9-2015

Imperial Priests and Martyrs: Pretexts for State Violence and Religious Change in France, 1848-1871

Benjamin Tyner
Graduate Center, City University of New York

Recommended Citation

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!
Follow this and additional works at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds
Part of the European History Commons, and the Religion Commons

This Dissertation is brought to you by CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Dissertations, Theses, and Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact deposit@gc.cuny.edu.
IMPERIAL PRIESTS AND MARTYRS
Pretexts for State Violence and Religious Change in France, 1848-1871
by BENJAMIN TYNER

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 to satisfy the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date

DAVID TROYANSKY, Chair of Examining Committee

Date

HELENA ROSENBLATT, Executive Officer

Supervisory Committee:

EVELYN ACKERMAN

DAGMAR HERZOG

BRENNAA MOORE
Abstract
Imperial Priests and Martyrs:
Pretexts for State Violence and Religious Change in France, 1848-1871
by Benjamin Tyner

Advisor: Professor David Troyansky

This dissertation examines the lives and political significance of five French Catholic priests who were murdered between 1848 and 1871. Using French newspapers, printed religious texts and pamphlets, hagiographic biographies and other sources, I show the many ways in which French priests were wittingly and unwittingly used by the French Second Republic (1848-52), Second Empire (1852-70) and the Paris Commune (1871) and Third Republic (1870-1940). Archbishop of Paris Denis Auguste Affre (1848), Saint Augustin Schoeffler (1851), Archbishop of Paris Marie-Dominique-Auguste Sibour (1857), Saint Théophile Vénard (1861), and Archbishop of Paris Georges Darboy (1871) were all killed more for their relationship to the French state than for their religious beliefs. In mid-nineteenth-century France, martyrdom served as a powerful cultural symbol demarcating good and evil and identifying appropriate targets for violence. Despite the ultimately secular causes of their deaths, all of the murdered priests discussed (except Sibour) were called martyrs by those who found them inspiring, motivating and useful and were subsequently used as pretexts for asymmetrical violence visited upon those held accountable for their murder, only contributing to their reputation as members of an imperial priesthood. I show how a series of political decisions made in the 1850s by French Catholics allied with the archbishops of Paris increasingly tied institutional French Catholicism to the government of the Second Empire for its survival. But by tying themselves ever closer to the empire, the archbishops of Paris became vulnerable to changing attitudes towards the empire itself. When the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1) swept the empire away the government that followed (ulti-
mately as the Third Republic) seemed ready to scapegoat Paris for all French woes. In desperation, members of the Paris Commune (1871) expressed their frustration at the previous decades with the demolition of imperial symbols, including the imperial priesthood itself.
Acknowledgments

This manuscript required contributions from so many. I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Graduate Center, CUNY, for allowing me the opportunity to pursue this course of study and the time needed to complete it. I would also like to thank my entire committee for their patience and advice. In particular, I’m sincerely grateful for the time and encouragement offered by Professor Evelyn Ackerman and the dedicated and detailed support given to me by my advisor, Professor David Troyansky. Without their help this manuscript would never have been completed. In addition, I’m profoundly thankful for Union College, which employed me, supported my dissertation needs and provided encouragement and financial support. My colleagues in the Humanities department at Union College took every opportunity to protect my time, to offer me wisdom and counseling, and to make excuses for responsibilities I neglected in favor of dissertation work. I’d like to thank my friends for their unwavering confidence in me and for their willingness to provide help whenever it was needed. With all of my heart, I thank my parents, Stuart and Karen Tyner, and my siblings, Erin Miller and Matt Tyner, who offered constant emotional availability and always-optimistic assessments of my progress. I’m so thankful for Gabriel and Lyra, who cheerfully sacrificed many hours of time with their father. Most of all, I’m grateful for Jenny, without whom none of this was remotely possible, who gave up countless professional opportunities and carried unequal domestic burdens along the way, and who nevertheless believed in me and rooted for me from start to finish. Thank you, Jenny, I love you.
Dedication

For Georgette:
There is no finer life.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: 1848 - Post-Springtime Wilt</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: 1850s - The Crucible of Crimea</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: 1850s - Debris of Demons</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: 1860s - Down with the Goddesses</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Illustrations


2. “Martyrs Morts pour l'Ordre et la République.” Print reproduction (by author) from: Chez Bèz et Dubreuil, June 1848.


INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the lives and political significance of five French Catholic priests who were murdered between 1848 and 1871. Archbishop of Paris Denis Auguste Affré (1848), Saint Augustin Schoeffler (1851), Archbishop of Paris Marie-Dominique-Auguste Sibour (1857), Saint Théophane Vénard\(^1\) (1861), and Archbishop of Paris Georges Darboy (1871) were killed in distinct historical moments. But all of them also have one thing in common not previously noted by historians. All of these “martyrs”\(^2\) were killed more for their relationship to the French state than for their religious beliefs. And all of their deaths (except Sibour’s) were subsequently used as pretexts for asymmetrical violence visited upon those held accountable for their murder. Whether weaving through desperate Parisian barricades or sick and in hiding from tigers and men in the bloody mission fields of Vietnam, these priests became targets because they were understood to be proxies for a government deemed villainous. Consequent repressions in their name only contributed to their reputation as members of an imperial priesthood.

In mid-nineteenth-century France, martyrdom served as a powerful cultural symbol demarcating good and evil, and thus identified appropriate targets for violence. When events produced the dramatic death of a priest, this symbol was available to be deployed for political purposes in moments of intense ideological competition. These latter-day Christian martyrs, claimed on behalf of particular issues or positions, had the potential to end debates before they had even begun, rendering resistance nearly blasphemous. Despite the ultimately secular causes of their deaths, all of the murdered priests discussed below (except Sibour) were still called martyrs by

\(^1\)Both Schoeffler and Vénard were canonized in 1988 by Pope John Paul II.

\(^2\)I will henceforth regularly use the term “martyr” in the loose fashion favored by most of the texts used in this dissertation, as opposed to the more narrow sense used in official Vatican proceedings. The technical definition will be mentioned in the introduction below and fully defined in Chapter 3.
those who found them inspiring, motivating and useful. This was even true when the deaths didn’t meet the technical Catholic requirements for the term, or in the absence of papal approval for such usage, or even when they were used to pursue goals different from those ostensibly held by the martyrs themselves.

In the chapters that follow, I show how a series of political decisions made in the 1850s by French Catholics allied with the archbishops of Paris increasingly tied institutional French Catholicism to the government of the Second Empire for its survival. French bishops had already expressed support for the Revolution of 1848 and the Second Republic it produced, but then many of the same priests defended the Second Republic’s stark rejection of continuing worker radicalism in the June Days and argued against principled Catholic resistance to the presidency of Louis-Napoléon, elected at the end of 1848. They then explicitly sanctioned and celebrated the coup of 1852 by Napoleon III which created the Second Empire. In foreign policy, they preemptively and enthusiastically called for the “crusade” known as the Crimean War. In these moments of potentially destabilizing political change, the archbishops of Paris and their allies used their influence and their pulpits to compel the support of French Catholics for the actions of a government which employed and protected them.

And indeed, between 1848 and 1856, when the Crimean War ended, the French high episcopate received broad Catholic support for their explanations of all of these events, as well as for their recommendations for a proper response. But soon after, the consequences of this imperial alliance began to materialize. By tying themselves ever closer to the empire, the archbishops of Paris became vulnerable to changing attitudes towards the empire itself. By the late-1850s they were politically isolated and the Liberal, Gallican Catholicism they preached was receiving criticism from Rome. The violence of the June Days had already alienated many socialists, who
felt betrayed by the intellectual defection of progressive Catholics from radical reform. The bishops who supported the coup of Napoleon III had further alienated republicans, who accused them of moral compromise and servility. And popular Catholic opinion, it often seemed to the imperial priesthood, was increasingly turned against them by the critical transalpine messages regularly arriving in Paris from Pope Pius IX. In the years following the Crimean War, these Ultramontane missives became more directly confrontational. The early favor shown to Catholics by the emperor, suggested the pope, had never extended nearly far enough. The only notable material beneficiaries within the church itself were archbishops of metropolitan seats. Furthermore, Napoleon III’s foreign policy decisions were increasingly judged as opportunistic and self-serving, rather than pious, and priests were dying abroad (albeit sometimes joyfully, see Chapter 3) while extending his reach. When the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1) swept the empire away and the government that followed (ultimately as the Third Republic) seemed ready to scapegoat Paris for all French woes, the Paris Commune (1871) expressed its frustration at the previous decades with the demolition of imperial symbols. When they cheerfully toppled the monumental celebration of Bonapartist conquest called the Vendôme Column and a few angrily slaughtered priests attached to the imperial family, Communards believed they were acting consistently.

In every numbered chapter below I rely primarily on French primary sources (most often French newspapers, printed religious texts and pamphlets and hagiographic biographies) related to these priests and their deaths. In Chapters 2, 3 and 4 I also use the conclusions drawn from these sources to complement or challenge recent scholarly works on related topics. Chapter 1 examines the use made of the assassination of Archbishop of Paris Affre during the June Days of 1848 to demonize worker rebellion and present the Second Republic as guardian of order and religion. This death also contributed to the passing of the previous climate of religious and politi-
cal experimentation and helped to narrow the ideological options available to good Catholics. The chapter then follows the formation of a broad Catholic coalition, fused together by the fear of socialism and led by Affre’s successor Archbishop Sibour, which legitimized Napoleon III’s coup against the Republic.

Chapter 2 charts the outbreak of the Crimean War. It shows how Napoleon III capitalized on Catholic support to gain consent for the aggressiveness of his foreign policy. In the “Question of the Holy Places,” several prominent Catholic writers debated how best to enhance French substantive control over sacred sites of symbolic significance for Christian history in Jerusalem. Despite important differences in Catholic and non-Catholic portrayals of the question, most participants agreed that a historically novel French assertion over the Holy Places of the Levant was desirable, deserving of French military support. I also suggest that the way in which the Crimean War is typically explained, as a simple product of Napoleon III’s imperial whim, needs to be revisited in light of how early and frequently French Catholics published works essentially demanding it be waged. For despite deep differences within Catholicism, this chapter argues that there was little Catholic resistance to understanding the Crimean War as a holy war, and thus a necessary one.

The creation of a martial empire thus depended heavily on Catholics. The foreign policy created in and shaped by the Crimean War also influenced subsequent adventures during the Second Empire. The imperial expansion of France into East Asia was similarly justified by reference to France’s role as the protector of the Catholic faith. Napoleon III mixed symbols and words from a long tradition of French Catholic holy war (along with more secular Napoleonic and neoclassical imperial imagery) to communicate a mix of religion and politics to the readers of the thriving Catholic press. Initially, this strategy involved little risk as those radically op-
posed to such an alliance of throne and altar remained politically diminished by the stain of the June Days of 1848. But unlike the Crimean War, French military engagements with Vietnam, China and Korea had only mixed success and made plain how French government purposes differed from the hopes of many Catholics. It is thus in part within the context of the mission field that the French state and its Catholic supporters began to part ways, prefiguring the stark political cleavages of the Third Republic.

Chapter 3 reviews accounts of French missionaries to Vietnam in the 1850s. In dialogue with Brad Gregory’s model for an historical examination of martyrdom, I explain the “willingness to kill” of French troops in Asia and the nineteenth-century Vietnamese government as well as the “willingness to die” of priests from the Paris Foreign Missionary Society like Théophane Vénard. I show that despite the urgent desire of priests to join the eternal ranks of Christian heroes, their own nationalism and the past and present policies of their government were involved in the decisions of Vietnamese authorities to execute them. Contemporary biographies which honored priests for their martyrdom tried to downplay these factors, since the technical grounds for achieving the status of martyr excluded non-religious factors. Nevertheless, hagiographers failed to entirely erase the anxious complexity they felt when interpreting the deaths of Schoeffler, Vénard and others at the hand of Vietnamese officials who blamed the missionaries for inciting French imperialism.

Chapter 4 examines two more deaths of archbishops of Paris: Sibour in 1857 and Darboy in 1871. It begins with Charles Dickens’ coverage of the assassination of Sibour during mass in January 1857. As the only killing of a priest in this book that doesn’t provoke a Second Empire invasion or repression, Sibour’s death is an outlier which highlights both the definition of mar-

---

tyrdom as about the cause the death supports (rather than the death itself), and also the evolving relationship of the French government to the Vatican. Unlike the death of Affre, or the deaths of missionaries in Vietnam, Sibour’s death served no broad function for the French state, and thus was largely not understood as martyrdom. By the time of Darboy’s accession to the archbishopric of Paris in 1863, his role as a functionary of the French Second Empire, itself now at odds with the papacy, was clear to all interested parties. Darboy’s selection indicated a combative assertion of the state role over church appointments in dispute since the Revolution (if not the sixteenth century). The chapter concludes with the execution of Darboy himself during the Paris Commune of 1871. Darboy’s death gives one final example of the use of martyrs in nineteenth-century France, as it became a major justification for the one-sided repression of the Communards. When Darboy was executed, the overlapping relationship between bishops and the state was severed, leaving only a new French government and politically-unaffiliated Catholics. Meanwhile, the new government, headed by Adolphe Thiers, was perfectly willing to use Darboy’s death to portray itself as the avenging angel during the repression of the Commune. But the episcopal-executive French alliance which had earlier used this strategy was itself dead and buried, with Darboy, and the secularization of the French state was in process even as the early Third Republic discussed the possibility of restoring the monarchy (and long before the Jules Ferry Laws established mandatory secular education in 1881-2).

This dissertation argues that discussions of martyrdom during the French Second Empire (and the governments that directly preceded and followed it) were creative and transformative moments for many Catholics, precisely because these discussions were doing important political work for their participants. Though recent scholars have conceded the impossibility of drawing firm lines between religion and politics, historical literature on secular political affairs has tended
to be uninterested in martyrdom and the interest in martyrs has been largely confined to religious biographies. In this dissertation I focus more on the political choices made and explained by these priests, rather than their theological importance or their relationship to the papacy. After all, the religious labels and doctrinal positions attached to these men cannot be separated from their political concerns, and the attempt to do so is anachronistic, since their engagement was explicit and discussed. Theodore Zeldin once noted this historical dichotomy, asking if there were really “[t]wo Frances,” Christian and republican, or if in fact history revealed “the contradictions within parties, the complexities of individuals, and the survival of traditional beliefs under the cloak of modern formulae and of traditional practices in nominally new institutions.”

Zeldin’s question was rhetorical: France was not a simple ideological dichotomy in this or any period.

Even when noting the major issues under debate within Catholicism, many historians have provided only oversimplified ideological labels to distinguish different Catholics, rather than prioritizing the ways in which the individual choices of particular Catholics, based to some extent on self-interest, shaped the political culture of their time. Adrien Dansette wrote that the crucial arguments within French Catholicism were over “liberty and truth.” He similarly framed the struggle over the temporal power of the papacy as “the struggle of two great principles capable of forming the foundations of a civilization – authority and freedom.” From his account one would assume that the story of mid-nineteenth-century French Catholicism can be reduced to a battle of ideas between liberty and truth, authority and freedom. But this dissertation argues in-

---


5Dansette, *Histoire Religieuse de la France Contemporaine* (Paris: Flammarion, 1952), 285. To be fair, he also offered a slightly more complicated definition as well: “It was a fundamental difference of opinion over the role of the church in everyday life, occurring at the beginning of the Second Empire, which made the gap impossible to bridge. Catholic liberals, who regarded liberty as a universal right, concluded from this that the Church must come to terms with the age in which they were living. The die-hards, on the other hand, taking the view that freedom was a privilege attached to truth, freedom for evil being inconceivable, argued that the Church should make use of the civil authority in the struggle against modern tendencies.” *Ibid.*, 280.
instead that the failure of Liberal Catholics and the triumph of Ultramontanism by the time of Vatican I can only fully be understood in light of the political actions and choices of Catholics close to the imperial government.

A related problem in describing the Second Empire has been the eagerness of historians to explain the future secularization of French politics by noting trends which seem to anticipate it during the Second Empire. Historical writing on French Catholicism has thus been dominated by accounts of the triumph of Ultramontanism (within Catholicism) which for some writers implicitly justified the secularization policies of the Third Republic. Catholics allied with the archbishops of Paris are often ignored in this narrative. This dissertation focuses on them. This is important simply because they have been ignored. But in addition, they are important because, in fact, the secularization of France in the Third Republic would have been much more difficult if the state had continued to employ a collaborating priesthood, loyal to the state, interested in educational reform but not secularization, and helpful in bolstering other state policy. In other words, the absence of the imperial priesthood is perhaps as important in explaining subsequent events as the outcome of Vatican I.

Part of the complexity in understanding the religious and political landscape of Second Empire France is a consequence of the labels we use to describe key actors. Terms such as Liberal, Ultramontane and Gallican Catholic were changing during the Second Empire, contain both political and religious content, and fail in any case to capture important aspects of the individuals under review. Scholarship which presents these priests largely by defining them in this way, in other words, fails to prioritize what they represented politically to contemporaries and misses much of their biggest impact. To take one example, Mark Gabbert has defined Liberal Catholic

---

6See, for example, Jean Maurain, La Politique Ecclésiastique du Second Empire de 1852 à 1869 (Paris: Alcan, 1930).
as an intellectual identity characterized by some degree of support for civil and political liberty and the separation of church and state. This dissertation seriously undermines any claim that the archbishops of Paris, at least, ever really supported such a separation. In fact, the Liberal Catholic archbishops under review decried as “political” any Catholic activism against the government. Describing their cooperation as “apolitical,” they simultaneously benefitted from the protected and state-sponsored hierarchical episcopate, somewhat safe from populist priests frustrated with episcopal elitism, wealth and influence. As a philosophical position this was perhaps best summarized by Archbishop Affre: “In France the pope reigns but does not govern.”

When treating the period prior to 1848, historians have often described Liberal Catholics and Gallicans as two rival groups, distinct in how they felt about the July Monarchy. Liberal Catholics were primarily opposition figures, and between 1846 and 1848, they could defend themselves with the words of (still-apparently liberal) Pope Pius IX (as well as his predecessor) to rhetorically resist the policies of Louis-Philippe, the “King of the French.” These priests could often, therefore, have been described as both Liberal (in their support for republican resistance to the monarchy) and Ultramontanist (in their appeals to papal authority for such political activity). Some even participated in the February Revolution of 1848 (see Chapter 1). Gallicans, on the other hand, were those Catholics who had cleaved closer to the government for support against opposition Catholics. During the period covered by this dissertation (1848-1871), however, historians have used the terms Liberal Catholic and Gallican almost interchangeably, often to refer to the exact same people, including all of the archbishops of Paris directly treated in the chapters

---


9See, for example, Gregory XVI’s declaration *Mirari Vos* dated August, 1832.
to follow. Liberal Catholics, certainly those imperial priests treated in the chapters below, rallied to the new Second Republic and then to the regime of Napoleon III. They thus became Gallicans, in that they depended on the state to bolster their episcopal independence against an Ultramontanism which now increasingly demanded that they declare their ultimate loyalty to the pope and to the infallibility of his word and governance.\(^\text{10}\) Political events, in other words, defined these categories and shuffled the individuals within them.

Ultramontanism has also been defined primarily as a religious ideology characterized by assent to the supremacy of papal authority, even in “secular” affairs. Historians have been especially critical of Ultramontanism, and some have criticized its logical coherence. “Is it possible at the same time,” wrote René Rémond, “without being naive or cynical, to ask for liberty for the Church on the outside and to refuse it on the inside?”\(^\text{11}\) But the logical coherence of belief is not

\(^{10}\)Gallicanism is defined by John Merriman as “a doctrine which held that the authority of the ninety-one French bishops should take precedence over that of the pope.” Merriman, *Massacre: The Life and Death of the Paris Commune of 1871* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 99. Brian Tierney has highlighted how the High Middle Ages provided the historical foundation for papal infallibility as a set of ideas, and for their political flexibility in political argument. The purpose for arguing that the pontiff was infallible was diametrically opposed in this earlier period to the goals that the “infallibilists” at Vatican I would have in mind in 1870. Connections nineteenth-century proponents of the doctrine made between papal sovereignty and papal infallibility required walking a paradoxical and very delicate line. “It is of the essence of sovereignty (as the concept was understood both in the nineteenth century and in the Middle Ages) that a sovereign ruler cannot be bound by the acts of his predecessors. It is of the essence of infallibility (as the doctrine was formulated at Vatican Council I) that the infallible decrees of one pope are binding on all his successors since they are, by definition, irreformable.” Brian Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility, 1150-1350: a Study on the Concepts of Infallibility, Sovereignty and Tradition in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972), 2. Those formulating the arguments buttressing infallibility had been initially, therefore, those attempting to limit papal sovereignty by requiring adherence to decisions of past popes. Later, the critique of papal power shifted to the rhetorical strategy of conciliarism, giving highest authority within the Church to a general council of bishops. Another option was, increasingly, to argue that the sovereignty of the monarch in one’s country had to be prioritized over opposite decrees coming from Rome. French bishops in particular, under the influence of Jansenism from the seventeenth century, called for the establishment of a Gallican church: one that would protect them from what they perceived as a domineering pontiff who had condemned Cornelius Jansen. In the early sixteenth century, wars in northern Italy, and the victory of François I over the pope at Marignano in 1515 earned the French government an important concession. The Concordat of Bologna (1516) gave French kings near-complete control over filling the most important positions in the French Catholic church. This trend continued in the centuries that followed, culminating in the Revolution of 1789, which formally disestablished Catholicism. As part of the compromise Napoleon struck with the papacy in the Concordat of 1801, the French state took on the responsibility of paying the French clergy.

necessary for broad influence. Ultramontanist activism created a “crisis of authority”\textsuperscript{12} within French Catholicism, one only resolved by Vatican I (1869-70). I suggest that our understanding of actual Ultramontanists can be improved by examining their political decisions and in reaction to the Second Empire and their exclusion from the higher French church and state patronage. In the long term, this meant that Ultramontanists reached the Third Republic blameless for the sins of the Second Empire, basking in formal papal approval.

In recent decades, some historians have enriched these labels by attention to the broader social and economic divisions between Liberal Catholics and their Ultramontane rivals. Austin Gough, for example, crafted nuanced and functional definitions of these terms in his account of the specific objectives of Ultramontanist activism prior to and during the Second Empire. Using the lens of class privilege, among other analytical tools, Gough explained how archbishops were able to create a position of doctrinal independence from Rome.\textsuperscript{13} In addition, as Gough implied, the content of their beliefs can be explained with class language. Recipients of political influence, relative wealth and educational advantage, bishops were often accused of arrogance and paternalism. The importance of this class difference is also evidenced by the political campaign of Ultramontanist activism in France which specifically targeted the high episcopate’s wealth and control over the French church and independence from the Vatican. The imperial priests were also paid: bishops earned twelve thousand francs per annum, and archbishops earned twenty thousand (compared to the four thousand francs for a notary or the two thousand francs for a

\textsuperscript{12}This phrase comes from Anita Rasi May, “The Falloux Law, the Catholic Press, and the Bishops: Crisis of Authority in the French Church,” \textit{French Historical Studies}, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring, 1973), 77-94.

\textsuperscript{13}Austin Gough, \textit{Paris and Rome: the Gallican Church and the Ultramontane Campaign, 1848-1853} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). Published subsequently in French as \textit{Paris et Rome: les Catholiques Français et le Pape au XIXe Siècle}, trans. Michel Lagrée (Paris: Éditions de l’Atelier, 1996). Historically, the formal independence of the French episcopate had been recognized in the Concordat of 1801, and grudgingly signed by the papacy. This had strengthened the power of the bishops vis-à-vis Rome and their own flocks. Where previously parliaments, cathedral chapters and dioecesan consultative committees called \textit{officialités} had operated as checks on episcopal authority, archbishops now spoke directly, with all the force of law.
skilled worker). The rest of the priesthood experienced something different: seven-eighths of the parish clergy were working-class. The average salary of one of the thirty-thousand priests in charge of minor parishes, the *desservants*, was about eight hundred francs. “A young *desservant* in the middle of the century,” wrote Gough, “could expect to find a crumbling church, a tiny congregation of elderly women, and local society dominated by middle-class people who read the Parisian newspapers which now arrived each day by the railway, and who treated him with ironical reserve; the municipal council and the *conseil de fabrique* which supervised parish expenditure were often run by outright anticlericals.”

Since Archbishop Georges Darboy died during the Paris Commune in 1871 (see Chapter 4), his story has mostly been told in early religious biographies and later discussions of the anticlerical nature of the Commune. After new archival materials became available in 1971, however, Jacques Martin reopened the issue of the long-avoided conflict between Darboy and the Vatican. In an article titled with the question “Why was Mgr. Darboy never made a cardinal?”, Martin even directly acknowledged the proximity of Darboy to the imperial court. “Cultured, intimidating, open to the ‘ideas of his times,’” he wrote, “[Darboy] had preached on Easter in front of the Emperor and made him cry. Napoleon III had made him grand almoner, he had named him bishop of Nancy (1857), then archbishop of Paris (1863). But contrary to the tradition that the archbishops of Paris should be elevated to the purple, Darboy never was.” Nevertheless, Martin also explained Darboy’s failure to receive the honor by referring to his personality and ideas, and his account never considers the possibility that the pope’s dislike of Napoleon III could also

---

spread to those deemed to be imperial representatives. The new documents, Martin wrote, prove that “it was not only the individualism and outspokenness of the prelate which, as has previously been written, cost him the cardinal’s hat. There was another important issue. The doctrinal divergences between him and Pius IX were so deep that the Pontiff could never allow himself to act against his conscience.” Even in the accounts of Gough and Martin, then, the contributions of Darboy and the imperial priests to political change are seen as less important that what they represented within Catholicism and its changing understanding of papal authority.

As these examples show, terms like Liberal Catholic cannot be taken as self-evident in meaning, and potentially treat people, beliefs and events as static and abstract when we ought instead to speak specifically and particularly: these terms are not inherently useful shortcuts in understanding mid-century Catholics. Recognizing the flexibility of the term over time, Carol E. Harrison abandoned the term in favor of another cultural label in her recent study of French nineteenth-century Catholics. “Scholars most commonly refer to the individuals featured in these chapters as ‘liberal Catholics,’ a term that I have rejected in favor of ‘romantic Catholics.’” She defends this decision by articulating the complicated and unique intellectual biographies of important French Catholics, revealing the limitations of the word “liberal” in describing the diverse opinions on, for example, monarchy, liberalism and mysticism held by her subjects. While her method is helpful, it creates similar problems of the definition of romanticism and fails to explain differences between Ultramontane “romantics” like Louis Veuillot (I define Veuillot in this way: see Chapter 1, pg. 37) and Liberal Catholic romantics like Montalembert (Harrison defines the latter this way). Instead, while occasionally using the traditional terms in the pages that follow

---

18 Ibid., 609-10.
when appropriate, I attempt to increase the specificity of reference by writing about members of
the “imperial priesthood”, or “the high episcopate”: those who enjoyed the favor and patronage
of the French state after 1848 and before the foundation of the Third Republic.

In addition to the scholarship of Zeldin, Gough, and others mentioned above, this disser-
tation could not have been conceived without the work of a number of other historians of religion
whose work I have depended on and received insights from. Thomas Kselman’s work has been
characterized by a basic faith in the reasonableness of his subjects. More specifically, he has ar-
gued that a prophetic and millennial fervor underpinned much of French popular Catholicism in
the nineteenth century. Familiar stage-driven apocalyptic interpretations of recent French polit-
ical history helped people “to fit what was new and unprecedented into categories that were old
and familiar.” Martyrdom has been described in a similar way by Brad Gregory when describ-
ing the way discussions of martyrdom, by both Catholics and Protestants, following the Refor-
mation connected their participants to the deep history of their faith. My own examination of
French Catholic martyrs is indebted to Gregory’s claim that “If martyrdom seems bizarre or in-
comprehensible, we should suspect that we have insufficiently grasped the religious convictions
at its heart.”

The mid-century popular resurgence of French Catholicism has recently been the subject
of renewed historical interest. Sudhir Hazareesingh’s work, for example, has attempted to high-
light the vitality of popular religious nationalism in support of the Second Empire and Raymond
Jonas has examined the Cult of the Sacred Heart. Studies of Marian apparitions and of religious

20 See, for example, Kselman, Miracles and Prophecies in Nineteenth-century France (New Brunswick,

21 Ibid., 71.

22 Gregory, 255.

23 See Hazareesingh, “Religion and Politics in the Saint-Napoleon Festivity 1852–70: Anti-Clericalism,
tourism to sites like Lourdes have used these phenomena to call into doubt any broad distinctions between the loosely related theoretical models sometimes called “modernization” and religious movements which spread through the same networks once assumed to be inevitably secularizing in their effect. Similarly, although the French state’s patronage of Catholicism, especially in the early 1850s, provided the material context in which the Church could flourish, both Catholic missions abroad and pilgrimages and religious tourism at home also benefitted from modern technology: railways, steamships and the opening of the Suez Canal allowed an exponential drop in the time of transit, whether one was pursuing evangelism in Tibet or visiting the shrine at Lourdes; and one could read about both thanks to the arrival of national newspapers and foreign correspondents. In her study of Lourdes, Suzanne Kaufman argues against the assumption that Catholics only used such modern tools for “traditional” purposes. “[T]he very success of Lourdes…,” she writes, “depended on erasing its identity as a local holy site and linking the practices of Catholic pilgrimage to the emerging mass culture of urban France.”

Sue Peabody’s work on Catholic missions in colonial Saint Domingue contains a nuanced analysis of the overlapping yet separate concerns of missionaries, slaves and French colonial administrators. Peabody’s conclusions point to the collaboration of missionaries with French imperialism while making absolutely crucial distinctions about their separate goals, methods and values: one cannot simply assume that correlation between mission and empire proves mutual purpose. Furthermore, Peabody insists, intra-Catholic disputes have had important consequences


See, for example, Ruth Harris, Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age (New York: Viking, 1999) as well as Kaufman, mentioned below.


for the conditions of empire: the removal of Jesuits from Saint-Domingue removed an important check on plantation brutality, accelerating the conditions which produced the Haitian Revolution.

In treating stories of martyrdom, I’ve critiqued Brad Gregory, as mentioned above, in order to test his definitions of martyrdom, to explore martyrdom’s relationship to faith, and to examine the unique laboratory mixing God and war provided by a crusading government. These issues certainly still have relevance in the twenty-first-century west. Other scholars have drawn my attention to other aspects of martyrdom. Attention to the rituals of death and dying, as Kselman has shown, can provide opportunities to examine struggles between individuals, communities, churches and secular authorities over issues of import to participants. Furthermore, martyrdom is of course a form of dying which at times in its retelling takes on elements of scandal and spectacle; thus, evidence is easy to find. The study of visual and material culture, of their distribution and reception, has been undertaken beautifully by Vanessa Schwartz. Finally, this dissertation combines typical national (and Parisian) histories with stories of communication of information, fashion, and ideas by people from far away. This shifting focus has been beautifully demonstrated by C.A. Bayly as well as a generation of historians of imperialism.

Recent trends in the historiography of colonialism have emphasized the ways in which both theoretical and practical knowledge enabled colonial projects. The major focus of this kind

---


of Foucauldian project has been scientific discourse, but the continued presence in the French context of the use of martyrs as symbols enabling violence suggests a similar insight. Another trend in recent studies of imperialism is the collapse of the dichotomy between “internal” empire and “external” empire, and the ways in which both serve as laboratories for rhetorical and institutional experiments. One can see this kind of argument as early as Eugen Weber’s Peasants into Frenchmen, but it has been expanded, for example, by Alice Conklin in A Mission to Civilize. These kinds of works look at the two-way dialogue between metropole and colony in that institutions and arguments created in one context affect those found in the other. My juxtaposition of martyrdoms in Paris with martyrdoms in Vietnam relies on many of these insights. In following these examples, this dissertation attempts to deepen our understanding of several major narratives in nineteenth-century French political and religious history by paying attention to economic, military, and communications networks that connected metropolitan France to a wider world.

One problem this book implicitly addresses is the way in which histories written in the “national” mode not only neglect fuller explanation but actually obscure accurate models of causation by separating, for example, state action within a country from those without. Disregarding the international contexts of missions seems to me a very perilous prospect, especially when the contestations of power abroad so clearly parallel those at home. “When national histories,” writes Susan Buck-Morss, “are conceived as self-contained, or when the separate aspects of history are treated in disciplinary isolation, counterevidence is pushed to the margins as irrelevant.” Similarly, the understanding of issues of church and state in France must be deepened by attention to, for example, French imperialism in Asia.


This kind of attention seems to be particularly lacking during this period. One very notable exception is J.P. Daughton’s *An Empire Divided*, which serves as an important model for parts of this dissertation. Daughton examines the French empire in Indonesia, Polynesia and Madagascar from 1880 to 1914 in order to better see disputes between Republicans and Catholics in the metropole. He finds that Catholics and Republicans within the context of empire had very different purposes. For one, Daughton argues, “until the 1880s missionaries rejected liberalism and nationalism and remained committed to Christian traditions.”33 In the context of the early Third Republic, this rejection was frustrating to anticlericals at home who felt that missionaries were engaged in misrepresentation of France and had too much political influence. The source of this influence was the inability of Republican imperialists to get around the fact that using missionaries in the colonial context (including martyrs) was cheaper and less complicated than any alternatives. The missionaries were already there and often had much longer standing ties with local communities; disenfranchising them would have caused unnecessary conflict with the Vatican and the French Catholic public. So Republican merchants and politicians often found themselves in an awkward situation: arguing for limitations on religious freedoms at home but expansion of them abroad. The debates around these issues, Daughton argues, led to the formation of the Republican justification for empire: France’s *mission civilisatrice* to colonial peoples.

Structurally, my approach is similar to Daughton’s in that it will look to France’s empire abroad to elucidate cultural and political debates in the metropole. Clearly, I will also be interested in many of the same topics: justification for empire, missionaries and their relationship with the government. Nevertheless, Daughton’s treatment of the Second Empire is remarkably curs

ry and because of this he occasionally treats as novel structures which predated his period (in-
cluding earlier imperialism). For example, I argue below that the Second Empire provides a trans-
sitional space between traditional religious justifications for imperialism and the scientific, civi-
lizing mission pretexts of the Third Republic.

To anyone who takes these kinds of approaches seriously, a major problem develops. At-
tention to historical erasures, marginal phenomena, and excluded stories reminds us ultimately of
the absolute importance of all human stories. This dissertation almost entirely neglects France
outside of Paris. It is virtually silent on issues of gender; actual women in this narrative are al-
most nonexistent. It privileges Parisian understandings and ignores several geographical regions
outside France where the French were quite active. Yet, the centrality of Paris in French culture
and politics means that in some contexts Paris was France, and the Parisian press was (and is) a
national press, one whose reliance on the sensational engaged and moved readers throughout the
country.

In Visionaries, William Christian ends his introduction to a book on twentieth-century
Spanish Catholics by explaining a key avoidance: “I do not address the question essential for
many believers: were the apparitions ‘true’?” Instead, he writes, “I must stick to human history.”
This dissertation will imitate Christian’s humility in its treatment of martyrdom and avoid judg-
ment on religious truth claims. As Christian closes, “By upbringing and nationality I am an out-
sider ill-equipped to tell Basques, Spaniards, and Catholics what is sacred and what is profane. In
any case, I am quite unwilling to try.”34 I will attempt to treat French Catholics and nonbelievers
with a similar sense of critical propriety.

34 Christian, Visionaries: The Spanish Republic and the Reign of Christ (Los Angeles: University of
CHAPTER 1: 1848 – POST-SPRINGTIME WILT

Martyrdom in 1848

In nineteenth-century France martyrdom served as a powerful cultural symbol demarcating good and evil that was deployed for political purposes in moments of intense ideological competition. Christian martyrdom, brandished politically on behalf of particular issues or ideological positions, had the potential to end debates before they had even begun. In the case examined in this chapter, I show that the martyrdom of Archbishop of Paris Denis Auguste Affre influenced the development of a political consensus in the French Second Republican government. This consensus committed Catholics to the support of a repressive government against workers and ended certain possibilities of collaboration between progressive political thinkers and Liberal Catholic priests and intellectuals.

This chapter introduces the relevant historical context around the Revolutions of 1848, as well as many of the individuals and institutions present throughout this dissertation. I first recount the death of Archbishop of Paris Affre on the barricades of the June Days in 1848, and the use made of it as a justification for the repressive violence that followed (“Affre’s Last Mission”). Next, I enumerate the ways in which the violence of the June Days definitively closed the era of boundary-crossing romantic utopianism that had allowed novel political and religious identities to become common in the 1830s and 1840s (“Springtime Wilt”). Then, I use accounts of the meetings of the Assembly during the June Days as reported by Le Constitutionnel to make clear how Affre’s death functioned politically as deployed by political elites (“More Than Dangerous Illusions”). Finally, I establish how the crucial cornerstones of Catholic support for Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte’s Second Republic presidency (1848-1851) were laid and describe Parisian perception of religious support for the coup of 1851 that initiated the Second Empire.
(1852-1870), through the prints of Honoré Daumier (“Daumier’s Republic”).

**Affre’s Last Mission**

“June, 1848, we hasten to say, was an exceptional event, and it is nearly impossible to account for it in the philosophy of history,” wrote Victor Hugo. The barricade at the faubourg Saint-Antoine, as he described it, was three stories high and seven-hundred feet long. At the place where the street met the square three six-story buildings had been ripped down and used to build the massive, disorderly wall. It caused him “immense agonizing suffering” to look at it yet he found its quixotic defiance heroic: it was, Hugo wrote, “the acropolis of the ragamuffins.”¹ By the late afternoon of June 25, 1848 it was the last barricade standing in Paris.

In the square all of the wineshops were boarded up and in the opposite corner the National Guard pumped artillery fire over the wall of broken houses. Behind the artillery, a small procession was making its way towards the officers on horseback. Soon the artillery fire stopped. The Archbishop of Paris, Denis Auguste Affre was bringing a message to the insurgents from General Cavaignac,² who had been given emergency powers to put an end to the rebellion. As Affre approached the guardsmen he was warned by Cavaignac of the danger he was courting. “My life,” the Archbishop answered, “is of little value, I will gladly risk it.”³ In full episcopal robes and with a golden crucifix around his neck the fifty-five-year-old Affre was accompanied by at least two other men, one or two National Guardsmen in plainclothes, and one or two vicars,

---

¹Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables, Tome V* (Paris: Émile Testard, 1890), 6-11 (all citations with French titles indicate my translations unless otherwise noted). Hugo’s epic ends in 1832, well before the the June Days, but he left many references to more recent events in the prose.

²Louis-Eugène Cavaignac, up to that time, was the Minister of War but was probably most well-known for his command over colonial Algeria. The uprising of the June Days led the Assembly to ask for the resignation of the five-member executive commission so that Cavaignac could take up emergency powers.

one of whom held a leafy branch high in the air as a sign of peace.

The insurgents on the other side of the barricade showed themselves on top of the wall, rifle butts aloft signaling their willingness for a brief truce. Suddenly, for the first time in days, it was quiet. For a population schooled in France’s recent past, an archbishop walking towards a revolutionary barricade was an event of some moment. Affre picked his way to the top of the behemoth, and for a few moments it appeared that his presence might be able to achieve something. All accounts suggest that he said a few words before shots rang out and a cross-fire resumed between the two sides. Affre was shot in the groin and fell, mortally wounded. His last words were unrecorded, but perhaps he prepared to bless the insurgents, as he had the passersby on his route to the barricade, or perhaps he had begun to read the letter he bore from Cavaignac. The letter said:

To the Insurgents: Citizens, You doubtless believe you are fighting for the welfare of the working classes; — it is against them you fight, and it is upon them that all the blood will fall. If this contest is to continue, we must despair of the republic, the success of which you are all anxious to secure. — In the name of our bleeding country, — In the name of the republic which you will destroy, — In the name of that work, which you ask, and which has never been refused, frustrate the hopes of our common enemies. Lay down your fratricidal arms, and rely upon the Government, which, if not ignorant that criminal instigation is in your ranks, knows also that amongst you are brothers, seduced from the right path, and which it recalls again to the arms of their country.

- The chief of the Executive Power, Cavaignac.4

Within a few hours, the remaining rebels were dead, in hiding, or among the thousands of people arrested and held in makeshift prisons until they could be deported to Algeria.5 “The conquest of this country had been the main preoccupation of the previous reign, and it was now beginning to pay off as Algeria came to play quite an important role in the internal policies of the French republics - as a training ground, a tough military school and a place of exile for rebels. It

---


was also, we recall, Cavaignac’s homeland.” Although the violence was incredibly one-sided, the insurgents were blamed for the death of Affre along with countless other crimes. Those who survived felt lost and stigmatized. In particular, those who were involved in authoring the ideas understood as the cause of the June Days were rhetorically attacked. The insurgents had to be punished but they were, in the words of Cavaignac’s letter, “seduced from the right path” by radical intellectuals. The details of Affre’s heroism and sacrifice were distributed as iconic images and brandished in any debate about the brutality of the repression.

Our Bleeding Country

Six months before Affre’s death, Alexis de Tocqueville had given “the only famous speech of his July Monarchy political career.” He had famously warned the government that they were “at this moment sleeping on a volcano.” And this volcano was commencing to erupt not because the government lacked strength, Tocqueville argued, but for a more frightening reason. “No, messieurs; there is a deeper and truer cause, and this is that the governing class has now become, by its indifference, by its selfishness, by its vices, incapable and unworthy of governing.”

The “King of the French,” Louis-Philippe, had failed miserably in stemming the growing tide of popular dissent against himself and his chief minister, François Guizot. This broad frustration was reflected in a campaign of political subversion served up, initially, at subversive

---

8 Ibid., 61.
9 Ibid.
“banquets”, but soon from the barricades. The king, as a last ditch effort to shore up his regime, summoned Adolphe Thiers on February 24, 1848. Thiers had recently abandoned support for the July Monarchy after being one of its primary defenders for most of its life. He was asked to organize a carrot-and-stick strategy desperately aimed at staving off a full revolution. After some equivocation he accepted the assignment. Thiers was reform-minded enough to be the carrot, and he was accompanied in this task by Odilon Barrot, who had much more respect from Republicans. By declaring a new government, led by and proclaimed by Thiers and Barrot, Louis-Philippe hoped he would convince some of the rebels of his intentions at reform. As for the stick, Thiers was sent to commission Thomas-Robert Bugeaud, Marshal of France and hero of the wars in Algeria, to be the vehicle of repression. The message from the king via Thiers was to tell Bugeaud and his men to “load their weapons.”

Things had turned bloody the day before when government troops had fired on a demonstration in front of the Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. The crowd had formed slowly, seemingly spontaneously. It included curious strollers, voyeuristic families and professional revolutionaries alike. Wrote Alphonse de Lamartine: “A red flag floated in the light of the torches in the first ranks of this multitude. They continued to advance and multiple. A sinister curiosity attached itself to this cloud of men, who seemed to carry with them the mystery of the day. In front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a battalion of the line, arms drawn and with their commander in front of them, blocked the boulevard.”10 At least some of the mystery-carriers, wrote another eyewitness, Percy B. St. John, signaled their intention for national martyrdom by singing “Mourir pour la patrie.”11 As the group approached the line of soldiers, they paused.

---

Lamartine describes the critical moment: “The column stops in front of this hedge of bayonets. The flapping of the flag and the light of the torches frighten the horse of the commander; rearing back in fear, the horse threw itself into the battalion, which opened to receive its chief.” A shot was fired, but from where? “No one knows. Malice or accident, this shot made a revolution.”

To describe what happened next Lamartine sprays out clipped phrases like bullets. “The column of the people of the faubourgs tumbles down, decimated by the bullets. The cries of the dying and the wounded mix with the terrified shouts of the curious, of fleeing women and children. They rush into the neighboring houses, into the side streets, under the covered doors. In the light of torches, barely visible in pools of blood on the pavement, piles of dead can be distinguished here and there on the road.” As the shock of witnesses turned to anger, the bodies of the dead became a demand for action. St. John describes how the massacre was transformed into a tipping point:

The scene which followed was awful. Thousands of men, women, children, shrieking, bawling, raving, were seen flying in all directions, while sixty-two men, women, and lads, belonging to every class of society, lay weltering in their blood upon the pavement. Next minute an awful roar, the first breath of popular indignation was heard, and then flew the students, artisans, the shopkeepers, all, to carry the news to the most distant parts of the city, and to rouse the population to arms against a government whose satellites murdered the people in this atrocious manner.

Indignation turned into a plan. This event would be a spark; the dead and dying would become martyrs and visual proof of the cruelty of the regime. Transforming the dead into a mobile exhibition of atrocity, the outraged of Paris began distributing the message.

Meanwhile the news of this event spread, with a rapidity equal to that of the firing, through the whole line of the boulevard and through the one-half of Paris. The body which had marched from the faubourg, scattered and thrown in confusion for a moment, soon regained order and began to collect its dead. Large wagons . . . were found at hand . . . in order to exhibit through Paris those lifeless bodies, the mere sight of which was destined to rekindle the fury of the people. They collect the corpses and arrange them on the wagons, with their arms hanging over the side, with their wounds exposed and their blood dripping on the wheels. They carry them by torchlight before the office of Le National, as the symbol of approaching

12Lamartine, 96-7.
13Ibid., 97.
14St. John, 74.
vengeance exhibited on the cradle of the republic. At the same time, official attempts to preclude an uprising were also taking shape. Taking Barrot with him, Adolphe Thiers found barricades everywhere on his way to fetch Bugeaud. As he would recount four years later, most of the revolutionaries were understandably skeptical of a new attempt to calm their activism with a belated feint at reform - and they hated Bugeaud. “The fusillade at the Affaires Étrangères was supposed to have been a treacherous massacre, the nomination of Bugeaud, an act of open hostility.” But Thiers responded to their concerns with Machiavellian panache - and set about attempting to save the regime he had opposed just hours before. “Along our whole road, at every barricade and wherever a crowd was collected, we assured the people that the Ministry was changed; that all that was right would be done; but we were met by cries of ‘Le Roi vous trompe!’ ‘On va nous égorger!’ ‘On va nous mitrailler!’” But at every opportunity, Thiers proudly reported, he soothed, cajoled and convinced. “‘Non,’ we said, ‘on ne va pas vous mitrailler. Voyez Barrot! voyez Thiers! Nous sommes ministres nous ne sommes pas des égorgeurs!’” But the public could not stomach the general. “‘Mais Bugeaud! Mais Bugeaud!’” they cried. Although Thiers was in fact on his way to instruct Bugeaud to prepare a repression, he assured everyone that they were safe. “‘Bugeaud,’ I said, ‘will do you no harm. Pull down the barricades and all will be well.’ And in many cases the barricades were pulled down.” But along the way, Thiers was losing the support of Barrot, who began to think he was on the wrong side. “Let Guizot and Bugeaud beat down the resistance,” he said.

---

15 Ibid., 73-4.
16 Nassau William Senior and Mary Charlotte Mair Simpson, Conversations with M. Thiers, M. Guizot, and Other Distinguished Persons, during the Second Empire (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1878), 9.
17 The switch from English to French and back is in the original. Here the translation is: “The King is deceiving you!” “We will be killed!” “We will be shot [strafed with guns]!” Ibid., 9.
18 No, no one will shoot you. Here is Barrot! Here is Thiers! We are politicians not murderers!” “But Bugeaud!”
Finally they arrived at the general’s home. “I found [Bugeaud] excited and anxious. It was now about three in the morning. ‘I have not been appointed,’ he said, ‘two hours. I scarcely know with whom I am to act or what are my means, but as far as I can ascertain they are very small. I have not 16,000 men; they are fatigued and demoralized; they have been kept for two days with their knapsacks on their backs, standing in half-frozen mud. The cavalry horses are [exhausted]; there is no corn for them, and the men have been two days on their backs.’”

Despite all of these problems, Bugeaud relished the thought of killing the rebels. “‘However,’ he repeated several times,” according to Thiers, “‘I would have the pleasure of killing a bunch of that pack of dogs, and that is always something.’” Unfortunately for the General, the chance to slaughter rebels would pass all too quickly for his nervous hesitation. On February 24, while Bugeaud was attempting to organize an attack on rioters with “full Algerian-style force, using four columns of troops,” Louis-Philippe abdicated. There was no way to justify the slaughter that would be necessary to maintain his power: all the martyrs were on the other side.

_Springtime Wilt_

Catastrophe- to have missed the opportunity.
-Walter Benjamin

In the ascendant “Universal, Democratic and Social Republic” that followed the February

---

19_Ibid., 7-8.

20_Ibid., 8. The last phrase is my translation. The original is “J'aurai le plaisir de tuer beaucoup de cette canaille et c'est toujours quelque chose.”

21Bugeaud could have used a little more nervous hesitation in 1834, when soldiers in his unit massacred a whole house of people on the Rue Transnonain. Honoré Daumier made him famous for this with his “Massacre de la rue Transnonain.” Published in _Le Charivari_, April 15, 1834, see below.


Revolution, it seemed realistic to dream big. By innumerable accounts, Parisians were drunk on an alluring elixir of possibility. Categories could be transcended and anything seemed possible. One could even be a Catholic revolutionary, as in Sorrieu’s *Le Pacte* (fig. 1). Men and women of all nations file in front of the tree of liberty and the allegory of the republic, while Jesus blesses revolutionary national fraternity as the angels chase away kings. Universal (male) suffrage was enacted, press laws loosened, political clubs were formed and proliferated, and a partially successful unemployment relief program was debuted.

Figure 1 - Frédéric Sorrieu, *La République universelle démocratique et sociale - Le Pacte, 1848.*

This spirit of possibility, often denoted by the phrase the “Springtime of the Peoples”, had preexisted and prepared the way for the February Revolution. The informal alliance of all who opposed the “bourgeois monarchy” united legitimists, republicans and socialist utopians. All agreed on the necessity of the departure of Louis-Philippe. Furthermore, significant overlaps existed on the political and religious left. Pierre Leroux, for example, preached a religion of
humanity which transcended the boundaries of Church and political ideology. “This ‘humanity’, for Leroux, embodied all anterior generations, as well as the spiritual communion of the living. It was a mystical notion of humanity, implying the need for a new faith or ideal, the religion of humanity, to guide social reform.” Utopian socialists, like Victor Considérant, urged a united front between republicans and socialists and Liberal Catholics found friends among the same.

This collaborative political and religious environment persisted into February of 1848 and the consequent Second Republic. Priests participated in the revolution, and the tone of the revolution was distinctly religious, as can be seen from the actions of the crowd at particular moments. St. John writes that the February crowd, after leaving the Tuileries Palace, took several objects and began a religious procession. “[T]he great cross [was] taken from the palace chapel; it was guarded by men of the people armed, followed by others; all were without their hats; and at the general cry, ‘respect to the Holy One!’ the frantic mob doffed theirs on every side. It was a picture that stirred one's heart; a picture of religious deference in the midst of the wildest riot, worthy of the pencil of a great painter; a scene that gave for the moment hopeful thoughts of the better feeling of the people. The procession passed on with the cry ‘To the Church of St. Roch.’” When the Second Republic was founded this cooperation continued. “The republican flag will protect the religious flag,” wrote Archbishop of Bordeaux Donnet. L'Ère Nouvelle, created in April 1848, urged the guidance of a “Christian socialism.” Workers demonstrating in the Champs de Mars on April 16 made their commitments clear by yelling “Long live the republic, the true republic of Christ.” The revolutionary motto of Liberty, Equality and


Fraternity was, according to the Bishop of Châlons: “The Gospel in its simplest expression.”

