James T. Schleifer, in *Democracy in America: Historical-Critical Edition of "De la démocratie en Amérique,"* ed. Eduardo Nolla (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2010), 4:1315.

[18]Ibid., 4:1318–19.

[19]Ibid., 4:1350.

[20]Ibid. Tocqueville makes the mother smile when asked if she is French but not when asked if she is English.

[21]Ibid., 4:1351.

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scene on the Saginaw. Second, three of the scenes are set near water: this is quite clear with respect to the Saginaw portrayal; the Alabama scene does not include water in its journal stage, but by the 1835 *Democracy* it is said to have occurred near a spring; and of course the Ohio River scene is painted from the very perspective of the water. Third, three of the accounts describe or at least mention that the event depicted occurred near a dwelling: the pioneer lives in a "log house," and Tocqueville preserves the word in English in his account; the "half-breed" baby is found in a cabin that is halfway between a wigwam and a civilized dwelling; and the spring in Alabama is said to be near the home of a planter (Tocqueville mentions that he did not want to enter the planter's dwelling in the *Democracy* account, a detail he does not mention in the journal version). The treatment of the waters and the dwellings in these tableaux suggests that the water somehow symbolizes nature and the dwellings symbolize custom or convention or law. In the Alabama tableau, Tocqueville turns away from convention —the planter's home—to approach nature, where he sees that "a bond of affection here united the oppressed to the oppressors, and nature, in striving to bring them together, rendered more striking still the immense space that prejudices and laws had put between them" (1.2.10; 307). Similarly, the dwelling of the half-breed baby is nearer the Saginaw River than the dwellings of the more civilized Europeans, and the dwellings of the Indians just across the river are more rustic still.

A fourth element common in the tableaux is a depiction of the use of the land by human beings, especially in farming. This is explained in some detail in the pioneer tableau, with Tocqueville pointing out how the pioneer must first destroy a great number of trees to begin to clear a field and to cultivate it, but the Saginaw River depiction also describes the not very successful attempts of the human beings there to farm. Of course, the Ohio River comparison emphasizes above all else the differences between the agricultural practices of the north and south banks. A fifth element common to these tableaux is the use of female figures to stand for an entire people: the three females in Alabama obviously stand for the three races of America discussed in the very chapter in which the tableau occurs; the pioneer woman in the log house is expressly said to represent every pioneer woman; and the mother of the half-breed baby directly identifies herself as a member of the class of savages. Sixth, the tableaux are sometimes so structured that the reader is invited to pursue a comparison. Clearly, the reader is meant to compare the attitudes toward freedom and slavery of the three races in the Alabama tableau, and one is especially invited to pursue a comparison of the same theme in contemplating the north and south banks of the Ohio River. The two tableaux from *A Fortnight* are not immediately placed in juxtaposition to each other, but Tocqueville surely intends for the reader to compare the two mothers; we are even told that each rocks a young son (with knee or foot) while attending to domestic chores (preparation of supper or making moccasins).

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Finally, it must not be overlooked that the tableaux all follow a similar course of development: Tocqueville observes people and talks with them during his journeys; he takes notes on these sights and interviews in his journals; then, upon reflection, he massages the original events and adds details and reflections so that they give rise to a scene that is appealing to the imagination as well as didactic—to a tableau from which a reader might learn.

We have already shown how *A Catholic Priest* shares this final feature of the earlier tableaux, how Tocqueville recorded sights and interviews in his Irish journals and then turned them into a contrived narrative. Yet all of the other elements identified in the tableaux from the *Democracy* and *A Fortnight* are also present in *A Catholic Priest*. First, Tocqueville himself uses the very word *tableau* at the beginning of *A Catholic Priest*, stating that he wanted to visit the priest and the minister for a specific goal: "to see in a very narrow frame a picture of which I had already perceived the detached parts" (de voir dans un cadre très étroit un tableau dont j'avais déjà aperçu les portions détachées) (111). This striking statement could serve as a statement of purpose—almost indeed as a definition—for the genre of the Tocquevillian travel tableau. Especially noteworthy is not only the explicit use of the word *tableau* as in the Alabama and Saginaw depictions, but also the use of the phrase *dans un cadre très étroit*, which requires only the changing of *très* to *plus* to match the rhetorical question in the Saginaw tableau quoted above.

