Civilizing Settlers: Catholic Missionaries and the Colonial State in French Algeria, 1830-1914

Kyle Francis

Graduate Center, City University of New York

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Follow this and additional works at: http://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds

Part of the History Commons

Recommended Citation

http://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/558

This Dissertation is brought to you by CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Graduate Works by Year: Dissertations, Theses, and Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact deposit@gc.cuny.edu.
CIVILIZING SETTLERS: CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES AND THE COLONIAL STATE IN FRENCH ALGERIA, 1830-1914

by

KYLE FRANCIS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2015
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Professor David Troyansky

____________________

Date

Professor Helena Rosenblatt

____________________

Date

Professor Dagmar Herzog

Professor Clifford Rosenberg

Professor Megan Vaughan

Professor Judith Surkis

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

CIVILIZING SETTLERS: CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES AND THE COLONIAL STATE IN FRENCH ALGERIA, 1830-1914

by

Kyle Francis

Advisor: Professor David Troyansky

This dissertation argues that between 1830 and 1914, with increasing intensity over time, French Catholic missionaries sowed divisions among the European population of French Algeria. The French government initially welcomed missionaries to cater to religiously devout Spanish, Italian, and Maltese settlers in Algeria and to foster their loyalty to the colonial state. Missionaries, however, incited the professional jealousy and personal animosity of the territory’s generally less devout French population, who saw Catholicism and missionaries as little different from Islam and the “fanatical” Muslim population. Throughout this period, missionaries thus occupied a liminal space in the racialized hierarchy of colonial rule. As such, their presence disrupted colonial taxonomies that positioned a “civilized” European population as superior to an “uncivilized” indigenous one.

For their part, missionaries saw Algeria as a blank slate in which to create a Catholic society they perceived as increasingly foreclosed in a secularizing Europe. At the same time, in the extralegal space of Algeria, missionaries relied on seemingly “pre-modern” networks of privilege and patronage to win support. The stress caused by navigating these dense patronage networks in an increasingly hostile environment created discord among missionaries. On the most localized level of power, missionaries competed with each other to carve out their own niches of authority. Male missionaries
competed to administer sacraments to female missionaries, while the latter sought to assert their own autonomy by procuring friendly spiritual advisors or secular authorities who would allow them the most individual latitude. In the end, these political ploys only undermined their efforts to spread the Catholic faith and to portray themselves as useful to government officials.

Ultimately, this dissertation reveals that colonial officials of all types framed the need to govern the settler population as a crucial component of the larger goal of ruling over the conquered indigenous population. As such, it re-conceptualizes France’s well-known civilizing mission as directed as much towards this settler population as towards the indigenous one. At the same time, in showing that colonial officials utterly failed in their attempt to mold a unified settler community, this dissertation further reveals the fragility of the bonds that supposedly held the colonial settlers together and the tenuous foundations of imperial rule in nineteenth-century French Algeria.
Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have come together without the generous assistance of many individuals and institutions. I would like to thank the Graduate Center, CUNY, for providing an Enhanced Chancellor’s Fellowship that funded the first four years of my graduate work as well as a Dissertation Writing Fellowship that allowed me to devote my fifth year of graduate school solely to the work of writing the dissertation. I would also like to thank the history department, and especially Executive Officer Helena Rosenblatt, for procuring funds for two research trips to Europe in the summers of 2012 and 2013.

This dissertation entailed research in a number of archives that I would have never gained access to without the kindness and generosity of many individuals. I would like to thank Sister Laura Huerta at the archives of the Soeurs Trinitaires in Lyon; Louis Pierre at the Centre Jean Bosco in Lyon; Monseigneur Luis Ramos at the Archivio Storico di Propaganda Fide in Rome; Frère Ricoussé at the archives of the Frères des Ecoles Chrétienennes in Rome; Lâm Phan-Thanh and Father Lautissier at the archives of the Congregation of the Mission in Paris; and Sister Fromaget at the archives of the Filles de la Charité in Paris. I would also like to thank Professors Sarah Curtis, Owen White, and J.P. Daughton for sharing their extensive knowledge of missionary archives, without which I would have never discovered many of these resources.

Over the past five years, numerous professors have generously read early and later drafts of this dissertation in part or in whole. Most importantly, I thank my advisor, Professor David Troyansky, for taking the time to provide thoughtful and critical feedback on conference papers, grant applications, and dissertation chapters throughout my time in graduate school. Over the past two years especially, he has carefully read the dissertation manuscript on countless occasions and has always come up with new and insightful suggestions for improvement. It has been an invaluable asset to have an advisor who knows his profession so well. Over the last five years, Professor Dagmar Herzog has also overseen my work every step of the way and encouraged me to approach my topic from new and innovative methodological angles and to ask questions of my sources that I had not previously considered. Her rich theoretical insights are, I hope, evident throughout this dissertation. Finally, Professors Judith Surkis, Clifford Rosenberg, and Megan Vaughan have all provided critical feedback that has improved this dissertation immeasurably. Any errors, of course, remain solely my own.

Many of the ideas in this dissertation have come from lively discussions with fellow graduate students. The members of the History and Humanities Seminar at the Graduate Center read and provided helpful commentary on Chapter Two of this dissertation. I would also like to thank my fellow members of the French History Group at the Graduate Center, especially Scott Johnson, Megan Brown, and Lauren Saxton, for taking the time to discuss my work on many occasions throughout the last two years. In particular, Chelsea Shields has generously donated so much of her time in person and via email to improving nearly every aspect of this dissertation. Our stimulating discussions over both its content and style have indelibly left their mark on everything from its title to its conclusion. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Jenny Francis, for serving as an intellectual and professional inspiration in everything she does. Her well-deserved successes and her tireless work ethic push me every day to make the most of myself, both professionally and personally.
Contents

Introduction
*Missionaries, Settlers, and the Colonial State* ................................................................. 1

Chapter 1
*Algeria: A Land of Opportunity, 1830-1846* ................................................................. 28

Chapter 2
*A “Golden Age” for Catholic Missionaries in Algeria? 1846-1866* ...................... 68

Chapter 3
*The Decline of Patronage and the “Long Decade” of 1867-1883* ............................. 117

Chapter 4
*Foreign Citizens and Foreign Missionaries in French Algeria, 1883-1914* ............. 179

Conclusion
*The Paradox of Settler Colonialism* .................................................................................. 224

Bibliography ........................................................................................................................... 236
Introduction: Missionaries, Settlers, and the Colonial State

Between 1830 and 1914, with increasing intensity over time, French Catholic missionaries sowed divisions among the European population of French Algeria and preoccupied the French colonial government. Although fully European in birth and nationality – that is, in no way a métis population in the traditional sense of the word – missionaries occupied a liminal space between European rulers and North African subjects that further disrupts the notion that a clear racial divide separated colonizer from colonized.¹ Never fully subject to the rule of law, but neither entirely servants to the arbitrary regime of exception that ruled native Algerians, missionaries floated uneasily in a contested and ever-changing colonial space, appearing variously as nodes of communication that either transmitted or subverted expressions of power between the imperial regime and its diverse subjects, citizens, and functionaries.²

Missionary work in Algeria did not fail to garner publicity. An array of actors, including the colonial press, the military and civilian governments, lay settlers, and indigenous subjects, all offered their opinions on the benefits and liabilities of welcoming missionaries to the territory. The multiple and varied discourses that surrounded and enveloped these missionaries did little to clarify their potential to facilitate or undermine

colonial rule. Throughout the period from 1830 to 1914, the nature of the relationships between and among missionaries and settlers, as well as the political dangers these relationships posed to the state, remained remarkably confused; and this confusion and the anxiety it engendered stemmed directly from the weakness, instability, and incoherence of the colonial state.

Beginning in the 1830s, the French military government welcomed Catholic missionaries from France and from the Vatican as part of its effort to encourage European settlement in Algeria. Officials encouraged missionaries to provide religious services for Catholic settlers in Algeria in order to tie them and their families to the colony. If settlers could find sufficient religious resources in their adopted homeland, officials reasoned, they would have less of an incentive to return to France or elsewhere in Europe. From the very beginning, though, reality never corresponded to expectations. Unlike in France, the French population in Algeria constituted a minority of the overall Catholic European population. French colonial officials were thus faced with the dilemma of having to choose whether to use missionaries to “assimilate” these foreigners (and the minority of French Catholics) by spreading their universalist ideal of French culture and language or to allow missionaries to provide for these settlers’ particular needs by fostering their own religious customs and preaching and ministering to them in their own native languages – typically Spanish, Italian, and Maltese.

To complicate matters, French rule throughout much of the nineteenth century resembled a system of dual power, in which after 1848 civilian officials theoretically

---

administered areas occupied primarily by Europeans while military officials governed lands where native Algerians constituted a majority. Until at least 1880, the military and civilian regimes remained divided over whether to pursue a policy of assimilation or association in their attempts to tie settlers to the colonial state. Generally speaking, the military regime hoped to treat foreign settlers and their religion much like they purported to treat conquered Algerians and their religion – by allowing them to retain their religious and linguistic heritage in return for pledging their political loyalty to the state. The civilian regime too sought to govern the foreigners as it claimed to rule the indigènes, but it pursued the goal of assimilating outsiders to a universalist conception of French belonging rooted in the tradition of the Revolution of 1789, while leaving them to their own devices to fulfill their particular religious needs in the privacy of their own homes and chapels. Either way, officials from each camp applied their respective ideologies much more consistently and wholeheartedly to the settler population than to the indigenous one.

7 David Scott, channeling Michel Foucault, speaks of the emergence in the 1830s of a “colonial governmentality,” by which colonial rule (specifically in British controlled Ceylon) transitioned from the administration of territory to the administration of a population; or from the repressive power of territorial rule to the productive power of forging colonial subjects by producing new forms of individual conduct and subjectivities. If we apply certain insights of Frederick Cooper concerning the limited and uneven reach of the imperial state, however, we could argue that such desire to produce colonial subjects often had a very
Regardless of the policy pursued at any given moment, the extralegal effort to control missionaries reveals the limits of the supposed juridical assimilation between France and Algeria, while the arc traced by a history of missionary work correlates little with the major political and social upheavals that shaped the historical trajectory of metropolitan France. That arc took shape, rather, according to the unexpected difficulties the colonial regime encountered in its attempt to govern the diverse European population of Algeria. Despite the supposed transition to civilian rule in 1848, and the full assimilation of Algeria to France in 1870-71, the military would continually flout the rule of law and come to the aid of foreign settlers when civilian officials threatened to separate them from the religious services the missionaries provided. Only after the application of the Ferry laws to Algeria in 1883 did the policy of association begin to give way to the civilian ideal of assimilation.\(^8\) Paradoxically, however, the hallmark of this policy – the law that naturalized foreigners \textit{en masse} in 1889 – granted actual political rights to these freshly-naturalized settlers (\textit{néo-français}) and thus at times allowed them to enforce their religious will on the ethnically French population (\textit{français})

---

8 The Ferry laws of 1880-82 were the creation of Prime Minister Jules Ferry. They mandated that primary education be free, secular, and obligatory, though families could still opt to send their children to religious schools. To be sure, the laws’ application to Algeria only pertained to European children, as colonial officials feared the political repercussions of forcing native Algerians to send their children, especially their daughters, to French schools. See Antoine Prost and François Mayeur, \textit{Histoire générale de l'enseignement et de l'éducation en France, t. III, 1789-1930} (Paris: Perrin, 2004). See also Peter McPhee, \textit{A Social History of France, 1789-1914}, Second edition (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 252-255. For the application of the laws to Algeria see Fanny Colonna, \textit{Instituteurs Algériens, 1883-1939} (Alger: Presses de Science Po, 1975).
What was supposed to constitute the pinnacle of colonial assimilation in fact divided the settler community more than ever before.

The efforts to cultivate the religious sensibilities of the settler population, to classify their outward manifestations and locate their potential for political subversion, call to mind Ann Laura Stoler’s observation that imperial rule did not only rely on the reign of reason, on gifting Enlightenment principles to the irrational peoples of the world; it also entailed the careful cultivation of affect and sentiment among the supposedly rational European population. Whereas officials in the Dutch East Indies fretted especially over the affective ties that bound together, or threatened to tear apart, the mixed-race families that disrupted and confused the imperial hierarchy, officials in French Algeria sought to monitor the religious sentiments of the Catholic settler population, all the more so as this group consisted primarily of European foreigners. In Algeria, religious belief already connoted political subversion in and of itself, as from the beginning the French classified all conquered Algerians simply according to their confessional identity as “Muslims.”

---


11 Indeed, after 1865 Algerians who hoped to gain French citizenship first had to renounce their personal status as Muslims and reject their right to Islamic courts of law. See, among many other works, Ruedy, Modern Algeria, 75-76. The exception to the categorization of all native Algerians as “Muslims” came in the form of Algeria’s substantial Jewish population (30,000 at the time of the conquest). Although many Frenchmen in France and Algeria characterized indigenous Jews and Muslims as equally uncivilized, a large number of Frenchmen, notably Jewish elites in the metropole, actively worked to assimilate Algerian Jews to French society and culture. This undertaking ultimately led to the Crémieux Decree of 24 October 1870, which extended French citizenship to all Algerian Jews. To be sure, from its inception this law heightened anti-Semitism among Algeria’s European population, culminating in the anti-Semitic riots of
anxieties led the colonial state to see faith and religious belief as “especially dense transfer point[s] for relations of power.”¹² Over time, however, officials increasingly divided over exactly what sentiments they ought to cultivate: whereas the military regime saw Catholicism as a bulwark of French civilization in the fight against Islamic “fanaticism,” the civilian regime increasingly identified Catholic with Islamic fanaticism and saw both as equally subversive. In a society that defined the political enemy primarily by the religion he professed, any religious sensibility whatsoever threatened to blur the line between ruler and ruled.

The government initially hoped to use religion to tie settlers to the regime, but research on missionaries reveals the pluripotency of faith and the unreliability of harnessing faith for political ends. Although officials hoped missionaries would bolster imperial rule by fostering unity among a diverse settler population, they more often sowed divisions. Not only did they divide the military from the civilian regime and Catholic from anticlerical settlers, but they also engendered discord within the community of the Catholic clergy itself. Like other European immigrants to Algeria, missionaries and clergymen saw the territory as a blank slate in which they could inscribe their own niches of professional and personal authority that remained closed off in the more rigid confines of the metropole. Because of their precarious financial, legal, and political positions, however, missionaries had to compete with each other to secure valuable patrons who could supply moral and financial support, typically Catholic

bishops, military governors general, or civilian prefects. The strain engendered by the cultivation of these dense networks of patronage only caused secular clergymen and missionaries to encroach on one another’s terrain and to denounce one another to ecclesiastical and secular authorities. In many ways, their story is one of ambition, often thwarted, and it mirrors that of the settler population writ large.

Finally, although missionaries relied on these seemingly pre-modern patronage networks to carve out their own realms of autonomy and authority, they still saw Algeria as a place to forge what they saw as a religious modernity. Rather than seeing the territory as a “laboratory of modernity” whose findings could be transplanted back to the metropole, missionaries saw the empty space of empire as affording them the opportunity to forge and implant a religious present increasingly foreclosed in a secularizing France.

To be sure, their version of modernity looked very much backwards toward a (perhaps mythical) medieval past. As such, their ideal of modern Christianity correlated closely with that of metropolitan Catholics described by historians Raymond Jonas and Ruth Harris. Both historians have shown how nineteenth-century Catholics combined modern techniques of mass fundraising drives and organized pilgrimages with medieval imagery, most notably that of the Sacré-Coeur of Jesus Christ, to mobilize support for a Catholic revival – whether in the construction of the Sacré-Coeur cathedral on Montmartre or the

---

13 Although I am aware of the critiques, offered most forcefully by Frederick Cooper, of the various uses of the all-encompassing term “modernity,” I avoid the potential pitfalls Cooper describes by refraining from attaching any agency to modernity itself. I instead use the term to depict the society that these actors hoped to create, a society that they described themselves as modern, even if it often took inspiration from the past. For the critiques of the historical uses of the term “modernity” see Cooper, Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 133-152.

popularization of the miraculous fountain at Lourdes.\(^{15}\) More recently, literary scholar Michelle Warren has turned to the colonial world to analyze a phenomenon she terms “creole medievalism,” or an emerging belief among French colonists in La Réunion that they occupied a privileged position through which to restore France to its medieval glory.\(^{16}\) This dissertation repeatedly invokes Warren’s terminology in its contention that missionaries in Algeria – due both to their distance from metropolitan organs of control and their proximity to a large European population – saw themselves as uniquely placed to combat the secular society that they feared threatened to overtake metropolitan France.

Unfortunately for missionaries, not only did they compete with each other to direct the implementation of a Catholic Algeria, but they also increasingly competed with French anticlericals who themselves saw Algeria as a place to enact their own version of a secular modernity that they could not yet achieve in the metropole. Although Algeria constituted a French territory, it remained far enough from the relatively moderate policies of Paris to allow more extremist positions on both sides to prevail; and both sides used the colonists’ tenuous position amidst an overwhelming and menacing Muslim majority to radicalize their respective visions. Over time, these conflicting versions of modernity, both secular and religious, past- and future-oriented, would come into direct


\(^{16}\) This desire to implement a mythical medieval past recurs throughout this dissertation. Here I draw from the recent work of French literary scholar Michelle Warren, *Creole Medievalism: Colonial France and Joseph Bédier’s Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). Warren defines “creoles” strictly as fully white, ethnically French settlers on the island of La Réunion. Used this way, the term aptly applies to the nostalgic vision of missionaries in Algeria. To be sure, Warren focuses more on the French of Réunion who chose to study medieval French literature as a way to revive the gloriousness of France’s past in the present. These scholars though also saw the Crusades as an early form of French colonialism. Although they were not members of the Catholic clergy and they largely supported the Third Republic, they also continued to claim the Christian identity of Réunion’s elite landowners and they saw medieval France and its incarnation in Réunion as superior to modern metropolitan France. Warren, xxviii. 139, 164-193.
and explosive combat with one another. Despite this combat, the goal of constructing a religious modernity in Algeria remained a distinct possibility until very late in the nineteenth century.

**Historiography**

This dissertation bridges two distinct bodies of literature that French historians have only recently brought into conversation with one another: those on imperialism and Catholicism. For the former, it builds on the pioneering work of Ann Stoler and Frederick Cooper that sees European empires as sites of contestation, instability, and anxiety – sites where the division between ruler and ruled was never as clear as European discourses, and indeed later historians, portrayed. For the latter, this dissertation owes much to the work of Claude Langlois, Sarah Curtis, and Caroline Ford, all of whom definitively overturned the depiction of nineteenth-century France as entirely secular and of the Catholic church as existing merely at the margins of society. All of these scholars have called into question previously accepted historiographical suppositions and brought to the fore the importance of concepts such as negotiation, unreason, and liminality.

In the last decade, the interventions led by these historians have sparked a renewed interest in Catholic missionaries in the French empire. Whereas an older

---


18 Langlois was the first to show that thousands of young women joined religious congregations throughout France in the nineteenth century, as these congregations provided them with professional opportunities unavailable in secular life. Sarah Curtis built on this work to show that in the field of education especially religious teaching congregations educated more children than did secular schools throughout almost all of the nineteenth century. Caroline Ford too built on Langlois’ work by illustrating how the Catholic faith often tore families apart, as women tended to become more religious and men less religious. Claude Langlois, *Le catholicisme au féminin. Les congrégations françaises à supérieure générale au XIX siècle* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1984), Sarah Curtis, *Educating the Faithful: Religion, Schooling, and Society in Nineteenth-Century France* (Chicago: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), and Caroline Ford, *Divided Houses: Religion and Gender in Modern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).
generation of historians tended to view missionaries as simple and obvious extensions of the oppressive colonial state, historians like J.P. Daughton, Sarah Curtis, and Elizabeth Foster have complicated the role of missionaries abroad. Daughton was perhaps the first to show that, in the very midst of the wave of anticlericalism that overtook the Third Republic after 1880, French missionaries spread throughout the world in unprecedented numbers. Although they often won the support of French colonial authorities if they agreed to spread French culture in the French language, they could also incite the ire of the same authorities if they adopted the language and customs (if not the religion) of France’s indigenous subjects. Curtis has shown that the empire especially allowed female missionaries an escape from the rigid gender hierarchy of bourgeois France. Foster, meanwhile, has portrayed the empire as a space where competing religious and secular “power brokers” sought to assert their own realms of authority and autonomy far away from overbearing metropolitan superiors. Although this dissertation owes much to Foster’s concept of missionaries as power brokers, it complicates this term by portraying

---


missionaries and other members of the Catholic clergy as in competition more than collusion with one another.

In studying nineteenth-century colonial Algeria in particular, a handful of historians have examined the disturbances caused by Catholic missionaries. Other than Sarah Curtis, all of these scholars have dealt with a single missionary congregation, the Missionnaires de Notre Dame d’Afrique, better known as the Pères Blancs, due to their distinctive white robes. As François Renault has recounted, this congregation was founded in 1870 by the archbishop of Algeria, Charles Lavigerie, who hoped to use the congregation to convert Muslims to Christianity and then to train an indigenous clergy to convert the rest of Africa.23 Karima Dirèche-Slimani and Bertrand Taithe have both examined particular attempts by these missionaries in the 1870s and beyond to establish “Arab-Christian villages” consisting of native Algerian orphans.24 These attempts typically met with failure, as the orphans ran away or declined to convert. On rare occasions the orphans did convert, only to meet with a double marginalization from both Muslim and European societies. Sarah Curtis has examined the fortunes of another missionary congregation in Algeria in the 1840s, the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition, led by the intrepid Emilie de Vialar, but Vialar quickly fled Algeria for Tunisia after her disagreements with the bishop of Algiers. To be sure, these

disagreements represent some of the only documented incidences of infighting among the Catholic clergy abroad, and this dissertation will expand on such conflict in great depth.25

Because of their relative rarity and their failure to impart any significant historical consequences, direct interactions between missionaries and Algerian Muslims figure rarely in my analysis. The works described above have dealt adequately with such interactions. Further, in the very framing of their questions these works perpetuate the historiographical dichotomy that posits a clear divide between colonized and colonizer. This dissertation will complicate such a dichotomous historical picture by building on a methodological framework recently called for by historian Mary Lewis – one which “transcends neat oppositions between colonizers and colonized, without denying uneven distributions in power.”26 Indeed, none of the works described above examine missionary interaction with a largely forgotten colonial population that nevertheless constituted the primary object of missionary labor in Algeria: the settlers themselves. Although the settler community as a collective admittedly held more power than did the colonized indigènes, vast discrepancies in power existed within the settler community as well; and the religious beliefs of missionaries and their followers often cast them to the marginal outskirts of colonial society, or to conceptual and literal spaces that closely bordered those inhabited by native Algerians.

The settler population in general remains underexplored in the history of French Algeria, particularly in the nineteenth century. When historians have broached the topic, two questions have tended to predominate: When did civilian settlers unite to overthrow

25 For another example of Catholic missionary infighting in colonial Louisiana, see Michael Pasquier, “When Catholic Worlds Collide,” in In God’s Empire, edited by Daughton and White.
the military regime, and when did the settler community achieve an identity as such, an identity known colloquially as *pied-noir*? This dissertation will contribute to both debates and in doing so it will help to change the periodization of the history of French Algeria. This periodization owed little, especially in the initial decades, to major political turning points in the metropole; rather, it depended more on the specific exigencies of imperial rule, the uneven application of metropolitan legislation, and the individual whims of ecclesiastical and secular leaders. Despite the division of Algeria into three official departments of the metropole in 1848, and the supposed institution of full civilian rule in 1871, the military continued to wield ultimate power well into the 1880s due to the political disenfranchisement of not only the entire indigenous population but also the mass of the settler population that did not possess French citizenship until 1889.

Historians have posited various dates for the emergence of a relatively unified settler community in Algeria. Perhaps the most famous thesis comes from Annie Rey-Goldzeiguer, who argued that by the late 1860s a powerful civilian population had come together to stymie Napoleon III’s attempt to use the army – and the detested Arab bureaus – to create an “Arab Kingdom” that protected native Algerians from civilian rapaciousness. Goldzeiguer locates this success in the colonists’ ability to ensure that the *senatus-consultes* of 1863 and 1865 remained essentially dead letters in the colony.27 Conversely, historians Pierre Nora, David Prochaska, and Charles Robert Ageron have argued that the law of 1889, which granted automatic citizenship to all the foreign Europeans born in Algeria, served as, in Ageron’s words, “the birth certificate of the

---

European people of Algeria.\textsuperscript{28} These arguments are all belied by a study of missionaries in Algeria, as up to the eve of the First World War the settler community remained wracked by divisions that stemmed above all from ethnically-tinged religious differences among the colonists.

\textit{Archival Sources}

This dissertation combines research in the French national archives in Paris, the French overseas archives in Aix-en-Provence, and a number of missionary archives in Paris, Lyon, and Rome. Research in the national archives provided material for the basic legal and political arc of the argument. Specifically, in the national archives, series F19 on religious congregations and F17 on public instruction proved invaluable for delineating how the minister of war (and later interior), the governor general, and the various prefects employed legal and extra-legal means to attempt to control missionary work in the territory. In the French overseas archives (\textit{Centre d'Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer}), a subset of series F80 on the establishment of parish churches in Algeria and series 1U containing correspondence between Algerian bishops and the governor general and prefects allowed me to gain a better understanding of the relationship between secular and ecclesiastical officials in the colony.

This information, however, has with some exceptions only provided the institutional framework of the overall dissertation. For its primary argument and its attempt to depict the social and spiritual landscape of missionary life and work, this dissertation relies primarily on missionary archives. Materials in each of the eight

missionary archives I visited illuminated crucial insights regarding the relationship both between secular and religious authorities and amongst missionaries and clergymen themselves. In many of these archives, no historian had previously looked at the papers pertaining specifically to Algeria. Their organization varied tremendously, with some periods well documented and others inexplicably absent from the historical record. Similarly, the emotional richness of these documents varied from archive to archive and often changed over time. Whereas the documents in some archives may have provided an extraordinary level of detail for the decades of the 1830s and 40s only to tail off into more bureaucratic language after 1850, others only began to prove useful after 1850. As a general though not uniform trend, however, the richness of the missionary archives declines after about 1880, and this decline can be traced directly to the centralization of religious authority under the archbishop of Algiers and with the slow but steady application of metropolitan law to the territory of Algeria. Both of these events contributed to circumscribing the realm of the possible in the missionary imagination, and the narrowing of this imagination is reflected in the increasingly formulaic nature of missionaries’ letters.

A final word is in order regarding the structure of the missions in Algeria and how it shaped the archives left behind. Upon arrival in the colony, each congregation established one or more houses depending on the number of missionaries it staffed. Typically referred to as a residence, each of these houses had its own superior. This superior would report to the superior of the entire “province” of Algeria, who took the title of “visiting superior.” In theory, the visiting superior alone corresponded with the superior of the congregation who resided in the motherhouse in France or Rome. In
reality, however, various sub-superiors of the different houses often wrote directly to the superior in the metropole. On rare occasions, typically in times of personal duress, individual missionaries who did not possess any position of authority also wrote to either the visiting superior or the superior of the congregation. Once or twice a year – though sometimes less frequently – a “visiting inspector,” often also the superior of the entire congregation, toured all the houses of Algeria and penned a report on his or her findings. The report would comment on the general conduct, morality, efficacy, and morale of each of the houses – and often each of the missionaries – followed by suggestions for improvement, or even outright admonitions.

The frequency of all of this correspondence – at least what remains of it today – varied widely from congregation to congregation; and the level of detail in the correspondence depended entirely on the individual personality of the author. Other than the annual reports penned by the visiting superiors, the archival documents consist entirely of letters written from missionaries in Algeria to their superiors in the metropole. That is to say, the archives do not contain the equally frequent letters written from the superior in the metropole to the visiting superior in Algeria. We can only hear the distorted voices of these metropolitan superiors in their echoed sentiments found in the responses penned by missionaries abroad, for instance when these latter responded directly to questions, reprimands, or advice offered by the former. Presumably these documents remained in Algeria, where the relatively chaotic state of the missionary establishments and the paucity of personnel did not allow for the systematized collection and filing of letters received from Europe.
For the purposes of this dissertation, the most valuable information by far came from the archives of the Congregation of the Mission of St Vincent de Paul, hereafter referred to as the Lazarists, and the neighboring archives of their sister congregation, the Filles de la Charité, both located in Paris. From 1845 to 1905 the Lazarists directed the senior seminary at Kouba and, for most of that time, the nearby junior seminary as well. They also served as parish priests in a number of communes in the territory. Further, the Lazarist priests served as the spiritual advisors – generally as administrators of sacraments – to the Filles de la Charité. From 1845 onward, these sisters directed schools and orphanages and worked as nurses in military (and sometimes civilian) hospitals throughout the territory, though primarily in the department of Algiers. From their arrival in the 1840s, these two congregations enjoyed more support from both the secular and ecclesiastical hierarchy than any other congregation. This support stemmed from their history of serving the French government at home and abroad and from the paternalist relationship between the Lazarists and the Filles de la Charité.

The documents these two congregations left behind remain relevant for two reasons: first, the Lazarist superiors, more than those of any other congregation, enjoyed the patronage of successive bishops of Algiers; accordingly, the correspondence between superiors of various houses in Algeria with the motherhouse in Paris reveals the criteria required for success in Algeria. Second, due to their special and entirely paternal relationship with the Filles de la Charité, correspondence among and between these two congregations reveals the gendered dimension of the missionary hierarchy and helps us understand how female missionaries worked to carve out their own niches of autonomy within a society and religion structured entirely on patriarchal principles. As such, these
documents also reveal the limits of both governmental and ecclesiastical control, and how missionary women capitalized on the particular structures of always-unequal relationships to creatively manipulate different levers of male authority to their own ends.

Of almost equal importance, especially for the period between 1845 and 1870, are the archives of the Jesuits, located in Rome. More than any other congregation in Algeria, the Jesuits spoke specifically and in depth about issues of power and politics. At the same time, as legally suppressed in France for a large portion of the nineteenth century, the Jesuits encountered numerous obstacles with the civil and military authorities (though much more so with the former than the latter). As notorious adherents of ultramontanism – or loyalty to the pope over the French government – they also sparked the repeated suspicions of more Gallican bishops and secular clergy of Algiers, who owed their positions and salaries entirely to the French government.29 Thus, if the documents left behind by the Lazarists reveal the criteria for success in Algeria, the documents crafted by the Jesuits shed light on the reasons for failure and, equally importantly, how this failure took its toll on the personalities, relationships, and piety of the missionaries in question.

The remaining missionary archives proved useful for specific and circumscribed purposes. Those of the Soeurs Trinitaires – the most disorganized of all the archives I

29 Gallicanism is the profession of loyalty towards the French government over the pope. Ultramontanism, literally “beyond the mountains” (as in the Alps), connotes loyalty to the pope over the French government. These issues came to a head several times previously in French history, notably in 1713 when the papal bull Unigenitus condemned the Jansenists and later in the 1760s and 70s when Jansenists began to adopt an explicitly Gallican outlook. Finally, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in 1790 forced all clergymen in France to swear an oath of loyalty to the nation rather than the pope. For the Jansenist controversy see Dale van Kley, The Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975) and The Religious Origins of the French Revolution (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). For the dechristianization campaign during the French Revolution, see Claude Langlois et al., Atlas de la Révolution française. Religion, 1770-1820, tome 9 (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences, 1996). For the popular response to this campaign, see Suzanne Desan, Reclaiming the Sacred: Lay Religion and Popular Politics in Revolutionary France (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).
visited – first brought to my attention the idea that the church in Algeria did not constitute a monolithic entity, a conclusion that would have been impossible to draw from the national archives alone. The Soeurs Trinitaires worked in Algeria, specifically in the department of Oran, from 1840 until the end of the period covered in this dissertation, and indeed beyond. The documents exchanged between the headstrong visiting superior and the superior of the motherhouse in Lyon, France, illuminate how, in the 1840s and 50s, the bishop of Algiers sought to replace the sisters with more docile female missionaries. The bishop failed in this attempt, however, because the sisters possessed a powerful patron in the form of the governor general of Algeria. The governor general and the visiting superior formed a tight emotional bond which resembled that of a father and daughter and which protected the congregation from the designs of the bishop.

The archives of two other male missionary congregations proved useful for very specific insights. The Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes, who worked only as primary school teachers and were not actually priests, arrived in Algeria in 1853 and stayed until the First World War. Located in Rome, their documents helped illuminate how the transition from the Second Empire to the Third Republic affected Catholic school teachers of Algeria in what I will refer to as the “long decade” from 1867 to 1883. In Lyon, the Centre de Jean Bosco, technically a library rather than an archive, provided crucial background information on the Salésiens de Don Bosco in Algeria. Further, an internal unpublished history from 1941 discovered by the librarian during my trip allowed me to flesh out the details of the story that unfolded during their time in the territory from 1891 to 1914. The Salésiens, however, left behind a greater presence in the national archives than in their
own library due to the constant state of suspicion they evoked in the eyes of the government, which resulted directly from their supposed foreign origin.

Finally, this dissertation draws from the archives of two organizations that did not constitute missionary congregations as such – the Propaganda Fide and the Propagation de la Foi. Based in Rome, the Propaganda Fide (today known as the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples) was founded by Pope Gregory XV in 1622 and had as its stated goal to spread Catholicism to the non-Catholic regions of the world. The Propaganda Fide was staffed by cardinals of the pope’s inner circle and run by a cardinal prefect, appointed by the pope. Correspondence sent from missionaries in Algeria to the cardinal prefect helps illuminate the conflicting visions that the Holy See and the French state held for the religious fate of colonial Algeria; it also reveals the contempt that most missionaries from the Vatican had for French appointed clergymen.30 This correspondence especially sheds light on the decade of the 1830s, when the future of the faith in Algeria remained completely open ended.

The Propagation de la Foi, meanwhile, collected donations from the faithful in France in order to channel funds to French Catholic missionaries throughout the world, especially in their efforts to convert non-Catholics to the Catholic fold.31 Based in Lyon, the archives of the Propagation de la Foi shed light on the goals of early missionary establishments and especially the financial hardships they suffered and the difficulty they had in converting Muslims to Catholicism. The richness of this archive lies essentially in

---

30 In its diplomatic relations with other nations, the Vatican referred to itself as the Holy See. This dissertation will use the term Holy See when discussing geopolitical or diplomatic relations between the pope or the Vatican and other nations.
31 J.P. Daughton’s, *An Empire Divided* was the first monograph to formulate its entire argument from documents found in this archive and to alert historians to the wealth of information other missionary archives might contain.
the period before 1848, when missionaries still held out hope of converting Muslims and before the successive bishops of Algiers attempted to bring them entirely under their authority. After this period the correspondence consists almost entirely of letters from the bishops of Algeria requesting money for their own ends. By 1870 the Propagation had largely ceased to provide funds for Catholic works in Algeria for three reasons: the territory’s nominal incorporation to the metropole; the fact that the metropolitan government already provided salaries for Algeria’s bishops and parish priests; and the utter failure of missionaries to make any headway with the native Algerian population.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation includes four substantive chapters that build upon one another and proceed chronologically. Chapter One spans the period from the conquest of Algeria in 1830 to the arrival of the second bishop of Algiers in 1846. Between 1830 and the establishment of the bishopric in 1838 the confused state of the Catholic church in Algeria stemmed directly from a wider state of confusion over the exact purpose of the newly-conquered territory. With a settler population numbering fewer than 4,000, Catholic missionaries saw the conquest primarily as offering a chance to convert the one million Muslims who inhabited the former Ottoman regency and to resurrect the ancient splendor of the early church in North Africa. At the same time, missionaries sent by the Vatican competed with ambitious military chaplains appointed by the governor general to oversee the establishment of the church on a more permanent basis. From the very beginning they all relied on the patronage of highly placed military leaders to ascend the ranks of the clergy in Algeria.
By the end of the 1830s, the rapid influx of colonists from throughout the Mediterranean world combined with the religious resistance of the conquered Algerians to shift the focus of Catholic missionaries away from Muslims and towards (often lapsed) Catholics. The military regime supported this transition because it quickly began to see the political dangers in threatening the religious sensibilities of the conquered North African population. Further, officials feared that what they saw as the notorious immorality of the early settler population might undermine the supposed racial superiority of the conquerors. The government thus hoped to use missionaries to moralize a settler population whose depravity threatened from a very early stage to invert the colonial racial hierarchy. In order to better control missionaries in Algeria, the French government established Algiers as an official bishopric in 1838, which under the terms of the Concordat of 1801 allowed the French government, rather than the Vatican, to appoint its chosen bishop from among the French clergy. 32 This first bishop, however, proved a great disappointment to metropolitan officials, both for allowing himself to be manipulated by Jesuits and for bringing the church to the brink of financial ruin. In 1846, the government replaced him with a much more Gallican and administratively competent bishop.

Chapter Two spans the tenure of this second bishop, who held his position from 1846 until his death in 1866. This period was marked by the rapid migration to the colony of both settlers and missionaries. The military government continued to see Catholic missionaries as a cheap means of providing for the religious and educational needs of

32 Napoleon Bonaparte signed the Concordat with the Vatican in order to end the religious discord that wracked France following the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in 1790. It proclaimed Catholicism “the religion of the great majority of the French,” but not the national religion of France. It also allowed the French government to nominate bishops in metropolitan France and to provide all the clergy in France with state salaries. See McPhee, *A Social History of France, 1789-1914*, 79-80.
settlers, and it was at this time that it really began to formulate its policy of using missionaries to help tie these settlers to the regime. This change stemmed from the recognition of the permanence of the French occupation of Algeria and the need to create a unified settler community as a bulwark of support against indigenous uprisings. At the same time, the Revolution of 1848 had two important repercussions for Algeria: it nominally assimilated the European areas to the metropole as three departments of France with full political rights and, following the June Days and Louis Napoleon’s coup, it led to the exile to Algeria of more than 6,000 political radicals. This new system of dual power between conservative military generals and at times radical civilian leaders continued until the 1880s. Nevertheless, the fact that French missionaries remained in a state of legal limbo and that they could repeatedly rely on the extralegal support of military generals belies the notion that even for the settler population – to say nothing of the native Algerians – 1848 led to the establishment of the metropolitan rule of law in the territory.

Secondly, this chapter examines in detail the criteria for missionary success and failure in Algeria. It uses case studies of the Lazarists and Jesuits to show the importance of patronage and the power that missionaries could accrue from gaining the support of the bishop of Algiers or the governor general. It also uses case studies of the Soeurs Trinitaires and the Filles de la Charité to show the gendered dimension of missionary work and patronage in Algeria. The bishop of Algiers hoped to replace the Soeurs Trinitaires with the Filles de la Charité in order to better exert his authority over the sisters. Whereas the former congregation had a headstrong female superior, the latter had a Lazarist priest as superior, and the bishop hoped to bestow patronage on the Lazarists in
order to use them to exert his authority over the Filles de la Charité. In both of these plans, however, he encountered unexpected difficulties. The superiors of the Soeurs Trinitaires and the Filles de la Charité both found powerful patrons in the form of military generals, and the latter congregation even used this patronage to overthrow the gendered hierarchy so that their Lazarist superiors relied on the sisters for their monthly salaries and their very existence.

Chapter Three begins in 1867, with the arrival of the first archbishop of Algeria, the imposing Charles Lavigerie, and spans what I will term the “long-decade” of 1867 to 1883, when the metropolitan government applied the republican educational legislation known as the Ferry laws to Algeria. Lavigerie both built on past precedents and vastly expanded the authority of his office. He succeeded where his predecessors had failed and brought missionaries and their work almost entirely under his control and oversight. He did so by creating his own missionary society, the Missionnaires de Notre Dame d’Afrique, known as the Pères Blancs, and designating himself as superior. From this point forward, Lavigerie began to dismantle the complex patronage system erected by past missionaries and ecclesiastics and funnel all state and charitable resources to his congregation alone. Despite his renown as the most important Catholic clergyman in nineteenth-century Africa, Lavigerie’s arrival definitively weakened missionaries’ autonomy in Algeria and thus changed their fortunes for the worse.33

The second set of actors that profoundly changed the status of missionaries in Algeria consisted of municipal councils – especially that of Algiers – which even before the proclamation of the Third Republic began a concerted effort to remove missionaries

33 For the exploits of Lavigerie in Africa, see especially François Renault, Cardinal Lavigerie.
from all public teaching roles. This effort to secularize the schools began before any similar concerted effort in France, and had two causes specific to Algeria. First, many political exiles of 1848 and 1852 lay low in Algeria during the ensuing decade, only to gain renewed confidence by the mid 1860s due to their very distance from metropolitan organs of repression. Algeria in effect provided them an opportunity to enact their secularizing visions that remained closed off in France. They seized this opportunity in 1867, when the governor general implemented a program to create mixed schools (écoles mixtes) that provided a universal secular education with time set aside for particular religious instruction for children of different faiths. The municipal council of Algiers willfully misinterpreted this circular to remove any religious vestige from their public schools whatsoever, specifically the Catholic missionary teachers. In doing so, however, they provoked the protests and petitions (with signatures numbering almost 10,000) of the city’s Catholic, largely foreign, families.

The battle over the schools would span the entire decade of the 1870s and envelop nearly all of the municipal councils of Algeria until finally coming to an end with the application of the Ferry laws in 1883.34 The conflict remains important for three reasons. First, it shows that despite the official institution of civilian rule in 1870-1, the “civil” governor general continued to overrule legally elected municipal councils in order to appease the disenfranchised foreign population of the territory. The colonial government continued to rule the European population as colonial subjects as much as citizens, as the political and juridical status of the territory remained mired in confusion. Second, it shows that the settler population had after forty years of imperial rule in no way taken on

a unified consciousness, as conflicts over religion intertwined with those of ethnicity continued to divide them more than any other issue. While Catholics and anticlerical officials both saw Algeria as a place to carve out an alternative modernity, they both continued to have diametrically opposed visions of what that modernity entailed and how to go about constructing it.

The fourth and final substantive chapter covers the decades surrounding the law of 1889, which granted automatic French citizenship to all foreigners born in Algeria upon reaching adulthood. In the years leading up to the law the practice of Catholicism, more so than Islam, continued to preoccupy and divide colonial officials and the settler community. In this period, the association of “foreigners” with the religious fanaticism of the Muslim population only intensified. Officials hoped that the law of 1889 would stand as the pinnacle of civilian rule and the triumph of the policy of assimilation over association, but even it did not signal the definitive creation of a cohesive European community. Rather, by transforming previously disenfranchised foreigners into citizens newly endowed with political rights the law only increased the insecurities of the ethnically French colonists. This chapter looks at the department of Oran in particular, where foreigners, now known as neo-French, continued to outnumber their French counterparts. These latter no longer necessarily held the numerical majority in the electorate or the municipal councils, and many commentators worried that Catholics of Spanish or Italian descent would assert their religious will on more anti-clerical French

35 This argument goes against that of the only extant research on the subject, by Oissila Saâidia, who argues that the colonial regime and the settler population were almost entirely supportive of the Catholic clergy as a bulwark against Islam in Algeria. Oissila Saâidia, “L'anticléricalisme article d'exportation? Le cas de l'Algérie avant la première guerre mondiale.” Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire, No. 87, Numéro spécial: Laïcité, séparation, sécularisation 1905-2005 (Jul. - Sep., 2005): 101-112.
settlers. In the years leading up to the First World War, these fears of a “foreign peril” only intensified.

Such fears coalesced around a newly installed missionary congregation, the Salésiens de Don Bosco, which not only had an Italian founder, but also staffed its ranks with a number of Spanish and Italian missionary priests. The Salésiens thus acted as a touchstone for larger debates around the danger of foreigners, and their arrival only intensified the association of foreigners with the Catholic faith. In the period between 1901 and 1905, when the government sought to apply the laws of laïcization to Algeria, colonial officials persecuted the Salésiens to a much greater extent than any of the other missionary congregations in Algeria. At the same time, while Algeria increasingly did constitute a true extension of the metropole (at least for the European settlers), the failure to fully enforce the secularization laws revealed that this transformation remained incomplete. After their legal dissolution, a number of Salésiens continued to work with the youth of colonial Oran due to the support they had from the families of Spanish and Italian descent. This support continued to preoccupy the colonial regime and divide the settler population up to the eve of the First World War.
Chapter One

Algeria: A Land of Opportunity, 1830-1846

“I fear an apostolic vicar chosen from outside a congregation would be animated by a spirit of personal ambition and self-interest, inclined maybe only to see his mission as a temporary task or as a means of advancement. Experience has shown that priests who want to leave their diocese for a far off mission are typically not the most respectable people.”

-Letter from the minister of foreign affairs to the French ambassador to the Holy See, 31 December 1835.

“What will become of our women and our children without this priest? Do not leave us unfortunate colonists without spiritual and temporal aid.”

-Petition from the Catholic colonists of Algiers to their majesties the king and queen of France, 1834.

This chapter analyzes the shifting and competing logics that led to the official establishment of the Catholic Church in Algeria. In the 1830s, both the French government and the Vatican saw Algeria as an empty space in which to inscribe their authority. Although the two states disagreed on the purpose of religion they both saw it as a crucial component of political authority more generally. The French government’s plans for establishing the Catholic Church on a permanent basis in Algeria changed over time according to contemporary debates over the wider juridical and political relationship

---

1 Archives of the Congrégation de la Mission de St Vincent de Paul, known as the Lazarists, 108a Algiers. Copy of letter from the archives of Foreign Affairs of a note on the arrangement made with the Holy See for the organization of the Catholic religion in Algiers, 31 December 1835. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.


3 Again, many other actors, including Saint-Simonians, saw Algeria saw as a “blank slate” in which to enact ambitious schemes or create new utopias. See Abi-Mershed, Apostles of Modernity. For colonies as “laboratories of modernity” see Rabinow, French Modern; Stoler and Cooper, eds., Tensions of Empire.
between France and Algeria. In the early years of French rule the exact purpose of the colony remained unclear. Ultimately, it was the rather unexpected emergence of a permanent (and generally far from pious) settler community that led to the establishment of the diocese of Algiers in 1838 under a French appointed bishop.