One way to date the life of this persisting period of class-transcending Republican-Catholic alliance during the Second Republic is to identify it with the Buchez chamber of the Constituent Assembly. The late April elections to the Assembly sent fifteen priests, including three bishops, to the chamber. In addition, Philippe-Joseph-Benjamin Buchez was elected president. Buchez was, Agulhon writes, “…a former carbonaro, a genuine republican, vaguely socialist, but a committed Catholic…” As such, he represented the precise overlapping of progressive social politics and Catholicism that made the short period unique. This working partnership showed its weakness even before it died definitively on the barricade of the faubourg Saint-Antoine on June 25. On May 15, a crowd invaded the Assembly and a confusing abortive attempt at regime change under Buchez’s ineffective leadership began to show the clear divisions latent in these political alliances. How comfortable were Catholic socialists about violence and attacks on property, for example? In addition, Assembly debates over educational policy made it clear that “freedom of education” meant vastly different things to different groups.

And then June came. Buchez resigned on June 6, a delayed casualty of May 15. Then rhetorical attacks on the National Workshops began to have an effect. The situation deteriorated further when the barricades went up again after the dissolution of the workshops on June 21. On June 25, Archbishop Affre was shot, along with countless Parisian workers and radicals. Having neither salesman nor government, those behind the barricades in the June Days could serve, at most, as anonymous martyrs. And an anonymous martyr is not really a martyr. Papers posted in rebel neighborhoods had tried to suggest the possibility of rebel martyrdom proclaiming: “This

---


28 Agulhon, 50-51.
holy cause already counts many victims; we are all resolved to avenge these noble martyrs, or die.” 29 But no grand individual-as-symbol from behind the barricades emerged, no broad network of press distribution and rapid image circulation materialized on behalf of the social republic and within a few days none was needed. Those interested in such a figure had been externalized.

The difference between the success of the February Revolution and the defeat of the June Days rebellion in 1848 can be explained, at least in part, by how effectively rebels in February mobilized the public around a symbol of martyrdom and utilized networks of information distribution to advertise the moment. In the June Days, the martyr-pretext was used against the rebels. The hopes of a “universal” democratic and social republic were dashed, the “National Workshops” were closed and thousands of workers and new immigrants found themselves unemployed and desperately confronting the National Guard in the streets. Many believed that they had been promised a right to work. Many others just felt betrayed.

An astronomer, François Arago, briefly led the Second Republic’s Executive Commission as president but was the subject of a vote of no confidence once the desperate killing began. His record included playing a crucial role in the abolition of French colonial slavery and early attempts at universal education in April 1848. Nevertheless he was also a staunch centrist liberal in his distaste for revolution. And in the summer of 1848, Arago had absolutely and entirely lost control of the situation as Paris began yet another revolution. 30 In desperation, on June 22, the brilliant astronomer had taken to the streets to try to reason with an angry crowd outside the Panthéon, but found the barriers to mutual comprehension between the classes as firm as a barricade. “Ah! M. Arago, you have never been hungry,” was the reply of an anonymous rebel.

---

29 Reported in Le Constitutionnel, June 28, 1848.

30 In the years before the Second Empire Paris rose in significant uprisings in 1827, 1830, 1832, 1834, 1839, 1848 (February and June), 1849, and 1851.
The Second Republic, become repressive, used as its Bugeaud another military veteran who had won honors killing Algerians and who was ready to serve: Louis-Eugène Cavaignac. When Arago stepped aside, Cavaignac assumed a full slate of emergency dictatorial powers in order to crush the June Days, by invitation from the National Assembly.

“I have finally arrived at the insurrection of June,” wrote Alexis de Tocqueville, “the largest and the most unusual that has occurred in our history and maybe in any other; the largest because for four days, more than a hundred-thousand men were engaged in it; the most unusual because the insurgents fought without a war cry, without leaders, without flags and nevertheless with an amazing solidarity and an amount of military wisdom which surprised the oldest officers.”

The coalition of priests, soldiers, workers and bourgeois that had driven out the July Monarchy had quickly disintegrated with the persons of that government. The Republic had come, but passed no right to work, no broadly meliorating policies dedicated to urban poverty, and a rumbling smolder had quickly turned into a roar. The Republic had taken the tricolor and turned it into another bourgeois monarchy. It had forgotten the public muscle that had guaranteed its legitimate novelty.

Tocqueville had never seen a revolution like this one, and the thing that really unnerved him was that “among all the events of this kind which have succeeded one another in France for sixty years is that it did not aim at changing the form of government but at altering the order of society.” He pronounced himself “pleased” by the repression of socialism, but even so it depressed him. “I do not have faith in the future. I feel a profound sadness that rises much less from immediate apprehensions (although they are great) than from the absence of hope. I do not know if I should still hope to see established in our country a government that is at the same time

---

regular, strong, and liberal. This ideal was the dream of my entire youth, as you know...Is it permissible to still believe in its realization?...Are we not on a stormy sea without a shore?”

Even among those unsympathetic to the rebels the feeling of a rapid constriction of possibility and a resulting depression or cynicism (defined by Tocqueville as a loss of “faith in the future”) was one of the most commonly reported reactions to the June Days.

But political realists like Adolphe Thiers reported no such sentimentality about the repression. “In June,” he remarked casually four years later, “we burnt three millions of cartridges.”

Cavaignac and the National Assembly used a climate of suspicion and fear to tighten up laws on the press and on demonstrations and congratulated themselves on maintaining order, while residents of the faubourgs nicknamed the general the “prince of blood.”

Maurice Agulhon has suggested that a post-upheaval rumor mill about the rebel threat flourished in Paris and around France, especially with the middle classes of Paris, and their “fascination with horror and excess.”

As is well known, during the June days, the most appalling rumours were rife in bourgeois Paris: the insurgents were said to be putting to death any mobile Guardsmen who fell into their clutches by sawing him up alive, between two planks...And it was put about that there had been discovered in the pocket of an insurgent prisoner a ticket 'for two ladies from the Faubourg Saint-Germain' (meaning: to be raped after the victory)...etc. All lies, of course. But it is hard to say how many of these cock-and-bull stories developed from the outrageous exaggeration of a tiny seed of truth, how many were deliberately put about by a coldly calculating, slanderous propaganda machine and how many were spontaneous figments of the imagination.

A key constituent element of the successful demonization of the June Days participation was supplied by Affre’s death. Seen from the perspective of a government struggle for legitimacy, the most consistent function of the death of a priest in mid-nineteenth-century France was to overwhelm alternative data in its invocation of anti-religious terror.
the death of Affre on the faubourg Saint-Antoine barricade transcended the one-sided slaughter at the acropolis of the ragamuffins and transformed it, for some, into a reminder of the Terror of 1793-4.

Affre’s death, in retrospect, is especially poignant because it marked the end of the brief alliance between French Catholicism and the “social republic.” Frustrated by the clumsy repressions of Louis-Philippe’s government, much of the French episcopate had rallied to the February Revolution of 1848 and even supported radical social reforms. Affre himself had hoped deeply for social reform and he and others embraced the revolutionary tradition more than ever before. As the Second Republic turned on the social republic, however, French Catholics largely
abandoned revolutionary support. As I argue below, Affre’s death played a crucial role in this transformation. The murdered archbishop was immediately molded into a symbol filled with historical meaning and fear of disorder. He, as well as a few other key victims of the June Days, became “Martyrs who died for Order and the Republic” (fig. 2, Affre is top-center). Merging Affre’s tragic death with advocacy of the brutal repression (a repression he would certainly have found appalling) made him politically useful and had crucial consequences. Ultimately, the repression, imprisonment and stigmatization of the participants of the June Days largely neutralized, for a while at least, the attack on the Second Republic from the left. The prominent role many Catholics had played in the overthrow of the last regime and the bolstering of the new one consolidated support for the Second Republic around a centrist party of order alarmed by revolutionary fervor. And this party and its interests and concerns would provide the backdrop to the next phase of French political history.

Six months after the June Days, Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte would be elected president with almost 75% of the vote. His closest opponent was General Cavaignac (receiving just under 20%). As a result of the election Cavaignac was required to relinquish his six-month-old leadership of the Second Republic.\(^{36}\) At both the level of political professionals and popular support, Louis-Napoléon was swept into electoral victory in December 1848 by Catholic majorities.\(^{37}\) Remaining democratic and socialist agitation after his election was judged sinful by Church leadership. Louis-Napoléon assisted this process with political actions and language aimed at Catholics. “The time has come for the Good to find reassurance and the Wicked to

---

\(^{36}\)Itself only in existence since the February 1848 revolution had ousted the July Monarchy of Louis-Philippe.

\(^{37}\)In addition to the overwhelming support he received from rural Catholic voters, the ‘Rue de Poitiers Group’ led by Adolphe Thiers was also instrumental in encouraging Catholic monarchists to vote for Louis-Napoléon. See Agulhon, 69-73.
tremble,” said the new president one year after the June Days. In June of 1849 he attacked Rome, driving out Mazzini’s Republicans and liberating the pope. Although the attack on Rome seemed to violate the restrictions on unilateral foreign policy supposedly placed on the president by the Constitution of 1848, it was very popular among Catholics. The move triggered pockets of feeble resistance in Paris and in the provinces which were easily repressed. Louis-Napoléon’s Roman policy didn’t satisfy all Catholics, certainly, because he failed to restore all of the former Papal States. But those who were unsatisfied with his determination to further beat back Mazzini’s Republicans were mollified with the passage of the Falloux Laws in 1850 and 1851, which increased the role the Church would play in French education. And when particular policies failed to impress voters, there was still the menace of the dangerous ideas that threatened to produce another popular volcano. Fear of socialism continued to be the president’s best asset through the end of the Republic and well into the Second Empire. It was the one thing that connected everyone who supported him.

On December 2, 1851, Louis-Napoléon dissolved the National Assembly and seized dictatorial powers, carrying out a long-standing secret plan he had dubbed his ‘Rubicon.’ But even this unlawful seizure of power was not enough to split the Catholic alliance with order. After the coup, the most prominent Liberal Catholic in France, Charles Forbes René de Montalembert, wrote publicly to the most famous Ultramontanist writer in France, Louis Veuillot, and indicated his support for the end of the Republic in no uncertain terms. “The act of December 2 [Napoleon’s coup],” he wrote:

‘…has put in retreat all the revolutionaries, all the socialists, all the bandits of France and of Europe…To vote against Louis-Napoléon, this is to support the social revolution, this is to call the dictatorship of the reds to replace the dictatorship of a prince who has provided, for three years, incomparable services to the cause of order and Catholicism…To vote for Louis-Napoléon, this is to arm the temporal power, the sole power possible today, with the force necessary to tame the army of crime, to defend our churches, our

---

38 Ibid., 100.
homes, our women against those who covet them and respect nothing, who aim at property and whose bullets do not spare the clergy,’ if you ask me, he concluded, ‘my choice is made, for society against socialism, for Catholicism against revolution.’

As Montalembert implied by referencing those indiscriminate bullets, the memory of Affre’s death still colored French Catholics’ perception of the opposition, and suggested the coupling of order and Catholicism. Veuillot, for his part, supported the new regime as a “lesser evil,” arguing that the president’s supporters were “neither religious nor Christians…but they are good devils.” Soon, he became more optimistic, hoping that the new regime would ensure the triumph of the faith. For now, Louis-Napoléon had the support of both the official leaders of the Church in France as well as the leading voice of the Ultramontanist, populist Catholic press.

This was no small accomplishment: the feud between the archbishops of Paris and the Ultramontanist journalist Veuillot (and their respective allies) had continued to intensify throughout recent events. This conflict was waged largely over doctrine but was also about class, education, and style. While archbishop, Affre had done his best to block priests of Ultramontanist opinions from access to the upper echelons of the episcopal hierarchy. Turned away, “disappointed applicants complained that the policy was ‘above all, no zeal.’” By contrast well-educated and economically-comfortable bishops like Affre, Sibour and Dupanloup argued for rational thought and emotional reserve in the exercise of their ministries. Trained in the elite Sulpician seminaries in Paris, they had received a heavy dose of “Jansenist rigorism” through treatises like Louis Bailly’s nineteenth-century work on dogmatic and moral theology, the Theologia Dogmatica et

---


40 Ibid., 265.


43 Gough, 39.
While some philosophies of confession suggested deferrals of absolution and laxity in penance, Bailly advised:

…three years of penance for fornication, between five and ten years for adultery and penance for life for fornication with a nun. Dancing in front of the church should get three years too, and talking in church ten days of bread and water. The cursing of parents received forty days of bread and water. ‘If any woman be-daub herself with white lead or any other pigment so as to please other men’, she should undergo three years of penance.

By the 1850s, the Sulpician seminaries had been the target of an Ultramontane campaign of “authoritarian romanticism” for years. This attack was led in France by Veuillot, whose journalism proclaimed a concrete Ultramontane program which included the replacement of local liturgies with the Roman liturgy, the use of the Roman Index to target favored French textbooks at the seminaries, the revival of Gregorian chant, and a papal encyclical directed squarely at the Archbishop of Paris (Sibour) and his vocal resistance to the Ultramontane movement. The pope obliged the latter goal, denouncing Sibour’s Gallicanism (see Chapter 4, “Eagles and Crosses”). In addition, members of the imperial priesthood could be found overseeing, with more

---

44 Ibid., 39. First published in 1789, by 1830 it was in use in seventy-five percent of French seminaries, including Saint-Sulpice in Paris and the twenty diocesan seminaries run by the Sulpician order, the seminary at Montpelier and others run by the Lazarist Order, and a few others in cities like Lyon, Bordeaux and Orleans with staff supplied by the best schools. “[For] the better students of the Sulpicians and Lazarists and the more serious ‘honours students’ in the other seminaries, whose careers would be devoted to managing the Gallican apparatus, each step in their studies of ecclesiastical history, philosophy, or patristic literature had had the effect of reminding them that the Church of France was a national Church with certain traditional procedures, and that it took a particular and characteristic view of its own relations with the State and with the Roman papacy.” Ibid.


46 Ibid., 40.

47 In the campaign to use the Roman Index to prohibit Liberal Catholic French books it was often Veuillot himself who typically decided which books to target, forcing the Vatican’s hand. For example, Bouillet’s Dictionnaire Universel d’histoire et de géographie, generally called “Le Bouillet”, had been reissued seven times since 1842 and was regarded as the best guide to antiquity and history - it was placed by the government in every lycée and college library. Archbishop of Paris Sibour had approved it in 1849. But on the 30th of July 1850, Veuillot printed an extended review of “Le Bouillet.” Giving it to a student was like giving a son a dictionary of the leading prostitutes and their addresses in Paris, he wrote. It was atheistic and corrupt, neutral on Julian the Apostate, Trajan, Arius, Voltaire, Hegel, and the Greek gods. As Gough paraphrased the rest of Veuillot’s review, “Christianity was treated simply as ‘one of the principal world religions’. The entries on the Church were mischievous: the popes were discussed as if they were kings and barons; councils were described as being the ultimate ecclesiastical authority; the article on St Peter mentioned primacy of honour but not primacy of jurisdiction; the articles on the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and the Concordat were absurdly even handed; Saint Martin of Tours was ‘said to have performed miracles’.” Ibid., 144.
or less severity, the suppression of village dancing, novel-reading, theatre-going, and travel for pleasure.\textsuperscript{48} In the mission field of East Asia, where Jesuits enjoyed a reputation for tolerance of diversity in local beliefs, Jansenist-influenced French priests often demanded complete renunciation of local, heterodox belief prior to conversion.\textsuperscript{49} But despite this moral severity, Bailly remained popular, especially at the upper levels of the French church. In 1852, when the Index (the Vatican’s list of banned books) condemned Bailly for his Gallicanism, there was a shocked protest from the episcopate. “Nobody,” Mgr. Dupanloup, the bishop of Orléans, wrote, “could fail to see the result of telling priests in this sudden and callous manner that ever since the Concordat their respected instructors had been working from a heretical textbook, and that the older generation of clerics had been raised on errors; it would give the younger men a contempt for the whole edifice of ecclesiastical learning and an unhealthy fear of the capricious power of Rome.”\textsuperscript{50}

For Dupanloup, similarly, Catholicism would have no future unless it recovered its appeal to the educated classes. It was with reasoned argument and realism that Catholics must target the secular age, he believed, as well as the fiery rhetoric of Ultramontanists. Archbishop Affre, shortly before his murder, had written carefully but critically about the growing popularity of this kind of rhetoric, suggesting that it was an excessively passionate foundation on which to build solid personal belief. “We do not condemn ultramontane opinions, but we think them less probable, and less likely to keep people in the Church or to win them back when they have abandoned religion.”\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{48}Zeldin implies that such moral severity was more a feature of parish priests, but the training in these methods came from the seminaries and their required reading in Bailly.

\textsuperscript{49}Despite what one would assume from familiarity with Michelet’s attack on the Jesuits and the confessional.

\textsuperscript{50}Gough, 195.

\textsuperscript{51}Quoted in \textit{Ibid.}, 39.
The rhetorical moderation of those bishops who thought the Ultramontanist position excessive seemed like whispering against the saturated language of apocalypticism and holy war provided by Veuillot and his allies, who likely contributed to a resurgence of Catholic numbers in France. For the first time in the nineteenth century, the 1850s saw ordinations exceed deaths and retirement from the priesthood. Unlike the “overeducated” bishops trying in vain to reach those lost to the secularism and the intellectualism of the Sorbonne, Veuillot seemed unconcerned by his reputation and harshly dismissed his opponents. He wrote defiantly that L'Univers was not trying to convert unbelievers but to prevent them from doing any further damage: “the greatest service that one can do for stupid people, in all charity, is to frighten them.” Veuillot’s prose was, above all, prophetic and apocalyptic. As in the later writings of his mentor, Juan Donoso Cortés, he peppered his journalism with passages from the Bible used to describe the significance of current, ominous events. Often, contemporary ideas themselves were held to blame for France’s current path towards total destruction. In 1851, Cortés had written: “Our nation is completely lost; liberalism and parliamentarianism produce the same effects: this system has come into the world for the punishment of the world; it will kill everything, patriotism, intelligence, morality, honor; it is evil, pure evil, substantial and essential evil.” Continued Cortés, without a trace of irony, “I believe that Catholic civilization contains good without any mixture

---

52 Ibid., 2.

53 Veuillot to M. Terret, 12 September 1850, as quoted in Ibid., 132.

54 On Cortés and his ideas see Thomas P. Neill, “Juan Donoso Cortés: History and Prophecy,” The Catholic Historical Review, Vol. 40, No 4 (Jan. 1955), 385-410. Cortés was a Spanish counterrevolutionary philosopher who publically renounced his liberalism after 1848, pronouncing instead an extreme apocalyptic interpretation of the present that Veuillot credited with radically altering his perspective from the first time they met in Paris soon after the June Days. Cortes died in 1853, but Veuillot brought his works to France and French readers, and lobbied to have the books preapproved by the Index after Liberal Catholics objected to their content (they were approved with commendation).

55 Ibid., 403.
of evil, and that philosophic civilization contains evil without any mixture of good.”\textsuperscript{56} There was ultimately no room for discussion or compromise with Liberal Catholicism, since it was an inherently evil position. “Liberalism and Socialism are children of the same parent, rationalism,” wrote Cortés, and “differ not in ideas but in daring.”\textsuperscript{57} The only solution when dealing with such parasitic ideas was a holy war against modernity itself.\textsuperscript{58} Any compromise with modern political ideas would encourage a belief in truth as established by consensus, an obstacle to a church led only by the pope. The collaboration of bishops with secular governments rendered them incapable of clearly recognizing the enemies of the faith. “The task of bishops was not to collaborate with voltairean governments but to harass and dominate them, to proclaim the superiority of the spiritual over the temporal, and eventually to inaugurate the reign of Christ on earth; but the French hierarchy were \textit{tranquillistes} – ‘prudence everywhere’, Mgr. Pie remarked.” Abbé Combalot agreed, saying that “the sword has rusted in the scabbard of the hierarchy.”\textsuperscript{59}

Veuillot believed that the true church had no borders, and that the war with atheism was inherently expansive. The stakes were high and all Ultramontanist rhetoric pointed not to a debate, but to a war. A holy war. It was, then, as Adam Knobler has noted, not surprising that crusading rhetoric featured regularly in Ultramontane publications. “In the face of revolutionary barricades, the crusades represented to many supporters of the \textit{ancien régimes} a time when government, justice and diplomacy were undertaken with divine sanction and under a rather uncom-

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., 391.  
\textsuperscript{57}Quoted in Ibid., 404.  
\textsuperscript{58}Others have noted that behind Cortés and Veuillot were popular and widespread Catholic Ultramontanist conspiracy theories accusing a cabal called \textit{la secte} of causing the Revolution of 1789 and the continued attempted to destroy Christianity via Gallicanism or the parliamentary model of society. Against this conspiratorial cabal, the Ultramontanist movement saw itself as international, tracing its ancestry to the émigré generation of the French Revolution and heroic: civilization and virtue were under attack! See Antonio Regalado Garcia, “The Counterrevolutionary Image of the World,” \textit{Yale French Studies} No. 39 (1967), 98-118.  
\textsuperscript{59}Gough, 76.}
plicated set of moral absolutes.” The nostalgia for a golden time when the papacy had ruled over a united and submissive Christendom, however fancifully imagined, was a powerful idea, and one that made use of broader romantic trends which idealized the Middle Ages. Even better, crusading rhetoric carried within it an anti-Revolutionary discourse by its very nature and could rouse Christian men with the opportunity to pursue military glory without sacrificing their piety. As Gough described it, Veuillot’s prose was loaded with martial language, an armoury of military rhetoric and from that time [his presence during a French campaign in Algeria] he wrote more than ever in terms of bombs, ambushes, advance guards, sentries, and deserters. Every editorial was a cartridge fired, every évêché a fortified camp to be taken by surprise. This vocabulary was perfectly suited to his ideas about authority in the Church. In military ecclesiology it seemed obvious that the pope as commander-in-chief must exercise day-to-day surveillance over his subordinate generals, and that the commanders in the field, the Gallican bishops, could hardly claim a right to adapt his orders to suit the traditions of their own regiments; in any case from Veuillot’s point of view the Gallican commanders themselves had a dismal record of lost battles and ignominious surrenders.

Considering the ongoing conflicts between many French bishops and Ultramontane journalism and the dramatic difference in social background and rhetorical strategy, the cooperation between Liberal and Ultramontane Catholics in support of the election of Louis-Napoléon (and then the empire he created) requires more explanation.

More Than Dangerous Illusions

A closer look at the way Affre’s death functioned at the end of the June Days can clarify


61 For a similar effect in Britain at the same historical moment, leading to the song ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’ see Olive Anderson “The Growth of Christian Militarism in Mid-Victorian Britain,” *English Historical Review* 86 (1971), 46-72.

62 Gough, 96-7. This kind of attack could veer even towards inanimate objects like newspapers, railways and the telegraph - all symbols of material modernity. Veuillot mocked the worldly editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, François Buloz, and invented characters, like Coquelet, to represent the science obsessed materialism of the typical reader of the Parisian press. “Buloz and Coquelet saw beauty only in science; they prayed to the microscope and the telescope and had no time for the Virgin Mary and the saints. Thomas Aquinas, Veuillot said, had never felt the need for a microscope; the Angel needed no telegraph for the Annunciation to Mary.” *Ibid.*, 90.
the importance of martyrdom as a symbol in gathering Catholic support. Discussions about the martyred archbishop assisted the political transformation of the Second Republic, born of the February Revolution, from a progressive political force into a government based on a center-right consensus committed to the preservation of order. This preoccupation with order created the possibility of Louis-Napoléon’s election and, ultimately, the Second Empire of Napoleon III. In contemplating Affre’s death and its meaning, the recently elected National (Constituent) Assembly and its leadership developed an interpretive consensus about the causes for the rebellion. Crucially, they placed blame for the June Days on subversive ideas, rather than social issues or even the rebels themselves (who were nevertheless punished). Furthermore, the fallen archbishop was placed next to those ordering and carrying out the repression. Claiming the holy banner of a Catholic martyr, the shaken Second Republic glorified the repression and demonized democratic ideas and social Catholicism.

Representatives of the National Assembly, whose primary purpose was to provide the Second Republic with a constitution, had only met for the first time on May 4, 1848. As mentioned above, June 6 had marked the end of Buchez’ presidency of the Assembly. He was succeeded in this role by Antoine Sénard, who had already earned a reputation for “firm” tactics in his repression of a democratic disturbance in Rouen the month before. On June 24, as Arago’s leadership deficiencies became apparent, Sénard’s Assembly declared a state of emergency and forced the resignation of the five-member Executive Commission led by the astronomer, and replaced it with Cavaignac, acting alone. By the morning of June 26, the rebellion had been crushed and preparations had begun to export fifteen-thousand prisoners to Algeria. Cavaignac, entrusted with full power, was brutally efficient in carrying out his mission.

The pages of *Le Constitutionnel*, edited in 1848 by Louis Désiré Véron (with
significant contributions from Thiers), published daily the verbatim record of the previous day’s séance of the Assembly. Véron’s paper would play a crucial role in mobilizing support for Louis-Napoléon’s election later in 1848, but in late June its pages were filled with the sensational events ripping apart. The Assembly was in near-constant session during the crucial days of June, but it was also totally dependent for information about the progress of the repression on contradictory reports from outside sources. Was the fighting over? Who had shot the archbishop? Mutually exclusive news trickled in slowly. At certain moments complete chaos reigned on the floor. The Assembly existed in a nervous state of confused dependence on the centralized military authority of Cavaignac and Sénard.

On June 26, Le Constitutionnel reported the news of Affre’s delegation, sent the day before. “[The] Archbishop of Paris, accompanied by his four vicars-general...” offered himself spontaneously “to General Cavaignac, chief of the executive power, at the presidential palace. He offered to go himself to bring words of peace to the insurgents and to put at the service of the Republic his loyalty and that of his clergy.” The same morning at 8:15 (June 26), the Assembly anxiously awaited news of the delegation’s progress. Sénard reported first on the general state of Paris and the purpose of Affre’s mission. The delegation had attempted to convince “the faubourg Saint-Antoine to renounce this brutal struggle, [but the rebels were seemingly] resolved to fight until completely exterminated...” Despite the alleged stubbornness of those on the barricade, Sénard immediately followed by acknowledging that they had offered terms for a diplomatic solution. Address their letter to the “President of the National Assembly,” the rebels had denied continued desire for conflict. “We do not want to spill the blood of our brothers; we

---

63Below, I quote exclusively from Le Constitutionnel when describing Assembly procedure and discussion, but other newspapers and publications often carried the same material and typically used the same sources.
64Le Constitutionnel, June 26, 1848.
65Le Constitutionnel, June 27, 1848
have always fought for the democratic Republic. If we comply in ceasing this bloody revolution
taking place, we would like to keep the title of citizens and keep all the rights and duties of
French citizens.” But Sénard had already informed them that no terms would be discussed until
they scuttled the barricade and surrendered. The rebels refused.

Three hours later, the president announced that all resistance had been crushed. “The
faubourg Saint-Antoine has fallen.” The relieved exclamations were interrupted by the Comte de
Falloux, who spoke from the floor. “We ask for news of the Archbishop.” Sénard had already
received some news: “...he was unfortunately wounded, gravely, in the leg.” Agitated voices
competed at the revelation until Abbé Parisis corrected the president: shots from both sides hit
the archbishop, not in the leg but in the back. The abbé also reported that the rebels had
immediately signed a document indicating that it wasn’t they who had fired the shots. Argument
followed about the likelihood of the source of the shots but no consensus was reached until a
voice from the floor opened another phase of chaotic debate: “M. le président, we say that [the
rebellion] is not finished, and that this news of a complete surrender is an error.”

It wasn’t until the afternoon that the Assembly received multiple confirmations that the
rebellion was finished. Sénard announced: “It is all over.” No light was cast, however, on the
source of the shots that killed Affre, and despite many of the representatives’ clear concern for
the archbishop, a serious inquiry was never attempted. The particular source of the bullets was
irrelevant, some argued, because the June Days revolt itself was clearly responsible for his death
by creating the situation. The rebels had killed Affre, regardless of who shot him. And a rebellion
which could kill such a godly man was more than misguided, it was evil. An anonymous author
(possibly Thiers) of the editorial section of Le Constitutionnel on June 27 gave his diagnosis.
“We repeat, that this struggle was not like other revolutions which have ripped through Paris.” It
was a “sacriligious enterprise” which targeted not just the French government, “but the nation itself, and its glorious civilization. It is therefore up to the entire nation to repay this debt.” It was an attack on the “social order”. “More than dangerous illusions, more than chimeras...”, the ideas behind the rebellion were demonstrably nefarious, and what was worse, these ideas persisted in some minds, even in the National Assembly. “It is necessary that the Assembly probe the entire wound, and that they courageously apply the remedy if they don’t want to see the return of conspiracy and conflicts, and if they are resolved to save society from the barbaric state towards which, by dint of this so-called progress, we retreat each day.” To “probe the entire wound” was to follow the physical violence with an attack on the climate of free discussion and political openness that, in the minds of some representatives, was responsible for the rebellion.

The leaders of the Second Republic were also newly uneasy about being both the product of a recent revolution and the executioners of another. What language could they use to hold up February as glorious and legitimizing while denigrating June? What would those outside their borders think? *Le Constitutionnel* helpfully supplied the answer to the latter question, publishing on June 29 two explanations of the recent events from London that confirmed the worst fears of the Assembly by affirming the accuracy of their developing consensus. The *Times of London* inquired how one could explain the evident rebel success at organization and self-armament? How could one explain the motive force of the struggle when “the leader of these desperate fighters is without name, their design is obscure and their resources [lacking because they proceed from] a hungry population?”

The answer was simple: revolution begets revolution. “The insurrection is born from the spirit of the Republic; it is only the beginning of the calamities that the intrigues of a minority
without scruples have inflicted on France.”

The Globe agreed, and added indignantly that the representatives of the revolutionary philosophy continued to prowl the halls of French political power! Referring specifically to Ferdinand Flocon, a former republican journalist, a member of the Provisional Government before the June Days and a current member of the Assembly, The Globe asserted that the chickens were coming home to roost, and nothing more. Flocon had “had the audacity to declare, in full session of the Assembly, that the civil war which has exploded in Paris was the work of foreign governments. It isn’t the work of those who have proclaimed the absolutism of the ignorant masses? It isn’t the work of those who have said to the masses that they have the right to demand work and food from the central government? It is not the work, in a word, of the socialist preaching of M. Flocon...in La Réforme, the teacher of the people, and even still a minister of State?” It was important, in other words, for the Assembly to take a firm line and to direct their punishment at the ideas behind the revolution, not just the revolutionaries, who, after all, were some of the same people who had created their republic in February.

But how firm, exactly, should they be in punishing the rebels, their guiding intellectuals and their indirect associates? The crucial debate on this question took place on June 27, beginning around 10:30 in the morning. Flocon was there. He urged caution when assigning punishments, deportations and blame, arguing that in judging human lives, they must be aware that history will someday judge the judges. Sénard assured the assembly that the executive power was not rushing into things and that problems of excessive punitive measures had been isolated and atypical. Then General Cavaignac arrived. Upon his entry representative Hyacinthe-Charles Méaulle, a supporter of Cavaignac’s dictatorship-by-invitation, was in the midst of a nuanced argument about the sentencing of the rebels. To begin with, he agreed that even extralegal punitive measures were often sadly necessary in the current circumstances. “We have believed

---

66 Le Constitutionnel, June 26, 1848.
that being in a revolutionary period, it has been sometimes necessary to silence legality, because
the first thing for us, the sovereign power, this is to save the patrie, this is to save the republic.”
Applause followed this statement, but Méaulle wasn’t finished. “We have said: the ordinary law
will be silent for a moment; until those men who have declared war, a mortal war, against society
have disappeared from the capital...” and order and tranquility is reestablished. “Order without
which,” he added, to vocal support from the Assembly, “there is no liberty.”

But then Méaulle closed his careful caveats and began to express his concern that the
deportations of convicted rebels were made with little or no distinction between differing degrees
of culpability: the leaders of the rebellion, for example, were certainly guiltier than most of the
others. At this moment Cavaignac ended his silence and loudly interrupted: “I say if there is
anyone who has the right to express what he is thinking, it is me.” Méaulle briefly objected that
he wasn’t finished but was soon apologizing for interrupting the intimidating executive.

Marc Caussidière, a participant in the February Revolution and the Prefect of Police until
he was removed after the crisis of May 15, came to Méaulle’s defense. Justice required a forty-
eight-hour pause, at the very least, to reflect and to diminish “the fear of Septembrists.” With this
reference to the “patriotic” murderers of 1792 an outcry rose in the Assembly: “Retract that
expression!” “You calumny the National Guard!” Uncowed, Caussidière continued: there were
good people in the rebellion. “It is in the name of these men [those who didn’t do anything
wrong] that I’m here to demand a just and more careful investigation...” No more transportations
or acts of vengeance. No killing of the innocent. A commission should be created to oversee
justice for insurgents. As a definition for the guilty, “Individuals who have taken part in the
insurrection” was far too elastic, he argued.67

Caussidière wasn’t alone in his reservations. Representative Louis Edmond Baume

67Le Constitutionnel, June 27, 1848.
chimed in, suggesting that they have some mercy, and let the revenge lust cool. “There is no justification for civil war.” Representative Joseph-François Repellin agreed: they must be severe but not vengeful. After all, he argued, “Half of the condemned are innocent!” But then Representative Alfred Eugène Cordier de Montreuil again accused Caussidière and the others of criticizing the sacred National Guard (“the National Guard is France”). Although he denied the accusation vigorously, Caussidière had overstepped by referencing 1792, and the conversation’s momentum shifted back towards how to punish those who had put “fallacious doctrines” into the minds of the people like Caussidière himself, who would be writing his memoirs of the Revolution from an overseas exile by early autumn.

General Eugène Casimir Lebreton, another veteran of Algeria who had led troops in the June Days, angrily asserted that the voices of caution didn’t know what they were talking about. He argued that he was privy to documents unavailable to the rest of them. The question of guilt was simple: it covered all the rebels. “Never has a cause so sacred been offered to us; we come to defend our families; our wives, our children, France, civilization! Here is the cause we must defend! Who among us would not be proud to give his life for such a holy cause?” France must have immediate satisfaction for its wounds. But what exactly made the cause holy?

After a session break, the Assembly reassembled to continue to discuss deportation and punishment. No decision had yet been made, although those most procedurally advantaged had all declared support of the intense and uncompromising repression of both rebels and rebel ideology. But the argument for leniency was about to receive a coup de grâce. Sénard revealed that Affre had succumbed to his wounds (on behalf of the “wayward people”). Murmurs of sympathy came from the floor. “There is nothing to add to these words,” he added. The debate was over.
But no one had informed Pierre Leroux. Leroux, the freethinking Christian socialist of the “springtime of the peoples,” arose both to defend leniency and to suggest that the “holiness” of repression was overstated. “Citizens, for many days we have heard not one single word about religion.” Hubbub on the floor ensued. In a confused but impassioned harangue, Leroux accused the Assembly of being a false council where all issues were being steamrolled through by force. And those who were guilty of this abuse of procedure, worst of all, claimed to be the defenders of order and religion. “There have been three days of a terrifying civil war raging among us, and not one word of religion! No! No! No! No! Not a one!” The stunned Assembly didn’t quite understand what exactly he was suggesting: hadn’t they been speaking constantly about the archbishop? Representative Auguste Avond protested: “But the archbishop is dead, killed on the barricades!” But Leroux was having none of it, and continued to attack his peers for ignoring the principles they claimed to represent. “These men, who profess generous sentiments, sentiments of love for humanity have not offered a word...” At this point the commotion became too much, and calls for order rang out. Leroux was shouted down and stormed out of the Assembly. Leroux’s ramblings, said the President, had “abused the patience of the chamber.” Leroux’s “religion of humanity” was no longer realistic in a post-June Days world.

All discussion in the Assembly and in the supportive press after the announcement of Affre’s death and Leroux’s last stand agreed that the rebellion had been poisoned by evil, uncivilized ideas and that it must be burned out root and branch from French society. Besides the (alleged) killing of Affre, revolting atrocities had been committed by the rebels. “We do not hesitate to publish them, to show everyone for once, who are the enemies of society and civilization” wrote the editor of Le Constitutionnel.68 While the numbers of rebel dead went largely uncounted, stories of rebel violence filled the pages. “A woman, arrested yesterday,.

---

68 Le Constitutionnel, June 28, 1848.
swore, with a horrible directness, that she had hacked off the heads of three mobile guards.”

There were numerous other stories of beheadings by madwomen and prostitutes. These kinds of actions were not French, “...this impious war, [this] sacrilege, has taken an odious character which calls to mind the exploits of the cannibals.” Stories of mass executions by the National Guard, however, were “entirely false.”

On June 28, General Cavaignac magnanimously offered to resign from his emergency executive powers, but his offer was rejected. Instead, the Assembly debated how to properly honor the general for his exemplary service to the Republic. As they discussed this question, Sénard interjected, “A word to the Assembly. General Cavaignac has passed me a note. I am going to communicate it to the Assembly. That which is said in this note from the General is in all of our hearts. Last night, our emotion, mine, was so great, when I read to you the two letters which opened our evening session which related the death of the Archbishop of Paris.”

Cavaignac’s note, Sénard related, elevated Affre above all other victims. “[A]lthough there is a huge list of the dead, there is one alone who represents all.” A special decree should be issued, wrote Cavaignac, to honor “the name of the Archbishop of Paris.” Great acclamation followed, according to Le Constitutionnel. If the archbishop represented all the martyrs for order and religion, impiety must reign on the opposing side. The decree ultimately read: “The National Assembly regards as its duty to proclaim the feelings of religious gratitude and profound sorrow that tests our hearts’ devotion for the holy and heroic death of the Archbishop of Paris.”

The Assembly unanimously adopted the decree. Immediately afterwards, they voted to force the closure of certain newspapers, political clubs and secret societies, the delivery vehicles for the rebels’ “dangerous illusions”. Furthermore they sought to make their diagnosis of the two forces at work in the June Days more public. Sénard read a proclamation to the Assembly on the
morning of June 29. “The struggle of recent days was justly and energetically characterized. Yes, there was, on one side, order, liberty, civilization, the honest Republic, France; on the other, barbarians, madmen coming out of their lairs to massacre and pillage; odious followers of wild doctrines in which family is only a name and property is theft…Order and civilization have triumphed!” The representatives of order had followed to their final lairs “these madmen, who without principles, without flags, seemed to be only fighting for massacre and pillage!” (“Yes, yes!” shouted voices from the floor).

Families, institutions, freedom, patrie, all were shot in the heart under the fire of these new barbarians; the civilization of the nineteenth century was threatened with complete death…But no, civilization can’t die! No, the Republic, God’s creation, the living law of humanity, the Republic will never die! We swear it by the entire country, which pushes back with horror these savage doctrines [“bravo! bravo!”] in which the family is only a name and property only theft! [cheers from the floor] We swear it by the blood of the noble victims fallen under fratricidal bullets.69

Afterwards, the Assembly voted unanimously to thank those who served during these four days, with “heroic courage.” In addition to the new executive Cavaignac, who was to be commended for his efficient leadership, “[t]he president of the Assembly, the archbishop of Paris, and these noble defenders of the patrie, the national guard of Paris and the departments, the mobile guard, the army, inseparable in public knowledge, have earned much gratitude.” While deciding how to honor their (for Affre was now certainly their symbol) heroes, Sénard read the letter Cavaignac had written to the priest temporarily in charge of the archdiocese of Paris, affirming the relationship between the clergy and the government of the Second Republic while simultaneously articulating the purpose for which Affre had died:

M. le grand-vicaire,
I learn with sadness the recent loss of the person of our worthy archbishop. For three months, the clergy has joined in all the joys of the Republic; it now is joined with its sorrows. The archbishop has the double glory of dying both as a good citizen and a martyr for religion. Pray that these last words of his worthy ministry [will be honored]: ‘this is the last blood shed.’
Signed, E. Cavaignac

In the opening editorial of Le Constitutionnel on June 30, the journalist echoed the

69Continuing coverage of the Assembly in Le Constitutionnel, June 28, 1848.
Assembly’s growing consensus. “True liberty excludes insurrections; a people’s will will prevail... not with bullets, but with votes.” Despite the glaring contradiction presented by the Second Republic’s revolutionary origins, no further subversive violence would be tolerated. In addition, dangerous ideas, as well as their spaces of distribution, would be immediately censored. The National Workshops had functioned as a camp of revolt, “a school of barricades”, which ended with the murder of a peaceful holy man. It was high time, the editorial continued, for the government to “rid itself of all this socialist and immoral baggage which has furnished the insurgents with the instruments and the weapons of their rebellion.”

Those insurgents who had been taken in by these socialist “chimeras” were not really French workers. The real workers of France were the National Guard “...who hurried with so much courage to the aid of order, of property, of the family, of society; finally, against communism, which is to say against pillage, rape, and arson; in a word, against chaos.” Those behind the barricades in June were completely different from those of February. “No, this is not the people of February, so great in combat, so great in victory, who raised these sacrilegious barricades on which was never flown, thank God, the flag adopted by France. No, it is not the Republic which fought the Republic; it was barbarism which, one more time, dared to raise its head against civilization.”

On July 1, the editorial continued its analysis. What would it have been like if the June Days had succeeded? “One imagines for a moment the insurrection triumphant, what a sinister dream!” The horrible victory of the “terrible assailants” would have been the “…signal of the ruin of civilization and social order.” If they had won, “…what would have happened to freedom in Europe?” Socialism is not just the scourge of Paris, the editorial read, but “the scourge of the whole universe.” But we can’t lose sight of the peril still at our doors, the journalist continued.

---

70 Le Constitutionnel, July 1, 1848.
“We well know that the [socialist] intellectuals are, in general, peaceful men who didn’t take up arms behind the barricades and who contented themselves only with encouraging the insurrection which had begun, save to profit from the victory or excuse a defeat.” But those who preyed on the weak-minded should still be counted as blameworthy. In April and May, he wrote, “We spoke of fraternity and concord” while they secretly “prepared the insurrection of June.”

The Pantheon had been badly damaged during the struggle. The outside of the building was scorched and scarred by the attack on a barricade that had used one of its walls for support. Inside, “two colossal statues were destroyed, the one representing the Republic, the other the spirit of Immortality...” The building had already undergone several recent transformations: evolving from a Catholic church into a shrine to the Republic. Now it was a place to reflect, as one contemplated the fallen statues, on the death of ideas. And at each debate about political and military repression, barbaric and impious ideas, punishment, censorship and centralizing power, the specter of the martyred archbishop, “victim of an unholy struggle,” was raised to close the discussion.

**Daumier’s Republic**

Honoré Daumier saw the danger coming before most others. He had been disappointed by brief revolutions before. He had spent his adult life criticizing the crass commercialism and hypocritical censoring brutality of the king he and his publisher, Philipon, had turned into a pear.71 Some of his most radical statements on freedom of the press and in support of the Republic had been crafted in the first few years of the July Monarchy’s existence: the sting of the

---

71Daumier and Philipon had done a series of caricatures of the king’s face literally turning into a poire, which has the double meaning of fool or “fat-head” in French. During Philipon’s unsuccessful judicial defense he asked the court why he should be punished for an actual similarity in fact. “Can I help it,” he famously inquired, “if His Majesty’s face is like a pear?” By 1834, Philipon had racked up 13 months of imprisonment and 6,000 francs in penalties. Jonathan Green, *The Encyclopedia of Censorship* (New York, N.Y.: Facts on File, 1990), 440.
betrayal of the “three glorious days” in 1830 had still been new. His unflinching “Gargantua” (1831)\(^{72}\) portrayed Louis-Philippe as an extortion machine, eating the money of the poor and defecating out favors to his pets. In “Rue Transnonain” (1834) Daumier had used the government’s murder of civilians to calumny both Bugeaud and Thiers, whom he accused of shared responsibility for the shooting (with the king). Daumier was not intimidated by the clumsy crackdown that followed, even after “Gargantua” earned him six months in prison in 1832. He and Philipon created new strategies of lightly veiled critique, like the pear, and continued being critical. But eventually, in order to survive, Daumier and his publisher moved towards a milder social humor, tinged with mild regret and wary cynicism.

As the barricades went up and the monarchy went down in 1848, Daumier launched some gleeful parting shots at both the _poire_ and those who, like Thiers, had served him. In “Dernier conseil des ex ministres”\(^{73}\), published just weeks after the February Revolution, Thiers and the other ministers climb over each other in abject terror at the appearance of liberty menacing their final meeting.\(^{74}\)

---

\(^{72}\) _La Caricature_, December 16, 1831. Brandeis Institutional Repository, Daumier digitized lithographs, https://bit.brandeis.edu/handle/10192/3930 (accessed July 1, 2012). Hereafter, Brandeis' database will be abbreviated as “BIRD” and cited as “BIRD, url (accessed date).” From BIRD's commentary: “‘Gargantua’ was actually referring to the incredible amounts of money, the Government spent on itself. Louis-Philippe allowed himself a ‘salary’ of more than 18 Millions francs, which was 37 times more than Napoleon Bonaparte or almost 150 times the amount the American President received. This amount was paid on top of the regular upkeep of the various castles in his possession. At the same time, the majority of the working population was living in deepest poverty.”

\(^{73}\) BIRD, http://hdl.handle.net/10192/2114 (June 1, 2013).

\(^{74}\) Little could Daumier know that Thiers, already a favorite target of his for more than fifteen years, would continue to haunt his political landscape for another two and a half decades.
The arrival of personified liberty represented Daumier’s returned optimism at the possibilities of the Second Republic, but it didn’t last long. Just over a month after the February Revolution, Daumier expressed impatience with the slow commitment of the Second Republic to demilitarization in a rare self-portrait (fig. 4). Dressed as a National Guardsman, Daumier throws his weapons and insignia to the ground. The caption reads: “A Citizen who is fed up with all this military paraphernalia - Just think that we finally got rid of Louis-Philippe and yet we cannot get rid of this leather junk!”\(^{75}\) Apparently some part of the artist had hoped that the Second Republic would live up to the rapturous possibilities dreamed up in the springtime, and he was becoming impatient.

\(^{75}\) BIRD, http://hdl.handle.net/10192/2116 (June 1, 2013).
Daumier was one of the few who saw the threat Louis-Napoléon represented to the Republic, despite also finding him hilarious. Louis-Napoléon’s own supporters underestimated him, assuming that they could use him to support their own projects and goals. Did he represent the views of the first Napoleon (and what exactly did the first Napoleon represent?)? Or was he a utopian socialist? What was his program? Benefitting from his lack of a political record in France and a taciturn personality, Louis-Napoléon was a mystery. Contemporaries sometimes called him “the Sphinx.” In 1839 he had published *Les Idées Napoléoniennes* from London, but the book didn’t produce clarity, containing as it did a mix of democracy and empire, industrial modernization and traditional honor.

Even before the June Days and Louis-Napoléon’s arrival in France, Daumier noted how he was becoming many things to many people. Three men stand around arguing in his caricature
called “An Alibi” published in *Le Charivari*, on June 9, 1848. “I'm telling you I saw Bonaparte at the Hippodrome,” the first says. “But that's impossible because I just heard him at the National Assembly,” says the second. Then the cartoonist delivered the punch line: “You're both wrong, because I just passed Place Vendôme a minute ago, and he was on the column.” Atop the Vendôme column perched a statue of Napoleon I – Daumier was suggesting that Paris knew so little of “Napoleon le petit,” as Hugo called him later, that he could be mistaken for his long dead uncle.76

Daumier, from the beginning, targeted the shrouded man with a famous name with his characteristic blend of mock and pillory. In “Paquebot Napoléonien”77 his target sails across the channel in a Napoleonic hat much too big for his head, pulled by a vulture-like eagle (fig. 5). The hat and the eagle, symbols of the *great* Napoleon, drove him to France, but neither really fit. Nevertheless, he has arrived, and right before an election.

![Figure 5 - Honoré Daumier, "Paquebot Napoléonien."
Le Charivari, December 2, 1848.](image)

Victor Hugo had been an early supporter of Louis-Napoléon, much to his later

---

76 Even after his election, many denied that he had any personal political acumen. Marx wrote that it was only “the class struggle in France [that] created circumstances and relations that made it possible for a grotesque mediocrity to play a hero’s part.” Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1954), 6.

77 BIRD, [http://bir.brandeis.edu/handle/10192/2122](http://bir.brandeis.edu/handle/10192/2122) (June 1, 2013).
embarrassment. But how could he have known? Such an empty-headed, paltry politician, wrote Hugo later, could not have been expected to kill the Republic in a coup three years after his election.

As to a conspiracy against the Republic and against the People, how can anyone premeditate such a plot? Where was the man capable of entertaining such a dream? For a tragedy there must be an actor, and here assuredly the actor was wanting. To outrage Right, to suppress the Assembly, to abolish the Constitution, to strangle the Republic, to overthrow the Nation, to sully the Flag, to dishonor the Army, to suborn the Clergy and the Magistracy, to succeed, to triumph, to govern, to administer, to exile, to banish, to transport, to govern, to administer, to exile, to banish, to transport, to ruin, to assassinate, to reign, with such complicities that the law at last resembles a foul bed of corruption. What! All these enormities were to be committed! And by whom? By a Colossus? No, by a dwarf.78

Unlike Hugo, Daumier was suspicious of Louis-Napoléon from the beginning, despite his occasional optimism about the future. It is helpful to remember that Daumier’s traumatic experience of the course of French politics after the 1830 Revolution had provided him with a consistent cynicism about human nature, especially in the realm of politics. More quickly than in 1830, and even before the June Days, Daumier moved from the celebratory optimism of the late “springtime of the peoples” to an awareness of the existential threats to the Republic’s existence. The danger to the Republic, from Daumier’s perspective, came from the eagerness of compromising Catholics and “realist” politicians to cooperate with, encourage and even cloak Louis-Napoléon’s moves of centralization. In particular, Daumier targeted Montalembert and Thiers as symbols of this kind of moral flexibility in pursuit of political aims. He believed they were pursuing their own gain but unwittingly providing cover for an aggressive executive. In choosing Falloux as minister of public education, he believed, the Second Republic was largely giving back control over education to the church while simultaneously handing the president a cheap political victory. His 1849 caricature of Falloux is introduced with an anticlerical caption: “Falloux - Chosen, under the Republic, to be Minister of Public Education, in his capacity as a

brother of ignoramuses.”

Not only were the new educational policies backward, Daumier argued through images, they were bound to discourage learning. Even before the Falloux Laws of 1850 and 1851 were passed, the Second Republic, under its new leadership, had suspended Jules Michelet from teaching history after complaints from Church officials. Daumier’s reaction was published in Le Charivari on March 28, 1851. “The Capuchin Reverend Father Gorenflot teaching a course in history as a replacement for Mr. Michelet,” reads the terse caption, but Père Gorenflot finds himself lecturing to a vast amphitheater occupied only by two bored Bonapartists. Daumier consistently sought out symbols to represent French Catholicism (Gorenflot was a drunk monk from a Dumas novel) as an enemy of progress. But even more effective were his scathing caricatures of real individuals. Daumier almost always portrayed Montalembert, for example, with the attribute of a candle-snuffer (often worn as a hat) to symbolize his eagerness to perpetuate intellectual darkness.

The short life of the Second Republic was a high point for the work of the Socrates of caricature. With blistering intensity he exposed the hypocrisies and self-interest of the political elites of Louis-Napoléon’s government as they scuttled (or attempted to), bit by bit, the free press, secular education, universal suffrage, and, eventually, representative government and the four-year presidential term limit. It is difficult to adequately indicate the intensity and pace of critique Daumier offered to the readers of Le Charivari in a serial and satirical course in political science. He did not like Adolphe Thiers. No other explanation is sufficient for the (at least) seventy-six times Daumier parodied the statesman in some capacity over their long careers.79 Frequently Daumier has a tiny Thiers parading around in some new uniform, indicating his fair-weather

---

political allegiances. The calculating cynicism behind this sort of political move seemed outrageous to Daumier. By the time of the December 1848 election, the same Thiers that had attempted to salvage the July Monarchy had swung his support publically behind Louis-Napoléon. In “Les moucherons politiques” or “The political midgets,” a bunch of flies circulate around a flame circled by the dates of the February Revolution. The flies include Thiers and Montalembert. “They are trying desperately to extinguish the flame of the February Revolution of 1848, although many dead flies, representing politicians, are already lying on the ground.”