A Catholic Priest also is set near water, thus matching the second characteristic of the tableaux we have analyzed. After setting out on foot for the village of X, Tocqueville approaches a divergence in the road, with one fork leading to the *right* and a mansion, and the other—the one followed by Tocqueville—leading to the *left* and a ravine: "At the bottom of the ravine ran a stream which no doubt swelled in winter, but at the time this note refers to offered only an almost entirely dry rocky bed. Not a tree grew on its banks which offered this spectacle of nudity that goes with nearly all the water courses in Ireland" (111–12). The third characteristic of tableaux is a description of dwellings, and in *A Catholic Priest* the miserable huts of the villagers are squeezed between the dry stream bed and the sides of the ravine. Echoing the method announced in the introduction of the description of the pioneer settlement, according to which a description of one will do for all, Tocqueville says that the unhappy huts in the village of X are like all the others he had seen so often in Ireland and then continues on to offer a description of them that runs to over two hundred words. The fourth feature of Tocqueville's tableaux is a description of agricultural labor. What is striking about *A Catholic Priest* in comparison with the tableaux discussed earlier is that the able-bodied young men living in the village of X do *not* labor in the fields: "If I had known less about Ireland, this idleness in the midst of so great poverty would have excited my indignation; but I knew already enough of this unhappy country to know that unemployment is the norm.

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One cannot earn his living by the sweat of his brow as God commanded" (112–13).[22]

Tocqueville's fifth technique for tableaux—using female figures as symbols—is also employed in *A Catholic Priest*. After describing the stream, the huts, and the idle young men, Tocqueville next depicts a young girl drawing water from the stream that flows through the village of X. Having just spoken of the nearly dried-up condition of the stream, Tocqueville has to explain that a rock formation at a certain spot in the stream's course formed "a natural reservoir" where the water was "deep and clear" (113). The reader learns the color of the girl's hair and eyes, that she is barefoot, and that she pulls back her hair with her small hands when Tocqueville addresses her. When Tocqueville asks her to direct him to the home of the priest, she seems amused that he does not know the way. She politely asks him to follow her, however, and not only points out the priest's house, but runs upstairs through the unlocked cottage and announces Tocqueville to the priest (113–14). If the feminine figures in the tableaux discussed earlier represent a race or a people, it is reasonable to wonder whether, in this unfinished tableau on Ireland, this girl does not somehow represent the new, emerging Catholic Ireland, for the girl is said to have "blue eyes full of shrewdness and intelligence" (113) and seems to be on very familiar terms with the Catholic priest in leading Tocqueville directly to his study. But why is she filling an earthen jar with clear water when Tocqueville first comes upon her? If water symbolized nature in, for example, the Alabama tableau, the conclusion to be drawn would seem to be that young Catholic Ireland stands closer to the natural or seeks to recover nature, whereas the dryness of the stream bed and its lack of vegetative covering intimate how the natural is under duress. One notes that the Protestant minister, allied with the Irish aristocracy, lives on a hill at some distance from the stream, and hence he is to be associated more with the inequalities of convention, custom, and law than with natural equality.

Tocqueville mentions two other girls in *A Catholic Priest*. One of these is Mr. O'Sullivan's daughter, Jane. Mr. O'Sullivan is an impoverished Catholic whose father is dying; the priest from the village of X, accompanied by Tocqueville, visits the elderly man on his rounds through the countryside. The priest is worried about the old man's strength and asks Mr. O'Sullivan to send Jane to the presbytery that evening for some sugar and wine to sustain the sick old man. Jane is said to curtsey when the priest mentions her name, and she clearly knows the way to the priest's home and feels safe in going there to receive aid for her grandfather (125). Even though Jane O'Sullivan is said to be eight or ten years old while the girl at the stream

[22]The priest in *A Catholic Priest* makes a similar comment about Gen. 3:19 a few pages later in the narrative (116); this reduplicated reference is presumably a sign of the unrevised nature of the manuscript.

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filling her jar is said to be seven or eight, one wonders whether in a revision it would not have become clear that the girl at the stream is really Jane O'Sullivan.[23] It is impossible to know, but both are poor and Catholic, both know the way to the presbytery, both curtsey respectfully to the priest, and both seem to be familiar enough with the priest to be entrusted with tasks on his behalf.

The other girl in *A Catholic Priest* is the Protestant minister's daughter. The notes for the planned section treating Tocqueville's visit to the minister say only, "He introduces me to his wife. To his daughter. Apologizes that she cannot play the piano because it is Sunday" (128). If the two Catholic girls really were intended to be one, it seems that Tocqueville's planned Irish tableau was to contain one young girl representing Catholic Ireland and one representing Protestant Ireland, rather in the manner that the tableau from Alabama includes female figures representing the three races and *A Fortnight* contains two mothers representing two different wilderness peoples.