At the same time, various plans imposed from above by the government and the Vatican ran up against the unexpected idiosyncrasies and messy realities of individual missionaries and settlers from below. While the government hoped a religious influence would help moralize and civilize a renegade settler community, missionaries sent by the Vatican just as often competed with military chaplains paid by the French state to carve out their own niches of professional and spiritual authority as “power brokers” in the former Ottoman regency. At the most localized level of power, missionaries even denounced one another in order to displace their rivals and extend their influence throughout the city of Algiers and later into the rest of the nascent colony. Finally, despite numerous royal ordinances from France and papal decrees from the Holy See, successful missionaries relied just as much on private patronage of highly placed military and ecclesiastic officials in Algeria to secure their livelihoods.

**The Period of the Apostolic Vicariate, 1830-1833**

Prior to the French conquest of Algiers in 1830, a handful of Catholic priests from congregations such as the Pères de la Merci and the Pères de la Congrégation de la Mission de St. Vincent de Paul (better known as Lazarists) lived in the city of Algiers and served the chapels of foreign consuls. They also won occasional permission from the dey

---

4 I borrow the term power brokers from Elizabeth Foster, *Faith in Empire*. This chapter complicates Foster’s portrayal by showing that secular clergy, different congregations, and individual missionaries could also serve as competing, rather than complementary, power brokers in the imperial world.
of Algiers to administer sacraments to Europeans held in prison or sold into slavery. The Lazarists especially had a long history of collecting donations in Europe to fund the repurchase of “Christian” slaves captured and sold into captivity by Muslim corsairs. As early as 1632, the Vatican had designated the “Barbary Coast” as an apostolic prefecture and named a Lazarist priest as apostolic prefect with express orders to repurchase captured European slaves. This situation continued more or less unabated up to the French invasion of 1830.

Following the French capture of Algiers on 5 July 1830, colonial rule in Algeria fell under the authority of a military governor general, who received his powers from and reported to the minister of war in Paris. Over time, the position of the governor general would emerge as the single most important source of support for Catholic missionaries in the colony. The governor general held enormous influence over policymaking and could rule unilaterally by emergency decree. He also controlled a bureaucracy staffed by subordinate generals who oversaw finances, justice, commerce, police and, notably, religious affairs, in Algeria. During the expeditionary campaign the governor general had already drafted 17 military chaplains into the army to administer sacraments and preach mass to French soldiers. Many soldiers experienced extreme homesickness for

7 An apostolic prefect is a priest who oversees an apostolic prefecture, or a missionary area where the Catholic Church is not yet sufficiently developed to create a diocese. The prefect has authority from the Vatican to administer all sacraments in the missionary area.
their native villages, and military chaplains typically came from the same regions as the soldiers who composed the regiments. On the same day as the fall of Algiers one such chaplain held the first religious ceremony in the newly acquired territory when he led a *Te Deum* in the medieval neighborhood of the Casbah. Although a royal ordinance of 10 November 1830 suppressed these chaplains in their official functions, the governor general allowed those chaplains who opted not to return to France to continue to travel with the army in an unofficial capacity or to remain in the city of Algiers to administer sacraments to local Europeans and give last rites to dying soldiers in the increasingly crowded military hospitals. These priests often continued to receive salaries directly from the funds of the governor general according to their perceived level of public utility.

Immediately after the conquest military and metropolitan authorities remained divided over the future of their newly acquired territory. This situation owed much to the revolution that unfolded in Paris directly following the fall of Algiers. Although the Bourbon King Charles X had used the invasion to distract from his unpopularity at home, his overthrow on 30 July 1830 did not signal an immediate withdrawal from North Africa (though to be sure a large minority of commentators supported such a measure). The establishment of the July Monarchy and the ascension of the Orléanist Louis Philippe to the throne as “King of the French” actually led to an increased focus on Algeria as the king and his sons saw the new colony as a place to prove their worthiness as “citizen

---


11 Combaluzier, 165. In 1833, 2,512 French soldiers died in military hospitals in Algeria, compared to just 64 in combat. See Brower, 48.

soldiers” and leaders of the new regime.\textsuperscript{13} Two of the king’s sons, the Duc d’Aumale and the Duc d’Orléans, would serve as governors general of Algeria (and the latter would even die there). Thus, with longer-term – if not permanent – occupation appearing increasingly likely the ministry of the king opened negotiations with Pope Gregory XVI and the Vatican’s official missionary organ, the Propaganda Fide (also known as the Sacred Congregation), to establish the Catholic Church on a solid and more permanent foundation in the new territory.

Between 1830 and 1838 these efforts repeatedly foundered in the face of continued disagreements between the Vatican, the French government, and the missionaries chosen for this task. In this respect, religious policy in these early years differed little from policy over the conquered North African population. Historians agree that the 1830s generally constituted “a period of disorder” regarding France’s relations with its conquered subjects.\textsuperscript{14} Religious policy was no different, and the general state of confusion pertained not only to France’s new colonial subjects, but also to its new colonial citizens. Three primary sources of tension arose over the establishment of the church in Algeria: whether to constitute Algeria as an apostolic vicariate or a bishopric; whether the French government or the Vatican would have the right to appoint the spiritual leader over this jurisdiction; and whether the necessary priests should come from the secular clergy or from missionary congregations.\textsuperscript{15} The answers to these questions changed over time and depended largely on conflicting visions of the wider purpose of

\textsuperscript{13} Sessions, \textit{By Sword and by Plow}, 83-96.
\textsuperscript{14} Brower, \textit{A Desert Named Peace}, 12.
\textsuperscript{15} The term “secular clergy” denotes Catholic clergy salaried by the state and who, unlike missionaries, did not belong to religious orders, or congrégations.
the territory of Algeria, its broader juridical relationship to France, and the population to be targeted by the Catholic Church.

The Vatican preferred to designate Algeria as an apostolic vicariate because this legal status would allow the pope, rather than the king, to appoint his chosen apostolic vicar. By definition an apostolic vicar worked in the midst of “infidels,” not in a land composed predominantly of Catholics, with the goal of achieving enough conversions that the vicariate could eventually give way to a diocese under the jurisdiction of a bishop. Further, an apostolic vicariate constituted by definition a missionary land, and priests appointed there worked in the official capacity as missionaries, not as members of the secular clergy. In sum, by designating Algeria as an apostolic vicariate the Vatican and the French state would tacitly recognize that the role of the Church in Algeria was to convert Muslims to Catholicism. Recognition of an apostolic vicariate thus attached less importance to the existing European settler community – which numbered about 3,000 in 1831 – than to the much larger and seemingly more permanent Arab and Berber populations.

In the weeks and months following the conquest, however, confusion continued to reign over the purpose of an expedition that “lacked an ideology.” The Holy See’s hopes of converting Muslims threatened to undermine the peace treaty of 5 July 1830, which stipulated that “the exercise of the Mohammedan religion will remain free.” At the same time, many of the leading generals in the Armée d’Afrique were themselves

---

17 For the population of Algiers, see Sessions, *By Sword and By Plow*, 217.
19 Quoted in Brower, 11.
devout Catholics and envisioned spreading the faith throughout Africa on the heels of the French army. In August 1830, the Comte Albert de Retz, officer of the army’s thirty-seventh regiment, wrote to the French ambassador to the Holy See that “our conquests are almost finished, the Crescent is humiliated and will soon cede the throne to the Cross.”

By 1831 de Retz had developed his views further and wrote, “I see the colonization and civilization of this country by conversion to the Catholic religion as a very beneficial act and it should be French policy to send missionaries here.”

In the end, the French government reneged on the treaty’s promise of religious toleration, just as it did regarding the agreement to respect indigenous property and persons. On 19 December 1830 a royal ordinance established Algeria as an apostolic vicariate with an apostolic vicar appointed by the Holy See after nomination by the French government.

From the beginning, the holder of this position relied for his authority on private patronage; and de Retz had months previously begun to maneuver to secure the appointment of his personally chosen nominee. In August 1830 de Retz asked France’s ambassador to the Holy See (who also happened to be his brother) to use his influence with the pope to win the appointment of one Father Collin. This priest, a native of Brittany and likely in his 50s, had served as military chaplain in de Retz’s regiment, and de Retz saw him as the ideal man to oversee the spread of Catholicism to Algeria’s conquered subjects. Collin’s “zeal and education” gave him “the ability to work for the

20 ASC, SC – Barbary 13/. Letter from Comte Albert de Retz to the French ambassador to Rome, 12 August 1830.
21 ASC, SC – Barbary 13/223. Excerpt from a letter from the Compte Albert de Retz, officer of the thirty-seventh regiment to his brother, ambassador to Rome, 13 April 1831.
conversion of peoples, a conversion which remains extremely difficult.” De Retz succeeded in his aims and the same royal ordinance that established Algeria as an apostolic vicariate also named Father Collin as the first apostolic vicar of Algiers.

This appointment set a precedent that continued throughout the nineteenth century, as private patronage from highly placed military officials served as the primary determinant of the success or failure of individual missionaries. In this and many other aspects the daily lives and “little tactics of the habitat” employed by missionaries in Algeria differed little from those of their secular colon counterparts. In addition to revealing missionary reliance on private patronage and ad hoc policy, then, viewing early colonization through the lens of religion helps uncover the habits, motivations, and fears that animated the larger settler community in the 1830s – a community whose experience “remains the least known aspect of the decades of the conquest.” In the early and tumultuous years of French rule in Algeria, policy toward European missionaries and settlers differed little from policy toward the conquered North African population. As Benjamin Brower has written in regard to the latter policy:

The new regime did not plan to rule based upon affirmation and consent, law and legitimacy, institutions thought to be typical of the modern state. Instead, it prepared a specific set of institutions for colonial rule inspired by the most unsophisticated forms of power.

---

23 ASC, SC – Barbary 13/169. Letter from Comte Albert de Retz to the French ambassador to the Holy See, 12 August 1830.
24 The phrase the “little tactics of the habitat” was coined by Steven Kotkin to explain how Soviet citizens navigated their daily lives under Stalin’s so-called totalitarian regime. Kotkin, Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).
26 Brower, A Desert Named Peace, 16.
This “unsophisticated” policy toward missionaries and the wider settler community continued until the 1880s even if, to be sure, it remained conquered colonial subjects who felt its effects in their most oppressive and violent manifestations.27

Unbridled ambition quickly emerged as one of the primary traits of missionaries in early French Algeria. The new apostolic vicar, Father Collin, saw the territory largely as a “blank slate” on which he could inscribe a degree of personal authority deprived him in Europe. In doing so, he set another precedent that would continue to hamper the religious policy of France and the Vatican in Algeria throughout the nineteenth century. Collin’s ambitions repeatedly destabilized the sanctity that authorities felt his position must entail. Further, Collin incited the ire and jealousy of other missionaries who aspired to his position and who engaged in constant intrigue to disgrace him in the eyes of the Vatican and the French government alike. Throughout the nineteenth century, these repeated religious scandals only undermined the moral authority of the Church in the eyes of the settler community as well as, authorities feared, the gaze of an indigenous population which, as one historian has written, “whether invisible or visible, [was] always present.”28

Word of Collin’s impiety began to spread almost immediately upon his appointment. In March 1832, the Propaganda Fide dispatched two French missionaries from the Missions Etrangères de Paris – Fathers Banvoy and Cayens – to take stock of the situation and report back to the congregation. Immediately upon his arrival, Cayens

---

27 Writing on a later period, between 1880 and 1940, Elizabeth Foster has argued that political policy towards missionaries in colonial Senegal also resembled “Old Regime” or “pre-modern” forms of power. Foster, Faith in Empire.

wrote to the prefect of the Propaganda Fide, Cardinal Pedicini, to complain that, while
the French authorities had shown them goodwill, “unfortunately we cannot say the same
for our [apostolic] prefect; M. Collin is rarely at the chapel and always about town.” The
two missionaries further complained that Collin refused them lodging so that they had to
take refuge with a military chaplain in a tent at the nearby garrison. They accused Collin
of failing to perform marriages, baptisms, communions, or burials and of “only [doing]
things that can bring him some immediate gain.”29 The following month Cayens wrote
that “If [Collin] is not replaced disorder will reign throughout Algeria…He exceeds his
authority and he believes himself soon to be pope.”30

A rift soon arose between Collin and Cayens, as both appeared to covet the
position of apostolic vicar. In August 1832 Collin himself wrote to the Propaganda Fide
to complain of Cayens’ insubordination. He demanded that the congregation “increase
my authority to rule over the ecclesiastics in this country” and he accused Cayens and
Banvoy of acting against his orders “in many grave circumstances.”31 In response to
Collin’s rebukes, the missionaries told him that “they brought from Rome powers above
my own and that these powers place them outside of my surveillance and my orders.”32
Despite Vatican and French hopes of using the apostolic vicariate to bring order to the
newly acquired French territory, the missionaries specifically designated for this task
only sowed further disorder.

30 ASC, SC – Barbary 13/294. Abbé Cayens to Cardinal Pedicini, Prefect of the Propaganda Fide, 12 April 1832.
31 ASC, SC – Barbary 13/373. Abbé Collin to Cardinal Pedicini, Prefect of the Propaganda Fide, 9 August 1832.
32 Ibid.
Unsure of whose story to believe, the Vatican responded by sending yet another priest, Father Muller, to ascertain the reality of the situation. To ensure that Collin received Muller better than he did the previous two missionaries, the pope himself sent Muller in the official capacity of apostolic missionary with powers equal to those of Collin (including the ability to engage on his own with secular authorities). Upon arriving in Algeria, however, Muller followed the precedent set by the other three missionaries and immediately worked to carve out his own niche of authority by displacing both Collin and Cayens. In January 1833, Muller wrote to Cardinal Pedicini that “religion still goes very poorly and it is all because of the poor ecclesiastics that we have here.” Muller worked to cultivate his relationship with the governor general, Anne Jean Marie René Savary, the Duc de Rovigo, who “is well disposed towards us” and allowed Muller to convert “the most beautiful mosque in the city” into the Church of Saint Philip.33 This relationship reached the point that, in the words of another general, the governor general “calls [Muller] often to his home and promises him his protection.”34 Muller hoped to cultivate this relationship to claim the position of apostolic vicar as his own.

Muller’s arrival also coincided with a decisive shift in French religious policy in Algeria. In January 1833 he informed the Propaganda Fide that the governor general had asked him “as soon as possible to replace the ecclesiastics here…to put an end to the scandals and the lack of faith that there is among the Europeans” [emphasis added].35 Indeed, despite the designation of Algeria as an apostolic vicariate, changing political

33 ASC, SC – Barbary 14/1. Abbé Muller to Cardinal Pedicini, Prefect of the Propaganda Fide, 1 January 1833. The name of the church is given in Julien, *La Conquête*, 160.
34 ASC, SC – Barbary 14/154. Letter from Count Audras to the Queen of France in defense of Abbé Muller, 26 July 1833.
35 ASC, SC – Barbary 14/1. Abbé Muller to Cardinal Pedicini, Prefect of the Propaganda Fide, 1 January 1833.
policy and a total lack of interest among the Muslim population had led Algeria’s clergy
to reluctantly shift their focus to the European community. This shift also reflected the
growing fear among colonial authorities that a failure to extend proper moral guidance to
the European settler population would render Algeria a lawless land populated by
vagabonds and criminals.

Unsure over the future and ultimate purpose of the vicariate, the Vatican began to
consider that the patronage Muller enjoyed from the governor general necessitated that in
the short term Muller replace Collin as apostolic vicar. Rather than appease Father
Cayens, who also despised Collin, this move prompted his passionate protest. It seems
professional aspirations motivated Cayens at least as much as any pious ones. Cayens
coveted the position for himself and wrote to Rome that with Muller as vicar “all our
difficulties will remain the same.” He asked if he must remain “entirely under his
authority, [and if he] can do nothing without his orders?” Cayens alleged that Muller’s
youth, inexperience, superficial personality, and weak theology had left people “stunned
that you have confided such a responsibility to such a feeble character.” Unlike Muller,
however, Cayens lacked a powerful patron in the colony. As a result, the Propaganda
Fide had him recalled to Paris, from where he wrote numerous letters seeking permission
to return to the colony. After multiple rejections, Cayens sought a new adventure in
Brazil.

In Algeria, the constant disagreements between missionaries soon became an
object of embarrassment for both the colonial regime and the Vatican. On 3 June 1833, a

36 ASC, SC – Barbary 14/67. Abbé Cayens to Cardinal Pedicini, Prefect of the Propaganda Fide, 16 April
1833.
37 Ibid.
royal ordinance removed Collin from his position and abolished the apostolic vicariate.38 At this point tension arose between the French government and the Vatican over the future of the faith in Algeria. Misunderstanding the full extent of the royal ordinance, the Vatican simply replaced Collin with Father Muller as pro-apostolic vicar. The French government, however, had grown distrustful of the entire set up and saw little difference between Collin and Muller. Further, the minister of war had recalled the Duc de Rovigo to Paris upon hearing news that Rovigo had murdered several tribal leaders after luring them into supposedly peaceful negotiations and had undertaken the virtual extermination of the Al'Ouffia tribe earlier in 1833.39

Without a patron, Muller began to suffer persecution from less friendly authorities. The civil intendant, Genty de Bussy, complained to the minister of war of Muller’s constant visits to the military hospital and his harassing of sick and wounded soldiers. Further, the French ambassador to the Holy See expressed his fear that “acting as he has done, M. Muller has perhaps been guided by the hope of getting himself named in place of M. Collin; this conjecture seems at least justified by the little intrigues he has made against Collin.”40 By October 1833, the minister of war wrote to the governor general that Muller must cease all religious functions in the colony and that he could no longer receive any salary from the state. Indeed, rather than accept a new vicar, the ambassador informed the Holy See that France would review the question “at a more

39 Brower, A Desert Named Peace, 17. For more on Rovigo’s tenure in Algeria see Julien, La Conquête, 89-92.
opportune time when a system of administrative organization for Algiers will have been definitively adopted.”

In addition to creating a rift with the Holy See, this failure to define a coherent religious policy led to the beginning of a conflict between state-appointed secular clergy and members of missionary orders that would span the rest of the century. In late 1833, the colonial regime simply returned to the practice of employing military chaplains to serve the military and civilian communities in the new territory. At the same time, a number of missionaries sent by the Propaganda Fide continued to work independently in Algiers. Immediately upon his removal, Father Muller complained to the Propaganda Fide that the colonial regime had replaced him with an army chaplain, Father Spitz, whom Muller accused of orchestrating his downfall. Muller claimed that the government called Spitz “to create the new church of the French” but that “by his conduct he has revealed himself as the secret enemy of all ministers of the Catholic religion who have come to Algiers. He has always worked to divide them and unfortunately he has always succeeded.”

Finally, Muller found a base of support that would continue to sustain beleaguered missionaries throughout the nineteenth century: the colony’s devout and largely non-French settler population (examined in greater depth in Chapter Two). To be sure, the settlers who actively practiced their religion constituted a distinct minority of the overall population; they did, however, make their wishes known. In a petition to the king and queen of France, a group of settlers wrote, “for 18 months we had asked Rome for a

\[\text{Ibid.}\]

\[\text{ASC, SC – Barbary 14/214. Abbé Muller to Cardinal Pedicini, Prefect of Propaganda Fide, against Spitz, 7 September 1833.}\]
French priest who spoke the Italian and German languages.”⁴³ Father Muller had fulfilled these duties admirably and without him “the Italians and Germans…would be the most miserable colonists.” The petitioners further asked, “What will become of our women and our children without this priest?,” pleading with the royal couple “not to leave us unfortunate colonists without spiritual and temporal aid.”⁴⁴ In a nearly identical petition to the pope the settlers added only that the French government’s “blindness and weakness for the indigènes has sought to destroy our holy religion rather than protect it.”⁴⁵ In both petitions the writers divided their signatures into columns labeled French, Italian, Spanish, German, and Maltese, reflecting the diverse makeup of the early settler population and presaging the identity politics that would so divide the settler community later on in the nineteenth century.

These petitions also mark the emergence of a new voice into this cacophony of competing interests in the nascent colony: the settlers themselves. The decades of the 1830s and 40s saw the significance the colonial regime attached to this population transform from a virtual afterthought with little-to-no importance into the primary purpose of the entire colonial venture. I argue in subsequent chapters that the government applied the ideologies of both assimilation and association to this settler population more zealously than it applied them to the indigenous population.⁴⁶ The heterogeneous nature of this colon community would especially preoccupy policy makers in metropole and

---

⁴³ ASC, SC – Barbary 14/200. Algiers. “To their majesties. Petition of colonists in support of Muller,” undated [1834]. ⁴⁴ Ibid. ⁴⁵ ASC, SC – Barbary 14/344. “Petition to the Holy Father by the inhabitants of Algiers in favor of Muller, who was removed by the French government,” 6 February 1834. ⁴⁶ The French government at the time and scholars since have viewed these two competing ideologies as the primary theories that informed governance of the conquered indigenous populations in modern French imperialism. For the classic account see Raymond Betts, Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961).
colony alike. At this moment in the history of the colonization of Algeria, however, such petitions remained relatively rare, and the fact that they apparently did not receive a response from the governor general or metropolitan officials reveals the continued lack of importance attached to the settler population and the confusion that still reigned over the ultimate purpose of the colony. Only in 1834 did the initial phase of the conquest give way to a period of so-called “occupation restreinte,” or restricted occupation. Not until 22 July 1834 did a royal ordinance even give the colony an official name: *Les Possessions françaises du Nord de l'Afrique*. And it would take a new round of warfare that led the army deeper into the interior of Algeria, away from the coastal cities, for a period of full conquest and occupation to “add momentum to plans for a settler colony.” Only then would the colonial regime truly recognize the need to establish the Catholic Church on a definitive foothold in Algeria via the establishment of a bishopric and the employment of secular clergy to cater specifically to the settler community.

But the petitions by the colonists are revealing for a second reason. The accusation that the French government possessed “weakness for the *indigènes*” indicates the shift in religious policy that occurred shortly after the conquest in 1830. Despite the initial desires of some Catholic-minded generals, the colonial regime decided it was poor policy to meddle with the religious sensibilities of what it saw as a fanatically devout Muslim population. As the minister of war wrote to the governor general as early as 27 November 1832:

> While totally desiring that dissemination of the principles of Christianity accompany our efforts for the progress of civilization, I cannot warn you strongly enough against the dangers of propaganda that is spread and supported publicly by the government. It could only alienate us from the Muslim

---

populations, which are too attached already to their beliefs for us to bother with establishing a foreign religion in their midst.\footnote{Centre d’Archives nationales d’outre mer [Henceforth CAOM] F80/1627. Letter from the minister of war, the Duc de Dalmatie to the governor general, 27 November 1832. Part of this is also quoted in Julien, \textit{La Conquête}, 160.}

This about-face in the logic that informed religious policy also explains the ministry of war’s decision to abolish the apostolic vicariate and to replace Vatican-appointed missionaries with its own, more trusted, military chaplains. As we have seen, by its definition the apostolic vicariate aimed to convert non-Catholics. Once this policy began to conflict with the exigencies of colonial rule its abolition proved inevitable. From this point forward, the state would work to ensure that Catholic clergymen focused their efforts on the European settler community. To do so, the colonial regime sought to better control the number, character, and activity of Catholic clergymen (and female missionaries) in their burgeoning settler colony. To be sure, the regime would still undertake a number of failed efforts before it succeeded in establishing the Church on any firm foundation, and a number of competing power brokers still hoped to insert themselves into the political equation while colonial religious policy remained mired in confusion in the minds of metropolitan and colonial officials.

\textbf{A Lazarist Vicariate?}

In 1834, the French government again set about to establish the Catholic Church in Algeria on a definitive foundation. The apostolic vicariate had presented a host of difficulties. Not only did the appointment of apostolic vicar come from the Vatican rather than the French state, but this nomination also did not provide for any unity of action among the clergy as a whole. The incessant conflict between missionaries Collin, Muller, Cayens, and Spitz led the French government to consider alternative solutions. To
promote clerical unity, the government could either confide religious authority to secular clergy, as in France, or it could call on a single missionary congregation, as it would later do, for instance, in colonial Senegal.\textsuperscript{50} Secondly, it still had to decide if the new clergy should administer Algeria as an apostolic vicariate or as a bishopric akin to those in the metropole. The answer to this question would determine the church’s official purpose in Algeria and it hinged upon the wider relationship between Algeria and France. Whereas a bishopric constituted a tacit recognition of the permanence of the settler community, not to mention France’s very presence in Algeria, an apostolic vicariate indicated a more transient settler community in what remained above all a missionary land (\textit{pays de mission}). In a bishopric the clergy served the faithful; they did not convert infidels. Ultimately, these decisions would help determine the larger juridical future of Algeria as a land of European settlement fully assimilated with the metropole or as an official colony of exploitation in which the military continued to rule over a conquered North African population, if it ruled at all.\textsuperscript{51}

At this point, a consensus remained illusory among church and government officials alike. Writing to the Propaganda Fide in August 1833, one Father Sabatier observed:

\begin{quote}
Obviously [the mission in Algiers] differs from ordinary missions since there exists already in this city a Christian and Catholic population coming from the French garrison and from the numerous colonies belonging to different nations and from commercial speculators who are called here.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{50} For the Saint Sulpiciens in Senegal, see Foster, \textit{Faith in Empire}.
\textsuperscript{51} Throughout the 1830s French policy in Algeria remained confused. Julien has called the period between 1834 and 1840 the time of “anarchic colonization.” See Julien, \textit{La Conquête}, 106.
\textsuperscript{52} SC – Barbary 14/73. Father Sabatier gives observations to Cardinal Pedicini, Prefect of Propaganda Fide, on the mission in Algiers, 21 August 1833.
This large “Christian” population led Sabatier to reluctantly recommend that the Propaganda Fide relinquish the spiritual needs of Algiers to French secular clergy under the authority of a bishop. The French government showed itself no less uncertain in this regard. Despite the obvious benefits to France of a bishopric, the minister of war expressed his concern in September 1833 that “we are not yet established enough in Algiers to send a bishop there.”\(^{53}\) He recommended maintaining the apostolic vicariate but staffing it with secular clergy the French government felt it could better control, rather than with more unpredictable members of missionary congregations. The foreign affairs ministry, however, feared that an apostolic vicar chosen from among the secular clergy “would be animated by a spirit of personal ambition and self-interest, inclined maybe only to see his mission as a temporary task or as a means of advancement.” He further observed that priests who willfully left their dioceses in favor of a far off mission “are typically not the most respectable people.”\(^{54}\)

A final option consisted of constituting Algeria as an apostolic vicariate but staffing it with members of a single missionary congregation that had its motherhouse in France and employed priests trained exclusively in French seminaries. To be sure, this option too presented difficulties. Coming so soon on the heels of the French Revolution and the Bourbon Restoration all congregations, even French ones, remained suspect in the eyes of many government officials and much of the larger public. Revolutionaries had shuttered most congregations in the 1790s, and well into the nineteenth century many feared that *congrégationistes* harbored ultramontane sentiments and provided places of

\(^{53}\) SC – Barbary 14/139. Letter from Martin da Noirliu to Cardinal Pedicini, Prefect of Propaganda Fide, informing him of his conversation with the minister of war, 20 September 1833.

\(^{54}\) CM Lazarists, 108a Algiers. From the Archives of Foreign Affairs. Copy of a note on the arrangement made with the Holy See for the organization of the Catholic religion in Algiers, 31 December 1835.
refuge for the dreaded Jesuits, who had been expelled from France in 1764, reestablished in 1814, and then partially expelled again in 1828 (only to be again reinstated in 1850 and expelled again in 1880).\textsuperscript{55} As the foreign affairs ministry noted in 1835, “it would not be without problems to place this administration in the hands of a congregation, when the congregations of men have been generally suppressed in France.”\textsuperscript{56} In the waning months of Charles X’s reign, the liberal opposition reanimated this sentiment by depicting the king as led by “priestly” and “Jesuitical” ministers and the new King Louis-Philippe doubtlessly hoped to avoid similar accusations himself.\textsuperscript{57}

The various French ministries arrived at a potential solution in the form of the Lazarists. In 1835, the minister of war announced a plan to reconstitute Algeria as an apostolic vicariate and to confide all clerical positions to Lazarist priests. The Lazarists possessed many attributes that rendered them particularly suitable to the mission in Algeria. Unlike nearly all other French Catholic congregations, the Lazarists had survived the Revolution intact. They won official authorization by a Napoleonic decree of 7 Prairial XII (27 May 1804) and again by royal ordinance of 3 February 1816. They also had a long history of loyalty to the French state. As the minister of foreign affairs remarked, “the Lazarists have not shown in their conduct or opinions the spirit of ultramontanism that the Jesuits have shown.”\textsuperscript{58} Despite the government’s decision to maintain an apostolic vicariate, it still believed the Lazarists would place loyalty to

\textsuperscript{55} A Royal Ordinance of 16 June 1828 forbade the Jesuits from their primary purpose of working in any educational establishments. The Catholic inspired and conservative Falloux Laws of 1850 allowed Jesuits to resume their teaching functions in France. Ralph Gibson, \textit{A Social History of French Catholicism, 1789-1914} (New York: Routledge Kegan & Paul, 1989), 104.
\textsuperscript{56} CM Lazarists, 108a Algiers. From the Archives of Foreign Affairs. Copy of a note on the arrangement made with the Holy See for the organization of the Catholic religion in Algiers, 31 December 1835.
\textsuperscript{57} Sessions, \textit{By Sword and By Plow}, 47. Though the argument that these accusations influenced the policy of Louis Philippe is my own.
\textsuperscript{58} CM Lazarists, 108a Algiers. Letter from the Duc de Broglie to the office of foreign affairs, 5 December 1833.
France over loyalty to the pope. Further, the Lazarists’ history of working in the Levant rendered them “especially suitable…due to their knowledge of the morals and the languages of Turks and Arabs.”\(^{59}\) Again, the very fact that the ministry desired that priests possess a knowledge of these languages reveals its continued uncertainty over exactly which community constituted the ultimate object of religious aid and the purpose of the Catholic religion in general. For despite approving of their knowledge of native languages, the minister of war wrote in the same letter that the Lazarists, “by their irreproachable morality, their enlightened tolerance, their submission to established authorities, and their very old relationship with the French government, give us guarantees that it would be difficult to find with other congregations.”\(^{60}\) Not least of these guarantees would be their agreement not to undertake outright and overt proselytism towards unwieldy and potentially rebellious Muslims.

The Lazarists’ very history of loyalty to the French government, however, also threatened to create difficulties with the Vatican. Informed of this plan by the minister of war, the French ambassador to the Holy See worried that “the Congregation of the Propaganda [Fide] does not always seem satisfied in its relations with the Lazarists.”\(^{61}\) As it happened, the chaotic state of the faith in Algeria worked in favor of the Lazarists and encouraged the Vatican to consider this proposition. Pope Gregory XVI expressed particular worries over the fact that many priests in Algeria had begun to perform sacraments, notably marriages, without officially recognized authority as curés, thus rendering these marriages null and void in the eyes of the church and establishing any

---

\(^{59}\) CM Lazarists, 108a Algiers. Copy of a letter from minister of war to the Marshall Clauzel, 16 October 1835.

\(^{60}\) Ibid.

\(^{61}\) SC – Barbary 14/359. Guy Latour Maubourg, French ambassador to Rome, asks the Cardinal Pedicini for a decision on the Lazarists, 6 March 1834.
resulting children as conceived out of wedlock. According to the minister of foreign affairs, “the Holy Father attaches the highest importance to end this affair as soon as possible [so that] spiritual aid be set up in a permanent and suitable manner for the numerous Catholics who live or temporarily reside in Algiers and its surroundings.”\(^6\)

On 3 July 1835, the French ambassador to the Holy See wrote that the two states had reached a tentative agreement to send the Lazarists to Algiers and to appoint a Lazarist superior as apostolic vicar.\(^6\)

This tentative agreement, however, encountered unexpected difficulties when the Lazarists set about drafting a constitution for their new establishment in Algiers. First, the Propaganda Fide took offense at stipulations that allowed the French government to determine the number of missionaries to work in the colony at any given time and to retain ultimate authority over the appointment and removal of these missionaries in consultation with the Lazarist apostolic vicar alone. Essentially the Vatican worried that this constitution removed it from the political equation entirely. In response the Lazarist superior, Father Etienne, protested to the Vatican that in giving this authority to the government he wanted above all “to fix the legal foundation of this establishment so that the missionaries can enjoy all necessary independence.”\(^6\)

Rather than allotting more authority to the government, Etienne saw the constitution as ensuring that the government could not remove missionaries without first consulting with the apostolic vicar.

Moreover, by agreeing with the government on the number of missionaries to work in the

\(^6\) SC – Barbary 14/494. Memorandum inviting Lazarists to Algiers. From minister of foreign affairs to Vice Admiral Count de Rigny, 18 October 1834.


\(^6\) SC – Barbary 14/603. Lazarist Superior General Father Etienne to Cardinal Pedicini, Prefect of the Propaganda Fide [no date, 1835].
colony, Etienne claimed that he desired only to ensure that each missionary would receive a state salary. He concluded:

We have not wished at all to restrain the authority of the Holy Congregation …[but] it is easy to understand that a religious establishment founded in a country ruled by the French government, one founded, organized, and funded by that government, can never be entirely independent of its authority. And thus it is indispensable to set the rules of this dependency, in order to as much as possible avoid all collisions and difficulties.

The Holy See had hoped that by retaining an apostolic vicariate and confiding it to a missionary congregation it could increase its authority over the clergy of Algeria. This assumption, however, proved unfounded as the French colonial government sought to solidify its own religious authority in the colony.

The Propaganda Fide proved especially recalcitrant over article four of the proposed constitution, which stipulated that it would only have the right to *nominate* its chosen Lazarist as apostolic vicar, but that the ultimate *approval* would rest with the king. Such a regulation went against established protocol for establishing apostolic vicariates and reversed the process by which Father Collin had ascended to the position of apostolic vicar in 1830. To add further insult article four also specified that the superior general of the Lazarists could change the apostolic vicar after consulting with the king alone. As a confidential note in the foreign affairs office in Paris stated on 31 December 1835, “the pope would never consent to this [article], as he jealously guards the rights of the Holy See. He is so inflexible in his pretensions and moans even when he

---

65 The annual salary per Lazarist missionary at the time was set at 1,500 francs, provided by the French government.
66 SC – Barbary 14/603. Lazarist Superior General Father Etienne to Cardinal Pedicini, Prefect of the Propaganda Fide [no date, 1835].
is forced to recognize the right of the king over the nomination of bishops.” This disagreement over who possessed the authority to appoint the apostolic vicar ultimately proved fatal for the entire enterprise. With the Vatican and the ministry of foreign affairs unable to reach an agreement, the religious situation in Algeria returned to the chaotic status quo ante.

A Diocese of Algiers for a Depraved Settler Community

Almost immediately following the breakdown in negotiations between the Holy See and the French government, the same problems resurfaced as missionaries competed with each other to carve out their own realms of authority in a territory that still lacked any real religious order or any recognized spiritual leader. In 1836, the Vatican unilaterally appointed the Jesuit Father Montera as apostolic prefect, though his authority remained unrecognized by the French government, which nonetheless allowed him to stay in the colony in an unofficial capacity. Montera immediately complained to the Propaganda Fide that the war ministry had granted ecclesiastical authority to the old military chaplain, Father Spitz, who continued to “exercise parish sacraments…outside of his authority” and inspired “little confidence in the hearts of the faithful.” Montera also noted that another rogue priest without any recognition from either the French government or the Vatican had taken it upon himself to come to work in Algiers after the bishop of Nancy had expelled him from his diocese. Montera observed that this priest’s conduct “correlated with his shameful past” and complained that the administrative chaos

---

67 CM Lazarists, 108a Algiers. Copy of a note from the ministry of foreign affairs on the arrangement made with the Holy See for the organization of the Catholic religion in Algiers, 31 December 1835.
had led to “the degradation in which our religion has for a long time wallowed in this country.”  

Like other missionary priests examined here, Montera sought to further his temporal as much as his spiritual authority, or at least saw them as complementary and mutually reinforcing. He complained to the Propaganda Fide:

Being the only ecclesiastic equipped with legitimate powers, it is also only I who can administer the sacraments and fill all the other ecclesiastical functions; and yet I have had to see these functions, these sacraments of marriage and sometimes even confession, filled by two ecclesiastics without the authority required to do so, without an approved mission, while I have no way of suppressing this state of disorder.

When Montera brought this complaint to French officials, they informed him that he could continue to administer sacraments but that he should not expect a salary from the state nor should he impede the work of other ecclesiastics recognized by the state.

At the same time, however, the steady stream of colonists that continued to pour into Algiers and the other large cities of the colony began to render more urgent a definitive religious ruling in the colony. The European population of Algeria grew from 3,228 in 1831 to 11,251 in 1835 and would reach nearly 30,000 by 1840. As Jennifer Sessions has noted, the oft-commented-upon immorality of this population began to challenge “the racialized assumptions on which the settler colonial order was based.”

Sex, alcohol, and slovenliness constituted the daily lives of many colonists. Despite efforts by French authorities to tightly control the number of liquor distributors in the colony, drinking establishments quickly emerged as the primary business in the areas of

---

68 SC – Barbary 15/132. Excerpt from a letter by Father Montera, from Central Council of the Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi to Cardinal Pedicini, Prefect of the Propaganda Fide, 19 August 1836.
69 Ibid.
70 Sessions, By Sword and By Plow, 217.
71 Sessions, By Sword and By Plow, 239.
European settlement. In the words of historian John Ruedy, “a typical European who came to Algeria expecting to become a farmer might well end up opening a bar to serve wine and absinthe to French soldiers.” Further, due to the disproportionate numerical superiority of men over women, prostitution appeared ubiquitous in the major cities. Finally, whereas metropolitan officials did their utmost to create a colony of small agricultural proprietors, colonial officials constantly complained that the majority of Europeans arrived only as transient and idle land speculators. In sum, the colonial regime began to fear that European settlers deprived of religious guidance would assume the traits of hyper-sexuality, laziness, and debauchery that it associated with the defeated North African population. Although the morality of the colonists had probably changed little between 1830 and the latter part of the decade, the colonial regime’s newfound preoccupation with this morality reflected the growing importance that it attached to the settler population for the future and potential permanence of colonial rule.

Missionaries themselves did not fail to connect this immoral and ignorant society to a lack of proper religious guidance and to insert themselves as potential disseminators of civilization. Writing in 1836, one Jesuit informed his superior in Rome that “the corruption of moeurs here has reached its limit…libertinage and money, these are the two divinities that are the passions of the inhabitants of the French possessions of North Africa.” Another Jesuit wrote that “religious observance on Sundays [and] on holy days

---

74 Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu [Jesuit archive, henceforth ARSI], Fonds Algérie 1001. Anonymous letter from Jesuit priest to the provincial superior in Rome [no date, 1836].
is virtually unknown” in Algeria, while another missionary complained, “I have seen people who were previously pious but who today no longer practice; I have seen others here who were previously indifferent but now actively disrespect the faith.”

It is likely that, separated from the watchful eyes of their neighbors and families, settlers no longer felt bound by the traditional moral codes and religious practices that governed rural life in the metropole; and secular and religious leaders felt this moral depravity all the more acutely as it threatened to undermine the emerging ideology of the civilizing mission that justified imperial rule in the first place.

Rather than spread civilization to North Africans, then, many missionaries feared that the lives of European settlers began to mirror the “savage” habits of their conquered subjects. In 1841, the representative of the Lyon-based Propagation de la Foi in Algiers expressed the conception that Europeans and North Africans differed little in their levels of civilization. His first impressions of the colony are worth quoting at length:

What a city this city of Algiers!…To say nothing of the 1,500 prostitutes that line the streets…Around 8.45 in the morning on the banks of the sea a negress, accompanied by Jewish and Moorish women, after lighting many candles and burning incense, slit the throat of a chicken and drank its blood. While emitting piercing cries each of the women received from the hand of this priestess a cup from this sacred fountain in order to be delivered from the malevolent spirit that torments them... I have said nothing of all the ridiculous and sacrilegious superstitions of the notorious Europeans to the shame of our holy religion.

In another letter this priest recounted the native belief – perhaps in a misunderstanding of the Catholic belief in transubstantiation – that the French practiced cannibalism and that French surgeons “cut cadavers into pieces in order to cook them and from this broth they

---

75 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1001. Anonymous letter from Jesuit priest to the provincial superior in Rome, [no date, 1836].
76 SC – Barbary 16/66. Abbé Bourgade to Cardinal Fransoni, prefect of the Propaganda Fide, about his mission in Algeria, 17 March 1842.
77 Archives of the Propagation de la Foi, Fonds de Lyon G6. Letter from Father Daidou to the director of the Propagation de la Foi, 29 December 1841.
get the remedies to heal the sick.” The priest immediately added, “fanaticism here has reached its limits, our so-called *colons* are not very enlightened themselves.” In 1843, another missionary expressed his fear that unruly settlers could completely reverse the hierarchical dichotomy between colonizer and colonized, as he remarked that “the majority [of *indigènes*] have habits of sobriety which would make our Europeans blush.” All of these missionaries understood the government’s growing desire to differentiate the European from the indigenous population and they saw the issues of immorality and ignorance as ones they could capitalize on in order to secure their own positions of professional and spiritual authority in Algeria.

Although the above reports date from the early 1840s, they doubtless reflect the overwhelming sentiment of the government in 1838, when it decided to constitute Algeria as an official bishopric identical to those existing in the metropole. The undeveloped state of Catholicism that resulted from the impasse with the Vatican combined with the flagrant immorality of the ever-growing settler community had reached the point that it threatened the very legitimacy of colonial rule itself. Under the terms of the Concordat of 1801, France, rather than the Vatican, had the authority to nominate and salary its bishops, who in turn appointed secular clergy to serve the different parishes in their diocese. Since 1801, the French government had used the Concordat to ensure that it could appoint bishops with Gallican, rather than ultramontane, sympathies. At the same time, confusion continued to reign over whether the government

78 Archives of the Oeuvre de la Promotion de la Foi, Fonds de Lyon G6. Letter from Father Daidou to the director of the Promotion de la Foi 14, December 1843.
79 Archives of the Promotion de la Foi, Fonds Lyon G6. Letter from Father François Regis, superior of La Trappe d’Afrique, Notre Dame de Staouéli, to the procurer of the Promotion de la Foi, 13 April 1845.
could constitute Algeria as a French bishopric without legally assimilating Algeria to France on a wider political and juridical basis. As the minister of foreign affairs wrote:

As long as our possessions in Africa are not consolidated as French departments and placed under the laws of the metropole in the same situation as Corsica, the Holy See will never admit that these areas should fall under the regulations of the Concordat.\textsuperscript{81}

The minister feared that only by incorporating Algeria into France as a department of the metropole could the government then force the Vatican to recognize the conditions of the Concordat that held in France. This legal assimilation would allow the government to appoint its own bishop to oversee the spiritual development of the new territory.

Although calls for the full legal assimilation of Algeria began in the 1830s and increased throughout the 1840s, these calls emanated from a vocal minority, primarily consisting of wealthy settlers who sought to protect their business interests in Algeria by winning legal representation in the French legislature.\textsuperscript{82} This outcome would eventually come to pass, though not until the Revolution of 1848 toppled the July Monarchy and replaced it with the Second French Republic.\textsuperscript{83} In the uncertain years of the 1830s, however, the call for the full assimilation of Algeria made little headway. As a result, King Louis Philippe opted to ignore the Vatican entirely and unilaterally constitute Algeria as a bishopric parallel to those existing in France despite the absence of the full juridical and political assimilation of the colony. It appears that the Vatican ultimately acceded to this move simply to bring some religious order to the colony’s growing European population.

\footnote{CM Lazarists, 108a Algiers. Copy of a note from the ministry of foreign affairs on the arrangement made with the Holy See for the organization of the Catholic religion in Algiers, 31 December 1835.}

\footnote{For colonists’ calls for assimilation see Jean-Pierre Peyroulou et al., “1830-1880: la conquête coloniale et la résistance des Algériens,” in Histoire de l’Algérie à la Période Coloniale, 33.}

\footnote{See Claude Collot, Les institutions de l’Algérie durant la période coloniale (Paris: CNRS, 1987).}
On 10 February 1838, the French ambassador to the Holy See wrote to the prefect of the Propaganda Fide, now Cardinal Lambruschini, that the king had “deemed it suitable to replace [this provisional state] with a definitive organization analogous to that which exists in France,” adding that “the intentions of the government are to institute a bishop whose seat is in Algiers, and it no longer requires the consent of the Holy See to accomplish this project.”

On 25 August 1838, a royal ordinance declared that the French possessions of North Africa would form a diocese with an episcopal seat in Algiers. This same ordinance designated Antoine Louis-Adolphe Dupuch (in office 1838 to 1845), a priest of the diocese of Bordeaux, as the new bishop, while a papal bull of September 1838 recognized this bishop by canon law. On 9 November, Dupuch was sworn in at the Tuileries before King Louis-Philippe. He arrived in Algiers on 6 January 1839 and took residence at the old palace of Azizo-Bey, with an annual salary of 12,000 francs. The minister of war also granted him 50,000 francs for fees of installing and paying his clergy, which included one curé, two vicars, two chaplains, and six incumbents.

Only months previously, a separate royal ordinance had changed the official name of the colony from “Les Possessions françaises dans le Nord de l’Afrique” to the more concise term “Algérie.”

Bishop Dupuch and the Origins of the Jesuit Mission, 1838-1845

The story of the relatively short tenure of Bishop Dupuch – his two successors held their positions from 1846-66 and 1866-92, respectively – has been partially

---

84 ASC, SC – Barbary 15/322. Letter from the French ambassador to Rome to the Cardinal Lambruschini, prefect of the Propaganda Fide, 10 February 1838.
85 CM Lazarists, 106b/Algérie. Anonymous author, “Chronique du Vieil d’Alger,” published in either L’Echo d’Alger or La Dépêche Algérienne, 5 January 1929 [newspaper clipping found in Lazarist archives].
86 Ruedy, Modern Algeria, 54.
recounted by historian Sarah Curtis. Curtis described the power struggle that erupted in the period from 1838 to 1840 between the bishop and the strong-willed Emilie de Vialar, superior of the Sisters of St-Joseph de l’Apparition. This struggle ultimately resulted in the expulsion of Vialar and her congregation, which took refuge in neighboring Tunisia under the patronage of its leader, Ahmed Bey. Dupuch replaced the Sisters of St Joseph with the Filles de la Charité, who he hoped would prove more docile and amenable to his authority. As this chapter has already shown and as subsequent chapters will explore in greater detail, rather than serving as an aberration this struggle continued previous practices of Catholic clerics who used their positions of authority in Algiers to achieve levels of power unavailable to them in the metropole. Secondly, it also set a precedent that successive bishops would build upon in an attempt to solidify their authority over secular clergy and missionary societies alike. To be sure, the fact that Dupuch did not consolidate his authority as would his successors resulted primarily from his own incompetence rather than a lack of ambition, although it appears that despite his struggles with Vialar he was seen as generally pious. As Curtis recounts Dupuch was forced to resign in 1845 because of his catastrophic mismanagement of resources and the state of financial ruin that he brought to the newly created diocese of Algiers.