In “Les Principaux Personnages de la Comédie qui se joue en ce moment aux Champs-Elysées,” Daumier’s readers were treated to a political puppet show. Ratapoil and Montalembert are the puppets, scepters and clubs in hand to represent the threat of monarchism (legitimist or Bonapartist) and force. Ratapoil often represented the monopoly on legal and extra-legal force wielded by Louis-Napoléon and the cartoon became at times a symbol of the prince-président himself, as in “Nouveau joujou” (fig. 6).

---


81a “The main participants in the comedy performed at this moment on the Champs-Elysées,” BIRD, http://hdl.handle.net/10192/2521 (accessed June 1, 2013). BIRD text identifies the figure on the right in this caricature as Louis Veuillot, but it seems more likely to be Montalembert: Veuillot is always given a different appearance by Daumier, and the straight hair, snuffer hat and proximity to power are all Montalembert’s attributes.

82 BIRD, http://hdl.handle.net/10192/2523 (June 1, 2013).
Here, Daumier hints at the increased strong-arm tactics of Louis-Napoléon at the moment he was preparing a coup d’état. Ratapoil, grown ominous and massive, gives his accomplices (including Thiers at left) the opportunity to hammer away at Marianne (and thus the Republic). In December, Parisians awoke to placards around the city announcing a fait accompli. The president’s placards suggested, among many other things, a ten-year term for the president, and asked the country to support him in his mission: “This mission consists in closing the era of revolutions, by satisfying the legitimate needs of the People, and by protecting them from subversive passions. It consists, above all, in creating institutions to survive men, and which shall in fact form the foundations on which something durable may be established.”83

---

Daumier’s Republican lens highlights how the Second Republic appeared, to many, to have left behind those who had fought for it in the spring of 1848. The sense of catastrophe was felt by all those who believed that France had missed the opportunity to create an authentic democracy. The function of the death of Archbishop Affre in the cultural and political struggle that accompanied and followed the June Days was to assist the development of an influential political consensus that would dominate French politics for most of the next decade. Affre’s martyrdom, the fault of political rebels, made rhetorical resistance appear sacrilegious. It was used to silence numerous resistant voices in the Assembly, to justify repressive violence, and to urge the abandonment of nuance and distinctions in favor of a bipolar assessment of the moral battlefield. The political culture that followed was, in other words, primed for centralization by the symbolic power of martyrdom. The emerging political consensus encouraged the tacit support of Catholics for violence in support of a government-imposed order and against socialism and impiety. It committed Liberal Catholics, in particular, to positions supporting government power against radical politics, an alliance that would become increasingly isolating as more conservative Catholics abandoned the Second Empire later in the 1850s. Furthermore, Affre’s death represented the closure of a remarkable period of open-ended, experimental, idealistic and socially progressive Catholic thought. Instead, the next period of French history would see the increasing rhetorical separation of democracy and republicanism, the organizational cleavage of Catholics and workers, and the beginning of a more aggressive anticlerical turn in radical and Republican politics.

The next chapter charts the use made of this temporary unity of Catholic support for a militarily aggressive empire in the early policies of Napoleon III. I show how Ultramontane and Liberal Catholics in France were both drawn into a debate over the ‘Eastern Question’ and,
through this discussion, were drawn towards support for the empire at war. Within this debate, the opaque divisions within French Catholicism will be identified in terms of the respective style of argument and intellectual commitments of four French Catholic writers. And finally, I will argue that both the Crimean War and the political strength of Ultramontanism were founded on a visual language which tied the sacred geography of Jerusalem and the romanticism of the Crusades to French action in the Holy Land.
CHAPTER 2: 1850s – THE CRUCIBLE OF CRIMEA

Who Owns God’s House?

In the previous chapter, I introduced how martyrdom was used to encourage a political consensus around order after the death of Archbishop Affre in June 1848. In addition, I noted the crucial collective support of Catholics in making possible the election of Louis-Napoléon as president of the Second Republic in December 1848 and in supporting the transition to the Second Empire of Napoleon III after 1851. In this chapter, I show how Louis-Napoléon rode this wave of Catholic support into the Crimean War by leveraging French Catholic concern over access to sacred Christian sites in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. First, I introduce, from the French perspective, the conflict over the Holy Places in Palestine preceding the Crimean War (“Who Owns God’s House?”). Second, I show that this conflict has not been taken seriously as a substantive cause of the war or an issue of real import by recent scholarship and suggest why this is a mistake: namely, that the French Catholic public, by engaging with the “Question of the Holy Places,” was in effect demanding that the French government respond militarily (“Crusades Old and New”). Third, I present the romantic and historical case for French involvement in the Levant most familiar to French readers before the Second Republic, that of René de Chateaubriand, and the importance of nineteenth-century orientalist interests in the new archaeology of the Levant (“The Nerve Center of Christianity”).

Finally, I demonstrate how distinct French Catholic constituencies used new arguments to push for French involvement in the Levant in their writings about the Holy Places. By examining the different rhetorical strategies employed in Eugène Boré’s, *Question des Lieux Saints*, Georges Darboy’s *Jérusalem et la Terre Sainte* and Eugène Veuillot’s, *L'Église, la France, et le Schisme en Orient*, I show how different French Catholic worldviews nevertheless coalesced in
the strategy of using references to France’s crusading past to urge French military power to assert Catholic predominance over sacred spaces abroad (“Trembling with Religious Patriotism”). In other words, Catholic framing of the importance of French intervention in the Levant was tantamount to a pre-authorization and public demand for French involvement in the Crimean War.

The sacred geography of the Levant for Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Christians, as well as for Jews and Muslims, had since the 1840s entered a period of renewed and acrimonious contestation. But for France, the precedents for how the various religious and political interests would divide access and control to their religious patrimony extended back into the mid-1500s, and even into the Crusades on certain issues. Over the centuries, Europeans and a succession of Islamic empires had laid down a confusing and contradictory ad hoc web of treaties and guarantees of protection, ownership and access for pilgrims to the holy sites of Jerusalem, Bethlehem and other places of sacred significance.\(^1\) The role of France as the protector of Catholics in the Levant was formally recognized and officially renewed during the reign of Louis XV as a result of his treaty with the Ottoman Empire against the Habsburgs. In 1740, France was declared the guardian of all Catholic interests within the Ottoman Empire.\(^2\) Russia responded by assuming the identity of Orthodox protector. But during the turbulent period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, French governments had neglected their claims in the Levant and in practice Catholic control and unrestricted access to the sacred sites therein lapsed to local authority.

This situation changed during the Mehmet Ali crisis of the early 1840s, as the

\(^1\)For Christians these sites include in particular the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, the traditional site of the birth of Jesus and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, traditionally recognized as the site of his entombment and resurrection.

pseudonymous pasha of a modernizing Egypt attempted to seize power over the rest of the
Ottoman Empire, or at least to obtain Egyptian independence from it. European involvement in
the Empire increased in an attempt to maintain both state stability and their special relationships
with particular Ottoman or Egyptian constituencies. Furthermore, a growing awareness of the
weakening grip of the Porte on its subjects both concerned and stimulated the appetite of newly
industrialized European states. In this environment of increased international competition over
the Levant, and in response to perceived Protestant and British successes at increasing their
respective access to the Holy Places, the French protested alleged Greek Orthodox abuses of
Latin rights/rites and created a consular position in Jerusalem in 1843. The consul could keep an
eye on French religious interests against these abuses as well as generally looking after the four-
thousand-strong Catholic population in Palestine (one thousand in Jerusalem alone).³

The first person to occupy the new position had served as an officer under Napoleon I
and was now made consul under the July Monarchy. Count Gabriel de Lantivy confirmed with
his first official dispatch that the French government had sent him to the Levant “to defend the
Rights and the interests of Christians.”⁴ But the consul quickly found evidence that his major
obstacle would not be non-Christians, but the intractability of Latin-Greek relations. Repairs to
the central cupola of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre had been rendered impossible since a fire
in 1808 because both Latin and Greek priests in residence assumed that if one side took charge of
the repairs it would connote actual custody or ownership.

Furthermore, as Lantivy set about commissioning Catholic schools, a project he entrusted
to the Congregation of the Mission (hereafter Lazarists),⁵ he soon found that many Franciscans in

³Ibid., 402.
⁵Founded by St. Vincent de Paul in the 1620s, the order is called Vincentians in the United States and
Palestine resented the new, re-assertive French assumption of Catholic protection over Catholics and the Holy Places as well as the preference shown towards the Lazarists. In this assertion of French government power on behalf of faith, there was at least some resistance, which in this case looked to Rome for leadership and saw the Lazarists as a little too political and a little too French. The position of leadership in the Levant had traditionally, the Franciscans felt, been exercised by their order. Additionally, the secretary of the Franciscan mission in Jerusalem, Giambattista da Moneglia, was suspected by the French consul of seeking Sardinian and Austrian support against French involvement. The French ambassador in Rome complained and was able to secure papal assent for Moneglia’s removal, and he was transferred away to a less volatile post.6

In this Gordian knot of confessional and international Christian competition over rights, privileges and recognition within a devotional geography, tempers ran high and violence began to be common. A bullet shot from a Catholic monastery hit a Greek child. A convert from Catholicism to Greek Orthodoxy found his family threatened with physical violence unless they followed his example. In April of 1846, a Latin Good Friday procession to the Chapel of Mount Calvary inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was attacked by Greek monks who protested the Latin use of the altar: Ottoman troops had to be called in to stop the violence. Orlando Figes paints the picture:

On this Good Friday the Latin priests arrived with their white linen altar-cloth to find that the Greeks had got there first with their silk embroidered cloth. The Catholics demanded to see the Greeks’ firman, their decree from the Sultan in Constantinople, empowering them to place their silk cloth on the altar first. The Greeks demanded to see the Latins’ firman allowing them to remove it. A fight broke out between the priests, who were quickly joined by Monks and pilgrims on either side. Soon the whole church was a battlefield. The rival groups of worshippers fought not only with their fists, but with crucifixes, candlesticks, Lazarists (or Lazarites or Lazarians) in France (from the priory of St. Lazarus in Paris where they had originally been headquartered). With the suppression of the Jesuits in the late 1700s, the Lazarists largely took over the missionary function of the former, especially after the Revolutionary Wars.

6Broadus, 402.
chalices, lamps and incense-burners, and even bits of wood which they tore from the sacred shrines. The fighting continued with knives and pistols smuggled into the Holy Sepulchre by worshippers of either side. By the time the church was cleared by Mehmet Pasha’s guards, more than forty people lay dead on the floor.  

The new French consul, Hélouis-Jorelle, was shocked, and wrote back to François Guizot about the “scenes very shameful to Christianity. Blood has flowed.” The violence continued: in February of 1847 Latins were beaten with staves by Greek monks to get them out of sites in Bethlehem. The dispute escalated further when Catholics blamed Greek Orthodox monks for stealing an ornate silver star that had indicated the site of the birth of Jesus. The star had disappeared and had allegedly been stolen because the Orthodox monks thought that the Latin inscription on the star would be used to justify Latin claims of ownership. At one point, Orthodox monks were compelled by Ottoman authorities to give Catholics keys to the Church of the Nativity, only to give them false keys (or change the locks, depending on the account) so that they couldn’t get in. Even the intervention by Ottoman authorities triggered acts of resistance. Both Catholic and Orthodox congregations sent appeals to French and Russian diplomats, respectively, in order to protest Ottoman state intrusiveness.

For the French consul Hélouis-Jorelle, as for his predecessor Lantivy, the French position was again complicated by significant Catholic resistance to the French claiming protector of the faith status, especially from the Franciscan Palestine Mission. In a letter to Guizot, the consul characterized their head, Paola da Moretta, as one “who seeks to break the French protectorate, which he carries as a heavy yoke.” Da Moretta saw Piedmont as a likelier and more reliable ally, perhaps as a reflection of his own nationalism or perhaps because it didn’t appear at the time that

---

8 Letter from Hélouis-Jorelle to Guizot dated April 16, 1846, as quoted in Broadus, 406.
9 This account is spread far and wide; see for example Edward Fox, *Sacred Geography: A Tale of Murder and Archeology in the Holy Land* (New York: Macmillan, 2002).
10 Letter from Hélouis-Jorelle to Guizot dated April 6, 1846, as quoted in Broadus, 406.
French assistance amounted to much in practical terms. “The fact that France supplied relatively little financial support to the Catholic Church in Palestine, in contrast to the liberal endowments given the Greeks by Russia, seemed to indicate the limited value the French attached to the Holy Land.” \(^{11}\)

It was at this moment that the new pope, Pius IX, \(^{12}\) made his presence more actively known in the growing dispute. In the summer of 1847, a Latin patriarchate in Jerusalem was (re)established by the pope and occupied by the missionary and bishop Giuseppi Valerga. The patriarchate in Jerusalem had first been established during the First Crusade, but in 1342 Clement VI had formally passed Latin care of the Holy Land to the Franciscan order. From the Franciscan perspective, the new patriarch of Jerusalem in 1847 was effectively ending a set of 500-year-old Franciscan prerogatives in and around Jerusalem. Valerga was invested in great pomp and more than a little circumstance. “Local Muslims, Jews and Christians lined the streets of Jerusalem to watch the new patriarch, accompanied by sixty Franciscan priests and escorted by the Turkish army, parade to the Franciscan convent church to give his first sermon and deliver a papal blessing.” \(^{13}\)

The sermon was also a public statement of the intention of the new patriarch to be an assertive leader. As Hélouis-Jorelle remarked (with some condescension): “The appropriate arrangements were made in coordination with the Franciscan convent to make the reception as impressive as possible because this was necessary in this country, which pays attention to appearances.” \(^{14}\) The Orthodox patriarch, Kyrillos II, was understandably put off by this display

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 406.
\(^{12}\) Pope Pius IX’s pontificate began on the 16th of June, 1846.
\(^{14}\) Quoted in Hanna Sai’d Kildani, *Modern Christianity in the Holy Land: Development of the Structure of*
and sent a bishop to the Ottoman governor of Jerusalem asking, “Has the new patriarch obtained a special permit from the Ottoman government to enter Jerusalem in such grandeur?” Valerga quickly established several schools, hospitals and printing houses to aid in Catholic evangelism, and employed the “stream of Catholic missionaries, mainly French, now arriving in the Middle East.” He imagined that the new schools would create a new generation of priests and friars who would be trained in Arabic and Greek. For the new central Catholic authority in the Levant, missions in Jerusalem would be a beachhead against indifference, apathy and ignorance.

But the obstacles to this vision were many. Invoking the Crusades to justify the re-assertive role of Catholicism, Valerga also publicly accepted France’s role as protector of Catholicism in Palestine. As a consequence, he was doubly resisted by the Franciscans. But Patriarch Valerga was the pope’s representative and also, formally, the titular head of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem: the Franciscans owed him obedience. In addition to objecting to the new French and papal assertion, the friars also felt that the more active evangelistic strategy in the Holy Land was divisive, dangerous and prone to blowback. Their strategy was to open Franciscan schools to Muslims, Orthodox Christians, and Jews and to avoid direct evangelistic pressure. The Franciscans, furthermore, were often supported in their ventures by the Austrians in direct competition with the French. Valerga complained to his superiors that he didn’t have control of the resources and couldn’t enforce Franciscan or public loyalty. By the spring of 1849 he had received multiple letters from contacts in Rome who informed him that a conspiracy against him was being planned by those sympathetic to the

---


15 Quoted in Kildani, 298.
16 Curtis, 162.
Franciscans back in Rome.\textsuperscript{17}

Initially, the next French consul, Paul-Émile Botta, together with the French diplomat to the Holy See, had also opposed the new patriarchate, seeing in it the potential to undermine the French consulate. These nationalist reservations came despite Botta’s avowed ultramontanist Catholicism, but he put his concerns aside and created a partnership with Valerga. “Instead they argued for an increase in French missionaries,” writes Sarah Curtis, who goes on to quote Botta’s letter to the French diplomat in Rome, “…who, ‘being French and only living here through us and under our uncontested and exclusive protectorate, would not be able to invoke, in any way, the protectorate of a foreign power.’” French officials were also protective of France’s symbolic privileges at the Sunday Mass in Jerusalem, which had traditionally included an exaudiat for the French king, favored seating for the French consul, and a special role for him during the service.\textsuperscript{18} Even after Botta and Valerga began to work together to build a hospital (to serve the community \textit{and} to compete with the Franciscan order), they argued about how French the hospital should be: Valerga wanted to avoid any specific reference to French overlordship while the French consul wanted it to be explicit, with preference shown to French staffing as well.\textsuperscript{19}

Over time, however, without a strong local base of his own, Valerga was increasingly willing to acknowledge France’s special role in the Latin Levant since he needed French support for his authority as well.

Battling resistance from nearly every other side, Valerga finally determined to plead his case to the pope himself in the fall of 1849. Meeting with the pope, Valerga explained his

\textsuperscript{17}Kildani, 301. One letter came from Cardinal Franzoni. Kildani quotes the other, from “a friend in Rome,” as saying the following: “I learned in an indirect way that the Fathers of the Holy Land were concocting a conspiracy against you. I am disclosing this to you in view of the friendship that links us so that you would be careful.” The translation is Kildani’s.

\textsuperscript{18}Curtis, 162.

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Ibid.}, 163-4.
situation and argued that his hands were tied by the fact that the Franciscans saw themselves as the authentic representatives of the Holy See, and therefore didn’t listen to him: “the friars held an exaggerated idea about their privileges. They believed that they had extraordinary rights that superseded the rights of the local bishop...[They] turned the privilege into power and the exception into a rule and became a slave of privilege.” Furthermore, Valerga continued, they oversaw charity, and thus dependent parishioners had no reason to transfer their loyalty and respect to the patriarch. He also criticized their passive strategy vis-à-vis evangelism, suggesting a more active program of printing and schooling in order to create a bureaucracy under the control of the patriarch. “A Patriarchate without national clergy is a mockery and is something like a ghost.” To add urgency to his demands, Valerga submitted his resignation, but the pope affirmed the value of his service by rejecting it.

As a result of this meeting, the Propaganda Fide in Rome issued a new series of instructions to the diocesan officials of Jerusalem. The new orders gave ultimate authority in nearly every issue to the patriarch: this included censorship of publications, control of charities and resolution of all issues between friars and the larger Catholic community. Armed with at least verbal guarantees from the pope, Valerga immediately embarked with Botta to France. First, the embassy stopped for a visit with the Association de la propagation de la foi to encourage donations and mission service in the Levant. They then proceeded directly to Paris, attempting to gain the actual force of law by enlisting promises of support from the French government, should the situation become more dangerous.

In Paris, Valerga and Botta met with the recently elected president, Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte. Botta and Valerga explained the increasingly volatile situation in the Levant and both

---

20 Kildani, 303.
21 Ibid., 310.
affirmed that the real threat to French assertiveness would be Russia (and their Greek Orthodox proxies), not the Ottomans.\footnote{Broadus, 411.} Without specifically committing to any course of action on the issue of the silver star, the French government sent Valerga and Botta back to Jerusalem with twenty thousand francs to support the patriarchate.\footnote{Kildani, 308.} Newly assured of French support, Valerga began building a patriarchal bureaucracy. Towards this end, he recruited European (primarily French) priests to serve in the area and when traveling through Palestine he recruited the best and the brightest from local congregations and established them in institutions like the new patriarchal seminary. The public cooperation of the Holy See and the French government in securing Latin interests in the Levant was beginning to bear fruit.\footnote{But not without resistance. Valerga wouldn’t attempt to found his first new parish in Beit Jala, near Bethlehem, until 1853. The Orthodox patriarch and followers of the town tried to kill him and he was forced to flee. It was not until after the Crimean War had begun to turn against the Russians that the French support behind the patriarch began to mean something and multitudes of new parishes were founded throughout the 1850s.}\footnote{Agulhon, 78.}

Back in Paris, and armed with popular Catholic support, a fragile but significantly united French Catholic hierarchy and papal affirmation of French protectorate status in the Holy Land, Louis-Napoléon could now act with more confidence. In mid-1849, the president had committed French troops to support the temporal power of the pope in Rome. Catholic support, perhaps previously offered grudgingly in light of revolutionary threats, was increasingly enthusiastic about the new protector of the faith in the Tuileries. Furthermore, General Oudinot’s 1849 mission to Rome was in clear violation of the anti-Imperial provisions of the constitution of the Second Republic. Article V read: “[The Republic] respects foreign nationalities just as it expects its own nationality to be respected; it undertakes no war with a view to conquest and never employs its forces against the liberty of any people.”\footnote{Emboldened by the lack of negative}
consequences for this shift in foreign policy and aware of the growing support Catholics in France were offering him as a consequence, the French executive decided to advance further.

In May of 1850, the French president publicly challenged Orthodox control over the Holy Places in and around Jerusalem and asked the Ottomans for immediate resolution to the issue of the silver star of Bethlehem. When the Ottoman government granted some concessions to French demands, Louis-Napoléon sent a warship (the Charlemagne) into the Dardanelles to escort his ambassador back to France. The Ottoman response was by necessity uneasily balanced between French and Russian demands, and when they conceded to replacing the silver star in December 1852 (less than three weeks after Napoleon III had declared himself Emperor) the Russians began mobilizing as a response and French troops were put on alert. The Crimean War (1853-1856) would follow the next fall.

In summary, French presumption in the Levant was resisted from several sites: internationally, especially by Russia and by the Greek Orthodox Church in Jerusalem; by the Ottoman authorities themselves who felt French (and Russian) involvement highlighted their impotence in resolving these local conflicts; and by many native Catholics as well, especially Franciscans who found their centuries-old prerogatives as sepulchral guardians superseded by highly educated French priests. But French aggression had overwhelming public support at home, thanks especially to the temporary unity of Catholics, and the pope, behind the Empire. With such a multifaceted political environment is it possible to accurately explain, without oversimplification, France’s entry into the Crimean War?

**Crusades Old and New**

Causes of the Crimean War...

---

26 And for some of the same reasons as the French, see discussion of Figes below.
d) The Holy Places. The French thought that the Holy Places ought to be guarded (probably against the Americans) by Latin Monks, while the Turks, who owned the Places, thought they ought to be guarded by Greek Monks. England therefore quite rightly declared war on Russia, who immediately occupied Roumania."

- 1066 and All That

Most historiography on the Crimean War has neglected factors other than Napoleon III’s personality when explaining initial French involvement. And yet, it often appears that the emperor was responding to the desires of much of his public, at least as partially represented by the Catholic press (see below). First of all, as noted above, French assertion in the Levant on behalf of Catholics predated the Second Republic. Furthermore, it should already be clear that, at least temporarily, papal interests coincided with those of the new emperor. But most importantly, as I argue below, French Catholic authors had done significant work on Napoleon III’s behalf to imagine the Levant as a legitimate site of French military activity.

But when one surveys the scholarship on nineteenth-century wars and European imperialism, it is easy to emerge with the impression that conflict was exclusively driven by back-room deals and by great statesmen. Eric Hobsbawm understood the Crimean War of 1853-6 as a breakdown in diplomacy, particularly consequential because of the resultant alteration in the European balance of power produced by Napoleon III’s imperial ambitions in the Middle East.

“In so far as...French ambitions were pursued overseas, they did not particularly affect the European power system; but in so far as they were pursued in regions where the European powers were in rivalry, they disturbed what was always a rather delicately balanced arrangement.”27 France’s entry into the power struggle within Europe meant that a new and unpredictable source of aggression had to be accounted for in the mutually insecure balancing act of European great power diplomacy. A diplomatic misaccounting, then, provides Hobsbawm with a sufficient cause for the Crimean War. “The fact was that the mechanism of ‘Eastern

---

Question’ diplomacy, designed for simpler confrontations, temporarily broke down – at the cost of a few hundred thousand lives.”

More specifically, Napoleon III’s interest in imperial *gloire*, as the determining necessity that required familial repetition, is often the only French cause listed for France’s involvement. “In the attempt to live up to his name,” one historian writes, “Louis Napoleon was to reestablish the empire at home and to engage in foreign adventures that would plunge France into political catastrophe.” And when, in 1854, he “had yet to fulfill the promises of national glory associated with his name”, he fatefuly “recognized that to gain this glory and to restore France’s old position of ascendancy in Europe, he would have to break the restrictions imposed on France by the treaties of 1815.” Such an interpretation requires an assumption of almost total agency for the recently elected president-turned-emperor of a government rapidly transformed by a revolution and a popular coup. For historians who are willing to concede the larger impact of other national interests on French action, the Crimean War was most insistently determined by the ‘Eastern Question’: the set of problems presented by the decaying authority of the Ottoman Empire. The French and British entered the war not primarily because of a breakdown in diplomacy or in search of military glory, but in order to shore up the Ottomans against Russian imperial aggression.

The stated justifications for the war, namely French desire to be the protectors of Catholic access to the Holy Places in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, are rarely treated as significant to constructing a narrative about causation. When they are mentioned, they are often relegated to

---

28 *Ibid.*, 76.


31 See, for example, Winfried Baumgart, *The Crimean War, 1853-1856* (New York: Oxford, 1999), although this is one of the dominant interpretations of the Crimean War and can be found many places.
historical curiosities or “mere” anecdote: this war was about statesmen, not shrines. “The [stated] reasons for the squabble,” writes Peter Hopkirk about the first semi-industrial war that killed over 300,000 people, “...are of no concern to us.”32 Instead, the war is, in fact, important largely because of what it represents diplomatically. If not itself part of the “Great Game”, the nineteenth-century cold war between Great Britain and Russia over influence in central Asia, the Crimean War at least represented the end of its brief decade of détente. The Crimean War, these authors agree implicitly, was directly determined by men of state, for diplomatic or realist reasons. And its primary significance lies in the consequent state and diplomatic changes to the European state system. “The outbreak of the Crimean War illustrates the dictum that at times the course of history is directed by the beliefs and desires of a handful of individuals rather than by the weight of material fact.”33

This surviving “great men” narrative of state power, where all agency of ends lies within the hands of the leader, can be contrasted with theses of means. Some historical accounts focus more on aspects of political and/or industrial liberalization, forces stronger than the political leaders themselves. The rulers at mid-century, Hobsbawm wrote, “found themselves in a situation of economic and political change which they could not control, but to which they had to adapt. The only choice - and statesmen recognized this clearly - was whether to sail before the wind or use their skill as sailors to steer their ships in another direction. The wind itself was a fact of nature.”34 This “wind” was the growth of industrial capitalism: in a time of economic boom and broad capital expansion, leaders “could stop and start wars almost at will” with few political consequences, as long as they were forward-thinking about the broader changes they

34Hobsbawm, 71.
were exploiting. Statesmen, still, made the decisions about war, and simply floated on the novel breezes of industry and into battle.

Others historians have argued more strongly that mid-century European imperialism was simply the result of the removal of impediments and obstacles to colonial interests through technological change. These technological determinist arguments could often be paraphrased in the following manner: “Question: Why did [European country] invade [Asian or African country] during the second half of the nineteenth century? Answer: Because they could.” Consider, for example, the excellent work of Daniel Headrick, who has so eloquently explained the mutual dependency of the industrial development of Europe and its age of new imperialism. “In the penetration phase, steamers and the prophylactic use of quinine were the key technologies. The second phase - that of conquest - depended heavily on rapid firing rifles and machine guns. In the phase of consolidation, the links that tied the colonies to Europe and promoted their economic exploitation included steamship lines, the Suez canal, the submarine telegraph cables and the colonial railroads.”35 Not only are these technologies the most important facts in understanding the progressive domination of Africa and Asia by Europe, but that very domination, Headrick writes, enabled a massive “technology transfer,” through the intellectual and material capital and networks of exchange, from the colonies or regions of influence to the metropole - making underdevelop into a verb.36

When the Crimean War is seen in this light it becomes simply an early example of a tide of European imperial war driven by the availability of new industrial technology. And indeed, besides new railroad construction and telegraph lines, in the years prior to the Crimean War the

---


French Navy received an industrial makeover. By 1852 their military overproduction made Lord Hardinge nervous across the channel. Not only had France’s naval factories exceeded their ordnance handily, but the French were installing steam engines in every line-of-battle vessel, as well as beefing up their four screw-driven battleships (like the Charlemagne) with one hundred heavy-caliber guns. 37 Certainly one must admit that such production indicates, at the very least, willingness for its use. But what determines the ‘when’ or the ‘where’? Clearly these data are important in attempting a reasonably comprehensive account of the origins of the Crimean War. But is state technological capacity a kind of sufficient causation?

These are exceedingly difficult questions. In fairness to all of the authors above, none of them explicitly attempt to advance a purely monocausal account of the origins of the Crimean War. But they have made strong decisions of priority in explaining this event, as one must. There are at least two implications shared by these decisions of historical inclusion and exclusion. First, justifications for war are secondary in importance when determining causation. Second, these authors all assume the primacy of the French government (rather than the French public, for example) in the war. And finally, they see the 1850s in light of a becoming: a forerunner of the transformation towards the new imperialism of the later decades of the century. The Crimean War, from the perspective of French involvement, can thus seem almost inevitable when considering the appetites of Napoleon III and the abilities presented by the new technologies he

37 One of Emperor Napoleon III’s first priorities had been the rapid industrial militarization of France, especially of the navy. In February 1851, Louis-Napoléon had ordered the installation of steam engines in every line-of battle vessel. (See James Brian, “Allies in Disarray: The Messy End of the Crimean War,” History Today Vol. 58, Issue 3 (2008): 24-31.) The naval rearmament happened so quickly that the French exceeded their fleet goals. “According to its own Ordnance, France should have 40 vaisseaux (line-of-battle ships) and 50 frigates. It had, in service in fact, now 47 and 56. It should have 136 other naval craft; it had actually 233, of which an astonishing 107 were newly-built troop transports.” (Brian, 27) This was in addition to the new French ironclads and screw-driven, massively-fortified battleships mentioned above. This challenge to the naval supremacy of the British made the neighbors across the channel very nervous about the Napoleonic ambitions of the new French leader. “Between 1850 and 1852 the Times had carried ninety-nine major articles and leaders on ‘National Defense’; in every one of which France was named.” (Brian, 25.)
funded. Justifications deployed in service of the Crimean War, and other acts of military engagement by the French Second Empire, are instantly demoted to interesting but unimportant: Napoleon III’s real reasons were that he wanted to, and that he could.

But ignoring the justifications for war is a mistake for several reasons. During the age of mass politics and revolution, even a war for lucre or imperial gloire had to be made acceptable to the potentially revolutionary public. Therefore, examining justifications for war may present an opportunity to better understand the audience of these pretexts. Whether the public, in this case, is actually the audience or the authors of the pretext will be discussed below, but the relevant point here is that public support provides the bedrock for the confident expression of state violence. This support had to be carefully considered, weighed, and measured before any aggressive action was considered. Napoleon III’s new government still appeared as of questionable legitimacy, and a thoughtless move could obviously end governments, political careers and lives. In other words, successful pretexts, like quinine, are a state’s attempt at inoculating itself from the potential fallout of a failed war. Pretexts that could succeed in attaining the approval of the French public (or at least their complacency and passivity) are thus an historical fact relevant to understanding that public itself. Furthermore, these pretexts, once deployed, had a logic of their own that suggested repetition. As protection of Catholics became a popular mandate, the necessity of war would present itself every time Catholics anywhere were disrespected. We can thus find more than one French war forged in the crucible of the Crimea.

Finally, as I argue below, focusing on the humanitarian justifications for war reveals unexpected complexities in the standard narrative. I’ve argued that the pretexts for war are mentioned, but largely passed over as unreal in the scholarship. There have been some exceptions, especially in recent years. Even in those few histories which take these issues
seriously, however, the political and religious situation in France at mid-century has been an obstacle to successful explanation. One easy pitfall is a version of the secularization thesis which sees ‘Holy War’ as a last gasp of “old-fashioned” sacred politics. “Of course, the idea of a holy war, so redolent of the premodern, is the sign of an undifferentiated terrain in which the theological and the political are fused, not yet rendered distinct by the putative autonomization of religion, and the putative secularization of politics.”38 The rhetoric accompanying the Crimean War is here simply a waypoint between the God-invoked justice of past wars and the coming secular and scientific civilizing missions of later nineteenth-century military mobilization.

Others have helped clarify the importance of religious discussions by showing how religious disputes could morph into issues of “larger” (read: diplomatic or state) importance. States all wanted a piece of the Levant, writes John Broadus, and “the Holy Places were in a sense indivisible.” 39 Sarah Curtis also describes how these issues of sacred geography could be quickly turned into matters of state rivalry. “As European powers jockeyed for position...protection of Christian minorities was one tool to extend their influence, and the consular corps jealously guarded against potential slights and embarrassments.”40 International competition, once again, fueled a paranoid foreign policy. Curtis writes: “France feared that even Catholic powers like Spain and Austria were undermining traditional French interests in the Holy Land, trying to place Catholic nationals under consular protection rather than under the French umbrella, as guaranteed by the sixteenth-century treaties. In turn, conflicts among Christian denominations, many of which went back centuries, became matters of state.”41

39 Broadus, 416.
40 Curtis, 163.
41 Ibid.
But still, despite their helpfulness, the authors above primarily find pretexts interesting by translating them into “more important” issues. By contrast, Orlando Figes’ *The Crimean War: A History* takes seriously the struggle over the Holy Places and treats ideas of holy war as if they are important in motivating risky diplomacy.\(^{42}\) Unfortunately, this refreshing interpretation is largely used to explain Russian involvement, and Figes doesn’t apply the explanation to France. For Russians, the Holy Land was an “extension of their spiritual motherland” and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre the “mother church.”\(^{43}\) Russia produced massive numbers of pilgrims and the sacred geography inspired the piety of Tsar Nicholas and the Russian people. But the crusading idea of Russian war claims only works, in Figes' account, for Russia (and it barely even extends to Russia). As one reviewer describes it:

> The crusade becomes throughout the course of the narrative more of metaphor than Figes, one suspects, originally intended. This does mean the book captures the heady mix of orthodoxy, nationalism, and identity contained in the Russian pre-revolutionary concept of empire. But it doesn't have such resonance with French, British and especially Austrian calculations. The same toxic messianic brew is not detectable in Palmerston's veins, or Louis Napoleon's.\(^{44}\)

But certainly just because there was no “messianic brew” flowing in the Tuileries itself doesn’t mean that there weren’t many other French crusaders! Compared to the Orthodox, writes Figes, “Nothing like this ardour could be found among Catholics or Protestants, for whom the Holy Places were objects of historical interest and romantic sentiment rather than religious devotion.”\(^{45}\) As I argue below, I think this is a serious misreading of the French public’s *mentalité* on the eve of the Crimea War. Figes cites as anecdotal evidence of this assertion the airy disdain of the celebrations of an Anglican and a Unitarian from England, and cites an English historian

---

\(^{42}\)In one of the editions for the book the title was accordingly *Crimea: The Last Crusade*. Indeed, the first chapter (of all editions) is called “Religious Wars.” But the title was changed post-publication to *The Crimean War*, perhaps because the lens of crusading and religious imagery really only fits Figes’ discussion of Russia.

\(^{43}\)Figes, 3-4.


\(^{45}\)Figes, 4.
and travel writer about the lack of French pilgrims in Jerusalem. “The closest likeness of a pilgrim which the Latin church could supply was often a mere French tourist with a journal and a theory and a plan of writing a book.”\footnote{Alexander Kinglake quoted in Figes, 4.} Certainly these observations indicate something interesting about the observers themselves, but equating pilgrimage with religious ardor and using an Anglican and a Unitarian as a guide to the interest of all French Catholics is an indication of Figes’ neglect of the context of mid-century France.

It’s possible that it is easier to assume the prominence of the state in decision making (as opposed to the role of the public) from the outside. Figes’ familiarity with both the British and Russian sources make his account of the integral public pressure exerted by Orthodox messianism (in Russia) and the press (in Britain) nuanced and fascinating. It’s also true that Napoleon III indeed appears, by most accounts, to lack any sincerity in matters of faith, while Tsar Nicholas I seemingly exudes piety and calling. But Figes sees the British and French as appalled by Orthodox passion and having more in common “with the relatively secular Muslims, whose strict reserve and dignity were more in sympathy with their own private forms of quiet prayer.”\footnote{Ibid., 5.} This is certainly an unwarranted generalization. For the French, according to Figes, the Question of the Holy Places was only a question of Russian expansionism. “Unaware of and indifferent to the importance of the Holy Lands to Russia’s spiritual identity, European commentators saw only a growing Russian menace to the interests of the Western Churches there.”\footnote{Ibid., 5.}

And yet, Figes himself does acknowledge that French myopia wasn’t quite so pronounced, conceding at a few points the pressure of the French public and press on Napoleon

\footnote{Alexander Kinglake quoted in Figes, 4.}
\footnote{Ibid., 5.}
\footnote{Ibid., 5.}
III. “‘We have a heritage to conserve there, an interest to defend,’ declared the Catholic provincial press. ‘Centuries will pass before the Russians shed a fraction of the blood that the French spilled in the Crusades for the Holy Places. The Russians took no part in the Crusades...The primacy of France among the Christian nations is so well established in the Orient that the Turks call Christian Europe Frankistan, the country of the French.’”49 And a few pages later, Figes references Catholic concern with Eastern “invasiveness”. “A French newspaper, meanwhile, gave warning that the Russians represented a special menace to all Catholics because ‘they hope to convert us to their heresy.’”50 Figes also concedes that the French public, or at least those members of the press who putatively had them in mind as audience (denoted here as ‘provincial’ seemingly because of their ardent Catholicism), were in favor of the Crimean War. And this pressure was influential on Napoleon III’s political decisions:

The conflict deepened in May 1851, when Louis-Napoléon appointed his close friend the Marquis Charles de La Valette as ambassador in the Turkish capital. Two and a half years after his election as President of France, Napoleon was still struggling to assert his power over the National Assembly. To strengthen his position he had made a series of concessions to Catholic opinion: in 1849 French troops had returned the Pope to Rome after he had been forced out of the Vatican by revolutionary crowds; and the Falloux Law of 1850 had opened the way to an increase in the number of Catholic-run schools. The appointment of La Valette was another major concession to clerical opinion. The Marquis was a zealous Catholic, a leading figure in the shadowy ‘clerical party’ which was widely viewed as pulling the hidden strings of France’s foreign policy. The influence of this clerical faction was particularly strong on France’s policies towards the Holy Places, where it called for a firm stand against the Orthodox menace.51 La Valette eventually went on to exceed his mandate from Napoleon, using aggressive language and threats in an attempt to cow the Ottomans into concessions. His aggression was a key turning point: immediately after this crisis Britain and Russia began preparing for war. Although Napoleon III, Figes writes, may have been happy about the opportunity such a crisis created, he doesn’t seem to have initiated La Valette’s aggressiveness. “It is doubtful whether La Valette had the approval of Napoleon for such an explicit threat of war. Napoleon was not

49 Ibid., 5-6.
50 Ibid., 7.
51 Ibid., 7-8.
particularly interested in religion. He was ignorant about the details of the Holy Lands dispute, and basically defensive in the Middle East.”52

In other words, Figes concedes the influence of Catholic public opinion on the government while asserting its impotence. At most, Catholic pressure came from “a shadowy ‘clerical party’”53? In fact, as I argue below, it makes much more sense to understand Napoleon III’s entry into the Crimean War as a defense (however agreeable to the Emperor) against a tidal wave of Catholic interest in military action in the Levant, at least if one judges by the publishing interests of the French Catholic press. The lead in France up to the “Last Crusade”, as Figes’ subtitle calls it, can be accurately understood only by first recognizing the unusual and deceptive state of mutuality among French Catholics after 1848. As will become clear below, this mutuality was significant and important, but also concealed crucial differences in outlook and political temperament, differences which would surface with renewed intensity after the war.

The Nerve Center of Christianity

It was in the tense few years before the outbreak of the Crimean War that the French public became actively educated about the “Question of the Holy Places.” Between 1848 and 1853 alone, hundreds of books were published in France on La Terre Sainte (the Holy Land) or Les Lieux Saints (the Holy Places).54 Eugène Boré, a Lazarist priest and missionary, had been sent by the French government to investigate and report on the situation in the Holy Land and his resultant monograph, Question des Lieux Saints, was initially written as a legal brief for the

52 Ibid., 8.
53 Ibid.
54 123 separate WorldCat.org, search conducted on 19 November 2010 using the terms “Terre Sainte” and “Lieux Saints” and the limiters “1848-1853,” “books,” and “French.” The same limiters used to search the Bibliothèque Nationale de France at http://gallica.bnf.fr/ produced 174 results for “Terre Sainte” and 481 results for “Lieux Saints,” search conducted on 20 June 2015.
government of the Second Republic in March 1848 and was published in Paris in 1850.\textsuperscript{55} Other monographs on the topic, like that written by Abbé Darboy\textsuperscript{56}, were in the tradition of Chateaubriand: travelogues and history books for religious tourists. But these works also intended to shape European opinion about Ottoman affairs. And then there was Eugène Veuillot, the brother of Louis Veuillot, the editor of \textit{L’Univers}. Eugène Veuillot’s call to arms at the outbreak of the Crimean War carried a very different tone.\textsuperscript{57} While Boré was a missionary and scholar and Darboy was a liberal member of the Parisian high episcopate, Veuillot was a staunch Ultramontanist and monarchist. In other circumstances and on many issues of importance, these three writers would have been opponents, and their perceptions of the real threats to French preeminence are distinctly rendered. But all three were, in their way, responding to the events of June 1848, and the death of Affre, in their support of France’s avenging state. All three also chose to invoke the Crusades to talk about Jerusalem. Most importantly, all three begged France to project its influence once again, as it had during the Crusades, towards the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Decades earlier, Chateaubriand had stood, transfixed, by the “nerve center” of his Christianity. “The Church of the Holy Sepulchre,” he wrote, “is composed of several churches, founded on unequal ground, lit by a multitude of lamps, is singularly mysterious...

\begin{quote}
silence reigns, conducive for piety and depth of soul. Christian priests, of different sects, inhabit different parts of the edifice. From the arches above, where they are wedged like pigeons, into the chapels, and into underground vaults, their chants are heard at all hours both of the day and night; the organ of the Latins, the cymbals of the Abyssinian priest, the voice of the Greek caloyer, the prayer of the solitary Armenian, the plaintive accents of the Coptic monk, assail your ear separately or all together; you know not where these concerts are coming from; you inhale the perfume of incense, without seeing the hand that burns it; you only see the pontiff going to celebrate the deepest of mysteries on the very spot where they were
\end{quote}

accomplished, pass behind the columns, and disappear in the gloom of the temple.\textsuperscript{58}

The cacophony of sensory input overcame the romantic traveler while praying in the little chamber, and he found himself unable to get up from his knees. His eyes, he explained, were riveted to the tomb of Jesus. “The only thing I can assure you of, is that when I saw this victorious tomb, I felt only my own weakness and when my guide exclaimed with St. Paul, ‘O death, where is thy victory! O grave, where is thy sting!’ I opened my ears, as if death were about to reply that he was vanquished and imprisoned in this monument.”\textsuperscript{59}

Carried away in the rapture of sacred proximity, Chateaubriand rose and walked towards the wall of the church. On it hung two monuments to the French crusading brothers Godfrey and Baldwin of Bouillon, directly below the chapel where the Holy Cross was said to have been erected. Godfrey, the first (unofficial) King of Jerusalem, had refused to wear a crown in the city where Jesus wore a cross of thorns, taking instead the title “Defender of the Holy Sepulchre.”\textsuperscript{60} Inscribed in Latin on his tomb was the following epitaph: “Here lies Godfrey of Bouillon, who conquered all this territory for the Christian religion. May his soul be at rest with Christ.” Later in his book, Chateaubriand conjured up the moment when the heroes of France had first appeared in Jerusalem.

Godfrey appeared on the frontiers of Palestine in the year 1099 of Jesus Christ; he was accompanied by Baldwin, Eustace, Tancred, Raimond de Toulouse, the counts of Flanders and Normandy, l’Etolde, who was the first on the walls of Jerusalem; Guicher, already celebrated for having split a lion in two; Gaston de Foix, Gerard de Houssillon, Rambaud d’Orange, St. Paul, and Lambert. Peter the hermit marched with his pilgrim’s staff at the head of these knights...Jerusalem was soon under siege, and at three in the afternoon of the 15\textsuperscript{th} of July 1099, the standard of the cross waved upon its walls.\textsuperscript{61}

For French readers, this was a list of legendary national celebrities. “The time of these


\textsuperscript{59}\textit{Ibid.}, 269.

\textsuperscript{60}Godfrey’s brother Baldwin had no such qualms, taking the title of King of Jerusalem officially on the death of his brother.

\textsuperscript{61}\textit{Ibid.}, 287.
expeditions is the heroic period of our history; it is then that epic poetry was born.” One can hear Chateaubriand’s disdain at those who find barbarism in the Crusades. Why should France be embarrassed by its past? “Anything which makes a nation marvelous should not be resented by that very nation.” To ignore the glorious was tantamount to eliminating all but mammon as a mover of the human heart. “One would try in vain to deny it, there is something in our hearts which makes us love glory; men are not only made of calculations of profit and loss; it would be debasing to believe so.”

Chateaubriand recounted the brief few steps required to move from the tomb of Jesus to the space that had once held the cross itself and from there to the monuments of Godfrey and Baldwin of Bouillon. These spaces were all made sacred, in a sense, by holy absences and vibrated, for the author, with a national presence. “I saluted the ashes of these royal knights, who had earned their rest near the tomb which they had liberated. These ashes are French ashes, and they alone rest in the shadow of the tomb of Jesus Christ. What badge of honor for my country.” For French Catholics, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was a place in which French nationalism intersected powerfully with the history of Christianity. It had the power to rally and inspire. Baldwin’s ashes lay in the shadow of the broken tomb of Jesus.

The French tradition of orientalist and religious interest in the Levant was hardly brand new: the heady mix of nationalist and Christian triumphalism invoked by the Crusades had been useful and popular for centuries. But modern European interest in the Middle East had exploded with Napoleon I’s invasion of Egypt and return with countless antiquities. By the 1830s and 40s the antiquities market had begun to boom in France, especially antiquities coming from the

---

62 Ibid., 286-7.
63 Ibid., 270.
Ottoman Empire. The French government took a direct hand in funding and directing archaeological excavations like Jean-François Champollion’s in Egypt in 1828-9 and Charles Texier’s digs in Turkey in search of Mesopotamian artifacts in the 1830s. The first tourist guides to Middle Eastern antiquities available in Europe were published in French, and the tourist boom and the exploding antiquities market had a synergistic effect on European interest in the Orient. In Egypt, French archaeologists had complete dominance over digs and artifacts during the independent rule of Mehmet Ali, and with every returning scholar and pilgrim-diarist came new information, new artifacts, new sketches of ruins and new condescension about insufficient Ottoman historical stewardship. At mid-century, Paris had become the “Mecca for European orientalist scholars.”

Most of the archaeologists were Christians, and the rush for eastern antiquities was also a search for objects which could corroborate the Bible as an historically accurate text. Austen Henry Layard’s excavation of Nineveh, for example, was publicized by evangelicals who read his studies as confirmation of the biblical account of that city’s destruction by God. In 1853 Layard published a second study of Nineveh which included a list of fifty-five rulers, cities and countries which were also mentioned both in the Bible and at the excavation site. And in 1847, the Louvre had made available to the general public the first collection of Assyrian monuments. This was largely thanks to the work of the French consul and scientist Paul-Émile Botta, mentioned above, and the excavations corroborated the existence of another figure mentioned in

---


65 Champollion was the first to publish a translation of the Rosetta Stone taken from Egypt by Napoleon I and his later expedition brought back a piece of the Luxor obelisk to Paris.

66 Garcia, 140.
the Bible: Sargon II.\textsuperscript{67} Even the pope was not immune to the passion for “sacred archaeology.” In 1852, Pius IX created the Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology to continue and sponsor such work in Rome and abroad.\textsuperscript{68} For many Christians, then, sacred archaeology involved utilizing the modern tools of historical science as a way to affirm their faith and provide information that could be useful in proselytization.

But for French Catholics, the modern usefulness of contemplating the actual sacred spaces of the Levant began with the romantic Catholic émigré, François-René de Chateaubriand. Chateaubriand’s memoirs of his travels through the eastern Mediterranean and the Levant in the first decades of the nineteenth century were pursued, as he believed all travels to the Holy Land should be, “with the Bible in his hand.”\textsuperscript{69} For Chateaubriand, a key part of his goals in traveling there was to inquire into “the authenticity of the Christian traditions about Jerusalem.”\textsuperscript{70} The early parts of his accounts are a history of uninterrupted succession of the commemoration of cites of veneration. The most important proof of the authenticity of the Holy Places in Jerusalem and its environs is the \textit{continuity} of their worship. “If the first Christians of Judea consecrated monuments to their religion, isn’t it likely that they chose to erect them on the places which had been sanctified by miracles?”\textsuperscript{71} Even acts of desecration were ultimately establishing continuity. When the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was profaned in 137 CE by Emperor Adrian who inserted a statue of Venus on Mount Calvary and one of Jupiter on the Holy Sepulchre, Chateaubriand writes, the new monuments were built intentionally on the old. “The folly of idolatry published in this way, with its foolish profanations, the madness of the Cross, which it

\textsuperscript{67}Ibid., 140-2.
\textsuperscript{68}Ibid., 104.
\textsuperscript{69}Chateaubriand, 268-9.
\textsuperscript{70}Ibid., 59.
\textsuperscript{71}Ibid., 36.
had so much interest in concealing.”

Chateaubriand filled the margins of the early chapters of his published text with date after date, emphasizing by their very quantity the continuation of a single tradition of localized veneration. It is here, again, that we discern Chateaubriand’s primary purpose: to prove the stories of Christianity to the enlightened doubters of his country. Admittedly, he writes, this task can be made more difficult by the ignorance of some believers. “I know that over long periods of time,” he allows, “an exaggerated piety, an indiscreet zeal, the ignorance attached to the times and to the inferior classes of society, may overload a religion with traditions which will not stand up to criticism”. But one must not be distracted by petty details, for “the substance of things remains forever. Eighteen centuries, all indicating the same monuments and the same facts in the same places, cannot be mistaken.”

In addition to this invocation to infallible history, Chateaubriand’s use of the Crusades also involves an emotive reconstruction of special spatial relationships inside the “nerve center of Christianity.” Contemplating the Crusaders’ graves at the foot of Calvary was to worship in an imagined sanctuary of sacred French nationalism. Furthermore, he listed the writings and travels of Peter the Hermit (“AD 1099”, says the margin), the historians of the Kingdom of Jerusalem (ruled by French princes, he notes), and the friars and monks and holy warriors who visited and wrote about the Holy Places in the centuries afterwards as evidence of continuous succession. This proof of Christianity is directed against “enlightened” critics back at home: “Anyone who honestly examines the argument advanced in this Mémoire will be convinced that, if there is anything on earth that is proven, it is the authenticity of the Christian traditions about

---

72 Ibid., 60.
73 Ibid., 66.
Jerusalem.” Beyond this, the Crusades for Chateaubriand needed to be defended against the philosophers. “The writers of the eighteenth century are desperate to represent the Crusades in an unflattering light. I was one of the first to protest against this ignorance and injustice. The Crusades were not madness, as some writers have affected to call them, neither in their goals nor in their results. The Christians were not the aggressors.”

If Islam’s expansion into Europe, checked, the author notes, by Frenchman Charles Martel, is acknowledged, “why shouldn’t the subjects of Philip I, quitting France, make the circuit of Asia, to take vengeance on the descendants of Omar in Jerusalem?” The war between Islam and Christianity wasn’t a confrontation between two (equal) forms of religious fanaticism, he argued. On the contrary, one civilization under question is clearly superior to the other:

To understand the crusades as nothing but a mob of armed pilgrims running to deliver a tomb in Palestine is to display a very limited view of history. It was not simply about the liberation of a sacred tomb, but also to determine what should triumph in the world, a religion hostile to civilization, systematically attached to ignorance, despotism and slavery, or a religion which has revived among the modern peoples the spirit of learned antiquity and abolished servitude.

