

The Anti-Catholic Program of the  
French Revolution  
and the  
Martyrs of Laval, France - 1794

by

Mary Brosseau Messenger R.S.C.J., A.B.

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## PREFACE

This study intends to point out the close connection between the Church and State in France during the years 1788-1794. It will consider the anti-religious legislation that became law under the National Constituent Assembly, the Legislative Assembly, the National Convention and a phase of the National Convention, the Reign of Terror. The study will then show how the laws affected the Catholic religious and the laymen in general; and in particular, the religious and the laymen in the city of Laval, France. We must bear in mind that the martyrs considered in this paper were martyrs in the true sense of the word. These witnesses rendered a testimony to Christ and to His doctrine by voluntarily sacrificing their lives to God for their Faith out of love for Him. They were never primarily political victims, though the Revolution against the State furnished the occasion for their execution.

The materials used include the Positio super introductionae causae et super martyrio ex officio compilata and the Positio super non cultu, the historical reports made by the Sacred Congregation of Rites for the beatification of the Fourteen Martyrs of Laval. This valuable documentation was available through the generosity of St. Mary's

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## INTRODUCTION

The French Revolution was an attempt to put into practice certain basic beliefs. It sprang not solely from the state of things, but also from the state of men's minds; that state itself the result of the false principles - religious, social, and political - promulgated by the philosophy of the time. The decades just before the Revolution were restless ones; an era of "contras". All fields were attacked and the effects were far reaching. Rousseau, with his idea that sovereignty rests in the community, gave to the people that same monstrous and exorbitant power which Hobbes ascribed to the kings. With both men, existing civil law was the criterion of right and wrong. The only difference was, that with the English philosopher law was the expression of the absolute will of one individual, the monarch; with the Genevese, law was the expression of the absolute will of the sovereign people, collectively. Both agreed in banishing God, the real Source of law, from society.

These atheistic ideas directly (Voltaire and his followers) or indirectly (Rousseau and his fellow thinkers) assailed God and combined at ruining the social order. The political and social crisis brought much suffering to the

Church because, in consequence of her close union with the State, she found herself intrinsically involved in it.

Though the Church was severely attacked during the French Revolution, there are two ways of looking at the persecution. A famous eye-witness, Joseph de Maistre, writes:

There is in the French Revolution a satanic character which distinguishes it from anything that had been seen up until now . . . they break all bounds beyond the usual type of criminal behavior, and seem to belong to a different world.<sup>1</sup>

But this judgment seems too severe and too narrow. The Roman Catholic Church herself, in the historical report made by the Sacred Congregation of Rites for the Beatification process of fourteen of her sons and daughters, victims of the Terror, has stated the reasons for their death and beatification:

1. The fourteen martyrs of Laval refused to take the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.
2. The fact that they constantly refused to take the oath seems to be the sole cause for their condemnation.
3. Their blood was shed for Jesus Christ and the Church alone. They glorified the Mystical Body of Christ and particularly the diocese of Mans.
4. There were eye-witnesses that attested to the fact that they were not political victims of the Revolution. They died as witnesses to Christ and His eternal doctrine, and their motive was the love of God and testimony to the truth of divine doctrine.

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1 l'Abbé Moriceau, Histoire de la vie et de la mort de Marie Lhuillier dite Soeur Monique, Religieuse Hospitalière de Saint Julien de Château Gontier (Laval, Chailland, 1883) p. 47.

5. These deaths, so glorious in the history of the Church, have given edification to the faithful.<sup>1</sup>

From this primary source we can see that at least in this particular case no satanic force was loosened against the Church, as custodian of Truth. We can further generalize and say that in many other instances the Church was not attacked for that reason alone. The state did not directly attack the doctrine of the Church - that would have been heresy; the state did desire a "French" and not a "Roman" Church - that was schism. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy was designed to effect this French National Church. In this was the error - schism! This creation of a schismatic church appears to almost be a by-product of the state's desire to solve the many crises facing the French Nation. Church and state had been interlocked and when one was attacked and an attempt at reformation made, both suffered.

France in 1788 was socially, economically and politically disturbed. To ease the problem and the people's fears, the King had capitulated to his subjects' demands for the assembling of the Estates General in an attempt to settle the serious financial crisis that the country was facing. The opening had been decreed for May, 1789.

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1 Sacra Rituum Congregatio, Sectio Historica, n. 44. Beatificationis Seu Declarationis Martyrii Servorum Dei - Joannis Baptistae Turpin du Cormier eiusque tredecim sociorum sacerdotum, Mariae Lhuillier eiusque trium sociarum et Jacobi Burin, parochi in dioecesi Valleguidonensi in odium fidei, ut fertur, anne 1794 interfectorum. Positio super introductionae causae et super martyrio ex officio compilata (Rome: Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1941), Dec. XIV, 221-222. Hereafter quoted as Positio.