It is important to note that it was during the tenure of Dupuch that secular clergy began to trickle into the colony. Because this still small number of state-salaried clerics could not alone meet the needs of the growing settler population, it was also during this time that most of the missionary congregations that would continue to populate Algeria throughout the nineteenth century arrived in the colony. These religious orders included

the female congregations the Filles de la Charité, the Soeurs de la Doctrine Chrétienne, the Soeurs du Bon-Pasteur, and the Soeurs du Sacré Cœur as well as the male congregations of Lazarists, Jesuits, Trappistes, and an offshoot of Jesuits who founded the Society of St. Regis for the Rehabilitation of Marriages. The arrival of the Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes in 1853 completed the list of the numerous congregations that plied their trade in Algeria during the nineteenth century (the Salésiens de Don Bosco arrived in 1891 and will be discussed in the last chapter). In the following chapter, I will examine the conflicting fortunes of each of these congregations in greater detail.

The remainder of this chapter will look in depth at the politics behind the relationships between Bishop Dupuch, the Jesuits, Governor General Thomas-Robert Bugeaud (in office 1840-47), and the war ministry in Paris. Despite legal restrictions in France and in Algeria, missionaries could best win support through securing the patronage of either the bishop of Algiers or the governor general of the colony. Far away from politicians in Paris, private influence and political expedience trumped metropolitan ideologies and legislation. The Jesuits took advantage of this situation to oversee a number of educational establishments in Algeria despite, as we have seen, the royal ordinance of 18 June 1828 having prohibited them from doing just this. They owed their success to Bishop Dupuch, who unlike his successors saw the Jesuits as useful allies, and Governor General Bugeaud, who preferred the Jesuits for their moralizing influence on what he saw as the mass of debauched settlers. Ultimately, this section contributes to the larger argument that the change in fortune of missionaries in Algeria throughout the nineteenth century did not correlate with the major political upheavals of the metropole –

the Revolution of 1848 for example – but rather to the successive changes of bishops and military patrons in the territory.

After assuming power in 1838 Dupuch began to outline plans to establish a junior and senior seminary in Algiers to train the future clergy of Algeria.89 A royal ordinance of 6 August 1842 created the junior seminary, which provided secondary education to capable students regardless of their plans for a future vocation. After a failed attempt to use secular clergy, Dupuch confided the seminary to the Jesuits, giving them an institutional foothold in the colony. In 1844 the Jesuits then paid 120,000 francs to purchase 86 hectares of land on which stood an abandoned cavalry garrison in the village of Ben Aknoun, about eight kilometers from Algiers. They spent a further 100,000 francs on this property making repairs and constructing additional facilities to turn the garrison into an orphanage. Much of the funding for this enterprise came from the Propagation de la Foi, but Bugeaud himself provided the necessary manpower to help with the repairs and to establish a working farm on the property.90 As administrators of the orphanage, the Jesuits received a subvention directly from the governor general for overseeing “an institution of public utility.”91 As official teachers of the junior seminary, the Jesuits received their salaries from Bishop Dupuch, whose own funds came from the minister of

---

89 Petit, or junior, seminaries served as secondary schools run by clergymen that taught qualified children regardless of their plans to pursue a vocation in the priesthood. After completing coursework students had to express a desire to join a grand seminary in order to begin the official path towards a priestly vocation. Gibson, A Social History of French Catholicism, 104. In 1846, Bugeaud briefly voiced support for granting plots of land to colon proprietors in order to help cultivate Algerian soil, writing in La Revue des Deux Mondes that it at least provided a preferable alternative to the socialist dream of establishing collective farms in the territory. See Benjamin McRae Amoss, “The Revolution of 1848 and Algeria,” French Review 75/4 (2002), 749-751.

90 Archives of the Propagation de la Foi, Fonds de Paris G8. Excerpt from a letter from a Jesuit of Algiers to the procurer of the Propagation at Lyon, 24 July 1844.

91 The colonial regime paid the Jesuits 15 francs per month per child for their work at the orphanage. In 1844 the orphanage housed 99 children. Archives Nationales F/19/6223. Letter from the secretary of the council of the war ministry to the minister of war, 25 March 1845.
war on the express recommendation of the governor general. Despite the flagrant illegality of both these establishments, one Jesuit father wrote to the Propagation de la Foi in 1844 that “the civil and religious authorities have been so content with the amelioration introduced by Father Brumauld [the Jesuit superior in Algeria] that they have become entirely devoted to him.” In both instances, then, the Jesuits relied on the good will of private patrons rather than formal legal protection for moral and financial support.

This protection did not fail to raise the suspicions of metropolitan officials. In March 1845 the secretary of the minister of war wrote to his superior to inform him that “the Jesuits, as a congregation not legally authorized to teach in France, have very much discovered that in [Algeria] their prohibition has not been possible.” The secretary blamed the “impudence” of the bishop, who had shown “an unfortunate lack of foresight” in confiding the orphanage to this congregation. Although the Jesuits claimed to train children as artisans and tradesmen, “to this is always joined a certain degree of primary education…[which cannot] be left to religious congregations that are not legally established in France.” Although the secretary admitted that the orphanage served a valuable purpose for the colony he warned:

Everywhere the [Jesuits] appear becomes a permanent foyer of intrigue, as they always keep hidden agendas under a façade of good works… It is too easy to recognize that behind a useful establishment at the head of which one finds a Jesuit, is hidden a question of legality and social order, which one day or another will become the most formidable political question.

---

92 Archives of the Propagation de la Foi, Fonds de Paris G8. Letter from L. Bigot to the central council of the Propagation de la foi in Lyon, 3 February 1844.
93 AN F/19/6223. Letter from the secretary of the council of the war ministry to the minister of war, 25 March 1845.
94 Ibid.
Even before Algeria’s legal assimilation to France in 1848 then, the secretary viewed the political and legal standing of Algeria as analogous to that of France. In a period of near constant workers’ strikes, revolutionary upheavals, and anticlerical agitation, the secretary worried that ultramontane Jesuits posed a threat to the stability of the colonial regime itself.\(^{95}\)

Ambitious settlers also capitalized on metropolitan fears in an effort to displace Jesuits who occupied positions of power that they coveted as their own. In 1844 a local lay teacher published accusations against the Jesuits in the Parisian broadsheet *Le Journal des Débats* in an effort to displace them from a new secondary school they had just opened in the Algerian town of Oran. Drawing on longstanding beliefs about Jesuits in France, he alleged that these missionaries had hatched a “Carlist and Legitimist conspiracy” to overthrow the colonial government.\(^{96}\) The governor general, however, immediately leapt to the defense of the Jesuits. In a confidential letter to the minister of war, Bugeaud wrote that “political parties being powerless in Algeria, only a very tiny number of insurrectionists could dream of conspiring against the state.” The European community comprised a minority of the population of Algeria while “the Arabs constitute the principal force of the country and…seeing as though they will not make themselves either Jesuits, Carlists, or Republicans…they would take the opportunity of a Jesuit conspiracy to quickly assert revenge on France.”\(^{97}\) Unlike many metropolitan officials,

\(^{95}\) For the political turmoil of the July Monarchy, especially that caused by organized labor, see William Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

\(^{96}\) This accusation refers to the movement to restore the Bourbon monarchy to the throne in Spain and France, respectively.

Bugeaud saw the political problems confronting Algeria as distinct from those in France and he used this distinction to refrain from applying metropolitan laws to the colony.

Rather than fearing a Jesuit plot, Bugeaud saw the Jesuits as serving a useful purpose by providing a moral upbringing to the colony’s ever-growing community of orphans. He wrote, “I see no danger in leaving a very small number of Jesuits to exercise a charity all the more useful to a colony where we are not able to do it ourselves.” He praised the Jesuits for imparting the principles of religion, morality, and utility to children who “according to all appearances have been abandoned in the streets to a life of crime, [but] now become artisans useful to the colony.” Bugeaud admitted himself that the government had neither the resources nor the willpower to undertake such a useful work. He asked the minister of war if “we must destroy an establishment so important for the future of the colony because some jealous imbeciles take umbrage at it?” For Bugeaud, Algeria possessed no political similarities to France, as metropolitan political alliances counted for little in the colony and the primary threat to the colonial regime came from the rebellious indigenous community.

Further, Bugeaud supported the Jesuits and indeed other religious congregations due to their supposed similarities to the military. In a conversation with Father François Régis, the superior of a house of Trappiste monks in the nearby town of Staouëli, Bugeaud stated:

My opinion is that colonization can only succeed by militarily organized populations. And nothing approaches more a military organization than a religious organization. The monk and the soldier have great relationships with each other; they are submitted to severe discipline, accustomed to deprivations

---

99 Ibid.
and to obey passively, they both work for the community and they are directed by a single will (une seule volonté).  

This opinion matched Bugeaud’s larger outlook, as he saw the influx of civilians and especially civilian rule as a potential detriment to French control over Algeria.  

We should note that it was Bugeaud in his capacity as governor general and commander of the Armée d’Afrique who orchestrated the most brutal phase of repression in the campaign against Abd al-Qadir and other rebel groups between 1840 and 1847.  

As Benjamin Brower has written, “Bugeaud is correctly understood as one of the most dangerous men ever to have set foot in Algeria.”  

Bugeaud’s brutality did not fail to incite criticism from government officials in both France and Algeria, and Bugeaud interpreted the traditional alliance between the Catholic Church and the army as a reason to offer support to religious congregations that he saw as obedient to his will.  

There is in fact no archival evidence that missionaries ever criticized Bugeaud’s “war of extermination” against the tribes. Such violence only received any mention whatsoever when missionaries noted in passing that the most recent razzia (or “raid” against the tribes) had produced a number of new orphans for them to house and had thus increased their public utility.  

This lack of empathy is evident in a letter written by a

---

100 Archives of the Propagation de la Foi, Fonds Lyon G6. Letter from Father François Regis, superior of La Trappe d’Afrique, Notre Dame de Staouëli, to the procurer of the Propagation de la Foi, 13 April 1845.  
101 For Bugeaud’s views on military colonization see Brower, A Desert Named Peace, 65.  
103 Brower, A Desert Named Peace, 25.  
104 For Bugeaud’s distrust of civilians and civil authorities see Sullivan, Thomas-Robert Bugeaud, 117-122.  
For the continued alliance between Catholic Church and the army in France, especially during the Dreyfus Affair, see Martin Johnson, The Dreyfus Affair: Honor and Politics in the Belle Epoque (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999).  
105 Although missionaries were largely prohibited from working with Muslims, they were periodically allowed to raise orphan children who had lost, at times, only one parent. Even this allowance, however, would almost always lead to vocal protests and the removal of the indigenous orphans. For the genesis and
representative of the Propagation de la Foi in Algiers noting that an orphanage run by the Dames of Charity (a secular organization in the colony staffed largely by nuns) was composed of “European children whose parents have been decimated by misery and the deadly climate of Africa and other children in a greater number [who] have been carried off from Arabs following razzias.”¹⁰⁶ In sum, then, in this early phase of colonization the military and religious congregations served as institutions of mutual support, and missionaries thus received the invaluable patronage of military commanders like Bugeaud.

**Conclusion**

By the mid 1840s an alliance had developed in the colony between the military and religious congregations. At this time in the shifting politics of colonial rule, private patronage trumped legal rulings, a development that allowed the Jesuits to thrive in Algeria. With this support, other missionary congregations and secular clergy began to expand throughout the colony. The establishment of a bishopric ensured the colonial regime a measure of independence from the Vatican, which by 1840 had lost the struggle for authority over the new church in Algeria. It also, for a time, rendered the military authorities more trustful of the Catholic clergy. As the parish priest of the newly-settled town of Tlemcen wrote on 27 August 1845, “on the first Sunday of July the Catholic religion was established in this town in presence of all the military authorities, who are so

---

¹⁰⁶ Archives of the Propagation de la Foi, Fonds Lyon G6. “Rundown on the establishments of Algiers.” Letter from Monsieur Montgolfier to the procurer of the Propagation de la Foi [no date, 1845]. To be sure, most of these North African orphans stayed in the orphanages for only a very short time, before either running away or, more often, being reclaimed by surviving extended family members.
supportive of our religion.” Whereas in 1830 the military leadership had seen missionaries as a means of spreading civilization to conquered Muslims, by the 1840s they now supported the clergy as long as they directed their supposed civilizing mission toward the growing European population, rather than the indigenous one (barring, in rare cases, indigenous orphans).

The next chapter will show how, by the end of the 1840s, widespread support for missionaries among highly placed officials began to wane. Although support by military authorities continued more or less unabated, the settler population only grew in numbers and confidence, and proponents of civilian rule began to equate both the military and missionaries with brutality and fanaticism – two traits incidentally also linked with the conquered North African population. At the same time, the ever-growing number of missionaries and secular clergy began to compete with each other to secure a dwindling supply of patrons. The next bishop of Algiers would go far beyond Bishop Dupuch in his efforts to consolidate his rule over the growing number of missionaries in the colony. In doing so, he gave financial and moral support to his own parish clergy at the expense of more independent missionaries. Missionaries began to compete with each other to secure the patronage of military and ecclesiastical authorities. As part of this competition, they often exhibited scandalous behavior that undermined their very purpose of moralizing the European population. To be sure, missionaries still saw Algeria as a land of opportunity and, in the wake of the Revolution of 1848, they increasingly saw it as a land in which to construct an alternative religious modernity that rejected the secular modernity emerging

107 Archives of the Propagation de la Foi, Fonds Lyon G6. Letter from the curé of Tlemcen to the procurer of the Propagation, 27 August 1845.
in the metropole. To do so, they sought to cultivate the alliances of the minority of the settler population that retained their religious beliefs: the so-called foreigners.
Chapter Two

1846-1866: A “Golden Age” for Catholic Missionaries in Algeria?

“*We must keep Father Girard in Algiers. He is the pivot around which our entire work turns. His influence is such around town that the priests and the clergy fear him and would never engage in a struggle with him.*”¹
-Letter from Lazarist Father Damprun to his provincial superior in Paris, 28 June 1848.

“One can never make a society that does not even have a half-century of existence resemble effectively one whose origin stretches back centuries. If a mission consists of moving from ordinary conditions of Christian society into extraordinary conditions based on dates rather than distance, then we are certainly in a missionary land. The proof is in the repugnance of a great number of our Jesuits to even come to this country. Many ask if they have been sent here by punishment.”²
-Letter from Jesuit Father Reynaud to his provincial superior in Lyon, 18 August 1858.

The previous chapter illustrated how the colonial government came to rely on missionaries to provide a religious education to Algeria’s orphaned or abandoned children in order to civilize a population that many people saw as dangerously degraded and idle – two characteristics traditionally associated with the colony’s Muslim subjects. In the period between 1846 and 1866, the French government also supported missionaries because it saw missionary work as a cheap method of molding a diverse settler community into a loyal unit that would offer support in the face of indigenous uprisings. And yet, in spite of the government’s quest to use missionaries to cultivate the loyalties of this diverse colonial population, missionaries just as often sowed divisions: among the settler population, between the military and civil regimes, and even within the Catholic

---

¹ CM Lazarists 108a Algiers. Letter from Lazarist Father Damprun to superior in Paris, 28 June 1848.  
² ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1002. Letter from Reynaud to superior, 18 August 1858.
clergy itself. By viewing colonization through the lens of missionary work we see that by 1870, and indeed much later, the vision of a cohesive settler community in Algeria remained a complete chimera.3

Further, often detested by colonists to a greater extent than their Islamic counterparts, Catholic missionaries occupied a liminal space between European rulers and North African subjects, and their presence thus disrupted the racialized taxonomies on which imperial rule depended.4 Like other settlers, missionaries viewed Algeria as an empty space in which to carve out professional opportunities and personal authority that remained denied to them in the metropole. In this period, missionaries began to see Algeria in particular as a place in which to forge what I will call a “religious modernity” that appeared increasingly unrealizable in a secularizing Europe. In this endeavor, however, missionaries often incited the ire and jealousy of competing secular and religious power brokers who hoped to shape the nascent colony to suit their own visions of the future.5 These visions repeatedly came into direct conflict with each other and missionaries had to navigate this hostile terrain by cultivating dense networks of privilege and patronage with military and religious authorities. Their story thus reveals the cultivation of privilege as at least as integral to modern structures of power as any impersonal or bureaucratic rule of law. It also complicates the depiction of colonies as simple laboratories of modernity, as sites of experimentation whose findings could then

3 This argument goes against that of historian Annie Rey-Goldzeiguer, who argued that a powerful and united settler community emerged in the 1860s and blocked Emperor Napoleon III’s attempt to create an “Arab Kingdom” that would respect the property rights of native Algerians. See Annie Rey-Goldzeiguer, Le Royaume arabe: la politique algérienne de Napoléon III, 1861-1870 (Paris: PUF, 1977).
4 For the importance and instability of racial taxonomies see, for instance, Ann Laura Stoler, Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power.
5 In this chapter I again borrow the term power brokers from Elizabeth Foster, Faith in Empire. I again complicate Foster’s portrayal by showing that secular clergy, different congregations, and individual missionaries could also serve as competing, rather than complementary, power brokers in the imperial world.
be grafted back on to metropolitan society. Rather, for missionaries and settlers alike, the colonies served in themselves as sites in which to implement modern potentialities. In this way, colonial actors began to see Europe as more provincial than the colonial periphery it supposedly ruled over.

Finally, missionaries’ ability to forge this alternative modernity was undermined by their competition for useful patrons and the state salaries they could provide. This competition often caused missionaries to denounce one another, challenge each other’s authority, and ruin the best-laid plans of the government and missionary superiors alike. Secular clergy accused missionaries of encroaching on their territory, while missionaries jockeyed with each other in an effort to secure a limited amount of financial resources and to climb the ranks of the internal hierarchies of their congregations. Further, although historians have shown that the colonies could offer females missionaries in particular an escape from the male-dominated metropole, this chapter demonstrates that they too at times relied on powerful male patrons for their financial and spiritual existence. While colonial territories could indeed offer women a refuge from bourgeois notions of secularism and patriarchy, they could also provide marginalized men the opportunity to reassert a gendered hierarchy that they perhaps felt unable to uphold in a rapidly-changing Europe. To be sure, female missionaries could at times retain a modicum of independence by venturing outside ecclesiastical patronage networks and winning support and protection from secular, especially military, authorities.

---

7 Sarah Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*.
Assimilation, Association, and the Paradoxical Place of Foreign Settlers

It was during the period covered in this chapter (1846-1866) that the colonial government began to place great emphasis on monitoring and policing the European community of Algeria. This emphasis only intensified throughout the nineteenth century. This shift in policy resulted from the increasing realization of the permanence of the French occupation of Algeria and from the unrelenting stream of settlers that continued to pour into the colony. By 1848, 115,000 Europeans lived in Algeria, compared to a mere 3,000 in 1831.\(^9\) In the mid 1840s, the colonial regime began to undertake the twofold endeavor of imparting a sense of shared identity among the colonists and fostering these colonists’ loyalty to the colonial state. To be sure, these two goals often conflicted with one another, not least because the French identity that stood as the desired paradigm itself remained highly fluid and contested, and it changed over time as the sources of immigration to the colony also changed. French radicals exiled to Algeria after the Revolution of 1848 had a much different conception of Frenchness than did Alsatian refugees resettled on Algerian farms after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870.

To complicate this situation, unlike much of the imperial world in the nineteenth century, Algeria from the beginning had a diverse settler population of Italian, Spanish, and Maltese speaking families who in many communes outnumbered the French until the 1880s. In cities like Oran, Spanish speakers continued to outnumber the French almost until the turn of the century (a situation mirrored by the Italian population in Constantine). As Julia Clancy-Smith has shown, the non-French population of Algeria came to comprise the “lumpenproletariat” of Europeans that increasingly settled on the

\(^9\) Sessions, *By Sword and by Plow*, 217.
southern shores of the Mediterranean – they came as casual laborers in search of work, as
dispossessed farmers in search of land, and (less often) as political dissidents in search of
refuge.\textsuperscript{10} Rather than assimilate into a cohesive, monolithic French community, this
motley array of often devoutly religious Europeans clashed with their less faithful French
neighbors, and their adherence to the Catholic faith could divide them from the French
more than any other issue. In the words of historian François Renault, although most
French settlers had lost their faith, “foreigners, like Spaniards, Maltese and Italians,
continued for the most part to practice their religion, but they had no voice in ruling
circles.”\textsuperscript{11} Indeed, until the naturalization law of 26 June 1889, these non-French
Europeans could neither elect nor serve in the city councils of Algeria, and archival
documents reveal the constant tensions engendered by these religious, political, and
ethnic divisions.\textsuperscript{12}

Anthropologist Andrea Smith has argued that colonial societies “were based on
extreme power differentials and the rule of the many by the few…Division between
colonists within such a society could prove fatal to the entire enterprise.”\textsuperscript{13} For this
reason, the imperial state in Algeria preferred French settlers; nevertheless, it reluctantly
welcomed other Europeans in order to compete with the overwhelming numerical
superiority of its indigenous subjects. As early as 1843 the minister of war, Marshall

\begin{footnotes}
\item[10] Julia Clancy-Smith, \textit{Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, 1800-1900}
(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 285.
\item[12] Only in 1889 did the French government pass a law that granted automatic citizenship to all “Europeans”
born in Algeria and, for that matter, to all European immigrants born in France. See Patrick Weil, \textit{How to
Be French: Nationality in the Making Since 1789}, translated by Catherine Porter (Raleigh: Duke University
Press, 2008), 212-214; David Prochaska, \textit{Making Algeria French: Colonialism in Bône, 1870-1920}
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Rogers Brubaker, \textit{Citizenship and Nationhood in
\item[13] Andrea L. Smith, \textit{Colonial Memory and Postcolonial Europe: Maltese Settlers in Algeria and France}
\end{footnotes}
Jean-de-Dieu Soult, complained of the “poor policy of letting hordes of foreigners invade Algeria.”\textsuperscript{14} He worried that if another European power attacked Algeria then the government could not count on the loyalty of these non-French Europeans. At the same time, the French military confronted two larger problems. First, it faced an ongoing struggle to subdue indigenous uprisings, the largest of which was led by Emir Abd al-Qadir; and second, despite official encouragement for French farmers to emigrate to Algeria, death and disease ensured that one way or another most of these settlers returned to France shortly after their arrival.\textsuperscript{15} As a result, Soult wrote, “if we welcome foreigners, it is with the thought that the substitution of Christian for Arab blood…guarantees us more support than from the indigenous population…[and] if the Arabs rise against us, [the foreigners] will unite with us for our defense.”\textsuperscript{16}

Until at least 1880, metropolitan and colonial officials remained divided over the best policy for securing the loyalty of these so-called foreigners.\textsuperscript{17} This division stemmed in part from the strained relationship between military and civilian authorities in the territory. The Revolution of 1848 marked a decisive shift in the juridical status of colonial Algeria and resulted in the first tentative steps towards civilian rule. In September 1848, French colonists in Algeria won the right to elect representatives to send to the Constituent Assembly and participate in the creation of a new constitution for the Second French Republic. On 12 November 1848 this constitution declared Algeria an

\textsuperscript{14} CAOM F80/1675. Confidential letter from the minister of war to the governor general, 10 November 1843.
\textsuperscript{15} For the struggle against al-Qadir see Brower, A Desert Named Peace, 9-26. For the failure of policies to inspire the immigration of European farmers, see Sessions, By Sword and By Plow, 230-233.
\textsuperscript{16} CAOM F80/1675. Confidential letter from the minister of war to the governor general, 10 November 1843.
\textsuperscript{17} In 1870, the Third Republic replaced the Second Empire in France, and civilian rule replaced military rule in Algeria. The civilian leadership proved much more anticlerical than their military counterparts (see Chapter Three).
official part of the French metropole and divided it into three departments – Oran, Algiers, and Constantine – themselves subdivided into communes and *arrondissements*. Each department also won the right to elect local departmental and municipal councils, presided over by prefects and mayors, respectively, and to send elected officials to the French National Assembly to represent the interests of the colonists.\(^{18}\) This assimilation, however, only entailed areas of European settlement, as since 1839 the government had divided Algeria into “full communes” (*communes de plein exercise*), mixed communes (*communes mixtes*), and military communes (*communes militaires*).\(^{19}\) In full communes European residents outnumbered indigenous ones, and in 1848 French citizens in these communes theoretically won political rights equal to those of metropolitan citizens. In military communes Europeans remained in the minority and a military governor general assisted by the notorious Arab bureaus (*bureaux arabes*) continued to rule over indigenous subjects.\(^{20}\) As European colonization progressed it was hoped that military communes would pass through an intermediary stage as mixed communes (with mixed populations), before gaining the political rights of full communes.

In practice, however, this division was not so clear cut. Even in full communes non-French citizens had few political rights.\(^{21}\) As a result, the minister of war and the

---


\(^{21}\) In European communes with municipal councils, the number of European foreigners and *indigènes* combined could not exceed one-third of the total number of municipal councilors, while neither a foreigner nor an *indigène* could serve as mayor or assistant mayor (*adjoint*). Julien, *La Conquête*, 352.
governor general retained ultimate authority over politically sensitive issues like education and religion even in these communes. This system of dual power prevented officials from ever adopting or enacting an official policy or legal framework to govern the foreign settler population in European communes. Nevertheless, although such policies remained unarticulated and inchoate, governmental tactics towards the foreign population of Algeria most closely resemble the policies of association and assimilation traditionally associated with the conquered indigenous populations.22 Government officials, in fact, applied these concepts much more vigorously towards the settler population than the indigenous one.

In broad outlines, civilian authorities in the European communes in this period, and increasingly over time, tended to work towards assimilating the foreigners to French culture by imparting French education in the French language; what exactly this culture consisted of varied from commune to commune based on the composition of local municipal councils. At the same time, the military retained ultimate authority over politically sensitive issues and governors general tended to work towards associating foreigners to the imperial state by providing for their particular and presumed cultural, educational, and religious needs. In this period, the military turned to missionaries to fulfill this goal and offered them protection from at times hostile civilian authorities and anticlerical colonists. Ultimately, religion played a pivotal role in the conception and application of both policies.

To be sure, in the 1840s and 50s officials remained uncertain over how to use religion to tie these colonists to the imperial regime. In 1845, Governor General Bugeaud

22 For the classic account of these two conflicting ideologies, again see Raymond Betts, Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory.
decided to provide for the religious needs of the colonists by assigning a single church building to serve both Protestant and Catholic settlers in the city of Algiers. Writing in 1845, Minister of War Soult warned Bugeaud, “because of the superstition which the Spanish as well as Maltese attach to religion it appears to me that such a measure could spark the most profound unrest.” Rather than offend this religious “superstition,” Soult sought to appease these settlers’ religious sensibilities; to do so, he hoped to use Catholic missionaries to cultivate the loyalties of these families by providing for their particular religious needs. Two years later, however, the director of civil affairs for Algeria voiced his fear that missionary schools would compete with public schools that the state created specifically “to give a national education that is above all necessary in Algeria, where there are a great number of foreign parents who will not teach it within their households.” Generally speaking, military authorities like the minister of war continued to support idiosyncratic policies of association while civilian authorities proved more dogmatic in their desire to assimilate foreigners to what they saw as French secular customs. Increasingly throughout this period such assimilation connoted less and less the practice of Catholicism, especially among the handful of radical French settlers that later ascended the political ranks in some communes of Algeria.

---

23 CAOM F80/1627. Letter from the minister of war to the governor general, 22 February 1845.
24 CAOM F80/1625. Letter from the director of civil affairs of Algeria, second bureau, to the minister of war, 28 June 1847.
25 For the most recent discussion of the republican sentiments of these communes during the Second Empire, see Gavin Murray-Miller, “Imagining the Trans-Mediterranean Republic: Algeria, Republicanism, and the Ideological Origins of the French Imperial Nation-State, 1848-1870,” French Historical Studies 37/2 (Spring 2014): 303-330. Separately, Yvonne Turin has shown that, while many radicals remained in Algeria after their exile in 1848, they opted to refrain from politics initially in order not to further court suspicion by Napoleon’s authorities in the colony. Only in the mid 1860s did they gain enough renewed confidence to run for political office in Algeria, largely on anticlerical platforms (see Chapter Three). Yvonne Turin, “La commune d’Alger et ses écoles en 1871. Un problème de laïcité coloniale,” Revue d’Histoire et de civilisation du Maghreb 8 (Algiers: Publ. Fac. Lettres, 1970), 86.
For the time being, however, an unforeseen imperative often helped reconcile civilian authorities to military designs: the need to minimize expenses. Once they realized that missionaries worked for less than half the salary of their secular counterparts, many civilian authorities quickly cast their assimilationist tendencies aside. The bishop of Algiers recognized as much when he wrote to the superior of the Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes that “here the entire question is reduced to material expenses: salary, rent, furnishing.”

Indeed, teaching frères from this congregation received an annual salary of 750 francs throughout the 1850s and 60s, compared to as much as 1,800 francs for secular teachers. The bishop’s opinions were seconded by the minister of public instruction, who wrote as early as 1847 that “a purely lay organization of our hospitals, our schools, our nurseries in Algeria, with a double or even quadruple expense, only produces far inferior results to those obtained with the aid of religious communities.”

At this still early stage of colonization, cities often lacked secular teachers and healthcare workers entirely. Missionaries could thus help tie families to the colony in order to give them an incentive not to return to France or elsewhere in Europe at the first sign of distress. Governor General Bugeaud voiced this fear directly when he warned that “many fathers would hesitate to come to Africa and to settle there if they are not assured of finding for their children the educational resources that exist in the largest French cities.”

---

28 CAOM F80/1746. Letter from the minister of public instruction to the minister of war, October 1846. A number of historians have remarked on the cost effectiveness of missionaries in the imperial world. See for instance Clancy-Smith, Mediterraneans, 256.
29 CAOM ALG/GGA/50S/2. Notes on public instruction in Algeria, December 1847.
These fears continued throughout the 1850s and 60s and settler petitions proved such anxieties to be well founded. Between 1856 and 1859, for instance, the inhabitants of the Algerian port town of Cherchell sent numerous petitions to the governor general in Algiers, the minister of war in Paris, and, ultimately, Emperor Napoleon III himself in an effort to allow missionary sisters to open a local primary school for girls. The petitioners worried that their children “were left free throughout the day and that this inaction allowed them to abandon themselves to regrettable habits.” Only the sisters, they contended, would “inspire in our children first the principles of our religion.”  

They further complained that the lack of a Catholic school “had already forced fifteen fathers to impose on themselves the enormous sacrifice of separating from their little girls to send them to other cities or villages.” In a similar instance, the division commander of Oran, Jean-Jacques Pélissier, expressed his support for Jesuit secondary school because the lack of a Catholic school had previously imposed a “heavy burden” of forcing parents “to send their children far away to receive the benefits of an education.” He feared that families who could not establish roots in the colony would most likely return to the metropole rather than defend their territory. In this sense, the future of French rule and France’s presence in Algeria depended on the state’s ability to meet the religious and educational needs of its settler population. The administration hoped to use Catholic

---

30 Centre d’accueil et de recherche des Archives nationales [Henceforth AN] F17/12325/5, letter from the inhabitants of Cherchell to the prince minister of war, February 20, 1859.
31 Ibid.
32 Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu [Jesuit archives, henceforth ARSI], Fonds Algérie 1001. Quoted in an anonymous letter from a Jesuit priest to his superior, 3 July 1852.
education to keep families together and thus to tie the nuclear family to the colonial state.  

The Jesuits in particular understood the fine line between providing religious aid and cultivating loyalty to the French state. They hoped to capitalize on this double imperative in order to cement their own position as power brokers in the emerging colonial order. To do so, they actively worked to cultivate the loyalties of the non-French population in Algeria. Citing the 20,000 Spanish settlers in Algiers who “languish in profound ignorance and flagrant immorality,” one Jesuit father wrote to Rome in 1851 to request a new Spanish priest who “knows France and loves the French.” In a separate letter, he also asked for a “French nationalized Italian” to work in the school at Oran. In 1852, another Jesuit taught himself enough Spanish so that he routinely filled the cathedral of Algiers with Spanish parishioners; but at the same time he claimed to teach those parishioners to support the French authorities. Although historians have shown that French missionaries could most often cultivate favor with colonial regimes by spreading French culture and language, the Jesuits, and indeed the military government, understood that the diverse settler population of colonial Algeria necessitated a slightly altered approach. The state could win the loyalties of the non-French settlers by providing for

---


34 ARSI 1001, Alger 1-III. Father Jordan to his superior in Rome, 25 April 1851.

35 ARSI 1001, Alger 1-III. Father Jordan to his superior in Rome, 24 September 1852.

36 For the requirement that missionaries spread French culture and language to the French colonies see J.P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Daughton’s missionaries, however, interacted solely
their spiritual needs in their own language, so long as they also taught a love of France and of French rule.  

To win the support of the military regime that governed Algeria, missionary congregations had simply to fulfill three requirements: they must remain reasonably solvent, they must allow periodic government surveillance over their establishments, and they must refrain from large-scale and overt proselytism towards the indigenous Muslim population. In 1849, the governor general devised a plan to assign each of the three newly created departments of Algeria to a different congregation of missionary sisters: Oran to the Soeurs Trinitaires, Algiers to the Filles de la Charité, and Constantine to the Soeurs de la Doctrine Chrétienne. Two additional congregations did not make the cut: although the Dames du Sacré Coeur helped run a successful orphanage in Mustapha, their reputation for a lack of submission worked against them. Indeed, the governor general remarked that “these women seem to want to escape all administrative control.” Similarly, the Soeurs du Bon Pasteur, who ran a boarding school at El Biar, lacked enough resources to gain government support. In 1848, the minister of war remarked unfavorably on the “precarious and disturbing financial situation of this religious

with indigenous populations and not with European settlers. Conversely, Claude Prudhomme has written that “a focus on the linguistic dimension risks hiding the fact that the French, religious or laic, promoted a common culture to their students.” See Prudhomme, “Catholic missions and cultural rivalries in the Eastern Mediterranean: 1870-1914,” in Une France en Méditerranée: écoles, langue, et culture françaises. XIXe-XXe siècles, edited by Patrick Cabanel (Paris: Creaphis, 2006), 51.


39 CAOM F80/1629. Letter from the governor general to the director of civil affairs for the province of Algiers, 4 December 1847.
establishment.”⁴⁰ These failings ensured that neither congregation received government patronage to expand their works in any of the newly created departments.

The colonial government sought to better control the three remaining congregations not by subjecting them to the metropolitan rule of law, but rather by leaving them in a state of legal limbo. A royal ordinance of 14 July 1834 forbade the establishment of any missionary congregation in Algeria without the approval of the governor general. Nevertheless, even upon approval the administration refrained from granting official “authorization” to any of these congregations in Algeria. Rather, since 1843 it had pursued a policy of mere “toleration” for congregations. This strategy ensured that if any congregation focused too much on proselytism towards the indigenous population then the government could expel it from the colony with a mere decree from the minister of war.⁴¹ Although the governor general supported missionaries’ work of education and moralization with the European population, he feared that proselytism towards Algeria’s Muslims would only turn them against the French. As the minister of war wrote in 1846, “the Arabs see in their religious belief the very principle of their nationality, and are no more disposed to renounce one than the other.”⁴² The minister expressed his fear that the application of the laws of the metropole to the congregations in Algeria could “unleash in our colony the most unfortunate consequences…[but] by leaving things in this provisional state the government will retain an absolute liberty of

⁴⁰ CAOM F80/1629. Confidential letter from the minister of war to the governor general, 20 January 1848.
⁴¹ If the congregations had official authorization to work in Algeria, the government would have needed a royal ordinance to expel them from the colony. CAOM F80/1746. Letter from the minister of war to the governor general, October 1846.
⁴² CAOM F80/1746. Report from the minister of war to the minister of public instruction, October 1846.
acting, such as for the repression of different religious communities.”  These congregations would remain in their provisional state until the 1901 law of associations forced them to apply for authorization (see Chapter Four).

To further solidify control over missionaries and education in Algeria, the minister of war ensured that the French educational laws of March 1850, known as the Falloux laws, remained unapplied in Algeria. This reluctance to apply the laws of the metropole in Algeria, even towards the European population in full communes, reveals the limits of the juridical assimilation of Algeria with France. Under the Falloux laws and later amendments, municipal councils could nominate their local public school teacher, who only needed approval from the superintendent (recteur). In Algeria, however, the minister of war and the governor general retained complete authority to appoint schoolteachers. Although they originally intended this stipulation to prevent colonists from forcing unfriendly teachers on the indigenous Muslim population, it also allowed the governor general to appoint Catholic missionary teachers desired by Spanish, Italian, or Maltese settlers, who, lacking French citizenship, had no voice in local municipal councils. Indeed, these councils at times proved most resistant to missionary teachers and often attempted to force secular teachers on the Catholic population under their jurisdiction. As we will see in the next chapter the issue over who exactly had the right to appoint schoolteachers would nearly spark a settler revolt in the early 1870s and served as a touchstone for debates over the broader shift to full civilian rule.

---

43 CAOM F80/1746. Letter from the minister of war to the bureau of politics, administration, and personnel, 30 October 1843.
44 The Falloux laws also gave an extraordinary liberty of teaching to female religious congregations in France, as they allowed Catholic sisters to teach without even a brevet de capacité, the minimal requirement for all lay teachers. Rather, Catholic sisters could teach with a mere “certificate of obedience” from the superior of their congregation. See Sarah Curtis, Educating the Faithful: Religion, Schooling, and Society in Nineteenth-Century France (Chicago: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000).
To round out their control over missionaries in Algeria, the minister of war and the governor general made a distinction between government funding of congregations as a whole and the funding of missionaries as private actors who proved beneficial to the colonial state. In 1848, the minister of war wrote that the government must “abstain from any measure which would lead congregations to believe that the state is disposed…to give them its patronage.” He clarified this position by continuing:

The government only sees the members of these corporations as *individuals*, agents with a specific ability who engage in aid for a particular and predetermined service. For the government, the Lazarists are only auxiliary priests, the Sisters of Charity and the Sisters of the Christian Doctrine are only teachers. The administration maintains establishments of public utility: schools, hospitals, and nurseries. It does not fund religious congregations.45

Taken together, the policy of official “toleration” (rather than “authorization”), the abstention of applying the Falloux laws, and the restriction of funding to “individual actors of public utility” all ensured that missionaries had to rely completely on the patronage of individual military generals or the bishop of Algiers in order to secure support. As a result, individual missionaries competed to win favor and state salaries for their work as teachers, preachers, and nurses. These salaries came directly from the governor general, who inscribed them in municipal or departmental budgets at his will, or they came from the bishop of Algiers, whose own funds came from the minister of war upon recommendation of the governor general. In sum, the government’s policy towards missionaries differed little from what historian Osama Abi-Mershed has described as its policy towards the colonized North African population. For Abi-Mershed, “historical context [and] political expedience…more than any ideological clarity, held sway in

45 CAOM F80/1629. Confidential letter from the minister of war to the governor general, 20 January 1848.
determining the orientation of French policies in Algeria.”\textsuperscript{46} Although Abi-Mershed does well to expose the lack of ideological coherence in French colonial policy on the ground, he overlooks the integrality of extralegal measures not only to the governance of the conquered and colonized population, but also of the European settler population. The government’s strategic use of missionaries reveals that it focused its efforts (alternately and haphazardly) of colonial assimilation and association on European settlers more than on native Algerians.\textsuperscript{47} Although it feared missionaries could disturb the religious sensibilities of the Muslim population, in the period between 1840 and 1870 it also saw missionaries as crucial in cultivating a settler community that pledged allegiance to the French state.

**Settler Opposition to Catholic Missionaries**

The government’s quest to use missionaries to mold a unified and loyal settler population, however, proved elusive.\textsuperscript{48} Writing in the 1960s, a sister from the women’s congregation the Filles de la Charité referred to the period from 1850 to 1870 as “the golden age for missionaries in Algeria.”\textsuperscript{49} Reading the primary documents, however, the historian is hard pressed to arrive at the same conclusion. Only when gauged against the overtly anticlerical policies implemented after 1870 does this earlier period appear as a


\textsuperscript{47} For the military’s attempt during the Second Empire to associate native Algerians to French rule see Ageron, *Les Algériens Musulmans et la France*, 38-48.

\textsuperscript{48} Again, this argument goes against Rey-Goldzeiguer, *Le Royaume arabe*.

\textsuperscript{49} Anonymous author, *Les Filles de la Charité, Pendant un siècle en Algérie*, 1842-1962 (unpublished manuscript found in the archives of the Filles de la Charité, written sometime in the 1960s).
time of harmony. Rather, a study of missionary work in Algeria reveals what Abi-Mershed has described as “the uneasy and uncertain relationship between the civil and military powers in North Africa” in the period before 1870; but the strains in this relationship resulted not only from conflicting visions over the place of North Africans in French Algeria. Documents in the missionary and national archives attest to the constant external threats, internal divisions, and struggles for power that beset missionary establishments in this period. One of the two principal sources of opposition to Catholic missionaries came from anticlerical settlers and civilian authorities (the other, more surprisingly, came from the Catholic bishop and his appointed clergy in Algeria).

In the early years of French rule, Europeans saw Algeria as a blank slate on which they could carve out their own niches of professional or personal authority; or, as Abi-Mershed writes, as “a vast, unspoiled canvas on which to create fresh social realities.” At the same time, conflicting visions over how to create these realities often led to resentments between competing power brokers. As we saw in Chapter One, certain settlers had already begun to express their disdain for missionaries by citing the political dangers they supposedly posed to Algeria. In the instance examined above, a lay teacher accused Jesuit missionaries of plotting “Carlist and Legitimist” conspiracies to overthrow the colonial regime. Bugeaud, for his part, saw this accusation as a ploy by this teacher to carve out his own professional opportunity by displacing the Jesuits from their secondary school. As a result, Bugeaud succeeded in protecting the Jesuits despite their illegal status as a congregation not recognized in France itself.

---

50 Abi-Mershed, 56.
51 Abi-Mershed, 91.
Such accusations only increased throughout the middle of the century. Repressions following the Revolution of 1848 and Louis Napoleon’s *coup d’État* on 2 December 1851 resulted in the exile of 6,258 political dissidents to Algeria.⁵² Although many of them would return to France within a decade, many also chose to stay in Algeria and use the colony to enact the secular reforms that remained unfulfilled in France. In large and newly-enfranchised communes like Algiers a number of self-styled republicans ran for and won elections as municipal councilors and mayors, and they sought to use their positions of power to enforce anticlerical legislation on, at times, a religiously devout (but politically powerless) community of foreign settlers. As one Lazarist missionary wrote in 1857, “the mayor [of Algiers] shows us increasing hostility. The employees of the mayor and the prefect act the same way and use all their power against us…everywhere officials are hostile, apart from 1 or 2 of every 20.”⁵³ The divisions caused by this anticlerical turn among the civilian authorities threatened to undermine the religious aims of the military governor general and minister of war.

To be sure, the republicanism of French exiles soon adapted to the peculiar imperial situation of colonial Algeria. As Ruedy has written many “republican” settlers “were far from being republicans in the liberal mold of the 1848 revolutionaries… Their republicanism was a means to end arbitrary military rule” and extend their authority over an indigenous population they saw as unfairly protected by the military and the Arab

---

⁵² Jean-Pierre Peyroulou et al., “1830-1880: la conquête coloniale et la résistance des Algériens,” in *Histoire de l’Algérie à la Période Coloniale*, edited by Abderrahmane Bouchène et al. (Paris & Algiers: Editions La Découverte, 2012), 35. The authors state that by 1860 5,465 of the 6,258 political exiles had returned to France, but this return did not mean that their ideas returned with them. See also Julien, *La Conquête*, 388.
These settlers continued to associate military rule not only with undue respect for Muslims and their religion, but also with undue respect for the so-called foreigners and their religion. Although many exiles already had anticlerical sentiments, these sentiments combined with and were exacerbated by the association of any religion with the fanaticism of the detested Muslim subjects. And this disdain for religion extended to a disdain for those who provided financial and moral support to religious congregations and, theoretically, native Algerians: the military generals.

The petition for a missionary school at Cherchell mentioned above, for example, may have won the support of the military government, but it also incited the ire of the civilian administration and a portion of the settler population. In 1858, the prefect of Algiers informed the director of civil affairs that “the petitions [for missionary sisters] stem entirely from the intrigues of a local priest” and that the presence of the missionary sisters “was not only useless but also dangerous.” The prefect claimed that the petitioners were “persons little esteemed,” who have for years been “slandering the local lay institutrices [female teachers] and submitting them to public insults.” The military regime thus found itself in a bind. It could accede to the demands of the Catholic families and help tie these families to the colony, but in doing so it risked offending the anticlerical sensibilities of the local French civilian government in what was, after all, a French territory.

Such situations would play out across Algeria throughout the Second Republic and Second Empire. They reveal the tensions that beset colonial rule and belie the simplified dichotomy that separates European colonizer from African subject.

---

54 Ruedy, Modern Algeria, 74.
55 AN F17/12325/5. Report by the director of civil affairs of Algeria to the minister of war, 14 December 1858.
Anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler has argued that “[colonial] statecraft was not opposed to the affective, but about its mastery.”\(^5^6\) In this case, affective ties between parents and their children in a religiously divided settler community threatened the very legitimacy of colonial rule. How could settlers trust a colonial state that could not even keep families together? These families, as mentioned above, faced “the enormous sacrifice of separating from their little girls to send them to other cities.”\(^5^7\) Conversely, how could the military administration overrule the local civilian government in a commune that supposedly had the full political rights of the metropole?

Throughout this period, the state repeatedly found itself torn between Catholic settlers who relied on free moral education provided by missionaries, and religiously indifferent or even hostile settlers who saw the missionaries as sowing divisions within the European community or monopolizing professional positions they coveted themselves. In this period, the military regime most often sided with the missionaries and against anticlerical, largely French, civilian municipal councils (though by no means were all municipal councils anticlerical, nor were their policies unchanging over time). Again, it did so in the hopeless aim of unifying a pan-European community into a cohesive unit of national defense. But it did so by spreading a facet of French culture – Catholicism – for which most French in Algeria cared little, and some downright detested.