Ironically, Chateaubriand’s argument posits the superiority of European enlightened culture, a culture characterized as the opposite of ignorance, despotism and slavery, against the typical Enlightenment view of the Crusades. The problem for the author is not the issue of war motivated by religion, but war motivated by the wrong religion. European precocity is the result of Christianity and could never develop within the confines of Islam.

The spirit of Islamism is persecution and conquest; the Gospel, on the contrary, inculcates only toleration and peace...Would those who cheer so loudly today for the progress of knowledge, wish to live under a religion which burned the library of Alexandria, and which takes pride in trampling mankind under foot, and which truly despises literature and the arts?

---

74 Ibid., 67.
75 Ibid., 285.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid., 285-6.
78 Ibid., 286.
The importance of crusading as a set of national and religious signifiers only increased in the decades after Chateaubriand wrote. Michaud published his *Histoire des Croisades* in 1815, and the intellectual and artistic use of the theme depended on and developed with the expansion of orientalist archeology and the wars of Charles X and Louis-Philippe in Algeria. “Of the nearly one-hundred thirty paintings on medieval topics commissioned for the monarchy by Louis Philippe for display at Versailles, nearly fifty were on crusading themes.”79 As almost all French visitors to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre noted, the crusaders had left their literal marks in the church, carving crosses into the stones.80

**Trembling with Religious Patriotism**

In March of 1848, Eugène Boré, a Lazarist priest and missionary, sent a report for the French government on the Question of the Holy Places from Constantinople.81 Boré ended the document with the following words: “We put a close to these reflections, daring to believe that we have fixed the legality of that which we have the right to undertake, and we restate with confidence that we will be able to obtain this settlement …”

The emphasis is in the original and explained by a footnote: “The same expressions given to the author by the French government.”82 Unlike Chateaubriand’s journey decades before, then, Boré’s mission was different. An orientalist scholar and priest of vast experience in Armenia, Persia, and other countries, he had been sent just a few months before the fall of the July Monarchy to investigate the situation of the Latin Catholics in the Holy Land. His instructions

79Knobler, 296. Knobler made this calculation by examining the Versailles Palace art catalog.
80Even today, Godfrey of Bouillon's swords hangs inside a display case in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.
82Ibid., 75.
were to review and summarize the legal argument for Latin ownership of the sacred sites in question, and to recommend action to the government. Commissioned by the July Monarchy, his book was completed and sent to the new Second Republic, and not published until the accession of Louis-Napoléon as president. His recommendation to the French government was to bolster Catholic support by intervening to push the Ottoman Porte towards a more aggressive strategy in protecting Latin claims:

…the Porte is deciding to opt between remaining the instrument of cupidity and of the violence of schism or becoming the loyal executrice of the obligations contracted by the intermediary of France towards Catholicism. Now Catholicism, we say, and repeating some recent words of the great pontiff Pius IX, contains two hundred million souls; why hesitate to win them by this simple act of justice that would have the more respect [by the fact that] it would be desired and ordered by the Sultan, head of Islam! The sepulcher of Christ, which used to put the East and West at struggle, would become for them the pledge, and seal for France and Turkey a closer union, advancing the work of civilizing reform [réforme civilisatrice], and covering with glory the names of the mediating officials. - Jerusalem, 19 March 1848.

During the same years Boré became part of the Congregation of the Mission (Lazarists) in 1849 at Constantinople, was ordained there in 1850, and made his vows in Paris in 1851. And yet his book is a diplomatic and legal treatise, and one in which the Crusades once again play a crucial role. His style, fitting its function, is dry, educated, and peppered with knowing asides.83

Boré’s treatise begins: “Our government cannot ignore or neglect its precious rights, the foundations of its Catholic protectorate. France has for a century closed its eyes to its great interest in the Orient. Today she is required to make brilliant repairs. In resuming the traditional policies of the Crusades, the government of the Republic will serve the cause of the Church and would enhance our preponderance in the world.”84 For Boré the Crusades function not as a fusion of French nationalism and Christian authenticity, but as the founding link of Catholic ownership of holy sites in Jerusalem and, importantly, the moment in which France first represented itself as

83 When he speaks of the stolen star of the church of the nativity, he writes: “The stolen star is not only a very small matter; it is, so to speak, the inseparable molecule of the whole, itself indivisible.” Molecular theory was in its infancy.

84 Ibid., 1-2.
the defender and protector of the Latins in Jerusalem. “Resuming the policies of the Crusades” in this sense means taking seriously France’s role in defending the imagined “country” called Catholicism. The historical and legal case comes, first, from longevity: the Catholics were there even before the Crusades. “It is true, [the Catholic] position has the advantages of an antiquity which is lost in the mists of times, and of a succession of continuity uninterrupted until today. One would be mistaken in believing that they were not established in Jerusalem until the epoch of the Crusades. We find them there much earlier, in the year 414 of the Hijra (1023).”85 In fact, he writes, the sultan Mouzaffer defended their rights from molestation calling them the “religieux francs.”86

It is here that we begin to see the difference in Boré’s treatment of Islam from that of Chateaubriand. Even after the Crusader kingdoms are deserted, and only the “poor Franciscans” carry on their guardianship, the dominant role of Islam, in Boré’s reading, is to strengthen Catholic ownership of the Holy Places over the claims of the Orthodox. Boré makes this argument by listing, moment by moment, from Sultan Bibars II in 1309 to Selim I in 1515, firmans and declarations from different overlords guaranteeing Latin rights and Catholic rites. He cites as well the unprecedented alliance set up between Francis I and Suleiman I. In 1527, Boré recounts, Suleiman responded to a French diplomat bearing Francis I’s request for rights of sanctuary: “I will return the church when the king, your master, permits the construction of a mosque in his land.” Boré even suggests that the French government should remind the current Sultan of this, and suggests French construction of mosques in Algeria as a sort of concession to

85Ibid., 5.
86This is one of the many places where French authors make use of Muslim equivalent of “francs” with all Catholics to support French intervention.
their reoccupation of the sacred geography of the Levant.\textsuperscript{87} He also shows his respect (and displays his scholarly expertise) by exclusively using dates from the Islamic calendar when discussing Ottoman decrees. Despite some exceptions, he claims, Islam has largely protected French rights, but only when France has been vigilant. The Ottomans are not the enemy: the Greeks are. However, the weakness of Ottoman central authority, and French reluctance to replace it with its own, has led to a deplorable loss of French influence.

France has, Boré writes, increasingly abandoned its role and let the matter be determined by Orthodox deceit and Ottoman weakness. Boré catalogs the piece-by-piece deterioration of Latin rights over the Holy Places through a campaign of misinformation, deceit and forgery by the Greeks. And to make matters worse, the crimes visited by Greek presumption on holy sites (by redecorating and claiming ownership, for example) have been against French nationalism, as well as Catholic doctrine:

Calvary was turned over; the cavity where the redeeming cross was planted was detached and the stone was removed and replaced by another that offers a sacrilege to the veneration of pilgrims. Next to that, behind the stone called \textit{l’Onction} [the Anointing], where the body of Our Lord was washed and embalmed, the bodies of Godfrey of Bouillon and his brother Baldwin rested gloriously, under the sepulchral stones, on which M. de Chateaubriand and many other travellers have conserved for us the inscriptions.

Here once again one can see the rhetorical usefulness of the First Crusade in fusing Catholicism and French nationalism within a discrete space of sacred geography. Successive Muslim governments, he argues, have repeatedly respected these spaces, but the Greek Orthodox priests have not. And France ought to be ashamed if it doesn’t act aggressively towards this invasiveness.

The Arabs, the Mameluks of Egypt and the Ottomans have alternately, in their conquests, spared the ashes of these other conquerors, enemies for some of them, thought of with little sympathy and of a different religion; they have respected in these ashes the honor of the West and the inviolable asylum of death. The Greek monks have violated these tombs, scattered the bones, broken the marble on which Latin inscriptions bear witness to our property rights, for example with the Star of Bethlehem, and they still remain unpunished masters of the place! Only ignorance of this [loss] that we denounce to the French government can explain and justify [the government’s] patience. Has France waived its rights to protect the Holy Places,

\textsuperscript{87}Ibid., 49.
leaving the Greeks to dispose of them arbitrarily?  

Since the last capitulations “the Catholic religious find themselves the [legal] owners of sanctuaries which are not any more in their hands.” And not only are these properties “bought with the alms of Christian kings and the faithful”, but they have also been confirmed by the pope. “How would France respond, if the leader of Catholicism demanded an account of its sacred patrimony? And this account will be soon demanded, because the new and dignified patriarch sent by His Holiness Pius IX, to reinvest the seat of Jerusalem, has the special mandate of an inquest...”

After a general history of the Holy Places and Catholic ownership, and while demanding French government acceptance of its historic responsibility, Boré proceeds by enumerating the demands of Catholics in Jerusalem and instructing the government exactly how to argue each point with the Ottomans, including anticipating the arguments of the Greeks. Boré makes a special point to note that he is not asking for all sites of Catholic heritage to be returned, just those specifically guaranteed by treaties and firmans of the Ottomans. “But we repeat, the letter of the treaties does not authorize us to reclaim the ancient church of the Mount of Olives, which is now a mosque...” Neither could they claim access to the house of Pilate (“which is now a barracks”), or the prison of St. Peter (“now a Muslim tannery”). What the Catholics want, writes Boré, is the six spaces specifically guaranteed by treaties. This included the two cupolas, big and small, of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which under the leadership of the French the Latins had already repaired thrice (in 1558, in 1669, and in 1719). And furthermore, inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Latins must have rights over the anointing stone (on which the body of Jesus was laid to be embalmed), and the restoration, at least, of the recently gone missing

---

88 Ibid., 42-44.
89 Ibid., 48-9.
funerary marbles carrying the inscriptions of Godfrey of Bouillon, and the other French crusaders.\textsuperscript{90}

It would be a simple thing, Boré suggests, for Europe in concert to put pressure on the Ottomans and Greeks to make this last part happen. “Surely the people of Belgium, Germany and England would associate themselves voluntarily to this tribute rendered to the heroes of the Crusades and to this act of filial piety to the West.”\textsuperscript{91} The Greeks will try to suggest that you are foreigners, he wrote, but you have as much right to live there as they, as the treaties and \textit{firmans} confirm. If the Sultan wanted to undertake the repairs he should be encouraged to do so. But only provided that he knew he was making repairs on behalf of the actual title owners: the French.

As Boré closed his treatise, he reminded his readers of the real problem. The Orthodox religious were malicious, but the \textit{Porte} was weak. The Crusades, for Boré, were both legal and historical precedent for French backing of Latin claims on the Holy Places. But they also highlighted how far the ability of the Ottoman government to enforce its claims had fallen since earlier Caliphates which had ruled by law and could enforce it. Instead of the projection of its authority and the honor with which it used to treat Christians, the old-fashioned infrastructure and political system of the Ottoman state was now dominated by bribery and corruption:

Once the remoteness, the imperfection of the administrative system, the obscurities deliberately piled on the issue, ignorance and lack of freedom in the courts could hurt the cause of Holy Places and promote injustice. Today the harmonization of distances by means of steam, administrative improvements, advertising, wisdom and integrity of men at the head of government, allow us to hope that false will be distinguished from true, that the central government will have the strength to be obeyed to the ends of the empire, that public opinion, which is also a court, will ratify the judgment of the wise arbitrators who will revisit the trial, and that the fleets of the Republic can provide the necessary prompt execution of

\begin{itemize}
  \item The other spaces Boré instructs the French government that they have a case to claim access or ownership to are listed on pages 53-70. They include: “The seven arches of the Holy Virgin from the chapel where after the resurrection, Our Lord appeared to the holy Madeleine [and which] has equally always belonged to Catholics.” And, outside Jerusalem, the subterranean chapel “containing the tomb of the Holy Virgin” and the great church of Bethlehem.
  \item \textit{Ibid.}, 59.
\end{itemize}
The problem, it was clear, needed to be solved by French industrial might and administrative virtuosity. Boré’s basic legal and historical case was imitated by many other French commentators, although the exact opposite legal and historical case could be made and was made by some across the Mediterranean. The fact that Chateaubriand’s “war for civilization vs. Islam” was completely missing from Boré’s account is at first glance easily explained: this was a diplomatic document at a time in which the Ottomans were not the enemy, but instead a potential ally. But the early date of composition (1848) and Boré’s obvious willingness to criticize the Ottoman Empire were also indications of a more general worldview becoming dominant in France. The problems facing Catholics in Jerusalem had less to do with the antithetical worldviews of Islam and Christianity, and more to do with economic backwardness and central government weakness.

Georges Darboy’s Jérusalem et la Terre Sainte, a travel guide to the Holy Land for modern pilgrims, was published soon after Boré’s book. One of the youngest and most celebrated of the circle around the Archbishop of Paris, Abbé Darboy had previously frustrated his superiors at the seminary in Nancy by lecturing on Hegel and Saint-Simon and for his unorthodox interpretations of the Greek Fathers. Darboy was thus a “springtime” priest, willing to experiment theologically in novel ways, but after the June Days firmly committed to the state against any threats of disorder. Though couched as a straightforward guide to the Holy Land for

92 Ibid., 72.
93 See Réponse à la Brochure de M. Eugène Boré, Intitulée: Question Des Lieux Saints (Constantinople: Imprimerie Ant. Coronila & Platon Paspalli, 1851), which makes clear the selectiveness of Boré’s evidence by listing, often verbatim, firmans and decrees stating the opposite of those listed by Boré, as well as suggesting the actual brutality of Islam in dealing with Christians.
modern pilgrims, Darboy’s book occasionally revealed in brutal assessments of the government, culture and religion of the Ottoman Empire.96

Darboy began by distinguishing his account from other contemporary accounts that were available to the French public. Without mentioning any names, Darboy suggested that other accounts have been on the one hand childish, overly personal and superficial, and on the other excessively imaginative, romantic and false (albeit often enjoyable to read). In opposition, Darboy “wanted to gather in this book accurate and varied notes and present a picture of Jerusalem and the Holy Land which was not devoid of interest,” but, more importantly, a book which was “drafted with the desire to avoid the defects often attributed to the writers who have traveled in and described the east.”97 Explicitly Darboy was treating what he saw as the excessively romanticized view of Jerusalem presented by his contemporaries, and implicitly, he was criticizing Chateaubriand. His purpose was not to craft a legal argument or to prove authenticity, but to shape public perception of the meaning and history of Palestine and its connection to France. Most importantly, his account strengthens the motivation for French intervention by arguing that Palestine was a mess, badly governed and desperately in need of industrial intervention from the west. In support of this thesis, he also argued that Palestine’s sole importance lay in its history: a history of pilgrimages (people going there, not people living there), a history of Jesus, and a history of France.

Darboy used the Crusades for purposes of historical education and French nationalism, but not to establish a legal claim on the Holy Land. For that latter purpose he points the reader in a footnote to Boré’s book. While most of the other contemporary works under review focused on

96 The frequent politically-loaded remarks may account for his publishing the book semi-anonymously (“Abbé G. D.”), considering the potential of public relations damage due to his closeness with the archbishop.

97 Darboy, Preface.
the First Crusade exclusively, likely because of the dominant role France played in it, Darboy plods through all of them. And not just all of the Crusades, but also all pilgrimages to the Holy Land that have left behind prominent memories in France. The Crusades, for Darboy, were just one of many kinds of pilgrimages, alternately peaceful and justifiably bellicose. Even the modern French tourist was a kind of pilgrim. And unlike the Germans, the French traveler didn’t mistake “obscurity for profundity,” but strove for clarity and “science without pedantry.” To Darboy this history, in a very real sense, belonged to France.

Darboy also regularly gave signals that his treatment would be both fair and contemporary, unlike the many available travelogues by romantic and biased authors. At first glance he seems to be taking a similar approach to that of Boré when it comes to Islam: he pointed out the protection of Catholic rights through successive sultans and notes that during the Crusades both sides committed excesses. After the crusader kingdoms fell, the new overlords “sometimes showed tolerance, often fanaticism and cruelty.” Taking an extraordinary step for a time of romantic glorification of Godfrey and the French crusaders, Darboy reminds readers that on their triumphant first entry into Jerusalem in 1099, the Crusading army “forgot the example and the lessons of the divine Master and soiled their victory by a horrible massacre.” But despite this, the Crusades are a glorious part of French history, and even the chroniclers from other countries pale in comparison to the French:

...it is France that occupies the first place in the crusades; its action and its preponderance is everywhere felt. A Frenchman, Peter the Hermit, raised Europe against the oppressors of the holy city; a French pope, Urban II, in a French council, decided on the first expedition overseas; it was commanded by a prince whose name belonged to France, by Godfrey of Bouillon, duke of lower Lorraine. The French founded a kingdom in Jerusalem; they spoke there the language of their fathers; France occupied itself, for two centuries, in conquering or defending the tomb of the Savior; our ideas and our feelings have so predominated in the crusades, and our role shone with so much brilliance, that the Orientals gave the name Francs to all.

---

98 Ibid., 51-2.
99 Ibid., 16.
100 Ibid., 28.
Europeans.\textsuperscript{101}

He continued by listing many other kings and warriors (notably St. Louis, for example), chroniclers, annalists, scientists and witnesses to French interests in the Middle East. In short, for Darboy, the Crusades were essentially French. And though the crusader kingdoms ended in failure, it was a noble and tragic failure – a cause worth dying for. Once again, the territory under question was presented as sacred and indivisible. Darboy quotes the words of the inhabitants of Jerusalem to Saladin as he besieged their city: “We cannot cede to you the town where our God died; we cannot sell it to you either.”\textsuperscript{102}

On reaching the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and reviewing its major features and the story of Jesus it represents, Darboy reflected on the meaning of the place. Compared to Chateaubriand’s, Darboy’s account is much less interested in the authenticity of the place itself, although he considered its accurate location self-evident. But it was the animating spirit and the story that captured him. On the one hand this was of course a special space. But the things that were born here had moved away and were present no more. He meant this in more than one sense: Christ was risen and had transcended space and time. “He will rule the future, as he ruled the past, as he does the inner life of the present, whether one knows it or not.”\textsuperscript{103} But also, the Gospel, though born here, had relocated:

From the Gospel [Europe] drew its intellectual and moral superiority, the progressive kindness of its ethics, the perfection of its laws, the greatness of its institutions and even her hope in the future. If we would fall into decrepitude, it would only be in losing the Gospel; and if the more or less barbarous peoples of Asia, of Africa, of the oceanic islands….will seat themselves one day…at the banquet of civilization, this is only the day when they will accept the Gospel…\textsuperscript{104}

These reflections on the new chosen ones were immediately followed by a more specific

\textsuperscript{101}Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{102}Ibid., 184.
\textsuperscript{103}Ibid., 202.
\textsuperscript{104}Ibid., 205.
call to French mission, as Darboy described what lay underneath the chapel of the Cross in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre: the sword and spurs of Godfrey of Bouillon. “The grip of the valiant blade was made of gilded iron; the gold has fallen off, but the glory remains attached to it, and no French hand can touch this relic without trembling with a religious patriotism.”

The other reason that the history of the Holy Land belonged to France was that the present owners did not deserve to be its caretakers, a belief that Darboy made clear from the preface of his book. “We must say it bluntly, this country [Palestine], to consider it only in its present state, is not worth the difficulty for Europeans to go see it eight hundred miles [away], and they really only go there because of its great past and the memories and beliefs associated with it.” Effectively, the value of Jerusalem was only in the sacred geography of its past and not in the people and culture of this underutilized province of the Ottoman Empire. With Boré, Darboy believed that the major problem was the backwardness of the Ottoman Empire. “Indeed, from the perspective of the triple relationship of science, art and industry, Palestine is dead today; only the ruins remain and [its people don’t] even know how to make them last.” To Darboy, Palestine was ripe for modernization. “This is why to the statements designed to make known the nature of the soil and its products, the population statistics, the description of customs and ruins, we felt obliged to join the account of the facts that make up the history of Palestine. A few pages are enough to depict the present state of this country: the soil is fertile but uncultivated; for one man whom [the soil] nourishes in a paltry manner, it could feed easily twelve or fifteen; [without economic investment] despotism and misery will [continue to] reign with impunity. Such, in summary, is Palestine today, but it holds a great weight in the destiny of the world.”

105 Ibid., 206.
106 Ibid., Preface.
107 Ibid., Preface.
Those entrusted with the proprietorship of the sites of Jesus’ birth, death and resurrection were woefully underperforming in their trust. And even if they had kept the “ruins” of their sacred geography intact, they were not in possession of the sacred story capable of giving the ruins value. “[T]he ruins are given value...” he explained, “… only through the ideas of which they keep the imprint and are mute witnesses.” For this reason, argued Darboy, an account of Palestine was valuable only inasmuch as it rendered the spirit of Christianity which animated its ruins. “Consequently, that which can give charm and importance to a work which takes Palestine as its subject, this is above all the narration of the events which have illustrated these lands, where eighteen centuries ago Jesus was shaking the world or where medieval Europe, in the expression of Anna Comnena, was torn from its foundations and threw itself into Asia.”

Here the author coupled historical nostalgia with an urging for France to recapitulate this movement into Asia.

The more reflective he became as he travelled around Palestine, the more disgusted Darboy seemed with the present state of things compared to the momentous nature of its past. “[There is] great misfortune, and shame mixed with holiness in everything... in Jerusalem. A curse, under the form of the despotisme musulman, saddens the interior of the town, and in the form of the ruins and sterility, it saddens also the outside of the town.” Gazing down from the Mount of Olives “all seems sterile and dried out.” With its cavalcade of traveling religious and foreigners “no place less resembles a country... it looks more like a place of exile.” Developed infrastructure was hardly to be found. Jerusalem had “only narrow, covered, dirt streets, always

---

108 Ibid., Preface.
109 Ibid., 216.
110 Ibid., 221.
111 Ibid., 227.
dark and nearly deserted.” Residential and business districts were fatally impoverished. “The houses are low, square, surmounted by a terrace that crushes them and gives them an air of massive tombs. The shops spread wretchedness, not luxury, nor any of the wonders of industry.” Both commerce and agriculture were stifled by danger and difficulty. “The farmer lives in distress; the Arab is a vagabond and hates labor, the Turk should be protecting those he plunders. We impute evil to the pashas and the higher authorities, who put the blame on the lazy and unruly character of the population. That which is certain is that wretchedness appears pervasive and persistent in Jerusalem, as in the rest of Palestine.”

As Darboy finished his book, after traveling through other parts of the Levant, he became, if possible, even more explicit about the source of this “pervasive wretchedness.” Islam was to blame for this ruination.

[One looks out at the] miserable huts along a shoreline on which European civilization would create many flourishing cities, some Arabs in rags on soil that could feed five hundred thousand men; barbarians trampling with reckless ignorance and coarse fanaticism over the ground that gave us a religion of science and freedom: this is what the traveler encounters alongside a sea full of beauty, under a sky sparkling and pure, and in the beautiful plain of Sharon, going from Mount Carmel to Jaffa. It seems that the old mahométisme drags behind it widowhood and desolation: the earth under its feet does nothing productive, cities become depopulated. If Europe does not intervene with its conserving activity, [the land will] be suffocated quietly, it would seal the tomb of the past and in the near future, the traveler, after going through Judea, could describe it with a single word by saying all is devoured, even the ruins: etiam periere ruinæ.

Boré’s diplomatic brief and Darboy’s historical travelogue had one thing in common: both begged and demanded that the French government involve itself in the Question of the Holy Places. Their style is of the educated high episcopate, their tone urbane and fluent in the newest advances in science and orientalist history and archaeology. And both of them also believed that France’s role was not just to be religious protector but also to engage in a civilizing mission using its superior commercial and even industrial strength. This was the language of the new

\[112\] Ibid., 227.
\[113\] Ibid., 395-6.
imperialism couched in the cloak of moral crusade. It is difficult to doubt their sincerity, but also impossible to avoid the conclusion of their arrogance, especially Darboy’s polemical passages, which regularly hint that the native inhabitants of the Levant deserve neither proprietorship of the Holy Places nor the land itself, and he also suggests that this is both by virtue of their religion and their cultural (or racial) incapacity for work. Like Caesar contemplating Troy where “even the ruins were destroyed” (etiam periere ruinae, cited above), Palestine’s time in history was finished and the country must now make obeisance to a new Rome.

At the end of June in 1854, days after French and British forces occupied Greece, a statue was commemorated in the square outside of the Cathedral at Amiens. The towering bronze figure held aloft a cross in his right hand, brandished like a weapon. Another cross was emblazoned on his tunic and his grim expression admitted no wavering of purpose. This was Gédéon de Forceville’s Peter the Hermit. Most French Catholics believed that it was Peter the Hermit’s return from pilgrimage to the Holy Land and his itinerant activism which had finally triggered Pope Urban II’s declaration of the First Crusade in 1095. As a symbol, he represented the prophetic rights of the French Catholic religious to demand of their country the protection of Catholics and their patrimony.

Eugène Veuillot’s contribution to the discussion of the Holy Places was also an apologia for a war just begun. At the same time as the statue was erected in Amiens, the Crimean War officially got underway. He began his discussion of the preludes to the “war against Russia” by remembering the First Crusade. Quoting the twelfth-century chronicler William of Tyre,¹¹⁴ he commenced the first chapter with a section called “The Crusades and the War of 1854”, which remembered the story of Peter the Hermit. “In 1093,” he wrote,

¹¹⁴ Historians no longer accept uncritically the histories of William of Tyre, and importantly, the prominent role of Peter the Hermit in initiating the First Crusade, of which the only substantive account is William’s.
there was in France, in the diocese of Amiens, a hermit named Peter, a man of great virtue and living in extreme poverty. He went for devotion to visit the Holy Sepulcher and was profoundly touched to see the Holy Places under the domination of infidels. The oppression that the Muslims had pushed on the Christians broke his heart, and he asked the patriarch of Jerusalem if there wasn’t any remedy to so many ills. ‘We have some hope, [the patriarch] responded to the French pilgrim, if your people who serve God sincerely, and whose forces are still whole and formidable to our enemies, would come to our aid, or at least pray to Jesus Christ for us; because we expect nothing from the Greeks any more, although they are closer to us, by location and blood line and they are richer than us...’

‘Please come help us,’ the Christians in Palestine were saying, Veuillot reminded his French readers. “The next night, Peter had a vision, he believed, in his sleep, hearing Our Lord say to him: ‘Get up, hurry up; execute with boldness that which is required of you. I will be with you, because it is time to purge the Holy Places, and to rescue my servants.’” Peter immediately returned to Europe, and, barefoot, impressed upon the people of France and the pope himself the urgency of his mission. Stirring the people of France to action, “all thoughts turned towards the East.”

It is tempting to conclude from Veuillot’s discussion of the role of Peter the Hermit that he identifies Peter with the function being currently played by L’Univers: the press, like Peter’s sermons, could rouse the conscience of the faithful.

“In those days,” Veuillot added wistfully, “the whole of Europe was Catholic, and having only one faith, she had only one heart which was visibly [dedicated] to the interests of God.”

Right away Veuillot was introducing a theme that made him distinct from authors like Darboy and Boré: a focus on what appeared to him to be a national duty to publicly rededicate France to the Church. Some months later, Veuillot continued, Pope Urban II, “French by birth,” convened the famous council at Clermont. By his side was Peter the Hermit, who repeated what he had seen of the “scandals” in Jerusalem. When he had finished, reported Veuillot, Urban II arose to address the crowd and summarized what they had heard. “[Peter] told you how the city of the King of Kings, which transmits to the others the precepts of a pure faith, was constrained to

---


116 Ibid., 2.
serve the superstitions of pagans; how the miraculous tomb where death could not guard its prey, this tomb, source of the life to come, on which rose the sunrise of the resurrection, was contaminated by those who will only be resurrected to serve as straw for eternal fire.”

In case there was any doubt who it was that embodied the fuel for the eternal fire in a modern context, the passage helpfully clarified. “The victorious impiety has spread its shadows on the richest countries of Asia; the barbarian hordes of the Turks have planted their standards on the rivers of the Hellespont, from where they menace all Christian countries. If God himself, arming his children, cannot stop the barbarians in their triumphant march, which nation, which country could shut the doors of the West?” Veuillot’s treatise, coming as it does just a few years after Darboy’s and Boré’s, casts the commencing war as a recapitulation of France’s crusading duty more specifically than his predecessors. “‘The Church,’” said the pope, as quoted or paraphrased by Veuillot, “‘places its principal hope in the courage of the French - your ancestors under Charles Martel, stopped and broke the Mahometan power on the plains of Poitiers: it is for you to go to achieve in Asia their glorious work. Knowing your bravery and your piety, I came to you, my compatriots, I crossed the Alps and I bring you the word of God!’”

“The sovereign pontiff hadn’t finished speaking,” wrote Veuillot passionately, “but already a unanimous cry, an enthusiastic acclamation came from the Christian crowd: ‘God wills it! God wills it.’ The Crusades began, civilization was saved, Europe escaped from the yoke of Islamism.” Again, in case anyone had missed the barely implicit comparison to the war now in progress, he continued: “In 1854, a French army set sail for the Orient; like eight centuries previously, the conflict was engaged on the subject of the Holy Places.” Veuillot acknowledged

117 Ibid., 3.
118 Ibid., 3: emphasis in original.
119 Ibid., 3-4.
briefly some small differences. This time it wasn’t the Turk they fought, for he was an ally, “or rather a protégé.”\footnote{Ibid., 6.} As a protégés, the Ottomans were a bit lacking, perhaps. The distinctions between Catholics and Orthodox were lost on their leaders, for example. “The pasha and the members of the Divan would have maybe had some difficulty understanding this elementary distinction”, especially considering how “the sophisms of the Greeks” have taken advantage of the “ignorance of the Turks”.\footnote{Ibid., 25.}

And France wasn’t the same pure, unified, Catholic nation that Veuillot imagined it had been in the Middle Ages. But it was doing the right thing, and he gave a nod to the decision of Napoleon III to consecrate the French navy with images of Mary. “If the cross is no longer on the uniforms of our army, Immaculate Mary was given to patronize our fleet, and her image dominates and protects us.” Once again, “France did not deny its ancient role: She is always the eldest daughter of the church; she will always defend the rights of Catholics.” Just like before “She [France] took the defense of the rights of the Church and protected the Holy Places against the impiety and violence of new profaners.”\footnote{Ibid., 5-7.}

The function of the Crusades, for Veuillot, had an additional message for France. Ultramontanists, amidst their attack on the rationalism, liberalism and weak faith of contemporary France, could see this war as a rebirth. How had France, so recently “indifferent or hostile to religious matters, returned to fulfill today its duties as a Catholic nation?”\footnote{Veuillot, 7.} In order to answer this question Veuillot took a broad detour in his second chapter to relate a story about a young Muslim philosopher. The story was borrowed from a Hungarian prelate, Mgr. Mislin,
was travelling throughout Europe in 1848. As he conversed during the trip with the Muslim philosopher, the prelate learned that his companion was a deist and an admirer of Voltaire. In fact, the Muslim traveler was shocked to learn that Mislin was a Christian, for as the prelate had described it, the well-traveled young philosopher had been to Paris and Berlin, talked to many people, but had encountered not one Christian. “I have not found one,” Mislin’s new friend had said. “I talked with a lot of people; I have never met anyone who admits your Gospel as it is, with its miracles, its precepts, its morality.”

For Veuillot, this story proved several points. First, it showed that “reformist” ideas like those sweeping Europe were toxic. And secondly, it proved that the evil of modern Islam was not “fanaticism” but reform. “All Europeans who know the Orient, who have looked at the Turks closely, will recognize there the ideas of the partisans of reform. Isn’t it obvious that no living seed can escape from this corruption?” And worse, this reforming spirit is perceived by others to be a French product. “They borrow from our civilization its skepticism, its love of material pleasures, which is to say everything that weakens [our civilization]...Revolutionaries without ardor and skeptical conservatives are to their eyes the representatives of the French spirit.”

Thus, in an interesting twist on Chateaubriand’s dichotomy between the civilized west and the barbarous east, Veuillot fears both that French “civilization” has become too secular and also that it has unfortunately become one of France’s major exports.

Veuillot is asking ‘what are the French to the world?’ The answer ought to be upsetting, he writes. “[Muslim tourists] frequent our schools, draw from us scientific and literary notions,

\[124\textit{Ibid.}, 10.\]
\[125\textit{Ibid.}, 12.\]
\[126\textit{Ibid.}, 12.\]
\[127\textit{Ibid.}, 13.\]
study everyone in the theaters and public balls, pay to dine with beaux-esprits devoid of prejudices, and return to the Orient convinced that in Christian countries no one believes in the Gospel.” The invasiveness of Islam is in this passage ingeniously coupled with the struggle against liberalism and rationalism in Europe. Most Muslims who come to Europe, he wrote, go back home atheists - and this perception of France only serves the interests of Russia. But despite “the superb indifference” of the press to this “quarrel of monks”, both the Muslims and the freethinkers are mistaken about France. The beginning of the war has convinced everyone “from Saint Peters burg to Constantinop le” of the true identity of the French. Since the war began, “allies and enemies have seen the zeal of our generals for holy things, the piety of our soldiers, the devotion of our priests; and the war in the Orient has revealed to them that France is always Christian. This is our first victory, and it will not be taken away.”128 The enemy here was not just the Ottoman Empire, Islam and the Russians: the enemy was also French religious indifference.

A major purpose of Veuillot’s treatise, in other words, is to provide an explanation for what is happening within France. He writes that recent years have seen such a flurry of publishing about the Holy Places that one could only conclude that “France has once again turned its eyes and its heart towards Jerusalem.”129 This was only the beginning, a sign of the times. “France returns to herself in her old ways, she works instinctively somehow to regain her natural role, the role of the first Catholic power. [We are only beginning], no doubt, the time of flowering, and it is difficult to tell what will come out of these buds still closed and hard, but everything promises at least the end of evil days.”130 Perhaps an international movement is turning Europe back towards God, he mused. The Austrians and the Swiss were turning their

---

128 Ibid., 15.
129 Ibid., 54.
130 Ibid., 55-6.
attention back to Jerusalem by sending money. While these early signs could be overestimated, they were nonetheless important and should provoke joy in those who saw them. “Don’t forget, in fact, that [these efforts] are waking us from a sleep that the enemies of the Church have regarded as a sleep of death.”

It is important to note here that Veuillot’s enthusiasm and confidence in the existence of a growing movement of resurgent Catholicity has been prompted by the outbreak of the Crimean War, still underway at his date of publication. But for Veuillot it was already a significant victory for Catholics that France was committing itself at all to a cause he understood as fundamentally religious. A victory at home against indifference had already been won, regardless of the outcome of the ongoing war.

“The ministers of the Sultan and those of the czar, judging France by the writers, politicians and men of the world who pretended to represent it, were convinced...that a French government would never dare to accept a war in which one could say: it was born in the Holy Places.” But this whole affair has “proved to the enemies of the Church that if France is patient, she is neither weak, nor indifferent, as they had begun to believe.” Quoting his brother Louis Veuillot in *L’Univers*, Veuillot remembered occasionally that there was another enemy besides French indifference. If Russia took Constantinople, “this would not be the ruin of Islam…[but] it would be a frightening development, assuring the preponderance of an anti-Catholicism much more formidable than [that of Islam]- it would be the sword of Muhammad in the hands of Photius.” The enemy of the Church, the enemy of Christian civilization, is Russia…We are

---

134 Photius was a ninth-century Byzantine patriarch who played a prominent role in earlier phases of the schism between Latin and Orthodox Christianity.
“Going to see the justice of God!”

“This war comes from God,” said Mgr. de Salinis while blessing the departing troops. By Imperial decree, the troops were peppered with an unprecedented number of chaplains. Their ships were dressed with images of Mary (officially Immaculate since 1849). And they sailed from France with a public papal blessing sent directly to Napoleon III, praying for his military success as he commenced the first war of mass industrial violence.

_Framed_

The “Question of the Holy Places” was part of a broader European project of imagining the past for use in interpreting the present. For French Catholics, the debate had something for everyone: by taking as its geographical object of interest the very spaces which combined intensely colorful episodes of French history with the most important moments of the history of Christianity it became a multifunctional, fungible and useful discursive space. Talking about the Crusades in the Holy Places carried comforting messages about the authenticity of Christian belief in contemporary languages of science and history; it gave precedents for the legal rights of Catholics over far-off places and precedents of French military and ethical valor; it provided an example of French and papal leadership and imagined religious unity; it gave the Ultramontanist rhetorical violence the ring of truth and, finally, it gave the French government a prior and public sanction for war, ultimately one which would be reused over and over again.

What happens to our typical narratives of the Crimean War when we examine it from the angle of this French Catholic discussion? The sole agency of Napoleon III in initiating French participation, it seems, is diminished. The forces of European attention and intention on the

---

135 Veuillot, 210-11, quoting Louis Veuillot in _L’Universe_, March 3, 1854.
Levant precede him and are publicly overdetermined. Even if we admit the importance of realist national and diplomatic causes and objectives, these things are demanded at least as much by Catholics like Boré or Darboy as by a “shadowy clerical elite” or Napoleon III. Similarly, a strict technological determinism cannot speak comprehensively to the causation of the Crimean War. Technology can, however, help us understand the confidence with which the French expressed the urgency of their foreign policy decisions. But the use of the new technology, even when developed in secret, had been pre-approved by the publicly declared crusade. When the public repeatedly cries ‘God Wills It’ who will stand up and say “but only with smaller guns”?

Orlando Figes underestimates French “ardour” in matters of religion. French piety could alone be assessed highly by recording the subscriptions to L’Univers, but proof can also be found that pilgrimages (both at home, for example to Lourdes, and abroad) were increasing as well. On reflection, Rosalind Morris is correct in seeing rhetoric around the Crimean War as somewhat of a waypoint in the rhetorical justification of war. Darboy’s call for French intervention, if made a few decades later, would be immediately recognized as the rhetoric of the mission civilisatrice and mise-en-valeur. What we see in the brothers Veuillot, however, is the synergistic blend of crusading rhetoric, contemporary politics, and an apocalyptic teleology intended to rally enthusiasm for the church militant. The Crimean War, somehow, had become also a war on French indifference in matters of religion. In the next chapter, I examine French martyrological sources and commentary on several French priests who died in Vietnam in the 1850s and 1860s. In examining these accounts, I show how martyrs were used by the French government, and how their deaths can only be explained by acknowledging that they were targeted in large part because they were French. Martyrs in Vietnam, in other words, didn’t die for the faith.
CHAPTER 3: 1850s – DEBRIS OF DEMONS

The longer it lasts, the better it will be.
- Théophane Vénard’s last words to his executioner, Vietnam, 1861

The Principal Reasons

Almost three years after the June Days uprising, six months before Louis-Napoléon launched the coup which would dissolve the National Assembly and give him dictatorial powers (December 2, 1851) and more than six thousand miles away from Paris, another priest was about to die. In May of 1851 in northern Vietnam1 a twenty-nine-year-old priest of the Paris Foreign Missions Society2 (MEP) walked gleefully towards his execution. Proselytization was illegal, and Augustin Schoeffler had been ambushed, caught red-handed and arrested. After contriving to allow some of his fellow priests to escape on the excuse that they would collect a pretend ransom, Schoeffler freely confessed to his evangelistic criminality. When asked if he had been aware of the illegal nature of his activities he replied “that he knew very well, even before he left France, that the Catholic religion was strictly prohibited in that kingdom [Tonkin], but that that was the principal reason of his coming to it rather than to any other.”3

And Schoeffler had certainly been busy. According to the accounting of the vicar apostolic, in the previous year Schoeffler had performed “two hundred baptisms of children of

---

1In this chapter I use the twentieth-century anachronism ‘Vietnam’ to refer to French Indochina, eventually administered by the French as Cochinchina (in the south), Annam (center) and Tonkin (north). As the French began to dominate all three regions, the separate terms faded from use in favor of Vietnam. But Quang Trung's unification of these regions in the late eighteenth century directly preceded the first French military involvement in Vietnam (discussed below). It is appropriate to say, therefore, that before the French arrived in Southeast Asia the inhabitants of modern Vietnam already considered themselves as a unified people. The only major changes in territory in the period concerned here were battles over Siam/Cambodia to the southwest of Vietnam, and those divisions created by the periods of incomplete French invasion. Older divisions and naming protocols existed, but the use of Vietnam has precedents among contemporary historians like Charles Keith, who argues for its use in part because “the alternatives all pose greater problems.” Charles Keith, Catholic Vietnam: A Church from Empire to Nation (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 17.

2Hereafter referred to as “MEP” for Missions Étrangères de Paris.

unbelievers, forty-one of children of Christians, and twenty-three of adults; four thousand seven hundred and seven confessions; three thousand three hundred and fifty-one communions; fifty-two administrations of the holy Viaticum; and one hundred and twenty-five of extreme unction.”

“Is this not,” his superior wrote, “a glorious work for a young missionary who was suffering from fever for the greater part of the year?” Two examinations of the priest in front of the local mandarin provided more exuberant confessions, but little useful information for the authorities intent on ferreting out his network.

He spent the next month in prison. On the fourth of May he was led from the prison by “Eight soldiers, sabre in hand…preceded by two companies of fifty armed men each, half lancers and half fusiliers, who walked alternately in two lines, and two elephants formed the rear-guard.” In front of the smiling priest and his guards as he walked to the place of execution a placard was carried which read: “Mr. Augustine [sic], a European priest, has dared, in spite of the prohibitions of the religion of Jesus, to come secretly into the kingdom and preach it to deceive the people. On his arrest he confessed the whole. His guilt is clear. He is condemned to be beheaded and thrown into the river.” His kneeling request for a quick execution was denied by the mandarin who was determined to observe some formalities. Finally, at the third crash of the cymbals, the executioner swung the sword at Schoeffler’s bare neck, but “the hand of the executioner trembled. He struck three blows of his sabre on the neck of his victim, and was at length obliged to cut the flesh with a knife, in order to detach the head from the body.”

---

4Ibid., 160.

5Ibid., 173.

6Ibid., 172.

was tossed into the river and there was a furious scrambling afterwards by native Christians to obtain his blood-soaked relics.

![Figure 7 – Martyre de Saint Augustin Schoeffler: Son-Tay, 1851. Vietnamese painting, artist unknown.](image)

As Schoeffler died, four French priests were longing to share a similar fate. Twenty-two-year-old Jean-Théophane Vénard was in Paris, preparing to follow Schoeffler into Asia and praying for him to be given the grace of a martyr’s death. Jean-Louis Bonnard, a twenty-seven-year-old Lyonnais with an “angelic” bearing but “less-than-mediocre” intellect, was in Vietnam already, desperately trying to learn the language of his parishioners. Another recent arrival in Vietnam was thirty-three-year-old priest Pierre-François Néron, who as a teenager had dramatically abandoned his “dissolute youth” after being inspired by stories of the martyrs of the MEP. Étienne-Théodore Cuenot was forty-nine in 1851, and had already been in the mission field in Vietnam and its environs for twenty-six years. All four priests hoped to die like Schoeffler, and as soon as possible.
Rational Martyrdom

In the previous chapter, I examined how Napoleon III’s foreign policy during the Crimean War was founded on a coalition of support unified by mutual interest in the new emperor’s first major war. In particular, I argued that industrial, realist arguments for French intervention converged with romantic, historicist arguments about French claims to the Holy Land on behalf of Catholics. This chapter draws on nineteenth-century martyrlogical sources about executed MEP priests in Vietnam to examine from another angle the relationship between French foreign policy and Catholicism. Martyrs in Vietnam initially extended the political alliance between the Second Empire and Catholics by serving as pretexts for an ostensibly holy war that was also economically and politically rewarding for Napoleon III. Missionaries in Vietnam in the early 1850s expressed pride in their nation’s military strength and pious motives, and felt that they were participating in a divine plan in which France played a significant part. Their willingness to die abroad was not unrelated to the perceived social encouragement they received in the 1830s and 1840s. Because missionaries couldn’t themselves separate their ostensibly universal mission from their national origin, and because of the previous history of French Catholicism in Vietnam, MEP priests were perceived by the Vietnamese as proxies for French imperialism. When they were executed, it was as much for this perceived national threat as for their Christianity itself. And yet the poor performance of initial French military aggression and its dire consequences for Christians contributed to a serious decline in expressed support for the sanctified state imperialism of Napoleon III.

This argument proceeds below in several parts. Because of the international nature of this material, this chapter spends considerable time on recent secondary scholarship on the historical
contact between France and Vietnam before delving into primary sources in the last two sections. Without some historical context we will fail to correctly analyze the reasons that the aspiring martyrs from France who are the primary subjects of this chapter succeeded in their quest, but not in exactly the way they hoped. First, I introduce some helpful language from historian Brad Gregory’s model of studying martyrdom that will inform the first part of the chapter. After introducing Gregory’s methodology and some distinctions in my approach, I describe the three basic elements in Catholic understanding of martyrdom: the appropriate way to encounter death (not running towards it or away from it), dying for the cause (Christianity alone), and the display of heroic joy (in the face of death). In the next section (“The Willingness to Kill: France and Vietnam”), I broadly examine how martyrs in Asia were used by the French imperial government to justify an active interventionist foreign policy. I also explain the Vietnamese government’s “willingness to kill” Catholics based on its assessment of France’s preexisting interventions there, and how Catholic priests functioned in those previous interventions. Next (“Manufacturing Joy with Jealous Tenderness”), I explain the apparent “willingness to die” of French Catholics as both real (not created by source bias) and as supported and produced by a feedback loop of largely internal Catholic reflection, rehearsal, and ritual, and celebrated by a rhetoric of timeliness that connected them with the first Christian martyrs. Finally (“The Debris of Demons”), reading against hagiographic accounts of Théopane Vénard and other MEP priests who died in Vietnam, I show that rather than dying simply for Christianity, these priests were dying for France, a fact that they became less proud of through the turbulent 1850s.

In *Salvation at Stake*, Brad Gregory examines the competing martyrdoms of European Christians in the wake of the Reformation. Focusing on Anabaptists, Protestants and Roman Catholics, Gregory argues that early modern martyrs must be understood “on their own terms,”
rather than as strange anomalies to be examined with suspicion. Doing so, he argues, renders martyrs’ unusual behavior as evidence of radical but entirely rational commitment to widespread and coherent beliefs. “Put simply, martyrs were willing to die for their religious views because they believed them to be true, because revealed by God.”

When seen in this light, Gregory argues, modern explanations of early-modern martyrs that fail to take seriously the beliefs that underpinned their actions are revealed as problematic. Instead of asking whether martyrs were pathological or fanatical, a better question would be “whether certain commitments were worth dying for, and if so, which ones.” Within their context, martyrs pursued a reasonable course and the mainstream beliefs of most contemporary Christians are sufficient to explain their decisions. “Early modern martyrs measured temporal pain against eternal gain and drew the logical conclusion. Torture and death were surely horrific—but incomparably less so than eternal suffering.” Similarly, widespread Christian assumptions and beliefs made the execution of heretics a rational and consistent application of belief.

Thus, in both their “willingness to kill” (and thus produce martyrs) and in their “willingness to die,” Gregory argues that Christians proceeded rationally. Part of this willingness, within this framework, was the many uses these deaths served for contemporaries. Martyrs were “seed,” in Tertullian’s ancient formulation, in that their deaths both encouraged conversion from outside the tradition and inspired those already committed to make themselves available for the ultimate sacrifice. In death, martyrs argued dramatically for the truth value of the claims for which they were dying, especially if they died well. “To remain prayerful and

---

8 Gregory, 105.
9 Ibid., 105.
10 Ibid., 123.
calm, while being torn apart denoted divine favor.”11 Their deaths further highlighted the division of the world into good and evil. “Whether elsewhere in Europe or in distant mission fields, the contrast between the glorious and the wicked was plain to see.”12

Furthermore, Gregory maintains, martyrdom was the creative expression of an historical continuity with a timeless community of faith. The stories of martyrs could allow their audience a perceived departure from normal historical time and present dramatically the continued relevance of Christian tradition as a mimetic repetition of Jesus and the martyrs of the bible and early antiquity: “by following the ancients, the moderns were imitating the imitators of Christ.”13 Catholic martyrologies were organized calendrically, not chronologically, and thus discouraged a progressive, historicist interpretation of time. Martyrdom was thus an event that claimed to collapse historical time into an eternal present.

For early-modern Catholics, as for Protestants and Anabaptists, news of these deaths was spread by networks of information that proceeded from eyewitnesses through letters and into the broader confessional community through pamphlets, books and other media. The popularity of the accounts of Reformation-era martyrs can be understood, once again, by their many uses. “Memorialized and publicized, honored and revered, the new martyrs offered something to everyone: models for the few facing violent death themselves; examples of asceticism for the devout; paradigms of virtue for ordinary people striving to become better Christians; additional intercessors for the most learned prelates through the least educated laity.”14 Catholics also used visual sources more widely and popularly thought of martyrs as almost automatic saints and

11Ibid., 303.
12Ibid., 313.
13Ibid., 282.
14Ibid., 313.
instant intercessors. Because of this, Catholic communication of martyrdom also involved the distribution of relics.\(^{15}\)

Martyrdom shouldn’t be read as performance, Gregory argues. Those who died were not constructing a self “but in stripping away every pretense to acknowledge the self one was: a weak, enfleshed soul, created by and radically dependent on God.”\(^{16}\) But in his focus on the historical modeling across time of martyrs, he describes something that could be called performance. This is a performance which does not entail “acting” in a sense of falseness or self-interest, as he seems to suggest, but simply an intentionality of imitation of an antecedent example of Christian heroism. Most urgently, as in Gregory’s own account, Christians rehearsed, imagined and practiced how to die “well”. “The spectacle of the martyrs’ deaths could frame a final act of evangelization more powerful than a thousand sermons.”\(^{17}\) The causes for which they died were cemented by the executioners who routinely read the specific articles of the faith for which they were being sentenced. By their deaths, martyrs theatrically ridiculed the paltry

\(^{15}\) And yet, sometimes, the meaning of martyrs was not plain to see. They were also, often, uncomfortably ambiguous in meaning. Thinking about Christian martyrdom provided needed consolation but also heightened anxieties within early modern European Christianity. Martyrs could present a crisis in interpretation since most Europeans were familiar with competing confessional examples. All three traditions Gregory examines agreed that what was happening was unfolding “according to divine providence. Yet what did these occurrences mean? A sharp distinction between appearance and reality was imbedded in the notion. Any given event or chain of events could be and was interpreted contradictorily.” (Gregory, 343). Deaths could be either tests for the faithful or punishments visited on the wicked. “Even when a general drift is clear, however, the meaning of executions eluded imposition and control. Opposite perspectives were always available to individual observers. The perspective varieties of early modern Christianity offered different plausible interpretations, no matter what transpired.” (Gregory, 339) Furthermore, viewed retrospectively, the traditions in question were substantially incorrect about certain things: the apocalypse didn't occur, heresy flourished and religious pluralism became normal. Unresolved disagreement was not necessarily an internal problem for Christians, but when viewed from the outside it was enormously difficult to develop a standard of truth to adjudicate these issues. Gregory sees this epistemological crisis as a significant grounding for later skepticism and developing standards of religious toleration. However, he contends, no modern or postmodern methodology which refuses to take religion seriously can hope to truly understand early modern martyrdom. As such, Gregory ends with a condemnation of theories which read present assumptions into the past and characterize a “self-indulgent presentism that cannot see past its own political agenda.” (Gregory, 351)

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 133.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 135.
demands for recantation. They looked heavenward as they died. They expressed gratitude while doing it.