The election of deputies began in the winter and continued throughout the spring. The legally constituted electoral assemblies drew up the cahiers de doléances and prepared to submit them to the Estates General. The practice of making cahiers de doléances was an essential feature of the French Estates General.<sup>1</sup> When Louis XVI took the actual step, it was, therefore, quite natural that the traditional procedure should be not only followed, but should also exert a marked influence. Out of the total number of cahiers composed, "six hundred fifteen were designated as the specific instructions for the deputies-elect to the Estates General."<sup>2</sup>

Catholicism was considered by many cahiers as a distinctive French tradition. This is true of the cahier du Clergé de la Sénéchaussée du Maine:

Article 1: The Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion, shall be exclusively the religion of the State, and the edicts, ordinances, and declarations concerning its public worship and its exterior policy shall be executed according to its form and content.

Article 2: Let there be for the whole kingdom one and the same rite, one single breviary for the regulars as well as for the seculars, one same catechism, the same laws and statutes, and benefit.<sup>3</sup>

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1 See Georges Picot, Histoire des États-Généraux (Paris: 1888, 5 vols.)

2 Beatrice Fry Hyslop, French Nationalism in 1789 according to the General Cahiers (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), p. 21.

3 Paul Piolin, L'Église du Mans durant la Révolution: Mémoires sur la persécution religieuse à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (Le Mans: Leguicheux-Gallienne, 1868), I, 24.



Yet to think this was the general consensus would be to present a very one-sided picture. Under the old regime in France, sovereignty had been distributive. The State had shared its power with the Church, the privileged classes, the guilds, the provinces and even the cities. But the cahiers manifest a different thought. Gallicanism in the cahiers of 1789 had its étatist as well as its patriotic implications.<sup>1</sup> As étatist, it worked toward the elimination of the Christian element in the theory of the State. In the cahiers, this movement involved demands for independence from papal power, and for an increase in state power over religious matters, made possible by the growth of a secular spirit.

Thus, the cahiers contemplated a larger role for the State. The clergy of Maine asked for the re-creation of provincial councils; this meant a democratization within the Church.

Article 4: That there would be every three years a diocesan synod, every six years a provincial synod, whose rules and decisions would have the force of provisional and gradual law until the meeting of the national committees, which would be every ten years, and to which the first two would be subordinate.

Article 6: The curés will have the liberty to assemble in order to confer among themselves on matters concerning their state, and let them have

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1 Georges Weill, Histoire de l'Idée laïque en France au dix-neuvième siècle (Paris: 1925) distinguished three phases of Gallicanism - ecclesiastical, royal, and parliamentary. The first and second were both étatist and patriotic, while the third was étatist. As quoted in Hyslop, p. 101.

the right to make remonstrances for the interests of the public good and the good of religion.<sup>1</sup>

But the complete subordination of the Church to the State subsequently effected by the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was only vaguely foreshadowed in the cahiers of 1789.<sup>2</sup> When on the night of August 4, 1789, the clergy and nobles altruistically renounced their privileges, the clergy did not mean for the Church to become a mere plaything in the hands of the state. "Carried to its legal limits, the abolition of clerical privileges meant the end of the ecclesiastical courts as well as of tax privileges."<sup>3</sup> The clergy did not mean to give that much, at least permanently.

The privileges renounced were exemptions or immunities prejudicial to the lay orders and not those inherent to the corporate existence of the Gallican Church. In fact, 63 cahiers of the clergy did urge the retention of church privileges.<sup>4</sup>

The cahiers of 1789 did contain, however, "four hints of the action taken by the National Assembly in 1791."<sup>5</sup> The first concerned the personnel of the Church offices. Cahiers of the third estate spoke of the election of the clergy in such a way as to suggest choice by the

1 Piolin, I, 24.

2 Hyslop, p. 103.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., pp. 103-104.

5 Ibid., p. 104.

parish."<sup>1</sup> One cahier of the clergy and three of the third estate suggested state payment of clergy.<sup>2</sup> But in view of the large number of cahiers, these were only isolated incidents.

A more frequent foreshadowing of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was indicated by statements about church property. "The étatist point of view was rarely so forcefully expressed as by the third estate of Blois: "All ecclesiastical properties belong to the nation, and only the use thereof to the clergy."<sup>3</sup> The clergy was not just to "use" the land, neither was it to make payments to the papacy. Even cahiers of the clergy opposed papal payments. They sometimes asked that such money be applied to pay off the church debt."<sup>4</sup>

Some cahiers advocated state usage of funds to be collected from the suppression of small monasteries, or from the complete dissolution of the monastic orders. It seems that the doctrine of "utilitarianism" spread by Helvetius and Bentham formed the foundation of this bequest. "Utility

1 Brest, Castelmorin-D'Albert, Nantes, Paris hors-les-murs, Rennes. It is noticeable that three of these came from Brittany. Quoted in Hyslop, p. 104.

