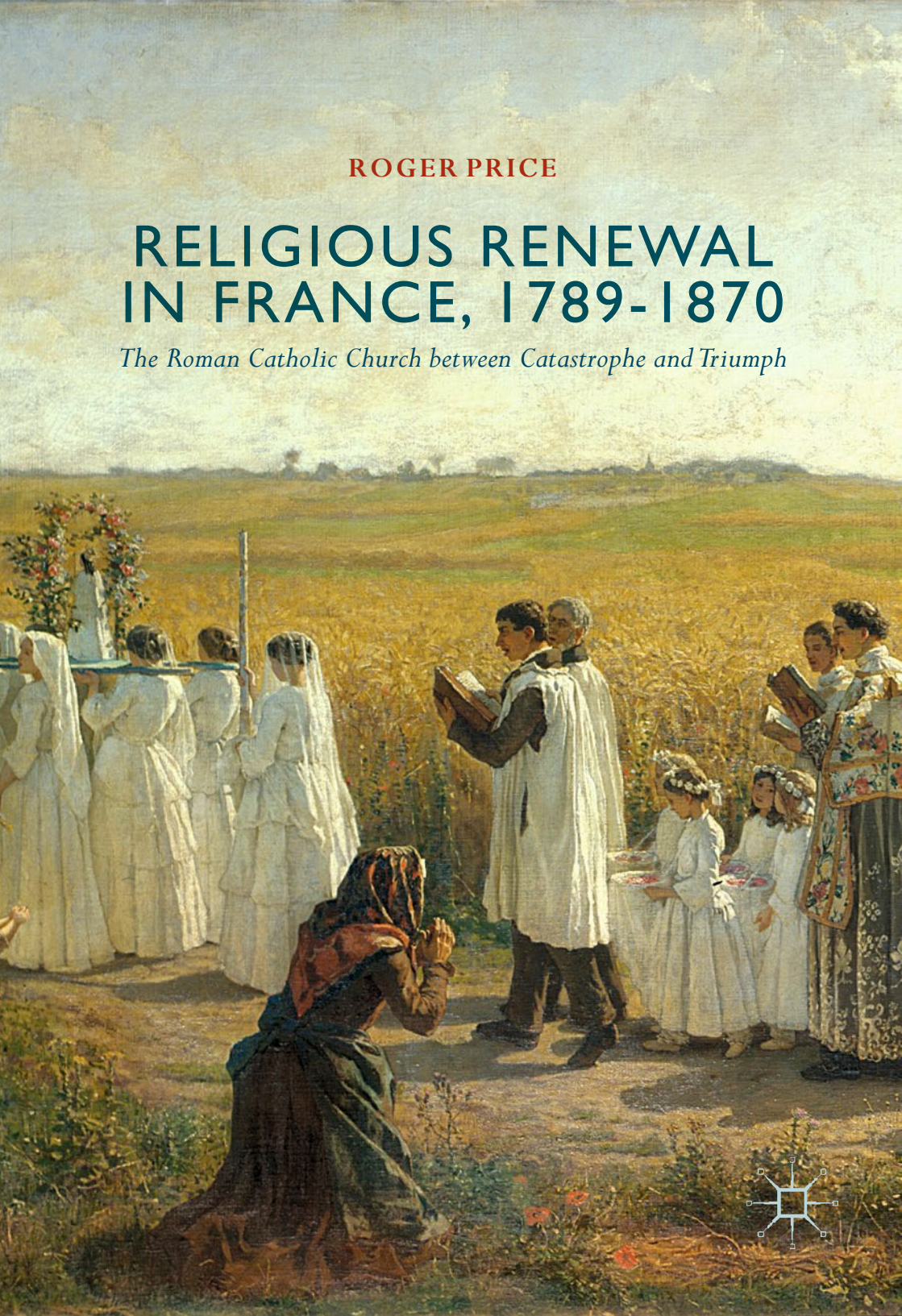
ROGER PRICE

RELIGIOUS RENEWAL IN FRANCE, 1789-1870

The Roman Catholic Church between Catastrophe and Triumph



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Roger Price
Aberystwyth, United Kingdom

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For Heather with love

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Protestant Reformation was widely perceived by the Roman Catholic Church in the nineteenth century as the first of two major and overlapping *catastrophes*, periods of profound change, spreading uncertainty, anxiety and chaos. It had at least, however, in response, inspired the vigorous, creative—and repressive—movement identified with the Counter-Reformation (inaugurated by the Council of Trent (1545–63)). The second period, represented by the French Revolution, beginning in 1789, and continuing in 1848, similarly represented a massive transformation, threatening destructive anarchy, and also stimulating a powerful counter-revolution. During these reactionary phases, the clergy, in collaboration with state institutions and social elites and the faithful in general, desperately sought to defend the Church they believed to be the only repository of the true faith of Jesus Christ, to fortify belief, combat the 'Satanic' forces of moral corruption and revolutionary disorder and to create a 'counter-society', the *société parfaite*.[1] For the historian, understanding these complex processes of politico-religious confrontation and their profound impact at both national and international levels requires a recognition of context, as well as comprehension of the people involved—the historical actors—their institutional loyalties, mindsets, and social roles.

After 1789, the vast majority of churches and monastic buildings in France had been vandalized and then closed. Perhaps 20,000 priests left holy orders and a further 30,000–40,000 had emigrated; many were murdered.[2] While some communities sought to safeguard their religious

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heritage, as a public act, Christian worship largely disappeared.[3] Changing political circumstances leading to the Napoleonic Concordat, followed in 1815 by the restoration of the Bourbons in the person of Louis XVIII, would, however, eventually facilitate the renewed transmission of traditional faith together with theological/ideological and institutional regeneration, the gradual restitution of religious institutions and of the physical fabric of the Church.[4] The latent strength of religious commitment and its revitalization, together with the 'devotional revolution' experienced during the nineteenth century, represented a dynamic process of (re) Christianization.[5] A massive and continuing effort would also be necessary to combat the longer-term secularizing forces set in motion by a complex of economic, social and cultural changes.[6]

Every new confrontation, and particularly the revolutionary movements in 1830 and 1848, ensured that memories and fear of persecution would be reawakened. The establishment of 'universal' suffrage in 1848 would, however, promote conservative as well as democratic mobilization and substantially reinforce the political influence of the Church, its priests and of the Catholic laity. Through the inculcation of a clerical vision of society and politics, militant Catholicism would energetically promote religious and 'moral' revival, together with counter-revolutionary political strategies. A reinvigorated Church would respond positively to the charismatic leadership of its popes in adopting doctrinal and ideological positions towards the modern world based upon an overwhelmingly pessimistic and fundamentally intransigent position of *défense religieuse*.[7] Such an outlook could, however, be combined with an apocalyptic confidence in the Second Coming of Christ which would inaugurate the final defeat of Satan and sin.[8] Appeals to old spiritual and moral verities, together with the centralization of doctrinal authority within the Church, and trends towards greater uniformity of practice, were encouraged by the exploitation of emerging modern technologies and particularly of the communications systems (rail, telegraph, education and the mass media), which facilitated the transmission of ideas, religious mobilization and an 'assertive confrontation'.[9]

Understanding 'the dynamics of religious change',[10] and the capacity of the Church to define and to affirm its own interests, as well as to shape social attitudes and political ideologies depends on a profile of the clergy, of their *outillage mental* and their key role as cultural intermediaries.[11] This should take into account the recruitment and training of priests and the hierarchical organization of the Church. Theology, evolving patterns

of spirituality, ritual and symbolic representation and the relations between dogma and practice revealed by pastoral care and popular religiosity are all within our remit. A traditional top-down perspective has deliberately been adopted in recognition of the 'overbearing hierarchical and doctrinal elitism' of the religious institution,[12] as well as the determination and enhanced capacity of the Papacy to impose a sense of discipline and moral order on both the lower clergy and the laity. The sources of internal unity and division, and the nature of the power struggles characteristic of any large organization similarly need to be delineated. The crucial questions are: Who were the clergy? Why did they think and behave as they did? How much influence did they wield?

A series of questions also needs to be posed concerning 'the dialectical relationship between clerical representations and the reality lived or conceived by Christians' and the wider practice (or rejection) of religion.[13] How was the message received? Articulated initially by the Apostles, by the Fathers, councils and popes, and commented upon by numerous theologians and canon lawyers in a complex technical and rebarbative language. those theological ideas, approved by the religious hierarchy, were subsequently presented to the population in simplified form in sermons, catechisms, through confession, as well as in popular works of piety. How did these religious ideals influence individual perceptions, expectations and behaviour, as well as wider social relationships? Was religion—as an ideology—a more powerful motivating factor than class allegiance? To what extent did the Church and religion serve as integrative or as divisive forces in social and political life? How did relationships between the temporal and spiritual domains evolve? This will lay the ground for an assessment of the influence of the Church within social and cultural systems undergoing rapid change, in which the intensity of religious practice varied considerably between localities, and where seemingly contradictory processes of secularization and religious renewal were underway.

As well as representing a 'source of personal inspiration and private sustenance, an interior form of mystical experience, faith is to a large degree socially constructed through interaction between the representatives of a hierarchical institution (the Church) and individuals belonging to distinct and diverse social milieux and parish communities'.[14] Faith can be expressed in discourse, through material forms and representations, through the adoption of a sense of identity and also by means of political activity judged to be in the interests of the institution and of those values perceived by its leading decision-makers to be in need of protection and

reinforcement. In these circumstances, the religious and the secular easily become confused. Thus, rather than simply offer an institutional history or a history of theology, it is also my intention to focus on the social contexts, the gendered processes of family and community socialization, and the developing social networks within which power was exercised, and ideas constructed, adapted and diffused, as well on the relationships between dogma and practice. It is also worth constantly bearing in mind that 'the faith of a past age is of its age'[15] and that 'men and women of the past deserve to be considered on their own terms and in the context of their own social and cultural milieux'.[16] In a book about the Roman Catholic Church in an age of revolution, contextualization is everything.[17]

Discussion of the Church as an institution in crisis, of the recruitment and instruction of its bishops, parish clergy, and the members of religious orders, of its hierarchical structures and internal discipline, and of the need to compensate for the losses suffered by its people and physical fabric during a period of revolutionary upheaval (Chap. 2) provides the basis for an exploration of its evolving doctrine(s) and sense of purpose (Chap. 3); for an assessment of the pastoral care provided to the parish community (Chaps. 4 and 5); and of the leadership and moral qualities of the clergy (Chap. 6); before final consideration of the reception of the religious message(s) (Chaps. 7 and 8). The period which began in 1789 in catastrophe, ended, in 1870, with the declaration of Papal Infallibility at the Vatican Council, the culminating act of the long and largely successful era of re-affirmation and reconstruction which is the subject of this book. Apparent triumph however coincided with the military defeat and collapse of the French Second Empire, the elimination of the Papal States, and the opening of a new era of uncertainty for the Church—which is beyond the remit of this chapter.

Notes

1. C. Langlois, 'Infaillibilité, une idée neuve au 19e siècle' in *Le continent théologique. Explorations historiques*, Rennes, 2016, p. 61.
2. T. Tackett, C. Langlois, 'Ecclesiastical structures and clerical geography on the eve of the French Revolution', *French historical studies*, 1980, p. 357.
3. C. Langlois, T. Tackett, M. Vovelle, *Atlas de la Révolution française*, vol. IX, 1996, p. 42; R. Gibson, *A social history of French catholicism, 1789–1914*, 1989, p. 44. See also M.-H. Froeschlé-Chopard, *Espace et sacré en Provence, 16e–20e siècles*, 1994, pp. 305–317. The intense 'shock' this rep-

resented is discussed by R. Price, *The Church and the State in France, 1789–1870. 'Fear of God is the basis of Social Order'*, 2017, Chap. 2.

4. See also E. Duffy, *Saints, Sacrilege and Sedition. Religion and conflict in the Tudor reformations*, 2012, p. 176.
5. The concept was developed by E. Larkin, 'The Devotional revolution in Ireland, 1850–75' *American Historical Review*, 1972. For subsequent debate, see e.g. L. van Ypersele, A.-D. Marcelis, (eds) *Rêves de chrétienté, Réalités du monde. Imaginaires catholiques*, Louvain-la-Neuve, 2001, pp. 7–9.
6. R. Price, *The Modernization of Rural France. Communications networks and agricultural market structures in 19th century France*, 2017, Part 3.
7. Y. Déloye, *Les voix de Dieu. Pour une autre histoire du suffrage électoral: le clergé catholique et le vote 19e–20e siècles*, 2006, p. 46; E. Bogalska-Martin, *Sacrée liberté. Imaginaires sociaux dans les encycliques pontificales du 19e siècle*, 2012, p. 10.
8. See also H. Multon, 'Un vecteur de la culture politique contre-révolutionnaire. La décadence dans la littérature apocalyptique' in F. Jankowiak, (ed) *La décadence dans la culture et la pensée politique*, Rome, 2008, pp. 140–3.
9. R. Schaefer, 'Program for a new Catholic *Wissenschaft*: devotional activities and Catholic modernity in the 19th century', *Modern Intellectual History*, 2007, p. 437.
10. I. Katznelson, G. Stedman Jones, (eds) *Religion and the Political Imagination*, Cambridge 2010, p. 10.
11. Ibid., p. 447.
12. Anonymous publisher's reader.
13. A. Walch, *La spiritualité conjugale dans le catholicisme français (16e–20e siècles)*, 2002, p. 477.
14. J. de Vries, J. Morgan, (eds) *Women, gender and religious culture in Britain, 1800–1940*, 2010, p. 3.
15. Rowan Williams, *Why study the past? The quest for the historical church*, 2005, p. 89.
16. R. McKitterick, 'Great light', *Times Literary Supplement*, 22 May 2009, p. 9.
17. See R. Harris, *Lourdes. Body and spirit in the secular age*, 1999, p. xv.

PART I

L'Eglise de France

CHAPTER 2

God's Church

2.1 Introduction: Institutional Renewal

In the aftermath of the Revolution the Church proved able to revitalize its human resources during a lengthy period of expansion and of 'reconquest'. The lessons drawn from history, from the counter-Reformation and the sixteenth-century Council of Trent, as well as more recent cataclysmic experiences stimulated substantial doctrinal reaffirmation as well as the building of a more effective organizational culture.[1] Under the increasingly authoritarian guidance of an 'infallible' Pope, the Church wholly and intransigently committed itself to the struggle for human souls. As an institution, it was defined by Mgr Gaston de Ségur in his widely read *Traité de l'Eglise* (1861) as 'made up of priests and the faithful. The body of priests calls itself *l'Eglise enseignante*, it includes the Pope and the bishops, and to a certain degree, the priests. *L'Eglise enseignée* includes all the faithful, whoever they might be, even kings and princes. This distinction is of divine origin. When one speaks of the Church, from the point of view of its authority, and of its mission, it is in reference to the *Eglise enseignante* which, alone, through the Pope and its bishops has received from Jesus Christ the right and the duty to teach, to govern, and to judge. The *Eglise enseignée* profits from these divine privileges but does not share them.'[2] Responsible for interpreting the Word of God, the Church possessed well-organized channels for communication through its hierarchical structures and established forms of socio-religious discourse.

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It was regulated by its own dogmas and by the received wisdom of the past, reinterpreted by each generation of theologians and canon lawyers.

Unsurprisingly, as the intermediaries between 'Man' and God, priests claimed superiority over the laity. Just like Christ and his Apostles, they were men, their functions manifestations of male superiority over all, save the most exceptional, women.[3] The *Plan d'une vie sacerdotale ou règlement de vie pour un jeune prêtre*, a manual published in 1865, began with the confidence-building affirmation that 'Just like Jesus Christ I have through my vocation, a divine origin, a divine mission, and divine powers.'.[4] These powers included the miraculous capacity during the communion service to transform bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, as well as the ability to establish social 'reality' through definitions of 'orthodoxy' and of 'heresy' and to identify the means of living a good and moral life. Even a 'bad' priest had sacramental obligations through ordination, and would share these virtues. The spiritual claims made by ordained priests thus ensured that they assumed powerful and demanding responsibilities within every sphere of human life. Their instruction, their special relationship with an all-powerful God, the distinctive role they assumed within the parish community, together with their vows, and in particular that of celibacy, furthermore guaranteed that priests were not like other men.

By employing Christianity as a powerful ideological force, the clergy were capable of exercising substantial influence in order to achieve a variety of both spiritual and secular objectives. In his Lenten message in 1858 Mgr Raess, Bishop of Strasbourg, reminded the faithful that the Church was 'the infallible organ of truth … the mystical body of Jesus Christ who speaks to us through His Church … It is invested with all His authority and it is in virtue of this great and magnificent authority that the Church, immaculate spouse of the Son of God, dictates the law, that it makes judgements concerning the path to salvation, that it excommunicates those who reject its word, and that its judgements are sanctioned by God Himself …'[5] Such authoritarian and potentially aggressive claims to a monopoly on truth, and the rejection of individual autonomy, reinforced the influence of the clergy among believers but also made internal disputes, as well as conflict with the representatives of other institutions all the more likely. Thus, as a result of the Napoleonic Concordat (1801), a constant tension existed between the priest's performance of an idealized role as God's servant and his legal position as a paid functionary of the state. The priest owed obedience to the Holy Father in Rome and to his

representatives in the bureaucracy of the Papal Curia, and more directly to his bishop, but was also subject to supervision by the Ministre des Cultes in Paris, as well as by the government's local representatives, the departmental prefect and the communal mayor. The Administration des Cultes would come to play an increasingly assertive role, reflecting its budgetary responsibilities, the political significance of religion, and the power of precedent.[6]

The balance of authority within the Church was shifting moreover, and in a manner which would have a substantial impact on relations between Church and State. The threats posed by revolution and modernity, together with distaste for the Concordat, encouraged the clergy to look increasingly towards the Universal Church and its Pope—the Vicar of Christ on Earth, *ultra montes* (across the mountains)—for leadership, as well as for protection. The proponents of an increasingly dominant ultramontanism—a much-used, and abused, label—sought to defend the rights of the Church, and to insist upon the absolute power of the Pope and in effect on a personification of power.[7] Ultramontanes mounted a powerful challenge to the established Gallican traditions of the Church in France and increasingly to the authority of the State.[8] They were resolutely and aggressively opposed to Gallican efforts to affirm the superior authority of episcopal councils within the Church and to maintain traditional provincial autonomies. They rejected the right, enshrined in the Concordat, of the civil authorities to regulate religious life. The Church, they affirmed, should enjoy complete 'liberty' of action in those domains, and most notably pastoral care and education, which were its particular concern. The primary objective of the State should be to assist the religious institution in the achievement of its objectives. A divinely ordained monarchy seemed most appropriate to serving the interests of religion.[9]

Paradoxically, the influence of a fundamentally conservative institution, whose representatives constantly expressed negative views of modernity, would, in the nineteenth century, be substantially reinforced, and the exercise of authority by successive popes greatly facilitated, by modern technologies which established new perceptions of time and space—by the railway which encouraged regular visits by bishops and pilgrims to Rome; by an improved postal service, and the telegraph which intensified contact; as well as by increased literacy and the emergence of the mass circulation press so vital for the rapid diffusion of an evolving religious discourse. Centralization was becoming a reality for both Church and State.

2.2 Authority Within the Church

According to Roman Catholic theologians, God had manifested Himself through Christ—the earthly presence of His only Son through whom He had chosen to reveal the Word; the Truth of which was further affirmed when He spoke through 'His Gospels and divine writings, apostolic tradition, and through the Church, the only guardian, interpreter, and supreme judge of revelation'.[10] Inspired by a widespread (re)reading of Saint Augustine's *La Cité de Dieu*, and centuries-old traditions, theologians and ordinary parish priests believed that, divinely ordained, through doctrine, life and worship, the Church could claim to be the key agent in the transmission of God's Word, and the means of securing the defeat of Satan and the final victory of Truth over Evil and, at the end of time—heralded by the Second Coming of Christ, the final establishment of the rule of God on earth.[11]

The Papal Bull *Auctorem fedei* (1794) had clearly affirmed the magisterial authority of the Pope within the Church. As the Archbishop of Cambrai reminded the faithful, His Holiness owed his authority to Jesus Christ who, before ascending to Heaven, had chosen Saint Peter 'to govern in His Place and in His name'. In his turn, Peter had established Rome and its bishop as the centre of the Universal Church, an 'Eternal City', a source of stability 'independent of the revolutions which overthrow states and change the face of the world'.[12] The Pope was responsible for defining the faith given to the world by God, for its transmission by means of evangelization, and for imposing discipline on the Church. Inspired by a vision of the perfect society, he was also duty-bound to condemn everything incompatible with his holy mission.[13] The sacred duty of all Christians must be to 'believe everything taught from the [Papal] throne and to reject everything it condemns. Peter's law must be our faith.' Catholics should at all times offer docile, confident and loving submission to the '*Père de la famille chrétienne*'.[14]

The law of 18 germinal An X similarly insisted upon the top-down nature of authority within the Church, reminding both government officials and individual priests that bishops were responsible for imposing discipline on their diocesan clergy in relation to doctrinal matters and pastoral care.[15] Few, if any, of his colleagues would have disagreed with Mgr Pie, Bishop of Poitiers' assertion that 'Just as the Church is a monarchy, of which the Pope, and the Pope alone, is the supreme head, so each diocese is a monarchy of which the chief is the bishop, the bishop alone, under the

dependence of the universal pastor.'[16] Their pastoral authority over both clergy and laity was justified through biblical references to the Apostles and regularly reiterated—in stereotyped form—in pastoral letters.[17] On his translation to the diocese of Nantes in August 1870, Mgr Fournier offered a grandiose definition of the bishop's role as 'the chief, the principal driving force of religion in the area subject to him, on whom depends the individual churches and their pastors … It is with reason that heads bow under his beneficent hand, that people and institutions request his support, that he intervenes in the direction and education of the young … that he extends his gaze to all those religious and moral works of which he is quite properly the creator, the inspiration or the judge.'[18] The entry of a newly appointed bishop into his episcopal city was celebrated with great pomp, its streets decorated and crowded with both the faithful and the curious, as befitted a figure of such considerable importance in the functioning of both Church and State.[19] Religious processions, which during the July Monarchy had been closely controlled to avoid offending Protestant or anti-clerical opinion, under the Second Empire became quasi-official in character. The Church was able to proclaim the faith through street theatre.

From the perspectives of both Church and State it seems clear that the bishops were expected to play a difficult coordinating role within both the religious and State hierarchies, were key figures of authority, constituting part of the socio-political elite, as well as forming an elite within the Church itself. The Prefect of the Aisne in 1865 warned that a senior clergyman 'can be either an excellent auxiliary or a serious embarrassment'. Thus, a nominee should be 'at the same time a very good priest and a very good citizen' and certainly devoted to the Emperor.[20] Once their nominations had been confirmed by the Pope, bishops were moreover difficult to discipline and almost impossible to dismiss.[21] Considerable care was clearly required in making appointments to such posts.

2.3 The Appointment of Bishops

According to the terms of the Concordat, governmental approval was necessary for the appointment of bishops, and their vicars-general, as well as to the tenured position of *curé*. At mid-century, there were 80 bishops (rising to 86 following the annexation of Nice and Savoy), each assisted by two or three vicars-general and eight or nine canons. In return for cooperating with the administration, they received high salaries and public

honours, as well as subsidies for diocesan works, and expected to be treated with a certain deference. As Mgr Sibour warned his '*cher ami*' Fortoul after two of his colleagues had been kept waiting in the ministerial antechamber—'we are by our nature as bishops rather demanding and extremely susceptible'.[22] Nevertheless, during the Second Empire's first decade, a close alliance between Church and State prevailed. The bishops played a central role in the construction of an image of the regime as a Christian monarchy. Cardinals took their seats in the Imperial Senate. Public ceremony constantly associated the two institutions. The representatives of State and Church united to inaugurate and bless railway stations and other public monuments. The civil authorities were present in serried ranks for the sanctification of new and restored churches, for such spectacles as the restoration of the Pantheon to religious use in 1852, and the laying of the foundation stone of the new cathedral in Marseille.

J-O. Boudon's invaluable prosopographical study of *L'Episcopat français à l'époque concordataire* (1996), read in conjunction with his work on *Paris, capitale religieuse sous le Second Empire* (2001), provides detailed insights into the ideas and careers of the 250 men—essentially bishops and vicars-general, holding '*postes de commande*' within the Church in France. Boudon's research revealed that most bishops originated in towns or larger rural centres, located primarily within the '*pays de chrétienté*'.[23] Although, in popular perceptions, bishops tended to be assimilated with the aristocracy, in practice, the origins of most were the middle class. They were the sons of lawyers, government officials and army officers, and of merchants, although especially from mid-century, the promotion of a rising proportion of sons of the lower middle classes—traders, artisans, minor officials—was becoming evident.[24] If only a minority came from wealthy families, virtually all future bishops depended on family financial support during their long studies for the priesthood and in order to acquire the priestly culture, as well as the '*bonnes manières*', necessary to mix in polite society. The appointment of sons of peasants, invariably those of the better-off, and representing 19.5% of bishops gaining office during the July Monarchy and 26.8% under the Second Empire, continued to arouse comment and to reveal a marked distaste for such 'commoners'—*le paysan mitré*—among the upper classes.[25]

The statistics compiled by Boudon[26] reveal a real process of democratization associated with the demise of the Bourbons in 1830. More than any other elite group in French society, save perhaps the army officer corps,[27]

Table 2.1 Social origins of French bishops (%)

Period of appointment	*Nobility*	*Bourgeoisie*	*Petite bourgeoisie*	*Peasants*	*Unknown*
First Empire	47.1	33.8	11.8		7.3
Restoration	59.6	25.3	3	1	11.1
July Monarchy	14.1	41	17.9	16.7	10.3
Second Republic/ Second Empire	8.5	34	25.5	22.3	9.7
Third Republic	4.5	25	41.5	16.5	12.5

the Church offered a career open to the talented (Table 2.1). Of course, it was unique in that inheritance could not close off access.

The overall pattern of recruitment to the clergy and deliberate government appointments policy ensured that a growing proportion of bishops came from the 'popular' classes. By 1871, according to other calculations, this was true of 53.3% of the 90 bishops. Of these, 34 came from peasant families, 18 had fathers who were artisans, 2 were unskilled workers, 15 clerks and 8 traders.[28] Nevertheless, as a result of their origins or the process of acculturation they had experienced, bishops came overwhelmingly to belong to the class of notables.

The Prefect of the Oise considered the case of the Abbé Obré, recommended in 1854 for promotion to the see of Evreux. Although coming from a family of '*petits cultivateurs*', and indeed possessing 'some relatives … in inferior situations', including a cousin who was a shoemaker in Beauvais, Obré had proved capable of developing '*gravité*' in his language, appearance and bearing. Indeed, he had already acted as tutor to the children of the Duc de Clermont-Tonnerre and his appointment to Evreux would place further distance between himself and his '*parenté médiocre*'. While subsequently being considered for Amiens, in an interview with the prefect, Obré admitted that although some members of his extended family had become notaries or prosperous farmers, others remained 'simple artisans who might cause him to blush'. As a result, it was determined that he should not be appointed to a diocese close to his place of origin but was qualified for appointment anywhere else in France. By 1859, however, when nominated to the see of Nancy, the unfortunate Obré was too concerned about the threat of '*une congestion cérèbrale*' to accept—causing considerable surprise and consternation among those who had supported his candidature.[29]

Within the Church the bishops represented a small and culturally homogeneous elite. The social promotion many of them had enjoyed might have encouraged humility but was more likely to result in pride and a taste for authority. Generally, there was a considerable intellectual and cultural gulf between bishops, most of whom had risen through service in diocesan administration or seminary teaching, and the mass of parish priests.[30] Immersed as they often were in the details of administration, working closely with their vicars-general and a small secretariat, there was a constant danger that bishops might isolate themselves from the day-to-day realities in the parishes. Educated within the closed world of the seminary and rarely going on to higher education, their own intellectual limitations would become only too evident when debate was joined with German, Italian and Spanish colleagues at the Vatican Council in 1870.[31] The Abbé Darboy's opinions of the senior churchmen he encountered when vicar-general in the Paris diocese—expressed in the privacy of his diary—were generally less than flattering. Consulted by Fortoul on the promotion of the Abbé de Guerry, *curé* of the fashionable Parisian parish of La Madeleine, to the see of Marseille, he observed that the priest was 'indiscreet, lacking in tact, subject to frequent changes of opinion, and had insufficient strength of character to become a bishop'. Following dinner with the Cardinal-Archbishop of Lyon, Mgr de Bonald, Darboy described this eminent figure as 'rather dull, a listless character, of limited intelligence' adding that 'he represents an older France'. He claimed that Mgr Meirieu, Bishop of Digne, not only 'believes in table turning' [i.e. spiritualism] but was 'a narrow-minded, credulous, provincial'. With, it appears, a certain degree of relish, he recorded the description by Mgr Menjaud, Bishop of Nancy and chaplain to the Emperor, of his own archbishop as 'an impressionable man, unreflecting, lacking dignity'. He also gleefully reported the claim made by the Abbé Coquereau that Mgr Morlot was regarded by both ministers and members of the clergy as '*médiocre*' and as someone who had 'attained such a high position because no one believed that he would, and no obstacles were placed in his way'.[32]

In terms of career trajectories it appears that young men identified as the most able seminarians were earmarked for the most attractive and visible posts as college or seminary teachers, as parish priests in episcopal towns and especially Paris, or in diocesan administration. These were all functions in which an ambitious young priest might establish a reputation and attract the favour of an influential patron as a first step towards establishing contacts with significant networks within the French Church or

even with the Roman curia.[33] To a substantial degree the nomination of new bishops thus represented a process of co-option which ensured a high degree of homogeneity. Those already holding office were periodically requested to name priests suitable for promotion and, in a thorough process, information gathered from prefects and other government officials on their 'religious and theological tendencies … political opinions … devotion to the person of the Emperor and to the traditional interests of the nation.'[34] In some cases, such as the appointment of Mgr Bécel to Vannes, recommendations by members of the local social and political elite were significant and, in this case, particularly that of the Emperor's cousin—the Princess Bacciochi—owner of a château in the diocese.[35]

The support of bishops was also likely to be canvassed by those anxious to be considered for promotion—particularly their own senior subordinates and close acquaintances. In recommending the Abbé Obré as successor to Mgr Olivier at Evreux and then for appointment as Bishop of Amiens, the Bishop of Beauvais Mgr Gignoux described a career spent first as a singularly pious parish priest, then as a well-informed seminary professor, and finally as an effective vicar-general and administrator. He insisted that he would regret the loss of such a capable collaborator and was prepared to part with him only in the broader interests of the Church. This unqualified reference was followed up by a report from the prefect of the Oise which might have aroused ministerial concern. He described the vicar-general as 'inclined to be domineering' and as an '*ultramontain, de l'Ecole de l'Univers*', although otherwise devoted to the regime and extremely grateful for admission to the *Legion d'honneur*.[36] Such reports contributed to the creation of substantial personal files on likely candidates for bishoprics.

The final decision was taken by the Emperor, on the advice, not always followed, of the Ministre des Cultes. In the consultation process, some bishops—those close to the Emperor, the ruling family, and ministers—were of course more influential than others. They included successive archbishops of Paris and Cardinal Donnet, the long-serving Archbishop of Bordeaux, whose advice was sought in both Paris and Rome.[37] A priest with particular influence because of his functions, social status and connections, like the canon law expert and eminent member of the Roman curia, Abbé Louis-Gaston de Ségur, felt able to write directly to the Emperor. In November 1854, he supported the promotion to the episcopate of the Abbé de Conney, vicar-general of Moulins, because of his piety, theological and political moderation, and of the Abbé Gay, canon of

Limoges, due to his '*rare sainteté*' and good judgement. Ségur hoped furthermore that, in a forthcoming audience with the Emperor, he would be able to expound upon his concern about the 'lack of character and of impact of many of our bishops'.[38]

An unsigned and undated letter among the Fortoul papers, in recommending the establishment of a Commission consultative pour les affaires ecclésiastiques, with responsibility for systematically consulting bishops and leading theologians, implies some dissatisfaction with this informal appointment process. It was further suggested that care needed to be taken to appoint Gallicans and to counter Ultramontane intrigue.[39] Subsequently, Fortoul expressed concern about the rumours and rivalry stimulated by discussion of potential candidates, reminding the Prefect of Aveyron of the need for absolute secrecy in such matters and the necessity of responding to requests for information in sealed envelopes rather than in telegrams which passed through several hands.[40]

As well as according to the government the right to nominate bishops, the Concordat also required subsequent confirmation by the Pope. Generally, prior consultation with the Papal nuncio in Paris ensured the appointment of individuals acceptable to both the French State and the Papacy. Almost by definition they were mainly theological and political moderates. Nevertheless, and although classification is not always easy, it is evident that a growing proportion of bishops were or, once in office, became, ultramontane in terms of their general sympathies, and furthermore, that the appointments they made—particularly of the vicars-general from whose ranks future bishops were likely to be selected, tended to favour men whose outlook was similar to their own.[41] The trend had commenced during the July Monarchy and had reflected the growing appeal of such ideas among the younger clergy. During the Second Republic, 13 of the 19 bishops appointed, and during the 1850s, 21 of 29, exhibited sympathy for the Roman cause. In spite of this, a majority of bishops shared some misgivings about the further extension of Papal centralization and this group would be strengthened deliberately as relationships deteriorated in the following decade.[42]

The regime's growing preference for neo-Gallicans and frequently for priests trained at the Parisian seminary of Saint-Sulpice, who offered each other mutual support through correspondence and regular meetings, certainly caused concern in Rome. The bishops appointed in the 1860s were also increasingly less typical of the clergy in general and particularly of those described by Emile Ollivier as representatives of '*l'ultramontanisme*

du presbytère'—the enthusiastic adherents of the Roman cause.[43] This might by the end of the decade be seen as an attempt by the French government to prepare a challenge to Papal aspirations for the forthcoming General Council of the Church.[44] Increasingly, tension was also caused by Pius IX's determination to challenge the secular right of nomination which he saw as the main obstacle to Papal control over the Church in France. In case of disagreement, as in the case of the proposed nomination of the Abbé Marte to Vannes in 1860, the displeasure of the Holy See would be expressed directly to the French government and intense pressure imposed on the unfortunate candidate to desist.[45]

The appointment of a successor to Mgr Morlot as Archbishop of Paris in 1863 was always going to be fraught with difficulty. The Abbé Maret, doyen of the Paris theological faculty and a leading Gallican, had responded to Minister Rouland's request for advice with a firm warning against the appointment of an intransigent Ultramontane—'the question of the moment is to know whether this anti-modern, anti-French and anti-Napoleonic party will be strengthened by the nomination of an Archbishop of Paris taken from within its ranks'.[46] In most respects Mgr Darboy, the candidate favoured by the government, was well qualified. He had served in the administration of two previous archbishops, latterly as a vicar-general, before his appointment as Bishop of Nancy. He was known to be an opponent of extreme ultramontanism and a firm supporter of the imperial regime.[47] The minister (Rouland) was even prepared to break with precedent by announcing Darboy's nomination without consulting the Papal nuncio.[48]

The new archbishop's Gallicanism, his support for the regime's Italian policy, and subsequently his criticism of the Syllabus of Errors, were, however, hardly calculated to endear Darboy to the Pope. Together with his closest associates within the University theological faculty, and the Société de Saint-Sulpice and the Ecole des Carmes—responsible for the training of future priests, he would be regarded with hostile suspicion. In a private letter written on 26 October 1865 (and eventually leaked in 1868), Pius even accused the new archbishop of being a 'proponent of false and erroneous doctrines'.[49] His unwillingness to appoint Darboy to the cardinalcy, even when this was requested by the Emperor, was a public expression of his displeasure. In February 1868, he forcefully maintained that 'in the choice of cardinals, I am obliged to prefer candidates who have given proof of their loyalty to the Holy See in adhering to the principles it has proclaimed … How can I accept the entry into the college of cardinals of

a prelate who has shown himself to be animated by different principles, and who has, in a variety of circumstances, inclined towards maxims condemned by the Holy See?'[50]

2.4 The Recruitment of Priests

In spite of their differences, State and Church continued to cooperate in the post-revolutionary work of religious restoration. Substantial efforts were made to recruit priests and to improve their instruction, to reinforce discipline among the clergy, and to encourage pastoral activity and the spread of Catholic schools. A more numerous, rejuvenated and dynamic priesthood emerged, anxious to exert its influence and confident in its powers. The parish clergy in 1870 included an influential elite of 3450 *curés* in tenured posts—enjoying a limited administrative, but certainly not doctrinal autonomy—generally located in major urban parishes and cantonal centres. The remainder was made up of 31,000 untenured *desservants*, responsible for smaller, mainly rural parishes; 10,700 *vicaires* and 4750 *prêtres habitués* providing assistance in the larger parishes, often assuming responsibility for a chapel of ease established in part of an especially populous or geographically extensive parish; as well as some 5000 secular priests serving as teachers in seminaries and *collèges* or as chaplains in prisons, hospitals, schools or in the service of religious congregations; and a further 1000 engaged in diocesan administration.[51] With the exception of *curés* these secular priests were entirely subject to diocesan bishops who had 'the exclusive right to appoint and to revoke' as a means of balancing supply/demand and of imposing discipline.[52] Thus, when the Abbé Reboul, curé of La Madeleine in Béziers omitted the prayer for the Emperor in January 1853, the Bishop of Montpellier forcefully reminded clergy that under no circumstances should they deviate from the formal instructions in this matter given both by himself and the Ministère des Cultes. There was no room for debate, no right of appeal to local custom, simply the assertion that 'the proper authority … inspired by his rights and duties controls the interior of our churches … assuming a responsibility which cannot be left to the free will of individual [priests]'.[53]

In terms of density, whereas in 1821 there had been one priest for every 814 inhabitants (excluding the religious orders), by 1848, the figure had risen to 1:752 and by 1877 to 1:657, although there were substantial variations in this clerical presence—between 1:463 in the Tarn in 1870 and, at the other extreme, 1:858 in the Loir-et-Cher.[54] The clergy had

moreover been rejuvenated. In 1814, 42% of diocesan priests were at least 60 years old; by 1848, this was true of only 6%.[55] Subsequently, between 1852 and 1860, an average of 1310 ordinations occurred annually, while only around 800 secular clergy died.[56] As a result, there were, by 1860, around 50,000 secular priests, active in 36,000 parishes, and, in addition, some 25,000 monks and 120,000 nuns, resident in 14,000 religious houses.[57] A peak of 1753 ordinations would be achieved in 1868.[58] However, the situation was already beginning to deteriorate as priests recruited earlier in the century died and as the status of the clergy and the attractiveness of a clerical career began to decline.[59] Their numbers and distinctive garb still ensured, however, that the clergy remained a visible presence in French society. Indeed, they were a formidable body—'*l'élément d'encadrement essentiel*' in many communities.[60]

In general, recruitment was relatively easy in the west—although illiteracy restricted the numbers of suitable candidates; in Flanders, the Franche-Comté, Massif Central and parts of the Midi, regions in which populations remained devoted to their priests and in which the prestige, influence and material comfort of the clergy seemed assured. It was much more difficult in parts of central France, in Bourgogne and especially in Champagne and the Paris region. In the diocese of Meaux, for example, the rate of ordinations per 100,000 Catholics between 1853 and 1870 was only 16.4 compared with a national average of 37.[61] These differences can be explained only very roughly in terms of the varying intensity of religious faith, as measured by the number of Easter Communicants. Population densities and access to land, literacy as well as celibacy rates, local models of social promotion, and the sustained impact of missionary activity in the previous century, all contributed to the definition of discrete cultural zones. In the second half of the nineteenth century vocations appear to have been especially common in rural areas with high population densities and restricted opportunities for upward mobility, rather than in the more dynamic economic regions. As a result, the diocese of Montpellier depended on neighbouring upland dioceses (Viviers, Rodez, Mende) to supply it with a sufficient number of priests. In areas of strong recruitment, the majority of priests tended to come from the countryside. Elsewhere, in dioceses like Orleans or Limoges, where much of the rural population was rather indifferent, most of the priests came from the towns but in insufficient numbers.[62] Paradoxically, a ruralization of recruitment appears to have been developing just as society was becoming more urban.

Numbers were important. Areas which found it difficult to recruit priests were often forced to accept unsuitable candidates or the rejects from more plethoric dioceses. In the nature of things, 'good' parishes tended to receive 'good' priests and 'bad' parishes had 'bad' priests, that is, the incompetent, indifferent or those with low social status, priests who might well have been removed from a regional linguistic and cultural context in which they were comfortable and, due to a surplus of priests, deposited in a diocese with very different religious *mores* and patterns of behaviour.[63] As a result of the large number of priests ordained in his diocese, Mgr Bouvier, Bishop of Le Mans, prided himself on being able to select committed and able parish priests and to reject those whose vocations appeared doubtful and education incomplete. It was possible to maintain a high density of priests and to expect them to engage in close pastoral care of their parishioners.[64] In contrast, Mgr Regnault, Bishop of Chartres, bemoaned his inability to provide a priest for every parish. In March 1869, there were 47 vacancies, and parishes with relatively small populations were likely to have to share a priest, who might well be non-resident, provide fewer services and less intense pastoral care than was the norm. In a situation in which he was unable to pick and choose, it was also the case that the overall quality of the clergy was diminished.[65] In such circumstances, the mayor of Les Ecrennes (Seine-et-Marne), despairing at having to rely on clergy from other parishes, offered to supplement the stipend, and renovate the presbytery, ready for a new priest—but to no avail. The bishop continued to insist that no priest was available.[66] An inhabitant of Monfiquet in Normandy, a little village with only 300 inhabitants, lost in the forest of Biards, complained that in ten years four priests had been appointed to the parish, 'all of them mediocrities' and with long intervals between the departure of one and the arrival of his successor.[67] Judging from the complaints this might well have been a parish which served as a dumping ground for inadequate priests.

Particular problems were evident in the larger, rapidly growing cities, and especially in their suburbs. In the Paris diocese, low levels of recruitment to the clergy combined with high levels of population immigration to cause growing pastoral difficulties. The relative lack of ordinations was partly compensated for, however, by the substantial recruitment of priests—over 70% of them—in the provinces, although many had received their seminary instruction in the city.[68] As the undoubted religious capital of France, Paris attracted both the ambitious and able as well as those who had already failed elsewhere and who would frequently seek to make ends

meet through the accumulation of minor tasks.[69] Overall the number of secular clergy of all kinds, including teachers, administrators and chaplains, increased from 752 to 1368 between 1852 and 1870, a rate of growth exceeding that of the population and generally assumed by contemporary observers to be sufficient.[70] Of these, some 256 in 1841, 285 in 1851, and 491 in 1870 were parish priests charged with the care of souls.[71] This parish clergy was supported by 1200 regular clergy and 4000 nuns, as well as by the lay activists of organizations like the Société de Saint-Vincent-de-Paul.[72]

It was not simply the number of priests which mattered, however, but their distribution. The rigidities of the parish structure were an obstacle to change. In 1840, Paris was divided into 37 parishes. In 1856, this was increased to 46 and, following the annexation of the suburbs in 1860, the number rose to 70. Most priests were anxious to secure appointments in the city centre which were more prestigious, better rewarded and less demanding than most suburban parishes. As the novels of Balzac and Zola suggest, the priest was a familiar figure in the city streets. In contrast, the often dire situation in the suburbs was exacerbated by the inability of hard-pressed working-class parishes to finance the appointment of an adequate number of clergy.[73] If, in 1861, in the Paris diocese there was one priest for every 2956 inhabitants, the Abbé Darboy's inquiries in 1856 had revealed that in working-class Montmartre the figure was 1:4000 and in Belleville 1:5000.[74] The often hurried and cursory fashion in which marriages and burials appeared to be conducted by priests whose functions gave them little time for repose, was cause for concern within the Church. It also aroused deep resentment among distraught relatives. Thus, a certain M. Cuny, who had requested a mass to accompany the burial of his daughter-in-law at Saint Jean in Belleville in November 1858, complained that although the fees had been paid, the mass had not been sung. The reassurance by the parish priest that it had simply been postponed to the following day—and had been sung in the absence of the bereaved family—offered little comfort.[75] Similar situations were evident in most urban centres. In Marseille, there had been one parish priest for every 1740 inhabitants in 1821. The ratio, however, had declined to 1:2450 by 1861. Typically, the bourgeois parish of St Philippe employed the same number of priests (six) to care for the souls of 5000 people, as the socially more mixed la Belle-du-Mai for 15,680 parishioners.[76] Moreover, concern was being expressed already about a decline in enrolments in the *grands seminaires*.[77] Gradually, in some areas, the passing

away of priests ordained during the Restoration and early July Monarchy came to exceed the number of ordinations.[78]

There were a variety of reasons for becoming a priest. Not surprisingly, socialization within a fervent religious milieu was the key factor. Family upbringing, and particularly the influence of a pious mother, frequently appears to have been decisive in the transmission of values and the development of a sense of vocation.[79] Elected to the Constituent Assembly from the Pas-de-Calais in April 1848, the Abbé Frechon had from infancy been dedicated to the service of God by his parents (a hatter and his wife).[80] Family tradition was also significant, with many aspiring young men influenced by uncles or other relatives who were priests already. An acquaintanceship with an individual *bon prêtre* might be sufficient otherwise. In general, the clergy were zealous in their efforts to identify and encourage the vocations of intelligent and pious children, from the ages of 8 or 9.[81] Motivation is, of course, a complex matter. It is doubtful, however, whether in most cases the long training and the pious behaviour expected of priests could have been sustained without genuine religious commitment, a sense of answering God's call, constantly reinforced by the enveloping value system established by the Church and prevailing in the wider society.

If faith was central to the development of religious vocations, so too were family aspirations. Nobles, wealthy bourgeois and professional families appear, to a significant degree, to have excluded themselves from a calling which, from their perspective, had failed to provide sufficient financial independence and social status since the Revolution, and which seemed to have reduced the priest to the position of a functionary paid by the State. The overwhelming majority of candidates for the priesthood (about 90%) in the nineteenth century were from the landowning peasantry and lower middle classes, and especially the families of artisans and traders resident in the small towns of pre-industrial France. In many regions having a priest in the family reinforced its status. Thus, religious motives combined with a family's marriage and economic strategies. These were the social groups which would also become increasingly attracted to school-teaching as a means of social promotion.[82] In any case, the sons of the poorest peasants, agricultural labourers and urban workers were largely excluded from the priesthood by lack of education and ambition. Their families could rarely manage without their earnings. In the Pays de Retz, in the Nantes diocese, recruitment from the coastal fishing communities was rare, in spite of the manifestations of faith by their inhabitants, in large

part because poverty precluded educating sons for the priesthood.[83] It was reported nevertheless from the impoverished southern diocese of Mende, where Protestantism still appeared to pose a threat, that many families 'do without for several years, if necessary burdening themselves with debt, in order to make a priest, according to the local expression. Those families which are fortunate enough to succeed improve their situation within the social hierarchy; they are more in demand for [marriage] alliances.'[84]

In his Lenten address for 1863, the aristocratic Mgr La Tour d'Auvergne recognized that 'the clergy are no longer recruited primarily from the higher levels of society: whether as a result of the revolutions, or the necessity of circumstances, or the Divine Will, it is in other, less privileged classes—in terms of birth and fortune—although not less loved by the Saviour of Mankind, it is in the home of the poor, under the thatched roof of the farmer, that the Lord today searches for the chosen …'.[85] Adopting a more pessimistic tone, perhaps depressed by the parlous situation prevailing in his own Orleans diocese, Mgr Dupanloup loftily complained in a '*Lettre pastorale sur la rareté des vocations sacerdotales*' (1861) that the care of souls 'is henceforward assured only by the plebians' and that 'the spirit of cupidity' had replaced 'the spirit of faith'. Furthermore, as Bishop Bouvier of Le Mans warned, cultural deprivation, and an inability to mix in 'polite society' were all too likely to deprive the priest of 'the high moral tone so important in our holy calling'.[86] Another consequence of its origins, according to the Prefect of the Meurthe, was that the rural clergy, which 'recruits itself, for the most part, in the inferior classes … appear to have retained from their origins a certain harshness of character, which combined with an exaggerated sense of their individual value and social importance, frequently provokes conflict with the municipal authorities'.[87]

A respected, influential and indeed dignified position, which furthermore offered relative security and material comfort, and the role of '*chef du village*', must for many candidates for the priesthood have appeared preferable to hard physical labour in the fields and workshops.[88] Alternatives were limited—but who would have admitted to such thoughts! Indeed, as Mgr Bouvier had pointed out in 1846, 'they might not be able to aspire to wealth, but realise that they will not lack necessities if they remain faithful to their holy vocations; they will face fewer obstacles to securing life thereafter, and be sheltered from the innumerable vicissitudes to which ordinary men are exposed in their present lives'.[89] Seminary students were moreover exempt from conscription, and might be awarded financial

grants (*bourses)* to subsidize their studies, although, and in spite of substantial government assistance, providing these imposed a constant strain on diocesan finances.[90]

Of course, parents were not always rendered blissfully happy by their children's religious vocations. It was easier to accept where they had been blessed with a large family. In contrast, a semi-literate letter from a certain Joseph Sorel from Bulle (Oise) complained that he and his wife had made considerable sacrifices to educate their only son so that he could become a school teacher and help support them in their old age. Instead, and without asking for their approval, he had determined to become a missionary. The superior of the Séminaire des Missions Etrangères in the rue de Bac in Paris responded by pointing out that the younger Sorel was of age, had indeed already performed his military service, and had entered the seminary of his own free will.[91]

Some of those who had chosen to become priests or enter religious orders would come to doubt their vocations. The contrast between the high ideals associated with a sense of vocation and the realities of parish life might well provoke disillusionment. The combination of faith, established habits, reluctance to admit to doubt, and pressure to conform—reinforced by isolation, mutual surveillance, and discouragement of close friendships, and the resulting 'immolation' of the individual's personality, ensured that relatively few would renounce their vows, however. In all likelihood, a former priest would have felt reduced to a mortifying state of sin.[92] Having doubts about one's love of God or indeed concerning God's love must have been profoundly depressing but might be sublimated—in the words of an anonymous priest in the diocese of Vannes—by the reassuring sense of belonging to the elect—'My vocation is sublime! … It is God who has called us.'[93]

2.5 Educating the Clergy

The response of priests to the needs of a changing society was largely determined by their instruction and the perceptions of the world and of their mission which this provided. In his first encyclical *Qui pluribus* (9 November 1846), Pius IX had insisted on the vital importance of providing intending priests with a good education, according to the precepts of the Council of Trent. Thus seminary students should be 'instructed … in the fear of the Lord, in the love of ecclesiastical discipline; [and] moulded according to Catholic doctrine … especially in the knowledge of the sacred

sciences, the traditions of the Church, the writings of the holy fathers, and the sacred rites'.[94]

The early education of those identified by their parish priests as having potential generally took place in the local primary school, and was likely to be supplemented, from the age of 10 or 12, by tuition in the presbytery where priests offered instruction to perhaps half a dozen pupils at a time. The clergy took great pride in encouraging likely candidates for the priesthood and in providing them with the first rudiments of a religious education. Guidance might also be offered by members of the teaching orders or by devout lay teachers. During this time, according to the Abbé Gaduel's guide—*De la vocation ecclésiastique chez les enfants et de leur première éducation dans les presbytères*—pupils should be informed of the 'great truths of the faith: of the end of man, of the shortness of life and the insignificance of the things of this world, of the eternity … which must so soon succeed to the fleeting illusions of the present life, of the judgments of God and of his justice for sinners, of … the dreadful results of sin, and the terrifying punishments which will afflict sinners in this life and in the next'. This would serve as the foundation for a Christian life. It was also the moment to acquire some Latin, not provided in the primary schools, but essential for the future priest.[95] In this respect, for the sons of peasants and artisans, the *école presbytère* was the essential link between primary and secondary instruction.

The latter was provided for around seven years, by the *petit séminaire* (in the case of 63.2% of bishops appointed during the nineteenth century) or by public or private secondary schools (in the case of 42.14%).[96] The aim was to impart a traditional classical education and the best of the *petit séminaires* tried to emulate the state *lycées*. In the main, they were boarding schools, established generally in small towns isolated from corrupting influences. Thus, in the diocese of Rennes at mid-century there were two—at Vitré and Saint-Méen-le-Grand with 350 students and 19 priests.[97] The institution at Notre-Dame-des-Champs in Paris was exceptional in its national appeal, attracting the sons of the aristocracy and *haute bourgeoisie* as well as serving the diocese.[98] According to the Abbé Gaduel, the objective of instruction in the *petits séminaires* should be to ensure that 'sweet, pious, docile and pure children love God and adore the Holy Virgin, [and] escape from the temptations of the world …'[99] It was vitally important to mould the characters of the young and impressionable, and secure the internalization of faith and discipline. In the diocese of Angers, pupils were expected to live 'in hunger and thirst for justice and consequently

in the spirit of penitence, so as to purify themselves; in the spirit of mortification, so as to overcome vice and passion; in the spirit of prayer, in fulfilment of their duties to God and to His Holy Spirit; in a profound religious faith; in humility; in complete obedience towards those who represent the authority of God on earth; and finally in the state of perfect charity and holy submission which is the crowning glory of Christian virtue'.[100] In addition to the Latin of Virgil, Ovid, Horace and Cicero, some Greek and pre-eighteenth-century French literature and a little history were taught. Modern languages and science were utterly neglected. Far greater importance was attached to the round of prayer, meditation and spiritual exercises. From the age of 14, pupils adopted the ecclesiastical dress which marked them off from other adolescents.[101]

During this period young men were drawn more and more into a mental universe divorced from that of their families of origin. This pressure to maintain a distance between God's chosen and the laity was to be constant. Pupils were persuaded of the supreme importance of their religious mission and inevitably of their own personal worth. According to the superior of the *petit séminaire* at Nantes, 'the saintliness which would have been sufficient to ensure your salvation as a member of the laity, would not be sufficient for a member of the clergy … The life of the priest must be like a permanently open book in which laymen can find lessons in wisdom, modesty, piety, and all the virtues.'[102] Having been chosen by God to enter this enclosed world, it would become increasingly difficult ever to contemplate leaving it, an act which moreover would bring shame on the individual and his family.[103] Discipline, self-criticism, silence, study, isolation, and cultivation of the Christian virtues were central elements in the instruction of future priests. The *petit séminaire* was to be distinguished by the spirituality of the instruction it offered. Nevertheless, for financial reasons, these institutions also needed to attract pupils who had no intention of entering the priesthood. The other advantages of attracting the sons of local notables were spelled out by Mgr Dupanloup—'Opening the [*petits*] *séminaires* to all, besides bringing in the money of the rich, provides the means to elevate the poor, through their daily contact and their shared education … a mutual exchange of advantages to the benefit of all.'[104]

State inspectors, however, frequently insisted upon the mediocrity of the instruction provided.[105] In July 1861, the Academic Rector at Rennes was especially concerned about the 'mutiny' rumoured to have occurred in the *petit séminaire* at Mayenne in protest against poor food and corporal punishment. He maintained that, taught mainly by inexperienced

young priests awaiting appointment to a parish, pupils in *petits séminaires* were at least one year behind *lycée* students of the same age. At Châteaugontier, he claimed, pupils regularly scaled the seminary walls and even frequented the town's brothels.[106] However, by the Second Empire, as the shortage of priests left by the Revolution was ended finally, and in the regions of faith where potential recruits were plentiful, growing selectivity does appear to have led to an improvement in the quality and commitment of students.[107]

The *grand séminaire* was the next step in preparation for God's ministry and in the inculcation of a priestly culture. The Concordat had provided for the establishment of one in each diocese. In the 1870s while 33 seminaries were directed by members of the diocesan clergy, most were administered by members of religious orders—22 by Lazarists; 24 by Sulpicians; and 6 by Jesuits. Undoubtedly, the most prestigious institution, its model of instruction widely imitated, was that of the Sulpician order in the Place Saint-Sulpice in Paris.[108] In a fairly benevolent socio-political climate the number of seminarists would fluctuate between 7500 and 8800 between 1848 and 1868. Selection of students was based upon the intellectual ability of candidates and especially on their piety. Rather than the lack of applicants it was financial constraints on the provision of assistance to potential students which restricted expansion.[109]

The instruction provided helped determine the socio-political outlook as well as the pastoral qualities of the future priest. Hatred of the Revolution which had attempted to deny the truths of religious faith and to destroy the fabric of the Church, contributed to an intense suspicion of 'modern' ideas, of social change and the prospect of secularization, and a marked—if increasingly unrealistic—preference for a further restoration of the Bourbon monarchy. Such was the government's concern that a circular of 5 February 1853 instructed prefects to gather information 'discreetly' on seminary directors and professors and especially on 'their character, their capacity, their reputation, and their political opinions'. In his response the Prefect of Eure-et-Loir stressed the significance of the strategic position occupied by the Abbé Paquert, superior of the diocesan *grand séminaire*, in determining both the spiritual instruction and career paths of the clergy. He judged the professors at the seminary to be entirely undistinguished and offering a mediocre education. Together with most of the clergy in the diocese, moreover, they shared Legitimist political sympathies.[110] In contrast, the Prefect of Côtes-du-Nord provided a far more positive assessment of the instruction afforded to aspiring priests in the diocese of

Saint-Brieuc, as did Mgr Pie, at whose diocesan seminary in Poitiers in the 1850s at any one time six clerical professors sought to instruct around 80 seminarists.[111]

The quality of the education provided certainly varied. In general, however, it appears to have been intellectually undemanding, perhaps unavoidably so, given the low cultural levels previously attained by most students. Teaching was characterized by an unimaginative routine within an authoritarian environment. Often, the instructors themselves appear to have been selected because of their piety rather than intellect. Typically, over four or five years, students received instruction in religious dogma and morality, and a grounding in religious and general history, in canon law and the liturgy. They were introduced to the essentials of dogmatic theology, which would prepare them for the work of catechizing, and to the rigorist moral theology essential for future confessors. 'They learned to love the liturgy and develop the practices of a solid spiritual life.'[112] Students made use of manuals composed of extracts from the Bible—employed as 'a repository of doctrinal opinion', from the deliberations of the Councils of the Church and from diverse works of piety.[113] As part of this project the Abbé Migne worked tirelessly from his Parisian printing works to compensate for the destruction of libraries during the Revolution by providing low-cost editions of *Scripturae sacrae cursus completus* ('complete course in sacred scripture') including commentaries on each of the books of the Bible; a *Collection des auteurs sacrés* (100 vols, 1846–48); and a wide-ranging *Encyclopédie théologique* (171 vols, 1844–46) offering guidance to parish priests.[114]

In the late 1850s, in the cold, uncomfortable and insalubrious seminary directed by the Lazarist order at Cambrai, teaching was based on the explication of chosen themes developed in an authoritarian fashion. Independence of mind was definitely not encouraged. Success in examinations depended on rote learning. There was no library. Discipline was ferocious, surveillance constant.[115] At no stage in the training of the future priest was personal curiosity or initiative encouraged. The objective was to train *bons prêtres* who identified with the suffering of Jesus Christ, who would be pious, docile, disciplined and zealous in the performance of their duties. Inspired by an Augustinian emphasis on the human depravity brought about by the 'original sin' of Adam and Eve, they would emphasize man's dependence on God's grace for salvation.[116]

The Abbé Tissot described a typical day in the Sulpician seminary at Brou near Bourg-en-Bresse around the middle of the century. There, 'the

life of the grand séminaire is as if set in a mould. Everything is regulated in almost mathematical fashion.' From the moment of getting up at 5 o'clock, to returning to bed at 9, students experienced a carefully regulated day of teaching and prayer, of meals eaten while listening to readings from the scriptures, the martyrology and spiritual works, with the all-pervading silence interrupted by two noisy and more relaxed periods of recreation in the cloisters. This was the routine imposed through five years of study. There was constant pressure, imposed both by the careful subdivision of time and by a rigid discipline, reinforced by mutual surveillance and denunciation, by the confession of faults, and an internalized determination to achieve 'perfection'.[117] Similarly, in the *grand séminaire* at Nantes, alongside theology, and guidance in pastoral care and the techniques of conducting a service, instruction in personal behaviour—a process of acculturation—continued. The future priest should appreciate the need to dress—in priestly cassock—speak, and even move his body with studied care. Regulations insisted that the seminarian must 'carefully observe the rules of modesty, remaining dignified and serious in appearance, avoiding all frivolity and banter, moderating his voice, avoiding outbursts of laughter'. Spitting on the floor in chapel was also forbidden![118] New behavioural norms were being imposed, especially on students from the countryside. Modesty, dignity, cleanliness, politeness—particularly in dealings with the upper classes—were all characteristics of the ideal priest, along with religious devotion and frequent prayer. The regulations of the seminary at Marseille typically proscribed close friendships, 'those *amitiés particulières* which are based on purely natural inclination and not on charity or the desire for perfection, and the least harmful consequences of which are dissipation, waste of time, contempt for others, infraction of rules, and distrust of those who are there to guide us'.[119] Vacations were rare and brief. There was a concern that young men, returning to their homes, might well question their vocations. It was thus expected that students would maintain the routine of study and prayer and habits of piety, looking towards their parish priest for assistance in the on-going pursuit of personal sanctification.[120]

Writing to his parents in 1847 from the seminary at Orleans, which he had only recently entered, Louis Baunard complained that 'I am finding it very difficult to enter into the ecclesiastical world … The aridity of the studies, the rigidity of the rules, the solitude of my cell, the stress caused by constant surveillance and the triviality … of conversations, all of this is painful for me.'[121] Most seminarians would probably have been better

prepared by the routines of the *petit séminaire* and less aware of, or concerned by, the intellectual mediocrity of their studies. In a report on diocesan seminaries prepared for Cardinal Lambruschini, Prefect of the Congrégation des Etudes in Rome, Mgr Affre insisted that the instruction provided was of 'an elementary and eminently practical character', warning that if it became 'more extensive, more developed, it would fail to achieve its goal, because it would not be adapted to the ability of most of those to whom it is addressed and would be suitable only for the small number of more able students'. His complacent conclusion was that 'the seminaries, just as they are, respond well to the general needs of the Eglise de France'.[122]

The establishment in Paris, by the then Abbé Affre in 1845, of the Ecole des Carmes as an institution for advanced religious studies had nevertheless represented a small sign of a growing awareness of the shortcomings of priestly instruction. Bishops, however, remained suspicious of the centralizing ambitions of successive archbishops of Paris and reluctant to send their best young priests to study in the city. Furthermore, career prospects were more likely to be advanced by study in Rome.[123] The opening there of the French seminary in 1853, encouraged by the Pope, would provide a means of creating a romanized clerical elite.[124] By 1870, 340 students, selected by ultramontane bishops, had been admitted.[125]

In all, around 20–30% of seminary students would fail to complete their studies. They were 'seduced' by the attractions of secular society, whether it be women or alternative professional careers, had questioned their vocations, or were suffering from poor health, and particularly tuberculosis, made worse by austere living conditions.[126] The remainder, those who had completed their studies and proved themselves—through their good conduct and respect for religion and their superiors—were ready for ordination, an imposing, long, and carefully choreographed ceremony, in which, among numerous complex and symbolic gestures, the essential elements were the prostration of the ordinand before the altar, and the laying on of the bishop's hands in the act of consecration.[127] This was followed by the celebration of the new priest's first mass, conducted in private and attended only by a priest and relatives, and then the first public *grande messe* often celebrated in his native parish.[128] Once ordained, usually around the age of 24–26, priests were appointed to parishes, often living collectively in a presbytery under the constant and frequently humiliating supervision of a senior priest. Subsequent promotion from *vicaire* to *desservant* or *curé* was unlikely before a priest reached his early forties.[129]

In Paris, in spite of an increase in the number of parishes, most parish priests would always remain *vicaires*.

In the deliberately enclosed world of the seminary there had been little preparation for the realities of parish life or for the challenges posed by urbanization and secularization. In spite of the invocations against pride, newly ordained priests were easily led to consider themselves as special and distinguished from the rest of humanity. After all, they had been chosen by Providence to engage in a Holy Mission and would share in the Glory of Christ. How their lofty status, long training and relative social isolation, together with the need to sublimate sexual desire, affected the personalities of individual priests is impossible to determine. The psychological impact of the constant struggle to remain irreproachable, to behave with dignity and self-control, and to satisfy popular expectations of the *bon prêtre*, as well as endure surveillance by colleagues, superiors and parishioners must have been considerable. Nevertheless, the Divine gift of spiritual consolation—and inner strength—might be gained through constant prayer and supplication and humble abandonment of oneself to the Will of God.

Regular informal meetings with clergy from neighbouring parishes offered mutual support. In a letter to his bishop, the Abbé Billet, priest in the small community of Rahon (Jura), explained that priests usually gathered twice weekly, and that 'the object of these visits is not only an honest recreation, but the need for advice and the advantage of meeting with those who have the same objectives, the same spirit, the same duties as myself, and who can sometimes instruct me, console me, and revive my courage'.[130] Priests might remain in a parish for decades, occupying themselves with their religious duties, influenced by such helpful, and frequently re-printed guides as the Abbé Dupanloup's *Manuel des catéchismes* and *Manuel de première communion* or the Abbé Migne's *Dictionnaire des objections populaires contre le dogme…contenant pour chaque difficulté une réponse claire et précise*, a volume which was part of an ambitious project by its author to create a complete library for parish priests, providing them with all the elements of Catholic 'science'.[131] Many young priests also searched for inspiration in the pastoral letters regularly published by their bishops, and the sermons of illustrious preachers, as well as in the pages of the diocesan *semaines religieuses* which became increasingly common from the 1860s.

Increasingly, efforts were also made to stimulate their intellects, and above all to encourage the continuous striving for perfection, by means of

localized *conférences ecclésiastiques* where, as in the diocese of Le Mans, priests met every two or three months to discuss the practical problems of pastoral care, as well as '*des points de théologie dogmatique ou morale*'.[132] Perhaps because of their formal character, these do not appear to have been regarded with great enthusiasm by the clergy.[133] The much larger annual retreats, generally held in the *grand séminaire*, were another means of countering the isolation of the rural clergy. Appointed in 1849 to the diocese of Poitiers which, unusually, included the two departments of Deux-Sèvres and Vienne, with 630 parishes and a thousand priests, Mgr Pie was particularly anxious to improve their intellectual and pastoral attainments.[134] However, discussion was invariably restricted within very narrow and closely controlled doctrinal and spiritual bounds.[135] The results were mixed. It took time to overcome inertia. In the 1840s, the Bishop of Saint-Brieuc, Mgr Le Mée, insisted on attendance at least once every three years. Following construction of a new *grand seminaire* with space for 400 students in 1846, it became possible to require attendance every other year for 'four days of contemplation and of separation from the world, allowing time for self-reflection, to examine the depths of one's conscience and consider the frightening responsibility of a demanding and challenging ministry'.[136]

Independent reading—self-instruction—was most likely to involve devotional works which provided a one-sided view of a restricted range of theological questions. In 1861, Mgr Dupanloup judged these pious works, full of '*puérile sentimentalité*', to be 'mediocre and worse than mediocre … devoid of substance and incredibly bland' and concluded, anxiously, that they could not possibly provide 'sustenance for Christian souls'.[137] He was unusual in recognizing that the Church was in transition between 'a past … which has bequeathed practices and habits of pastoral ministry, entirely insufficient for new needs, and a future for which our means of action have not yet been organised', and that as a result, 'the ecclesiastical ministry exercises itself and functions in a manner which ensures that a substantial part of society remains outside its influence'.[138] Younger priests were particularly likely to read and circulate the combative and intransigent ultramontane newspaper *L'Univers*.[139] This served to confirm a fundamental hostility towards social and political change. Priests were also encouraged by their bishops to enquire into the history of their churches and parishes, and to become members of learned societies. Achieving the status of an *érudit* was one means by which a priest of humble origin might enhance his status as a local notable and his career

prospects.[140] History, archaeology, biography and hagiography—and notably the edifying lives of recently deceased bishops—were all popular, and served to confirm the overwhelmingly counter-revolutionary proclivities of the clergy.[141]

2.6 Hierarchy and Discipline

According to the provisions of both canon law and the Concordat, *curés* enjoyed tenure in office, and thus a degree of autonomy, as well as greater security in comparison with the mass of parish priests. This might of course turn out to be an illusion. Priests could be 'persuaded' to resign by the promise of promotion, in the interests of their parishioners, or of the Church, or else by the threat of sanctions including the temporary loss of stipends or, in extreme instances, of de-frocking.[142] The Baronne de Monville employed all the resources at her disposal in an attempt to replace the Abbé Petit, the *curé* of Mainsat (Creuse). He appears to have displeased her son-in-law, M. de La Roche-Aymon—the leading landowner, 'benefactor' and mayor of the commune—by voting against the re-establishment of the Empire. Initially, Mme de Monville appealed to the Bishop of Limoges who had pointed out that the Abbé Petit occupied a tenured position and could not be moved without his consent. However, in a letter to the Emperor in November 1853, reminding him of her credentials as a daughter of Marshal Lannes, and asking him to exercise his influence, she pointed out that such matters were constantly being arranged.[143] At the same time, in a very forceful letter to Fortoul, after reminding the minister that her brother, General de Montebello, was an aide-de-camp to the Emperor, the Baronne expressed her 'conviction' that the Abbé Petit would regard a 'suggestion' from his Bishop as an 'order' and, if necessary, the minister could threaten to deprive the priest of his stipend.[144]

Where non-tenured positions were in question, ministers normally accepted that 'it is the responsibility of bishops to make appointments to ecclesiastical posts; the civil administration must abstain from all interference in the nominations of *desservants* and of *vicaires*'.[145] Around 90% of parish priests were thus movable, at their bishop's behest and in response to the needs of pastoral care, as a means of promotion, or as a disciplinary measure.[146] The latter were most likely to take the form of a simple admonition, as in the not untypical case of the Abbé Aubertin at Louppy-le-Château (Meuse) criticized for 'imprudent' and 'maladroit' relations with

his parishioners.[147] Priests were also frequently instructed not to condemn named individuals from the pulpit for their moral transgressions,[148] warned against displaying an excessive '*esprit de domination*'[149] or even 'excessive zeal',[150] and advised to display greater dignity and reserve.[151] Failure to heed such warnings, or the apparently irretrievable breakdown of relationships between a priest and his parishioners, could lead to a transfer to another parish. Thus, like many other priests, the *desservant* at Draveil (Seine-et-Oise) had quarrelled repeatedly with the commune's mayor, but went too far when he published a circular listing his grievances.[152] The Abbé Vigny at Couvrot in the Marne overstepped the mark finally when he publicly insulted the mayor and his deputy at a session of the parish council.[153] The Abbé Bénavont, *desservant* of Durenque in the mountainous Aveyron was moved, after several warnings, not because of his politics, as the Bishop of Rodez took care to point out, but due to his lifestyle, 'his gluttony and expenditure beyond his presumed means, his frequenting of persons of the opposite sex'.[154] In the case of the parish priest at Imling, accused by his parishioners of neglect of his duties and alcoholism, Mgr Darboy, the Bishop of Nancy, concluded that the Abbé Deblaye was too committed to his historical and archaeological studies and intellectually unsuited to an isolated village. Typically, he also insisted that the transfer of the priest to another parish would occur only once spirits had calmed, to avoid confirming the impression that the priest had been in the wrong.[155]

In spite of the legal situation, the archives are full of petitions from mayors, councillors and ordinary citizens, requesting the transfer of priests. These might be sent to bishops, prefects, and ministers, often successively. Thus, the municipal council at Bouxières-aux-Chênes claimed that their 'tyrannical' parish priest had driven away a succession of lay school-teachers and removed a harmonium from the church. The councillors had appealed to the Bishop of Nancy, without success, and then determined to try their luck with the Ministre des Cultes.[156] In a relatively small, but not insignificant, number of cases, appeals might even be made to the head of state or to the Empress Eugènie. Outside intervention was, however, perceived by bishops to be 'entirely opposed to the letter and spirit of canon law'.[157] As the Bishop of Limoges observed, bishops bitterly resented, as an '*abus intolérable*', this 'obsessive determination of the rural population, and even some mayors … to request the minister to move a parish priest, as if the minister, however respectable, was clothed with episcopal dignity and authority'. Mgr Buissas went on to claim that generally complaints were

initiated by men 'without religion and often without morals', and were in any case unnecessary as, if the case had merited it, the responsible bishop would already have taken action. He felt that prefects should be instructed to punish rather than lend credence to the authors of 'capricious' complaints.[158] The evidence presented was frequently contradictory. The same priest might be described as incompetent and immoral by one group and regarded as pious and irreproachable by their rivals.[159] Making concessions was furthermore perceived as only likely to discredit the clergy and to encourage further complaints.[160]

In some circumstances, where a bishop had failed to act as government officials would have wished, or as a result of the succession of delays which frequently followed a promise to discipline an errant priest, creating an impression of weakness and incompetence, administrative intervention might appear to be unavoidable.[161] Reporting on the case of a priest found guilty of rape, the Prefect of Basses-Pyrénées maintained that disorder among the clergy was hardly surprising given the 'systematic' failure of the Bishop of Bayonne to act on complaints by the authorities.[162] Age, infirmity and waning powers were sometimes significant factors. In June 1857, the Prefect of the Marne complained that 'the hand of our old bishop is not always sufficiently firm to ensure respect for his authority', although this might be compensated for by a young and energetic vicar-general.[163] A new bishop might also face difficulties. The clergy of the diocese of Saint Brieuc were reported to be 'unwilling to recognize' in Mgr Martial 'the superior abilities which would have ensured obedience'. The Prefect of Côtes-du-Nord hoped that this would come with time.[164] The Bishop of Luçon, Mgr Baillès, was exceptional in his personal arrogance and in the degree to which he was prepared to engage in political opposition. He rejected out-of-hand pressure to transfer the Abbé Mestres, *desservant* of Nesmy who, an investigation appeared to prove, had unsuccessfully attempted to seduce an *institutrice* and subsequently accused the unfortunate woman of immorality. This kind of behaviour, together with Baillès' extreme theological and political views, clearly caused discord even among his own clergy.[165] However, although parish priests might resent the high-handedness of their bishops, they were unlikely to publicly express their sense of grievance other than in the exceptional circumstances created by revolution or as a result of the widespread loss of confidence caused by the exceptionally crass behaviour of a particular bishop like Baillès or Mgr Depéry, Bishop of Gap, who was widely held to be guilty of nepotism and financial misappropriation.[166]

The episcopal decision to transfer a priest as a disciplinary measure was in general taken only as a last resort, even when such action might appear to be richly deserved. Procrastination was a frequent response to complaints, presumably in the hope that the problems would somehow sort themselves out.[167] The Abbé Crétel, priest at Crépy (Pas-de-Calais), who had already been warned on several occasions by his superiors about his 'inconsiderate' behaviour, was eventually moved to '*un poste inférieur*' in the hope that he would profit from the warning.[168] For the priests involved, such action posed a threat to their reputations and imposed practical difficulties and expense. Following long years of devoted service in a parish, the impact could often be described as 'sad and painful'.[169] The parish priest at Assenoncourt in the diocese of Nancy, informed about the complaints made by his '*chers paroissiens*', claimed to have been 'morally crucified' by their evident hatred.[170]

Some priests—difficult personalities, incompetents, or men with weak vocations—were subjected to several moves during their careers. They were likely to end up in isolation; in the diocese of Grenoble in 'the worst parishes in the mountains', where the arrival of yet another failed priest can have done little to revivify religious life.[171] In such circumstances, preceded by a bad reputation, probably magnified by rumour, the transferred priest would find himself in an extremely difficult situation. In a petition listing the transgressions of the Abbé Goubely, the inhabitants of Bord in the Creuse wondered what they had done to deserve a priest who had been driven out of his previous three parishes.[172] Wearily accepting the need to transfer the abrasive Abbé Becker from Boucheporn, the Bishop of Metz appeared to accept that, in spite of his piety and zeal, this was a priest who would never enjoy the confidence of his parishioners for very long and who needed to be moved repeatedly.[173]

There were, however, often practical obstacles. The shortage of priests in the Soissons diocese made it difficult to find a successor for a priest who had been transferred, for whatever reason. It might be necessary to wait for the next round of ordinations.[174] Disputes within the parish, and its bad reputation, ensured that other priests were reluctant to replace the Abbé Compère in Drancy in 1861.[175] Finding a suitable alternative parish was a further difficulty. When bishops regarded a priest's offence as relatively minor, as in the case of the Abbé Machère, *vicaire* at Bonneval, accused, on the basis of gossip, of employing an offensive expression to describe the Emperor, the Bishop of Chartres was anxious to move him to a position of equivalent standing rather than humiliate a respectable

clergyman who had already apologized.[176] While accepting the urgent need to transfer the Abbé Barbé from Etsaut, where his 'well-intentioned' efforts had led to disputes with the mayor over politics and funding, the Bishop of Bayonne was anxious not to appear to be promoting him, given that his existing parish with its dispersed hamlets, lost in the mountains and isolated by snow for several months each year, was already 'one of the least and at the same time most demanding in the diocese'.[177] In the case of the parish of Urdos, the Prefect of Basses-Pyrénées accepted that the *desservant*, although 'perhaps not a model priest' was at least, in terms of his charitable disposition and good morals, an improvement on his predecessors. Moreover, 'his parish is one of those in which a more distinguished priest could not and would not reside (it is known as the Siberia of Béarn)'.[178]

Tired of difficulties with parishioners, some priests welcomed a move and a fresh start.[179] In any case priests who challenged the authority of their bishops by objecting to a move might be threatened with an interdiction from all priestly activity.[180] There was also the possibility—rarely employed—of committing a recalcitrant priest to a madhouse,[181] or at the very least a Trappist monastery.[182] In such difficult circumstances, priests could appeal to the Ministre des Cultes or even the Conseil d'Etat against what they judged to be the authoritarian and unreasonable behaviour of their bishops. In 1863, the *curé* of Lizy-sur-Ourcq complained that he had been brutally dismissed as cantonal doyen while two other priests had been transferred from their parishes by the Bishop of Meaux for supporting M. Jaucourt, a Protestant official electoral candidate rather than the opposition candidate—a Catholic critic of the Emperor's Italian policy. The priests concerned had been summoned to the château at Lizy—the residence of the Baronne de Morell—at which the bishop, on a confirmation tour, was staying, and been severely admonished. Their protests to the prefect, and then to the Emperor, as well as to their metropolitan archbishop had only intensified the bishop's anger. The Archbishop of Paris had recommended that they submit to the will of their superior who was entirely within his rights.[183] In similar circumstances the Bishop of Perpignan had dismissed the Abbé Bedos from his functions as vicar-general for supporting a Jewish official candidate. Mgr Gerbet insisted that he did not have to answer for his actions and that he was determined to preserve 'the unity of the diocesan administration' in support of the cause of religion and the Papacy. The insistence by Bedos on his freedom to vote was an unacceptable threat to these principles.[184]

2.7 The Religious Orders

The growth in the number of secular clergy was replicated by that of the male religious orders. These included enclosed and primarily contemplative orders like the Redemptorists, Capucins, Franciscans, Dominicans and particularly the Jesuits whose numbers increased from 1209 to 2658 between 1850 and 1870. They proved attractive to the many devout upper-class young men anxious to maintain close links with their *milieu d'origine* and not tempted by the prospect of ministering to the lower classes.[185] Although an 1817 law required prior governmental authorization, most of these congregations refused to submit themselves to the official procedure. They were, however, tolerated, largely due to the influence they exerted within the socio-political elite. Indeed, as Père Pouget, representing the Jesuits in the Lyon province, admitted in November 1851, this was their primary ambition.[186] When the order took charge of the Parisian Collège de Vaugirard in 1852, it provided instruction to some 250 pupils, drawn exclusively from noble and *haut bourgeois* families while the school opened in 1854 in the rue des Postes specifically sought to prepare students for entry into the *grandes écoles*.[187] At Nancy, where nine Jesuit fathers established themselves in 1857, their chapel was frequented mainly by '*les Dames de la Noblesse et de la Haute Bourgeoisie*', members of families with Legitimist loyalties to whom they offered spiritual guidance and in return received substantial monetary donations.[188] These establishments would be perceived as a threat to public secondary education and to government influence over regional elites.[189] Little wonder that a report to the Ministre des Cultes from the Paris Prefect of Police borders on paranoia. After commenting on the 'concealed' wealth of the religious orders, P-M. Pietri observed that 'Most of the congregations do not have direct relationships with the populations which surround them; their influence is exercised in an occult manner. They all obey the orders they receive from Rome. From the political point of view their sympathies appear to be with the Legitimist party … The fundamental objective of the congregations … is to inspire the generation they are educating with their own outlook, and in this respect, teaching provides them with powerful weapons to achieve their goal.'[190]

Often, the parish clergy shared at least some of these misgivings, particularly in central Paris where the chapels opened by the religious orders, with their fashionable preachers and confessors, competed for worshippers

and resources. The Jesuits in the rue de Sèvres heard around 80,000 confessions each year in the 1850s, and those in the rue des Postes a further 40,000.[191] The efforts of successive archbishops, and particularly Darboy, to introduce regular pastoral visits as a means of imposing episcopal discipline on the religious orders were fiercely resisted, with the Jesuits and Capucins reminding the archbishop that they depended directly on the authority of the Pope.[192] In a strongly worded letter to Pius IX written on 1 September 1864, Darboy complained of 'the language and behaviour of the regular clergy, their determination to insidiously denigrate the bishops and clergy'. He regretted the encouragement they received from the Papal nuncio and from Rome itself. In his reply the Pope forcefully accused Darboy of expressing opinions 'entirely contrary to the divine primacy of the Roman pontiff over the universal church'.[193]

More favourably regarded were those 'useful' orders, engaged in primary instruction for the masses, as well as caring for the sick. The 1861 census estimated that 13,000 of the 18,000 members of male congregations were teachers, members of orders like the Institut des Ecoles chrétiennes and the Frères des Ecoles chrétiennes. By 1878, the latter alone had grown to 1800 communities with 11,600 members.[194] They were located especially in relatively under-educated areas south and west of the line drawn on the map between Saint-Malo and Geneva, rather than to the north where mass literacy had developed earlier and the teaching profession had long been laïcized.[195] Wearing their religious habits, trained to bear themselves at all times with dignity and modesty, they offered a means by which the Church could reinforce its presence and assert a powerful cultural influence while satisfying the vocations of the many young people willing to commit themselves to lives of poverty, chastity and obedience, as a means of gaining the '*chemin de perfection*'.[196]

The most potent sign of the renewed dynamism of the Church—as in the seventeenth century in the aftermath of the Reformation—was, however, the rapid expansion of the female orders, a development which reached its apogee during the Second Empire, when around seven out of every 1000 women were *religieuses* compared with four before the Revolution.[197] From less than 13,000 in 1808 their numbers rose to over 130,000 by 1880, with 80% of these belonging to congregations active in the community. The authoritarian Empire was thus marked by the triumphant assertion of Catholic faith largely as a result of the annual entry of 5000 sisters into the religious congregations. Recruitment was stabilized at this level for over two decades. With an estimated 56% of their members

under 40 in 1880 and only 10% over 60, the female orders combined youthful energy with solid experience.[198] While encouraging the subordination of women to men in the wider society, the Church provided opportunities in teaching, nursing and charitable activity for collective and self-expression and personal fulfilment.[199] Mostly directed by a charismatic female superior general, these religious orders thus provided a vital link between the Church and society.[200]

Regions of religious vitality in the west, the Massif Central, Lorraine and the Alps, provided sisters for other parts of the country—and especially for the Paris basin, centre-west (Poitiers, Limousin, Charentes) and Provence. As a result of these transfers a higher density of sisters was to be found in the irreligious Beauce close to Paris than in faithful Brittany. Urban areas exercised a more powerful call on their services than the countryside, due to the concentration of schools and charitable activity, as well as their ability to provide the necessary financial resources. By 1861, there were 55 sisters per 10,000 inhabitants in urban areas compared with 16 in rural.[201] In Paris, the presence of the religious orders was evident especially in the more bourgeois western *quartiers* and above all around Saint-Sulpice, a sort of religious ghetto.[202] Working-class districts, as well as 'dechristianized' parts of the countryside were both more resistant to the activities of the *bonnes sœurs* and far less likely to attract their initial interest. Nevertheless, most sections of society recognized their moral integrity and dedication.[203]

In the early 1850s, around 65% of sisters were involved in teaching, 25% in providing medical care and only 10% belonged to cloistered, contemplative orders.[204] Favoured by the daughters of the aristocracy and wealthy bourgeoisie, entry into the latter was expensive. The Sisters of the Visitation at Le Puy, for example, were, in the early 1850s, recruited from the '*bourgeoisie*' who brought with them a dowry of 6800 francs as well as a '*trousseau*' valued at around 1800 francs.[205] These orders were exclusive in terms of the social origins of the girls they educated and this largely determined their own subsequent patterns of recruitment. Even 'closed' religious communities like the Dames du Sacré-Cœur de Paris or the Bénédictines du Calvaire at Machecoul in Brittany, however, were increasingly engaged in secondary education through their *pensionnats*, partly for revenue-raising purposes.[206] The daughters of the 'popular' classes in contrast preferred, and were encouraged to enter, those religious orders which performed traditional female roles in teaching, hospitals, orphanages, asylums, and in the care of the elderly and sick.