Martyrdom, as technically defined by Catholic tradition and as it was understood during the Second Empire, includes three basic elements. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia* a martyr is a “person who, having not personally known Jesus, is so firmly convinced of the truths of the Christian religion, that he gladly suffers death rather than deny it.”\(^{18}\) For Catholics, a martyr must first of all have been put to death. This seems obvious, but dying appropriately required precision. A true martyr never actively sought his or her own death and yet, simultaneously, when death approached the true martyr never offered physical or violent resistance to it. As St. Gregory of Nazianzus wrote, “it is mere rashness to seek death, but it is cowardly to refuse it.”\(^{19}\)

Secondly, a true martyr was put to death *for Christ*, for the faith, for refusing to apostatize or to offer worship to false gods. For Catholics, true martyrs by definition *could not be* those who died for other causes, no matter how just or heroic. St. Augustine made this clear when he wrote about false martyrdom during the Donatist controversy. Reading from the Gospel of Matthew, he quoted Jesus. “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”\(^{20}\)

One phrase remained vigilant against all of your venom, against your double-talking, triple-talking, babble-talking attempts: *for the sake of righteousness*. In view of this phrase, murderers suffer punishment but are not martyrs, adulterers suffer punishment but are not martyrs. For you make a show of your martyrs: you throw out what they suffered, I ask why they suffered. You laud the penalty, I examine the cause. The cause I examine, I say, the cause I seek. Tell my why he suffered, he whom you toss out to have suffered.


\(^{19}\)Oration XLII, 5-6.

\(^{20}\)Matthew 5:10.
For righteousness? Learn this: for this itself is the cause of the martyrs. Punishment does not crown the martyrs, but the cause.\footnote{Augustine, \textit{Sermo} 53A.13 as translated by Thomas Sizgorich, \textit{Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam} (University of Pennsylvania Press: 2012), 64.}

For this reason, it became extremely important for Catholics arguing that executed French missionaries in Vietnam were martyrs to demonstrate that no other factors but the hatred of Christianity motivated their execution. Patriotism may have been a noble cause, but it could not make you a martyr.

Finally, true martyrs not only died (without either seeking or running from death), and died for the correct cause, but they also died well. A true martyr exhibited Christian joy and gladness as they died, leaving behind a model of heroic virtue. This gladness was an acknowledgement that martyrdom was a triumph, the abandonment of the lesser good of earthly life for the greater good of ascension to heaven. In addition, joyful final moments were crucial testimony of the truth of the cause and were much more valuable as evangelical tools.

In presenting the lives and deaths of MEP priests to the Vatican for review, the advocates of these priests exhibited constant concern that in using terms like “venerable”, “blessed”, or “martyr” before the pope had given his permission, they ran the risk of appearing to undermine his authority. For example, Louis Beaulieu’s account of the work of the MEP began with the following caveat, signed by all three authors: “In the pages of this book, the reader will sometimes find the labels Saint, Confessor, Martyr, Relics, etc.; we declare and protest here that we only use these terms for ease of discourse, and that...as in all that we recount, we in no way intend to obstruct the judgment of the Holy Roman Church, in which we want always to be submissive and devoted sons.”\footnote{Beaulieu, \textit{La Salle des Martyrs du Séminaire des Missions Étrangères} (Paris: Douniol, 1865), front matter.} Among many other examples,\footnote{Beaulieu, \textit{La Salle des Martyrs du Séminaire des Missions Étrangères} (Paris: Douniol, 1865), front matter.} Adrien Launay used similar
language in preparing his case for honoring certain martyrs of Vietnam. “We protest our full and entire submission to the laws of the Vatican and particularly to the decrees of Urban VIII. If we have come to use certain expressions like Saint, Blessed, Martyr, we declare simply to be following the impulses of our heart without wanting to prevent the judgments of the Vatican.”

So the formal designation of ‘martyr’, for these authors, could only result from the meeting of certain criteria as reviewed by a regular process and approved by the pope.

As they formally or informally made their cases for the special status of these priests, authors understandably made sure to couch the evidence directly towards surmounting the three conditions of true martyrdom listed above. Therefore, hagiographic accounts of MEP priests took great pains to convince readers that no other factors but faith were present in their executions. In addition, as examined in Gregory’s account of Christian timelessness in stories of martyrdom, authors sought to regularly remind their readers of the analogies between the present persecution of Christians in Vietnam and the original Roman persecution of Christianity nearly two millennia before. As an example of this rhetorical strategy, examine how Launay both downplays alternate motivations for the persecutions and simultaneously transports Catholic imaginations to an age of heroism:

In studying...the pain visited on the missionaries and against the Christians, one can find numerous analogies with the accusations raised in the first centuries: the doctrine of Christ is misunderstood, distorted, despised; the Eucharist is enchanted bread; the cross, a disgrace; the divine Crucified, a malefactor; Catholicism, a foreign religion, perverse, subversive of established traditions, corruptor of good morals, disrespectful of the gods of the country, destructive of the cult of the ancestors; its ministers are men of highly questionable morality, who engage in sorcery, composing remedies from pieces of the dead; the Christians, a population vile and ignorant.

It is therefore impossible to have a shred of doubt on not only the principal, but the only motive of the persecutions: it is a religious motive; Catholicism is condemned because it is Catholicism; its preachers and adepts, because they spread it or because they remained faithful to it.25

---

21Nearly all authors reviewed who were writing about the MEP with hagiographic purposes used similar language.


Despite their best attempts at framing Vietnam as a latter-day Roman arena, certain elements in these accounts consistently betray their purposes. Hagiographic authors needed to make the case that religion alone explained these deaths. But in their texts and in the words of their subjects one can repeatedly identify evidence that national identity was the most important factor in their deaths. This type of information was left in these accounts against the stated purpose of the authors. Why? Because the martyrs in the 1850s were initially proud of the role their nation played in these events.

*The Willingness to Kill: France and Vietnam*

What role did France play in the martyrdom of its priests? The answer requires some extended context. In November of 1857, Admiral Charles Rigault de Genouilly sailed towards Vietnam on a punitive mission authorized by Napoleon III. Since the death of Augustin Schoeffler in 1851 several more European Catholics had been martyred by order of Vietnamese Emperor Tu Duc, most recently two Spanish priests in 1856. Why did the French government send a small armada towards Vietnam in 1857? France was certainly concerned with falling further behind Great Britain in the competition for markets and materials historians call “New Imperialism.” But just as much, in a continuation of Napoleon’s Crimean War positioning, the invasion of Vietnam (as well as that of China) was demanded by interest groups of concern to the emperor: in particular French admirals (and other military advisers) and the French missionary societies, as well as their concerned (and voting) publics.

In 1856, Consul Louis-Charles de Montigny had successfully negotiated a treaty with the king of Thailand facilitating trade, religious freedom and warship access. From there he had

---

26 For more on this general setting for Napoleon III’s imperial policy, see “Crusades Old and New” in Ch. 2, beginning on page 62.
proceeded to Vietnam hoping to formalize a similar treaty relationship. As I explain below, France’s prior imperial history in Vietnam made diplomatic success unlikely, as de Montigny was certainly aware. Nevertheless, the rejection of French terms, even after the consul threatened an invasion, led directly to the approval of de Genouilly’s military expedition. The latter admiral didn’t have very far to sail, as he had arrived in China earlier in 1857 on board the _Nemesis_. The Second Opium War had begun with his visit, and France and Great Britain, flush from their Crimean success, were wartime allies once again.

By this time, France had already twice confronted Vietnam on behalf of martyred missionaries, in 1843 and 1847, but in both cases they had hesitated to invade or were repelled. Admiral de Genouilly was involved in both confrontations. In 1843 he had been a captain supporting Admiral Jean-Baptiste Cécille, Captain Léonard Victor Joseph Charner and the diplomat Théodore de Lagrené on a mission to counter perceived British diplomatic successes in Vietnam. While there, Cécille pushed for the release of the French bishop Dominique Lefèbvre. Twice the Vietnamese government was convinced to release Lefèbvre and several other missionaries, but on both occasions the French simply delivered the bishop back into the country in a different location. This episode nicely demonstrates the preexisting overlap of French foreign policy and missionary work. While Bishop Lefèbvre had his own reasons for continuing to risk his life, the French naval command was all too happy to use him as a tactical weapon of provocation, despite their inability or unwillingness to yet risk invasion. In 1847, de Genouilly was once again attempting to recover the bishop when French ships were allegedly attacked and fought back with a barrage of explosive shells.\(^{27}\) After the French disengaged (perhaps intending

---

\(^{27}\) Known as “the Bombardment of Tourane.”
only a temporary withdrawal), the admiral unceremoniously crashed his ship on the Korean coast and had to return to Paris in another boat.

An early supporter of Napoleon III, along with Cécille, de Genouilly had been given command of the screw-driven Charlemagne in 1849 and became an admiral during the Crimean War. Many French naval officers, like Cécille and de Genouilly, who had provided crucial support for then-president Louis-Napoléon were rewarded by lucrative command posts. Later stationed in Chinese waters, it was these officers who first argued for an invasion of Vietnam. In the Ministry of the Navy, “regrets over the loss of France’s American empire in the eighteenth century were giving birth to exaggerated hopes for a new and great nineteenth-century empire in Asia.” As the Crimean War wound down, Napoleon III called La Commission de la Cochinchine in April 1857 to investigate the opportunity for an intervention. The commission heard testimony from many missionaries. The Vicar Apostolic of northern Vietnam, Bishop François-Marie-Henri-Agathon Pellerin, came all the way from Vietnam to emphasize the diplomatic and imperial benefits of conquest and commercial bases, in addition to France’s religious duty.

Pellerin further emphasized the relative ease with which the operation could be accomplished, given the massive support that he alleged the indigenous Catholics would bring to their French ‘liberators.’ He urged the French government to occupy Vietnam and to capture the Vietnamese monarch, who, Pellerin supposed, would die in the process. This, the prelate, continued, would leave the French free to govern the country through a successor of their own choosing and with an administration built upon a ‘spinal column’ of Vietnamese Catholics. In addition, the bishop revealed that he had secured the pope’s approval of the intervention. The commission agreed. It was high time for France to join in “the movement of

---

28 The same Charlemagne and admiral were used to intimidate the Ottoman Empire during the initial phases of the Crimean War. See Ch. 2, page 63.


30 Ibid., 42.
progress, civilization, and commercial expansion of which [East Asia] was going to be the theater.”\textsuperscript{31} Paraphrasing the groups’ utilitarian consensus on the value of martyrdom, McLeod continues: “[t]he commission urged that the issue of religious persecution in Vietnam be put to good use as the justification for the establishment of a solid French presence in the Far East.” After the war had begun, Napoleon III, argues David Schalk, “was unsure about how far to go with these [new] conquests, and he tended to follow the advice of his energetic minister, the Marquis de Chasseloup-Laubat, a shrewd and determined imperialist, who served in several different cabinet positions from 1858-1867.” Chasseloup-Laubat’s ideology was central to the developing French understanding of their role in Vietnam – a role that was both practical and ideological for Chasseloup-Laubat. He was an evangelist in his own way, writes Henry Kamm:

Chasseloup-Laubat’s mission was one of imperialism, and he was a missionary of that cause. He perceived it as a God-given and mystical task and made himself its dithyrambic minstrel, even in bureaucratic instructions to his subordinates. “A difficult task,” he wrote to his officers in Saigon on the subject of how to deal with the Vietnamese. “We must on the one hand in large measure respect their morals and laws, but at the same time lead them little by little to love our civilization and our domination.” In a later letter he wrote, “I want to create for my country a veritable empire in the Far East. I wish our Christian civilization to have in our new conquest a formidable establishment, from which it will send its rays to all its regions, where such cruel morals still exist. There is in this sentiment of being useful to a task of which God alone knows the grandeur and the mystery, there is in this sentiment that one has when one serves this great cause of civilization and the Good, a joy, a force, that make up for all the sacrifices.”\textsuperscript{33}

Not to be outdone, the missionary societies themselves loudly demanded a military intervention in Vietnam. The persecutions of priests extensively described in Europe through books and newspapers provoked pity and anger, and inspired in many a desire to join the ranks of the church militant. Schoeffler’s death was soon followed by another, when Jean-Louis Bonnard (MEP) was executed in Vietnam in 1852. The MEP appealed to the new government for a reprisal, but the Crimean War kept Napoleon III from spreading his military resources.

\textsuperscript{31}Report of the \textit{Commission de la Cochinchine}, as quoted in \textit{Ibid.}, 42.


Nevertheless, French missionaries abroad repeatedly returned home to demand a military response. “Indeed, the most determined and persistent of the pro-interventionist militants,” according to Mark McLeod, “were undoubtedly the missionaries of the Société des Missions-Étrangères…”

Perhaps as importantly, the pretexts for war in Vietnam and China had just been underlined by the pope himself. In September of 1857, Pius IX publicly venerated Schoeffler, Chapdelaine and six other Catholic martyrs who had died in China, Korea and Vietnam. In doing so the pope was effectively securing the support of most Catholics for the wars in preparation. As in France, across Europe governments found that the return to order and the crushing of the revolutions of 1848, coupled with the expansion of capital and an economic boom, created a sort of breathing space for the expansion of government power at home and abroad. Eric Hobsbawm argued that the general militarism of European governments of the

---

34McLeod, 42.

35On September 24, 1857 Pius IX declared Venerable (a title one step short of sainthood) F. Imbert, Chastan, Maubant and Delamotte from Korea, Chapdelaine and Minh from China, and Schoeffler and Bonnard from Vietnam. Minh was the only priest who didn't hail from the MEP. Les Missions Catholiques: Revue Générale Illustrée de Toutes les Missions (Paris: Oeuvre de la propagation de la foi, 1868), 71-2. More on this act below.

36Schoeffler died at the beginning of a coherent historical period in which several trends coalesced to increase both the political desirability and the military capacity of the French Government to respond punitively to such deaths. Chateaubriand and his intellectual heirs had championed a rebirth of Catholic militancy and the Church in France had been restored to a situation of financial plenty. The foreign missions attracted young men interested in the romance and heroism presented to them in books, pamphlets and journals, and understood their participation as an attempt to verify the Catholic view of the world in light of the recent anti-clerical history of France.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the industrial capacity of France had also made possible its entry into the general industrial expansion of the west. The middle of the nineteenth century was an extraordinarily violent time in global history (despite perceptions to the contrary if Europe alone is the focus). During the four decades between 1840 and 1880 there were 177 “war-like confrontations” globally, the bulk of them in frequency and violence between 1850 and 1870 (This data comes from the Correlates of War project [http://www.correlatesofwar.org/], to which I was directed by Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, “Global Violence and Nationalizing Wars in Eurasia and America: The Geopolitics of War in the Mid- Nineteenth Century,” Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 38, No. 4 {Oct., 1996}, 621). France participated in several of the costliest conflicts, often by intervening in civil or local conflicts abroad, but they weren't unusual in their militarism. “There was nothing particularly French in these exercises in brigandage, except perhaps Napoleon's appreciation of the electoral value of imperial glory,” wrote Eric Hobsbawm, “France was merely strong enough to take part in the general victimization of the non-European world.” (Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital: 1848-1875 {New York: Vintage Books, 1996}, 76). Industrial innovations like the telegraph, railroads, steamships, quinine and canals removed checks on imperial appetites, nation building powered by wars spread throughout Italy, Germany and the United States, and other countries waged massive civil wars just to keep their systems intact.
1850s and 60s was due in part to these removals of checks on power. “The 1860s were a decade of blood…” he wrote, and “…it was due to the reversion to war as a normal instrument of policy by governments who now ceased to believe that it must be avoided for fear of consequent revolution, and who were rightly convinced that the power-mechanism was capable of keeping them within limits.”

France took advantage of the two costliest internal conflicts of the nineteenth century to enlarge its empire – the American Civil War provided a distraction for Napoleon III’s imperial project in Mexico and the Taiping Rebellion weakened China enough to allow it to fall victim to French imperialism.

In Chapter 2, I showed how several legal and diplomatic arguments for French rights over sites in Jerusalem used early-modern Ottoman capitulations to the French as justification for contemporary French rights over holy places in the Levant. But prior to the nineteenth century, no Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese or Korean capitulations to the French existed to be used. In applying a religious protectorate to East Asia, therefore, the French were effectively abandoning the specificity of their pretexts in favor of an abstracted universal French right to protect Christians globally. But I also argued in the previous chapter that the Crimean War melded two distinct political strategies (crusaders and civilizers, in short) in a common cause. French pretexts for war, building on this Catholic and military political base, were astonishingly consistent as they were leveraged for a series of wars in Asia during the Second Empire.

\(^{37}\) Hobsbawm, 78-9.

\(^{38}\) What did exist was an historical precedent for the papal sanction of a special role for Portugal as the protector of the faith. The Portuguese “Protectorate of Missions” or the “Portuguese Patronage” (padroado) had traditionally guaranteed Portuguese monarchs control over episcopal investment abroad and a share in the revenues generated by the Church in Portugal in exchange for protection and support of mission work – even in countries in which Portugal had no actual dominion (e.g. China). Informally, Portuguese patronage had disappeared and French support had replaced it during the reign of Louis XIV. It was the Sun King who had founded the Jesuit mission in China. The French state was formally recognized as the protector of Catholic missions by the pope in 1839. See Richard Sims, French Policy Towards the Bakufu and Meiji Japan 1854-1894 (Richmond, UK: Japan Library, 1998), 9.
As we’ve seen, Napoleon III first presented religious persecution of Catholics as the pretext for entering the Crimean War. The very week that the final settlement for that war was being discussed in Paris in late February 1856, Father August Chapdelaine, a recently arrived French missionary to the Guangxi province of China, was arrested, tortured and beheaded by a new local mandarin. France used “the Chapdelaine affair” to mobilize support for a punitive expedition with Great Britain, sometimes called the Second Opium War (1856-60). The war clearly demonstrated to China and its neighbors the political threat of missionaries, if any doubt remained after the humiliation of China in the First Opium War (1839-42),\(^39\) the incursions on all sides by other western powers, the rapid expansion of Catholic missions, and the role of Christianity in the horrifyingly bloody Taiping rebellion.\(^40\)

Missionaries who died in the mission field were thus regularly used as pretexts for war by the French government. They bound administrative, industrial, naval and Catholic interest groups together. The sensational stories of the brutal torture and executions of French priests only served to inspire further mission work. The story of the martyr’s spectacular death allowed the Catholic reading public back home to more easily overlook the one-sided realities of European imperial violence and instead respond with patriotic defensiveness and martial Catholicism.

“Invasiveness” is defined by Rosalind Morris as “the abstracted experience of another’s

\(^{39}\)It was after the First Opium War that Great Britain and France first used treaties to secure rights for missionaries in China.

\(^{40}\)Some 20-30 million people died in the rebellion: Ranbir Vohra, *China's Path to Modernization: a Historical Review from 1800 to the Present* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1987), 38. East Asian anger against European Christianity was of course not entirely new. Apart from the success of Jesuit priests like Matteo Ricci (d. 1610), Christian missionaries were seen as aggressive, arrogant, and dangerous. See Hugh Dyson Walker, *East Asia: A New History* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2012), 329. In the nineteenth century, however, more tolerant missions were again increasingly being replaced by a wave of Catholic moral severity and intolerance or ignorance of Chinese custom and practice. And this time, missionaries came accompanied by Europeans no less arrogant, but much better armed.
expansionism.” When French priests were attacked, even when targeted as criminals on Chinese or Vietnamese soil, it meant that France itself was being attacked.41

In other words, French military interest in Vietnam involved at least some political self-interest and national calculation. The French invasion of Vietnam, explained this way, seems almost overdetermined: strong political support by the naval hierarchy and Catholics, technological capacity, recent military success on similar terms and a powerful pretext. And yet the information remains largely one-sided: from France, Vietnam appears as an undifferentiated eastern field wherein French industry could project its might. But what explains the distinctive brutality of the Vietnamese government towards Christian missionaries? One major reason is that by the 1850s, the interventionist history of France in Vietnam was already at least seven decades old. Catholics had been there much longer of course, and missionaries had appeared threatening to the Vietnamese before.42 But the specifically French Catholic project in Vietnam began with a priest called Pigneau. Pierre-Joseph-Georges Pigneau (MEP) was a Catholic missionary sent to Vietnam just a few years before the French Revolution of 1789. While there, the missionary became entangled in local politics and eventually ended up recruiting French soldiers and leading a small army in an effort to restore the exiled Nguyen dynasty to defeat their rivals. Pigneau would die before his attempt at Vietnamese regime change succeeded. His supposed dying words were: “Precious cross...the French have thrown you out and knocked you


42Charles Keith, Catholic Vietnam: A Church from Empire to Nation (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012). “To be sure, theological, social, and political conflict had regularly surrounded Catholicism since the religion first arrived in the two Vietnamese kingdoms, Đàng Trong and Đàng Ngòai, in the sixteenth century”, writes Keith. “Many Vietnamese rulers worried that a monotheistic religion would cause discord in a religiously plural society, were concerned that Catholic proscriptions against ancestral worship undermined the foundations of the Confucian political order, and worried about the social authority, scientific knowledge, and international connections of foreign missionaries. Thus Vietnamese rulers at times, and especially in times of discord or conflict, issued edicts calling for the destruction of Church property and the imprisonment or execution of Catholics.” (Keith, 4)
down from their temples; come to Cochin China...I wanted to plant you in this kingdom, upon
the throne of kings...Plant it here yourself, O my Savior, and build your temples upon the debris
of demons...Reign over the Cochin Chinese!"43 By 1801, the Nguyen dynasty had decisively
defeated its rivals and established itself as the sole power in a unified Vietnam. As the new
emperor, Nguyen Ánh took the name Gia Long.

Gia Long’s strategic alliance with the French began to decay almost immediately after his
accession. The likely reason for his growing discomfort with European Christianity was the
threat it presented to Vietnamese Confucian belief and practice (coupled with the end of the
period of dependence on French military aid). As McLeod explains:

...within the Catholic communities themselves, the missionaries forbade their converts to practice the
traditional rituals of ancestor worship and to make sacrifices to the village deities. They further forbade
their followers from practicing polygamy, which was recognized by Vietnamese custom and law. The
implication of these protests, refusals, and prohibitions was manifest: to the missionaries the Christian God
was the supreme deity in the universe, and all religions or doctrines that contradicted this were false; the
missionaries were the early representatives of this divine being, and their authority over Vietnamese
Catholics in matters defined as spiritual was therefore superior to that of mundane authorities who did not
recognize the Christian God.44

The fear that European missionaries were undermining royal authority seemed justified
when Gia Long’s eldest son converted to Christianity. Crown Prince Cảnh had travelled to
Versailles with Pigneau in 1787 and near the beginning of his father’s reign he demonstrated his
loyalty to his new faith by publically renouncing ancestor worship and, allegedly, desecrating a
shrine with feces. This familial crisis was politically resolved, it appeared, when the crown
prince died prematurely in 1802, and the emperor excluded his eldest son’s family from the line
of succession. When Gia Long died in 1820, he was succeeded by his younger son, Minh Mang.

Minh Mang’s brutality towards Christian missionaries was unprecedented. His political
project was to bolster Vietnamese independence as well as to centralize power under his

43 The quote comes from Adrien Launay quoted in Daughton, 299.
44 McLeod, 6.
administration. As such he began a campaign of “restructuring and modernization of the imperial bureaucracy, agricultural expansion, military conquests, and a revitalization of the ideological and ritual aspects of Confucian imperial rule.” This extension of central power during the 1820s and 1830s brought the new emperor into immediate conflict with other political entities “on the kingdom’s geographic and cultural margins,” including Catholic missionaries and those local authorities and communities that had developed ties with them. As Catholic missionaries increasingly began to involve themselves in rebellion against Minh Mang’s government, they played into the government’s perception of their collective threat. The emperor formally made Christianity illegal in 1825 and rebuffed resulting French diplomatic overtures. In 1833, a rebellion broke out which intended to restore the line of Prince Cảnh to the throne and Catholic missionaries played a key role. As Minh Mang’s repression began to succeed, the rebels retreated to the French fortress in Saigon. Not all of them escaped to safety. It was thus as revolutionaries, and not heretics, that the first French missionaries were executed in modern Vietnam.

Minh Mang’s reign ended in 1840, but in the previous decade he had waged an intense war on the sleeper cells of Catholic Christianity in Vietnam. “In all, under Minh Mang, from 1833 to 1840, over one hundred lay Catholics, fifteen catechists, twenty Vietnamese priests and nine foreign missionaries, both French and Spanish (F. Gagelin, Marchand, Cornay, Domingo

45Keith, 5. Keith goes on to summarize the trends that would end in martyrdom. “Two related but distinct external developments rapidly made Catholicism the primary concern of Minh Mang and his successors to the Nguyễn throne. The first was the rapid growth of the presence in Vietnam of the Société des Missions Etrangères de Paris, or MEP, in the mid-nineteenth century, a moment of extraordinary growth in global French missionary activity. This expanded the resources and reach of missions precisely when the Nguyễn sought to expand the control of the imperial bureaucracy and military over the kingdom’s populations. This in turn led many Catholics to resist the challenge that they felt Nguyễn rule posed to their spiritual and social autonomy, which they did through bribery of officials and participation in anti-Nguyễn uprisings. This then led the Nguyễn court to levy increasingly harsher proscriptions against the religion and its adherents. The second external development was the growing presence of the French navy in Asia, which during the 1840s began to exercise gunboat diplomacy regularly to protect French missionaries from growing Nguyễn repression. This only confirmed Nguyễn fears that Catholics were a potential conduit for external influence in Vietnam, and the court’s repression of Catholics intensified.”

46The “Lê Văn Khôi revolt” in 1833 resulted in the execution of two MEP missionaries: Gagelin was put to death in October 1833 and Marchand in September 1835 alongside other rebels.
Henares, Ignacio Delgado, José Fernandez, Jaccard, Delamotte and Borie) were martyred.”

His successor stepped back from the aggressiveness of his father. Thieu Tri didn’t revoke any of his father’s laws prohibiting Christianity, but he also didn’t pursue their enforcement. As such, toleration of Christians largely “depended on the zeal of local mandarins. In general, the church enjoyed relative peace. No foreign missionary was killed, and only three Vietnamese Christians were martyred.”

It’s tempting to imagine that this easing of animosity might have continued, and that the history of France in Vietnam could have taken a different path. But this seven-year period of relative mutual restraint was broken in 1847. On April 15, the French navy (which may or may not have been attacked first) bombarded Tourane and sank several Vietnamese ships. Thieu Tri, understanding this as an unprovoked act of war (and one which had been triggered by the repeated smuggling into Vietnam of an MEP priest) ordered retaliation against Christians. One Vietnamese Catholic lost his life before Thieu Tri himself died. His son was Tu Duc, emperor of Vietnam until 1883. Tu Duc would brutally, albeit irregularly, attempt to extinguish Christianity from his realm. In March of 1851, he issued a decree proclaiming that “the ta dao [erroneous or evil religion] forbade the veneration of ancestors, the Buddha and the spirits…[and] that Christian priests preached about ‘heaven and the holy kingdom’ and that they encouraged their followers to die rather than renounce their faith by showing the picture of Christ crucified on the cross.”

Five weeks later, Augustin Schoeffler was executed.

---

47 Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley, World Christianities, c. 1815-1914 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 517.

48 Even when French ships were caught smuggling missionaries into Vietnam (as mentioned above) in 1843.

49 Gilley, 517.

50 Ibid., 518.
Manufacturing Joy with Jealous Tenderness

The tyrant dies and his rule is over; the martyr dies and his rule begins.
- Søren Kierkegaard, 1848

To summarize, the French navy and missionary societies (like much of the French public – see Ch. 2) were possessed of both romantic images of heroic crusades on behalf of the faith and material and geo-strategic interests when thinking of Vietnam. In other words, they mirrored the realist-romantic rhetorical alliance that bound Catholics to the state during the Crimean War. The Vietnamese government was brutal, but also fundamentally correct about the threat posed by Catholic missionaries, especially ones brought to East Asia on screw-driven French battleships. Because the priest-passengers on these ships intellectually participated in the religious nationalism of contemporary French Catholicism, they were proud of France’s special role in their mission. These were French young men who, at this moment, believed that their government acted with divine favor and who imagined themselves as warriors in a holy army. At the same time, as aspiring martyrs (or as their biographer-advocates) they had to walk a fine line. Martyrs must die for the correct cause (not the patrie) and they must accept death without pursuing it or resisting it violently. This tension will be explored further in the next section.

This section describes the joy exhibited by martyrs at death and explains this joy by noting the training that came before the climactic moment. Martyrdom, in many ways, is a performance, representing both agency and modeling of others’ examples. In nineteenth-century France it was for many young men the starring role, in a story already known, on a stage dreamed about for a lifetime. Catholic romantics imagined and rehearsed martyrdom, longing for the heroism, adventure, and the passion it seemed to represent. Deaths of martyrs were publicized by countless biographies, iconographic imagery and papal declarations. Jean-Louis

---

Bonnard’s death even inspired a twenty-five stanza poem from exiled French novelist Victor Hugo (see Ch. 4). On September 24, 1857, Pope Pius IX reminded Catholics of the importance of those on the frontlines of mission work, declaring “Venerable” seven French priests killed in Asia.\(^{52}\) When these are added to the decrees of Pope Gregory XVI in 1840 and 1843, fifty-two MEP martyrs from the missions of China and Vietnam were declared venerable by papal decree in the 1840s and 50s.\(^{53}\) When Gregory XVI declared special indulgences for priests in Asia in 1840, he “exalted the glorious triumphs of the martyrs of Tong-King, in comparing their heroism to those of the early Church.”\(^{54}\) To be declared venerable was to be identified officially as “heroic in virtue”, and as a potential candidate for sainthood. The venerable would also be added to the rolls of the heroes of the faith, and thus become the object of meditation for future priests.

As I show below, later martyrs in Vietnam would almost always identify the moment when they first read these stories as the beginning of their willingness to die for the faith. But by the time these testimonies reached the French public, the martyr’s performance had already been filtered and edited by numerous hands. Available eyewitnesses (always Catholic) of the last moments had to be found. Their accounts and images needed to be coupled with extant letters (and other relics) from the period of the martyr’s apostolic ministry. These were assembled with relevant biographical information from friends, family and spiritual mentors. It was only then that the tragic event would be written about, published, and discussed. At some point a biographer would collect the extent letters, testimonies and images into a hagiographic compendium of the holy life. These biographies were composed, implicitly or explicitly, with the intention of initiating an investigation by the Vatican into permissible public veneration. Thus the

\(^{52}\) Fathers Chapdelaine, Delamotte, Schoeffler, Maubant, Bonnard, Chastan and Imbert were so honored.

\(^{53}\) Launay, v.

\(^{54}\) E. Vindry, *Tong-King et Martyr ou Vie du Vénérable Jean-Louis Bonnard* (Lyon: Briday, 1876), 292.
martyr, as received in Second-Empire Paris, was already more than human: a biography composed by a group and shaped by precedent, audience, and context. This suggests an important question: is the ever-presence of joy at the moment of the martyr’s death merely a product of the source bias of these group biographies? Several things point against this narrow assumption.

To begin with, the willingness to die of aspiring French martyrs can be measured by the numbers of those who made a voluntary commitment to go to places where death was likely. Between the founding of the MEP in 1663 and 1848, the society had sent 483 missionaries to “infidel” countries. Between 1848 and 1868, utilizing the new industrialized modes of transport, they sent 457 more – nearly equaling the total of the previous two centuries in two decades. And within those two crucial decades, twenty-three of those MEP missionaries achieved martyrdom. As the papal decrees of Gregory XVI alone make obvious, death was not a surprising outcome of such a trip. In fact, death was not only unsurprising; it was expected and longed for. MEP priests at the seminary in Paris wanted to be called to Vietnam because of the likelihood of martyrdom in that theatre, not in spite of the danger. Mental training for the performance was difficult but crucial, for the end would likely involve torture, and the attitude towards death would determine its usefulness for the cause. Above all, the martyr needed to make his death useful. And to be used effectively, the martyr’s final tone had to be triumphant, and joyful. The doubts of observers were best overcome by the display of an attitude of conviction, of cheerful bravery: even amidst incredible pain and in the face of imminent death. Unwavering certainty was the key to the performance.

55 At least in the loose sense of martyrdom: fifteen of them were “morts de la main du bourreau” or deaths by the hand of the executioner, while two died in prison and six were killed during capture or on the run. Les Missions Catholiques, 71-2.
When Étienne-Théodore Cuenot lay sick and near death in Vietnam in 1844, he wrote the following in a letter: “I am content and would not trade my situation for all the kingdoms of the world. That which makes me value my position is that I have not yet lost hope of being beheaded by the sword of the persecutors. If you knew how little I fear the red-hot pincers, ropes, knives, swords and chains, you would ask daily that the good Lord grant me the favor finally to be cut in pieces...for the glory of his name.”\textsuperscript{56} Less than a year after Schoeffler’s execution, Jean-Louis Bonnard was arrested and wrote with excitement that if God graced him with martyrdom, he’d be “overwhelmed with happiness.”\textsuperscript{57} As his imprisonment seemed to be at its end, he became almost giddy as he imagined his reward: “Here I am, in the field destined by the Lord, a field maybe a bit too thorny, but [endowed with a] beautiful and magnificent heritage which I know and appreciate too well...and I seem to see not too far off a glorious palm, all shining and ruby red: it is the martyr’s palm! Our dear and beloved brother, M. Schoeffler...oh! that I could walk in his footsteps and share his fate!”\textsuperscript{58}

Bonnard’s two-month prison sentence allowed him ample time to write several letters to family and other French priests. “Do you think I’m in pain? No, I am rejoicing!” he wrote. “Since my childhood, I have hoped for this good fortune and I have begged God with ardor and love. Now God has granted my request - why would I cry? I thank God with all my soul.” The worst frustration for someone with this hope was being denied martyrdom.

\textsuperscript{56}Launay, 42.  
\textsuperscript{57}Vindry, 337.  
\textsuperscript{58}Ibid., 344.
Mgr. Retord, the vicar apostolic, would survive more than two decades of service in Vietnam without being given this “good fortune,” before succumbing finally to disease and hunger while hiding in the forest in 1858. In 1852 he had written to comfort Bonnard in prison, but also to write of his feelings of envy for the young priest’s fate:

God has permitted this; you will earn heaven, and gather glory for the church. Only, I am sad to not be going with you. How beautiful the career of the martyrs!!...Oh! I am more than sad; I am jealous of you to see you leave for the holy country, by surest and shortest road, while I stay here on my stormy sea, without knowing when I will reach a port, without even being assured that I ever will. Me, your bishop, me, the old captain of twenty years of service on foreign soil...How dare you supplant me in this way? But I pardon you, because God wants it this way...

I admire that you have been chosen at this appointed hour, to fight the great fight with the Christian heroes; I envy you, it’s true, but it is an envy of love, a jealousy of tenderness. It is certain that you will be put to death, prepare yourself as well as you can. And be happy! The days of your pilgrimage on the earth will soon be over: soon you will join Borie, Cornay, Schoeffler, and the other apostles and martyrs of this Mission. Ah! how happy they will be to see you enter into their glorious phalanx! What stories you will tell each other. Do not forget to tell them of me and to send them my deep respect.59

Bonnard was executed on May 1, 1852, exactly a year after Schoeffler’s death.

Jean-Théophane Vénard left for Vietnam four months later, having only been ordained in the spring of 1851. When, finally, he was called, he wrote of his certainty that this was a one-way

59Ibid., 352-3, my emphasis.
trip. “I am, therefore, going to leave you at once, dearest people, and to wish you good-bye until our reunion in Heaven. I shall not remain even this week in Paris; Friday will probably be my last day on the soil of France, as we are to embark at Antwerp.”  

He wrote to a friend of his eagerness to embark on the distant conquest of souls: “Mother China and her daughters Korea, Japan and Cochin-China must bend the knee before Christ.” Departing from Belgium, Vénard and a small group of other missionaries sailed to Hong Kong, where he waited to be forwarded to his final assignments for fifteen months. Finally, in February 1854, he was delivered to Vietnam, the promised land for aspiring martyrs. He wrote again to his family.

Well my dear people, I am going to Tonquin. There the venerable Charles Cornay died a martyr. I do not say that the same fate is reserved for me; but if you will only pray ardently, perhaps God may grant me a like grace. I am not going to China, which I have seen as Moses saw the promised land; but I must guide my boat to another shore, a shore on which MM. Schoeffler and Bonnard obtained the martyr’s palm. It is in the Annamite country, which includes Tonquin and Cochin-China, where the spirit of persecution is most active. A price is put upon the head of each missionary, and when one is found, they put him to death without hesitation. But God knows His own, and only to those whom He chooses is the grace of martyrdom given. The one is taken and the other left, and there as everywhere His Holy Will is done. In spite of the violence and the universality of the persecution, it is there that the missions are the most flourishing.

His first act upon arriving was a pilgrimage to Bonnard’s bamboo-shrouded shrine. Later, he wrote to his brothers back at the MEP seminary in Paris. “All the things that make me think of martyrdom are precious to me.... I do not dare to ask for such a brilliant crown: Domine non sum dignus [Lord I am not worthy]; but my soul cannot stop itself from a powerful emotion and many sighs. Lord you have said: Greater love hath no man, that he lay down his life for his friends. You will recall your prayer; this for me is an invincible charm: Holy Mary, Queen of the Martyrs, pray for us. Pray for your friend who thinks of you daily.”  

While still travelling north to his appointed field of ministry, he began to make plans for his death. “When I get to Tonkin, it will

---

60 Launay, 73.
61 Ibid., 198.
be necessary to prepare a place for my future relics.” Mgr. Retord remarked later on the severity of the young man’s commitment: “M. Vénard seems to have chosen suffering as his specialty.”

Pierre-François Néron, who had been ordained by Archbishop Affre in 1848, shortly before the latter’s death in the June Days (see Ch. 1), had a similar longing when he arrived in Vietnam just before the deaths of Schoeffler and Bonnard. “On this ground which exhales the perfume of so many beautiful memories, embalming and fortifying the Church of Tonkin; it was here that the Blessed Cornay and Schoeffler were arrested, here that they suffered and gave their blood for Jesus Christ,” he wrote to his parents in late November 1855. “Will I have the same exit as those who went before me?” He found it likely that the local authorities would locate him sometime soon and exchange him for their “thirty pieces of silver.” But that was as it should be. “I have no brighter desire than to be taken by the mandarins and condemned to death; I have come to this country, finally, to obtain the gift of martyrdom.”

In these accounts, not only does the joyful willingness to die seem real, but the subjects express frustration only when death is postponed or denied. As with Retord’s tender jealousy, the certainty and preparedness for death perhaps made experiencing its delay much more difficult. Cuenot wrote while sick and near death about his anxiety that he wouldn’t be able to hold out until his probable execution. “I would love so much better to die by the sword...than by sickness.” He wouldn’t be so lucky, dying in prison in late 1861 around midnight – just a few hours before the order to decapitate him arrived. Previously, Néron had spent part of April 1857 hiding from tigers in the forest and presumed dead by his companions. His hosts were experiencing intimidation from local authorities and he had taken to hiding at a distance from them to try to spare them from danger. But soon he strode back into the village and promptly

---

62 Ibid., 198.
63 Ibid., 178.
performed an exorcism. “I prefer to be arrested here rather than dying alone in the forest” he wrote. In 1860 when he was arrested he went on a twenty-two-day hunger strike as a response to the delay in his execution, prompting some locals, apparently, to exclaim that he was about to reach enlightenment: “The European has become like a God!” Convinced eventually to eat, he nevertheless continued demanding an immediate sentence and punishment. “Why are the mandarins retaining me so long, when I have no other desire than to submit to execution without delay? The sooner I die, the better it will be.”

These kinds of passive tactics meant to force authorities’ hand were sometimes accompanied by more aggressive conflict-court ing. When a village which had been found to be flirting with Christianity was forced by the local mandarin to offer prayers to the Buddha on pain of death, and understandably complied, Vénard was furious, and brazenly came out of hiding and strode into the village. “If you do not obtain the cessation of this practice,” he said to the poor villagers, “I will come myself, publically, a cane in each hand, to chase the faithful from the common house; I will be arrested by the pagans, I know it, but this will give me great joy…” His apparent lack of concern about his fate made his threat to bring more unwanted attention to local affairs credible, and the mandarin convinced the chief of the village to suppress the “superstitious practice” of obeisance to the Buddha.

Seen in this light, joy in the face of death seems unlikely to be a result of source bias. Despite the hagiographic nature of many of the sources, the numerical volume of young men voluntarily embarking to a place of their sure suffering and probable death, coupled with the

---

64 Ibid., 181.
65 Ibid., 181.
66 Ibid., 204.
multiple independent epistolary attestations to longing for martyrdom, makes the most obvious conclusion that MEP priests shipping to Vietnam sincerely longed for a grisly death. But why?

Part of the answer clearly comes from the way these same accounts, and their precedents, shaped the youth of those who volunteered for later martyrdom. Néron’s conversion to Christianity in 1835 had followed a dissolute youth at the age of seventeen, followed by a job working the grounds of a religious school. At midday, he would sneak into the school library and illicitly read the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* to marvel at the adventures of holy martyrs.\(^67\) Vénard in 1836 at the age of seven already dreamed of being a martyr like Cornay, and had to repeatedly be told to “go and play” rather than praying all the time.\(^68\)

When Bonnard was a lad in the late 1830s, he read similar accounts. According to his biographer, these pages “touched the imagination and the ardent heart of M. Bonnard. It began, in fact, with his first master, M. Ville, who read [to him] the little notebooks of *L’Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi*...”\(^69\) One Catholic circular that Ville read to Bonnard was addressed broadly to the MEP in the late 1830s, and claimed triumph for those who had already given their lives. “[A]lready the sound of your triumphs has crossed all seas, awakening hearts drowsy with indifference, and making the marvels of ancient days believable to the skeptical; fight courageously until the end; you are being watched by God, the angels, and humanity… Already your glorious martyrs, Gagelin and Pierre Tuy, have shown how one dies for the faith, and now they are your representatives to the great King of heaven.”\(^70\) When the martyr Gagelin, who as mentioned above was targeted for his role in a rebellion, was told that he had been sentenced to

\(^{67}\) *Ibid.*, 170.
\(^{68}\) *Ibid.*, 193.
\(^{69}\) Vindry, 300.
\(^{70}\) *Ibid.*, 300.
death in 1833, he wrote of his rapturous happiness. “Sir and dearest colleague; the tidings which you announce to me, that I am irrevocably sentenced to death, fill my inmost heart with joy…The grace of martyrdom, of which I am most unworthy, has been from my earliest childhood the object of my most ardent desire. I have specially solicited it every time I elevated the Precious Blood in the holy sacrifice of the Mass.”  

He told them that he hoped now only to quicken the road ahead. “…My whole ambition is to depart quickly from this body of sin, to be united with Jesus Christ in a blessed eternity.” His friends wrote back to him that they were “radiant with joy” at the news and one added that “I should be almost sorry if the king released you, now that you are so near the moment which will give you the palm of martyrdom, and admission into heaven.”  

Fueled by reading these stories, the religious imagination of young Bonnard envisioned “…the countries of the Far East surrounded …by a shining, poetic halo of the promised land.”

In 1841, twelve-year-old Vénard was already dreaming about passing through this doorway to glory. Suffering from chilblains on his feet and hands, Vénard was asked by one of his schoolmasters to warm himself, but he refused. “The missionaries you were talking to us about last night, sir, suffered much more than that!” In later years, still passionately devoted to stories of martyrs, he thrilled at each student who was accepted to the MEP. He wrote about his developing sense of mission to his father, sister and two brothers, much to their concern, for in their minds that professional route carried the mark of an early grave. “So my news troubled you,

---


Dear little sister, did it? But is there anything so very extraordinary in one among us devoting himself to the salvation of the heathen?"  

Although he tried to quiet the concerns of his family, in truth he had already decided that his ideal endpoint was martyrdom. “Why have I come here?” he asked himself in a letter to his sister after heading off for school. “Why come to a theological seminary? It is to go through a certain course of instruction, you will say. Well, but that course comes to an end; and then? Oh, when that thought comes across me, I simply bow my head, and beg of God to answer me. I will do as He shall appoint.”

At school, the imagined rehearsal of martyrdom was a dramatic and serious affair, and a constant subject of Vénard’s letters. “Oh, this is indeed a sad and exceptional day at the college!” he wrote to his sister on Good Friday. “To see us all mournfully wandering here and there in the cloisters, without a sound being heard, not a voice, not even a whisper, one would imagine we were sheep without a shepherd. And it is quite true: the Pastor of pastors is dead; the Pastor has given His life for His sheep.” Students took this collective reenactment very seriously: it was an act of devotion, an imitation of Christ.

When Vénard reached the MEP seminary in Paris, his childhood longings would be reinforced and sharpened. Martyrs’ relics, gathered by witnesses, carefully guarded and protected, and smuggled back home to the seminary were on display everywhere. But the sacred sanctum was the “Salle des Martyrs”, where students could reverently close the distance between themselves and the afterlife. Louis Veuillot talked often of this room, and credited it with being the beating heart of the French missionary enterprise. Despite every effort to destroy the spread of Christianity, the witness of martyrdoms past and present inspired new generations:

---

74 Ibid., 21.
75 Ibid., 21-2.
And that is why there are schools of martyrs in Paris still, and why they are all filled. Enter the houses. They are old. This is the Seminary of Foreign Missions, founded two centuries ago, and closed by the Revolution, risen up and flourishing. Tertullian said to the persecutors of the early Church: The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians! Open your eyes and see. Here is where the arrow of a savage hit, the whip and the ax of a mandarin, the revolutionary guillotine; here triumphed the torch and the hammer. The walls were rebuilt, the garden is full of flowers, there are no empty spaces in the house, faith burns in their hearts, and joy prevails here. Two inexhaustible sources are open here. One is the chapel, the humble temple of the living God, where the Victim who taketh away the sins of the world is sacrificed every day; the other is the room of the martyrs, where we keep the relics of the community members who confessed God by the loss of life. There are the swords that cut them, the cangues and the chains that they carried, the ropes and whips that ripped their flesh, linens stained with their blood, some remnants of their sacred bones, which have probably, left this world, and thrilled at the sight of the Son of God. All these lips have kissed great treasures, and in all hearts they have lit a fire that will not die.  

Vénard certainly felt the fire. He spent every free minute meditating on the contact relics laid out around the room. “The precious remains of these new martyrs, who in our time have enriched the Church with their blood, have been gathered with reverence and love by the faithful of the Far East. The instruments of their torture, the chains they wore in prison, the clothes dipped in their blood, any of the objects that they used, have become carefully-maintained Christian relics, and guarded like treasures by the faithful for the day when the Holy Church allows a public cult for these new witnesses for the Lord.”  

By the end of 1852, this exhibition included fifty-two contact relics and pieces of the martyred body of Jean-Louis Bonnard, carefully collected and secretly shipped to Paris from Vietnam during the five months since his death. The garden and chapels of the MEP were also continually resupplied with new relics, creating an atmosphere of exotic heroism. Théophane Vénard described this feeling as an “indescribable something which seems to speak to us all day of the Apostolate and martyrdom!”  

Inside the walls of the seminary the soldiers of the cross could safely prepare themselves to serve the church militant. As part of their daily schedule, wrote Vénard, “each of the future

---

76 Veuillot, Ça et là (Paris: Gaume frères et J. Duprey, 1860), 308.
77 Beaulieu, xi.
78 Vénard, 53.
missionaries goes to pay a little visit to the Hall of Martyrs, round which are ranged, not only the relics of the confessors, but the instruments of their torture and pictures of their martyrdom. Every one stays a few minutes here to pray in silence, and then kiss the crucifix stained with the blood of Mgr. Borie. Vénard spent every spare moment in this room, and when the news came of the martyrdom of Schoeffler in Vietnam he wrote to his sister passionately of his desire to share a similar fate. “Oh, if I might someday give my life like him for the Faith! I am not afraid of saying so to you, because I know your generosity, and that you would not even wish to rob me of my crown. This Tonquin Mission is now the most enviable, for in it is almost certain martyrdom.” Progress, for many Catholics, was measured in terms of spreading the gospel: the second coming of Jesus could not begin until all had heard the message. As martyrs were “seed” for new conversions, evidence of progress towards the apocalypse could only come from the front lines of the “distant conquest of souls.” And the port of exit and entry to a frontline role in this eschatological epic was the MEP of Paris.

Perpetual contemplation of (actual and potential) contact relics was accompanied by collective celebration of martyrdoms as victories with both legendary historical precedents and modern significance for France’s special mission. “Vain efforts!” wrote Louvet about the first MEP martyrdoms in 1830s Vietnam. “The rage of the persecutors would be vanquished by the courage of the martyrs... new missionaries [flocked] to replace their brothers, fallen gloriously in the arena, and our Christians had gained more than they had lost by the persecution.” Two council members of the Propagation de la Foi agreed, but reminded their subscribers of the national distinctiveness of the French role in this work. “Yes, we know for sure, the cries of

---
79 Borie (MEP) was killed in Vietnam November 4, 1838.
80 Vénard, 69-70.
81 Louis-Eugène Louvet, Les Missions Catholiques au XIXme siècle (Lille: Société de Saint-Augustin, 1898), 156.
persecuted Christians will be heard everywhere; [but] it will be here in France...so often watered with the blood of martyrs, that all will be moved by it.”

The authors highlighted as well the participation of all French readers in the great mission. “Love knows no distance; faith brings us to you; it seems to us that we fight with you; we share in your retreats and exiles, your anguishes are ours, because we are your brothers, members of the same body, having together the same divine Chief...” And they reminded martyrs-to-be of the glorious reward at the end of the journey. Your hiding places will become palaces, they wrote, “when you understand that they are truly for you the vestibules to Heaven!”

Enraptured by these stories of the 1830s, Catholic boys grew into fervent young men at the dawn of the Second Republic. Néron reached the MEP in Paris in August 1846; he was twenty-eight-years-old. As mentioned above, he was ordained in Paris by Archbishop Affre less than a week before his murder. Schoeffler arrived in Paris at almost exactly the same time as Néron, but was ordained first, in 1847. Bonnard was ordained in December 1848 during the election which brought Louis-Napoléon to the presidency. Vénard was there in 1848 as well, but by the time he reached the MEP seminary in 1851, Néron, Schoeffler and Bonnard were already in Vietnam. But all of these priests began their ministry in the heady days of the romantic revival of Catholicism culminating in the experimental theology of the 1840s (see Ch. 1). And all of them embarked on their missions during a period of strong rhetorical and institutional cooperation between Catholics and the French government. This situation would evaporate by the end of the 1850s (see Ch. 4).

82 E. Vindry, Tong-King et Martyr ou Vie du Vénérable Jean-Louis Bonnard (Lyon: Briday, 1876), 296.
83 Ibid., 298.
84 Ibid., 300.
Despite the encouraging climate and educational reinforcement, however, choosing to be an MEP missionary came with considerable social and financial cost, as can be seen with the reaction of Vénard’s family to his call to Paris (before he’d even been given an assignment in Asia). In 1851 he moved into “that house which for the last two centuries has trained Apostles for China and Tonquin.”

His family was shocked. Vénard understood: they had lost a key member of the family economy and had to face the possibility of his death. He wrote to his father advising consolation through prayer. “Poor father! the word is Foreign Mission. Do not let your human nature shrink from the thought. Rather kneel and take your crucifix, that crucifix: which received my mother’s last breath, and say, ‘My God, I consent, may Thy holy will be done. Amen.’” He begged forgiveness for an act he knew would be interpreted by his father as abandonment. “My father, forgive me for having struck the blow myself! Some people will tell you I am mad, ungrateful, a bad son, and I know not what besides. My darling father, you will not think so!” He hoped to preempt this reaction by reminding his father of the epic, timeless struggle at the heart of the decision. “I know you have a great and generous soul, and one that has drunk deeply at the only true source of real strength and greatness—that of Religion and Faith. I have saddened your heart; my own is sorrowful and heavy too. The sacrifice asked of us is hard—most hard! But, O Lord Jesus! Since Thou dost will it, I will will it likewise, and so will my father.”

After a long pause from home, his father wrote back. He grudgingly accepted his son’s calling, but wondered in writing (in the eternal language of fathers) “if, at your age, you can really arrive at so serious a decision and not regret it hereafter?”