2 Quoted in Hyslop, p. 104 (Clergy - Le Mans; Third Estate - Foix, Nantes, Nemours.)

3 Quoted in Hyslop, p. 104. Cauchie and Lesueur, D. I., I, 13; II, 448.

4 Quoted in Hyslop, p. 103. See Archives parlementaires de 1787 a 1860, ed. by Jerome Mavidal, Emile Laurent, and others (Paris, 1862-1913)., II, 723 (art. 31). Hereafter referred to as Archives parlementaires.



was the criterion for the maintenance, modification, or abolition of many an institution of the old regime."<sup>1</sup> The arguments, both for the retention and for the suppression of the monasteries, were therefore, two sides of the same coin. According to the clergy of Metz:

. . . public utility requires the conservation of the religious orders . . .

The clergy of Soissons recommended that the religious orders devote themselves to education in order that they might be as "useful to the State as they had been to the Church."<sup>2</sup>

"Approximately one third of the general cahiers evinced a utilitarian philosophy in respect to the role of the clergy, church property, or the monastic orders."<sup>3</sup> They did not necessarily desire wholesale suppression, but usually favored a complete reorganization. And, "Wherever mentioned, the mendicant orders were denounced."<sup>4</sup> In short, the state, whether it desired monasteries or not, should have primary jurisdiction.

The chief foreshadowing of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was the evidence in the cahiers of a pervading spirit of the world. "There was a widespread concern for

1 Hyslop, p. 136.

2 Quoted in Hyslop, p. 137. Archives parlementaires, III, 762; V, 769.

3 Hyslop, p. 103.

4 Hyslop, p. 105, note: only one cahier defended the mendicants - that of Limoux. See de Vic, Histoire de Languedoc (Toulouse; 1872-1892), XIV, 2615.

moeurs and ethics rather than for church doctrine."<sup>1</sup> Secularism was creeping into this century, setting as the norm utility. Even the Parisian clergy mirrored this philosophy:

The ministers of the altar are at the same time citizens, and their patriotic zeal, animated and made more perfect by the religion that they profess, does not permit them to be indifferent to the condition of the state, of which they have the fortune to form a part.<sup>2</sup>

But this love for state's rights was not always reciprocal. The third estate of Aix declared, "The clergy ought not to form an order in the state," and demanded a "reduction of the number of ecclesiastics to what is absolutely necessary for divine service."<sup>3</sup> The lay cahiers from the generalities of Paris, Orléans, Aix, and Rennes were marked by anti-clericalism.

The right of the State to control and reform, while protecting the Gallican Church was universally accepted . . . There was anti-papal sentiment, and there were foreshadowings of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Although the hold of religion still appeared basic, a secular spirit had gained acceptance among the lay orders. Over one-third of the cahiers showed some degree of secularism, while thirty-six showed a marked tendency in that direction. Public opinion as manifested in the cahiers, was not ready in 1789 for the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. It was the generalities of Paris, Orleans, Aix and Rennes which gave the chief indication that the State might assail and subdue the Church.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Quoted in Hyslop, p. 106. Archives parlementaires, IV, 47.

2 Quoted in Hyslop, p. 161. Archives parlementaires, V, 265.

3 Quoted in Hyslop, p. 107. Archives parlementaires, I, 697.

4 Hyslop, p. 107.

From the extant summaries of the original cahiers of the clergy and the third estate of the generality of Tours,<sup>1</sup> (Laval is included in this generality) we see that a "progressive nationalism" of the Parisian variety prevailed. Progressivism was the dominant tone, the clergy were eager for religious uniformity (as seen in Piolin, I, 24) yet Gallicanism was prominent. The nobles, clergy and third estate were eager for these ideas to be legally implemented in the legislation of the Estates General. Humanitarianism and cosmopolitanism characterized most of the cahiers of the generality of Tours, while patriotism was "progressive."<sup>2</sup>

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1 Beatrice Fry Hyslop, A Guide to the General Cahiers of 1789, with the texts of unedited cahiers (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), p. 151.

2 Hyslop, pp. 222-23.

## CHAPTER I

THE ANTI-CLERICAL PROGRAM OF  
THE NATIONAL CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY  
(JUNE 28, 1789 - SEPTEMBER 30, 1791)

It does not belong to this paper to relate in detail the events that led up to and culminated in the formation of the National Constituent Assembly. The Tennis Court oath of June 20, 1789, provided that the members should "not separate, until the constitution of the kingdom is established and consolidated upon firm foundations."<sup>1</sup> Thus, on June 28, 1789, the National Constituent Assembly came into official being, and it was to continue until September 30, 1791. It is the revolution under this body that we must examine concerning its anti-clerical program. Mirabeau had stated the sentiments that many held: "If you wish a revolution accomplished, it is necessary to commence by de-Catholicizing France."<sup>2</sup> This was the seed. We shall see the anti-Catholic movement from Mirabeau to Robespierre

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1 J. B. Duvergier, Collection complète des lois, décrets, ordonnances, règlements, avis du conseil d'état (Paris: A. Guyot, 1834), I, 24.