Particularly notable was the rapid expansion of the teaching orders which represented a response to the growing mass demand for instruction, to the determination—in the interests of moral order—to separate girls from boys at school, and to the perceived need to provide both with a fundamentally religious instruction. Facilitated by the provisions of the Guizot and Falloux laws, such development was evidence of the determination of the Church to transmit the faith. The schools staffed by the religious orders might either be private institutions or communal establishments where an order had responded to an official invitation to open or take over a school. Communes benefited from low salary costs, the religious orders from public funding of buildings and teaching resources. According to the Academic Rector at Rennes in 1856, 'Municipal councils request sisters for the direction of girls' schools; this tendency constantly spreads; the influence of large landowners, the powerful action of the clergy, the legacies and donations exclusively reserved to the sisters' schools result in the ever growing concentration of the instruction of girls in the hands of the congregations.'[207] By 1876–77, some 60% of female pupils receiving a primary education were taught by members of the religious orders, although only around 18% of the boys. The religious orders thus made an exceptional contribution to the achievement of female literacy and a closer equality between the sexes.[208] This might be combined with the missionary activity engaged in by such orders as the Society of the Sacred Heart, established at the beginning of the century by Sophie Barat (its superior general for 65 years) and Philippine Duchesne, and which, by 1865, had 3500 members, active in both North America and the French colonies.[209]

In most parts of Brittany, as in the Côtes-du-Nord, both male and female teaching orders had expanded rapidly. In 1853, the 136 Frères were responsible for 88 schools for boys—around one-third of the total. According to the prefect they were characterized by 'the purity of their morals, and by a great devotion to the poor'. Some 140 Filles offered instruction in 50 schools, as well as distributing charity and caring for orphans. A host of smaller orders provided similar services. These included the Maison du Réfuge at Saint Brieuc, which sheltered a cloistered order offering both a *pensionnat de demoiselles*, and a refuge for '*les filles répentantes*'. The Filles de la Croix worked in both schools and hospitals; the Sœurs hospitalières de Saint-Augustin administered the hospital at Lannion, provided charity and instruction to the poor, and educated the *demoiselles* who boarded with them. Additionally, they trained lay

institutrices on behalf of the department.[210] In the Haute-Loire the 'Sœurs de Mère Agnès' typically 'look after the sick, distribute charity to the homes of paupers', as well as supervising female inmates in the prison at Le Puy.[211]

From the 1820s and particularly the 1840s, charitable sisters like the Filles de la Charité in Paris, the Providence de Rouen or the Filles de la Sagesse in the west also flourished as never before or since, with the latter opening 252 houses in the 1850s alone. The Petites Sœurs des pauvres specialized in care of the aged. These orders offered a range of vital services which the State was as yet unwilling or unable to offer. By offering assistance, in collaboration with local notables, and the parish priests who in return served as their confessors and spiritual guides, and by sharing the lives of the poor, the sisters were able to evangelize, by example, manifesting the 'compassion of God' and 'imitating the virtues of Mary'.

The overwhelming majority of nurses active in some 1500 hospitals in 1864 were also members of religious congregations. So too were sisters of orders based largely on the model of the Bon secours established in Paris in the 1820s to provide care in their homes for the better-off and the Petites Sœurs de l'Assomption, which from the 1860s focused their attention on the desperately poor sick and aged.[212] In under-medicalized regions of the Massif Central and Brittany, members of the religious orders, under the supervision of and in collaboration with parish priests, local bureaux des bienfaisance, charity committees, mayors and doctors, contributed to improvements in public hygiene and to the care of the sick in their homes. There were frequent complaints, however, from an increasingly professionalized medical profession that the limited medical knowledge of the nursing sisters, combined with the authoritarianism of their superiors, resulted in inappropriate treatment, which doctors found difficult to control.[213] Their undoubted devotion, the '*consolation*' and '*secours*' they offered to the poor, and the relatively low cost of their presence nevertheless ensured considerable community support.[214] In major urban hospitals, through the employment and supervision of lay female assistants, the sisters themselves managed to avoid much of the hard physical labour and 'degrading' activity typical of hospital life. They were able to devote more of their time to religious proselytism among the sick and dying—to the vital mission of saving souls.[215] Clearly, the nuns provided the combination of bodily and spiritual care which so many people desired.

In a society in which there were few respectable and sufficiently remunerative ways to earn a living, the religious congregations offered

opportunities for women to express their piety and serve as models of Christian virtue through the performance of useful and rewarding services. Membership of a religious order offered career prospects and a sense of professional identity within disciplined, hierarchical organizations, as well as material security and spiritual fulfilment. Women were also offered a means of escaping from situations in which social norms emphasized male superiority, the duty of unquestioning obedience to fathers and husbands, and the conjugal rights of the man, as well as from the terrors of childbirth and of possible infection by spouses with venereal disease. Becoming a sister in religion offered emancipation through membership of a religious 'family'.[216] The idealization of chastity as a higher calling even than marriage and bearing God's children, must have offered consolation or gratification to the large numbers of unmarried women (1:4 of those over 20) and widows (1:2 women over 60), for whom the religious orders provided an admired model of religious devotion. Unwanted tension might, however, have been introduced into married life by the glorification of virginity, the association of purity with chastity, and the negative perceptions of sexuality this implied, together with the condemnation of contraception and insistence that carnal sin was a threat to the prospect of earthly and Divine bliss.[217]

Demographic and cultural factors combined. Close curbs on sexuality and high rates of celibacy in traditional rural communities were closely related to religious vocations. In some impoverished areas in Brittany and the Massif Central where the mass migration of young men created a substantial imbalance between the sexes, the religious orders had been supplemented since the seventeenth century by groups of *béates* who, while not taking vows, wore religious habits and remained within their communities of origin to perform good works under the supervision of their own orders and the parish priest. In the Haute-Loire in the 1850s the Sœurs de l'Instruction supervised the charitable activities of around 800 members of these *tiers ordres* who provided some instruction in the countryside. The ideal was a little community of *bonnes sœurs* in every parish, assisting the priest in his pastoral care, educating the young, and caring for those in need.[218]

The cultural climates prevailing within the family, school and parish, would also have decisive consequences for the young women who would become the mothers of the next generation.[219] Through the organization of pious associations like the Enfants de Marie, efforts were made to protect and reinforce their faith. Some, from a very early age were encouraged

to think of entering the religious orders and becoming the brides of Christ. Living modest and exemplary lives, frequently radiating happiness due to their own sense of fulfilment, the sisters themselves were able to encourage the young to treasure their virginity, to repress unchaste physical desire and prepare themselves for death and God's judgement.[220] The Carmelite sister Marie-Aimée de Jésus Quoniam was inspired by her mother's revelation that she had been forced into an unhappy marriage when she had wished to enter a religious order. Saint Theresa of Lisieux, and her sister, were clearly moved by the intense religious faith of both their parents.[221] Sometimes, in contrast, enthusiastic proselytism led to complaints from fathers unwilling to accept the prospect of 'losing' their daughters. Thus, M. Simon, a '*surveillant*' working for the Nord railway company at La Chapelle in Paris accused the Mother Superior of the Bon-Pasteur in Reims, a school which his daughter Constance had attended from the age of 7, of 'cultivating his daughter in order to persuade her to embrace a religious life'. He wanted to be absolutely certain that she genuinely possessed a vocation.[222]

Occasionally, and sometimes repeatedly, some young women were beset with doubts. Largely during the testing period of noviciate, around 14–20% would decide against remaining within their orders.[223] Sister Gros, a member of the Communauté du Bon-Sauveur at Caen, while devoted to the care of the deaf and dumb, was frustrated at being unable to communicate freely with her family because her letters were censored. She was also concerned that '*certaines personnes*' would regard the sentiments she was determined to express as a 'crime'. In February 1848, she succeeded in smuggling a letter to her brother. In it she claimed that she had come to believe that God had not wished her to enter religious life, and expressed her determination to return to her family, rather than die miserably in her convent. A month later, following representations by her brother and an interview with the Mother Superior of the order, Sister Gros was persuaded to write to the Bishop of Bayeux to inform him that she had been depressed momentarily and wished to continue to respect her vows. In an accompanying letter the Mother Superior claimed that the sister had been afflicted with a '*fièvre cérébrale*' and, as a result, suffered from a '*faiblesse de tête*' which, combined with 'a vivid imagination, often magnified in her eyes, the impact of the sorrows she encountered'. Greater vigilance by the other sisters would ensure that in future Sister Gros received 'every care and consideration'.[224] Most sisters would persevere with a lifetime of service although mortality from epidemic disease and

especially tuberculosis was high, in spite of the determination of the religious orders to admit only physically robust candidates capable of performing demanding duties.

The expansion of the religious orders, together with the Marian cult, reflected and reinforced the 'feminization' of the Church. The wealthy appear to have been less reticent about allowing their daughters to enter the Church than their sons. As a result, leadership in these authoritarian organizations continued to be provided by well-educated and relatively cultured women from noble or well-off bourgeois families often reluctant to submit to the dictatorial tendencies of their bishops.[225] Members of the teaching and charitable orders were in contrast recruited overwhelmingly from among the better-off sections of the 'popular classes'.[226] Lack of education was regarded as less of an obstacle to the entry of women from poor artisanal and peasant families into the religious orders than it was for their menfolk. There appeared to be an insatiable need for teachers, *gardes-malades* and Petites Sœurs des Pauvres, vital elements, Louis Veuillot believed, in the struggle against socialism and revolution; a view shared by his friend the Abbé Lelièvre, an eminent and generous representative of the paternalistic industrial patronat of the Nord.[227]

2.8 Preserving the Fabric

As in Britain, many churches, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, were in a deplorable condition, in desperate need of repair both as a practical necessity and a means of reaffirming the faith. The problem in France had of course been greatly exacerbated by the vandalism and neglect of the Revolution, and the destructive impact of civil war.[228] An important precedent was set in 1810, when the Ministre des Cultes, the Comte de Montalivet, addressed a questionnaire to officials, the clergy and local *érudits*—members of groups like the Société des antiquaires de la Normandie—in an attempt to identify buildings of historical importance. Interest gathered pace following the Restoration. In 1824, his successor, Mgr Frayssinous, acknowledged that the state was responsible for the preservation of cathedrals and other major historical structures, while regretfully accepting that only limited subsidies could be provided for the mass of parish churches.[229] The renovation of often decrepit buildings would moreover not be without its problems. Concern would repeatedly be expressed about the extreme state of dilapidation of many medieval churches and the incompetence of those involved in their restoration, as

well as concerning the stylistic and structural mediocrity of new buildings.[230] In a circular to bishops in December 1834, J.C. Persil, the Ministre de la Justice et des Cultes, complained about '*curés*, almost everywhere, especially in the rural communes … disposed, of their own authority, to bring workers into their churches, sometimes to undertake major reconstruction', without plans or consulting superior authority. Prefects were instructed to prevent 'degradations and mutilations' and widespread 'vandalism'. Regular and serious inspection appeared to be essential to prevent the destruction of buildings and historically significant works of art.[231]

On behalf of the official Commission des Monuments historiques, Prosper Mérimée, an anti-clerical non-believer, in close collaboration with the aristocratic Catholic Charles de Montalembert, insisted that 'the architect must not lose from sight that he is restoring an exceptional monument, and that in such a case, he is forbidden to invent anything. His responsibility is to conserve with scrupulous care the smallest vestiges … and to leave untouched a ruin in which the primitive dispositions are not clearly recognizable.'[232] Nevertheless, in 1840, J-P. Schmit, a member of the Comité historique des Arts et Monuments, reported to the Interior Minister that 'grave mutilations' of buildings and unbelievable acts of 'vandalism' remained common, in the cities as well as in the isolated villages in which the clergy were often left to their own devices.[233] Mgr Raess, Bishop of Strasbourg, claimed that the beauty of many ancient buildings had been destroyed.[234] Inspecting churches in the diocese of Rouen in June 1861 on behalf of his archbishop, the Abbé Cochet reported that although the continued zeal for church construction and restoration was to be welcomed, the poor quality of much of the work, the excessive use of plaster and cast iron decoration, as well as the growing presence of tasteless plaster ornaments, were cause for concern. While complimenting the departmental architect on work carried out in the cathedral and other churches in Rouen, which was largely compatible with the original style of the buildings, he was extremely critical of the situation in churches such as that at Saint-Léger-du-Bourg-Denis. This had 'suffered over the last 25 years distressing restoration which has disfigured it' and served as proof that 'good intentions are not enough. It has been disfigured by the most zealous piety.'[235]

By the mid-1860s, the work of 'Catholic 'reconquest' additionally involved an unprecedented wave of construction or enlargement of over 9000 churches—around a quarter of the total—in a measured response to urbanization and population growth, and thus a feature of

'modernization'.[236] Such a substantial modification of the built environment would to a large degree reflect the growing prosperity and ambitions of the Second Empire, with a substantial impact on countless communities, large and small. As Baron Haussmann, the Prefect of the Seine, made clear, investment in churches was for the State both a statement of faith and an affirmation of the social role of religion.[237] The programme of restoration and church construction in Paris has indeed been described as an instance of '*haussmannisation religieuse*',[238] a means of reinforcing the regime's own prestige and symptomatic of the Emperor's 'political approach to religious questions'.[239] Archbishop Sibour certainly welcomed the Emperor's desire to 'make the capital of France the most beautiful city in the world' and promised the full support of the Church.[240]

The need to restore Notre-Dame de Paris as the focal point for both religious and civil ceremony had become only too apparent. Under the supervision of the leading ecclesiastical architects Viollet-le-Duc and Lassus, the work had already started in 1845, been interrupted in 1850, and then re-commenced three years later.[241] The Emperor whose marriage was solemnized in the cathedral in 1853, and whose son would be baptised there in 1856, appears to have been sensitive to the archbishop's claim that a building of such major national, as well as religious significance, required special care.[242] In a letter to Fortoul, Sibour had complained about 'the dilapidation, the bareness, the indecency of the interior of this magnificent monument'.[243] Following the imperial wedding, Viollet-le-Duc had pointed out that 'the area around the cathedral today bears little relationship to the importance of this great edifice; on ceremonial occasions, the metropolitan church can only be reached by means of circuitous, narrow and inadequate streets. The cathedral square is itself cramped, unable to contain the troops, carriages and the crowd which gathers … for solemn occasions.'[244] The clearance of space around the gothic masterpiece was thus a signifier of the Church's renewed assertiveness, a means of enhancing its visibility, but also a vital part of the government plans to enhance the dignity of religion, for urban renewal, slum clearance, and improvement of the circulation of traffic.[245]

Mgr Sibour's even grander aspirations would have involved not only clearing the area around the cathedral of the many 'puny constructions' and 'narrow and tortuous streets' but also the creation of an ecclesiastical *quartier* on the Ile de la Cité, including a new bishop's palace, together with a *petit* and a *grand séminaire* located between Notre-Dame and the

Palais de Justice, as a means of glorifying both State and Church. The Archbishop included with his proposals copies of preparatory sketches drawn by Viollet-le Duc and Lassus. He pointed out that 'Notre-Dame is the Louvre of Religion, and the accomplishment of this plan would represent its completion. In attaching his name to this work, Napoleon III would combine one of the great modern glories with one of the most glorious achievements of the Middle Ages.' He assured the minister that 'these two immortal souvenirs, consecrated by Religion would be forever inseparable in the memory of the faithful'.[246] It would in practice be too costly to contemplate.[247]

Although central Paris was relatively well provided with places of worship, the average population of inner-city parishes had nevertheless doubled between 1802 and 1856.[248] More peripheral areas, including the communes eventually annexed to the city in 1860, had been severely neglected. In a letter to his archbishop in 1849 one Parisian *vicaire* warned that 'if we continue for much longer to deal with God's affairs in the current fashion, Religion is lost in Paris!'[249] The civil and religious authorities had come to appreciate that there was a pressing need to establish new parishes, as well as chapels of ease, to improve public access to religious life.[250] Ideally, Mgr Sibour would have divided the city into parishes containing no more than 20,000 souls, each with a church playing a vital integrative social role, as a centre for 'the distribution of assistance, associations of all kinds'.[251] In practice, between 1852 and 1870, 22 new churches would be constructed, with the cost shared between individual donors, communes, the city and state. Substantial and ostentatious buildings were constructed in developing middle-class areas on the edge of the old city, including Saint-Augustin designed by Baltard and completed in 1868 at a cost of 5.7 million francs, while in eastern, working-class Paris, both the construction materials employed and the internal decoration of new churches suggest a much greater determination to economize.[252]

In the construction of new churches the choice of architectural and decorative styles also represented a symbolic statement and offered 'transmission languages for theology and piety'.[253] In the early part of the century, neo-classical forms were favoured, while in later years neo-medieval styles—judged to be more Christian—would be preferred. The neo-gothic, and in the south neo-Romanesque, were widely perceived to be the supreme manifestations of beauty, glory and truth. Both the clergy and architects looked to the great church builders of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries for inspiration. The reign of Saint Louis in particular

appeared to offer the model for a Christian architecture representing a period of intense faith, of harmony between Pope and King and of glorious artistic creativity. In his *Etudes historiques pour la défense de l'Eglise* (1864), the Catholic historian Léon Gautier forcefully affirmed that the Middle Ages were 'the epoch which established the reign of truth and Goodness on earth', a golden age when unity had prevailed in marked contrast with the discord introduced by the Reformation.[254] The neo-gothic represented the creative reaffirmation of a great tradition, and a means of combating secularization.[255]

Inevitably perceptions of the past, the simple listing of 'great' buildings, substantially influenced architecture in the present. Bitter differences of opinion were nevertheless often evident between architects—the largely conservative products of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts; archaeologists—anxious about the threat to ancient monuments; the clergy—interested primarily in the practical needs of pastoral care, i.e. the creation of a spiritual space; and government and municipal officials—concerned about costs.[256] The restoration, from 1837, of the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris by Duban and Lassus, and Lassus' and Viollet-le-Duc's work on Notre-Dame from 1845, as well as the former's construction of Saint-Nicolas in Nantes, however, provided examples which—for good or ill—would be copied widely.[257] These eminent architects assumed that the work of restoration should involve re-establishing, as far as possible, the integrity of the original structure and removal of the accretions of centuries. Viollet-le-Duc was also committed to the achievement of harmony between material, form and function.[258] From 1848 until 1874, as inspecteur-général des édifices diocesains, he assumed primary architectural responsibility, imposing a degree of official control often resented by bishops, and a much greater uniformity of style than had been the case previously.[259] Paradoxically, the man, who more than any other single individual determined the external and internal appearance of so many religious buildings, was another anticlerical, hostile to what he perceived to be the authoritarian obscurantism of both the medieval and modern church.[260]

The employment of modern construction techniques was an additional cause of dispute, and particularly the use of iron frameworks with the potential for reducing costs and increasing the usable space. Viollet-le-Duc, so often associated with the neo-Gothic, insisted that modern architects, rather than 'borrowing from all the styles of the past', should base themselves on 'new principles of structure'.[261] Other architects were less enthusiastic about industrial building techniques, as a result of their

traditional training or of a belief that iron, ideal for railway stations, covered markets or factories, was somehow improper for church construction. Improved communications having substantially reduced the cost of transporting materials, many continued to favour traditional modes of construction.[262]

The church construction, so characteristic of many expanding urban centres, was also evident in quite small towns and in numerous rural communities, most of which achieved their maximum historical population densities around mid-century.[263] The Bishop of Nantes took considerable pride in the fact that 'it is necessary to look far back in time to find a period comparable to ours in terms of the construction of religious monuments'.[264] In the Vendée, in the second half of the century, 142 churches were constructed and 107 others 'profoundly modified'; adding up to 85% of the department's churches. The expense was substantial, with new churches in 1870 estimated to cost around 80,000 francs and presbyteries 15,000, at a time when the building which typically housed the *mairie* and primary school might require a further 25,000.[265] For priests, particularly those with ultramontane sympathies, the spiritual needs of the community and the embellishment of the '*temple de Dieu*' should obviously be given priority.

Wherever possible, a new church ought to make a statement. It should be constructed on raised or open ground, with a grand entrance, and approached by flights of steps. A high tower and a sonorous peal of bells would further symbolize the pre-eminence of religion.[266] The Bishop of Metz was so dissatisfied with the size and condition of the church in the village of Aumetz that he refused to appoint a priest until the municipal council voted the funds necessary to add 6 metres to the nave and to ensure for the building as a whole an appearance 'at the same time … religious and monumental'.[267] State subsidies were concentrated on cathedrals, however, placing the financial burden in the case of parish churches very much on communities—on pew rents, extra local taxes, and more or less 'voluntary' donations; in cash as well as through the physical labour of the poor.[268] A ministerial circular in August 1853 would draw attention to '*une disposition malheureuse*' among the parish clergy, 'to abandon, often on the most frivolous pretexts, their old churches … in order to undertake the construction of a new building which, often, is not very solid and does not respond to the needs of worship. Besides the considerable and often ruinous expense which results, these unintelligent enterprises habitually result in the disappearance of monuments far more precious for art and

religion than those constructed with their wreckage.' Prefects were instructed to discourage such activity.[269]

Subsequent liability for the maintenance of buildings was, according to the organic articles, to be shared between the parish *fabrique* and commune. The seemingly incessant requests for money to supplement the incomes of impoverished priests or for the repair and enlargement of churches, for the renewal of ecclesiastical furnishings and robes, as well as for the improvement of often decrepit presbyteries, at a time when—in spite of growing prosperity—communes were also anxious to improve town halls, schools and roads, caused frequent disagreement over expenditure priorities.[270] According to Louis Dieu, the oddly named Prefect of Haute-Saône, writing in April 1858, 'the clergy often makes excessive demands on communes for … the costs of worship. The difficulties which result are becoming more frequent by the day. Many parish priests make the serious error of managing parish finances as if they were their own, spending without authorisation, and then asking the commune to make payment.'[271]

Considerable expenditure on the transformation of church interiors was also evident, in part in compensation for the dispersal of relics and works of art during the Revolution, but also illustrating the further development of symbolic and religious system(s). During the Restoration, again from 1835, and especially during the Second Empire, subsidies and gifts by the State—particularly of not always worthy or appropriate paintings purchased at the annual Salon, contributed to the transformation of the appearance of many churches.[272] In their internal order, restored churches would exemplify a greater sensitivity to the mysteries of the Incarnation, to the celebration of the Eucharist, and the cult of the Virgin Mary, rather than to those of the saints.[273] There was a widespread determination to ensure that the parish church should itself bear witness through the beauty of holiness. Nothing was too good for '*la maison du Père*', as was evinced by the murals painted by Delacroix in Saint-Sulpice from 1847.[274] Although often still in need of more basic repairs, many churches were embellished with reliquaries, murals, paintings, statues, elaborately carved choir stalls and confessionals, and richly decorated chapels, and provided with an abundance of ecclesiastical robes, all offering proof of the faith of those who had made donations.[275] The renewal of stained glass windows had been slowed by concern that they obstructed the penetration of the light needed by an increasingly literate congregation.[276] Their popularity, however, grew with the realization that, in

medieval buildings, the subdued light, the colour that flowed into the building, and the stories told in the windows, had all exalted the faith and added to the sense of religious mystery and piety.[277]

These objects often evinced a fundamental stylistic uniformity, reflecting the influence of such eminent figures as Didron, the editor of the *Annales archéologiques*, who stressed the importance of imitating medieval models, and of Viollet-le-Duc, committed to a 'total art' in which furnishings, although adapted to modern needs, should reflect the style of the building which contained them. Bishops appointed in the 1840s and 1850s were similarly committed to the neo-gothic art forms which they believed represented the political and theological ideals of the age of Saint Louis.[278] By enhancing the theatricality of worship through art, together with the introduction of the Gregorian chant in the forms developed by Dom Guéranger at Solesmes, as well as the Roman liturgy, and in building churches of a dimension sufficient for the entire population, the clergy were enhancing the status of the individual priest and of the institution he served.[279]

Paradoxically, on the initiative of many ill-educated priests and parish councils, influenced by the latest fashions, surviving medieval objects were frequently replaced with mass produced neo-medieval imitations. Indeed, following the expression of concern in May 1851 by Léon Faucher, the Minister of the Interior, Dombidau de Crouseilhes, the Ministre des Cultes, had written to the Bishop of Perpignan, to complain that 'ancient religious objects are being destroyed or sold by priests'. In one parish an embroidered altar cloth, believed to date from 1030, had been cut into three pieces, in another a silver chalice had been sold and replaced with a larger vessel, of no historical value. In many communes, priests were reported to be selling antique objects in order to finance a destructive whitewashing of walls. The bishop was reminded of his duty to 'conserve ancient monuments and all the precious debris of the past'.[280]

The destruction of reminders of the past was often linked to the liturgical changes of the present. Thus, in 1843, the *curé* of Château-Chinon in the Loire valley objected to wooden statues which he claimed were in such poor condition that they invited only 'laughter' or 'pity' but which nevertheless attracted 'a ridiculous and singularly ignorant veneration'.[281] Parishioners in Arles complained that the Abbé Montagnard 'incessantly seeks to destroy the holy traditions inherited from our ancestors'. Traditional ceremonies had ceased, and lamps, ciboriums, statues, enamel

reliquaries, and even 'ancient' manuscripts had all disappeared.[282] A concerned inhabitant of the parish of Cerny-Bois-Halbout appealed against the decision of the parish priest and mayor to replace a carved wooden altar and two '*tableaux antiques*' with an altar and statues made of plaster and of '*nulle valeur artistique*'.[283] A multiplicity of saints—often of purely local significance—were also displaced as doubts were expressed about their authenticity and the objects devoted to their memory seemed redundant, or as alternative devotions, judged to be more efficacious, became more popular.

The growing manufacture of religious furnishings as well as of more personal objects of devotion such as religious medals and rosaries, was designed to inspire prayer and devotion.[284] Paris, and particularly the Saint-Sulpice *quartier*, together with Lyon, were the primary centres for the production and sale of religious art and artifacts, of vestments and sacred ornaments, as well as of religious publications and a multitude of plaster statues of a serene Virgin Mary, all available for purchase by post on the basis of illustrated catalogues.[285] Such objects were condemned by the Abbé Sagette in 1853 as the products of a 'gross commerce in objects of devotion … trafficking on ignorance or simplicity, perverting taste, and sometimes even insulting dogma and Christian sentiments'; and as failing entirely to stimulate piety.[286] According to Viollet-le-Duc, writing in 1876, this was a trend which 'spreads amongst the rural clergy with the speed of phylloxera'. He added that while not hostile in principle to '*cette propagande clérico-mercantile*', as a 'free-thinker' he would like to 'distribute in the countryside carefully thought out catalogues, prepared in a very different spirit'.[287]

Artistic endeavour might exhibit a particular vision of faith. Thus, a rich Marial iconography had developed over many centuries emphasizing the role of the Virgin as the primary intercessor between the faithful and God. This vital popular devotion, reinforced by the Council of Trent as a central feature of the struggle against heresy, was constantly reiterated in word, deed and art. Every church possessed growing numbers of statues as well as chapels dedicated to Mary. The murals decorating the Parisian churches of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, Saint-Germain-de-Près and Saint-Etienne-du-Mont all provide evidence of these sentiments. Provincial churches frequently ordered copies or lithographs of well-known representations of the Virgin by the likes of Murillo, Titian or Raphael, or chose from among the many religious paintings exhibited at the annual Paris Salon.[288] More than 50 paintings and murals created by

Delacroix in the churches of Saint-Sulpice and Saint-Denis-du-Sacrement in Paris, similarly re-produced, reveal the influence of Spanish counter-Reformation art, and of Rubens, as well as of Romanticism. The objective of the artist was to present the crucified Christ as the incarnation of human suffering.[289]

The objective of almost every parish priest appears to have been to 'spend sufficient money to make the church worthy of the God who inhabits it'.[290] A retired cavalry officer living near Avesnes (Nord) indeed complained that 'every time a new priest arrives in the commune, neither the church nor the parish are worthy of him'.[291] From within the Church, however, relatively few critical voices were raised. In a letter to his bishop, one Parisian priest, who preferred to remain anonymous, did express concern about the value, in half-empty churches, of 'candlesticks and candles, chandeliers and lamps, rich and numerous ornaments, huge and pompous incense burners, large and resounding orchestras, choir boys, porters and beadles'.[292] Far more representative of the outlook of the clergy was their attendance in massed ranks at the consecration of a new church at Moussey in the Vosges in August 1852, where, in the presence of the prefect, the Bishop of Saint Dié blessed the new building and presented the Papal order of Saint Sylvestor to the mayor, a M. Charlot, who had personally financed its construction. The blessing of the bells represented a further affirmation of faith and of community. The presence of a numerous laity confirmed the immense prestige enjoyed by those who interceded between Man and God.[293]

The reluctance of individual laymen or municipal councils to make 'adequate' contributions towards such works could, however, provoke disappointment, irritation and even fury among priests.[294] The Abbé Chervaux, parish priest at Vireaux (Yonne), remembering how the councillors of his impoverished parish had delivered their priest to the guillotine in 1793, complained that their successors shared this 'blindness' and 'wickedness' in their refusal to make the presbytery habitable and prevent the church falling down.[295] The income gained by a parish from collections, fees, pew rents, property, donations—in both cash and kind, lotteries and fund raising was, however, often insufficient for even desperately needed building schemes.[296] An influential patron was clearly useful. In a note to Fortoul—his 'dear friend'—the Emperor's close associate, the Duc de Persigny, ambassador in London, reminded the minister of a conversation they had had concerning the financial assistance needed for the restoration of the church in his native village, a project which, in retro-

spect, Persigny admitted had been 'too lightly' entered into.[297] Again on the basis of personal acquaintanceship, the writer Georges Sand sent Fortoul a note asking him to receive the mayor of her commune to discuss the funds needed to repair the church roof, and suggested that the rain falling on the priest as he officiated at services represented '*un christianisme trop primitif*'.[298]

The parish priest at Beaufay (Sarthe), in desperation after 12 years of '*efforts surhumaine*' and the expenditure of 50,000 francs, appealed directly to the Emperor, claiming that a further 20,000 was needed to complete the renovation of his church. The death of a leading benefactor, together with the disastrous impact of hail on the harvest, had compounded his difficulties and forced the parish to request a government subsidy, in return for which its inhabitants would offer 'our prayers and the gratitude of our hearts'.[299] In response, the State might well offer assistance but the law of 30 December 1809 required the commune to provide a larger proportion of the cost.[300] Thus official subsidies—a useful means of exercising political patronage—appear to have represented only around 10–15% of the total cost of (re-)constructing parish churches, although more would be provided for especially prestigious projects. From 1.2 million francs in 1852, the total value of subsidy had risen to 2.5 million by 1860—a sum sufficient to satisfy around 10% of requests.[301]

Not surprisingly, the high cost of constructing and renovating churches and presbyteries and their interior furnishing and decoration was frequently the cause of complex disputes between parish priests, parish councils (*fabriques*)—made up of between five and nine members co-opted for six years and including *ex officio* the parish priest and mayor of the commune, together with, generally devout, local notables—and communal councils. Prefectoral intervention could also be expected.[302] Repeated appeals for funds were much resented by parishioners.[303] At Poiré in the Vendée, the efforts of the Abbé Millageau to enlarge his parish church were, it was claimed, a means of satisfying the priest's vanity by 'attaching his name to the construction of a grandiose building', rather than a reasonable response to the needs of public worship. Moreover, in order to circumvent opposition, the priest had failed to follow the proper legal procedures and to secure approval from the local council. He had simply launched a subscription and placed considerable moral pressure on his parishioners. He had promised all the blessings of Heaven to those families which made contributions and, accompanied by a local landowner, had proceeded from door to door threatening 'divine vengeance' on the

remainder. This 'tax imposed on timorous consciences, on simple and credulous spirits', had caused considerable anxiety and divisions, particularly where wives had subscribed in spite of the opposition of their husbands.[304] There were thus often serious obstacles to ambitious plans to glorify God through the beauty of holiness, particularly in impoverished parishes in some of the more 'de-christianized' areas. Nevertheless, in addition to the growing presence of priests and women religious, religious buildings and ceremonies were the visible signs of God's real presence in a parish and central to the act of worship in both a functional and an inspirational sense.

Notes

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3. See also C. Langlois, 'Catholicisme, féminité et sacralité' in *Le continent théologique*, 2016, pp. 266–267.
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14. Instruction pastorale de Mgr l'Evêque de Cahors pour le Carême de 1865, AN F19/1936.
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16. Quoted by M. Launay, *Le bon prêtre. Le clergé rural au 19e siècle*, 1986, p. 206.
17. See M. Lagrée, *Religion et modernité. France 19e–20e siècles*, Rennes, 2002, pp. 203–4.
18. Quoted by M. Launay, *Le diocèse de Nantes sous le Second Empire*, II, 1982, p. 912.
19. See e.g. M. Agostino, 'Les ordinations aux 19e et 20 siècles: les enseignements de l'évolution d'un rituel. L'exemple du diocèse de Bordeaux', in M. Agostino, F. Cadilhon, P. Loupés, (eds) *Fastes et cérémonies. L'expression de la vie religieuse, 16e–20e siècles*, Pessac, 2003, pp. 252–3.
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38. Letter to Emperor, 4 Nov. 1854, AN 246AP24.
39. AN 246AP24.
40. MC to Prefect Aveyron, 7 April 1855, AN 246AP24.
41. See e.g. anon letter to Bishop of Tarbes, 4 Oct. 1863, AN F19/5865.
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50. Quoted by ibid., p. 476, note 3.
51. McManners, *Church and state*, p. 26.
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66. Mayor to MC, 22 March 1869, AN F19/5823.
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CHAPTER 3

Doctrine: The Move Towards Rome

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of life, according to the Church, was to serve God and to secure personal Salvation. Life could thus be represented as preparation for death when all would be judged. Belief in the message delivered by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, together with good works, enabled men and women to seek forgiveness for the Original Sin committed by Adam and to secure relief from the fallen state into which consequently all humans had descended, as well as for personal sin—both grave and thus 'mortal', and less severe and 'venial'. Faith in the risen Christ, and genuine penitence, would be rewarded with Divine forgiveness and the gift of Life Everlasting. Unrepentant sinners were, however, threatened with eternal damnation and all the sufferings of Hell—further proof of the power and majesty of the Lord. The struggle between God and Lucifer, between 'good' and 'evil', was thus dramatized as a means of preserving the faithful from temptation and sin.[1] A matter for debate since the first century of the Christian era, the major doctrinal innovation of the nineteenth century would be the assertion (as an eternal truth) that, in matters of faith and morals, the Pope, inspired by God (and thus protected from error), provided infallible leadership. This affirmation has to be understood within the context of an established—and generally accepted—body of doctrine together with perceptions of the measures required to combat the existential threats posed to what were widely regarded as universal truths. The

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more systematic expression of Papal authority, bureaucratic centralization, and the diffusion of religious ideas made possible by the nineteenth-century communications revolution would moreover engender a dynamic spiritual and organizational response to the mounting challenges posed by revolution and modernity.[2]

3.2 The Lessons of History

Every historical event, since the beginning of time, as well as the individual's life experience, was conceived by theologians to be part of the Divine Plan, a representation of the Will of God. As such, it was a passing moment in Eternity.[3] The message was essentially Providentialist. Although God had accorded liberty to Man in order to test him, its unchecked use would inevitably result in Divine Punishment, for individuals, and for entire nations by means of famine, pestilence, revolution and war. 'History was [thus] shaped by God's vengeance' and certain historical events represented moments of 'eschatalogical providence … on the way to the Apocalypse'.[4] Ultimately, however, as Mgr de Ségur confidently promised, catastrophe would be followed by 'deliverance …, with the glorious coming of the Saviour, at the moment when all appears lost … the power of Satan will be broken; then, but only then, Revolution will be vanquished'.[5]

On the path to deliverance, every act of Man and the State should be inspired by Divine Law. Within an Augustinian and neo-Thomist discourse the Church represented itself in countless sermons, pastoral letters and theological manuals, as the 'perfect society', a Divine institution, obedient to God's Will, and responsible for revealing God's eternal truth. There was general agreement that only within the Church might sinful Man redeem himself by fully accepting that he had no rights but only the duty of complete submission to both the Will of God—who had sacrificed His Son on the Cross to redeem mankind—and to the guidance of His Church. Individuals should, moreover, accept, without question, the place in society that God had ordained for them. The sacrifice of Christ, and of all the saints and martyrs, was designed to inspire a sense of moral obligation towards God the Creator and His Commandments. Truth was only accessible through faith.

The lessons of 'history'—'the institutionalized … memory'—could be drawn upon in order to create an image of the 'ideal' society and also as weapons in the contemporary battle against heresy and secularism.[6] The

'reinvention' of memory thus represented both an affirmation of collective identity and a means of learning from the past and coping better with the uncertainties of the present. The clergy were encouraged to become historians.[7] The Bishop of Nantes indeed expected parish priests to engage in the age-old tradition of hagiography and to 'amass with care whatever, in the lives and acts of your predecessors during the days of revolutionary torment, might contribute to their glory and to that of the Church and, at the same time, to the edification of the people'.[8]

The obsession with the past provided weapons for the intellectual and political conflicts of the present. Catholic writers and preachers were inspired by a particular conception of history, idealizing a profoundly rural and hierarchical 'golden age'. Mgr Delalle, the Bishop of Rodez, in an article published in *L'Univers*, focused on the triumph of the Church over the Barbarians and the subsequent creation of a '*monde chrétien*', characterized by the 'predominance of law, justice, the genuine freedom of the children of God … and the stability of power'. Harmony—'*le règne social du Christ*'—had been secured on the basis of the spiritual authority of the Church, and with the support of the Christian kings. An idealized conception of medieval society, and especially of the reign of Saint Louis, provided a model of the complete society. This harmony had been destroyed, according to Mgr Delalle, by three successive 'negations'—'*Protestantisme, philosophisme, socialisme*'. The authority of the Church had been weakened by the Reformation; that of '*toute religion révelée*' by the Enlightenment; and that of '*Dieu et de l'âme humain*' by the socialist ideas the bishop associated with Proudhon—steps towards the reign of the Anti-Christ described so graphically in the Book of Revelation. He warned that without God there could be no morality, and in the absence of a sense of morality, the State would substitute itself for God, imposing a new Caesarism, which would, itself ultimately be challenged, leading to 'anarchy'.[9]

Preaching before the faculties of law and theology at Aix in November 1841, the Abbé Tolge had previously reminded his congregation that the '*fameux hérétique de Witemberg*' had sought to 'replace the dogma, so precise, and so necessary of the infallibility of the Church by that of individual inspiration'. The 'catastrophic' impact of this attempt by 'man … to correct God', and to challenge 'truth' and 'authority', had been 'pillage, murder, debauchery' and 'tyranny', the reinforcement of the Moslim menace, and finally Revolution.[10] That vigorous publicist Mgr Gaume's personification of *La Révolution* (1856) forcefully expressed

similar views –'I am the hatred of all religion and social order … I am the proclamation of the rights of man against the rights of God. I am the philosophy of revolt, the politics of revolt, the religion of revolution. I am negation armed … I am anarchy; for I am God dethroned and man put in His place. That is why I call myself Revolution, that is to say inversion, because I place above that which, according to the eternal law, should be below, and below that which should be on high.'[11] It was assumed that most of the problems faced by the contemporary Church could be blamed on Revolution, a form of Divine Punishment, to which the response must be to seek atonement in order to protect God's Church and His people.[12]

A sense of urgency, even of desperation, was evident. The Bishop of Le Puy, Mgr Le Breton, insisted in a pastoral letter in 1869 that, in spite of the 'hideous' events which had occurred in the centuries following the collapse of paganism, no period was as bad as the nineteenth century, in which 'we have seen … the cult of the disgusting and horrible proclaimed, the hatred of God publicly professed, negation brazenly raised above truth …', by individuals, 'drunk with pride'. Human reason had glorified atheism and materialism. The result was an era of social and political 'cataclysm' in which Evil had manifested itself in revolt against God and His Church, in religious indifference, the failure to attend church, materialism and neglect of the family and of the poor, in obscene books, immoral plays and lascivious dances, in alcohol and brothels and in widespread criminality—all signs of moral disorder.[13]

3.3 The Creation of a Universal Community of Faith

In this situation it appeared all the more urgent to reinforce the spiritual infallibility and temporal sovereignty of the Pope. Inspired by Lamennais' insistence in 1814 that 'without Pope no Church; without Church, no Christianity, no religion, and no society', and his conclusion that 'the unique source of life for European nations is pontifical power', Ultramontanes, increasingly supported by the parish clergy and in the religious press, regarded the authoritarian leadership of the Holy Father as the essential basis for the reaffirmation of a community of faith.[14] The concept of Papal infallibility was also adopted and politicized by counter-revolutionary theoreticians like Joseph de Maistre in *Du Pape* (1819). In the aftermath of 1848—further proof of the desperate need to propitiate

God—it seemed all the more urgent as part of counter-revolutionary politics to defend the temporal power of the Papacy and to reinforce the dogmatic authority of the Pope. In 1849, the recently installed Bishop of Amiens, Mgr de Salinis proclaimed that 'the present not less than the past imposes on the Church of France the obligation to reinforce the links which bind it to Rome … The present epoch is one of transition and regeneration, it is the eve of a new era … a time when only Catholicism can regenerate the world. We have before us either death or renewed life through Catholicism. Rome is the centre of hope for Catholics, it is from Rome that the movement to regenerate human societies begins.'[15] In addition to growing centralization, Ultramontanism also implied a new moral theology, liturgical reform, and innovative and more evangelical forms of piety.

The long-established Gallican alternative of a more decentralized and less authoritarian Church, however, posed an unwanted challenge which needed to be overcome. In 1682, under pressure from Louis XIV, the Declaration of the Clergy of France composed by Mgr Bossuet, the Bishop of Metz, had accepted that a distinction should be made between the temporal power of the King, owing his legitimacy to God alone, and the spiritual authority of the Pope. It represented furthermore a belief in the diversity of the universal Church, in the value of local administrative and liturgical traditions, and in the scriptural origins of the bishops. Rather than taking the form of absolute monarchy, governance within the Church should be shared between the Pope and the bishops.[16] During the nineteenth century successive Archbishops of Paris—Affre from 1839 to 1848; Sibour from 1848 to 1857; Morlot between 1857 and 1863; and Darboy from 1863 to 1871—continued to expound neo-Gallican views with support from the Sorbonne theology faculty, the Ecole des Carmes, and the seminary of Saint-Sulpice. In February 1852, Sibour insisted on the urgent need to combat the doctrinal positions assumed by the ultramontane newspaper *L'Univers*, which he described, in a letter to Hippolyte Fortoul, as 'anarchic and theocratic, even more dangerous for the state than for the church'.[17] The liberal Comte de Montalembert similarly condemned 'this fanatical and servile school, which is attempting to identify the Church with despotism'—and which, he claimed, would render it odious and ridiculous.[18]

These mixed feelings towards the Papacy were also shared by the Abbé Darboy, who, as vicar-general of the Paris diocese, visited Rome in 1854. He was clearly moved by the experience of hearing the Pope, 'tears falling

from his eyes', proclaim the Immaculate Conception in Saint Peter's on 8 December. On the other hand, the impressions of the Holy City recorded by Darboy in his journal were overwhelmingly negative and in marked contrast to the repeated descriptions by visiting bishops of a population 'unanimous' in its sentiments of 'love, respect and obedience'.[19] Darboy described Rome as 'a heap of churches and palaces lost amidst hideous and disgusting hovels. One feels that there is no administration in this dirty, infected town, lacking in industry and commerce.' He condemned the standards of morality and the lack of dignity evident even among the social elite—'the women are impertinent and the profane Parisian salons offer nothing to compare with the low cut dresses one sees in the salons visited by cardinals and the prelacy'. He maintained that 'they do not go to church to pray, but as if to a spectacle; the ceremonies occur without order or dignity, the *monsignori* and the *abbati* lack proper robes, propriety and respect. I was shocked by their attitudes … In the papal chapels they talked, took tobacco, arrived and left without order or reason, with their hands in their pockets.'[20]

His archbishop, Mgr Sibour was probably more concerned about the Ultramontane challenge to Gallican theology.[21] The fundamental texts composed by Bossuet almost two centuries earlier, together with the contemporary works of Mgr Bouvier, Bishop of Le Mans, had previously been employed in most French seminaries. They denied Papal infallibility and affirmed the superiority of a General Council of the Church, together with the rights of the secular authorities. Suddenly, in 1852, they were placed on the Index of Forbidden Works; according to Rayneval, the French ambassador in Rome, on the express instructions of Pius IX.[22] Faced with the threat of condemnation, Bouvier decided to defer to the Pope as 'the supreme judge in matters of doctrine'. In a new (fifth) edition of his treatise on *Théologie*, he humiliatingly agreed that on every issue, including such controversial matters as 'local customs', he would 'conform to the doctrine of the Holy See'.[23] This perfectly illustrated the growing deference of bishops towards the Pope, as well as the unwillingness of Gallican bishops as eminent as Bouvier or Dupanloup, the Bishop of Orleans, to risk a breach. Sensationally, on 7 December 1852, the Abbé Lequeux's *Traité de droit canon*, the text most commonly used in French seminaries, was also placed on the Index because of its Gallican sentiments. Its author was another vicar-general of the Archbishop of Paris. When, as a counterblast, in February 1853, Mgr Sibour ordered his clergy to stop reading the Ultramontane newspaper *L'Univers*, he was instructed by Rome to rescind

this ban.[24] In March, in the encyclical *Intermultiplices*, Pius IX formally condemned the concept of the 'liberties of the Gallican church'.[25]

Gallicans were increasingly forced on to the defensive. Fortoul, in a long letter to Drouyn de Lhuys, his colleague at the foreign ministry, complained in June 1852 about the growing pressure to secure general adoption of the Roman liturgy placed on bishops by the Roman congregations, as well as by their own diocesan clergy. This, he claimed, represented a significant practical and symbolic step towards centralization and was a tactic designed both to divide the French bishops and to reduce their influence, together with that of the government itself.[26] Drouyn de Lhuys was clearly irritated that Sibour 'with his usual petulance and bad temper had let himself go too far'. More significantly, he recognized that the defence of Gallican principles in their entirety was a losing battle. The government's objectives should be redefined—'The policy of the Government of the Emperor is not to secure the resurrection of Gallicanism; that would be to pursue a fantasy; what preoccupies us all, is to preserve the integrity of the powers of the civil authorities …'. These, he felt, were increasingly threatened by the Pope's determination 'to bring the French bishops to absolute submission'.[27]

The passionate debate developing over the alignment of local liturgies with that employed in Rome was thus an issue of considerable significance. Ceremony, the 'visible expression of religion' and the careful selection of gestures and words, were the means of expressing theological truth, and of instructing the faithful.[28] The universal, and dignified, use of Latin was unquestioned. The Papal objective was an affirmation of the supremacy of the Pope and the spiritual and political unity of the Universal Church.[29] In 1842, Gregory XVI had already deplored the variety of liturgies in use. Completion and perfection of the Tridentine reforms and the rejection of local and national particularism were to be achieved by imposing the Roman missal and breviary and adopting Roman ceremonial as the means of eliminating differences in the order of mass, in the selection of readings and prayers and the choice of saints commemorated. The move towards Rome, initiated during the 1830s, was favoured by the authoritative Vatican Sacred Congregation of Rites and enthusiastically championed in France by Ultramontanes like Parisis, Bishop of Arras, and such active missionaries as the Marist Emmanuel d'Alzon, as well as by Louis Veuillot in the pages of *L'Univers*.[30] Between 1849 and 1853 when 15 provincial councils were held, 11 of them declared a preference for the adoption of the Roman liturgy—as soon as

possible—in place of varied diocesan liturgies.[31] The Benedictine Dom Guéranger also argued powerfully in favour of a supposed return to a traditional ritual in place of the corrupt variations accumulated over the centuries, and sought to reinforce the theatrical and emotional power of ceremonies through the 're-establishment' of the Gregorian chant and the 'restoration' of Gothic architecture.[32] Liturgical change was allied closely with the renewal of vestments and the inauguration of grandiose ceremonies and pilgrimages.[33] Many ordinary believers were no doubt enthralled by ultramontane spirituality with its vision of a 'loving God' and 'flamboyant ceremony'.[34] Others assumed that liturgical disputes could safely be left to the clergy.[35]

In March 1853, the bishops were finally instructed by the Papal curia to (re-)establish the Roman liturgy. The capitulation of the Archbishop of Paris, announced during a visit to Rome in December 1854, proved to be especially significant.[36] The Emperor had already cut the ground from under Sibour by proposing to a delighted Pope, through the good offices of Mgr L-G. de Ségur, the French auditor at the Rota court in Rome, that measures be taken to establish an uniform catechism and liturgy. Ségur assumed that this would finally resolve the question of the liturgy in France, isolating the ten or 12 bishops who still, 'from lack of character', wanted to retain their traditional diocesan liturgical practices.[37] In an anguished letter to Fortoul in October, Mgr Cœur, Bishop of Troyes, warned that this was a further manifestation of the 'dream of theocracy' and regretted that to oppose the affirmation of Papal authority in print was to run the risk of falling foul of the Index.[38] Such influential figures as Mgr Mathieu, the Cardinal-Archbishop of Besançon, also remained determined to conserve as much as possible of the traditional liturgy.[39] Delaying tactics were also evident at parish level. As late as March 1864, Pius IX would feel obliged to condemn a supplication addressed to Cardinal de Bonald by almost 1500 priests in the Lyon diocese.[40]

Whereas in 1814 only 22 dioceses had followed the Roman liturgy, between 1845 and 1860 a further 51 adopted this signifier of ultramontane superiority.[41] By the mid-1860s, 'Gallican' liturgies had virtually disappeared—in spite of the cost of replacing existing liturgical works.[42] Parish priests and members of the religious orders largely took on the substantial task of selling the new volumes directly to the faithful, an act which was certainly not appreciated by licensed booksellers, nor by the administration, and indeed which appeared to be an infraction of legisla-

tion on the press and bookselling.[43] Nevertheless the clergy were convinced that in this and through the distribution of other edifying works, they were contributing to the diffusion of the Divine Message.

Under growing hierarchical and peer pressure, dissenting priests would come to feel that they had little choice but to submit.[44] Not untypically, the state prosecutor at Rennes would report that 'the Breton clergy is in its entirety ultramontane; the old Gallican doctrines are assimilated with heresy'.[45] In *L'Univers*, Veuillot encouraged his followers to 'without cease attack dogmatic liberalism and Gallican indiscretions'.[46] Although, even bishops with ultramontane sympathies often found the editor's efforts to assume what they regarded as their own proper leadership roles disconcerting, most priests appear to have been attracted by the vitriolic language employed and by the powerful affirmation of the supremacy of God's Holy Church, and rejection of compromise.[47] The records of one of the regular *conférences* which brought together parish priests in the diocese of Besançon, kept by the Abbé Filsjean from Cour-Saint-Maurice in the Doubs, affords some insights into the outlook of the clergy. At a meeting held on 15 November 1858, priests discussed relationships between the spiritual and civil authorities and concluded that only the Catholic Church was in a position to make judgments in case of dispute, 'since it alone on earth, is *the single infallible tribunal*. Yes, it has this right, as part of the *essence of things*, a right identical to that of *the soul over the body*.' The *conférence* concluded that it had been Gallican efforts to reinforce the authority of the Prince at the expense of the Church, which had led, inevitably, to revolution.[48]

As the threat to the survival of the Papal States again intensified in the late 1850s, resistance to ultramontane pressures further declined.[49] Although, by the end of the following decade, some 30 bishops, many of them recently appointed, like Darboy and Lavigerie, the Archbishop of Algiers, as well as Dupanloup, the influential Bishop of Orleans, remained more or less committed to the Gallican cause, lack of support from the secular authorities left them exposed to pressure from their own parish clergy, as well as from Rome.[50] In this context, Archbishop Darboy's support for the Emperor's Italian policy and defence of the organic articles before the Imperial Senate would inevitably prove to be provocative. In a confidential letter of 26 October 1865, the Pope accused him of holding 'opinions entirely contrary to the divine primacy of the Roman pontiff over the universal Church'. He was warned that securing a cardinal's hat would depend on his submission.[51] Regardless of their status, it was

becoming increasingly difficult for priests to stand up to the overwhelming movement of Catholics towards Rome.

3.4 The Cult of Pius

The prestige of the Papacy had been considerably enhanced by the 'victory' of Pius VII over Napoleon. Within the context of the catastrophic mid-century crisis, Pius IX had also come to be seen as the symbol of the threatened and suffering Church and of the crusade against modern evils. His 'charisma', 'attuned to the dispositions … of disciples and followers', would prove to be an invaluable tool in the struggle for symbolic power, and as such 'a lever of social transformation'.[52] The Pope was perceived to be the primary representative of truth, order and authority in a world turned upside down by revolution. His 'heroic' resistance in 1848 and 1849 and determination once again in 1859 to protect the territorial integrity of the Papacy were widely and successfully employed as a means of reinforcing the personality cult to which the Holy Pontiff—an emotional, extremely pious, even mystical personality—appears to have been extremely susceptible. The cult of Pius IX, as well as 'mobilization for the Pope' were vigorously promoted. Justifications of the temporal power, of the 'sacred domain' as the essential means of securing the independence of the Papacy, which each Pope on his accession had taken an oath to preserve, together with widely circulated portraits of His Holiness, poured off the presses and contributed to the creation of a charismatic leader.[53] The trials and tribulations of an embattled Pope-martyr, recounted in countless sermons, encouraged devotion. In associating Gallicanism with liberalism, republicanism and socialism, as inextricably linked '*erreurs modernes*', the eminent theologian Blanc de Saint-Bonnet in *L'Infaillibilité* (1861) insisted that only through the unreserved acceptance of Papal infallibility and of hereditary monarchy might respect for private property and social hierarchy be reinforced and the enemies of social and moral order be defeated.[54]

Convinced that in the absence of Papal leadership, 'Satan will become prince of this world', the eminent theologian Mgr Gaume affirmed that 'power, instead of rising from the earth, descends from Heaven … Caesar ceases to be autonomous and becomes subject to divine laws'. The role of the Pontiff, 'clothed with the infallibility of God himself', was to 'preserve, interpret and proclaim the laws; and if necessary, Caesar … places his sword at the service of the spirit, to ensure their execution'.[55] In their

pastoral letters, bishops similarly reminded the faithful that in case of dispute with the State, 'the doctrines of the Church come from God'. The doctrines of the State, in contrast, were defined by Man. 'Certain infallibility on one side; a too obvious fallibility on the other.'[56] At its most intransigent, this state of mind was represented in France by Louis Veuillot, the savagely polemical editor of the newspaper *L'Univers*, who counted most parish priests and the Pope himself among his regular readers, and in Rome by the semi-official monthly *Civiltà Cattolica*, edited by members of the Jesuit order.[57]

Founded in 1850, *Civiltà Cattolica*, served as an authoritative expression of Papal opinion and of the policy of the Roman curia. In France, *L'Univers* was only the most popular representative of a burgeoning devotional literature, the product of cheap industrial printing and the increasingly well-coordinated activities of the Catholic press. At diocesan level, printed pastoral messages, read aloud by parish priests, and published in growing numbers of *semaines religieuses*, served to reinforce the sense of personal devotion. Addressing the Archbishop of Toulouse, recently returned from Rome, the Arch-priest of Saint Etienne proclaimed that, 'Everyone wished to see you, because they know that in you they will see Peter; everyone wished to hear you, for your voice, always loved and blessed, appears to have retained, from your discussions with the Bishop of Bishops, greater strength and a more touching tenderness and paternal authority.'[58] Catholics were reminded repeatedly that prayer and the meditation which brought knowledge of God were the most powerful weapons they could deploy in the battle against the forces of Satan and that every political crisis affecting the Papacy required a 'redoubling of prayers'.[59] With growing frequency, the Pope announced that regular worship, good works, and especially prayers for the Church would be rewarded with days of indulgence and remission for the sins both of the living—a means of storing up spiritual credit—and of those souls already struggling in Purgatory.[60]

Improvements in communications by rail, steamship and the electric telegraph, as well as better postal services, increasing literacy and the development of the mass media, redefined the scale of the Catholic world. The struggle against modernity would make imaginative use of modern communications technology to facilitate more effective pastoral care and moral and spiritual instruction and to combat the ever-present revolutionary menace. Papal efforts to centralize authority, improve the workings of the Roman bureaucracy, and impose greater uniformity on the Church

were greatly facilitated.[61] A genuinely Universal Church was being created as part of a wider process of modernization. The visits *ad limina* which had long required bishops to report in person to the Pope once every five years on the state of their dioceses became much easier to realize.[62] Eagerly anticipating his visit to Rome in February 1856, the Bishop of Luçon, Mgr Baillès asked—'How much joy will we share … with the successor of Peter when, prostrate at his feet, we receive the apostolic blessing; when we are able to expose our doubts so that he can dissipate them; our difficulties so that he can ease them; our sorrows so that he can soothe them …?'[63] In 1862, over 300 bishops responded to the invitation to attend the canonization of 26 Japanese martyrs, while in June 1867, for the solemnities attending the anniversary of the martyrdom of the Apostles Peter and Paul, the French ambassador, the Comte de Sartiges, estimated that there were in total 408 bishops and 8250 priests visiting the Holy City, of whom 3000 were French, all of them hoping for an audience with His Holiness. He explained that this intensification of contact between Rome and the provinces of the Church and the triumph of Ultramontanism, were the result of '*les chemins de fer à prix réduit*'.[64] This was the occasion on which the Pope gave notice of his intention to summon a Council of the Church, the first for three centuries.

The departure of bishops for Rome, as well as their subsequent return, were occasions for major celebrations in their dioceses. Following a 7 o'clock mass in his cathedral in Nîmes on 12 May 1862, Mgr Plantier was seen off by a large crowd of men waving their hats and women their handkerchiefs, and to shouts of '*Vive Monseigneur*' and '*Vive le Pape*'. These ovations were repeated at stations further along the railway line, while, at Manduel, the clergy were greeted by the town band and young girls dressed in white and crowned with flowers.[65] On his return, carrying a papal blessing, the bishop could expect to receive an even more enthusiastic reception.[66] For those who could not witness such events, the weekly diocesan *Semaine catholique* described the enthusiastic crowds serenading a returning bishop with hymns at the railway station and during the triumphant procession to his palace.[67] Growing numbers of devout pilgrims were also able to travel to Rome to express their devotion. Writing from the Eternal City in May 1862, the Abbé Poupelier, parish priest at Neuville, proudly informed his parishioners that he had been blessed by the Pope on Ascension Day and, for more than ten minutes, had been able to 'contemplate with an ineffable sentiment of love and veneration, the features of his handsome and celestial face'. In spite of the 'persecution' he had endured,

the Pope remained 'serene'. Furthermore, condemning the 'lies' of the French press, Poupelier insisted that the people of Rome were 'happy' and 'devoted' to the 'paternal government' of the Pope.[68]

While the position of the Papacy as an Italian state was being gravely weakened, the personal status of the Pope and his effectiveness as an authority figure were substantially reinforced through inter-related top-down theological and bureaucratic processes and the bottom-up power of popular piety and an emotional commitment to the Holy Father, the figure who both personalized the threats to religion and the Church, but additionally symbolized its heroic response. The continuing development of devotion to the Virgin Mary and publication of the Syllabus of Errors represented further obvious manifestations of these trends.

3.5 Devotion to Mary

The exceptionality of Mary, mother of Jesus Christ, was marked by the sensational proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin—immaculate because she, like her son, had been conceived without recourse to the shameful physical act which had marked humanity since the original 'sin' of Adam and Eve. This occured before 200 bishops in Rome (the largest gathering since the Council of Trent)[69] on 8 December 1854—'by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul and by our own authority'; an affirmation which represented an unambiguous assertion of Papal authority over the Church.[70] Devoted throughout his life to the Virgin Mary, Pius, permanently scarred by the dearth, revolution and cholera endured during the mid-century crisis, had in 1849 written to the bishops from his place of exile in Gaëta to ask them to express their views on whether it was opportune to '*augmenter la gloire de Marie*'. In the emotional climate created by the visions experienced at La Salette, 51 French bishops had responded with enthusiasm. The Papal Bull announcing the 'reign of Mary' confirmed as a dogmatic truth a belief traditionally held within the Church and forcefully asserted at the Council of Trent, and was represented as a prelude to the Second Coming of Christ and the establishment of the reign of God and His Church on earth.[71]

The already rich representation of the Virgin on altars and in windows, pictures and statues would be enhanced by the construction of numerous new monuments, and in particular by the mass production of colourful plaster statues of Mary Immaculate, crowned with stars and opening her

arms to the faithful.[72] Following the Revolution, the revival of Marian shrines was frequently stimulated by the discovery of a statue of the Virgin which had 'miraculously' survived the cataclysm, stimulating efforts to re-establish pilgrimages and construct a fitting sanctuary. Meditation on the rosary and thrice-daily recitations of the *Angelus* had also become common practice. In 1830, the Virgin had appeared to Catherine Labouré, a novice of peasant origin, belonging to the Filles de la charité, at a convent in the rue de Bac in Paris. She had already been blessed with visions of the heart of Saint Vincent de Paul and of Jesus himself within the host at mass. Then, between July and November, the Virgin had appeared, clad in a blue shawl, wearing a white veil, surrounded by a dozen stars, with beams of light emerging from her finger tips, and carrying a globe of the world, her feet firmly placed on top of a serpent. She had proclaimed her eternal devotion to France while insisting on the pressing need for moral reform. Although the identity of Catherine would be concealed until 1855, both her confessor and Mgr de Quelen, the Archbishop of Paris, an intransigent Legitimist, were convinced of the veracity of the vision. Following the instructions of the Virgin herself, the event had been commemorated by the striking of a 'miraculous medallion' on which, along with an image of the apparition, were inscribed the words, 'Mary, conceived without sin, pray for those who have recourse to you'. Partly in reaction to the 1832 cholera epidemic, millions of medals would be sold to people for whom its wearing appeared to hold out the promise of protection.[73] The beatification of the visionary in September 1864 would represent Papal appreciation of the potency of the vision.[74]

The apogee of the nineteenth-century 'explosion' of Marian spirituality would manifest itself in public ceremonies—including the (re-)dedication of churches and the crowning of monumental statues of Mary, placed generally in prominent locations overlooking towns—and most notably in 1860 at Notre-Dame du Puy that fashioned from cannons captured from the Russians at Sebastopol.[75] More significantly, the naming of children, as well as churches, together with sermons, feast days and pilgrimages, creations of religious fraternities, publication of numerous books, pamphlets and popular lithographic images—'the visual translation of religious truth'—as well as the pious literature employed for religious instruction in schools, together with the purchase of statues and images for numerous homes, combined to reinforce a sentimental and emotional ethos of the

Christian family and to firmly establish the central place of the Holy Mother in popular devotion—offering love and, where necessary, consolation.[76]

News of the promulgation of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was widely celebrated. The parish priest at Willgottheim in Alsace proudly reported to Mgr Raess his bishop that 'this commune … is not backward when it comes to paying homage at the feet of Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth'. A '*confrérie* in honour of the holy virgin' had been established and the priest reported enthusiastically that 'Everyone has joined, almost everyone confessed [when work ceased] during her principal feast day.' A large number, 'even amongst the men, are members of the confrérie of the living rosary … clear evidence of the glorious attraction of our population towards Mary'. Popular faith and an intense pressure to conform were clearly evident. During the week leading up to the [local?] fête of 6 May, the population vied with each other to decorate their homes, to construct triumphal arches and altars in the streets and above all to embellish the church with flowers. The fête had been proclaimed by the ringing of bells and the firing of mortars. On the day itself,

> the procession began around 7 o'clock in the evening: not to participate would have been regarded as a denial of the faith and an outrage against the Holy Virgin. Many people from neighbouring communes took part, and the Protestants … peaceful spectators, stood along the streets … in which all the houses of both rich and poor were illuminated with large numbers of lights. The litter on which the Holy Virgin was carried … was strewn with roses and illuminated with candles. The sight was unique; one could have been looking at the moon or the sun in the midst of shining stars … As the procession returned to the church, it was possible to see the altar dedicated to the Holy Virgin and the entire church flooded with light. Following the Angelus, the tower, all the houses, and especially that of M. Strumpf, a Protestant, were illuminated, bonfires were set alight. Crowds gathered in the streets to enjoy the spectacle.

The Catholic press was full of similar descriptions of this explosion of religious sentiment, while Mgr Raess announced that 'Our heart is overflowing with joy.'[77]

The appearance of the Virgin at La Salette (1846) and then at Lourdes (1858) (more fully discussed below) combining mystery, miracle and

authority, were further important turning points, additional stimuli to the expression of an already powerful popular sentiment. The visionary children had passed on Mary's warning that divine punishment would follow if the religious and moral behaviour of the French people did not improve; threatening that 'if my people do not wish to submit, I will be forced to release the hand of my Son; he is so strong … that I will no longer be able to restrain him'.[78] During and soon after the long mid-century crisis, this warning inspired fear and gave hope. God could be mollified. There was an outpouring of devotional literature, with illustrations portraying the Virgin Mary blessing the different visionaries, and stressing the virtues of humility and humble obedience to a Church so evidently blessed by the appearance of Christ's mother.[79] Orchestrated by the religious hierarchy and enthusiastically promoted by numerous parish priests the devotion stimulated enormous affection. So too did the more Christocentric cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus associated in its modern form with the visions of Marguerite Marie Alacoque at Paray-le-Monial between 1671 and 1675, in which Jesus, as a token of his love for humanity, had revealed his heart to the young nun and warned that only through its adoration could divine punishment be avoided. The image had subsequently been adopted as a counter-revolutionary symbol by royalists who had claimed that Louis XVI in his prison in 1792 had dedicated his kingdom to the Sacred Heart. It had been deployed on the banners of insurgents in the Vendée in 1793. The Pope's decision in 1856 to extend this devotion to the entire Church would be warmly received.[80]

Although some Catholics, and Protestants in general, were concerned that the cult of the Virgin Mary would diminish the significance of both God and His Son, ultramontane enthusiasts insisted on the vital importance of securing God's mercy by honouring Christ's mother.[81] It did not matter that Mary—conceived free of sin, and indeed prior to the existence of sin—and her parents Anne and Joachim are rarely mentioned in the New Testament, that their existence was largely apocryphal, and their cult mostly medieval in origin.[82] The Marian cult, together with the devotion to the Sacred Heart and the crucifix, and the sacrifice they symbolized, contributed to the nurturing, renewal and reconstruction of the faith and to ensuring, especially in those social groups and regions in which the Church remained particularly influential, that ultramontane Christianization would represent a phenomenon of at least as much importance as the 'dechristianization' upon which historians have tended to focus their attention.

3.6 The Syllabus of Errors

The experience of Revolution had encouraged an uncompromising resolve to reinforce Papal authority and to promote ever more rigorous affirmations of the restorative mission of the Church. In his inaugural encyclical *Qui pluribus*, published on 6 November 1846, and in spite of his liberal reputation, Pius IX had voiced clear counter-revolutionary sentiments. The 1848 Revolution had substantially reinforced his concerns and in 1849, he had welcomed the suggestion made by Mgr Pecci, the future Pope Leo XIII, that he should prepare a list of 'all the errors against the Church, its authority and property, and their explicit condemnation'.[83] Three years later, Pius instructed Cardinal Fornari, the Papal nuncio in Paris, to consult leading French clerics and laymen, and in March 1861, a commission was established to draft a document condemning the ills of modern society on the basis of the 85 propositions contained in an *Instruction sur les erreurs du temps présent* prepared by Mgr Gerbet, the Bishop of Perpignan.[84] The threat to the Papal States, in 1859, appears to have reinforced the Pope's belief that decisive action was necessary, as did publication in June 1863 of Ernest Renan's *Vie de Jésus*—presenting its subject as an exemplar of human morality rather than the Son of God, and the speech at the Malines congress in Belgium—published as *L'Eglise libre dans l'Etat libre*—in which the Comte de Montalembert condemned the 'timidity' of his fellow liberal Catholics and reaffirmed the need to reconcile religion with the principles of 1789—political liberty and freedom of conscience.[85] The presentation of similar liberal ideas at the congress of German theologians held at Munich in September; the anticlericalism of the Italian government; and finally the negotiation of a Franco-Italian agreement in September 1864, providing for the withdrawal of the French garrison from Rome in two years in return for a promise to respect the territorial integrity of what remained of the Papal state, added to the acute sense of crisis.[86] The Pope thus expressed his intransigent determination to defend the faith against 'modernity'—all those ideas and sources of evil which he was convinced threatened Christian life.[87]

The encyclical *Quanta cura*, together with the Syllabus of Errors, would be published on 8 December 1864, after being, it has recently—and perhaps inaccurately—been claimed, 'cobbled together in confusion' by the Papal bureaucracy from previously published statements.[88] In reality, these were emblematic documents, the summation of a series of propositions made by both the Pope and his predecessor Gregory XVI, and in

this respect a mature, long-prepared response to modern 'errors'. His Holiness called for a crusade against modernity and for the secure re-establishment of Christian civilization and, as the French ambassador to the Holy See stressed, was convinced that in this struggle it was essential that the clergy in its entirety accept '*l'omnipotence doctrinale du Saint Siège*'.[89]

The most immediate danger was perceived to be liberalism, as both a philosophy and political programme, rather than the utopian schemes of socialism and communism. In his encyclical *Mirari vos*, Gregory XVI in 1832 had already denounced 'this false and absurd maxim, or rather this delirium: that one must procure and guarantee freedom of conscience for everyone'.[90] Liberalism invariably led to demands for a false liberty, an illusory equality, based upon such precepts as freedom of conscience, the laïcization of institutions, the suppression of the Church, and State control of education.[91] It had resulted already in the catastrophic rupture in the fabric of society represented by the French Revolution. More recently the Piedmontese government had renewed the assault and many of the phrases employed in *Quanta cura* were borrowed wholesale from previous denunciations of its actions. The Pope also, however, condemned the '*funeste principe de non-intervention*' employed by the various European states to justify their unwillingness to prevent the annexation of the Papal States, insisting that this lent justification to a rebellion which 'opens the fatal path to communism'. Gallicanism, which subordinated the Church to the State and required approval of the actions of the ecclesiastical authorities by the civil power, was similarly damned.