---

85 Vénard, 31.
86 Ibid., 33.
87 Ibid., 34-5.
kind of religious career for his son, one that could provide some material comfort, or at least one that offered physical proximity to his family. “You may well say that the sacrifice is hard. Your ordination cost me nothing. On the contrary, it fulfilled my fondest wishes for you, and I was quite content. But now everything is changed. All my plans are upset. [Rightly do] people say, ‘Man proposes, and God disposes.’” The elder Vénard then poured on the guilt. “I had flattered myself that I would someday have a curé near me, that I should be able to make over everything to Henry, and then come and finish my days quietly under your roof, so that you should close my eyes. Happy, but, alas! Hopeless illusions.”88 The father continued. “But if you are resolved, if you feel that God has indeed called you, then I would say, ‘Obey Him without hesitation.’ Let nothing keep you back. Not even the thought of the poor old father whom you leave in his sorrowful desolation, nor of the paternal roof which will no longer shelter you.”

Clearly for some MEP priests, martyrdom was a family affair. After all, the father wrote, he had been sacrificing for his son for many years for this moment, and now his son would return none of the financial and emotional investment. The preparation for missionary work was expensive, especially for families on the margins: Cuenot’s mother had been forced to cut up her wedding gown to supply him with an acceptable suit for seminary. Vénard’s father reminded him of his past dependency. “My sacrifices began when you first went to school, and I was separated from you; they went on increasing year by year, and now God knows where they are to end. Well, I can only resign myself, and leave all in the hands of God.”89 Vénard replied to his sister, acknowledging that she was burdened by his decision as well: “One more sacrifice is asked of

---

us; but does not our Lord prove those He loves so as to make them more worthy of Himself?
Must we not all pass through the crucible?"90

The last visit of Théophane Vénard with his family was emotionally fraught. As they sat
around and talked the father mournfully pressed the son’s hand. Finally, they began to speak of
the life of the future missionary. “At last he excited them so on the subject of China that nothing
would content Melanie and his brothers but the thought of going too. They made a thousand little
plans, in which each was to share in his labors. ‘And what is to become of me?’ at last exclaimed
their father, who had been silently listening to their fine projects; ‘am I to be left like poor old
Zebedee91 to mend my nets? Rather than that I will go too.’” Finally, the moment of departure
came. “My father,” he begged, “will you not bless your son, your poor little Théophane?” He
embraced his father’s knees and the blessing was hesitatingly given. The lost son went away,
leaving everyone weeping. His father brutally remarked to his other children: “I have lost the
fairest flower in my garden!”92

Even with full knowledge of the danger and the heavy cost, it seems, aspiring martyrs
urgently wished for death. Their mortal joy was taught early and reinforced often: ritually,
theologically, and visually, and socially valued to some extent by a supportive cultural
environment in France. In addition, at least in the lives of the priests under review here, the
impact stories of martyrs had on their youth must have suggested to them the potential power of
what they were doing. As the ultimate imitation of Christ, giving one’s life for the faith could
suggest to those back home that the last global barriers to the reception of the gospel were
falling. The distribution of a martyr’s image, story and body (as relics) were thus, at least

90Ibid., 38.
91Fisherman and father of James and John, who, according to the Gospels, abandoned their father to
become disciples of Jesus.
92Vénard, 43.
potentially, verification of (French) Catholicism, and a useful way to ground ministry in France in a heroic, accessible and inspiring personal narrative.

In this context, one other important rhetorical strategy of exhortation needs to be mentioned, a strategy of temporal folding in which an imagined epic history was embedded into the present. Chateaubriand, who had initiated France’s romantic obsession with the crusades, had a house in Paris which looked straight into the garden of the MEP seminary, the “Polytechnic Institute of Martyrs.” Through it he imagined he could see the romantic glow cast by the doorway east to Jerusalem and beyond to “Tonkin.” As with Chateaubriand’s romantic appropriation of the French role in the crusades (see Ch. 2), martyrs in Asia were repetitively connected with the classical context of persecuted Christianity in first-century Roman Palestine.93

Textual references to the “first martyrs” are nearly ever-present in these sources and already attested above in several quotations. A few more examples should suffice to suggest what is meant here. Bonnard’s biographer, for example, explains the temporal function of the martyr’s death. “M. Bonnard...in the year 1852, served as a great witness chosen by God to transmit from the past to the future this bloody torch of Christian heroes...which has never ceased, since the beginning of the church, to shine in the hands of its children.”94 One was transmitted “back to the future” by imagining Vietnam as a “bloody arena.” Vénard wrote to his family, when he was arrested in 1860, that he had “entered into the arena of the confessors of the faith.”95 Other examples included comparisons of Minh Mang or Tu Duc to Nero, or the use of anachronistic language familiar from martyrologies to describe relevant current events.

---

93 This is remarkably consistent with the rhetorical strategy used by early-modern martyrologies as presented by Gregory (see above).
94 Vindry, 1.
95 Launay, 212.
While authors and readers invested the past into the present, one foot needed to be maintained firmly on modern ground. In the here and now France had a divine mission to civilize. The Church’s role, wrote Vindry, was to “maintain and administer past conquests...and, today, to continually send new workers to win for Jesus Christ nations still unfaithful...” This work was particularly crucial in Vietnam, “…the frontier of this bloody struggle...it is [to Vietnam] that we throw the valiant militias of apostolic combat, it is there, as in Rome of the first ages”⁹⁶ that the palm of the martyrs shines into the modern world. The Church did this, naturally, in cooperation with “Roman Gaul, so justly proud of its ancient martyrs.”⁹⁷ Then, as now, these “new Sebastians”⁹⁸ inspired broader Christian devotion. Today, they would conquer the lagging faith of Europeans. “Who, in reading the admirable history of the illustrious confessors of the faith [in the past], could withhold praise from the martyrs of our day, in this century chilled by religious indifference, having given living proof of the marvels of ancient days?”⁹⁹

**The Debris of Demons**

MEP missionaries, as well as their contemporary and later publicists, were almost desperate to assert that Christian faith alone precipitated the deaths of these priests. “Obviously, the principal preoccupation of Tu-duc was the ruin of Christianity”, wrote Launay.¹⁰⁰ Martyrdom could not be official if service to the nation was the cause. Launay continued, using all the rhetorical devices so far mentioned in order to make this point.

---

⁹⁶Vindry, 281-2.
⁹⁸St. Sebastian, who may have been from southern Gaul, was a third-century victim of the last major Roman persecutions of Christians under the Emperor Diocletian.
¹⁰⁰Launay, 11.
In studying...the pain visited on the missionaries and against the Christians, one can find numerous analogies with the accusations raised in the first centuries: the doctrine of Christ is misunderstood, distorted, despised; the Eucharist is enchanted bread; the cross, a disgrace; the divine Crucified, a malefactor; Catholicism, a foreign religion, perverse, subversive of established traditions, corruptor of good morals, disrespectful of the gods of the country, destructive of the cult of the ancestors; its ministers are men of highly questionable morality, who engage in sorcery, composing remedies from pieces of the dead; the Christians, a population vile and ignorant.

It is therefore impossible to have a shred of doubt on not only the principal, but the only motive of the persecutions: it is a religious motive; Catholicism is condemned because it is Catholicism; its preachers and adepts, because they spread it or because they remained faithful to it.101

But as the contextual analysis has already demonstrated, French priests who were executed in Vietnam during the Second Empire weren’t exactly killed because of their Christianity. For Vietnamese authorities it was often nearly impossible to make a distinction between Christianity and European military aggression. They had worked in tandem in East Asia for most of recent history and had both appeared simultaneously once again. But even more, neither the martyrs nor their hagiographers could themselves entirely separate the role of nation and church, even when their cases for martyrdom depended on doing just that. Both the martyrs and their hagiographers regularly betrayed the martial French nationalism they shared with their broader confessional community. This can be seen (as in the Crimean War) in the language of Cuenot, who imagined himself as “Enrolled in this pious crusade.”102 Bonnard’s biographer, more directly, could take pride in France’s role in the divine plan. “If it is true that everywhere and always, the Catholic church was and will be militant on earth, it is true also that at certain times, certain countries are chosen by divine Providence to be the ultimate arena of the strong, the field of battle of the heroes of the faith.”103 His subject, similarly, could write that his work in the field was “...to hold constantly a pen in his hand to address defenses of our holy religion to accessible mandarins or to recount to Europe the glorious misfortunes of Tong-King, and finally to suffer

101 Ibid., 11.
102 Ibid., 35.
103 Vindry, 281.
from the proscriptions and the cruelty of the tyrants of this unfortunate country [in response to] a thousand efforts to civilize it and simultaneously to convert it to the true faith.”

Bonnard, himself described by his teachers and fellow students as frustratingly slow intellectually, could nevertheless revel in the technological superiority of Europe. Describing himself as the father to locals much older than he, Bonnard proudly coupled western industrial and military superiority with France’s supposedly benevolent civilizing mission for his students’ edification. “In my free time, I recount to our Christians the history of Europe, which they love...When I describe to them the railroads, great churches and other European things, they go into ecstasies.”

Louvet, contemplating with similar pride the brief period of relative peace during the reign of Thieu Tri, wrote that the Vietnamese emperor “was afraid: that is all.” He was afraid of French cannons (and imagined Vietnam sharing China’s fate), and “he feared, when spilling the blood of the missionaries, that France would not delay in demanding an account.”

Recent tensions which had resurfaced in the 1840s, he wrote, had provided the opportunity for France to gloriously enter onto the stage of an epic history. “This was the first appearance of France, intervening in the name of civilization and of its faith, for the deliverance of its nationals.” The Vietnamese government, he continued, profited from this “lesson,” and the military threat of France was even demanded by the irreligious. “The Voltairean journals of the time themselves protested against this abandonment, in the name of national honor.”

The missionaries were proud of the accomplishments and might of their patrie. Much as French Lazarist priests had expressed satisfaction when replacing Italian Franciscans in the

104Ibid., 314.
105Vindry, 333.
106Louvet, 157.
107Ibid., 157.
Levant (see Ch. 2), MEP priests were gratified when they replaced Dominicans (and other orders) from non-French nations in the mission field. And, as one might expect, these kinds of sentiments can be seen especially in the priests who passed through Paris during the Second Republic and early Second Empire. From Affre’s death during the June Days of 1848 to the Crimean War, the French Catholic religious experienced a papally-approved honeymoon with the French government. In 1851, in Paris, Vénard was ordained in a massive festival that buoyed his spirits. “The ordination was very large, and all the different communities of Paris contributed some members,” he wrote. “I found, kneeling side by side with me, Lazarists, Dominicans, Franciscans, Missionaries of the Holy Ghost, Irish, Negroes, &c. I knew none of them; but my heart went out to them with love and sympathy, for are we not children of the same Father, servants of the same Master, soldiers of the same King? The same object unites us; the same grace, in different degrees was distributed to us; the same God himself gave to us; and we invoked the same Queen, Mary, the Mother of the Saviour of the world. And then, as brothers, we gave one another the kiss of Peace. Oh, how happy I was!”

Having expected Paris to be irreligious and republics to be secular, Vénard instead found acceptance and solidarity. Writing to assure his family that he was safe in Paris, he explained that MEP priests were well-liked, even by revolutionaries. “As far as I am concerned, I assure you I am in perfect safety. Our congregation is looked upon with a favorable eye at Paris, and everyone knows and is kind to us.” As proof he mentioned a moment during the recent revolution which seemed to him to attest to the high regard even political radicals had for missionaries. “In February 1848, the eve of the dethronement of Louis-Philippe, our community was going across the Champs Elysées. An immense crowd was collected, and some of them deliberated what they should do [to the MEP priests]. But the majority exclaimed, ‘Let us leave them alone. Those are
the men who are going to martyrize themselves in China!’ and the observation saved our poor missionaries.” And he saw reason to be optimistic about the new leadership. “The new government seems well disposed towards religion, and willing to give the Church her due. If they go on so, God will send His blessing on this poor distracted country, and there may be some chance of seeing things reorganized.”

He attended the triumphal entry into Notre Dame of the new emperor in January 1852, a festival that formally sanctified the new empire with the blessings of its most elevated priests. As he wrote to his brother, “all the great ones of the earth were thus compelled to do homage to the majesty of God and to the glory of His Church. God alone is the beauty and His works perfect and glorious… In Catholic countries all human potentates seek the support of the Church for she is the one power-first and indestructible and without her aid no Catholic can exist, for winds and the tempests would blow and sweep away from off the face of the earth.”

The mutability of current events suggested to him the importance of national repentance (especially the repentance of irreligious workers) so that France could be restored to political stability after revolutions and reaction. “To remedy the evil, France must be converted, or else God will permit the working classes, the men who possess nothing, to be sooner or later the instruments of His vengeance. It seems to me our business is to try and become each one of us better, and then God will have pity upon our country.”

---

108 Ibid., 56. The source leaves unclear whether Vénard was actually present at this near-confrontation. One of his companions at the MEP in 1851 was Auguste Chapdelaine. Chapdelaine was already 37 years old, and his presence in Paris was thus an exception granted for his unusual piety. His experience of Paris seems to have been similar to Vénard’s: rumors of urban moral decay appeared to be exaggerated and there was much cause for optimism. “If it’s true to say that Paris is the center of dissoluteness,” he wrote to a Carmelite nun of his acquaintance, “it is also the home of much virtue.”

109 Ibid., 54.

110 Ibid., 54.

111 Ibid., 55.
In other words, MEP priests found it difficult not to think of themselves as agents of a specifically French project, backed by God though it was. It is therefore not surprising that their jailers failed to understand that their national identity and relationship to the French military weren’t as important as their Christianity. The hagiographic accounts of the interrogations under Vietnamese authorities themselves show the importance of national identity in precipitating the arrests and executions. As a general rule, the higher the official questioning the priest and the later in the 1850s the trial occurred, the more the concern and even paranoia with the French connection is apparent. These questions, moreover, were preserved in hagiographic sources despite the fact that they directly undermined the case for martyrdom. When Bonnard was arrested in 1852, the questions by the local mandarin were still curious and fairly innocuous, although his European identity was clearly important. He reported laughing at their inability to pronounce his name and at their “impudent” questions about how he got to Vietnam and how long he had been there. When he told them he was from France, they inquired whether the “mandarins” of France were well-fed (“had plenty of rice”).\textsuperscript{112} At his trial, his European identity seemed to be more important than his nation, likely because of the concern the Vietnamese must have felt about British incursions in Asia as well. The high mandarin pronounced the following sentence prior to his execution: “Having examined the three guilty, I have discovered that one of them, a priest of the religion of Jesus, was clearly European. He has a long nose, thick beard, short hair, yellow eyes, white, pale skin; he says his name is Bona. He is French, aged twenty-nine. He has been here for two years, having obtained a passport from a grand mandarin of his country, he came on a French vessel, until the city of Macao...”\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{112}Vindry, 366-370.
\textsuperscript{113}Ibid., 377.
But by the time of Néron’s arrest in September 1860, concern with specifically French military movements and involvement with rebellion and local unrest was of primary concern in the interrogation. Asked why he came to Vietnam, Néron answered that he had came “[t]o preach the Catholic religion” and had been “living in the forest”\(^\text{114}\) when he was arrested. Attempting to force him to give up details about his network, multiple mandarins demanded admission that French foreign policy lay behind his presence in Vietnam, asking him “about the details on the Franco-Spanish expedition in Cochinchina.”\(^\text{115}\) When he refused to answer, they threatened him with torture and beat him “forty times” but apparently couldn’t get him to utter a sound. After returning him to his cage for some time, the mandarins demanded that he sign a confession for having taken part in a rebellion, but he refused. “I came here to preach the Christian faith...and not to excite a revolt.”\(^\text{116}\)

Similarly, Vénard’s interrogator three months later showed serious interest in his national origin. “Where are you from: France, Spain or Malacca?” Vénard answered defiantly, incredulous that his captors possessed enough information to distinguish between the options offered. “Why do you ask me this? You who have a public office in this kingdom, who have never travelled anywhere and who know nothing, neither of France, nor of Spain, nor of Malacca. Lock me back up if you want, but don’t push these questions any further.”\(^\text{117}\) They continued skeptically to inquire into his role in precipitating the ongoing French invasion, but he refused to admit any contact. “It is neither the king nor the officials of France who sent me; it is my mission to preach to the pagans, and my religious superiors assigned me the Annamite

\(^{114}\)Launay, 184.
\(^{115}\)Ibid., 185-6.
\(^{116}\)Ibid., 188.
\(^{117}\)Ibid., 213.
kingdom as my district.”

They then inquired about Mgr. Retord, having apparently received evidence that he had requested French invasion and/or encouraged native rebellion. “Why has [Retord] given letters recommending to the chiefs of the rebels to enlist Christians?” Vénard asked for the source of the information and denied its truth. The mandarins continued: “And the European warriors who have taken Tourane and Saigon, who sent for them? What is their goal in making war with our country?” Nothing Vénard could say could dissuade them from the notion that French priests had started the war. “Mandarin, I understand that there is a war,” Vénard replied, “but having had no communication with the European soldiers, I cannot answer your question.”

At this moment, a higher official (“Prefect”) arrived and with a “vibrant voice” began the following exchange with his prisoner:

[Prefect:] Ah, chief of the Christian religion, you have a distinguished face; you know well that the Annamite laws bar the entry of Europeans to our kingdom; what good will come of your getting killed here? It is you who have roused the European navies to come make war on us, is it not? Tell the truth or we will torture you!

[Vénard:] Great Mandarin, you ask me two things: in the first place I respond that I am one sent from heaven to preach the true religion to those who are ignorant of it, regardless of what place, and in what kingdom. We respect very much the authority of the kings of the world, but we respect still more the authority of the King of heaven. To the second question, I respond that I have in no manner aroused the Europeans to make war on the Annamite kingdom.

[Prefect:] In that case, go to them and tell them to leave, and we will pardon you.

[Vénard:] Great Mandarin, I have no authority to fix this issue: nevertheless if His Majesty sends me, I will ask the European warriors to stop making war on Annam and if I do not attain my goal, I will return and submit to execution.

[Prefect:] You are not afraid to die?

[Vénard:] Great Mandarin, I am not afraid to die. I came here to preach the true religion; I am guilty of no other crime which merits death; but if Annam kills me, I will spill my blood with joy for Annam.

Cuenot, the following year, also found that questions about the missionary-military connection were of urgent concern to his jailers. The first question, according to his biographer, betrayed this fear. “‘What do you know about the war,’ [the mandarin] demanded brusquely. ‘I

---

118 Ibid., 214.
119 Ibid., 215.
know nothing about the war,’ said [Cuenot], ‘I came here only to preach religion, and I have preached for more than thirty years, that is all. The Great Mandarin can inflict pain on me if he wishes; but it is completely useless to interrogate me, this will just complicate things, because on the subject of the war, I know absolutely nothing.’”¹²⁰ His captors found incredible his claim of thirty-six years’ residence in their kingdom. They found impossible his denial of involvement in the war. After all, every other regional priest and missionary had fled south to the French castle in Saigon, now once again occupied by French soldiers. Cuenot had personally approved their flight, but refused to depart with them, saying like Affre walking towards the barricades, “the Good Pastor gives his life for his sheep.”¹²¹

Following the deaths of Schoeffler and Bonnard in 1851-52, missionaries (and their later sponsors) corroborated the intensification of Vietnamese concern with France and all of them blamed French foreign policy for their increased suffering. It is here that one can note elements of national disillusionment (contemporary with similar shifts back in Paris – see Ch. 4). After all, if French actions sped delivery of their longed-for martyrdoms, weren’t they valuable? What kind of instrument of divine will was France supposed to be? Was it a New Jerusalem, or another Imperial arena? Bungled policies made France appear less like a champion of the faith, and they also complicated Vietnamese persecution, diluting the cause with realpolitik. Bonnard’s biographer summarized the problem in retrospect: “The organs of the Catholic press spread to all places the news that another victim had been sacrificed on Annamite soil. They scarcely needed to prove that Christian blood, spilled for the faith in the arena of martyrdom, crying to Heaven for mercy from the executioners, that French blood, unjustly taken, demanded that the mother country vigorously punish the guilty. France understood this eventually, and, through a series of

¹²⁰Ibid., 48.
¹²¹Ibid., 43-4.
armed interventions, too timid at first, but later wisely aggressive, forced [Tu Duc] to sign …the
treaty of Saigon.”

Launay agreed that intensified persecution was the result of French military
engagement, as “…the embassy of M. de Montigny, sent in 1856 by Napoleon III to conclude an
alliance with Annam and halt the persecution, obtained a result exactly opposite to that which
was hoped for. Tu-Duc refused to receive the plenipotentiary; his hostility against the Catholics
augmented, and the persecuting decrees multiplied themselves.”

Louvet concurred, after describing the executions of Schoeffler and Bonnard.

This was an insult to France, an act of defiance against civilization. The imperial government...during this
time...had clerical tendencies [but] couldn’t yet do anything about it. It was only in 1856 that [Napoleon III]
sent M. de Montigny to Cochinchine to propose a treaty of commerce, and incidentally to deal with the
religious question; but the mission of Montigny, ill-conceived and carried out, did not succeed at achieving
results in either of these purposes and provoked a paroxysm of fury from the persecutors. As Mgr. Retord
wrote of this subject ‘the half-measures and idle threats only aggravated our situation and that of our
Christians. [Instead of] acting with force, we were abandoned to our unfortunate situation.

In a subsequent extended passage, Louvet continued to reflect on what was gained and
lost by the dependence of the missions on the French government, beginning with Pellerin’s visit
to France in 1857 to “…expose to the Emperor the critical situation of the Christians and to
demand from him serious help that would be capable of obtaining finally the religious freedom
of the missionaries and their neophytes.” This was the emperor’s “incontestable right” in defense
of French “honor and justice.” Pellerin asked the emperor what possible alternative to a French
invasion existed. “Should we leave [the MEP priests] without any defense in the claws of the
tiger, after having excited its wrath with our error?” Soon after, as discussed above, the
expedition was ordered. As Louvet assesses it,

[The war] was a deplorable affair. The treaty of peace gave to France the colony of Cochinchine and
promised to the Christians religious liberty. The expedition had, therefore, at least in part, obtained its goal;
but at the price of such sacrifice! Not simply Mgr. Cuenot but…in total, five vicars apostolic martyred in
four years, not to mention Mgr. Retord, Vicar Apostolic of Tong-King occidental, who died of his

---

122Vindry, 401.
123Launay, 8.
124Louvet, 158.
privations in the forest (1858); the martyrdom of Néron and Vénard...the imprisonment of Charbonnier and Mathevon, for eleven months who escaped death only at the peace treaty. In addition, 116 Annamite priests died, more than a third of the Annamite clergy; the destruction of eighty convents...as well as exile, destruction, fire, etc.

There is still, for many of us, a problem of knowing if, finally, religion gained or lost here, from the presence of our compatriots. For me, I am one of those who thinks that we lost and that we always lose, from this contact [with the French military]. The pagans became more difficult to convert, the Christians are less fervent, less docile, more exposed to the delicate temptations that they do not even suspect. As I have written in another work, if the sword of the executioner made martyrs of our virgins, it did not make them prostitutes.¹²⁵

In addition to authors reminiscing later about the loss of the church on account of the nation, one can also see national disillusionment in the letters of the martyrs themselves as they were in the best position to judge how French action and Vietnamese response affected the lives of missionaries on the ground. Cuenot could already feel the intensification of persecution in 1854, when he wrote that he had suffered more that year than in his previous twenty-two years of mission work. But it was to get much worse. Vénard described 1858 as a time of great personal fear. “The year 1858 was terrible, because the presence in Tourane of the French expedition had excited more hatred from Tu-duc.”¹²⁶ Néron described 1859 as a period characterized by “uncertainty about the future, fear of an always-imminent arrest...these days of agony.”¹²⁷

Vénard had quickly learned upon reaching Vietnam of the need to accustom himself to a very difficult life. He had trained in survival tactics and available hiding places, and had learned the administrative divisions and proper procedures from Retord himself. Retord’s episcopal slogan, “Intoxicate me with the Cross,” offered the passionate embrace of suffering as the best antidote to the mundane brutality of living in hiding. Having arrived at a moment of renewed persecution, Vénard found, in fact, that his entire ministry was done in fits and starts of hiding and escaping.

¹²⁵Ibid., 158-9.
¹²⁶Launay, 199.
¹²⁷Ibid., 182.
One goes generally by night, for greater security: sometimes by water, on rivers or canals, with a continual change of boats: sometimes by land, like mighty lords, in palanquins, or on the backs of slaves, in a species of net or hammock, while the matting at the sides hides you from the passers-by. Sometimes one can only go on foot, without shoes, in the little narrow paths, between the rice-fields. If it be day-time, one has a fair chance of escaping the difficulties of the road, but at night one must be content to walk ‘clumpity-clump,’ falling into holes one moment, into rice-water the next, unable to find a firm footing anywhere; and often, when you think you are going on swimmingly, your foot slips on the greasy damp soil, and you measure your length in the mud. Now don’t you think this is a very picturesque way of travelling? \(^{128}\)

Vietnam was “the vestibule to Heaven.” All who had volunteered to go there had willingly chosen death, and now lived in the waiting room. “The cross is the program of all the Tonquin missionaries; for, from first moment to the last, their lives may be looked upon as one long martyrdom.”\(^{129}\) Since villagers had been killed or tortured when they helped him, Vénard felt compelled to live outside of the hamlets as much as possible, in the forests, mountain caves or worse. “To try and spare them, we hide either in our little boats, or in caverns, or in tombs in the mountains, where we run the risk of being buried alive. One day we had to remain in one of these for eight hours, being only able to breathe through a bamboo tube. When we came out we were all like idiots, and only half conscious.”\(^{130}\) Watching such suffering, the missionaries’ “whole moral nature has been martyred.”\(^{131}\)

Vénard, suffering from advanced tuberculosis and fighting for survival, became desperate. Death under these conditions was not what he had expected. “I write to you from Tonquin, and from a little dark hole,” he wrote to his family in 1858, “of which the only light is through the crack of a partially-opened door, which just enables me to trace these lines, and now and then to read a few pages of a book.” Visits from local officials were frequent, sudden and unannounced. “For one must be ever on the watch. If the dog barks, or any stranger passes, the door is instantly closed, and I prepare to hide myself in a still lower hole, which has been

---

\(^{128}\) Vénard, 109.
\(^{129}\) Ibid., 111.
\(^{130}\) Ibid., 138.
\(^{131}\) Ibid., 143.
excavated in my temporary retreat. This is the way I have lived for three months, sometimes alone, sometimes in company with my dear old friend, Mgr. Theurel.” Attacks on natives continued, as a deterrent to potential hosts and for the sake of their traitorous kindness to the French priests. “The convent which sheltered us before has been destroyed by the pagans, who got wind of our being there. We had just time to escape between two double walls about a foot wide. From thence we saw through the chinks the band of persecutors, with the mayor at their head, garroting five or six of the oldest nuns, who had been left behind when the younger ones took flight. They beat these poor women with rods, laying their hands on everything they could get, even to a few earthenware pots which hung on the partition behind which we were concealed. And we heard them vociferating, howling like very demons, threatening to kill and burn everybody and everything, unless they were given a large sum of money.”

This was not how things were supposed to happen. “His missionaries live in holes and caverns, and a price is put upon their heads. Is not the day of their deliverance at hand?”

Imagining France as the likely vehicle of such deliverance, the following year provided more disappointment. In 1857, he and other missionaries heard about the end of the Crimean War, the birth of the Prince Imperial and the papal declaration of the Immaculate Conception. “In addition to all this we were told of the mission sent by the Emperor to negotiate with the Annamite king, so as to stop the persecution of the Christians, and especially of the French missionaries, whose blood their king, a worthy successor of his father, has so cruelly shed.” But hopes raised at French assistance were disappointed.

In Cochin-China the state of things is still worse. I told you, in a previous letter, that the Emperor was going to send a plenipotentiary to plead the cause of the Christians with the Annamites. Well, M. de Montigny duly arrived, but only with two little steamers and a corvette, and with no real powers to treat. So

---

132 Ibid., 134.
133 Ibid., 124.
the king refused to listen to them, and the Frenchmen had to weigh anchor and go; and all the people, whether Christians or pagans, who had been rejoicing at the prospect of being delivered from their tyrants, seeing the failure of the whole thing were not only thoroughly discouraged, but began to despise a power which could do nothing, and this shame has fallen heavily on us poor missionaries. If France meddles at all, she ought to do it thoroughly, so as to carry her point. Still, all hope is not gone as the Chinese war has brought so large a fleet into these waters. M. de Montigny, unable to help us as he wished, threatened the king with the account he would have to render to our ships of the French bloodshed in his dominions. The king, seeing the interest he took in the Christian missionaries, imagined that he had been sent for by them; therefore, when he set sail and went away, he left us in the claws of a tiger who was more and more irritated against us. In consequence, they seized a Christian mandarin with thirty of his neophytes, and after having made them suffer horrible tortures, they were condemned to be beheaded.\textsuperscript{134}

Each further moment of French intervention was followed by disappointment. “We are in daily expectation of peace. A French squadron is arrived at Touranne on the first of September, and 3000 troops are camped on the shore. As soon as their arrival was known there was great rejoicing among both Christians and pagans; for the pagans hate the reigning dynasty, and attribute all the misfortunes of late years to the bad conduct of the king, who thinks of nothing but his pleasures, and neglects his people, whom he gives up to the oppression and rapacity of the mandarins. Many say, ‘The cruelties against the Christians have brought down the vengeance of the gods on this dynasty. The Europeans come to deliver them, which is just and fair.’”\textsuperscript{135}

Native Christians were prepared to begin a rebellion, Vénard believed, at the first sign of French success. Looking for signs of change, they interpreted everything as meaningful. “The appearance of a comet has strengthened the popular belief in the approaching dissolution of the Government. Such phenomena are always a sign of war to a superstitious people. A revolt has been organized, and only waits for the report of the success of the French troops to lift its standard from one end of the country to the other. Strangely enough, although the French squadron has been for three months and a half in Cochin-China, we have heard nothing.” It was difficult for Vénard, it seems, to know what to hope for: after all, French success may very well have robbed him of his chance at martyrdom.

\textsuperscript{134}Ibid., 138.
\textsuperscript{135}Ibid., 153.
Comet observers in Vietnam would be as disappointed, though for different reasons, as their French counterparts who were also looking to the skies for a comet in 1857. But as the comet waned, court officials asserted that its disappearance actually heralded their continued divine favor. In 1860 Vénard wrote again to his family of his loss of faith in French efforts. “I wrote to my family in 1858, to tell them of the French squadron at Touranne. In 1859 they destroyed the fortifications of Saigon, in Cochin-China, leaving a garrison in one of the forts of the river. Then came the summer, and news of the war with Austria, and a pestilential sickness which began to decimate our troops. Nevertheless, hostilities were resumed against the Annamites in the autumn, and were continued till April, 1860, when, to the astonishment of everyone, [the French soldiers] retreated, and abandoned all the points they had previously occupied.” He ended with the phrase his father had used when informed of his son’s appetite for mission work. “Man proposes, and God disposes. An expedition undertaken by the iron will of the Emperor Napoleon III and confided to such a man as Admiral Rigault de Genouilly, ought to have been crowned with success. But what are human probabilities to the Divine decrees?”

Perhaps God’s plan was no longer reflected in French imperial success, but by its failure. “He has permitted that our deliverance should be delayed, and our Church still further purified by suffering… It is on account of our faults and shortcomings that these misfortunes have come upon us, and instead of blaming the cause, we should beat our breasts, and say, ‘Have mercy on us O Lord! according to Thy goodness.’” Seen as a signal of French weakness, the botched French invasion only convinced authorities to finish the job of eliminating Catholicism from Vietnam. “The Annamite government, seeing the French leave their shores, determined once for

---

136 Parisians in June of 1857 participated in a rumor-fueled apocalyptic panic concerning the anticipated return of a potentially destructive comet. Though astronomers repeatedly readjusted their calculations, the comet never appeared. For a nineteenth-century account, see Amédie Guillemin, *The World of Comets* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1877).
all to extirpate the Catholic Faith throughout the kingdom. Those mandarins who were in any way favourable to the Catholics were dismissed, and replaced by others whose hatred was well known.” Humiliating tests of faith were contrived in order to identify committed Christians. “Crosses were placed at the entrance to all the villages, that the Christians might be forced by the guards to trample them under their feet. Then they chanted horrible blasphemous verses, declaring that Zato, which is the Annamite name of ‘Jesus,’ had a dog for his father, and men were found vile enough to carve crucifixes with a figure of a dog on one side and a woman on the other, so as to degrade to the utmost the God of the Christians.137

In November 1860, Théophane Vénard was caught inside the double wall of a native Christian’s house and dragged away. “When I left the prefecture to go on to the capital,” he wrote from his final home in a small cage, “an immense crowd came to witness my departure; one of them, a young Christian, was not afraid to throw himself on his knees three times before my cage, imploring my blessing, and declaring me to be a messenger sent from Heaven, in spite of the guards and the mandarins.” Vénard asked his captors to have pity on the people hiding him. But the mandarin only replied, “I have always pitied the people, it is you who have brought these evils upon them; my own son-in-law is now reduced to extreme poverty.”138

Schoeffler had walked smiling to his death in 1851. Bonnard had died in 1852 “walking with heroic courage and an air of superhuman contentment.”139 Although his beheaded body was separated and thrown into a river, it was recovered by dedicated swimmers. Néron simply said “the sooner I die, the better it will be,” and walked silently to his death in November 1860. The executioner, according to his biographer, apologized to him. Another official, watching his

137Ibid., 160-2.
138Launay, 211.
139Vindry, 379.
silence and lack of complaint, as well as a dramatic storm which reportedly accompanied his beheading, remarked that the authorities must have acted in error. “This European, calm, living a solitary life, was unjustly condemned to death; even the sky is shaking.”

Vénard was sentenced to be executed a couple of months later. His bishop wrote to his family that in the meantime he was well taken care of: “though in chains, he is as gay in his cage as a little bird.” As Vénard himself wrote home, there was a relief in the certainty of death. He would play his part very soon in the distant conquest of souls. The period of hiding while ill in marshy swamps and dank caves and hoping for survival was over. Unlike the fear and uncertainty of hiding, this chapter of his story was familiar and planned. “Ah! I am now come to the hour so longed for by us all. It is no longer, as in the Hymn for Departure, ‘Perhaps some day,’ but ‘Very soon,’ all the blood in my veins will be shed for Thee…I have suffered nothing, in comparison with my brethren. I have only to lay my head quietly on the block, under the axe of the executioner, and at once I shall find myself in presence of Our Lord, saying, ‘Here am I, O Lord! Thy little martyr!’” The end would be quick and he would be delivered directly to heaven. “I shall present my palm to Our Lady, and say, ‘Hail, Mary! my Mother and my Mistress, all hail!’ And I shall take my place in the ranks of the thousands killed for the holy name of Jesus; and I shall intone the eternal Hosanna! Amen.’”

After months of delays, rounds of “final letters” and secret ministrations from native Catholics, he “joyfully strolled” to his execution. The executioner asked him for a bribe to make it quick. Vénard was defiant: “the longer it lasts the better it will be.” It took several strokes with a blunt blade to sever his head. “No sooner had the troops left the ground than the crowd and the

---

140Launay, 190.
141Vindry, 176.
women precipitated themselves on the spot to soak their handkerchiefs and papers in the martyr’s blood; and such ardor did they show that not a blade of grass was left in the place.”

**Martyrize Yourself**

Nineteenth-century French martyrs shared many characteristics with their early-modern counterparts. Martyrdom as conceived in the 1850s was similarly useful to its audience in providing a sense of continuity and timelessness in a moment of anxiety about change and the future. Martyrs functioned as proof of true belief. They provided a focal point for contemplating how to “die well.” For Schoeffler and his MEP brothers, as well as for those who distributed his story, and as in the wars of the Reformation, the “spectacle of the martyrs’ deaths could frame a final act of evangelization more powerful than a thousand sermons.” But this was especially true in a period of expanding information networks. Catholic dissemination of the stories of martyrs could rely on the telegraph, the steamship, and subscription newspapers which used detailed description of these events to bolster a theological and apocalyptic eschatology while moving within a feedback loop insulated from external critique. The level of detail was unwittingly assisted by the practices of the executioners who read aloud the crime of Christianity, and generally allowed last minute letter-writing and regular visitation. The martyrs, prepared by their culture for the moment of their death, both imitated and authored familiar epic moments. They theatrically ridiculed demands for recantation, they looked heavenward as they died, and they expressed gratitude and joy while moving towards their death. Participating in a sacred reenactment, French missionaries could experience an abolition of the temporal distance between them and the apostolic age. And in addition to the models of Jesus and the apostles and

142 Vénard, 191.
143 Gregory, 135.
the communities of early Christian martyrs, they also had contemporary French examples of Christian heroes and could measure the socialized meaning attributed to previous martyrdoms and thus anticipate how such actions would be valued by their peers.

Did the MEP martyrs seek their own death? Technically, such behavior would count against a priest being formally designated a martyr. They certainly longed for it, they put themselves repeatedly in harm’s way, and occasionally they refused to escape when it was possible. And yet they fought tooth and nail to survive sickness, flood, tigers, and other potentially fatal perils. Only one kind of death was acceptable. The joy of the martyrs was real, in that it was superior to the unknown. The joy involved a kind of sigh of relief that the story was returning to its script. The joy of the martyrs was real, manufactured by youthful hero-worship, training and rehearsal, and modeling. In other words, the joy was practiced before it was performed. The joy was evident when the might of the patrie seemed to be entwined with the divine plan. The joy came also from a sense that approaching death meant entry not just into heaven, but into an imagined, timeless space that Christians had collectively called upon since the crucifixion: they were about to ascend from life into myth.

But the joy could disappear. It was not evident when suffering and privation did not seem to be leading to the martyr’s palm. The joy was absent when Vietnamese natives were executed on the martyr’s behalf while he avoided beasts in the forest. And the joy was increasingly absent from the contemplation of France’s lack of success in providing a shield in times of need or assisting the spread of the gospel. Ultimately, questions about home were the most vexing of all. Vénard and other MEP priests who died in Vietnam during the Second Empire were not killed because of the faith. But they died happy.
In the next and final chapter, I follow the accounts of the violent deaths of two more Archbishops of Paris, that of Mgr. Sibour in 1857 and that of Mgr. Darboy in 1871, to draw several conclusions about the transformation of church-state relations in France over the course of the Second Empire. Despite their similarly grisly murders, only Darboy was regularly described as a martyr (and even he much less so than the subjects of this chapter). What was the difference? Oddly enough, in fact, Archbishop Sibour’s death was the only death of a priest mentioned in this dissertation that had Christian belief *directly* at its center. And yet, despite the meaning of a martyr, it was the death least associated with that term. For Sibour’s death only reminded Catholics of the deep disunity of Catholics and required them to reflect on conflicts of the French clergy with the pope: instead they preferred to imagine his killing as a random act of lunacy. When Darboy died, however, despite the clearly political, rather than religious, basis of his assassination, there was much use to be made of his death by a new government eager for legitimacy. Martyrdom, in Second Empire France, was a mask worn to disguise an imperial priesthood.
**CHAPTER 4: 1860s – IMPERIAL PRIESTS**

*Fortunately Mad*

The enshrinement or apologia is meant to cover up the revolutionary moments in the occurrence of history. At heart, it seeks the establishment of a continuity. Walter Benjamin

As Théophane Vénard crouched in jungle caves, Paris was inauspiciously beginning a pivotal and crisis-plagued year. Only days into 1857 a crime of “inexpressible horror” shocked the capital. Mgr. Marie-Dominique-Auguste Sibour had occupied the archepiscopal seat of Paris since the untimely death of Mgr. Affre in the June Days in 1848, and was looking forward to another busy year. “Saturday, the third of January eighteen hundred and fifty-seven, the Archbishop of Paris presided over the opening ceremonials of the Neuvaine,” wrote Charles Dickens.

Vespers had been chanted, and the sermon of the Abbé Lacarrière was over. The procession of the ladies of Sainte Geneviève was walking round the church. The canons in long white cloaks with blue satin facings preceded the Archbishop, the most conspicuous form in the procession, with his golden mitre gleaming in the light upon his head, and with his tall gilded crozier in his hand, while a priest upon each side of him supported his heavy pontifical robes. He scattered his benedictions before him. The procession was accomplishing the second turn round the church; the Archbishop having approached the bottom of the nave, was in the act of blessing the children, when a young man in a frock-coat sprung up, his eyes darting fury, and, with a long poignard-knife in his right hand. A lady seized the knife with her left hand, but let go on feeling it cut. The young man lifted up the cape of the Archbishop, and instantaneously plunged the knife deep into his heart, crying aloud – ‘Down with the Goddesses!’ ‘Unhappy man!’ ejaculated the prelate, letting fall his crozier and falling backwards, while his black eyes started as if out of their sockets. He was dead in a moment.”

Adding to the horror of the event, wrote *L'Univers*, “was the fact that the assassin is a priest.” In fact, the thirty-year-old assassin was a recently-defrocked cleric who had been interdicted “for five or six different crimes, and most recently for having preached publicly against the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which he called idolatry. This last interdiction

---


2Dickens, *Household Words*, vol. XV (London, 1857). Dickens was on holiday in France during these events.

forced him to return to Paris, where he was reborn, he said, with the idea of committing the crime, which he had thought of before and abandoned.” Immediately apprehended after the murder, Jean-Louis Verger was taken by the police for questioning. “He was dressed in linen,” L’Univers reported and showed clear signs of an overexcited ideological imagination: “One found in his jacket writings of all sorts.”

The Metropolitan Chapter of Paris quickly appointed Georges Darboy and two other priests as vicars to assist the administration of the vacant see while reflecting in print on the tragic history of the office. “Lamentable destiny of the Church of Paris!” wrote its representatives on January 8. The structural similarity of the violent death of two successive archbishops of Paris struck many observers. “General Cavaignac gave to Bishop Sibour the mitre he had picked up on the barricades. The mitre came by assassination, and went by assassination,” Dickens wrote. Furthermore, “...both died in full pontificals— the one upon a barricade, speaking words of peace in a furious insurrection; the other in a church, while giving his benediction to children. There is an old man-servant in the archiepiscopal palace, whose arms have held the corpses of both his murdered masters.” The Institute of the Ladies of Sainte Geneviève, founded by Sibour in the very church in which he was struck down, also noted the symbolic connections between the deaths of the last two archbishops of Paris. “Just as with Mgr. Affre, of glorious memory, it was at the feet of the tomb of the patron saint of Paris and of France that Mgr. the Archbishop of Paris knelt for the last time; there, as for his illustrious predecessor, he took his last steps on earth before the doorway to heaven was opened for him!”

But the Metropolitan Chapter also noted one crucial difference between the two deaths. This time, they wrote, “His noble blood was spilt without profit for religion.” It was, in other

---

4L’Univers, January 8, 1857.
words, useless. And martyrs, by definition, are never useless. Despite the formal similarities between the deaths, the tragedy of January 1857 produced a radically different response. Most importantly, no flood of images and texts presenting Sibour’s death as a martyrdom would follow: his death promoted no cause. Throughout this dissertation, martyrdom has been defined primarily in terms of its function in public culture. The “enshrinement” of the martyr is, in part (see Benjamin’s epigraph above), an attempt to establish a sense of continuity: a stability of lived time produced by an event coated with a familiar patina of eternally present elements (see Ch. 3 for more on my definition of martyrdom). Martyrdom, for Christians, could heighten the feeling of connection with the first martyrs. Thinking about a contemporary martyr could abolish novelty and resolve anxiety about change. But this comforting aspect wasn’t itself enough, in nineteenth-century France, to motivate an enshrinement. Because martyrs only become martyrs if (and when) they serve many interests beyond the emotional needs of believers. Unlike the death of Affre, or that of missionaries in Vietnam, or Darboy’s death in 1871 (see below), Sibour’s death invited no punitive expedition and united no segments of the population. It was not useful for shoring up support for order. It was explained by no simple oppositions. It caused only bafflement. At Sibour’s funeral a week after his death, a ceremony described by Dickens as more “military than ecclesiastical,” Darboy fainted.

In Chapter 1, I showed how Affre’s death during the June Days of 1848 was used by the new Second Republic to justify brutal repression of workers, claim the moral high ground and unify the French church behind the anti-socialist republic. Affre’s “martyrdom” also symbolically represented the end of a period of religious experimentation where Catholic republicans were not unusual or even particularly radical in Paris. The episcopal liberals around the archbishopric of Paris who had supported the revolution then transferred their loyalty to the
now reactionary republic. Finally, voluntarily and enthusiastically, these same priests abandoned the republic and sanctified the new imperial government of Napoleon III (more on this below), providing it with crucial legitimacy for Christians. In Chapter 2, I argued that, responding to the unified urging for intervention within a Catholic debate on the Holy Places of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, this now-sanctified empire launched the Crimean War. The Holy Places, for many French Catholics, functioned as a logical destination to initiate a new martial age of faith: Jerusalem would be the site of (another) heroic crusade against impiety and unbelief. For others, the Holy Places were to be the field of national glory and a stage on which to present new French industrial superiority. But regardless of the particular way French Catholics imagined the Levant, they agreed for most of the 1850s that the government of Napoleon III expressed their interests and the interests of all Latin Christians. Thus the death of Affre, and the sanction provided by French bishops for the Second Empire, enabled an aggressive foreign policy to take shape and to be politically successful.

In Chapter 3, I showed that this foreign policy and state patronage for French seminaries and missionary societies flooded Eastern ports with French missionaries. Aspiring martyrs embarking for Asia longed to die purely for the faith and not as a consequence of the politics or history of their nation. They thus felt clarity of purpose when they were judged in language which seemed to directly criminalize their religious beliefs. But despite the technical requirements of formal martyrdom and the urgency with which their supporters argued on their behalf, the missionaries’ own accounts betray insecurity at confusion or delay, gradual loss of faith in the divinely-inspired role of the French empire and the influence of personal nationalism in their actions (as well as in the words of their hagiographers).
In this chapter, I read the French press as it reacts to the violent deaths of two archbishops of Paris: Sibour in 1857 and Darboy in 1871. In order to highlight relevant biographical details of these two archbishops, this chapter departs from the normal chronological approach of this dissertation so far by discussing both of their careers prior to their respective accessions. But first, in the current section (“Fortunately Mad”), I argue that the discussion of Sibour’s death reveals growing worry over disunity within Catholicism. For Catholics, Sibour’s death was an upsetting symbol of the yawning gulf suddenly separating the French government and its imperial priesthood, on the one hand, from the pope and Ultramontanist Catholics on the other. In the next section (“Eagles and Crosses”), I provide background for this reaction by examining in detail Archbishop Sibour’s path towards collaboration with Napoleon III and its importance for the successful foundation of the Second Empire. Next (“From Humid Crosses to Profane Liberty”), I describe Darboy’s political apprenticeship in Paris under the new archbishop. Sibour showed the ambitious young priest the value of state support for creating the independence and resources necessary to effectively pursue their shared goals. At Sibour’s request, Darboy used his argumentative virtuosity to demonize principled Catholic resistance to the coup. We have already seen (in Chapter 2) how Darboy also lent his scholarship to a tacit argument for imperialism in the Levant. Later, as the instability of the revolutionary moment diminished, he pioneered a social-science approach to diocese administration and began a vast restructuring of Catholic primary education.

By the time Darboy became archbishop of Paris in 1863, the possibility of a Gallican church was entirely dependent on the patronage and protection provided by Napoleon III. And by 1863, the emperor had lost much of his Catholic support and the tacit approval of the papacy. This situation is revealed in this section by examining primary sources relating to disputes
between Darboy and the Vatican during his eight-year career as the head of the church in France. In the next section (“Expiation by Massacre”), I analyze Darboy’s death and the anticlericalism of the Commune in light of the prior conclusions of this dissertation. I show that Darboy’s final words, which combine “liberty and religion”, are significant when remembering his fights with the pope (fights which are themselves avoided). I argue that the intense anticlerical anger which characterizes the Commune was as much anti-imperial as anti-Catholic. To make this argument I engage critically with John Merriman’s *Massacre* by asserting the importance of Darboy’s earlier career in understanding his final hours. Over the course of the “terrible year” of 1870-1, the pillars of Napoleon III’s imperial priesthood came tumbling down. In contrast to Sibour, Darboy’s death was the subject of significant martyrrological comment in France, despite his similarly problematic relationship to the pope. But Darboy’s death was useful for the Versailles government and anti-socialist defenders of order in their quest to demonstrate the monstrosity of the Commune. It was thus on the rhetorical muscle of the death of Darboy that the nascent Third Republic consolidated itself with pious violence.

Dickens, on holiday in France, charted the confusion that followed Sibour’s assassination and attempted to explain it. “When all free discussion in a country is suppressed, what is lost to reason and truth is given to passion and imagination”, he wrote. “The capital of Napoleon the Third is a whispering chamber of wild conjectures.” Unlike Affre’s death on the barricades, which had become a rallying point for Catholic unity behind order, Sibour’s assassination highlighted the spreading fault-lines within French Catholicism and fueled suspicion. “Is the assassin mad? Was he driven by hunger? Is he alone in it? Who has put him up to it? Who are his associates? Is he an agent of the Jesuits? Who gains by it? Was not the Ultramontane party furious against the Archbishop? Is not great power given to the Emperor by it? Will the Abbé
Bonaparte be the new Archbishop? Was not the Archbishop named by Cavaignac an obstacle to the visit of the Pope to bestow the crown?”

In the first days after the assassination, and included in Dickens’ comprehensive list, one nervous question (in two formulations) was asserted with the largest frequency and urgency: was Verger insane? *L’Univers* immediately asserted (with no attached evidence) that the killer “...appears to be affected by madness.”5 Was the extremity of his act itself proof of insanity? Or was he rational enough to be truly culpable legally? The next day *L’Univers* reported that unnamed “various sources” had argued that Verger had shown “signs of mental illness.” Another source reported that his insanity was, in this case, an inherited condition. “We have learned that the father, the mother and one of the brothers of Verger were suicides, the first many years ago, the last a few months ago.” *L’Ami de Religion* agreed the next day, writing that Verger exhibited an “unhealthy overexcitation of his spirit and even grave mental alienation.”6 Supporting this interpretation was the evidence that Verger had meditated on, planned and executed the crime (and purchased the thirty-centimeter Catalan knife the day before) with “horrible calm.” Did such eerie calm imply sanity? No, wrote *Le Droit*: the evidence “repels the conclusion of sane intelligence, and it must be believed, for the honor of humanity, that this man, who was invested with the sacred functions of a priest, is a madman and not a monster.”7

But why did “the honor of humanity” require that Verger be judged insane? On January 4, *Le Droit* assembled evidence towards this necessary conclusion. Verger had a history of violence, “several” previous interdictions, and had exhibited “Satanic joy” in the exercise of this type of rebellion against his ordained superiors. But the supposed library of excessive behavior

---

5 *L’Univers*, January 4, 1857.
6 *L’Ami de Religion*, January 5, 1857.
7 *Le Droit*, January 4, 1857.
cited by various dailies as evidence of Verger’s nonspecific motive and probable derangement included only two short and ambiguous chapters. Less than two months prior, Verger had appeared as a witness for the defense on behalf of a woman accused of poisoning her husband. The Gazette des Tribunaux reported that he had defended her from the stand with “inexplicable vehemence.”8 The ultimate failure of the defense did not dissuade Verger from his continued colloquy against what he determined to be a miscarriage of justice, wrote Le Constitutionnel on January 5. “Verger took the defense of the accused with such energy that the magistrate had to repeatedly call for order...After the condemnation of the accused to forced labor for life, Verger printed a libel against the judges and the jury; but this libel was shut down before publication. Following this, his functions were suspended; he returned to Paris towards the end of the month of December.”