2 Abbé Barruel, Histoire du clergé pendant la révolution française (London: 1793), p. 4.

and from Robespierre to Barras grow and advance toward a more radical and more sectarian impiety.

It would not be historically correct to say that anti-Catholic motives were the sole forces that led to the subsequent acts. The reorganization of the State did involve that of the Church, but the conclusions of enlightenment led it along the anti-Catholic path. The work of the Assembly was three-fold: it was political, it was social, and it was religious. There were many extenuating circumstances that led the Church to her subservient position. In August, 1789, France experienced the "Great Fear", yet she was being led by altruistic leaders who wanted a Constitution, the object of the Assembly, at any cost. This desire led to the night of August 4. The nobility and the clergy were called upon to sacrifice, and sacrifice heavily. A representative of the nobility, Viscount de Noailles, proposed the immediate abolition of all feudal taxes; the clergy joined in this proposal and the August 4-August 11 decrees came into effect. At the last session, after several priests had renounced their tithes, the Archbishop of Paris rose to speak:

In the name of all the clergy we surrender all the tithes hitherto possessed by the Church into the hands of the just and generous nation. But let the Gospel be preached among us as before, let public services be celebrated with dignity and propriety, let the churches be served by virtuous and zealous priests, and let the poor be assisted as before! This was the object of our tithes. But we trust ourselves to the National Assembly and do not doubt that it will make it

possible for us to continue to fulfill such honorable and sacred duties.<sup>1</sup>

After this impetus, the decree was passed, abolishing the tithes unconditionally.<sup>2</sup> "This suppression of the tithes diminished by one-half the revenue of the clergy."<sup>3</sup> This was followed by the prohibition of the payment of annates and other Church dues (i.e., Peter's Pence) to Rome.<sup>4</sup> From this time on, "L'Église est dans l'état et non l'État dans l'Église."<sup>5</sup>

The abrogation of the feudal rights that had been held for centuries by numerous dioceses, abbeys, and cathedral chapters; the cancellation of the financial privileges of the clergy; and finally, the abolition of the tithes without any compensation, were only the prelude to still more drastic measures. The secularization of Church property and the suppression of religious houses and the prohibition of vows that bound the subjects were to follow in quick succession.

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1 Abbé Barruel, Journal Ecclésiastique, September, 1789, p. 36, quoted in Ludwig Freiherr von Pastor, The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1953), XL, 113.

2 See Article V; Duvergier, I, 34.

3 Gazette Nationale ou le Moniteur, dimanche, 11 avril, 1790, I, 412.

4 On August 11; See Pastor, XL, 113.

5 Albert Mathiez, Rome et le clergé français sous la Constitution (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1911), p. 79.



On August 20, 1789, in the course of the debate on the "Rights of Man and the Citizen," the National Assembly appointed a Comité Ecclésiastique, consisting of fifteen members, to deliberate on Church affairs.<sup>1</sup> This group had not been very successful in the early days of the National Assembly in stemming the tide of the attack on the Church. But it was even less successful when, on February 7, 1790, Treilhard, a Voltarian Parisian lawyer, succeeded in having the membership of the Comité doubled. "The Left, now in the majority, advocated very subversive reforms."<sup>2</sup>

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen on August 27, 1789, fanned the fire of the Revolution. The crowd, but more especially, the citizen, became enamoured with its own might. But in the presence of this bulwark for new power there were

four traditional powers, which, if wisely restored, might have effectively withstood the rising flood of anarchy. These controlling factors were the royal power, the authority of the judiciary bodies, the influence of the professional corporations, and the ascendancy of the clergy, regular and secu-

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1 Ferdinand Gaugain, Histoire de la Révolution dans La Mayenne (Laval: Chailland, 1918), p. 192; Piolin, I, 60, note; the aim of the Comité Ecclésiastique was "to recover the simplicity of the early church." The creation of the Comité also shows the stress intended to be placed on religious matters.

2 P. Pisani, L'Église de Paris et la Révolution (Paris: 1908), p. 139.

lar. The Assembly strove to destroy each of these forces, one after the other.<sup>1</sup>

The Church, with its immense religious ascendancy, land, and goods, had undeniable power. By its vast possessions, "valued at 3,000,000,000 francs,"<sup>2</sup> it had continually remained in permanent contact with the people.

In 1791 the Marquis de Montesquiou assessed the Church's property in real estate, farms, forests, and buildings, at about three thousand million francs, the forests alone being valued at 392 millions. If the profits from the forests are calculated at 2½ per cent, the value of the non-productive buildings at 100 millions, and the profit from the rest of the property at 3 per cent, the total revenues amount to 85 millions. In addition, the tithes may be reckoned at 80 millions, and the revenue of certain bishoprics and abbeys at 15 millions. This gives a total annual income of 180 million francs.<sup>3</sup>

Yet the powerful monasteries had poured out generous alms in time of stress, and the poor faithful had profited - both in body and soul.