**Bishop Pavy, Female Missionaries, and Clerical Conflicts**

Reading the documents in the national archives, one is left with the impression that the religious divisions that afflicted colonial Algeria stopped here. There is little mention in

\(^{56}\) Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 71.

\(^{57}\) AN F17/12325/5. Letter from the inhabitants of Cherchell to the Prince, 20 February 1859.
the archives of anything other than the secular clergy and religious orders working in tandem. An examination of missionary and Vatican archives, however, reveals that these divisions cut much deeper. Missionaries in Algeria encountered staunch and consistent opposition from the Catholic bishop of Algiers and his local parish priests. This situation stemmed directly from the liminal space Algeria occupied after 1848 as not a colony in the strict sense of the term and at the same time not fully part of the metropole.

As we have seen, in 1838 the French government opted to unilaterally incorporate Algeria into France as an official bishopric of the metropole. In doing so, it appointed a French bishop, Bishop Dupuch, who in turn began to appoint secular clergy to serve the parishes throughout his diocese. In this respect, even before 1848 the legal framework for the Catholic Church in Algeria was analogous to that in France. At the same time, however, unlike in France the bishop of Algiers did not have nearly enough secular clergy to serve his diocese. As a result, the period after 1838 also saw missionary congregations arrive in Algeria en masse. To an even greater extent than in France, not to mention other imperial settings, the Catholic Church in Algeria relied on both secular and religious clergy to serve the faithful; and, while nearly four times larger than France, the territory often seemed too small to accommodate both sets of clergy. If the first bishop of Algiers was forced to resign in 1845 due to his catastrophic mismanagement of resources, his successors proved much more adept at spreading their authority throughout the diocese of Algiers. They did so by ruling authoritatively over potentially independent missionary congregations and bestowing patronage on those missionaries who displayed

---

58 The term “secular clergy” denotes Catholic clergy salaried by the state and who, unlike missionaries, did not belong to monastic congregations.
the most loyalty and docility to episcopal authority. To better secure their own professional and spiritual footholds in Algeria, these bishops also worked to align their interests with those of metropolitan and colonial authorities as much as possible.

In the early 1840s, the metropolitan government had watched with dismay as Dupuch and Bugeaud allowed the Jesuits to spread themselves throughout the colony in spite of their tenuous legal position in France. The war ministry and the ministry of cults thus moved to ensure that a more Gallican bishop succeeded Dupuch to rein in the more ultramontane Jesuits. In 1846 the government appointed Louis Antoine Augustin Pavy (in office 1846-1866) as bishop of Algiers. Pavy hoped to displace Jesuits and other renegade missionaries by increasing the number of parishes in Algeria in order to populate the colony with his own appointed parish priests (who received their salaries directly from him). During his tenure the number of official parishes in Algeria increased from 29 to 187 and the number of diocesan priests from 48 to 273.

As members of religious orders, however, male and female missionaries drew their authority from their motherhouse in France rather than from the French government or the bishop. As a result, the Gallican bishop and his clergy from the outset saw missionaries as competition to their authority and as dangerously independent and unpredictable, but at the same time as necessary for the spread of the Catholic faith.

59 Julien calls Pavy “much more diplomatic than his predecessor, but who no less considered it his duty to fight against both the Koran…and the rationalism of the colons.” In both attempts he only met with failure. Julien, La Conquête, 262.


61 For struggles between missionaries and other clergy in a different context, see Michael Pasquier, “When Catholic Worlds Collide,” in In God’s Empire: French Missionaries and the Modern World, edited by J.P. Daughton and Owen White (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). According to Donald Sutherland, an analogous situation could unfold in France, as “the restored clergy of the nineteenth century distrusted
Historian Gérard Cholvy has written that after the French Revolution many new congregations adopted ultramontanism as a means to protest the Concordat. Whether or not this assertion applied to Algeria, the bishop at least showed himself cognizant of this possibility. As late as 1862, a representative of the Propaganda Fide complained that “the very little sympathy Pavy has for the religious congregations deprives them of aid which would be more useful here than anywhere else.” Because he could not afford to rid the colony of religious orders completely, Pavy worked to play different congregations off against each other in order to better exert his authority over all of them.

Pavy’s maneuverings around the Soeurs Trinitaires and the Filles de la Charité in particular reveal his obsession with cultivating obedience to his authority. Both congregations were financially solvent and equally pleasing to the military regime. For a number of reasons, however, Pavy favored the Filles de la Charité over the Soeurs Trinitaires and quickly moved to replace the latter with the former. As female congregations, each order relied on male priests to administer the sacraments of confession and communion – affirmations of faith that these sisters took very seriously. The Soeurs Trinitaires, distrustful of the secular clergy, relied primarily on local Jesuit missionaries to administer their sacraments and serve as spiritual advisors. The Filles de la Charité, in theory at least, relied for their sacraments exclusively on their brother.

---

63 ASC, SC – Barbary 19/364. Letter from M. de Baudicour to the prefect of the Propaganda Fide, Cardinal Barnabo, 22 October 1862.
64 Historian Sarah Curtis has shown that one congregation, The Soeurs de St-Joseph de l’Apparition, founded by Emilie de Vialar, was forced to flee Algeria in 1842 due to its struggles with the previous bishop of Algiers, Antoine-Adolphe Dupuch. Research in a number of missionary archives reveals that these struggles served as the rule with successive bishops, rather than the exception. Sarah Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*. 
congregation, the Lazarists. As we saw in the first chapter, the Lazarists had a history of friendly relations with the French government and secular clergy. As a result of the Gallican tendencies of their male confessors, Bishop Pavy thought he could better ensure the loyalty and submission of the Filles de la Charité than he could the Soeurs Trinitaires.

Further, the spiritual and indeed temporal authority of the Lazarists over the Filles de la Charité ensured that a traditional gender hierarchy remained intact and that Bishop Pavy would not have to deal with less predictable female superiors. In Algeria, missionary sisters relied heavily on individual men for their success; and sisters who fell under the direct authority of a male superior found it easier to succeed than did those with a female superior. Indeed, Bishop Pavy sought to marginalize the Soeurs Trinitaires because they procured their own (Jesuit) confessors and relied ultimately on the authority of a female superior. Conversely, Pavy helped draft the regulations of the Filles de la Charité in Algeria specifically to ensure that only their male superiors interacted with local authorities (though this stipulation did not always correspond to reality). Father Girard, the head of the Lazarist mission in Algiers, worked closely with Pavy on drafting the regulations for the sisters in Algeria. The resulting constitution established a five-person council that met once a week “to ensure good order and discipline in the houses” of the Filles de la Charité. The council included three sisters, who served an advisory role, and two Lazarist priests, who monopolized executive functions. Article five of their constitution stipulated that “the sisters composing the council must avoid communicating together outside of the council about anything which should be discussed in the council.”

---

65 Claude Langlois has written that only in the nineteenth century did female religious congregations almost uniformly adopt a female superior general as the head over multiple subordinate branches. Langlois, “Le Catholicisme au féminin,” Archives de sciences sociales des religions, 29e Année, 57/1 (Jan.-Mar., 1984), 32. The Lazarists and Filles de la Charité, however, as much older congregations, continued to subordinate the female superior to a male superior.
while it included no such stipulation for the priests. Similarly, article eleven ruled that
“the [Lazarist] visiting superior alone, or in his absence the director, will interact with the
authorities, whether ecclesiastical or civil.” As a result of this gendered hierarchy,
Bishop Pavy and the Lazarist Father Girard developed a close relationship that redounded
to the benefit of the Lazarists and, to a significant if lesser extent, the Filles de la Charité
alike.

The Soeurs Trinitaires, who worked primarily in and around the city of Oran, did
not enjoy this support; and their independent and assertive mother superior, Sister
Aloysia Bilhot, worked tirelessly to maintain her congregation’s chosen Jesuit confessors.
In 1851, Bishop Pavy moved to rein in the sisters by replacing their Jesuit confessor with
his own appointed parish priest, Father Avit. Pavy hoped thus to displace the Jesuits, who
owed no loyalty (or state salary) to Pavy. For his part, Father Avit saw his new position
as an opportunity to carve out his own niche of authority as a new power broker in
colonial Oran. As such, he quickly moved to close the chapel the sisters created in the
local hospital to force them and their patients to attend his own church, whose attendance,
the military commander of Oran later noted, “was hardly considerable.” When the
sisters refused, Avit wrote to the bishop and called Sister Aloysia a “rogue and
insubordinate.” He went so far as to nullify any confession these sisters made to a Jesuit,
telling Aloysia that she and her sisters “may as well have confessed to a dressed-up
cat.”

---

66 Archives of Les Filles de la Charité de St Vincent de Paul in Paris 28/21 [Henceforth FC]. Letter from
Visiting Superior Father Etienne to FC establishments in Algiers, 27 February 1851.
between General Pélissier and the Sister Aloysia Bilhot, [no date] 1852.
68 ST, ORAN Saint Louis 1841/1972 2 M F 1-1. Notes on what occurred with the curé of St Louis, Oran,
14 December 1851.
Jesuits the sisters had “constantly diminished his authority.” While this example reveals the power that male clerics could exert over their female counterparts, it also highlights the fragility of male authority. Father Avit himself relied on the missionary sisters to prop up his authority and to justify the moral (and ultimately financial) support he received from the bishop.

The sisters resisted this assertion of male clerical authority as much as possible within the constraints of a religion and society shaped by patriarchal networks of power. In perhaps the ultimate form of female Catholic resistance to male clerical authority, two sisters mortally ill with typhoid preferred to die without receiving their last rites rather than receive them from Father Avit. Sister Marie-Françoise commented on her deathbed that “it is bad enough to be forced into confession while one is healthy, at least in dying leave me the consolation of having another priest, whoever he may be.” For women who desired confession multiple times per week and saw it as the ultimate profession of faith, renouncing this sacrament on one’s deathbed constituted an extreme, if desperate, form of political resistance and a powerful assertion of individual autonomy.

In other instances, sisters sought to cultivate alternate secular sources of patronage. In 1851, Sister Aloysia made the trip to the local headquarters of the division commander of Oran (and future governor general of Algeria), Jean-Jacques Pélissier. Himself a devout Catholic, Pélissier criticized the government in France for appointing bishops and secular clergy based solely on political, rather than religious needs. Pélissier told Aloysia that the whole Algerian clergy constituted the riffraff of France, and that they garnered no respect among the settler population, “not only as priests, but even as

---

69 Ibid.
70 ST, ORAN Saint Louis 1841/1972 2 M F 1-1. Notes on what occurred with the curé of St. Louis, Oran, 14 December 1851.
men.” Conversely, he expressed his support for the disciplined and devout Jesuit missionaries. “It is the bishop,” he wrote, “who wants to expel the Jesuits from your house in order to put you entirely under the hands of his clergy.” Pélissier further contended that since the Revolution of 1848 Pavy had sought to curry favor by showing republican sympathies and had even “degraded himself to the point of blessing the tree of liberty.” He reassured Aloysia by writing, “Am I not your father? I am there to protect you.” In this instance, Aloysia ensured the continued existence of her congregation by appealing to a devout military general to defend her order against a Catholic bishop who garnered political support from authorities in the metropole.

Pélissier proved an equally valuable patron for the Jesuits’ secondary school in Oran. Bishop Pavy saw the Jesuit school as a direct threat to the Lazarist seminary that Pavy himself established in Algiers. Although the Falloux laws of 1850 had stipulated that the Jesuits could again run teaching establishments in France, Pavy issued an order in 1852 that forbade Jesuits from teaching secondary classes and accepting boarding students in Algeria. In doing so, Pavy hoped to force students in Oran to come to Algiers to attend schools over which he had direct oversight. Again, however, General Pélissier came to the Jesuits’ aid because he saw Pavy’s decision as a danger to the entire colony. Pélissier understood Pavy’s intentions, but countered that:

The population of Oran has no relation with that of Algiers. All its relations are with Marseille or the cities of the Midi [in France]. Not finding in Oran any means to raise its children it will direct them towards France, and thus Algiers will not profit any more than Oran from this prohibition.  

---

72 Ibid.
73 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1001. Quoted in an anonymous letter from a Jesuit to his superior, 3 July 1852.
The Jesuits thus won this battle with the bishop because their aims dovetailed with those of the military administration. They provided a cheap and efficient means of tying children to their families and in turn of tying families to the colonial state. Although the school in Oran continued to struggle under pressure from Bishop Pavy, the school’s administrator assured his superior in 1852 that “once Pélissier is named governor general, as everybody expects, our secondary school will not be forgotten.”

Lazarists, Filles de la Charité, and the Gendered Dimension of Patronage

Throughout the 1840s and 50s, the Lazarists expanded their works in Algeria by cultivating favor with the bishop, who preferred them to the Jesuits due to their lack of ultramontane traits and the supposed control they exerted over the Filles de la Charité. Indeed, the Lazarist visiting superior for all of Algeria, Father Girard, accrued immense power from securing the patronage of the bishop. Directly after Pavy was named bishop in 1846, Girard wrote to his superior in Paris:

Things are going so well for us here due to our new bishop...He tells me of his most intimate affairs and asks for advice as though he were one of my fellow priests. As much as he supports the Lazarists, he is equally against the Jesuits whom he nonetheless appeases because they are very powerful. We are helping the bishop to reorganize the diocese and you will see, I dare say, prosperity come to our houses.

Such support yielded dividends in 1848, when Pavy appointed the Lazarists to replace the Jesuits in the junior seminary and to manage the newly created senior seminary in Kouba, nine kilometers from Algiers. The seminary by canon law fell under the control of the local bishop, as it trained secular priests to serve the diocese. By maneuvering to get Girard named head of the seminary, Pavy brought the recruitment of new priests under

74 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1001. Anonymous letter from a Jesuit to his superior, 3 July 1852.
his own control, but also ensured Girard and his fellow seminary teachers annual salaries of 1,800 francs, thus giving the Lazarists significant advantages over other male congregations, notably the Jesuits. As one Lazarist priest wrote to his superior in Paris, “we must keep Monsieur Girard in Algiers. He is the pivot around which our entire work turns. His influence is such around town that the priests and the clergy fear him and would never engage in a struggle with him.”

The Revolution of 1848 revealed the importance of this patronage, as newly installed civilian authorities often expressed overtly anticlerical sentiments. In November 1848 the Lazarist superior of the residence in the Algiers neighborhood of Mustapha, Father Dufour, wrote to his superior in Paris: “you would not believe how many difficulties we have undergone. The civil authorities have proved very little accommodating [and Girard] thinks it better to have recourse to the bishop.” The anti-missionary backlash spread to the press as well, with an article in the moderate journal Akhbar accusing the sisters of the Filles de la Charité of sexual impropriety with the Lazarist priests. Dufour – who as we will see was no friend of the missionary sisters – admitted himself that the sisters took carriage rides to the Lazarist seminary in Kouba far too often, writing in February 1849, “I strongly desire that the public not be wrongly informed about these trips. If this keeps up our indiscretion will cost us!”

Despite this anticlerical agitation from members of the municipal council and organs of the press, one Lazarist affirmed in March 1849 that “the incendiary articles written against us have only

76 CM Lazarists 108a Algiers. Letter from Lazarist Father Damprun to superior in Paris, 28 June 1848.
excited everywhere general reprobation…they have not done us great harm.”79 At this still relatively early stage in the history of French Algeria, anticlerical politicians could not rally the support of a large segment of the settler community, who remained largely indifferent to anticlerical agitation.

To be sure, many settlers remained equally indifferent to the brand of civilization missionaries hoped to impart. The most successful missionaries were those who could cater specifically to the more religious foreign population of Algeria. In December 1848, Dufour informed his superior that one Lazarist taught two catechism classes to “a large number of Spanish and above all Catalans… [and] he will soon have more work than he can handle.”80 For the non-Spanish or Italian speaking Lazarists, however, work was harder to come by. In July 1849 Dufour wrote that “even though the bishop is on our side…there are so few people of faith in this city.”81 Moreover, even many people of faith contested the power of the Lazarists. Although they may have won the support of the bishop, this support did not always extend to other members of the secular clergy, who jealously guarded their domains of religious authority. As one Lazarist informed his superior, the congregation found itself “surrounded by clergy that is so hostile to us and the other male communities that there is no hope of finding sufficient work [in Algiers].”82 It was only the continued patronage and salaries provided by the bishop that allowed the Lazarists to expand outside of the colonial capital and to serve villages not yet staffed by parish priests.

80 CM Lazarists 108a Algiers, Letter from Lazarist Superior Dufour to superior in Paris, 31 December 1848.
Although this patronage had its origins in the Lazarists’ ability to control the far more numerous sisters of the Filles de la Charité – who largely eluded the jealousy of the secular clergy – even this desire to implement patriarchal relationships from the metropole proved more difficult to achieve in colonial Algeria. On the most localized level of power, the juxtaposition of so many missionaries from so many congregations allowed the sisters to flout the designs of the bishop and resist their assigned spiritual directors, a situation which Father Dufour protested to no end. The sisters often used the struggles between and among male missionaries and clergymen as opportunities to play different priests against each other and to carve out their own realms of autonomy in the schools and hospitals they staffed. Within an admittedly very circumscribed domain, such minute political tactics allowed female missionaries to assert a modicum of independence and overturn the gendered hierarchy of their congregation.

We can see an example of these political tactics through an examination of certain sisters of the Filles de la Charité, who worked as nurses in the civil hospital of Algiers and who nominally fell under the authority of the Lazarist Father Dufour. Despite the rules of their congregation, however, the sisters often sought out Jesuits to administer sacraments such as confession and communion. In August 1848 Dufour complained that “the confidence the sisters hold for our priests at the hospital is very limited…[and] the Jesuit father is held above us in the hearts of the Filles de la Charité.” The head of the mission in Algeria, Father Girard, began to maneuver to have the bishop remove the Jesuits from the hospital; he told Dufour, however, that the Jesuits had pushed the sisters

---

to “delay the move indefinitely.”

Nevertheless, by 1850 Girard and Dufour had succeeded in displacing the Jesuits from the hospital and allotting their state salaries to other Lazarists. Following this substitution, Girard reminded Dufour that “the bishop would like the Lazarists to recognize the favor he did them by removing the Jesuits from the hospital in order to replace them with Lazarists.”

On other occasions, sisters ironically used their very gendered identity to go over the head of their male superior and cultivate favor outside of official ecclesiastical patronage networks. In 1850, Dufour again bemoaned his continued lack of power over the sisters and confided to his superior in Paris that “here, people in high places love women, the women of our community above all. The numerous visits that are made to them, the caresses they are enveloped in, the daily compliments that they are the object of are a real test for them.”

Dufour complained that their insubordination actually overturned the sexual hierarchy so that the Lazarists “find themselves bound to the dress of a Fille de la Charité, as here [in Mustapha] our existence depends on her, our work is given to us by her; she throws it to us out of charity like a morsel of bread.” Indeed, the patronage the sisters enjoyed from a local military general allowed them to procure funding for their local primary schools independently of both the bishop and their male superior. And only once their schools received this funding would the sisters then call on the Lazarist priests to serve as confessors for themselves and their students.

In part, the sisters proved more useful than male missionaries for the government because capable laywomen remained so rare in Algeria during the middle decades of the

---

84 CM Lazarists 108a Algiers. Letter from Lazarist Superior Dufour to superior in Paris, 31 December 1848.
86 CM Lazarists 108a Algiers. Letter from Father Dufour to superior in Paris, 28 February 1850.
87 Ibid.
nineteenth century. Military generals and often even civilian officials desired very much to confide various works of education, healthcare, and poor relief to the sisters as “individual actors of public utility.” Lazarist priests, on the other hand, existed solely to provide for the spiritual needs of the sisters and thus served no secular purpose. Many Lazarists sought out other professional opportunities by working as members of the parish clergy and responding to the needs of colonists who founded new European villages outside of the major urban centers of the territory. As Dufour wrote in 1849, “If we do not find work outside [of Algiers] we will be annihilated. Our sisters are expanding without us and they will soon have closer relationships with the Jesuits, who are everywhere.”88 Indeed, during the cholera epidemic of 1848-9 in particular the minister of war chose to send Filles de la Charité to far off “agricultural colonies” to serve sick settlers.89 He even inscribed in the colonial budget a salary of 700 francs per sister for this task plus funds for travel and lodging.

Because of their usefulness to the colony the sisters began to supersede the Lazarists in the eyes of the government. Following the creation of the agricultural colonies, Dufour bemoaned the fact that “the hopes of our rulers seem to rest in this moment on the Filles de la Charité.”90 He was not far off, as in April 1850 the minister of war wrote:

The sisters have made themselves respected and loved… The local authorities have lauded their great results, and the population would be very upset to see

89 On 19 September 1848 the National Assembly approved a plan to send 20,000 Frenchmen to live and farm in 42 villages throughout Algeria. They received from the state land, houses, seeds, farming tools, draught animals and three years of cash payments. This plan met with near total failure and many settlers quickly returned to France. In 1849, 1,500 died and thousands fled during a cholera epidemic. See Sessions, By Sword and By Plow, 317.
them leave…The governor general has taken the resolution to substitute them in all agricultural colonies for the existing secular teachers and nurses.  

Father Girard actually complained that the administration gave more support to the sisters than the Lazarists because colonial officials interacted more with the sisters than the priests on a day-to-day basis, a situation that directly undermined the rules of the constitution which Girard himself had helped to draft. He suggested to his superior in Paris that “maybe it would be advantageous if we had more frequent relations with our governor and our prefect,” adding that, “in the house of Algiers we are under the protection of the sisters, who go often to the office [of the governor general] themselves.”

The increasing independence and autonomy of the sisters ultimately threatened to elevate them above the Lazarists in the hierarchy of colonial power brokers. The Lazarists began to fear that this newfound sense of autonomy had given the sisters an elevated opinion of themselves, with one priest complaining that the sisters “only respect and esteem you in proportion to the degree of authority that you have.” In 1851, the superiors in Paris dispatched a visiting inspector to Algeria in order to institute reforms in the composition of the missionary council and hem in the independence of the sisters. Although the details of these reforms remain unclear, it appears that the inspector removed the sisters even from their advisory role on the provincial council, a move that Dufour heartily endorsed. In March 1851, Dufour wrote that the new reforms “completely bound (enchainé) [the sisters] in every action, they can no longer move

---

91 CM Lazarists 108a Algiers. Letter from the minister of war to the director of affairs of Algeria, bureau of the general administration of municipal and Arab affairs, 12 April 1850.  
without the consent of the Lazarists.””94 Further, Dufour wrote that the female superior in Algeria now found her authority over her fellow sisters “completely limited,” adding that “I alone am their spiritual director [while] Girard is their temporal director.”95 Dufour hoped that the new composition of the provincial council would finally “bring peace” to the mission.

Even this new effort to subordinate the sisters, however, did not end the continued strife between male and female missionaries. Four years later, Dufour still complained that the female visiting superior (visitatrice) “shows the coldest indifference towards my authority.” He attempted to reprimand this sister, but bemoaned that “she had no intention of ceasing her actions and [said] that she would act according to her own conscience.” He further alleged that she had “incited [her fellow sisters] to revolution.”96 To bring an end to this continued flouting of the sexual hierarchy Dufour recommended the extreme measure of abolishing the position of female visiting superior altogether and placing the houses of the sisters directly and completely under the authority of the Lazarist superior alone. The administration in Paris showed itself both displeased with the insubordination of the sisters and upset at Dufour’s inability to alleviate the escalating tensions. In 1856, the motherhouse acted on Dufour’s recommendation and removed the position of female visiting superior entirely. It also opted to recall Dufour to Paris and place a new superior over the houses of the Lazarists and Filles de la Charité in the cities of Algiers and nearby Mustapha.

These measures seem to have restored a modicum of stability to the houses. Periodic complaints continued throughout the 1860s, but none as vehement as the

94 CM Lazarists 108a Algiers. Letter from Father Dufour to superior in Paris, 19 March 1851
95 Ibid.
96 CM Lazarists 108a Algiers. Letter from Father Dufour to superior in Paris, 30 April 1855.
protests voiced by Dufour. Both the Lazarists and the Filles de la Charité continued to expand their works as the settler population spread throughout Algeria. Despite their internal discord, these missionaries owed their success to the patronage they enjoyed from the military and ecclesiastical authorities. Their story reveals the “little tactics of the habitat” that female missionaries could employ to gain independence from their male superiors. It also demonstrates the limits of these tactics, as male missionaries constantly worked to uphold the gendered hierarchy inscribed in both the regulations of the congregation and the larger and more fundamental organization of the Catholic Church. To understand the benefits that continued to accrue to these missionaries despite their disagreements, it is helpful to examine in detail the plight of a missionary organization that for a variety of reasons found it increasingly difficult to secure powerful patrons.

The Jesuits in Algeria: A Mission Unravels

The Jesuits present an interesting case study because their story further demonstrates that by zooming in we can uncover fractures and fragmentations underneath a seemingly seamless missionary façade. The Jesuit missions unraveled largely because different Jesuit missionaries could not get along with one another and viewed each other with suspicion as competing power brokers in this land of opportunity. Further, the Jesuits struggled to define the very nature of the mission in Algeria. The Jesuit hierarchy in Lyon and Rome – like the civilian government in Paris – saw Algeria as a simple extension of the metropole, and as such wanted to run Jesuit establishments there from afar. Conversely, the missionaries themselves – like the French military – saw Algeria as

---

97 Again, this phrase comes from Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*. 
a land apart and wanted the freedom to run their mission independently of their superiors in Europe. Indeed, the liminal state of the mission stemmed directly from the liminal space that Algeria itself occupied in the larger imperial landscape.

The Jesuits understood well the need to curry favor with the bishop and they hatched ambitious schemes to win his support. By 1848, the congregation had a residence of priests in Algiers that ran two nearby orphanages at Bouffarick and Ben Aknoun as well as a secondary school at Oran. Initially, the Jesuits thought the political changes brought by the Revolution of 1848 would allow them to expand their works in the colony. The visiting superior for all the missions in Algeria, the affable if timid Father Reynaud, hoped that the new French constitution would deny state salaries to official clergy and thus render the Jesuits “eminently useful, [as] Monseigneur [Pavy] would lose the greatest portion of his clergy, and as for many of them…he would not lose anything important.”

Another Jesuit who oversaw the residence in Algiers, Father Jordan, also understood the necessity of cultivating favor with the bishop. “In France,” he wrote, “one does not understand enough that everything is for us based on these intimacies and relations with the bishop.” Jordan worried that the head of the two Jesuit orphanages, the domineering and assertive Father Brumauld, tried to remain too independent of the bishop and to “fight the power of the bishop with his own power” (recall that in the mid-1840s Brumauld had enjoyed the patronage of Governor General Bugeaud). Jordan put the matter at its bluntest when he wrote, “I am nothing without the bishop. And when I say ‘I,’ I mean the entire mission plain and simple.”

Jordan thus hatched a scheme to win the bishop’s patronage by presenting him with a donation of 10,000 francs that he

---

98 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1001. Letter from Reynaud to superior, 31 May 1849.
99 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1001. Letter from Jordan to superior, 30 December 1849.
100 Ibid.
received from the Propagation de la Foi to fund an “Arab seminary” in Constantine.

“Such an act would leave [Pavy] grateful to the Jesuits forever,” he reasoned, adding that “if we dare take such a decisive step Algeria will be ours.”

The Arab seminary, however, proved a great disappointment. The government tolerated it at first because the Jesuits agreed only to recruit indigenous orphans who had lost both parents. Its failure, rather, stemmed from internal disagreements among competing Jesuit superiors. Apparently the Propagation de la Foi thought the seminary had already begun functioning. Jordan wrote to his superiors in Rome to ask how to respond to the Propagation. “Of the 1,000 embarrassing questions,” he wrote, “where is the seminary? Who are the seminarians? Where have the funds gone?” He accused the Jesuit superior of the two orphanages at Bouffarick and Ben Aknoun, Father Brumauld, of siphoning the money for his own works and of sabotaging other Jesuit establishments. Jordan further explained that he could not tell the Propagation that “the men designated by the superior cannot get along with Father Brumauld…that the Arab seminary consists of an Arab coffee shop with a couple of Jesuit fathers…that while we await results the 10,000 francs will be used to pay the debts of [the orphanage at] Ben Aknoun.”

By 1853, Brumauld had succeeded in transplanting the handful of indigenous “seminarians” to his own orphanages and thus shuttering the misbegotten venture entirely. Within a year the remaining indigenous orphans had left his establishments and returned to live with their extended families.

After having alienated the Propagation de la Foi, Brumauld moved to gain financial support for his orphanages from the French government. He did so by switching

---

101 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1001. Letter from Jordan to superior, 30 December 1849.
102 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1001. Letter from Jordan to superior, 5 June 1850.
the focus of his civilizing mission – away from potential Arab seminarians and towards European children themselves. Brumauld initially opened the orphanages by transplanting 200 orphans from Paris to Algiers “to aid in the colonization of Algeria.” To replenish his orphanages Brumauld devised a strategy to round up additional orphans across France and resettle them in Algeria.103 In 1854, he wrote a letter to Emperor Napoleon III in which he asserted that the climate of Algeria had rendered the original 200 orphans “robust, as they never would have been in Paris,” especially in agricultural labor.104 He claimed that the glut of would-be proprietors in Algeria combined with the shortage of day laborers put the colony “in a veritable and dangerous state of crisis.” The administration had granted so many land titles, he claimed, that the grand proprietors could no longer find day laborers to cultivate their fields. Brumauld added that the smaller proprietors typically had no idea how to run an estate. He thus proposed to rid France of its costly orphans to “change the destiny of Algeria and provide it with a large working and farming population.” Ultimately, Brumauld claimed his plan would transform these orphans “from dangerous and ruinous dregs into precious citizens.”105 Brumauld spent three years lobbying the government unsuccessfully to fund his scheme.

In the meantime, attendance at the orphanages continued to decline. Other Jesuits blamed Brumauld’s personality for this failure. One Jesuit lamented that “for two years we have done [the orphans] very little and superficial good that contact with the world would have soon brought itself.”106 Father Reynaud accused Brumauld of being “overly

103 According to Brumauld in the eight years of the two orphanages’ existence, they had housed a total of 897 children from ages 6 to 21. Of this number 36 had died, 328 left, and 533 had seen out the duration of their stay.
104 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1001. Letter from Brumauld to superior, 8 December 1854.
105 Ibid.
106 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1001. Anonymous letter from Jesuit to his superior, No date.
authoritarian towards his inferiors, which is also the cause of our difficulty with the administration."

In 1858, the Jesuits dispatched a visiting inspector, Father Gautrelet, to ascertain the situation. Gautrelet had little sympathy for any of his fellow Jesuits in Algeria and wrote that the children “think we exploit them for our profit [and] do not like us much.” (Indeed, another Jesuit claimed that “our house has taken the aspect of a prison and we have become the guards.”) Gautrelet accused Brumauld of prioritizing the exploitation of land and labor over the moralization of children. In a passage of extreme candor, he confided to his superior:

The orphanages have lost their reputation. Brumauld has exhausted his influence: bad with the governor general, bad with the prefect and the municipal councils, seen in Paris as a utopian, he can hardly even give to the orphans the minimal service he has rendered up until now. He is too rude, too imperious, and too exaggerated in his requirements. He is hardly better with the bishop than with the civil administration. He is more feared by our own personnel than he is esteemed. Reynaud does not dare to resist him and weakens before this iron will.

Gautrelet recommended that the Jesuits abandon the orphanages entirely. He also questioned the prudence of Brumauld’s plan to resettle French orphans in Algeria, asking if “the mother country really wants to colonize Africa by means of its orphans.” In this instance, the success of the two orphanages declined precipitously because their superior failed entirely to meet any of the requirements for securing patronage in Algeria: he lost the support of the military, civil, and ecclesiastical authorities; he lost the support of his own superiors; and he failed to maintain a good reputation for his establishments in the eyes of the settler population.

---

107 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1002. Letter from Reynaud to superior, 3 March 1857.
108 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1002. Letter from Francis Gautrelet to superior, 21 February 1858.
109 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1001. Anonymous letter from Jesuit to superior, 8 December 1854.
110 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1002. Letter from Francis Gautrelet to superior, 21 February 1858.
111 Ibid.
This failure of leadership engendered a discussion over the very nature of the mission in Algeria. Gautrelet criticized the missionaries by writing that “religious spirit and orderly discipline are more or less lacking in all our African houses; there is hardly any morality.” He then argued that, just as Algeria constituted an extension of France and could be run from the metropole, the Jesuits too could run the Algerian mission from Europe. He went so far as to question whether the establishments in Algeria even constituted a mission. A true mission, he argued, must procure its own resources rather than rely on funds from its motherhouse, while true missionaries “devote themselves to the mission for life” and do not depend on the motherhouse to replenish their personnel every year. The proximity of Algeria to Europe rendered the mission a revolving door for curious Jesuits. In this sense, he asserted, “Africa for us is not in the rigorous sense of the word a mission.”

For Reynaud, on the contrary, Algeria constituted a missionary land plain and simple. Of course, as superior of the mission in Algeria Reynaud’s status as a power broker depended entirely on this assertion. He chided his superiors for thinking they could “know how to direct our affairs as easily as one can do for the affairs of a [metropolitan] province.” He summed up his position by stating:

One can never make a society that does not even have a half-century of existence resemble effectively one whose origin stretches back centuries. If a mission consists of moving from ordinary conditions of Christian society into extraordinary conditions based on dates rather than distance, then we are certainly in a missionary land. The proof is in the repugnance of a great number of our Jesuits to even come to this country. Many ask if they have been sent here by punishment.

---

112 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1002. Letter from Reynaud to superior, 11 May 1860.
113 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1002. Letter from Gautrelet to superior, 26 March 1859.
114 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1002. Letter from Reynaud to superior, 18 August 1858.
Reynaud cared less about the physical distance between Algeria and Europe and more about the temporal and developmental lag between the two localities. In this sense, his argument mimicked that of the European settlers, who saw native Algerians as too underdeveloped to enjoy the political rights of the metropole; at the same time, however, Reynaud saw the *European* population of Algeria as equally underdeveloped and in need of a civilizing mission.

Indeed, Reynaud blamed the underdeveloped state of the settler community on the failure of French colonial rule writ large. “We follow step by step the progression of a colony,” he wrote, “a difficult work in its own right, more difficult still when it falls into the hands of a nation which does not have a taste for it.” He then compared the Jesuit superiors in Rome to Emperor Napoleon III, who wanted to govern the country at his whim based on an idealized vision that did not at all correspond to reality. In doing so the emperor constrained the authority of the governor general, who had far better knowledge of the situation on the ground. In the same way, the metropolitan superiors constrained Reynaud from effectively running the mission on his own. Reynaud accused the Jesuit superiors in Europe of “no longer having the taste for this slow and patient work of Christian colonization just as France does not have the taste for contributing to the material development of Algeria.”

In this sense, again, Reynaud built upon existing settler critiques of the overreach of metropolitan officials in their hapless effort to govern Algeria. Historian Gavin Murray-Miller has recently argued that “the colonial administration’s supposed disregard

---

116 For the policies of Napoleon III, specifically his desire to create an Arab Kingdom, see Annie-Rey Goldzeiguer, *Le Royaume Arabe*.
117 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1002. Letter from Reynaud to superior, 18 August 1858.
for the needs and interests of the settler community became a centerpiece of *colon* opposition as reformers held the government accountable for the colony’s sluggish economic development.”

In their effort to secure independence from metropolitan authorities, missionaries, like their secular *colon* counterparts, portrayed themselves as uniquely positioned to use their more intimate knowledge of local conditions to work for the benefit of Algeria, though, to be sure, an Algeria in which the native population remained conspicuously absent. Finally, if missionaries closely resembled civilian settlers in their desire for autonomy and the competition they engaged in with one another to secure this autonomy, they still differed from the rest of the settler population in the ultimate vision that they held for the French territory. Missionaries alone preached a brand of the civilizing mission for which Catholicism proved the most salient characteristic.

By 1865, the Jesuit mission constituted a mere shadow of its former self: Reynaud had lost his battle and been recalled to Marseille; the mission had abandoned hopes of establishing a secondary school in Algiers; it had closed the orphanage at Bouffarick and transferred the remaining orphans to Ben Aknoun; and enrollment at the school in Oran had plummeted and its closure seemed imminent. The Jesuits still had enough priests to staff their residence in Algiers, but, in an ironic twist that brings this chapter full circle, the residence began to suffer from internal divisions that split the congregation along lines of ethnicity. On his tour of Algeria in 1866, Reynaud, now a visiting inspector, remarked that the Jesuit priests had grouped into competing factions between the Spanish *Confrérie de la Vierge* and the Italian *Confrérie de St Joseph*. “The diverse nationalities

---

in the house enter into excessive rivalries,” he wrote, adding that they “appear ridiculous in the eyes of the people.”119 The head of the residence reported that the Italian faction had nearly come to blows with the Spanish faction after the Italians proposed to hold separate collections in mass for the Spanish and the Italian parishioners. The Spanish rejected this plan due to their less numerous followers (and thus their smaller collections). The superior noted that in Algeria above all “we have a great need…to encourage unity [while] the factions only create rivalries, divisions, and hostilities.”120 Indeed, the Jesuits’ attempt to win the favor of the military administration by using Italian and Spanish-speaking priests to unify the settler population had actually backfired and only sown divisions within the congregation itself. Not only did the Jesuits fail to assist the administration in tying foreign colonists to the French regime, they also only accentuated ethnic rifts for all the settlers to see. In doing so, they revealed the potential dangers inherent in the military’s policy of using Catholic missionaries to cultivate a cohesive settler community. When the Second Empire fell in 1870, and a civilian government replaced the military regime in Algeria, missionaries would increasingly find their position under threat.

Conclusion

In the end, if the Jesuits failed, many other missionary congregations succeeded in spreading their schools and hospital services throughout the colony in the period before 1870. The reasons behind the successes and failures of missionaries reveal much about the larger position and purpose of Algeria within the European colonial imaginary during the period of the Second Empire. First, as the missionary archives make abundantly clear,

119 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1002. Letter from Reynaud to superior, 16 June 1866.
120 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 1002. Letter from Laurencot to superior, 9 October 1866.
many missionaries came to Algeria for the same reason as other colonists did: to establish themselves as power brokers and to carve out positions of authority that remained closed to them in the metropole. It was not least this desire that ultimately led to competition and division between missionary congregations and within individual missionary orders. The missionaries who achieved the greatest amount of success were those, like the Lazarists, who won the support of highly placed patrons. Female missionaries, meanwhile, were more likely to find patrons outside of traditional ecclesiastical networks of authority. By appealing to secular or unauthorized religious authorities they could secure their own niches of autonomy that overturned the gendered hierarchy of Catholic religious orders.

Secondly, as the language exchanged between missionaries and metropolitan Jesuits makes clear, Jesuits in Algeria, like their more successful Lazarist counterparts, not only struggled with one another and with hostile colonial officials; they also worked to assert their autonomy from *metropolitan* organs of control, most notably their own motherhouses. This autonomy was important and even necessary, they came to argue, because the metropole lacked the critical know-how for navigating the cultural particularities of Algeria – a colony they framed as exceptional and distinct from France. Notably, Algeria’s distinctness from the metropole was borne *not* of the cultural difference between indigenous and European populations. What made Algeria so particular and missionary work so urgent was the need to *create difference* between populations whose dissimilarities were *not yet* clear enough. After failing to make headway in their attempts to assimilate native Algerians to European cultural norms, missionaries changed strategies and positioned themselves in the vanguard of a
movement to spread civilization to the European settler population alone, a move which would actually better distinguish Europeans from their colonial subjects.

Further, and at the same time, missionary success depended on mimicking the strategies employed by the wider community of settlers, who struggled either to work on the outskirts of metropolitan legal confines, within what Frederick Cooper has described as the “crevices of [colonial] authority,” or to justify their importance to metropolitan officials by touting their superior knowledge of Algeria and its inhabitants. Although all of these settlers relied on seemingly premodern networks of patronage to climb the colonial hierarchy, they also hoped to use these networks to create their own version of modernity as an alternative to the ones they perceived as developing in the metropole. For missionaries, as the next two chapters show in great detail, this aim entailed the creation of a Catholic modernity that they saw as increasingly foreclosed in a secularizing France.

In the end, however, Algeria’s very demographic peculiarity allowed a number of competing actors to envision vastly divergent plans for the colony’s future, with male and female missionaries, settlers, and metropolitan officials all struggling to implement their own visions for French Algeria, a relatively new colony in this period and one whose central importance to the hexagon was still in the making. As these case studies of Catholic missionaries reveal, competition among ambitious settlers over the exact type of modernity they hoped to create in Algeria proved the rule, and cooperation the exception. It was perhaps this competition that ultimately undermined visions of colonial assimilation, not only those directed towards the native Algerian community, but also

---

121 Frederick Cooper writes of colonized subjects maintaining a semblance of autonomy by living “within the crevices of [colonial] authority.” Frederick Cooper, Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 4.
those that aimed to create a supposedly civilized and acculturated settler community – a fiction, as we have seen, but a goal that nevertheless remained central to the legitimacy of empire.

To be sure, despite its many unintended consequences, the military’s unofficial policy of colonial association through missionary work, while not a total success, neither proved a total failure. Missionaries did provide for the spiritual needs of a number of foreign colonists who continued to practice their religion, and in doing so they typically further tied these colonists and their families to the colony on a permanent basis. We must keep in mind, however, that in this effort missionaries also further divided the Catholic foreign population from their largely religiously indifferent, and increasingly anticlerical, French neighbors. The onset of civilian rule in 1870-71 and the shift in emphasis towards assimilation as an anticlerical French paradigm would lead to widespread unrest and threatened to tear apart the diverse settler population. Vocal protests came especially from the foreign population that remained excluded from positions of political power. Missionaries and settlers alike would return to the themes of moralization and the fears of vagabondage and idleness in order to plead their case to metropolitan and colonial officials.

Even throughout the 1870s, however, missionaries found willing patrons in the form of the civil governor general, who rather confusingly continued to be chosen from among the ranks of the military until 1877. Only after this time would the civilian rule of law slowly begin to trump extra-legal military rule when it came to the administration of missionaries and foreign settlers. Finally, over the course of the 1870s missionaries also progressively lost the patronage of their most important ally: the new archbishop of
Algiers. This archbishop succeeded in bringing his chosen missionaries completely under his authority by taking the unprecedented step of founding his own missionary congregation created specifically for Africa and run entirely by the archbishop himself.
Chapter Three

The Decline of Patronage and the “Long Decade” of 1867-1883

“Our freedom of belief must not be trampled under foot in Algeria in the presence of the Muslims… as here more so than elsewhere Catholicism must be the national religion of France.”

-Letter from the archbishop of Algeria to the minister of war, 19 December 1870.

“The children of foreign colonists will only truly become Frenchmen through the institution of the school, and they will only go to schools where their parents can find their religious sentiments satisfied.”

-Petition from the archbishop of Algeria to the Government of National Defense, December 1870.

“I told [the governor general] with tears in my eyes that we all as Frenchmen feel deeply humiliated by his conduct… because he is the highest authority in the colony and he has allowed his most formal orders to be vilified, spat upon by a horde of demagogues, and that in my eyes this is the ultimate degradation of my unhappy country… But he said very painfully that he could not set the country ablaze and spill blood over the question of schools.”

-Letter from the visiting superior of the Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes to his provincial assistant, 4 May 1872.

In the years surrounding the proclamation of the Third Republic in 1870, metropolitan and colonial leaders continued to struggle over how to govern the European population of the colony as much as the conquered North African population. The religiosity of the European foreigners provided the main impetus for metropolitan officials to refrain from fully assimilating Algeria to France on a juridical level and from dispensing entirely with the quintessentially imperial position of governor general, even

1 FEC NL 460 No 1. Letter from Archbishop Lavigerie to Minister Crémieux, 19 December 1870.
3 FEC NL 460 No 1. Letter from Frère Aimarus to his assistant, 4 May 1872.
after the supposed switch to civilian rule in Algeria in 1870–71. This hesitancy stemmed both from the foreigners’ perceived importance for consolidating the hegemony of the settler community and from their continued lack of political rights. Because they could not express their will through democratic institutions, the governor general took it upon himself to use his own authority to ensure foreigners could continue to rely on him as a more personal, extralegal outlet through which to ensure their religious sentiments were met.

To compound matters, the definitions of and discourses surrounding the concepts of assimilation and association in this period rose to unprecedented levels of confusion as political upheavals in the metropole and the colony rendered increasingly opaque what exactly it meant to be French and, after 1870, to be republican. Gavin Murray-Miller has recently described “the dearth of scholarship examining the relationship between French republicanism and the colonies prior to the Third Republic.” Murray-Miller highlights the fact that republicans who applied democratic ideals inclusively in France easily adapted these principles to exclude Muslims in Algeria. At the same time, by eliding the fact that most foreigners also remained excluded from Algerian politics, Murray-Miller in a way perpetuates the dichotomous conception of colonial society that he seeks to break down – one that posits a clear division between colonized and colonizer.

---

4 Foreigners in Algeria would continue to lack full political rights until a law of 26 June 1889 granted automatic citizenship to the children of all “Europeans” born in Algeria. For the law, see Prochaska, Making Algeria French. For the racialized conception of “Europeans” (most of whom had never set foot in Europe), see Todd Shepard, The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France (2006).

5 For a detailed discussion of legislation surrounding French nationality from 1789 to the present, see Patrick Weil, How to Be French. Nationality in the Making Since 1789, translated by Catherine Porter (Raleigh: Duke University Press, 2008). Again, for the classic discussion of assimilation and association towards colonial subjects see Betts, Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory.

In Algeria, moreover, it was church officials before and after 1870 who argued for the more inclusive definition of French republicanism, one that invited all believers regardless of citizenship status into the democratic fold. If Catholic foreigners won representation in local assemblies, church officials reasoned, then they could work democratically to stifle the anticlerical policies championed by the French minority. In the end, however, self-defined radicals ultimately succeeded in applying their own conception of republicanism in a more narrow and exclusive manner – one that disenfranchised roughly 98% of the total population in the territory (and roughly 75% of the European population, including foreigners and women). This struggle over who held the discursive and political authority to legitimately articulate republican belonging in Algeria began even before the fall of the Second Empire and had causes completely separate from those in the metropole. It derived rather from the particular exigencies of imperial rule and, specifically, the diverse religious and racial demographics that defined Algeria.