The encyclical affirmed that the Will of God, expressed through divine revelation in the Bible and by the Church, was the sole source of legitimate authority in society. The ends pursued by the Church in order to secure human Salvation were entirely superior to those of the State. Its secular clergy and religious orders should thus enjoy fully the liberty necessary to secure these. The concept of the separation of Church and State or the possibility of an education distinct from religion were forcefully condemned, as was the notion of a freedom of expression which might include ideas contrary to the teachings of the Church. The Syllabus identified 80 'Errors of the Age' and insisted on the duty of the Church to protect humanity against the 'evil ones' who promised 'liberty', while spreading 'corruption' and 'devouring the foundations of the Catholic religion and of civil society'.[92] The 'errors' were in part philosophical—those of the ancient as well as the modern worlds which might be employed

to promote secularization—including pantheism, naturalism, rationalism, indifference, and latitudinarianism. The essential focus was, however, on 'modernism', on a 'rationalism' which challenged the truths revealed by God and maintained that religion was simply the product of human society. Such views could result only in 'indifference', together with socialism, communism, liberalism, Protestant biblical societies, freedom of conscience and 'materialism'—the latter resulting in 'a society stolen away from the laws of religion [which] can no longer propose any other goal for itself than to amass and accumulate wealth, no longer follow any other law … than the uncontrollable lust of a soul enslaved by its passions and its interests …'.[93] In order to make the Pope's position absolutely clear, Article 80 condemned the belief that 'The Roman pontiff could and should reconcile himself with and compromise with progress, liberalism, and modern civilization.' This might be judged to be '*le moment intransigeant*'.[94]

Responses to the Syllabus varied, even within the Church. Ultramontanes triumphantly greeted the 'perfect' representation of Papal intransigence towards modernity.[95] As the Bishop of Tarbes pointed out in a pastoral letter in December 1864—'When the sovereign Pontiff has proclaimed a doctrinal decision, no-one has the right to add or remove even the least vowel. Whatever he affirms, is true for ever, whatever he declares to be mad and false will be eternally.' He called on his clergy to proclaim the Pope's words, 'as the true and pure word of God'.[96] An often passionate debate nevertheless ensued. Mgr Darboy, the liberal Archbishop of Paris, was horrified by a document in which 'the most monstrous errors and opinions previously tolerated, or even respected by custom and law, are stigmatized in the same manner and without distinction', and which appeared to condemn many of the basic principles of the French Constitution. In a long pastoral letter, on the contribution of religion to the 'prosperity of States, as well as to the prevention of *des révolutions sanglantes*', Darboy suggested that as well as listing the errors of modern society, His Holiness should have enumerated its more positive features. Foremost among these, he suggested, was the restoration of 'order' and 'security' which Providence had 'entrusted to the genius of a hero'. The Archbishop came close to admonishing the Pope by pointing out that 'It is up to you to reconcile reason with faith, liberty with authority, politics with the Church.'[97] His close collaborator, Mgr Maret, doyen of the Sorbonne theological faculty, in a letter dated 29 January 1865, posed what he suggested was the 'immense question'—'whether the order of the

Middle Ages and the unity of Church and State realized during that epoch are the only true form, the necessary and immutable form of Christian society'.[98]

Mgr Dupanloup vainly attempted to calm the situation by interpreting the propositions in a relatively moderate fashion, taking advantage of every ambiguity.[99] At least in private, liberal laymen were, however, in despair.[100] They were appalled by what Falloux, in a letter to Montalembert, written on Christmas Day 1864, described as a 'catastrophe … the stupid product of a cruel clique which, unfortunately, in taking up the pen, failed to appreciate the possibility of misunderstandings'. In a subsequent letter (3 January 1865), he nevertheless ascribed to the Pope the best of intentions and assumed that his uncompromising stance revealed that 'he has been little by little led, by persistent obsessions, to the point at which he is determined to emancipate his soul before God and nothing else'.[101] They felt that they had no choice but to submit.

Louis Veuillot was utterly disdainful of such temporizing. In a letter to his brother, he described the Bishop of Orleans's comments as 'ridiculous, stupid, and even odious'. Only the government's ban on *l'Univers* prevented him from communicating his contempt for liberals to the many priests who hung on his every word. Nevertheless, in a book on *L'Illusion libérale* (1866), he was able to associate liberalism with heresy, and to denounce those, and by clear implication Mgr Dupanloup, who engaged in 'frivolous games'.[102] The Pope would congratulate him on his efforts.[103] According to the Comte de Sartiges, His Holiness had been surprised by the hostile response to a document which he regarded as simply offering clarification of existing doctrine.[104]

In his advice to Baroche, Minister of Justice and of Public Worship, Mgr Darboy had suggested that he should impose a ban on the publication of the Encyclical and Syllabus by the Church in France, giving the Archbishop time to attempt to persuade the Papal curia to issue 'a corrective, an attenuation'.[105] A prohibition was issued on 1 January 1865, and justified by the provisions of the Concordat and the organic articles, as well as a ruling by the Conseil d'Etat that the propositions contained within the Syllabus were contrary to the Constitution of the Empire.[106] Most bishops reluctantly obeyed the minister's instructions, although, paradoxically, the liberalization of press legislation in 1861 ensured widespread publication of the documents, together with numerous commentaries. The absurdity of a situation in which the Encyclical could be published in newspapers, and non-believing journalists were free to com-

ment on the Papal statements, but not French bishops, who owed a duty of explication to their congregations, was pointed out repeatedly. The inability of the bishops to offer a serious theological defence of Papal doctrine, left the opposition press, 'the enemies of the faith', free to engage in distortions.[107] These critics were identified by the Bishop of Rodez, Mgr Delalle, as 'for the most part men who do not believe in the Church, Protestants, Jews, free-thinkers, saint-simonians, pantheists or atheists', all the enemies of God and the Pope, as well as the 'remaining partisans of a national church, bastard Catholicism' based upon 'the traditions of Jansenism and parliamentary Gallicanism'.[108] Mgr Fillion, Bishop of Le Mans, wondered why France alone—and not Protestant England or the USA—had taken this course of action.[109]

The bishops in general certainly felt bound to protest, with only Mgr Lecourtier, Bishop of Montpellier, registering approval of government action.[110] Thirty restricted themselves, however, to confidential letters. In contrast, Cardinal Mathieu, Archbishop of Besançon, and Mgr de Dreux-Brézé, Bishop of Moulins, publicly read the encyclical *Quanta Cura* in their cathedrals. Although this was condemned by the Conseil d'Etat, they would be congratulated warmly and publicly by the Papal nuncio.[111] The Archbishop of Reims believed that he had an imperative duty to communicate the teaching of the '*Pasteur suprême*' to both his clergy and the faithful,[112] while the Bishop of Auch affirmed that the absolute right of the 'Sovereign Pontiff' to speak to the 'universal church' on spiritual matters, a right conferred by Jesus Christ, could not be contested without angering God.[113] Mgr Epivent, Bishop of Aire, could not understand 'the sudden reversal in church-state relations and the apparent rejection by the government of a letter sent from heaven to earth to cure sick societies, and to strengthen Europe as it rocks on its old foundations'. The word of God could not be suppressed, he asserted, neither could those of the Pope and the bishops—'the principal organs of the word of God'.[114] The Bishop of Digne simply described the government's action as 'odious' and published his own commentary on the Syllabus in a pastoral letter.[115]

Others followed his example. Even the Bishop of Saint Claude, who, anxious not to embarrass the government, had initially determined to maintain a 'prudent silence', was forced by pressure from his vicars-general, cathedral chapter, and seminary professors, to break this silence.[116] Mgr Mabille, Bishop of Versailles, informed his flock that 'after having condemned all the gross errors, which if applied … would instantly crush religious and social order', the Pope had also specifically condemned

'socialism, which is creeping into the habits of a certain class of the population and which, at a given hour, could turn into a frightening danger'; 'caesarism by which one would like to rob and diminish the Church …'; and 'liberalism which involves a resurrection of the spirit of paganism and the importation of an irreligious philosophy' and which 'has nothing in common with true liberty … which comes from God'.[117]

In a circular letter to his clergy, the Bishop of Grenoble, Mgr Ginoulhiac, explained that His Holiness was not attacking modern society but the errors, the 'absolute theories of social organization, which have been decorated with the seductive label of progress'. Error needed to be denounced in order to protect truth and the religious faith without which social order and the creation of the 'perfect society' would not be possible. The bishop also protested that the Pope had not condemned freedom of conscience or freedom of speech but rather, 'freedom of conscience in the face of God himself; freedom of all cults, whatever they are or might become; freedom without limits and without regulation of speech and the press, or the absolute right to think anything and to say and write everything one has thought'.[118] The Bishop of Carcassonne identified two distinct forms of liberty—'that of God, of the angels, of the saints, and that of fallen man'. Only the Church, as the repository of 'divine truth', should enjoy absolute liberty, because 'its liberty is not dangerous: it wishes to be free only to preach truth to mankind, to correct morals, to sanctify souls, to pacify states, and to ensure everywhere the rights of justice'. Outside the Church, there was 'a much greater tendency towards error than towards truth, towards evil than towards good. It is this dangerous and unhealthy liberty which frightens the Church …'. Universally, 'the Church represents perfect tolerance', from which it followed that 'Rome, the city of principle par excellence is, at the same time, the most free soil that there is on earth'. It could not, however, tolerate 'freedom for error', or the freedom allowed to a press '*impie*'. This the bishop defined as '*la liberté de perdition*'.[119]

While regretting the obstacles placed on the full and free publication of Papal decisions, the Bishop of Meaux reminded his clergy that these had been published in Rome, which made observance 'obligatory' for Catholics.[120] He insisted that it was the duty of every Catholic to 'accept fully and heartfully all the decisions of the Holy See, to believe what it believes, to approve what it approves, to condemn what it condemns. We must be Catholics like the Pope and with the Pope …'. The religious freedom guaranteed by the French Constitution meant nothing if Catholics

were unable to publicly 'avow, profess and teach' those 'eternal principles of justice and truth, the bases of society and of civilization' affirmed by the Pope.[121]

It was hardly surprising that His Holiness should include in the Syllabus of Errors the belief that 'the will of the people, manifested by what is referred to as public opinion … constitutes the supreme law, independent of both Divine and human law'. Accepting such a proposition would, as Mgr Foulquier, the Bishop of Mende insisted, place 'the people … above all law, above the Divine Law itself, the eternal law of truth and justice'. The outcomes of universal suffrage were acceptable only when compatible with Divine Law. Anything else would lead to toleration of '*les plus révoltantes injustices*'.[122] According to Mgr Landriot, Bishop of La Rochelle, the Pope had not rejected manhood suffrage as such, nor had he rejected 'progress' or 'modern civilization', but had condemned 'the revolutionary spirit, which … turns upside down all the rights, disregards all the principles, installs license in the place of real liberty'.[123]

The bishops' overwhelmingly positive response to the principles affirmed by the Pope offered further proof of the degree to which Gallicanism had crumbled.[124] Even Cardinal Mathieu, Archbishop of Besançon, who had previously played a leading role in resistance to ultramontane pretensions, insisted that the views expressed in *Quanta cura* and the Syllabus of Errors represented 'a lifeline for a society in danger of perishing'.[125] Mgr Plantier, the Bishop of Nîmes, also seized the opportunity to demand abolition of the organic articles, as well as an end to the role of the Conseil d'Etat in resolving disputes between State and Church, because of the presence in its ranks of 'Protestants, Jews, schismatics, rationalists'.[126] As the Bishop of Saint Brieuc insisted, 'the voice of the Pontiff is the voice of God' and must be respected in order to bring to an end an era of chaos, confusion, division and revolution. He predicted in millenarian tones that, in the midst of crisis, 'Deliverance will come suddenly, with the glorious accession of the Saviour, at the very moment when all appears lost. This will be the Passover, the resurrection of the Church after its long suffering. Then the power of Satan will be broken; then, and only then, will the Revolution be defeated.'[127] Securing this providential, and inevitable, victory necessitated and fully justified adopting an entirely intransigent world outlook and a determined, uncompromising defence of God's Truth against error, as the means of securing the final defeat of Satan—the root of all Evil, and installing the reign of God on Earth.[128]

The French government would be particularly concerned about the extravagant gestures of support for the Papal position offered by an intransigent minority of around 15 ultramontane bishops, including Pie, Doney and Mabile, supported by large numbers of assertive parish priests determined to influence public opinion.[129] Thus, in successive services in the parish of Balâtre (Somme), the local priest enlightened his congregation by reading the Encyclical and commenting on the Syllabus, insisting that he preferred to risk imprisonment than remain silent when the 'Ministre des Cultes wishes to lead us like wild beasts'. He called on those present to pray for the Emperor—'because someone wants to put very bad ideas into his head'.[130] The Abbé Maupier, from the pulpit of his church in the village of Saint-Michel-du-Hâvre, informed his congregation that 'We must all gather under the laws of the Church and never bow before earthly laws if these are contrary to those of the Church.'[131] Although large-scale concerted action was rare, officials also reported more frequent and larger gatherings of priests than usual.[132]

The Catholic and conservative press in its editorials, articles and through publication of letters from bishops also repeatedly reaffirmed its devotion to the Pope.[133] The Syllabus had denounced 80 errors in a manner which made the statement accessible to the public. It was enthusiastically welcomed as a magisterial pontifical proclamation, of universal validity, by that portion of the laity which itself felt uneasy about the threats to traditional values and hierarchies identified by the Pope and which, by means of petitions and prayer, was able to share in an intense sense of devotion to His Holiness.[134]

Cardinal Antonelli, the Papal Secretary of State, discussing the issue with the French ambassador in Rome, insisted that the objectives of the Encyclical were purely spiritual and directed 'especially against the spirit of socialism and against the evil passions of the century'. He was convinced that only Papal leadership and the doctrinal unity of the Universal Church could defeat the atheistic, Protestant, Jewish and revolutionary conspiracy against Christianity, a conspiracy facilitated by parliamentary debate and the 'freedom' of the press. The Cardinal claimed to be surprised that the Emperor who '*représente les conservatives*' had not welcomed an anathema directed against the enemies of conservative principles.[135] The pressing need for an unambiguous definition of papal infallibility was stressed on 1 June in an article in *Civilità cattolica*.[136] Equally indicative of a determination to reinforce further the authoritarian structure and culture of the Church were the decisions of a supposedly 'secret' consistory on 22 June

1868, at which His Holiness condemned as 'detestable' the decision of the Austrian government to recognize freedom of speech and of religion, as well as the loss of clerical authority over education, in matrimonial disputes, and over cemeteries, where the result would be the interment of 'heretics' alongside Catholics. Austrian ministers and officials were warned of the spiritual consequences of their actions.[137]

3.7 The Vatican Council

The decision to summon a Council of the Church was inspired by the Syllabus as was evident in the establishment of a preparatory commission of cardinals, chaired by Mgr Patrizi, Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, in March 1865. The Papal Bull, *Aeterni Patris*, actually summoning the Council, was finally published on 29 June 1868.[138] The main aims of the gathering would be to consider means of defending truth against the errors of the epoch, and of securing discipline within the Church.[139] There was no explicit reference to Papal Infallibility. There hardly needed to be. The idea had, for some time, been in the air. The personality cult enveloping the Pope-martyr, had generated massive emotional support for such a declaration. In a circular letter of 2 June 1869, the Pope, who had on 11 April celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination, offered his gratitude to the faithful for their prayers, and went on to stress the seriousness of the situation in which the Church found itself, engaged as it was in a 'terrible' struggle across the universe, against 'the powers of darkness allied with human perversity'.[140] In some dioceses potential critics were subjected to a sustained ultramontane campaign which largely succeeded in silencing its opponents. Cardinal de Bonald did not hesitate to revoke the Abbé Valin, who had served for 35 years as parish priest at Lissieu near Lyon for publishing in 1868 a brochure on *De l'Ultramontanisme et du Gallicanisme*, in which he had warned that the imposition of the Roman liturgy, as well as publication of the Syllabus of Errors, would be followed by the declaration of Papal Infallibility.[141]

The essential question the Council was to address was the location of ultimate authority within a Church which was itself the undoubted repository of Truth, and Infallible in its judgements. Many bishops made their positions (more or less) clear before leaving for Rome. Gallicans like Mgr Maret believed that sovereignty should be shared between the Pope and bishops and that the Church should assume many of the attributes of constitutional monarchy.[142] According to the Bishop of Chambéry, particularly

in 'grave circumstances', the Pope should surround himself with the bishops 'to add his wisdom to their wisdom'.[143] Insisting that the Church should be seen as an alliance between 'authority and liberty', Mgr Ramadié, Bishop of Perpignan, condemned what he regarded as the excessive zeal of those contributors to *L'Univers*, who 'clearly take the particular characteristics of their own spirit to be the true Catholic spirit'.[144]

Ultramontane bishops like Mgr Epivent, Bishop of Aire, saw the Council as useful rather than necessary, pointing out that the Church, 'already, through its monarchical constitution, possesses, in its infallible head, a leader able to exercise his power to the full'. He nevertheless attended in expectation of 'an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit'.[145] The Bishop of Versailles, Mgr Mabille, insisted similarly that the Pope 'has already employed his infallible authority to strike out against the errors and disorders of our time; he has convoked a council to complete his work'.[146] Mgr Gignoux of Beauvais explained that God would speak to the Council, so that 'Whoever listens to its lessons …, will listen to Jesus Christ; but whoever has the misfortune to disregard them will denigrate God himself.' He could not understand the timidity of the small number of his colleagues who were afraid that the Council might go 'too far' by accepting 'the doctrinal infallibility of the Sovereign-Pontiff, a truth as old and as unquestionable as the Church itself …' and consoled himself by insisting that, due to God's protection, the Council was incapable of even the slightest error.[147] Mgr Pie pointed to the practical difficulties of decision-making by bishops dispersed throughout the world,[148] while, according to Mgr Saint-Marc, Archbishop of Rennes, and Mgr Raess, Bishop of Strasbourg, doctrinal unity and a sense of purpose were all the more essential in a world threatened by revolution, materialism and atheism.[149]

The Vatican Council opened with an impressive procession and ceremonial mass on 8 December 1869. It would be attended by 793 archbishops and bishops, 17% of them French and 40% Italian. The French embassy would provide regular and detailed reports on the proceedings. On 24 April 1870, the Council unanimously voted in favour of *Dei Filius*, a document defining Catholic doctrine in respect of God, revelationary faith and the role of reason. Divisions were, however, already apparent on the burning issue of the respective doctrinal authority of Pope and Council. A majority, influenced by the writings of Joseph de Maistre, Louis de Bonald and the young Lamennais, and drawn especially from the bishops of Italy, Spain, Ireland and Latin America, led, among others, by Cardinal

Manning, Archbishop of Westminster, was determined to reinforce the authority of the Pope within a centralized, authoritarian institution fully committed to the propositions of the Syllabus of Errors. An increasingly divided and weakened minority, including especially German bishops influenced by the critical theology of the universities, as well as around one-third of French bishops—and most notably Maret and Darboy, the leading Gallicans—anxious to reconcile the Church with the modern world, either opposed the doctrine of Papal Infallibility or, like Dupanloup, judged the moment to be inopportune.

While every bishop agreed that the Pope enjoyed supremacy within the Church, there was disagreement on the issue of whether he alone had the right to define dogma. Thus, according to Maret, 'infallibility', just like sovereignty within the Church, was the shared attribute of Pope and bishops, and should be realized by means of regular councils. This represented a determination to affirm the rights of bishops within the Church and doubtless to protect their authority within their own dioceses. It enshrined a commitment to aristocratic government rather than absolute monarchy. Liberals also shared a determination to protect the waning autonomy of their national churches.[150] Darboy, as Archbishop of Paris, would play a leading role in mobilizing those of his colleagues who were anxious to ensure that Papal absolutism was tempered by episcopal influence. It had been hoped that the representatives of the Austrian, French and Prussian governments in Rome would offer support. The decision of the French government not to send a plenipotentiary, welcomed by the Holy See, thus caused dismay among bishops anxious to restrain papal ambition.[151] It seems likely that Emile Olliver, as Minister of Justice and *Cultes*, had judged that the separation of Church and State, if effected by the Pope himself, would be nothing to worry about.[152]

From fear of contributing to a schism, many bishops, including such eminent figures as Dupanloup, would speak with studied ambiguity, hoping to achieve a compromise. The realization by such moderates as Mgr Lyonnet, the Archbishop of Albi, together with the archbishops of Rouen, and Tours, Cambrai and Rennes, that—'we need to form a group. I speak of those who we know … will not succumb to pressure or weakness'—had little impact.[153] This was hardly surprising, given the unrealistic aspirations of the group's secretary, Mgr Forcade, Bishop of Nevers, who proposed to '1. Reject absolutely the word *infallibility*; 2. Search for a formula to define the rights and prerogatives of the Holy See which will prove acceptable to all opinions and their nuances.'[154] The vicar-general representing

the diocese of Nice was moreover only too aware of the efforts of the Roman curia to restrict and to 'guide' discussion, and claimed that the gathering in Rome was 'less a Council than a coup d'état'.[155] The careful selection of members of preparatory commissions and close control of proceedings served to restrict debate, creating a feeling that the outcome had been pre-arranged.[156] According to Mgr Darboy, bishops were dismayed by 'the manner in which business is conducted: no freedom, no preparation, no sincerity'.[157] The poor acoustics of the transept of Saint Peter's in which meetings were held, together with variations in the pronunciation of Latin, sharply reduced the comprehensibility of proceedings.[158] In any case, as M Icard, superior of Saint-Sulpice, observed in his journal entry for 29 December—'The Pope is extremely sensitive; he cannot tolerate any word, any information, contrary to his views. Those who surround him speak only to flatter him …'[159]

Bishops were subjected to pressure from aristocratic Roman opinion as well as from the ultramontane press.[160] Thus, the editors of both the Jesuit-run semi-official Roman newspaper *Civiltà cattolica* and the restored *L'Univers* assumed that members of the Council would welcome by acclamation a declaration of Papal Infallibility and the final refutation of Gallicanism.[161] Parish priests and their parishioners were encouraged to forward petitions to Rome in favour of the declaration of Infallibility. When over three-quarters of the 850 parish priests in the diocese of Saint-Brieuc signed such a petition in March 1870, they effectively disavowed Mgr David, their Gallican bishop.[162] Mgr Place, Bishop of Marseille, endured similar pressure.[163] Impelled by 'an invincible horror for the quarrels emerging between Catholics', Mgr Lavigerie, newly appointed to the archbishopric of Algiers, explained to Emile Ollivier, that 'an immense majority has acquiesced in the definition; to oppose an invincible fact is useless; instead of exhausting oneself in a long resistance with no way out, moderate bishops should employ all their efforts to mitigate the terms of the definition, to remove from it whatever might cause outrage'.[164]

Even before the Fathers of the Church had gathered, in a letter to his friend, Falloux, Montalembert had expressed dismay at what he perceived to be the feebleness of liberal Catholic resistance to Papal authoritarianism, expressing his hope that at the moment when the 'personal government' of the Emperor was being restricted, 'the good God will put a break on the abuses and excesses of this form of government in the Church which appears to me to be much more dangerous and especially more enrooted than in the State'.[165] Already critically ill, Montalembert, would

come close to despair. In a forceful letter published in the *Gazette de France* on 7 March 1870, he condemned 'those lay theologians of absolutism, who began by turning all our liberties to straw when faced by Napoleon III, and subsequently to sacrifice justice and truth, reason and history in a burnt offering to the idol they have erected in the Vatican'. A furious Pope would only with great reluctance agree to permit a memorial service in Rome for this life-long servant of the Church.[166]

By mid-July, according to a report from the Comte de Sartiges, the French ambassador in Rome, the minority had virtually given up. In support of this assessment a letter dated 5 July, from an unnamed bishop, was quoted. Its author explained that the majority had simply refused to engage in debate. The minority had been subject to constant pressure from the religious press and the host of priests gathered in Rome, encouraged by Papal representatives. Those bishops suspected of pressing for intervention by the French government were being accused of treason.[167] According to Sartiges, 48 French bishops had supported the 'dogmatic definition' of his authority by the Pope, a further 12 had not commented explicitly but nevertheless were assumed to be supportive of this article of faith, while 10 had adhered but felt that the moment was inopportune. Three Gallican bishops, including Mgr Sibour, the Archbishop of Paris, had determined that it was not possible to adequately define the doctrine and that in consequence it should not become an 'obligatory belief'. Even so, they were prepared to accept the Pope's judgement and had acknowledged that 'Rome has spoken, the case is closed'. According to the ambassador, these were 'the last words of Gallicanism'.[168]

On 18 July 1870, 533 bishops voted in favour of the constitution *Pastor Aeternus* which—employing precedents drawn from the first Councils of the Church—affirmed that Christ had established Peter as 'leader and head of the apostles', and recognized that his successors as Bishop of Rome should enjoy 'the primacy of Peter over all the Church'. It thus followed that 'When the Roman Pontiff speaks *ex cathedra*, that is when,…as the pastor and teacher of all Christians in virtue of his highest apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine of faith and morals that must be held by the Universal Church, he is empowered, through the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, with that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer endowed His Church'.[169] Some limits were posed to the authority of the Pope. Thus, in exercising his rights, he would not do so on a personal basis, but on behalf of the Church, and solely on questions of faith and morality, rather than discipline and liturgical matters.

Although this definition remained susceptible to theological hair-splitting, its affirmation of Papal absolutism constituted a devastating blow to the Gallican alternative of a Church in which authority was jointly held by Pope and bishops. Only two opposing votes were recorded. The 25 French Gallican bishops who maintained their opposition almost to the end, absented themselves from the final vote rather than face open defeat.[170] Of their colleagues, 45 voted in favour of Papal infallibility. Centuries of debate had been brought to an end.

3.8 Conclusion

The Council would be prorogued on 20 October 1870, following the withdrawal of the French garrison as a result of the Franco-Prussian War, but not before achieving the doctrinal objectives previously defined by Pius IX and the Roman curia. The Declaration of Papal Infallibility was the culmination of attempts to impose greater doctrinal uniformity and a sense of purpose on the Church and to reinforce its ability to counter the threats posed by revolution, materialism and atheism. In spite of the undoubtedly painful loss of his temporal power following the entry of Italian troops into the Eternal City, the Pope although considering himself to be a prisoner, a martyr immured within the walls of the Vatican, had, thanks to Divine Providence, emerged victorious.[171] The vast majority of priests and laity would accept the doctrine of Papal Infallibility with considerable enthusiasm.[172] Moreover, and although application of the dogma was supposed to be limited to statements made *ex cathedra*, the proclamation's insistence on the God-given authority of the Roman Pontiff could easily be interpreted in a more inclusive and authoritarian manner. Veuillot typically insisted that 'we must clearly affirm the omnipotent authority of the Pope as the source of all spiritual and temporal authority. The proclamation of the dogma of Papal infallibility has no other purpose.'[173]

The primary objective of the Council had been to close the moral breach opened up by the Revolution—itself the work of Satan—by means of the affirmation of Papal authority. Further success required intransigent opposition to 'liberalism' and to 'progress'.[174] The Jesuit editors of *Civiltà cattolica* celebrated—'In future, in the succession of centuries, ours will be one day blessed and glorified as that in which, thanks to the Council celebrated under Pius IX, enlightenment returned to a world oppressed and invaded by the darkness of revolution.'[175] The warning delivered by Lord Acton, the eminent Catholic historian, to the British Liberal leader,

Gladstone, that 'we have to meet an organized conspiracy to establish a power which would be the most formidable enemy of liberty as well as of science throughout the world', largely went unheard.[176] So too did Cardinal Newman's observation that 'it is not good for a Pope to live twenty years … He becomes a god, [and] has no one to contradict him.'[177] On 3 September 2000, John Paul II, another long-serving and combative Pope, would nevertheless beatify Pius IX, placing him firmly on the path to sainthood. The spirit of reactionary triumphalism, the dream of reconquest and belief in the eventual triumph of Christian civilization would persist—until the 1950s, and beyond—in response to the threats posed by liberalism, socialism and communism, by an on-going secularization and increasingly to the perceived menace from radical Islam.

Notes

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2. R. Aubert, *Le pontificat de Pius IX (1846–70)*, 1958, p. 276 and *Vatican I*, 1964, p. 30; C. Langlois, 'L'infaillibilité, une idée neuve du 19e siècle' in *Le continent théologique. Explorations historiques*, 2016, p. 54.
3. See also J.-M. Donegani, *La liberté de choisir, Pluralisme religieux et pluralisme politique dans le catholicisme français contemporain*, 1993, p. 469; J.-F. Galinier-Pallerola, *La résignation dans la culture catholique en France (1870–1945)*, 2007, pp. 45, 82, 99, 112.
4. C. Gaposchkin, review of P. Buc, *Holy War, Martyrdom and Terror: Christianity, violence and the west*, Philadelphia, 2015, *Reviews in History* no. 1863.
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6. J.-L. Bonniol, M. Crivello, (eds) *Façonner le passé. Représentations et cultures de l'histoire*, Aix-en-Provence, 2004, p. 8.
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10. Copy of sermon included with report from PG Aix to MC, 11 November 1841, AN F19/5709.
11. *La Révolution*, (1859), vol. 6, pp. 18–19; also quoted by J. Grévy, *Le cléricalisme? Voilà l'ennemi*, 2005, p. 35. See also D. Moulinet, 'Mgr Gaume', op. cit., pp. 169–170.
12. A view shared by the Academic rector of Nancy, 6 April 1858, AN F17/2649.
13. 'Lettre pastorale de Mgr l'Evêque du Puy sur le Concile Œcuménique et Mandement pour le Carême de 1869, Jan. 1869, AN F19/1939.
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18. Montalembert letter to Cantù, 14 Dec. 1854, quoted by Aubert, *Le pontificat*, p. 230. See also Falloux, *Mémoires* II 1888, pp. 333–4.
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21. Letter of 14 August 1852. Similar concerns were expressed by Fortoul in a letter to the Min. des AE on 11 June 1852. AN 246AP 24.
22. Report to Min. des AE, 24 Dec. 1852, AN 246AP17.
23. De Rayneval to Min. des AE, 10 Jan. 1853, AN 246AP17. On Bouvier, see also C. Langlois, *Le crime d'Onan. Le discours catholique sur la limitation des naissances*, 2005, pp. 225–7; P. Foucault, 'La formation du clergé dans le Maine au 19e siècle', in H. Guillemain, S. Tison, N. Vivier, (eds) *La foi dans le siècle, Mélanges offerts à Brigitte Waché*, Rennes, 2009, pp. 211–14.

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28. See also M. Agostino, 'Les ordinations aux 19e et 20e siècles: les enseignements de l'évolution d'un ritual. L'exemple du diocese de Bordeaux' in Agostino et al. (eds) *Fastes et ceremonies. L'expression de la vie religieuse, 16e-20e siècles*, Pessac, 2003, pp. 251, 259.
29. See also V. Petit, *Eglise et nation. La question liturgique en France au 19e siècle*, Rennes, 2010, pp. 42, 54, 79.
30. See e.g. J. McMillan, 'Louis Veuillot, *L'Univers* and the Ultramontane network' in D. Bates et al., (eds) *Liens personnels, rèseaux, solidarités en France et dans les îles britanniques (11e-20e siècles)*. 2006, p. 225; M. Launay, *Les séminaires français aux 19e et 20e siècles*, 2002, pp. 103–5; Y.-M. Hilaire, *La vie religieuse des populations du diocèse d'Arras, 1840–1914*, Doc. d'Etat, Univ. de Paris IV, 1976, pp. 533–4.
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38. Letter to MC, 30 Oct. 1853, AN 247AP24.
39. PG Besançon to G. des S., 21 Feb. 1865, AN F19/1936; Petit, *Catholiques et comtois*, pp. 229–249.
40. Copie d'une letter adressée à son éminence le Cardinal Archevêque de Lyon, par les curés de la ville de Lyon, 30 March 1865; Ministère de la J. et des C., Note sur le diocèse de Lyon. n.d.; Cardinal de Bonald to M.J., 7 Jan. 1869, AN F19/5821.

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47. See e.g. Horaist, *La devotion au pape*, p. 15.
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52. B. Turner, *The Religious and the Political*, Cambridge, 2013, p. 43.
53. See e.g. Mandement de Mgr. l'Archévêque de Rouen…pour le publication de l'Encyclique de N.S.P. le Pape en date du 19 janvier 1860, AN F19/5609; Lettre-circulaire à MM. les curés et recteurs du diocèse de Marseille, 7 Feb. 1860, AN F19/5822.
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133. See e.g. *Le Courrier de Lyon*, 3 Jan. 1865; *La Gazette du Midi* (Marseille), 15 Jan., *La Guienne* (Bordeaux) 11 Jan., *L'Ordre et la Liberté* (Caen), 21 Jan., AN F19/1934; *Le Moniteur catholique*, 12 Feb. 1865, AN F19/1936.
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139. Christophe, 'Le Concile' p. 19.

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161. R. Aubert, *Vatican I*, 1964, pp. 268–9.
162. Gicquel, *Prêtres de Bretagne*, p. 210.
163. Christophe, 'Le Concile', p. 45.
164. Ibid., p. 116—letter to Mgr Maret 28 Oct. 1869; p. 47—letter to Ollivier.

165. Montalembert, *Catholicisme et liberté*, pp. 409–410, letter of 19 Aug. 1869.
166. Christophe, 'Le Concile' pp. 54–55.
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172. R. Aubert, 'Motivations théologiques et extra-théologiques des partisans et des adversaires de la définition dogmatique de l'infaillibilité du pape à Vatican I' in E. Castelli, (ed) *L'infaillibilité*, 1970, pp. 68–9.
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174. On these objectives, see e.g. a sermon by Pius IX on 19 June 1869, reported in *L'Univers*, 24 June. See also K. Schatz, *La primauté du pape*, 1992, pp. 227–9; Jankowiak, *La curie romaine*, p. 397.
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177. Quoted by E. Duffy, 'A Hero of the Church', *New York Review of Books*, 23 Dec. 2010, p. 62.

CHAPTER 4

Pastoral Care: The Clergy and the People of God

4.1 Introduction

The social visibility of the Church following the Revolution was enhanced by the vitality of a relatively youthful, numerous and combative clergy with a high ideal of Christian ministry and devotion to God, His Church and the community of the faithful. Their primary responsibility was to transmit the essential truths of the Christian message and, by receiving confession and administering the sacraments, through preaching and teaching, by supporting the Christian family and providing comfort to the sick and distressed, prepare the faithful for the Last Judgement. Every act of daily life should respond to the all-pervading presence of God and be informed by the teachings of the Church, the only legitimate interpreter of the Gospel. As Mgr Thibault, Bishop of Montpellier. insisted, the priest should ensure that 'morals are purified, Religion flourishes, society begins to envisage an improved destiny: a future in which there will be only obedient children, faithful servants, charitable rich, resigned poor, hard working and sober workers: the peace of God will reign amongst us'.[1] Success depended upon the priest's ability to understand, adapt and insert himself into the social space of the parish.[2]

Subscribing to an exalted ideal of the purpose of their Christian ministry and their perception of themselves as the agents of God's Will and representatives of Christ on Earth, it was hardly surprising that priests frequently displayed an ill-disguised sense of their own personal worth and

R. Price, *Religious Renewal in France, 1789-1870*,
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superiority over laymen.[3] Their determination to dominate was considerably reinforced by the experience of revolution, by a 'theology of combat', by a pessimistic view of sinful man, and a Manichean vision of history as an all-consuming war between good and evil.[4] As local 'notables' they were, moreover, widely perceived to represent a '*force d'encadrement*' and to serve as powerful agents of social control.[5]

4.2 Administering the Sacraments

The meaning and social function of the sacraments was clearly evident within the sacred space of the parish—in which the clergy sanctified the major stages in the life of the family and the rituals associated with the worship of God contributed to 'the processes of community-formation'.[6] It was on Sunday in particular, at mass, on a day devoted to God, that Christ's sacrifice was remembered through the mystery of the Eucharist and reconciliation between Man and God became possible following the prior examination of one's conscience and confession of sins, by means of penance and forgiveness. Securing regular attendance was a key objective, for, as the catechism of the diocese of Valence pointed out, 'it is at Mass that prayers are said especially for parishioners, and one hears there the voice of God in the instructions of one's own priest, [and] because it is at Mass that fêtes, fasting, marriages etc. are announced'.[7] Mass was the central act of collective, community worship. The liturgy employed, with its prayers, readings, and sermon provided a means of instruction, a framework for moral teaching, and an opportunity to manifest the hierarchy of priests and believers.[8]

The seven sacraments—baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, ordination and matrimony—constituted central features of Christian worship, as well as vitally important 'rites of passage'. Marriage was the prelude to the establishment of the Christian family, which provided the perfect context for the socialization of children and their religious upbringing. Subsequently, baptism represented the means of securing forgiveness for original sin, avoiding eternal damnation, and opening the path to membership of the Christian community and ultimately to salvation for the newly born. High levels of infant mortality ensured that premature death was a very real prospect and, according to Canon Law, baptism needed to be performed within three days of birth. The ritual act was generally conducted publicly with the participation of parents and godparents—usually members of the extended family—who

undertook, on behalf of the child, and in the presence of the community, to provide a Christian upbringing. Only when an infant seemed likely to die prematurely was baptism at home rather than in the sacred space of the church judged to be acceptable, although the Archbishop of Cambrai conceded, reluctantly, in response to a petition from the Société médicale de Douai, that exposure to severe winter conditions in a freezing church might threaten the well-being of the newly born.[9] *In extremis*, in the absence of a priest and where the death of a newly born child appeared imminent—followed by internment in unconsecrated ground alongside heretics and suicides—midwives, or even ordinary parishioners, were permitted to administer baptism, although this meant delivery of the sacrament by a woman.[10] In the case of a difficult birth, many (most) Catholic doctors, sharing the prevailing religious discourse, would have agreed that the fundamental objective was to baptize the child.[11] In a frequently republished *Essai sur la théologie morale considérée dans ses rapports avec la physiologie et la médecine* (1842), J-C. Debreyne (a priest and a doctor), thus insisted that in the case of a difficult pregnancy the extremely dangerous procedure of a caesarian section should be followed, even if it meant sacrificing the mother (or else post-mortem).[12] The practice of contraception which might otherwise have avoided potentially dangerous births or of abortion to safeguard the life of the mother was condemned by the Church.[13]

Death, the most important moment of passage, was hardly to be contemplated without the '*secours de la religion*'. Belief in Divine Judgement ensured that the final confession, followed by absolution, and receipt of the holy sacrament, were of supreme importance. Preparedness at the moment of death, and confidence in God's judgement, might compensate for the failure to live a wholly Christian life. Ideally, the arrival of the priest, carrying the *viaticum*, escorted by choir boys and a parishioner ringing a hand bell, allowed time for a final confession, contrition, performance of the last rites and absolution. Even where individuals had rarely attended Church, they were frequently 'persuaded' to receive the last rites by family members, particularly by women anxious to avoid embarrassment or to ensure that those they had loved should not expire in a state of sin. Any departure from the norms, or threat to the dignity of death-bed and post-mortem ceremonies, was likely to cause distress. This was the case at Lannemezan (Hautes-Pyrénées) where the parish priest attempted to persuade 80-year-old Louise Ricaud, on her death bed, to agree to pay her debts before he would hear her final confession. Stubbornly, she

expired before receiving the last rites and was subsequently refused a Christian burial. The daughter of the deceased complained in a petition to the Emperor that the 'extreme rigour' the vicaire had displayed had 'doomed a family, until then respected by all, to eternal infamy'. The priest insisted that he could not have behaved in any other way towards someone who even in extremity had shown 'contempt for religion'.[14]

Sudden death was something to be dreaded.[15] Circumstances, such as the absence of a priest from his parish at the crucial moment or his own serious illness, might result in the last rites not being performed.[16] The aged priest of the alpine parish of Saint Martin with its dispersed population, was frequently unable, due to asthma and rheumatism, to attend to the dying or to receive the bodies of recently deceased parishioners at their homes, as custom demanded.[17] Hope of life everlasting and escape from the torments of an eternal death were not extinguished entirely, however. For the deceased, it was assumed that there were three possible destinations—Heaven, Hell or Purgatory. On the basis of very limited scriptural evidence, the Council of Trent had revived, reinterpreted, and popularized the medieval obsession with souls in Purgatory. During the nineteenth century—the 'great century of purgatory'—the doctrine was again strongly reaffirmed by the Papacy.[18] It was maintained that although only a small, saintly, minority could expect after death to directly and immediately gain the eternal bliss of Heaven, most sinners might still aspire to avoid the eternal suffering imposed by the Devil in Hell. They should, however, anticipate a period of torment in Purgatory, enduring punishment and expiating their sins before finally ascending into Heaven. A good and charitable life might limit this period of penance, as would constant prayer to Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and the saints for redemption for the sins of both the living and dead. Remission might also be gained, and the rigour of God's punishment eased, by means of indulgences granted by the Church to those sinners who truly repented or else as reward for the good works and prayers of the living; by participation in particular religious festivals and pilgrimages; membership of congregations and confraternities; the wearing of crosses and religious medals; and by means of the purchase of memorial masses for the souls of the dead; as well as donations to good causes. The Pope could also offer further and substantial relief from the suffering of Purgatory by means of the plenary indulgences associated with the celebration of such events as Papal Jubilees.[19]

For the cynical Breton peasant, and former soldier, Jean-Marie Déguignet, this renewed emphasis on Purgatory appeared to be yet

another money-raising scam. He was convinced that the clergy preferred to dispatch the rich to Purgatory rather than Hell because 'if they send them there [to Hell], they would only be able to claim a single [burial] fee, whereas by sending them to Purgatory they will receive annual, monthly, weekly and even daily fees' in return for prayers to relieve the suffering of souls in Purgatory.[20] Many others, however, doubtless welcomed the second chance provided to those who had sinned, or died without the ministrations of a priest, to avoid the burning fires and torments of Hell, by securing God's blessing. As well as mechanical acts of worship, the belief in Purgatory promoted intense devotion and a veritable cult of the dead on All Souls Day.[21]

4.3 Transmitting the Message

4.3.1 Childhood Socialization

Inspired by a vision, constructed over the centuries, of Mary not only as the Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, but as the ideal wife and mother, priests were especially determined to preserve and sanctify the virtues of the Christian mother whose role was of such crucial importance in the religious upbringing of the young. Marie-Eugènie-Dorothée Quoniam, a Carmelite sister, born in 1839, indeed remembered fondly how her pious mother 'taught me to make the sign of the cross, to join my little hands together in prayer! … She took such care with all those matters which concerned my soul and the development of my faculties.'[22] Women were expected to play a central role in the Catholic reconquest of society, by inculcating virtue, as well as in the restoration of social harmony.[23] Mgr Donnet, Archbishop of Bordeaux, in his *Instruction pastoral sur l'éducation de famille* for Easter 1845 forcefully reminded mothers that 'You are the living instruments, the visible chiefs of a formidable spiritual power. Your thoughts, in becoming the thoughts of succeeding generations, mingle with universal life, and serve as the breath of humanity. Never forget your responsibilities, never forget your power: for if men make the laws, women make morality which has much more influence than laws on the destiny of the world.'[24] Religion was widely regarded as an '*affaire des femmes*' within a gendered division of labour in which they tended to assume responsibility for the spiritual life of the family and for its relationships with the priests whose prayers were vital in securing prosperity and well-being.[25]

4.3.2 Catechizing

Considerable importance was also attached to more formal catechizing. By means of a process of instruction spread over two to four years, the priest, assisted by the school teacher, could employ a series of simple questions and answers about the catechism, together with stories from the Bible, to combat the widespread '*ignorance crasse*' of Christian principles, promote faith among the young, protect them against sin, and inculcate respect for authority within the primary social institutions—home, Church and State.[26] Following the Restoration and the abandonment of the imperial catechism, each diocese had adopted a cheaply printed catechism approved by its bishop. The Strasbourg catechism, published in 1846, defined the Church, as 'the visible society of the faithful, united on earth by profession of a shared faith, by participation in the same sacraments, under the authority of legitimate pastors, whose visible chief is our Holy Father the Pope, vicar of Jesus Christ on earth … the successor of Saint Peter, on whom Jesus Christ founded His Church, to whom He gave the keys of the kingdom …'. The faithful were reminded that 'Jesus Christ is the invisible head of the Church, our Holy Father is the visible head'. The role of the bishops, as 'successors of the Apostles', was to 'govern' their dioceses under the 'supervision' and 'authority' of the Pope. It was maintained further that the Church, defined as the Pope and the bishops 'in communion with him', was 'infallible and never able to teach any error contrary to the faith and to morality', and that 'outside the Catholic, apostolic and Roman Church, [founded by Christ] there is no salvation'. Much greater stress was placed on the role of the Pope than in a previous catechism published in 1829.[27] From 1852, the catechism introduced by Mgr Sibour in Paris often served as a model. It was divided into three parts—the Credo ('that which we must believe'); commandments ('which we must obey'); and the sacraments ('the means of salvation which we must respect'). Each of these was further divided into lessons based on questions for which model answers were provided, which were to be learnt by heart to ensure that they remained imprinted on the reader's mind. Absolute obedience to the Will of God and to the dictates of His Church were the fundamental requirements.

In the hope of instilling a life-long faith, the provincial council held at Lyon in 1850 recommended that the catechist employ 'a simple and

clear language, accessible to all … stories, examples, comparisons drawn from the Holy Scriptures or from Tradition', and warned that 'it is not enough to ask children to recite the catechism learned by heart, without raising questions and providing explanations'.[28] Ideally classes should take place in the edifying environment of a chapel. Mgr Devie, Bishop of Belley, additionally suggested the use of engravings of the life of Christ and history of the Church to interest and introduce the young—many of them illiterate—to the 'mysteries' of religion.[29] The efficacy of this instruction of course depended on the zeal and teaching skills of the parish clergy and of the members of religious orders and school teachers who often assisted them. At worst, teaching could turn into a meaningless recitation of half-understood phrases, and according to the warnings of the Abbé Chevrier, a leading catechist, in boredom and discouragement.[30] In such circumstances maintaining interest and discipline in catechism classes must often have been a problem. Generally, '*une sage et juste séverité*' was thought to be necessary.[31] When the Abbé Richard, *desservant* of Labbeville, was accused of brutality towards his catechists, the Bishop of Beauvais pointed out that Richard had chastised only the 'most insubordinate, naughty, and incorrigible children' and that some parents had advised him to '*châtier, de claquer leurs enfants*'.[32]

The process of childhood instruction culminated in the receipt of first communion, followed by an imposing confirmation service conducted by the bishop for which parents proudly provided their children with new clothes and the clergy distributed images and medals.[33] Priests insisted upon their unchallengeable right to determine whether or not a child was adequately prepared to participate.[34] The Bishop of Nancy thus fully supported the refusal of the Abbé Schleinenger, parish priest at Langatte, to admit a 13-year-old girl, who, when questioned about the catechism, revealed an ignorance of 'the most elementary notions of religion'. He was determined to 'stimulate the zeal' of parents who neglected to send their children to school and who failed to go to church themselves.[35] Exclusion was regarded as a weighty punishment. It represented public humiliation and ruled out participation, as part of a peer group, in a major community celebration, in the rite of passage which marked entry into adulthood.[36] Indeed, in some areas, the lack of a certificate attesting to qualification for first communion made it difficult to find any kind of work.[37]

4.3.3 Confession

Following confirmation and receipt of first communion, an individual became an adult member of the parish community and accepted his/her personal responsibility towards God. Subsequently, in order to secure absolution and restore themselves to a state of grace, individuals would be required, on their knees before a priest in the confessional, to confess their sins in their entirety, show contrition, and promise to avoid further sin. The priest in hearing confessions and defining the limits of acceptable behaviour thus secured a vital pedagogical opportunity and means of imposing social control. He was obliged to interrogate the supplicant, assist in the identification of sin, and ensure repentance in the fear of God.[38] Although required to respect the secrecy of the confession, priests would certainly condemn acts like theft as contrary to God's Commandments and might additionally reinforce the public legal system by encouraging individuals thought guilty of illegal acts to confess to the authorities.[39] The numerous missions visiting during the Restoration were likely to demand a general confession of sins committed during the Revolution, as a means of securing both reconciliation and expiation.[40]

The prospect of making confession must have aroused considerable anxiety. Preaching in Provençal at Gordes in the 1850s, the Abbé Françon warned that 'When you go to confession and fail to confess all your sins, it is as if when you pull up weeds and you do not pull hard enough, you leave some pieces in the soil, and as though you had done nothing. Those pieces of weed that you've left overrun everything, and soon there are more weeds than there were before.'[41] At Serdinya, in the eastern Pyrenees, the parish priest in 1855 even warned those sinful young men who had failed to make their confessions that they would be punished by drawing a '*mauvais numéro*'. Hearing that, some of those who had been conscripted had criticized him, in his next sermon he warned that they would soon be killed and went on to chant the De Profundis for the peace of their souls. He also warned the community that God would strike it with cholera for its sins.[42]

The growing popularity of the moral theology developed by Saint Alphonse Liguori (1696–1787), particularly from the 1830 and 1840s, with its emphasis on frequent communion moreover served to reinforce the status of the clergy. As representatives of the '*institution de salut*', they assumed that it was their duty to intervene in every sphere of human relationships and to strip away the obstacles to salvation.[43] Securing the

moral integrity of the Christian family was vital to ensure 'the perpetuation of the Catholic *habitus*'.[44] Priests thus accepted the challenging responsibility of regulating sexual activity within the community, although the unconsummated marriage between Mary and Joseph, as well as their own vow of celibacy, must have encouraged them to believe that celibacy was a morally superior state.[45]

In a traditional Catholic theology, based upon the teaching of Saint Augustine, marriage, indissoluble and monogamous, was assumed to be the 'natural' situation in recognition of 'the needs of the flesh' and the conjugal responsibilities of married couples. Furthermore, as Mgr Bouvier (Bishop of Le Mans, 1833–1854), whose works were widely employed for instructing seminarians and for the guidance of parish priests, pointed out—'in the intention of the Creator, venereal pleasures are uniquely destined for the propagation of the human race; everything that is contrary to that objective, constitutes a grave disorder and is then a mortal sin'.[46]

Sexuality, however, as the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden had revealed, was indicative of the human capacity for bestiality and sin. The key biblical text (Genesis 38, 9) referred to the 'crime of Onan'—who in practising *coitus interruptus* had enjoyed sex without conceiving children. The practice of family limitation ran counter to the duty of humanity to preserve itself through procreation within the family, in order to ensure the perpetual adoration of God. The purpose of sexual activity was the central question. Thus, activity engaged in primarily for pleasure rather than to ensure procreation—although this might be the outcome—was likely to be defined as venal sin, while deliberate efforts to prevent conception were undoubtedly mortal sins. These included not only the '*crime d'Onan*', but those of Sodom, as well as the 'self-abuse' associated with masturbation. Sexual activity outside a Christian marriage or involving civil ceremonies was also invariably condemned. Speaking to a newly married woman at Montricher (Savoie), following a civil ceremony conducted by the mayor, the parish priest warned that this was not sufficient for a Christian and little better than a '*mariage des chiens*'.[47]

From the late eighteenth century, the spreading practice of *coitus interrruptus*—through which 'man defies providence'—caused considerable anxiety among the clergy. In 1830, Mgr Arbaud, bishop of the Alpine diocese of Gap, sought to make them more fully aware that the 'detestable crime of Onan has even penetrated into the cottages'.[48] The marketing of large numbers of rubber sheaths from the mid-1840s aroused further alarm. In response, confessors might have followed Mgr Bouvier and

avoided excessive rigourism in case it discouraged confession, limiting themselves to vague generalities to avoid mutual embarrassment; or alternatively, accepted the far less tolerant views of the saintly, obsessive and self-mortifying, *curé d'Ars*, or the rigourism enforced by the Congregation of the Holy Office from the early 1850s. As the supposedly active participants in sexual activity, men, rather than women, judged to be passive, were particularly likely to face censure.[49]

The degree to which the model of conjugal life defined in the manuals was acted out in reality is of course impossible to determine. The ideal might be represented by a prayer included in a *Manuel des fidèles*, published in Lyon in 1850—'O Mary! Pure Virgin without stain, chaste wife of Joseph, tender mother of Jesus, perfect model for wives and mothers, I prostrate myself at your feet and beg for your help. Consider my cares and those of my family. I hope through you to obtain from Jesus the favour of properly fulfilling my duties as wife and mother. Secure for me the fear of God, the love of work and good works, the taste for prayer and holy matters, sweetness, patience, wisdom, all the virtues the apostle recommended to Christian women and which are the happiness and ornament of families. Teach me to honour my husband as you honour Saint Joseph and as the Church honours Jesus Christ. That he finds in me the wife of his heart! That the holy union we have contracted on earth will continue eternally in Heaven!'[50] Wives were required by their confessors to strive to attain perfection in terms of submission to their husbands, and in the creation of a domestic environment suffused with religion, and with tenderness rather than passion. The proclamation of Joseph as patron saint of the Church in 1870 and the growing dedication to the Virgin's parents Saints Anne and Joachim—more or less fictitious figures drawn from tradition rather than biblical revelation—reinforced this devotion to the Holy Family.

Considerable emphasis was placed by both State (through the legal system) and Church on the centrality of paternal authority, and on authoritarian relationships within the family as the bases for both moral order and political authority.[51] Men, although rarely hostile to religion, were increasingly likely to maintain a distance from the clergy—a development which contributed to the growing 'feminization' of the Church.[52] They frequently resented the authoritarian attitudes of priests and their determination to interfere, through the confessional, in the most intimate details of family life and particularly the interrogation of their wives and daughters. Whispered confessions, which nonetheless needed to be audible as well as secret, must frequently have been an embarrassment. The repeated

condemnation by the clergy of family limitation as mortal sin, and the demand that the faithful submit to God's will and resign themselves to the poverty associated with large families proved ever more unacceptable, associating the clergy with a past from which many people were desperate to escape. The celebrated theologian and Bishop of Le Mans, Mgr Bouvier, was sufficiently concerned about the impact of '*imprudents rigueurs*' on Church attendance in a diocese in which contraception was widely practised, as well as anxious to avoid humiliating women—responsible for the religious faith and morality of the next generation—that he advocated reconsideration of the doctrine. Under pressure from colleagues like Mgr Pie, as well as the Holy Office—confident that only moral rigour would secure religious regeneration—he would instead become more rigorous in his strictures.[53]

4.3.4 Preaching

In addition to hearing confessions, the clergy were also expected to offer guidance to the faithful by means of pastoral letters on the part of bishops and through regular preaching. Surviving sermons tend to be the exceptional, given by senior figures within the Church or by famous preachers, and subsequently printed. The vast majority of addresses delivered in countless parish churches throughout France have disappeared. It nevertheless appears that congregations were constantly reminded that their 'destinies are in the hands of their Creator', that 'the Providence of God governs the affairs of this world … [and that] There does not fall a hair from our head without His order or His permission. Nothing occurs purely by chance …'.[54]

Individual or collective misfortune—floods, cholera, revolution—were seen as representing both Divine retribution and a warning of the need for moral reform.[55] According to the parish priest at Dauendorf, the fundamental message was that 'religion is the essential condition for Happiness; it alone provides the remedy for our ills', combined with a warning that God would punish those who transgressed His laws.[56] This was a vision of an Old Testament God—the Creator, the All-Powerful.

The vital need to observe the Fourth Commandment, and to respect the Sabbath, was a favourite theme, although compromises were often accepted during the harvest.[57] Even then, in his pastoral letter for Easter 1847, the Bishop of Chartres warned his flock that those who worked on Sunday, and their families, would be punished for their 'greed', by means

of 'these dreadful events which carry with them everywhere desolation and tragedy' and which 'attest to the anger of God'. Mgr Clausel de Montals predicted that hail or flood would devastate their crops and disease afflict their livestock. In contrast, God would reward those who rested and worshipped on Sundays.[58] The situation nevertheless continued to deteriorate. In 1869, Mgr Regnault, who had succeeded to the diocese, warned that 'as a result of … the fatal habits of so many young people who desert our churches, we can only dread the calamities of celestial vengeance. God will not allow these scandals to go unpunished.'[59] According to the Bishop of Angoulême, markets on Sundays which encouraged the pursuit of profit and pleasure would result in 'the almost complete extinction of conscience, hatred of those who possess and of the government which protects them, encouragement to join secret societies, and an ardent aspiration towards a new revolution, more radical than all its predecessors'.[60]

Many priests appear to have been poorly prepared in their seminaries for the demanding role of preacher. Congregations enduring discomfort in buildings which were frequently cold and damp, already bored by the Latin intonation of the mass, must often have found it difficult to cope with interminable and incomprehensible sermons delivered by uninspiring priests. Complaints were frequent concerning inaudibility, excessive length, or lack of clarity. Parishioners often found themselves unable to wait for the end of the service before starting conversations.[61] Securing the silence conducive to audibility and private pious devotion must often have been difficult. The priest at Vienne-en-Val in the diocese of Orleans described how peasants 'arriving for mass, for the most part during the prayers and announcements from the pulpit, violently open and close the door and make a racket as if they were at a fair or in a cabaret. Those who have attended mass from the beginning, cough, spit, shuffle their feet, do everything they can to make it obvious to the priest that they do not want him to preach.' Not surprisingly, 'the continual noise distresses and discourages the priest'.[62] The Abbé Tynturié, after serving in the parish of Cunfin in eastern France, insisted that 'the time of the martyrs has not passed … especially for the country priest for whom a vocation has become a crown of thorns, a thankless task … when far from towns in which there are a large number of intelligent souls, and where his holy words might be understood, he finds himself alone amongst uncultured peasants, plunged into materialism, whose speech is barely comprehensible, full of blind prejudices and dreadful passions …'.[63]

An experienced speaker, enjoying the prestige of his functions, embedded in his parish, aware of the anxieties and shortcomings of his flock, could, however, by means of a normative discourse employing simple language and meaningful examples, hope to serve as an effective moral guide, as well as a cultural intermediary between his community and the wider society. Particularly on feast days, the more eloquent could attract large and enthusiastic congregations. The model of the Christian family—the authoritarian father, the loving and submissive mother, the obedient and respectful children (and servants)—was frequently employed, with hymn singing designed to reinforce the basic message, and to enhance its emotional appeal.[64] Manuals or collections of sermons, especially those written for special occasions, were frequently published as pamphlets and might serve as a model for aspiring preachers. Doubtless they were often simply plagiarized.[65]

Many priests, imbued with a pessimistic view of human nature, continued, in spite of the gradual diffusion of a Ligurian emphasis on a tender, loving Jesus, to preach a religion of fear, which by insisting on confession as the central act of Christian life, helped to preserve their own special status. The promise of God's Judgement and the threat of Eternal Damnation and the horrors of Hell were effective means of enforcing moral discipline.[66] Heaven and Hell were represented as real places.[67] Father Soulas, chaplain to the Sœurs gardes-malades de Notre-Dame Auxiliatrice at Montpellier, not untypically described Hell, in his favourite sermon, in a very literal sense, as 'a place of horror and despair, where the avenging thunderbolt of the Lord strikes, where millions of victims, the object of the most fearful of vengeances, discover how terrible a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. What is hell? It is a frightful prison where all is fire and flame, a stinking sewer from which rises an odour of sulphur and bitumen …An ocean of fire engulfs the damned.' He concluded—'Take away Hell, and you will thunder in vain against sin. If there is no Hell, where is the justice of God?' He assumed that only the prospect of the Day of Judgement could curb human lust and greed.[68] Although Mme Lacressionière, a well-known actress at the Théâtre impériale de l'Odéon in Paris had followed with care the prescriptions of the Church during her last illness, confessing her sins and receiving the Last Sacrament, at her funeral ceremony in Saint-Sulpice, the parish priest departed from the usual words of comfort to warn his congregation, made up mainly of actors, that they risked Eternal Damnation:'and when I say eternal, I do not mean 100,000 years, I do not mean 200,000 years, I mean an entire

eternity', as, he assured them, the deceased, in her coffin, and judged by God, would already have realized.[69] The vanities of this transitory existence were as nothing compared with death and Divine Judgement.

The Abbé Vianney, *curé* of Ars (Ain) near Lyon, was frequently presented to the faithful and particularly to fellow priests as a moral exemplar. Canonized in 1925, he would be declared to be the *patron de tous les curés de l'univers* in 1929. Utterly obsessed with the threat of sin, and desperate to protect himself as well as his parishioners from earthly temptation, Vianney engaged in a constant and desperate struggle against Satan. To assuage his personal demons and turn his thoughts to his Divine Saviour, he wore a hair shirt, a metal chain and a tight cord. Every night he bloodily scourged himself, before lying down to sleep on a stone floor with a piece of wood as a pillow, at intervals prostrating himself in prayer, face down on the floor of his church. This masochistic priest reinforced his saintly reputation by tyrannizing his parishioners, warning them that alcohol and dancing led inevitably to the torments of Hell—described in the most lurid terms—and requiring frequent confession of their sins.[70]

Belief in the real existence of Satan and his demons appears to have been prevalent. In a lengthy Easter message in 1865, Cardinal Gousset, Archbishop of Reims, called on his clergy to revive the respect due to the 'holy angels' and to warn their congregations about the threat posed by demons, the agents of Satan. The product of sin, these fallen angels were doomed to 'persevere in their pride against God, in their hatred of Christ, in their jealousy against humanity'. Arrayed in 'invisible legions, led by their chiefs, living in the lower layers of our atmosphere and travelling across every part of our world', they were a constant threat. Having failed to assume control of Heaven, they were determined to establish their reign on Earth.[71] Mgr Epivent, Bishop of Aire, defined a hierarchy of angels, with the superior orders close to God, and the inferior in daily contact with Man. It was the 'angels who govern all the phenomena of nature' and not the so-called 'immutable laws [which] have been invented by ignorant and hateful rationalists'. The bishop stressed the importance of distinguishing between the good and the bad angels who encouraged evil. An attached note for the minister warned him that the bishop had increasingly been attracted to spiritualism.[72]

The state prosecutor at Bordeaux would be especially disconcerted by the sermon given by the Abbé Combalot in the cathedral at Easter 1865. Particularly popular among the younger clergy, this notorious visiting preacher had in previous years aroused considerable disquiet in Tours and

Marseille. Invariably, he focused on the 'question of death which strikes the great and the little'. His sermons were full of allusions which the prosecutor felt were 'in extremely doubtful taste', voiced in exaggerated language. This was confirmed by another witness, the commissaire de police, who also reported that the priest had abandoned his prepared sermon in favour of 'political digressions'. He had drawn a parallel between 'Jesus crucified by the Jews and the Pope … persecuted by the revolutionaries'; between the Emperor and King Victor-Emmanuel and Judas and Barabbas. Democracy had been denounced, as had Voltaire and his modern imitators who threatened to 'drag the priesthood through the mud and the priests to the scaffold'. To those who persecuted, or failed to fully support the Pope, Combalot promised Divine retribution and universal revolution.[73]

It was the priest's responsibility to protect his flock from corruption, and particularly from the sins of the flesh. Ideas often needed to be expressed forcefully to make an impression. Words and allusions familiar to a congregation also needed to be used.[74] Examples drawn from daily life or popular proverbs might be employed to clarify points of theology. The Prefect of the Jura accepted that 'one could not expect a priest brought up in the countryside and living with peasants, to always use expressions as choice as those one would like to hear'.[75] Sermons denouncing named, or easily identifiable individuals, could also have a considerable impact, particularly when combined with a refusal to grant them absolution or administer communion. However, as the Bishop of Poitiers pointed out, even if allusions were employed, this practice was dangerous. The personalities concerned were easily identified in a small community, whilst 'the words attributed' to the priest, 'in passing from mouth to mouth, change meaning and take on an exaggerated character'.[76] Sermons were also used frequently as a means of exercising pressure in favour of the teaching orders and against lay teachers, although when the priest at Broyes (Saône-et-Loire) welcomed the hail which destroyed the crops in July 1853 as punishment for appointing a lay *instituteur*, this was not very well received.[77]

The 1854 statutes of the diocese of Chartres, while instructing priests to 'attempt to extirpate from the parish all those superstitious practices which are nothing other than a false cult, very damaging to the true faith' also advised them to 'act with a prudent care'.[78] As the Abbé Denizot, priest at Sainte Sabine in the Dijon diocese, accepted in 1860, at least 'Superstition supposes faith, of which it is the froth and is in itself an evil incomparably less great than incredulity or even indifference, which will

poison and kill the soul. If you are able to introduce the true faith … do so certainly! If you cannot, … leave the superstition, which is not incapable of doing good, and when it does wrong, does so not from malice, but by error'.[79]

The religious message was nevertheless gradually changing as part of the broader cultural change induced by the Revolution and the emergence of Romanticism, together with the dissemination of the christo-centric moral theology of the Neapolitan Saint Alphonse de Liguori (1696–1787), whose volume on *La pratique de l'amour envers Jésus-Christ tirée des paroles de Saint Paul*—was published in French in the 1820s and remained a 'best-seller' throughout the Second Empire. In reaction against the rigorous Jansenist ideals popular in the eighteenth century, a new more festive ultramontane and Italianate theological sensibility emerged, encouraged in 1831 by Papal authorization to seminary professors and confessors to teach Liguori's doctrines.[80] These emphasized Christ's blessing and focused on a vision of 'gentle Jesus, divine Jesus', on a merciful saviour rather than on the vindictive and vengeful God of the Old Testament, so evident in the missionary preaching of the Restoration.[81] This tender, sentimental vision was reinforced by the cults of the Virgin Mary, of the tender, loving Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the Adoration of the Holy Sacrament. Receipt of Holy Communion was increasingly presented not as an 'exceptional reward for virtue' but as a means of 'getting close to God'.[82]

In a probably fairly representative sermon—drawing on both the new and more traditional theologies—preached in the little parish church at Grandrien (Lozère) on the feast of the Assumption in 1866, the Abbé Touzery, appealed to Mary, Mother of God not to forget 'the unhappy children who groan in this valley of sorrow'. He begged the Virgin to break the chains 'of Satan and sin', and to ensure that 'the torrent of the century' did not carry the population away and lead it to deny 'the path to salvation'. Calling on 'Divine Favour' for the Pope, the defender of religion and social order, against whom 'Hell in its rage has unleashed its legions'—the 'sinners' and 'revolutionaries' of every country, Touzery begged the Virgin Mary to 'pray your divine son to shorten this time of trial' and 'From your sublime throne, deign again, O Mary, to cast a favourable glance on France.' He took comfort from his conviction that 'Your divine son can refuse you nothing. Ask him to rapidly ensure the triumph of Religion and the Church and of its venerated head.' The sermon ended with a request to Mary to ask Jesus 'for each of you, the

blessing of a saintly life and a saintly death, so that in meeting Jesus Christ in Heaven, together we will be able to praise him throughout eternity'.[83]

In its determination to reach out to the faithful, the Church increasingly identified itself with a tender, loving, Holy Family. This change in emphasis '*d'un Dieu terrible à un dieu d'amour*'[84] represented, however, only a partial theological renewal. Moreover, it took time and the passing of generations for theological change to influence pastoral care. The less inquisitorial, more sensitive and understanding position taken by many confessors was not incompatible with pessimistic visions of Divine Retribution.[85] The saintly *curé d'Ars*, Jean-Marie Vianney, certainly saw himself as engaged in a constant battle with the Devil.[86] The influential ultramontane preacher, and future founder of the Assumptionist order, Father d'Alzon, similarly insisted on the value of visions of Hell as a means of saving the impressionable young, and protecting them against sin. He was extremely critical of what he perceived to be the growing feebleness and ineffectiveness of many of his fellow priests.[87] The threat of Eternal Damnation remained potent. The catechism of the diocese of Orleans continued to ask young children—'Is it absolutely necessary to observe the commandments to be saved?' In response, they were expected to say—'Yes; eternal life is only promised to us on that condition; and it will be enough to commit only one mortal sin to be in a state of damnation.' The response to the question—'How will God punish those who violate His commandments? was that 'He will punish them often in this life, and make them burn eternally in the afterlife.'[88] Sermons continued to insist upon the transitory nature of life and of its achievements and to denounce sin. There could be no compromise between the Church—militant, triumphant and suffering—and the perversions of the modern world.

4.3.5 Schooling

The legislation introduced in 1833 by the Protestant historian Guizot made a substantial contribution to the expansion of the school network by requiring every commune to establish a primary school. Its first article stipulated that 'primary instruction necessarily includes moral and religious instruction'. Supporting the parish clergy in the work of religious instruction was to be central to the school teacher's mission. The fundamental lessons derived from the catechism were to be reinforced throughout the school day. Classrooms were to be decorated with a crucifix, together with religious pictures with a moral message. Religious exercises

were to take priority over everything else. Classes should begin and end with prayer. Stories from the Bible, verses learnt by heart, and the singing of hymns would all contribute to the work of evangelization and of childhood socialization.[89]

Designed to reinforce the religious and moral instruction provided by the Church, together with the 1850 Falloux law, this represented a direct response to the social fear aroused among political conservatives and the clergy by revolution and a determination to make more effective use of the 'mechanisms of indoctrination'.[90] The extension of catechizing and of an elite-designed school network gradually resulted in a reinforcement of the doctrinal content and internal logic of popular beliefs otherwise grounded in the experiences of the everyday.[91] In addition to providing the basic literacy which facilitated the diffusion of religious truth, the purpose of primary instruction, and the discipline of the classroom, was to inculcate both the fear and love of God, together with respect for social hierarchy and the fundamental principles of moral order.

Instruction in biblical history—'*l'histoire sainte*'- also played an important part in reinforcing the lessons of the catechism. The programmes offered in Parisian primary schools in the 1860s appear to have been typical. They focused on stories from the Bible, and particularly from the Old Testament. The Creation, Noah, Abraham and Isaac, Joseph and his brothers, Moses and the flight from Egypt, David and Goliath, the Babylonian captivity, and finally the life and passion of Jesus, were employed to diffuse the basic religious and moral messages.[92] Catholics shared their faith in a suffering and loving Jesus Christ, as well as fear of the powers of an Old Testament God—Creator and Avenger—and prayed for protection during their earthly existence, together with eternal redemption.

The official regulations of 17 August 1851—implementing the Falloux law of the previous year, even required that 'models of writing offer only useful matters to the children, such as the dogmas and precepts of religion, and fine stories from the Gospel and the History of France'.[93] The texts employed to teach children to read, such as J-B. de La Salle's *Devoirs d'un chrétien* and L-P. Jussieu's *Simon de Nantua*, repeated basic Christian moral precepts, providing edifying examples of the happy lives and eternal bliss enjoyed by children who lived in imitation of Jesus Christ and according to the rules laid down by His Church, and contrasting them with the sad end of those who fell into sin. Ignace Mertuan's *Morale française* (1852), widely used in girls schools, included a chapter 'On submission to

superiors' in which both parents and employers were presented as the representatives of God.[94] More child-centred books, less abstract and more readable, would increasingly be provided, and most notably *Francinet* (1869), written by Mme Fouillée, under the nom-de-plume G. Bruno, which was awarded the prize presented for 'the most useful work for morality' by the Académie française, but the message would remain the same.

It was particularly important, as Mgr Affre had pointed out in 1843, that schools ensure that girls 'become Christian mothers who give an excellent education to their children and often lead to religion husbands brought up in an anti-Christian spirit'.[95] The establishment of girls schools was perceived to be an urgent necessity and the clergy undoubtedly played a major role in overcoming parental indifference to the education of their daughters.[96] In addition to spreading literacy, it was their particular responsibility to reinforce the messages derived from a Catholic upbringing. The Sœurs de la Doctrine chrétienne de Nancy thus sought to inspire their working-class and lower middle-class pupils with 'love of piety, of work, of caring for a household, in a word, ensure that their education is religious and exempt from everything favourable to vanity or which might make them dissatisfied with their condition'.[97] They were to ensure that the young girl became a '*bonne chrétienne*' and by definition a good wife and mother.[98]

Together with the moral prudence which required the strict separation of the sexes in the classroom, these objectives stimulated a substantial growth in the activities of the religious orders in both public and private education.[99] By 1863, 63% of primary school teachers in girls schools were members of religious orders, compared with 18% in boy's schools.[100] The academic rector at Rennes observed in 1856 that 'the tendency of municipal councils to ask for sisters to direct their girls' schools is constantly growing; the influence of large landowners, the powerful action of the clergy, the legacies and donations exclusively reserved for these schools tend more and more to concentrate the instruction of girls in the hands of the *congrégations*'.[101] The instruction provided by lay teachers also reflected the training they received and the norms laid down by the *congrégations* and as a result of inspections by both state inspectors and the parish clergy.[102] In addition to contributing to the work of religious instruction, *instituteurs* were required to escort their pupils to church and, especially in rural parishes, to perform such subordinate functions as choirmaster, sexton and bell ringer, while their wives might repair and wash the church's linen.[103]

Themselves faithful Catholics, many lay teachers willingly accepted their religious obligations, although not always without misgivings. Jean Charles, teaching at Loc-Maria-Plouzané in Finistère, was happy that 'teachers chant at the lectern on Sundays and holy days, they teach singing to their pupils to enable them to participate in the divine offices, something which appears as eminently useful and a means of inspiring children with the profound sentiments of our divine religion …'. However, he objected to what he described as 'less tolerable' demands by the clergy who 'profited' from the teachers' dependence 'to impose menial chores incompatible with the seriousness of their function … and oblige them to assist at baptisms and burials, to serve at mass, and to teach the catechism in the church during Lent … We can, without hesitation say, that for as long as the *instituteur* will be compelled to perform such tasks, it will be perfectly useless to speak to him of dignity and consideration'.[104]

Although only complete control over the means of instruction would satisfy the clergy and many lay Catholics, most priests adopted a positive attitude towards education as a means of developing the talents dispensed by the Creator.[105] They believed that the essential role of the Christian teacher was to provide the knowledge without which the adult 'has no means of defending himself against the attacks of the demon, of concupiscence, and of the world'.[106] The young mind was to be programmed for life. While school attendance did not become compulsory until 1882, the clergy had already done much to promote its merits to an often sceptical population, in some areas even threatening not to admit recalcitrant children to their First Communion.[107] Schooling—in both lay and religious schools—undoubtedly made a substantial contribution to a developing religiosity. The education statistics, based upon enrolments, however, provided an excessively optimistic impression of the development of functional literacy.[108]

The choice of the language in which the religious message might be transmitted was also an issue in certain regions. The use of Latin for liturgical purposes was unchallenged. It added to the sense of mystery inherent in religious practice. For catechizing, confession, or preaching, as well as for private conversations, it was however, necessary, in the interests of effective communication, to employ the '*langue vulgaire*'—not only French but patois or such regional languages as German, Flemish, Catalan, Basque, Provençal or Breton—especially in rural parishes, and where cross-border contacts sustained linguistic differences. In the northern textile towns, for example, the adoption of French was postponed by the

continued influx of Flemish-speaking Belgian migrants.[109] Archbishop Régnier of Cambrai was particularly determined that the catechism be taught in Flemish in the arrondissements of Hazebrouck and Dunkirk, at least in those parishes in which 'the families only speak and understand Flemish, and are only able to pray in Flemish'. In response to complaints by Duruy—the education minister, that Flemish-speaking children were denied career opportunities and excluded from 'progress', the archbishop pointed out that, together with his colleagues at Strasbourg and Rennes, he regretted that 'the French language has become, due to the unfortunate abuses of the bad press, a means of propaganda as irreligious as it is immoral', but firmly denied that the clergy was in principle opposed to its diffusion through the primary schools.[110]

The use of Flemish or Breton as the language of religion and French as the language of education encouraged bilingualism and the gradual weakening of the local language through the adoption of French words, partial comprehension of French, and, particularly in the towns, the rapid replacement of the old with the new language. Although bishops in the Breton dioceses of Vannes and Saint Brieuc made an effort to appoint bilingual clergy and to ensure that, where appropriate, prayers and the catechism were conducted in Breton, schoolteachers tended to view French as the language of the nation and of modernity.[111] Often priests proved incapable of adapting to the innumerable variants in local dialects over short distances and remained linguistically isolated from many of their parishioners. The parish priest at Natzwiller in the Vosges thus managed in the ten years following his appointment, to learn sufficient German—or so he claimed—'to understand and be understood in the savage patois spoken in this locality'. He was able to hear confessions but not to preach effectively.[112]

Preaching in the local tongue was, however, often seen as vulgar and likely to trivialize the message, by both priests and parishioners. Bishops were appalled by what they regarded as the 'crudeness' of sermons in patois.[113] In his *Mémoires d'un compagnon*, Agricol Perdiguier remembered with pain the effort made by a priest to preach in Provençal—'His words were … just and useful, but nevertheless their impact was not happy. At Morières we spoke only patois, but we were not accustomed to preaching in our own language: it surprised us, and appeared to be common, frivolous, grotesque during a grand ceremony.' He concluded that it was 'better by far to preach in French and employ Provençal for confession'.[114] The educated classes were likely to be scandalized by the use of a language

spoken primarily by the poor, and French speakers were likely to resent the use of other languages or of 'patois' for religious instruction or sermons.[115] Many artisans and peasants were also coming to accept the school teacher's view that only the national language offered them access to the benefits of modern life.[116] The overall result was an accelerating loss of status for the local language, evident in the restriction of its use to ever more limited socio-linguistic spaces.[117] In any case, increasingly lengthy and regular school attendance, and the on-going replacement of an oral with a predominantly written culture, were from the point of view of many priests ambiguous in its impact, offering a means of religious evangelization, but additionally access to a 'subversive' and 'immoral' literature and to an alternative 'scientific' means of understanding the universe and natural phenomena.[118] It was thus vital that the pastoral work of the clergy and teachers be reinforced by the provision of a growing number of religious publications as a '*complément de la Prédication Evangélique*'.[119]

4.3.6 The Religious Press

The development of the mechanized steam press, and of the low-cost, mass publication and distribution of printed literature offered new possibilities.[120] The catechism was the key element within the emergence of a print culture in which the publication, re-publication, and more effective diffusion of pious works employing often a simple and evocative language and frequently designed to be read out loud, were intended to sustain the lessons delivered by the clergy and to encourage the habit of prayer and meditation, as well as the regular practice of religious duties.[121] From an average of 430 works per year between 1815 and 1819, publication of Catholic books is estimated to have risen to 2250 by 1860/64 (from 10.4% to 18.6% of the total number of books published).[122] Three major and growing markets might be identified—the clergy and religious orders; women; and children, particularly the growing numbers of school pupils.[123]

There was substantial demand for bibles—often cheap abridgements; catechisms; *manuels de piété* centred on Marian devotions and the Eucharist; collections of prayers and hymns; edifying extracts from the Christian classics; and histories.[124] Hagiography underwent a spectacular renewal from mid-century—including most notably lives of Saint Vincent-de-Paul, of the *curé* d'Ars, of Saint Geneviève and Saint François de Sales. So too did guides to Christian behaviour written in simple language, like

the *Manuel de l'ouvrier chrétien*—56,000 copies of which were sold for 50 centimes or distributed free between 1849 and 1851.[125] Charitable societies like the Œuvre des campagnes and the Société de Saint-Vincent-de-Paul were also active in the distribution of such edifying works as the *Mois de Marie*, a collection of prayers edited by the Abbé Mullois and sold to the poor for 25 centimes.[126] Other works written for particular audiences included *La jeune fille selon Dieu et la jeune fille selon le monde,* directed at adolescent girls, and the *Manuel de la femme chrétienne* for married women. The pamphlet *A mes amis les cultivateurs* sought to cater for the spiritual needs of peasants. The *Réponses courtes et faciles aux principales objections populaires contre la religion* attempted to deal with uncertainty.[127] To these might be added a host of almanacs and parish or diocesan publications. The *Almanach de l'ouvrier et du laboureur* published by the Société de Saint-Vincent-de- Paul, replete with moralizing tales, achieved a very respectable circulation of 180,000 in 1859.[128]

The development of wood engraving and of the 'illustrated press [as] the greatest tool of information dissemination until the electronic age' made possible a vast outpouring of devotional images for rich and poor.[129] This included copies of often centuries-old engravings of events in the life of Christ, of the saints and the history of the Church, together with contemporary evocations of Paradise juxtaposed with horrifying visions of Hell, and numerous re-productions of paintings like Millet's *L'Angelus* which revealed the simplicity and intensity of popular devotion.[130] The publisher Pellerin at Epinal concentrated on the mass production of lithographic images of the Virgin and Sacred Heart. Small prayer cards featuring a religious image were present in every Catholic home.[131] This popular literature and imagery employed a simple and repetitive rhetoric to instruct, encourage and confirm people in their faith.