There were three important decrees of the Constituent Assembly that were aimed at destroying the Church's power. The decree of November 2, 1789, placed all ecclesiastical property at the disposal of the nation. The decree of February 13, 1790 suppressed the vows of religion. And the Civil Constitution of the Clergy of July 12, 1790, finally made the ministry of the clergy dependent on the

1 Fernand Mourret, A History of the Catholic Church, translated by Newton Thompson (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1955), VII, 92.

2 Ibid., VII, 94.

3 Pierre de la Gorce, Histoire Religieuse de la Révolution française. (5 vols., Paris, Librairie Plon, 1909-1923, I, 10-12.



State. These works of the Assembly were well done, for all intents and purposes.

Since the formation of the National Assembly, the clergy no longer existed as the first order of the state. After the speech given by Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord, Bishop of Autun, one wonders what rights, if any, they were able to exercise. Bishop Talleyrand's arguments were of a financial sort, for the economic situation of France was indeed desperate. The solution Bishop Talleyrand set forth is as follows:

An immense resource remains, one that does not violate rights of ownership; the property of the clergy . . . The clergy are not owners after the manner of other owners . . . The portion of these goods required for the decent sustenance of the clergy is all that belongs to them; the rest is the property of the temples and the poor. If, then, the nation reserves an honorable subsistence to each holder of a benefice, of whatever nature, this policy is sure not to infringe any true ownership. By assuming responsibility for administering the rest, and of fulfilling the obligations attached to it - such as the support of hospitals and of charitable workshops, the repair of church edifices - the intentions of the founders will be carried out, and every demand of justice will be strictly observed.<sup>1</sup>

The most eloquent objection was that of Abbé Maurý. He denounced the harmful consequences that would follow the spoliation of the clergy. He said:

We have usurped nobody's possessions. Our possessions belong to us because we have acquired them or because they have been given to us. . . . But ownership is one, . . . and it is sacred for us as it is for you. Our right of ownership guarantees yours. We can produce the titles of our acquisitions. We came into them under the

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<sup>1</sup> Le Moniteur universel #81, October 30-November 2, II, 115.

express authorization of the laws. . . . If the nation can . . . go back to the origin of society to strip us of our possessions, recognized and protected by the laws for fourteen centuries, this new metaphysical principle will lead to all the insurrections of the agrarian law; the people will take advantage of the chaos to demand the partition of your possessions.<sup>1</sup> Where there is no property, there is no freedom.

However, on November 2, 1789, the final proposal was accepted, a bit modified and not so odious looking. The goods of the clergy were not to be the "property" of the nation, but:

The National Assembly decrees:

First: That all ecclesiastical property is at the disposal of the nation, upon condition of providing in a suitable manner for the expenses of worship, the maintenance of its ministers, and the relief of the poor, under the supervision and according to the instructions of the provinces;

Second: That in the provision to be made for the maintenance of ministers of religion, not less than 1,200 livres per annum be assured for the endowment of each and every living, exclusive of lodgings and gardens pertaining thereto.<sup>2</sup>

But in reality, this statement of M. de Beaumetz summarizes the decree: "The clergy no longer exists, the clergy is no longer an owner."<sup>3</sup> The decree was passed by a vote of 368 to 346, and thus became law. Forty deputies had abstained from voting; 300, almost all belonging to the Right, were absent.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Mourret, VII, 101.

2 Le Moniteur #81, October 30 - November 2, 1789, II, 115; Duvergier, I, 54-55.

3 Le Moniteur #81, October 30 - November 2, 1789, II, 118.

4 Gaugain, p. 194; Pisani, p. 135.

The decree of November 2, sanctioned on November 4, by placing the ecclesiastical possessions "at the disposal of the nation" did not regulate the measures the government would take in the matter. From November 19, 1790, to March 19, 1793, a series of decrees would mark the progress of the most brutal and complete spoliation.

The simple enumeration of these legislative acts is sadly eloquent. On November 19 the property valued at 400,000,000 francs was put on sale. Two decrees (April 14 and April 16) transferred the administration of these properties from the clergy to the départements of the districts. A month later the procedure to be followed was made precise: with a view to facilitating the operations, the purchasers could enter into possession after a down payment which, in the case of rural real estate must be merely one-twelfth.

But this alienation of 400,000,000 francs' worth of property was soon judged insufficient. Subsequent decrees (June 24, 26, 29 and July 9) ordered the total sale, except of property belonging to the fabrics (church boards), colleges, seminaries, and hospitals. This exemption, however, was not of long duration. The Constituent Assembly decided (May 6, 1791) on the sale of suppressed churches. The Legislative Assembly and the Convention decreed as follows: (July 19, 1792) the sale of episcopal palaces; July 31 and August 7, the sale of houses occupied by the religious; August 19, the sale of the property of the fabrics; March 8, 1793, the sale of the possessions of all ecclesiastical establishments of public education; March 19, the property of the hospitals.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the actual sale began on December 20, 1789, and the curés were commanded (February 5, 1790) to declare the amount of their revenues to the municipal officers.<sup>2</sup>

The decrees of August 4-11 and the November 2 decree had begun to reduce the secular clergy to the con-

<sup>1</sup> Mourret, VII, 103-104.