The sixth enumerated item from the earlier tableaux was the use of contrasting pairs in which each member of the pair serves to illustrate a general type. The contrasting pair in *A Catholic Priest and a Protestant Minister in Ireland* is named even in the title, and parallels the contrasting mothers in *A Fortnight* as well as the contrasting banks of the Ohio River; the Alabama tableau is unique in that it employs a contrasting triad rather than a dyad. James Schleifer, in reflecting upon his experiences in translating the Nolla edition of *Democracy in America*, describes such contrasts as Tocqueville's tendency to "think in pairs," using illustrations in which a part stands for the whole. He does not speak of tableaux, but he does refer to Tocqueville's contrast between the left and the right banks of the Ohio River as an example of his thinking in pairs.[24] Using such dichotomous pairs is an especially effective rhetorical strategy, for it leads readers to identify with one element of the pair and to reject the other not only on a rational but on an affective level as well. The reader's emotions are quickly attached,

[23]Perhaps Tocqueville intends nothing by it, but eight is the number common to both age ranges. If he had proceeded to publish *A Catholic Priest* by, say, early 1836, such an eight-year-old girl would have been born in 1828—the year Daniel O'Connell managed to win election to the Westminster parliament from Clare. From that position, O'Connell was able to win passage of Catholic Emancipation the next year. Beaumont lionized O'Connell in his *Ireland*, and uses O'Connell's election and the passage of the Emancipation Act as the events separating Ireland's past history from her present era; see Gustave de Beaumont, *Ireland: Social, Political, and Religious*, ed. and trans. W. C. Taylor (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 116–17, 223–32.

[24]James T. Schleifer, "Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* Reconsidered," in *The Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville*, 122–25.

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for example, to the free bank of the Ohio River, as well as to the Catholic priest.

Finally, while we have not yet mentioned it, it should be pointed out that all five of these tableaux share the common trait of having been painted with particular details in order to render the scene described especially vivid to the reader's imagination. To be sure, vivid writing is hardly a style practiced by Tocqueville alone, but his ability to paint with words in these tableaux is striking. Schleifer draws our attention to this aspect of Tocqueville's work as well, and refers us to a letter written to Charles Stoffels on July 31, 1834, in which Tocqueville emphasizes the importance of using a detail in order to illustrate or paint the scene that one wants to communicate. "You find that the principal quality of style is to *paint* [*peindre*] objects and to make them perceptible to the imagination," Tocqueville says to Stoffels. "I am of the same opinion."[25] Such remarks clarify some of the marginal notes that Tocqueville writes to himself in the draft of *A Catholic Priest*. In the first of these he states, "All this ought to be told very simply but better and with more details" (111). In another note he writes, "The pig in the house, the dunghill, the bare heads and feet. Explain and paint [*peindre*] that" (112).

Given all these parallels between *A Catholic Priest* and other passages in Tocqueville's work, one must conclude that *A Catholic Priest* is a member of the genre of the Tocquevillian travel tableau; indeed, *A Catholic Priest* is a longer, more sustained tableau than the others, and even though it is incomplete, it must still be viewed as Tocqueville's most extended attempt to write within the genre. Other tableaux drafted by Tocqueville could be considered and compared to *A Catholic Priest*,[26] but since we have now isolated the narrative from the rest of the Irish journals and established the genre to which it belongs, it is time to turn to an interpretation of the meaning of the manuscript.

What the Unfinished Manuscript on Ireland Might Teach Us

The care and attention that Tocqueville devoted to planning and drafting *A Catholic Priest* indicates that he once wanted to say something he thought was important within its pages; yet the unfinished character of the work cautions the would-be interpreter to proceed only with particular circumspection. One does not know with confidence just what the completed execution of Tocqueville's plan might have accomplished; perhaps even

[25]Translated by Schleifer in *Historical-Critical Edition*, 3:810–12 note r. This letter to Stoffels is dated almost exactly one year before Tocqueville drafted *A Catholic Priest* and almost at the same time as he was writing the final chapter of the first *Democracy*.

[26]Two sketches treating religion but bearing only a few of the features of tableaux may be found in *Historical-Critical Edition*; see "Sects in America" at 4:1360–67 and the fragment at 3:859–60 note m.

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more importantly, one does not know whether revisions would have changed those portions of the manuscript that were drafted. Since the works Tocqueville himself published must be given far more weight in any complete or general interpretation of his thought than an unfinished manuscript, the safest way to begin to understand *A Catholic Priest* is to try to understand it in relation to Tocqueville's published works, and especially in relation to *Democracy in America*, since the Irish manuscript was written between the two volumes of that extraordinary book. To be sure, one must be alert to the possibility that *A Catholic Priest* might teach something new and unique, but even such uniqueness would best be noticed against the principles of Tocqueville's comprehensive position.