The period 1867 to 1883 witnessed two crises that profoundly shook the territory of French Algeria. First, in 1867 the greatest famine in Algerian history caused and combined with a cholera outbreak to kill as many as one million native Algerians. No sooner had the epidemic subsided than on 4 September 1870 the Second Empire fell to the Prussian army and a Committee of National Defense in Paris proclaimed the advent of the Third French Republic. By 1871, prodded by French-Algerian deputies in the newly elected National Assembly, officials in the Republic moved to institute full civilian

---

7 Here, I derive the idea of discursive authority from François Furet’s interpretation of the French Revolution as primarily a struggle over who held the right to public speech, or discourse. See François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, translated by Elborg Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1981).
rule in Algeria. This transition above all entailed the replacement of a military governor general with a civil governor general, who would work to facilitate the policies of the colonists and implement a full transfer of power from military to civilian officials.

For many historians, this transfer of power signaled a decisive shift in the history of French Algeria. Osama Abi-Mershed expresses a general consensus among historians when he writes that “the uneasy and uncertain relationship between the civil and military powers in North Africa was not effectively resolved until 1871.” An analysis of the political conflict over missionary work, however, reveals that even in the decade after the advent of the Third Republic civilian leaders in Algeria remained unable to completely cast off the yoke of military rule due to continued divisions over the ultimate purpose of the territory and the best way to go about governing its vast and diverse European population. What emerged in the 1870s did not resemble a transfer of authority so much as the failure to create a consensus over who actually held authority in the colony and on what legal foundation this authority was based.

In addition to having to negotiate their way through these two critical events, missionaries in Algeria now had the delicate task of appeasing two new sets of actors that emerged on the colonial scene in this period: Archbishop Charles Lavigerie and the radical municipal councils of Algeria. Both of these power brokers saw Catholic missionaries as capable of either transmitting or subverting their own authority in Algeria and they accordingly worked to bring missionaries completely under their own control. To be sure, they hoped either to use or dispense with missionaries in order to enact entirely conflicting visions of modernity in colonial Algeria. Whereas Lavigerie thought

---

8 Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity*, 56. Julien too wrote that “the hostility to the regime of the sword did not cease to grow until the civil insurrection of 1870.” See Julien, *La Conquête*, 221.
he could harness specific missionaries to transmit his own religious authority throughout the territory, the municipal councils saw missionaries as sources of religious subversion that only hindered the extension of their authority as newly-installed secular power brokers in Algeria.

The first of these new actors, Charles Martial Allemand Lavigerie (1825-1892), arrived in Algiers on 27 March 1867 following the death of Bishop Louis Pavy. On 25 July 1866 the government in France transformed the bishopric of Algeria into an archbishopric that now oversaw subordinate bishoprics in Constantine, Oran, and Algiers. Perhaps best known for his crusade to end the slave trade throughout Africa, Lavigerie originally inherited an archdiocese that contained 187 parishes, 273 diocesan priests, 54 missionary priests, 70 missionary brothers, and 800 missionary sisters. He held his position until his death on 25 November 1892, by which time he would also oversee, now as Cardinal Lavigerie, the apostolic vicariate of the new French protectorate of Tunisia, with its seat in Carthage.

Lavigerie both built on past precedents and vastly expanded the authority of his office. Most importantly, he succeeded where his predecessors had failed and used his domineering personality to bring missionaries and their work almost entirely under his control and oversight. He accomplished this aim by immediately creating his own missionary society, the Missionnaires de Notre Dame d’Afrique (better known as the Pères Blancs due to their distinctive white robes), which he hoped would lead the crusade against Islam and paganism throughout all of Africa. Although Lavigerie would periodically support other missionary orders in Algeria in the face of government

---

9 Renault, Cardinal Lavigerie, 80-81.
opposition, he also ensured that all funds coming from the government and outside organizations like the Propagation de la Foi and the Propaganda Fide went entirely to his own congregation. In doing so, Lavigerie ultimately proved a poor patron for all other missionaries and did little to ameliorate the situation of those persecuted by increasingly anticlerical authorities. To be sure, he did at times offer some congregations, most notably the Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes (FEC), moral and (however fleetingly) financial support.10

Secondly, missionaries encountered consistent opposition from radical municipal councils throughout the territory. This opposition began in 1867, when the municipal council of Algiers willfully misinterpreted a circular issued by the governor general – a circular that had as its intent religious toleration – in order to expel missionary teachers from all public schools in the city. Following the proclamation of the Third Republic on 4 September 1870, this offensive against missionary teachers spread to all the other major European cities of Algeria.11 An analysis of the ensuing, decade-long struggle between missionaries and municipal councils contradicts the notion that the onset of the Third Republic marked the final transition to civilian rule and the full assimilation of Algeria to the metropole; it also proves that well into the 1870s a unified settler community with a

---

10 Although Catholic historians like François Renault have portrayed Lavigerie as the ultimate champion of the Catholic faith in Algeria, by diverting all resources to his own missionary society in the mostly failed effort to convert Muslims to Christianity Lavigerie only made it more difficult for all other missionary societies to continue their work with Europeans of Algeria. For the pro Lavigerie argument see Renault, *Cardinal Lavigerie*.

11 This incident has been recounted in a brief 12-page article by Yvonne Turin. This chapter will expand on her argument and also, by extending its focus to include the period before and after the uprising, draw rather different conclusions. It will also go into the threat that the situation posed for the larger system of colonial rule. See Yvonne Turin, “La commune d’Alger et ses écoles en 1871. Un problème de laïcité coloniale,” *Rivue d’Histoire et de civilisation du Maghreb* 8 (Alger: Publ. Fac. Lettres, 1970): 83-95. For the tumult caused in France following the proclamation of the Third Republic and the advent of the Paris Commune see Robert Tombs, *The War Against Paris, 1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
common vision for the future of Algeria had yet to emerge. By analyzing religious and educational policies (or lack thereof) we see that into the 1880s the political and juridical status of the territory remained mired in confusion. Further, while Catholics and the anticlerical laity both saw Algeria as an area in which to construct an alternate modernity, they had vastly differing ideas of what that modernity entailed and how to go about constructing it.

The Arab Orphanage and the Competition for Patronage

The famine of 1867-68 and the ensuing cholera epidemic created one of the largest demographic catastrophes in Algerian history. Annie Rey-Goldzeiguer estimated that 500,000 people lost their lives over this two-year period, while the geographer Djilali Sari puts the figure at more than one million. In the short term, Algerians’ susceptibility to cholera in 1868 resulted from widespread famine and starvation, themselves caused by a combination of the invasion of hordes of locusts and one of the worst droughts in recorded history. Over the longer term, however, scholars have traced the causes directly to French imperial policy. Decades of war had ravaged the countryside, while colonial speculators had snatched up what remained of the best farmland. Although Napoleon III drafted the sénatus-consulte of 1863 to designate and protect tribal lands from the rapaciousness of French speculators, in reality disgruntled colonists ensured that the ruling remained largely unapplied throughout the remainder of the Second Empire. As a

---

12 For this argument see Rey-Goldzeiguer, Le Royaume arabe.
14 Ruedy, Modern Algeria, 74-76. The constitution issued by Napoleon III on 14 January 1852 gave to the Senate the right to rule all the colonies by decrees known as senatus-consultes. No specific text was ever drafted for Algeria, so throughout the Second Empire it was ruled by imperial decrees alone, except for the two senatus-consultes of 1863 and 1865 (discussed below). See Julien, La Conquête, 396.
result, tribal groups had for years desperately resorted to emptying their silos just to survive. At the time Europeans proved all too eager to blame the famine on Muslims’ alleged indolence, but as Kamel Kateb has written, “the existence of the silos demonstrates that…the famine did not stem from the ‘legendary lack of foresight’ in the indigenous society. These reserve silos were a means specifically of reducing the impact of drought, locusts, famines, and epidemics.”

An analysis of the religious policies surrounding the famine and epidemic reveals how Archbishop Lavigerie moved from bestowing patronage on an already existing missionary order to withdrawing his patronage from this same order when he succeeded in establishing his own congregation and installing himself as superior. This maneuver set a precedent that continued throughout the next two decades of his tenure. Lavigerie’s correspondence with FEC superior Frère Aimarus and the frères’ correspondence with one another demonstrate the great lengths to which missionaries went in their attempts to appease the archbishop. As such, this correspondence testifies to the extent of Lavigerie’s power, even during the early years of his 25-year tenure in Algeria.

The famine carried off entire families and left thousands of indigenous orphans and abandoned children in its wake. As historian Bertrand Taithe has written, “no one knew where the refugees came from nor where they might go but, every morning, corpses were discovered in the villages near Algiers and in the suburbs of all the colonial cities.” Lavigerie saw the famine as an opportunity to begin the long-desired project of converting Algeria’s Muslims to Catholicism. The situation proved especially promising.

---


16 Bertrand Taithe, “Algerian Orphans and Colonial Christianity in Algeria, 1866-1939,” *French History* 20/3 (2006), 246. Taithe only examines the orphanages after Lavigerie transferred their control away from the FEC and to the Pères Blancs.
because orphaned children had no living parents to protest their conversion. The move also came at a propitious time in the history of the colony, as the new governor general and future first president of the Third Republic, Patrice de MacMahon (1808-1893), arrived with the (rather utopian) vision of mixing indigenous and European children to achieve the gradual “fusion of the races,” though not necessarily by conversion to Catholicism.\footnote{This fusion entailed implementing MacMahon’s own peculiar and nebulous policy of assimilation by intermixing European and indigenous children in the school, so that the latter could better understand the superiority of French culture and willfully embrace it. This was not fully a policy of assimilation, as MacMahon planned to provide every student with French education, but also to allot time for religious instruction of the student’s choosing. In theory, this fusion would create a truly interracial society, though only in the distant future. In practice, because it relied on the assumption that Algerians would inevitably come to see their culture as inferior, it never gained any traction. For the policy of the fusion of the races see Yvonne Turin, \textit{Affrontements culturels dans l’algérie coloniale: écoles, médecines, religion, 1830-1880} (Paris: Maspero, 1971), 208-217 and elsewhere throughout. MacMahon, though the first president of the Third Republic, won election as a legitimist in 1873 and subsequently attempted to reinstall the monarchy in the “16 May 1877 crisis.”} 

By the spring of 1868 Lavigerie had collected 800 orphans to raise in his own orphanage. The military had originally housed these children in tents around military barracks, but their ever increasing number and their high mortality rates in the camp (1,000 children had already died after three months) rendered the authorities more than willing to pass them and their expenses onto the new archbishop, who raised funds from the faithful and even succeeded in setting up an “adopt an orphan” campaign to gain further resources from charitable Catholics in France.\footnote{Taithe, 248.} To oversee these orphans Lavigerie initially solicited the help of the FEC. These frères had arrived in Algeria in 1853 after a presidential decree of 24 July 1852 granted them permission “to found and direct schools in the French possessions of North Africa.”\footnote{FEC NL 460 No 1. Decree by President Louis Napoleon, 24 July 1852.} The FEC appealed in particular to Lavigerie and his secular clergy because, as teaching frères and not priests,
these missionaries could not themselves administer sacraments and thus did not incite the jealousy of other missionaries or priests in the territory. Indeed, like missionary sisters, the frères too relied on religious or secular priests to administer the sacraments to them. This lack of competition encouraged their expansion in the colony and by 1860 they had opened primary schools for boys in every major European city of Algeria, where they educated an estimated 4,500 students at no tuition cost, rendering them especially appealing to the territory’s impoverished foreign population.20

Lavigerie initially hoped to use the frères to marginalize the work of another group of missionaries: the Jesuits. In this respect, Lavigerie continued the anti-Jesuit stance of his predecessor, telling his two subordinate bishops in 1868 “not to have anything to do with the Jesuits, [for] they will take everything and leave you with nothing but the shirt on your back.”21 Lavigerie largely succeeded where Bishop Pavy had failed, as over the course of the next decade ecclesiastical and state persecution resulted in the Jesuits losing control of their last remaining establishments in Algeria.22 Indeed, Lavigerie saw the Jesuits’ foundering orphanage at Ben Aknoun, with its large already-existing workshops, 17 hectares of vineyards, and 30 hectares of arable land, as the ideal spot to found his “Arab agricultural orphanage.” In February 1868, Lavigerie proposed that the FEC purchase the property from the Jesuits for 50,000 francs. Lavigerie promised

20 FEC NL 461 No 1. Notes on the establishment of Frères des Ecoles Chrétienes in Algeria, 24 August 1859.
22 In 1880 the French government dissolved the Jesuits and prohibited them from teaching in France, but according to Ralph Gibson by 1890 the Jesuits “began a cautious return” and returned almost in full by 1900 (they were again dissolved by the 1901 law on associations), Ralph Gibson. A Social History of French Catholicism (New York: Routledge Kegan & Paul, 1989), 104.
that by teaching the orphans to harvest the vineyards the FEC would easily recoup the expense.\textsuperscript{23}

Despite Lavigerie’s desire to bestow the work of the Arab orphanage on the FEC, the visiting superior, Frère Aimarus, initially appeared reluctant to accept the offer. In addition to the FEC’s already precarious financial situation and their unfamiliarity with the Arab language, Aimarus feared that work with indigenous orphans could incite charges of proselytism from unfriendly secular authorities, who feared the political repercussions that could result from religious affronts to Muslim parents. This accusation, as we saw in the last chapter, could lead to their expulsion from the colony completely. Further, a handful of municipal councils in Algeria had already begun to express openly their anticlericalism, and Aimarus worried that assuming control of such a visible public project would only exacerbate these sentiments. In this respect, Aimarus perceived correctly that most settlers in Algeria attached little import in the project of spreading European values to North African children.

Ultimately, however, Aimarus saw more benefits than drawbacks in accepting Lavigerie’s offer. First, despite anxieties over proselytism, Governor General MacMahon had already approved Lavigerie’s orphanage and his proposal to staff it with the FEC. Second, fear over rising anticlericalism among civilian authorities in fact led Aimarus to see the orphanage as a way to bolster the FEC’s presence in Algeria if the municipal councils succeeded in expelling the frères from public primary schools in the European cities of the territory. As he wrote to his superior in Paris on 2 March 1868, “an establishment of this type is perhaps the only certain way…of saving our communal

\textsuperscript{23} FEC NL 463 No 1. Letter from Frère Aimarus to his superior, 29 February 1868.
schools.”²⁴ Aimarus went so far as to tell his superior that “it seems to me that this question is one of life or death for us in Algeria [as] our communal schools only hang by a thread.”²⁵ If they did lose control of their communal schools, the orphanage could offer them an alternative source of public utility in the eyes of the military and allow the frères to continue to work in the territory and to receive salaries directly from the colonial budget.

Equally important, Aimarus saw the orphanage as a perfect opportunity to secure the patronage of the new archbishop. Indeed, when the municipal councils did attempt to secularize the public schools, Lavigerie’s support would prove decisive. At the same time, Lavigerie had a reputation as a domineering personality with a short temper. When Aimarus told Lavigerie that he would have to ask the advice of his superior in Paris before accepting his offer, Aimarus wrote that “Lavigerie left me in a wretched state, as he wants the matter to be decided right now,” before adding, “the fact is that he appears to have all of Algeria in his hands.” Aimarus told his superior that Lavigerie possessed enormous influence both with the emperor and the Vatican and that he:

has too much generosity to abandon those who put themselves in his hands, but the least defiance or the smallest deviation from his will infuriates him…[The orphanage’s] failure would not leave any stain on our reputation [but] if Monseigneur succeeds without us his opinion of the need he has for us will likely be significantly modified.²⁶

It was this need to secure such a valuable patron in view of current and potential future battles with secular authorities that ultimately swayed the superior in Paris to accept a modified version of Lavigerie’s offer and assume control over the new orphanage. In the end, Lavigerie himself leased the property from the Jesuits for 15,000 francs (with the

---

²⁴ FEC NL 463 No 1. Letter from Frère Aimarus to his superior in Paris, 2 March 1868.
²⁵ Ibid.
²⁶ FEC NL 463 No 1. Letter from Frère Aimarus to his superior in Paris, 29 February 1868.
hope of purchasing it entirely in the near future) and ordered the Jesuits to send their handful of remaining European orphans to other establishments in Algeria and France. Two Jesuits alone remained at the orphanage to administer sacraments to the frères.  

On 13 April 1868, 12 frères from the FEC arrived at the new Arab orphanage at Ben Aknoun to, as Aimarusphrased it, “contribute to the regeneration of this bastardized race.” Lavigerie allotted each frère the paltry salary of 400 francs per year, while again assuring them that soon the products of the children’s labor and agricultural work would more than suffice to ensure their existence. Despite the small salary, Aimarus confided to his superior that “in the material aspect we lack nothing” and that their lodging and board were superior to what was found in all the other missions of the colony. They enjoyed a glass of wine and coffee in the morning, a plate of meat in the afternoon, and a full dinner in the evening. As Aimarus wrote, “Monseigneur understands that breathing the same air as the Arabs requires more substantial nourishment.” In April 1868 the orphanage counted 320 children, and by June this number had almost doubled. The children, one frère remarked, exhibited “a submissiveness that our French children would not recognize whatsoever,” a comment that likely reflected the children’s fragile emotional state after the loss of their parents and subsequent displacement. The frères divided the children into groups of 200 (though 400 were soon too sick to work) and gave

---

27 FEC NL 463 No 1. Letter from Frère Aimarus to his superior in Paris, 14 March 1868.  
29 FEC NL 463 No 1. “History of Ben Aknoun, the Agricultural Orphanage for Arabs, begun on 14 April 1868,” anonymous note.  
30 FEC NL 463 No 1. Letter from Frère Aimarus to his superior in Paris, 11 April 1868.  
31 FEC NL 463 No 1. Letter from Frère Aimarus to his superior in Paris, 15 April 1868.
them two hours of education per day with the rest of the day devoted to work in the gardens, vineyards, or workshops.\textsuperscript{32}

Aimarus’ hopes that meeting the demands of Lavigerie would bring the FEC success and security, however, proved unfounded. Two factors combined to lead to the dismissal of the FEC from the orphanage in 1870, just two years after their arrival. First, the Franco-Prussian War sapped the donations that Lavigerie received from the metropolitan faithful (he had received nearly 100,000 francs in aid in 1868-9). On 1 September 1870, in the midst of the Battle of Sedan and three days before the proclamation of the Third Republic, Lavigerie wrote Aimarus that “the increasingly detrimental impact that the war in France has had on the donations to our orphanage forces me to restrain all expenses,” adding that “it has become impossible for me to provide the salaries and the maintenance of your frères and I am forced to reject their continued aid.”\textsuperscript{33} He informed Aimarus that the FEC would have to leave the orphanage by the end of the month.

If geopolitical events proved necessary to separate the FEC from the Arab orphans, however, they did not prove sufficient. By 1870 Lavigerie had begun to organize his own missionary society, the Pères Blancs. Despite claiming a lack of funds, Lavigerie did not abandon the orphans; he simply withdrew his patronage from the FEC. Over the summer of 1870, Lavigerie had begun to move the orphans and the frères to the vast estate that housed the Pères Blancs’ new novitiate at the nearby Maison Carrée.\textsuperscript{34} Once this novitiate had produced a sufficient number of its own missionary priests,

\textsuperscript{32} FEC NL 463 No 1. “History of Ben Aknoun, the Agricultural Orphanage for Arabs, begun on 14 April 1868,” anonymous note.
\textsuperscript{33} FEC NL 463 No 1. Letter from Archbishop Lavigerie to Frère Aimarus, 1 September 1870.
\textsuperscript{34} FEC NL 463 No 1. “A History of Ben-Aknoun, 13 April 1868 to 23 September 1870,” anonymous author, written at the FEC novitiate in El Biar, Algeria, 20 November 1906.
Lavigerie made the decision to dismiss the FEC and use his missionaries alone to continue raising the Arab orphans. In this effort, the FEC had merely served as a stopgap until the Pères Blancs’ novitiate had established itself on a permanent basis.

The fate of these orphans after 1870 has been recounted by Bertrand Taithe and Karima Dirèche-Slimani. Lavigerie instructed the Pères Blancs to found two “Arab-Christian” villages, Saint Cyprien and Saint Monique, where they raised the orphans as Catholics with the ultimate goal of using them to convert the rest of the Algerian population and ultimately all of Africa. Although the orphans did largely convert to Catholicism, this conversion only alienated them from Muslim society, and most ended up marrying Europeans. Further, the handful of these children who went on to receive higher education – at least one would attend medical school in France – found all professional avenues blocked to them in the metropole and had to return to Algeria, where they remained marginalized from European and native Algerian societies alike. As such, Taithe concludes that “the collective venture proved to be a failure.”

Regardless of its success or failure, this episode is important for the precedents it set for the remainder of Lavigerie’s tenure. In addition to acquainting missionaries with Lavigerie’s authoritative personality, this experience hinted that the archbishop, while expressing nominal support for other missionary orders, would in the future funnel nearly all funds – whether from his parishes, from the Propagation de la Foi, or from the Propaganda Fide – into his own missionary society. Indeed, the FEC’s experience of marginalization recurrently with the Lazarists as well, with one priest writing in

---
36 Taithe, 254.
1870 that “Monseigneur proposes to give us work when in reality he negotiates to have it for himself [i.e. his own missionary congregation].”\textsuperscript{37} In doing so, Lavigerie succeeded where his predecessors had failed by forming his own missionary society with himself as superior and thus ensuring that he exercised total control over these missionaries.

As mentioned previously, Church historians like François Renault have portrayed Lavigerie as the single most important Catholic clergyman in nineteenth-century Africa. In the end, however, his self-aggrandizing maneuvers only hindered the development of the Catholic faith in Algeria by diverting funds from the already-existing Catholic European population into his own pet projects for conversion – projects that largely failed and that at the same time made ministering to the European population more financially unfeasible. The resulting deprivation of funds only exacerbated the difficulties that missionaries increasingly encountered from civilian authorities. By 1880, valuable patrons, whether in the form of the bishop of Algiers or the governor general, became increasingly hard to secure.

**Governor General MacMahon and the Proposal of Mixed Schools**

At the same time that the frères assumed control of the orphanage at Ben Aknoun, they also began to find their positions as teachers in Algeria’s communal schools under threat, especially in Algiers. By 1867, the FEC educated 2,313 students in the capital city alone with 16 frères receiving annual salaries of 750 francs each from the budget of the municipal council. The frères taught three times more students than did the city’s secular schools, whose enrollment in Algiers totaled 835 students, even while lay teachers

\textsuperscript{37} CM Lazarists 108b, Algiers. Letter from Father Doumerg to superior in Paris, 10 June 1870.
received as much as 2,500 francs per year from the communal budget. By the late 1860s, however, a handful of municipal councils in the larger cities of Algeria had begun to push for widespread secularization of public schools. In many of these municipalities political exiles of 1848 had recently won elections as city councilmen. As Yvonne Turin has recounted, these exiles “played a more noticeable role in the second half of the Empire” than in the first, as they initially lay low to avoid the suspicion that had led to their deportation to begin with. By the 1860s, however, the liberalizing Second Empire had relaxed its organs of political repression and, in far-off Algeria especially, radicals felt freer to express their republican sentiments.

Chief among these sentiments was anticlericalism, which the republicans of 1848 had inherited from the Jacobins of the French Revolution. Although this anticlericalism remained latent throughout the early years of the 1860s, a circular issued by Governor General MacMahon on 14 October 1867 gave the municipal council of Algiers the opportunity to overtly attack the city’s missionary teachers. As it happened, MacMahon did not intend the circular to apply to the territory’s European schools. Rather, he issued it to stem Lavigerie’s continued attempts to convert to Catholicism the indigenous Berber population in mountainous Kabylie east of Algiers. This effort resulted from Lavigerie’s belief in the widely disseminated “Kabyle Myth,” which posited that due to their supposedly insufficient Islamicization, their lighter skin color, and their sedentary lifestyle the Kabyles would more likely accept European culture and religion than the

---

38 FEC NL 460 No 1, “History of the houses of the District of Algiers, 1851-1945,” anonymous Internal history of the Frères des Écoles Chrétienes in Algeria, anonymous author, no date [1968?].
supposedly more fanatical, lazy, and nomadic Arab population. With this thought in mind, Lavigerie assigned a number of Pères Blancs and two Jesuits to travel to the mixed commune of Fort Napoleon to begin their work of proselytization. This effort, however, only met with failure. As one tribal leader would later write to MacMahon, “we would prefer to see all our children die than to have them convert to Christianity.”

It was at this point that MacMahon, worried about the political repercussions of Lavigerie’s actions, issued his circular of 14 October. The circular had two mutually reinforcing goals: first to protect the religious sentiments of the Muslim population and second to bring about the “gradual fusion of the races” (mentioned above). The circular thus ordered the generals commanding the provinces and the civilian prefects to establish, where the size of the indigenous population merited, mixed schools (écoles mixtes) for Europeans and North Africans in which “the education…will remain essentially French, without any bias for religious education, which will be given to children of different faiths by a minister of their religion: priest, pastor, taleb, or rabbi.” The circular aimed, then, to allow indigenous students to benefit from a French curriculum while at the same time allotting time for the teaching of Islam as well. In this way, Muslim children would come to see French society as both tolerant and superior and would thus gradually adopt

---

42 CAOM F80/1746. Quoted in a letter from Governor General MacMahon to the minister of war, 18 May 1868. The military remained entirely unconvinced by the Kabyle Myth. As the superior commander, Colonel Honateau, wrote on 31 May 1868, “The Jesuits were authorized to attempt religious propaganda among the Kabyles based on I don’t know what information, which has given them the false assumption that many of the Kabyles are better disposed to Christianity than other Muslims of Algeria.” Letter to the governor general, CAOM F80/1746.
44 AN F17/12335. Circular from General MacMahon to the generals commanding the provinces and the departmental prefects, 14 October 1867. Turin’s article mentions this circular but says only that “the governor general would explain his thinking but it is not possible to analyze it here.” Turin, 91.
it as their own. As many historians have recounted, this goal held no chance of success, as nearly all Muslims in Algeria saw study of the Quran as the sole purpose of education.\textsuperscript{45}

MacMahon’s circular sparked the outrage of Lavigerie, who, however much he desired to spread Catholic civilization to Algeria’s Muslims, had no intention of “de-civilizing” Algeria’s Europeans by exposing them to Islamic beliefs and Muslim customs.\textsuperscript{46} On 23 January 1868 the archbishop issued a circular of his own that drew on the racialized conception of imperial rule to argue that the plan would have terrible political repercussions for the colony. Lavigerie encouraged the government to uphold the “freedom of belief” of colonial mothers and fathers that held specific importance “for Algeria more than anywhere else.”\textsuperscript{47} He lamented that in MacMahon’s circular “the Catholic priest, that is to say the French representative of the national religion, finds himself placed on the same rank as the taleb or the rabbi.”\textsuperscript{48} Further, if Catholic and Muslim students attended the same school then the state would have to exert “vigilant surveillance over the Muslim children, whose corruption occurs at such a young age, in order to prevent contact that would be devastating to our European children.”\textsuperscript{49} Lavigerie attempted to turn his Catholic parishioners against the French government by telling them that the regime asks those “who constitute here the superior and conquering race, to sacrifice the dearest, most sacred interests of their children in favor of the heinous

\textsuperscript{45} See Abi-Mershed, \textit{Apostles of Modernity}, 190-200. See also Turin, \textit{Affrontements culturels dans l’algérie coloniale}, 208-217 and elsewhere throughout.

\textsuperscript{46} For an interesting account of the “decivilizing” mission of one missionary priest in Timbuktu, see Owen White, “The Decivilizing Mission: Auguste Dupuis-Yakouba and French Timbuktu,” \textit{French Historical Studies} 27/3 (Summer 2004): 541-468.

\textsuperscript{47} FEC NL 460 No. 4. Circular from Monseigneur the Archbishop of Algiers to the Clergy of his diocese relating to the proposal to establish mixed schools in Algeria, 23 January 1868.

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Ibid}.
prejudices…and deplorable habits of Muslim children.” Finally, lest these fear tactics failed to work, Lavigerie instructed his clergy to refuse first communion to any child who attended the mixed schools.\(^{51}\)

The competing circulars sparked a media frenzy that further divided the colonial population. In the words of one frère, the circulars put “the whole city in an uproar and a polemic began between the good and bad journals.”\(^{52}\) Meanwhile, a Lazarist priest wrote to his superior that the archbishop’s “absolute, abrupt, and impetuous tone…will lead him to difficulties that I fear he will never surmount.”\(^{53}\) The priest added that Lavigerie and General MacMahon had a tenuous relationship and that “unfortunately they carry out their public spats in writing and the press has a field day with it.”\(^{54}\) Indeed, in April 1868 Lavigerie published an article in *Le Courrier Français* in which he wrote of the necessity that “France give religion to the Arabs, or, I do not deceive myself…they will retreat into the desert, far from the civilized world.”\(^{55}\) In response, the journal *Akhbar* published an “edited” version of the same article that quoted Lavigerie disapprovingly as saying that “France must either convert the natives or expel them into the desert.”\(^{56}\) These polemics sparked a worried letter from the minister of war, who saw a rift developing between MacMahon and Lavigerie. The minister expressed his concern to the governor general that Lavigerie wanted to “end freedom of belief for the Muslims of Algeria.”\(^{57}\) The minister also wrote to Lavigerie to warn him of the danger of pursuing such a path, but he

---


51 Turin recounts that Lavigerie first made this threat after the proclamation of the Third Republic and during the reign of the revolutionary municipalities in Algiers. In fact, as this chapter shows, these conflicts had emerged fully during the Second Empire.

52 FEC NL 450-460. “History of Algeria, 1853-1883, No 18.” anonymous author, no date [1916?]


55 CAOM F80/1746. Quoted in letter from General MacMahon to the minister of war, 26 April 1868.

56 CAOM F80/1746. Quoted in letter from Lavigerie to minister of war, 26 April 1868.

57 CAOM F80/1746. Lavigerie quotes the general in a letter to the minister of war, 22 May 1868.
assured the archbishop that he had misunderstood the spirit of the governor’s circular and that “the governor has always been sympathetic” to the Catholic religion.\textsuperscript{58}

In the fall of 1868, MacMahon demonstrated his support for the Catholic teachers by clarifying the intentions of his circular. This clarification came after a number of municipal councils of Algeria moved to willfully misinterpret the circular and rid their schools of any public religious influence whatsoever. MacMahon did not intend at all for the circular to ban Catholic education from schools that taught almost exclusively children from Catholic (or lapsed Catholic) families.\textsuperscript{59} And indeed, the schools that used congregationist teachers in the European communes counted, with rare exceptions, only European children among their students.\textsuperscript{60} Nevertheless, on 22 November 1868 the city of Algiers took advantage of an internal change in teaching staff at the FEC’s communal school on the Rue Doria to inform the frères that it would simply replace the outgoing teachers with secular teachers (rather than other FEC missionaries). Further, rather than following the orders of the circular and staffing ministers of different religions, the council opted simply to use secular teachers to teach “issues of morality that applied equally to all religions.”\textsuperscript{61} In making this substitution, the municipal council sought to apply its own version of secular assimilation to European children by taking advantage of a little-known ministerial circular of 2 March 1853 (henceforth amended to the Falloux

\textsuperscript{58} CAOM F80/1746. Letter from the minister of war to Archbishop Lavigerie, 25 May 1868.

\textsuperscript{59} This misinterpretation for anticlerical ends is briefly mentioned by Turin, though she admits “The governor general explained his thoughts in a text that it is not possible to analyze here.” Turin, “La Commune d’Algiers et ses écoles,” 91. For his part, MacMahon considered himself a very pious Catholic. See Julien, La Conquête, 440.

\textsuperscript{60} FEC NL 463 No 1. As one FEC frère remarked in his memoires, “except for rare exceptions, the indigènes did not attend our schools. Our influence was then nil on the infidels.” Quoted in “A History of Ben-Aknoun. 13 April 1868 to 23 September 1870,” written at the FEC novitiate in El Biar, Algeria, 20 November 1906.

\textsuperscript{61} FEC NL 460 No 1. Quoted in an anonymous, unpublished history of the FEC in Algeria. Entry written on 15 November 1867.
laws of 1850), which allowed councils to unilaterally appoint teachers of their choosing (without consulting the prefect first) upon the “dismissal, retirement, or resignation” of an existing teacher in the middle of the school year. But as the FEC, Lavigerie, and General MacMahon soon pointed out—and as the last chapter demonstrated in detail—the Falloux laws and their later amendments remained unapplied in Algeria. As such, Lavigerie and MacMahon continued to attempt to tie Catholic settlers to the colonial state by providing specifically for their religious needs.

Nevertheless, other municipalities soon followed the lead of the council of Algiers. In the town of Sidi-Noussa, the municipality voted to prohibit any priest from entering the schoolhouse on any occasion whatsoever. Other communes informed their secular teachers never to speak to children of matters of religion, while the council of Oran voted to remove the crucifix from all public schools. We should note that these attempts to secularize public schools in Algeria all occurred before any similar attempts in France, where the authorities exerted tighter and closer control over sensitive matters like education and where article 23 of the Falloux laws stipulated that “primary education

62 See the circular of the minister of public instruction of 2 March 1853 relative to the nomination of communal teachers. Octave Gréard, *La législation de l'instruction primaire en France depuis 1789 jusqu'à nos jours. Vol V, 1848-1863* (Paris: impr. de Delalain frères, 1902), 517. See also the explication of this law in, among many other documents, the petition redacted by Lavigerie in December 1870. FEC NL 460 No 1. There is an extensive literature that deals with how French public schools replaced Catholic with secular morality. The legal implementation of this change occurred with the Ferry Laws of 1880-81. In the end, these different moralities, while important to actors at the time, actually possessed many similarities, as both stressed the importance of labor, gender, and family roles, with secular morality simply replacing worship of God with that of the fatherland. See Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen*; Stephen Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850-1940* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998); and Laura Strumingher, *What Were Little Boys and Girls Made of?: Primary Education in Rural France, 1830-1880* (Albany: SUNY University Press, 1983). For girls’ morality in particular see Linda Clark, *Schooling the Daughters of Marianne: Textbooks and the Socialization of Girls in Modern French Primary Schools* (Albany: SUNY University Press, 1984).

63 FEC, NL 460 No 4. Recounted in the Circular from Monseigneur the Archbishop of Algiers to the Clergy of his diocese relating to the proposal to establish mixed schools in Algeria, 23 January 1868.
includes moral and religious instruction.” Rather, the secularization campaign of 1867-68 stemmed from the peculiar exigencies of imperial rule – specifically the lack of explicit legislation, which was withheld precisely to facilitate imperial rule – and the juxtaposition of different religions in such close proximity. Further, the councils used the rhetorical, and at most half-hearted, desire of assimilating Algerian subjects to French culture to in reality pursue their anticlerical agenda. These anticlericals gave little thought to indigenous beliefs, but used the religious diversity of Algeria to force through secularizing reforms that they could not yet pursue in the metropole.

To be sure, MacMahon remained a military man, and he had no intention of allowing civilian authorities to disobey his orders and remove the missionaries from their teaching positions in purely European schools. He blamed the municipal councils for wrongly applying the circular and wrote as follows to the prefect of Algiers: “I said that purely religious education be given to children of diverse religions by a minister of their religion, but it has been interpreted that the primary schools must not provide any religious or Catholic education.” This problem continued to plague Algeria until the 1880s because at root it stemmed from the lack of any specific legislation over who had

---


66 AN F17/12335. Letter from General MacMahon to the prefect of Algiers, 19 December 1868.
the right to appoint teachers in the territory. As a result, military, civilian, ecclesiastical, and metropolitan officials all displayed confusion over who exactly possessed the authority to govern these matters in the European communes of Algeria. MacMahon further informed the prefect that:

Until special legislation for Algeria has been passed that states otherwise, it is that of France which must serve as the basis of our rulings [and]…for the Catholic students, the teaching of prayers and the Catechism must then in Algeria as in France continue to form the first object of primary teaching and instruction.67

As we know, MacMahon’s reasoning was disingenuous at best, as his military predecessors had failed to pass legislation with the express goal that the legislation of France not necessarily serve as the basis for their rulings.

The municipal council of Algiers seized on this legislative confusion to assert its own claim to authority and to forge a secular society in Algeria. The council argued indeed that Algerian educational policy must follow that in use in France, specifically the amendment to the Falloux laws that on 2 March 1853 (Article 89) gave the councils the right to choose a new teacher themselves upon the “removal, resignation, or retirement” of an existing teacher in the middle of the school year.68 The municipality used MacMahon’s own argument to the prefect to justify applying (its interpretation of) metropolitan legislation to Algeria and thus allowing the municipal councils to choose their own teachers. This interpretation would have allowed the Algiers municipality legally to prevent the appointment of new congregationist teachers at the school on Rue Doria and to instead replace the outgoing missionaries with secular teachers.

67 Ibid.
68 CAOM F80/1731. This law is quoted in a letter from the minister of public instruction to the minister of war on 25 February 1869.
Faced with this argument, MacMahon backed away from his original stance and instead moved to highlight the legislative particularities of the territory. Indeed, although the Falloux laws and later amendments allowed municipalities to name their own teachers in certain circumstances, article 81 of the law stated that “a ruling of the public administration will determine the dispositions of the present law which are applicable to Algeria.”69 This ruling never arrived. In 1850 and on many occasions afterwards the issue had come up for debate in metropolitan circles, but as MacMahon recounted, “circumstances did not permit it to have an immediate hearing and the status quo was maintained.”70 The failure to issue a definitive ruling stemmed initially from the administration’s desire not to impose an unfriendly teacher on the indigenous population. At the same time, MacMahon now invoked it to prevent civilian officials from imposing an antagonistic secular teacher on Algeria’s Catholic European population. Further, MacMahon noted that municipal councils of Algeria had not chosen their teachers in the past in part because they did not have any knowledge of the background or personality of these teachers. He confided to the minister of public instruction that the failure to apply metropolitan legislation resulted from the fact that “in general it had been difficult for the municipal councils to give an enlightened opinion [on the teachers] because whether secular or religious almost all the teachers came from France.”71

Between 1848 and 1870, however, much had changed in Algeria. First, while only six municipal councils actually existed in 1848, by 1870 the councils “embraced all the

70 CAOM F80/1731. Letter from the governor general to the minister of public instruction, 15 December 1868
71 Ibid.
civil territory of Algeria.” 72 Second, years of settler occupation had created a local supply of Algerian-born French teachers. To this end, an imperial decree of 4 March 1865 established the territory’s first teacher training school (école normale) at Bouzarea, on the outskirts of Algiers. 73 Not only did this local teacher training school allow the councilors to better know their chosen teachers, but it also received most of its funds from their own tax dollars. In December 1868, MacMahon himself admitted to the minister of public instruction that “since they have become elective the municipalities of Algeria, those of the large cities in particular, show themselves so impatient to exercise their authority that they have sought to apply metropolitan legislation, and they impose on themselves the greatest sacrifices in favor of their schools.” 74

Although he kept his opinions from the municipal councils and the prefect, MacMahon hoped to work towards a definitive solution by drafting new legislation. He further confided to the minister of public instruction that “the dangers of this situation have begun to reveal themselves with a certain gravity…and the superior authority lacks the power to resolve them.” 75 He encouraged the minister to articulate an administrative ruling based on article 81 of the law of 15 March 1850. At the same time, MacMahon hoped that this new legislation would work towards his long desired “fusion of the races” by applying the directives first outlined in his circular. As we have seen, despite their constant rhetoric of “assimilation” the municipal councils had no desire to actually accommodate Muslim beliefs, teachers, or institutions. Indeed, by misinterpreting

---

72 AN F17/12328. Report from the governor general to the minister of interior, 7 October 1873.  
74 CAOM F80/1731. Letter from the governor general to the minister of public instruction, 15 December 1868.  
MacMahon’s original circular to banish all religious education schools the councils in reality ensured no Muslim child ever set foot in a French public school. To be sure, this outcome mattered little to the municipal councils because they placed their emphasis rather on assimilating European Catholics to their own version of a secular modernity in French Algeria.

MacMahon, on the other hand, told the minister of public instruction that the new ruling must have as its aim to admit Muslim children to the new mixed schools “on as large a scale as possible” and even “to plan for the case where the number of Muslim students exceeds by a great deal that of Catholic students, and where the teacher will be himself a Muslim, drawn from the école normale of Algiers.”

MacMahon encouraged the government in Paris to convene a special commission to draft this law. The commission would have as its head the minister of public instruction supported by the governor general, the prefect and mayor of Algiers, and two Muslim notables chosen by the governor general himself. This proposal, however, proved utopian at best, for as this entire episode has shown, the municipal councils and the mayor had entirely different ideas on the purpose of education than did the governor general, without even taking account the minister of public instruction, not to mention the two Muslim notables. As a result, the government failed to enact any definitive legislation before the fall of the Second Empire.

In the end, MacMahon solved the conundrum of the school on the Rue Doria by having the minister of war inscribe an annual credit of 6,000 francs in the budget of the governor general to skirt the law and fund the salaries of the FEC teachers at the school.

---

76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
indefinitely. This act temporarily appeased both the municipal council of Algiers by removing all financial responsibility from the city budget and Algerian Catholic families by providing their children with a religious education.\textsuperscript{78} In other communes, the conflict temporarily abated due to the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in July 1870, when the government recalled MacMahon to lead the Army of the Rhine. Not long before his departure, MacMahon still lamented the lack of “precise and definitive legislation” and warned that such a “vague and precarious regime can only give birth to numerous difficulties and conflicts.”\textsuperscript{79} This prediction proved well founded when the fall of the Second Empire led to the ascension of radical municipal councils throughout Algeria. These councils again attempted to enact their anticlerical legislation, but they went far beyond previous efforts by attempting to dismiss missionary teachers from all publically funded teaching positions in the territory without any pretext whatsoever. The chaos only continued through the 1870s because a definitive ruling on public instruction in Algeria would not arrive until the application of the Ferry Laws on 13 February 1883.

The Third Republic, Radical Municipalities, and Foreign Families

The fall of the Second Empire and the proclamation of the Third Republic on 4 September 1870 unleashed a power vacuum in Algeria. No longer recognizing the authority of the military governor general, and encouraged by new Minister of War Léon Gambetta, on 5 September leading \textit{colons} formed a Republican Committee of Defense that by October had succeeded in winning the recall of Bonapartist Governor General Durrieu, setting in motion the progressive abandonment of the Arab Bureaus, and in

\textsuperscript{78} FEC NL 450-460. Discussed in an extract from the meeting of the municipal council of Algiers, 22 November 1868.
\textsuperscript{79} CAOM F80/1731. Letter from the governor general to the minister of public instruction, 23 March 1869.
holding elections for new municipal councils throughout the territory. Leadership in Algeria then fell to the municipal council of Algiers and the Republican Committee of Defense. Throughout the winter of 1870-71, a series of decrees passed by the Government of National Defense in France aimed at removing all power from the military in Algeria in order to attach administrative functions to the relevant civilian ministries in France. Some colonists even went so far as to threaten secession from France if the military retained the highest positions of authority in Algeria.

The new leaders in Algeria desired a republican regime, but their idea of republicanism differed in many important respects from that in France. Put another way, many aspects of republicanism in Algeria reveal strains of exclusivity in republican thought that remained latent in the metropole until quite recently. First, republicans in Algeria had a very circumscribed conception of democracy, one that in no way implied popular sovereignty. In October 1870, male French citizens in Algeria went to the polls to elect mayors, prefects, and councilmen for all the European communes of the territory. Although the politicians in Algiers claimed to owe their authority to “universal” suffrage, they actually owed it to an electorate of just 5,000 people in a city whose population totaled 70,000. Women, Muslims, and, most importantly for our context, European foreigners remained politically powerless despite their overwhelming numerical

---

80 For a detailed discussion of the transition to civilian rule see Julien, La Conquête, 454-467.
81 Ruedy, Modern Algeria, 76-7.
majority. These disenfranchised elements did of course continue to bear the brunt of the tax burden.

In addition to its circumscribed nature, republicanism in Algeria connoted a hatred of the military, which republicans saw as an extension of the despotic regime of Napoleon III and his Arab Kingdom. An article appearing in the journal *Le Courrier de Tlemcen* in November 1870 helps illuminate this position. The author remarked:

> It goes without saying that the elections could not fail to return republicans [because] for us the [Second] Empire manifested itself under one of its most odious forms: the Arab Kingdom, with a caste of French Mamluks [i.e. the army], exploiting the *indigènes* and hindering colonization.

Republicanism in Algeria meant an end to military rule and the Arabophile policies of Napoleon III, embodied especially in the position of a military governor general and the detested Arab bureaus. These latter held the responsibility for governing tribal affairs and protected tribal lands from civilian speculators. As such, they allowed Muslims to maintain their personal status under Islamic law and to continue to occupy tribal (that is non-private) property. Civilians had for years called for the assimilation of *indigènes* to French society and they blamed the military for preserving native institutions via a policy of association.

In reality, this accusation served purely as a rhetorical device that allowed the colonists to further exploit the indigenous population. Specifically, by reorienting the purpose of the *sénatus consulte* of 1863 – which attempted to protect tribal lands from colonial speculators – the civilian administration moved to impose French law on all

---


84 For the civilian hatred of the military in Algeria during the 1870-1 crisis, see Julien, *La Conquête*, 454-457.

85 CAOM F80/1731. *Supplément au Courrier de Tlemcen*, 7 June 1872.
property transactions between Europeans and Algerians. As a result of this effort, between 1877 and 1920 the colonists would appropriate 1.75 million hectares of tribal land. Finally, the colonists revealed the emptiness of their rhetoric by their efforts to create a regime of exception to govern indigenous subjects in the form of a separate law code (the indigénat), special native taxes (the impôts arabes), and the use of forced labor on public works (the corvée).87

Thirdly, republicans in Algeria – like many of their counterparts in France – despised the Catholic Church, to say nothing of Islam. As we have seen, this anticlericalism stemmed in large part from the political clout accumulated by exiles of the Revolution of 1848. It also owed much to colonists’ association of Catholicism with Islam, as they repeatedly labeled adherents of both religions with the derogatory epithet “fanatical.” On 23 June 1873, for example, the Spanish parish priest of the town of Tlemcen “violently and insistently” accused the city’s “radicals” of delaying the procession of the Fête-Dieu. This accusation led the mayor’s office to suggest to the prefect that “it would be good to take measures in order to avoid any scandal that a fanatical priest could incite among the population if he continued to act this way.”88

At the same time, republican colonists continued to employ the rather contradictory argument that Catholics offended Islamic sensibilities and thus made imperial rule more difficult.