For the better educated, there were theological and polemical studies, many of them re-prints of much older books, but including 214 responses to Renan's *Vie de Jésus* and its popularization of biblical criticism in 1863 and 1864 alone.[132] In spite of the cost of subscriptions and their small circulation, daily newspapers like *Le Correspondant* and *L'Univers* facilitated discussion of theological and political issues. Edited by the extremely combative ultramontane Louis Veuillot, *L'Univers*, was undoubtedly the most influential Catholic newspaper, although many bishops resented the influence wielded by even the most devoted of layman.[133] Among notables, subscriptions to Parisian newspapers like the *Gazette de France*, *L'Assemblée nationale* and *L'Union*, with Legitimist as

well as Catholic sympathies, were favoured, as well as regional newspapers like the weekly *Progrès de l'Ouest*. Published in Angers, this typically provided national and international news, largely culled from Parisian newspapers with similar views, from official sources, or the Havas news agency. Its vision of the world was summed up by its sub-title—'*Religion, famille, travail, propriété*'.[134] Although their literary style and cost make it clear that they were directed at the educated classes, by influencing the outlook of important opinion-formers, such newspapers contributed to the establishment of a current of opinion transmitted by word of mouth at all manner of gatherings.[135] This was also the role of specialized journals, including the *Bulletin de la Société de Saint-Vincent-de-Paul*, the *Bulletin de l'Œuvre des pélerinages* and the *Revue de l'Enseignement chrétien*.[136]

While books remained a luxury for much of the population, the activities of peddlers, as well as growing numbers of booksellers, were stimulated by improved living standards, rising literacy and reductions in the cost of production particularly by the major industrial publishers of pious works—the '*bonne presse*' made up of committed Catholic businessmen—like Périsse and Pélagaud (Paris and Lyon), Mame (Tours), Lefort (Lille), or Arsant (Limoges).[137] At Petit-Montrouge, in Paris, that remarkable entrepreneur the Abbé Migne operated a large and modern publishing enterprise and printing works where, by 1854, 600 workers were employed producing religious images and devotional works.[138] According to the Prefect of Police, the establishment was notorious for low wages and harsh discipline, including not only a ban on singing but on any kind of conversation. Its employees generally found alternative employment at the first opportunity.[139]

Edifying religious novels, of which an estimated 2–2.5 million copies were published every year in the 1860s, were a speciality of Mame, Lefort and Ardant.[140] Typically, in Mme Manceau's *Les deux jumeaux; ou travail et paresse*, the Abbé Boudevillain's *L'ouvrier ébeniste ou les fruits d'une bonne conduite* (both 1864) or the *Fleurs symboliques offertes à Marie* (1860), written by Josephine de Gaulle (the General's grandmother), or the extremely successful works of the Comtesse de Ségur (mother of Mgr. Gaston de Ségur; close friend of Louis Veuillot) ideal types were presented—the *good* who included practising Catholics, hard-working and frugal workers, *le bon curé*, the devoted *bonne sœur*, the pious and resigned woman, the charitable rich, the grateful and virtuous poor, etc.; and the *wicked* represented by the usual suspects—Protestants, Jews, freemasons, unbelievers, the greedy and uncharitable rich, free thinkers, *la femme*

coquette, republicans, revolutionaries, socialists, lazy and drunken workers, lay teachers, those who chose to work on the Sabbath, and Parisians. In the very successful series *La Bibliothèque de la jeunesse chrétienne*, established in 1840, the authors employed by Mame sought to instruct their young, and essentially bourgeois, readers with heroic stories of acts inspired by Christian morality and set within the context of an authoritarian and hierarchical model of family and social relationships.[141] Frequently, such works were distributed as school prizes—further reinforcing the status of reading, through parish libraries and as a result of the efforts of the Société de Saint-Victor (1846–56) and the Société pour l'amélioration et l'encouragement des publications populaires, as well as through bookshops like those clustered around Saint-Sulpice in Paris.[142] The archconfraternity of the Œuvre des bons livres, created in 1831 in Bordeaux, from 1842 began to publish lists of recommended works for parish libraries. Three hundred of these, containing over 50,000 volumes existed in the diocese of Bordeaux alone in the 1860s.[143] Activists were promised indulgences to ease their suffering in Purgatory.[144]

It is of course far easier to determine what was published than to identify what people actually read, which included old and treasured works inherited from previous generations. Considering how people read and the impact their reading might have had on their attitudes and beliefs is another major problem It has been suggested that reading habits altered from an intensive and repetitive reading of the same (religious) text to an extensive reading of different texts. The printed word, more easily accessible than ever before, proved to be an effective means of education, of reinforcing the memory, and of representing the Divine.[145] For many parish priests and diocesan missionaries, the press offered a means of extending their pastoral care, while every effort was made by the Roman Congregation of the Index and bishops to guide the rapidly growing number of readers towards an orthodox as well as edifying literature. The list of theological and secular works which Catholics were forbidden to read—given 'the evil produced by bad reading'[146] —also grew ever longer. The parish priest at Buzançais (Indre), a small town which had experienced violent subsistence disorders in 1847, assumed that, as this had 'incontestably represented the opening of the socialist war', he had a special duty to write to the Comte de Falloux and to insist that a special committee be appointed to select school text books.[147]

The potential impact of much of this pious literature was, however, reduced by its stultifying banality, typified by the message accompanying a

picture of Jesus the apprentice carpenter, drawn by the author of a pamphlet written for industrial workers—'The wood lends itself to all the wishes of the God-worker, the tools obey his all-powerful hand, the work advances with speed, the infant, from time to time, looks towards Mary, and often the glances of the Mother encounter those of her Son: they smile and throw themselves into each other's arms'.[148] Mgr Dupanloup welcomed the reprinting of the works of Archbishop Fénelon (1651–1715) in 1861 because he regarded them as infinitely superior to contemporary publications which he described as, in general, 'mediocre and worse than mediocre … incredibly empty and bland', and characterized by a '*puérile sentimentalité*'. This, he concluded, was particularly serious because such works 'were incapable of nourishing Christian souls, and if anyone were to open them, they would very quickly close them, with an equal disgust for the book and its piety'.[149] The development of a mass media nevertheless allowed substantial publicity for doctrinal statements, miraculous occurrences, pilgrimages and major events in the life of the Church, helping to reinforce an already strong sense of community. Numerous pamphlets glorified the Pope, insisting on his closeness to God, focusing intently on his every triumph or misfortune. The paradox is obvious. Modern means were being employed to combat 'modernity' and to maintain the links between a specifically clerical and theological culture and popular Catholic religiosity.[150]

4.3.7 Ceremonies

Ceremony, by means of an appeal to the emotions represented, according to the Bishop of Carcassonne, another ' powerful means of creating impressions favourable to piety, and especially of disposing the uncouth spirits of the rural population, so generally susceptible to the influence of the senses, to accept religious ideas'.[151] The pomp and theatricality, the spectacle of seemingly ever longer religious processions, involving the clergy, school children, religious fraternities, musicians and (until 1883) the civil and military authorities, passing along decorated streets had, for the Abbé Migne, been instituted 'to speak to the soul by an appeal to the senses'.[152]

Popular faith was stimulated by regular festivals—the Rogations prior to Ascension Day which represented a prayer for a fruitful harvest, Corpus Christi which honoured Christ's presence in the Eucharist, Easter, Christmas, the feast of the Assumption and that of the Perpetual Adoration.

Festivals in honour of local saints or the universal jubilees proclaimed by the Pope provided especially fruitful opportunities to mobilize large crowds and enhance the visibility of the Church. During such acts of commemoration the proper, ordered conduct of priests and worshippers as laid out in the missal was of crucial importance. Bowing and kneeling at the appropriate moments were marks of respect for religion and for the real presence of Christ. So too were the prayers, chants and hymns designed to honour God, and contribute to the solemnity and emotional intensity of the occasion.[153]

The parish, its boundaries and the sense of identity of its inhabitants largely unchanged over centuries, represented the primary field of priestly endeavour. Efforts were also made to provide external assistance to parish priests. Episcopal visitations, linked to confirmation tours, were one means of stimulating enthusiasm. The organic articles (article 23) stipulated that annually each bishop should visit some part of his diocese and the entire area over a period of five years. Regular pastoral visits to parishes would place a bishop 'in direct relations with his flock, and particularly with the popular classes, and provide him with the means of understanding their needs, as well as reducing the impact of many of those prejudices so unfavourable to religion and to the clergy'.[154] The latter undoubtedly had mixed feelings concerning what were in effect tours of inspection and in their aftermath must have waited anxiously for criticism or praise. Every effort was certainly made to ensure that churches had been cleaned carefully and embellished. Parish priests were also required to complete a questionnaire providing information on church attendance and particularly on the number of Easter communicants. The desire to gain the goodwill of their bishop might well have encouraged them to inflate the figures.[155]

Even in communities with low levels of regular church attendance, the triumphal entry of the bishop was nevertheless eagerly awaited. He would be greeted by large and enthusiastic crowds, and process under triumphal arches. Thus, in July 1865, in the village of Le Russey near the Swiss border, as the Cardinal-Archbishop of Besançon arrived on his confirmation tour, he passed under an *arc de triomphe* and was greeted by the mayor, *juge de paix* and senior customs officer, each of whom made a speech of welcome and then, at the entrance to the church, by the parish priest. In the evening, public buildings and '*maisons bourgeoises*' including those, it was noted, belonging to Jews, were illuminated, with M. Feuvrier, a retired notary, distinguishing himself by lighting 128 candles. On his walk

through the village to admire the illuminations, the Cardinal was accompanied by over 200 people. The following day, a guard of honour was mounted in front of the church by customs men, gendarmes and the local fire brigade while the Société philarmonique performed, mortars were fired, and 498 young people from 12 parishes were confirmed. Following the ceremony, a dinner for 34 local notables was held in the presbytery.[156]

Efforts were also made to engage every age group and social milieu in an intensification of the religious basis of daily life. Virtually every parish contained groups of pious people on whom the clergy could depend. The 35,000 parish councils (*fabriques*)—one in every parish—in themselves nationally involved around 300,000 laymen.[157] There were also a variety of associations designed to involve the laity in pastoral activity, but over which the clergy were determined to assert their own dominance. Ideally the result should have been like that achieved in the Breton parish of Maure (Ille-et-Vilaine) where, in 1861, of 4000 inhabitants, 700 belonged to the *confrèrie* of the Rosary and 1300 to that of the Scapular. Others were *adorateurs du Saint-Sacrement*. In this rural community, few adults remained outside these networks of devotion which provided the means by which the parish clergy could offer advice and exercise pressure.[158] In the major cities, in which 'indifference' was perceived to be a growing threat, the *conférences* of the Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul and other associations provided a valuable resource. In a letter to his archbishop in 1849, the Abbé Martin de Noirlieu, *curé* of Saint Augustin in Paris, expressed his 'joy' at the zeal of pious laymen committed to doing good and filling 'the serious gap we have in God's work'.[159] Such groups as the Société pour l'observation du Dimanche created in Toulouse in 1846, and the Association réparatrice des blasphemes et de la violation du dimanche, which represented a similar burst of activity in 1854 in the diocese of Langres, were welcomed by bishops, although they would enjoy only limited success.[160]

The cult of the saints, exemplary practitioners of sacred values, and possessing miraculous power, was another central feature of this spiritual revival.[161] With increasing regularity from the 1840s, major public events were organized to celebrate the display of holy relics (bodily remains, objects saints had used). Following a disastrous fire in Limoges on the night of 15–16 August 1864, the clergy, by popular demand, sought God's forgiveness by parading the relics of Saint Martial, Saint Aurélien and Sainte Agathe, through the city's streets.[162] Relic collecting continued

with almost medieval fervour, stimulated by the availability of 'saints' bones from newly excavated Roman catacombs—complete with certificates of authenticity linking them to renowned martyrs; the re-discovery of relics lost during the Revolution; and the development of a functioning market.[163] At Amiens, in 1853, 28 archbishops and bishops, together with numerous other priests and large crowds of worshippers gathered for the translation of relics of Saint Theodosius—fifth-century hermit and abbot—to the cathedral.[164] The arrival at Montpellier in 1856 of what was reputed to be a bone from St Roch's leg was similarly marked by a week of celebrations.[165] In 1860, at Arras, over 50,000 people were estimated to have prayed before the relics of the blessed Labre—the eighteenth-century pilgrim-saint. The newly re-discovered tomb of Saint Martin in Tours provided another occasion for celebration in 1861, while in 1866, at Cadouin in the Dordogne, the Holy Shroud which had reputedly covered Christ's head was carried in a procession attended by three bishops, 200 priests and 6000 of the faithful.[166]

Throughout the decade Mgr Pie, the combative Bishop of Poitiers, promoted the cult of 'the only part of Christ's body left behind when He ascended into Heaven',[167] while in 1864, the celebration of Corpus Christi was represented as a response to the Protestant denial of the 'real presence' in the Eucharist, and additionally as a challenge to the scandalous denial of the divinity of Christ by Ernest Renan—'*soldat de l'Anti-Christ.* The diocesan *Semaine religieuse* glorified the procession as an affirmation of popular piety through which 'the internal feelings of the soul manifest themselves externally'. The presence of a military band added to the sense of occasion.[168]

4.3.8 Missions and Pilgrimages

A revival in the practice of religious missions and pilgrimages as manifestations of the search for spiritual grace and of commitment to the community of believers was also encouraged. In the Avignon diocese, where only 15 missions were preached between 1845 and 1849, 108 occurred in the following decade, particularly in the fervent parishes most likely to request—and to be able to pay for—a visit.[169] The Bishop of Nantes, Mgr Jacquemet, believed that even the most devoted parish required stimulating at least once every ten years.[170] His advice to missionaries was to find, 'each day, something new and interesting to say: [and] avoid wearing their audience out with long-winded sermons …'.[171] A simple pedagogy was

essential. The Jesuits from Quimper would spend at least two weeks in a parish, holding four meetings each day, with separate gatherings for men and women, as well as for children. Every morning the Angelus would summon the faithful to the parish church to listen to edifying sermons. These would be followed by prayers, by instructional dialogues between priests, or commentaries on illustrations of such scenes as the paths to Heaven taken by the virtuous, contrasted with the temptations leading ineluctably to the eternal suffering of Hell, for those who had chosen alternative ways. Parishioners were encouraged to confess their sins and to receive the blessing of Holy Communion.

In addition to terrifying warnings about the consequences of all manner of transgressions, the preachers also increasingly emphasized the love of God, together with the need for devotion to Mary and the sanctification of the Sabbath.[172] A more tender Christo-centric appeal was added to a religion of fear. God could be mollified. The mission culminated with a daytime or torchlight procession and the triumphant raising of a cross.[173] A 'Christianization of the landscape' was evident in the erection of numerous chapels and wayside crosses—2500 of them in the Arras diocese during the century.[174] More dramatically, a 16-metre-high statue of Notre-Dame de France, cast from the metal of 213 Russian cannons captured at Sebastopol, was installed in 1860 on the summit of a volcanic plug at Puy-en-Vélay. Visible over long distances, such monuments were a potent affirmation of Christian reconquest.[175] The spectacle provided by a mission was of course all the greater in major population centres particularly when combined with a call to the faithful from the surrounding region. Sustaining the interest of crowds attracted in part by the sheer spectacle, was, however, often problematic. In many parishes, it often proved difficult to attract men to these events in the first place.[176]

From the late 1840s, the gradual construction of railways offering cheap and rapid mass transport also made possible the modern triumphalist mass pilgrimage as a collective affirmation of faith; of a determination to follow in Christ's footsteps; and acceptance of leadership by the clergy.[177] A hierarchy among shrines was rapidly established. Pilgrimages to Rome itself were rendered so much easier and offered the prospect of paying tribute to the Holy Father in person.[178] Increasingly, pilgrims, although still drawn towards convenient local sites, were also encouraged to visit diocesan and, from the 1860s, national shrines.[179] The efforts to disassociate these spiritual occasions from traditional popular fêtes furthermore required the imposition of clerical control through the presence

of permanent chaplains and diocesan missionaries and the ritualization of behaviour at recognized pilgimage centres like Chartres or Paray-le-Monial, at that dedicated to St Martin at Tours, and to Sainte-Anne d'Auray in Brittany, and the many shrines devoted to the Virgin Mary.[180] Even the better educated social groups which might disdainfully have avoided popular processions to traditional shrines marked by holy wells and misshapen trees were much more likely to participate in pilgrimages to devotional centres dignified by the presence of the clergy.[181] Such pilgrimages, creating demand for transport, hotels, cafés and souvenirs were also good for business and constituted an important element in the growth of modern tourism. Indeed, spirituality has rarely been divorced from commerce.[182]

Processing to a place where God had manifested His love by means of a miracle was a potent means of reinforcing the 'visibility' of the Church. A sentimental attachment to the Holy Family, to Saint Joseph and to the maternal and comforting figure of Mary, Virgin and Mother—the symbol of female perfection—ensured that Marian shrines were especially popular. The cult of the Virgin Mary—constructed by theologians and popular tradition over two millennia—as the primary intercessor between Man and God had already enjoyed renewed popularity during the eighteenth century, in spite of rationalist criticism. In a world in which the supernatural was ever present, and in which the Church encouraged belief in the power of Satan and his demons, the need to pray to God for protection was self-evident. The willingness of Christ's mother—the greatest and most universal of saints—to intervene on behalf of those who believed in Her Son and prayed for salvation, offered considerable reassurance.[183] The ravages of cholera in 1832, 1849 and 1854 promoted the construction of numerous statues and Marian shrines along the roads as appeals to the Virgin Mary replaced the traditional pleas to Saint Roch for protection against plague.[184]

Within this context, the messages apparently offered by the Virgin Mary to humble, poverty-stricken, illiterate and deprived children like Maximin Giroud (aged 11) and Mélanie Calvat (aged 15) at La Salette in 1846 and to Bernadette Soubirous (aged 14) at Lourdes in 1858 aroused considerable emotion. In an era which had commenced with the Revolution, the 'reign of Mary' might be seen as a prelude to the Second Coming of Christ—conceived without sin—and the final defeat of Satan.[185] The first accounts of events on the mountainside at La Salette in the Isère were given by Mélanie to Mme Pra, her employer, who decided that the

children must have seen the *Sainte Vierge* or else some great saint and insisted that they tell the parish priest. They were then interviewed successively by the priest, the mayor of La Salette, and the Abbé Mélin, *curé* of nearby Corps. The various accounts of these interviews largely concur, although details vary.[186] That dictated to and written up by Jean-Baptiste Pra, their *patron*, on 20 September 1846 took a form which closely resembled the '*Lettre tombées du ciel*', a feature of the traditional popular literature circulated by peddlers throughout the countryside, and read out loud at winter community gatherings.[187] Maximin and Mélanie claimed that while searching for their sheep in an isolated alpine valley, they had encountered a lady, dressed in shimmering white, seated, head in hands and crying. As she lifted her head they could see that she wore a crucifix, and some sort of bonnet or tiara. This image would be diffused rapidly throughout France in numerous popular engravings. The lady warned them that unless blasphemy, the desertion of the churches, and the profanation of the Sabbath, were brought to an end rapidly, her son would punish His people by means of famine. After insisting that they pass on this message, the '*Belle dame*, rose into the sky and disappeared in a ball of flame.[188]

Interrogated by the Abbé Mélin, and threatened by the authorities, the children stuck to their story. Reporting to Mgr Philibert de Bruillard, the Bishop of Grenoble, 15 days after the event, Mélin claimed to believe them.[189] On 17 November, responding to further questions from his bishop, he maintained that the children lacked the intelligence to have invented their account.[190] Mgr Bruillard was cautious. Members of his entourage were sceptical, afraid of the embarrassment which would result, for themselves and the Church, from premature recognition of a (false) miracle.[191] However, the commission of priests nominated by the bishop appears to have succumbed to the pressure of events as news of the miracle spread. The onset of Spring brought thousands of pilgrims, including well-known Legitimist aristocrats, to La Salette to participate in open air masses. The threat of famine appeared credible to the inhabitants of impoverished mountain parishes, already frightened by poor cereal harvests and the spread of potato disease. The warning delivered by the Virgin must have invoked memories of the angry and vengeful God of the Old Testament who had inflicted a series of plagues on Egypt. In comparison, Mary appeared sorrowful and compassionate, anxious to protect the people if only they would repent and pray for salvation.[192]

Visiting friends in a nearby château, the Abbé Dupanloup, soon to become Bishop of Orleans, addressed the 'problem of La Salette' in June 1848. After meeting the two visionary children on several occasions and discussing the evidence with Mgr de Bruillard and other priests, he concluded that 'it is very difficult to believe that the hand of God is not there'. Dupanloup pointed out three 'signs of truth. 1. the steady character of the children; 2. the numerous responses absolutely beyond their age and their understanding, which they made spontaneously in the various interrogations to which they have been submitted; 3. the fidelity with which they have kept the secret they claimed was entrusted to them.' Initially, he had judged Maximin to be 'gross', 'repulsive' and 'wicked'. Mélanie had made a similar impression. Although she had already been in the care of a religious order for 18 months, she remained 'a sulky person, dull, stupidly silent, saying scarcely more than "yes" or "no" in response'. Nevertheless, Dupanloup was impressed by the 'simplicity, gravity, seriousness, and respect for religion' displayed by the children as they described their great experience.[193] This conviction was undoubtedly reinforced by his belief in an all-powerful God intervening in human affairs.

The validation of these events depended upon the clergy. As the first miraculous cures were proclaimed, public pressure obliged the bishop to institute two enquiries which were conducted by hand-picked commissions drawn from his cathedral priests and seminary professors. The doubts which might have been aroused by such unfortunate incidents as Maximin's confession to Jean-Marie Vianney, the saintly *curé* of Ars, in September 1850, that he had not seen the apparition of the Virgin, were cast aside on the convenient pretext that the Vianney was deaf and had misunderstood.[194] In a pastoral letter dated 19 September 1851, Mgr de Bruillard announced that the 'apparition … carries in itself all the characteristics of truth, and the faithful are well founded in believing in it'. In his opinion, that so many pilgrims believed the Fact to be true, confirmed its truth. He thus determined to 'expressly forbid that the faithful and priests of our diocese ever publicly raise their voices … against the Fact that we proclaim today, which demands to be respected by all'.[195] Finally and unequivocally, on 10 November 1851, and with Papal approval, Mgr de Bruillard recognized the 'truth' of '*l'apparition céleste*' and authorized the cult of Notre-Dame de Salette.[196] In spite of the reservations expressed by the metropolitan Archbishop of Lyon, the Cardinal de Bonald, to the Papal nuncio, Mgr de Bruillard also sent two envoys to the Pope to reveal the 'secret' conveyed by the apparition. His Holiness does not appear to have

been impressed, but it hardly mattered.[197] On 1 May 1852, Mgr Ginoulhiac, the new Bishop of Grenoble, authorized the construction of a sanctuary at La Salette.[198] He had expressed some concern about the 'truth' of the evidence offered by the children but also warned that unless official recognition was forthcoming and close control of the phenomenon secured, Legitimist sympathizers would make full use of the prophecies.[199]

Whatever had happened, and regardless of whether the children had genuinely undergone, or imagined, or playfully constructed, some kind of spiritual experience, first, Mme Pra and then a succession of priests had interpreted and reinterpreted the story of the Virgin's visitations, imposing structure as well as the French language, in place of the simple patois of the original descriptions.[200] By the time bishops had established their commissions of investigation, the details of the Divine visitations were firmly fixed in the minds of both the *miraculés* and local populations. Moreover, prayer and penitence appeared to have ensured cures for some at least of the chronically sick pilgrims and confirmed the validity of the original miracle. Large and devout crowds helped to overcome the initial scepticism of both the religious and civil authorities. Further 'reconstruction' also occurred to conform to 'elite [and clerical] notions of taste and credibility'.[201] As Ruth Harris has pointed out, 'the older Pyrenean tradition of wondrous storytelling' was combined with 'the innovation of 19th century Roman Catholic spirituality'.[202] The apparitions were located within an orthodox theological structure which associated the ills of the world—death and revolution—with the failure to follow the teachings of the Church.[203] Miraculous visions of the Virgin Mary reminded the faithful of the power of God and appeared to vindicate scripture and more especially the major dogmas of the Catholic Church. The traditional belief that Christ's mother had herself been conceived without sin, the Immaculate Conception—voiced since at least the twelfth century—would finally be proclaimed as dogma by Pius IX in 1854.[204]

The problem of authenticity would re-emerge when, at Lourdes, in the foothills of the Pyrenees, another impoverished peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous, claimed that on 11 February 1858, and on a further 17 occasions in the following five months, she had experienced visions of the Virgin Mary. The parish priest, the Abbé Peyremale, was sceptical initially. The civil authorities were positively hostile, closely interrogating Bernadette and constructing fences in a vain effort to exclude pilgrims from the grotto at Massabielle in which her visions had appeared.[205]

Nevertheless, within days of Bernadette's visions, as news spread rapidly, local pilgrims began to arrive at the grotto, and were joined by a curious Louis Veuillot, on holiday in the area. Convinced by the evident sincerity of the visionary and moved by the devotion of the crowds, he was able to use the pages of *L'Univers* to spread the good news.[206] In these circumstances, Rouland, the Ministre des Cultes, expressed the view that 'these pretended miracles degrade religion', but significantly added that 'I fear that a prelate cannot struggle openly against popular belief'.[207] Indeed, on the first anniversary of Bernadette's vision at Lourdes, a mass was authorized by Mgr Laurence, Bishop of Tarbes, even before the investigatory commission he had appointed had reported. It was celebrated by 200 priests with the participation of some 40,000 pilgrims in search of forgiveness for sins, in hope of consolation or divine assistance, or simply curious.[208]

It was thus hardly surprising that the episcopal judgement finally delivered in 1862 following lengthy enquiries was that the apparitions at Lourdes were authentic—a view already upheld by the Empress Eugènie.[209] The grounds were: First, the evident simplicity and sincerity of Bernadette when describing 18 separate appearances of a figure who had fortuitously announced that 'I am the Immaculate Conception'—and thus confirmed a central tenet of the new theology—and then identified a hidden, healing spring (a major feature of traditional popular religion), and asked that a chapel be constructed on its site. It hardly seemed to matter that Bernadette's aunts had been leading figures in the local Enfants de Marie and that her visionary experience might be the product of an already powerful cult, with the figure of the Virgin Mary as described by Bernadette derived from popular art. Second, the reports of miraculous cures and conversions. Although these had not been promised in the visions, they encouraged visits from growing numbers of pilgrims. By the time the report was published, the site of the apparition had already been purchased and plans for a suitably imposing shrine drawn up.[210]

On 4 August 1864, the first official pilgrimage was organized to witness the consecration of a statue of the Virgin in the grotto. It would soon be followed by the construction of a basilica. The prospect of a cure for a deadly affliction, or at least the alleviation of suffering, was central to the development of the cult. The publicity accorded in sermons and the religious press, preparation for pilgrimage through confession and prayer, the eventual excitement engendered by participating in the crowd, the sheer

theatricality of the event and of the 'curing drama', all added to the possibility of an intense spiritual experience and to the revival of piety.[211] The construction of a branch line from Tarbes by the Midi railway company in 1866 further stimulated the movement, as well as creating significant commercial opportunities.[212]

In the cases of La Salette and Lourdes, the 'propensity to believe' was reinforced by press campaigns, most notably in *L'Univers*.[213] In contrast, 'Notes' prepared in the Emperor's private office in November 1856 would express continued official concern about the propagation of '*le culte du miracle de la Salette*', pointing out that 'this apparition, true or false, has caused a very notable religious movement in the region', which the religious authorities 'have not judged it timely to condemn'. While recognizing that the Bishop of Grenoble 'appears to have resisted the propagation of the prophecies as far as possible' and welcoming his discussions with colleagues on the 'rules to follow in such matters', the notes also suggested that the clergy might be tempted by the substantial profits likely to be made from the sale of holy water to pilgrims.[214] Many priests appear to have shared such concerns.[215] Some were irritated that the Virgin had chosen to appear and speak—in patois—to 'ignorant' peasants, women and children, rather than one of their own number. Nothing should be allowed to threaten the central role of the priest or the hierarchical order of the Church.[216] More generally members of the clergy were determined to reaffirm the responsibility of the Church as the primary mediator between Man and God and to reassert control.

Hand-picked commissions appointed by bishops assessed the evidence and sought to distinguish between *vraies et fausses apparitions*. These commissions determined whether apparitions should receive publicity: in effect, whether they should be marketed, or suppressed.[217] It was important not to sanction apparitions which might subsequently prove to be false, and even more important to avoid rejecting signs and messages from God. The commissions were especially likely to assume that cures provided confirmation of the original miraculous visitation.[218] In the case of the visions at La Salette and Lourdes, and 32 other shrines recognized during the Second Empire, the pressure of public opinion in impoverished communities, desperately anxious to grasp any means of self-gratification and material improvement, and easily convinced of the powers of the supernatural, combined with the ultramontane spirituality of social elites and of the clergy themselves, to overcome doubts.[219]

Most of the dozens of apparitions reported to the clergy—developing in close geographical proximity to each other—were, however, not authenticated by the religious authorities and were dismissed as mere imitations or attributed to hallucinations or superstition. Among the visions rejected were those of Félicité Plumel, a 34-year-old spinster and devout Catholic, living at Brette in the Drôme who, in 1848, together with a young shepherd, claimed to have received a terrible warning from the Virgin Mary to the local population: 'Either they convert or a fire will fall from heaven … The embers will cover the earth … The dead will re-appear with the same bodies as before, some will rise in glory and the others remain forever in the embers.' The faithful were called upon to process and sing in the open air. The local clergy refused to accept the validity of this particular apparition, apparently resenting the challenge to their leadership. The parish priest's report that his parishioners 'are abandoning mass, and roaming the mountains, the two sexes, even at night … certainly to pray and sing, but they are on a slippery slope, these events are taking place *in deserto*', confirmed the Bishop of Valance's worst fears concerning the '*cupidité*' and 'superstition' of the poor and ignorant, and the threat of social unrest which he blamed on the 1848 Revolution.[220] Also dismissed were the visions of the Abbé Clauset, *curé* at La Sauvetat de Blanquefort (Lot-et-Garonne), who had terrified his congregation by describing the appearance of the Virgin Mary in his bedchamber. She had warned of the coming of the Anti-Christ who would dethrone all the kings of the world, and establish his own, short-lived, kingdom, before bringing about the end of the world (in 1910).[221] An 'epidemic' of visionaries would be written out of the Church's official accounts.[222]

In contrast, in the cases of Mélanie and Bernadette, hagiography—and photography—were employed to construct edifying images, as means of encouraging the faithful and combating de-christianization. The two young women were carefully controlled, and given intensive religious instruction by (male) spiritual advisors who sought to ensure that they conformed to official dogma.[223] In 1856, Mélanie, an extremely disturbed and unhappy figure, would be transferred to (isolated in) an English convent (in Darlington) and ultimately to a more comfortable place of exile in Naples. Given her growing predilection for making startling predictions—of revolution, the destruction of Paris, and the coming of the Anti-Christ, born of a bishop and a nun—this is perhaps not surprising! Maximin simply took to drink. Although far less troublesome, Bernadette was removed to the convent of the Sisters of Charity in Nevers in July 1866.[224]

The determination of many priests to eliminate popular 'superstition' and to regularize religious practices was increasingly evident.[225] The generalized imposition of the Roman liturgy during the 1850/60s aroused widespread, if generally short-lived resentment, especially where it interfered with the celebration of traditional local festivals.[226] In Grandru, in the Beauvais diocese, parishioners demanded the replacement of their unfortunate parish priest for failing to chant the traditional prayer to Saint Médard the parish patron, for which there was no place in the revised order of service.[227] In the Breton department of Côtes-du-Nord, the religious authorities during the nineteenth century would insist on the rededication of 110 of the area's 400 parishes to saints recognized by the Church, most commonly Saint Peter—in place of mythical figures from the Celtic past.[228] Chapels were constructed at popular places of pilgrimage to allow the clergy to play a more effective pastoral role; 'ancient' wooden statues, considered by some to possess magical powers, were replaced with colourful plaster images.[229]

The Virgin's prediction of dire consequences unless the people returned to religion was clearly a message the clergy were anxious to propagate. During the long period of intense crisis between 1845 and 1856, with repeated harvest failures, cholera epidemics, and widespread social and political unrest across Europe—and with particularly dire consequences for already impoverished upland communities—the apparitions had presented an apocalyptical and divine warning that without moral reform and a return to the faith, mankind could expect yet more severe punishment.[230] The Virgin Mary had also, however, offered hope in the battle against Satanic forces. The apparitions at La Salette and Lourdes representing proof of her love of France and of the possibility of securing God's blessing.[231]

The explosion of popular Marian devotion was further stimulated in virtually every parish by an outpouring of pious literature, and by the creation of confraternities of the Sacred Heart or Rosary, their members forming a religious elite working closely with the parish priest.[232] A series of festivals honoured Christ's Mother throughout the year—that of the Purification (2 February), Annunciation (25 March), Visitation (2 July), Assumption (15 August), Nativity (8 September), Rosary (7 October), Presentation (21 November), and culminated in the feast of the Immaculate Conception on 8 December during which images of the Virgin were carried through the streets.[233] Sermons frequently encouraged women to strive to live in imitation of Mary, model of all the virtues—pure Virgin

and devoted Mother, free from all sin. The celebration in May of the *Mois de Marie* with prayers to the Virgin each evening and the decoration of altars with flowers in Her honour further stimulated the youthful enthusiasm and spirit of emulation of the Enfants de Marie.[234]

Numerous hymns, dedicated to the Virgin, celebrated a confident belief that Christ's Mother would intercede with Christ the Redeemer and God the Holy Father on behalf of the faithful. She was the first among intercessors, placed above all the saints. Numerous churches were re-dedicated and chapels constructed in Her name. Medals, statues, and a pious literature honouring Mary were mass produced. As part of this devotional revolution an iconography developed in which Mary, without Her child, was portrayed surrounded by light, Her head crowned with stars—just as she had appeared at La Salette and Lourdes. Congregations were reminded that Saint Louis had dedicated France to the Holy Virgin. Marial piety also received a vital stimulus from a religious education which stressed the significance of 'purity, innocence, modesty and virginity as valuable feminine characteristics'.[235] The schools sought to prepare girls for their future roles as Christian wives and mothers—pious and self-effacing within the patriarchal family. The Virgin Mary rather than Eve was without doubt the model they should follow![236] Employing the typically emotional language of religious devotion, the Besançon diocesan catechism of 1845 described the Virgin Mary as a sort of goddess who had dedicated herself to the service of God on earth and to a '*perpetuel et inviolable virginité*', and who subsequently, as almost the equal of Christ, 'was transported body and soul to Heaven. Mary was placed above all the angels and saints in Heaven and God established her as Queen of Heaven and Earth and as dispenser of His mercy'. The message was mixed. As well as an attack on sexuality, it represented a glorification of femininity. Moreover, although the Marian cult might be linked to the growing feminization of the Church, it was also a devotion shared by many men.[237] The Archconfraternity of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, founded in the Parisian parish of Notre-Dame des Victoires, already had one million members by the early 1860s.

In localities where Mary's blessing had become evident through miracles attested to by the local bishop, the Pope's consent could be given for the crowning of statues of the Virgin (in 66 cases between 1853 and 1890). This was a custom imported from Italy and part of a process of categorization and recognition of major national sanctuaries.[238] In 1854, a series of ceremonies between 24 June and 2 July celebrating the laying

of the foundation stone of the new basilica of Notre-Dame de la Treille in Lille, culminated in a procession of 11,000 people, led by 11 bishops and numerous robed clergy followed by children dressed in white, and the uniformed representatives of the State, accompanied by local notables.[239] At Notre-Dame d'Issoudun, where a shrine had been constructed in 1855, and a basilica consecrated in 1864, the crowning occurred in September 1869 as the central event in a celebration attended by 13 bishops, 700 other priests and over 20,000 laity.[240] The inspiring vision of the Holy Family was also extended by means of devotion to Saint Joseph, the earthly father of the Son of God, who had respected the virginity of Mary throughout her life.[241] In September 1868, the crowning of a statue of Anne, the Mother of Mary, in the presence of devoted crowds at Sainte-Anne-d'Auray was another mark of intense popular devotion to the Holy Family.[242]

4.4 Conclusion

The declaration of the Immaculate Conception had represented a clear step towards both the Syllabus of Errors and the final assertion of Papal Infallibility in 1870. The Bull might be taken to represent an affirmation of both temporal—and indeed counter-revolutionary—as well as spiritual truth. If Mary was unique, Man was sinful. The cause of human misery was to be found within Man and not society. Redemption was possible only through devotion to the suffering Christ and to His Mother.[243] In a subsequent apostolic letter, the Pope contrasted the virtue of Mary with the sins of Adam and the 'malice' of Satan. God had prepared for 'His only Son, a Mother, from whom, by his incarnation, he would be born in the happy plenitude of time, and who He would love above all other creatures … Always exempt from any form of sinful stain, entirely beautiful and perfect, She combines in herself the plenitude of holiness and innocence, so that, after God, one could not imagine anyone greater and, with the exception of God, no one can comprehend the grandeur … of this venerable Mother to whom God the Father resolved to give His only Son to beget in Her womb, equal to Him whom He loves as himself, so that he became naturally the Son of both God the Father and of the Virgin …'.[244]

In a letter published in the journal *Rosier de Marie* in 1861, a priest from the Carcassonne diocese expressed his belief that 'we are at the beginning of an epoch of renewal and of the prodigious extension of

Christian society, and this, as a result of the miraculous intervention of the Virgin Mary'.[245] Such statements heralded a new era of glory for the Church as did the intense enthusiasm of the crowds which gathered in celebration at Marian sanctuaries like Ars, Paray-le-Monial, Rocamadour and Notre-Dame des Victoires in Paris, behind their priests, choirs and banners, manifesting a greater sense of spiritual optimism at a time of mounting institutional and political calamity in Rome.[246]

In these various ways, the Church and its clergy sought to reinvigorate the institutional and devotional frameworks of religious life, to reinforce their influence and to enthuse the mass of believers. The quasi-divination of Mary evident in Mgr de Ségur's affirmation that 'the Church only exists for Mary, who leads it to Jesus, and from Jesus to the Father' was associated closely with both a loving devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and fear of an all-powerful God.[247] Ultramontane forms of piety, involving a public display of religious sentiment and fervour, combined with 'modern' forms of communication and publicity to reveal the 'changing relationships which established themselves between a living popular piety and[the] legitimate religious prescriptions … of the clergy'.[248] An intense desire for God's blessing in this life, as well as for heavenly recompense and Life Everlasting promoted respect for a clergy ordained by the Divine Will, dedicated to the service of God within His church, 'inspired by a theocratic conception of society … [and] unconditional loyalty to the pope', and devoted to sustaining moral order against heresy, vice and revolution.[249] The only long-term solution to the revolutionary menace was, as Mgr Clausel de Montals, Bishop of Chartres, insisted, to 'bring back faith and virtue'.[250]

Notes

1. In 1840, quoted by G. Cholvy, *Christianisme et société en France au 19e siècle*, 2001, p. 494.
2. J. Bouchet, C. Simien, 'Introduction. Pour une nouvelle approche de la politisation des campagnes' in *Les passeurs d'idées politiques nouvelles au village de la Rèvolution aux années 1930*, Clermont-Ferrand, 2015, p. 41.
3. See e.g. re. award of Légion d'honneur, AN F19/5607; J. Lafon, *Les prêtres, les fidèles et l'Etat. Le ménage à trois au 19e siècle*, 1987, pp. 96–7.
4. P. Airiau, 'La formation sacerdotale en France au 19e siècle', *Archives de sciences sociales de religion*, 2006, p. 33; P. Büttgen, 'Théologie politique et pouvoir pastoral', *Annales. Histoire, sciences sociales*, 2007, 1133–35.

5. See e.g. S. Fath, 'Entre colporteur et confesseur: le choix des femmes en Picardie au milieu du 19e siècle' in G. Cholvy, (ed.) *La religion et les femmes*, Montpellier, 2002, p. 160; A. Tillier, *Des criminelles au village. Femmes infanticides en Bretagne (1825–61)*, Rennes, 2001, pp. 283–5.
6. E. Duffy, 'Rites of passage. How historians have refashioned the Reformation', *TLS*, 10 February, 2017, p. 16.
7. Quoted by B. Delpal, *Entre paroisse et commune. Les catholiques de la Drôme au milieu du 19e siècle*, Valence, 1989, p. 72.
8. V. Petit, 'D'un siècle l'autre: reflexions sur deux mo(uve)ments liturgiques' in B. Dumons, V. Petit, (eds) *Gouverner et reformer l'Eglise, 19e-20e siècle*, Rennes, 2016, pp. 17–20.
9. *Sous-préfet* of Douai to MC, n.d; Archbishop of Cambrai to MC, 10 Oct. 1851, AN F19/5799. See also V. Gourdon, 'L'hygiènisme français et les dangers du baptême précoce. Petit parcours au sein d'un *topos* médical de 19e siècle', in G. Alfani, P. Castagnetti, V. Gourdon, (eds) *Baptiser. Pratique sacramentale, pratique sociale (16e–20e siècle)*, Saint-Etienne, 2009, pp. 104–111.
10. V. Gourdon, C. Georges, N. Labéjoh, 'L'ondoiement en paroisse à Paris au 19e siècle' *Histoire urbaine*, 2004, pp. 141, 147–8; L. Pinard, *Les mentalités religieuses du Morvan au 19e siècle (1830–1914)*, Château-Chinon, 1997, pp. 41–2.
11. J. Léonard, *Médecins, malades et société dans la France du 19e siècle*, 1992, pp. 43–59.
12. P. Guillaume, *Médecins, église et foi*, 1990, pp. 34–5.
13. C. Fredj, 'Concilier le religieux et le médical. Les médecins, la Césarienne post-mortem et le baptême au 19e siècle', in Alfani et al., *Baptiser*, pp. 125–132.
14. *Sous-préfet* Bagnères to Prefect Hautes-Pyrénées, 27 March; Abbé Argué to Bishop of Tarbes, 6 May; Anne Ricaud to Emperor, 15 Oct. 1862, AN F19/5865.
15. G. Cuchet, *Le crépuscule du purgatoire*, 2005, pp. 38–9.
16. Jean Carrère to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 1 Jan. 1856, AN F19/5784.
17. Bishop of Annecy to MC, 10 May; Prefect Haute-Savoie to MC, 12 Aug. 1869, AN F19/5776.
18. M. Vovelle, *Les âmes du purgatoire ou le travail du deuil*, 1996, p. 204.
19. C. Langlois, 'Du bon usages des indulgences devant l'année sainte' in *Le continent théologique*, Rennes, 2016, pp. 164–170. See also A. Corbin, *Le temps, le désir et l'horreur*, 1991, p. 19.
20. *Mémoires d'un paysan bas-breton*, An Here, 2000, p. 94.
21. See especially G. Cuchet, 'The revival of the cult of Purgatory in France (1850–1914)', *French history*, 2004, *passim*; and *Le crépuscule du purgatoire*, pp. 90–3, 135–145.

22. Quoted by D.-M. Dauzet, *Le mystique bien tempérée. Ecriture féminine de l'expérience spirituelle, 19e–20e siècles*, 2006, pp. 28–9.
23. J. Popiel, 'The Hearth, the Cloister, and beyond: religion and the19th century woman', *Proceedings of the Western society for French history*, 2009, p. 189.
24. Quoted by H. Mills, 'Negotiating the divide: women, philanthropy and the public sphere in 19th century France' in F. Tallett, N. Atkin, (eds) *Religion, society and politics in France since 1789*, 1991, p. 40.
25. C. Langlois, '*Toujours plus pratiquants*. La permanence du dimorphisme sexuel dans le catholicisme français contemporaine'. *Clio*, 1995—http://clio.revues.org/index533.html. Consulté le 12 mars, 2009, p. 8.
26. See e.g. Prefect Côte-d'Or to MC, 2 August 1862, AN F19/5808.
27. R. Epp, *Le mouvement ultramontain dans l'Eglise catholique en Alsace au 19e siècle (1802–70)* I 1975, pp. 398–9.
28. Quoted by I. Saint-Martin, *Voir, savoir, croire. Catéchismes et pédagogie par l'image au 19e siècle*, 2003, p. 231.
29. Ibid., pp. 244–5.
30. P. Martin, *Une religion des livres (1640–1850)*, 2003, p. 262.
31. See e.g. *sous-préfet* Boussac, re. Parish priest at Bord (Creuse), 24 Dec. 1851, AN F19/5817.
32. Letter to MC, 22 Jan. 1862, AN F19/5786.
33. See e.g. L. Pinard, *Les mentalités religieuses du Morvan au 19e siècle (1830–1914)*, Château-Chinon, 1997, pp. 44–7.
34. Bishop of Limoges to MC, 7 July 1852, AN F19/5817.
35. Letter to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 9 Dec. 1866, AN F19/5831.
36. See e.g. Joseph Manen, cultivateur, to MC, ? March 1851, and parish priest at Entraygues to Archbishop of Avignon, 5 April 1851, AN F19/5783.
37. See e.g. C. Poulain, *facteur de moutons*, to Bishop of Bayeux, ? Aug. 1861, AN F19/5783.
38. C. Langlois, 'La confession, un sacrament à l'épreuve de la Révolution' in *Le continent théologique*, p. 151f.
39. A. Le Douget, *Violence au village. La société rurale finistérienne face à la justice (1815–1914)*, Rennes 2014, p. 253.
40. E. Sevrin, *Les missions religieuses en France sous la Restauration*, I, 1948, pp. 12–21. See also R. Price *The Church and the State in France, 1789–1870: Fear of God is the Basis of Social Order*, 2017, Chap. 3.
41. D. Javel, *Transmettre la foi au diocèse d'Avignon, 19e–20e siècles*, Avignon, 2000, p. 302, note 678.
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43. J. Pirotte, 'Refaire la chrétienté d'outre-mer. Les métamorphoses d'un projet de conquête (19e-milieu du 20e siècles) in Ypersele, Marcelus, (eds) *Rêves de chrétienté*, p. 377.

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47. Bishop of Saint Jean de Maurienne to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 8 Aug. 1861, AN F19/5659.
48. Quoted by J. Stengers, 'Les pratiques anticonceptionnelles dans le mariage aux 19e et 20e siècles: problèmes humains et attitudes religieuses' *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 1971, p. 441.
49. Langlois, *Le crime d'Onan*, pp. 72–3, 95.See also T. Kselman, 'Claude Langlois's Vision of 19th Century French Catholicism', *Historical Reflections*, 2013, pp. 75–6.
50. Quoted by A. Walch, *La spiritualité conjugale dans le catholicisme français (11e–20e siècle)*, 2002, pp. 358–9.
51. See also E. Pierre, 'Père affaibli, société en danger: la diffusion d'un discours sous les monarchies', *Le mouvement social*, 224, 2008, p. 9.
52. See e.g. Gendarmerie lieutenant, arrondissement of Château-Thierry to MG, 20 May 1861, re. 'indecent' questions posed in the confessional, AN F19/5863; R. Gibson, 'Théologie et société en France au 19e siècle' in J-D. Durand, (ed) *Histoire et théologie*, 1994, p. 90; Gibson, 'Le catholicisme et les femmes', pp. 12–3; H. Mills, 'Negotiating the divide: women, philanthropy and the *public sphere* in 19th century France' in F. Tallett, N. Atkin, (eds) *Religion, society and politics in France*, p. 42; H. Pomme, 'La pratique religieuse dans les campagnes de la Meurthe vers 1840′, *Annales de l'est*., 1968, pp. 138–9
53. Langlois, *Le crime d'Onan*. p. 108.
54. Mandement de Mgr. l'Evêque de Chartres pour le Carême de 1847…, AN F19/5726.
55. See e.g. Secrètaire-Général prefecture de la Sarthe to G. des S., 4 Dec. 1866, re. sermon on blasphemy by Abbé Salé at Bonnétable, AN F19/5822.
56. Anon, *De la question du paupèrisme sous le point de vue politique et social, ou Mémoire à l'occasion de la statistique des pauvres*, Paris, chez Debécourt, 1842—written by the parish priest of Dauendorf, copy in AN F19/5760.
57. M. Launay, *Le bon prêtre. Le clergé rural au 19e siècle*, 1986, p. 165.
58. Mandement de Mgr l'Evêque de Chartres pour le Carême de 1847…, AN F19/5726.
59. Quoted by J-C. Farcy, *Les paysans beaucerons au 19e siècle*, II Chartres, 1989, p. 914.

60. Mgr Cousseau to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 22 Dec. 1856. AN F19/5539.
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62. Quoted by Marcilhacy, *Le diocèse d'Orléans au milieu du 19e siècle*, 1964, p. 395.
63. Quoted by S. Milbach, *Prêtres historiens et pèlerinages du diocèse de Dijon (1860–1914)*, 2000, p. 81.
64. See e.g. S. Le Maléfan, 'Dans l'attente du Ciel: agromanes et clergé en Bretagne au milieu du 19e siècle' in F. Quellier, G. Provost, (eds) *Du ciel à la terre. Clergé et agriculture, 16e–19e siècles*, Rennes, 2008. pp. 240–3.
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66. J. Delumeau, *La peur en occident*, 1978, p. 44; G. Cuchet, *Faire de l'histoire religieuse dans une société sortie de la religion*, 2013, pp. 156–8.
67. G. Cuchet, 'La carte de l'autre vie au 19e siècle. L'au-delà entre espaces réel et symbolique', *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 2007. Mis en ligne le 19 nov. 2010, consulté le 4 juillet 2017.
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72. Note for MJ et des C., 10 Feb. 1869, AN F19/1939.
73. PG Bordeaux to G. des S., 2 April 1865, *Commissaire de police* to PI Bordeaux, 15 April; see also Prefect Bouches-du-Rhône to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 12 March 1860; MJ to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 7 June 1862, AN F19/5839.
74. Points made by *sous-préfet* Oloron to Prefect Basses-Pyrénées, 13 Nov. 1867, AN F19/5784.
75. To MJ et des C., 6 June 1866, AN F19/5856.
76. Letter to MC, 26 July 1840, AN F19/5748. See also e.g. Bishop of Autun to MC, 28 Aug. 1860, AN F19/5782 recommending that this practice should be ended.

77. Le Conseil municipal et les principaux habitants de la commune de Broye to MC, 21 Feb. 1854; Prefect Saône-et-Loire to MC, 27 April, AN F19/5782.
78. Quoted by Farcy, op. cit. II, p. 906.
79. Quoted by Milbach, *Prêtres historiens*, p. 331.
80. See especially G. Humbert, 'Jalons chronologique pour une histoire de la pénétration en pays francophones de la pensée et des œuvres d'Alphonse de Liguori', in J. Delumeau, (ed) *Alphonse de Liguori: Pasteur et docteur*, 1987, pp. 369–401; C. Langlois, 'La conjoncture mariale des années 40' in F. Angelier, C. Langlois, (eds) *La Salette. Apocalypse, pèlerinage et literature*, Grenoble, 2000, pp. 32–33.
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83. AN F19/6288.
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91. See e.g. D. Roche, 'Histoire des idées, histoire sociale', *Revue d'histoire modern et contemporaine*, 2012, pp. 24–5.
92. A. Bruter, 'Un laboratoire de la pédagogie de l'histoire: l'histoire sainte à l'école primaire (1833–82)', *Histoire de l'éducation*, 2007, pp. 61–81. Religious instruction in state schools was abolished in 1882.

93. Quoted by Zind, *L'enseignement religieux*, p. 88.
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244. 'Lettres apostoliques de N.T.S. Père Pie IX, Pape par la divine providence, touchant la définition dogmatique de l'Immaculée Conception de la Vierge Mère de Dieu' published in *L'Ami de la Religion*, 20 Jan. 1855, AN F19/1931.
245. Quoted by C. Savart, 'Cents ans après: les apparitions mariales en France au 19e siècle' *Revue d'histoire de la spiritualité*, 1972, p. 216.
246. Cholvy, Hilaire, *Histoire religieuse*, pp. 194–4.
247. Quoted by Savart, *Les catholiques en France*, p. 602.
248. Lagrée, *Religion*, pp. 297–8.
249. C. Dujardin, 'World Missions as a field of inspiration for new Vatican strategies towards modern society (1830–1940)' in Maeyer, Viaene, *World views and worldly vision*, p. 233.
250. Quoted by P. Boutry, 'Industrialisation et déstructuration de la société rurale' in Joutard, (ed) *Histoire de la France religieuse* III, p. 279.

CHAPTER 5

The Protection of Moral Order

5.1 Introduction

The fundamental message was simple. Life on Earth was only a brief prelude to the eternal life of the soul. Death was the moment of passage from one world to the next. The ultimate destination—Heaven or Hell—depended on the outcome of a constant and apocalyptical struggle by both individuals and mankind in general against Satan, the Anti-Christ, who through the original sin of Adam and Eve had introduced suffering and death into the world. The Abbé Gaume in his influential study of *La Révolution*, published in 1856, insisted that the powers of evil had been reinforced by heresy and materialism, renewed by the Protestant Reformation, and given massive additional strength by the guarantees of freedom of worship provided by the Revolution and the Napoleonic Concordat.[1] The mission of the clergy in this battle between God and the Anti-Christ was to construct a rampart against sin and to secure the means of achieving individual spiritual perfection. All those in positions of authority were duty bound to work towards the (re)establishment of moral order and the regeneration of a corrupt world through the affirmation of God's power on Earth. The objective was the creation of a 'perfect society', rigorously hierarchical, authoritarian, and intransigent.[2] Its critics were likely to be demonized.

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5.2 The Obstacles to the Creation of a 'Perfect Society'

5.2.1 Heresy

In his 1853 Easter message, Mgr Gros, Bishop of Versailles, warned that there could be no compromise, no dialogue with beliefs which threatened the path to salvation. 'Heresy' posed a substantial threat. In offering 'simply a taste of error' it had caused 'sufferings without number to society … giving rise to divisions and wars, [to] the cruelties which have dishonoured it, the blood it has shed, the profanations with which it has soiled itself, the sins to which it has given over the entire world'.[3] Moreover, as the Abbé Léger, Professor of Canon Law at the Nîmes seminary, recognized, 'there can be only one truth … It is impossible to … recognize for error the same rights as for truth.'[4] The *liberté des cultes* recognized by the Concordat was thus perceived by most priests as at best an act of 'prudence, dictated by circumstances' and as incompatible with the 'essential and absolute laws of justice and truth'.[5] 'Liberty' and 'toleration' were, as the Syllabus concluded, equivalent to 'indifference'. The plurality of cults posed the threat of anarchy.[6]

Protestantism in embodying the 'spirit of insurrection' had, according to Joseph de Maistre, proved to be 'the mortal enemy of all sovereignty', and 'the French Revolution the incontestable daughter of the revolution of the sixteenth century'.[7] In 1851, there were some 565,000 Calvinists and 270,000 Lutherans in France, mainly resident along the southern edges of the Massif Central, in the Tarn and Tarn-et-Garonne, in the Nîmes, Alais and Vigan areas of the Gard, in the Hérault and parts of Alsace. Like Catholics, they were experiencing considerable spiritual ferment. Pietistic elements were reacting against the rationalism of the eighteenth century and reaffirming the doctrines of the Reformation—the Bible as God's word revealed, and the utter sinfulness of man. The existence of separate confessional communities with their own religious 'truths', reinforced by a particular sense of history, and memories of past persecution had encouraged intensely competitive religious devotion.[8] Protestants were consumed by a determination to resist the hegemonic pretensions of the Catholic clergy and to preserve their separate identity.[9] They sought security by means of rigid segregation in urban *quartiers* and villages with their own schools and charitable and voluntary associations. The rarity of mixed marriages in these

areas suggests a high degree of success, particularly in areas in which they were relatively numerous such as the arrondissements of Alais and Vigan in the Gard. There, memories of persecution, most recently during the White Terror in 1815, when churches had been pillaged and around 80 Protestants murdered, were revived by such incidents as Mgr Plantier's deliberate redirection of Catholic processions through the Protestant quarters of Nîmes.[10] It was the school text books and catechisms employed in communes with a Protestant majority which particularly exercised the bishop. In his view, they presented a 'shrewdly organized history' designed to encourage contempt for the Catholic Church. The Abbé Mujas, the parish priest at Clarensac had been so disturbed that, accompanied by the village policeman (*garde-champêtre*), he had entered the village school and confiscated Protestant catechisms and Bibles from pupils.[11]

All manner of incidents, minor in themselves, illustrated the spirit of the times. In the case of mixed marriages, priests always insisted that in return for their blessing a couple should promise to bring up their children in the Catholic faith.[12] In Lorgies (Pas-de-Calais) even the public celebration of a marriage between two Protestants induced the furious priest to instruct his parish clerk to remove the flowers decorating many of the houses in the village and pass on his threat of '*vengeances célestes*'.[13] At Spicheren (Moselle), after delivering babies for 22 years without concern for the religion of their parents, Marguerite Stein was in 1859 instructed by her parish priest not to deliver Protestant babies or risk being found guilty of mortal sin and refused absolution.[14]

Objections were also frequently raised to the opening of Protestant schools, churches or burial grounds.[15] Mgr Baillès, Bishop of Luçon, ever ready for battle, complained that by conducting the funeral service of a textile manufacturer at Cugand in the Vendée, the Protestant pastor from Nantes '*profane le cimetière catholique par sa présence*'. According to the bishop, the refusal of the family of the deceased to accept his burial in the small plot of ground normally reserved for unbaptised infants, suicides and non-Catholics, would mean that 'the corpses of heretics … of those who were the supporters of demons' would lie alongside 'the precious remains of the faithful'.[16] At Saint Pierreville in the Ardèche, a mixed community, the Catholic priest having previously forbidden Catholic participation in ceremonies at the Protestant temple or cemetery, reminded those who might have wished to pay their last respects to M. Salhen, a former *juge de paix*, that they were engaged in a 'war to the death against

Protestantism'.[17] Such incidents, widely reported, inevitably provoked disquiet.

The situation was further complicated in some parts of eastern France by the practice of the *Simultaneum*. According to its provisions, time and space in the parish church were divided between Catholics and Protestants, a stipulation unwelcome to both, and which resulted in frequent disputes. In one case, in 1843, the Bishop of Nancy, Mgr de Forbin-Janson reminded the Protestant minister that the medieval parish church at Viberswiller (Meurthe) had been constructed originally by Catholics and that furthermore the sanctuary was essential to the celebration of the mass, as well as for the perpetual display of the Holy Sacraments, while Protestants did not believe in transubstantiation and in the Real Presence. Indeed, from the time of Louis XIV until 1790, the Catholics had used the sanctuary and the Protestants the nave. The decision of the imperial government in 1806 that in such situations the entire church should be used by both cults was regarded as a '*monstreuse conception*'. A new bishop, Mgr Menjaud, would return to the issue in 1852.[18]

Intransigent Ultramontanism invariably reinforced tensions.[19] Louis Veuillot, together with the hyperactive Abbé Migne—writing in the periodical *La voix de la vérité*—proved to be ardent supporters of the Œuvre de Saint-François-de-Sales established in 1857 with Papal approval to combat Protestantism.[20] In a series of articles in *L'Univers*, Veuillot regretted that Luther had not been burnt at the stake and sought to justify both the Inquisition and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. He insisted that the secular authorities had a duty to 'reduce to silence' those who threatened 'moral and religious truth'.[21] In a sermon published in *L'Univers*, his collaborator, the Abbé Combalot, a missionary based at Saint-Sulpice in Paris, and already banned from preaching in several departments because of his extreme views and aggressive language, as well as virtually disowned by his own archbishop, similarly contested the principle of religious tolerance. Complaining that 'tolerance of error, of the constitutional equality of all cults, of legal atheism, has become the corner stone of modern governments, and the most grave crime against truth. Faith and doubt, sacred traditions and anarchy, light and darkness, truth and lies, are the dividing lines between Catholicism and Protestantism. The latter represents an impious and immoral rationalism … an open wound which brutalises souls to the point at which they envisage … every excess of the intelligence as social and religious progress … Instead, it is impiety and immorality which emerge from rationalism, just like a virus

from an abscess. Those who do not see that the Church can only be militant are blind!'[22] In an article published on 19 September 1860 in *Le Monde*—the successor to the suppressed *L'Univers*—Mgr Doney, Bishop of Montauban, quite logically insisted that 'either the Church has constantly taken the wrong road, it has violated the law, it has sinned in approving, in favouring, in claiming and in practising itself acts of what might be called intolerance wherever it has exercised temporal power, or it must be accepted that, in principle, intolerance is the duty of Christian governments, as it has always professed and as it still professes'.

In general, the administration tried hard not to offend the susceptibilities of the main Protestant churches, while encouraging the reinforcement of hierarchical control over these organizations by 'respectable' Protestant notables.[23] Protestants were nevertheless alarmed by the regime's close identification with the Church in the 1850s, as well as by its efforts to protect the Papacy in the following decade.[24] Catholic officials who tended to assume that 'every sectarian is a soldier of Socialism' were moreover often reluctant to approve the establishment of new Protestant congregations.[25] When an approach was made by some residents of Azay-le-Rideau in 1853 to the Protestant pastor in Tours, it was condemned by the Prefect of the Indre as the work of 'a few ill-reputed individuals'. Their petition, he claimed, included the signatures of children and others obtained by '*menaces et injures*', together with the promise that the commune's common land would be distributed among the Protestants. Judging that the introduction of a '*culte dissident*' into the commune—and the language is instructive—would not represent 'a sincere conversion, but would be the outcome of maneuvers as offensive for religion, for morality, and for authority, as compromising for order, public tranquility and the peace of families', he requested assistance from the judicial authorities in preventing the spread of Protestantism.[26] A request from the Protestant consistory at Nantes for the establishment of a church at Murs was similarly rejected, the following year, on the advice of the Prefect of Maine-et-Loire, because, initiated by a group of around 15 known 'subversives', 'people who, unfortunately, have no religious faith of any kind', he assumed it was simply 'a pretext to have a meeting place from which politics will not be excluded'.[27] At the same time, the authorities in the Var condemned proposals by the Marseille consistory to establish a church in overwhelmingly Catholic Hyères, a little town which had experienced considerable political agitation during the Second Republic. Although intended to provide a place of worship for foreign visitors who spent

summer in the area, the activities of two English residents who had distributed Protestant pamphlets and bibles, and thus sought to encourage 'apostasy', had aroused the concern of the Bishop of Fréjus, while the involvement of known 'socialists' worried the civil authorities.[28]

Protestant evangelization was likely to awaken a storm of protest.[29] On the Ile-d'Oleron, immediately after the *coup d'état*, the police *commissaire* had insisted that the mayor of Saint Pierre, supported by other Protestant employers, favoured the '*instincts anti-religieux*' of the small Protestant community, and represented 'an immense danger to the religious interests' of the 4700 Catholics on the island. The seizure in the post of brochures intended, it was assumed, for distribution to Catholics was taken to be proof of subversive intent. These included two tracts by the Protestant evangelist Napoleon Roussel, one on *Les reliques juives et payennes de l'archévêque de Paris*, published by Delay in Paris, which appeared to claim that the Catholic faith was an invention of Satan; the other entitled *Les papes peints par eux-mêmes* presented the popes as 'proud, idolatrous, ambitious criminals'.[30]

The activities of Protestant missionaries, like those of the London Bible Society, were especially resented.[31] In the early 1850s, Baptist missionaries in Picardy were accused of sowing division within families and threatening paternal authority by seeking to influence women.[32] In the Summer of 1854, following visits by missionaries from the Société évangélique de Genève, around 500 Protestants were prosecuted for holding unauthorized meetings in the communes of Montpont, Branges and Sornay (Saône-et-Loire). According to the *procureur général* at Grenoble, 'the new cult involves nothing less than the interpretation of the word of God according to the free reason of each individual'. He was concerned that 'if such an approach can, without too much inconvenience, be accepted from intelligent and informed men, one is less able to understand how it might be suitable for poor and simple peasants'. It seemed 'hardly permissible to hope that uncultured spirits will be able to furnish a reasonable explanation of the divine texts', particularly as 'those recruited are the habitués of the cabaret who have distanced themselves from the Church and its lessons …' He concluded that 'political self-interest, the protection that the government owes to those classes, so easily led astray, demands that the countryside is not abandoned to all the recklessness of religious novelties'.[33] It was subsequently claimed that evangelical sects like the Methodists, the Plymouth Brethren, and Momists, active in the Die and Montélimar areas of the Drôme in 1858, were recruiting former socialists,

and their meetings were also banned.[34] An overwhelmingly Catholic magistrature remained largely unsympathetic towards Protestants, and some of its members were undoubtedly susceptible to the influence of popular Catholic theologians like the Abbé François Martin, who challenged the validity of Protestant beliefs and insisted that their influence was entirely destructive, serving only to encourage materialism and revolt. He warned that 'Protestantism has allied itself to revolution: either Catholicism triumphs or society will perish'.[35]

In spite of official tolerance, together with the provision of stipends for rabbis and subsidies for synagogues, the Jewish community represented another form of heresy for many Catholics. By 1870, there were around 95,000 Jews in France, with individuals torn between a desire to assimilate and a determination to preserve their religious and cultural traditions, as well as divided between the adherents of religious liberalism and orthodoxy.[36] The largest communities were to be found in Paris and the department of the Seine (23,000), in the south in the former papal enclaves in the Comtat-Venaissin, and in the two Alsatian departments of Bas-Rhin (21,300) and Haut-Rhin (14,500), in which they made up 3.68% and 2.75% of the population respectively, compared with 0.23% nationally.[37]

The clergy, in France as elsewhere, played an absolutely crucial role in stimulating an anti-semitism based on the repetition and reinterpretation of the centuries-old themes, images and language, the 'habits of thought', which identified Jews as the murderers of Christ and as a race guilty of '*déicide*'.[38] As part of the post-Napoleonic restoration, Pius VII had reversed the emancipation of Jews in the Papal States and forced them to return to their ghettos. Subsequently, in responding to a request in 1843 from the Austrian Chancellor Metternich for greater tolerance, Gregory XVI denied that the Jews of Ancona had a right to purchase property outside the ghetto within which they were confined, insisting that 'the Jews are forbidden such ownership … as a Nation of deicides and blasphemers of Christ, and sworn enemies of the Christian name'. The Pope was also determined that in Rome itself the Jews should continue to attend the traditional annual sermon devoted to encouraging their conversion. Priests were furthermore instructed to prevent their parishioners from having social contact with Jews.[39] Following some slight easing of restrictions on Jewish residence, Pius IX displayed similar hostility, associating Jews with freemasons, socialists and revolutionaries. He would bitterly regret the emancipation in 1848 of those he described as a 'harsh and disloyal people'.[40]

In Alsace and Lorraine, where the majority of French Jews still lived, the 1848 Revolution had been followed by an explosion of anti-semitic violence blamed by the authorities on resentment arising from the involvement of local Jews in the cattle trade and money-lending, as well as on religious hostility.[41] Both Catholics and Socialists condemned the 'financial tyranny' supposedly exercised by Jews, while the former remained overwhelmingly hostile to the 'murderers of Christ'.[42] At its most serious, in Marmoutier on 28 February, around 30 Jewish houses had been invaded by a mob, their contents smashed and their inhabitants threatened with hanging. The state prosecutor at Colmar explained that, 'if it is true that some Jews deserve this hatred, one might add that intolerance can be found in the very make-up of the inhabitants; it is the fruit of this classic land of prejudice. Every question here, for most of the inhabitants is a question of religion.' It would take the deployment of troops to entirely restore order in the region.[43]

Popular anti-semitism was widespread, frequently taking the form of the vague, unreflecting antipathy evident in the sort of discourse in which the parish priest at Cornimont (Vosges) condemned manufacturers who imposed Sunday labour on their workers, for behaving like 'greedy Jews'.[44] The parish priest of Oberschaeffolsheim (Haut-Rhin) was in March 1863 reported by the local *juge-de-paix* to have warned his congregation—'above all do not go into cabarets held by Jews, for you know that they are the enemies of Christians, that they crucified Our Lord and that they only live by deceit and laziness'.[45] Although the regime insisted on the equality of all its citizens, officials were themselves frequently guilty of sharing the prejudices of those they administered, habitually condemning what they perceived to be the 'spirit of intrigue and rapacity' of the Jewish population.[46] In spite of the fact that Christians were equally likely to engage in money-lending at rates above the official maximum, and the denunciation of 'usury' by the Jewish consistory, the state prosecutor at Colmar, Pouillaude de Carnières in 1853 still launched an enquiry specifically into '*l'usure juive*' and accused 'rootless' Jews of reducing local peasants to a state of demoralization similar to that of the '*paysan irlandais*'.[47] Little was done to prevent the publication and preaching of anti-semitic diatribes by the Catholic clergy. When in 1859 and 1860 a vicious pamphlet campaign was launched against the government and the local Jewish community by a group of priests alarmed by threats to the Pope's temporal power, the state prosecutor failed to suppress them because he was aware that the bishop had himself corrected the proofs.[48]

Anti-semitism remained a central feature of the Catholic vision of the universe. The essential links between simple prejudice and a more ideological anti-semitism were in large part provided by the sermons of parish priests, together with the numerous diocesan catechisms and religious manuals written to instruct both children and adults. Thus, the manual for religious instruction employed in the Paris diocese between 1852 and 1903, and which influenced those of other dioceses, explained the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel in the following terms: 'Jerusalem perished without hope, the temple was consumed by fire, the Jews perished by the sword. They suffered the consequences of their cries against the Saviour: His blood be on us and on our children: The vengeance of God pursues them, and everywhere they are captives and vagabonds.' According to the 1860 *Catéchisme du diocèse de Moulins*, the response to the question: 'Who caused the death of Our Saviour?' was 'The Jews, our sins, and the love which Our Lord bears for us.' If the Jews alone were not responsible, they were certainly regarded as the active agents of deicide.[49] A widely distributed prayer, intended for children preparing for their first communion, and published by Pillet in the Rue des Grands Augustins in Paris, called on the faithful to pray for 'Jesus crucified between two thieves, soaked with venom and vinegar, blasphemed by the Jews, and dying so as to restore your glory and to save the world'.[50]

It was frequently claimed that the negative qualities associated with the Jews were the result of their rejection of Christ. According to the Abbé Rigaud, writing in 1866, the Jew's 'mission' was 'to bear throughout his life punishment for deicide'.[51] Only acceptance of the Saviour might bring freedom from persecution and from eternal damnation. This was certainly the view of the Comtesse de Ségur, the best-selling author of moralizing children's books. Her *Bible d'une Grand-Mère* (Hachette 1869) included the following dialogue:

Grand'mère: Every time we sin, we are accomplices in his Passion.
Madeleine: But it's frightening to think, Grand'Mere, that we are monsters like the Jews.
Grand'mère: We are monsters like them if we commit mortal sins …'.