Tocqueville himself says that the first volume of the *Democracy* discusses "certain laws and political mores" that have arisen in the democracy of the United States, while the second volume treats the many "sentiments and opinions" that have arisen there as a result of the prevailing democratic social state (399). We will therefore first consider *A Catholic Priest* against the background of the laws and political mores discussed in volume 1 and then against the sentiments and opinions of volume 2.

The laws and political mores as they pertain to Christianity in America are discussed especially in the second and the penultimate chapters of the first *Democracy*. Both chapters emphasize the combination of the spirits of religion and liberty in America—the first within the souls of the founding Puritans, the second in the America of Tocqueville's own time. Because of the many different Christian groups that have come to the United States since the Puritans, it has only been possible to maintain the combination of the spirit of religion and the spirit of liberty there because of the doctrine of the separation between church and state. In order for this separation to work, it is crucial that all the Christian groups agree on the basic requirements of Christian morality; they may disagree on certain theological doctrines, but such doctrinal differences are not to be aired in such a way that they disrupt public life. Thus, the American clergy teach doctrine and morality to their individual congregations but do not even desire to bring themselves or their theological doctrines into the realm of government. The citizens, in turn, do not advert to Christian doctrines in practicing political life, but neither do they challenge the Christian morality shared by all; they thereby voluntarily limit the exercise of liberty to the realm of government. This mutual self-limitation of church and state is what Tocqueville means by the expression "separation of church and state."[27]

[27]For a fuller treatment of the topic of this paragraph, see my "Alexis de Tocqueville on 'Civil Religion' and the Catholic Faith," in *Civil Religion in Political Thought: Its Perennial Questions and Enduring Relevance in North America*, ed. Ronald Weed and John von Heyking (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 170–78.

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Tocqueville explains in volume 1 of the *Democracy* that this system of mutual self-limitation has been extended to and accepted by the Catholics in America. Indeed, Tocqueville says that he learned about the advantages of the American situation especially from Catholic priests there, who "all attributed the peaceful dominion that religion exercises in their country principally to the complete separation of church and state," even though that very separation makes it impossible for priests to occupy governmental positions of any sort (1.2.9; 283). The result is that the Catholic faith—particularly the faith of Irish Catholics—flourishes in the United States:

> Around fifty years ago, Ireland began to pour a Catholic population into the United States. For its part, American Catholicism made proselytes: today one encounters more than a million Christians in the Union who profess the truths of the Roman Church.
>
> These Catholics show great fidelity in the practices of their worship and are full of ardor and zeal for their beliefs; nevertheless they form the most republican and democratic class there is in the United States. (1.2.9; 275)[28]

What first strikes the eye of an American reader upon encountering the quotation above is that Tocqueville seems to be overlooking a great deal in thinking that the Irish Catholics are prospering in the United States and that they are a great benefit to the maintenance of a democratic republic there. His treatment seems inconsistent with the notion of nineteenth-century Irish Catholic immigrants as "needing not to apply" for certain jobs in America; it conflicts, too, with other well-known American antipathies toward Catholic immigrants, such as "know-nothingism."

Perhaps some of this difference between what we might expect Tocqueville to say about the status of the Irish in America and what he actually says is due to the fact that in the *Democracy* Tocqueville was describing pre-Famine Irish immigration. Estimates vary, but it is generally suggested that approximately one million of Ireland's eight to nine million in population starved during the Famine years of 1846–1851, and that at least another one and a half million emigrated, mostly to the United States.[29] The Famine immigrants were

[28]This is the only explicit reference to Ireland I have been able to unearth in any of the works Tocqueville himself published. The first volume of *Democracy* was published in 1835, so the phrase "around fifty years ago" would mean "about 1785." In 1784, responsibility for the Catholics in the fledgling United States was transferred from the apostolic vicar of the London district to the American Irishman John Carroll, who in 1790 became the first bishop of the new nation.

[29]In 1863, Beaumont published a new preface for his *Ireland*, which was appearing in its 7th edition. The new preface comments especially on the disaster of the Great Famine. The population figures he uses are 8 million Irish at the beginning of the crisis, of whom 1 million died and 2 million emigrated; see "Preface, 1863: A Report on the Present State of Ireland (1862–1863)," trans. Tom Garvin, in *Ireland*, 386. A recent treatment of the demographic estimates, and indeed the whole history of the

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often not only ignorant and unskilled, but also desperate; at least in the view of Irish-American historian Lawrence McCaffrey, their inadequacies tended to undermine the limited acceptance that had been achieved by the pre-Famine Irish immigrants.[30]