---

86 The two laws that specifically allowed for this confiscation were the Warnier Law of 26 July 1873 and a follow-up law of 22 April 1887. See Ruedy, Modern Algeria, 81, and Ageron, Les Algériens Musulmans et la France, 78-88.
88 CAOM 1U/2. Letter from the assistant of the mayor of Tlemcen to the prefect, 23 June 1873.
Finally, due to the historical ties between the military and the Church – especially the patronage shown by military generals for missionary orders in Algeria – republicans in Algeria quickly moved to cut public funding for all missionary work. In this struggle, they had the loyal support of most organs of the press, which “adopted a language that Marat would not have disowned.”\(^89\) To this end, as Yvonne Turin has briefly recounted, on 15 October 1870 the mayor of Algiers informed all congregationist teachers in the city that by the end of the year they must evacuate all the communal schools of Algiers.\(^90\) By the end of 1871, the communes of Blida, Mustapha, St Eugène, Douera, Tènes, Constantine, Bône, Philippeville, Oran, and Tlemcen had followed suit. Ultimately, these municipalities hoped expulsion would help them to achieve “the complete separation of church and commune.”\(^91\) Turin draws the astute conclusion that the communes failed in their efforts because of the influence of the large Catholic population of Spanish, Italians, and Maltese, the intransigence of Archbishop Lavigerie, and the panic caused by the Kabyle uprising of 1871.\(^92\)

Although Turin correctly concludes that the communes failed in the short term, she neglects to tease out the wider implications that this failure held for the transition from military to civilian rule in Algeria. Lavigerie’s success in convincing the governor general to overturn the anticlerical actions of the communes reveals the continued inability of civilian officials to overthrow military rule and to fully assimilate Algeria with France on a juridical level. At the same time, however, by extending Turin’s

\(^{89}\) Turin, “Le commune d’Alger et ses écoles en 1871,” 90.
\(^{91}\) FEC NL 460 No 1. Letter from Archbishop Lavigerie to minister of interior, 19 December 1870.
\(^{92}\) For the Kabyle Insurrection, see Ageron, Les Algériens Musulmans et la France, 4-36.
analysis throughout the decade, we see that while the governor general may have won the battle in the early years of the 1870s, by the early 1880s he and his successors had lost the war. Indeed, despite an official decree by the *council d’état* that aimed to reinstall the congregationist teachers in 1872, radical municipalities stubbornly continued to refuse to actually reinstate these missionaries. This conflict was exacerbated by the metropolitan state’s failure ever to extend definitive legislation to Algeria in matters of religion and education. Finally, in 1883 the intransigence of the councils forced the government to apply the Ferry laws of the metropole onto Algeria.³⁹ These laws rendered primary education free, secular, and obligatory and, finally, marked the definitive legal assimilation of the European cities of Algeria to France in matters of education. To be sure, the desired aim of this assimilation remained elusive due to continued resistance from below, as the territory’s foreign (and still disenfranchised) population still saw the Catholic religion as a vital source of identity and belonging.

In the immediate aftermath of the expulsion of the congregationist teachers in 1871, Archbishop Lavigerie mounted a stern defense of their public utility. At this point, he still hoped to get these teachers’ salaries re-inscribed in the municipal budgets in the near term. He wrote to the FEC superior in December 1870, “my clergy and I have decided to take all measures possible…to conserve your care over the children in our schools.”⁹⁴ Lavigerie told the *frères* that he and his clergy would provide resources to allow the FEC to open new private schools (*écoles libres*) and he welcomed the *frères* to lodge for the time being in his episcopal palace. Finally, Lavigerie created a Committee

---


⁹⁴ FEC NL 460 No 1. Letter from Archbishop Lavigerie to Frère Aimarus, 17 December 1870.
of Patronage of Catholic Schools, administered by him with the help of his clergy and the faithful of the territory, to channel donations to the congregationist teachers.⁹⁵

Lavigerie saw these measures as providing only a temporary stopgap during what remained a chaotic political transition in Algeria and in France (he had no intention of acting as a permanent financial patron for the schools of the FEC). In December 1870, he appealed to the metropolitan government to overturn the decisions of the municipal councils. He did so by employing the racialized rhetoric that had served him so well in 1868, informing Minister of Justice Adolphe Crémieux that colonists’ freedom of belief “must not be trampled under foot in Algeria in the presence of the Muslims…as here more so than elsewhere, Catholicism must be the national religion of France.”⁹⁶ At this point, however, the provisional government in France maintained a fiercely republican bent, and the minister responded to Lavigerie that the juxtaposition of different religions in Algeria meant that the Government of National Defense could not “force the communes to conserve a mode of primary education that presents in their eyes a monopoly for the benefit of one religion alone.”⁹⁷ Crémieux – himself famous for the law that granted automatic French citizenship to Algeria’s Jewish population – supported the spread of secular education and championed the schools’ “absolute disinterestedness in matters of religion.” And yet, he refrained from pursuing any definitive legislation, writing that he would “leave to the future national assembly the problem of finding a solution that conforms best with the interest and grandeur of the Republic.”⁹⁸

⁹⁵ FEC, NL 460 No 1, “History of the houses of the District of Algiers, 1851-1945,” internal history of the Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes in Algeria, anonymous author, no date [1968?].
⁹⁶ FEC NL 460 No 1. Letter from Archbishop Lavigerie to Minister Crémieux, 19 December 1870.
⁹⁷ Ibid.
⁹⁸ AN F17/12328 Dossier 5. Letter from Minister Crémieux to Archbishop Lavigerie, 22 December 1870.
Lavigerie then resorted to what seemed to him a quintessentially republican method of protest: an appeal to popular sovereignty. In December and January, Lavigerie organized a petition that in the city of Algiers alone collected 7,000 signatures, a number that exceeded by far the 5,000 citizens listed on the electoral ballot (though to be sure many of Lavigerie’s signatures came from women and children). The petition claimed that in the name of liberty and equality the governor general must overturn the “arbitrary” rule of the municipal councils. The petition demanded that the government uphold the freedom of belief and the right to education for the families that constituted a majority in Algeria. Ultimately, it appealed to a different ideal of French belonging by claiming to speak “for the colonists from Alsace and Lorraine who…have at heart Christian sentiments, for the Maltese, Spanish, and Italian foreigners who are as numerous in the colony as the French themselves and who do not have any political rights.” The petition also claimed that the religious schools served the assimilating interest of colonization as “the children of foreign colonists will only truly become Frenchmen through the institution of the school, and they will only go to schools where their parents can find their religious sentiments satisfied.”

Lavigerie’s rhetoric resembles the “creole medievalism” described by Michelle Warren that emerged in the thought of Joseph Bédier (1864-1938), a French colonial from La Réunion. Bédier and a number of other creoles – by which Warren means the white French colonial elite – located French identity in a medieval past, long before the

100 FEC NL 460 No 1. Petition by Lavigerie to the Government of National Defense, December 1870. In the aftermath of defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany, the French government offered free plots of land in Algeria to anyone from this region who wanted to remain a French citizen.
rise of anticlericalism, and claimed that the creole community of La Réunion embodied this identity better than did the French of the metropole.\textsuperscript{102} Lavigerie too appealed to a rapidly disintegrating ideal of Catholic France in order to champion a version of modernity that was denied him in the metropole. Unfortunately for Lavigerie, his opponents also hoped to use Algeria to create their ideal of secular France, an ideal which – rather than locating French identity in the medieval past – looked back towards the as yet unrealized Jacobin ideals of the Revolution of 1789 in order to forge a modernity that had not yet come to fruition in metropolitan France. Both groups grew out of a long tradition of colonial actors, most notably the Saint Simonians, who saw Algeria as a space in which they could create their ideal society, one they nevertheless both saw as quintessentially modern.\textsuperscript{103}

Secondly, Lavigerie’s argument in part recalls that of Governor General Bugeaud and Minister of War de Soult in the 1840s (see Chapter Two), as the two generals hoped to use Catholic missionaries to tie foreign colonists to the nascent colony. At that time, the two military men pursued a policy of association by providing for the \textit{particular} religious needs of foreigners in order to cultivate their loyalty to the colonial regime. In this instance, however, Lavigerie, while maintaining the importance of Catholicism, claimed that religious schools would \textit{assimilate} these foreigners to what he saw as a normative French society. Again, however, he did so by appealing to an aspect of French culture, Catholicism, that most French in Algeria and most members of the provisional

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item[103] For the Saint-Simonians see See Abi-Mershed, \textit{Apostles of Modernity}. For the comparison between “modern” French rule in Algeria and Algeria under control of the Roman Empire, see Patricia Lorcin, “Rome and France in Africa: Recovering Colonial Algeria’s Latin Past,” \textit{French Historical Studies} 25/2 (Spring 2002): 295-329.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
government cared little for, and some downright detested. Indeed, throughout this period, whether championed by the clergy or by the civilian regime, efforts of assimilation repeatedly foundered due to ongoing struggles over what exactly it meant to belong to the French nation. The petitioners thus drew on two previous, and previously contradictory, strands of thought in colonial policy, rendering their argument fundamentally problematic and difficult to implement.

By 1871, however, a confluence of events served to sway opinion in France towards the side of Lavigerie and the congregationist teachers. First, as Lavigerie predicted, many families refused to send their students to the newly organized schools. Statistics for the city of Algiers show that before the secularization campaign a total of 2,633 students attended congregationist communal schools in Algiers, compared to 1,270 students in secular communal schools (for a total of 3,903 students). By July 1871, only 2,094 students attended the (now all secular) communal schools in the city, marking a fall in enrollment by almost half. According to the prefect of Algiers “the establishments of the congregations, having made themselves private, have not seen a noticeable decline in attendance, and they still count today 2,158 students thanks to the favor they enjoy with Spanish families.” The congregationists had lost public funding, but they now received (much reduced) salaries and lodging either from voluntary tuition paid by wealthier parents or from Lavigerie’s Committee of Patronage of Catholic Schools.

---

104 CAOM F80/1731. Letter from the governor general to the minister of interior, 13 July 1871. According to the petition redacted by Lavigerie, in all of Algiers congregationists taught 4,224 students, while secular teachers taught 1,452 in 1870. The difference in statistics likely stems from the inclusion of private schools in Lavigerie’s figure.

105 AN F17/12328 Dossier 5. Prefect of Alger to the minister of public instruction 19 September 1871. In all of Algeria, out of the 3,426 male students taught by the FEC in 1871, 1,830 were foreigners. FEC NL 461 No 1. Letter from Frère Aimarus to General de Gueydon, 23 June 1871.
Moreover, in cities where the clergy could not support the frères’ private schools, many children ceased attending school whatsoever rather than move into the secular schools. In Oran, the bishop argued that the lack of Catholic schools had begun to unravel the fabric that held colonial society together. He wrote to the minister of justice that many local children now sat “in the most dangerous idleness and most alarming vagabondage,” thus situating them in the same conceptual framework used to denigrate and exclude Algeria’s Muslim colonial subjects.106 He further expressed his fear that many families who could no longer rely on Catholic education “will hasten to leave this country.” These colonists, he argued, came to Algeria precisely because metropolitan and colonial lobbyists ensured them they would “find the parish priest of their village and the sisters to instruct their children.”107 The project of the municipal councils thus threatened their entire existence. The bishop contended that the Catholic religion alone could “form bonds between colonists of different nationalities…who only come together at the church.”108

Other clergymen expressed their fear that by specifically restricting the rights of the Catholic population the administration threatened to overturn the colonial order of things. In June 1871 the municipal council of Mostaganem passed a law prohibiting traditional Catholic processions on holy days (specifically the Fête-Dieu) on the grounds that they offended the city’s non-Catholic population. A local parish priest asked how the councilors could prohibit this procession “while they suffer without a word all the noisy public processions of the Muslims.”109 He further observed that Muslims and Jews have offered public prayers in times of drought, and while he “did not blame them for this

---

106 AN F17/12328 Dossier 5. Letter from bishop of Oran to minister of justice, 14 January 1871.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
109 FEC NL 461 NO 3. La Verité Algérienne reprints a letter to the editor of the Courrier de Mostaganem, 6 June 1871.
“drought” he could not understand why city authorities allowed these prayers in public while prohibiting Catholic ones. Finally, he asked why nobody had “ever prevented the blacks from making in town their disgusting processions, leading a cow whose neck is half cut off and whose blood soaks its shoulders, all accompanied by the tam tam and the most lascivious cries and gesticulations.”

In the eyes of the parish priest, the secular policies of the municipal council forced France, the supposedly dominant nation, to renounce its religious ceremonies entirely and subordinate itself to the superstitious beliefs of its uncivilized colonial subjects.

The second event that helped tip the scales in favor of the missionary congregations was the appointment on 21 March 1871 of Louis Henri, the Comte de Gueydon, as the first “civil” governor general of Algeria. Despite his civilian title, de Gueydon had previously served as vice admiral in the French navy and as military governor general of Martinique. He had no intention of subordinating himself to radical civilian municipal councils (de Gueydon would eventually win election to the national assembly as a royalist in 1885).

Upon arriving in Algeria, de Gueydon stated publicly, “I have spent my life protecting Catholic missions around the globe. I cannot allow them to be persecuted on French territory.” De Gueydon’s appointment stemmed from another key event that hindered the transition to full civilian rule: the Kabyle insurrection. Shortly before de Gueydon’s arrival, tribal leaders, fearful of the extension of civilian rule over previously protected indigenous lands, rose up and began laying siege to French towns and killing French soldiers. As John Ruedy has written, “the prospect of rule by

110 Ibid.
112 Quoted in Ageron, Les Algériens Musulmans et la France, 302. Ageron described de Gueydon as the only governor general who actually supported a policy of converting Muslims to Catholicism.
the colons, who had made no secret of their program for Algerian society, filled the country with fear” and itself contributed to the very uprising the colons claimed they would prevent.113

On 5 May 1871, Muhammad al-Hajj al-Muqrani, the insurrection’s leader and an erstwhile ally of the French military, died from a shot to the head.114 But the rebellion continued throughout the spring and summer of 1871, as de Gueydon moved to extend martial law over much of Algeria, including the European communes. De Gueydon used his extraordinary powers to, among other things, attempt to overturn the secular laws of the radical municipalities. Turin has argued that the insurrection occasioned the reconciliation of the squabbling colonists and the backing down of the municipal councils.115 In April 1871, however, de Gueydon wrote to the minister of war that he had thought the Kabyle insurrection would “calm the revolutionary fervor of the commune of Algiers…but far from this the newspapers become each day more aggressive.”116 More importantly, de Gueydon contended that the chaos surrounding the municipal councils has “certainly contributed more than anything else to causing this insurrection and giving the Arabs the spectacle of our weakness and disorganization.”117

Further, de Gueydon understood the political importance of the religious sensibilities of both the rebels and the foreign colonists. As Ruedy has written, “most Muslims pitied the minority of Frenchmen who were observant Christians and held in

---

113 Ruedy, Modern Algeria, 77.
114 For the uprising see Mohamed Brahim Salhi, “L’insurrection de 1871,” in Histoire de l’Algérie à la Période Coloniale, 103-109.
116 CAOM F80/1683. Letter from General de Gueydon to the minister of war, 29 April 1871.
117 Ibid.
secret contempt those who were not.” De Gueydon thus began to see the congregationists’ reintegration as a pressing political necessity. The general wrote to the minister of war to ask if “one could protest that in suppressing the congregationist schools the municipality of Algiers has harmed the sentiments of the majority of heads of families?” He lamented the “moral violence committed upon colonial fathers,” which had caused a further decrease in the number of students at an increased expense for the government. “The question is serious,” he concluded, “a solution is urgent.” This urgency to appease family fathers can also be understood in the context, described by historian Judith Surkis, of a simultaneous attempt by the government in France to mobilize a wide array of institutions and propaganda in the hope of using fathers to tie families to the French nation. At the same time, while the secular school provided a primary site for the transmission of this propaganda in France, military leaders in Algeria saw the peculiar demographic situation of Algeria as requiring the continued use of Catholic schools to achieve this same end.

To achieve this goal, de Gueydon preferred to implement a dictatorial solution that entirely disenfranchised the municipal councils. He clearly expressed his vision for the future of Algeria in a conversation with the Lazarist Father Doumerg, telling him that:

Many laws applied in France must not be in Algeria, and universal suffrage even less so. Seeing as the indigènes, Jews, foreigners (and most French conservatives) do not vote, the elections will always be unfailingly radical, since the voters are political deportees or hardly better.

---

118 Ruedy, Modern Algeria, 100.
119 CAOM F80/1731. Letter from General de Gueydon to minister of interior, 13 July 1871.
121 CM Lazarists 108b, Alger. Father Doumerg to Father Etienne in Paris, 2 April 1873.
By “universal suffrage” de Gueydon meant suffrage by all male French citizens. Such sentiments led other missionaries to try and curry favor with the governor general by appealing to his undemocratic sentiments. In 1871, FEC superior Frère Aimarus wrote to de Gueydon about his admiration for other colonies where education “instead of being left to arbitrary passions of individuals is ruled by the higher administration…which retains the exclusive direction over such an important question.”

Aimar used so far as to contend that this divergence in educational policy could explain the failure of Algeria to attract colonists to the same extent as other settler colonies, specifically the English colonies of Australia and South Africa.

At the same time, the municipal councils still possessed great leverage and de Gueydon sought to offer them a compromise that he secretly thought would ultimately redound to the exclusive benefit of the congregationists. In the words of de Gueydon’s ally, the superintendent of Algiers, this compromise consisted of “reestablishing in the communal budget the congregationists’ salaries, without suppressing the lay schools founded by the cities.”

De Gueydon added that municipal councils could issue free tuition reimbursement (cartes d’enseignement) to poor families to allow them to send their children to the school of their choosing. De Gueydon surmised that in a territory with so many foreign families this system would eventually lead to the closure of the secular schools due to a lack of students. His “compromise” thus masked a solution that he hoped would serve to reinstate the Catholic teachers everywhere in the public schools.

122 FEC NL 461 No 1. Letter from Frère Aimarus to General de Gueydon, undated [1871].
123 AN F17/12328 Dossier 4. Confidential letter from Recteur Delacroix to the minister of public instruction, no date [1871].
124 AN F17/12328 Dossier 5. Letter from General de Gueydon to the prefect of Oran, 11 September 1871.
De Gueydon proved a valuable and willing patron for all missionaries in Algeria – something they had lacked since the recall of Governor General MacMahon and the political void left in his wake. In October 1871, De Gueydon’s successful suppression of the Kabyle insurrection won him great sympathy and support in Paris. In France itself the new government led by Adolphe Thiers had succeeded in brutally suppressing its own radical communards in the capital. With relative stability finally on the horizon there began to take shape the so-called government of Moral Order, led by former Governor General MacMahon himself, and the new regime sought to distance itself from the radical ideas of the communards by recovering France’s “traditional” values. In 1872, then, circumstances converged to allow the governor general to work with the new government in Paris to rein in the power of the municipal councils and to continue to thwart attempts to institute full civilian rule in Algeria. Two years after the creation of the Third Republic, Algeria still remained under military rule and this situation stemmed directly from the importance of protecting the religious sentiments of the disenfranchised foreign population of the territory.

As such, de Gueydon received free reign to reinstate the congregationist teachers against the will of the municipal councils. Rather than passing any definitive educational legislation, or even creating a compromise situation, on 22 February 1872 de Gueydon informed the prefect of Algiers that “the minister of public instruction has delegated all his authority to me and it is thus to me alone that you must henceforth address yourself.

---

for everything concerning this matter [of the schools].” On 21 and 27 March 1872, de Gueydon issued two decrees that declared null and void the municipal councils’ decision to secularize the communal schools. He instructed the prefects in the three departments of Algeria to ensure that their municipal councils reinstated the congregationist teachers immediately. Unable to solve the question based on the rule of law – as no law yet existed – the military governor general issued an executive decision that superseded the authority of the civilian municipal councils.

Although Turin concluded that the situation of the schools ended with the decision of the governor general, in fact even this executive and fully authoritarian act failed to tame the recalcitrant municipal councils, as they persevered in the struggle to institute their own peculiar brand of republicanism in Algeria. In France, the government had long since reinstated congregationist teachers expelled by radical municipalities during the height of the Commune. In Algeria, however, the struggle continued. In June 1872, the municipal councils of Algiers and Constantine filed a formal appeal with the Council of State (conseil d’État) to overturn the decree of the governor general that aimed to reinstate the congregationists. The appeal claimed that the governor general had exceeded his authority and acted illegally by violating the laws of the metropole, which as we have seen allowed the prefect to name communal teachers based on the advice of the municipal councils. For his part, de Gueydon sought to influence the Council of State by writing to the ministers of the interior and public instruction that the issue “is a political question of the highest order and the administration must take it upon

---

127 AN F17/12328 Dossier 4. Letter from General de Gueydon to the prefects of Algeria, 20 February 1872.
128 AN F17/12328 DOSSIER 4. Arrêté of the governor general on 21 (for Algiers) and 27 (for Constantine) March 1872.
itself to decide the question authoritatively (autoritairement).”130 The Council of State would take almost a year to issue its decision.

In the meantime, the situation continued to threaten the very foundation of imperial rule. The municipalities openly flouted the decree of the governor general and refused to pay the salaries of the congregationists. In the opinion of Frère Aimarus, de Gueydon had “lost and lost without honor” in his struggle with the municipal councilors, who called his decision “illegal” and pushed for his recall to France. Aimarus wrote to his assistant:

I told [the governor general] with tears in my eyes that we all as Frenchmen feel deeply humiliated by his conduct…because he is the highest authority in the colony and he has allowed his most formal orders to be vilified, spat upon by a horde of demagogues, and that in my eyes this is the ultimate degradation of my unhappy country…But he said very painfully that he could not set the country ablaze and spill blood over the question of schools.131

The governor general himself recognized the futility of his decree and wrote to the minister of public instruction on 9 May 1872 that although his ruling returned all the rights to the congregationist teachers, it “remains a dead letter and is attacked as illegal by the municipal councils of Algiers and Constantine.”132

The conflict escalated throughout 1872 and even threatened to cause an international incident. In May the prefect of Constantine wrote that the congregationist teachers at the private school of Philippeville had run out of resources and had begun to make plans to return to France. In response, the frères’ supporters drew up another petition signed by 790 inhabitants, including 300 French, 490 Italians and Maltese, as well as the English consul (representing the Catholic Maltese population) and the Italian

131 FEC NL 460 No 1. Letter from Frère Aimarus to his assistant, 4 May 1872.
132 AN F17/12328 Dossier 5. Governor de Gueydon to minister of public instruction, 9 May 1872.
and Spanish consuls. As Lavigerie himself later asked, what would France do “if we went to war with one of these nations, Spain, for example? Do we not fear the 70,000 Spanish colonists who populate our cities and farms?”133 The superintendent of Constantine wrote that “the assembly still believes itself authorized to treat this mass of people as a minority because the bulk of the children come from foreign families.”134 He pointed out, however, that these families still provided half of the city’s tax revenue and thus felt they had a right to help decide the religious orientation of the city’s public schools. In response, the prefect wrote to the minister of public instruction that the French radicals “see a political danger in favoring too much the foreigners,” adding that “the French of Algeria are radical by their own standards, without being in any way egalitarian with the foreigners.”135

In the town of Tlemcen, this rift between the foreigners and the French boiled over into violence. On 7 June 1872, a petition published in the local newspaper claimed to speak in the name of “the students in tears, the indignant masses, the frères pulled from their houses, mistreated, beaten, trampled under the eyes of the fathers and mothers of these families.”136 The local newspaper the Courrier de Tlemcen reported that when the police came to take the keys from the schoolhouse “the frères chained themselves to the benches and the tables. One of them tried to grab the neck of the inspector who, seizing the frère by the arms, led him to the police station.” The paper reported that the next day, when the police shut the classes with padlocks, “the police chief had hardly left when the

---

133 CAOM 1U/4. Letter from Archbishop Lavigerie to the minister of religion, 25 March 1873.
134 AN F17/12328 Dossier 4. Letter from the prefect of Constantine to General de Gueydon, 11 May 1872.
135 AN F17/12328 Dossier 5. Letter from Recteur Delacroix to the governor general, no date [1872].
136 CAOM F80/1731. Petition of the inhabitants of Tlemcen reproduced in the Supplément au Courrier de Tlemcen, 7 June 1872.
padlocks were broken by the frères and the children were recalled.”137 Despite these increasingly commonplace episodes, the metropolitan government continued to refrain from issuing any definitive legislation, leaving everyone confused as to who actually held authority in the colony.

Finally, on 23 May 1873, the Council of State issued its decision to reject the appeals made by the municipal councils. The government informed the municipalities that they must reinstate the congregationist teachers on 1 October 1873, the first day of the school year. Because even this ruling did not result in more definitive legislation, however, unforeseen circumstances meant that many previously Catholic schools would continue to lack congregationist teachers. As late as December 1873, the communal schools in Tlemcen, Mostaganem, Bône, Philippeville, and Oran still employed the new secular teachers. In these towns, preexisting contracts between the FEC and the communes that dated from the 1850s had stipulated that in the case of removal of the frères before the end of their contracts the communes must pay the equivalent of six months’ salary for each frère and moving fees for the return to France. These communes had agreed with the frères to pay these fees and thus the frères had renounced their contractual right to their positions as communal teachers. The municipalities thus saw it as their legal right to replace the departed frères with teachers of their choosing since the congregationists had voluntarily left. At the same time, despite this voluntary departure, settler petitions continued to circulate for the reintegration of the congregationist teachers. The governor general thus found himself in the position of having to actually

137 Ibid.
appoint new and different congregationist teachers. The petitions of the largely foreign population thus forced him to go beyond even the text of the decree issued by the Council of State: rather than “reappointing” the old frères he had to name entirely new ones and thus assume for himself the authority to name new communal teachers in Algeria without having any legal foundation for this act.

In the end, the council’s decision did not solve the fundamental problem of the lack of legally conferred authority in the territory, a problem that continued to plague Algeria throughout the decade. The failure to reinstate the religious teachers led the governor general (now Antoine Chanzy) to write to the minister of the interior and complain again of the “absence of all legislation in the matter of public instruction.” He admitted that despite his act he had no actual legal ability to appoint new missionary teachers, writing in near desperation in October 1873, “I am thus led to ask myself who currently possesses the authority in Algeria to legally name a primary school teacher.”

Presented with no precise legislation, with hostile municipal councils, and with unwieldy foreign parents, Governor General Chanzy temporarily opted to assume himself all expenses related to the reinstallation of congregationist schools, which now functioned alongside lay schools funded by the communes. This precarious situation lasted for the next two years until it began to drain the resources of the office of the governor general.

Finally, on 15 August 1875, the long-awaited decree on public instruction in Algeria arrived. It granted temporary respite to the congregationists while pointing the way forward for full civilian rule in the foreseeable future. The decree granted all authority over education to the minister of public instruction, who would rule on the

---

138 AN F17/12328 Dossier 4. See the text of the deliberation of the municipal council of Philippeville on 6 September 1873.
139 AN F17/12328 Dossier 5. Letter from General Chanzy to the minister of interior, 7 October 1873.
advice of an academic council in Algiers composed of the superintendent as president, his academic inspectors, and the heads of the faculties of the secondary schools. In addition, the law stipulated that the superintendent appoint primary school teachers – for both public and private schools – from a list drafted either by the departmental council or by the superior of an authorized religious association, respectively. The ruling stipulated that the congregationists who currently worked in communal schools would continue in their functions until the expiration of their individual contracts with the communes, at which point “the municipal council will be allowed to express its opinion on the continued employment of the congregationist teachers or their replacement by lay teachers.”

This ruling, while appeasing missionary orders and foreign families in the short term, would only exacerbate their precarious position in the longer term. It also marked a key moment in government policy towards the foreign population of Algeria, as from this point forward the policy of assimilation to an anticlerical and universal cultural norm would consistently win out over that of association based on particular (religious) sentiments. This is not to say, however, that the policy would fail to encounter difficulties in the form of foreigners who still desired that their children receive a Catholic education and missionaries who continued to have a different conception of what French national belonging entailed, especially in an environment as religiously and racially diverse as Algeria’s.

Cardinal Lavigerie and the Decline of Ecclesiastical Patronage


141 CAOM ALG/GGA/50S/2. Ruling of 15 June 1875 applicable to Algiers.
The ruling on public instruction in Algeria on 15 June 1875 marked the first step on the path to full assimilation with the metropole in matters of public instruction. This path culminated on 13 February 1883, when the metropolitan government opted to apply the Ferry laws of 1880-81 to Algeria in full (for European inhabitants). The ruling of 1875, however, did not solve the problems surrounding the foreign colonists of Algeria, who would not gain the political rights of Frenchmen until the 1889 law of naturalization. As a result, when congregationists’ contracts with municipal councils expired, the former moved to open private schools to continue serving the Catholic inhabitants of the territory. Although Lavigerie initially instructed his clergy to offer these schools their full support, including substantial economic assistance, the rising anticlericalism and the systematic defunding of the Catholic religion in Algeria put increasing strains on the relationship between the archbishop and his secular clergy on the one hand and all the missionary congregations on the other. At the same time, Lavigerie continued to divert financial resources from other missionary congregations to fund his own missionary order, the Pères Blancs.

Upon the expiration of contracts in the late 1870s and early 1880s, the fate of publically funded Catholic schools in Algeria fell entirely to the discretion of the municipal councils. Many municipal councils expressed the opinion that foreign parents only sent their children to Catholic schools out of habit. As a municipal councilor of Philippeville opined to the council in 1879, “the foreign parents [are] for the most part illiterate and thus incapable of appreciating the value of one type of education over
second. Most municipal councils thus voted to install lay teachers in their public schools in order to assimilate these foreign children to their ideal of French secular culture. By 1881 the FEC could only count two remaining communal schools, those at El Biar and Stora, with six frères alone continuing to receive salaries from local governments. At the same time, the FEC still had 93 total frères in the colony (66 of whom did not possess the brevet de capacité), and these frères worked to open private schools in order to continue to meet the demand of largely foreign families for Catholic education.

To do so, the FEC had to rely on the largess of Lavigerie, his subordinate bishops and appointed clergy, and individual families.Unlike in the early 1870s, Lavigerie now began to recognize that FEC schools would have to rely on him as a permanent source of funding for their continued existence. In many instances, Lavigerie and his clergy chafed at this prospect. In Mostaganem, for instance, the FEC opened a private school funded by the local clergy after the municipality had secularized the communal school in 1877. By 1879, however, the school’s director, Frère Ignatius, wrote to his superior that they would have to close the school for a lack of funds. He claimed that while the clergy had offered its support initially, “now that [the school] is open and functions as well as possible…everyone seems to withdraw this support and abandon us.” He specifically blamed the local parish priest who “has turned against us…[he] leaves us to struggle and

---

142 FEC NL 473. Deliberation of the municipal council of Philippeville, 1879.
143 To be sure, at this point female congregationists still enjoyed slightly greater acceptance, as many municipalities continued to fund missionary sisters due to a lack of secular female teachers.
144 FEC NL 460 No 5, Letter from Frère Aimarus to his superior in Paris 12 June 1881. Since the Falloux laws of 1850, secular teachers had to possess the brevet to teach at communal schools, while members of missionary orders only needed a “letter of obedience” from their superior. This allowance ended with the Ferry Laws.
145 FEC NL 471, Letter from Frère Ignatius to Visiting Superior Frère Aimarus, 13 May 1879.
makes it seem that we embarrass him.”

The priest promised Ignatius a salary of 900 francs per month supplemented by another 500 francs from the bishop of Oran, but neither payment ever materialized. Ignatius wrote that although the school counted nearly 100 students, these children comprised “the dregs of the city [and they] can give us nothing.”

By May 1879, Ignatius had to shut the school and return to Algiers. A similar course of events unfolded in numerous European cities of Algeria.

Missionaries also suffered due to the continued growth of Lavigerie’s own missionary orders. Reflecting on the situation in 1892, Lavigerie’s successor wrote that the late cardinal, “preoccupied exclusively with his own missionary works [i.e. those of the Pères Blancs], has channeled in their favor the vast majority of the credits that the Propagation de la Foi has opened to this diocese.”

Lavigerie’s own letters to the Propagation de la Foi and the Propaganda Fide corroborate this accusation. As early as 1874, Lavigerie requested the unprecedented sum of 459,000 francs from the Propagation de la Foi, all of which he designated for his own missionary societies, specifically in their work in the Arab-Christian villages and in their attempt to penetrate deeper into the Sahara and Equatorial Africa.

Two years later, Lavigerie told the cardinal prefect of the Propaganda Fide in Rome that “I very strongly request your eminence to reserve for [the Pères Blancs] alone the new missions to found in all of North Africa.”

When the Propaganda Fide considered funding a second missionary society to aid the Pères Blancs

---

146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
148 Archives of the Propagation de la Foi, Fonds Lyon G9. Quoted in a letter from the vicar general of Algiers to his cousin, 8 July 1892.
149 Archives of the Propagation de la Foi, Fonds Lyon G8. Letter from Lavigerie to the Propagation, 4 April 1874.
150 Archives of the Propaganda Fide, SC – Barbary 20/879. Letter from Archbishop Lavigerie to the cardinal prefect of the Propagation Fide, 16 February 1876.
in their mission in the Sahara, Lavigerie warned that “two missionary societies side by side will lead to injurious competition and, ultimately, serious scandal for the church.”\footnote{Archives of the Propaganda Fide, SC – Barbary 20/920. Letter from Archbishop Lavigerie to the cardinal prefect of the Propaganda Fide, 4 April 1876.}

Thus, by 1880 most missionary orders in Algeria had largely lost the patronage on which they had relied since the conquest in 1830. On an ecclesiastical level, Lavigerie progressively shifted his focus away from the imperative of spreading Catholic civilization to the settler population and toward converting the Muslim population, an effort that would swallow hundreds of thousands of francs and yield very meager results. Nevertheless, by ensuring that all funds flowed through his office and by channeling those funds to his preferred missionary orders, Lavigerie emerged as the most powerful bishop in the history of French Algeria, even if his ascension to power did little to help the numerous missionaries who worked with the European population of Algeria. On a secular level, 1879 saw the appointment of Albert Grévy – brother to President Jules Grévy – as the first truly civilian governor general of Algeria.\footnote{Sylvie Thénault, 1881-1918: L’apogée de l’Algérie française et les débuts de l’Algérie algérienne,” in Histoire de l’Algérie à la Période Coloniale, 162.} The arrival of a civil governor general signaled the abandonment of the military’s policy of funding missionaries to tie Catholic settlers to the colonial regime. Henceforth colonial officials would pursue a strict policy of assimilation based on the conception of republican universalism emerging at the same period in metropolitan France.

Although both the civilian leadership and Lavigerie represented two distinct and opposed interests, the rise of both demonstrates the triumph of official networks of power in Algeria. Specifically, it reveals the transformation of the territory of Algeria from a place where renegade or opportunist individuals could carve out their own realms of
authority and autonomy deprived them in the metropole into a veritable extension of the metropole itself. Whether arriving as lay settlers or as members of religious orders, those who ventured to Algeria in an unofficial capacity to pursue dreams they found foreclosed in metropolitan France increasingly found their efforts equally stymied in Algeria, as legal codes and bureaucratic processes replaced the dense patronage networks that had previously ensured their existence, reliant as they were on the individual whims of powerful military generals or self-aggrandizing clergymen.

The case of the Jesuits in particular demonstrates this transformation’s impact on missionary works. In the 1840s the Jesuits’ legal suppression in France in no way prevented them from operating in and even expanding throughout the nascent colony (see Chapter One). By the 1870s, and especially following their latest legal dissolution in 1880, the Jesuits could no longer count on friendly secular or ecclesiastical patrons to provide them with protection. In 1874, a dire lack of resources (and orphans) had finally forced the Jesuits to sell their property at Ben Aknoun, after which their secondary school at Oran served as their last remaining establishment in Algeria. Further, Lavigerie then moved to close the school in Oran because it competed with his new seminary in the city. One Jesuit father recognized that “we will be sacrificed if the new seminary…[run by the Pères Blancs] can continue without requiring our support.” Writing at the same time, another Jesuit complained of “the difficulties we have in living in good harmony with the archbishop.” He further feared that “we attempt the impossible in seeking to appease Monseigneur, as however hard we try we cannot satisfy him.” In 1876, another Jesuit got to the root of the matter when he wrote that the archbishop “always supports the

---

153 ARSI, Fonds Algérie, 2-V. Letter from Jesuit Father Lagrange to his superior, 11 Feb 1873.
parish priests and his congregation over the Jesuits.” He accused Lavigerie of only giving
the Jesuits missionaries work that his parish priests could not perform on their own and
claimed that the archbishop was “completely suspicious of the congregations of the
parish.”155

To be sure, Lavigerie’s persecution of the Jesuits largely continued the policies of
his predecessor, Bishop Pavy. Lavigerie, however, also far exceeded this precedent by
also attempting to dispense with Pavy’s handpicked missionary congregation, the
Lazarists. In 1874, Lavigerie drafted a new contract between the diocese and the
Lazarists in which he combined the posts of superiors of the senior and junior seminaries
into one position with a single salary. This combination allowed Lavigerie to suppress
what he saw as superfluous salaries of Lazarist priests. As Father Girard wrote, this move
“would reduce expenses for Lavigerie, but goes against our regulations that each superior
must remain master of his own house,” and added frankly that it “imposes on us the
obligation to spend a lot of money.”156 The new contract also required that the Lazarists
pay out of their own pocket for the teachers, domestics, and meals at their seminaries,
with Lavigerie funding the rent payments and the salary of one superior alone.

Three years later, Lavigerie went even further by threatening to close the senior
seminary entirely. The conflict stemmed from a circular issued by Lavigerie on 19 March
1877 that forced seminarians who received scholarships from the diocese (which
included nearly all of them) to swear an oath upon entering the seminary promising that
they would stay and work for their entire lives in the diocese of Algiers rather than
returning (or going for the first time) to France immediately after entering the priesthood.

155 ARSI, Fonds Algérie 2-VI. Confidential note from a Jesuit priest to his superior, 13 October 1876.
156 CM Lazarists, 108b Algiers. Letter from Father Girard to Father Etienne, 24 November 1874.
Lavigerie justified this decision by claiming the need “to retain the priests who come here to steal their vocations from us and return to France without any pretext.” Realizing that the measure might not go over smoothly with the seminarians, Lavigerie first convened the senior Lazarists to inform them of his decision in order that they work to make it more palatable to their students. Rather than the Lazarists helping to facilitate its acceptance, however, Lavigerie complained that “everything I have said of the most serious and the most confidential matters to the directors…they have entirely repeated to the students, and they have even included their own criticisms and orders, which goes beyond treason.”

As a result of what Lavigerie saw as the treasonous disposition of the Lazarist teachers, many seminarians refused to take the oath. Lavigerie informed the Lazarist hierarchy in Paris that the actions of the faculty had “unleashed the open resistance of the students and, due to the lack of a firm authority on the part of the directors, an open revolt on their part.” Lavigerie accused the director of the seminary, Father Rouget, of “contesting the legitimacy of the measure that I have taken by supporting the rebellion of the students.” He told Rouget that the director of a seminary cannot maintain his position by “turning the seminary against the bishop.” Ultimately, Lavigerie warned the Lazarist hierarchy that the seminarians’ resistance to his authority had reached the point that he might close the seminary entirely. Although he stopped short of this extreme measure,

158 Ibid.
159 Ibid.
Lavigerie convinced the superiors in Paris to recall Father Rouget, whose “imprudence and lack of virtue,” he wrote, “border on madness.”

Without a powerful patron in the ecclesiastical hierarchy or among the civilian administration, the works of the Lazarists began to crumble. In July 1877, the new Lazarist superior, Father Doumerg, wrote to Paris to request that the mother house provide them “with sufficient resources so that we do not need to rely on a salary from the archbishop nor on outside aid.” These resources were not forthcoming, and in 1879 Doumerg warned that “the two seminaries are crumbling before our eyes.” The Lazarist teachers there had only managed to survive the year with proceeds from the grape harvest so that they could “live despite the penny pinching which continues to burden us due to our archbishop.” On 10 April 1880 the government informed the Lazarists that it would seize the house they occupied in Algiers (not to be confused with the seminary at Kouba) in order to sell it at public auction. By August 1880, the Lazarists only had the funds to support two priests in Algiers and two in neighboring Mustapha to serve the orphanage run by the Filles de la Charité.

Nor were these sisters immune from the persecution. In September 1880, the government temporarily expelled the Filles de la Charité from the orphanage at Mustapha that they had directed since 1846 and moved to auction off this house as well. The sisters employed a strategy that had served them well over the preceding forty years by again looking outside of traditional ecclesiastical and civilian networks and instead turning to the few remaining military patrons that existed. As such, they “took refuge in the military

160 Ibid.
161 CM Lazarists, Algiers 108b. Letter from Father Doumerg to Father Etienne in Paris, 22 July 1877.
162 CM Lazarists, Algiers 108b. Letter from Father Doumerg to Father Etienne in Paris, 18 August 1879.
163 Ibid.
prison, though as of yet nobody there has actually loosened the purse strings.” Although
the sisters ministered to these prisoners for a year, in June 1881 the civilian government
seized the military prison and transferred the prisoners to the civilian prison, which it
refused to allow the sisters to enter. Faced with a dwindling number of patrons, Doumerg
complained that even the clergy withheld funds from missionary orders “based on the
absurd proverb that the congregations are rich enough.”164 Only in 1883, after the
anticlerical fervor surrounding the Ferry Laws had abated, did the civilian regime
partially reverse course and allow the sisters to resume their work at the orphanage of
Mustapha. The sisters after all still provided an immensely useful service by raising the
city’s large number of orphans at a very low cost to the state.

Finally, the financial situation even began to affect the Lazarists’ founding
establishment and its largest work in Algeria: the senior seminary at Kouba. In September
1880 the director wrote that “someone must help restore this vast seminary at Kouba
which the government has left to slowly deteriorate.”165 In addition to water leaking
“from all parts of the ceiling” a wall on the building’s western side had apparently
crumbled entirely. When the superior asked the state inspector to make the necessary
repairs, the inspector responded that “it is not our responsibility to maintain the buildings,
as this falls under the authority of the archbishop.”166 Unfortunately, the Lazarist superior
wrote, the archbishop “is at this present time far from showing us favor.” He lamented
the days when Father Girard had established the grandeur of the seminary and had
“obtained all the money from a ministry that was less hostile and more favorable to

---
166 Ibid.
us.”\textsuperscript{167} Although the senior seminary would continue to struggle along, the junior seminary had ceased to exist entirely by 1890 owing to a lack of resources and a lack of patrons.

**Conclusion**

The “long decade” of the 1870s represented the greatest period of transformation for the colon population in nineteenth-century Algeria. This transformation comes into full focus when viewed through the lens of missionary work in the territory. In 1867, Archbishop Lavigerie bestowed on the FEC what he saw as the most important missionary work in the history of French Algeria, the Arab agricultural orphanage. Similarly, when faced with expulsion from their positions as public school teachers in 1868-69, the FEC could count on the support of both Archbishop Lavigerie and Governor General MacMahon, who unilaterally moved to reinstate them against the wishes of the municipal council of Algiers. The situation changed, however, due to the creation of the Pères Blancs and the fitful onset of civilian rule. The transfer of the orphans to the new Pères Blancs mission at the Maison Carrée marked the first step in the archbishop’s attempt to consolidate his power over the territory by withdrawing his patronage from outside missionary congregations. Separately, the rise of the Third Republic and the empowerment of municipal councils in 1870 made it harder still for missionaries to secure patrons from friendly authorities, as authority itself remained hotly contested in the territory.

At the same time, the fact that the government in Paris spent the first half of the decade coming to the aid of the missionary supporters, and that it only very reluctantly

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.
granted the municipal councils the rights of the metropole, reveals the logistical difficulty it encountered in transforming Algeria from a colony into an actual extension of France. This difficulty stemmed not from an attempt to incorporate the majority indigenous population into the French body politic; few if any Frenchmen envisioned enfranchising Algeria’s 2.1 million Muslims.\textsuperscript{168} The difficulty, rather, stemmed from the continued need to satisfy the religious sentiments of the large European population of Algeria that itself did not possess French citizenship or the political rights of the metropole. The affair of the schools that wracked Algeria throughout the 1870s brings into stark relief the ethnic and religious divisions that continued to afflict the settler population after forty years of imperial rule.

The fact that both the Catholic clergy and the secular municipal councils wanted to use their schools to assimilate these foreigners to their own ideals of French civilization reveals that the contestation over French belonging that unfolded in the metropole in the 1870s spread to the territory of Algeria as well. Unlike in the metropole, however, these two camps continued to find themselves on opposite ends of the political spectrum throughout the decade. Rather than working to mimic the political census that slowly developed in the metropole, these two camps continued to polarize opinion and only further radicalized their demands. This radicalization actually marginalized both sides from the more moderate political culture that began to take shape in France.

At the same time, as a direct result of this marginalization both sides saw Algeria as a space in which they could articulate their own version of Frenchness that remained unattainable in France itself. Whereas Catholics looked to an idealized past – a “creole

\textsuperscript{168} See Patrick Weil, \textit{How to be French}, 53, 211-216. The Muslim population of Algeria in 1872 was 2,134,000. Ruedy, 94.
medievalism” in the words of Michelle Warren – to realize their vision of a religious present, anticlericals aspired to an as yet unrealized future based on the principles of the French Revolution in which they could turn the long-desired separation of church and state into a social and political reality. The fact that these radicals finally won this struggle stemmed less from political events in France than from the peculiar makeup of French Algeria, where they could seize on the juxtaposition of different religions to justify the removal of Catholicism from the public sphere. Throughout, any desire to elevate Islam to the level of Catholicism remained mere empty rhetoric.