Officially, the stated cause for the priest’s interdiction after the trial was his lack of respect for the judicial process and representatives. But this one episode, while intriguing more for its elisions than its indications, was an overly thin hook on which to hang the case for hereditary insanity. The “other interdictions” vaguely cited as proof of Verger’s history of violence came up less often. Because, in fact, there was only one other interdiction, and it pointed discomfitingly to the sanity of the priest and to the underlying Catholic struggle over belief. Earlier in 1856 Verger had been interdicted for criticizing the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception from the pulpit. Could his eloquent and studied doctrinal heterodoxy, unhelpful to demonstrate madness, be a motive for the murder of Sibour? And thus the second form of the central question preoccupying the newspapers in the days after Sibour’s death was: did Verger really cry “Down with the Goddesses!” at the very moment, as the L’Union put it, when he

---

8Gazette des Tribunaux, January 4, 1857.
“pierced the heart of the Archbishop”? No, wrote Le Pays. “It is not true, as has been reported in some papers, that he had said that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was the pretext for his crime, and that he had uttered the words ‘Down with the Goddesses!’ at the moment [of Sibour’s death].” Le Constitutionnel agreed that it was too soon to draw conclusions: “It is not exactly clear” that the assassin yelled anything at all or even what his name was or where he had been born.

But the Gazette des Tribunaux firmly disagreed. Verger did indeed yell “Down with the Goddesses!” Numerous witnesses had reported hearing it and Verger himself explained his action this way after his arrest. Initially, the Gazette had shared the assumption that he was out of his mind, “above all because of his inexplicable attitude following such a deed, one is tempted to ask oneself if this man had awareness of his crime.” But this thesis was difficult to maintain in light of Verger’s statement to the police. Under interrogation he had acknowledged the severity of his actions. “Yes, it is horrible”, he had reportedly admitted, and then had shed some tears and asked for a New Testament. After his transfer to the Conciergerie he had elaborated. “Why did you say Down with the Goddesses?” he was asked. “Because I do not believe in the Immaculate Conception, as I have explained from the pulpit; I wanted to protest once again against this impious worship”, he answered. “Why not a smaller protest?” asked the officer. “Because I had been interdicted and [Sibour] had told me that this time the interdiction would not be raised.” The interdiction, of course, wasn’t an empty scolding. It had eliminated Verger’s ability to earn wages, and upon reaching Paris in December 1856 he had briefly put a sign on a church door, implicitly addressed to the archbishop: “A priest should not die of hunger”, it read.

---

9 Le Pays, January 5, 1857.
10 Gazette des Tribunaux, January 5, 1857.
11 Gazette des Tribunaux, January 4, 1857.
On January 7, *L’Union* emphatically attempted to close the issue of Verger’s mental health. “The papers that have denied that Verger said ‘Down with the Goddesses!’ at the very moment that he pierced the heart of the archbishop are incorrect. These words were heard by Abbé Cuttoli, the personal secretary of [Sibour], who himself was holding one of the sides of the cape of the pious prelate; [the words] are also to be found in the deposition of this young priest. It is also certain that the assassin, interrogated by the *commisaire de police* of the twelfth arrondissement, had stated that he had held no particular disagreement with the archbishop himself, and that the sole motive which had pushed him to the crime was the idea of protesting against the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.” Despite *L’Union*’s confidence, however, many Catholics preferred to skirt the issue and think of Verger as touched in the head. The very same day the Bishop of Soissons wrote of how painful it was to admit that the assassin was a priest when communicating the news to his parishioners. “Fortunately,” he wrote, “this wretch appears to be mad.”

The central concern about questions of Verger’s sanity and motive shrouded a crucial question: what conclusions should Catholics draw about the recent dogmatic definitions of Pope Pius IX which had strained relations between Paris and Rome and were now presented as motive for the murder? Was the assassination of the archbishop of Paris, in other words, a rational, if extreme, response to the assertive doctrine of the pope? Verger’s sanity would be the central question of his trial, and the ultimate rejection of his defense on these grounds secured his capital punishment (carried out before January surrendered to February). But the sentence of Verger’s culpability (and sanity) also highlighted the fact that the pope’s 1854 decision could inspire such a violent reaction in an essentially sane mind. Why exactly was this thought unthinkable? It

---

wasn’t just the awareness that opposition to the mandatory belief in the Virgin Birth of Mary could take such forms. It was also that Archbishop Sibour had spent the last three years backtracking from his initial assertion that the declaration was ill-timed and unnecessary: in a word, “inopportune.” It was thus uncomfortable for many Catholics to look directly at Verger’s reasons and much easier to tactically retreat to the explanation of madness.\textsuperscript{13}

This question was the obverse of the driving question around discussion of French martyrs in Vietnam (see Chapter 3). The defining concern of the missionary-martyr discussions was to downplay the contribution of a history of mutual national antipathy, fueled by French imperialist meddling, in the death of French priests in Vietnam. The obvious issue being avoided in the argument around Verger’s sanity and final words, by contrast, was the growing rift within the church between the pope and French Ultramontanist opinion represented by \textit{L’Univers} and the liberal, Paris-led imperial bishops and their ideological allies. Excepting a few loose, adjectival descriptions of Sibour as a martyr in the immediate reactions to his death, no discussion of his beatification ever began and the label was rarely (if ever) attached to him even informally. The whole episode highlighted only ambiguity and disunity.

\textit{Eagles and Crosses}

To better understand how the Catholic unity behind French foreign policy had evaporated into internal violence it is helpful to consider the career of Archbishop Sibour. By the time Sibour’s archbishopric began, at the death of Affre on the barricades, he was already a successful clergyman with well-known opinions. His connection with Affre, for one, indicated overlapping affinities on subjects like Egyptian hieroglyphics and high culture. Before 1848, Sibour had also

\textsuperscript{13}One interesting consequence of this was that Verger was not demonized, at least morally, in most discussions. The exaggeration of his madness decreased the sense of his moral culpability.
shared Affre’s support of the temporal power of the papacy, understood as a bulwark for episcopal independence against the French government. In 1847, for example, Sibour exulted about the possibility of a Rome-Paris alliance behind a Liberal Catholic program in a private letter to his friend Father Ventura. Indicating his support for real episcopal power to promulgate decisions (despite the government prohibition within the Organic Articles of 1801) when meeting in large councils, Sibour could only envision restrictions coming from the French state. “Nothing endangers civilization more directly than the system which...wants to place in the state the double supremacy - spiritual and temporal.”

Fortunately, he wrote, against such a threat history had opened a wonderful new era of possibility: one in which freedom marched with religion under the banner of the pope. Little did we know, he wrote to his friend, that “a great time of [spiritual] regeneration” was emerging, directly connected to “…the miraculous election of Pius IX.” After all, what but divine providence could shape a moment in which the pope was leading the national unification of Italy! People must become free, Sibour wrote with passion, but more, “the living conditions and the prosperity of nations must change to fit the times [because] there is a legitimate emancipation that religion must bless and sanctify. But it is also necessary to know that to make men happy, freedom must descend from heaven and walk supported by order and religion...the only durable conquests are those which are made not by the sword, but by the force of reason and good law.”

The political progress represented by recent French history, therefore, represented divine

---

14 Philippe A***, Biographie de Monseigneur Sibour, (Paris: Lacour et Companie, 1849), 58.
15 Ibid., 63.
providence and had the apparent support of Pius IX. Indeed, he wrote, “...the French episcopate has never been more united in its devotion...to the pope.”

Despite Sibour’s conviction of the unarmed nature of lasting change, however, his historical referents and expansionist metaphors already sound somewhat martial. “You know, my dear father,” he continued to Ventura, “that in other times when the glorious predecessors of Pius IX undertook great and holy deeds which were destined to save Christianity or to crown it with glory; when they stopped the barbarian fleets, when, to dry up its source, they threw Europe into Asia, or even when they elevated great temples, magnificent apothéoses of religion; you know this, there was not a Christian soul that, depending on their ability, did not believe itself obliged, through prayer or money, to give their love and sympathies, through prayer or money, with their arms or with their hearts.”

Today’s resurgence of the church was in many ways a recapitulation of past crusades, but this time the crusade would prioritize freedom as well as truth. “Today something similar seems to be happening in Rome. A holy enterprise, a new crusade begins. We know this, everywhere, the children of the Church are turning with love towards their common father, ready to second him in every way...the bishops of France join in this tribute....”

In his paean to Affre, written after his death, “Le Docteur” Belliol agreed. This spiritual awakening, ultimately, would produce the first alliance of a revolution with religion. “During the first revolution,” he wrote, “worship was abolished, religion banned, priests massacred; During the second, worship was constrained, religion persecuted, priests mocked; In the third, religion and its ministers are the object of the most profound respect.” This assessment was based on

---

16Ibid., 65. He was not alone in this feeling. Frédéric Ozanam wrote in 1848 about Pius IX that “Divine Providence has created this great man to unlock the whole social order for the reconciliation of liberty and Christianity, just in time to remove the temporary scaffolding of monarchy, which up until now has supported the unfinished work.” L’Ère Nouvelle, May 1, 1848.

17Ibid., 67.
“irrefutable historical facts”: today, Belliol believed, religion is recognized as “the first friend of people and of humanity.”

But less than a year later, at the end of June of 1848, everything looked different. The revolution in Italy was rapidly turning against its increasingly reactionary pope; and in France, the barricades were going up for the second time in months, cutting the French clergy off from many who had so recently been their partners in progressive activism. Once again, wrote Belliol, “the seat of European civilization was transformed into a field of battle; the cannons of the French republic rumbled against the French.” Affre’s support for the revolution of February of 1848 may have been hesitant. According to one contemporary biographer he had “accepted the Republic in the name of the health of the patrie.” But in his personal correspondence (above, to Father Ventura), one cannot avoid the conclusion that prior to 1848 Sibour had been thrilled by the possibilities offered by a progressive future. After June, however, whatever sympathy had existed between republicans and the French clergy waned, and at the same time the springtime spirit of ideological experimentation which had allowed even socialist Christianities to flourish had been firmly squelched (see Chapter 1). This disillusioning closure had really begun with the death of Affre on the barricade in the faubourg Saint Antoine, “this new Calvary.” And the man known as “the prince of blood” in that same neighborhood, General Cavaignac, had personally appointed Sibour as the successor to Affre, “the martyr of our disorders.”

In a Paris still smoldering, Sibour’s immediate concern was to actively demonstrate his pastoral concern in resolving the issue at the center of the June Days: poverty. His first act was to visit, as a pilgrimage, the sacred ground on which Affre died. There, in the “most solemn

---

19 A***, 21.
20 Belliol, 24.
moment of his life” before an assembled crowd, he declared that “we will be the pastor of all. But for you, suffering people, poor workers, we have a mother’s womb.” To the poor, he promised, “We will give our last slice of bread and final coins”. “As much as is permitted by the general care of the diocese, we will visit you and bless you in your shops, in your poor dwellings.” In the following months, he visited prisons, hospitals and immigrant neighborhoods descending even to the “lowest rung of the social ladder.” For Lent the next year, Sibour wrote to his clergy that “in dealing with people the priest must give much and take almost nothing.”

Despite Sibour’s attempts to target the roots of class struggle in Paris, the fearful reactions of most Catholics to socialism (or even worker organization) were quickly closing certain ideological doors. Belliol couldn’t help but imply, for example, that Affre’s liberalism was naive (if morally admirable) when faced by the nefarious “popular volcano” with its threatening “open crater” which “threaten[ed] to engulf the patrie and the entire world.” It was a common mistake of republicans, he wrote, “to think that things can be fixed overnight.” The barricade-soldiers of the June Days were only “covering their crimes with a cloak of politics” and the essential nature of their contagion was the error of “confounding license with liberty.” Against this socialist menace which waved its “bloody and sacrilegious flag”, good Catholics “want[ed] progress marching with the Cross!” The author posed a series of rhetorical questions to this public, as if from the mouth of the fallen archbishop: “Will you finally cease your odious blasphemy?...Tell us, what do you want? Do you even know yourselves?”

Affre was dead but his voice could still be coopted from beyond the grave to pronounce judgment on the barricades. “Drop your weapons, Brothers, come to us, abjure your errors,” Belliol wrote through Affre’s imagined ghost. “Brothers, come to us, we open our hearts to you;

21 Ibid., 35.
22 Ibid., 11.
Brothers, do not seek a sad victory, a fratricidal combat is a fight without glory! The patrie is weeping, the patrie is mourning; How many of our children will be placed in a coffin! Too much blood spilled, before the war finished, and for such a blessing, I offer myself as a sacrifice; But before I die, to pay for my love; Children, hasten to return to the fold! This is the most ardent hope of your pastor: as heaven’s interpreter, my voice invites you there.” Sibour agreed the socialist ideas that motivated many of those on the barricades were essentially demonic. In one of his first sermons he proclaimed that although Parisians were generally a “good and generous people” the number of those blind and lost was large, “in these times where the Tempter seduces people with so many fallacious systems, so many words, so many lies, so much corruption.” In such conditions, it was not easy to resist materialist doctrines which advocated only the pursuit of “the intoxication of pleasure” and rendered people “senseless beasts.” Nevertheless, said Sibour, the French must never return to the “sacilegious hatreds” of the civil war, hatreds which “in exciting our most evil passions, lead us down into impiety and atheism.”

Despite the obstacles presented by the fading alliance of Liberal Catholic with the pope and with progressive political doctrine, Sibour attempted to hold the line of reform. At the massive ceremony celebrating his official accession in October 1848, he presented a platform designed ambitiously to unify all Catholics under his brand of nationalist Liberal Catholicism. The week before during a sermon in Digne, and referring to Affre, Sibour had asked why priests functioned as “perpetual victims immolated for the health of their brothers? Because...our soul recognizes divine action. We see perils everywhere.” The mission of the church was “to fight the enemies of the lord as on a vast battlefield, to courageously defend the rights of god and the

---

23 A***, 79-80.

24 Ibid., 76.
In Paris a week later, he specifically held up a Catholicism which was full of both liberty and truth, preoccupied by industrial civilizing as much as crusading, and connected to both its past and its future.

_Eh bien!_ We are here to tell you that ancient times have nothing to fear from modern times; that the glory of the past and the glory of the present, as that of the future, is the same glory which has always brilliantly advanced like the sun which shines brighter and brighter the more it shows itself above the horizon...this is nothing but the splendor of Christianity. It is this Church, so often calumniated, which has liberated ancient peoples from slavery, which has so many times saved Europe, and France in particular, from barbarity; it is she who gave us the very notion of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Modern civilization, like the civilizations of the past, comes from her, from her beliefs and her morality. We are here to explain how the immutability of this dogma and the permanence of this morality allies itself admirably with the progress of science and freedom...My mission is to bring peace...Peace between the past and the future, peace between faith and science, peace between order and liberty, peace between men of all opinions, between political parties, between the rich and the poor.

But Sibour’s philanthropic and moderating ambitions were jarringly overshadowed, for many, after his explicit sanctification of the coup which initiated the Second Empire and his support for the Crimean War that immediately followed. See, for example, the scathing comparison Hugo (from exile since the coup) drew between Archbishop Sibour (along with his distinguished colleagues) and Jean-Louis Bonnard, martyred in Vietnam in May of 1852 (see Chapter 3). While Bonnard had, “at the age of flourishing happiness,” left home to offer his head as a sacrifice to those suffering from ignorance and wandering away from progress, priests back in Paris had become prostitutes. “Here, behind you, martyr, we sell your God!” Bonnard’s French superiors had become so many “stole-coated” senators and cardinals, priests with “palaces, carriages, and summer gardens who laugh beneath the blue sky, drinking good wine and sitting by a warm fire.” These “thieves” were symbolically responsible, in Hugo’s poem, for selling the Ark of the Covenant, even for selling Jesus Christ himself. “Yes, these bishops, yes, these merchants, yes, these priests; Next to the actor of the crime, sated, crowned; By Nero sated

---

25Ibid., 73.

laughing among the traitors; One foot on Thraseas, one elbow on Phryne...They sell, O martyr, God pensive and pale; Who, standing on the earth and under the firmament; Sad yet smiling at us in our fatal night; On black Golgotha bleeds forever!”27 The imperial priesthood, said Hugo’s acid pen, had become accomplices to state brutality in their quest for gold and position. The culture war between republicans like Hugo and Catholics in France had begun to center on the willingness (and even eagerness) of some Catholics to support the empire.

Within French Catholicism, the seeds of disunity reveal themselves to careful examination long before they flowered into violence. During the 1850s, while the episcopal hierarchy and Parisian center of the church luxuriated in state patronage, other Catholics found themselves increasingly alienated and resentful of the imperial government. Even some Liberal Catholics began to slip towards confrontation. Montalembert was the first: his support faded soon after the coup. Referring to the “last free assembly” before the coup in a letter to a friend, Montalembert’s new opposition became clear when the letter was published abroad in 1854. In response, the government initiated prosecution for libel in an attempt to bar him from future political participation. For a few, Montalembert’s prosecution was an epiphanal moment during which the veils of piety shrouding the Second Empire fell away. For others, Montalembert’s opportunism had led him to attack the regime he had helped create as a response to his lack of continuing influence. Lamartine took the latter view and pulled no punches in a contemporary interview:

I have no sympathy whatever with Montalembert; he is false, he is malignant, he is bigoted, he is unscrupulous, he is unpatriotic; he cares about nothing but the domination of the Church and his own importance in this world and his own salvation in the next. No one has done more to bring about this tyranny; no one supported it more zealously as long as it favoured his views. He came forward as a Government candidate; he voted with the Government; he was constantly visiting the Emperor and obtruding his Ultramontane advice; he intended without doubt to be his minister, but when his advances were not received as cordially as he expected and no portefeuille was offered, he used the Orleans

27Ibid., 61-64.
confiscation as a pretext for opposition. His indignation and his liberalism are mere expressions of mortified vanity. I hear now that he intends to defend himself by falsehood and meanness: that he intends to deny that he gave a copy of the letter; to maintain that he merely showed it, and that his friend… published it from recollection. He is one of the most despicable men that I know.28

Nevertheless, throughout the early 1850s, most Catholics still expressed support for the Second Empire, and imagined it to be the best option for friends of the pope. This support was especially strong when the empire went to war informed as it was by the way the French Catholic episcopate presented military action to the public. At a ceremony dedicating the Second Empire (attended by the aspiring missionary Théophane Vénard), Sibour played a prominent part. Dickens remembered:

I saw him in the Champ de Mars, blessing the imperial flags, upon the tenth of May, eighteen hundred and fifty-two, on the occasion which was called the Feast of Eagles. The immense square space from the École Militaire to the Seine, called the Champ de Mars, seemed one vast harvest field of soldiery, whose varied costumes were set off by two sides or edgings of green foliage. The procession of the Archbishop and eight hundred of his clergy dressed in white made a beautiful effect when their long lines were seen winding their way among the military. They slowly ascended the steps of a lofty chapel to officiate at an altar, the lighted tapers of which were seen feebly glimmering in the brilliant sunlight. The ensigns or standard-bearers walked in procession from the tribune of the President to the chapel of the Archbishop. When they had ascended, the gilded eagles and tricolor banners were conspicuous above the heads of the clergy.

The “distribution of the eagles” was a carefully designed media event, combining symbols of the First Empire with a religious, legitimating aura. Dismounting a platform on the Champ de Mars, the new emperor pronounced a resurgent France. Since “the history of nations is largely the history of armies”, determining its success or failure, so nations “carry always with them a religious veneration for the emblems of military honor.”29 He then began distributing said emblems to the troops. “The Roman eagle, adopted by the Emperor Napoleon at the beginning of this century, was the most dazzling sign of the regeneration and the greatness of France. It disappeared during our misfortunes; it must re-appear when France, risen from her defeats, mistress of herself, seems no longer to repudiate her own glory.” In days past, the eagle had fled;

28Lamartine in Senior, 315. A bust of Lamartine in Sibour’s office had been excessively republican for Montalembert’s taste a few weeks before the coup.

it could not bear to witness France’s military impotence and internal reaction. But it would return with the Bonapartes, Paris would once again be the New Rome, and Holy War was again the order of the day. “Take back this eagle, then, soldiers, not as a menace against foreigners, but as the symbol of our independence, as the souvenir of a heroic epoch, as the sign of the nobility of each regiment. Take back the eagles then, which have so often led our fathers to victory, and swear to die, if there be need, to defend them.”\textsuperscript{30} The eagles were then passed out to the generals, and “after some salvos of Artillery, the Archbishop of Paris commenced the Mass. As the Holy Sacrament was elevated a cannon was fired, the drums beat a salute, the trumpets sounded a march, the troops presented arms to the Divine Presence, and the flags lowered. When the Mass was ended Archbishop Sibour blessed the Standards, and the troops returned to their respective barracks.”\textsuperscript{31}

A month after the ceremony, Napoleon III, reminded those present in the \textit{Corps Législatif} what he had intended the ceremony to signify. He reminded them that as he returned to Paris he struggled to find remaining signs of the destruction of the 1848. Not only had they seen, he assumed, people working with joy and security in the future to rebuild the city, but also they had seen soldiers acclaim “the return of our eagles, symbols of authority and glory.” And they had also seen those same soldiers pay homage to God and his earthly representatives. “You have seen this proud army, which has saved the country,” he said, “rise still higher in the esteem of men by kneeling devoutly before the Image of God present upon the Altar. This is as much to say that in France there is a Government animated by faith and the love of Goodness.\textsuperscript{32} In effect, Sibour’s presence sanctified the coup d’État. And further, as Dickens remembered, his presence had

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Price}, 93.
\textsuperscript{32}Napoleon III, 95.
authorized France’s military expansion as the protector of the faith. The elevation of the Host
was consequent with the roar of a cannon. The movements of France’s troops were literally
blessed in advance. “Over every sanctified flag the Archbishop uttered a remarkable Latin
prayer,” Dickens wrote:

‘Receive these standards sanctified by the blessing of Heaven. May they be the terror of the enemies of the
Christian people, and may God, in honour of his name [and] glory, give you grace to pierce, safe and
sound, into the midst of the battalions of the enemy. After pronouncing the prayer, the Archbishop gave the
kiss of peace to each ensign, saying Pax tibi, Peace to thee! and the ensign, after kissing the pontifical ring,
rose from his knees and walked to his place in the ranks, where the flag was welcomed with loud cheering.
When the Host was elevated every man in the whole army of sixty thousand soldiers knelt on one knee.
During the defile the meadow of the god of war was covered with waving crops of human life, offering
themselves successively to the service of the deity. Successively, long fields of gleaming steel, of blazing
brass, and of tricolor-decked lances, galloped past upon horseback. Long fields of men in light blue, in dark
green with white breasts, with belted breasts, with red breasts, ran swiftly past, offering themselves to the
god; last of all, galloped the terrible masses of artillerymen with their offerings of cannon.

The mixture of national symbol, classical mythology and Catholic ritual is striking in its
scope while entirely derivative, as if from a lost manual of Bonapartist spectacle. The god of war
shared billing with God the father. But for Dickens, remembering the coup from the vantage of
Sibour’s corpse, it was a ceremony which inauspiciously included a horrible accident and one
which was retroactively haunted by the subsequent war:

The god of battles, we know now, accepted the sacrifices offered to his altar. I shall not venture to guess at
present how many of the animated forms I then saw upon the Meadow of Mars are to-day mere bones
rotting in oriental earth. Death had his first fruits even there and then. I saw a chandelier fall, and I
witnessed a commotion among the priests. Subsequently I was informed by the newspapers that the
chandelier had killed one of the clergy of Paris.

From Humid Crosses to Profane Liberty

[Napoleon III’s] Grecian extraction, his sphinx-like impenetrability of countenance, his addiction to the practice of
Spiritualism, and his deceptive professions of a pacific policy, identify him with the description given of the
Personal Antichrist in Dan. 8. – Michael Paget Baxter, 1867

33Baxter, Louis Napoleon the Destined Monarch of the World: Foreshown in Prophecy to Confirm a Seven
Years' Covenant with the Jews about Seven Years Before the Millennium, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: J.S. Claxton, 1867),
38.
Georges Darboy peers at us from a painting by Hector Viger with a careworn but haughty assurance. Though the pressures of his position and conflict with the papacy are apparent in his resigned, non-committal posture and narrowed, almost cynical gaze, his left eyebrow remains raised in an implicit challenge. The grasp on his seat, the sign of his authority, is firm. Viger seems to have painted only two subjects: imperial persons of quality (from both the First and Second Empires) and scenes from the life of Jesus. Darboy’s tight grip was secured by being in the former category. Within Darboy’s career one can chart the split within French Catholicism between liberals and Ultramontanists through the 1860s and culminating in the Vatican Council of 1869-70 and, finally, his execution by elements of the Paris Commune of 1871. This split is often depicted as essentially a consequence of the French policy on the Roman Question. But as Sibour’s death in 1857 makes clear (two years before Napoleon III’s famous meeting with Cavour at Plombières) the crucial events and shifts in perspective that increasingly plagued the
emperor’s strategic alliance with Catholicism had already occurred. By that time, as I discussed in the last chapter, missionary Catholics like Théophane Vénard were already losing whatever faith they had had in the possibility of a Napoleonic age of faith (see Ch. 3, pg. 156). The resolutions of the Crimean War and the aggressive invasions being launched in China (February, 1857) and Vietnam (November, 1857) raised unnerving questions about the government’s sincerity of purpose.

Sibour’s support for the empire was shared by many; but his recently strained relationship with the pope was something Catholics didn’t want to discuss. After the coup, his statements on Gallican liberties had been followed by a letter indicating papal disapproval. “The doctrines of the Sulpician Mémoire [Sibour’s circular] of 1852 on the plural and conciliar nature of the Church, the autonomy of dioceses, the ‘Gallican liberties,’ and the purely advisory nature of decisions by the Roman Congregations were declared absolutely unacceptable, and the Mémoire itself was placed on the Index. The bishops were told that their seminaries could use only books specifically approved at Rome.”34 The emperor, despite his continued institutional support for the ecclesiastical hierarchy in France, was clearly not a model of Catholic belief and behavior. The imperial couple spent parts of the spring of 1857, for example, at the séances of American medium Daniel Dunglas Hume, sponsoring a tide of spiritualist frenzy in the capital with their attendance.35 The orthodoxy of the imperial family (as well as their spiritual sponsors in the palace) was obviously suspect. In addition, the empire’s claims of favor to the church produced only ambiguous benefits shared only by a privileged few. The assassination of Archbishop Sibour allowed no repairing of this unity as he was a symbol of the small group of

34 Gough, 40-1.
35 The empress was apparently quite delighted when Hume appeared to casually fly out of the room through an open window, only to return nonchalantly through a different window moments later. Mme. Dunglas Home, D.D. Home: His Life and Mission (London: Trubner & Co., 1888), 78-9.
most prominent beneficiaries of the empire. Sibour furthermore represented internal resistance to
the pope and his murder came from within Catholic ranks.

From the outside, those willing to work with the state could be seen as traitorous.
“Betrayal dressed as a French general; The dazzled archbishop blessed the God Success,” wrote
Hugo on Sibour’s accommodation with the new emperor. But some Catholics collaborating with
the state understood themselves as religious realists in a church vibrating with apocalyptic
romanticism. Darboy presented himself as a self-controlled, rational intellectual, willing to
compromise in many situations on behalf of a greater good. After his ordination he had become
an instructor in dogma at Nancy, but he quickly provoked concerned comment and accusations
of arrogance because of his controversial lecture topics and linguistic virtuosity. He had first
come to the attention of Archbishop Affre when he published of a work of scholarship. It was a
translation of the primary writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, the medieval mystic and theologian.
Affre was impressed, and remarked to the young priest that it was a pity that he should “hide
himself” in a country town. In 1845, Affre invited him to Paris. His diocese objected to the
Parisian predation of their popular provincial prelate, but Darboy was ambitious and perhaps
eager (in the interpretation of several of his early biographers) to move to the city and away from
his rural background (he came from a region known for its basket-weavers).

Lest his family doubt his motivations, Darboy affirmed his sincerity to his friends and
family in a letter before leaving for the capital. In language remarkably similar to that of Vénard
writing home en route to Vietnam, Darboy promised to remain firm in this dangerous new
mission field, even to the point of martyrdom. “How happy should I be if I could die for my
convictions,” he had written at seminary. After arriving in Paris he once again wrote home
indicating that he had considered the possibility of persecution, perhaps reflecting on the city’s
revolutionary history. “I will always endeavor to do nothing which would dishonor me before God”, he wrote. “By His grace I will confess my faith upon the scaffold.”

In the capital, he quickly became well-known both for his sermons and scholarship and began to develop a reputation for unusual intellectual acumen. His progressive political leanings were quickly recognized by the papal nuncio in Paris when Darboy published a detailed critique of the theology of Giovanni Perrone, one of the Vatican’s favorite contemporary theologians.\textsuperscript{36} The nuncio blamed the circle around the archbishop. This “entourage” of priests was colloquially known as \textit{les africains} and its members occupied a majority of the most important administrative and intellectually influential positions in the French church.\textsuperscript{37} The personnel and personality of the group largely remained intact after Affre’s death in 1848, and retained their organization and favor under Sibour. After 1848 the group also shared a common desire to protect the independence of their authority from the Vatican: the pope’s reaction to liberal ideas had begun to be apparent as he dealt with the Roman republican movement. Wrote Lewis Colby Price: “Georges Darboy [was the] cleverest of the \textit{africains}, the most brilliant product of the seminary of Nancy in the nineteenth century.”\textsuperscript{38} Soon after Affre’s death, Sibour elevated Darboy to vicar general overseeing local religious education. Immediately, with a data-based approach and intensity of opinion, Darboy set about completely rearranging the educational program of the Diocese of Paris. “He first arranged that the doctrines of the Faith should be taught through the events of Church history, and to this he added a still more excellent method. Each heresy was made to explain or define some truth, according to St. Paul’s declaration that ‘There must be also

---

\textsuperscript{36}Perrone was a Jesuit who was expelled from Italy by the new Roman Republic in 1848.


\textsuperscript{38}\textit{Ibid.}, 72.
heresies among you, that they which are among you may be manifest.’ Each Martyrdom, every Council of the Church, or the lives of the Saints, were therefore used to illustrate some particular Article of the Faith.”

In Chapter 2, I argued that Darboy’s Second Republic work on Palestine, composed during this time, had framed theoretical French intervention in the dispute over the Holy Places of the Levant as a desirable and benevolent civilizing mission. Palestine, he wrote, was now composed of a bunch of “miserable huts along a shoreline on which European civilization would create many flourishing cities, [populated by] some Arabs in rags on soil that could feed five-hundred thousand men; barbarians trampling with reckless ignorance and coarse fanaticism over the ground that gave us a religion of science and freedom…If Europe does not intervene with its conserving activity, [the land will] be suffocated quietly…” Before the coup of Napoleon III, in other words, Darboy was already enthusiastically putting his talents for historical scholarship and French patriotism to use in an argument for a military action.

But even before his implicit justification for a preemptive war could be useful to the government, the prolific priest found other avenues for his particular persuasive style. In 1850, first published in Le Correspondant, he engaged directly with the growing concern about the president’s heavy-handed clericalism (see Ch. 1 in the Daumier section). He strongly criticized the state of political “skepticism” in France. “[S]ome people claim to have been taken by surprise or deceived by trickery; others complain, on the contrary, that they are not allowed to go as far as they had wanted. Those ones propose to wade forward, even though it be through blood; the others want to retrace their steps.” And while everyone argues about which direction to go,

---

39 Price, 93.  
41 Ibid., 3.
ignorance stifles the masses, “making them vulnerable to seduction and fear” and dampening their patriotism. Is it freedom we wanted out of February 1848, he asks, or were we just “a bored nation.” If it was freedom, which kind? People think they want freedom, but the minute they have it they misuse it. “The proof is that they were not armed for a second without becoming prey to the ambitious and falling under the control of the first despotism they meet.” History proves, wrote the scholar, attaching anecdotes from Greece, Rome and the Middle Ages, that political freedom always comes with a cost. “[I]t can be stated in principle that the development of political freedom is always done at the expense of civil liberty and ordinarily, especially in a large country, creates a state of anarchy or despotism.” Ultimately it doesn’t matter. “For myself, one thing seems clear, and I will say it plainly: France doesn’t believe in the republic or monarchy.” It will never be happy with either, because the form of government is missing the point. “[A]ny government, whatever its form, can last in France if the French recognize and practice duty, morality and positive religion.” Without these things, no government can possibly work anyway.

Knowing what will follow, it is hard not to read Darboy’s longest statement on his apparent political beliefs without feeling that, in the political realm, he is urging submission to whatever form of government exists. Submission and duty are required as a moral law: if the republic was to fall, it would make no real difference. In 1851, a year before the distribution of the eagles, Sibour asked Darboy to write a treatise on the danger of “political priests” at a time of renewed political agitation in Paris and fears of a Bonapartist coup. After some hesitation, he

---

42 Ibid., 4.
43 Ibid., 6.
44 Ibid., 8.
46 Ibid., 14.
agreed, composing an open sixty-four-page “letter” to Abbé Combalot, an aggrieved Ultramontanist priest who objected to President Bonaparte’s extraconstitutional actions. “As a simple soldier I shall be happy to fight for my general,” Darboy wrote in a note to Sibour.\(^4^7\) Darboy’s treatise, initially published pseudo-anonymously (“by Abbé G. D.”) but almost immediately identified, eloquently shamed Combalot for resisting the nascent empire. Darboy defined “political” as any oppositional stance towards the new (divinely-ordained) status quo, a posture which for clergy was at minimum unseemly and more than likely immoral. “The Cross which touches Heaven, you abase to the level of a legal instrument. The Cross, all humid with Blood of God, you give as a support to matters which the hand of man has already corrupted. The Cross, which is the salvation of souls, you make the mistaken instrument of perishable interests!”\(^4^8\) Both Sibour and Darboy thus worked hard, for whatever reasons and among many other responsibilities and interests, to legitimize the new empire by casting it as God’s will. Darboy carried out his duties with such enthusiasm that some began to suspect that he was giving orders rather than receiving them. In 1854, for example, Mgr. Louis-Gaston de Ségur wrote the pope a confidential note arguing that Darboy was to blame for Sibour’s actions against Veuillot and his newspaper. “Monseigneur Sibour is always accompanied by a grand vicar named Darbois [sic], in whom he puts much trust. It is he [Darboy] who has inspired the Archbishop in his unfortunate campaign against \textit{L’Univers}.”\(^4^9\)

Sibour was certainly still in charge, but Darboy’s energetic willingness and clear support for the government is striking, despite his claims that he was avoiding politics. The same year as de Ségur’s letter, Guillaume-Alphonse Cabasson imagined an improbable “apotheosis” of

\(^{47}\text{Price, 83.}\)

\(^{48}\text{Darboy, \textit{Lettres à Combalot} (Paris, 1851), 1.}\)

\(^{49}\text{Quoted in Martin, 610.}\)
Napoleon III, painted in 1854 for the imperial family’s autumn retreat at the château in Compiègne (see fig. 10, below). The painting was a mythological allegory. But the archbishops of Paris and those in their employ provided a Christian adaptation in the ceremony of the eagles and in print. Rightly or wrongly, the Vatican always thought of Darboy primarily in this light.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 10 - Guillaume-Alphonse Cabasson, The Apotheosis of Napoleon III, 1854.**

For six years after Sibour’s death, Darboy left Paris in the experienced (and moderately empire-friendly) hands of Cardinal Morlot, the new archbishop of Paris. In the summer of 1857 and with the pope’s approval, Napoleon III revived the office of Grand Almoner of France, a title that formalized the kinds of services Sibour had been providing. The job description included jurisdiction over the religious life of the imperial court and the army. Morlot was the first holder of the title since the office had been abolished by the Restoration, tainted by its association with Napoleon I. In the same year, the emperor appointed Darboy as the new archbishop of Nancy: a triumphal return for the former student of the diocesan seminary. When Morlot died suddenly (uncharacteristically for an archbishop of Paris, of illness) just a few days shy of 1863, Darboy

---

50The office dates back to the Middle Ages but was revived by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1806 to provide a position for his uncle. The pope’s support was probably in part an indication of Morlot’s perceived greater receptiveness to Vatican authority. In 1853 Morlot had been made cardinal, despite the fact that he was already a senator and a friend of the empire.
returned to Paris. This time, it was for good. Unlike Morlot’s accession, Darboy’s appointment (by the emperor, who simultaneously named him senator and grand almoner) to the See of Paris began ominously with a conflict with the Vatican, prefiguring the tension with Pius IX that would dominate the remainder of his professional life. The papal nuncio in Paris, Msgr. Chigi, objected to the choice of Darboy on the grounds that he hadn’t received any message of approval from the pope and argued that “a bishop cannot accept a transfer of venue without the consent of the Holy Pontiff.”\(^{51}\) Chigi suggested a delay in the appointment to allow the pope to communicate his opinion on the appointment (despite the fact that the Vatican could communicate quite rapidly when it wanted). The minister of education and religion, Gustave Rouland, rebuffed the request: the emperor was no longer actively courting papal support. Rouland wrote that even if this had been a minor position, “the pretension of the papal nuncio seems to me inadmissible [and] contrary to the right of appointment which, in France, the Concordat assured to the sovereign.”\(^{52}\)

Darboy’s subsequent career was dominated by these kinds of embarrassing disputes with Rome. Most of these disputes were initially pursued in private correspondence and thus intended to remain largely private, but they did not, much to Darboy’s embarrassment. His contentious correspondence with Rome (as well as his entries in his personal journals) exhibits a constant wavering of tone between near sarcasm and condescension (especially when writing to Chigi) to tacit expressions of total humility and subservience to the pope. The complaints from the Vatican, though diplomatically worded, all expressed concerns about the new archbishop’s willingness to adhere to papal authority in France and questioned his independence from the


\(^{52}\)Ibid.
demands of the emperor. Chigi complained that Darboy had received large gifts from the emperor and that he had made theologically suspicious arguments on the senate floor. A more direct challenge to papal prerogatives came when Darboy attempted to impose episcopal control (simply by undertaking official visitations), as Chigi interpreted it, over the Jesuit houses in Paris. None of these exchanges resulted in changes in French government procedure or in Darboy’s behavior as archbishop and imperial official. At some point, the Vatican apparently decided to retaliate by making the private dispute a public affaire.

The event which finally triggered the backdoor publication (in the Canadian press, but soon reproduced in Paris) of a private and critical letter from the pope to Darboy was a funeral. Maréchal Bernard-Pierre Magnan died in the spring of 1865, at the age of seventy-three. The pope’s letter wasn’t published until 1868, but it exposed his specific condemnation of the masonic symbols allegedly prominently displayed during the ceremony. The letter also revealed that Napoleon III had recently requested that the pope make Darboy a cardinal. The pope had replied with a firm negative but had avoided offering any particular justification. Most subsequent discussions of the scandal around Magnan’s funeral accept that the major reason for the pope’s disapproval was that stated by the pope’s letter: the unorthodox association of a Catholic archbishop with visual references to a secret society associated with political radicalism and atheism. For the same reasons it may initially appear odd that the funeral was also attended by the emperor and his circle. But imperial support becomes perfectly understandable when one glances at Magnan’s path to high military office.

---

53 This is true of nearly all of the pre-World War I biographies already footnoted and also more recent accounts, such as that of Merriman discussed below in the final section of this chapter. If the source of the publication is discussed, it is typically assumed by these same sources that the pope intended the letter to be made public.
In 1809, eighteen-year-old Magnan had abandoned preparation for law school to join Napoleon’s army. Four years of war in Spain and Portugal later, Magnan was a decorated captain and joined the Imperial Guard in time to lead troops at Waterloo. Despite the political transformations which followed, Magnan’s early experience allowed him to continue to ascend within the French military hierarchy. Napoleon’s army had made him. His reputation for toughness and severity increased after he led the brutal suppression of a worker’s rebellion in Lyon in 1831. Made a general in 1835 he continued developing this repressive expertise in Lille and Roubaix during political agitation later in the decade. In 1840 he was forced to stand trial for assisting the young Louis-Napoléon in a botched uprising near Boulogne.

During the June Days, Magnan responded to the urgent need for his talents by marching one hundred twenty leagues in seven days to help General Cavaignac take vengeance on the Parisian working class. Made commander-in-chief of the army of Paris in 1851, Magnan was perhaps the most important member of the small cabal that planned and carried out the coup, providing as he did the repressive apparatus in case of resistance. For his loyalty, Napoleon III made Magnan a senator and presented him with several prestigious and lucrative sinecures. In 1862, just months before the vacancy in the See of Paris, the emperor found another use for Magnan. Determined to curb any political threat from the secretive society in the immediate aftermath of the coup, Napoleon III had ended the elective leadership of French Masonry, and selected his cousin Lucien Murat to be the Grand Master in 1852. By 1862, increasing backlash from dissident lodges against Murat’s dictatorial leadership, high number of lodge-closings, and

54One hundred twenty leagues are nearly equivalent to four hundred fourteen miles. The number is taken from Magnan’s obituary in *The American Annual Cyclopædia and Register of Important Events* (New York: Appleton, 1866), 518.
support for “papal obscurantism,”55 forced Napoleon III to intervene. Removing Murat, he imposed Magnan on the masons instead. Continued resistance to central control by the secret society included a coordinated attack on the “catholico-feudal” nature of the imperial constitution assigned to the lodges. The reformers had nearly succeeded in wresting control of French Masonry from the empire by the time Magnan died. As well-informed as the Vatican must have been on these kinds of issues, it seems hard to imagine that the symbols on Magnan’s catafalque were the real center of the pope’s frustration. Instead, Magnan’s fame as a career Bonapartist meant that the official funeral was attended by all of the representatives of the imperial court and presided over by its most favored imperial priest. Any discomfort Darboy may have had with the heretical symbols, from the pope’s perspective, were clearly less important to him than performing his role as a representative of the empire and a faithful servant of Napoleon III.

Regardless, Darboy’s defense against the pope’s critique assumed the centrality of the symbols on display and he repeatedly denied any awareness of their presence. Writing to the pope, Darboy begged Pius IX to “protect yourself from false reports about me.” “I deplore the misunderstanding which seems to exist between us,” he continued, “and I desire to contribute to its end. Towards this purpose, I am abstaining from discussing here any accusation or reproach.” Despite his stated desire to avoid discussing the allegedly erroneous details, however, the symbols are the constant focus of his frustrated letters to intermediaries. In a preserved first draft of a letter to Cardinal Antonelli which he would send with the letter to the pope, Darboy’s threatened to counter-publish his own account, along with unspecified proof of his innocence. “I do not say these things lightly, Msgr. [Antonelli]; I hold in my hands material proof of what I say

55The words of mason Luc-Pierre Riche-Gardon, as reported by Philip Nord in *The Republican Moment*, 18.
and I will publish it if it becomes necessary.”56 Apparently, the archbishop thought better of going this far and removed the threat from the final draft.

In the letter sent to the pope he continued: “I write to give homage to the Vicar of Jesus Christ. This declaration, I make it willingly, and by the spirit of faith, and to honor in your person the majesty of the Lord and for the respect of social propriety.” He again repeated his unwillingness to discuss the petty details, but immediately failed to resist the urge. “There is more, dear Holy Father; I do not want, in writing directly to Your Holiness, to combat and refute the assertions, even the most inexact and the most unjust, for example those which are related to the funeral of Maréchal Magnan; because no matter what may have been said to you, the symbols of the Masons were nowhere placed on his coffin or the catafalque…” This was followed by another partial apology. “But once again dear Holy Father, I won’t discuss this here. Permit me to pass over these miserable details which, after all, are only a personal matter, and over the vain quarrels and indignant words from you and me, because the truth wins less than love, to say simply and sincerely that I am full of respect and devotion towards your person and that I have no other doctrine than that of the Church, my mother.”57

It is difficult to tell if and when Darboy is being calculating or disingenuous – his defense seems sincerely outraged at the slight. His letters to the pope certainly don’t suggest that the approval of Pius IX was meaningless. And yet, it is hard to imagine that the archbishop hadn’t by this time received the signals that his proximity to the empire made the pope uncomfortable. And his behavior regularly indicates a stubborn refusal to follow the increasingly-recognizable papal path towards the declaration of infallibility. In addition to his desire for tacit papal toleration


57 Ibid., 264-5.
Darboy was also clearly stung by the idea that he would never be made cardinal, an office he seemed to covet: perhaps he was motivated by the preservation of this professional possibility. It is clear that he reveled in being a part of the imperial circle, discussing politics, war and religion with Marshal Magnan, or Marshal Jean-Baptiste Philibert Vaillant, Minister of War during the Crimean War, or General Prosper de Chasseloup-Laubat, Minister of the Navy.58

Ultimately, Darboy’s attempts to ingratiate himself with the Vatican were somewhat successful, although very short-lived. A couple of months later Abbé Goschler wrote him an encouraging letter:

Monseigneur, I have just left an audience with His Holiness. In the middle of the conversation, the Pope asked me *ex abrupto*: ‘What do you think of the Archbishop of Paris?’ ‘Holy Father,’ I responded, ‘he is my Bishop.’ ‘Yes,’ said the Pope, ‘and he is a man of [much] mind and talent…tell him that I send him my paternal benediction, and that I *love him very much*, but that I would like to see him, because we can understand each other only when talking, in communicating face to face.’ ‘Holy Father, you authorize me to transmit these words to Mgr. de Paris?’ ‘Certainly, I desire it and I authorize you.’” 59

Darboy was eventually received by the pope in Rome and both parties apparently came to some sort of mutual understanding. But the reconciliation was brief and made more difficult by Darboy’s continued presumptive interventions into the affairs of Ultramontanist Catholics in Paris. In February 1868, Darboy had irritated many Catholics by forbidding Jacques-Paul Migne to reopen the Ultramontane subscription-based publishing house *Imprimerie Catholique*. An apparently accidental fire in the printing press had destroyed the business of the co-founder of *L’Univers*, but it was Darboy’s imperial support that allowed him to prevent it from reopening.

On March 14, Darboy noted in his personal papers that “M. de Cuttoli told me that he knew without any doubt that the nuncio [Chigi] said in the salon of La Rochefoucauld, where he resides, that I would never be cardinal…” In June of the same year Darboy noted receiving anecdotal confirmation of the real problem. “M. Armand, secretary to the ambassador at Rome,

58 Darboy’s correspondence includes letters to and about these and other military figures. *Archives Nationales*, F19 2555 (Darboy).

told me that the pope has nothing against me personally, but that he is jealous of the influence of Paris. The emperor and all those close to him are odious to him.” His heterodox theology and apparent tolerance of nonconformist religious practice were surface details: underneath was the fact that the pope now firmly identified Darboy as an imperial priest.

The situation again deteriorated as the issue of the pope’s poison-pen letter continued to undermine the archbishop’s position. In August 1868, Darboy wrote a letter to Antonelli again objecting to the publication of the letter. But this time he also accused the Vatican of intending the leak and expressed his conviction that the pope owed him some sort of public statement (if not an apology) in order to counterbalance the use his enemies were making of the document. “On the 26th of October, 1865,” he wrote, “the Holy Father wrote me a letter…it did not lack in severity, but what is worse, it contained incorrect assertions; it contained facts improperly attained, words that I did not say, and sentiments that I did not express.” He told Antonelli that he had understood the matter as having been settled after his audience with the pope, had found instead that the letter had been “pulled from obscurity” and was again “making the rounds at present in Paris.” “As the letter was not favorable to me,” he added, “it is clear that it was not me who released it.” Directing the implicit accusation towards a clear assertion of the pope’s authorization of the leak, he wrote that “civilized people” gained the consent of both the recipient and the sender of a letter before they published it. “That an individual would avoid this rule with regards to another individual, that is an outrage; but for a government which commands two-hundred million consciences, to allow themselves to [act this way] to a sole, defenseless man, this is deserving perhaps of another name.” The silent refusal of the pope to end the discussion, furthermore, was counter-productive to the interests of the church itself.

60Ibid., 277-8.
Which law of the Church permits the hunting of a bishop by the voices of journalists, and resorts to, for slanderous purposes, unknown shameful agents, irresponsible and protected by others, with a sentiment which resembles scorn?

Finally, the [letter] cannot have any target or result but to offend my person, and to discredit my ministry. I have something in me which can handle the first. As for the second, I ask myself what advantage can be returned to the bishops, to the Vatican, to the souls entrusted me, to the Church and to religion. 61

In subsequent letters, Darboy quixotically continued to demand that the Vatican shed some light on the leak of the letter. Antonelli had previously assured Darboy that he had investigated the matter and had found that the source of the leak was in Paris and not Rome, but Darboy refused to believe this. In a letter to Antonelli dated December 7, 1868, he revealed his certainty that the Vatican’s diplomat to France was responsible, and his belief that Chigi had received direct authorization from the pope. Darboy wrote that he had discovered that Chigi had previously been authorized to show the letter to the government’s ministry of religious affairs, he wrote, “towards a purpose which is not apparent to me,” wrote Darboy, meaning that there were several government officials who were in possession of the letter. But he found Antonelli’s explanation entirely implausible. “On the contrary,” he wrote, “I desire that the government of my country knows me well.” The nuncio, on the other hand, had already proven himself as untrustworthy with this secret. “Your Eminence could add that, in 1865, the Nuncio had spoken of this letter to a good number of my colleagues” and thus was clearly capable of the act, with or without formal authorization. “You said, Monseigneur, that your research has already been done, that it showed that the ecclésiastique culpable of this divulgence resides in Paris. Yes, but he lived in Rome when he obtained a copy of the pontifical letter.”62

He closed the letter with another demand that reconciliation was entirely up to the Vatican. “Your Eminence has let it be known that the Vatican would not do anything [about the scandal]; that it is up to me to do something. You think this and advise me to address [another]

61 Ibid., 272-3.
62 Ibid., 275.
letter directly to the Holy Father justifying myself. I ask your pardon for the painful feeling that such advice gives birth to within me. How?! I am the victim of an injury and you invite me to present my excuses! I am passionately slandered at the whims of dishonest agents who believe they do the pleasure of the Vatican; the letter which attacks me is in the hands of a great number of French and foreign bishops, and you ask me to justify myself in secret and before the Pope alone!”

The strained relationship would only diminish when military disaster and national trauma overshadowed personal pride. Before that could happen, Darboy and the pope would enter a heightened period of theological contest in Rome. In December 1868, Chigi began compiling a report on the attitude of the French bishops towards the upcoming general council of the church which would come to be known as Vatican I. In it, Chigi labeled Darboy’s faction as the only Catholics expressing a lack of enthusiasm for a declaration of papal infallibility. “As to the general condition in France, Catholics are divided into two classes: Catholics pure and simple and Liberal Catholics”, he wrote. “These latter are the object of preference to the Government. They fear that the Council will proclaim the dogmatic infallibility of the Pope…But the great majority of Catholics submit by anticipation to whatever the Council may proclaim. They admire the courageous convocation of the Council in such stormy, revolutionary times.” Chigi’s assessment was rapidly assembled and submitted to Antonelli. Communicating as it did the impression of near-universal French support for the pope, it was immediately leaked to the Roman Catholic press and appeared in the pages of the Civita Cattolica. Back in Paris, some bishops expressed complete ignorance of such a survey while others alleged that the information which they had provided was selectively used and edited to bolster Ultramontane support.

Regardless of what “most” French bishops actually thought about the upcoming council, Darboy’s continued demand for an apology was levied at a pope who was preparing a doctrine asserting their own inerrancy. He must have been aware of the futility of such a goal. Perhaps he hoped that the continued importance of French troops between the Vatican and Italian revolutionaries would give him some leverage. If so, he would soon be doubly disappointed at the power of such imperial support.

**Expiation by Massacre**

I will be unpitying; the expiation will be complete.
- Adolphe Thiers, May 1871

Darboy was first disappointed, during the council itself, by the complete disregard the pope gave to his supposed imperial influence. Despite his active opposition on the floor of Vatican I, the declaration of papal infallibility was a foregone conclusion, and the majority of the council enthusiastically voted for its adoption. Darboy and his party could only communicate their formal submission to the decision before leaving the council early to avoid prolonging the tension. But in addition, and more gravely, the abstract bulwark to Darboy’s confident independence hitherto provided by his awareness of the French troops protecting the Vatican had suddenly evaporated. The troops had been called away to participate in the Franco-Prussian War.