<sup>2</sup> Duvergier, I, p. 99, gives the law.

dition of salaried employees of the state, and to reduce the regular clergy to pensioners. These religious orders formed a major body in the life of France and the loyal support of the faithful made them a force to be feared. The National Assembly sought to abolish the Regulars - and for this measure, Barnave was the spokesman.<sup>1</sup> In his address to the Assembly, he maintained that his proposition of abolishment was just, and to prove it, he looked to the first article of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.<sup>2</sup> ("Men are born and remain free and equal in rights.") He said, "The religious orders are, therefore, contrary to the public order; being under a superior they are outside society and contrary to it."<sup>3</sup> He continued to show the rights and duties of society and the rights and duties of the citizen. He then concluded:

They are obliged to do what nature does not prescribe . . . they have taken over the duties towards the people (education, aiding the poor and sick) that the state should fulfill. Therefore, the religious orders are incompatible with the social order and the public welfare; you must destroy them without restriction.<sup>4</sup>

The calculations of several historians tend to establish the fact that France then counted "60,000 religious of both sexes with 4,000 religious houses."<sup>5</sup> This number

1 Pisani, I, 143.

2 Duvergier, III, 240.

3 Le Moniteur, #44, samedi, February 13, 1790, III, 356.

4 Ibid., #44, samedi, February 13, 1790, III, 356; also #43, vendredi, February 12, p. 346.

5 de la Gorce, I, 168.



of souls was occupying property that could legally have been in the hands of the state. The Left wing of the Assembly became impatient with the slowness of the work of the Comité ecclésiastique. On February 4, 1790, on the pretext that the fifteen members were overburdened with work, Treilhard proposed that the number should be doubled. The fifteen new members appointed three days later were mostly from the Left.<sup>1</sup> Treilhard was the one who proposed the ruthless measures during the property discussion in the Assembly on December 17, 1789.<sup>2</sup> On February 11, 1790, Treilhard renewed his request for suppression, and on February 13 the decree prohibiting monastic vows in France was passed. It provided:

1. The constitutional law of the kingdom shall no longer recognize solemn monastic vows of persons of either sex. Accordingly, the regular orders and congregations in which such vows have been taken are and shall remain henceforth suppressed in France, and no similar ones may be established.
2. All individuals, of either sex, at present in monasteries and religious houses may leave them by making their declaration before the local municipality, and they shall be provided for immediately by a suitable pension. Similarly, houses shall be indicated to which monks who do not wish to take advantage of the provision of the present article shall be required to retire. Moreover, no change shall be made for the present with regard to houses in charge of public education and charitable establishments, until a decision has been reached concerning such matters.
3. Nuns may remain in the houses where they are at present, and they shall be expressly excepted from the article obliging monks to unite several houses into one.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Mathiez, p. 98.

2 Le Moniteur, #119, samedi, December 19, 1789, II, 423.

3 Ibid., #45, dimanche, February 14, 1790, III, 363 (given in 4 articles); Duvergier, I, 100.

To each mendicant religious that should depart from the cloister was granted 700, 800, or 1,000 francs according to his age."<sup>1</sup> This was finally settled on February 19. The pension of ex-Jesuits was raised from only 400 livres to 900.<sup>2</sup> The decree of February 13 had prevented any further vocations in France and thus cut the monastic life at its very roots. The Assembly was proud and happy with its work. One of the delegates, Garat, expressed his sentiments, "I applaud the execution of the vows and the suppression of the religious orders."<sup>3</sup>

Subsequent decrees (March 20 and 26, 1790, and January 2 and 4, 1791) enacted that the collective properties of the congregations must be absorbed in the national patrimony since these congregations had ceased to exist legally. It was also decided (February 8 and 12, 1791) that all the subjects belonging to any one order should be gathered in a single house.<sup>4</sup>

By these acts we see that the National Constituent Assembly sought to give Church life a very definite French scope. To dispute the Gallicanism of the Assembly would be impossible, for they sought to merge the Church and the State into one - French, not Roman. ". . . to nationalize the church and make it the moral tutor and safeguard of the new political regime; such was their profound intent."<sup>5</sup>

1 Mourret, VII, 110.

2 Pastor, XL, 121.

3 Le Moniteur, #46, lundi, February 15, 1790, III, 370.

4 Mourret, VII, 111-112.

5 Mathiez, p. 78.

Now that the Church had been stripped of all its financial resources, provision had to be made for the maintenance of the clergy. This was an opportunity to reshape the constitution of the Church under the guise of removing abuses. By means of the so-called "Civil Constitution of the Clergy" the Church too, was made to conform to the completely new conditions. This invasion of the purely ecclesiastical domain was to be undertaken after long discussions in the Constituent Assembly. It was evident that this would be of French making with no reference or recourse to the Pope. He would be informed of the document when it was drawn up and passed, and he could then sanction the projected reforms. As a result of this document, the clergy were to be completely subjugated to the civil power as to make Voltaire's ideal a reality: "That France should be blessed with a clergy as submissive as that in Russia."<sup>1</sup> The Civil Constitution of the Clergy, the joint work of the Voltarians, the Jansenists, and the Gallican lawyers of Parlement, was a utilitarian movement destined to make the clergy a tool, and it "aspired to upset the Church with the consent of the Church herself."<sup>2</sup> Its very name was misleading: it was not a civil, but an ecclesiastical code, that overturned the Church's constitution and invaded the domain of dogma.