Such stereotypes were reinforced by the religious and conservative press, in satirical journals and in the best-selling novels of authors as diverse as Balzac and Eugene Sue, as well as in the socialist Proudhon's

condemnation of Jews as parasitic and inassimilable.[52] When Mathieu Dairnvael, an obscure pamphleteer, published an *Histoire édifiante et curieuse de Rothschild Ier, roi des juifs, par Satan* in 1846, purporting to provide evidence of the threat posed by this greedy, manipulative, cosmopolitan 'Prince of Darkness', over 60,000 copies were sold and the work was reprinted 20 times.[53]

The determination of zealous Catholic priests and laymen to work for the conversion of Jews in an attempt to save their souls[54] was again revealed by the Mortara affair in 1858. Then, following the baptism—in Bologna, part of the Papal states—by a Christian servant, of a Jewish infant she believed to be dying, the Sacred Congregation determined that the child (by then aged 7) who had been admitted by his baptism to the Christian faith, must be taken from his parents and brought up in that faith. According to the Jesuit newspaper, and Papal mouthpiece, *Civiltà cattolica*—in an article rapidly translated into French—the Church was obliged to take action by 'a law superior to all human law'. Moreover, the child's parents, required to conform to the laws of the Christian state in which they lived, had, as Jews, behaved illegally by employing a Christian servant.[55] According to the French ambassador, the Duc de Gramont, the Pope's decision was inspired by 'His deep religion', combined with 'a streak of mysticism that seems to have increased with time. In the silence of his chapel, alone in the presence of God and the lights of his conscience, the Holy Pontiff makes his decisions on the basis of what he takes to be divine inspiration.'[56]

Criticized both by liberal Catholics and the French government, the Pope's assertion of what he saw as a major issue of principle, was vigorously defended. Preaching in Nice, the Jesuit Abbé Lachaud, affirmed that 'the finest title of the Pope to the recognition of the world is the baptism of young Mortara'.[57] Louis Veuillot—that 'valiant soldier of Jesus Christ and of his Church', as the Bishop of Laval described him[58]—in a series of articles approved by Rome, and warmly received by the clergy in France, led a counter-attack against what he referred to as '*la presse juive*'. Influenced by his illustrious predecessors Bonald and Lamennais, and echoing the influential Fourierist Toussenel's attack on 'financial feudalism' in *Les juifs rois de l'époque* (1845), he evoked the notion of a Jewish plot—'The Synagogue is strong. It teaches in the universities, it has newspapers, it has banks … it is incredulous, it hates the Church; its adepts and its agents are numerous' and able to influence governments.[59] While accepting that the Jews—although guilty of deicide

and of the ritual murder of Christian children—might eventually accept conversion, Veuillot admitted in an editorial on 20 November 1858 that, 'I do not believe that we can do any good with these people; whether by multiplying the privileges of their detestable industry, or by lavishing political favours which encourage their natural insolence. There is in the Christian blood against the Jew an animosity which is not unjustifiable, and which these methods will not extinguish. Only Christian charity might be successful; but the Jews excel in discouraging charity.' Veuillot did much to poison public life during the Second Empire,[60] and would exercise a direct influence on the virulent turn-of-century anti-semitism of Edouard Drumont, whose two massive tomes on *La France juive* would run into 127 editions in the two years following their initial publication in 1886–87, as well as on that of the Assumptionist order's newspaper *La Croix*. Instructed by the Interior Minister Delangle to desist, he continued to express his virulent anti-semitism in articles defining usury as 'a form of holy war' conducted by the Jews, and proving their 'hatred of Christians, contempt for Christians, [and] determination to dominate and to annihilate Christians'.[61]

In a circular to prefects in December 1861, the Ministre des Cultes, Rouland, expressed particular concern about the 'excesses' of those religious orders which he believed had sought to persuade Jewish minors to adopt the Catholic faith and to enter religious communities. In order to protect the rights of parents, the full force of the law should be deployed against such practices.[62] In large part, this was a response to the efforts of the Abbé Ratisbonne, with all the enthusiasm of a convert, and of the adherents of the Congrégation des Pères de Sion, of which he was the director, to secure conversions from Judaism. During the 1850s, a network of priests, including most notably the Archbishop of Cambrai, the Pères rédemptoristes de Douai, those of the Missions apostoliques at Cambrai, together with the sisters of the convent of Notre-Dame de Sion and the Dames Bernardines in Paris, had exerted constant pressure on the parents and eight children of the Bluth family, some of whom were persuaded to leave their home and were hidden by priests. According to medical experts, the result was bitter division within the family, and the extreme '*monomanie religieuse*' which had led to the commitment of two young girls, Siona and Sophie, to asylums. Although Delangle, now Justice Minister, would have preferred to avoid prosecuting the priests involved for '*détournement de mineurs*' in case this further inflamed religious passions, an example was made of the Abbé Mallet who was sentenced to six

years imprisonment by the Nord assizes.[63] In 1863, the Pope would make clear his personal approval of the work of the Congrégation.[64]

On such a foundation of prejudice, it would be relatively easy to erect an even more hateful structure of racial anti-semitism to which many senior clergymen and Catholic laymen would contribute. Thus, responding in 1865 to critics of the Syllabus of Errors, the Bishop of Rodez, Mgr Delalle, explained that Jews, not only 'do not believe in the Church, but all their efforts are devoted to annihilating it, and this dark plot, hatched in the masonic lodges, explains the furious energy with which they launch their attacks against the Supreme Pontiff. In striking the pastor, they hope to disperse the flock.'[65] The supposedly unchanging and unchangeable '*Juif eternel*', even when transformed from an impoverished and uncultivated cattle dealer into a well-educated businessman or professional, remained outside the Christian community.[66] Economic modernization and many other trends in modern society were indeed regarded by many priests and laymen, as inimical to Catholicism and frequently associated, within the bounds of an increasingly vicious anti-semitic discourse, with 'Jewish finance'.[67] When the government presented the financier Isaac Pereire as its candidate for the Limoux constituency of the Aude in 1869, the scandalized diocesan vicar-general, on behalf of the bishop, informed parish priests that 'Monseigneur does not doubt the profound repulsion of his clergy for the candidature of the Jew whose election would be shameful for the arrondissement of Limoux.'[68]

In the second edition of his book, *De l'Antéchrist* (1868), the Abbé Rougeyron, parish priest at Menat (Puy-de-Dôme) and an honorary canon of Clermont cathedral, combined an attack on the manipulation of politics by international Jewish high finance with a more traditional representation of the Jews as instruments of the Anti-Christ.[69] In similar terms the Legitimist noble Roger Gougenot des Mousseaux in his *Le Juif, le Judaïsme et la judaïsation des peuples chrétiens* (1869) warned that unchecked liberalism and modernization could lead only to the destruction of Christianity and the judaization of the world. He attacked 'the strangest myopia' which resulted in a failure to 'recognize in the Jew the … chief engineer of revolutions'. While calling for tolerant attitudes towards 'honest and pacific Jews', Gougenot insisted, in chilling terms, that the vital duty of the 'soldiers of Christ' was to resist those 'whose beliefs and morals are one of the curses of civilization … Our necessary violence will be that which humanity demands of a surgeon who, in the unique interest of achieving a cure, applies his forceps to the living flesh.'[70]

5.2.2 'Materialism'

The danger represented by heresy was compounded by the associated menace of 'materialism' and vice in all its forms. The social enquiries conducted in the 1840s by leading Catholic intellectuals like Villeneuve-Bargemont, Villermé, and Le Play, graphically described the intimacy of life in over-crowded and squalid slums and posed questions, which, in both reflecting and reinforcing conservative social discourse, seemed to reveal that accelerating industrialization and urbanization represented a growing threat to the integrity of family life and to the effective transmission of Christian moral values.[71] The situation appeared sufficiently dangerous for Mgr Cousseau, Bishop of Angoulême, to warn the government in 1856 about the development of 'an ardent aspiration towards a new revolution, more radical than all its predecessors', among a population which 'lives without religion, without moral instruction, without belief in an after-life, without belief in anything other than money and pleasure', about workers without any sense of conscience, full of hatred for property owners, and for the state which protected the rich.[72]

Social fear was heightened by the publicity given to the apparently inexorable growth of crime.[73] Within this discourse, Paris, the new 'Babylon', frequently served as the symbol of the growing danger. Louis Veuillot's books would contrast the *Parfum de Rome* (1862) with the *Odeurs de Paris* (1867)—the one representing the perfect society, the other ignorance and vice. The city's archbishop, Mgr Affre, had previously warned that 'Paris, as overcrowded as it already is, exercises a power of attraction which threatens to increase …, to the great detriment of Christian habits …'.[74] The threat of wider contamination also seemed very real. In 1843, defending the clergy against the claim made by the administrators of the Hospices de Paris that foundlings fostered in the Pas-de-Calais were not receiving sufficient religious instruction, the parish priest at Vendin-le-Vieil described these children from the Parisian orphanages as '*fruits de libertinage*', who had inherited from their parents 'a brutalized intelligence' and 'vicious and very precocious inclinations'. They were beyond redemption.[75]

The Abbé Gaume characteristically castigated both the 'egoism' of the rich and the materialism and indiscipline of the poor.[76] Materialism and the monetization of relationships, together with the individualism signified by the spread of contraception, were all symptoms of spreading evil.[77] In a report to Pope Gregory XVI, the Archbishop of Toulouse,

Mgr Astros, complained that 'a large number of shops are open during the days consecrated to the Saviour; numerous carts travel along the roads; and the population devotes itself to agricultural work. The lure of profit prevails over the laws of conscience'.[78] The threat of social dissolution had been intensified by more rapid transport and widening literacy, in short, by a communications revolution which threatened established hierarchies. Even in those parts of the west where 'the rural populations have been devoted to the … clergy for centuries … the times have changed, communications have become easier; less ignorant, the populations are becoming less docile'.[79] The new technologies also provided the means for a dangerous political centralization. According to the *Revue du monde catholique* in 1869, they threatened universal revolution and the creation of a new tyranny, as well as war and slaughter on a previously unimagined scale.[80]

Catholics were nevertheless divided over the wonders of modern technology. Pope Gregory XVI had denounced railways—'*chemins d'enfer*'—as a means of spreading sedition. Mgr Berteaud, the long-serving Bishop of Tulle, blessing the opening of a new railway line at Brives (Corrèze) in 1861, similarly described them as '*instruments de démoralisation*' because of the speed with which they transported people and ideas.[81] The more extreme Ultramontanes were particularly likely to remain technophobes. Veuillot complained indignantly that 'the railway is the insolent expression of contempt for humanity. Nothing represents democracy better. I am no longer a person, I am an object; I no longer travel, I am despatched' (*L'Univers*, 23 April 1869). Pius IX, however, so 'intransigent' in many respects, almost immediately after his accession appointed a commission to plan rail construction in the Papal States. The ability of rail, together with the electric telegraph, to link Rome to the Catholic world, would increasingly be appreciated. Mgr Plantier, Bishop of Nîmes, in his Easter message for 1860, described these developments as evidence of Man's growing ability to make use of the resources provided by God, the Creator,[82] a theme taken up by the Abbé Corbière, in *L'Ami de Religion* in June 1860, in welcoming the improvements in living conditions brought about by new technologies for the production of foodstuffs, and cheap and warm clothing.

At one and the same time, individual priests might welcome innovation while condemning the excesses of speculation and exploitation with which it was associated.[83] In his Lenten message for 1869, Mgr Jacquement, Bishop of Nantes, reminded the faithful that bishops frequently blessed

the railway engines and stations, the mines and factories, which they judged to be evidence of God's blessing, before going on to condemn 'the pride of science which does not wish to submit to God and which will push us into insane dreams, the necessary consequence of which will be to turn society upside down'.[84] Speaking at Sainte-Anne d'Auray in Brittany in September 1868, the illustrious Parisian preacher, the Abbé Freppel, warned his congregation that 'this epoch is critical … a new situation is being prepared for you: the development of business, characteristic of our times, envelops you from every direction; outside influences penetrate in spite of your efforts; a more rapid exchange of ideas, easier communications, multiply your relations with men and things from elsewhere; the railway lines criss-cross your countryside, bringing with them evil as well as good, error no less than truth'.[85]

In spite of the ban imposed by a law of 18 November 1814 (abrogated 12 July 1880), numerous complaints were made in pastoral letters and sermons about the growing prevalence of work on Sundays and feast days and its impact on church attendance. High levels of demand for manufactured goods, as well as continuous production processes and numerous exemptions, clearly made the legislation difficult to enforce.[86] The Abbé Gaume forcefully rejected the exploitative excesses of an economic liberalism which reduced man to 'a machine and a beast of labour. Machine to plough the land, machine to manufacture cloth, but always machine.' The result he feared was alienation, degradation, crime and revolt.[87] In the aftermath of 1848, the work of moral regeneration appeared all the more urgent. On 15 December 1851, Morny, as Interior Minister, instructed prefects to ensure respect for the Sabbath as a means of reinforcing the authority of religion, but with little effect. While encouraging church attendance by its own officials, the government was not prepared to impose a legal obligation.[88] Although some significant successes were recorded, affecting, for example, workers at the Gouin et Lavallé engineering works at Clichy, and the maintenance and office workers of the Paris-Orleans railway company, most such initiatives were short-lived. The same was true of the efforts of the Œuvre du repos des dimanches et fêtes, established by Albert d'Olivier and the Abbé Sibour in 1853 in the aristocratic parish of Saint-Germain in Paris, which sought to encourage the wealthy to think of the religious needs of their servants, as well as to persuade shopkeepers and artisans to make Sunday a day of rest.[89]

Businessmen, unsurprisingly, resented criticism. The Abbé Dillier, parish priest at Ascq, was even threatened with legal proceedings by the

Société Bacq-Lefebvre after he had accused the company of violating divine and human law in preventing the young from preparing for their first communion by requiring that they work on Sundays, and calling on workers to resist this '*insulte à la Religion*' and to 'obey God's law'.[90] Similarly, and while recognizing that religious instruction was the 'indispensable' means of achieving 'good order' and 'respect for property', the owners of the water-powered cotton mills in the valleys of the Vosges around Remiremont claimed to be committed by their technology to a continuous industrial process and pointed out that the support given to the priest's complaints by local councillors was the result of rivalry over water rights between industrialists and farmers. They rejected criticism by the Abbé Martin of their insistence on night and Sunday work and were 'outraged' when the priest was reported to have told a catechism class in November 1854 that the manufacturers 'drive you on like slaves and when you have made their fortune, laugh at you', and in a sermon on 31 December, compared them with Protestants and Jews.[91]

The situation in the countryside also seemed to the clergy to be deteriorating rapidly. In a pastoral letter published in January 1855, Mgr Regnault, the recently appointed Bishop of Chartres, observed that, on the rich wheat-growing plains of the Beauce in the Paris basin, 'the farmer who has prospered and purchased some land, seems to say to God: All this is due to me; it is my hands which have achieved this, and not the Lord's; it is through my hard work that I have been able to prosper. Growing used to seeing the sun rise and set and the earth carry its fruits, he has said in his heart, just like the unbeliever: there is no God.'[92] The *sous-préfet* at Pithiviers appeared to confirm the bishop's view of his diocese, observing that 'the rural population, carried away by the immoderate desire to increase their wealth, never suspend their work, even on Sunday during church services, with the result that usually, particularly in the Beauce, the churches are deserted'.[93] The rural population had always felt bound to labour during such demanding periods as harvest but the practice was clearly becoming more common. According to the priest at Patay (Loiret), even when they did attend services, his parishioners were quickly bored. All peasants wished to hear, he claimed, was a sermon instructing their children to obey their parents and warning agricultural labourers not to steal from their masters, along with the prayers for a good harvest.[94] Frequently, reports from vine-cultivating areas reiterated these concerns. Time spent in church might be seen as time wasted.[95] It was this growing indifference rather than outright hostility that concerned many parish

priests. The famous parish priest of Ars warned that 'You work, you work, but what you gain ruins your soul and body. When I see someone who is transporting goods on Sunday, I think they are carrying their soul to hell.'[96] Those who were unwilling to fulfil their religious obligations were deprived of the religious and moral instruction on which they should base their faith.

A further threat was posed by the rapidly increasing numbers of cafés in both town and country.[97] Only those forms of sociability directly supervised by the clergy were likely to meet with their approval.[98] The *cabaret* was widely seen as a place of perdition, the *locus* of alcoholism, debauchery, and blasphemy against God, a danger to religion and morality, to authority, family life and physical health.[99] These were the 'counter-institutions' perceived to represent challenges to the moral leadership of the Church in virtually every community.[100] The response to the 1848 *Enquête* from Levet in the diocese of Bourges in fact claimed that the most religious areas were those 'distant from roads and centres of population', from 'cabarets, cafés, inns',[101] while the Abbé Debeney, priest of Saint-Denis-le-Chosson (Ain), observed that 'the four cafés which surround the church, and the railway, have reinforced the irreligious spirit which is dominant amongst the men and young people'.[102] Events at La Bastide des Jourdans in the Vaucluse in March 1863, insignificant in themselves, were revealing. There, a visiting missionary, a certain Abbé Ange, attempted to persuade the denizens of a café to join a procession making its way to the cemetery to pray for the dead. One of the drinkers was reported to have responded: 'Father, we are not men …We are young unmarried people', assuming presumably that they were simply behaving in the normal fashion of their age cohort. The mayor, entering the café to warm himself, pointed out that everyone, 'even savages', prayed for the dead. At this moment the priest, angry that the young men had not followed him re-entered the premises and furiously commanded everyone to kneel—'do you not hear the *Libera*? It is for you that it is being chanted. Anathema on you! Anathema on the café! Anathema on the proprietor of the establishment! You will all die—the proprietor in six months.' 'Stupified' and 'trembling', according to the mayor, the young men finally joined the procession. The good *abbé* subsequently repeated his condemnation in a sermon, demanding an apology from the café owner who, in his own defence, insisted that he had at least ensured that his clients stopped playing games and remained silent as the procession passed. Afterwards the mayor found the café proprietor and his family distraught

and in tears. He comforted them by pointing out that at least the Inquisition no longer ruled.[103]

The parish priest had a fundamental role to play in the *police des mœurs*, in offering moral guidance, encouraging communal self-regulation, imposing some civility, and restraint on disputes within and between families.[104] In isolated and under-policed communities and through the association of crime with sin, he assisted in the gradual reinforcement of the authority of the State and its justice. Considerable efforts were made through sermons and the confessional to identify the potential dangers. Warnings against vanity, the desire for pleasure, and for the liberty that turned easily into licence, were constantly addressed '*aux femmes surtout*'.[105] The temptation of Eve, and the weakness of women in general, needed to be constantly borne in mind. The Pope himself, in a letter to the faithful read from every pulpit, complained that women even 'in going to church bedeck themselves as if they were going to the theatre', and seek to 'attract the attention of others by the vanity of fashion and by their bizarre clothing'. There was an urgent need to remind the weaker sex that their inordinate 'desire to please men represents hatred of God'. They were enjoined to remember Saint Paul's command that women should 'attend church with their head modestly veiled, out of respect for the real presence of God and the angels which adore Him, and in order to avoid the danger of profaning … the sanctity of the temple'.[106] The pious daughter of the mayor of Neau (Mayenne) was refused communion and publicly humiliated because she was dressed in a crinoline, which her parish priest claimed distracted worshippers and took up too much space, as well as symbolizing the penetration of the countryside by '*le luxe des villes*'.[107]

The constant attack on dancing, a vital feature of rural courtship practices and traditionally part of many parish festivals, revealed an obsessive anxiety concerning the '*fréquentation des sexes*', as did criticism of participation in such communal gatherings as the *veillée*.[108] The Bishop of Tarbes, Mgr Laurence, threatened to excommunicate all those 'indulging in the pleasures of the dance' and campaigned incessantly against the low necklines on women's dresses.[109] The popularity of new and more intimate dances like the waltz intensified these concerns. Thus, when Mme Horn, the wife of a blacksmith sought to take communion at Saint-Jean-Brouviller in November 1849, the officiating priest, the Abbé Hoëffel, turned her away with the words: 'you [*tu*] will not receive communion, you have been dancing, go back to the dance'. On this occasion the priest was admonished by the Bishop of Nancy and even required to make a public

apology.[110] Misogyny, and an often obsessive fear of sexuality, clearly characterized the attitudes of priests like the Abbé Galbin, a missionary present in the parish of La Guierche (Sarthe), who condemned those women who wore silk dresses and, it was claimed, he verbally abused young girls making their confessions, addressing them as '*de salop et de cochon*'.[111] In 1860, the parish priest at Bilhères in the Ossau valley went so far as to claim in a sermon that there was not a single 'pure' girl or faithful wife in the commune.[112] In terms which were undoubtedly too graphic for his congregation at Tilly (Meuse), the priest was said to have claimed that at the local dance-hall 'the boys take the girls, like horse dealers their animals, and the girls look for the boys like cows searching for their calves, … they behave like prostitutes, lacking only a licence, and marry like dogs on a manure heap …'. Marriages in the parish were described as 'marriages between pigs, … couplings between dogs, between filthy animals …'.[113]

For the young men and especially women denounced from the pulpit, and sometimes obliged to kneel in front of the altar to beg God's forgiveness, the experience can only have been mortifying and the effect on their reputations permanently damaging. Dismissal from parish associations—whose rules often forbade attendance at balls—and from church choirs—that is, public shaming—were alternative means of persuading girls to avoid temptation.[114] God-parents might also be rejected, as morally unsuitable, because they were known to have attended dances or else played musical instruments at such events.[115] Priests might even take offence at the dancing which traditionally accompanied wedding feasts. A family celebration on Christmas Day 1847 was denounced by the priest at Chérisy (Pas-de-Calais) as revealing a scandalous lack of respect for a holy day. Following a fire on his farm, the offending party was warned in the New Year's Day sermon in 1849 that this represented Divine punishment and that only through prayer might he avoid future disasters.[116]

The habit among the young of '*danser les rondes*' in the village streets on sunny summer evenings might also be condemned. The attempts of the parish priest at Beaucens (Hautes-Pyrénées) to prevent the young from engaging in a traditional Pyrenean dance, '*vulgairement appellée La Balade*', were certainly resented,[117] while in the nearby town of Argelès, the Abbé Lauga was condemned by the municipal council for exercising a 'moral police' and refusing communion to those—particularly women—he believed to have 'fallen into the horrible sin of participating in dances', even during official receptions at the prefecture.[118] At Crançot in the Jura the parish priest caused considerable offence when he responded to the

village schoolmistress' efforts to teach her class a traditional dance by rushing in a fury into the group and striking children with his umbrella in order to disperse them. He accused the teacher of encouraging 'debauchery'.[119] At the other end of the country, the mayor of Lorgies (Pas-de-Calais) complained about a priest who in June 1864, had condemned a 'cock fight, joyously celebrated', and then the following month had criticized from the pulpit a dance held in the barn of a local farm. He had reminded his congregation that his advice on the employment of the young was frequently requested and warned them that 'for our response to be favourable, it is essential that you lead a Christian life'.[120]

The priest at Bouillancourt (Somme) even expressed his concern about a procession in honour of Sainte Colette in which the young girls dressed in white who accompanied the holy relics, danced as they processed, injecting, he felt, a secular element into a religious event. The mayor, supported by the prefect, described the practice as traditional and inoffensive, and maintained that the priest was completely fixated on the morality of the young.[121] Indeed, priestly concern about illicit sexual relations could become an obsession, with the practice of contraception seen as a sure sign of moral depravity. A mental revolution had undoubtedly occurred during the revolutionary decades, powered by a determination to reduce the burden of children on family resources, as well as to limit sub-division of inherited property.[122] In his response to the 1866 agricultural enquiry, a priest from the Yonne complained that the theories of Malthus had led the population to 'the most degrading sensualism, to passions, [which] turning them away from divine life, render them sensible to dangerous enthusiasms'.[123]

Carnival, with its traditional involvement of '*des individus travestis*' or wearing masks, and a habit of parodying religious ceremonies, must have represented a nightmare for many priests.[124] Any occasion for merriment might become suspect, however. The national celebration of the *fête de l'Empereur* on 15 August was generally accompanied by dancing and fireworks and, coinciding with the Feast of the Assumption, threatened to overshadow and contaminate the religious celebration.[125] Even the festivities associated with the birth of the *Prince Impérial*, or with military victories, were likely to be regarded with suspicion.[126] High society was not exempt from criticism. At Lorient, the charity balls so favoured by the wealthy were condemned in an Easter sermon by Père Godichaux, a visiting Jesuit preacher, who warned that 'you dance for the poor, but take care that one day the poor do not make you dance'.[127] Public scandal was

caused in March 1866 when M. Fresnel, *vicaire* in the parish of Saint Sauveur in Rennes, criticized Mme Uhrich, wife of the military commander, because of the *décolleté* ball gown she had worn at an official reception.[128] Concerned that the Empress was portrayed in an engraving of the imperial family in a dress cut so low as to provoke '*des idées impures*', the parish priest at Saint-Joseph-de Rivière in the Isère actually 'confiscated' the image,[129] while the *curé* of Saint Aspais in Melun refused to bless the new fountain in the Place Saint Jean because the statues surrounding it were, in his judgement, insufficiently clothed.[130]

Popular among all classes, the theatre was another manifestation of danger. According to Veuillot, 'the theatre … applies itself, even more than the press, to the destruction of the family and social order. Concubinage and adultery are commonly portrayed; most of the heroes … are bastards or unmarried mothers; marriage itself is the subject of derision.'[131] The Bishop of Nantes insisted that those *enfants de Marie* who attended performances must resign immediately.[132] At Voiron (Isère), the parish priest even refused to allow the town band to play during a mass for Sainte Barbe because their instruments had previously been used in the local theatre and, as a result, could not be brought into the church.[133] A constant battle had to be waged against vice in all its forms.

5.2.3 Revolution

During the dark years after 1789, God's holy order had been challenged. 1848 had proved to be another '*année de la peur*'. Mgr Ségur in his frequently re-published study of *La Révolution* warned that this sickness spreading through modern society threatened to inaugurate the rule of Satan and culminate in the reign of the Anti-Christ.[134] The threat was pressing, for as Mgr Jacquemet warned, 'The enemy prepares by every means … for a relentless war … against the Catholic religion which is so dear to you, against society itself which you have all too recently seen … on the verge of ruin.'[135] The solution lay at hand, however, as an editorial in *L'Univers* (14 April 1851) reminded its readers, in the form of 'a doctrine which honours the poor, without flattering it, without rising it up against the rich, and which instructs or persuades the rich to be the friends of the poor: a doctrine of conciliation and of reconciliation of duties and conditions: this is the Christian doctrine'. Only faith could neutralize the appeals of socialism and conjure away the nightmare image of the poor storming 'our cities, sword and torch in hand'.[136] A counter-revolutionary

mentality was constructed which often combined the perspectives of liberal political economy and Roman Catholicism. Thus, the economist Adolphe Blanqui ('respectable' brother of the famous revolutionary), in a report on *Les classes ouvrières en France pendant l'année 1848* (1848), commissioned by the Académie des sciences morales et politiques, with the objective of dissipating any surviving illusions concerning the 'right to work', maintained that poverty was essentially due to the moral shortcomings of the working classes, evinced by laziness, the absence of thrift, by drunkenness, jealousy and all manner of other evil passions. The poor were thus themselves largely responsible for their predicament. Constant surveillance and intimidation might be necessary in the short term, he added, but for the longer term the answer could only be improved education and '*perfectionnement moral*'.[137]

5.3 Achieving Perfection

On 26 March 1860, in a circular letter *Cum catholica*, the Pope expressed his belief that 'the Catholic Church, which was founded by Our Seigneur Jesus Christ to procure eternal salvation for mankind, has taken the form, as a result of its divine institution, of a perfect society'. This Augustinian conception would be employed to justify the autonomy of the Church in the pursuance of its Divine mission, as well as its intransigent determination to engage in a process of spiritual reconquest. In this, the clergy welcomed the cooperation of all those who believed that political power was ultimately derived from God and that religion provided the foundation of both individual morality and an ordered society.[138] Catholic social thinking remained firmly based on an idealized conception of the eternal order of the fields, of an ordered, hierarchical rural society, in which the Church represented a dominant physical presence, and remained central to the lives of the population, with its priests venerated and feared. On 28 April 1864, in the Parisian church of Sainte-Clothilde, the fashionable preacher Father Félix glorified the peasant as the guardian of civil and moral order, on whom society depended for its sustenance and for its soldiers, ready always to defend home and hearth, the 'tombs of his forefathers and the altars of his God' against both internal and external enemies. The countryside served too as the 'nursery of priestly vocations'. It was the 'only force of resistance against the torrent of false doctrines, and violent and egotistical passions' which had already 'corrupted the towns'.[139]

The ideal—and often the reality—was a self-regulating *société d'interconnaissance*. Within a face-to-face community, authority figures—landowners and other local notables, the mayor and particularly the parish priest—were expected to set an example and offer moral guidance to the peasants, labourers and servants who depended on them. Refusal to offer the deference properly owed by 'inferior' to 'superior' was symptomatic of excessive pride. Control of sexual behaviour could be imposed by women meeting in church, or at the public wash-place or communal oven. Matters pertaining to the land, to violent behaviour, or to politics would be discussed by the men gathering in the village square or—especially in winter—at the blacksmith's. Deviants were likely to be ostracized and deprived of work, lodging and charity. An individual's loss of reputation would thus have a negative impact on an entire family. Recourse to external authority was a last resort.[140]

A sense of crisis was, however, palpable in this ruralist discourse which idealized the peasants' dependence on the forces of nature, as well as the purity and spirituality of rural life, and condemned the barbarities of the urban world. Migration from the countryside was a growing cause for concern. New opportunities for the peasant represented the temptations of Sodom and Gomorrah to many rural notables and priests.[141] In the Creuse, temporary migration to the cities to find work in the building trades appeared to result in the spread of bad habits and '*théories vicieuses*'.[142] In the uplands of the Doubs, the domestic manufacture of parts for clock makers in the Swiss cantons of Berne and Neuchâtel, a source of enhanced prosperity for the rural population, was condemned by the clergy because it intensified rural-urban contacts.[143] Appeals to the rural population like that made by the Abbé Devoille in *La charrue et le comptoir ou la Ville et la Campagne* (1854) to 'remain at home; scratch the soil with your finger nails; suffer poverty, rather than throw yourselves into the whirlpool in which all will be lost: faith, morality, health, the future and especially eternity', were, however, all too likely to fall on deaf ears.[144]

If the countryside represented stability and hope, the city and particularly the working classes signified fear of change and subversion.[145] The problem of urban poverty attracted the interest of officials, priests and political economists, who adopted a discourse inevitably riddled with value judgements.[146] Thus, in 1855, the state prosecutor at Colmar reported that 'in spite of the Emperor's efforts to ensure that they enjoy the benefits of work and of more abundant assistance, the working classes retain the prejudices and tendencies inherent in their social position. The …

perception of inferior status … the ardent desire for well-being, the envy of all those who are rich or well-off, and, above all, the example and doctrines of the 1848 Revolution, have deposited within these classes a fatal germ of defiance and of hatred against the organization of society.'[147] The focus of attention moreover shifted from the poor in general to the factory in which the rhythm of daily life was altered, and where individuals were constantly exposed to error and sin.[148] According to Mgr Plantier, 'Nothing has further separated us from God, than industry … Contact with a factory or manufacture has plunged virtually entire populations into the mire of libertinism and impiety.'[149] The social theorists Frédéric Ozanam and Armand de Melun condemned the English model of social development and the inordinate greed, which led to excessive mechanization, over-production, unemployment and low wages.[150]

Poverty was nevertheless generally viewed as self-induced rather than structural, and as a vital part of God's design. An essentially unsympathetic theology developed on the basis of the belief that work itself was God's punishment for the sins of Adam and ought to be accepted with resignation.[151] The provincial synod held at Avignon in December 1849 reminded the poor that 'God is the author of Society … who has established diverse conditions amongst men: it is essential that we submit to His divine will when he forbids us … to covet the goods of another'.[152] As Mgr Darboy, Archbishop of Paris, later concluded, 'you will never suppress misery, nor the suffering which results, because they have their source in the inequality Providence has established, which Society vainly seeks to correct, and which individual liberty only makes worse'.[153] The social doctrine of the Church established non-negotiable behavioural norms.[154] Labour relations continued to be understood in essentially master-servant terms.[155] Criticism of the existing, God-ordained, social order, could only be blasphemous. Indeed, according to one Legitimist commentator, to 'deplore the condition of the majority, is to put God on trial. You want to destroy misery, why don't you also wish to destroy hunger and then death?'[156]

Priests at every level in the religious hierarchy assumed that the attempt to calm 'the antagonism of those who do not possess against those who possess' was central to their responsibilities.[157] In the archdiocese of Cambrai, Mgr Régnier employed his Easter 1853 pastoral letter to instruct the workers of the Nord to turn away 'from these menacing coalitions, from these concerted abstentions from work, which religion forbids and human laws will punish'.[158] His response to a major crisis affecting the textile trades in 1869 was again simply to exhort workers to 'put up with

misfortune like Christians'.[159] Socialism was also condemned by the priest of the parish of Saint-Etienne in Lille, as 'that stupid and violent equality dreamt of by wicked or insane levellers: God does not hate the society He has created, with its ranks, its hierarchy, its precedences.'[160] As the Abbé Martin, a leading figure in the city's *conférence* of the Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul, fatalistically insisted, the worker must 'be submissive to his master, observe the law of God in its entirety, and particularly in that which concerns procreation: One should not dread the increased number of children, nor complain. God knows what He is doing, and in creating a family He at the same time provides sufficient to sustain it!'[161]

It was assumed that, in order to secure eternal salvation, the poor must resign themselves to their misery and accept their subordinate place in society. These were the characteristics of the '*bon peuple*' as opposed to the 'vile multitude' denounced by Adolphe Thiers.[162] In compensation for the sins of Adam, they should devote themselves to work and recognize their responsibilities towards their families and society and, above all, to God. Work, and the self-discipline it engendered, would promote moral regeneration. This was the message of countless sermons and of almanacs and pamphlets. Thus, the *Almanach de l'atelier* (1854) stressed that 'courageous and persevering labour is the source of all the strength and glory of man'.[163] Heavenly reward and, if it was God's Will, earthly prosperity, might be earned through '*Bonne Conduite, Travail, Persévérance*'.[164] Mgr Jacquemet in his Lenten message in 1850 had no hesitation in presenting himself as the spokesman for the grateful recipients of charity—'O rich, no one condemns more severely than us the threats audacious mouths make around you. Defender of the poor, but apostle of truth, we indignantly condemn the impious doctrine which teaches to the poor that they have the right to place a criminal hand on your inheritance and on the fruit of your work. This doctrine … is not … the Word of Jesus Christ, our master.'[165]

The clergy were not, however, entirely satisfied with the attitudes of the property-owning classes. The irreligious greed, as well as the 'excessive' harshness which many employers displayed towards their workers, together with their failure to provide them with moral guidance, were entirely unacceptable.[166] Mgr Parisis, Bishop of Arras, expressed particular concern about the brutal subordination to machines of workers, and especially women and children.[167] Hypersensitive, because of their own self-belief and glory in their role as intermediaries between Man and God, individual priests could easily perceive criticism as an assault on the

Church and on religious faith. The educated professional classes were frequently accused of *voltairianisme* and of failing to set a good example. According to the Abbé Méthivier, this was due to a false education—'at the medical faculty, the student learns materialism; at the law faculty, he learns that the law ought to be atheistical; at the école normal, he learns eclecticism; at the Sorbonne, he learns pantheism. In all these schools, the voices of liberals shout in young men's ears: *Sons of the Enlightenment and of progress, smash, smash the old institutions of France and create around yourselves a new world*'.[168] Its editors posing as the '*sentinelles d'avant-garde*', the Parisian *Journal des villes et campagnes* claimed to be representing the outlook of the episcopate in denouncing 'the more and more formidable invasion of atheism and materialism into modern society'.[169] The Bishop of Tarbes perceived a 'revolt against God, contempt for His sovereignty, disobedience of His law; the abandonment of religious practices; the obsessive love of pleasure; the unchaining of every lust', with an impact similar to that of 'a devastating torrent … which eats away at the body of society'.[170] The duty of the clergy, supported by the Christian monarch, was to alert the world to the dangers it faced.[171] Censorship further exemplified this determination to engage in the work of moral regeneration.

5.4 Censorship

Following the 1848 Revolution, both State and Church were anxious to reduce the potential for moral and political subversion.[172] The press law of 27 July 1849—reinforced by decree on 17 February 1852—required newspaper editors to deposit caution money, and subjected them to strict supervision which could lead to warnings, fines and the eventual suspension of publication. Stamp duty was imposed even on short pamphlets. Special commissioners were also appointed to oversee the book trade, and prefects instructed local police to closely supervise booksellers. Public reading rooms, popular libraries and the new railway station bookstalls, were all suspect.[173] The Commission du colportage was established to supervise the activities of the urban street traders and the peddlers who traditionally distributed low cost and accessible reading matter and lithographs throughout the countryside and to purge their wares by establishing lists of approved works.[174] It defined its primary objective as being to 'control publications intended for the lower classes; much more important without any doubt than the press seeking to influence the upper classes.

Peddling is the instrument by which one can corrupt or moralize the popular classes.'[175] Controlling the flow of illicit publications across the frontiers was a particular problem.[176]

The clergy welcomed the Interior Minister, Persigny's, reminder to his colleague at Justice (Abbatucci) in October 1853 that Article eight of the law of 17 May 1819 could be employed against 'every outrage to public and religious morality'.[177] Among those prosecuted under this vague catch-all article would be Baudelaire in 1857. According to the state prosecutor, the poems included in *Les fleurs du mal* were an affront to 'that great Christian morality which is in reality the only sound base for public morals'. The poet was fined 300 francs and ordered to pay costs. The novelist Flaubert was also arraigned in the same year for the 'indecencies' contained in *Madame Bovary* although, better connected and defended than Baudelaire, he was acquitted.[178] The prolific socialist P-J. Proudhon was, however, judged to have exceeded the limits of legitimate controversy by means of such 'outrageous sarcasms' as referring to Christ as 'the putative son of God'.[179]

Particular public interest was aroused by the prosecution in September 1857 of the publisher of the popular novel, the *Mystères du peuple* written by the recently deceased Eugène Sue. The work's tone might be judged from the 1851 Preface in which Sue had condemned the enslavement of the people through 'fourteen centuries of divine right Church'. Referring to the histories written by Guizot, Thiers and Michelet, the novelist had reminded his readers of the slaughter of the Albigensians and the iniquities of the Holy Inquisition, denouncing 'the blind ferocity of religious fanaticism'. More recently, he pointed out, French intervention against the Roman Republic in 1849 had again revealed the 'ultramontane party, foaming with hatred and rage, preaching new crusades', whilst the Falloux education law represented further proof of the '*abominable complicité de l'Eglise catholique*' in the 'oppression, spoliation, exploitation and enslavement' of the masses. The judgment of the imperial court was that 'one can find … on every page, the negation or the overthrow of all the principles on which religion, morality and society are based'. The unfortunate publisher La Chatre was sentenced to a year in prison together with a substantial 6000-franc fine. It was furthermore ordered that the printer's plates should be destroyed and all extant copies of the work seized and pulped.[180] Prosecution before *tribunals correctionnels*, rather than jury trials at the assizes, helped to ensure punitive outcomes. Self-censorship was, however, the most likely outcome of such pressure.

The Government, in spite of its efforts, was nevertheless frequently accused by the clergy of tolerating an excess of liberty.[181] Mgr Mabille, the Bishop of Versailles, demanded a greater effort to combat 'the hundred thousand mouths of the impious press' and reiterated the Papal condemnation of those 'gross errors' which threatened to 'overwhelm … the entire religious and social order'.[182] In addition, associations like the Union de prières pour la destruction des mauvais livres, established in Chartres, repeatedly warned about the influence of 'bad' books, and in particular the novels serialized in popular newspapers,[183] while spiritual guides like that published in 1849 by the Abbé Martinet instructed first communicants that 'You will never read any bad books, especially those which are even slightly suspect in matters of religion, or morality, such as novels, plays etc.'[184] Mgr Baillès even insisted that where books had been inherited, they should not be read or sold before consulting the parish priest.[185]

With greater apparent precision, Mgr Wicart, the Bishop of Laval, claimed that the threat was posed by a hundred, or perhaps 200, 'openly atheistic' authors, '*impurs romanciers*', and 'corrupt' playwrights'.[186] The faithful were enjoined to respect the Church's Index of forbidden works, and avoid reading books like Renan's notorious *Vie de Jésus*, as well as the works of Dumas, Sand, Balzac, Flaubert, Hugo, Stendhal, Champfleury, Feydeau and Murger, which, according to the Cardinal de Bonald, should all be confined to the flames.[187] After a campaign in the Senate, the anti-clerical town council at St. Etienne was even forced by the local prefect to withdraw the works of Rabelais, Voltaire, Rousseau, Proudhon, Fourier, Michelet, Renard, Balzac, Sue, among others, from the town library.[188] This was '*la littérature moderne* [which] disguises the poison, which kills innocence' and threatened to infect every class with 'impiety'.[189] Furthermore, as Mgr Dupanloup warned, the situation was deteriorating rapidly. In his view, there had been 'a sudden explosion … of errors, of irreligion, of lies' in learned reviews and daily newspapers, while 'popular songs, cheap novels, expressly written for and distributed to the people' fed the arguments of 'cabaret philosophers who indoctrinate the simple beings around them and know how to translate … the arguments of a learned impiety'.[190]

Such concerns might be translated into the kind of sermon preached in October 1860 by the priest at Canaples (Somme). He forbade the reading of newspapers on the grounds that the serialized stories they contained 'vomit the most odious insults against morality, religion, and tradition'

and blamed the government for allowing them to circulate.[191] In the Allier, the priest at Chappes denounced the liberal newspaper *le Constitutionnel*, claiming that in its columns, 'a race of perverse, corrupt and over-proud men' presented 'Voltairian doctrines which have never produced … anything other than monsters, crimes and revolutions, and the total destruction of all the principles of order and of religion'.[192] The priest at Sarralbe in eastern France even refused to confess the dying wife of a *limonadier* and was reported to have shouted at her: 'I cannot confess you; your soul will go to Hell; you are a damned woman; your establishment is the House of the Devil'—and this because of a subscription to 'an impious newspaper, *le Siècle*.[193] Even the ancient classics, the staples of secondary education, were condemned by some priests, provoking the Abbé Ramadié, the *curé* of St Jacques at Béziers to complain that the only books visiting missionaries, supporters of the Abbé Gaume's campaign against 'pagan' literature, would tolerate, were 'the Roman missal, the Roman ritual, the Roman pontifical, the Roman breviary'.[194]

Negative representations of religion were also prominent among the themes prohibited in the theatre. While legislation dealing with the *police des théâtres* introduced in July 1850 largely repeated previous provisions, ministerial circulars on its implementation were more precise in demanding avoidance of scenes portraying class conflict; attacks on the public authorities, on the army and religion; and 'moral depravity'. Although censorship was less intense in the 1860s, Victorien Sardou's unsympathetic portrayal of a devout Catholic in *Les Ganaches* was in 1862 cut in response to complaints by the Empress as well as the disquiet felt by the censor. The equally popular playwright Emile Augier was asked to remove such phrases as '*Dieu n'est pas juste*' from his works.[195] Haussmann's efforts to embellish the capital were moreover accompanied by the demolition of the boisterous popular theatres characteristic of the old city. This attempt to improve the 'moral hygiene' of the population was closely associated with speculative reconstruction, the gentrification of central areas and growing social segregation.[196]

There were other threats which the regime inexplicably tolerated. Catholic theologians appeared entirely unprepared or unwilling to recognize the growing interest in scientific and technical progress. Together with Catholic scientists they sought to reconcile religion and science, both of which, together with the existing social order, were perceived to be manifestations of the Divine Will.[197] A straightforward belief in the Revealed Truth appeared sufficient. Dupanloup, in his *Histoire de Jésus*

Christ (1869), simply insisted on the superiority of faith over science.[198] An appeal to the Bible—to the Word of God—and to the traditions of the Church was sufficient. In *L'Univers*, Louis Veuillot insisted that 'science without theology has no meaning'.[199] Mgr Frayssinous, as Grand Master of the Université, had long before, in 1825, sought to defend the dominant ethos of biblical literalism against emerging concepts of geological time. In a series of much-commented-upon lectures in *Défense de christianisme*, he had condemned those he described as 'preoccupied with research into the formation and structure of the world, known as *géologues*, who have turned over the soil in order to discover something contrary to the account of Moses, whether in relation to the Creation or the Flood'. Taking up the challenge in his *Théologie dogmatique* (1848), Mgr Gausset would dismiss criticism of Genesis as the work of an '*imagination vagabonde*', and of scientists who continually contradicted each other. Convoluted efforts were also made to reconcile scientific and Biblical accounts of creation by establishing a concordance between the Days of Genesis and the epochs of geological time.[200]

Mgr Cousseau, Bishop of Angoulême, was concerned that 'the new generations will be taught to read, to count, history (but what sort of history?), geography and astronomy, without any reference to God, creator of heaven and earth. Man will be left in ignorance of his origin, his destiny, and his nature, of what he might fear or aspire to after this life. Instead, he will hear that he has nothing more to fear or to hope for than other animals, of whom he is simply the better organised brother.'[201] One wonders how aware of the great literary and scientific debates of the century the great mass of parish clergy might have been and whether their response went much beyond angry accusations of 'sacrilege'.[202] The Abbé Mingayon, parish priest at Pommiers (Indre), in a sermon celebrating the Feast of the Assumption and the *Fête de l'Empereur* simply referred to the education minister Duruy as '*un chenapan* (scoundrel) considering that he claims that man is descended from the monkey'.[203] The Darwinian notion of natural selection was caricatured and dismissed rather than addressed, although many liberal Catholics no doubt managed to accommodate Darwin within their beliefs.[204]

Even more disturbing were new forms of biblical criticism, and particularly the 'doctrines of a school for which Jesus Christ is no more than a man possessed of a more or less honourable character, and God himself an ideal being, without reality'.[205] The German theologian David Strauss' *Leben Jesu* (1835), an attempt to define the historical Jesus, and challenge

the assumption that the Scriptures were divinely inspired, threatened to reduce the Bible from a sacred text to a collection of myths.[206] His approach was popularized in France by Renan's *Vie de Jésus* (1863), which caused a sensation, as well as enjoying considerable commercial success. Some 65,000 copies were sold in the year following its publication in June 1863 and a further 82,000 within three months of the publication of a cheap edition in April 1864.[207] Renan's devastating denial of the divinity of Christ, and insistence that Jesus had simply been an 'incomparable man', the greatest of the many prophets active in Galilee, together with his claim that the resurrection had been falsified, were beyond the comprehension of most Catholics.[208] The liberal Comte de Montalambert vigorously condemned the assault on the 'divinity of the crucified Jesus' and particularly its threat to the religious life of women, children and workers.[209] Numerous rebuttals—both cheap and popular pamphlets and learned theological tomes—were printed.[210] The Archbishop of Reims simply instructed the population of his diocese not to read the book.[211] Potential readers were of course often made aware of Renan's book by the pamphlets and sermons in which it was so vigorously condemned.

Dissatisfied with the lack of decisive governmental intervention in support of the Church, bishops could at least insist that they had the moral, and indeed—according to a law of 7 Germinal An XIII—the legal right, to expect authors resident in their dioceses to submit the manuscripts of devotional and theological works for approval.[212] Typically, the Bishop of Nancy responded to a proposal made by the Abbé Deblaye to publish a three-volume history of the diocese by reminding him of the obligation to request the episcopal *imprimatur* before publication or else face suspension and the inclusion of the book on the diocesan index.[213] Catholics were furthermore instructed to read only those works which had received the *imprimatur* and such approval appears to have been a prerequisite for the commercial success of works intended for a Catholic readership.[214] Cardinal Mathieu, the Archbishop of Besançon, went so far as to instruct the faithful to avoid publications which failed to make an explicit avowal of Catholic faith, whatever their other merits.[215] In this atmosphere, and indeed throughout the pontificats of Gregory XVI and Pius IX, it was hardly surprising that the Roman Congregation of the Index became increasingly active. Although its decisions had no legal status in France, in the 12 months from June 1863, along with a host of theological studies, the literary efforts of such leading contemporary writers as the two Dumas, Sand, Balzac, Flaubert, Lamartine, Hugo and Stendhal were condemned.

Novels in general appear to have been regarded as potent sources of moral corruption. The historical novels of Alexandre Dumas were judged to be fit only for the flames; Balzac's *Lys dans la vallée* was condemned because of numerous 'stupidities, blasphemies and impieties'.[216] It almost goes without saying that Catholics were forbidden to read the works of Enlightenment philosophers, those extolling the principles of 1789, or expressing Gallican sentiments, or indeed any notions judged to be contrary to the prevailing orthodoxy as defined by the Roman curia.[217] The Bishop of Arras complained forcefully that the programme for the *baccalaureate* in letters established in 1852 included works condemned by the Papal Index such as *Le siècle de Louis XIV* and *L'histoire de Charles XII* as well as Descartes' *Discours sur la méthode*. Invited to prepare expurgated versions, Mgr Parisis had first, however, to request approval by the Pope.[218]

The growing determination of the Papacy to ensure doctrinal uniformity on such questions as the Immaculate Conception was enforced through the Congrégation des Rites (in the case of the breviary) and that of the Index. Significantly, Mgr Baillès, formerly Bishop of Luçon, who had been forced to resign in 1856 (by the Pope under pressure from the French government) because of his extreme ultramontane and Legitimist views, was immediately compensated by His Holiness with appointment to the influential post of *consulteur* to the Congregation of the Index.[219] Author of a general decree attacking French writers in 1864, Baillès, in a typically aggressive declaration published in Paris in 1866, and entitled *La Congrégation de l'Index mieux connue et vengée*, insisted that 'The supreme pastor of souls, charged with the government of all the flock, must lead his ewes and his lambs into abundant pastures which are safe and healthy' and that an individual author like Georges Sand might be considered to be 'the most fatal and the most famous enemy of religion, of morality, of the family, and of society in its entirety'.[220]

The main concern of the curia was nevertheless with doctrinal orthodoxy rather than modern novels. As the Ultramontane offensive gathered pace, even the work of such an eminent theologian as Mgr Bouvier, Bishop of Le Mans, which had been the staple text employed in many seminaries for decades, was subject in 1852 to substantial 'correction'. Bouvier's previous insistence that each bishop should determine which manuals were to be used in his diocesan seminaries was one of the many points of condemnation. Although, on behalf of the Prince-President, Fortoul expressed his concern that ultramontane clergy were being encouraged to criticize Gallican bishops, as well as about the weakening of State influence, in this

environment, even the Archbishop of Paris, Mgr Sibour, felt obliged to hold his tongue.[221] In a confidential letter to a close friend (10 October 1856), he explained that he had decided to avoid writing anything other than 'purely administrative letters … at least until the freedom of evangelical expression, killed by the Congrégation of the Index, is one day restored'. He looked forward to the eventual calming of '*ces passions ultra-catholiques et antichrétiennes*' set in motion by '*le grand lama Veuillot*'.[222] In a speech before the Imperial Senate in March 1865, the former Ministre des cultes, Gustave Rouland, would describe the Congrégation of the Index as the 'incarnation of despotism, a tribunal which condemns without hearing'.[223]

5.5 Conclusion

The broad objective shared by the clergy and much of the laity collaborating within a hierarchical and disciplined religious institution was the establishment of a *société d'encadrement* within which, from childhood, all, or at least a substantial part of the population, would be subject to rigorous intellectual and social control through a combination of confession, preaching, teaching, membership of pious associations, and Christian charity and with the assistance offered by a Christian magistracy. These were the means of countering the criminal and revolutionary proclivities of those who dared to challenge the fundamental precepts of a Christian society respectful of God's Holy Order—as defined by His Church. In achieving these objectives, the role of the parish priest as teacher and moral exemplar was of course crucial.

Notes

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3. Quoted by Sacquin op. cit., p. 102.
4. Abbé Léger, *Réponse touchant la liberté de conscience et des cultes*, Nîmes, Soustelle, imprimeur de Mgr l'Evêque, 1865, AN F19/5811.
5. Mandement et instruction pastorale de Mgr l'Evêque de La Rochelle pour le saint temps de Carême, 1865, AN F19/1936.
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7. Quoted by J. Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic. A history of political thought in France since the 18th century*, Oxford, 2011, pp. 330, 332.
8. See e.g. PG Colmar, 8 July 1859, AN BB30/368; Acad. Rector of Montpellier, 26 April 1858, AN F17/2649; P. Leuillot, 'Politique et religion. Les élections alsaciennes de 1869', *Revue d'Alsace*, 1961, p. 72.
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11. Abbé Mujas to Inspecteur d'Académie, 7 July 1855; Extrait du Régistre des déliberations du Conseil presbytéral de l'Eglise-Réformée de Clarensac, 16 July; Prefect Gard to Bishop of Nîmes, 20 July; Prefect Gard to MC, 28 July; Extrait du régistre des déliberations du Consistoire de l'Eglise réformée de Calvisson (Gard); Vicar-general, diocese of Nîmes to MC, 8 September 1855, AN F19/5811.
12. See e.g. letter from Gabriel Rosset, *agent voyeur* at Bazas (Gironde) to MJ et des C., 12 August 1848, AN F19/5722.
13. Mayor Lorgis to MC, 12 November; Prefect Pas-de-Calais to MC, 5 December 1864, AN F19/5779.
14. Prefect Moselle to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 28 January 1859, AN F19/5825.
15. See e.g. PG Colmar, 5 April 1859, AN BB30/376; A. Wahl, *Petites haines ordinaires. Histoire des conflits entre catholiques et protestants en Alsace, 1860–1940*, Strasbourg, 2004, pp. 128–130.
16. L.-J. Favreau, avocat, *Note pour M. Brodu, gérant du journal l'Esperance du peuple*, presented to Cour de Cassation, 8 July 1853.
17. Prefect Ardèche to MC, 6 February 1863, AN F19/5877.
18. Bishop of Nancy to MJ et des C., 29 August 1843 and reply of 21 October; Bishop of Nancy to MC, 31 July 1852, AN F19/5831. See also V. Petit, *Catholiques et comtois. Liturgie et identité régionale au 19e siècle*, 2001, p. 146.

19. See e.g. letter from mayor of Beaufort (Drôme) to MJ et des C., 13 September 1867, AN F19/5577.
20. M. Sacquin, *Entre Bossuet et Maurras*. p. 106. See also R. Bloch, *God's plagiarist. Being an account of the fabulous industry and irregular commerce of the Abbé Migne*, 1994.
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24. A. Encreve, *Protestants français au milieu du 19e siècle. Les réformes de 1848 à 1870*, Geneva 1982, pp. 910–1.
25. PG Dijon, 28 Jan. 1857, AN BB30/377.
26. Prefect to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 11 April 1853, AN F19/5768.
27. Prefect to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 26 May 1854, AN F19/5776.
28. Bishop to Min de l'I.P. et des C., 12 Jan. 1854; *Sous-préfet* Toulon to Prefect Var, 13 Feb., AN F19/5810.
29. See e.g. Acad. Rector of Douai, 12 Nov. 1858, AN F17/2649; P. Zind, *L'enseignement religieux dans l'instruction primaire publique en France de 1850 à 1873*, Lyon, 1971, p. 163.
30. *Commissaire de police* of St. Pierre, to *juge de paix* of Ile d'Oleron, 21 January 1852; *commissaire* to Prefect Charente-Inférieure, 24 January; Prefect to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 12 March, AN F19/5852.
31. See e.g. Bishop of Châlons to MC, 22 April 1852, AN F19/5801.
32. S. Fath, 'Entre colporteur et confesseur: le choix des femmes en Picardie au milieu du 19e siècle' in G. Cholvy, (ed) *La religion et les femmes*, Montpellier, 2002, pp. 160–7.
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34. PG Grenoble, 14 Oct. 1858, AN BB30/378.
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CHAPTER 6

Saints and Sinners

6.1 Le bon prêtre

From the perspective of the Church, the ideal/idealized parish priest—the '*prêtre de l'evangile*'—was a figure defined in sermons, in obituaries in the religious press, and in the hagiographical literature of praise which identified emblematic individuals as a source of inspiration. In an address to ordinands in December 1847, the aristocratic Cardinal-Bishop of Arras, Mgr de la Tour-d'Auvergne, insisted that the priest must love his fellow men and engage in a conciliatory 'ministry of peace'. In his everyday dealings with parishioners the '*bon curé*' should avoid both coldness and excessive familiarity, behave with humility, and subordinate his personal concerns to those of his flock. He should scrupulously perform the rites of the Church, living frugally, practising charity and love for the sick and poor. Piety and zeal must be combined with virtue. Dignified in his manner, modest in his demeanour, his words and gestures presenting an air of inner calm, serving as the guide and guardian of his flock, and submissive towards his superiors, the priest should be exemplary in his faith and personal behaviour.[1]

Another influential figure, Mgr Dupanloup, Bishop of Orleans, after identifying their major shortcomings—laziness, routine, and an absence of intellectual interests—demanded that priests 'take flight from every occasion for sin; adopt a prudent reserve in relationships with members of the female sex; observe with exactness the regulations affecting us, whether in

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the canon law of the Church or in diocesan statutes; rigorously abstain from all reading which might trouble our modesty; impose a rigorous control over our thoughts, affections and senses; achieve sobriety and temperance; labour assiduously; live an active and fully occupied life always filled with saintly and zealous works; never hesitate to combat the inevitable assaults of temptation; and conserve … that firm and virile determination, and unshakable will to maintain, and without cease strengthen, our resistance by a constant fidelity to all our pious exercises, and especially to prayer, to the reading of Holy Scripture and worthy spiritual books; to the daily examination of our conscience; to frequent confession; to spiritual retreats…'[2] The minimum requirement, according to the Abbé Perreyve, was 'the dignity of character which makes the man, and the religious sincerity which makes the man of God … Unfortunate the priest in whom men see nothing more than the man.'[3]

Parishioners also frequently made their expectations clear. According to a petition signed by the mayor, council and notables of Rely (Pas-de-Calais)—'a priest … must have, following the example of his divine master, a rich Heart overflowing with tolerance, conciliation, indulgence and compassion'. Absolute devotion was their expectation.[4] The many signatories to a petition to the Empress Eugènie from Meymac in the Corrèze praised their *vicaire*, the Abbé Mas, who for 14 years had performed his own, as well as the duties of the sick and infirm parish priest, with 'zeal', 'love', 'disinterest' and 'Christian charity', earning the 'esteem and affection' of the entire population, and especially of the poor who saw in him 'an old friend and support'.[5] The citizens of Villelongue (Hautes-Pyrénées) regretted the passing of the Abbé Cénac, a priest 'who loved the poor as much as the rich, whose gentle and persuasive voice calmed passions and consoled the unfortunate'.[6]

Particular instances of goodness might be referred to, including priests who devoted their own financial resources to the welfare of their parish, or else encouraged donations for the construction of churches and schools and provision of assistance to the deserving poor. The parish priest at Baudreville, near Chartres, during the 1856 subsistence crisis, persuaded local farmers to sell their grain to him at below market price, and then sold loaves to the parish poor at the presbytery door.[7] Crises such as the disastrous floods at Strasbourg in 1852 or the successive cholera epidemics, when self-sacrifice might well attain a literal meaning, represented particularly testing circumstances, which brought out the best in many priests. In the little village of La Chapelle-Monthodon

(Aisne), where in August–September 1854 the epidemic killed 45 of the 135 people infected out of a population of 468, according to the school teacher, the Abbé Bardin had stood as 'sentinel' and 'consoling angel' against this '*fléau mysterieux*', caring for the sick, praying for relief, and offering consolation. His actions had revealed to the population 'all the virtues which repose in the heart of a priest'.[8] The parish priest at Saint-Victor-de-Malcap, in the Gard, had similarly offered sustenance and spiritual relief at a time when the mayor and *instituteur* had fled, and the *garde champêtre* and grave-digger died of the disease, and when 'terror had frozen every heart'.[9] This kind of devotion certainly appears to have been far more common than the response of the Abbé Martres at Fougaron (Haute-Garonne), who was accused of hiding in his bed when cholera ravaged the commune, and of refusing to hear confessions, to offer the last rites, or to bury the victims.[10] The frightened inhabitants of Templeuve (Nord), however, complained bitterly about the Abbé Lancelle's insistence upon constantly tolling the church bells to remind his flock of the imminent prospect of death.[11]

Many priests gained public recognition for their compassion and good works. The death of the Abbé Gellée, a priest attached to the cathedral at Beauvais, was reported to have caused 'a kind of electric shock' among the '*classe ouvrière*' to whom he had devoted his life. His funeral service was celebrated with '*grande pompe*', in marked contrast, according to the Prefect of the Oise, with the life of deprivation he had imposed upon himself.[12] The general commanding the 7th Military Division recommended awarding the *légion d'honneur* to the priests who had devoted themselves to victims of cholera in the Arles garrison in 1849.[13] The Abbé Desté took the probably less demanding route of membership of the cantonal statistical commission to win similar official approval.[14] For the authorities the 'good priest' was generally a partisan of the regime.[15]

In spite of the determination of the vast majority of priests to live morally irreproachable lives or, at the very least, conform to established norms, it was inevitable that the mutual expectations of both priests and parishioners would often be disappointed. Parish life was, after all, fraught with difficulties. Judging the clergy of the Var in the 1850s, the Bishop of Fréjus concluded that around half were *bons* or *très bons* in the performance of their duties, another quarter *passable* and the remainder incompetent.[16] In his history of the Arras diocese, Y-M. Hilaire similarly concluded that there was a very real danger of parish priests adopting 'the worthy and tranquil life of a functionary or a *rentier*, cultivating their own

garden … and isolating themselves from the world'.[17] The Abbé Meignan, vicar-general in the Paris diocese, was particularly critical of the routine adopted by some older priests. He wondered 'from which of these ecclesiastics would a cultivated, serious man, say a chief clerk in city hall, solicit a service or ask for advice?'[18]

6.2 The Trials and Tribulations of Parish Life

6.2.1 Fulfilling Obligations

The day-to-day realities of parish life and the expectation that a priest should constantly fulfil his religious obligations imposed considerable burdens and a frightening responsibility on a man 'clothed', as the Abbé Vianney pointed out, 'with all the powers of God'.[19] As the vital intermediary between Man and God in the struggle for Salvation, the priest was generally perceived to be the moral guardian and primary source of authority within the community. His education, dress, celibacy and the distance maintained between his life of faith and the secular community, combined to ensure that he was regarded as a man unlike other men.[20] Although mutual tolerance, religious socialization within the family, the regular participation of the community in religious ceremonies, and the development of a religious routine, or at least '*la plus grand resignation*', might limit potential disaffection, satisfying the expectations of every parishioner was always going to be difficult.[21]

Priests were most certainly expected to conduct the regular round of religious services. The sick and dying, together with the bereaved, expected to be comforted and blessed. Parishes, however, varied considerably in scale, population density and distribution, and in the demands made upon clerics. In the large parishes with dispersed habitat, typical of much of Brittany, and in upland areas, horses or mules were an essential part of the priest's equipment.[22] The 2200 inhabitants of Crux-la-Ville in the Nièvre were divided between 32 villages or hamlets, and its service demanded a priest who was not only '*fort diligent*' but '*très robuste*'.[23] The failure to perform the last rites was unpardonable.[24] Even the infirmity of a long-established and much-loved priest could not long be tolerated if it interfered with his ability to provide hope of salvation to his flock. The inhabitants of Sarraltroff in Lorraine complained that because of the illness of the Abbé Müller, they had been abandoned spiritually for three years.[25] Jean Carrère, the road-repair man (*cantonnier*) at

Etsaut in the Basses-Pyrénées, entirely bereft following the death of his wife, found his pain all the harder to bear because, in spite of her piety, she had not received '*les secours de la religion*' from a priest who was absent frequently and failed to perform properly the 'duties imposed on him by his quality as representative of Jesus Christ on earth'. Carrère had determined to write to the minister because the Bishop of Bayonne always ignored complaints.[26]

Furthermore, communities expected funerals to be conducted in dignified fashion. The practice had developed of carrying the deceased from their homes to church for a religious ceremony and recitation of the *De Profundis*, and from there to the grave where the clergy would intone the final prayers. The failure to properly honour the dead by respecting legal precepts or local custom in matters of ritual or the tolling of church bells could arouse a lasting sense of grievance.[27] Previously often a place for games or even pasture for animals, the cemetery was during the nineteenth century turned into a separate and respected space. The refusal of a parish priest to conduct a religious interment within its consecrated ground invariably caused distress. The legitimate grounds for such a refusal—resulting in an unsanctified burial in land set aside for non-believers—might include the death of an infant without baptism, or else suicide, atheism, libertinism and a failure to repent, or heresy. The apparently vindictive behaviour of the parish priest at Blussans (Doubs), in refusing to perform the religious rites at the funeral of a much-respected 82-year-old veteran of the imperial army who, as a municipal councillor, had disagreed with his views, together with his instruction to the village schoolmaster, who served as his sexton, not to attend the funeral, and to lock the door to the church tower to prevent the tolling of its bells, did much to destroy his own reputation. In spite of his claim that the deceased had always rejected the '*secours de la Religion*', members of the community, led by the mayor, wearing his sash of office, conducted the ceremony themselves.[28] When M.Bouyssy, mayor of the little village of Monviel (Lot-et-Garonne) died on 31 May 1864, the Abbé Pauzet claimed that he had refused the last rites and been unwilling to repent his sins. The mayor's family and the wider community were convinced that the priest had been infuriated by the refusal of the dying man to bequeath part of his fortune to a religious congregation. Led by the *garde champêtre* beating the commune's drum, and by uniformed national guards, the entire population accompanied the coffin to church. The bells were tolled, while old ladies lit candles on the altar and around the body, and a local mason,

wearing the tricolour sash of the mayor, read the prayers for the dead. Subsequently, the Bishop of Agen complained about the profanation of the church and demanded the prosecution of participants. The Prefect adopted a more tolerant attitude towards a population guilty in his eyes of no more than 'naivety', 'ignorance' and the simplicity so characteristic of this 'little corner of the department', which was, in his judgement, at least a century behind the times.[29]

The parish priest was also responsible for the moral well-being of his flock. The religious instruction of the young was of crucial importance. It was possible to cause offence by rejecting godparents judged to lack the moral qualities essential to the Christian upbringing of a child and thus delaying baptism.[30] In rejecting the choice of an unmarried mother, the *vicaire* of Saint Laurent (Jura) explained that canon law forbade him to 'accept as a god-parent someone whose conduct is not regular: she would not know how to take responsibility for a child'. At nearby Vannoz, the parish priest even sought to impose preconditions on both father—the deputy-mayor—and godfather, in the form of a promise to refrain in future from criticizing the clergy.[31] Judgements as to whether children were ready to receive their first communion—the mark of adulthood and an occasion for celebration—generally around the age of 11 or 12, and following two or three years of religious instruction, might also easily precipitate disputes. Rejection represented a blow to the status of the family and, in many areas, an obstacle to finding employment.[32]

The possibly over-zealous priest at Montfranc (Aveyron)—and many others—also faced criticism for exhibiting 'during the religious instruction of children an impatience which appears incompatible with the gravity of his priestly responsibility'.[33] Petitioners from Cabourg in Normandy, where almost half of the catechism class were denied confirmation in 1851 because they had failed to regularly attend, pointed out that this was because the children were terrified of the Abbé Boitard who resorted to 'slaps around the head, six months of penitences, standing with arms crossed, and to kicks', as means of encouraging the learning process. A child who stammered had been forced to kneel with arms crossed during services and been called a 'fat pig … imbecile, animal…' Children had been expelled from classes simply for smiling, or for attending local fairs with their families. The priest was accused of treating the poor with contempt.[34]

If it was expected and generally demanded that 'a good minister of Jesus Christ … will speak out against the disorders which have taken place

in his parish', it was easy to overstep the mark and be accused of '*le fanatisme religieux*' or '*despotisme*'. The authoritarian and frequently self-righteous attitudes of many priests might well alienate parishioners. The priest at Bilhères in the Pyrenees was thus condemned by the '*premiers citoyens de la commune*', outraged by his repeated denunciations of 'the most respectable young girls' who, he insisted, had lost their 'honour' during the regular *veillées* held in barns at which, in the winter months, people 'stripped the maize'. It was claimed that 'most of the population submitted to this tyranny from fear of scandal and of religious punishments'—particularly their dread of a refusal to hear their death-bed confessions and to administer the last rites.[35] As the Prefect of Moselle pointed out, 'the refusal of the sacraments of the Church strikes an unbelievable terror into the populations of the countryside [and] is an almost infallible weapon'.[36]

The frequently aggressive moral rigourism of the clergy was nevertheless a potent cause of disgruntlement. The lack of discretion/sense of duty which led a parish priest to engage in *ad hominem* denunciation and 'to shout at his parishioners from the pulpit, and sometimes to name people and denounce family affairs which the public ought not to know about' was particularly difficult to endure.[37] Thus, preaching against pride on 15 August 1866, the Abbé Letienne took the mayor of Navilly and his family as an example.[38] The Abbé Nicolas, parish priest at Segré, recognized that even when he condemned drunkenness or the ill-treatment of wives in general terms, the criticism was invariably taken personally by those members of his congregation whose susceptibilities were easily offended or who were generally known to be guilty.[39] Some bishops were sufficiently concerned about the impact to instruct their clergy to desist.[40] Even so, the practice appears to have been widespread. At the little thermal centre of Argelès, according to the minutes of a meeting of the town council, the Abbé Lauga, his temper inflamed by gout, was prone to reproving 'in the most virulent terms…, the vices—genuine or supposed—which have been denounced to him by a sort of police made up of some poor fanatics who have no misgivings about the sad roles they are playing'. Although individuals had not been named, those presumed guilty of such diverse 'sins' as usury or dancing (even at family gatherings or official receptions) or of participating in '*les amusements les plus innocents*' were easily identifiable in a small community, particularly when the priest refused to hear their confessions and to admit them to holy communion. They generally assumed that they had no choice but to submit to the will of a priest convinced that

he was doing God's work and who as a tenured *curé* had even ignored his bishop's advice to be more discreet.[41] In an anguished, and semi-literate letter, Ambroise Paturon, a resident of Le Thour in the same department, expressed his concern that this kind of moral severity had the effect of discouraging confession.[42]

Confession, which the Church increasingly insisted should become more frequent as a means of encouraging the search for perfection, was always an anxious moment, even in the absence of scandal, and in spite of the spiritual relief it offered. At least once a year, immediately before the celebration of Easter, an admission of sins was deemed to be the essential prelude to gaining absolution and returning to a state of grace. A sympathetic priest might ease the process. The clergy were encouraged to be tactful by their superiors and in the manuals to which they looked for practical advice. However, as Mgr Gousset, Bishop of Périgueux, insisted in his *Théologie morale* (1844), 'everyone is obliged by divine law to admit to all the mortal sins of which they feel guilty, to identify their nature, indicate the number, and describe the circumstances'.[43] Mgr Pie warned his clergy that absolution too easily granted to sinners would only encourage vice.[44] Obsessed with the threat of Evil, the clergy felt duty-bound to intervene. Laxity in the confessional represented failure in the eyes of God. In all probability, the existence of a private sphere, from which religion was excluded, would have been inconceivable.[45]

Intimate questions concerning sexual relationships were always likely to cause embarrassment. Marie Cazaubon from Clarac in the Hautes-Pyrénées was distressed by an interrogation which she judged to be '*fort indiscret*' and 'too familiar', as well as by the aggressive manner of the priest concerned.[46] Parishioners making their confessions to ageing priests like the Abbé Clere at Moiron in the Jura, who was almost completely deaf, were often forced to shout and naturally concerned that they would be overheard. The essential secrecy of the act was further threatened by the rumours and gossip so typical of the small parish community.[47] At Villers-Cernay (Ardennes), women who offended against their priest's high moral standards could expect to be refused communion and thus undergo public humiliation.[48] The exclusion of young girls from the Congrégation de Marie was another, much-resented, shaming tactic.[49] At Saint Christol near Nîmes, the parish priest in suddenly terminating the confession of a widower who refused to answer questions concerning his sexual relationships, thus abandoned the man, unable to secure absolution, or to receive Easter communion, 'in the most terrible of alternatives'.

Another communicant was dismissed contemptuously with the words—'beast he was born and beast he will die'. For desperate parishioners, the impact of the 'caprice' and 'malignity' of their priest over the previous decade had been magnified by the bishop's 'indifference' to complaints.[50]

While sharing the clergy's insistence on the vital necessity of safeguarding female virtue—both the virginity of the young and fidelity within marriage—men frequently expressed their concern about what they perceived to be unacceptable levels of interest in their most intimate secrets. They also resented efforts, through the confessional, to influence their wives and daughters.[51] Confessors, instructed to believe that the procreation of God's children was the only justification for sexual intercourse, were especially anxious to halt the spread of the sinful practice of contraception. The Abbé Féline in his influential *Catéchisme des gens mariés*—first published in 1782—denounced married couples who practised 'the crime of the infamous Onan … when they do not want any more children, without wishing to deprive themselves of the pleasure they have grown used to during marriage'.[52] As contraception spread, questioning frequently became more obsessive and inquisitorial. Preaching at Arras, the Abbé Planque denounced 'the pollution, even in the marriage bed, [which] by a refinement of corruption, I almost said, diabolical art … cheats the intentions of nature, and even the designs of Providence for the institution of marriage!'[53] This was undoubtedly mortal sin.

By the 1850s, the various editions of Mgr Bouvier's influential manuals, which offered more systematic guidance to future priests on the questions they should ask in the confessional, and which unequivocally condemned—and associated—onanism and sodomy—were employed in some 60 seminaries. In apportioning blame, Bouvier emphasized male culpability. It was husbands who were judged by the clergy to be responsible for the act of *coitus interruptus* (withdrawal) and condemned for the *péché d'Onan*. Women, perceived to be submissive and sexually passive, were thought to have endured rather than enjoyed sex, and were thus, at least partially, absolved of responsibility, although a wife should certainly seek to persuade her husband to avoid offending God. Concern was rarely expressed about the impact of repeated pregnancies and the burden of large families on the physical and mental well-being of women. The Abbé Vianney nevertheless noted the agony of a sickly woman, terrified by the prospect of eternal damnation resulting from her attempts to avoid pregnancy while fulfilling the obligations of the marriage bed.[54] In such

situations, Mgr Bouvier insisted that confessors should advise couples to abstain from sexual activity and adopt separate beds.[55]

6.2.2 Newcomers

Obviously, some parishes were more difficult than others. However, 'Conflicts of interest, personality clashes, [and] rivalries … competition and conflict … rumour and gossip, suspicion and criticism, envy and fear of envy were endemic' in most communities.[56] Moreover, long-serving priests, convinced of their own virtues, often came to believe that they were immune from criticism while newcomers were almost bound to ruffle feathers; particularly when they adopted 'principled' and authoritarian rather than pragmatic positions on moral and communal affairs, sometimes seeking to 'immediately exercise an absolute authority, to which limited experience gives something of the brusque and tyrannical'.[57] The Abbé Lapoulle, priest at Génicourt-sur-Meuse, manifesting a determination to change established practices and '*tout réformer*', was thus rapidly denounced as 'a little tyrant in a cassock'.[58] According to Joseph Baudoz, a retired cavalry officer from the parish of Berlaimont (Nord), 'every time a new priest arrives in the commune neither the church nor the parish are worthy of him and the commune is obliged to make onerous changes'. The most recent incumbent had gone too far in his determination to construct a new, much larger church, rather than restore the existing building. This resolve to 'destroy to construct, instead of restoring to save, as did the Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ', represented an 'act of pride' which furthermore would disturb the remains of 'our ancestors'.[59]

Newly appointed parish priests always risked being compared unfavourably with their predecessors.[60] The inhabitants of Chavanne in Savoie were convinced that they would never again find the likes of their recently deceased and much loved priest. His replacement proved to be too forceful in his manner and use of his pulpit to denounce the perceived moral transgressions of young women. Following the celebration of Carnival in 1867, he had apparently complained loudly that the commune was 'a lunatic asylum' and that its inhabitants were '*imbéciles*', '*crétins*', '*crapules*' and '*canailles*'.[61] The mayor and leading citizens of Monléon-Magnoac, high in the Pyrenees, insisted in a letter to the newly elected President of the Republic in January 1849 that their normal 'blind' confidence in their parish priest had been shattered by the new incumbent's determination to entirely dominate the community.[62] Subsequently, the councillors and

notables of nearby Nistos would remind the minister that 'if a good priest is a treasure in a locality, one can comprehend easily that one with faults is likely to be a pure calamity'.[63]

New parish priests could also easily find themselves involved in ongoing disputes within communities, of which, initially, they might be unaware, much less understand.[64] According to Mgr Fillion, the Bishop of Le Mans, financial matters, refusals to baptize infants because of objections to proposed god-parents, efforts to persuade congregations to talk less and prevent their members from coming and going as they pleased, and changes in the trajectory of processions, were all likely to result in disputes.[65] Sometimes bitter differences also occurred over the participation of local musicians in church services and whether or not they were an aid to worship or a 'distraction'.[66] Having banned the local band, the parish priest at Grancey-sur-Ource (Côte-d'Or) found that he was prevented from completing his sermon on Easter Day 1862 by the '*tumulte*' arising when 'people noisily blew their noses, coughed [and] spat'.[67] The right to appoint a bell-ringer or grave-digger might also be disputed between municipal councillors, appealing to custom, and parish priests insisting upon their legal rights.[68]

Securing possession of the keys to the church tower, and control over the church bells, the vital means of calling the faithful to worship, as well as for sounding the alarm (*tocsin*), could also cause conflict.[69] There might be disagreement over whether or not it was appropriate to ring a peal for baptisms.[70] The growing unwillingness of priests to offer 'prayers to ward off storms' or ring the church bells to prevent hail was also resented, especially where, as at Esquiule (Basses-Pyrénées), they continued to collect the decalitre of wheat per household which had represented payment for such acts.[71] At Millières (Haute-Marne), the bells and clock in the church tower ceased to function because the municipal council, determined to retain control, refused to transfer 100 francs to the *fabrique* to pay for their maintenance. Peasants, without clocks in their homes, were deprived of '*les sonneries*' which regulated their work.[72] The holding of church services at times which did not fit in with the work routines of local farming or industry was a further cause for complaint.[73]

It was certainly possible to appoint the wrong kind of priest to a parish. When. on 1 December 1861. the Abbé Sevestre, parish priest at Marchéville, frustrated by the apparent indifference of the farmers and agricultural labourers who made up his flock, provoked 'hilarity' by announcing that 'If a revolution was necessary to drag you out of the state

of brutalization and stupor into which you have fallen, I would call for it with all my voice!', the Bishop of Chartres accepted that he should be moved, while expressing his sympathy for the parish which would ultimately receive a clergyman 'without tact, without measure, and incapable of doing good'.[74] The problem with the Abbé Corpel, parish priest at Bouligny (Meuse), according to the local gendarmerie commander, was his 'gloomy and haughty character … He never greets anyone, and does not even respond to greetings from others, something the population considers to be extremely impolite.'[75] The 'excessively pretentious manners' of the priest at Haute-Rivoire (Rhône) appear to have alienated the mayor and other local notables.[76] The *instituteur* at Eaux-Chaudes (Basses-Pyrénées) on the other hand regretted the '*grossièreté*' of the Abbé Dufaurart and the lack of 'respect' evident when the priest '*tutoye* everyone, even the old when he meets them for the first time'.[77]

A powerful personality, lacking tact was always likely to provoke dissent. Coldness and intolerance were major failings in a priest.[78] Constantly exposed to the elements and desperate for religious consolation, the fishermen of Berck (Pas-de-Calais) evidently found the Abbé Delrue too cold, too cerebral and too unsympathetic.[79] Widespread antipathy might also be aroused by a priest's apparent lack of sympathy for the poor.[80] An ambitious priest might thus address his sermons to members of the cultural 'elite' in a parish, employing a vocabulary and concepts hardly comprehensible to the majority of barely literate parishioners.[81] In the worst possible circumstances, the prospect that a new priest, already transferred from his previous parish(es) because of suspect morality, should hear confessions was likely to provoke intense male suspicion.[82]

6.2.3 Priests and Local Notables

For the clergy, satisfying the pretensions of both the social elite and of less elevated parishioners could be extremely difficult. The 'rich' and educated invariably expected to enjoy deferential and respectful relations with parish priests—whose bad manners they frequently complained about—and to exercise greater influence within the parish than the 'poor'. Recruited mainly from the peasantry, the clergy would be expected to adapt to a 'bourgeois' model of civility—in terms of speech, manners, clothing and personal cleanliness—which allowed them both to affirm their own rank and to mix with local notables.[83] The appearance of subservience to powerful local families might nevertheless be viewed as a major failing. It was

claimed that the Abbé Delatroitte's efforts to renovate a chapel at Ronchamp in Normandy and distribute charity to his parishioners ensured that he depended on the Marquis de Brige, in a relationship reminiscent of 'the despotism which existed in France before '89'.[84] A petition signed by '200 *chefs de famille*' at Listrac, similarly denounced their priest as 'detestable', as '*un esprit despote*', hostile to the Emperor, and wishing—with the support of local landowners—to return France to '*le siècle de la dîme*'.[85] In more mundane terms, Mgr Davie, Bishop of Belley, reminded his clergy that 'the poor … easily accuse the man they often see at the door of the rich at the time when smoke rises from his chimney and announces a table more fully laden than their own, of flattery and sensuality … God preserve the priest from visits which leave him with a desire to be invited to dinner. Nothing becomes him less than the weakness which has its origins in such base inclinations, so contrary to the ecclesiastical spirit, so conforming to the prejudices that the world has against us.'[86]

However saintly the priest, he was likely to assume that he had a right and indeed a duty, to intervene in local affairs.[87] This was especially the case where the mayor, 'an honest countryman, without education, without influence and without energy', had proved to be 'incapable of exercising control'.[88] The Prefect of Calvados was indeed grateful that in the village of Roucamps a mayor he described as 'poorly educated and of limited intelligence', was able to look to the parish priest for advice.[89] The assumption that the needs of religion should take priority over all else, however, frequently resulted in disagreements. The overlapping responsibilities of the municipal council and the parish *conseil de fabrique* complicated matters further. The former was required by an 1809 decree to provide lodgings for the parish priest and to meet the cost of major repairs to church buildings. The *conseil de fabrique*, composed of the mayor, parish priest and 'of some [elected] parish notables' was responsible for the proper conduct of religious services, the upkeep of buildings, and for financial matters, including the establishment of fees and pew rents.