Finally, and as a result of this last effort, the decade of the 1870s demonstrates the growing pains inherent in the creation of a self-styled republican regime in a society that based its very foundation on a policy and principle of exclusion. Religious difference could not be tolerated in Algeria because religious belief had for so long served as the defining characteristic of a subjected people, and existing legislation specifically invoked religious difference to deny this population French citizenship and legal protection. The colon population that came to power in the 1870s increasingly defined the foreign population in terms of religion and used this difference to deny them political rights as well. In refusing to fund their Catholic schools the municipal councils told the foreigners that they could enter the French community on an equal footing, in the public schools, only after they agreed to subordinate their religious identity to the councilors’ peculiarly Algerian version of a French universalist ideal. This new subjectivity entailed the belief in a republicanism based on exclusion and a society based on a rigid racial and religious hierarchy.
To be sure, the foreigners were not yet ready to accept this new subjectivity. As we will see in the next chapter, Catholic clergy and their followers in Algeria continued to fight for the right to practice their religion. At the same time, the continued persecution they felt from the authorities only further divided the colon community throughout the period up to the First World War. Civilian authorities blamed foreign missionaries especially for perpetuating these divisions. Authorities looked with particular suspicion upon a new missionary order that arrived in Algeria in 1889: the Salésiens de Don Bosco. Indeed, the Salésiens’ Italian origins rendered them especially odious to French colonial officials, who began to create elaborate surveillance networks to monitor every move of the Salésien missionaries and their followers. It is to these missionaries and their largely Italian and Spanish supporters that we now turn.
Chapter Four

Foreign Citizens and Foreign Missionaries in French Algeria, 1883-1914.

“If, in favor of the numerous foreigners who live in our Algerian colony, we welcome into our congregation some priests of their nationality, there is nothing illegal in this. It is rather a means to make foreigners esteem the taste of hospitality that is so liberally practiced in France, and it shows that France knows how to grant to those who come to it seeking aid the liberty to freely and easily practice their religion.”
- Letter from the visiting superior of the Salésiens de Don Bosco to the prefect of Oran, 30 October 1895.

“Spanish monks have disembarked here as though in a conquered land and they are impossible to control.”
Excerpt from an editorial published in the journal L’éclair, 12 August 1898.

The practice of Catholicism, more than Islam, continued to divide the settler community in Algeria up to the First World War. In this period, the association of European “foreigners” with religious fanaticism in the minds of civilian officials and in the words of the republican press only grew more intense. Although the law of 1889 granted French citizenship to all foreigners of European descent born in Algeria it did not signal the definitive creation of a cohesive European community. Rather, the law frequently provoked the anger and increased the insecurities of the French colonial elite by transforming previously powerless foreigners into potent political actors. In many European villages, especially in the Oran department, the ethnically French population often no longer held the numerical majority in the electorate or the municipal councils.

---

1 CAOM 1U/29. Letter from Charles Bellamy to the Prefect of Oran, 30 October 1895.
and thus could not always enforce its anticlerical agenda on what it continued to refer to as the foreign population of Algeria (despite their new status as French citizens). Finally, during the period from 1901 to 1914, the piecemeal application of metropolitan laws of laïcisation often went against the wishes of the newly nationalized settler population and provided a further source of division amongst the colonists and anxiety for the colonial regime. Because they continued to enjoy the support of what officials came to refer to as the “neo-French” (néo-français) population, missionaries only intensified their efforts to spread Christian civilization to Algeria’s Europeans despite their precarious and at times illegal existence.

Historian Oissila Saaïdia has argued that “a paradoxical situation dominated the years from 1880 to 1914 [in Algeria]. While in the metropole the period was marked by intense clashes between clericals and anticlericals, in the colony it was the search for a consensus that brought together these two currents of opinion.” My findings complicate Saaïdia’s depiction, which begins from the broader theoretical assumption that the dichotomous difference between colonized and colonizer structured all aspects of colonial society. In late nineteenth-century Algeria, colonial settlers often proved more preoccupied with divisions within their own camp than with those between themselves and native Algerians. As in metropolitan France, these divisions coalesced around the

---

3 A similar situation unfolded in neighboring Tunisia, where the French population also constituted a minority in the French protectorate. See Mary Lewis, *Divided Rule: Sovereignty and Empire in French Tunisia, 1881-1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014). See also Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*.

4 For the anti-congregationist laws in France see Sarah Curtis, *Educating the Faithful*, 150-70.

5 The term néo-français was created by metropolitan functionaries to label the foreigners who won French citizenship due to the law of 1889. In Algeria it soon took on derogatory connotations. Ageron, *Les Algériens musulmans et la France*, 578.

issue of Catholicism. The dangers that Catholicism supposedly posed to Algerian society, however, differed in crucial ways from those it posed to French society in the metropole.

Clashes between clericals and anticlericals came to a head especially in debates and discourses surrounding a missionary congregation new to Algeria in the 1890s: the Salésiens de Don Bosco. As such, the Salésiens will constitute this chapter’s primary object of analysis. Because of their Italian origin and their alleged use of foreign priests, the Salésiens served as a touchstone for larger debates about the place of foreigners in a territory that increasingly did constitute a fully assimilated extension of the metropole (for the European population). The case study of the Salésiens further reveals the unsteady foundations of imperial governance in a land where the division between ruler and ruled was itself based largely on religious difference. The religiously devout portion of the settler community – or “fanatics” as their enemies labeled them – continued to constitute an intermediary group between the militantly anti-clerical settler elite and the excluded mass of the native Muslim majority. On rare occasions the religious sensibilities and social marginalization of the foreign population actually led them to seek out indigenous healers and sorcerers, who readily took advantage of their credulity. Such blurring of racial and religious boundaries preoccupied and puzzled colonial officials until the eve of the First World War.

In the three decades between 1880 and 1910, civilian authorities in Algeria and France expressed increasing anxiety over the large number of foreigners in the territory. This obsession stemmed in part from a concern over the falling population in France itself. In Algeria, however, it took on characteristics that stemmed directly from what we

---

7 In France too, politicians and the media became increasing obsessed over the nation’s low population and low rates of reproduction following its loss in the Franco-Prussian War and continuing throughout the
might call the ethnic demographics of empire. Although the 1860s saw the French colonial population equal and eventually surpass in number the total foreign population, by the 1880s the foreigners, especially those of Spanish descent, began to close this gap due to their higher levels of reproduction. On 20 November 1884, Governor General Louis Tirman (in office 1882-1891) gave a speech to the High Council of Algeria in which he warned:

The last census, in 1881, noted that the French population…exceeds the foreign population by only a mere 14,064 individuals. This gap, which consisted of 26,248 individuals in 1865, is getting smaller every year, and in the Oran department the national element is no longer in the majority.⁸

According to historian Patrick Weil, the governor general and the metropolitan administration began to fear that the large number of Spanish and Italian nationals in particular might cause Spain or Italy to challenge France’s claim to Algeria. This fear only increased in 1882, when Italy joined Germany and Austria-Hungary to form the Triple Alliance, a move in part motivated by Italy’s anger over the new French protectorate in Tunisia, which many nationalists hoped Italy would colonize for itself.⁹

Plans to grant French citizenship to European foreigners in Algeria dated at least to the senatus-consulte of 1865. Although typically invoked by historians for its application to the Muslim population of Algeria, the decree applied equally to European

---

foreigners.\textsuperscript{10} It stipulated that non-French Europeans who had lived in Algeria for more than three years could apply for French citizenship. As Weil writes, “The three categories of Algerian inhabitants who were not fully French – 30,000 Jews, 3,000,000 Muslims, and 250,000 foreigners – were dealt with separately but on almost the same basis in this ad hoc nationality law that was applied henceforth in Algeria.”\textsuperscript{11} The law, however, did not have the intended effects, as between 1865 and 1881 only 4,428 foreigners had applied for and won French citizenship, or an average of 276 individuals per year. We should note that the law had an equally negligible effect on Algerian Muslims, as it forced them to renounce their personal status and their adherence to Shari’a law and subject themselves entirely to the French civil code.\textsuperscript{12}

The 1880s saw a renewed effort to nationalize the foreign, if not the Muslim, population of Algeria. As the previous chapter demonstrated in great detail, the foreign settlers’ religiosity proved one of the largest stumbling blocks to the institution of full civilian rule. In 1884 and again in 1885 the civil governor general, Louis Tirman, lobbied the metropolitan government to nationalize \textit{en masse} Algeria’s non-French European population. The government initially proved reluctant, because this effort would require it to break with the conception of citizenship enshrined in the civil code and embodied by the concept of \textit{jus sanguinis} – which based acquisition of French citizenship on one’s French ancestry. By nationalizing the foreigners of Algeria the government would have to abandon this conception of nationality in favor of one based on \textit{jus soli}, or citizenship

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{10} For more on the \textit{senatus-consulte} see Ruedy, \textit{Modern Algeria}, 75-76, and Abi-Mershed, \textit{Apostles of Modernity}.

\textsuperscript{11} Weil, \textit{How to Be French}, 209. Algeria’s 30,000 Jews were automatically naturalized by the Crémieux Decree of 1870.

\end{footnotesize}
according to place of birth. Only in 1889 did the metropolitan government finally adopt the concept of *jus soli* and grant French citizenship to all foreigners born in French territory once they reached the age of 21. Although this new policy stemmed in part from French anger and jealousy that foreigners could avoid conscription in the metropole, Weil has asserted that support from Algeria’s representatives in the National Assembly “undoubtedly contributed to the adoption of the law.”

Historians have depicted the law of 26 June 1889 as marking a turning point in the history of French Algeria. Writing in 1961, Pierre Nora stated that the law of naturalization “created the French of Algeria properly said.” Similarly, in 1968 the preeminent historian of French Algeria, Charles Robert Ageron, called the law “the birth certificate of the European people of Algeria.” More generally, David Prochaska, perhaps the first historian to undertake an in-depth archival study focused solely on the European community of Algeria, has written that “a ‘new race’ of hybrid Europeans, a unified colonial society, began to take shape in the 1890-1914 period.” In sum, historians agree that by the turn of the century a cohesive unit of colonial settlers had emerged that would effectively assert its will until its wholesale expulsion from the territory following Algerian independence in 1962.

An examination of missionary work in the decades before and after the law of 1889, however, reveals that the law did little to attenuate the religiously tinged ethnic

---

17 To be sure, some anthropologists have noted that into the postcolonial era Europeans who lived in Algeria continued to embrace dual identities as belonging to both the French national community as well as that of their ancestral nation. See Andrea L. Smith, *Colonial Memory and Postcolonial Europe: Maltese Settlers in Algeria and France* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006).
divisions that plagued the settler community since the conquest in 1830. To be sure, the law marked the final step in the progressive abandonment of the military’s policy of associating the foreigners to the French state and the acceptance of the civilian leadership’s policy of assimilating them to French society more broadly. But the policy did little to alter the reality. Far from uniting the settler community, the law of 1889 only sowed further and unexpected divisions – divisions that resulted directly from disagreements over the place of religion in public discourse and civil society. Rather than assimilating the foreign community to French secular sensibilities, the law actually empowered these neo-French settlers to attempt to shape Algerian society according to their own religious sensibilities.

Ultimately, an examination of foreigners and faith in the period of high colonialism builds on Ann Stoler’s depiction of a colonial state based not on the rule of reason, but rather one that accumulates “a discursive density around issues of sentiment and their subversive tendencies, around ‘private’ feelings and their political consequences.” At the same time, this analysis complicates Stoler’s portrayal in two significant ways. First, it shows that such colonial governmentality did not only necessitate a policing of relationships that blurred the lines between indigènes and Europeans and the métis offspring such relationships threatened to produce. Rather, the colonial state relied equally on surveillance of the nature of intra-European relationships and daily behavior that often had little or nothing to do with France’s conquered colonial subjects. Secondly, this analysis inserts faith and religiosity as sentiments that, in colonial Algeria at least, held a subversive potential that was in some ways similar to that of

deviant or otherwise non-normative sexualities. Faith too, like sexuality, turned out to be a “dense transfer point for relations of power.”

**Faith, Foreigners and the Law of 1889**

In the years leading up to the law of 1889, the government reluctantly tolerated foreign or unauthorized priests because it did not have enough French priests to serve all the new villages that popped up throughout Algeria. Even after the colonial regime applied the metropolitan law dispersing Jesuits to Algeria on 30 October 1880, many foreign Jesuit priests stayed in Algeria to work as individual missionaries or, where possible, as members of the secular clergy, often with the benefit of state salaries. The use of foreign priests proved especially necessary for the department of Oran, where foreign settlers continued to outnumber French ones. As late as 1891 the department counted 98,724 French citizens to 102,453 Spanish nationals, not including the substantial number of Italian and Maltese settlers.

The lack of priests both threatened to unravel the ties that bound colonial society together and to leave settlers in what church leaders described as a state of uncivilized savagery. In March 1882, the bishop of Oran asked the minister of cults to pay for more parish priests, as “the new European cities that appear every day do not have priests to serve them.” The bishop tied the need for priests to the future of the colony by claiming that “this state of spiritual abandon is one of the causes that contributes the most to

---

20 CAOM 1U/106. *Letter from the governor general to the prefect of Oran, 14 October 1880*. The decree dispersing the Jesuits in Algeria on 30 October 1880 applied to the territory the metropolitan decree of 29 March 1880. Neither decree affected the Jesuits as individual actors but only as members of a congregation.
22 AN F19/2551. *Letter from Bishop Etienne to the minister of public instruction and cults, 29 March 1882*. 

186
discourage the colonists…I have heard them state loudly that if they had foreseen this deplorable situation, they would have never come to Algeria.”23 As late as 1894, there still remained 87 villages without parish priests, and the archbishop of Algeria warned that the colonists who came from Europe did not want “to live and die without the aid of a priest.”24 After failing to make headway with the minister of cults, he begged the Propagation de la Foi to provide priests for the colonists. “This situation,” he warned, “is 1,000 times more trying than that of the most wretched missionaries who live amongst the savages and barbarians of all the continents.”25 Without the aid of parish priests, far away from the culture of the metropole, settlers themselves threatened to succumb to barbarism.

It was such a state of affairs that led the government to allow one such Italian Jesuit to continue to receive a salary for his services in the villages of Mers-el-Kebir, Tamzourah, and Arbal in the Oran department. At some point in 1884, however, the government had ceased to pay this Father Pollaci, telling him:

You have manifested overtly hostile sentiments to France and its institutions. You travel to the villages of Oran…where under pretext of doing missionary work you incite against us your compatriots the Italians…You have aroused the fanaticism of the Italians of Mers-el-Kebir to the point of having them beat each other in expiation (coups de discipline) in the chapel with the doors shut.26

Pollaci defended himself from each of these accusations in a letter to the prefect of Oran on 15 February 1886. He admitted that he “said publically that today it is no longer permitted to speak of Jesus Christ,” but he asked how the government could interpret

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
26 AN F19/5836. Father Pollaci quotes the accusations against him in a letter to the prefect of Oran, 15 February 1886.
such a statement as inciting the Italians against the French. He further blamed an “impious press” for trying to have him removed by claiming wrongly that he hated the Republic.

Whereas the prefect accused Pollaci of arousing the “fanaticism” of his parishioners, Pollaci portrayed himself as a civilizer and claimed that he worked to actively rid his parishioners of religious superstitions. Indeed, he readily conceded to their so-called fanaticism, asking why the French should fear “these poor Italian fishers, occupied day and night with their fish, no matter how great their fanaticism is.” He also admitted that he directed them to beat each other while inside his chapel to atone for their sins. He explained these actions by writing that:

For the French it is out of fanaticism that I want to give these disciplinary blows in the church, but for the Italians it is not so. The Italians are used to doing and seeing this in their country…If the Italians want to give disciplinary blows to each other, what is there in this that is hostile to France?

Pollaci explained that he intended the beatings to break the Italians of the superstitious habit of “going to consult the Moor, the Moresque, the Jew to learn the cause of their despairs.” Apparently the Italian settlers sought to improve their fortunes by taking potions from indigenous healers. “With these people, ignorant to the point of believing in this type of sorcery,” Pollaci added, “there is no other means of wholeheartedly renouncing these acts of superstition.”

In this instance the foreigners and the foreign priest proved a threat on two accounts. First, the prefect saw the Italians as posing a potential political danger to French rule; and he feared the foreign priest only worked to exacerbate this danger.

---

27 Ibid.
28 AN F19/5836. Letter from Pollaci to the prefect of Oran, 15 February 1886.
29 Ibid.
Second, by their superstition the Italian settlers threatened to erase entirely the line that supposedly divided European colonizer from indigenous colonized to the point that the former actually sought out the latter for spiritual and temporal guidance. Whereas both the prefect and the priest saw this crossing of racial boundaries as dangerous and an act of “fanaticism,” the prefect saw the priest’s reaction to it as equally dangerous. Pollaci thus failed to fulfill either of the primary purposes that justified allotting him a state salary. He did not cultivate the Italians’ loyalty to the French state just as he did not provide them with any sort of moral values that would assimilate them to French civilization. Indeed, it was this fear that a priest could “turn his compatriots” against the French – morally, culturally, and politically – that contributed in large part to the adoption of the law of 1889.

When the law did arrive, however, it did little to overcome these divisions. In 1895, six years after the law’s passage, officials continued to worry that foreign priests manipulated foreign settlers for their own ends.30 In the village of Bou Sfer in the Oran department one Father Pomarès, a priest of Spanish origin (though now a naturalized Frenchman), drew numerous complaints from the village mayor, who alleged that Pomarès had “occupied himself with politics and incited hostility towards local functionaries.”31 The mayor also accused the priest of granting asylum to Spaniards expelled from Algeria and of preaching in Spanish rather than French, even when French parishioners attended mass. In October 1895, the bishop of Oran sent his vicar general to

---

30 In this argument, colonial officials adopted and adapted a widespread accusation in metropolitan France that, if French women gained suffrage, they would vote entirely according to the directives of their parish priests, and thus against the Republic. There is perhaps a connection here between the feminization and demonization of religion in France and the feminization, or de-masculinization, of the non-French community in Algeria. For feminization of religion in France see, among many works, Carline Ford, *Divided Houses: Religion and Gender in Modern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

31 AN F19/5922. Transcript of the inquiry conducted by Vicar General Lafumat, 3 October 1895.
conduct an inquiry, during which he collected 44 depositions from among the town’s inhabitants. The prelate concluded that the charges had little foundation and came only from the mayor and a local notable, the village doctor. In one of the depositions, an inhabitant reported that “if you were to put in Bou Sfer a priest who did not speak Spanish the complaints would not cease to rain down on the prefect and the bishop. This priest would find it impossible to work, and he would remain no more than 15 days.”\(^\text{32}\) As a result of this inquiry, the bishop went against the wishes of the French mayor and chose to keep the Spanish priest in the village. The prefect accepted this decision to appease the Spanish inhabitants of Bou Sfer.

By June 1896, however, the problem had not gone away. The mayor again wrote to the prefect and accused Pomarès of chanting in the public square, “Long live Spain, down with France!”\(^\text{33}\) The prefect suggested to the governor general that they conduct another inquiry, this time led by a secular official, rather than a member of the bishop’s council. The prefect wrote that “whatever the explanations given for the attitude of Monsieur Pomarès, one cannot deny that as a freshly naturalized Frenchman he remains Spanish at heart.”\(^\text{34}\) The prefect feared that when surrounded by so many of his compatriots the priest felt himself freer to express his “anti-French ideas and vengeance against the mayor.”\(^\text{35}\) The letter from the prefect sufficiently worried the governor general so that it caused him to pen an anxious letter to the minister of interior in Paris. On 15 September 1896 the governor warned the minister that “Pomarès occupies himself with

\(^\text{32}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{33}\) AN F19/5922. Quoted in a letter from the prefect of Oran to the governor general, 20 June 1896.
\(^\text{34}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{35}\) Ibid.
questions incompatible with his ministry, notably during the elections.”

He added the now familiar refrain that the priest “remains a Spaniard at heart, despite his French naturalization, and will inspire in his compatriots a hatred for our authority.”

The equation of Spanish priests with anti-French sentiments in Algeria resulted in part from the vastly different trajectories in church-state relations underway in metropolitan France and Spain. Just as the French Third Republic had defeated its royalist enemies and begun to consolidate its secular institutions, republicans in Spain found themselves on the defensive. In 1874, a Bourbon restoration overthrew Spain’s republican government and scrapped its secular-minded constitution of 1873. The new conservative constitution of 1876 restored Roman Catholicism as the official religion of Spain. As a result of these diametrically opposed religious paths, French civilian leaders in Algeria saw Spanish priests and Spanish settlers as a direct threat to the republican government. At the same time, Spanish priests looked admiringly in the direction of Spain as its conservative leadership set about constructing its own religious modernity (one that would culminate in the ascension to power of Francisco Franco in 1939).

The situation remained threatening in the department of Oran in particular, where as late as 1897 the ethnically French population still constituted a minority of the overall European population in 43 of the 100 communes that comprised the department. On 2 September 1898 a local notable in the town of Mers-el-Kebir wrote to the minister of

36 AN F19/5922. Letter from the governor general to the minister of the interior, 15 September 1896.
37 Ibid.
40 Jordi, Les espagnols en Oranie, 172.
cults to inform him that the 373 electors in the village of Mers-el-Kebir included only 74 French voters, compared to 216 Neapolitans and 83 Spaniards. He warned the minister that “the Crémieux decree [which granted French nationality to Algeria’s Jewish population] is a great danger, but the law of ‘89 is also a source of serious peril.”\textsuperscript{41} Not only did the law of 1889 allow “foreigners” to exert their political will over Frenchmen, but these foreigners were “almost all fanatics who do not recognize any authority except for clerical authority [and] they will only consult with the priest for their electoral votes.”\textsuperscript{42} If “comparison is always both a strategic and a political act,” the village notable in this instance used the method of comparison to highlight the dangerous consequences that neo-French colonists posed to French colonial rule.\textsuperscript{43}

The issue had geopolitical implications as well. The city notable reminded the minister that Italy had never desired to recognize the naturalization of its subjects abroad. “In the case that we go to war with Italy,” he wrote, “these children of foreign origin will not respond to their call [to serve the French army].”\textsuperscript{44} He noted that Mers-el-Kebir would very likely serve as a port of war in the near future, and yet one “administered by the faithful subjects of Umberto who only obey orders emanating from a priest.”\textsuperscript{45} Less than a month later, the mayor of Mers-el-Kebir wrote to the prefect to warn that the local priest continued “to use his pulpit and confessional to make political accusations against

\textsuperscript{41} AN F19/5922. Letter from Pierre Ruffie, “propriétaire,” to the minister of cults, 2 September 1898.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Stoler, \textit{Along the Archival Grain}, 170.
\textsuperscript{45} AN F19/5922. Letter from Pierre Ruffie to the minister of cults, 2 September 1898.
the government and he is supported in this sad labor by the anti-French population.”46 He further alerted the prefect that if the administration did not intervene “the French element will disappear entirely from this commune” – the prefect underlined this phrase when he forwarded the letter to the governor general.47 Nearly a decade after the law of naturalization, two years before the turn of the century, and slightly more than a decade until the outbreak of World War I, the fear of foreign priests and their influence over foreign settlers had grown to the point that officials perceived them as threatening to undermine French rule entirely.

**The Salésiens de Don Bosco in Oran (1891-1904)**

These anxieties coalesced around the Catholic missionary congregation known as the Salésiens de Don Bosco, which arrived in Oran in 1891. The rigorous persecution and intense surveillance directed towards the Salésiens reveals that, despite the famous claim by Léon Gambetta to the contrary, metropolitan anticlerical laws could very much constitute items for export.48 The reality of the situation better matches that described by historian Claude Prudhomme, who observed that “the metropolitan vision of an imperial France as an object of a uniform policy in matters of religion does not correspond to the extraordinary diversity of the colonial world.”49 Even within a single colonial territory, not all congregations received equal attention, surveillance, and persecution. The

---

46 AN F19/5922. Letter from mayor of Mers-el-Kebir to the prefect of Oran, 28 September 1898.
47 Ibid.
obsession over the Salésiens stemmed directly from their Italian background and their use of both Spanish and Italian priests.

The government’s surveillance over the Salésiens and their followers reveals a colonial state that both possessed an insatiable will to knowledge and continued to fail in its quest to obtain such knowledge, which remained fragmented, disordered, and insecure. In reality, as Stoler has reminded us, “colonial regimes were neither monolithic nor omnipotent.”50 Throughout this time period, the state could never ascertain exactly how many Salésiens were foreign, French, or neo-French; the same failure held true for the identity of the Salésiens’ followers as well. Indeed, after the law of 1889, officials remained dogged by confusion over what it even meant to be French or foreign. The government’s very obsession over its own instability, however, only increased its desire to classify and control the Salésiens and their supposedly foreign followers.

French Catholic congregations in Algeria, meanwhile, actually saw their fortunes stabilize in the 1880s and 90s. The Filles de la Charité, Soeurs Trinitaires, and Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes all continued to work relatively undisturbed in this period.51 The differing fortunes of the French congregations and the Salésiens are best revealed in the


51 After it appeared the government would shut down and auction off the orphanage run by the Filles de la Charité at Mustapha, it ultimately abandoned this project and allowed the sisters to continue to work in the orphanage. In 1880 the number of sisters there had fallen from 28 to 7 and the number of children to only 40. By 1896, however, the orphanage had rebounded to house 300 children served by 15 sisters paid by the government. The congregation also continued to direct 16 private and public schools in Algeria throughout the 1890s. In Constantine the government also gave 10 sisters annual salaries of 400 francs each to direct an orphanage for over 150 children from Alsace and Lorraine. See archives of the Filles de la Charité [FC] 27/22. Sister Salzani’s notes on her visit to the Orphanage of Mustapha, 9 September 1896 and her notes on her visit through Constantine, 14 November 1899. To be sure, the Filles de la Charité and Soeurs Trinitaires thrived in part because female congregationists did not arouse as much suspicion as did their male counterparts and because secular female teachers were still harder to come by in Algeria. Even so, however, the Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes also continued to operate more than 20 free schools in Algeria at least until the application of the law of 1904, and at times much later.
respective public responses to their use of orphan labor. In 1885, the sisters of the Filles de la Charité rented a new four-story building in Algiers where they directed six classes and a nursery for 500 to 600 children. They also oversaw a workshop (*ouvroir*) for 60 students in Algiers that provided “a source of great profit for the house.”\(^{52}\) In the village of Boghat as well the sisters used money earned from the products of their orphanworkshops to fund their own private school. These establishments won the support, or at least the tacit consent, of colonial authorities and the press. The workshops of the Salésiens, meanwhile, only provoked accusations that they employed orphans for their own profit and undercut the sales of the skilled laborers of Oran.\(^{53}\)

Founded in Turin, Italy, in 1873, the Salésiens came to Algeria in 1891 after the bishop of Oran invited them to open a primary and secondary school as well as an orphanage in the city of Oran. The congregation’s superior, Don Rua, admitted that “no land would be better suited by its standing, the ease of its relations with Europe, its climate, its customs, its language, to become a sort of garden of acclimation [to Africa], a practical novitiate for future missionaries.”\(^{54}\) On 1 January 1891, seven Salésien priests led by their French visiting superior Charles Bellamy arrived in the city of Oran. Unlike previous missionary societies, the Salésiens from the outset planned to focus primarily on the European population of Oran. In the words of Bellamy:

> We have not come here as explorers – the time has passed – nor as tourists – the time has not yet come – but as converters! Because this Algerian people, a mix of so many peoples, these French of all nations – ultra civilized in the natural sense

---

\(^{52}\) FC 27/22. Sister Salzani’s notes on her visit to the central house of Algiers, 8 September 1896.

\(^{53}\) To be sure, the sisters likely encountered less opposition because female orphans who learned sewing and needlework did not provide competition to male skilled laborers. Rebecca Rogers has recounted how a secular teacher in the 1850s taught indigenous girls the skill of weaving and sold their textiles throughout Europe for a great profit. See Rogers, *A Frenchwoman’s Imperial Story: Madame Luce in Nineteenth-Century Algeria* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

of the word – has the greatest need to be converted to a true Christian life. Our mission here is not to evangelize the savage peoples of the earth, but to…save from damnation these civilized people who risk being submerged in a cloak of false religions and superstitions.  

The Salésiens thus arrived with their own civilizing mission and felt that their multinational character, and especially their Italian origins, rendered them particularly suitable to ministering to the diverse European settlers of Algeria.

Notably, however, although the Salésiens’ mission to civilize still envisioned a society in which civilization entailed Christianity, the stated object of their proselytism was not the lapsed Catholic or the anticlerical, but rather the practicing Catholic whose knowledge of Catholic orthodoxy remained tenuous and whose religious practices had begun to merge with those of France’s colonized subjects. This fear that living in close proximity to native Algerians would create a form of syncretic religious practice only echoes the Italian priest’s accusation, described above, that his Italian parishioners had begun to consult native sorcerers and healers. As such, the blurring of religious boundaries in Algeria perhaps constitutes a more widespread phenomenon of the “decivilizing mission” described by historian Owen White in colonial Timbuktu.  

White recounts the story of a Père Blanc missionary, Auguste Dupuis, who adopted the dress and customs of members of the Muslim Songhay society and who eventually changed his name to Dupuis-Yakouba, indicating his dual identity as at once French and African. Although the Catholic colonists described here likely did not challenge the racial and religious hierarchy to such an extreme extent, the fact that they threatened to constitute a mass movement only heightened the anxieties of colonial officials and likely helped

55 Ibid.
convince these officials to allow the Salésiens an initial foothold in Algeria – an act they would come to regret.

Successive bishops of Oran as well proved valuable patrons for the Salésiens. In 1891, Bishop Géraud Soubrier secured for them the use of the old civil court building in the center of town on the Rue Ménerville. The government had previously slated the structure for demolition and upon arrival Bellamy found it “in a state of disrepair.” Still, he noted that the space received plenty of light and fresh air and he and his fellow missionaries immediately kneeled in the courtyard to pray for the criminals condemned during the building’s previous incarnation. Within a few months the congregation officially opened the Oratoire de Saint-Louis, the first Christian secondary school for boys in the city of Oran since the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1880. In its first year, enrollment reached 50 students.\footnote{Ibid.} By 1899 the school taught 150 elementary-level students, 22 secondary-level students in Latin studies (en route to ecclesiastical training), and an additional 130 students who came from the lay schools to attend the Salésiens’ youth club (\textit{patronage des écoliers}).\footnote{CAOM 1U/106. Report by the chief of police of the first arrondissement of Oran, 20 October 1899.} The establishment also had its own chapel that provided religious services for adults, including catechism classes in French, Spanish, and Italian. Finally, the Salésiens opened an outreach program for soldiers (\textit{foyer du soldat}) that provided access to a library and mailroom.

In January 1893 the Salésiens opened a second school, the Oratoire de Jésus-Adolescent, in the neighboring town of Eckmühl, situated on the vast plateau that overlooks Oran and the Mediterranean. A local widow donated the plot of land, which included groves of olive trees that allowed the missionaries to supplement their meager
Within a few years, the Salésiens also opened a boarding school (pensionnat) and an orphanage that provided orphans with training in skilled labor, especially carpentry. The school counted 41 children at the elementary level, 14 at the secondary level, and 76 not yet of school age. The boarding school admitted free of tuition students in “poverty or abandoned [but who had] an undoubted morality,” while wealthier families paid what they could afford. According to Father Bellamy most students paid nothing and very few paid the maximum tuition.

The congregation raised a portion of its funds from donations, but the majority came from selling products made by the students and orphans in the apprentice workshops (ouvroirs). The boarding school at Eckmühl aimed specifically to impart a trade to orphans and poor children who, “left to idleness, become a danger to the colony.” To this end, local artisans or skilled Salésiens helped train apprentices primarily in carpentry, but also in blacksmithing, tailoring, cobbling, and locksmithing. The Salésiens granted children weekly awards in equipment, clothes, linens or even cash for the completion of finished products. They also directed the students to set any cash awards aside as savings to use only after graduation. In order to graduate with a worker’s diploma (diplôme d’ouvrier), students presented a masterwork to a jury composed of skilled artisans from Oran.

59 CAOM 1U/106. Letter by Charles Bellamy published in the Croix d’Algérie, 16 November 1895. The letter was originally written to the newspaper Petit Africain in response to criticisms the paper had made about the conduct of the Salésiens in Oran.

60 CAOM 1U/106. Report from the office of the governor general, penned by Commissariat Spécial de la Sûreté des Chemins de fer et des ports, to the prefect of Oran. No date, sometime in 1895.

61 CAOM 1U/106. Les Salésiens de Don Bosco à Oran. État actuel des Oeuvres, Projets, Ressources (Oran-Eckmühl, 1896).

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.
By 1893 the number of Salésiens in Oran had risen to 28, and as their number increased so did their public notoriety. Despite their success, the Salésiens began to court controversy among certain politicians, organs of the press, and even secular clergy. Such conflict occurred for four primary reasons. First, many settlers accused the Salésiens of harboring “foreigners” and of imparting a non-French education to their students and orphans. Two-thirds of the Salésiens’ students in 1892 came from either Spanish or Italian families, and although the law of 1889 rendered these children French citizens upon their age of majority, the republican press continued to identify these children as foreigners. Second, most of the French children who attended the Salésiens’ schools – and who constituted one-third of the student body – came from French military families. The alliance between the military and missionaries continued even after the switch to civilian rule, and civilian politicians viewed this alliance with suspicion, which only intensified around the time of the Dreyfus affair. Third, many politicians denounced the Salésiens for using their workshops to exploit orphans for their own profit and for undercutting the labor of Oran’s skilled workers by selling their products at below market value. Finally, by opening their own chapel the missionaries incited the jealousy of Oran’s secular clergy as the chapel especially attracted a number of “foreign” families who had previously attended mass and received sacraments at the larger cathedral of Oran.

Suspicions over the Salésiens’ alleged foreignness began almost immediately upon their arrival. In 1892, an article in the Echo d’Oran contended that “these Salésiens, who have for a founder an Italian…are foreign immigrants in Algeria, and they want to

---

64 CAOM 1U/106. Report on the Salésien houses in Oran, 6 February 1901.
impose their will on our fair city of Oran.”\textsuperscript{65} Similarly, in 1893 an op-ed in the newspaper \textit{Le Républicain Oranais} complained that the congregation includes “a certain number of non-naturalized Italian priests.”\textsuperscript{66} The author encouraged the prefect of Oran to authorize intense surveillance over the houses in Oran and Eckmühl, as “these Crispinien priests would not hesitate to…send to their compatriots information dangerous to our national defense.”\textsuperscript{67} The writer even went so far as to accuse the prefect of complicity with the Salésiens and – in a thinly veiled threat of violence – warned that if the prefect could not fulfill his duty then the republican citizens of Oran would expel the Salésiens on their own. This accusation that the Salésiens represented a foreign, and thus dangerous, element in the Algerian colony only gained momentum as the decade progressed.

Further, much like other missionary congregations, the Salésiens too encountered opposition from the secular clergy of Oran. On 26 October 1895 the prefect of Oran wrote to Bellamy to inform him to “absolutely prohibit access to your chapel to any person from outside your congregation.” As the journal \textit{l’Union Africaine} noted, “the [secular] clergy had itself solicited the prefect to shut the chapel” because the chapel had begun to take parishioners away from the existing cathedral.\textsuperscript{68} This attraction stemmed in part from the Salésiens’ ability to preach in Spanish to the thousands of Spanish-speaking inhabitants who resided in Oran. Moreover, the very next month the local military

\textsuperscript{65} Quoted in: Father Cyprien Bessière, \textit{50 Ans d’Apostolat Salésien en Afrique du Nord: 1891-1941} (unpublished manuscript from the Centre de Jean Bosco, in Lyon, France, 1941), Deuxième Partie, 2-3. I am indebted to Monsieur Louis Pierre, librarian and archivist at the Centre Jean Bosco, in Lyon, France, for discovering this memoir, typing it out himself, and then emailing it to me, four months after I had visited his library, which was in the midst of a chaotic move at the time. As far as I know I am the only outside researcher to view this document.

\textsuperscript{66} CAOM 1U/107. Published in \textit{Le Républicain Oranais}, 29 December 1893. Letter to the editor, signed “Georges.”

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.

chaplain convinced the bishop to shut down the Salésiens’ recreational room for local soldiers.\textsuperscript{69} The military chaplain had in the parish his own recreational room that welcomed junior officers and soldiers and he saw the Salésiens’ establishment as “a serious encroachment on his domain.”\textsuperscript{70} What is striking here is that the increasingly beleaguered Catholic clergy did not close ranks in mutual defense, but rather continued to compete with each other as they had done since the conquest of Algeria in 1830. Even as late as 1900, missionaries and secular clergy alike saw Algeria as a space in which they could pursue professional and personal advancement that remained closed off in the metropole.

To be sure, throughout the 1880s and 90s a wave of anticlericalism overtook metropolitan France as well. As we have seen, however, the persecution of Catholics in Algeria took different forms. There was little mention in Algeria of Catholicism serving as a bastion of monarchism or of the Catholic clergy putting allegiance to the pope over the republic. Rather, anticlericalism in Algeria during this period stemmed directly from the supposed ties between Catholic clergy and “foreign” settlers and, after 1889, the political overtones this allegiance held in towns where the ethnically French population constituted a distinct minority. It was this crucial difference that Bellamy failed to grasp when he wrote to the prefect of Oran in October 1895 to bemoan that “our society…has everywhere in France met with the benevolence of the civil administration [but] we are the object of such scorn here in Algeria.”\textsuperscript{71} Only in Algeria did their alleged foreignness connote a danger to French rule, which already rested on the flimsiest of foundations.

Although numerous Spanish and Italian immigrants worked and lived in France as well,

\textsuperscript{69} Quoted in \textit{50 Ans d’Apostolat Salésien en Afrique du Nord: 1891-1941}, Deuxième Partie, 7.
\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Ibid.}, 8.
\textsuperscript{71} CAOM 1U/29. Letter from Charles Bellamy to the prefect of Oran, 30 October 1895.
nowhere did they constitute anything like a majority that threatened French political power.\textsuperscript{72}

Bellamy and the Salésiens employed three contradictory arguments to counter the accusations against them. At times they contended that their works spread French language and culture and thus facilitated the policy of assimilation. At other times, they argued that they pursued a policy of association by using foreign priests to cater to the particular religious needs of the foreign population and thus ensure that population’s loyalty for France.\textsuperscript{73} Finally, when both these arguments failed, they claimed that religious works by nature transcended ethnic and national boundaries. On 30 October 1895 Bellamy wrote in a letter to the prefect that as “true French missionaries we teach all our children the language, history, and love of France.”\textsuperscript{74} In the same letter, however, Bellamy backtracked and admitted:

If, in favor of the numerous foreigners who live in our Algerian colony, we welcome into our congregation some priests of their nationality, there is nothing illegal in this. It is rather a means to make foreigners esteem the taste of hospitality that is so liberally practiced in France, and it shows that France knows how to grant to those who come to it seeking aid the liberty to freely and easily practice their religion.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{72} For an account of pan-European immigration to metropolitan France see Gerard Noiriel, \textit{The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

\textsuperscript{73} In both these attempts, the Salésiens were part of a long line of “civilizers” in France dating back to the French Revolution. As David Bell has shown, early revolutionaries sought to spread their ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity in the \textit{patois} languages of France’s villagers. Only after the rise of the Jacobins and during the Terror did a concerted effort begin to root out all non-Parisian dialects in France, primarily to facilitate the functioning of democracy. David Bell, “\textit{Lingua Populi, Lingua Dei}: Language, Religion, and the Origins of French Revolutionary Nationalism.” See also Michel de Certeau, Dominique Julia, and Jacques Revel, \textit{Une politique de la langue. La Révolution Française et les patois: L’enquête de Grégoire} (Paris: Gallimard, 1975). Conversely, for the continued use of German in some academic circles in French-controlled Alsace, see David Troyansky, “Alsatian Knowledge and European Culture: Jérémie-Jacques Oberlin, Language, and the Protestant \textit{Gymnase} in Revolutionary Strasbourg,” \textit{Francia} 27/2 (2000/2001): 119-138.

\textsuperscript{74} CAOM 1U/29. Letter from Charles Bellamy to the prefect of Oran, 30 October 1895.

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Ibid.}
After employing arguments that appealed both to strategies of assimilation and association, Bellamy then changed gears entirely. On 16 November 1895, he published a letter in *Le Petit Africain* in which he asserted that like virtue or truth, religious congregations “have no fatherland.” He appealed to larger geopolitical sensibilities and asked what the minister of the interior would say if foreign governments elsewhere, inspired by the comments made in this newspaper, took reprisals and expelled French congregations from their territories.\(^{76}\)

Finally, Bellamy resurrected a strategy used by missionaries before him and invoked the danger that persecution of Catholics posed to the larger colonial order of things. He wrote to the prefect of the profound “humiliation” he felt when he had to close his chapel while at the same time the government actively protected numerous mosques in Algeria. He further noted that the governor general had just pledged funds for the construction of a grand synagogue in Oran, while the metropolitan government had even proposed to construct a grand mosque in Paris itself. Casting himself in the role of beleaguered Frenchman, Bellamy demanded to know “why our national pride should suffer thus.”\(^{77}\) In a colonial society supposedly based on the monopolization of privilege by Europeans, Bellamy hoped to convince the prefect that by extending religious freedoms to the indigenous population and offering moral support to their religious sensibilities alone the government threatened to turn the colonized/colonizer relationship on its head.\(^{78}\)

---

\(^{76}\) CAOM 1U/106. Letter from Charles Bellamy to the *Petit Africain*, 16 November 1895.

\(^{77}\) CAOM 1U/29. Letter from Charles Bellamy to the prefect of Oran, 30 October 1895.

\(^{78}\) The rights and obligations of native Algerians were outlined in the arbitrary law code known as the *indigénat*. See Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Berkeley: Stanford University Press, 2000); and Isabelle Merle, “Retour sur le régime
These arguments made little headway, and local authorities and organs of the press continued to denounce the Salésiens. After placing restrictions on the congregation’s chapel and closing its recreational room for soldiers, the authorities then moved to close the Salésiens’ school in Oran. In November the academic inspector accused the school of having a “clandestine character and illegal existence,” as many of the Salésiens taught without the required license (brevet de capacité). By the end of 1895, the inspector ordered Bellamy to restrict education to orphans alone. A letter from the inspector noted that in order to avoid such restrictions Bellamy claimed to no longer direct an educational establishment, but that he rather “has become the boss of an industrial establishment” and that he continued to lodge all his apprentices near his workshops. The inspector did admit that this state of affairs was “perhaps legal.”

Ultimately, the shift from academic education to the teaching of skilled labor engendered accusations of a new nature. After four years overseeing carpentry workshops, the Salésiens began to appear more as private entrepreneurs than as missionary priests. In 1899, Oran’s representative in the Chamber of Deputies, Marcel Saint-Germain, alleged that the missionaries capitalized on cheap orphan labor to sell their products at a low price, thus undercutting the business of the city’s skilled workers and then pocketing the profits for themselves. Saint-Germain told the general council of Oran, “we must close these workshops, which attract a large clientele and create

---

79 CAOM 1U/29. Letter from the academic inspector to the prefect of Oran, 27 October 1899.
80 CAOM 1U/29. Letter from the academic inspector to the prefect of Oran, 28 November 1899.
81 Marcel Saint-Germain (1853-1939) would serve as municipal councilor of the city of Oran from 1886 to 1888, as Oran’s representative in the Chamber of Deputies from 1889 to 1898, and as the department’s senator from 1900 to 1920; from 1915-1919 he served as vice president of the Senate. In 1920 he led the fight against a proposed law to grant indigenous Algerians political rights. See his biography on the website of the French Senate, http://www.senat.fr/senateur-3eme-republique/saint_germain_marcel1823r3.html.
disastrous competition for skilled workers and middling shop owners.” A police report from 1899 further noted that “the larger business owners in the city say that the Salésiens sell their goods for prices below those considered as official in the world of workers.”

Although the Salésiens ran similar workshops throughout France, both the missionaries and their opponents readily admitted that only in Oran did such establishments court controversy.

The claim that orphan labor threatened the livelihoods of skilled workers resulted from class and racial politics peculiar to Algerian society or, as Ann Stoler has argued, from the (always unsuccessful) desire to prevent the emergence of an indigent European underclass in the colonial world. In the city of Oran, however, the imperial hierarchy that concerned the French did not – or not so much – involve maintaining the social marginalization of the indigenous population; rather it entailed allowing a class of skilled French laborers to remain economically superior to their lesser skilled Spanish and Italian neighbors. In Oran, these foreign migrants worked almost entirely as fishermen or “itinerant day laborers” in the industries of sanitation, construction, land clearance, or transportation. As one historian has written, Spanish migrants often arrived with nothing but the possessions on their back “so that the French typically referred to them as snails

---

82 Quoted In 50 Ans d’Apostolat Salésien en Afrique du Nord: 1891-1941, Deuxième Partie, 9.
83 CAOM 1U/106. Report by the chief of police of the first arrondissement of Oran, 20 October 1899.
84 Bernard Delpal has documented that in metropolitan France, even after the law of 1905, “establishments which delivered a professional formation through apprenticeship, as well as the majority of [religious] orphanages, maintained their educational activity.” The textile industries in l’Ardèche and la Drôme in particular relied on workers provided by religious orphanages (and there are many instances of the factories exploiting these orphans). Bernard Delpal, “L’Application des lois anticongrégationiste: éléments pour un bilan, 1901-14,” in Le grand exil des congrégations religieuses françaises, 1901–1914, 73-4.
85 Stoler, Along the Archival Grain, 141-178.
(escargots).”\textsuperscript{86} The French elite put in considerable effort to maintain such ethnic and class distinctions.

The law of 1889 only increased French anxiety over the instability of this hierarchy and led the colonial administration to establish quotas in fields such as cork production that restricted the number of foreigners who could legally work in the industry.\textsuperscript{87} Further, in 1898 the Ligue Algérienne des Travailleurs Français addressed a petition to the national assembly in which it called for a special tax on foreign skilled laborers and the abrogation of the law of 1889.\textsuperscript{88} French skilled laborers saw the Salésiens’ workshops as yet another manifestation of the “foreign peril” that had allowed neo-French settlers in Algeria to encroach on their political and economic supremacy. It seems that economic policy towards the foreign population mirrored “the paradoxical tendency of colonial policymakers to find order in [the] economic insecurity” of the conquered Muslim population, as described by Benjamin Brower – a policy which he adds “was profoundly flawed [as it] unleashed a host of social tensions and crises that created conditions for conflict.”\textsuperscript{89} The orphan workshops posed the double threat of both lowering the standard of living for French skilled labors and of allowing foreign or neo-French children to climb the social hierarchy and bridge or even erase the ethnic and class divide. At the same time, shuttering the orphanage only antagonized the Salésiens and their foreign followers.