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<sup>1</sup> Pastor, XL, 132.

<sup>2</sup> de la Gorce, I, 288.

The Comité Ecclésiastique had implemented the philosophy of the "age of enlightenment" into their plans concerning the Church. Armand Camus, deputy of the Third Estate, spoke thus: "We are a National Convention, assuredly we have the power to change the religion, but we will not do so; we could not abandon it without committing a crime."<sup>1</sup> The Archbishop of Aix, de Boisgelin, spokesman for the Right, delivered a calm, but lofty protest:

The Comité wishes to remind the clergy of the purity of the primitive Church. The bishops, successors of the Apostles, and the pastors charged with preaching the Gospel, are not the ones who can reject this truth. But since the Comité reminds us of our duty, it will permit us to remind it of our rights and of the sacred principles of the ecclesiastical power . . . Christ gave His mission to the Apostles and their successors for the salvation of the faithful. He entrusted this mission neither to the magistrates nor to the king. We are in this matter concerned with an order of things in which the magistrates and the kings have the duty of obedience.<sup>2</sup>

At these words, the Moniteur says that murmurs were heard throughout the Assembly. The Archbishop continued:

I ought to point out that the question is one of purely spiritual jurisdiction. Abuses have crept in. This I do not pretend to deny. I grieve over these as others do . . . Retrenchments can be made in the Church. But the Church must be consulted. To deprive her of her administration would be to lay sacrilegious hands upon her.<sup>3</sup>

The last curé to speak for the Church prophetically foresaw the natural outcome of such a proposition. "If the Assembly

1 Gaugain, 207.

2 Moniteur, #151, lundi, May 31, 1790, IV, 498.

3 Ibid., #152, mardi, June 1, 1790, IV, 508.



wishes to follow up the project, it should ask the King to send it to the Supreme Pontiff with a request for him to examine it. It is the only means of avoiding schism."<sup>1</sup>

The discussion continued<sup>2</sup> and Camus again stated the power of the Assembly and showed how they desired bishops and curés, but they wanted only 83 bishops, one bishop for each département. On July 17-18 there were lively debates on the payment of the clergy.<sup>3</sup> The clergy alone could not stem the tide of anti-Christian attitude and aims, and there was no Catholic party among the lay members of the National Assembly, and no great leaders capable of forming a bulwark against the legislation. Thus, the motion was quite easily carried. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy, "a perfidious work of Jansenism,"<sup>4</sup> was passed on July 12, 1790. Its aim was clear - to constitute a national church in France. The chief provisions of the Civil Constitution had for their purpose to regulate the relations of this national church with the Pope, the civil authority, and the people.<sup>5</sup>

As regards the relations of the Church with the Pope, Article 4 of Title 1 "forbade every church and parish in France, as well as every French citizen, to acknowledge in any case and under any pretext, the authority of an ordi-

1 Moniteur, #152, mardi, June 1, 1790, IV, 508.

2 Gazette Nationale, jeudi, June 10, 1790, I, 657.

3 Pastor, XL, 137; de la Gorce, I, 230.

4 Piolin, I, 68.

5 Duvergier, I, 242-248.

nary bishop or metropolitan whose See should be established by designation of a foreign power."<sup>1</sup> The allusion to the Supreme Pontiff was evident. Moreover, Article 19 of Title II was explicit, declaring that the bishop-elect "must not address himself to the Pope to obtain any confirmation, but should write to him as to the Visible Head of the Universal Church, in testimony of the unity of faith and of the communion that he should maintain with him."<sup>2</sup>

The relations with the civil government, on the contrary, were most exactly determined. Article 1 of Title I established that "each diocese would have the same limits as the département."<sup>3</sup> Article 17 of Title II indicated, in case of disagreement between a bishop and his metropolitan about canonical institution, as final recourse "the appeal against an abuse of power."<sup>4</sup> A decree of November 15, 1790, specified that this appeal would be taken before the civil court of the district, which would pass judgment on it as the court of last resort. Articles 2 and 3 of Title III decided that the bishops and the curés are not allowed to be absent from their place of residence longer than 15 days without permission of the directory of their département or of their district.<sup>5</sup>

1 Duvergier, I, 243.

2 Ibid., I, 244.

3 Ibid., I, 242.

4 Ibid., I, 244.

5 Ibid., I, 247.

Lastly, the Constitution determined the relations of the bishops and the curés with the people, by regulating (Articles 1, 2, 3, of Title II) that both bishops and curés would be chosen by election, in the same forms as the deputies and the other officials, according to the decree of December 22, 1789.<sup>1</sup>

Two articles of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy were to be a source of great moral and physical suffering to the clergy. These were Articles 21 and 38 of Title II which referred to the oath.<sup>2</sup> To see its proper relationship, we must first examine the oath of February 4, 1790, that was taken by the members of the Assembly.