The legal responsibilities (particularly in financial matters) and social pretensions of the local notables who made up these two councils provided numerous occasions for all kinds of minor disagreements which, due to offended susceptibilities, might easily be turned into '*un question de principe entre la mairie et l'église*'.[90] Although overlapping membership often facilitated cooperation,[91] priests were especially likely to complain about the efforts of domineering mayors to extend their influence to the *conseil de fabrique*.[92] At Badefols in the Dordogne, according to the Abbé

Alette, the mayor was determined to establish himself as a 'dictator … using the town hall as a weapon to undermine whoever does not support his personal interests'. To make matters worse, he failed to attend church services, opened his notarial office on Sundays, and was described as irreligious and '*partisan des principes subversifs*'.[93] A municipal *conseil* which took seriously its role as 'the vigilant guardian of the interests of the population', and its responsibility for the financial administration of the community, might also awaken the resentment of a priest who believed that its members should simply and unquestioningly support his initiatives.[94] The decision in 1856 by the parish priest at Baudreville in the Beauce, to remove the mayor from the office of parish council treasurer, without following proper procedure, inevitably humiliated the wealthy and status-conscious farmer concerned. He refused to part with his keys of office, forcing the priest to employ a locksmith to open the chest in which the parish funds were stored.[95]

Much clearly depended on the personalities of the leading figures involved as well as the circumstances; the communal mayor—in an ambiguous position as the *de facto* representative of his community and *de jure* government official, and the parish priest—the man of God.[96] In spite of rising prosperity and government subsidies, the competing demands for expenditure on churches, new roads, schools and town halls, frequently resulted in irreconcilable financial demands.[97] For both parish priest and communal mayor, the development of instruction had become a primary area of responsibility.[98] Communes already hard-pressed to meet the obligations imposed by the 1833 and 1850 education laws were not likely to welcome demands from their priests for funds to construct additional premises for the religious orders.[99] Their determination to construct larger and ever more beautiful churches—to the glory of God—and demands for communal subventions and voluntary donations might cause discord. At Verdon (Gironde), where the parish priest had been accused of 'perpetual and irritating interference in … the administration of the commune', the problem appears to have arisen out of what he perceived to be the mayor's 'unjustified' determination to oppose the renovation of the church.[100] Similar disputes wracked the parish of Rezay in the diocese of Bourges where the priest was able to 'persuade' some of the inhabitants to engage in 'more or less voluntary labour service (*corvées*) to fetch stone'.[101] In a case eventually brought before the Conseil d'Etat, the mayor of Pozières (Somme), who had advised against the purchase of a new peal of bells the parish could not afford, was denounced

by an overwrought priest for having 'made worse ravages than the cholera; the cholera passed, this man remains!' He was described as 'stupid, ignorant, a pedant, an unbeliever, a *Voltairien*'.[102] Councillors who failed to vote additional funding for a *vicaire* in the Vendean parish of Les Essarts in 1868 were even threatened with eternal damnation.[103]

A conscientious determination to fulfil his official duties could place a mayor in a difficult situation. M. Briot, mayor of Maure, was described by the Prefect of Ille-et-Vilaine as extremely devout and habitually dominated by the local clergy. The parish priest, 'accustomed to administering the commune at the same time as his parish', had thus decided in 1856 that a school should be constructed on land belonging to the commune. The efforts of the mayor to follow proper administrative procedures and secure the approval of the municipal council and prefecture had so infuriated him that the unfortunate Briot was forced to confess and receive absolution in a neighbouring parish.[104] At Plaintel (Côtes-du-Nord), the installation of a young priest, the Abbé Rouault de La Vigne—'arrogant' and 'despotic'—was followed by requests for the renovation of the presbytery on a scale far in excess of the funds available to the commune and *fabrique*. In an attempt to resolve the dispute, the Prefect appointed a commission made up of one of his officials, a representative of the bishop and the diocesan architect, to draw up plans. When these were altered by the priest, who furthermore demanded the dismissal of the mayor, the entire council threatened to resign.[105] At Corbas in the Isère, having commenced a substantial renovation programme, on this occasion with the support of the municipal council, the parish priest was ordered by the local civil tribunal to demolish work which had not been properly authorized by the prefect. He refused and barricaded himself in the church with a small group of mainly female parishioners. Whilst the priest rang the alarm on the church bells, his companions threw stones and pepper into their faces of the workmen sent by the prefecture. Brandishing a crucifix, the priest justified his resistance 'in the name of Christ'. The workmen demanding entry 'in the name of the law' eventually smashed their way into the church through the windows. Although the state prosecutor at Grenoble stigmatized an attitude he believed to be common among the rural clergy, namely, an unwillingness 'to submit their ideas and personal projects to the control and sanction of the authorities', most communities of course managed to avoid such drama.[106]

Occasionally, however, outside intervention became an urgent necessity. Just as the prefect supervised communal accounts, so the diocesan

bishop was ultimately responsible for the proper conduct of its affairs by the parish council.[107] In October 1853, the Archbishop of Rouen dissolved the *fabrique* at La Haye because of financial irregularities and the 'false' accusations provoked by its internal divisions, and replaced it with a temporary Commission administrative au temporal.[108] In such situations, a bishop could simply refuse to approve the accounts. This was the case in October 1864 when an unauthorized meeting of the *fabrique* of the troubled Parisian parish of Ternes agreed to provide generous and irregular supplements to the stipends of assistant priests. A substantial correspondence was subsequently generated which revealed wounded susceptibilities. In 1867, the *fabrique* thus accused the parish priest, the Abbé Hugony, of '*excès de pouvoir*' on two counts. First, because, without consultation, he had employed a Mme Triquenot as the church's laundress in place of sisters from the order of Saint-Vincent de Paul—inevitably generating rumours concerning his close relationship with the lady. Second, because the repairs he had ordered, again without consultation, had resulted in the removal of some chairs and in consequence a reduction in the income from pew rents. In 1870, the *fabrique* even went so far as to publish a pamphlet listing its grievances.[109]

Accounting difficulties were frequent. The mayor of Socx (Pas-de-Calais) complained that the *fabrique* accounts—prepared by the parish priest rather than by the treasurer, as should have been the case, contained 'irregularities, errors, omissions'.[110] The priest responsible for the impoverished parish of Saint Michel in the 17th arrondissement of Paris appears to have diverted the income from pew rents into church building and charity and failed to produce any receipts. The *fabrique* president and treasurer complained to the Archbishop; other parishioners petitioned the Emperor to protect a priest engaged in such good works.[111] The Abbé Mayeux, in a neighbouring parish, similarly refused to account for the income and charitable expenditure derived from a series of lotteries.[112] In Clamecy (Nièvre), the Abbé Guillaumet, served as either president or *de facto* treasurer of the *fabrique* of the town for 30 years. According to the prefect, between 1845 and 1851, he had 'completely annihilated the council'. Subsequently he had arranged only rare meetings at which he had presented sparse and incomplete accounts of income and of the expenditure he had himself sanctioned.[113] Substantial irregularities were also likely to be found in the accounts of deprived upland parishes, and in Brittany, areas in which populations continued to 'venerate' their priests and accepted that they should nominate members of the *fabrique*, keep

the accounts, and preside over its meetings.[114] The *instituteur* at the Pyrenean spa of Eaux Chaudes complained that the parish priest was unwilling even to organize a *fabrique* and in 1865 was able to simply transfer local charitable funds to the denier de Saint-Pierre established in 1860 to provide assistance to the embattled Pope.[115] The distribution of charitable funds was indeed a further potential area of dispute. The *juge de paix* at Wassigny (Aisne) accepted that while members of the local *bureau de bienfaisance* might sometimes question the parish priest's determination to nominate recipients and control the distribution of charity, generally they followed his advice.[116] At Epinay near Paris, complaints were similarly made concerning 'unfair' procedures, but throughout the 1860s the Abbé Verrier continued to distribute the funds of the communal charity bureau entirely as he wished.[117]

The establishment and changing level of pew rents might also provide an occasion for disagreement by heightening the importance of questions of precedence in processions or seating arrangements in church—both partly determined by the level of pew rent.[118] Prominent families frequently assumed that the pews in which they habitually sat were their private property. Poorer and less important families placed themselves further away from the high altar. Those who could not afford a pew rent were obliged to stand at the back of the church. Seating arrangements were thus key signifiers of social status. The priest at Magnac (Aveyron) provoked a furious altercation when he allocated a 'special place' to the sisters of the local convent and asked the wife of the mayor and her family to sit further back.[119] The decision of the parish priest at Fongrave (Lot-et-Garonne) to move the seats normally occupied by the mayor and councillors to a less prominent place in the church was similarly perceived by the mayor to be an 'arrogant provocation'. According to a local notary, the priest 'nourished a profound hatred for all those who resisted his whims', as well as against the Napoleonic regime. In reaction, the next mass ended with the councillors shouting 'Vive Napoléon'.[120]

6.2.4 Payment of Priests

Priests were frequently—and often unfairly—accused of '*l'avidité du gain*' by parishioners reluctant to accept that fees (the *casuel*)—levied according to complex diocesan *cahiers de charges*—for the performance of weddings and funerals, as well as the revenue from pew rents, were a necessary supplement to the stipends the clergy received from the State.[121] In dioceses

like Orleans, low levels of church attendance and a widespread refusal to pay fees, reduced country priests to near-destitution, although they were still expected to keep up appearances and to make charitable contributions.[122] The only means of protecting the dignity of the clergy and reducing popular hostility, according to the parish priest at La Fourguette in the suburbs of Toulouse, would have been to abolish fees and compensate priests by increasing the basic annual stipend from 850 to 1200 francs.[123]

In many parishes, a variety of customary payments in kind were also levied. Where clerical influence survived intact, and particularly in the west, priests might prosper as a result of 'voluntary' gifts which peasants rarely dared refuse.[124] Elsewhere, in the commune of Saint-Joseph-de-Rivière (Isère), for example, the clergy chanted the service of the Passion on Good Friday as a means of ensuring a good harvest, and then in November went from door to door to gather 'the collection for the Passion'. Every household was expected to contribute a gift in kind—wheat, oil, sugar or coffee—or sometimes in cash.[125] At Mezel in the Côte-d'Or, the Abbé Chauvin expected a gift of chickens and eggs before he would admit a child to first communion.[126] The Abbé Seilhan, priest at Louey (Hautes-Pyrénées), refused in May 1848 to conduct a wedding ceremony until the various fees he was owed were paid in full. In his defence, he insisted that he was only claiming what was due to him on the basis of 'usages established in the commune since time immemorial'.[127] The charges levied on the bereaved could similarly appear to be a 'shameful speculation by religion'.[128] The refusal of the priest responsible for the tiny alpine hamlet of Les Guibertes to bury a woman until her family paid for a previous funeral, and a wedding, received a decidedly mixed reception.[129] The constant humiliation by the priest at Hanviller (Moselle) of a poor man unable to pay for the burial of three of his children, and which had forced him to sell the cow which was the last resource of his family, aroused widespread contempt. The presbytery door was twice daubed with human excrement.[130]

In poor upland areas, priests might also be criticized for keeping livestock and becoming involved in disputes over water rights.[131] Pasturing livestock in the village cemetery seemed to suggest a lack of respect for its dead.[132] At Saint André in the Hautes-Alpes, the parish priest was reported to disappear each day following early mass to work on his farm at Rosans, a round trip estimated in itself to take 4 hours.[133] The Abbé Simonet, priest at Lavoye (Meuse), was accused of devoting too much of his time to beekeeping and fishing. Instructed by the Bishop of Verdun to investigate the

situation, the *curé* of Fleury-sur-Aire, reported that no harm was caused by these 'innocent pastimes'.[134] Priests might also be criticized for their passion for hunting. On several occasions, parishioners at Labastide in the Lot had been forced to search for their priest in the mountains so that he could deliver the last rites. Otherwise, he might be found in local markets selling the game he had shot.[135] The Abbé Coumerilh, priest in the Pyrenean parish of Urdos, eventually had to be forbidden to hunt by the Bishop of Bayonne.[136] Priests might also be accused of self-indulgence. It was claimed that the Abbé Guinot, *curé* of Contrexville, gained great pleasure from mixing in high society, spent far too much time playing whist with visitors to the local spa, and took insufficient care in his choice of conversation. In his defence, he could point to the assiduity with which he performed his parish duties, to his charitable work, and to a packed church.[137]

6.2.5 The Propensity of Parishioners to Complain

Complaints about the perceived shortcomings of priests was restrained by respect for and/or fear of the clergy. The ingrained sense of deference towards the man of the cloth, inspired by his spiritual functions and social status, ensured that the disaffected must often have felt that they should suffer in silence.[138] The clergy were thus generally approached with 'prudence' and treated with '*beaucoup de circonspection*'.[139] The poor and powerless needed to be careful. The aggressive determination of the clergy to control the distribution of charity as a means of rewarding the faithful exercised a powerful influence on popular behaviour. Moreover the overwhelming likelihood that bishops, concerned to protect the reputation of the Church, would support their clergy, ensured that complaints were likely to have little effect.[140] After attempts to draw the attention of the Archbishop of Rouen to improper sexual advances by the parish priest at Thil-Manneville had been dismissed out-of-hand, it would take a further 12 years before the complaint was renewed.[141] Government officials who normally insisted that disciplining the clergy was entirely the responsibility of the religious authorities, also adopted dismissive attitudes to complaints, representing them as mere '*divisions de clocher*', the outcome of mutual '*sentiments de haine et de vengeance*' between rival '*coteries*' or as engendered by political differences.[142]

Discontented parishioners could of course simply choose to avoid religious services or even to boycott the parish church. The '*immoralité*' of the parish priest at Charentilly (Indre-et-Loire) was so notorious that in

June 1860 the church remained empty even during a pastoral visit by the Archbishop of Tours, normally an occasion for pomp and celebration.[143] Their willingness or freedom to adopt such a course of action depended on the vitality of their religious beliefs as well as the coercive potential of the local alliance between priests, officials and notables. When all else had failed, traditional means of expressing popular discontent might be employed, although with rapidly declining frequency after mid-century. Thus, at Nouvion-et- Catillon (Aisne), 'interference' by the parish priest in municipal affairs provoked defamatory 'anonymous writings and songs'.[144] Hand-written placards often represented a stepping up in the intensity of protest.[145] In the night of 14–15 December 1862 when the name of the parish priest was gouged out of the base of a calvary recently erected in the cemetery at Bouville (Eure-et-Loir), posters announcing the fact, and threatening the life of the priest, appeared on nearby walls.[146] Some of the inhabitants of Ramasse in the Ain, on 31 January 1861, took advantage of one of the frequent absences of their parish priest to place seals on the door of the church and then demonstrate on his return. The incident had been provoked by the prospect of a death in the community without benefit of clergy and had been supported by the mayor—who was dismissed—and councillors.[147]

Sometimes the desire for vengeance and justice provoked a ritualized *charivari*, with satirical songs and discordant music performed generally by gangs of youths, or took even more unpleasant forms such as the daubing of the doors of the presbytery with human excrement.[148] Ribald songs in Moulins (Allier) in December 1863 celebrated the exploits of the local *curé*—seen climbing a wall in an attempt to reach the bedroom of a young girl whose parents he knew were away from home.[149] Songs were also the weapon selected by the youths of Siradan in the Pyrenees when their parish priest accused a young woman of infanticide, provoking a judicial investigation which had found her innocent.[150] The threat of a retired gendarmerie officer to shoot a *vicaire* at Gan (Basses-Pyrénées) who had impregnated his daughter, leading to the precipitant flight of the priest, appears to have been regarded as quite justified even by the judicial authorities.[151]

Carnival presented the ideal opportunity for protest. On 25 February 1849, the young men of the village of Siarrouy (Hautes-Pyrénées) chose to parody the sermons of the Abé [*sic*] Cardeillac, described in a petition as an 'imperious spirit, … avid for domination …, having for principles that everyone should bend to the will of the priest, that the priest must be the sovereign arbitrator' in matters temporal as well as spiritual. Complaints

made to the Bishop of Tarbes had been without effect.[152] The unsuccessful efforts of the parish priest at Any-Martin-Rieux (Aisne) to prevent the traditional masquerade on Shrove Tuesday 1864, and his subsequent denunciation of the young men involved for immorality, led to a plot to embarrass the priest. This involved leading mares to the front of the presbytery and having them mounted by stallions, in reference to rumours concerning the clergyman's own sexual habits. The plan was ruined by the arrival of the mayor with a gendarme.[153] At Bouillancourt-en-Sery (Somme), the Abbé Fourrière was briefly locked out of his own presbytery in protest against the obsessive manner in which he followed young people and reported any signs of familiarity to their parents, and his repeated denunciations of sexual immorality, as well as his success in securing a ban on the dancing which had traditionally accompanied the feast of Saint Colette in this working-class community.[154]

Priests were expected to conduct themselves in a dignified manner. They should display 'patience' and 'moderation' and avoid excessive familiarity.[155] It was important also for a priest to ensure that he was not too closely identified with particular individuals or families. Most certainly, he should not succumb to such earthly temptations as drink, lust, or a greedy desire for possessions. Alcoholism, and also gluttony, appear, however, to have been common problems, brought on, perhaps, by the isolation which many priests endured.[156] The Prefect of Seine-et-Marne, while stressing that the behaviour of most priests was 'exemplary', certainly expressed concern about the 'immoderate' consumption of alcohol which threatened to 'compromise … the dignity of their character'.[157] In some cases, as when the parish priest at Gometz (Seine-et-Oise) was arrested, along with his drinking companions—a wine merchant and a cattle dealer—in a bar at Limours in June 1857, severe reprimands were delivered by bishops.[158] Even more serious was the discredit resulting from public drunkenness within one's own parish.[159] Initially, the Prefect of the Meuse excused the Abbé Souillot, *desservant* of Bazincourt, because he rarely appeared drunk in public and provided free medical care to the poor. However, this changed when the priest was reported to have collapsed in an alcoholic stupor onto the altar of his church during mass and because of his growing habit of abusing the congregation from the pulpit and threatening them with eternal damnation.[160]

As Mgr Darboy pointed out, priests needed constantly to be prudent in their behaviour and to choose every word with care.[161] An often obsessive interest in the parish priest's every move was evident in most communities.

Malevolence, or the impact of rumour as reports passed '*de bouche en bouche*' could easily exaggerate the least transgression.[162] There were always ill-defined borderlands. Self-respect might be perceived by some parishioners to be arrogance; advice to be interference; an interest in communal affairs a determination to dominate; the desire to achieve a respectable standard of living as greed; the occasional glass of wine as drunkenness; enjoying the services of a housekeeper, or else an interest in the well-being of the young, as symptomatic of a search for sexual gratification. Susceptibilities were easily aroused. Even trivial complaints might result in a fundamental loss of confidence on the part of some or all of the inhabitants of a parish and the reputation of a priest, once called into question, was difficult to restore.[163]

6.3 Moral Failings

Most priests appear to have lived morally irreproachable lives, sublimating the pressures caused by their perpetual vows and particularly the commitment to celibacy, which had been so openly and widely condemned as contrary to the laws of nature during the Enlightenment and Revolution by both priests and laymen.[164] The subsequent reaffirmation of this pledge, together with constant denunciations of sexuality as sinful probably assisted in this—as well as transmitting negative attitudes towards sex throughout society.[165] Women were idealized and partly de-sexualized as Holy Virgins or as submissive Christian Mothers. Nevertheless, many priests appear to have been obsessed with sex and to have experienced considerable anxiety in their everyday relations with women. It was Eve after all who had served as the instrument of Original Sin. It was her transgressions which had resulted in expulsion from the Garden of Eden and in the end of innocence. It was she who bore a heavy responsibility for bringing death into the world.[166]

In recent times, we have become all too familiar with the inclination of some priests to 'sin' by engaging in carnal activity and of others to turn a blind eye towards the moral and/or legal transgressions of their colleagues, as well as the misguided determination of those in positions of authority to attempt to protect the reputation of the Church by concealing abuses and thus protecting offenders. Substantial evidence exists to confirm that the Church—an institution claiming to provide moral leadership—systematically concealed—over centuries—illicit acts by its priests which, in the case of sexual abuse and the sadistic treatment of children,

had a devastating impact on the lives of many victims. In seeking to protect its own reputation, the Church, as an institution, was thus repeatedly guilty of gross moral turpitude.

Sexual transgressions by the clergy, whether with consenting adults, or at the expense of children were, at least according to some historians, comparatively rare.[167] Judgement was and is difficult. The Cardinal-Archbishop of Arras estimated in 1849 that 'of a thousand priests, five are rotten, which is hardly exceptional', adding, sadly, 'but it is too much for a bishop of 81 who has ordained all the priests in his diocese'.[168] The judicial authorities—representing wider socio-cultural trends—appear to have become increasingly intolerant of sexual crimes (of rape, paedophilia, incest, etc.). In part, the trend towards prosecution resulted from revisions of the penal code in 1832 and 1863 which reflected a growing official determination to protect women and children (under the age of 11–13) from indecent and violent assaults. Abuse of authority was also taken more seriously and reflected in the sentencing policy of the courts.[169] As political tension grew from 1859 as a result of French intervention in Italy, it also appears that reports of incidents involving priests, which in the past would have been suppressed by the authorities, and dealt with by the quiet transfer of the priest to another parish, were more likely to result in official action.[170] According to a recent calculation, prosecutions increased from 107 in 1830 to 875 in 1876—still representing probably only the tip of the iceberg.[171]

Sexual misdemeanours involving the clergy were in any case sufficiently frequent to cause public concern and, magnified by rumour and anticlericalism, certainly lent weight to the age-old myth of the predatory priest.[172] Popular proverbs and songs, as well as gossip, frequently accused the clergy of failing to live up to their vows. Jokes about the relationships between priests and their housekeepers and even with nuns were particularly common.[173] The tavern keepers, themselves so often condemned by the clergy for encouraging drunkenness and propagating ideas subversive of social and moral order, frequently responded in kind.[174] Even the best-intentioned efforts to assist the sick or comfort the bereaved could result in potentially compromising situations where a priest was left alone with a woman, or made repeated visits to her home.[175] Lending support to an abandoned or abused wife was especially dangerous, both because of the suspicions generated about the priest's motives, and what was likely to be viewed as a challenge to male, patriarchal authority. The inhabitants of the village of Honoy-le-Jussey (Haute-Saône) claimed to be so 'scandalized'

by the regular and closely observed visits of their priest to a woman estranged from her husband, that they found alternative confessors in neighbouring parishes.[176] Indignation was easily aroused by the apparent transgressions of a figure who claimed to be the moral guardian of the community.[177]

The habitual response of senior clergymen to accusations directed at priests whose previous behaviour had often been irreproachable was likely to be disbelief.[178] In 1847, the Bishop of Chartres defended his clergy against the 'lies', and what he insisted were exaggerated accounts of the most insignificant misdemeanours involving only a tiny minority of priests, but publicized with 'arrogant contempt' in the local newspaper *Le Glaneur*.[179] In a confidential report to the Bishop of Troyes in 1869, a senior parish priest in dismissing as unfounded a rumour concerning the '*relations coupables*' engaged in by a fellow cleric, described it as a 'banal accusation from which few priests, at a certain stage in their lives, are able to escape'.[180] The threat to the reputation of a priest in such circumstances could not always be ignored, however.[181] A significant number of reports containing formal accusations of illicit behaviour by priests survive in the archives. These might be divided into cases involving consensual sex between adults (both hetero- and homo-sexual)—the former unacceptable to the Church but not illegal); indecent assault or rape of adults; and the sexual abuse of children. In many cases, the commitment to celibacy must have caused considerable personal stress which could only have been partially relieved by the practice of masturbation, itself a sinful act of self-abuse.[182]

In certain situations sexual frustration could evidently become intense. Simply travelling in a coach, in close physical proximity to a woman, might represent an almost unbearable temptation.[183] The Abbé Gruel was accused of having 'inappropriately' touched a female travelling in a crowded coach between Laon and Montcornet. The intimate questions he habitually posed in the confessional had already resulted in his acquiring a reputation as a 'pig', to be avoided if at all possible.[184] The Abbé Bise, parish priest at Le Mesnil-Saint-Denis, was transferred to another parish when his obsession with a sister teaching at the girls school was revealed by the suggestive letters she had passed on to her superior.[185] In similar circumstances, the Abbé Fontaine at Vallières in the Aube was accused in 1863 of making indecent remarks to women during his frequent bouts of intoxication. He was reprimanded by his bishop and moved to a parish '*de peu d'importance*'.[186] The sheer hypocrisy of some priests encouraged efforts

by parishioners to obtain a replacement. This was the case in Aubervilliers on the outskirts of Paris. In a '*très confidentielle*' 'Note sur l'Abbé Escaille' composed in the Prefecture of Police, it was accepted that a priest well known for his moral rigour was himself guilty not only of greed, in demanding supplements to his stipend from the local council and excessive fees for conducting funerals, but was also widely assumed to have indecently assaulted a young woman.[187]

Priests who had come to doubt their vocations were especially likely to be tempted by the prospect of something akin to domestic bliss. The Abbé Blin and Marie Bullot of the parish of Saint-Etienne-de-Beauvais who fled to England in February 1857 had evidently been planning to leave as soon as the young lady reached the age of majority. According to the prefect, well informed about developments in his place of residence, they would make an attractive couple. Letters seized by the authorities, suggested that Blin had 'entered into holy orders in spite of himself, complaining about those with authority over him, who had forced his vocation'. As well as love, he was motivated by a determination to stop preaching 'truths' in which he did not believe. The scandal caused in the locality was 'immense' and the Bishop of Beauvais was determined to ensure that the authorities prevented the couple from securing their position by means of a civil marriage.[188] In a similar case, in December 1858, the Abbé Calvet, a priest in Perpignan, left town with a woman with whom he had been infatuated for some time. He declared that they intended to marry and explained his action largely in terms of his 'aversion' for the priesthood into which he had been forced by his father. However, several days later the couple returned to beg forgiveness from the bishop, the young man planning to enter a monastery, the young woman a convent. Guilt had presumably overwhelmed passion.[189] In 1868, the Bishop of Albi would prove to be far more sympathetic in another case of 'weakness of the flesh', in supporting the return to holy orders of a former priest, following the death of the woman with whom he had run off 20 years before.[190]

Not surprisingly, little sympathy appears to have been shown towards the Abbé Derras, parish priest at Lauzun, who was found to have enjoyed a long-term liaison with a Mlle. Reynaud—revealed in letters discovered by the lady's husband-to-be.[191] The relationship between the Abbé Rousseau, *curé* of Fillé-Guécélard and Constance Leroy, a 23-year-old '*pensionnaire libre*' in the convent of the Perpetual Adoration in nearby Le Mans was discovered when the couple were apprehended by a *garde châmpetre* engaging in '*des actes que la morale réprouve*' in a field on the

outskirts of the town. Rousseau confessed that for seven years he had been in the habit of using a rope ladder to scale the convent walls to sleep with his lover. To limit the impact of such scandalous behaviour, the prefect agreed that the priest should not be prosecuted.[192] This would not be possible when, in July 1856, an attempt was made to murder the Abbé Constant—a *vicaire* in the parish of Saint-Barnabé, by the aggrieved husband of a woman the priest had somehow managed to regularly meet in a room in the convent of the Sœurs de Saint-Vincent de Paul. The Bishop of Marseille regretted that 'it is very painful … to see such grave interests compromised by those very people who ought to be setting an example of all the virtues'.[193]

The military and clerical authorities were similarly embarrassed when the Abbé Bérard, chaplain at the Saint Cyr military academy, was found to be maintaining a woman in Versailles. Devastated by his dismissal, he complained that he had been found guilty simply on the basis of hearsay and reminded the minister of his past services as a military chaplain in the Crimea where he had been wounded as well as contracting cholera and typhus. The outcome of his request for a parish appointment is not known.[194] Particularly shocking for M. Renou, secretary-general at the Eure-et-Loir prefecture, was the '*coupable*' and '*criminel*' liaison between the parish priest at Gommerville and the wife of a local notary, which appeared to be tolerated both by the husband and the community. That the priest at nearby Oinville-Saint-Liphard was a drunkard and that his two mistresses had come to blows over him, appears to have been far less offensive to the official's susceptibilities.[195]

Some priests appear to have been inveterate womanizers, willing to take full advantage of their privileged positions. The mayor and councillors of Vanne (Haute-Saône) complained that 'our Saviour ... believed he had sent a pastor to safeguard the flock, but instead he has placed a wolf in the sheepfold to devour the souls of the faithful!'[196] The Abbé Jardin, when *desservant* of Saint-Germain-des-Bois in the Bourges diocese, had 'attempted to corrupt' several of the young girls attending his catechism classes. Transferred to another commune in the same diocese he had repeated the offence and been moved to a parish in the neighbouring diocese of Nevers, where he had entered into an adulterous relationship with a married woman, before being transferred to Entrains as *vicaire* and chaplain to a community of the Sisters of the Visitation. There he had exercised his undoubted charm to attract the attention of both the nuns and their teenage pupils. According to the official report, the letters of

some of the latter, seized in the post, were proof of his 'perversity' and '*esprit de débauche*'. He was finally placed under *interdit* by the Cardinal-Archbishop of Bourges.[197] Together with other widely reported incidents such as the seduction and impregnation of three sisters, aged 16, 18 and 22, by a *vicaire* at La Chapelle Saint Florent (Maine-et-Loire) and his subsequent confession, this only appeared to confirm negative popular perceptions of priests.[198]

In the case of accusations directed at members of the clergy, the Prefect of the Oise assumed, and quite typically, that his aim 'must always be to avoid scandal' which might discredit the religious institution.[199] When the Abbé Duché was accused of indecent assault in June 1867, the Prefect of the Nièvre sought to discredit the complainant, although she was supported by her own parish priest, by accusing her of being a prostitute or 'at least an unmarried mother', while the Bishop of Nevers, although himself convinced of Duché's guilt, successfully proposed a course of action designed to prevent public scandal . The charges against the errant priest were dropped and in return he was removed from his parish at Donzy—but only for two years.[200] When in 1869, the *instituteur* at Thorey (Meurthe) found the parish priest in his classroom in '*flagrant délit d'immoralité*' with a woman already rumoured to be his mistress he threw open the windows and called upon passers-by to witness the scandalous scene. The authorities were not amused! The Prefect severely admonished the teacher for publicizing the scandal, while the local clergy put pressure on him to deny that the incident had occurred. The Bishop of Nancy refused to transfer the priest because this would be seen as an admission of guilt, unless, and as a quid pro quo, both the village mayor and the teacher were dismissed.[201]

Far more serious was the situation of the Abbé Courtaud, *desservant* of Bazelat, actually brought before the assizes of the Creuse in 1850 and sentenced to eight years imprisonment for involving himself in infanticide as a result of the pregnancy of his mistress. He had already been transferred from another parish due to his interest in women.[202] The Abbé Tissier, *desservant* of Saint Maur in the diocese of Bourges, was also accused of complicity in infanticide by a 17-year-old servant girl who claimed that she had strangled her newborn child at the suggestion of the priest. Clémence Mazure also insisted that he had raped her when she was 10 and introduced her to a life of 'debauchery'. By the time the case came to trial, Tissier had disappeared leaving the girl to face the consequences of her actions alone.[203]

Homosexual acts were judged to be both immoral and illegal. The inhabitants of Aix-en-Provence were scandalized in June 1856 to hear of the advances made by a priest to Sergeant Bloud of the 75th Infantry regiment.[204] In an extremely detailed deposition, a soldier undergoing a cure for a venereal infection in the military hospital at Angers described how he had been seduced and sodomized by the chaplain—the Abbé David. The priest had explained that he had little real religious commitment although dutifully performing his duties and preaching wonderful sermons. He received a two-year prison sentence for his transgressions.[205] When a 15-year-old student at the Collège Saint Denis at Saint Geniez in the Aveyron told his elder brother about his homosexual relationship with the Abbé Delpon, this had provoked an investigation in which other pupils were closely interrogated about their masturbatory practices. They denied that their contact with the priest involved anything more than hugs and kisses.[206] Potentially more serious had been the '*actes nombreux de pédérastie*' of which the Abbé Merlin, *desservant* of the parish of Saints near Coulommiers, was suspected. Following enquiries made 'with all the moderation and prudence demanded by delicate affairs involving ministers of religion', it was recognized that the priest had made advances to at least a dozen men in his parish, including two members of the church choir who had subsequently suffered illness due to the acts of 'sodomy' committed upon them. However, as no children had been involved and the priest was to be transferred to another parish, the judicial authorities decided to take no action.[207] The parish priest at Saint-Maxime-sur-Vic (Landes) was also transferred after an agricultural labourer reported seeing him naked in a field with a young man. He had already been discredited by an accusation of sodomy two years before.[208] The Abbé Merstrallet, professor at the *petit séminaire* at Saint-Jean de Maurienne, appears to have been packed off to Rome in 1864 before the accusation of '*attentats aux mœurs*' made by several of his pupils could become public.[209]

Children appear to have been the most likely victims of the repressed sexuality of priests. Rumours of the abuse of children by parish clergy and members of the teaching orders were not uncommon.[210] The Abbé Jossen, vicar-general in the diocese of Meaux, even warned priests of the dangers they faced by treating children with affection in the irreligious parishes of a region where their every act was susceptible to misinterpretation.[211] In a memoir to the Ministre de l'Instruction publique in 1861, in the aftermath of the abuse of 17 young people by the directors of the Christian schools in Angers, Jean Guchet, a lay *instituteur*, described these incidents

as evidence of the brutal punishments regularly imposed, as well as of the 'multiple acts of immorality and indecent assaults' committed by the teaching orders.[212] The 64-year-old priest at Dornes (Nièvre), the Abbé Boyer, was actually sentenced to five years imprisonment for corrupting the young by encouraging acts of gross indecency, including sodomy, among members of his catechism classes, the church choir, and pupils at the local school directed by the Christian brothers. That, by law, the parish priest was responsible for the moral and religious instruction of the young was not lost on the court, which additionally banned Boyer from teaching for ten years.[213]

Questions asked by confessors but judged to be 'inappropriate' by the laity were another potential cause of difficulties. Not surprisingly, scandal was caused when, during a visitation to the parish of Vermenton (Yonne) by the Missionnaires de Pierre-qui-vive, initiated by a local landowner—the Comtesse de Chastellux, 14-year-old girls were asked by a certain Frère Etienne whether they allowed boys to 'lift up their skirts and if … they had placed their hands in a forbidden place'—to which he pointed.[214] The parish priest at Avesnes (Nord) was accused of having made '*propositions immorales*' to 11- and 12-year-old girls. In this case, Aline Mercier had complained to her mother that the priest had summoned her to his presbytery, questioned her about her relations with young boys, and then asked her if she would like to do 'naughty things' ['*polissonneries*'] with him. Police investigations discovered that four other girls had apparently been invited, in the confessional, to engage in '*cochonneries*' with the priest.[215] The Abbé Peschaud, *desservant* of Paray-sous-Briailles (Allier) accused of '*attentats à la pudeur*' against young people '*âgé de moins de 13 ans*', was already rumoured to have made his niece pregnant. He would be sentenced to ten years imprisonment.[216]

Where the judicial authorities were persuaded that the circumstances were particularly serious, an investigation might follow, involving such figures as the investigating magistrate, the mayor, the *juge de paix*, the police *commissaire* and *gendarmerie*. However, evidence was frequently contradictory and the legal situation not always clear. Thus when accusations of indecent assault were laid against the Abbé Cabardos, *desservant* of Eoux (Haute-Garonne) in April 1869, it was determined that if 'some of the accusations are consistent', while being immoral, they did not 'fall under the remit of the law'. The Garde des Sceaux was advised that all he could do was suggest that the offending priest be disciplined by the ecclesiastical authorities and moved to another parish.[217] Particularly strong

feelings of disgust were likely to be generated by such cases as that involving the Abbé Auffret parish priest at Lommoye (Seine-et-Oise). His drunkenness and extravagance had long been tolerated. However, according to the prosecuting magistrate, acts of gross indecency involving the 11- and 12-year-old members of his catechism class were, 'unpardonable', 'incomprehensible' and 'sacrilegious'.[218] As in the case of sexual misdemeanours involving adults, to their eternal shame, both the civil and religious authorities were only too likely to attempt to cover up abuse against children, although a priest caught up in and shamed by such increasingly public procedures and in all likelihood suffering intense feelings of guilt could well be driven to suicide.[219]

Even when accusations were taken seriously by magistrates, it could take some considerable time before suspicion was translated into prosecution.[220] The mayor of Thil-Manneville pointed out to the minister that the immorality of the parish priest had been discussed openly for at least a dozen years, but that until he had persuaded Louis Ducroq to make a deposition, no-one 'wanted to testify in writing from fear of compromising themselves'.[221] When the Abbé Launay appeared before the tribunal correctionnel at Loudéac in 1862, he was charged with over 50 counts of indecent assault, carried out in the succession of parishes in which he had served. He had finally been prosecuted only after the *sous-préfet* had himself witnessed an act of 'gross public indecency' conducted with a 14-year-old boy.[222] Brother Gerert, a frère des Ecoles chrétiennes, was accused of indecently assaulting 87 children before finally being brought before the assizes at Versailles in 1865.[223] Accused of masturbating 11 members of his catechism class and choir, the Abbé Richard, parish priest at Montolivet, attempted to blame the 'wickedness' of certain of his parishioners, before admitting that he might, 'but not deliberately', have touched the genitals of some of the children. The assizes of the Seine-et-Marne would sentence him to 15 years incarceration.[224] When, in Spring 1857, the Abbé Bonnot, priest at They-les-Sorans (Haute-Saône), was eventually accused, in a widely circulated wanted poster, of 'acts of a revolting obscenity and numerous indecent assaults committed, over more than eight years, against children of the male sex' [his choirboys], he fled across the nearby frontier into Switzerland. Deported by the Swiss police, Bonnot, who had already served three years for similar offences, was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment.[225]

Many incidents—probably the vast majority—were left unreported. The status of the priesthood, the victims' sense of powerlessness, the

extreme reluctance of the civil, and especially the religious authorities, to listen, and fear of authority in general, must have ensured that many potential complainants remained silent. Much would depend on the circumstances and also on the age of the supposed victims. Parents might be anxious to safeguard the 'honour' of their families or, understandably reluctant to subject children who had been victims of abuse to further trauma.[226] Pressure could be applied easily, particularly on the poor inhabitants of a small rural community, to prevent them from making complaints. At Margueron (Gironde), efforts were made by the mayor, described as a 'fervent Catholic', and the Archpriest of Sainte-Foy, 'blinded by an ill-considered esprit de corps', to persuade parents not to report the sexual abuse of a 9-year-old girl by the Abbé Laëns to the police *commissaire*.[227] In the case of a young girl sexually abused by the *vicaire* of Ham (Somme), the *curé* of the parish had summoned the victim to his presbytery and 'persuaded' her to swear on a crucifix, and in the presence of two witnesses, that the accusations she had made were false. He then circulated this information in two sermons. The investigating magistrate accepted that the girl had been intimidated but dismissed the case on the grounds that she was more than 11 years old, and had not been the victim of violence. At least, in this case, the bishop subsequently instructed the *vicaire* to leave Ham and return to his family and reprimanded the *curé*.[228]

The harsh regimes imposed in boarding schools and especially orphanages, as well as on numerous young domestic servants, the sense of impunity and the constant abuse of authority involved, must also have discouraged complaints, as well as brutalizing many of those forced to suffer in silence.[229] The young, women, social inferiors, even if they were courageous or desperate enough to complain, could expect a decidedly unsympathetic reception in many (most) cases.[230] Thus, Jeanne Isac and Louise Vitrac who eventually complained that they had been 'subject to solicitations and other things' by the parish priest at Nespouls (Corrèze) over a seven-year period, from the age of 12, had been warned by the Abbé Queyssac, in the '*tribunal de pénitence*', never to divulge what had happened. In this case the priest was acquitted by the tribunal at Brives, in spite of the evidence, before being arraigned by a scandalized state prosecutor before the imperial court at Limoges and given a lengthy jail sentence.[231] In a similar case, also tried before the Corrèze assizes, the Abbé Vigier, priest at Cornil, was acquitted because, according to the state prosecutor, of the 'manoeuvres of all kinds employed to weigh on the

conscience of the [all male] jurors' by the clergy led by the Bishop of Tulle.[232] In many impoverished communities, particularly in the more isolated rural areas like Corrèze or Creuse or Finistère, violence was a feature of daily life, tolerance of sexual abuse common, and socially marginalized individuals could expect little protection.[233]

Similar pressures appear to have been in play when the Abbé Latour, *desservant* of Mauzac (Haute-Garonne), a priest with a quarrelsome reputation, determined in 1852 to support his close friend the village mayor who had been accused of raping the local schoolmistress. Subsequently, witnesses remembered him boasting that he had summoned the victim to his presbytery and by exercising considerable moral pressure over a period of several hours, persuaded her to withdraw the charges. He was mistaken. The case was tried at the assizes where the president of the court delivered the '*plus humiliantes admonitions*' to the priest. To the disgust of the state prosecutor, the mayor was, however, acquitted and subsequently paraded through the streets of Toulouse arm-in-arm with the priest. An attempt to cite the Abbé Latour before the Conseil d'Etat was terminated on condition that he was moved to another parish. Appointed to the parish of Mourvilles-Hautes, in April 1857, Latour was himself accused of rape. While admitting to the minister that the priest suffered from '*défauts de caractère*', and deserved a severe reprimand, Mgr Mioland his bishop decided that this serious accusation had not been proved and that he should remain in his new parish.[234]

In attempting to minimize the impact on public opinion, transgressions were thus likely to be concealed by a conspiracy of silence and the transfer of suspect priests to a distant parish.[235] In this, bishops were often supported by Catholic officials. The secular authorities were prone to dismiss accusations against priests as the outcome of disputes within communities in which accusing a priest of sexual impropriety was an effective means of discrediting him.[236] Where complaints were persistent, and partly in order to quash rumours, investigations might, however, be instigated. Making sense of contradictory evidence from children was always difficult and the authorities invariably sought confirmation from adult witnesses.[237] When, in 1854, the *sous-préfet* at Contrexeville in the Vosges received a 'vague' complaint from the mayor of the town concerning the morals and politics of the parish priest, he initiated an investigation by the *brigadier de gendarmerie* and then instructed the *commissaire de police* to conduct a '*contre-enquête*'. Unwilling to make a report to the minister based upon what he regarded as limited sources of

information, the prefect himself then established a further enquiry directed by a trusted *juge de paix*. He also requested that the Bishop of Saint-Dié begin his own investigation and Mgr Caverot would claim subsequently that this was far more thorough than the efforts of the administration which, he claimed, had involved two gendarmes going from door to door, gathering 'all the slanderous remarks whispered amongst the lowest class by the enemies of the curé'. The police *commissaire* and *juge de paix* had, he maintained, simply interviewed the same hostile witnesses. In any case, the outcome, as was previously noted, was agreement that the Abbé Guinot was too fond of playing whist with visitors to the spa, and was careless in his conversation.[238] Investigations of the activities of particular priests, whether for suspected political or sexual offences, and sometimes involving rather ham-fisted *gendarmes* or police *commissaires*, were bitterly resented as an affront to the dignity both of the priests concerned and particularly to the institution which they represented.[239]

In the case of investigation by the episcopal authorities, a cantonal doyen or diocesan vicar-general would be required to make inquiries which again frequently proved to be inconclusive.[240] Responding dismissively to complaints about a priest made by two women, the Bishop of Albi pointed out that 'in this locality, they scarcely hesitate, when they want to get rid of a priest who does not suit them, to accuse him of the most wicked acts' and that, 'accustomed to this kind of plotting, we are obliged to remain on our guard against most of these denunciations'.[241] Following the Abbé Delpon's dismissal from his teaching post by the civil authorities 'due to misconduct and immorality', he was nevertheless appointed to a parish by the Bishop of Rodez who similarly denounced the allegations as '*monstrueuse*' and as evidence of the 'perversity' of the individual who had laid an accusation against a priest of irreproachable morality and of 'execrable machinations against the honour of the priesthood'. He sought to reinforce his point by insisting that 'there are women and girls paid by scoundrels to denounce priests' as well as women impelled by a '*passion coupable*' and determined to threaten clerical chastity.[242] As the Bishop of Dijon pointed out, 'with regard to the confessional, it is easy to incriminate the priest, because everyone knows that in this matter he is not able to defend himself'. More frequent prosecutions for defamation appeared to be the answer.[243] The Bishop of Nevers, Mgr Forcade, similarly claimed that accusations were generally false, a product of '*l'esprit d'irreligion*' and of the persecution the Church had endured for 'eighteen centuries'.[244]

The removal of a priest from his parish was undoubtedly a course of action which bishops preferred, if possible, to avoid. It might suggest presumption of guilt and was likely to permanently damage his reputation among his colleagues, as well as affecting his reception in his new parish.[245] The shortage of clergy in many dioceses was another factor. A flawed priest was better than no priest.[246] A priest who was judged to be at fault or to have lost the confidence of his parishioners, for whatever reason, was, however, likely to be transferred, even if not immediately, with compliance secured if necessary through the threat of prosecution, interdiction, or retirement to the nearest Trappist monastery.[247] One wonders about the prevailing state of religious belief in those parishes which were regarded by bishops as suitable dumping grounds for incompetent or errant clergy. The Abbé Delseille, *vicaire* at Saint-Alvère, expelled from the Périgueux diocese after making a young girl pregnant, was nevertheless recommended by his bishop to the Cardinal-Archbishop of Bordeaux, in whose diocese he would rapidly be moved from three parishes, before finally becoming *desservant* of Lignan, in which he again took advantage of several young women, before being persuaded to enter a monastery as a means of avoiding prosecution.[248] Something of a record must have been achieved by the Abbé Segond, ordained in 1847, who by April 1865 had served in seven parishes, in each of which, according to the state prosecutor at Grenoble, he had engaged in 'the most cynical immorality, spreading everywhere the contagion of his vices and corrupting young girls, and even children'.[249] The adequate supervision of priests who moved between dioceses was recognized as a particular problem by the Archbishop of Paris. Thus, the Abbé Imbert had been forced to resign from his parish at Cosne due to incidents of 'grave immoralité'—in this case of sodomy. After agreeing to enter the Trappist monastery at La Meilleraie, the priest, with the warm support of the Bishop of Nevers, had, however, managed to secure an appointment to the Parisian parish of Saint-Ambroise.[250] Only very rarely did a bishop make a stand on moral principle, as when, in 1859, the Bishop of Montauban, Mgr Doney, felt obliged to express his regret at the Garde des Sceaux's decision not to prosecute the *curé* of Valeilles. While understanding the government's determination to avoid scandal, he believed that simply transferring the priest to another parish represented a breach of canon law.[251] The essentially systemic tendency of bishops to give priests the benefit of the doubt, however, clearly risked bringing further discredit on the Church.[252]

6.4 Conclusion

Meaningful generalizations are difficult on the basis of the available evidence. Some priests were very good, some very bad. The vast majority were somewhere in between and probably managed to live up to the expectations defined in 1848 by the Commission municipale of Labastide Clermont, and according to which a priest should 'do good, encourage the practice of religion, and accomplish with an edifying exactitude all the duties of a good pastor'; work to establish 'peace and concord', and set a good example in terms of 'irreproachable moral purity'.[253] Not surprisingly, however, it was the extremes, the Saints and Sinners, who attracted the most attention. Among the latter, in addition to sexual misdemeanours, priests were, as we have seen, also likely to be accused of gluttony, drunkenness and financial greed.[254] It was all too easy for senior clergymen and officials to dismiss such complaints as exaggerated and as emanating from a disaffected faction within a parish, often three or four people who never even went to church.[255] The Bishop of Saint Claude and the Prefect of the Jura thus jointly concluded in 1866 that there was real cause for concern in only five or six of the department's communes.[256] However, if the *bon prêtre* is less likely to appear in our documentation than perhaps he deserves, it is worth bearing in mind the warning delivered in the 1860s by Mgr Ramadié, Bishop of Carcassonne, concerning the damage likely to be caused by 'the priest … who obstinately defends, without any sense of proportion, his personal rights and those of his church'. Such difficult and inflexible personalities were all too likely to compromise their ministry.[257]

Nevertheless, few questions illustrate the institutional weakness of the Church as clearly as the long history of the sexual and physical abuse of children by a small minority of priests, and particularly the manner in which this was dealt with. The evidence, from times and places as diverse as the fourth-century Council of Elvira and twentieth-century Ireland, as well as nineteenth-century France, suggests that over centuries abuse was recurrent and that erring priests were consistently treated with leniency by the Church.[258] The typical response of bishops was simply to admonish offenders and transfer paedophile priests to other parishes. In general, and often in collusion with the civil authorities and police, bishops proved to be more concerned with the reputation of the Church, with avoiding scandal, than with the well-being of children. This is surely an emblematic issue. How can we account for the impact of physical, sexual and psychological abuse on children, by a trusted and revered priest, a man in holy

orders, representative of God, responsible for hearing confessions and securing forgiveness—the ultimate figure of authority? How could a 'culture of concealment' which obsessively sought to subvert the provisions of both canon and criminal law be justified? Clearly clergy at every level in the religious hierarchy, including many otherwise blameless and dedicated parish priests, chose to ignore the depraved behaviour of their own kind and as a result to acquiesce in evil. Even the majority of humane and loving priests, engaged in the search for moral perfection, were only too likely to lack humility, and as representatives of an authoritative and authoritarian institution, as members of an 'instrument of control and power', were committed to obeying their superiors and to ensuring the passive obedience of their flocks.[259]

Notes

1. AN F19/5717.
2. Quoted by C. Marcilhacy, *Le diocèse d'Orléans sous l'épiscopat de Mgr. Dupanloup, 1849–70*, 1962, p. 123.
3. Quoted M. Launay, *Le bon prêtre. Le clergé rural au 19e siècle*, 1986, pp. 27–8.
4. Ibid.
5. Petition of ? Jan. 1865, AN F19/5870.
6. Petition to the Emperor, ? Aug. 1859, AN F19/5865.
7. Prefect Eure-et-Loir to MC, 25 July 1856, AN F19/5803.
8. *Instituteur* to MC, 20 Sept. 1854, AN F19/5863.
9. Petition to Prefect Gard, 7 Sept. 1854, AN F19/5811. See also P. Bourdelais, J-J. Raulot, *Une peur bleue: histoire du choléra en France*, 1987, p. 194.
10. *Sous-préfet* Saint Gaudens to Prefect Haute-Garonne, 30 July 1861, AN F19/5867.
11. Municipal councillors to Archbishop of Cambrai, 18 Nov. and 6 Dec. 1866, AN F19/5799.
12. Prefect Oise to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 14 March 1854, AN F19/5786.
13. MG to MC, 29 Nov. 1849, AN F19/5709.
14. Min.de l'agriculture to MC, 10 Dec. 1853, AN F19/5850.
15. See e.g. Y-M. Hilaire, 'L'Eglise et les très pauvres dans la Ire moitié du 19e siècle', in R. Rémond, (ed) *Démocratie et pauvreté*, 1996, pp. 291–2.
16. E. Constant, *Le département du Var sous le Second Empire et au début de la 3e République*, Doc. ès lettres, Univ. de Provence-Aix, 1977, p. 680.
17. Y-M. Hilaire, *La vie religieuse des populations du diocèse d'Arras, 1840–1914*, Doc. d'Etat, Univ. de Paris IV, 1976, I, p. 191.

18. Quoted by J-O. Boudon, *Paris, capital religieuse sous le Second Empire*, 2001, p. 218.
19. Quoted by P. Boutry, M. Cinquin, *Deux pèlerinages au 19e siècle. Ars et Paray-le-Monial*, 1980, p. 43.
20. See also J. Grévy, 'L'anticléricalisme au village' in J-C. Caron, F. Chauvaud, (eds) *Les campagnes dans les sociétés européennes (1830–1930)*, 2005, p. 232.
21. Letter to MC, 25 Feb. 1853, AN F19/5825; petition from inhabitants of Malay to Bishop of Autun, ? Feb. 1863, AN F19/5797.
22. See e.g. petition to MC from mayor and councillors of Villers (Loire), 28 Nov. 1864, AN F19/5820.
23. Petition to Bishop of Nevers, 23 Nov. 1850, AN F19/5833.
24. See e.g. petition from inhabitants of Chainas (Haute-Savoie) to MC, ? March 1870, AN F19/5801.
25. Petition to Bishop of Nancy, n.d., AN F19/5831.
26. Letter of 1 Jan. 1856, AN F19/5784.
27. see e.g. B. Basdevant-Gaudemet, *Le jeu concordataire dans la France du 19e siècle*, 1988, p. 205; P. Boutry, *Prêtres et paroisses au pays du curé d'Ars*, 1986, pp. 466–7.
28. Prefect Doubs to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 22 March 1860, AN F19/5788.
29. Bishop of Agen to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 28 June 1864; Prefect to minister, 30 Aug., AN F19/5768.
30. See e.g. complaint by Jacques Bardet of La Chapelle aux Chaux (Sarthe) to MC, 20 April 1863, AN F19/5822.
31. Prefect Jura to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 26 July 1855 and 10 Nov. 1859, AN F19/5856.
32. Ch. Poulain, *facteur de moutons*, to Min. de l'I.P. et des C.,? Aug. 1861, AN F19/5783; R. Brodeur, B. Caulier, 'Des catéchismes à l'enseignement religieux', in R. Brodeur, B. Caulier, (eds) *Enseigner le catéchisme: autorités et institutions*, Laval, 1997, p. 16.
33. Prefect Aveyron to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 7 Sept. 1849, AN F19/5752.
34. Petition to Bishop of Bayeux from 26 residents of Cabourg (Calvados), n.d. but almost certainly 1850/51, AN F19/5783.
35. Mayor of Bilhères to Prefect Basses-Pyrénées, 1 May 1867, AN F19/5784.
36. Letter to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 24 March 1863, AN F19/5825.
37. Prefect Basses-Pyrénées to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 2 July 1857, AN F19/5784.
38. Prefect Saône-et-Loire to MJ et des C., 22 July 1866, AN F19/5782.
39. Letter to Bishop of Angers, 10 Nov. 1861, AN F19/5776.
40. See e.g. Bishop of Autun to MC, 28 Aug. 1860, AN F19/5782.
41. Ville d'Argelès-Vieuzac, séance extraordinaire du 14 Oct. 1861, AN F19/5865.

42. Letter from A. Paturon to Min. de l'I.P. et des C.,? Dec. 1857; prefectoral report of 3 Aug. 1858, AN F19/5850.
43. Quoted by R. Gibson, *A social history of French catholicism, 1789–1914*, 1989, p. 95; see also Gibson, 'Rigorisme et liguorisme dans le diocèse de Périgueux (17e–19e siècles)' *Revue d'histoire de l'Eglise de France*, 1989, p. 315 f.
44. C. Langlois, *Le crime d'Onan. Le discours catholique sur la limitation des naissances (1816–1930)*, 2005, pp. 258–9, 276–7.
45. See e.g. petition from Mezel (Côte-d'Or), 13 March 1848, AN F19/5728.
46. Letter from Marie Cazaubon to MC, 25 March 1849, AN F19/5761.
47. JP Lons-le-Saunier to Prefect Jura 27 March; Bishop of Saint-Claude to MJ et des C, 23 April 1866; Prefect Jura to MJ et des C., 6 June 1866, AN F19/5856.
48. Petition to MC, signed by 'pères de famille', 6 March 1865, AN F19/5850.
49. See e.g. petition from Magnac (Aveyron) to MC, 19 March 1864, AN F19/5853.
50. Petition to MC, no date but date received stamp for 3 Dec. 1856, AN F19/5811.
51. Concern expressed by Prefect, Basses-Pyrénées, 5 January 1867, AN F19/1937.
52. Quoted by H. Bergues et al., *La prévention des naissances dans la famille*, 1959, p. 227.
53. Quoted by Hilaire, *Le diocèse d'Arras*, III, p. 999.
54. Boutry, 'Ars' in Boutry, Cinquin, *Deux pèlerinages*, p. 86.
55. Langlois, *Le crime d'Onan*, pp. 108, 118, 122–9, 164, 243, 251, 448. See also A. Burguière, 'Le changement social: brève histoire d'un concept', in B. Lepetit, (ed) 'Les formes de l'expérience. Une autre histoire sociale'. 1995, p. 266.
56. T. Tackett, *Priest and parish in 18th Century France*, 1977, p. 170.
57. Points made by Bishop of Beauvais to MJ et des C., 4 Oct. 1867, AN F19/5786; Rapport trimestriel de l'état politique, morale et religieux des départements du Puy-de-Dôme, Haute-Loire, Cantal, Allier, Corrèze (Académie de Clermont), AN F17/2649.
58. Letter to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., signed 'un habitant', 8 May 1858, AN F19/5874.
59. Letter to MI, 23 May 1857, AN F19/5799.
60. See e.g. letter from the 'principaux habitants' of Sécheval to Comtesse Walewski, 20 March 1859, AN F19/5850.
61. Mayor of Chavanne to MC, 2 Feb. 1867, AN F19/5801.
62. 10 Jan. 1849, AN F19/5761.
63. Petition to MC, 27 Nov. 1856, AN F19/5865.
64. See e.g. Bishop of Tarbes to Prefect Hautes-Pyrénées, 11 Dec. 1849, AN F19/5865.

65. Bishop of Le Mans to MC, 1 June 1869, AN F19/5822.
66. See e.g. petition from Conseil de fabrique, Saint-Rémy, diocese of Cahors, to MC, 7 Nov. 1854, AN F19/5769.
67. Prefect Côte-d'Or to MC, 20 April 1862, AN F19/5808.
68. See e.g. petition from inhabitants of Nistos (Hautes-Pyrénées) to MC, 27 Nov. 1856, AN F19/5865.
69. A. Corbin, *Les cloches de la terre. Paysage sonore et culture sensible dans les campagnes au 19e siècle*, 1994, Chap. 1, *passim*.
70. See e.g. M. Godin, landowner at St-Paul-aux-Bois (Aisne) and 'premier conseiller municipal', to President of the Republic, 23 Oct. 1851, AN F19/5863.
71. Letter from M. Laffitte to MC, ? 1867, AN F19/5784.
72. Mayor to MC, 7 July 1863, AN F19/5814.
73. See e.g. petition to Min. de l'I.P. et des C. from Membres du Conseil municipal, du Conseil de fabrique et chefs de famille de la commune et paroisse d'Ecotay-l'Olme (Loire), 8 Dec. 1861, AN F19/5820.
74. Prefect to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 29 Jan. 1862, AN F19/5803.
75. Brigadier de gendarmerie of Château-Landon (Seine-et-Marne) to OC commanding arrond. de Fontainbleau, date illegible, 1857, AN F19/5823.
76. Collective letter to MC, 16 Feb. 1857, AN F19/5821.
77. J.C. Lagardère to MC, 13 March 1865, AN F19/5784.
78. See e.g. Prefect Creuse to MJ et des C., 19 Aug. 1863, AN F19/5817.
79. Les Conseillers municipaux et les habitants notables … to MJ et des C., n.d.; Prefect of Pas-de-Calais to Minister, 3 April 1867, AN F19/5779.
80. See e.g. A. Audiganne, *Les populations ouvrières et les industries de la France dans le mouvement social du 19e siècle*, I 1854, p. 237 re. Lyon.
81. Petition to Bishop of Autun, ? Feb. 1863, AN F19/5782.
82. See e.g. Mayor of Pierre-Percée (Meurthe) to Prince-President, 3 Jan. 1852, AN F19/5831.
83. see e.g. P. Boutry, 'Vertus d'Etat et clergé intellectual: la crise du modèle *Sulpicien* dans la formation des prêtres français au 19e siècle', in Ecole française de Rome, *Problèmes d'histoire de l'éducation*, Rome, 1988, pp. 224–5.
84. Petition to MJ et des C.? March 1864; see also Prefect Calvados to minister 29 March, AN F19/5783.
85. Mgr. Donnet to MC, 25 May 1868; Jean Rivière, marchand-boucher to MC, 29 May, AN F19/5794.
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87. Point made by Prefect Pas-de-Calais to MJ et des C., 5 Dec. 1864, AN F19/5779.
88. Prefect Saône-et-Loire to MC, ? March 1866, AN F19/5782.
89. Prefect to MJ et des C., 29 March 1869, AN F19/5783.

90. Bishop of Nancy to MC, 22 July 1852, AN F19/5831.
91. Point made by Prefect Moselle to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 28 June 1856, AN F19/5825.
92. See e.g. Abbé Picot, parish priest at Labroquère to vicar-general, diocese of Toulouse, 2 June; to Prefect Haute-Garonne, 2 June; and Prefect to MC, 2 June 1870, AN F19/5867.
93. Letter to MC, 16 July 1860, AN F19/5843.
94. See e.g. Prefect Seine-Inférieure to Min. de l'I.P. et des C. 9 Aug. 1861 re. Abbé Boulard, *curé* of Thil-Manneville, AN F19/5854.
95. Prefect Eure-et-Loir to MC, 25 July 1856, AN F19/5803.
96. See also N. Bourguignat, 'Le maire nourricier: renouvellements et déclin d'une figure tutélaire dans la France du 19e siècle', *Le mouvement social*, 224, 2008, p. 89.
97. R. Price, *The modernization of rural France. Communications networks and agricultural market structures in 19th century France*, (1983), 2018, pp. 259–269.
98. Point made e.g. by Bishop of Bayonne in letter to MC, 4 May 1862, AN F19/5784.
99. See e.g. *sous-préfet* of Tonnerre to parish priest at Vireaux (Hérault), AN F19/5861.
100. Prefect Gironde to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 1 and 9 Oct. 1856, AN F19/5794.
101. Prefect Indre to MI, 20 Sept. 1860, AN F19/5796.
102. Mayor to Conseil d'Etat, 22 Feb. 1852, AN F19/5775.
103. J.P. canton of Essarts to PI Napoléon-Vendée, 30 Nov. 1868, AN F19/5819.
104. Prefect Ille-et-Vilaine to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 4 July 1856, AN F19/5851.
105. Diocesan architect to Prefect Côtes-du-Nord, 10 Dec. 1859; Extrait du régistre des délibérations du Conseil municipal de la commune de Plaintel…, 2 Feb. 1860, AN F19/5855.
106. PG Grenoble to MJ, 25 Oct. 1866; MI to MC, 19 Nov. 1866, AN F19/5812.
107. Point made, e.g. by Prefect of Côtes-du-Nord to Mayor of Plaintel, 27 Jan. 1860, AN F19/5855.
108. Prefect Seine-Inférieure to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 19 Dec. 1853, AN F19/5854.
109. See especially Abbé Surat, vicar-general, diocese of Paris to *curé* of Ternes, n.d; Abbé Hugony, *curé* of St-Ferdinand des Ternes to MC, 19 Feb. 1866; Archbishop of Paris to MC, 2 Oct. 1865 and 30 April 1867; *Conseil de fabrique* to MC, 18 March 1867; *Mémoire par le Conseil de Fabrique de l'Eglise St-Ferdinand des Ternes à Paris contre M. l'Abbé Hugony son desservant*, Paris: Chaix, 1870, AN F19/5841.

110. Letter to MC, ? May 1852, AN F19/5724.
111. President and treasurer to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 12 Aug. 1861, AN F19/5839.
112. Prefect of Police to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 16 May 1857, AN F19/5842.
113. Min. de l'I.P. et des C., Note sur les plaintes formées contre M. l'Abbé Guillaumet, curé de Clamecy, n.d., AN F19/5833.
114. See e.g. petition from mayor and notables of Monleon-Magnoac (Hautes-Pyrénées) to President of the Republic, 10 Jan. 1849, AN F19/5761; Bishop of Saint-Brieuc to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 21 June 1861, AN F19/5855.
115. Letter to MC, 13 March 1865; similar complaint in report from Prefect Basses-Pyrénées, 3 June 1864, AN F19/5784.
116. *Juge de paix*, Wassigny to Prefect Aisne, 13 Nov. 1865, AN F19/5863.
117. MI to MJ, 10 Feb. 1869, AN F19/5842.
118. T. Blot, *Reconstruire l'Eglise après la Révolution: le diocése de Bayeux sous l'épiscopat de Mgr. Charles Bruault (1802–28)*. 1997, pp. 330–5; T. Kselman, 'The dechristianisation of death in France', in H. Mcleod, W. Ustorf, (eds) *The decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750–2000*, Cambridge 2003, 151–2; on disputes over pew rents, see e.g. F. Ploux, 'Luttes de faction à la campagne. L'exemple du Lot au 19e siècle', *Histoire et sociétés rurales*, 2004, p. 108.
119. Prefect Aveyron to MC, 7 May 1864, AN F19/5853.
120. Parish priest Fongrave to MC, 18 Aug. 1867; M. Demestre, notary to MC, ? Sept., AN F19/5577.
121. See e.g. Archbishop of Rouen, letter to the MC, 21 Jan. 1863, AN F19/5854; Archbishop of Paris to MJ et des C., 20 Jan.,1867, AN F19/5842.
122. Marcilhacy, *Le diocèse d'Orléans*, p. 177.
123. Letter to MC, 19 Feb. 1855, AN F19/5866.
124. M. Lagrée, M. Denis, *Aspects de la vie religieuse en Ille-et-Vilaine (1815–48)*, Thèse de 3e cycle, Univ. de Rennes 2, 1974, p. 375; J. Maurain, *La politique ecclésiastique du Second Empire de 1852 à 1869*, 1930, p. 57.
125. *Commissaire de police*, Canton de Saint-Laurent-du-Pont to Prefect Isère, 3 Dec. 1861, AN F19/ 5812.
126. Petition to MC from mayor and others, 13 May 1848, AN F19/5728.
127. Petition from councillors and inhabitants to MC, 29 May 1848; Abbé Seilhan to Bishop of Tarbes, 12 May and 29 June, AN F19/5761.
128. Petition from Laàs (Basses-Pyrénées) to MJ et des C., 15 Feb. 1868, AN F19/5784.
129. *Juge de paix* of Monêtier to *sous-préfet* of Briançon, 1 Aug. 1866, AN F19/5811.
130. Petition to MC, 16 May 1858, AN F19/5825.

131. See e.g. PG Pau to G. des S., 23 April 1863, AN F19/5865.
132. See e.g. petition from Lamothe (Haute-Loire), AN F19/5848; Prefect Basses-Pyrénées, 16 Dec. 1857, AN F19/5784.
133. Petition to MC, 10 July 1854, AN F19/5811.
134. Prefect Meuse to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 31 May; *curé* of Fleury-sur-Aire to Bishop of Verdun, 23 June 1864, AN F19/5874.
135. Petition to MC, ? March 1859, AN F19/5797.
136. Prefect Basses-Pyrénées to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 16 Dec. 1857, AN F19/5784.
137. Min. de l'I.P. et des C. Cabinet. Notes, 20 June 1853; Abbé Guinot to Bishop of Saint Dié, 8 Jan. 1855; Bishop to minister, 9 March 1855; AN F19/5776.
138. See e.g. Jean Carrère, *cantonnier* at Etsaut, in the diocese of Bayonne, re. feebleness of local notables, AN F19/5784.
139. Prefect Seine-Inférieure to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 1 Nov. 1830, AN F19/5752.
140. Points made by *sous-préfet* Bayonne to prefect Basses-Pyrénées, 7 Jan. 1860, AN F19/5784.
141. Mayor to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 12 June 1861, AN F19/5854; see also petition to Emperor from Angeville (Tarn-et-Garonne), 19 Nov. 1864, AN F19/5825.
142. Prefect Hautes-Alpes to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 25 March 1856, AN F19/5811. See also e.g. Abbé Abadue, *curé* of Labarthe (Hautes-Pyrénées) to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., ? July 1855, AN F19/5865.
143. Prefect Indre-et-Loire to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 6 Aug. 1860, AN F19/5768.
144. Prefect Aisne to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 28 July 1851, AN F19/5863.
145. Price, *Modernization of rural France*, pp. 131–143.
146. MI to MC, 23 Dec. 1862, AN F19/5803.
147. Prefect Ain to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 7 Feb. 1861, AN F19/5787.
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149. Report to MC, 4 Dec. 1863, AN F19/5830.
150. Mayor Siradon to MC, 27 April 1851, AN F19/5865.
151. PG Pau to MJ, 22 Feb. 1865, AN F19/5784.
152. Petition of 29 May 1849, AN F19/5865.
153. Prefect Aisne to MI, 9 March 1864, AN F19/5863.
154. Mayor, councillors and notables to Bishop of Amiens, n.d.; Abbé Fourrière to Bishop, 5 Aug. 1859; Prefect Somme to MJ et des C., 7 July 1869 and 7 June 1870, AN F19/5775.
155. Prefect Marne to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 28 Feb. 1862, AN F19/5801.

156. See e.g. Prefect to MI, 26 June 1853, AN F1 CIII Creuse 8; Prefect Meurthe to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 4 January 1859; Prefect to MI, 2 Feb. 1869, AN F19/5831.
157. Report to MC, 29 Nov. 1856, AN F19/5823.
158. Prefect Seine-et-Oise to MC, 29 June 1857, AN F19/5875.
159. See e.g. Bishop Saint Brieuc to MC, 6 March 1868, AN F19/5855.
160. Prefect Meuse to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 22 Aug. 1860, AN F19/5874.
161. Letter to MC, 26 Dec. 1863, AN F19/5842.
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172. See also T. Verhoeven, 'The *Satyriasis* diagnosis: anti-clerical doctors and celibate priests in nineteenth century France', *French history.*, 2012, *passim*.
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174. V. Petit, 'Le clergé contre l'ivrognerie. La campagne du Père Ducreux dans les montagnes du Doubs, (1864–9)', *Histoire et sociétés rurales*, 2000, p. 87.

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176. Petition to MC, 18 Nov. 1849, AN F19/5788.
177. See e.g. M. Batique, municipal councillor at Prévilliers (Oise) to MC, 27 Jan. 1868, AN F19/5786.
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180. Résultat de l'enquête par M. le curé de Viapres au sujet des plaintes portées contre M. le curé de Rhèges, 28 April 1869, AN F19/5869.
181. See e.g. Abbé Darboy, vicar general, diocese of Paris to MC, 28 Nov. 1856, AN F19/5840.
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183. See e.g. Bishop of Nevers to Garde des Sceaux, 21 July 1867, AN F19/5833.
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185. Prefect Seine-et-Oise to MJ et des C., 6 Nov. 1863, AN F19/5875.
186. Prefect Aube to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 18 Feb. 1863, AN F19/5869.
187. Mayor of Aubervilliers to MC, 15 and 17 Dec. 1854; Cabinet du Préfet de Police, Note … Oct. 1856, AN F19/5840.
188. Prefect Oise to MI, 2 March 1857; Bishop of Beauvais to MC, 11 June, AN F19/5786.
189. Prefect Pyrénées-Orientales to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 30 Dec. 1858, AN F19/5845.
190. Letter to MJ et des C., 28 Sept. 1868, AN F19/5773.
191. *Sous-préfet* Marmande to Prefect Lot-et-Garonne, 11 March 1858, together with copies of the correspondence, AN F19/5768.
192. Prefect Sarthe to MJ et des C. 22 Oct. 1866, AN F19/5822.
193. Garde des Sceaux to Bishop 12 July and bishop's reply 15 July, 1864. AN F19/5822.
194. Abbé Bérard to MC, 2 Oct. 1858; internal Note, n.d.; AN F19/5875.
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201. Prefect Meurthe to MI, 2 Feb. 1869, AN F19/5831.
202. MJ to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 8 Feb. 1850; Bishop of Limoges to Director-general MC, 8 Feb; AN F19/5817.
203. PG Bourges to MJ, 16 August 1861; MJ to MC 20 Aug.; Archbishop of Bourges to MC 17 Oct. and 6 Dec., AN F19/5796.
204. Commissaire de police to sous-préfet Aix, 10 June 1856, AN F19/5769.
205. PI Angers to Prefect Maine-et-Loire, 3 Oct. 1857, AN F19/5776.
206. Depositions certified by PG 28 May 1868, AN F19/5853.
207. PG Paris to Garde des Sceaux, 5 March 1861, AN F19/5823.
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211. Letter to MC, 27 May 1862, AN F19/5823.
212. Quoted by G. Nicolas, 'Les instituteurs sous le Second Empire. Pour une approche régionale des mémoires de 1861: l'exemple de l'académie de Rennes', *Histoire de l'éducation*, 2002, p. 31 and especially note 2; see also Nicolas, *Le grand débat de l'école au 19e siècle. Les instituteurs du Second Empire*, 2004, pp. 252–8.
213. Extrait des minutes du Greffe du tribunal civil de Nevers (Nièvre), 5 June 1862, AN F19/5833.
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215. Commissaire de police des deux cantons d'Avesnes, Rapport en exécution de la circulaire de M. le Ministre de l'Intérieure, en date du 24 Sept. 1862, AN F19/5724.
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218. PI Mantes to MJ, 19 Dec. 1856, AN F19/5875.
219. See e.g. Prefect Seine-et-Oise to MC, 17 May 1865, AN F19/5875.
220. See e.g. Nicolas, *Le grand débat de l'école au 19e siècle*, pp. 74–5, re. accusations against the frères de l'Instruction chrétienne de Saint-Gabriel in 1860/61.
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222. Prefect Côtes-du-Nord to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 5 Feb. and 12 April 1862, AN F19/5855.

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225. Prefect to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 21 May 1857, AN F19/5788.
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231. Maréchal de logis Sedille, Gendarmerie impériale, 11e Légion, cie. de la Corrèze, brigade de Brives, procès-verbal, 28 Nov. 1861; Prefect Haute-Vienne to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 24 Feb. 1862, AN F19/5870.
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241. Letter to MJ et des C., 20 June 1868, AN F19/5773.
242. Letters from Bishop of Rodez to M. Cassau, *avocat*, member du Conseil départementale de l'Instruction publique, 29 Aug. 1868 and to Prefect of Aveyron, 4 Nov.; see also PG Montpellier to G.de S. 23 May; Prefect Aveyron to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 10 Nov.; AN F19/5853.

243. Letter to MC, 23 May 1869, AN F19/5808.
244. Prefect Nièvre to MC, 3 March 1862, AN F19/5833.
245. See e.g. PG Rennes to Garde des Sceaux, 8 Nov. 1857; Bishop of Quimper to MC, 2 Oct. 1861, AN F19/5849; Bishop of Poitiers to MC, 26 July 1848, AN F19/5748.
246. See e.g. PG Limoges to Garde des Sceaux, 25 Feb. 1862, AN F19/5870; J. Lafon, *Les prêtres, les fidèles et l'Etat: le ménage à trois du 19e siècle*, 1987, pp. 68–70.
247. See e.g. Archbishop of Bourges to Garde des Sceaux, 24 Jan. 1867, AN F19/5723; *Conseiller de prefecture* Sarthe to MC, 3 April 1863, AN F19/5822. The Abbé Thédeville, imprisoned in 1853 for planning to assassinate the Emperor, was in March 1864 judged to be sufficiently sane to be offered the same destination. See MI to MC, 19 March 1864, AN F19/5839.
248. PG Bordeaux to Garde des Sceaux, 26 April 1868, AN F19/5793.
249. Report to garde des Sceaux, 24 April 1865, AN F19/5813.
250. Prefect of Police, chargé de la Direction générale de la sûreté publique to MI, 26 Dec. 1862; Archbishop of Paris to MJ et des C.; 24 July 1863, AN F19/5833.
251. Bishop to MC, 6 July 1859, AN F19/5773.
252. See e.g. PG Bordeaux to Garde des Sceaux, 6 July 1861 and response of 10 July, AN F19/5777.
253. Letter to Archbishop of Toulouse, 6 July 1848, AN F19/5762.
254. Prefect Jura to Min.de l'I.P.et des C. 23 May 1856 and Bishop to minister 26 May, AN F19/5856.
255. See e.g. Vicar General, diocese of Arras to MC, 10 Sept. 1851, AN F19/5779.
256. Bishop Saint Claude to MC 23 April 1866; Prefect Jura to MJ et des C. 6 June 1866, AN F19/5856.
257. Quoted M. Brunet, *Bonnets rouges et blancs bonnets. La politisation de la campagne catalane, 1815–52*, Canet, 2009, p. 69.
258. Estimates of the proportion of priests with paedophile proclivities appear to vary between Cardinal Ratzinger's 1%; the 4.3% suggested by research commissioned by the US Bishops Conference and published in 2004; and other suggestions of 6–9%—See G. Robertson, *The case of the Pope. Vatican accountability for human rights abuse*, 2010, p. 20.
259. F. O'Toole, *Irish Times*, 28 Nov. 2009.