Yet even if pre-Famine immigrants in America were more easily tolerated than those who would come later, it still seems that Tocqueville is painting a picture of a thriving Catholic community in America that he must know is excessively rosy. His journals of the American voyage, for example, preserve the opinion of Fr. Mullon, who claimed that in the United States "all sects are united in their hatred of Catholicism; but only the Presbyterians are violent."[31] In the lengthy annotations to the second chapter of the first *Democracy*, moreover, Tocqueville records that the influential ecclesiastic Cotton Mather went so far as to claim that one of the prime reasons his Puritans came to New England was to "raise a bulwark against the kingdom of *antichrist*, which the *Jesuits* labour to rear up in all parts of the world" (1.1.2 note VI; 684, 687). Finally, Tocqueville admits, again in the first *Democracy*, that Catholic acceptance of the principle of separation of church and state in America is at least partly due to the fact that Catholics there are both poor and in the minority, and hence they need the principle in order to defend their precarious situation (1.2.9; 276). In other words, Tocqueville is aware that the rosy portrait of the thriving Irish American Catholics included in the *Democracy* is not completely true, and even while shielding its inadequacy from some readers, he permits others to notice it. Presumably Tocqueville proceeds in this way because he wants Catholic readers in general and French Catholic readers in particular to conclude that it is possible and desirable for Catholics and democrats to be reconciled to each other.

In any case, what Tocqueville emphasizes about the Irish Catholic immigrants is that they are committed to the principle of separatism. Like the other Americans, the Irish recognize that there is a realm of the state, within which liberty is permitted to predominate; surrounding this sphere of liberty, however, stands the church, or rather the churches—the various Christian sects, including Catholicism—whose common moral teachings provide the boundaries beyond which liberty is not permitted to stray. The clergy of America do not, as clerics, hold any reserved public posts; most of them actually eschew power voluntarily and "take a sort of professional pride in remaining strangers to it" (1.2.9; 283).

Famine, is offered by David P. Nally, *Human Encumbrances: Political Violence and the Great Irish Famine* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), esp. 2, 159, 204.

[30]Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Catholic Diaspora in America*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 71–72.

[31]*Journey to America*, 33.

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Upon coming to Ireland in 1835, Tocqueville finds a similar acceptance on the part of the Irish Catholic clergy of the principle of separation. Unlike the Protestant clergy, the Catholic priests of Ireland do not participate directly in government, their salaries are not financially supported by the government, and their churches are not built with state funds. Tocqueville does not seem surprised to find that the "Church of Ireland" is funded by the state or is "established" and that the Catholic Church there is not. He does seem surprised—or at least he calls attention to the fact frequently in the Irish journals—that Catholicism is prospering in this situation and that the Catholic clergy are adamantly opposed to receiving any state monies even though this means that they have to be supported by their impoverished parishioners. This point is illustrated especially well in *A Catholic Priest*, for in the long conversation between Tocqueville and the priest in the tableau, Tocqueville asks the priest whether it is not "regrettable" that the government does not build churches and endow the clergy, a suggestion against which the priest protests at length and with zeal. Although Tocqueville's support for the principle of separation of church and state is well known and expressed frequently in his writings, the strongest statement he has left behind in support of it is the one he has placed in the mouth of his Irish priest:

> You have seen, Sir, how I am looked upon in this village. The people love me, Sir, and they have reason to love me, for I myself love them. They have confidence in me, and I in them. Every man considers me in some way as one of his brothers, the eldest in the family. How does this happen, Sir? It is that the people and I every day have need of each other. The people share liberally with me the fruit of their labors, and I give them my time, my care, my whole soul. I am nothing without them, and without me they would succumb under the weight of their sorrows. Between us there is a ceaseless exchange of affectionate feelings. The day when I should receive money from the government the people would not look upon me as one of their own any longer. On my side, I should perhaps be tempted to believe that I no longer depended on them. Little by little we would become strangers to each other, and one day perhaps we should consider ourselves as enemies. Then, Sir, I should become useless to the very government that paid me. If I preach today peace and patience, I am believed because no one supposes that I have any interest in holding to such language, but if they could see in me an agent of the state, what weight would my opinion have? (126–27)

Emphatically, Tocqueville has noted in the margin beside this passage, "No connection between church and state!" (127).[32]

[32]Another marginal note referring to *Séparation de l'Eglise et de l'Etat* appears earlier in the conversation between Tocqueville and the priest (118). Larkin reports a third marginal reference to church and state at the end of the passage in which Tocqueville and the priest visit the new but crude chapel (123).