Little did the archbishop know, as he travelled home from the council, and officiated over the imperial family’s last religious service in the palace, that French bishops would never again receive such support from a French government as they had during the disappearing era of the imperial priesthood. The collapse of the Second Empire and the capture of Napoleon III at the battle of Sedan on September 1, 1870 left, as Adolphe Thiers put it, “a vacancy of power.” When the news reached Paris of the ignominious defeat, groups of workers invaded the Corps

---

Législatif while its members debated a course of action and, after a short march to the Hotel de Ville behind Gambetta and Jules Favre, they declared a republic. The Government of National Defense was put under the premiership of General Trochu, and was tasked with continuing the war with Prussia in an effort to retain occupied Alsace and Lorraine. The Government of National Defense, however, rested on an ambiguous legitimacy, having been created ex nihilo with its members handpicked by those who had declared its existence. Some members of the government wanted to hold elections immediately to bolster their sense of legitimacy through an appeal to national sovereignty, but the continuing emergency delayed them. Also, the government “felt uncomfortable in its illegality” and doubted its retention of power if elections were held. “In Paris,” according to Spencer, “Darboy decided to cooperate with the Government of National Defense and ordered Domine, salvam fac republicam to be sung once more in the churches of his diocese.” Once again, Darboy provided legitimacy to the state in a moment of doubt.

The Government of National Defense struggled to maintain the war until January 1871, when it was forced to capitulate. Bismarck further demanded that the government legitimate itself through national elections before signing the treaty. On February 8 the elections were held and a conservative, largely monarchist, legislature was elected, with Thiers soon after appointed as the “head of the executive of the French Republic.” In Paris, the deprivations caused by a long and brutal siege by the Prussians and the election of a potentially monarchist government led by Thiers (which famously took up residence in Versailles rather than in the capital), pushed an outraged capital into open defiance. After declarations from Versailles ending moratoriums on the repayment of loans and rent, most of which would be due immediately. For a war-weary and

---

65Plessis, 169.
66Spencer, 242.
poverty stricken populace, this was too much, and the workers and National Guardsmen of Paris organized themselves into a Central Committee. On March 18, 1871, Thiers, realizing that the Central Committee effectively constituted a separate center of political (and military) power, decided to forcibly disarm the Parisian National Guard of their remaining cannon on Montmartre. The clumsy attempt in the early morning hours led to a dispute which turned violent, and the two generals in charge (Lecomte and Thomas) were summarily executed. The remaining government loyal to Thiers evacuated to Versailles, and, a week later, the remaining Parisians elected a Communal Assembly, but, “no one could tell whether it would be a simple municipal council or a counter-government.”

Darboy had remained in Paris throughout the Prussian bombardment. A month after the siege was lifted he had addressed one final note to the pope. “Separated from the world for five month by the siege of Paris,” he began, “and only being able to correspond with the outside world rarely, I rush to use my newly regained liberty to tell you of all the pain I feel regarding the situation Your Holiness has been put in by the events occurring in Rome this winter.” As a result of French military withdrawal the Papal States had been occupied by Italian troops, leaving the pope as a “prisoner in the Vatican.” “All Catholic souls,” Darboy continued, “are profoundly afflicted by the state of things, which is a sacrilegious attack and at the same time a social disorder.” Having already submitted to the definition of papal infallibility the previous July, Darboy nonetheless wished to “declare to you [the pope] that I adhere purely and simply to the decree of last July 18.” He also wished to be informed of whether or not the pope wished him to abandon his continued position as Grand Almoner of France, as a symbol of his renunciation of state patronage (admittedly made easier by its absence).

---

67Plessis, 171.

Finally, he expressed ignorance about the way the new French government would understand its role vis-à-vis Catholicism. “I do not yet have enough information to guess what the [new] French government will do on the subject of questions touching on the temporal power of the Vatican and the good of religion in our country. The political and financial situation of France, the agitation of minds, the uncertainty of the future and so many things prevent the prediction of which solutions will be given to certain difficult questions relating to the affairs of the clergy. My diocese has suffered much, materially and morally.” He described the destruction of Paris, and the work of Parisian religious to care for the sick, hungry and wounded. “If we can manage, as I deeply desire, to conserve the confidence and the respect of the people, all of the other dioceses will gain, and the Church also.”

But before recovery and reconstruction came confession. “The entire nation is in need of a moral transformation” wrote Darboy in the pastoral letter to his diocese dated March 10, 1871. The Paris Commune was just over a week away, bringing with it another round of devastation to Paris.

Darboy refused to leave Paris after it declared independence, and initially he was largely left alone. But on the fourth of April, 1871, Darboy was arrested and brought before Raoul Rigault, the Prefect of Police. “What are you thinking my children?” the prelate reportedly asked his captors. By this time, the ragtag army of the Commune and the Versailles troops had begun to engage in combat and the Versailles troops had already begun executing prisoners on the second of April. In retaliation, the Communards had begun to gather up any prisoners of value that they could use for retaliation or exchange. Aware of Darboy’s imprisonment, the pope still

---

69 Ibid., 280-1.

70 Darboy was expressing a common sentiment among Catholics. As Raymond Jonas argues, the resurgence of the Sacred Heart movement sweeping through the west of France informed interpretations of the French catastrophic defeat to the Prussians and produced a broad desire for spiritual renewal and moral reform. The quote is from Jonas, 65, my translation.
considered the archbishop’s ideas to be a greater threat than those of his captors. “What I fear for
you”, he told a group of French priests and laymen in 1871, “is not that miserable band of
Communards – demons escaped from Hell – but Catholic Liberalism… that fatal system which
dreams of reconciling two irreconcilables – Church and Revolution. I have already condemned
it, but if need be, I would condemn it forty times more.”

The alliance of the archdiocese of Paris and the Napoleonic legacy had certainly drawn
others’ attention. Hippolyte Prosper Lissagaray, one of the first participants in the Commune to
make his account public, made clear what he thought were the most important labels to attach
to Darboy. “After the decree on the hostages, they had only managed to lay hands on four or five
ecclesiastics of mark: the Gallican Archbishop Darboy, a thoroughgoing Bonapartist; his grand-
vicar, Lagarde; the curate of the Madeleine; Deguerry, a kind of De Morny in cassock; the Abbé
Allard, the Bishop of Surat; and a few Jesuits of nerve. Chance only delivered into their hands
the president of the Court of Appeal, Bonjean, and Jecker, the famous inventor of the expedition
to Mexico.” In prison, Darboy became increasingly ill while the Commune argued about what
to do with him and the other prisoners in light of the slowly tightening noose of Versailles troops
surrounding Paris. Elihu B. Washburne, the American diplomat to France, visited Darboy many
times and participated in several rounds of negotiation with Thiers in an attempt to obtain his
release. But Thiers never considered the Communard proposal to trade Darboy and certain other
prisoners for the imprisoned veteran revolutionary Louis-Auguste Blanqui. Throughout the
Commune, Thiers refused to acknowledge that Paris had any official power to negotiate
anything, and ignored from the outset the recent Geneva Convention of 1864 protecting prisoners

71Quoted in Spencer, 244.
72Lissagaray, Histoire de la Commune de 1871 (Bruxelles: Librairie Contemporaine de Henri
Kistemaeckers, 1876).
73Ibid., 247.
of war. Ruthlessly efficient, Thiers decided early to treat the Communards as capital criminals, not prisoners of war, and executed many of them immediately after each brief battle. Despite this, the Communard authorities refused to commence counter-summary executions, despite significant vocal support from elements of the leadership and public.

Figure 11 - Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux Monseigneur Darboy dans sa prison, 1871.

Throughout April and into May, Darboy’s condition worsened. Despite his initial optimism about the proposed trade, sickness, as well as the betrayal of one of his assistants tasked with taking letters to Versailles, took their toll. He at times became despondent, despairing of the possibility of liberation. He nevertheless continued to accept visitors, and Washburne found his refusal to criticize his captors remarkable. Indeed, Darboy’s insistence on the duty of obedience seems to have diminished in the two decades since he wrote De la Liberté et de l'Avenir de la République Française. By mid-May Darboy seemed to have come to terms with his approaching death, whatever form it was to take. Visiting him at Mazas, the Abbé Bayle
remarked “that if His Grace was put to death by the Commune, he would be regarded as a martyr; that the Church had proclaimed St. Thomas of Canterbury a martyr, and there was as much of politics in the case of the English prelate as in that of His Grace of Paris.”

“One thing is certain,” replied Mgr. Darboy; “If I am condemned, it will not be as an individual, but as archbishop of Paris.” On May 19, Washburne wrote: “Since I commenced writing this dispatch, I have again visited the archbishop to communicate to him that it was impossible to effect his exchange for Blanqui. I am sorry to say I found him very feeble. He has been confined to his pallet for the last week with a kind of pleurisy; is without appetite, and very much reduced in strength. He is yet cheerful, and apparently resigned for any fate that may await him.”

Two days later, Versailles troops entered Paris, receiving passionate but feeble and disorganized resistance. Once inside, the troops began executing thousands of Parisians, in what would be remembered as Bloody Week. On May 23, despite continuing executions and arrests, Thiers issued the following dispatch announcing victory:

```
The Chief Executive to Prefects and all Civil, Judicial, and Military Authorities:

We are masters of Paris, except for a very small part that will be occupied tomorrow. The Tuileries is in ashes, the Louvre has been saved. That part of the Ministry of Finance that runs along the Rue de Rivoli has been set on fire. The palace on the Quai d’Orsay, in which the Council of State and the Cour des Comptes were housed was also set on fire. Such is the state in which Paris has been delivered to us by the scoundrels who oppressed and dishonored it. They left us 12,000 prisoners, and we will certainly have between 18-20,000. The ground is covered with their corpses. It is hoped that this horrible spectacle will serve as a lesson to the insurgents who dared declare themselves partisans of the Commune. Justice will soon satisfy a human conscience outraged by the monstrous acts that France and the world have just witnessed.

The army was admirable. Even in our misfortune we are happy to be able to announce that thanks to the wisdom of our generals it suffered few losses. - A. Thiers, Versailles, May 23, 1871, 7:25 a.m.

At the time of Thiers’ decree, Georges Darboy, the Archbishop of Paris, was still alive.

But the next day, in an act of revenge, he was shot against a wall outside his prison with several other prisoners. His execution was ordered by a single individual previously part of the
```

75 Washburne, 35.
governing council of the Commune; whatever regular authority had existed in Paris had collapsed into chaos after the entry of the troops into Paris.

In the confused days following May, details about the execution trickled into the public. Like Affre’s death, but unlike Sibour’s, hagiographical biographies flourished immediately – nearly all of them described Darboy as a martyr. Here they are in one print ascending together to heaven, arm in arm over a burning city (fig. 12).

![Figure 12 - “Affre et Darboy, les deux martyrs,” 1871.](image)

The accounts of the archbishop’s death shared in the avoidance of one key fact: that, less than a year before his death, Darboy was reviled by the bulk of the popular Catholic press in Paris, and publically undermined by the pope himself. When Sibour had died, the shared public silence which concealed his conflict with the pope had indicated that he was disqualified from imagined martyrdom. When Darboy died, the usefulness of his death for the incoming
government trumped any concern about his recent career. In addition, his last words became the topic of much interest, and very quickly, the question of whom to blame for his death featured in a broader argument about what had just happened in Paris.

The newly repatriated *Journal Officiel*, now making news on behalf of Thiers, was the first to publish an official notice: “The sinister imagination which could have predicted the fate awaiting the hostages detained by the commune has only just awakened. At first, too quickly almost to believe, and so deeply desired, we received with joy news of the deliverance of the Archbishop of Paris; this news was not accurate, and the villains which inaugurated their revolt with the assassination of the generals Clément Thomas and Lecomte, have crowned their bloody work with the cowardly massacre of the fallen victims with their own hands.”

“We cannot yet give this lamentable tragedy many details which we will recover with pious fidelity, in the interest of history and for the honor of these glorious martyrs who in [our] memory will rest eternally venerated.” Some details must have already been available, however, since the account goes on to present an account of the prelate’s precise last words: “The illustrious Archbishop…died like a Christian hero, and he was heard pronouncing these noble words: ‘Profane not the word liberty, it belongs to us alone, for we die for liberty and for faith.’” It is hard to tell if any of these words were actually said, but they would become almost a slogan for his dying bravery. The particular combination of liberty and faith is quite striking: after all, even after the Commune had begun the pope had pronounced liberalism the ultimate enemy, one which he would “condemn forty times more” if necessary. Even stranger, as I discuss below, the primary goal for many if not most of the hagiographies was the desire to avoid details Darboy’s conflict with the papacy. On the other hand, if Darboy died for liberty, then the Communards represented its opposite. And indeed, the account closed with a stirring call to punitive action:
“the martyr spoke the truth: he and his unfortunate companions were assassinated by the most hideous of despotisms; they have already received, in a better life, the recompense for their sacrifice. But it is left to us who survive them the duty to avenge with extreme punishment this heinous crime which has terrified the world, and at the same time to root out all [those who are] capable of soiling themselves with such nameless atrocities.” Brutal revenge was once again demanded by the death of the martyr.

More details emerged with the numerous pamphlets produced within the days and weeks after the archbishop’s death; each new fact was treated as piously as if it was a station of the cross. Darboy had been transferred from Mazas to La Roquette prison in a common furniture cart followed by “an infuriate mob of men, women, and children, who insulted the unfortunate men with ribald cries and jeers.” There he had waited. “On the evening of the twenty-fourth of May, just when the insurgents were suffering defeats which led them to devastate the city, a file of soldiers of the Commune, under orders from Delescluze, proceeded to the prison of La Roquette, where the hostages were confined...the [prisoners] were told that they must die. The venerable Archbishop only bowed his head, and said: ‘The justice of tyrants is hard to understand.’” A company of National Guard (known as “Les Vengeurs de La République”) arrived and had to convince the prison director to surrender his prisoners. They were then taken from their cells into the courtyard and placed against the wall. “The Archbishop, the most illustrious of them all, was placed at the head of the line. The fiends who murdered him had, as if in derision, etched a cross upon a stone in the wall against which he was placed, and at the very spot where his head must have touched at the moment the fatal shot was fired. Though wounded, he did not fall at the first

---

76 Détails Concernant le Massacre de la Prison de la Roquette et les Dernière Paroles de Monseigneur L’Archevêque de Paris (Paris: Chez Matt, 1871).
fire, but stood erect calm and immovable, seeming to be absorbed in prayers. Other discharges
immediately followed, and the venerable victim fell to the ground, his life extinct.”

Few pamphlets missed out on repeating the *Journal Officiel*’s account of Darboy’s last
words. Some even put them to verse and set them to a tune – like this one from the fifth stanza of
the “Grande Complainante sur la Mort de Monseigneur l’Archevêque de Paris”:

```
Profane not, with grace,
The holy name of liberty,
Because you have effaced,
By your crimes and your audacity,
For liberty, the faith
Killed the Archbishop Darboy. [set to the tune of Fualdès]
```

Lissagaray, as usual, tells a different story. He first sets the stage with the brutality of the
Versailles troops: “On that day,” he writes, “the massacres took that furious flight which in a few
hours left St. Bartholomew’s Day far behind. Till then only the Federals or the people denounced
had been killed; now the soldiers knew neither friend nor foe. When the Versaillese fixed his eye
upon you, you must die; when he searched a house, nothing escaped him. ‘These are no longer
soldiers accomplishing a duty,’ said a conservative journal, *La France*. And indeed these were
hyenas, thirsting for blood and pillage. In some places it sufficed to have a watch to be shot.”

In this context, the executioners of Darboy take on a desperate quality: “At half-past seven a great
noise was heard before the prison of La Roquette, where the day before the three-hundred
hostages, detained until then at Mazas, had been transported. Amidst a crowd of guards,
exasperated at the massacres, stood a delegate of the Public Safety Commission, who said,
‘Since they shoot our men, six hostages shall be executed. Who will form the platoon?’ ‘I! I!’
was cried from all sides. One advanced and said, ‘I avenge my father,’ another, ‘I avenge my

---


79 Lissagaray, 386-7.
brother.’ ‘As for me,’ said a guard, ‘they have shot my wife.’ Each one brought forward his right to vengeance. Thirty men were chosen and entered the prison.”

In Lissagaray’s account of the execution, some details remain the same: Darboy is still the last man standing, for example. But a crucial element is missing, Darboy dies in silence:

The delegate looked over the jail register, pointed out the Archbishop Darboy, the President Bonjean, the banker Jecker, the Jesuits Allard, Clerc, and Ducoudray; at the last moment Jecker was replaced by the Curé Deguerry. They were taken to the exercise-ground. Darboy stammered out, ‘I am not the enemy of the Commune. I have done all I could. I have written twice to Versailles.’ He recovered a little when he saw death was inevitable. Bonjean could not keep on his legs. ‘Who condemns us?’ said he. ‘The justice of the people.’ ‘Oh, this is not the right one,’ replied the president. One of the priests threw himself against the sentry-box and uncovered his breast. They were led further on, and, turning a corner,—met the firing-party. Some men harangued them; the delegate at once ordered silence. The hostages placed themselves against the wall, and the officer of the platoon said to them, ‘It is not we whom you must accuse of your death, but the Versaillese, who are shooting the prisoners.’ He then gave the signal and the guns were fired. The hostages fell back in one line, at an equal distance from each other. Darboy alone remained standing, wounded in the head, one hand raised. A second volley laid him by the side of the others.

There is as least one other immediate account that takes the words from Darboy’s mouth. A thirty-two page biography of Darboy by Fisquet has him pardoning his executioners as they prepare to fire, but not in the language of liberty and faith: “Mgr. Darboy, advancing towards his assassins, addressed some words of pardon to them. Two of the men approached the prelate, and in front of their comrades knelt and implored his pardon.” They were the subject of a barrage of insults from their compatriots until the commander ordered silence, and demanded the execution go forward. Once again, the first volley didn’t kill Darboy, but this time “a monster wearing the stripes of captain finished him off with a shot from his revolver.”

As the immediacy of the moment faded, printers rushed to add their particular biographies to the accounts of his death. In incredibly detailed summaries of his career, his disputes with the pope are never mentioned directly. “The eminent archbishop which all

80Ibid., 388.
82Ibid., 25.
Christians mourn at this moment wasn’t, as has been said, the son of a noble family, but indeed the son of simple and honest workers. It is therefore by his own merit alone that he was raised to the high Episcopal dignity where he found himself on his deathbed.”

Certainly, the author continued, this same merit would have been enough for further professional elevation. “There is no doubt that he would have obtained sooner or later the academic chair and the cardinal’s hat if the fatal events which we deeply mourn hadn’t made him a martyr.”

Fisquet’s biography, mentioned above, went through the archbishop’s whole career. It discussed his friends, quoted his speeches and letters and mentioned every major publication of his career. But somehow it managed to avoid even a euphemistic mention of the defining feature of the last decade of his life: his conflict with the pope.

Darboy’s body was rescued, from a ditch in Père Lachaise according to one account, and embalmed and lay in state from for the first week of June in Notre-Dame. The church “was entirely covered in black bordered with ermine…under the transept was raised an immense catafalque on which was deposed, during the ceremony, the mortal remains of the illustrious prelate.”

People came from all around for the ceremony. “I joined the immense throng of the people of Paris who passed through the palace to look for the last time on the well-known features of him who was so endeared to them by his Christian charity, by his benevolent acts, his genial disposition, and his kindness towards the poor and the lowly.”

The last corpse of the imperial priesthood was being laid to rest.

---

84 Ibid., 4.
86 Ibid.
The funeral oration offered by Henri Didon on June 23, 1871, did subtly point towards Darboy’s challenge of the papacy. But first, Didon went to great pains to paint Darboy as the pope’s biggest supporter, reading from a pastoral letter from when Darboy was bishop of Nancy indicating, perhaps, that he had supported the temporal power of the pope. After having thus proven Darboy’s orthodoxy against a straw man, Didon found a way to celebrate Darboy’s famous conflict at Vatican I. By first disagreeing with and then surrendering to the pope, Darboy had offered an honorable example of selflessness, “When after long debate of the Council on the serious problem of infallibility, the sovereign decree was rendered, what did he do? Renouncing this noble opposition, which had been his right and duty as bishop, he quickly wrote his name amidst the names of his other colleagues in an act of submission without reserve to the decision the timing of which he had combated. This is the way that one saves all the faith and principles and the honor of his opinions. Unfortunately it must be said that this is a thing we painfully understand today, this proud and disinterested middle, between absolute submission which degenerates into servitude and the opposition which becomes revolt.”

If Darboy’s theological Gallicanism was swept under the rug, his relationship with the fallen empire had completely vanished. Instead, other voices claimed his legacy. In effect, the political spectrum in France had been simplified. In the National Assembly, republicans were freethinkers and the conservatives were Catholic. The working class had been eliminated as a political and social threat – as Spencer puts it, quoting Hugo: “the ‘social question’ didn’t exist anymore; the solution was obtained, as Victor Hugo said, ‘by erasing the problem.’”

---

87 Henri Didon, Éloge Funèbre de Mgr. Georges Darboy, Archevêque de Paris, Prononcé a la Cathédrale de Nancy le 23 Juin (Joseph Albanel, Libraire, 1871), 23.

88 Spencer, 292.
Remembering the Massacre

Darboy!...But what disgust rises in my soul:
For the plunderers and assassins!
As ruined Paris writhed in flames;
It was murder in the Holy Places!

Affre! ...Sibour!...Darboy!...The worst crimes
That hatred can weave and that hell can invent;
Those acts born out of faith
Are greater and more sublime,…
Muse! It is about these things that you must sing.89

The new republic surprisingly limped ahead, avoiding becoming the handmaiden of a new monarchy, to last for seventy years. Although the government briefly discussed nominating Dupanloup to succeed Darboy as archbishop, Pius IX instead suggested Bishop Guibert, a loyal supporter of papal infallibility. As mentioned above, the pontificate of Pius IX had coincided with a moment of Liberal Catholic alliance with republican politics in France and across Europe. But despite the hopes of Archbishops Affre, Sibour and Darboy, by the 1860s Pius IX had directly addressed the evils of French imperial assertion in Church affairs, episcopal independence, and liberal and republican political doctrines many times over. With the political foundation for French episcopal independence in ruins (after Sedan), the doctrine of papal infallibility pronounced and Liberal Catholic opposition abandoned, the possibility of deep Catholic participation in the new Third Republic had been eliminated. Those Catholics most experienced in administration and government, as well as those with most interest in the possibility of working with a republican government, had mostly been killed or marginalized. This situation was, in part, a consequence of the Vatican’s strategy towards Darboy and his predecessors, whom the pope had described as even worse than the “demons” of the Commune because of their proximity to imperial power and the possibility this created of theological and rhetorical independence. As mentioned earlier, one of Darboy’s first post-Sedan letters to the

pope offered to abandon the sinecure which represented the overlapping spheres of influence available to the imperial priests; Darboy understood the source of tension with the pope and recognized that after the fall of the Second Empire and Vatican I, he would be required to simplify his chain of command. Separation of Church and State, as pursued by the Vatican, began long before 1907. Gallicanism, this time for good, was dead.

Nevertheless, the triumphant Versailles government, aided by the use of Darboy’s martyrdom (as well as, perhaps, the example of Louis-Napoléon’s Catholic-friendly beginning), cast itself as the friend of the church as Paris smoldered. Jules Simon, Minister of Public Instruction while Thiers was president (until May 1873), wrote to the archdiocesan authorities requesting their approval on models by Violet le Duc of the new sculpture of Darboy that was to be installed in Notre Dame de Paris, simultaneously raising Darboy up as a symbol and asserting his ultimate authority over what was essentially a religious decision. And the government fully cooperated with normative explanations, offered by the church in France and in Rome, of the Commune divine punishment for political sin. Bishops Dupanloup and Pie, formerly bitter enemies, worked together to build a monument for the expiation of France’s sins, soon to be the Sacré Coeur. But what were Paris’ sins, exactly? Certainly they included the anticlerical spirit evidenced by Darboy’s execution: the fruit of atheist and radical political doctrines.

Almost exactly as after the June Days, therefore, an argument for an alliance around order and religion, punctuated by a sensation killing of an archbishop of Paris, was being used to bolster a new government. In the pages of *Le Constitutionnel*, as pilloried by Daumier’s cartoons, Thiers and his colleagues had made a similar anti-socialist alliance on behalf of the

---

In addition, Thiers’ decision to move the government troops out of Paris, and then to attack the Commune with unrestrained force, bore a remarkable similarity to the repression of workers in 1834 (by Thiers himself) and in 1848 (by General Cavaignac). Whether or not, as the Comte d’Hérisson wrote in 1889, “Thiers wanted the Commune,” and was attempting another in a long line of examples of “lessons” given to the “vile multitude,” his actions at least suggest an eagerness to use the archbishop’s imprisonment to discredit the Commune with Catholics. Joseph Guillermin, one of Darboy’s early biographers, later wrote that “[Thiers] wished to force the Commune to such extreme acts that its repression could assume, with the appearance of a punishment, the full extent that he wished to give it.”

Lissagaray would have agreed, and maintained throughout his account that any acts of brutality were aberrant and that the Commune treated its prisoners well, even the clergy. “The hostages were allowed to obtain from without food, linen, books, papers, to be visited by their friends, and to receive the reporters of foreign journals.” The Communards had even been willing to let go of their prized imperial priest, but Thiers and, Lissagaray alleged, his Ultramontanist allies, had no interest in getting him back. “An offer was even made to M. Thiers to exchange the hostages of greatest mark, the Archbishop, Deguerry, Bonjean, and Lagarde, for Blanqui alone… But M. Thiers thought that Blanqui would give a head to the movement, while the Ultramontanes, eagerly covetous of the episcopal seat of Paris, took good care not to save the Gallican Darboy, whose death would be a double profit, leaving them a rich inheritance, and

---

91 See Chapter 1.
92 Or perhaps he was just being nice: “…Thiers, not wishing to deluge the streets of Paris with fraternal blood, withdrew the troops to Versailles...” Reuben Parsons, Studies in Church History, Vol. VI (New York: Fr. Pustet and Co., 1901), 86.
giving them at small expense a martyr.”

He continued by saying that Thiers had ignored Darboy’s repeated letters asking him to stop the executions and when an intermediary finally reached him and asked him to consider the danger the archbishop was in, “M. Thiers made a decided gesture: ‘What does it matter to me?’”

Karl Marx agreed with the assessment, and said as much in *The Civil War in France*, although unlike Lissagaray, Marx felt that the Commune was responsible and justified in shooting the hostages:

> When Thiers, as we have seen, from the very beginning of the conflict, enforced the human practice of shooting down the Communal prisoners, the Commune, to protect their lives, was obliged to resort to the Prussian practice of securing hostages. The lives of the hostages have been forfeited over and over again by the continued shooting of prisoners on the part of the Versaillese. How could they be spared any longer after the carnage with which MacMahon’s praetorians celebrated their entrance into Paris?...The real murderer of Archbishop Darboy is Thiers.

Marx defended his position by referring to Thiers’ refusal to trade Darboy for Blanqui and alleged that Thiers was hoping to use Darboy in the same way that Cavaignac had used Affre in 1848. “The Commune again and again had offered to exchange the archbishop, and ever so many priests in the bargain, against the single Blanqui, then in the hands of Thiers. Thiers obstinately refused. He knew that with Blanqui he would give the Commune a head; while the archbishop would serve his purpose best in the shape of a corpse. Thiers acted upon the precedent of Cavaignac. How, in June 1848, did not Cavaignac and his men of order raise shouts of horror by stigmatizing the insurgents as the assassins of Archbishop Affre.”

When challenged on this point, Marx argued that Darboy had agreed with his assessment. In *The

---

94 Lissagaray, 249.


96 Presumably not simply because Lissagaray was now dating his daughter.


Examiner on September 2, 1871, Marx denied that the Commune could be held responsible for Darboy’s death, as its leadership had already collapsed. Instead, he attached a letter that he had obtained, written by a M. Fondeville, who claimed to have visited and spoken with Darboy in April. “From [these conversations]”, wrote Fondeville, as quoted by Marx, “it emerges that apart from [Darboy’s] arrest, for which he blames the Commune, he places the full responsibility for his detention on the government of Versailles; he accuses it, above all, of sacrificing the hostages to reserve itself a sort of right to take reprisals in the future.”

Darboy’s misgivings about Thiers’ motivations are independently attested by others who published accounts of their visits to the archbishop in prison. But what Thiers knew and intended regarding the death of the archbishop are probably impossible to ascertain. Certainly he couldn’t have known for sure how events would play out during the massacre of Bloody Week. At least as important in motivating his actions, probably, was Thiers’ refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of Paris to treat with Versailles, assuming that this would be a symbolically important concession which would undermine all of his other actions towards the Commune. Clearly he was also motivated by the determination to begin a new government with a military victory and with the elimination of political opposition from Paris. Whatever his motivations, Thiers took advantage of the situation to cast himself as a divine avenger, sent to clear Paris of its filth. He had the full support of Pius IX. “We must add the long and pitiful succession of disasters and evils which have for so long smitten the illustrious French nation,” the pope wrote in his next encyclical.99 “These evils have recently increased enormously through the quite unheard-of excesses of beastly, God-forsaken scum. In particular, We are horrified and tormented by the murder of the Archbishop of Paris which has filled the whole world with fear and horror.” While

99Beneficia Dei, June 4, 1871.
official campaigns for Darboy’s beatification didn’t begin until the 1880s, a statue of him was immediately begun and once sculpted was moved into Notre-Dame in 1873; streets were named after him and Deguerry in the Eleventh Arrondissement.\textsuperscript{100}

\textit{Massacre}, John Merriman’s new book on the Commune, is driven by two primary theses. First, Merriman intensely reasserts a class interpretation of the Paris Commune, albeit nuanced carefully with multiple Parisian perspectives and a clear awareness of the major recent historiographical developments. Related to this, Merriman clearly labels Thiers and the National Assembly in Versailles as the villains and those ultimately responsible for the human tragedy at the center of his book. “The conservative National Assembly revolted against Paris, and not the other way around. Only days after the people of Paris had taken control of their city, Thiers and the National Assembly were readying for a war that they understood as ‘a class war’ between the bourgeoisie and Parisian workers.”\textsuperscript{101} Merriman other major concern is to argue that the one-sided state violence committed by the Versailles government during Bloody Week at the end of May 1871 prefigured the violence of the twentieth century. In effect, the Commune was the first chapter of a story which climaxes with Hitler and Stalin.

Briefly, Merriman makes this argument by showing that Bloody Week possessed all the characteristics of more recent state terrorism. The massacre was centrally directed from Versailles by Adolphe Thiers (along with General Patrice de MacMahon), who systematically organized, planned and carried out the violence with ruthless efficiency. It was directed at Paris as a whole, although with special focus on the working classes. It was nationalist and anti-foreign in perspective, one-sided and brutal (it was not a “fight”), driven by “hatred” and led by

\textsuperscript{100}Merriman, 285.
\textsuperscript{101}Ibid., 50
forces of “clerical reaction.” Thiers comes off as an almost-larger-than-life villain, although in fairness to Merriman, this is mostly a portrayal informed by Thiers’ own words, such as his proud assessment of his actions afterwards: “I shed torrents of [Parisian] blood.”

Perhaps even more importantly, Merriman spends time acquainting his readers with the bombardment of anti-Communard propaganda that suffused the life of Versailles soldiers as they waited for Thiers’ methodical plan to require them. The massacre required that Parisians be reimagined as non-French and without inherent claim (by virtue of their criminality) to humane treatment. The success of this project was assisted by the significant presence within the Versailles army of French troops with colonial experience, including General MacMahon (a veteran of decades in Algeria as well as several of Napoleon III’s other wars). “Many of the line troops had fought in Algeria, Mexico and even China, and, in their view, the Communards no more qualified as French than the insurgents they encountered abroad.” This colonial mindset was broadly reflected in contemporary descriptions of the Communards as “barbarians” from the colonies and “savages.” Paris was “in the power of negroes” wrote one observer, while others compared the capital city’s spring inhabitants to African Arabs, escaped American slaves, and “modern redskins.” Although Merriman doesn’t make this connection, such comparisons were likely made easier, at least for those who had served in Asia (or simply been a regular reader of international news), by the targeting of priests by the Communards (a project also valued by the Vietnamese before French control, as we’ve seen in Chapter 3). As the troops moved into Paris, their commanding officers fueled this hatred by making mandatory detours to view the bodies of

---

102 Ibid., 213.
103 Ibid., 209.
104 Ibid., 207.
105 Ibid., 216.
priests killed by the Commune (even against the wishes of priests who accompanied them from Versailles!). Violence against priests, as in 1848, was the evidence of the guilt and lack of basic humanity of the Communards. Parisians who escaped execution were often forced to kneel as they passed churches and offer expiatory prayers.

In addition to the focus offered to how Versailles imagined Paris, in terms of good and evil, Merriman also gives unusual attention and space to the role of religion itself in the Commune. No other mainstream history book in recent years has given significant attention to Darboy, for example, who gets an entire chapter, as well as minor parts in multiple others. However, in his treatment of the archbishop, and Communard anticlericalism, Merriman makes some understandable but important errors, at least in emphasis. The anticlericalism of the Commune is discussed throughout the book (most notably in Chapter 4, “The Commune Versus the Cross”). The antipathy to the church felt by many Communards (“in the ranks of middle-class radicals and the urban poor”) is explained, in line with the author’s commitments to a class analysis, largely in terms of Parisian awareness of the wealth of many bishops simultaneous with the existence of widespread poverty of workers. Other factors, such as mutual Parisian-provincial prejudice and the urban identification of religiosity with the paysans, or secular-rational intellectual trends like positivism, are noted but explained ultimately as products of class relations. The Parisian visibility, writes Merriman, of wealthy clerical elites was complemented by the increasing absence of priests in working-class neighborhoods. “This was perhaps unsurprising,” Merriman notes, “given that the Church told the poor that this world is a valley of tears and that they should resign themselves to poverty - their reward for suffering would come

---

106 Ibid., 219.
107 Compare Robert Tombs, who in much more typical fashion, in The Paris Commune, 1871, mentions Darboy twice (for a total of two sentences).
108 Ibid., 11.
The Versailles government had already indicated its leanings, at least as seen from Paris, by meeting at Versailles. Thiers’ cynical assessment of the use of the throne-altar alliance is also noted: “Thiers had once asserted, ‘I want to make the clergy’s influence all-powerful, because I am counting on it to propagate that good philosophy that teaches man that he is here below to suffer, and not that other philosophy that tells man the opposite: take pleasure.’”

Despite acknowledging these longer-term, contributing factors, however, Merriman argues that the anticlerical actions of the Commune are ultimately the product of a particular moment. On April 2, 1871, Versailles troops had summarily executed two Communard prisoners (Duval and Flourens) who had just been captured during the first major engagement of this civil war, in Courbevoie. These executions “changed the story of the Paris Commune,” writes Merriman, by triggering the arrest of Darboy and several other prisoners and eliminating hope of diplomacy. What is missed in Merriman’s class-based approach is Commune’s anticlericalism, informed of course to some extent by issues of economic inequality, secularizing thought and disputes over education, was at least as much an expression of anger against the Second Empire and what appeared to many Communards to be the inevitable continuation of its basic structure in the initial actions of the new Versailles government led by Thiers. Catholics, and in particular the high episcopate (especially those who had supported the February Revolution), were hated because of their absolutely crucial role in the suppression of the June Days, the foundation of the Second Empire, and the legitimization of its aggressive foreign policy and suppression of worker radicalism. As this dissertation has argued, this impression of betrayal had been repeatedly solidified by brutal state-driven violence at home and abroad.

---

109 Ibid., 11.
110 Ibid., 39.
111 Ibid., 97.
Any historical text that sets as its goal to describe the “birth” of something (like twentieth-century state violence) is potentially vulnerable to missing evidence of antecedents for that something. As with J.P. Daughton’s wonderful book on the French Third Republic’s Catholic policies in colonial Vietnam (see Chapter 3), the effects of actions set within one’s area of expertise are more noticeable than causes which precede the field of temporal focus. In Chapter 1 I focused on the state violence of the June Days of 1848, which also accelerated with the violent death of a priest.\textsuperscript{112} If Merriman never left his focus on the Commune, it wouldn’t be fair to criticize him for not giving full attention to antecedents. But his lengthy assessment of Darboy (again, one of the two or three most extensive treatments of Darboy in scholarly English-language history writing of the last century) makes this problem of historical attention even more noticeable. Merriman’s biography of Darboy gives plenty of scope and time to deal more directly with the justifying role he played in the construction of imperial politics. He describes the town he grew up in (Fayl-Billot), his early education, presentiments of calling and near-sacrificial dedication to Catholicism (as a teenager Darboy announced, in Merriman’s paraphrase, “that he would always stand ready to die for his religion”\textsuperscript{113}).

Merriman covers the basic points available in virtually every biography of Darboy, English or French, written prior to World War I: he notes that Darboy was smart and passionately interested in Christian history and theology. He had believed (with Sibour) that the church must make some adaptations to allow for the novel conditions of the modern world. And he had

\textsuperscript{112}Chapter 1, 46: “A potent emotional symbol, the death of Affre on the faubourg Saint-Antoine barricade transcended the one-sided slaughter at the ‘Acropolis of the Ragamuffins’ and turned it into a reminder of the Terror of 1793-4…In contemplating Affre’s death and its meaning, the recently elected National (Constituent) Assembly and its leadership developed an interpretive consensus about the causes for the rebellion. Crucially, they placed blame for the June Days on subversive ideas, rather than social issues or even the rebels themselves (who were nevertheless punished). Furthermore, the fallen archbishop was placed next to those ordering and carrying out the repression. Claiming the holy banner of a Catholic martyr, the shaken Second Republic glorified the repression and demonized democratic ideas and social Catholicism.”

\textsuperscript{113}Ibid., 98.
hoped, at least prior to the 1860s, that science could and should enliven faith, rather than becoming its enemy. When he had been called to Paris in 1845 by Affre, Merriman writes, “Darboy described himself as ‘happy, free and cheerful’ in there, with ‘its atmosphere, its chaos, its ideas - its all-consuming life’. Yet as he walked through the city, Darboy was appalled by the poverty of the working poor, the majority of Parisian residents.” His social conscience, Merriman argues, drew his attention, at least briefly, away from historical scholarship and towards the political developments of 1848. “Darboy immediately threw his support behind the Second French Republic. The young priest believed that the February Revolution could bring better relations between the Church and ordinary people.” But soon after the June Days, Merriman writes, “Darboy’s enthusiasm for the Republic ended.” The violent death of Affre on the barricades surely contributed to this evolution, as I’ve argued, but Merriman doesn’t mention it: Affre’s death and the brutal repression of workers that followed doesn’t assist his interpretation of the singular and novel importance of the repression of the Commune.

Merriman goes on to briefly discuss several of the other important moments in Darboy’s career previously mentioned in this dissertation. His basic impression of Darboy seems to be positive: a priest with a social conscience whose problems with the Vatican pushed him closer to Napoleon III as a defense for his independence. Merriman seems to accept a narrative presented implicitly in several early celebratory biographies and explicitly in some later Marxist accounts: that the provincial well-intentioned priest had been seduced by wealth and power.

Darboy became even closer to the Emperor. Pleased with Darboy’s loyalty to the empire, Napoleon III named him to the Senate, the only archbishop or bishop so honoured, and to the Emperor’s private advisory council. In 1864, Darboy became Grand Chaplain to the Emperor’s residence at the Tuileries, where imperial occupants surrounded themselves with adoring wealthy people. The archbishop married and

\[\text{114} \text{Ibid.}, 98.\]
\[\text{115} \text{Ibid.}, 98.\]
\[\text{116} \text{Ibid.}, 99.\]
baptised members of the imperial family and oversaw the first communion of the Prince Imperial. Such flamboyant events made him uncomfortable, because it clearly identified him with fancy folk, among whom the son of provincial shopkeepers never really felt at home. When Napoleon III awarded Darboy the Légion d’honneur, the archbishop reassured his parents that he had not been struck by ‘the sickness’ of seeking imperial honours.117

While Merriman notes the connection between the archbishop and the emperor, he prioritizes the importance (and discomfort) for Darboy offered by wealth and advantage, rather than noting the legitimating services Darboy and the archdiocese were effectively offering to the empire and its militarization. In addition, his account of Darboy contains significant errors of omission. Absent in Merriman, and indeed absent in all published writing on Darboy, is the crucial role Darboy played in determining the French church’s official reaction to Napoleon III’s coup and initial foreign policy. Absent is Darboy’s argument of the lack of importance of the form of government in the years prior to the coup, or his attack on political resistance to the coup in the letter to Combalot (mentioned above). This is a crucial element of his biography, because Affre, Sibour and Darboy had all been previously supportive (at least rhetorically) to the political resistance of priests to the throne of Louis-Philippe. Hugo’s sense of betrayal was informed by his awareness of the hypocrisy inherent in pretending that the sanctifying ceremonies presided over by these bishops were not political, while resistance to the empire in the name of religion was (by definition).

Also absent in Merriman’s account of Darboy any discussion of Darboy’s enthusiastic nationalist participation in the crafting of pretexts for the Crimean War (see Chapter 2) in his book on the Holy Places. Without these texts, Darboy’s moderate and apparently benign social reformism is one of his most obvious contributions to his political culture. With these texts one comes to understand Darboy’s deep elitism, as expressed when he criticizes the ignorant masses for both their stupidity and their negativity, less than two years after they had been mowed down

---

117 Ibid., 100.
in the June Days. After reading these texts, one notices his national chauvinism, informed by a belief in sacred French exceptionalism (not of course entirely unique to him). One comes to realize, when reading his assessment of the worthlessness of Turkish civilization and desire for a new crusade, Darboy’s relative lack of concern about violence against those his elitism deemed uncivilized or not representative of progress. When Darboy calls the Communards “my children” it no longer sounds quite so sweet. His first reaction to the proclamation of the Commune itself, quoted by Merriman, also takes on a new meaning: “This is a parade without dignity and a mindless parody without soul.”

Why is this important? A deeper understanding of the ways in which the imperial priesthood legitimized violence and class antagonisms within Paris (as well as abroad) leads to a more accurate assessment of the Commune’s anticlericalism. Were the hostages chosen by the Commune chosen primarily for their religion? Or were they chosen because they were representatives of a hated regime, of which the new Versailles government seemed to be simply a reincarnation with a shorter emperor? Consider the choices the Commune made in its arrests and executions: Darboy was not just the archbishop, he was also a Senator, an honored associate of the emperor and a government propagandist. Abbé Gaspard Deguerry, imprisoned and executed with Darboy, was not only the head of the elite Church of the Madeleine, but was also the confessor to Empress Eugénie, and very much at home in the imperial palace. Louis Bonjean, arrested before Darboy and executed with him, had been the president of the Court of Appeals and had enthusiastically assisted in the prosecution of political radicals during the empire. Jean-Baptiste Jecker, who briefly escaped being killed with Darboy only to be executed the next day, was the emperor’s banker and the person probably most responsible, other than Napoleon III, for

the disastrous attempted occupation of Mexico. Class-based anticlericalism and anti-imperialism are not mutually exclusive of course. But it was not simply the case, as Merriman writes, that “The Church’s close association with people of means had long drawn popular ire; the birth of the Commune merely unleashed it. Many ordinary Parisians now saw priests as ‘a particular type of bourgeois’.” It was an imperial, politically repressive, violently powerful circle, not simply people of means. It was political antipathy as much, if not more than, class or religious antipathy.

Thiers’ use of Darboy was effective for encouraging compliance with his elimination of Parisian rebels, but it also seems to have been personal. He personally oversaw the construction of his massive (now unmarked) tomb in Père Lachaise, and covered the lintel with a frowning angel, a large sword in hand, poised to deliver justice. It was important to him to be thought of in the mold of Cavaignac and other military enforcers. As I’ve argued throughout this dissertation, such self-presentation relies heavily on cultural markers, like martyrdom, signifying the justice of political repression. Thiers probably would have adored Jehan Georges Vibert’s allegorical painting of his death (fig. 13 below). With the ruins of Paris behind him, reminding viewers of the crimes of the Commune, Thiers is peacefully escorted into heaven. Marianne, at his feet, mourns the statesman as an angel directs him upwards, towards his reward. Above, in the skies, the revolutionary and imperial armies of French governments he had successively served melt together to become one, continuous, martial body. Thiers might have even appreciated the similarity to Napoleon III’s painting by Cabasson (fig. 10 above), and the shared suggestion of their apotheoses. Both Thiers and the former emperor were happy to claim martyrs on behalf of their causes and hoped the saints would cover up their own crimes. But while Napoleon III had being escorted through heaven by the classical Greco-Roman gods, so cherished by imperial

\[^{119}Ibid., 104.\]
neoclassical allegorists, Thiers’ holds tight to the sign of martyrdom. His claim for a quick entry into heaven depended on a reputation for holy vengeance. On his chest he clutches a crucifix.

Figure 13 - Jehan Georges Vibert, _Aposthèose aux funérailles de Thiers_, 1877.
CONCLUSION

This dissertation has focused primarily on the lives, deaths and contexts of five French Catholic priests who died either directly prior to, during or immediately after the Second Empire of Napoleon III: Archbishop of Paris Denis Auguste Affre (1848), Saint Augustin Schoeffler (1851), Archbishop of Paris Marie-Dominique-Auguste Sibour (1857), Saint Théophane Vénard (1861), and Archbishop of Paris Georges Darboy (1871). In referring to these priests as members of an imperial priesthood, I have argued that their deaths had much to do with their perceived and real relationship to the French government and its acts of domestic and international violence. In addition, two of the archbishops of Paris who were killed by other Frenchmen (Sibour and Darboy) had actively served as propagandists for the Second Empire. All of them died violent and sensational deaths, with many witnesses. All of them (except Sibour) were regularly referred to as martyrs in contemporary print materials, despite the fact that such status would only be conferred on two of them (Schoeffler and Vénard) and more than a century later. Sibour’s death, coming in a moment of relative political stability in Paris and at the hand of a priest, was not useful to anyone. But the deaths of the other four priests were useful for many different people, and they were therefore called martyrs. Wielded in political arguments as powerful, multi-functional symbols, these martyrs became justifications for violence and signs of the times.

Within the historical study of mid-nineteenth-century France, the direct comparison of the political culture around these martyrdoms is original, informative and important. By discussing rarely noticed French primary sources about the imperial priesthood this dissertation contributes to existing knowledge about the relationship between French government and religion between 1848 and 1871. In addition, analysis of some of these documents shows the need of altering existing understandings of the period by acknowledging the ways in which the imperial
priests, for example, contributed to the foundation of the Second Empire and its foreign policy and deployed ideas thought to originate in the Third Republic. The elimination of the imperial priesthood, furthermore, treated thematically, provides deeper context for the anticlericalism of the Paris Commune and, ultimately, the secularization of the French Third Republic.

Chapter 1 examined how the Second Republic made use of the assassination of Archbishop of Paris Affre during the June Days of 1848 to excuse the brutality of the crushing of the rebels. When Affre died, so did most of the possibilities for Catholics who wanted to support progressive political reform; those who remained became part of an anti-socialist alliance on behalf of order. Chapter 2 showed how a seemingly-innocuous discussion called the “Question of the Holy Places” became a Catholic pretext for war happily claimed by Napoleon III. In this chapter I also challenged the current basic narrative of the Crimean War, as represented by Orlando Figes and others, who explain it as a simple consequence of Napoleon III’s political interest alone. Chapter 3 followed the expansion of French missionary activity in the 1850s, especially in Vietnam. Using Brad Gregory’s definition of martyrdom, I argued that when the Vietnamese were killing French Catholics, they were taking out their revenge on France in response to a history of violence by the French state and not persecuting Christianity. Chapter 4 examined two more deaths of archbishops of Paris: Sibour in 1857 and Darboy in 1871. It began by suggesting that Sibour was not called a martyr after his assassination because he was killed by another Catholic, and because his death reminded believers of the deep divisions opening within their ranks. I then showed how central Sibour and Darboy were in legitimizing the coup of Napoleon III and by labeling principled resistance as sinful. Then, I showed how Darboy’s conflicts with the papacy developed and how he came to be imprisoned by the Commune for being an imperial priest and not primarily because he was a Catholic. Darboy’s death was labeled a martyrdom,
and I argued that this is because he was useful, once again, in the demonization of rebels. Finally, using this evidence, I offer a different take on the Commune and the role of religion than that presented by the most recent and in many ways, best, English historical work on the Commune, *Massacre* by John Merriman.

In summary, this dissertation has provided an extended examination of how the archbishops of Paris provided an integral foundation for the politics of order that gave birth to the Second Empire. I showed how the language of holy violence was used to demonize June Days rebels of 1848, to justify the establishment of the empire, and to encourage celebration of its military objectives. The imperial priesthood was revealed, in the pages above, in fact, to have played a crucial role in most of the major political and military initiatives of Second Empire France. It also showed how this legitimating aura created the possibility of the mass export of French missionaries, many of whom were martyred in large part for their relationship to the French government. Furthermore, it provides an important preface to the political and religious changes of the Third Republic, by showing how those priests most willing to be part of a French governmental edifice were eliminated or marginalized by the fall of the Second Empire and the simultaneous triumph of Ultramontanist Catholicism at Vatican I. Darboy’s death in the Commune can be seen as the opening chapter in the Third Republic in more than one way: by casting the Versailles government as holy avenger and stigmatizing its political opposition from the left and by eliminating the last representative of the imperial priesthood. In all of these arguments, this dissertation has shown that martyrdom, in France between 1848 and 1871, was a remarkably capacious topic of discussion. Martyrdom was defined as much by those who could politically capitalize on the deaths as by the priests themselves or by the pope, and could powerfully underline normative judgments on political actors. To think about martyrdom was to participate in a complicated but
impactful conversation in which the political winners and losers of mid-nineteenth-century France were explained and judged.
**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

*Archival Sources*


*Archives Historiques, Diocèse de Paris* (Série 1D5: Affre)

*Archives Historiques, Diocèse de Paris* (Série 1D6: Sibour)

*Archives Historiques, Diocèse de Paris* (Série 1D8: Darboy)

*Archives Historiques, Diocèse de Paris* (Série 1D9: Guibert)

*Archives Nationales,* F19 2555 (Darboy)

*Newspapers*

*Le Constitutionnel*

*Le Correspondant*

*Le Figaro*

*L’Illustration: Journal Universel.*

*Journal des Débats Politiques et Littéraires*

*Journal Historique et Littéraire*

*Journal Officiel de la République Française*

*La Presse*

*Le Siècle*

*L’Univers*

*Printed Primary Sources*


---. *Tract on Comets and Particularly on the Comet that is to Intersect the Earth’s Path in October 1832.* Boston: Hilliard, Gray, 1832.


---. *Travels in Greece, Palestine, Egypt and Barbary, During the Years 1806 and 1807*. New York: Van Winkel and Wiley, 1814.


---. *Saint Thomas Becket*. Paris, 1858.


Paris: Possielgue frères, 1889


*Papal Encyclicals of Pius IX*. Accessed June 1, 2014 at http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/.


*La Vérité sur la Question des Lieux Saints par Quelqu’un qui la Sait*. Malta, 1853.


Secondary Sources


Boime, Albert. *Art in an Age of Civil Struggle, 1848-1871*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press,


Childs, Elizabeth C. *Daumier and Exoticism: Satirizing the French and the Foreign*. New York:


Gough, Austin. “The Conflict in Politics: Bishop Pie’s Campaign Against the Nineteenth Century: Catholic Legitimism and Liberal Bonapartism at Poitiers during the Second Empire.” In


James, C.L.R. “They Showed the Way to Labor Emancipation: On Karl Marx and the 75th Anniversary of the Paris Commune.” Labor Action (March 1946).