PART II

A Change of Perspective

CHAPTER 7

The Practice of Religion

7.1 Introduction

The Church as an institution as well as the religious message(s) transmitted by its clergy have been considered in previous chapters. The primary concerns of Chaps. 8 and 9 will be the religious practices of ordinary believers; the *reception* of the Church's message within a community of believers linked by faith, ritual and the sacraments; and the influence of the Church, as part of a wider assessment of the 'use' made and impact of religious discourse(s).[1] A series of questions will be posed concerning 'the dialectical relationship between clerical representations and the ways in which people perceived and made sense of the world in which they lived'.[2] Religious beliefs and everyday practice were moreover embedded within particular localized social milieu (communities/parishes), wider social networks (classes) and broader (regional and national) social and political systems. Individuals shared in the perceptions, in the discursive practices, collective norms, and in the *systèmes de représentation* of their family, community, and social and institutional milieux of origin or belonging. Their experiences were mediated by language, ritual and often conflicting identities/interests, as well as the varying conceptions of time and place. Education, the management of news by State and Church, the affirmation of religious 'truth' through public ceremony and the (re-)construction of religious buildings all ensured that although significant distinctions might be identified between the official teachings of the Church, the religious

R. Price, *Religious Renewal in France, 1789-1870*,
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ideologies of the social elites, and the more widespread popular beliefs and practices, complex and mutually supportive interactions were also, and increasingly, evident.[3]

Much of the evidence on religious beliefs and practice was of course provided by the clergy themselves. The basic canonical obligations laid down by the Lateran Council of 1215 related to church attendance, receipt of communion, and participation in the process of religious socialization within the family and wider community. The level of conformity in these respects provides an indication of clerical influence, and in certain circumstances the basis for a fairly crude statistical analysis.[4] The responses of parish priests to the regular inquiries made by their bishops also tells us something about the character and intensity of religious faith.[5] Two sources in particular have provided usable statistical indicators—first and foremost data on the number of Easter communicants, described by Mgr Dupanloup as the '*thermomètre de Pâques*', and, second, the length of the delay between birth and the baptism necessary to free infants from the stain of Original Sin. Even as delays grew longer, baptism and the acceptance of a child into God's church remained the most popular rite of passage.[6] It might, however, be argued that measuring commitment on the basis of religious practice primarily informs us about the levels of conformity to institutional and communal norms. Michel Lagrée bemoaned the fact that after so much effort on the part of historians 'the profound faith of believers, beyond the easily perceptible structures, remains impenetrable'. The practice of religion might thus represent an intense personal faith or simply the wooden performance of ritual gestures. The statistical data on church attendance and Easter communicants needed to be supplemented by the visual evidence of church construction and renovation, and by the provision of altar pieces, statuary and funerary monuments, as well as the written and oral evidence, the language and imagery of elite and popular discourse. The degree to which the moral teaching of the clergy was respected could furthermore be judged by employing the information available on birth control and considering attitudes towards education and politics.[7] Indeed, the growing determination to limit family size and the number of potential heirs to property—accumulated often through substantial effort over generations, represented a considerable, relatively rapid and widely diffused intellectual and moral revolution and a substantial rejection of clerical authority.[8]

The evidence suggests that there were considerable geographical, social, gender and generational variations in the nature and intensity of

religious practice. In relation to these, historians have identified a wide, complex and inter-related range of possible causal factors, including social relationships, habitat structures, and linguistic variations, as well as the vicissitudes of history, which combined to create distinctive, frequently small, but rigidly demarcated socio-cultural regions. In some of these areas, the experiences of the Reformation and of Revolution had reinforced loyalty to the Church, and in others had weakened the faith. In the former, it was possible for the clergy and faithful to draw upon a routinized faith, firmly based in historical experience, memory and myth, to adapt to a changing world and develop a dynamic and evolving religious culture. An energetic priest or the sense of crisis generated by social conflict, harvest failure or epidemic, could similarly promote more or less sustained recovery in individual parishes.[9] In the latter, where a gulf had opened up between the clergy and the ambient popular culture, the influence of the Church was threatened increasingly. After discounting close causal relationships between religious faith and either living standards or levels of literacy, Christiane Marcilhacy concluded that 'what appears determinant, is the depth of the historical implantation of religion and the strength of the social pressure exercised in its favour'. To a large degree, the strength of religious belief in the nineteenth century and its geographical variations reflected the pastoral efforts of previous centuries.[10]

Employing the statistical information provided by episcopal visitations, the canon lawyer and religious sociologist Gabriel Le Bras long ago distinguished between five types of attitude towards the Church. His distinctions remain valuable.[11] There were those he described as seasonal conformists, who from family tradition observed the major rites of passage (baptism, first communion, marriage, and burial); regular observants who frequently attended Sunday mass and invariably received communion at Easter; the devout, who received frequent communion as well as participating in a variety of religious and pious activities; those who rarely, if ever, attended church, but whose outlook was impregnated with the religiosity of the society in which they lived, by the all-pervasive presence of religion in daily life, speech and sentiment; and finally, those who had broken all links with the Church.[12] However, even the last category were not necessarily devoid of religious beliefs, and anti-clericals and even atheists, while critical of the institutional Church, were nevertheless frequently inspired (positively and/or negatively) by its teaching.

Categorization can all too easily, however, lead to the simplification of complex social identities and the 'vast variety of empirical realities and

experience'.[13] The tendency towards reductionism evident in studies which employed 'class' as the fundamental analytical category and analysed religion in large part as a representation of economic and social structures and relationships; as a manifestation of backwardness; and which assumed that 'the dwindling social significance of religion is the inevitable consequence of the process of social development in modern societies' has been emphasized in recent years.[14] In Western Europe, where religion was widely perceived to have become increasingly 'marginalized' or at least 'diluted',[15] debates founded on once-central linear and monolithic and essentially teleological concepts like 'secularization', 'de-christianization' and 'modernization'—associated with the improvement of communications, growing urbanization, wider literacy, and politicization—have been subjected to a 'revisionism' stimulated in large part by local and diocesan studies which identified complex, inter-related and geographically diverse processes of religious decline *and* revival.[16]

Should religion instead be considered primarily in terms of individual practice or of adhesion to a Church and community? Should faith simply be defined as a form of social discourse, as a belief system offering understanding of the individual's social situation and daily experience, providing moral guidance, spiritual compensation and hope of life everlasting? Or might the Church be seen as an instrument of social control, in both anthropological and political terms? In which case—were the links between a priestly culture and varied social milieux articulated in ways which privileged some social milieux more than others? To what extent did a shared faith influence the inter-relationships between social groups—between the 'dominant' and 'dominated'?[17] Was religion—and the social networks associated with it, including those defined, at least in part, by gender or generation—a more powerful influence on social interaction and political relationships than class allegiance? Within these perspectives, religious institutions and interaction between elite and popular religiosity might be considered as agents of modernity rather than features of backwardness.[18] In considering the ways in which religious revival was to be a central feature of the social transformation of the nineteenth century, it should also be borne in mind that 'the faith of a past age is *of* its age'[19] and that 'men and women of the past deserve to be considered on their own terms and in the context of their own social and cultural milieux'.[20]

Defining 'religiosity' and gaining an understanding of *homo religiosus* clearly are ambitious objectives.[21] Religious ideas were derived from a lived experience, within the bounds of the parish—one of the formative *lieux de*

mémoire—and particularly within the family, which represented a vital inter-generational '*agent de transmission*' of religious beliefs.[22] It was the responsibility of the family, and especially of the mother, often by means of story-telling, to introduce children to 'the language, the moral values, the prayers, and the very idea of God'.[23] Socialization within the family promoted 'taken-for-granted', routinized assumptions and behaviour. Daily life remained '*impregnées de religiosité*'. Even those who rarely, if ever, went to church, tended to view the world through religious prisms, the faithful anxious to achieve a state of grace and inspired both by love of God and fear of eternal damnation; much wider circles drawing, at least occasionally, on religious beliefs in order to cope with suffering, anxiety and depression and/or give thanks for God's blessings and pray for their continuance.[24] Even if they were particularly susceptible to the exhaustion, diseases and accidents associated with hard physical labour and dangerous working conditions on the land and in the factory; to insufficient food and unbalanced diets; and insanitary and unhealthy and overcrowded living conditions, and the shortcomings of medical care, it was not only the poor who suffered, and experienced premature death.[25] Suffering offered to all a means of sharing in the passion of Christ on the cross.

The practice of religion was thus enrooted in a day-to-day sociability, within which the Church, its authority derived from tradition and scripture, provided a structure for belief and a means of communication.[26] This informal religiosity, closely related to the oral traditions of numerous distinct communities, was influenced by what might be called the ecclesiastical and more formal dimension of people's religious experience, that is, the teachings and liturgy constructed largely by members of the religious elite, and transmitted by the parish clergy. Even if it should not necessarily be regarded as a sign of religious vitality, the presence of a priest within the community was almost universally regarded as essential to individual and collective well-being. It was the duty of the clergy to impose order and orthodoxy upon an essentially oral scriptural tradition, employing the catechism and the teaching associated with it, and by means of sermons and the practice of the mass, the veneration of the crucifix and holy images and the burning of candles. Receiving confessions and offering absolution and spiritual relief conferred considerable moral authority upon those who officiated. These practices were essential to the development of a routine, followed unquestioningly by most of its practitioners throughout their lives. They provided the ideological framework for understanding relations between Heaven and Earth, as well as the difference between Good

and Evil, and established the basic precepts of Christian behaviour, as well as conveying the fundamental message—'*Hors de l'Eglise point de salut*'.[27] In spite of its supposedly transcendental values, religion, however, remained a social construct.[28] Indeed, the individual enjoyed a multiple sense of belonging and identity as spouse, parent, or member of professional, generational, cultural, political or religious groups, with varied historical experiences and differently constructed memories.

7.2 Religious Practice Among the Social Elites

Possession of formal (governmental) authority, and control of material and cultural resources, implied the ability of some people (lay as well as clerical) to exercise influence (power) over others, and engage in the construction of belief systems which defined the world and the range of possible beliefs and actions.[29] Wealth and control of access to scarce resources, profession, education and culture, a superiority expressed through conspicuous consumption, paternalism and the prestige of a name and family reputation, might facilitate the imposition of a sense of normative and hierarchical social order by means of complex strategies of domination in which doing the 'right' thing, exercising the 'virtues' of power in order to gain legitimate authority, often mattered more than the exercise of repressive (political) power.[30] The perceived weakness of subaltern groups moreover was crucial to the self-definition of the dominant group.[31] To what extent might religion be perceived as a constituent feature of a process of rule, of an effort—never fully achieved—to gain hegemonic control through the construction of the means of socialization, and diffusion of justificatory ideologies designed to extend the reach of the 'dominant' culture? To what extent moreover should religion—as institution and system of beliefs—be viewed as the primary means of linking elite and popular culture, and/or as a 'mechanism of indoctrination'?[32]

For the clergy, accommodation with the views of members of the national and local elites—within a network of real and symbolic dependencies—was normally easy. Together with privileged personal contacts and regular church attendance, public display—including seating arrangements—replicated an essentially conservative view of the world and reinforced these links. Thus, in major administrative centres and cathedral cities, senior members of the administration and representatives of the social elite regularly met the bishop and leading clergy in church and at

receptions and engaged in—and instrumentalized—social networking processes. In contrast, many members of the *classes populaires* (lower middle classes, peasants, workers) remained powerless and often unsure of the basic precepts of orthodox Catholic teaching. Considerable efforts had nevertheless been made by the Church to 'purify' religious beliefs and practices and to eliminate 'superstition' and 'paganism'. The missionary crusade inaugurated by the Council of Trent (1545–63), as part of the struggle against Protestantism, was revived in the mortal struggle against Revolution.

Defining the religiosity of particular social milieu needs to be given more precision by means of an analysis which takes account of individual spirituality, as well as differences between (and within) social groups. In the aftermath of the revolutionary crisis, the upper classes appear to have undergone a long-term process of (re)christianization. Within aristocratic circles, and among those attracted by ultramontane ideals and traditional concepts of hierarchical social order, the role of the Christian gentleman committed to both 'patriarchal domesticity' and a muscular assertion of faith in the public sphere had considerable appeal.[33] Respect for religion was virtually part of their self-consciousness. Even if many nobles did not regularly go to church, or even believe, religious values substantially influenced their view of the world and their actions within it.[34] A similar picture might be drawn of the socially conservative bourgeoisie, the landowners, *rentiers*, successful businessmen, lawyers and government officials for whom the aristocracy provided a model life style, as well as for many businessmen anxious to 'moralize' their labour forces with the help of the clergy.[35] When God's Holy Order appeared to be threatened by the progress of materialism and secularization, as the Prefect of the industrial Nord pointed out to the Archbishop of Cambrai, 'the sole duty of ministers of religion must be to preach resignation and calm to the population'.[36] That the clergy had a duty to safeguard 'wider societal values' also seemed evident to the largely Protestant textile entrepreneurs of Mulhouse who insisted that 'moral and religious regeneration' was the only effective antidote to the class struggle.[37] Inspired by a strong sense of *noblesse oblige*, by a firm acceptance that wealth implied responsibility, a substantial part of the social elite regularly and sincerely practised the Christian virtues, played an active role in parish life and charitable associations, influenced government policy, and exercised considerable influence on a mass of dependents and on the less privileged in general.[38]

7.2.1 Consolation and Hope

The notion of Providence, of resignation, of submission to the Will of a loving, all-knowing God, was central to Catholic doctrine and to the discourses on marriage and parenthood found in devotional books and prayers.[39] Personal loss might be perceived as an act of expiation and gratitude for God's own sacrifice of His son on the cross. Within every family, childbirth was invariably an occasion fraught with suffering and danger for mother and child. High levels of infant mortality meant that the death of young children was an experience shared or feared. Religion at least offered hope of God's blessing and life everlasting and was a potent source of comfort for the bereaved or afflicted.[40] Attempting to comfort the Ministre des Cultes, Fortoul, following the death of his newborn son, the Bishop of Nancy, Mgr Menjaud, reminded him that only faith was 'capable of comforting your noble soul in the midst of the sorrowful events of life'. He should take comfort from knowing that 'the little angel to whom you have given life has been taken up into Heaven, happy to have escaped from the torments of an existence, more or less long, which must nevertheless always end in death. Now, he is at God's side, and able to watch over your destinies, and to protect in the future the other children that Providence will preserve to console you… The father who possesses a son in Heaven can hope for much in this life and in the other.'[41]

Fortoul's friend and colleague, the *conseiller d'état* Louis Bonjean, had previously written to express his gratitude for the minister's letter of sympathy following the death of his own beloved daughter. He put pen to paper once again to express his sympathy following Fortoul's own loss. Apologizing for the delay caused by the need to organize the funeral of '*ma chère petite martyre*', he added that although the child's death had been expected for some time, 'the blow when it came has been none-theless terrible'. His little daughter had been 'our joy, our hope. Like the little flower in the fields, hidden under the grass, she seemed to want to reserve all the sweet scents for her father and mother: we alone are able to realise what treasures of innocence, of grace, of sensibility, of spirit, and of precocious intelligence we have lost. This death has opened up an abyss in our lives that nothing will ever fill.' Responding to Fortoul's grief and sense of despair, Bonjean observed that 'in the common shipwreck of our hopes, we share the same pain, in crying together for my beloved daughter and for the little angel who has been stolen from you'. He earnestly hoped that 'the cruel sacrifice which has been imposed on me, will serve as a pledge

of redemption which will spare all my friends from such a misfortune' and took comfort from his conviction that 'where reason is powerless, Religion can at least offer Consolation, can at least soften the blow in giving us hope that one day soon we will meet those we have loved so much.'[42] Louis Veuillot would seek similarly to comfort his beloved friend Juliette de Robersart by reminding her that 'Death is one of those salutary gifts which God distributes to us. It constrains us to think about the hereafter, it clearly shows us the good road.' Those who were blessed could anticipate 're-awakening in the eternal and infinite sun'.[43]

The faithful, together with Catholic medical practitioners and the members of the religious orders who assisted them in the care of the afflicted, frequently expressed greater confidence in the efficacy of prayer—of private devotional practices—than in the services of a doctor. In a letter to her sister-in-law, written on 9 March 1873, the relatively well-educated middle-class mother of the future Saint Thérèse, after calling, without apparent effect, a medical practitioner to the bedside of her critically ill daughter, described how 'I kneel at the feet of Saint Joseph and beg his mercy for the little suffering child, although resigning myself to the will of the good Lord, if He wishes to take her.' A week later, she wrote of her 'continual anguish' and wondered whether Purgatory could be worse than the torments she was enduring. Subsequently, on 30 March, seeking to understand the child's suffering, she explained that 'the good Lord intends that this will detach us from earthly concerns and turn our thoughts towards Heaven'. She had done her utmost to save Thérèse: 'now, if the good Lord wishes to decide otherwise, I will try to support the ordeal with as much patience as possible.' God's Will be done. Christians should never give in to despair.[44] As a central feature of their upbringing, young women from well-off families were likely to have received an instruction profoundly imbued with religion from tutors, or in *pensionnats* established for girls of 'good' family by such religious orders as the Dames du Sacré Cœur at Kientzheim in Alsace.[45]

Although the growing medical use of morphine from around 1800, and the subsequent introduction of ether and chloroform (from the 1840 to the 1850s) brought relief from pain and facilitated advances in surgery, a widespread preoccupation with death, and fear of dying without the blessing of the Church and in a state of sin, remained evident.[46] Death—and God's Judgement—needed to be prepared for carefully, and solemnized by the Church's liturgy. Family members, priests, members of religious orders and of lay associations like the Société de Saint-

Vincent de Paul or the confréries de la Bonne Mort, all sought to ensure that the last rites were performed in timely fashion.[47] Mgr Gaston de Ségur, desperate to ensure for his mother the 'good death' prescribed by Catholic manuals, clutched a crucifix blessed by two popes and a flask containing water from Lourdes to drive away the demons who seemed to be tormenting her.[48] For a parish to be deprived, even temporarily, of a priest, threatened the prospect of eternal bliss for all those engaged on their death beds in the final struggle against sin and the Devil. As the mayor of Aragnouet (Hautes-Pyrénées) lamented in an appeal to his bishop (in 1857), 'to live without a priest is, for us, Mgr., to live without God'.[49]

Heaven and Hell were generally represented not as symbolic but as real spaces.[50] In contrast with the sufferings endured by sinners within the fiery furnace of Hell, the Jesuit Abbé de Ravignan, in 1855, assured his listeners that in a paradaisical Heaven the blessed dead could expect to 'continue to love those they have loved … on earth; there, you will think of them; there you will pray for them; there you will be able to help them, to relieve them, and God, in His attentive Providence, will make you aware of the needs of those dear souls you have left behind, so that you are able to support them'.[51] The cult of the dead was evident in even the most detached regions but its practice was especially marked in central France and the west where on All Souls' Day families gathered around the tombs of their ancestors in order both to commune with them and pray for their souls and—from the 1850s—decorate the graves with flowers.[52] An especially intense obsession with salvation and the afterlife ensured respect for the clergy, the central practitioners in this *culture des morts*.[53] It was also evident in the construction—at least by the wealthy—of often fantastical memorials.[54]

Many among the generation reaching manhood from the 1840s, and contrary to notions of the 'feminization' of religion, were also educated at religious colleges in Paris like the *petit séminaire* of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, the more prestigious collèges Stanislas or Vaugirard, or else the Jesuit establishments at Brugelette in Belgium or Fribourg in Switzerland.[55] The letters written to his mother by Alfred Motte-Grimonprez, scion of a leading northern textile family, while boarding at Stanislas, are quite revealing.[56] In November 1844, the new pupil reported that 'the school contains twelve priests who, each Sunday, in addition to conducting services, provide instruction; mass every Thursday; my confessor is M. Gratry. There are also confessors from outside the school, such

as Jesuits … and, to reassure you, these gentlemen have given me salutary advice on the choice of friends.' The following month he wrote that, as a reward for good behaviour, 'I was among the five pupils from the class in rhetoric who went this morning to hear the R.P. Lacordaire preach on the virtues of chastity.' He appears to have been profoundly impressed—'Mother, you cannot imagine the power of his voice! Over a thousand people were at the foot of the pulpit, listening to the words of truth which emerged in torrents from that eloquent mouth. One of his sermons revives the soul… Oh, words are such a precious instrument when they are put to proper use!'[57]

Religion subsequently offered the young Motte consolation in the face of the disasters afflicting his family. Following the destruction of a mill by fire in 1845, or the February Revolution in 1848, which again appeared to threaten their prosperity, he took comfort in 'a God who keeps watch over us'.[58] Just like other members of the social elite, Motte would be determined to play a pivotal role in the multiplication of Catholic 'good works'. Together with his formal education, family socialization had taught him that 'it is the glory, the power, the divinity of our religion to make all men brothers, all members of a single holy family of which Jesus Christ is the Head; one day, if I am fortunate, my great hope would be to come to the aid of the unfortunate'.[59]

7.2.2 The Public Display of Faith

Faith, together with a determination to conform, and fear of God's Judgement encouraged compassionate public engagement. Around mid-century *Tout-Paris* participated in a '*frénsie philanthropique*', repeatedly making contributions to a whole host of good causes, including those of the local 'deserving' poor, the victims of floods in the Loire valley in 1846 and 1856, and the suffering victims of the Irish famine.[60] It was also 'good form' for men to enrol in the Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul; to attend the invariably ostentatious, even theatrical, services in fashionable churches like Saint-Sulpice in Paris; to belong to the *conseil de fabrique* which administered parish funds; to furnish private chapels; and to provide publicly celebrated donations for church construction and restoration, or the replacement of bells; and more generally to support the clergy, the teaching and nursing orders, and exercise an influence favourable to religion.[61] In Toulouse, a traditional administrative and marketing centre, 'patrician' families, resident in their town houses for three to four months each year,

provided the clergy with 'money, support, welcome. These families do nothing without consulting their director of conscience… Marriages, wills, business, everything is submitted to an examination, to the control of religion, and finally supported by the influence of religion.'[62] They saw themselves, and were widely regarded, as constituting the Catholic elite.[63]

A committed laity might exercise considerable authority within the Christian community. The influence of Louis Veuillot, that most vocal of Catholic laymen, was greatly enhanced by the extensive network of personal and epistolary contacts he developed with both provincial nobles and priests. Initiatives which threatened to challenge leadership by the clergy were, however, often regarded with suspicion. The Comte de Falloux detested him for his pretensions and extreme language.[64] Veuillot would be shocked to be accused of pride, insisting that 'I cannot imagine anything I would not be ready to do to prove my obedience to the teachings of the Church.'[65]

Christian teaching served to legitimize the existing social order, sanctified the possession of wealth and the existence of inequality, and justified the actions of government officials and particularly the magistrature—the essential guardians of order and morality. Hierarchy was measured and represented to the community even in apparently mundane matters like seating arrangements in the parish church. Notables expected to enjoy such visible manifestations of deference as being at the head of processions, receiving the sacraments before other communicants, sitting in a prominent position in church, being addressed in respectful tones, gaining easy access to and receiving an attentive response from parish priests.[66] In some rural areas the *banc du seigneur* survived.[67] Following the purchase of the château at Aiguefonde (Tarn) in 1863 by the Jewish banker, Eugène Pereire, the Abbé Bonnet, serving this weaving community, invited his congregation to wear their Sunday-best on the day Pereire was expected to arrive, organized the erection of *arcs de triomphe*, and celebrated the entry of the new proprietor into his mansion by ringing the church bells. The town bands from neighbouring Castres and Mazamet accompanied the Pereire family to church on the following Sunday when they were installed ceremonially in the pew designated for the owners of the château.[68] Even in death, funerary arrangements, memorials, charitable bequests in wills, and the purchase of masses, provided opportunities for the celebration of social status and the symbolic representation of power.[69]

In his classic study, Jean Maurain pointed out, however, that while appreciating the social utility of religion, many members of the elite were

'more clerical than believing'.[70] The academic rector in the Allier claimed that, for the better-off, 'religious practices are often … a matter of calculation: it is advantageous to set a good example to their inferiors'.[71] Age was a significant factor, with marriage often marking a dividing line between youthful indifference and religious commitment, or at least occasional conformity.[72] That eminent theologian, the Abbé Gaume, was openly contemptuous of those gentlemen who appeared 'at mass, three or four times a year, and never at vespers', preferring instead to 'frequent spectacles and balls',[73] whilst Mgr Pie distinguished between the unstinted support for good works provided by rich Legitimist landowners and 'the enriched bourgeois, the entire merit of whom is to give me a good dinner when I visit their parish, and to come to church on that particular day'.[74] In an article published in 1842 in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Charles de Rémusat, a friend of Prime Minister Guizot, illustrated an even more cynical liberal outlook—'Religion? One favours it wholesale as a means of securing order, but retail, it's a joke.'[75]

At a more personal level too, a shared faith did not mean that relations between proud, and frequently arrogant and condescending notables and a poorly educated and often socially graceless clergy were always easy. Priests moreover demanded respect for their particular *état* and for the dignity of their calling. Considerable irritation might be caused, for example, by requests for parish priests to officiate at private chapels in local *châteaux*. The *desservant* at Guémené-Penfao in the Nantes diocese complained to his bishop that 'on the eve of a grande fête, Mme. la Marquise [de Becdelièvre] asked me to hear her confession in her own chapel. That is to say, at 8 o'clock, and under the pretext that the weather and the roads were very bad and that the journey to Guémené would have ruined her carriage and horses… When Mme la Marquise wants something, she cannot understand that there could be a valid reason for refusing it.'[76]

The Marquis de Falendre, mayor of Mahéru (Orne), decided that the local priest was so uncouth that it was impossible 'to have relations with him'. Instead his family attended services in a neighbouring parish. Shortcomings in the '*vie privée*' of the priest had also been noted. He had been observed to 'give himself over, personally, to the material cares of his household, and stripped of his cassock, saw and split wood'. The Bishop of Séez and the Prefect agreed that this breakdown in relations between the priest and the most important family in the parish required the transfer of the offending clergyman.[77] More generally, however, and even if tensions were not infrequent, a clergy educated to esteem social hierarchy,

and dependent on the financial support and influence of potential benefactors, was likely to be accommodating.

God was always represented as a man. Entry to the priesthood was limited to men. Religious life nevertheless often formed the basis of a distinctive female sub-culture. If, within her family of origin, the woman's role was subordinate to that of her husband or father, the upper-class lady nevertheless occupied a privileged place within the social hierarchy. The salon held in the mansion of Sophie de Swetchine in the rue Saint-Dominique in Paris until her death in 1857 attracted the likes of Albert de Broglie, Falloux, Armand de Melun and Montalembert, as well as influential clerics like Dom Guéranger.[78] Caroline Brame, daughter of an industrialist, married young, and resident in the aristocratic Boulevard Saint-Germain, occupied herself with social visits, by playing the piano, reading novels, and with parish activities. According to an entry in her journal, however, 'nothing is more delightful for the heart than to receive communion … I am never as happy as during these pious and fervent instants in which Jesus gives himself to me. Is there any pleasure comparable to that of hearing one's God address to the bottom of one's heart these words which do so much good?' (11 March 1865). Every day she dedicated her life to Jesus and to the Virgin Mary.[79]

Most parishes also sheltered a group of pious women dedicated to supporting the priest, and displaying those qualities usually associated with prevailing stereotypes of femininity—tenderness, weakness, docility, submissiveness.[80] They were likely to have been educated themselves by the religious orders and belong to the various associations which celebrated the cult of Mary, that perfect exemplar of purity and female goodness—both Virgin and Mother—the vital mediator between man and God, largely constructed by male theologians, and ever present in statues and imagery. In some situations, as among the women of the Lille bourgeoisie, a passionate and immersive spiritual milieu was created, dominating daily life and social relationships. Its members shared an increasingly intense piety, rigorously observing their religious obligations—daily mass, regular prayer, and frequent consultation of their spiritual advisors, as well as an all-encompassing religious faith. Some would probably have wished to assume the role of priest. The achievement of 'perfection' as the means of gaining eternal salvation could become the dominant element in their lives.[81] The sincerity of this intense piety seems so evident and yet many women were also no doubt conforming, half-heartedly, to established models and expectations of thought and behaviour, sufficiently so for Mgr

Dupanloup to complain about the 'odious and barbaric' social pressure which produced 'complicity between worldly prejudices and piety, I want to say, false piety'.[82]

While insisting that the woman's primary role was to serve as a companion and help-meet to her husband, the clergy also assumed that religion was a necessary check on those peculiarly female passions—sexuality, vanity and pride—most likely to result in sin.[83] They sought to protect the innocence and purity of young girls and to insist upon the need for virginity before as well as fidelity within marriage. The constant representation of the Virgin Mary—Mother of God, conceived without sin—as exemplar; the practice of communion and penitence; the presence of the *bonnes sœurs*; the establishment of dense networks of Enfants de Marie and of *confréries* which offered wholesome games and songs in addition to prayer and instruction; the denunciation of such 'erotic' activities as dancing and of visits to the theatre as occasions for sin; and of the 'indecent' styles of dress favoured by many women; culminating in the denunciation—from the pulpit—of the *filles perdues* who had given in to temptation, were all part of an attempt to protect Christian morality.[84]

Besides regular (and often daily) attendance at church services, charitable endeavours served multiple functions, providing an opportunity for 'respectable' women—excluded from the male-dominated space of the club or café—to socialize and to establish their social status, as well as to serve humanity. Indeed, for the clergy, a woman's 'tender heart' made her the ideal dispenser of charity. In *La femme chrétienne dans ses rapports avec le monde* (1851), the Abbé Chassay reminded his readers that 'it is touching to see women, brought up in a situation of well-being, defy the false delicacies of their education and install themselves in the cottages of the poor, like angels descending from Heaven… If there is something especially agreeable to the female heart, it must be the noble joy inspired by charity.'[85] In Rouen, the activities of the Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul were reinforced by the shared idealism and cooperation between the ladies of the region's aristocracy and the city's upper middle class in the Société de charité maternelle, which assisted poor women during childbirth.[86] In Lyon, while seeking to provide shelter and comfort for the incurable and widows without families, the good ladies of the Dames de la Calvaire, blessed with money, time and energy, also encouraged them to understand their miserable situations in terms of Divine Punishment and to exalt the suffering which offered such a wonderful opportunity for repentance.[87]

7.2.3 Christian Charity

God had punished France for the sins of its people by means of revolution and cholera. It seemed evident that only acts of expiation could secure renewed Divine blessing.[88] Charity justified wealth and also facilitated social control by promoting dependence and deference. Jules Gossin, a leading figure in the Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul, optimistically pointed out in 1848—'By means of enlightened assistance, the poor can be reconciled to the rich, and through affectionate contacts with all those who have some wealth, harmony can be re-established between the different classes of society.'[89] Another eminent member of the Société, the assistant state prosecutor at Rennes, in a speech celebrating the *rentrée* of the Imperial Court in December 1855, similarly insisted that it was the influence of the clergy which had kept Brittany free of unrest in 1848, and that 'religious faith is for us the best guarantee of order, peace and happiness'.[90] In addition to serving God's purpose, as the state prosecutor at Bourges pointed out, 'Everyone understands that in the face of an inevitably unequal distribution of wealth, charity is not only a duty of humanity, but an element of social security.'[91]

In His wisdom, God had provided the rich with the opportunity to achieve salvation by alleviating the suffering of the poor through human sympathy, moral leadership and material assistance. Frédéric Ozanam, one of the founders of the Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul, distinguishing between 'charity' and mere 'philanthropy', condemned the latter because it lacked the spiritual dimension.[92] Pastoral letters and sermons frequently reminded the better-off that charity was a voluntary act, under the impulsion of conscience, leading to the construction of a moral community in which the better-off could exercise a reformative influence over the poor, and which provided a means of revealing their own love of God. The rich had responsibilities towards those less fortunate than themselves and were promised that charitable activity would ease their path towards Salvation. Charity was not something to which its recipients had any right, however. While they might earn God's blessing by accepting submissively the place in society He had chosen for them, questioning His Judgement represented blasphemy and exposed the transgressor to both human and divine retribution.[93]

As the President of the *conférence* of the Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul at Morlaix in Brittany reminded its members in 1857, 'the objective of the Society's founders … was not so much to offer greater assistance to

the unfortunate, but to give to men of the world, to men engaged in public life, a means of working for their own sanctification, that is for their own moral and religious improvement, through charity and works of mercy'.[94] By means of the love of Christ and mutual respect, charity would reinforce the faith of the donor and encourage the recipient to return to the faith.[95] According to the parish priest at Le Blanc, in the diocese of Bourges, the rich 'occupy on earth a providential place compared to the poor; they are indebted to God who has allowed them their good fortune; they must in return assist those who suffer'.[96] In this Christian-conservative conception of 'Providential' inequality '[which] is the essence of human nature'[97]—the suffering poor adopted the role of passive and grateful recipients in hope of Eternal Salvation.

In religious terms, charity represented an act of redemption. Seeking to comfort Juliette de Robersart during a cholera epidemic, Louis Veuillot reminded her that not only was this 'the moment to place yourself in the hands of God' but additionally an opportunity 'to assist the poor. Fear might persist, but at the last moment the poor will, in their turn, assist us in the person of … Jesus Christ, victor over death, and we will pass through the door of judgement almost without thinking about it.'[98] 'The rich' were thus 'necessary, not only for the good that they do, but additionally for the examples they give, which are the most appropriate to ensure enjoyment of the gift of poverty'.[99] He did, however, occasionally despair. In 1866, he complained that too many members of the social elite did little, in spite of the ever-present threat of death and the final Judgement. Their inactivity threatened to result in 'the triumph of the devil'.[100] Fortunately, the poor were always present—as passive instruments, offering opportunities for the good works which would earn God's blessing.[101]

For the rich, charitable activity was a means of 'legitimising one's position as a member of the ruling class'.[102] It provided a means of self-affirmation, of self-justification, of gaining recognition, and of enhancing a family's sense of respectability and social status (often by appearing on a list of charitable subscribers). In allowing the 'identification of the rich and powerful with the good', it offered a means of accumulating social and (even if indirectly) political capital.[103] The poor, in their turn, rewarded those who provided assistance by accepting the love of Christ, and offering gratitude and prayers.[104] The establishment of this circular relationship between rich and poor enhanced the prospect of salvation for both. In practical terms, by reducing the sense of desperation among the poor, assistance also reduced the likelihood of crime or of collective protest.[105]

Never, according to a repeatedly reprinted pamphlet by the Abbé Mullois, had the richer classes proved more fraternal and more altruistic towards the less fortunate.[106] The impact of industrialization and the influx into the towns of desperately poor and vulnerable people from the countryside had been highlighted in 1834 by Villeneuve-Bargemont in his *Traité d'économie politique chrétienne*.[107] Awareness of the 'social problem' had, within a constricted ideological-religious framework, been considerably enhanced among the Catholic elite during the 1840s by enquiries associated with the journal *Annales de la charité*, established by Armand de Melun in 1845, and with the Société d'économie charitable (1846). The proper conduct of Christian charity was also widely debated during the long mid-century crisis and following poor harvests between 1853–1856. Writing in the *Journal des Economistes*, A.E. Cherbuliez sought to marry Christian precepts of Divine Providence with liberal economic theory. He insisted that charity 'must, in order to be in harmony both with the religious principles which inspire it, and with those of economic science, endeavour to restore the morality of those living in misery, and to combat the discouragement, lack of foresight, and the vicious inclinations which might otherwise develop, by applying to such good works the direct and personal influence of one man on another'.[108] The government engineer and eminent social observer, Frédéric Le Play, the best-known theorist of this kind of neo-feudal, counter-revolutionary Catholic paternalism, insisted that social relationships must be based on those of the family—on affection, mutual obligation and respect for paternal authority.[109] Social order depended upon reverence for hierarchy, on acceptance, by the 'superior classes' of their paternalistic responsibilities towards the 'inferior classes' and by the latter of their subordinate position within what appears to have been conceived of as an essentially master/servant relationship.[110]

In 1856, Le Play founded the Société d'Economie sociale as a sort of think tank. Its objective was to 'establish a more prosperous future for the working classes through the conscientious study of their condition past and present, as a means of placing comfort within the grasp of the classes with a little money, and necessities within the grasp of the poorest', and above all of 'raising the people towards God through well-being and gratitude'.[111] The Society reflected the emergence of a social Catholicism directed not simply at providing assistance but to securing a permanent improvement in the living conditions of the poor and in social relationships and thus combating both the selfish individualism associated with

liberalism and the immoral temptations of socialism, as well as the prospect of class conflict.[112] Increasing prosperity would also provide a growing financial surplus to underpin three basic forms of activity—assistance to the poor, contributions to the construction and renovation of churches, and donations in support of religious good works. His pessimistic view of mankind encouraged Le Play to insist that religious belief and respect for the Ten Commandments were the only means of ensuring peace in society.[113]

The paternalistic ideas applied to the rapidly developing urban-industrial world drew heavily on conservative theological/ethical ideals derived from idealized conceptions of rural society in which the philanthropic activities of the wealthy both supported the pastoral work of the parish clergy and reinforced their own social influence.[114] In the cities, the place of the *châtelain* should be assumed by the parish priest, involving himself fully in the activities of the municipal *bureaux de bienfaisance*, in parish mutual aid societies, lay associations like the Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul, and supported by the ladies of the parish, collecting donations and distributing food and clothing together with moral injunctions to the 'deserving' and submissive poor. According to an anonymous Parisian priest in a letter to Archbishop Sibour in 1849, these activities would 'establish relations between the poor and the largest possible number of laymen; and reinforce links between these and the parish clergy… The object is to increase the influence of the priest, to reinforce the authority of his word, and the reign of the laws of his God… ', and to ensure that, 'in every case it is the clergy, … offering guidance or counsel to those engaged in good works, who will gain the glory and honour for these good works'.[115]

In a prize-winning essay on *Le Salut des campagnes*, published in 1855, the Abbé Bardin furthermore observed that 'to assist the unfortunate has always been the way to win them over, and the care of the poor, which represents one of the great obligations of the priest … becomes the basis of [his] influence, and the most active ingredient in his zeal for the sanctification of souls'. In mobilizing resources, as another prize-winner, the Abbé Laveau, pointed out, 'if the notables of the area are for us, we will find in them a support which will multiply by a hundred our strength and means'.[116]

In response to a growing concern that landowners were deserting the countryside for the temptations of Paris and abandoning their social responsibilities and duty to assist the clergy, the Œuvre des campagnes, established in 1857 by the Abbé Vandel and the Comtesse Auguste de la

Rochejaquelein, presented a call for repentance, devotion and charity.[117] A return to the land was predicated as a means of regaining lost influence and of re-establishing traditional hierarchical social relations. Concern with the interests of agriculture should replace the habits associated with luxury and idleness, and with high society. Landlords were encouraged to take a lead in agricultural improvement—to provide work, increase prosperity and encourage peasants to stay on the land.[118] Sharing these objectives, Mgr Dupanloup would in 1863 establish the Académie Sainte-Croix to bring together landowners and senior government officials in the Orleans diocese—men he judged to be given to idle leisure—in order to 'encourage study, the development of talent, and to shape men of capacity and conviction, a society of friends and emulators…', who would discuss history and literature and the interests of religion, while avoiding divisive political debate.[119] This was typical of the charitable, learned and agricultural societies and salons so vital to regular social networking, and in which invaluable social and cultural capital might be accumulated by priests and laymen.[120]

The *Bulletin* published by the Œuvres des campagnes also insisted that church attendance by landowners was a vital means of setting a good example. Thus, in 1868—'People are impressed by what they see: "These are educated men", they say; "they must know what they are doing. They are rich and do not practise religion out of personal interest. They practise because they believe and believe because it is true." This is the sort of reasoning one encounters amongst simple country folk. Their convictions develop according to the conduct of people they see and honour.'[121] As well as setting a good example, landowners were also advised to supervise their dependents closely, 'with all necessary tact but also with authority'. Daily prayers by the assembled family and its servants were also recommended and they should all be expected to attend Sunday church services.[122] The clergy assumed that without the example set by those in authority, there was every danger that irreligion and moral disorder would spread.[123] Just as in the Bible, 'the organization and direction of good works' was defined as a male responsibility, while 'charitable action was largely the responsibility of women'.[124]

The initiatives taken were largely local in character. Prominent Roman Catholic laymen were likely to be members of the Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul, founded in 1833 as a means of supplementing the work of the parish clergy and religious orders and encouraging a sense of responsibility among social elites towards the less fortunate members of society. By

1844, the Société was composed of 141 *conférences* and had 4561 active members.[125] Membership of a deliberately non-political charitable association offered opportunities for cooperative networking. It also provided a means of participating in the 'crusade' against impiety.[126] By 1860, the Société had 32,500 activists in France, organized in some 1300 *conférences*, with a coordinating *Conseil supérieur* in Paris.[127] Mgr Marguerye, Bishop of Autun, typically waxed lyrical about the '*chères conférences*' which represented '*la gloire du catholicisme*' and through which the 'rich' distributed 'their largesse and their charitable exhortations'. The Société brought together men of every political persuasion 'on the neutral ground of charity and the practice of religious obligations', to engage in a 'variety of commendable works'. Indeed, he added, 'What an admirable means of ensuring that the poor love and bless the rich, when they see a young man, a well-known magistrate, a man highly placed by his dignity, talent or birth, occupy himself with their family and their children… This is the true means of helping the poor, of calming their discontent, of improving their moral and physical conditions.'[128] The entrepreneurial Abbé Mullois even established a new periodical—*Le Messager de la charité*—in order to popularize charitable giving and to 'bring men closer together in order to bring them closer to God'.[129]

In the capital, the most active *conférences* of the Société were located in the aristocratic *faubourg* Saint-Germain and the wealthy bourgeois parishes on the right bank of the Seine—most notably La Madeleine and Saint-Roch. They attracted men with substantial wealth, together with the leisure time and religious faith necessary to sustain commitment and perform leading roles. In comparison, in much of central, northern and eastern Paris, professional and businessmen needed to devote their time to their careers, and might have felt overwhelmed by the scale of poverty.[130] According to recent research by Brejon de Lavergnée, some 20% of Parisian members were nobles, a further 30% belonged to the 'leisured' classes, including landowners with urban residences, *rentiers*, and senior government officials, and 25% were members of the liberal professions. Additionally, the *conférences* offered a means by which successful shopkeepers, clerks, and artisans (20% of the Parisian membership) might reinforce their social status, particularly in the poorer areas.[131] It was expected that each member would visit two or three families, and probably more in time of crisis and intense hunger like 1846 and 1847. Faced with an influx of migrants from the provinces and from the city centre areas cleared by Baron Haussmann's reconstruction, the *conférences* in

working-class suburbs like Clignancourt or Belleville, where few individuals were able and willing to commit themselves to charitable activity, were likely to be overwhelmed—in spite of the efforts of wealthy inner-city parishes like La Madeleine to provide additional resources by transferring funds and adopting families.[132] By 1854, the Société was present in half the parishes of Paris and its suburbs, with 1800 members, organized into 56 *conférences*. Some 5700 poor families received regular visits.[133] In 1870, there were 124 groups in the city, with at least 2000 activists. The Société was present in every parish although the number of active members rarely exceeded 30–40.[134] The primary aim of the *conférence* of the Parisian parish of Saint-Augustin was defined as being 'to preserve or to re-awaken … the sentiments of order, of probity, and of religion'.[135]

Outside Paris, the Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul was largely urban and might be found particularly in the regions of faith. It was similarly dominated by members of the 'leisured' classes.[136] Those notables resident for part of the year in the capital, as well as former students influenced by their experiences in the city, were particularly influential in the establishment of provincial *conférences*.[137] They provided behavioural models for the growing number of bourgeois families attracted by the ultramontane devotions of a revived Catholicism. The experience of dealing with the supplicant poor and the habitual employment of the language and gestures characteristic of a sense of superiority additionally promoted self-confidence.[138] In and around rapidly industrializing textile centres like Lille and Lyon, the fervent Catholicism of both traditional notables and leading industrialists, as well as a growing awareness of intense and threatening poverty, combined to encourage charitable activity. It also secured the greater integration of old and new elites, facilitated the division of labour between the leading male philanthropists and their womenfolk, active within supportive *comités des dames*, and provided a mechanism for reinforcing their influence.[139]

The Society's adherents were hostile to what they perceived to be the creeping bureaucratization and secularization of the municipal *bureaux de bienfaisance* in which they also often participated, and most certainly to socialist notions of an *Etat-Providence*.[140] They sought to personalize charity by regularly visiting the 'deserving' poor, the sick and infirm of the parish, in their homes and, with the assistance of members of religious orders like the Filles de la charité, distributed food, clothing, heating fuel, advice on hygiene and morality, and, above all, knowledge of the

Love of God.[141] It was assumed that the poor judged the rich harshly and envied their possessions only because they did not know them.[142] An association like that of Notre-Dame de Bonne Garde at Nantes offered a corrective, taking as its objective the need to 'protect the innocence of young female domestics and workers from all the dangers which threaten them in the middle of a great city'. Among its organizers were the representatives of the local aristocracy, inspired by an idealized conception of master-servant relationships which associated the devotion, love and affection expected from servants with the paternalism of their masters.[143] The association offered '*saines récrèations*' and spiritual instruction. Taking as a precept the passage in Saint Paul's letter to the Ephesians—'Servants, obey your masters', its regulations recommended that domestics 'attach themselves to their masters and serve them, not in proportion to the wages they receive but from love of Jesus Christ… They should not challenge the instructions of their master or mistress; they should never murmur in protest when they are given a command or some advice… Above all, they should take care to say nothing unfavourable about their master.'[144] It was further assumed that observation of daily religious practices within the household (or indeed on the estate, in the office or factory) 'induces a state of mind in which the established structures of authority and even modes of exploitation appear to be in the course of nature'.[145]

It was particularly important to protect the young from moral corruption. The Œuvre des apprentis, founded by Armand de Melun in Paris in 1854, provided evening classes for 800 and by 1870 was able to bring together 3300 young workers for Sunday worship. The parallel Œuvre du patronage des jeunes ouvrières offered similar support to young girls.[146] As well as technical instruction, these groups offered wholesome entertainment, religious retreats and prayer meetings. In Marseille the Œuvre de la jeunesse ouvrière similarly sought to protect young workers from temptation, especially those without families in the city, and to find them work once they had completed their apprenticeships.[147] Authorized in 1861 by the Prefect of Bas-Rhin, following a careful police investigation, the 'Statuts de l'association catholique des ouvriers de Strasbourg' defined its goals as 'at the same time religious, educational and recreational'. Political discussion was strictly forbidden. Its 130 members were provided with study and games rooms which would remain open between 8 a.m. and 9.30 p.m. on weekdays and, following religious services, from 4 p.m. to 9.45 on Sundays. Members should be at least 17 years old and be

recommended by their employers and '*personnes charitables*'. The administrator of the association would be a priest assisted by an elected committee. In this case the authorities had initiated an inquiry by the local *commissaire de police* because of the appointment of a Jesuit as director. As the Bishop of Strasbourg, however, pointed out, the association ensured that 'Young men, instead of passing their evenings in the *cabaret* or *brasserie*, or in even worse places, gather together in a place known to the police, and there, under the eyes of honourable and sympathetic men, they talk, laugh, and sing; they listen to instructive lectures or the reading of an edifying story; and sometimes enjoy a modest refreshment, always without alcohol, and which bears no resemblance to the disgusting orgies to which they might be invited elsewhere.'[148]

Closely associated with the Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul, and similarly spreading from Paris into the provinces, was the Œuvre des Saintes-Familles, which attempted to encourage church attendance by offering services specifically for the poor in the hope of overcoming any embarrassment caused by their ragged clothing, and to counter their inability to comprehend sermons directed at the better educated.[149] It also sought to reinforce self-discipline and to encourage thrift and mutual assistance as did the Société de Saint-François-Xavier (1840) which attracted some 25,000 members during the 1850s.[150] The objective of the Société de Saint-François-Régis (1826) was to encourage co-habiting couples to overcome the obstacles formed by the legal formalities and costs associated with a Christian marriage, and by 1870 it could claim the credit for having organized 50,000 weddings since its foundation.[151]

According to Mgr de Ségur, charity, in all its forms, should be concentrated on the 'good', on the humble victims of age and infirmity, on the chronic sick and bereaved, and on those who accepted their situation with resignation to God's will and gratitude towards their benefactors. First of all, the 'deserving' poor had to be identified among those families whose misery could not be blamed on idleness, waste or vice. The bishop estimated that 19 out of every 20 poor people did not deserve aid. These were the 'ungrateful and wicked' whose poverty was due to 'laziness, debauchery, drunkenness, love of pleasure', and who 'blamed God when they ought to blame themselves'.[152] It was assumed that regular visits to the homes of the poor were essential. This was where a greater understanding of the problems of poverty might be gained, and the location in which the faith of the poor, as well as habits of cleanliness, order, and civility in their everyday lives, might most efficaciously be reinforced. The

Comte de Falloux, an early member of the Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul, insisted in his memoirs that 'When one has always had shelter, a home and bread, one cannot judge the poor. It is essential to look more closely at misery in order to understand it better, as well as the variety of reasons for either irritation or the heroism of calm resignation.' In working-class *quartiers*, where members of the clergy were not necessarily welcome, dedicated laymen might more easily gain admittance to the homes of the poor.[153]

Such intrusive and judgmental activities clearly represented an affirmation of social and moral superiority, evident in the oft-repeated expression of disgust at the living conditions of the poor and the stench of poverty. Invariably, the conditions imposed upon the recipients of assistance were strict. For one thing, resources were limited. In Paris, the Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul accumulated money through subscriptions, donations, legacies, lotteries, bazaars, charitable sermons, concerts, balls and fêtes.[154] The various *conférences* raised an exceptional 300,000 francs a year by 1860 but were only able to offer assistance to around one (strictly defined) indigent family in ten and provide for a quarter of its needs.[155] As the Prefect of Loire-Inférieure, Chevreau concluded, 'the *conférences*, no doubt achieve much good… It is worth noting, however, that they limit themselves to assisting only a privileged, selected portion of the poor',[156] and particularly those employees and tenants, as well as paupers and the old and infirm, for whom regular church attendance and deferential behaviour were the indispensable means of acquiring respectability and gaining assistance.[157] Additional resources were provided by some 9336 communal *bureaux de bienfaisance*.[158] These were usually controlled by Catholic laymen inspired by a patriarchal vision of social relations, assisted by the parish clergy and nuns. While indicative of virtue, membership of the various charitable organizations could easily become a means of affirming and reinforcing social status.[159]

The terms on which public assistance might be granted are evident in the instructions circulated by the Prefect of the Moselle in 1853. Malher insisted that help should be denied to those who did not possess a certificate of morality from their local mayor; to households including children over 14 who had not received their first communion or not been vaccinated against smallpox; to those who frequented a *cabaret* or had a reputation as a *querelleur;* were guilty of 'idleness; who refused any job offer; ill-treated their wives or children; kept dogs; refused to allow the entry into their homes, at any time of day or night, of a member of the *bureaux*

de bienfaisance', or one of the 'sisters or charitable ladies distributing assistance on behalf of the local *bureau*'; or for failure to follow advice on the maintenance of 'order and cleanliness' in the home.[160] Assistance must always be provided in kind. In the parish of Les Ecorces, in the uplands of the Doubs, where the Abbé Guinard established a charitable association, its statutes typically stipulated that 'one should never give money to the poor [for] fear that they will use it badly … and so as not to encourage their habitual and fatal penchants for intemperance and laziness'.[161]

The eminent Catholic layman, Armand de Melun, while accepting that the State might, in exceptional circumstances, supplement the resources available for public assistance, as a means of preventing disorder, nevertheless emphasized that poverty and inequality were part of the Divine Plan, a means of testing the faith of both poor and rich.[162] He insisted that mutual aid societies independently established by workers or peasants represented a potentially dangerous threat to the vitality of both paternalistic societies and the more traditional parish confraternities.[163] The Abbé Lafforgue at Bours (Hautes-Pyrénées) even claimed that their inspiration was 'satanic'.[164] In his conclusions to the influential report of the parliamentary Commission de l'Assistance established in 1850, that arch-cynic Adolphe Thiers similarly insisted that the resources for assisting the poor should be the product of voluntary donations—an act of 'virtue' not one of necessity. The alternative, a tax designed to raise revenue for public assistance, was incompatible with 'respect for property [and] individual liberty'. The eminent churchman, Bishop Dupanloup shared these views. Although he criticized the indifference of the wealthy, he could still maintain, even at the height of the textile crisis caused in the 1860s by the American Civil War, that although 'the State must assist private charity in periods of great distress … I do not believe that the State should provide for everyone… This would result in a financial scheme which posed a frightening threat to liberty, in place of dependence on personal virtue and family responsibility.' He concluded—'We must stop wishing to give to the State and to taxation, a role in the relief of misery … which it is impossible and immoral for it to take on', and which would represent a threat to private property and, thus, indirectly to religion itself by negating the essentially personal, human character of the relationship between donor and recipient.[165]

Although a great deal has been written, in recent years and in increasingly positive terms, about charitable activity as an altruistic manifestation of Christian compassion and generosity, it should not be forgotten that

the activists remained a small, if dedicated, minority. Many, if not most, Catholic notables were uninterested, influenced by liberal values, or hostile to charitable handouts. The existence of poverty was seen as God's will, and as a manifestation of the laziness and of the moral inadequacy of the poor themselves. In both rural areas and urban neighbourhoods, families might in any case have adopted forms of inter-dependence and of reciprocal assistance which went unrecorded and have largely been ignored by historians.[166] Charity might alternatively be perceived to represent an indispensable means of inculcating a spirit of resignation, of obviating the need for social reform, and of defending social order against the menace of revolution.[167] It might be considered as a form of social control, justifying and reinforcing unequal social relationships and marking out a path to salvation based on dominance/dependency, fully consistent with a commitment to counter-revolution.[168]

7.3 Popular Religion

Much of what we assume we know about the mass of the population is obtained through the hegemonic processes of cultural mediation engaged in by their social 'superiors', the confident tone of which often conceals a limited and condescending familiarity and understanding.[169] The possibility also needs to be borne in mind that 'every source of knowledge about women has been contaminated by misogyny and sexism'.[170] The 'silence of the people' makes it extremely difficult to gain insights into the outlook of the masses and to assess the degree to which the relatively autonomous development of religious discourse might have been possible, as well as the extent to which major socio-economic and political changes affected people's religious sensibilities and perceptions of their world. Contemporaries and historians have nevertheless attempted to identify distinct geographical and cultural milieux—often small in size—and to define the varied chronology of change.

7.3.1 Religious Practice in Rural France

In most areas the influence of the clergy probably reached a peak during the Second Empire when growing prosperity made possible the massive programme of church construction and restoration in which so many devout communities took great pride. A distinction might, however, be made between areas of *fidelité* and religious fervour and those of relative

indifference.[171] High levels of religious enthusiasm and practice, and of loyalty to the Church, appear, perhaps unexpectedly, to have been identified as characteristic of areas in the north and east with good communications, concentrated habitat, relatively advanced economic development, and high levels of literacy, conditions often presented by religious sociologists as contributing to rapid 'de-christianization', but in which the enthusiastic ultramontane clergy of the nineteenth century were able to build upon the structures and missionary zeal of their post-Tridentine predecessors. Such loyalty was often characteristic of *sociétés d'encadrement*, with hierarchical social structures in which influential elites, whether landowners or manufacturers, lent support to the Church. Although we should not slip into geographical determinism,[172] the religious institution similarly served as the essential focus of community life in *bocage* areas of the *arrondissements* of Laval and Château-Gontier (Mayenne), the western part of the Sarthe, in most of Brittany, western parts of Normandy, and the southern Massif Central, with their dispersed settlements, fields enclosed by high hedges, and poor rural roads; areas additionally characterized by the large families, delayed marriage, sexual restraint and frequent celibacy, which combined to enforce familial solidarity and to preserve traditional hierarchies, as well as by an isolation which reduced the inward flow of the new ideas which might have challenged established norms of behaviour.[173]

Many of the areas in which traditional religious faith was preserved were also characterized by a linguistic particularism, perceived to have reinforced physical and cultural isolation. The survival of Breton, Basque, Catalan, Flemish, German or French dialects meant that while Latin was employed for religious services and French for official business, the local language or dialect might remain in use for confession and daily intercourse. In the frontier department of the Nord, high levels of religious practice were characteristic of Flemish-speaking areas around Dunkirk and Hazebrouck—but also of French-speaking areas around Lille and other industrial centres. The authorities were certainly convinced of the links between counter-revolutionary 'fanaticism' and ignorance of the French language and efforts to exclude regional languages from the public sphere would gradually reduce their status and popularity as well as posing a threat to the spiritual life they had encompassed.

Bastions of the faith also continued to flourish in 'backward' upland areas in central France where, as in the Haute-Loire, parish priests recruited from among the '*classes inférieures*', poorly educated, but invested with

considerable authority by their functions exercised 'tyrannical' power over their flocks.[174] Religious vocations were numerous, and the sheer weight of numbers, the long periods individual priests spent in particular parishes, together with their own relatively humble origins, helped ensure that they remained close to the people and were well placed to sustain their sacred authority.[175] The continued residence of supportive elites and official recognition of the clergy's role in the distribution of charity and in education also substantially reinforced its influence.[176] The proliferating numbers of teaching sisters—as well as the lay *institutrices* they trained—encouraged Mgr Dupanloup to proudly affirm in 1867 that 'young girls are brought up on the knees of the Church'.[177]

In the most propitious circumstances, in rural Brittany, for example, daily life was 'impregnated' with Christian practices and religious observance was virtually universal. In the negative perception of the Interior Minister, the Marquis de La Valette, in December 1866, this reflected a situation, comparable only with that of rural Ireland, in which 'the peasant is ignorant and superstitious'.[178] In many communes, even the mayors deferred to the clergy.[179] Numerous religious ceremonies provided occasions for celebration and manifestations of popular sociability. Missions, pilgrimages and processions in which the local authorities, gendarmes and soldiers, together with robed penitents, girls dressed in white, and the faithful, followed the clergy and the parish banners, demonstrated the strength of Catholicism.[180] In Morbihan and Ille-et-Vilaine the clergy could still expect to receive regular offerings in kind—almost akin to the tithe abolished in 1789—from grateful parishioners.[181] In the wider west, shared memories of the *chouannerie*, the struggle fought under the leadership of its nobles and priests against the 'Godless' Revolution and the centralizing and secularizing tendencies of the revolutionary state remained potent.[182] In the Vendée, in the 1860s, the clergy were accused of becoming 'more and more demanding and domineering'.[183] In the south-east, in parts of the Gard, Tarn and Tarn-et-Garonne, and in the north-east, generations of religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants, and in Alsace, additionally, hostility towards Jews, similarly helped to maintain solidarity and religious enthusiasm in rival confessional communities through the oral transmission, within families, of remembered events, as well as the more structured and deliberate activities of the clergy and influential lay notables.[184] The Revolution had similarly served to integrate individuals into particular ideological communities. The 'terror' and civil war had forged a sense of collective identity which would be preserved as

a 'memory' by successive generations The short-term impact—the 'shock' of the revolutionary crisis—thus had long-term consequences.[185]

Although much of the rural population—peasants (small landowners, tenant farmers, labourers) and artisans—continued to inhabit relatively closed worlds and mental universes, the process of penetration by external influences was nevertheless accelerating.[186] Religious practice had long tended to be relatively low in areas where the development of communications and commercial activity, and the mobility of people, facilitated the spread of ideas and the establishment of alternative value systems, and wherever the creation of the conditions conducive to greater individual independence weakened familial and community pressure. The Second Empire, as a result of the improvement of rural roads, rail construction and the growing integration of the countryside into an increasingly urban-dominated world, would be characterized by developments which, on the one hand promoted religious renewal, but on the other, exacerbated the difficulties of pastoral care. The missionary Abbé Vandel observed in 1857 that the inhabitants of the prosperous agricultural dioceses of Paris, Versailles, Beauvais, Meaux and Orleans were tending to 'detach themselves from Christianity and establish a habitual state of religious indifference'.[187] The entire diocese of Orleans was, in this respect, a disaster area, with, in 1850, only 7.3% of men and 31.5% of women receiving Easter communion.[188] The situation was similar in the neighbouring diocese of Chartres, where it was claimed that in some parishes the only man receiving communion was the *instituteur*, and even he might well have succumbed to pressure from the schools' inspector.[189]

In such regions the parish priest was expected to restrict himself to his spiritual duties (narrowly defined) and to avoid 'interference' in the day-to-day life of the community. In spite of ceremonies designed to impress the young, first communion, at the age of 12, marked both the passage into adulthood and, for many, particularly young men, the end of regular church-going. In many parishes—though far from all—there was some kind of a concept of a religious/secular divide, with the population exhibiting 'an extreme half-heartedness' towards religion and the mayors themselves often '*peu religieuse*'.[190] The parish priest at La-Selle-en-Hermois (Loiret) even complained (in 1850) that his parishioners 'have certain habits linked to religion. They recite prayers, but they do not pray; they assist at mass, but they never hear it; they believe in one God, who they fashion themselves; they pray to God with fervour when they are ill, when

they believe themselves to be bewitched, when their animals are sick; they ask God for temporal gifts, but never for spiritual gifts.'[191]

The traditional agrarian order was also increasingly upset by the growing absenteeism of landowners as well as by the migration of young people, the latter desperate to find a better life and anxious to escape from authoritarian social relationships which rural elites and the clergy generally assumed that the poor had entered into freely.[192] The absence of powerful landowning elites was an important permissive factor. It weakened support for the clergy. There were also frequent complaints about alternative and often competing opinion leaders largely identified with an anti-clerical rural bourgeoisie. The parish priest at Saint-Sulpice d'Excideuil (Dordogne) was only one of the many who complained, in 1841, that 'the bourgeoisie make it a point of honour to express contempt for religion and its ceremonies', adding that 'if there are a few bourgeois in a parish, they make a display of never going to church, of criticising the priest… Constant sarcasm has the effect of destroying the simple and naïve peasant's respect for the religion of his fathers!'[193]

Among the population of the Cambrèsis and southern Hainaut, areas of *fidelité* in the department of the Nord, memories of the high rents and the tithes demanded before 1789 by wealthy landowning abbeys remained strong among the large numbers of small peasant proprietors, who had acquired former monastic property, and who remained suspicious of the clergy.[194] In the Tarn, another department with generally high levels of religious practice, in the 1860s, church attendance was relatively low around the little towns of Gaillac and Castelnau-de-Montmirail where small-scale vine cultivation predominated, as well as in forested zones with poor soils in the extreme north-west of the department, populated by indigent woodcutters, isolated from the care of the Church.[195] Dissent was also evident in isolated and impoverished communities in which missionary activity had been less intense or less effective in the previous century. In the Limousin, populations with low levels of education and culture had remained unresponsive. They provided few priests themselves and often continued to identify the parish clergy with the exactions of the *Ancien régime*.[196] The authorities also complained about the negative influence of temporary migrants—peasant-workers employed in the building industry in Paris or Lyon.[197]

In between the zones of fervour and those of relative indifference, outlined above, there was a large intermediate area stretching from the north-east to the south-west, and including the Mediterranean coast.[198] In the

Var, in a 'good' parish such as Correns, in 1864, 23% of the men and 96% of women were Easter communicants, while in a 'bad' parish like Mazaugues, attendance was as low as 3.5 and 21.1% respectively.[199] There were also signs that other traditional requirements were not being observed. The delays between birth and baptism were increasingly prolonged. In the town of Béziers—a dynamic centre of the wine trade—the proportion of infants baptised within the three days stipulated by the Church fell from 60% in 1822 to 42% in 1852, while remaining at 75% in the nearby woollens centre of Lodève, and at 80–90% in the surrounding countryside.[200]

In both town and country, women were more likely than men to go to church, and were therefore more susceptible to the influence of the clergy and particularly that of their confessors.[201] In a process known to historians as one of 'sexual dimorphism', men and women thus associated themselves with somewhat different sub-cultures.[202] Nationally, 30% of men and over 70% of women were likely to receive their Easter communion. In those regions in which levels of religious practice were highest, virtually every woman regularly attended mass, made their confession, and received communion, while in areas of relative indifference women, together with their younger children, still provided the vast majority of worshippers. Indeed, gender disparities were especially evident in regions with low overall levels of practice. In particularly unfavourable circumstances, in a diocese like that of Orleans, only a quarter to half—varying between parishes—of the women over 21, were in receipt of Easter communion by the late 1860s, although women still made up 82% of the *pascalisants*. Mgr Dupanloup complained that congregations were almost entirely made up of women and children.[203] The 'feminization' of religion was evidently well underway and, given the role of women in bringing up the young, the clergy were determined to maintain this privileged relationship.[204] Conditions were changing, and with increasing rapidity; religious faith nevertheless continued to influence the ways in which most of the population viewed the universe.

7.3.2 Popular Practices and the Struggle for Survival

Ultimately life or death still appeared to depend on the will of God. Poor harvests and epidemics continued to provoke panic well into the nineteenth century. Illness and accidents, fires and storms were all too common reminders of the fragility of human existence.[205] Among the

impoverished masses, in a world of back-breaking labour, pain and suffering and of unremitting physiological and psychological misery, private prayer, together with public worship, offered consolation in the form of 'an ensemble of beliefs, practices and traditional prejudices transmitted from one generation to another; a singular mixture of religion and superstition…',[206] representing the faith of communities with 'little political power … little economic prosperity … little cultural mastery', for whom religion was a means of supporting life on earth as well as offering salvation in the hereafter.[207] Self-control, family values, neighbourliness and sobriety were encouraged by the clergy, supported by local notables, and by the close surveillance possible in small communities. The threat of informal sanctions, in concert with the gradual penetration of the legal system, gradually, however, reinforced respect for community and official norms.[208]

Much of the population was thus attracted to religion by its practical efficacy, and to the Church by the external forms of religious practice and the sense of spiritual community produced by Sunday worship, processions and pilgrimages and *les grands offices* on Palm Sunday, Easter, Pentecost, All Souls and Christmas. The agrarian and liturgical cycles were closely related. Each of the major religious festivals marked a stage in the work of the fields and invited God's blessing.[209] In addition, by means of an annual *fête*, a parish celebrated its continued existence and expressed gratitude to its patron saint by carrying images and relics in procession. This opportunely combined an act of religious dedication with an occasion for celebratory dancing and feasting and of escape from an otherwise endless routine. Sunday was similarly the weekly day of rest as well as prayer. For peasants who believed in the *Bon Dieu* who commanded the elements and could choose to safeguard the life and health of humans and animals and ensure bountiful harvests, the customary rites performed by the clergy appeared indispensable.[210] Rogation processions in Spring and Summer, when the fields were blessed, were an essential means of safeguarding the crop.[211] Etienne Bertin, the central character of Emile Guillaumin's realist novel *La vie d'un simple* (1904) had long given up on confession and communion but still 'I tried to please the Master of the Elements and seldom missed the ceremonies when the success of the crops was the object'. He would never have taken a risk and failed to sprinkle the haylofts with holy water before storing his fodder, or forgotten to make the sign of the cross over the first sheaf at harvest.[212]

When drought threatened, as in 1854, Mgr Jacquemet, Bishop of Nantes, advised his flock that 'it seems that God wishes to make us remember that we depend upon His powerful hand and that we must never weary of seeking recourse to his kindness by prayer'.[213] In the hope of propitiating the Lord, a procession took place on 21 May 1861 from Taillebourg (Charente-Inférieure) to a holy well at Saint Savinien. The crowd sang hymns, the parish priest provided a sermon, and the parish banner was plunged into the water in supplication. After the clergy had left, the crowd bathed in the stream and drank its reputedly miraculous water. The civil authorities were not amused. The Paris Prefect of Police complained about the participation of the clergy in practices he judged to be 'unworthy of an enlightened religion', and which could only 'maintain misleading illusions', while 'profoundly irritating those people who do not share such outdated beliefs'—presumably including himself.[214]

Many village priests probably felt obliged to compromise with the values of their parishioners if they were to retain any influence over them.[215] Their own recruitment from rural communities impregnated with folkloric practices made interaction between a clerical orthodoxy and popular belief all the more likely.[216] Frequently accredited with magical powers, the priest was himself often regarded as the most powerful of sorcerers, a man whom it was prudent not to alienate. He was valued by his parishioners not only as God's representative but as a sort of magician performing ritual gestures and employing Latin, a divinely inspired language which few understood. Indeed, its use was justified by the Bishop of Valence, Mgr Chatrousse, precisely because recourse to 'the vulgar language … would be the end of the respect owed to the mysteries' [of religion].[217] In an under-medicalized society threatened by inexplicable events, the sick and their families continued to look towards the priest and prayer for both comfort and cure.

In addition to the priest, it was above all the Virgin Mary, so close to Christ, and a potent symbol of love and perfection, who offered herself—through prayer and supplication—as a exceptionally efficacious intercessor with God. Her cult became the basis for personal faith as well as for daily worship.[218] A multitude of saints—often unknown outside a particular locality and unrecognized by the Church—also provided lines of communication with the deity. The saints were personages favoured by their association with a tradition of miracles and cures and made more easily accessible through wooden or plaster images. To the dismay of many priests, they were often seen less as intercessors, than as themselves the

practitioners of magical acts.[219] The popularity of individual saints might be enhanced by particular events or threats. The cult of Saint Roch, the traditional source of protection against plague, was thus revived by the intense anxiety aroused by the first cholera epidemic in 1832, and during successive outbreaks in 1849 and in 1854, when in his purple robes, Archbishop Sibour visited the impoverished faubourgs Saint-Marceau and Saint-Antoine in Paris and was welcomed by large crowds anxious to secure his blessing and protection.[220]

A vital element in the appeal to any saint was performance of the appropriate ritual gestures, from making the sign of the cross as a prelude to prayer, or, as in Berry, before changing one's shirt.[221] In an age when the threat of illness or injury, afflicting people or livestock, was constant, and medical or veterinarian care expensive, often ineffective, and frequently unavailable, and when affliction might well be regarded as God's punishment, rituals, employed since pagan times, had considerable appeal. So too did recourse to 'wise' men and women, or to the advice offered in many of the pamphlets distributed by peddlers throughout the countryside, both of which, in addition to suggesting herbal cures, were likely to call upon the saints, a host of whom were available, to offer assistance to those in distress.[222] In 26 parishes of the diocese of Blois, for example, 23 saints were invoked against fever in the middle of the century and others for more specific complaints—Saint Mame against colic, Sainte Apolline or Saint Laurent against toothache, Saint Cloud in case of boils, Saint Léonard to assist with childbirth, Saint Criard when babies cried at night. Saint Yves offered protection against diseases affecting sheep, while Saint Eloi served as the protector of horses.[223] In the Châteaubriant area, prayers to Saint-Gobrien offered cures for human '*maux d'entrailles*', those to Saint-Mathurin protected cows and warded off storms, although in the latter case ringing church bells was generally regarded as more efficacious.[224] In vine-growing areas, protection against hail was particularly important.[225] Groups suffering from particular insecurity, like miners, were especially likely to wear protective medals, to enthusiastically celebrate their patron Sainte Barbe, and be concerned to ensure that they would ultimately receive 'proper' funerals.[226] The annual blessing of the sea in fishing communities represented both a response to the very real fear of sudden death by drowning and concern about the consequences of not receiving the last sacrament or a Christian burial.[227]

Prayers for Divine assistance might be reinforced by processions and pilgrimages.[228] The faithful, usually led by parish priests, carrying crosses

and banners, and singing hymns, processed to holy places, including churches or chapels but also the wayside crosses—so common in areas like Flanders; to wells and springs associated with miraculous cures; or to stones or trees with mysterious silhouettes; associated with the legend of a noteworthy *bon saint*. Over time, a hierarchy of pilgrimages had evolved, in relation to the supposed efficacy of a specific saint or shrine, or the importance of the miracles associated with a special location. On arrival at the place of pilgrimage, it might be judged necessary to bathe afflicted parts of the body in spring water, drink 'holy' water, rub parts of religious statues, or touch sacred stones in the hope, for example, of increasing the fertility of both women and the fields.[229] Frequently too, soil or grains of stone from a venerated shrine or, increasingly, religious medals, were carried away in the hope that these amulets would provide continued protection. Subsequently, gratitude could be expressed in the form of *ex-votos*. These might take the form of a silk ribbon draped over a 'holy' tree or rock, or the presentation to a chapel of paintings depicting scenes of miraculous rescue or redemption, replaced, especially from the 1870s, by a marble plaque inscribed with a brief standardized expression of gratitude.[230]

The clergy were, however, frequently discomforted by the complex mixture of the sacred and profane accompanying such events as the Breton *pardon*, in which the faithful carried statues of the saints in procession before engaging in an often drunken celebration.[231] Far to the east, in the Ain, the clergyman at Dompierre-sur-Veyle observed that during the feast days of Saint Blaise, patron of farmers and Sainte Agathe, protector of women, 'the men chase the women like dogs after bitches'. In a letter written in January 1858, he complained that 'Every year, I anticipate these days with dread, although I have not felt able to refuse to say mass and to bless their bread. Would it be right to refuse? Some priests have tried, but this has not prevented disorders, on the contrary, blasphemy against religion and insults to the priest have increased, and in some communities they have gone so far as to mimic the benediction.' His colleagues were divided over how to respond—'some say that it is necessary to tolerate an evil to avoid even greater ones, others insist that it is essential to strike heavy blows against great evils, and that only by doing so will we be able to destroy these abuses'.[232]

The determination of many priests to eliminate popular 'superstition' and to regularize religious practices was, however, increasingly evident.[233] The final imposition of the Roman liturgy during the 1850s and 1860s,

might arouse generally short-lived resentment where it threatened the celebration of traditional local festivals, but otherwise represented an effective means of imposing uniformity and order.[234] In Grandru—in the Beauvais diocese—there was no place for the traditional prayer to Saint Médard, the parish patron, in the revised order of service.[235] In the Breton department of Côtes-du-Nord, the religious authorities, during the nineteenth century, insisted on the rededication of 110 of the area's 400 parishes to saints recognized by the Church, most commonly Saint Peter—in place of mythical figures from the Celtic past.[236] Chapels were constructed at popular places of pilgrimage to allow the clergy to play a more effective pastoral role; 'ancient' wooden statues, considered by some to possess magical powers, were replaced by manufactured plaster images.[237]

Questions were also posed concerning the continued practice of exorcism to combat demoniacal possession of both animals and people. Impossible to count, such practices—described in a report to the Emperor by the inspector general of gendarmerie, General de la Ruë, as 'unbelievable in our epoch'—and the publicity they received, illustrated the complex tensions between popular beliefs, orthodox religion, and the more secular standpoints of government officials.[238] Terrified by an outbreak of hydrophobia at Murat in the Cantal in 1864 peasants, hoping to prevent the police from shooting their dogs, muzzled the animals and took them to a chapel on a rock just outside the town, famous for a miraculous key, which it was believed could prevent *la rage*. There the sexton applied the red-hot key to the dogs' foreheads, the priest pronounced exorcism, made the sign of the cross over the animals and, shouting '*Heli! Heli! Heli*!', anointed each dog with holy water—receiving in return a fee of 15–20 centimes. The dogs could then, it was assumed, be taken back to their villages and released from their muzzles and chains. The authorities, concerned that this would lead to the further spread of hydrophobia, insisted that the bishop stop the practice.[239]

In the same year the exorcism of an individual who claimed to be possessed by a demon was even conducted in the chapel of the diocesan seminary at Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne (Savoie). The bishop expressed pride in the successful outcome of the proceedings and in the ability of the Church to sustain 'the relationships between the visible and invisible worlds'. This, he concluded, would eliminate the 'superstitious' practices associated with spiritualism, such as 'turning tables or automatic writing'. General de la Ruë, however, referring to the event as '*un scandale religieux*', maintained that exorcism was part of 'a comedy planned with the

goal of affirming the authority of the clergy' over an 'essentially superstitious' local population.[240]

The dramatic events in 1857 at Morzine, a desperately impoverished commune of some 2000 souls further north in the Alps, had already attracted widespread attention. Women and especially young girls had, it was claimed, experienced severe convulsions during which they had shouted 'filthy words'; an abandonment of normal social constraints which for local priests represented clear proof of demonic possession. By 1861, the disorder in the village seemed sufficiently serious to require the presence of gendarmes and two companies of infantry. The senior army officer in the department believed that a plot had been organized by the local *curé*. The gendarmerie commander advised that 'the illness having its origins in the influence of the priests, that is where we should search for a remedy'. He recommended the immediate replacement of the local clergy with 'men … more resistant to all superstition', as well as a ban on the practice of exorcism. Many of the women affected were dispatched to lunatic asylums. These measures appeared to calm the community, at least until the end of 1863, when the incidence of convulsions again increased, disturbing some 150 women. On 24 April 1864, the commune was visited by the Prefect of Haute-Savoie, accompanied by five medical experts. Seven women experienced renewed and violent attacks while being interviewed in the local school. According to the official report, 'their contortions were frightening: they fell over backwards, rolled on the ground, broke the furniture in the room and shouted: bastard of a prefect, wolves, bastard doctors. No, you are not powerful enough to free the girl from the Devil—only the clergy can save the girl.' Then, one of the women smashed a window with her fist and as blood flowed profusely she was dragged outside by two gendarmes and deposited, unconscious, at the foot of a stone cross. The prefect and a doctor who attempted to restore order were attacked by another group of women.