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This insistence on the distinction between church and state in both *A Catholic Priest* and the first *Democracy* must immediately be qualified, however, because in both works Tocqueville also offers portraits of priests who are vigorous defenders of equality. As has already become clear, the anonymous priest in *A Catholic Priest* works tirelessly to aid his impoverished parishioners, and he struggles especially against the inequality of possessions. In the *Democracy,* Tocqueville paints an anonymous priest who offers an impassioned prayer at "a political gathering" attended by "two or three thousand persons." Dressed in his "ecclesiastical habit," he advances only to "the edge of the platform [*sur le bord de l'estrade*] meant for orators" before praying that God grant aid to the political ambitions of the Poles (1.2.9; 277). The Poles, of course, are a Catholic people, but the principles the priest appeals to repeatedly in his prayer—which Tocqueville presents in the form of a direct quotation—are those of right and liberty. The priest uses the words "right" or "rights" three times in the prayer, calling such rights "sacred" twice; he also uses the words "freedom" or "free" three times.

What the two unnamed priests have in common, then, is that each is opposed to inequality and thus each reveals himself to be an ardent democrat. For all their talk of the separation of church and state, they both have very definite political sympathies. The enemy of the Irish priest is the inequality represented by the Irish aristocracy; "The aristocracy is the cause of all our miseries," he tells Tocqueville, and then adds, "They do not alleviate any of the evils that they give rise to" (116). The enemy of the American priest is the inequality represented by a foreign despotism that denies liberty; "Lord," the American priest prays, "who have created all men on the same model, do not permit despotism to come to deform thy work and to maintain inequality on earth" (1.2.9; 277). The emphasis upon the need for greater equality of possessions rather than the need for greater equality of liberty thus comes to sight as the principal difference between the two priests. Tocqueville—or at least his Irish priest—seems preoccupied by the specter of Catholic poverty in Ireland, so much so that liberty there is of relatively minor interest. We are indebted once again to Larkin for bringing to our attention a letter from Tocqueville to his mother in which the traveler admits, almost exactly four years after describing the wretchedness of the native Americans and half-breeds in the regions surrounding the Great Lakes, that at Newport-Pratt he has seen a "a frightening thing" and "a collection of misery" such as he "did not imagine existed in this world" (14).

As indicated above, the second volume of the *Democracy* is devoted to the "sentiments and opinions" that prevail in the United States as a result of its democratic social state. The shift from the emphasis in volume 1 on "laws and political mores" gives rise to at least an apparent shift in Tocqueville's view of Christianity's relationship to democracy. Whereas volume 1 suggests that in America the Christian faith is or ought to be the great ally of democracy, volume 2 wonders whether the true religious ally of democracy is not rather materialism or (what may reduce to the same thing) pantheism.

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Catholicism in particular is portrayed in the second *Democracy* as a sort of leftover from aristocracy that has for its inheritance the crucial task of reminding the Americans of the possibility of human greatness—indeed, it must remind the materialistically inclined Americans that they have souls at all. The happy marriage of the first volume, in which Catholicism and democracy are viewed as a couple experiencing the blessedness of unanimity, has become a tense marriage in which the Catholic Church must distinguish herself from the leveling tendencies of her spouse in order to maintain a critical distance that will be helpful to him. Such a distancing must not go too far, however, or democracy will fail to listen altogether; hence, the Church must accommodate herself to democracy's inclinations, but only to a certain degree.[33]

One is led to consider, then, whether Tocqueville's discussion of the tensions between democracy and Catholicism in the second *Democracy* is anticipated in *A Catholic Priest*. Certainly the Irish priest himself exhibits no such caution toward democracy. Indeed when one looks closely, one notices that, for all his attractive qualities, the priest is decidedly this-worldly and does not seem to be especially pious. He is worried about a Catholic child's absence from school; we are not told his thoughts about a Catholic child's absence from Mass. He is pleased that the schoolteacher reads the newspapers to the Catholic parents at the end of the day; he does not say whether the Bible is read to them. He visits the dying father of the impoverished farmer O'Sullivan and hears his confession; afterwards, however, he says that the old man's "greatest danger" is his bodily weakness. The priest even suggests at one point that religious belief may be the product of thwarted temporal desire and untutored imagination: "It is in the people, Sir," he says to Tocqueville, "that the root of beliefs is found. It is they who firmly believe in another world because they are unhappy in this one; it is they whose simple and naïve imaginations lead them without reserve to faith" (127). Ultimately, the priest seems to be animated by a secret anger—even hatred—of the Irish Protestant aristocracy. He is angry because they are negligent more than because they are "heretics"; indeed, he is also rancorous toward the few Catholic aristocrats in Ireland. The priest clearly longs for revolution, but his relative neglect of the spiritual inclines one to ask whether, after the revolution, he will still care about his Catholicism, or whether his soul will rest satisfied with the democratic egalitarianism he anticipates.