\textsuperscript{86} Jordi, \textit{Les espagnols en Oranie}, 211.
\textsuperscript{88} Jordi, \textit{Les espagnols en Oranie}, 198.
\textsuperscript{89} Brower, \textit{A Desert Named Peace}, 137. Brower discusses the attempt to reduce Algerian tribes to the edge of subsistence in order to better subdue and govern them and to force them to enter into the French economy on France’s terms.
For their part, the Salésiens too played on fears of a European, if not French, underclass by arguing that their workshops helped the colony by training abandoned orphans to work as useful artisans. As Bellamy wrote to the editor of *L’Echo d’Oran*, the workshops inculcated in young workers a respect for labor, property, and religion and thus helped orphans “to escape the seductions of vagabondage and all its consequences…all too common here in Algeria.”

Somewhat dubiously, Bellamy also claimed the workshops served a patriotic purpose by helping France regain its “former supremacy in hand labor that has recently been taken from us by the disastrous competition of Germany, England, and Belgium.”

More realistically, he asked how a mere five workshops with 51 apprentices could undercut the labor of a city of 80,000 people. Rather than competing with the working class, Bellamy wrote, the Salésiens actually aided the working class, as the orphans themselves came from lower class families. He concluded that the Salésiens desired only “to raise Christian citizens useful to France, to Algeria!”

Unsurprisingly, these arguments continued to founder due to the anticlericalism and national chauvinism of Oran’s colonial elite. More surprisingly, even self-identified French Catholics began to question the loyalty of the Salésiens and other foreign priests in Oran. This suspicion soon spread to the Salésiens’ patron, Bishop Géraud Soubrier, who had first invited the Salésiens to come to Oran in 1891. This bishop owed his appointment entirely to the late archbishop, Cardinal Lavigerie. Since Lavigerie’s death in 1892 many commentators had begun to see Soubrier as, unlike Lavigerie, dominated

---

90 CAOM 1U/29. Letter from M. Bellamy to M. Paul Perrier, published by the editor of *L’Echo d’Oran*, 3 March 1900.
by foreign priests. In August 1898, an article appeared in the journal *L’éclair* that accused the bishop of allowing foreign priests to undermine his authority. The author wrote:

> These Spanish priests have surrounded [the bishop], suffocated him, suppressed his authority, and when this old man took the route back to the country of his birthplace, he very much resembled a maroon in his own country, chewed up, emptied of all substance so that only his skin remained.

In another example of the “creole medievalism” described by Michelle Warren, the author wrote that “the pious convert Clovis” would no longer recognize his realm if he returned today to find so many foreigners.⁹³ Though Catholic himself, the author did not turn his pen against the anticlerical republic, but rather against anti-French elements within the church. He warned his readers that “Spanish monks have disembarked here as though in a conquered land and they are impossible to control.”⁹⁴ He also linked the danger specifically to the law of 1889, writing that “many Spanish in Algeria are priests or abbés, but they have had to gain naturalization. We must hope that these brave sons of El Cid have not considered their entry into the French nation as a simple formality.”⁹⁵ Again, rather than assimilating foreigners to French culture, the law of 1889 threatened to allow foreigners to exert their own will on ethnically French citizens.

The incoming bishop, Monseigneur Cantel, proved equally solicitous toward foreign priests. In October 1899 the prefect of Oran asked the bishop to gather the name, date and place of birth, and naturalization status for all the priests in his diocese in order to ascertain “what measures the government must take to remedy the very preponderant

---

⁹³ Michelle Warren, *Creole Medievalism: Colonial France and Joseph Bédier’s Middle Ages*.
situation of all the foreign priests in the department." The bishop responded, “I have given you exact information on this topic and you can see from it that the ‘scandalous situation’ in fact does not exist.” He counted in Oran eleven priests of Spanish origin, six of whom were born in Spain, the others in Oran, all naturalized Frenchmen, to which he added one priest born in Naples, one in Syria, two in Metz, and two in Strasbourg (though we should take these figures with a grain of salt). “Should we even count these last four as foreigners?” the bishop asked, adding that “obviously, it is above all the Spanish that you had in mind.” Spanish priests in particular incited the anxieties of colonial officials as the settlers of Spanish descent continued to outnumber those of French descent in the city of Oran.

The bishop defended the use of foreign priests for their ability to spread civilization to “savage” foreign colonists. “If some [foreigners] have been named vicars in large cities, it is because their services are necessary there, precisely because of their knowledge of the Spanish language,” he noted. He assured the prefect that everywhere priests gave mass first in French and only afterwards in Spanish, adding:

A great number of people, children above all, do not understand this language; so we must use Spanish if we don’t want them to languish in the most complete religious ignorance. Do you not know that in the Midi of France priests preach often in _patois_? To an even greater extent this practice is necessary among us, where the foreigners are so numerous.

The bishop’s argument, of course, failed to invoke much sympathy, as at that very moment metropolitan policy aimed to root out local _patois_ and replace it with

---

96 AN F19/2551. Quoted in a letter from the bishop of Oran to the general counselor of the prefecture of Oran, 16 October 1899.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
standardized Parisian French. Like officials in the metropole, the bishop in Oran hoped to lift the Spanish out of ignorance by imparting French culture; unlike them, however, he hoped to impart this culture by using a policy of association, rather than assimilation, and thus to employ the particular language of the Spanish colonists.

A Tenuous Separation: Applying the Laws of Laïcisation to Algeria

For all missionary congregations in Algeria, as in France, persecution to varying extents was enshrined into law with the so-called lois Combes of 1901 to 1904. In France, this legislation began with Prime Minister Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau’s law of 1 July 1901, which required all “associations” to apply to the government for official authorization (section III dealt specifically with religious congregations). Three years later, on 7 July 1904 new Prime Minister Emile Combes drafted a second law more explicitly designed “for the suppression of congregationist teaching.” The law prohibited all members of religious congregations from teaching in France and forcibly shut down congregations exclusively devoted to teaching. This law dealt with all forms of education: primary, secondary, artistic, agricultural, professional, and industrial. Nevertheless, if the congregation worked in both teaching and nursing or devoted itself strictly to the education of orphans, the law provided enough room for interpretation to

102 For the lois Combes, see Patrick Cabanel, “Introduction,” in Le grand exil des congrégations religieuses françaises, 1901–1914, 16.
103 Section III of this law dealt specifically with religious congregations. See “Introduction” to Le grand exil des congrégations religieuses françaises, 7. A decree of 29 March 1880 had previously expelled the Jesuits from France, although many remained in Algeria as secularized priests. See Bernard Hours, “La legislation anticongréganiste, 1901–04,” in La grand exil des congrégations religieuses françaises, 23.
105 To be sure, if a congregation could show that it trained clergy exclusively to teach in the colonies (not including Algeria), it could win authorization to stay open in France. See Claude Prudhomme, “Les congrégations missionnaires face aux lois anticongréganistes: un régime de faveur?” in Le grand exil des congrégations religieuses françaises, 1901–1914, 309.
allow some of these establishments to stay open. On 9 December 1905 a final law officially separated Church and State, definitively ending government funding for any religious activity.

Claude Prudhomme has written that the laws of 1900-05 did not fundamentally alter the status of missionaries in the empire but that they did accelerate a long-standing trend of missionaries leaving France to go abroad. In Algeria, however, all religious congregations eventually felt the force of these laws, with different congregations suffering to different extents. Many congregations – including the Soeurs Trinitaires, the Filles de la Charité, and the Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes – would continue to operate in some type of legally recognized capacity, often even in the field of education, up to the First World War and beyond. Others, however, were not so lucky. Out of all the congregations in Algeria to apply for authorization under the law of 1901, only the Salésiens failed at this first hurdle and did not obtain initial legal recognition. Their failure stemmed directly from their perceived status as foreigners, even if, as we have seen, nearly all the Salésiens had obtained naturalization as French citizens (while their visiting superiors in Algeria were all ethnically French).

Oissila Saaïdia and Pierre Soumille have recently written that “with the current state of our research we cannot say when the law of 1901 was actually applied [in
Algeria].” Drawing from documents in the French overseas archives and various missionary archives, however, I have found that early on the government sought to apply the law of 1901 to Algeria. Four months after the law’s application in France, the governor general requested all congregations in Algeria to apply for authorization as well. A chart drafted by the governor general on 8 October 1901 listed all the congregations that needed to apply and included notes on whether or not to grant authorization. The archives of the Soeurs Trinitaires reveal that in 1901 the sisters applied for authorization and the minister of interior informed their superior in Oran that he would “leave us to continue peacefully in our work.” Indeed, the government also agreed to grant authorization to allow the Frères des Ecoles Chrétienes, the Filles de la Charité, and the Lazarists all to continue working in Algeria for the time being.

Despite their continued difficulties with the colonial government, the Salésiens too set about applying for authorization to comply with the law. On 10 December 1901, a special report written jointly by the governor general and the Special Commissioner on the Safety of Railroads and Bridges urged the government to reject the Salésiens’ application. Although it noted that these missionaries had a “secret role of [disseminating] religious propaganda” in both their workshops and youth clubs, it focused more on matters of national origin than religion. The authors warned that a foreign congregation with a large number of foreign personnel

---

109 Oissila Saaïdia and Pierre Soumille, “Algérie et Tunisie, le repli en terre d'Islam?” in Le grand exil des congrégations religieuses françaises, 1901–1914, 345. These historians also observed that debates in parliament revealed little as to whether or not lawmakers hoped to apply the law to the territory.
110 CAOM 1U/106. Note on the application of the law of 1901 to Algeria, 8 October 1901.
111 Archives of the Soeurs Trinitaires, ORAN Saint Louis 1841/1972 2 M F 1-3, note from the provincial superior [no date, 1901].
112 CAOM 1U/29. Report from the governor general and the Commissariat Spécial de la Sûreté des Chemins de fer et ports, 10 December 1901.
constitutes a danger because of the spirit in which they instruct children…a large number of whom are of Spanish origin, but destined to become French subjects…and yet these children are under the authority of non-French teachers and are perhaps poorly prepared to receive the benefits of the law of naturalization.\textsuperscript{113}

Finally, the report noted that “the entire city of Oran does not fail to complain” about the competition of the Salésiens’ workshops. Again, only the Salésiens, of all the congregations in France and abroad, encountered such accusations of providing competition to lay skilled laborers.\textsuperscript{114} To be sure, the workshops run by the Filles de la Charité probably failed to encounter opposition because they taught the trades of sewing and needlework to orphaned and poor girls, and thus did not present competition to male skilled laborers, as the Salesiens’ woodworking shops did.

The Salésiens initially found an unlikely ally in the form of the municipal council of Oran. As part of the 1901 law, the government invited local municipal councils to give their opinion on whether to grant authorization to congregations that worked within the councils’ jurisdiction. On 20 January 1902, the municipal council of Oran opened its meeting to discuss authorization of the Salésiens. Surprisingly, the once-anticlerical council expressed qualified support for the Salésiens. Various councilmen noted that the Salésiens offered a useful service by imparting trades to orphans, and one councilman stated that, “leaving the religious question to the side,” he supported granting authorization to such a “humanitarian” association. Another councilman added that seeing as “the government which voted on the law of 1901 did not consult the municipal

\textsuperscript{113} *Ibid.*

\textsuperscript{114} Delpal notes that despite the laws of 1901-5, most congregations that employed orphans as laborers continued to remain open in France. Delpal, “L’Application des lois anticongrégationiste: éléments pour un bilan, 1901-14,” 73-4.
councils then, [I] do not see why it is consulting them today.”\textsuperscript{115} In the end, the council opted to waive its right and not to express any opinion whatsoever.

As later documents and debates make clear, the municipality’s support for the congregation stemmed from widespread anti-Semitism amongst the newly elected councilors. Historians have documented the violent wave of anti-Semitism that swept Algeria in the period between 1896 and 1903. This outbreak stemmed in part from the economic depression that hit Algeria in the 1890s and it combined with calls to revoke the Crémieux decree of 1870 – which many Europeans saw as unfairly favoring Jewish-owned businesses to the detriments of their own – culminating at the time of the Dreyfus Affair in France.\textsuperscript{116} In the 1890s, a number of anti-Jewish leagues appeared in the territory and many called for full-scale independence from the metropole.\textsuperscript{117} In 1898, Algerian voters elected the leader of the anti-Jewish league of Algiers, Max Régis, as mayor, while in the same year the notorious anti-Semite Edouard Drumont won election to the Chamber of Deputies for the department of Algiers.\textsuperscript{118} In the city of Algiers alone, 1898 saw two Jewish citizens murdered, 87 Jewish-owned businesses ransacked, and the town’s synagogue entirely destroyed.\textsuperscript{119} Although the anti-Semitic campaign was led by the French elite, they often appealed to, as one historian has noted, the “more pronounced

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{115} CAOM 1U/29. Minutes of the meeting of the municipal council of Oran, 20 January 1902.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{116} For the Dreyfus Affair in France see Martin Johnson, \textit{The Dreyfus Affair: Honor and Politics in the Belle Epoque} (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999).}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{117} This call for secession actually created its own short-lived political party, referred to as the \textit{Parti Cubain}, in reference to the creole-led Cuban independence movement of 1898. See Marc-Olivier Gavois, “La perception du pouvoir métropolitain par les Européens d’Algérie,” \textit{Cahiers d’histoire. Revue d’histoire critique} 85 (2001): 87.}
\end{footnotes}
religious anti-Semitism of the Spanish and Italians” to gain support for their cause [my italics].

In Oran this campaign sparked a brief and incongruous alliance of anticlerical and anti-Semitic French “republicans” with Catholic and anti-Semitic Spanish clergy and colonists. Guignard recounts that republican politicians simply used anti-Semitism as a political tactic and that they quickly abandoned it after it had served its purpose. This temporary alliance helps explains the municipal council’s lack of hostility toward the Salésiens and their religious works. In 1902, the prefect of Oran contended that the bishop, all his clergy, the seminary, and the Salésien missionaries voted in the municipal elections for a mayor who nonetheless passed himself off as at times an anticlerical republican. The prefect later alleged that the councilors who rose to power on an anti-Semitic platform had received loans from the bishop of Oran as well as many members of the local Catholic clergy, including the Salésiens. The municipal council actually hoped to remove the prefect of Oran and enlisted the Salésiens to tell their parishioners not to vote for his reelection. As a countermeasure, the prefect enlisted other inhabitants of Oran to agitate against the Salésiens and to push the council to reject their authorization.

In the end, the council spited the prefect and (half-heartedly) repaid the support of the

121 Historian Jean-Jacques Jordi has written that, between July 1901 and May 1904, “the naturalized Spanish population of Oran descended into the streets [to agitate against Jews]...heeding the appeal of the radical-socialists, themselves anxious to win the municipal elections.” Jordi, Les espagnols en Oranie, 195. Politics in France, as indeed elsewhere, has continued to produce strange party alliances that contravene the supposedly distinct religious and racial positions of any given party. Throughout the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century the religious Right in France unexpectedly began to take positions in favor of women’s rights, largely in order to demonize what they saw as the misogynist Muslim immigrant population. More recently, the Right in France has reversed its position and sought to garner the support of conservative Muslim clerics in its campaign to prohibit gay marriage and especially the right of homosexual couples to adopt children. See Scott, The Politics of the Veil. See also Alexander Stille, “An Anti-Gay-Marriage Tea Party, French Style?” The New Yorker (18 March 2014), online edition: http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2014/03/anti-gay-marriage-protests-in-france.html.
122 Guignard, 221.
123 AN F19/2551. Letter from prefect of Oran to the minister of interior, 17 May 1902.
Salésiens by refusing to vote on their authorization whatsoever, knowing that, regardless of its vote, the application would be rejected in the French Senate.\textsuperscript{124}

Numerous police memoranda and letters from the prefect further reveal that a number of Catholic clergymen supported anti-Semitic candidates and attempted to rally their “foreign” parishioners behind their electoral cause. On 11 May 1902 a confidential police report recounted that a Spanish priest used his pulpit to encourage his Spanish parishioners to vote for the church’s candidates in the coming elections. On the same day, a police spy reported overhearing the same priest tell a friend: “Down with the Jews.”\textsuperscript{125} One month later a second police report noted that many local clergy had encouraged their parishioners to vote against the freemasons and for the “anti-Jewish” candidates of the church. The report claimed that these voters were nearly all neo-French, or naturalized citizens of foreign origin.\textsuperscript{126} Similarly, on 17 May 1902, the prefect of Oran wrote that the new bishop, “although chosen by a republican government from among the priests of Paris, has given very strong support for the religious congregations.”\textsuperscript{127} He stated that the bishop used the religiosity of the Spanish to further his own political ends by encouraging his clergy and their followers “to take part in all the elections, even the municipal ones, and give overt support to the anti-Jewish candidates, with whom they have very quickly formed an alliance.”\textsuperscript{128}

On 3-4 July 1903, the French Senate held its official hearing to decide whether or not to grant the Salésiens authorization. The debate’s significance lies in the particular

\textsuperscript{124} CAOM 1U/106. Compte Rendu des Séances des 3 et 4 Juillet au Sénat. Discours de M. de Lamarzelle, 4 July 1903.
\textsuperscript{125} CAOM 1U/107. Secret police report of 11 May 1902.
\textsuperscript{126} CAOM 1U/107. Secret police report of 12 June 1902.
\textsuperscript{127} AN F19/2551. Letter from prefect of Oran to the minister of interior, 17 May 1902.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
imperial dangers of allowing foreign missionaries in a French territory. Although the hearing covered the Salésiens’ houses in France and Algeria, commentators on both sides readily admitted the issue primarily concerned the establishments in Oran alone. Not only was the Senate’s argument to reject authorization led by now-senator of Oran Marcel Saint-Germain, but the Salésiens’ spokesman, M. Bérenger, also began by noting that while seven Salésiens who worked in France did not possess French citizenship, “in reality this [concern] is really about the house in Oran.”129 Bérenger further noted that while the Salésiens ran a number of orphan workshops in France, “it is only the house in Oran that is complained about. Hardly anything is mentioned of the houses in Paris, or Dinan. But in Oran the dossier of this commission is full of a number of allegations…that this school presents the most serious competition to commerce.”130 The handful of Salésiens of foreign origin in metropolitan France did not figure at all in the debate to grant them authorization.

The Salésiens had support in the form of conservative senator Gustave de Lamarzelle, who expressed surprise that deputies from Algeria in particular refused to accept the French identity of Salésien priests naturalized through the law of 1889. “The number of these neo-French is considerable,” he asserted, asking if “it is not very dangerous to tell them that the naturalization they have acquired…does not give them a quality of Frenchness equal to our own?” If this denial showed a lack of prudence in France, he added, “is it not even more imprudent in Algeria?” Lamarzelle argued that by denying the Frenchness of the naturalized Salésiens, their opponents also denied the Frenchness of all the naturalized foreigners in Algeria, and thus only contributed to

130 Ibid.
sowing these foreigners’ disloyalty for the French government. He contended that as naturalized foreigners who spoke French, Italian, and Spanish, the Salésiens more than anyone else could help integrate neo-French settlers into the French community.\textsuperscript{131} Lamarzelle thus argued for the Salésiens’ utility by appealing to the increasingly bygone policy of colonial association for the foreign population.

It thus comes as little surprise that on 5 July 1903 the Senate ruled by a vote of 158 to 100 not to grant authorization to the Salésiens’ establishments in Oran. This ruling stemmed in part from the Salésiens’ continued refusal to accept and further the policy of assimilation that the colonial government had worked so hard to enact. On 1 September 1903 the colonial authorities ordered the Salésiens to evacuate their establishments at Eckmühl and at the Rue Ménerville. When the missionaries refused to leave their schools the police arrived on 16 October to arrest them. A number of people attended the ensuing trial and, as one of the missionaries later recalled, “protests in favor of the Salésiens became so vehement that the judge threatened to force the audience to leave the room.” When the judge ultimately upheld the ruling and fined each of the priests 25 francs, the crowd began to chant, “long live the Salésiens, down with the three points [i.e. the freemasons].”\textsuperscript{132} After the appeals court of Algiers upheld the ruling on 7 June 1904, the government seized the Salésiens’ property and put it up for sale on public auction.

\textbf{Conclusion: After the Dispersion}

Unlike the Salésiens, the other congregations examined here all won initial authorization to continue working in Algeria. To be sure, this authorization would prove only a temporary respite before the application of the 1904 law began the long process of

\textsuperscript{131} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{132} Quoted In \textit{50 Ans d’Apostolat Salésien en Afrique du Nord: 1891-1941, Deuxième Partie}, 21-2.
closing missionary schools throughout Algeria. Nevertheless, many of these congregations would continue to work with the government’s consent with orphans, in hospitals, or even in rare cases as congregationist teachers. The law stipulated that all teaching congregations must evacuate their schools within a ten-year period; in a handful of instances missionary schools in Algeria continued to operate until 1914, when a decree from the minister of interior revoked the law of 1904 in order to allow secular teachers to report to the warfront. In Philippeville, this decree arrived the day before the Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes had planned to leave their school and open another in Casablanca. Not only did the city reinstate them, but for the first time since 1881 it provided them with salaries from the municipal budget.133 Elsewhere, the Filles de la Charité continued to direct three schools in the department of Algiers – at Miséricorde, Cité Bugeaud and Bab-el-Oued – until on the eve of expulsion in 1914 they too “were saved by the Great War.”134 The Soeurs Trinitaires also directed a handful of private schools up to the First World War and beyond.135 In sum, the secular laws of the metropole proved slightly less onerous for congregations in Algeria than for congregations in France.136

Unauthorized to even exist in Algeria, the Salésiens more than any other congregation continued to attract the close attention of colonial officials, who employed police spies to gather information on the congregation and report back to the government. At the same time, the Salésiens continued to enjoy the support of a large number of

---

133 Archives of the Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes NL 473(1). Reported in a letter from the FEC director of the school at Philippeville to the mayor of Philippeville, 3 August 1914. Another group of FEC frères who did lose control of their private schools won authorization to open a milk farm on the property of their old novitiate at El Biar, outside of Algiers.


135 The Lazarists were not so lucky, as they left Algeria as an official congregation in 1905, when the government expelled them from their seminary in Kouba and opened a new seminary staffed by secular clergy in Algiers.

136 For congregations in France after the law of 1904, see Curtis, Educating the Faithful, 150-70.
Oranais youth, most of whom belonged to so-called foreign families. After they failed to gain government authorization, all but three Salésiens opted to return to Europe or move elsewhere abroad. The law prohibited two or more unauthorized congregationists to inhabit the same dwelling, but it could not prohibit two literal brothers, Léon and Cyprien Bessière, from doing so. In 1904, the two “ex-Salésiens” and four lay supporters moved to a building on 18 Rue de l’Arsenal in Oran and opened a youth club (patronage) consisting of 150 of their former students. The club met every Sunday to stage plays that reenacted scenes from the Bible or from the lives of saints. These plays were by invitation only and gained upwards of 200 attendees, including many members of the military as well as a number of city notables.137

Despite the persecution, the ex-Salésiens continued to see Algeria as a place to enact their own version of a religious present, but one that consisted largely of reviving an increasingly distant religious past. On 25 January 1906, a local priest purchased the Salésiens’ old building on Rue Ménerville and invited the two brothers, plus a third ex-Salésien who remained in Oran, to work as teachers in his new private school. While not explicitly Catholic, the school gave secular education in the daytime and religious education in the evening and quickly reached enrollment of 200 students. The priests also continued to run the musical Society of Joyous Harmony in Oran. In another example of the phenomenon of “creole medievalism,” Cyprien Bessière later recounted that these works allowed the ex-Salésiens to “rejoin their ancestors from the Middle Ages” and to “practice their faith like Christians of earlier centuries.”138

137 CAOM 1U/106. Report by the chief of police regarding the ex-Salésiens, 12 February 1904.
138 Quoted In 50 Ans d’Apostolat Salésien en Afrique du Nord: 1891-1941, Troisième Partie, 8, 10.
The ex-Salésiens continued to rely on the non- or neo-French population in their attempt to remake a medieval France in modern Algeria. After the closure of the orphanage at Eckmühl, Léon Bessière rented a neighboring villa from the mayor of St Denis du Sig, where he opened an auditorium, a gym, a woodworking shop, and a chapel. In 1907, a police report noted that the house continued to stage plays, sporting events, and musical concerts that attracted as many as 300 people, again by invitation only. The workshop employed seven apprentices to build furniture for both religious and private establishments and provided crucial income for the cash-strapped ex-Salésiens. The report observed that the children in these establishments primarily comprised “young men of Spanish or Neapolitan origin.”\footnote{CAOM 1U/29. Police report of 19 February 1907.} As late as 1909, the chief of police commented that Bessière focused his work “above all on people of Spanish and Italian nationality” and that the brothers “have thus maintained an incontestable influence…on their old students and on the families of those students.”\footnote{CAOM 1U/29. “Urgent” report from the police chief to the prefect of Oran and the governor general of Algeria, 5 April 1909.}

This influence continued to serve as a source of division for the settler population and confusion for colonial officials until the eve of the First World War. A police report from 1910 stated that the Bessière brothers used their youth club on Rue de l’Arsenal to encourage their children, “almost all Spanish or Neapolitan in origin,” to burn school textbooks condemned by the clergy. The same report noted:

The population of many neighborhoods of Oran is in large part of foreign Spanish origin. This group, clerical by tradition, submits without questioning to the influence of the clergy, all the more because the clergy of Oran is in part composed of Spanish priests [the strikethrough is in the original].\footnote{1U/107. Report from the Sûreté Générale to the governor general, 30 November 1909.}
The language of the report reveals the continuing limits of imperial knowledge, control, and classification and the “ambiguous nomenclature” that “cleaves into the conceit that more knowledge secures a more durable empire.”\textsuperscript{142} Despite legislation to the contrary and constant surveillance thereafter, the ex-Salésiens continued to ply their trade and the reporting officer no longer even knew how to classify their followers. Indeed, as a direct and unintended result of the law of 1889 the police struggled to identify exactly who constituted the political danger in the territory of Algeria (demonstrated by the strikethrough of the word “foreign”).\textsuperscript{143} Despite nearly a half-century of government policy of assimilation and efforts to shape religious sensibilities, the Oranais population of Spanish descent continued to practice their religion in their own language.

The influence of the Salésiens remained considerable and only increased throughout the first half of the twentieth century thanks to the continued support they received from the settlers of foreign origin. Léon and Cyprien Bessière would remain in Oran until at least 1941, when the latter decided to chronicle his experiences in a memoir.\textsuperscript{144} In this document Cyprien fondly referred to the period between 1901 and 1914 as “the golden age of our dear society in Oran.”\textsuperscript{145} It was only after their legal dispersion that the remaining Salésiens really began to expand their influence among the youth of Oran, an influence that only grew in the interwar years. In his memoir, while lamenting the laws of laïcisation, Cyprien included the following passage:

\textsuperscript{142} Stoler, \textit{Along the Archival Grain}, 7-8.
\textsuperscript{143} Ann Stoler examines this same phenomenon in colonial Java, where the Dutch government struggled to properly classify and delineate the \textit{Inlandsche kinderern, creolen} and \textit{kleurlingen} population of mixed Dutch descent. Stoler, \textit{Along the Archival Grain}, 56.
\textsuperscript{144} I am again indebted to Monsieur Louis Pierre, librarian and archivist at the Centre Jean Bosco, in Lyon, France, for discovering this memoir.
\textsuperscript{145} Quoted In \textit{50 Ans d’Apostolat Salésien en Afrique du Nord: 1891-1941}, Troisième Partie, 29.
At the very moment I write these lines, I hear that Marshall Pétain, who presides over the reconstruction of France, has…proclaimed the abrogation of the laws of 7 July 1904 and 1 July 1901…Finally, Providence has returned our past to us, or even improved on our past, and justice has smiled upon us…Henceforth the religious congregations will resume their task, in the words of our Head of State, of ‘diffusing and applying these great Christian truths which serve as the base of our civilization.’”\(^{146}\)

In 1940, with the fall of the French Third Republic, it appeared that the policies of the Vichy regime would finally allow these missionaries to fully implement their own version of creole medievalism, and everything that it entailed.\(^{147}\)


Conclusion

The Paradox of Settler Colonialism

“Europe’s ambivalent conquests – oscillating between attempts to project outward its own ways of understanding the world and efforts to demarcate colonizer from colonized, civilized from primitive, core from periphery – made the space of empire into a terrain where concepts were not only imposed but also engaged and contested.”

-Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*.

This dissertation has described in detail the lives of Catholic missionaries in Algeria between 1830 and 1914. In doing so, it has taken seriously Frederick Cooper’s call that scholars focus on the specificity of empire. Cooper urges us to analyze the colonies not just as abstract and uniform receptacles for the application of metropolitan ideologies. Rather, he calls for a more nuanced study of colonial *particularities*, where power is not just unilaterally applied from above and outside, but rather negotiated, contested, and subverted from below and within. At the same time, Cooper at times perpetuates the very dichotomies he seeks to break down by viewing such struggles for power as occurring between colonial rulers and colonized subjects alone. By applying Cooper’s methodology to missionaries, their allies, and their opponents, we can go even further in his effort to “reveal the limits of colonial power and define alternative modes of living and working in the crevices of authority.” These crevices emerged not only in the extension of authority over the indigenous population, but also in the equally important

---

1 Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 4.
2 Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 21.
attempt to mold the settler population in order to differentiate it from the indigenous population. It was within these very crevices that missionaries learned to thrive. They did so by posing as potential mechanisms that could transmit relations of power into the tight and narrow confines – confines of colonial sentimentalities and subjectivities – that colonial authorities had not yet figured out how to penetrate. Because of their very existence outside of authority, however, these crevices remained hotly contested and missionaries constantly struggled to portray themselves as transmitters rather than destabilizers of power.

In addition to reconceptualizing the thrust of colonial authority and the sites of tension that threatened to destabilize colonial rule, this study has sought to tease out the broader implications that an analysis of missionaries holds for the larger history of French Algeria on political, social, and cultural levels. Politically, a study of missionaries provides a new periodization for the ever-changing legal relationship between civil and military authorities in the territory and between France and Algeria as a whole. Socially, this analysis reveals much about the wider settler community – about the ambitions that led them to migrate to Algeria, the opportunistic nature of their multifaceted relationships once there, and the unexpected successes and failures that these relationships engendered on the ground. Culturally, a study of missionary work uncovers a colonial society not only shaped by racial difference, but one also and equally shaped by religious, ethnic, and national differences. Despite the immense effort and resources that went into monitoring missionaries and settlers throughout this period, the discourses surrounding all of their complicated relationships remained remarkably confused right up to the eve of World War I.
The historical trajectory of French Algeria corresponded less to major political upheavals in the metropole and legal impositions in the territory than to the particular necessities of imperial rule. Similarly, changing political structures in Algeria owed less to an evolving relationship between the state and native Algerians and more to the continuing need to police a nebulous and always potentially dangerous settler community. In the first two decades of the conquest, the appointment of the first two bishops of Algiers in 1838 and 1846, respectively, served as the two events that most altered and disrupted missionaries’ lives on a daily basis. By keeping our focus on these missionaries, religion, and religious education, we see that the Revolution of 1848 did not bring missionaries or other settlers under the metropolitan and civilian rule of law. Rather missionaries and settlers continued to rely on personal patronage of bishops or military generals, and this reliance held implications for every European child, parent, or civilian official in the colony. In fact, the political decision that had the most impact on European families in Algeria in this period was the decision not to apply the Falloux educational laws of 1850 to the European community of Algeria. We can even say that this failure did not result from an actual decision, but rather from the inability of metropolitan and colonial officials to even agree on how to frame the question. This inability stemmed from officials’ continued uncertainty over how to govern the settler population, and it further reveals the ad hoc and entirely spontaneous nature of imperial governance.

The next significant change for missionaries in Algeria arrived not with the fall of the Second Empire in 1870, but with the arrival of Archbishop Lavigerie and the circular of Governor General MacMahon in 1867. By centralizing religious authority around himself and his congregation Lavigerie disrupted the extralegal networks of patronage
that missionaries had relied on for success during the preceding forty years. The rise of the Third Republic did little to change this relationship. On a purely secular level, it was MacMahon’s desire to create mixed schools for native Algerians and Europeans that allowed civilian authorities to begin their attempt to secularize the public schools of Algeria. Significantly, although MacMahon intended the circular to alter the relationship between colonial settlers and native Algerians, the decision of the municipal council of Algiers to purposefully misinterpret the circular and apply it only to Catholic missionaries and schools again reveals that a preoccupation with creating a utopian settler community repeatedly trumped the ideal of assimilating conquered Algerians to French civilization. Indeed, colonial rule rested entirely on the requirement that this latter assimilation not occur. As Cooper has written, “the extent to which difference across space is institutionalized is important to constituting empire…for if incorporation ceased to entail differentiation, it could result in a relatively homogenous polity that becomes more nation-like and less empire-like.”3 To complicate even this nuanced appraisal, we can assert that civilian officials failed even in their attempt to mold a homogenous polity of Europeans – one that would have constituted a nation within a more heterogeneous polity that they hoped would continue to exist as an empire.

The proclamation of the Third Republic on 4 September 1870 and the nominal institution of full civilian rule in Algeria did not mark a decisive shift for missionaries in Algeria. Rather, it accelerated two previously existing trends without allowing either to come to full fruition. First, in a brief period between 1870 and 1872 civilian municipal councils sought to build on previous efforts of the council of Algiers and continue the

3 Cooper, Colonialism in Question, 27.
trend of secularizing the public schools. Second, and as part of this first trend, these councils aimed to consolidate civilian authority over Algeria and bring the territory fully in line with the metropolitan rule of law. In neither case did they succeed. They failed because the advent of the Third Republic did little to clarify the position of (religious) foreigners in French Algeria – foreigners who, much like native Algerians, continued to “build lives in the crevices of colonial power, deflecting, appropriating, or reinterpreting the teachings and preachings thrust upon them.”

The continued impotence of colonial authority led even staunchly republican officials in the metropole to continue to empower a military governor general to ensure he continued to meet the religious needs of these colonists. As such, the governor general cited the failure to fully transition to civilian rule – that is to enfranchise all the Europeans of Algeria – to justify his continued, always contested, position of authority and to unilaterally reinstall the missionary teachers.

The real legal transition from military to civilian rule in the European communes of Algeria came in 1883 and 1889; but this transition failed to have the desired effect of uniting the settler community. In 1883, the government rendered public education free, obligatory, and secular for all Europeans of Algeria and in 1889 it granted citizenship to all Europeans born on French territory, including Algeria. The 1883 law had a profound effect on missionaries, as it forced them to open private schools; and without a willing bishop to serve as their patron they drastically curtailed their activity. At the same time, missionaries continued to work due to the ongoing religiosity of the non-French population. As a result, the law of 1889 only proved a boon for missionary work and a source of further division for the settler community. It empowered the previously

---

4 Cooper, Colonialism in Question, 16.
disenfranchised religious element of the territory to use their new political rights to provide support for Catholic missionaries. Further, the law even had the totally unexpected effect of allowing a congregation of foreign missionaries to arrive in Algeria and further divide the foreign and neo-French settlers from the ethnically French settlers. Finally, although the official legal assimilation of Algeria to France was finalized with the application of the Combes laws of secularization in 1904, the creation of a united settler community remained elusive up until the First World War.

As this re-periodization shows, these changes and continuities enveloped many more colonial actors than just missionaries alone. In many ways the history of missionaries in Algeria is the history of the settler population on a more general level, a history that, Jennifer Sessions has written, “remains the least known aspect of the decades of the conquest,” or indeed beyond.5 Like missionaries, settlers saw Algeria as a land of opportunity in which they could achieve levels of autonomy and professional advancement unattainable in the more constraining legal confines of the metropole. Both secular and religious settlers exhibited traits of ambition and opportunism, and held grandiose visions of success.6 At the same time, missionaries and civilians alike often found a rude awakening upon their arrival as they encountered unexpected obstacles in a territory where competition served as the rule, and collaboration the exception.

Historian Pierre Nora has argued that “the history of Algeria cannot be written according to its laws: its history is the manner in which the French of Algeria have gotten

6 Again, see Abi-Mershed, Apostles of Modernity, 91, for visions of Algeria as a “vast, unspoiled canvas on which to paint fresh social realities.”
around them.”

The most successful European migrants to the southern shores of the Mediterranean understood quickly that professional and personal advancement did not entail working within the rule of law. Rather, it resulted from the ability to cultivate relationships with powerful authorities. At the same time, these relationships were constantly shifting, and settlers and missionaries had to remain cognizant of the fact that the personal preferences of one holder of authority did not necessarily extend to his successor, or even to his own allies. Settlers thus had to constantly recalibrate their strategies based on the very specific historical moment they inhabited and the individual personalities of their chosen patrons. As such, more than in the metropole, alliances and rifts among European settlers did not divide neatly between a secular and clerical camp. These allegiances cut across the entire settler population, and often one’s staunchest source of opposition came from one’s closest acquaintance, who also provided the most direct source of professional and personal competition. As such, missionaries frequently courted secular, typically military, officials to eliminate their closest competitors. As the Catholic clergy as a whole became more embattled, this competition in no way abated.

Finally, for missionaries and lay settlers alike, the opportunity for extralegal advancement diminished as the nineteenth century progressed and the metropolitan rule of law slowly, fitfully, and haphazardly came to apply to Algeria. At the same time, the discourses surrounding missionaries, their supporters, and faith in general only exhibited increasing confusion. Indeed, throughout the nineteenth century these discourses proved especially dense and, as a result, especially variegated. Their incoherence resulted in part from their seemingly incongruous strategic invocations of a population that often seems

---

absent in this analysis just as it often seemed absent in the words of contemporaries
themselves: the overwhelming majority of the marginalized Muslim subjects of French
Algeria. If explicit mention of native Algerians rarely figured in the colonial discourses
examined here, it is because the colonists wanted them not to figure in the larger social
and political landscape of Algeria. If this study demonstrates anything about the native
population of Algeria it is that, despite any rhetoric of assimilation or association, they
remained throughout the period up to the First World War utterly and completely Other.8

At the same time, they stubbornly continued to exist. As Oissilia Saâïdia has
written, “whether invisible or visible, [Algeria’s Muslims] were always present.”9 When
we do catch glimpses of native Algerians in colonial discourses about or by missionaries
they primarily served as inanimate and eternal objects of strategic invocation, conjured
up to justify a particular argument for or against a certain ideal of settler society.
Missionaries claimed that Algerians would never respect a colonial state that did not
respect its own national religion, while civilian officials countered that French Algeria
must remain entirely secular so that Catholics did not offend Muslims with their religious
ceremonies and sensibilities. In neither case did such discourses reflect the real concerns
of their authors. In practice, neither civilian officials nor missionaries exhibited respect
for the Muslims of Algeria or the Islamic faith. Missionaries wanted only to convert
them, while civilian officials wanted only that they remain invisible. As such, an analysis
of these discourses draws upon historian Mary Lewis’ methodological framework already

8 Alice Conklin has argued that in French West Africa this was not the case. French officials took their
civilizing mission seriously and it was their very desire to elevate West Africans to French civilization that
impelled the French to adopt punitive institutions of forced labor and separate legal codes. Conklin, A
Mission to Civilize. The primary difference between the two territories, it seems, stemmed from the sheer
size and reactionary nature of the settler population in Algeria.
9 Oissilia Saâïdia, “Algérie et Tunisie: le repli en terre d'islam?,” in Le grand exil des congrégations
religieuses françaises, 1901–1914, edited by Patrick Cabanel and Jean-Dominique Durand (Paris: Le Cerf,
2005), 333.
described in the introduction to this dissertation. Lewis calls for an approach that looks for power differentials within colonial society while still recognizing unequal relations of collective power between colonizer and colonized.\textsuperscript{10} For in the end, despite the divisions between and among secular and religious settlers, they continued as a collectivity to wield a degree of authority largely unattainable for native Algerians.

Finally, as the dissonance between these discourses and practices reveals, official policies of assimilation and association towards the Algerian population remained stillborn in the realm of metropolitan ideologies. The same was not the case, however, when applied to the European settler community. Although rarely articulated as such, military, civilian, and ecclesiastical officials understood the urgency in the need to somehow spread civilization to this horde of often poor and ignorant Europeans. As the earlier remark by Frederick Cooper demonstrates, assimilating or associating \textit{indigènes} to French society would completely obviate the very \textit{raison d'ê}\textsuperscript{tre} of the entire imperial enterprise by creating a homogenous polity that was more “nation-like” than “empire-like.” At the same time, Cooper leaves unarticulated the other side of this equation: that the application of such policies to the European community would help perpetuate the very ideological justification of imperialism. Only once the European settlers possessed the civilized habits of the universal French citizen could they then justify their alleged desire to spread this civilization to conquered colonial subjects. Without this civilization, settlers themselves threatened to assume the uncivilized traits of the supposedly inferior Algerians.

Ultimately, settlers and missionaries could not agree on a common definition of civilization or even in which direction to look to locate its ideal manifestation. David Prochaska has written that “perhaps the single most characteristic feature of the colonial city is its plural nature, the fact that it is comprised of a mixture of ethnic and racial groups.”\textsuperscript{11} Although the arguments put forth in this dissertation support this contention of Prochaska’s, they contest his corollary argument that “we should not lose sight of the primary fact...[that] the Europeans were never so isolated [from each other] as to preclude assimilation and acculturation.”\textsuperscript{12} In making this argument, Prochaska applied Eugen Weber’s analysis of the assimilating influence of French public schools in the metropole onto colonial Algeria.\textsuperscript{13} Prochaska wrote specifically that “this amalgamation [of the European population of Algeria] was itself effected by the school, by the street, by the barracks.”\textsuperscript{14} Even if we accept Weber’s analysis as unproblematic, an in-depth examination of alternative sites that held the potential to effect assimilation and acculturation reveals that another, nearly equally pervasive set of institutions in Algeria – as in France – continued to hinder such efforts of assimilation.

If we take as the objects of our analysis the Catholic school, the parish church, and the religious orphanage, we can identify a powerful counter current that, rather than assimilate and acculturate, sought to associate and to impart a \textit{particular} religious subjectivity that deviated from the universalism of French republicans. Moreover, more than in France, this particular subjectivity provided a political danger to colonial rule because of the very numerical inferiority of ethnically French citizens and the numerical

\textsuperscript{11} Prochaska, \textit{Making Algeria French}, 18.
\textsuperscript{12} Prochaska, \textit{Making Algeria French}, 165.
\textsuperscript{13} Weber, \textit{Peasants into Frenchmen}.
\textsuperscript{14} Prochaska, \textit{Making Algeria French}, 208.
preponderance of their foreign or neo-French European neighbors. In Algeria, the universal ideal of French citizenship was in fact embodied in a very small proportion of the population. Paradoxically, this group’s very standing as a minority only radicalized its universalist discourses and sentiments, just as it in turn radicalized the religious sentiments of Algeria’s Catholics. The French elite feared that their authority rested on ultimately tenuous foundations and that, especially as geopolitical tensions rose around the turn of the century, the Catholic foreigners represented a fifth column waiting to ally with the government of their homeland and undermine imperial rule from within.

The question of whether or not this fear was well founded is less important than what it reveals about the anxieties, uncertainties, and confusion that beset imperial rule in any context. These ambivalences get to the heart of the fundamental paradox of settler colonialism. Colonial states desired ardently that settlers serve as their representatives on the ground – that in their superior economic status, their superior rationality, and their superior culture they could demonstrate the incontestability and inevitability of European dominance. As this analysis has shown, this dominance was never incontestable or inevitable. We can see its fictive nature in the reams of government documents that questioned whether to subject this settler population to the rule of law, or whether to maintain a more authoritarian regime in order to force the settlers to adopt and exhibit their superior sentiments and their superior rationality. We can see it in the stubborn refusal of Algeria’s Catholics to shed their own “fanaticism,” to accept French secular culture, and to differentiate themselves from Algeria’s colonized subjects. Far from diminishing over time, the anxieties caused by the very fictitiousness of European supremacy only grew throughout the nineteenth century as European inadequacies came
clearly and incontestably into view. Nowhere were these anxieties more apparent than in officials’ repeated attempts to channel and control the faith of missionaries and their Catholic adherents in French Algeria.
ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Centre d’accueil et de recherche des Archives nationales de France (Paris)

Séries F17 (Instruction publique): 12325, 12328, 12335
Séries F19 (Cultes): 2551, 5836, 5922

Centre des Archives d’outre-mer (Aix-en-provence)

Séries F80 (Archives ministérielles, de la direction des affaires de l’Algérie): 1625, 1627, 1629, 1675, 1683, 1731, 1746
Séries ALG/GGA (Gouvernement général de l’Algérie): 50S/2
Séries 1U (Culte catholique): 2, 4, 29, 106, 107

Archives de la congrégation de la mission de St Vincent de Paul (Paris)

106b Alger
108a Alger
108b Alger
108c Alger

Archives Maison Généralice des Filles de la Charité (Paris)

26: 7 (Séries Algérie)
27: 22, 25, 30 (Séries Algérie)
28: 9, 16, 20, 21 (Séries Algérie)

Archives de la Oeuvre de la Propagation de la foi (Lyon)

Fonds de Lyon: G6, G7, G8, G9 (Alger)
Fonds de Paris: G8, G9, G10 (Alger)

Archives des Soeurs Trinitaires de Valence (Lyon)

Le Centre Jean Bosco (Lyon)


Archivio Fratelli Delle Scuole Cristiane, Casa Generalizia (Rome)

  NL 450-460 (Archives de l’ancien district d’Alger, versées après la dissolution. Personnel)
  NL 460 No. 1 and 4 (Algérie)
  NL 461 No. 1 (Alger)
  NL 463 No. 1 (Ben Aknoun)

Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (Rome)

1002 (Alger): 2-I, 2-II, 2-V, 2-VI

Archivio Storico della Congregazione ‘de Propaganda Fide’ (Rome)

Scritture Riferite nei Congressi – Barbaria:
  Volume 13 (1830-1832): 169, 286, 373, 294
  Volume 14 (1833-1835): 1, 67, 73, 113, 139, 154, 200, 214, 603
  Volume 15 (1836-1840): 132, 322
  Volume 16 (1841-1847): 66
  Volume 19 (1861-1866): 364
SECONDARY SOURCES


Kateb, Kalem. “le bilan démographique de la conquête de l’Algérie, 1830-1880.” In