The population subsequently focused its hopes on a pastoral visit by the Bishop of Annecy. It was widely assumed that a dignitary of the Church, and thus a man 'more powerful than other priests', would be able to finally exorcise the demons. On 30 April, at five in the evening, the arrival of Mgr Magnin was greeted with church bells and fireworks. Escorted by the communal council, he processed to the village square where a large crowd had gathered. At this moment several women experienced convulsions and others ran to the cemetery. There, some 80 women and girls 'went into a horrible state: their hair in disorder, they rolled on the tombs,

shouting: 'wolf of a bishop, we must tear out his eyes, he does not have the power to cure the girl, he is unable to free her from the devil'. Within the parish church other women tried to prevent the bishop from reaching the altar. He had to be protected by gendarmes while he prayed. On the following day—a Sunday—the bishop processed to the church to the sound of bells, fireworks, and the screams of '*les convulsionnaires*'.

The 'scientific' explanation subsequently provided by Dr Constans, Inspecteur-général du service des aliénés, who visited Morzine on several occasions, was that the women were suffering from a form of '*hystéro-démonpathie*'—the result of the 'superstitious beliefs' characteristic of the 'unenlightened spirit of the inhabitants'. He reported that 'all of them experience the sensation of a body agitating in their stomachs, rising to their throats and smothering them, strangling them: according to them this was one or several devils', their presence 'attributed to a glance, a touch, and a curse from one individual—who they accused of sorcery—to another'. The spread of the 'malady, itself occasioned sentiments of intense anxiety and further mutual denunciations', the result, according to Constans, of all manner of rivalries and '*petites haines*'. The situation had not been helped by a hapless local doctor who, himself convinced of the efficacy of exorcism, had sent his patients to the parish priest. Dr Constans, as a 'scientist', denied that such practices could have been effective, claiming that the exorcisms had only reinforced 'the over-excitement of the sick'. The colonel commanding the 26th Legion of gendarmerie maintained that the women were competing to produce the most spectacular convulsions and to appear 'the most possessed by the demon'. In his view, the disease spread by imitation and the desire for attention, and the visit of the bishop had only encouraged a violent recrudescence. Those women judged to be the worst afflicted were dispersed to hospitals throughout the region. Others who left the village rather than face the shame and misery of incarceration as lunatics were only allowed to return following a medical examination. Constans also pointed to the actions of Julienne L's father. He had grabbed his daughter by the hair, and threatened to slit her throat with an axe unless the convulsions ceased. Another father had achieved the same positive result by promising his daughter a new dress. Efforts were also made to entertain and divert the population with music provided by a military band, while a religious mission which, Constans claimed, had only agitated the population, was suspended. The authorities linked the waves of hysteria to the priest's 'exaggerated' sermons and to the religious festivals promoted by 'young and ardent' missionaries. The

collective trauma might indeed be taken to represent the sense of guilt and anxiety aroused by pressure on women in the confessional to achieve moral perfection. Untoward behaviour might then spread through a process of imitation among those sharing similar aspirations and anxieties.[241] When 'hysteria' again manifested itself during Holy Week in 1866, Dr Constans reported that the number of *convulsionnaires* had been restricted to 25, compared with 120 in 1863, by limiting the length of religious services and rapidly excluding the sick. He was convinced that the only long-term remedy was to reduce the isolation of this impoverished community, stimulate its economy and increase its prosperity.[242] Historians considering similar situations have wondered whether such behaviour was a manifestation of personal psychological disturbance or represented culturally specific performances within a dysfunctional community. They have emphasized the 'indebtedness, dispossession, malnutrition and disease', the constant physiological and psychological distress, the anxiety and apprehension characteristic of impoverished upland communities, as well as the 'unstable gender relations' caused by the absence of male migrant workers.[243] To this might be added the harsh 'religion of fear' preached by priests competing for influence, and themselves susceptible to magic and a belief in demons.

7.3.3 Industrialization, Urbanization and Faith

Complex processes of cultural inter-change existed between urban centres and their rural hinterlands as part of a centuries-long process of urbanization in which the growing interdependence of town and country ensured that cultural change in urban areas influenced belief systems over increasingly wide rural areas.[244] It was in the cities, together with rural areas close to the most active lines of communication, that the dominance of human life by natural, divine forces had first become less evident and secular preoccupations had been reinforced at the expense of spiritual concerns. Social pressures for religious conformity had become less intense and anticlerical sentiments more easily expressed. It should not be forgotten, however, that the larger cities (and especially Paris, Lyon, Marseille and Toulouse), as well as being associated with scepticism, were also the dynamic centres of bishoprics, religious organizations, of missionary and teaching orders, and influential lay associations like the Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul. In regions with low overall levels of religious practice, such as the dioceses of Paris, Limoges, Sens and Soissons, the cities

frequently had higher (although still relatively low) rates of religious participation than the surrounding rural areas.[245] Significant variations in religious practice could also be observed between and within towns, and explained not only in relation to their socio-economic structures but also by the characteristics of the wider cultural regions to which they belonged and the structure of rural-urban migration.

While making these distinctions, it is important, however, to remember that virtually the entire population—as a result of childhood socialization, reinforced by religious instruction—adhered to Christianity, and conformed to fundamental community expectations concerning performance of the rites of passage. Religious practice and contact with the clergy were everywhere preserved. Virtually every parish contained, in varying proportions, the fervent believers so treasured by the clergy, some of them tormented souls determined to secure Eternal Salvation, frequently confessing their 'sins', seeking absolution and receiving Holy Communion, as well as those who, although perhaps less devout, were nevertheless sincere in their faith.[246] The 'rites of passage' which sanctified the key moments in people's lives—baptism, marriage, the last rites and burial—were almost universally respected, and the major religious festivals—Christmas, Easter, the Feast of the Assumption and All Saints—celebrated. To practise religion in a 'de-christianized' community nevertheless clearly meant something very different from church-going in a centre of intense faith.

Although historians have recently become far less likely to simply associate industrial development and urbanization with 'de-christianization', it seems clear that the urban situation was unstable and, from the point of view of the Church, dangerous.[247] Overall, the number of parishioners per priest rose from 1600 in 1802 to 2956 by 1861[248] and it was assumed in the Ministère des Cultes that the excessive scale of parishes explained '*le peu d'influence du clergé*'.[249] In Paris, the situation was made particularly difficult by the predominance until late in the century of immigration from the already 'de-christianized' area of the Paris basin. A marked contrast developed between fervent *quartiers* and milieux—and especially the more prosperous western areas of the capital, and the eastern, more working-class *arrondissements* of the city and its suburbs into which migration was particularly substantial.[250] Moreover, the clergy and lay charitable activity were concentrated in the city centre while the burgeoning suburbs were neglected.[251] Nevertheless, J-O. Boudon estimates—and the point needs to be stressed—that 80% of the population retained some links with the Church and were inspired by at least a latent faith. Religion continued

to offer consolation and a means of coping with the spiritual distress associated with widespread material deprivation and constant insecurity endured by the 67% of the population of Paris (some 635,000 people), estimated by Husson, the Prefect of the Seine, to be close to destitution following the poor harvests in 1845–46, and particularly the 395,000 who actually satisfied the humiliating formalities which were a prelude to receipt of assistance.[252]

Boudon distinguishes between four groups in Paris in 1850–60—the devout (c.5%); regular worshippers (c.10%); those who had ceased to regularly receive communion but respected the rites of passage (c.65%); and the detached (c.20%). The more fervent groups were largely made up of women who, along with small groups of men, constituted a religious elite, which played a leading role in the life of every parish. While the churches were often full, the proportion of the growing population attending religious services nevertheless declined almost constantly. A survey by the clergy of Easter communicants in 1854 suggested that even in the city's western arrondissements only some 20–30% of those eligible received communion, while in the eastern areas dominated by artisans and workers the proportion fell to less than 10%. Considerable alarm was aroused by the collapse of Easter communion in working-class parishes like Saint-Eloi where less than 10% of those aged over 13 attended, and in the future 12th arrondissement where practice fell below 5%.[253] The growing delay between birth and baptism was further cause for concern—representing as it did ignorance/indifference/rejection of the prescription that in order to secure their salvation infants should be baptized no more than three days after birth.[254] Reporting on the situation in 1865, the Abbé Meignan observed that the vast majority of workers were increasingly detached from the Church. As social segregation within the city increased, the emergence of a working-class subculture and peer pressure ensured that very few men ever went to church, leaving religion to a small minority of fervent women and their children.[255] In the working-class parish of Saint-Bernard de la Chapelle in 1866, out of a population of some 42,000, only 60–80 men received Easter communion.[256] The man who went to church regularly could easily become a figure of fun.[257]

In the Paris diocese as a whole, the worst parishes were Bobigny and Clamart in the city suburbs where in 1854 only 1.3% (four people) and 0.7% of parishioners respectively received Easter communion. Although virtually every death was followed by a religious interment, rejection of

the last rites was becoming more common. According to the priest at La Courneuve, only the poorest, those in receipt of charity, felt obliged to accept the priest into their homes. Elsewhere in these eastern suburbs of the capital, the situation might not be as dire, but only a small minority could be expected to take part in religious activities regularly.[258] In a relatively 'good' parish like Orly, a quarter of the population attended mass, and three-quarters the various religious festivals, with virtually the entire population turning out for the celebration of Christmas, Pentecost, and the *fête-dieu*. Even then, the parish priest deplored the general 'ignorance of the principles of the Christian religion'.[259]

In other growing urban centres, religious practice similarly reflected the history of the wider surrounding cultural regions from which most immigrants came, as well as existing socio-professional structures and relationships. Especially from mid-century, as local cultures were undermined, major distinctions between social groups also became increasingly evident. In Lyon, Lille and Saint-Etienne, as in Paris, marked contrasts could increasingly be drawn between the old city centres, with their established parish structures and more settled populations, and the newer suburbs with a rapidly growing population poorly integrated into increasingly over-burdened parishes. In Marseille, a city once famed for the intensity of popular religiosity, the imperial years represented a significant period of transition as attendance at mass fell from 46% to 31% of the population, between 1841 and 1862, and to below 25% in the poorer *quartiers*. The interval between birth and baptism, seen by religious sociologists as an indicator of religious commitment, also widened. In the 1820s, 80% of babies had been baptized within three days of birth; by 1860, the proportion had fallen to 40% and would continue to decline, with especial rapidity during the 1870 and 1880s.[260] This reflected the growing heterogeneity of the city, as its socio-economic structures were transformed, and in-migration developed from a wider and more diverse circle of cultural and linguistic regions, creating a population more difficult to integrate into the life of the Church, and for much of which religious practice had little bearing on daily life. Until the late 1850s, fishermen (only too aware of the 'perils of the sea') as well as the old corporation of stevedores remained faithful to their religious traditions. The attack by the Compagnie des docks on restrictive practices led, however, to a decline in the power and prestige of the corporation and to an influx of newcomers into a formerly relatively closed group of workers. As the cultural unity of dock workers declined, so too did religious practice. By the end of the 1850s, only

around 8.5% of men received Easter communion, although in the industrial parishes of the rapidly growing port city, like Saint-Mauront, Saint-Lazare, Saint-Adrien and La Capelette, mass participation in the eight-day cycle of processions held annually in each parish to celebrate its *fête-dieu* revealed a widespread religiosity among workers.[261] The clergy might take comfort from crowded churches and the incessant activity required to minister to the faithful, and the numbers attending Sunday mass certainly appear to have grown from around 57,000 in 1825, to 73,000 in 1841 and 86,000 by 1862, but this represented a constantly declining proportion of a rapidly increasing population.[262]

Writing about the textile operatives of Rouen, Alphonse Audiganne, a particularly well-informed observer, insisted that they retained 'a basic knowledge of religion', and respected the rites of passage. Indeed, he observed, 'one sees workers, even the poorest, use their last resources to suitably dress their sons and daughters for their first communions'. He added, however, that their engagement with religion risked degenerating to no more than '*une formalité banale*'.[263] In similar terms, the state prosecutor at Montpellier felt obliged to agree with the local bishop, Mgr Thibault, that, in spite of enthusiastic popular participation in the various religious *fêtes*, 'without renouncing the semblance of piety, without losing … the external respect for holy things, religion is, in reality, nothing more than a dead faith and an indifferent practice'.[264] Local tradition often sustained pre-Christian magico-religious beliefs and a 'routinized faith' influenced by Catholic theology and practices.[265]

The Church, as an institution, failed sufficiently to adapt to a developing suburbanization, to the mushrooming of new housing particularly around railway stations and factories and to the rapid transformation of many rural into industrial communes. Within the course of a single generation, situations and attitudes could undergo substantial change. Many workers, especially among the first generation of migrants, nevertheless retained the religious traditions and habits of their rural past, particularly in small towns in which notables and individual priests were able to exert a personal influence. Thus, high levels of religious practice were to be found among such otherwise isolated groups as the large number of Flemish-speaking immigrants arriving to work in the textile mills and ironworks of the Lille area in the 1830s and 1840s,[266] as well as recent in-migrant textile workers in the mushrooming towns of Roubaix and Tourcoing, and in the dispersed manufacturing communities in the Lys valley—at a time when, in the more established communities in Lille,

practice had already significantly declined.[267] Even in Lille, however, around 15% of male workers still received Holy Communion in 1855.[268] Periodically, the fear aroused by cholera inspired huge processions through the streets of the city's poverty-stricken industrial suburbs. In Wazemmes, on 16 September 1866, the little houses were decorated with flowers and their windows illuminated with candles in supplication to Saint Roch and to the Virgin Mary.[269] There was also widespread appreciation of the efforts of priests, nuns, and Catholic doctors, to combine medical care with prayers for the poor and sick.[270]

Contrasts might also be drawn between the relatively low levels of religious practice among miners employed in the established coalfield in the Nord where, during the Second Empire, conformity appeared to turn towards indifference, and those employed in the more recently developed mines in the Pas-de-Calais (or Carmaux in the south), where they remained closer to their rural roots.[271] Even there, however, according to Mgr Parisis, priests faced serious difficulties ministering to 'these new agglomerations so rapidly established by industry, made up of strangers, unknown to each other, unknown to us, and invariably more attracted to evil, because they are unknown'.[272] In other developing industrial centres, including the southern textile towns of Lodève, Mazamet, Castres, Bédarieux and Millau, where they enjoyed the support of paternalistic employers, an energetic clergy was nevertheless able to exert considerable influence.[273] At Le Creusot, the major mining-metallurgical complex in central France where, in the 1840s, 57% of the adult population received Easter Communion, and although this was already 10% lower than in neighbouring rural areas, workers remained strongly attached to a community of faith.[274] Often deeply religious themselves, the *patronat* in such company towns, as well as in major textile centres like Lille or Mulhouse, supported by their wives and daughters, were committed to the performance of good works. In such circumstances, church attendance increased the likelihood of obtaining work and *secours* and, for the more ambitious workers, of securing promotion to supervisory functions.[275] The '*bons ouvriers*' in every community retained their faith and were respectful towards those who provided work and devoted themselves to easing the misery of the poor. The skilled and ambitious were often grateful for subsidized housing, garden allotments and schools.[276] Although religious commitment might have varied considerably, it seems clear that relatively few workers were entirely divorced from the ministrations and influence of the Church.

7.4 Conclusion

The continued influence of the Church as an institution depended on its capacity for institutional reconstruction and doctrinal innovation to meet the needs of a rapidly changing society and, at the same time, to stimulate popular religiosity. The clergy became less confrontational in their attempts to combat 'superstitious practices'. They accepted increasingly that many popular beliefs and practices might well be conducive to enhancing the piety of participants, as well as providing opportunities for the public affirmation of the Church's presence. In spite of frequent pessimism, all was far from lost as the Church reaffirmed its dynamic role at the centre of Christian civilization. Priests could not fail, however, to be aware of increasingly vocal currents of both popular and intellectual dissent.

Notes

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266. M-J. Lussien-Maisonneuve, 'Contribution de la Flandres aux développements néo-gothiques de la ville et de la vie artistique en France septentrionale au 19e siècle', in J. de Maeyer, L. Verpoest, (eds) *Gothic revival. Religion, architecture and style in western Europe. 1815–1914*, Leuven, 2000, p. 173.
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271. P. Pierrard, *Les diocèses*, p. 248.
272. 28 Oct. 1857, quoted Hilaire, *La vie religieuse des populations du diocese d'Arras*, p. 1030.
273. Faury, *Cléricalisme et anticléricalisme*, pp. 417–18.
274. Leveque, *Bourgogne*, pp. 732–3. See also M-C. Cartayrede, 'Aux frontières de la paysannerie: l'Eglise et les ouvriers d'Aubin (1825–70)', in F. Bédarida, J. Maitron, (eds) *Christianisme et monde ouvrier*, 1975, p. 282.

275. See e.g. A. Lanfrey, 'Eglise et morale ouvrier. Les congréganistes et leurs écoles à Montceau-les-Mines', *Cahiers d'histoire*, 1978, p. 69.
276. See e.g. Audiganne, *Les populations ouvrières*, p. 98, 135, 145; Hilaire, op. cit., p. 1023; Faury, *Cléricalisme et anticléricalisme*, p. 42.

CHAPTER 8

Anti-Clericalism

8.1 Introduction

The increasingly triumphalist ultramontane sensibility and aggressive commitment to 'the rule of Christ on earth' manifested by numerous priests during the Restoration and throughout the authoritarian Papacy of Pius IX undoubtedly inspired re-Christianization. It also, however, stimulated negative reactions. These varied in kind and intensity. Many practising Catholics resented the Church's increasingly all-embracing and dogmatic claims. Liberals and democrats disapproved of the close association between the Church and both the imperial regime and the restored monarchy. They were convinced that faith was a matter for the individual conscience, anxious to restrict priests more exclusively to their sacerdotal functions, and suspicious of the influence exercised by confessors over their womenfolk.[1] The 'Jesuit myth' developing in pamphlets, cartoons, songs and poetry during the Restoration and particularly the reign of Charles X, encapsulated many of these liberal and democratic concerns.[2] Anti-clericalism was moreover almost a reflex action on the part of families which had rallied to the First Republic or had been condemned from the pulpit for purchasing *biens nationaux* confiscated from the Church, as well as of those peasants who, in some regions, remained afraid of the reimposition of seigneurial dues and the tithe and resented the assertive attitudes or the 'greed' of the clergy.[3]

R. Price, *Religious Renewal in France, 1789-1870*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67196-3_8

The 1830 Revolution had been followed by a wave of anti-clerical and iconoclastic protest in Paris and the provinces as unpopular priests were excluded from their parishes, and the crosses erected by religious missions together with other symbols of the alliance between the Bourbons and the Church during the Restoration were smashed or displaced.[4] Although, in 1848 the apparent initial rapprochement between the Republic and the Church was, on both sides, often sincere, and the new republican Provisional Government was clearly anxious to avoid a repetition of the disastrous conflict with the Church which had so scarred the first revolution, this could not prevent the localized re-emergence of tension between individual priests and their parishioners as well as suspicion of the counter-revolutionary proclivities of the Church, culminating in its enthusiastic support for the December 1851 coup d'état. Gradually, an increasingly unbridgeable gulf emerged between radically different visions of the universe, making it difficult for some (probably a small minority of the population) to sustain even the vestiges of their religious faith.

8.2 Opinion Leaders?

Although it is difficult to characterize beliefs in social terms, it does appear that a division existed between socially and politically conservative groups enjoying mutually supportive relationships with the Church, including the landowning nobility and a clerical *bourgeoisie*—likely to consist of both traditional landowning elements and state officials as well as successful and status-conscious businessmen; and an indifferent or anti-clerical, politically liberal or democratic *bourgeoisie*, more likely to include 'newer' elements—landowners, members of the liberal professions, small businessmen and artisans—and suspicious of the pretensions of the clergy.[5] The struggle for local power between and within these groups, inaugurated by the Revolution, continued throughout the century.

In these circumstances the groundswell of 'spontaneous' anti-clericalism, which had been evident since time immemorial, was given voice in numerous popular gatherings, in cafés and work-places, and most notably by the habitués of such middle class meeting places as *cercles* and masonic lodges, the latter repeatedly condemned by the Church, and described by the Pope in 1865 as the 'synagogue of Satan'.[6] They were identified by the Alsatian clerical newspaper the *Volksfreund* in 1860 as lawyers, notaries, clerks and teachers, innkeepers, and readers of

liberal-democratic Parisian newspapers like *Le Siècle* or the local *Courrier du Bas-Rhin*, to which many cafés and lodges subscribed, and described as happy to while away their time over drinks, cards or billiards and by making fun of the local clergy, as well as engaging in more serious political and philosophical debate.[7]

The liberal and republican press provided a link between an intellectual, politicized criticism of the Church as an impediment to progress, and a more popular anti-clericalism. Its readers claimed to respect the moral force of science and were committed to the further development of Liberty and Progress. In *Le Siècle* they might gleefully read a satirical caricature of Louis Veuillot's dreams of a new Inquisition which predicted the excommunication of engineers and industrialists and their condemnation to eternal damnation on the grounds that 'industry is essentially Protestant, and … every Protestant destined for the fires of Hell. Catholicism, of which we are the most illustrious representatives on earth, can only love … the labour of the fields, and this is easily comprehensible: the peasant is ignorant, superstitious, easy to lead. He believes in all our miracles'. (24 November 1854). An affirmation of support for the Papacy by Mgr Dupanloup in the clerical newspaper *L'Ami de Religion*, was condemned as potentially dangerous because it had been 'sent to country priests, peddled from sacristy to sacristy, transmitting ignorance to the ignorant'. The likely outcome was that 'soon they will believe that the Pope has been attacked, that he has been crowned with thorns, that he has been whipped, that he is a martyr, and every Catholic will protest about persecution'.[8] It was the readers of such newspapers, a disgusted public prosecutor assumed, who might be led, as at Le Vernet (Ariège) on 19 September 1869, in the case of three intoxicated young men, to express their contempt for a procession in honour of Notre-Dame de la Salette by continuing to wear their hats and smoke their cigarettes, pulling faces and mocking the participants.[9] These were the sort of 'opinion leaders' identified by the Abbé Debeney in a pamphlet on *Les soirées au village* (1853), as 'usually a young ignoramus, a real pillar of the cabaret, conceited, always changing his mind, a village lawyer'.[10]

The social status, education, and access to information of many professional men appeared to validate their expression of disdain for the views of priests they perceived to be half-educated peasants. The Abbé Constant, a friend of the socialists Flora Tristan and Alphonse Esquiros, was briefly imprisoned for representing his contempt for the clergy in a series of dialogues published as the *Bible de la liberté* (1841). 'Listen to them speak',

he advised, 'and learn from this disagreeable and monotonous noise. They pray as they sleep, and make sacrifices as they eat. These are machines for consuming bread, meat, wine, and for delivering words devoid of sense.' He had also imagined a dialogue between parents anxious about their son's future—'he is feeble in mind and body, and his heart reveals no sign of life.' Their conclusion? 'We'll make him a priest and he can live off the altar.'[11] In his *Roman d'un enfant*, Pierre Loti would similarly remember with horror 'the boredom of Sunday sermons; the emptiness of those prayers, carefully prepared and delivered with the usual unction and gestures'.[12] The widely read historian Jules Michelet ridiculed the efforts of the clergy, supported by the State, to dominate the streets. Observing a procession in Nantes in 1852, he wrote that 'the singers were mostly shrill boys, badly dressed and at that unfortunate age when the voice breaks … The priests busied themselves, coming and going like inspectors … instead of inspiring order and calm by their reverential attitudes. However, most shocking of all was the rude discordance of the military band, violent, imperious and barbaric in the midst of what should have been a moving ceremony, devoted to the adoration of the Virgin by the virgins, by a mass of beloved children, under the eyes of their parents.'[13]

The immense popularity of Ernest Renan's, *Vie de Jésus* (1863) revealed something of the attractiveness of such views and further encouraged their spread. In place of the divine Christ, he described an incomparable prophet entirely committed, as the Sermon on the Mount proved, to justice, charity and the highest moral standards, and to 'a religion without priests and the external practices of devotion, but based on the sentiments of the Heart, and on the intimate relationship of the conscience with the celestial Father'.[14] The teachings of the Roman Catholic Church were reduced to a fraudulent human construct, a means of ensuring its domination. According to Alphonse Chadal, writing to the influential anti-clerical historian Edgar Quinet, Renan's work even penetrated the countryside. He referred to instances of the collective purchase of copies by peasants 'barely able to read' but hungry for knowledge. Posing the question—'What will they … read in Renan's book?', he concluded simply 'that Jesus is not God, that the *curé* has misled them, if not himself'.[15]

Moreover, if Renan admired Christ, and was convinced of the social utility of religion, others were more doubtful. The outlook of intellectual anti-clericals was increasingly devoid of their previous sympathy for Christian beliefs. An alternative philosophical position was developing, based upon a rationalist dogma and an almost mystical faith in progress

and in the emancipation of Man through science and education. Auguste Comte's influential positivist theories had already defined theology as the product of a primitive stage in man's understanding of the world. Leading literary critics like Saint-Beuve also attracted a considerable audience.[16] Religion *per se*, rather than simply the Church, was associated with a destructive obscurantism. The socialist writer Proudhon, who had initially been motivated by religious faith in 1846, demanded to know why a supposedly all-powerful God failed to prevent evil. Subsequently, his Jesus would be described as an egalitarian socialist although his claim to be the Messiah, together with the 'miracles', suggested to Proudhon that he was something of a charlatan.[17] Those republicans and socialists like Louis Blanc who, in 1848, sought inspiration from the life of Christ, the humble carpenter, were to be thoroughly alienated by the counter-revolutionary stance adopted by the Church.[18]

In terms deliberately calculated to be offensive, writers with liberal or republican sympathies were increasingly likely to denounce belief in miracles, and such vital elements of the Christian faith as the Resurrection, as absurdities, the products of hallucination or deliberate falsification by the disciples. The initial response to the news of the revelation at La Salette in the local Grenoble republican newspaper *Le Censeur* was thus to dismiss this 'stupid invention accepted due to the imbecility of some and exploited through the charlatanism of others'.[19] The *Journal de Rouen* spoke for many of its middle-class readers in complaining that, after the '*bouffonnerie de la Salette*', Lourdes represented an 'insult to the progress of Science and an outrage to human Reason'.[20] It was no more than a fraudulent money-making scheme.[21] The ironical response of liberal and moderate republican newspapers like *Le Siècle* and *Le National* was more restrained but equally contemptuous. The republican writer Allain-Targé simply proclaimed that 'it is no longer possible to be intelligent and Catholic'.[22] The Syllabus of Errors and the Declaration of Papal Infallibility would provoke similar scorn.[23]

In his *Grand Dictionnaire universel*, the first volume of which appeared in 1866, Pierre Larousse insisted that 'the times of blind faith have passed without return'. Many of the contributors shared his scepticism and anticlericalism, pointing out the patent absurdity of such Christian dogma as Original Sin, transubstantiation, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, Heaven and Hell.[24] The rituals and iconography developed over centuries by the Church were ridiculed. The image of Jesus Christ with his chest open to expose his beating heart was clearly bizarre. Visions of the Virgin

Mary, as well as the miracles associated with them were also contemptuously dismissed as the products of fraud and idiocy.[25]

As medical science developed, growing tension would also become evident between some members of an increasingly self-confident medical profession and priests suspicious of the 'materialistic atheism' of the medical faculties.[26] There were frequent complaints about interference by the clergy, and especially nuns, in medical matters, as well as criticism of the 'charlatanism' and '*autorité déspotique*' exercised by the nursing sisters and their rejection of modern medical practices.[27] Celibacy, which for the Church represented the unalloyed devotion and moral superiority of its clergy, appeared unnatural to many laymen. In *La Bible de la liberté*, Constant regretted that 'a priest is … necessarily a man without love. He is thus lower than an animal, because the animal enjoys affection and sympathy.'[28] In denouncing the dangers inherent in an 'unnatural' state, the article on 'celibacy' in Larousse's *Grand Dictionnaire universel* warned that 'the difficulty of living in a condition of absolute continence can lead to crimes against oneself or against others'.[29]

The practice of confession also remained a major issue. According to Dr Francisque Bouvet, 'there is no more striking and scandalous social antithesis … than to see youthful bachelors share the most intimate secrets of women of all ages. In these supposedly sacred meetings, there is … neither respect nor decency, nor security for anyone; there are no guarantees for the priest himself; the purity and consideration which his ministry demands might well suffer'. The threat—to both parties—of sexual arousal seemed only too evident.[30] Men, in particular, might decide not to admit to embarrassing 'sins' or else routinely confess to innocuous transgressions, or even avoid the confessional altogether, for greater or lesser periods. A certain M. Guillaume from Dijon, in March 1848, described confession as a 'moral inquisition', which by revealing the most intimate family secrets to the clergy, increased their influence and power. In his letter to Carnot, the new republican Education Minister in 1848, he condemned their '*jesuitisme*', '*bigotism*e' and 'hypocrisy'.[31] Jules Michelet claimed that the clergy had established themselves as rivals to the husband and father. Combining misogyny with an obsessive anti-clericalism, he stressed the dangers inherent in a situation in which an impressionable young woman was questioned about her sexual activity by a young and celibate priest who possessed, furthermore, the ability to 'reign over a soul … and through the magic key which opens the world to come, is also able to work on the heart'.[32] He went on to describe a woman returning home

following confession—'head lowered, bowed down with fear, broken. She can see nothing, other than Hell, the eternal flames.'[33] Even while affirming his continued faith, Charles Souvestre, in an editorial in the liberal Bonapartist newspaper, *L'Opinion nationale*, expressed his concern that their religious upbringing would ensure that wives 'fail to understand their husbands' ideas' and lead them to raise children 'without character and without beliefs, able to see in the great events of their epoch only the works of the Devil, able to make for themselves only an empty and puerile existence, a mixture of bigotry and vanity'.[34]

Some eminent liberals, including Edouard Laboulaye (*L'Etat et ses limites*, 1863) and Duc Victor de Broglie (*Vues sur le gouvernement de France*, 1870) called for the disestablishment and the freeing of both Church and State from the restrictions imposed and tensions caused by the Concordat. The liberal Catholic, Armand Wallon, in a lengthy petition to the Senate in March 1867, would condemn the Syllabus of Errors as the '*crédo du parti ultramontane*' and an attempt by the Pope to impose his spiritual authority on society. He warned furthermore, that this was only the beginning. Wallon predicted that the formal declaration of Papal Infallibility, so contrary to the traditions of the Gallican Church and to the dignity of French bishops, would soon follow. He claimed that that these innovations, motivated by 'an intolerable spirit of domination', represented not only an assault on the historic privileges of the Church of France, but were incompatible with the rights of the State.[35] They threatened to allow foreign congregations, 'fanatics', the right to define what was taught in French schools, and to influence morality, politics and law. The ultimate aim, he claimed, was the creation of a theocracy and the inevitable result would be to reinforce schism, hatred and conflict.[36]

Going further, the historians Michelet and Quinet insisted that Protestantism was a faith more favourable to the spread of literacy and better adapted to the demands of modernity. The Reformation, in their eyes, had represented a stage on the road to freedom.[37] Inspired by memories of past persecution, as well as current hostility, Protestants and Jews remained firmly attached to the emancipatory principles of 1789, and suspicious of a Catholic Church which claimed a monopoly of 'truth' and denied the validity of religious liberty.[38] Other leading liberal and republican personalities, including Alphonse de Lamartine, Edgar Quinet, Victor Hugo, and Jules Simon adopted a kind of vague spiritualism. Flaubert's creation—the pharmacist Homais in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*—probably expressed the author's own attitudes—'I have a religion … I believe in a

Supreme Being, in a Creator who has placed us down below to fulfil our duties as citizens and fathers: but I do not need to go to church … and fatten, out of my pocket, a pile of jokers who eat better food than us. One is able to honour God just as well in a wood, in a field, or even in contemplating the heavens like the ancients.' The historian Hippolyte Taine, was nevertheless quite cynically convinced of the social utility of religion. Travelling through France in the early 1860s in his capacity as an examiner of applicants for admission to the military academy at Saint-Cyr, Taine recorded in his diary his belief that 'the salient feature of the Church in France is to be a temporal institution, a governmental machine'. Of the northern town of Douai, he observed: 'Considerable clerical influence here, on the rich especially … without religion where would we be? … In effect it serves as an intellectual gendarmerie.'[39]

8.3 Popular Anti-Clericalism

Historians have tended to focus on the easily accessible published works of 'free-thinkers' and neglect the more diffuse hostility of the popular classes towards the clergy.[40] Those engaged in hard physical labour, and who struggled to make ends meet, might well discuss the perceived shortcomings of the pastoral care they received, the sermons they listened to, the pamphlets they read, and envy the parish priest's comfortable existence. In their response to the 1848 enquiry into working conditions, the delegates of the Rennes cabinet makers complained about priests who satisfied 'outward appearances only, where we are searching for life', who offered 'Words in place of actions', when 'we ask for nothing better than to live according to Christ's law.[41] The tailors claimed that 'the moral and religious education of workers in the towns … is almost non-existent because those charged with this mission fanaticize instead of instructing and reinforcing [the faith]; they substitute the letter which suffocates, for the spirit which revives and the acts which unite'.[42]

The greater respect invariably shown by the clergy towards 'rich' local notables might arouse further resentment.[43] Almost instinctively priests, in seeking to protect the faithful, worked closely with the circle of well-off parishioners represented in both the municipal council and the *fabrique*, together with those who provided employment and sought to create a disciplined working environment, and who otherwise offered support for parish and charitable activity. City centre churches with their splendid decoration and ceremonies, and a sense of decorum designed for the social

elites, left the poor feeling uncomfortable. They were conscious of their shabby appearance and resented the patronizing attitudes of both bourgeois worshippers and priests. Indeed, Fortoul, the Ministre des Cultes, complained to the Archbishop of Paris in 1855 that together with ostentatious services, pew rents, which obliged those who could not afford to pay them to stand at the back of the church, were driving workers away. He observed that, as a result, the Church was increasingly unable to fulfil its obligations as one of the guarantors of social order.[44]

The apparent greed of the clergy was frequently commented upon by workers, even when priests were only requesting payment of the fees to which they were legally entitled. In the case of funerals, the *administration des pompes funèbres*, which in the larger cities enjoyed a monopoly, together with the clergy and parish sexton, would discuss the form and cost of burial in particular cases, influenced by the diocesan *tariff des pompes funèbres.* This defined the characteristics of funeral ceremonies in terms of the number of priests present, the size of the choir and the number of candles, as well as the fees payable. Families were able to choose the form of burial their social situation required from a complex *cahier des charges.*[45] The wealthy were buried with considerable pomp and ceremony, particularly in cathedrals and substantial parish churches; the less well-off made do with what they could afford and frequently suffered from the condescending manner with which they were treated, all of which, at a time of great emotional turbulence aroused considerable antipathy. Unequal treatment in the face of death was only too evident. In the Paris diocese in 1840, a first-class funeral might cost 2000 francs, requiring the services, among others, of 22 priests, 6 singers, and a hearse pulled by 4 horses.[46] Those who could afford to might pay for a sixth-class funeral which included a low mass and in 1864 cost between 51 and 61 francs. The poor, however, commonly made do with cursory ninth-class funerals, costing only 16 francs.[47] The clergy could also conduct a simple church service, known as the '*service des pauvres*', without fee, but would not accompany the deceased to the common grave set aside for paupers, where the body would instead be received by the chaplains known as the *aumoniers des dernières prières*, established by the future emperor in 1852.[48] In the 1840s, 66% of those inhumed in Paris are estimated to have been buried in common graves.[49] The presence of members of mutual aid societies might compensate, in part, for this neglect of the poor, but even then, the President of the Société de secours mutuels de l'Union d'Aix-les-Bains felt bound to complain to the Cardinal-Archbishop of Chambéry

in 1864 about the ragged appearance of the mortuary cloth which covered the coffins of dead paupers. He regarded this as an insult to the dignity of the deceased.[50] Particular instances of unequal treatment could also arouse anger, as when, for example, the clergy at Etaples (Pas-de-Calais) refused to allow a religious funeral for a poor working-class woman who had killed herself, while celebrating with great pomp a rich suicide.[51]

Although generally joyful occasions, the conduct of weddings might also arouse umbrage. In Lille, where couples frequently co-habited to avoid the cost of a formal wedding a popular song pointed out that:

> For the poor, as for the rich,
> The Church does nothing for nothing;
> When a priest says a prayer
> He has to be paid, whatever.[52]

The profoundly anti-clerical novelist Emile Zola sought to illustrate the point in *L'Assommoir*, when the roofer Coupeau announced that although 'he certainly had no liking for those black crows, the priests … a marriage without a mass … wasn't a real marriage'. He was prepared to spend his last 6 francs on 'a low mass at the altar of the poor'. Of course, this distinction reinforced his antipathy towards the clergy, as did the ceremony, conducted with apparent indifference by a priest hastily performing a ritual, with scarce concern for the feelings of a couple trying hard to do what was proper, but lacking experience of religious ceremony and ill at ease.[53]

The clergy made insufficient effort to understand, much less sympathize with the problems faced by workers. Repeated denunciations of working-class 'immorality', 'idleness' and 'laziness', were all too likely to arouse resentment.[54] Significant cultural differences were evident between the men, trained from youth to be priests, however humble their origins, and most of their ill-educated parishioners. Orthodox theology taught that work was God's punishment for the sins of Adam and poverty an inescapable feature of a God-given social order. The anonymous priest who wrote a pamphlet entitled *De la question du paupérisme*, published in Paris in 1842, thus expressed his confident belief that 'Poverty … is not an evil … It accounts for and produces dependence; it serves as the basis for authority and consolidates it; without it, there would be no inequality of wealth or intelligence, and none of the unity which results from devotion and sacrifice; poverty augments courage, it illustrates merit, it operates marvels.' He further distinguished between 'good' and 'bad' poverty. The

former encouraged respect for authority and a sense of duty; the latter led to 'materialism', 'pauperism' and revolt against Man and God.[55] The parish priest of Saint-Etienne in Lille represented a similar outlook in a sermon preached in 1862, concluding that 'we must reject this stupid and violent equality, the dream of evil or insane levellers: God does not hate the society He has created, with its ranks, its hierarchy, its precedences.'[56]

Influential laymen delivered similar messages, habitually employing a discourse of obedience which focused on the responsibilities of the domestic servant or worker towards his or her 'master' and drawing analogies with the relationship between a child and its parents. The honorary president of the fraternity of the Œuvres de Saint Joseph, addressing its members in December 1853, following their annual procession through the centre of Nantes—band at their head—in celebration of the saint's feast day, told them to take pride in their refusal to listen to those who preached subversion—to 'those miserable troublemakers who, in promising them happiness, push them into the abyss of vice, misery and bitter regrets, and even into sacrificing their life or liberty in the midst of insurrection'. They must appreciate the gift of 'religion [which] consoles you when you are exhausted, when you are suffering, and which helps you to patiently bear this life of labour and misery in the hope of a better life, of a precious reward for all your sorrow'.[57]

Sermons insisting on the need for resignation to one's earthly lot in return for the promise of Divine bliss might—or might not—encourage quietism. Workers were thus reminded in a diocesan manual published in Paris in 1863 that 'it is necessary … to work in a spirit of penitence and submission to the will of God'.[58] The parish priest at Saint-Bruno des Chartreux, near Lyon, adopted similar language to advise the young women employed in a silk mill that 'the more you work, the more you will erase your sins'. He called for 'obedience founded on Christian humility' in their relations with their employers.[59] Furthermore, religion offered consolation to the families of workers who died in work-place accidents. When five men were killed in the sugar refinery at Bresles in November 1855, their funeral was attended by the Bishop of Beauvais and the Prefect of the Oise, as well as by their employer, all of whom made speeches and looked to God's blessing, as well as reminding the mourners of the Emperor's concern for the poor and afflicted.[60]

Aspirations for greater security and prosperity were condemned frequently by priests obsessed with the dangers of 'materialism', with declining church attendance, growing 'indifference' and the spreading practice

of birth control.[61] There was little evidence of a willingness to understand the pressure to earn a living which kept many workers and peasants away from church on Sunday.[62] The clergy instead constantly called for the voluntary renunciation of Sunday work by employers, shopkeepers, and those they employed. Time free from labour would allow church attendance and spiritual enlightenment, as well as physical repose. It would enhance family life and prevent moral brutalization.[63] In a pastoral letter in 1860, Mgr Pie declared that the great lesson of 1848 was that 'Sunday work is in no-one's interest … for, in demoralizing the worker, in over-exciting the passions and greed, it prepares society for those violent convulsions, those riots and revolutions, which are the most determined enemies of property, justice, order and authority'.[64]

An obsession with saving souls, together with an often unsympathetic moral rigourism, ensured that priests were often feared and, sometimes, despised rather than respected. Even the Archbishop of Montpellier, Mgr Le Courtier, was concerned that relentless proselytizing by nursing sisters frequently led to a failure to respect the 'dignity' of their poor patients.[65] The authoritarian paternalism and missionary zeal of so many priests could easily offend the egalitarian sentiments of skilled workers rather than reawaken their piety. In an illicit pamphlet distributed in the Lille area around 1855, the exiled republican Bianchi railed against the clergy and the message they delivered which, 'in promising to the poor, in an unknown heaven, infinite happiness and life eternal, condemns them, whilst they wait, to die of hunger in this real life'.[66] For those who insisted that the purpose of life was human happiness, acceptance of the doctrine of Original Sin, the depravity of man, and the need constantly to prepare for death, proved difficult. Anthime Corbon, the owner of a small engineering workshop and author of *Le secret du peuple de Paris* (1863), expressed his bitter resentment of the clergy's stress on the unimportance of life in this world and their dismissal of work—in which he took such pride—as simply God's punishment for original sin. He claimed that for many of his skilled craftsmen, 'the earth is no longer a place of exile for the human race, but a domain to transform. It should no longer be regarded as a prison in which man eternally expiates original sin, but a workshop open to his inventive genius. It is not in mortifying ourselves, in diminishing ourselves, and by incessant appeals for mercy that we can make ourselves acceptable to God, but in developing all our faculties and in applying them to the task of transforming the environment in which we live …'. Corbon maintained that anti-clericalism was so commonplace in

the workshops that 'the very rare faithful on whom the Church might count are no less exposed to derision than are the very rare opponents of democracy'.[67] Although church attendance was regarded as perfectly acceptable for women—the 'weaker' sex—and indeed offered a means of safeguarding their virtue, always providing of course that the clergy behaved with propriety, religion hardly seemed compatible with male virility or with '*respect humain*'.[68]

While the Bishop of Nevers, Mgr Dufêtre, felt able in 1854 to claim that charity through its benevolence and sincerity '*never causes irritation*',[69] the stigma attached to the selective and condescending way in which assistance was distributed, and to the deference required from its recipients might further increase hostility towards the clergy. At Bernay in Normandy, members of the Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul concluded that close association with the clergy hindered their efforts to reach 'the pauper class, ill disposed already [and which] accepted, all too readily, the prejudices against the cassock and everything which hinted of the cassock, predisposing them to reject our exhortations in assuming that they were dictated by the ecclesiastical authorities!'[70] The determination of the better-off believers who became 'honorary' members of mutual aid societies or of affiliates of the Société to exclude workers from decision-making also aroused considerable irritation.[71] The leading Nantes republican, Dr Guépin, thus condemned the medieval precepts of a Christian charity which 'debases the poor man and encourages him to hold out his hand'; which 'engenders idleness … multiplies beggars' and 'creates the falsehood of prayers mumbled with the aim of exploitation.'[72] Amongst Parisian revolutionary socialists, in the agitated early months of 1870, it had become common to denounce the alliance between the magistrature, the clergy and the army which provided 'the three bases of modern despotism … The clergy shackle the intelligence of the people; in preaching abnegation it fastens the chains of its slavery, giving to its social inferiority, to its misery, to its subjection, a form of divine consecration.'[73]

Similar sentiments might be expressed in rural areas. In some isolated regions, old animosities certainly lived on. At a time in 1868 when food prices were rising, Louis Carrère, petitioning the Emperor from Lomné in the Pyrenees, claimed that the clergy were not only speculating on prices but that 'for some time our priests have not been prepared to spend five minutes on the road in order to convey a body [to the church] without being paid, and this has caused a sensation in our very religious region'. He also resented the 50 centimes priests demanded from those about to

receive their first communion, as well as the special collections—10 centimes a time—for 'this, that and the other', all of which were contributed by the faithful in hope of avoiding mortal sin. Carrère contrasted the situation of 'those accursed *curés*, who don't know what to choose to eat, with poor people not knowing what to do to obtain 25 centimes to buy a litre of maize flour', and quoted the proverb—'those who do nothing eat the grain, those who work eat the straw'. Better, he concluded, for the government to spend its money on teachers, road repair workers and rural postmen.[74] In the Dordogne, and throughout the south-west, in the Maconnais and Morvan in the centre-east, and in other parts of central France, nobles and clergy were still suspected of plotting to reclaim their former privileges.[75] As late as May–June 1868, disorders would occur in the Charentes, beginning at Chevanceaux when crowds of peasants tried to smash a newly erected stained glass window bearing the arms of the Marquis de Lestranges which it was said heralded the re-establishment of the *ancien régime*. The 'news' spread rapidly and windows and furnishings bearing the image of the *fleur de lys* were destroyed in other churches. The authorities' constant anxiety concerning the potency of rumour was certainly justified.[76]

More generally, urbanization, industrialization, improved communications, the spread of literacy, and changing economic structures threatened to destabilize belief systems and social relationships, to weaken local cultures and community relationships, and make religion less relevant to people's daily lives. A greater sense of security developed as a result of improved communications and the disappearance of dearth after mid-century, as well as the declining impact of epidemics. Together with the stimulus to agricultural innovation afforded by the commercialization and monetization of the economy, this led to a decline in the appeal of popular magico-religious practices and in the influence the clergy had managed to gain from them. Sometimes, traditional practices simply appeared unnecessary. Deeper ploughing, the increased use of fertilizers, improved veterinary care and the selective breeding of animals must have made it seem a little pointless to put branches of consecrated boxwood in the corner of a field to ensure a good harvest, or in the cowshed to ward off disease. Prayers to the *bons saints* like Saint-Viatre in the Sologne became irrelevant as the marshes were drained, quinine became available and malaria disappeared. Such practices lost their utilitarian value and were abandoned. Many of the seasonal rites which survived lost their original significance and became forms of entertainment or games for children.

The clergy had hoped that, by reducing the obsessive need of the poor to make ends meet, growing prosperity might have allowed more time for the cultivation of spirituality.[77] There were disturbing signs, however, that industrial development and the commercialization of farming resulted in wider contacts, rising incomes, and greater material comfort, as well as the ability of peasants to purchase land or else migrate to the towns. Traditional conceptions of a God-ordained universe as well as established social relationships appeared under threat.[78] A new rationality became evident in the spread of birth control, regardless of clerical prohibitions, and in the rural exodus which revealed the growing interest of the young in urban life and *mores* and gradually reduced the vitality of village life. These centuries-old trends, rapidly accelerating during the critical years of the Second Empire. were well underway in the Paris region when Mgr Clausel de Montals, retiring Bishop of Chartres, warned in his farewell message to his clergy in 1852 that 'religion is only practised by a very small number; mockery and public indifference are the share of all the others'.[79] Processes misleadingly assumed to involve 'de-christianization' were evident in most areas although 'detachment' probably offers a more accurate description.[80] If the 'rites of passage' were still overwhelmingly respected, there appeared to be a real danger of indifference turning into irreverence.[81]

Notes

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2. G. Cubitt, *The Jesuit myth. Conspiracy theory and politics in 19th century France*, Oxford, 1993, *passim*; M,Hartman, 'The Sacrilege Law of 1825 in France: a study in anticlericalism and mythmaking', *Journal of Modern History*, 1972, pp. 21–3; D. Colon, 'Le mythe de la Congrégation: les Jésuites et les élites des grandes écoles au 19e siècle' in J-P. Chaline, (ed) *Elites et sociabilité en France*, 2005, pp. 171–5.
3. See e.g. Marcilhacy, *Le diocèse d'Orléans au milieu du 19e siècle*, 1964, pp. 478–9.
4. R. Price, 'Popular disturbances in the French provinces after the July Revolution of 1830', *European Studies Review*, 1971, pp. 345–6; R. Price, *The Church and the State in France, 1789–1870. 'Fear of God is the Basis of Social Order'*. 2017, Chap. 3.
5. See e.g. distinctions made by Bishop of Luçon in letter to Min. de l'I.P. et des C., 14 February 1856, AN F19/5819.

6. E. Anceau, *Les députés du Second Empire*, 2000, p. 364; see also S. Hazareesingh, V. Wright, *Francs-Maçons sous le Second Empire. Les loges provinciales du Grand-Orient à la veille de la 3e République*, Rennes, 2001, p. 164.
7. F. Igersheim, *Politique et administration dans le Bas-Rhin*, *1848–70*, 1993, p. 326.
8. Copy in AN F19/5609. See also Cour impériale de Paris, *Procès de Mgr Dupanloup, Evêque d'Orléans*, Brussels, Librairie polytechnique de A. Decq, 1860, p. 45.
9. PG Riom to MJ, 4 October 1869, AN F19/5830.
10. Quoted by P. Boutry, 'Industrialisation et déstructuration de la société rurale' in Joutard, *Histoire de la France religieuse*, III, p. 275.
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12. Quoted by M. Crubellier, *L'enfance et la jeunesse dans la société française, 1800–1950*, 1979, p. 190.
13. Quoted by M. Launay, *Le diocèse de Nantes sous le Second Empire*, I, Nantes, 1983, p. 476.
14. E. Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, 1863, p. 85.
15. Quoted by P. Boutry, '"Vertus d'état et clerge intellectuel": la crise du modèle *sulpicien* dans la formation des prêtres français au 19e siècle' in Ecole française de Rome, *Problèmes d'histoire de l'éducation*, Rome, 1988, p. 226.
16. See H. McLeod, *Secularisation in western Europe 1848–1914*, 2000, pp. 154–5.
17. B. Voyenne, *Proudhon et Dieu, le combat d'un anarchiste*, 2004, pp. 55–60; J. Grévy, 'Jésus des anticléricaux et les libres penseurs', in G. Cholvy, (ed) *Figures de Jésus-Christ dans l'histoire*, Montpellier, 2000, p. 69.
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22. Letter of Dec. 1864 in *La République sous l'Empire. Lettres 1864–70*, 1939, pp. 8–9.
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24. Hazareesingh, Wright, *Françs-maçons*, pp. 170–179; P. Boutry, 'La gauche et la religion' in J-J. Becker, G. Candar, (eds) *Histoire des gauches*, I, *L'héritage du 19e siècle*, 2004, p. 329.

25. See e.g. J. Lalouette, *La république anticléricale*, pp. 164–6.
26. H. Guillemain, 'Devenir médecin au 19e siècle. Vocation et sacerdoce au sein d'une profession laïque', *Annales de Bretagne*, 2009, pp. 117–121.
27. See e.g. J. Léonard, *Les médecins de l'ouest au 19e siècle*, vol. 3, Lille, 1978, pp. 1285–1302; O. Faure, 'Les religieuses hospitalières entre médecine et religion en France au 19e siècle', in I. von Bueltzingsloewen, D. Pelletier, (eds) *La charité en pratique. Chrétiens français et allemands sur le terrain social 19e–20e siècles*, Strasbourg 1999, p. 51.
28. *Procès de la Bible de la Liberté*, p. 15.
29. Quoted by Lalouette, *La république anticléricale*, p. 135.
30. *De la confession et du célibat des prêtres*, Paris, Revue indépendante, 1845, p. 299, quoted by Boutry, *Prêtres et paroisses au pays de curé d'Ars*, 1986, p. 441. See also S. Fath, 'Entre colporteur et confesseur: le choix des femmes en Picardie au milieu du 19e siècle', in G. Cholvy, (ed) *La religion et les femmes*, Montpellier, 2002, p. 157.
31. Letter of 5 March 1848, AN F19/5728.
32. *Du prêtre, de la femme, de la famille*, 1845, pp. 264–5.
33. Quoted by J-P. Moisset, 'Michelet, la femme et le prêtre', in G. Cholvy, (ed) *La religion et les femmes*, p. 141.
34. Quoted by P. Zind, *L'enseignement religieux dans l'instruction primaire publique en France de 1850 à 1873*, Lyon, 1971, p. 220.
35. Pétition au Sénat, 17 March 1867, AN F19/1939.
36. Pétition au Sénat, 2 November 1867, ibid.
37. See e.g. M. Lagrée, 'Religion et monde moderne' in B. Pellistrandi, (ed) *L'histoire religieuse en France et en Espagne*, Madrid, 2004, p. 471; Boutry, 'La gauche et la religion', in Becker, Candar, (eds) *Histoire des gauches*, pp. 324–5.
38. A. Encreve, 'Protestantisme et bonapartisme', *Revue d'histoire du 19e siècle*, 2004/1, pp. 112–13; E. Mension-Rigau, *Le donjon et le clocher. Nobles et curés de campagne de 1850 à nos jours*, 2004, p. 285 on the anti-Protestant attitudes of the Œuvre des campagnes.
39. H. Taine, *Carnets de voyage. Notes sur la province (1863–65)*, 1897, pp. 8–9, 344–5.
40. See e.g. R. Rémond, *L'anticléricalisme en France de 1815 à nos jours*, 1976, p. 15; G. Weill, 'L'anticlericalisme sous le Second Empire', *Revue des études napoléonniennes*, 1915, pp. 59; J. Lalouette, *La libre pensée en France, 1848–1940*, 1997, p. 84; J. Baubérot, 'Sécularisation et laïcisation. Une trame décisive', in B. Pellistrandi, (ed) *L'histoire religieuse*, p. 318.
41. AN C954.
42. AN C954 II.
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44. Boudon, *Paris*, p. 316.
45. See e.g. Archbishop of Paris to MC, 16 April 1860, AN F19/5482.
46. J-P. Moisset, 'Les finances de la culte catholique dans les paroisses urbains' in P. Boutry, A. Encrève, (eds) *La religion dans la ville*, 2003, pp. 104–9.
47. Directeur de l'octroi de Paris, Rapport … 26 July 1864, AN F19/5842.
48. Archbishop of Paris to MJ et des C., 20 Jan. 1867, AN F19/5842.
49. C. Duprat, *Usages et pratiques de la philanthropie*, 1996, p. 41.
50. Letter of 22 Oct. 1864, AN F19/5801.
51. MC, Réponses aux notes remises par l'Empereur au MC sur l'attitude du clergé, Mars 1863, AN F19/5605.
52. P. Pierrard, *La vie ouvrière à Lille sous le Second Empire*, 1965, p. 363.
53. For a critical assessment of the value of the Rougon-Maquart cycle to historians, see C. Charle, 'Zola et l'histoire', and P. Boutry, 'Zola, l'anticléricalisme et l'antichristianisme des années 1860 aux années 1880' in M. Sacquin, (ed) *Zola et les historiens*, 2004.
54. I. Saint-Martin, *Voir, savoir, croire. Catéchismes et pédagogie par l'image au 19e siècle*, 2003, p. 522.
55. Published chez Debécourt, rue des Saints-Pères, Paris.
56. Quoted by P. Pierrard, *Vie ouvrière*, p. 376.
57. Quoted by Launay, *Le diocèse de Nantes*, II, p. 631, n109.
58. Quoted by Saint-Martin, *Voir, savoir, croire*, p. 521.
59. Quoted by G. Mas, 'Internat et travail chrétien au milieu du 19e siècle', in O. Faure, B. Delpal, (eds) *Religion et enfermements (17e–20e siècles)*, Rennes, 2005, p. 97.
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62. See e.g. F. Boulard, J. Remy, *Pratique religieuse urbaine et régions culturelles*, 1968, p. 128.
63. S. Blenner-Michel, 'Sanctifier le dimanche ou le vain combat de l'épiscopat français au 19e siècle', *Histoire, économie et société*, 2009, pp. 36–41; M. Brejon de Lavergnée, 'Le repose du dimanche: un exemple de *lobbying* catholique en France au milieu du 19e siècle', ibid., p. 30.
64. *Seconde instruction de Mgr Pie sur la loi du Dimanche, carême 1860*, AN F19/5748.
65. G. Cholvy, *Religion et société au 19e siècle. Le diocese de Montpellier*, II, Lille, 1973, p. 1326; see also R. Price, 'Poor relief and social crisis in mid-nineteenth century France', *European studies review*, 1983, pp. 446–7.
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67. A. Corbon, *Le secret du people de Paris*, 1863, pp. 301–2.

68. Ibid., p. 386; see also e.g. M. Boivin, *Le mouvement ouvrier dans la région de Rouen*, Vol. I, 1989, p. 146; R. Price, 'Poor relief and social crisis', pp. 447–8.
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72. Quoted by Launay, *Le diocèse de Nantes*, II, p. 638.
73. A. Vermorel, *Le parti socialiste*, Paris, 1870.
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75. See e.g. L. Pinard, *Les mentalités religieuses du Morvan au 19e siècle (1830–1914)*, Château-Chinon, 1997, p. 211.
76. PG Bordeaux, 9 July 1868, AN BB30/385; ibid., 27 July 1868, AN BB18/1767; A. Corbin, *Le village des cannibales*, 1991, pp. 10–31; F. Pairault, 'Anticléricalisme et bonapartisme dans les Charentes: les troubles religieux de 1868', *Revue de la Saintonge et de l'Aunis*, 1993 *passim*; F. Ploux, *De bouche à oreille. Naissance et propagation des rumeurs dans la France du 19e siècle*, 2003, pp. 206–211.
77. E.g. response to 1848 Enquête. from Villeneuve-sur-Yonne, AN C968.
78. E.g. Acad. de Clermont 3 April 1858 re Cantal and Creuse AN F17/2649.
79. Quoted by J-C. Farcy, *Les paysans beaucerons au 19e siècle*, II, Chartres, 1989, p. 884.
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81. See e.g. Rapport trimestriel. Académie de Dijon, re. Aube, AN F17/2649; F. Chauvaud, *Les passions villageois au 19e siècle. Les émotions rurales dans les pays de Beauce, du Hurepoix et du Mantois*, 1991, p. 138.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusion

The centuries-long process of post-Tridentine reform had nevertheless enjoyed considerable success. The clergy had struggled to purify the faith, reinforce their own influence, and to impose 'decent behaviour' on the population.[1] Influenced by Romanticism, and a desperate response to Revolution, ultramontane priests and an educated laity had subsequently promoted a more emotional, mystical and militant affirmation of the mysteries of the Christian faith designed to encourage 're-christianization' by means of a reaffirmation and strengthening of popular piety combined with a reinforcement of clerical control.[2] Modification of the forms of devotion ensured a focus on Jesus and the Holy Family, and particularly on the Virgin Mary; on the more frequent practice of communion; the organization of numerous pious associations; and the publication of pious works and reproduction of images intended to stimulate devotion in the home and church. Considerable efforts were made to preserve the young from the spirit of scepticism and to ensure that religious faith offered guidance in every sphere of human activity. An idealized popular vision of Rome and the Papacy was also conceived, inspired by the historical triumph of Christianity over paganism, and reinforced by an intense, and increasingly popular determination to support the cause of an embattled Papacy and Universal Church, inaugurating in many regions a dynamic religious revival, the long-term impact of which was still evident in the 1950s and beyond.[3]

R. Price, *Religious Renewal in France, 1789-1870*,
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To a substantial degree, the Church managed to restore the spiritual damage inflicted by the revolution(s). Success was most likely among nobles; a conservative bourgeoisie; women and peasants, and in regions with already high levels of religious practice, in which the clergy could expect considerable communal support. Taking place over generations, these developments rarely, however, took a simple linear form. Moreover, once a critical threshold had been passed, and the social pressure for religious conformity had weakened, recovery would prove far more difficult than it had previously been.[4] The revival of the revolutionary menace in 1848 provided further evidence of a world in flux. It, however, reinforced the intransigent determination of the Church and of its clergy and laity to defend their particular perception(s) of social 'reality', to *conserver le bien*, and safeguard the established social system. These were the vital means of protecting the universal 'moral order' necessary for the transmission of religious 'truth'. This required a constant struggle against the competing discourses set in motion by Reformation, Enlightenment and Revolution.

According to Louis Veuillot: 'Two powers exist and are in conflict in the modern world: Revelation and Revolution.'[5] His friend, Donose Cortès, the widely read Spanish theologian and diplomat, insisted that 'free parliamentary discussion was incompatible with the quest for truth and sure to lead to social ruin' through the publicity accorded to debates in the press, and the accelerated circulation of 'erroneous' ideas. He added that there could be no compromise in the battle with Satan. An 'immense abyss, absolute antagonism' existed between modern civilization and Christianity.[6] As the Church endeavoured to sustain its influence, Pius IX, in the encyclical *Quanta cura* and the Syllabus of Errors, would forcefully denounce 'the principal errors of our times'. His initiatives would reinforce the interaction between the theological/ideological and political/diplomatic strategies of the Church and thus the political importance of religion.[7]

The long-maturing Syllabus of Errors had represented an uncompromising condemnation of 'progress, liberalism and modern civilization'. The Pope had furthermore assured Catholics, in a sermon delivered in the Sistine Chapel on 17 June 1869, that just as God had 'destroyed the first revolutionaries, the demons', so He would destroy the latest manifestation of revolution, 'socialism, which condemns and denies religion, morality and God himself'.[8] The constitution *Pastor aeternus* voted on 18 July 1870 by the Vatican Council moreover demanded that Catholics accept the 'duty of hierarchical subordination and of true obedience not only in

questions concerning faith and morality but also those which touch on the discipline and government of the Church'. It confirmed the accumulation of power by the Pope and the small group of men who as members of the curia advised His Holiness and sought to impose his wishes.

Even at this moment of apparent triumph, well-informed French commentators nevertheless wondered whether 'the religious reaction which occurred after 1848' was 'as profound as one would have wished, and whether it does not reduce itself to an honest illusion with which the clergy, in good faith, has been taken in'.[9] Industrialization, the commercialization of agriculture, migration, urbanization and the complex changes in mentalities, the cultural revolution, which was part of these processes, threatened to reduce popular dependence on religious ideals and on the Church which promoted them. Indifference and 'materialism' appeared to be spreading. The context within which the Church operated was changing, gradually, but more rapidly than ever before. Coming to terms with these developments would inevitably prove difficult. Indeed, as the beatification of Pius IX in 2000, and proclamation of the 'heroic virtues' of Pius XII in December 2010, seemed to indicate, the hierarchical structure of the Church and the authoritarian nature of its God-given leadership encouraged a dangerous long-term conservatism.

Understanding the past is a problem, both for the Christian, inspired by notions of the expression of God's goodness, and for the non-believer concerned by the apparent chaos of events. Nevertheless, one of the clear lessons of history, and indeed of contemporary politics, is that religious beliefs serve as a powerful motivating force. Religion can offer love and inspiration. Religion can also serve as a negative influence, an obstacle to 'reason', equality, and human fulfilment, anti-democratic, homophobic, and committed to the subordination of women. The Roman Catholic Church itself can be perceived as a divinely inspired institution or else as an all too fallible human creation. Whichever view is correct, it is impossible to ignore the claim—affirmed with such clarity by Pius IX—that it is only through submission to the authority of the Pope, as the representative of the Divine Will, that sinful humans can find Truth, and with it, *real* liberty, *genuine* happiness, and Eternal Salvation. It is through the continuing effort to achieve these objectives that the Church manifests itself in society, firm in the belief that the restoration of its influence and power is part of the Divine Plan. It is, however, difficult to avoid concluding in the light of an analysis of events in France during a revolutionary century that, in spite of the efforts of numerous good and caring priests, as an

institution, the Church largely existed in and for itself, concerned to establish and to preserve bureaucratic and hierarchical structures; to impose the authority of a leader who assumed a quasi-divine status in representing the Word of God; and to engage in a self-centred alliance with social and political conservatives and authoritarian leaders committed to counter-revolution.

Notes

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2. Milbach, *Prêtres historiens*, pp. 331–2.
3. See e.g. Horaist, B., *La dévotion au Pape et les catholiques français sous le pontificat de Pie IX (1846–78) d'après les archives de la Bibliothèque Apostolique Vaticane*, Rome, 1995, p. 15; C. Amalvi, 'Le mythe de Rome dans la littérature catholique destinée aux écoles et aux foyers chrétiens de 1830 à 1930', in H. Multon, C. Sorrel, (eds) *L'idée de Rome: pouvoirs, représentations, conflits*, Chambéry, 2006, pp. 111–116.
4. E.g. C. Marcilhacy, *Le diocèse d'Orléans au milieu du 19e siècle*, 1964, pp. 338, 573; P. Lévêque, 'Conservatisme sans cléricalisme. L'évolution politique du châtillonnais aux 19e et 20e siècles', in A. Faure, A. Plessis, J-C. Farcy, (eds) *La terre et la cité. Mélanges offerts à Philippe Vigier*, 1994, pp. 334–5.
5. *L'illusion libérale* (1866) quoted by P. Colin, *L'audace et le soupçon. La crise du modernisme dans le catholicisme français 1893–1914*, 1997, p. 52.
6. *Essai sur le catholicisme, le libéralisme et le socialisme*, 1851, quoted by R. Aubert, *Le pontificat de Pie IX(1846–70)*, 1952, p. 226; C. Clark, 'From 1848 to Christian Democracy', in I. Katznelson, G. Stedman Jones, (eds) *Religion and the political imagination*, Cambridge, 2010, p. 204.
7. See also J. de Maeyer, V. Viaene, (eds) *World views and worldly wisdom. Religion, ideology and politics, 1750–2000*, Leuven 2016, p. 9.
8. Printed in *L'Univers*, 24 June 1869.
9. Academic Rector of the Académie of Clermont, Report of 17 April 1858, AN F17/2649.

Appendices

Approaches

The literature on religious history is vast. For centuries, it was largely confused with Church or ecclesiastical history, and dominated by theological considerations—with Divine Revelation rather than the course of human history. The partial opening of the Vatican archives in 1883 by Pope Leo XIII certainly did much to encourage study of the Roman Catholic Church as well as the integration of history and theology. The Pope was convinced that an honest search for the 'truth' would confound liberal critics and that it was the responsibility of Catholic historians to 'energetically endeavour to refute lies and falsehoods, through recourse to the sources, whilst constantly bearing in mind that the first law of history is never to lie; the second is not to be afraid to speak the truth'. His Holiness was convinced that 'History has proclaimed that in spite of conflicts and violent assaults, the Roman pontificate has always remained victorious, whilst its adversaries, disappointed in their hopes, have only provoked their own ruin.'[1]

Historiographical fashions, however, change. Academic historians have long challenged the dominance of theologians and are today far less likely to engage in the search for religious truth. Nevertheless, the responses to a questionnaire from Jean Delumeau asking fellow Catholic historians whether their religious beliefs influenced their practice suggests that a committed Catholic historian, a believer in the Divine origins of the

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Church, and in the infallibility of its popes, *might* be reluctant to engage in a critical approach to the history of the Church as a fallible human institution.[2] Thus, one contributor, Pierre Pierrard, the distinguished historian of working-class Lille, insisted that 'objectivity' did not mean 'neutrality'.[3] Many edifying works continue to appear, posing as histories, but in effect often continuing an age-old tradition of hagiography, their objective being to represent a life characterized by 'qualities, which are those of a saint, of an individual in direct relation with the divinities'.[4] The numerous biographies of Pius IX frequently exhibit these characteristics, presenting the figure of the *pope martyr et héroique*, *angélique* and *innocent*.[5] While clearly sensitive to the problem, and insisting that 'theological interests' should not be allowed 'to settle historical questions', Rowan Williams, when Archbishop of Canterbury, hoped to read Church history in a manner which is 'theologically sensitive', looking to the past 'for what feeds and nourishes belief now'.[6] In contrast, the historian Jean Quéniart felt bound to assert that 'History is the science of man and of society: God is, if I dare say, outside its field of competence.'

To some degree, since the late 1920s, the edifying and primarily institutional histories or biographies favoured by Catholic historians, often themselves members of the clergy, have gradually fallen by the wayside, and been replenished by more questioning, objective and 'scientific' approaches. The range of subjects studied and of interpretative models employed has been broadened.[7] A major stimulus to change was initially provided by the eminent Catholic religious sociologists Gabriel Le Bras and the Abbé Boulard, prompted by concern about the apparent decline of religious practice and influenced by the pioneering study of 'clericalism' in western France by the political sociologist André Siegfried, but also in Le Bras' case, by contact with his one-time colleagues at the University of Strasbourg, Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre—founders of the *Annales* School. Influenced by Durkheim's sociology, they were committed to the study of collective mentalities in evolving material and social environments, to the history of religion rather than 'Church history'.[8] They were interested in the study of the thoughts and aspirations, the hopes and fears, and the piety of ordinary men and women over *la longue durée*.[9] The establishment of the journal *Archives de sociologie religieuse* (later *Archives de sciences sociales de religion*) in 1956, associated with Michel de Certeau, further represented this determination to adopt a social and cultural history approach to the study of religious institutions and practice which should combine theology, historical and religious sociology, demographic

history and historical anthropology to set the social context for developing religious belief systems.[10]

It was evident moreover that the character and intensity of religious belief and practice varied considerably between regions—often small in scale—as well as between social and cultural milieux, genders and generations. The diocese, normally co-existing with the administrative department, and incorporating within itself substantial geographical, social and cultural diversity, appeared to be an ideal unit of analysis. The combined resources of the diocesan and departmental archives—both offering evidence of close State supervision of the clergy—provided a tempting range of sources for research. In 1962, the first part of the seminal dissertation by Christiane Marcilhacy on *Le diocèse d'Orléans sous l'épiscopat de Mgr Dupanloup (1849–78)*—subtitled *Sociologie religieuse et mentalités collectives*—was published, followed two years later by *Le diocèse d'Orléans au milieu du 19e siècle. Les hommes et leurs mentalités.* Together with L. Pérouas, *Le diocèse de La Rochelle de 1648 à 1726. Sociologie et pastorale*, published in the same year, these studies provided evidence of the continuing development of new approaches to the history of religion. A series of diocesan studies followed, which similarly combined religious and social history.[11] To these might be added more broadly based regional studies organized around the study of geography, economy, society, mentalities—including religion and politics.[12] Gérard Cholvy, echoing the totalizing ambitions of the leading academic *patrons* Fernand Braudel and Ernest Labrousse, saw his task as being to develop 'a problematic which seeks to reveal the impact of transformations of the material, intellectual or social civilisation on the lives and mentalities of believers'.[13] Labrousse himself was convinced of the need to study 'the religious dimension of human life, essential to comprehension of the total, indivisible being that social history aims to understand'.[14]

The *Marxisant* approaches favoured by students of Braudel and Labrousse, nevertheless, and for a variety of intellectual and institutional reasons, fell from favour. Although one should not ignore the valuable research conducted, or the often refined analysis found in much of this work, the tendency towards reductionism evident in studies which analysed religion in large part as a representation of economic and social structures and relationships—of class—and often as a manifestation of backwardness was increasingly questioned.[15] There had been a marked tendency to assume that 'the dwindling social significance of religion is the inevitable consequence of the process of social development in modern

societies'.[16] In Western Europe, religion was widely perceived to have become increasingly 'marginalized' or at least 'diluted'.[17] However, debates founded on once central linear and monolithic and essentially teleological concepts like 'secularization', 'de-christianization' and 'modernization'—associated with the improvement of communications, growing urbanization, wider literacy, and politicization—were increasingly subjected to a 'revisionism' stimulated in large part by diocesan studies which had identified complex, inter-related and geographically diverse processes of religious decline and revival.[18] Within this perspective, religious institutions and the interaction between elite and popular religiosity might be considered as agents of modernity rather than features of backwardness.[19]

Influenced by largely Italian anthropological approaches as well as by the work of historians of the medieval and early modern periods, modern historians also began to take a greater interest in religious culture—in the 'specific actions, motivations and experience of individual and groups', in beliefs and faith, religious art and buildings, and in parish life.[20] By the mid-1970s, Alphonse Dupront and Jean Delumeau were calling for an attempt to understand the beliefs of men and women in the past, for a greater comprehension of *l'homme religieux*, which would necessarily employ a much wider range of sources.[21] The focus subsequently again shifted towards 'history from below' as well as social and cultural history.[22] Ralph Gibson underlined the pressing need to ask such fundamental questions as 'What does being a Christian mean? By what kinds of behaviour can the historian recognise a Christian in societies of the past?'[23] Growing interest in women's history and in the impact of the Church's teachings on sexual relations were also evident in the pioneering works of Claude Langlois, *Le catholicisme au féminin. Les congrégations françaises à supérieure générale au 19e siècle* (1984) and *Le crime d'Onan. Le discours catholique sur la limitation des naissances* (2005). At the same time a renewal of the history of the institutional Church was evident, involving, for example, an emphasis on prosopography in place of biography in J-O. Boudon, *L'épiscopat français à l'époque concordataire, 1802–1905* (1996), as well as in his study of *Paris, capitale religieuse sous le Second Empire* (2001). This is not to deny the considerable value of such classic institutional histories as Jean Maurain's—*La politique ecclésiastique du Second Empire de 1852 à 1869* (1930) and R. Aubert's, *Le pontificat de Pie IX* (1952), and their contribution to debates on religion and political power, nor can it do more than hint at the path forward.

Sources

In writing this book the most significant single source has been the archives of the Ministère des Cultes. Organized by diocese, these provide evidence of the routine activity of bishops and their clergy, and, crucially, of their relationships with each other, as well as with officialdom and the laity.[24] The essential weakness of this material is a tendency to focus on the negative. Letters, petitions and reports from communities, private individuals, and officials were all too likely—given their high expectations—to complain about parish priests who were judged to be failing in their duties. A far more positive representation of the Church, and of its theology and pastoral activities, was, however, provided by numerous pastoral letters, sermons—although going beyond printed texts to the less eloquent, more homely spoken version is inevitably difficult; spiritual guides; and debates on theological, liturgical and organizational issues; in pamphlets, newspapers, journals, and books; in innumerable obituaries; as well as in social enquiries. I originally planned to make use of a selection of diocesan archives but finally determined that I could more effectively take advantage of centralized archival sources supplemented by the numerous doctoral theses and published studies of particular dioceses.

A dialectic, or complex of dialectics, developed between an authoritarian Pope, his bishops and priests, and between members of the clergy, representatives of the State, and the laity in general. Although the Vatican archives have not been directly consulted, Papal instructions, as well as the convoluted politics of the Roman curia, have certainly been taken into account. The information derived from clerical sources has also been supplemented with the letters and publications of those who possessed the leisure, literary skills and self-awareness which encouraged them to commit to paper definitions of their own beliefs and descriptions of relationships with the Church and individual priests. Educated laymen might indeed adopt leadership roles not entirely compatible with the claims to superior status invoked by the clergy. The main problem is the silence of the masses—letter writing, much less memoirs are rare, and probably unrepresentative, although much can be gleaned from a mass of apparently unlikely sources.

The development of the 'information state' obsessed with 'public opinion' ensured regular and detailed reporting by government agents and especially those employed by the ministries of the Interior, Justice, War and Education, as well as Cultes. Prefects and state prosecutors, academic

rectors and schools inspectors, the commanders of military divisions and of gendarmerie legions—together with their subordinates (and particularly mayors)—were all required to provide reports on the political situation, economic conditions, on social relationships and religious life, particularly during periods of political tension, and in response to the introduction of manhood suffrage in 1848. The effectiveness of these bureaucratic reporting systems of course varied. Indeed, each of these sources of information has its shortcomings. All are more or less partial and based upon a mass of preconceptions which are not always clearly evident. Reports on the 'popular classes' were all too likely to be obfuscated by social distance, mutual suspicion, linguistic differences, and assigned 'codes' and 'roles' and by stereotyped perceptions of the 'other'.[25] A prefect's reports and actions might combine the demands of administrative routine with the reflexes of a practising member of the Church. The 'procédures d'élaboration de ce savoir' and their internal logic need repeatedly to be defined.[26] Established procedures to a large degree determined the form, structure, regularity and language of official documentation. The obligation to write ensured that many reports were repetitive and conformist '*rapports sur rien*', employing an orthodox discourse and drawing upon an administrative 'memory' in an attempt to impress superiors. Reports from the state prosecutors (*procureur généraux*) to the *garde des sceaux* (or Minister of Justice) appear to have been the most carefully prepared. Taken together with various, less regular, social enquiries—these diverse sources at least allow for an accumulation of detail and variation in the source and scale of observation.[27] The determination of the Bonapartist regime to appear accessible to its citizens also made it possible for quite humble citizens to avail themselves occasionly—as a '*rèmede extrême*'—of the right to petition ministers or even the Head of State.[28]

At the very least, the adoption of a multiplicity of 'frames of reference' offers the historian a means of comparing, contrasting and assessing the potential value of particular reports.[29] Every source needs to be carefully 'deconstructed' if we are to consider seriously what religion meant and how it influenced conduct, i.e. the relationship between dogma and practice. The more sustained and refined analysis of 'text'—whatever its form—demanded by the 'linguistic turn'—offers insights into the nature of discourse and the everyday use of language vital in the analysis of the diffusion (and reinterpretation) of religious ideas from theologians, through institutional networks of priests, to the 'people of God'. This might be seen to justify the author's frequent recourse to quotation.

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.

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