It seems, then, that the interpreter must be careful not to equate Tocqueville's own views with those of the Irish priest in his narrative. To be sure, Tocqueville wants his readers to prefer the Catholic priest to the Protestant minister, just as, for example, he wants his readers to prefer the north bank of the Ohio River to the south bank. But just as it does not follow that the north bank is perfect simply because it is preferable to the

[33]For a fuller treatment of the topic of this paragraph, see my "Alexis de Tocqueville on 'Civil Religion' and the Catholic Faith," 182–194.

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south, neither does it follow that the democratically inclined Irish Catholic priest is perfect simply because he is better than the aristocratically inclined Irish Protestant minister, as might seem to be the case upon a first reading of *A Catholic Priest*.

Apparently Tocqueville was intending to establish a certain critical distance between himself and his nameless priest especially in the conclusion of his tableau, for the outline of the manuscript shows that he was planning to end the narrative with himself offering final contemplations while standing between the Catholic village and the Protestant minister's house:

> Return. At the top of the hill, on one side the hovels of the village and the little home of the priest.
>
> On the other the mansion, the grounds, and the smoke, which rises above the trees that surround the house of the minister.
>
> Reflections. There wealth, knowledge, power [*pouvoir*]; here strength [*force*]. Difference in language according to position. Where to find the absolute truth. (128–29)

Whatever Tocqueville was intending to say with these final reflections, it is clear that he was not going to engage simply in the one-sided assessment of the situation that characterizes his Irish priest. The minister, if nothing else, has knowledge on his side, and Tocqueville knows that ignorance is not a political virtue.

Conclusion: Why Did Tocqueville Abandon the Manuscript on Ireland?

Jardin states that Beaumont was of the opinion that Tocqueville had not published his Irish travelogue out of deference to their friendship, not wanting his own work to compete with *Ireland*.[34] Such a scenario is not impossible, for Tocqueville was solicitous toward Beaumont's book. Eduardo Nolla reports that "The manuscript of Beaumont's book contains criticisms in Tocqueville's hand" and Jardin says that seeing the republication of Beaumont's book would be "one of the last pleasures" of Tocqueville's life.[35] On the other hand, George Wilson Pierson notes that Beaumont also thought that Tocqueville had held back publication of *A Fortnight in the Wilderness* because he did not want it to compete with *Marie*.[36] Yet Tocqueville still published his thoughts on slavery in America, which is a principal subject of

[34]André Jardin, *Tocqueville*, 238.

[35]Eduardo Nolla, introduction to *Historical-Critical Edition*, xcviii; Jardin, *Tocqueville*, 469.

[36]George Wilson Pierson, *Tocqueville in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 231n; originally published as *Tocqueville and Beaumont in America* (Oxford University Press, 1938).

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Marie, in the striking final chapter of the first volume of *Democracy in America* —a chapter that, it is fair to say, has eclipsed *Marie* in the event.

Jardin claims that in attributing Tocqueville's decision not to write on Ireland to their friendship, Beaumont had perhaps forgotten that the two traveling companions had made "a formal agreement" that would have obliged Tocqueville not to publish on Ireland. Jardin cites a letter written in early May of the 1835 journey that refers to an arrangement that the two had already entered upon whereby Beaumont would have "the prerogative of writing about England," whereas Tocqueville would write more on America.[37] This does not, however, solve the question of who might write on Ireland, for although Ireland was part of the United Kingdom at the time, it would have been quite odd for Tocqueville to intend to include Ireland within the term "England." It thus seems most unlikely that in ceding the right to Beaumont to publish on England, Tocqueville would have thought himself obliged not to publish on Ireland. Indeed, Jardin himself admits that Tocqueville's Irish notes "sometimes begin to look like sketches for stories or essays the author thought of publishing."[38] One assumes that Jardin especially has in mind the manuscript that we have isolated as *A Catholic Priest*, but why would Tocqueville have sketched anything with an eye for publication while journeying in Ireland in July and August of 1835 if he had already agreed in May of that year not to publish on Ireland? Besides, the marginal notes in the manuscript of *A Catholic Priest* clearly show that Tocqueville was planning on revising the work, and there was no reason to revise if he were not considering publication.

Another reason for thinking that Tocqueville once intended to publish *A Catholic Priest* has recently been brought to our attention by Nolla, who has published the following fragment from the files Tocqueville compiled as he was preparing the second volume of *Democracy in America*:

> Two very curious conversations could be done, one with a Protestant minister, the other with a Catholic priest. They would be made to uphold on all points opposed [*sic*] to what they are in the custom of upholding elsewhere.
>
> These conversations would have to be preceded by a portrait [*peinture*] of these two men and of their institutions. Very piquant details would result from all of that for the French public above all.[39]

This fragment immediately reminds one of *A Catholic Priest*, not only because of their common plan for contrasting portraits of a priest and a minister based on conversations, but especially because of Tocqueville's garbled suggestion that the priest and the minister should speak the opposite of what they might say elsewhere. Indeed, in *A Catholic Priest*, at the end of his exchange

[37]Jardin, *Tocqueville*, 239.
[38]Ibid., 238.
[39]*Historical-Critical Edition*, 3:755 note c, trans. Schleifer; the *sic* is Nolla's.

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with the democratically inclined cleric, Tocqueville muses that he should say to him, "Do not say these things in France, you would be taken for a Protestant minister" (127); in the notes for his planned exchange with the minister, Tocqueville lists, "Do not say all this in France, you would be taken for a Catholic priest" (128). Moreover, there is a very curious marginal note toward the beginning of *A Catholic Priest* that might be relevant to Nolla's fragment; next to the initial, detailed description of the Irish huts in the village of X, Tocqueville has written "Tout cela à mettre en français," which Larkin has rendered as "All this to be gallicized" (112). It would seem that the easiest way to make sense of Nolla's fragment and the marginal note in *A Catholic Priest* is to suggest that, while making the preparations for writing the second volume of *Democracy,* Tocqueville once considered incorporating *A Catholic Priest* as part of the work, and even looked back at what he had drafted there, writing a note to himself that the piece would have to be "gallicized" so that it would speak, as Nolla's fragment says, "to the French public above all."[40]

Such considerations, though, only lead us back to the question of why Tocqueville did not complete *A Catholic Priest* and publish it either independently or as part of the second *Democracy*. While it was suggested in the previous section that there are several important elements of *A Catholic Priest* that correlate to the argument of the first *Democracy* and fewer but still significant elements that correlate to the second, it must not be overlooked that the basic tension underlying *A Catholic Priest and a Protestant Minister in Ireland* is thoroughly at odds with the principal thrust of Tocqueville's thought on Christianity and democracy.

From the introduction to the first volume of *Democracy in America* to *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, Tocqueville argued against what he saw as the common fault lines in French politics, according to which the forces of irreligion were usually allied with democracy and the forces of Christianity with its critics. He insists, of course, that these fault lines are improper and even unnatural. The better situation is the American solution, wherein all of the Christian sects support democracy even while limiting it, and atheism, if not exactly unknown, is at least not publicly advocated. When placed against such a background, the arguments between Catholics and Protestants that Tocqueville was pursuing in *A Catholic Priest and a Protestant Minister in Ireland* begin to appear to be intramural disputes of secondary importance.

[40]It is also relevant that Nolla's fragment on conversations with a priest and a minister belongs to the same file or bundle of Tocqueville's notes that contains "Sects in America," which bears a note by Tocqueville to himself clearly indicating that he was considering revising it for inclusion in the chapters of the second *Democracy* on religion; see *Historical-Critical Edition,* 4:1360.

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Thus, while the situation in Ireland had to be of interest to Tocqueville because it showed clearly that Catholicism could be united with democracy and because it offered a stark contrast to the situation in France, it was also the case that the Irish were hopelessly bound up in a conflict that had already been rendered anachronistic by developments in America. In the United States, the doctrine of the separation of church and state had led to a preferable—if not perfect—solution to the problem of religion and politics according to which the Christians exerted a salutary control over the nation through an unquestioned moral authority, all the while keeping theological disputes out of public view and permitting liberty to range freely in matters of government not touching on morality. Because they could not make common cause with the Protestants in matters of morality, the Irish Catholics were unlike the American Catholics. Thus, whereas religious divisions had been controlled in America by keeping a common Christian morality very public and by keeping unshared theological teachings very private, in Ireland religious divisions reinforced and even augmented political divisions. As a consequence, the struggle between equality and rank, or between democracy and aristocracy, which Tocqueville perceived to be ongoing everywhere, appeared in Ireland to be headed only toward force and violence—the very opposite of the liberty Tocqueville was hoping to establish within a democratic future. Indeed, in the notes for the Protestant minister's speech in *A Catholic Priest and a Protestant Minister in Ireland*, Tocqueville includes "Allusion to Saint Bartholomew," which is surely meant to refer to the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572—an ominous precedent of a Catholic mob violently attacking Protestants.[41]

[41]It is curious that both Larkin (128) and Mayer and Jardin in the *Œuvres complètes* (150) report that the date for St. Bartholomew's Day that Tocqueville gives in the manuscript is August 29, whereas the date generally established for that event is August 24.

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