I swear to be faithful to the nation, to the law, and to the king, and with all my power to maintain the Constitution decreed by the National Assembly and accepted by the King.<sup>3</sup>

Article 21 and Article 38 of Title II of the Civil Constitution obliged bishops-elect and curés-elect, before entering upon their office, to take the oath prescribed by the decree of February 4. Three months later (November 27, 1790) the deputy, Voidel, had them extend the obligation of the oath to all the clergy of the realm, under pain of being deprived of their office, of losing their rights of citizens, and, in case of meddling in state functions, of

1 Duvergier, I, 244 - see results of this principle, *infra*. p.28

2 *Ibid.*, I, 245-246.

3 *Moniteur*, #37, samedi, February 6, 1790, III, 294 - remember, the Constitution was not yet complete, so this was extremely dangerous.

being persecuted as disturbers of the peace.<sup>1</sup>

This was, in fact, a schism! There was to be no consultation of Rome with the bishops or the bishops with Rome; the ordinary civil administration was the only authority for both church and state. Their actual force was realized when the pre-Revolutionary French hierarchy - 18 archbishops and 117 bishops - were suppressed and replaced by 83 diocesan conscriptions, corresponding to the 83 départements as legislated in Article I of Title I.<sup>2</sup>

In the second place:

The Catholic hierarchy is in confusion. The bishop named is prohibited from communication with the Pope to obtain approval; he can only write to him in testimony of the unity of faith and communion which he must maintain with him; in the same way, the bishop can no longer exact from new priests any other oath except that they make profession of the Roman, Catholic and Apostolic religion. He is forced to give canonical institution to the most notoriously scandalous subjects.<sup>3</sup>

And this case became frequent. The principle of nomination was election, and the electors who chose the bishops and the cures were, or could be, banished Catholics, Voltarians, Jacobins, Free-Masons, Jews, heretics or apostates. The priest was now nothing but a functionary; this is shown by the punishment of deprivation that he incurred if he was absent from his station 15 days without the authorization of the district or his département. That is why the conflicts

1 Moniteur, #332, dimanche, November 28, 1790, VI, 484;  
Piolin, I, 101-02.

2 Gaugain, p. 208.

3 Ibid., pp. 208-09.



between the curés and the bishops were not regulated by the Ordinary of Rome, but by the civil tribune.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the form of the decree that sought to "laicize" the Church according to the Rights of Man and the Citizen and the philosophies prevalent at the time.<sup>2</sup>

This Civil Constitution of the Clergy forced the Pope to take a definite verbal stand. Articles 21 and 38 of Title II did oblige bishops and curés to take an oath of loyalty to the Constitution - but, there was some doubt in the mind of the clergy whether this referred to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy or the national Constitution in progress. If the civil oath allied the juror with the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, then this was schism. This was the fact, but not all saw it. The bishops of the National Assembly were not completely lacking in courage and confidence. They published in October, 1790, a forceful Exposition des principes sur la Constitution du Clergé which was drawn up by de Boisgelin. This statement took a definite stand and pointed out four points of the Civil Constitution sharply opposed to Canon Law:

(1) The suppression of 51 episcopal Sees; (2) The election of bishops and curés by electoral colleges open to non-Catholics; (3) The granting to metropolitans the canonical institutions of bishops;

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1 For further discussion see, Picot, Michel Pierre, Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique pendant le dix-huitième siècle, (Paris: Librairie d'Adrien, n.d.), VI, 8-31

2 See Decree and instruction on the CCC, Jan. 21-26, 1791: Duvergier, II, 176-8.

(4) The suppression of the relations of obedience with the Pope.<sup>1</sup>

This was the Bishops' last attempt at mediation between the Holy See and the National Assembly. The Exposition was signed by all the bishops except four (Brienne of Sens, Talleyrand of Autun, Jarante of Orléans, and Savine of Viviers). The attempt was frustrated because the deputies in the National Assembly refused to make any alteration in the Civil Constitution.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the spring and early summer Pope Pius VI was abreast of the happenings of the Assembly. He chose to take a "watch and wait" attitude, perhaps for fear of only making the attitude of the Assembly more hostile and uncompromising. It has been recorded that the Supreme Pontiff did attempt to advise Louis XVI as to his manner of action, but multiple events prevented vigorous action. The Holy Father had written to Louis on July 10, 1790: "If you approve these decrees, you will lead your entire nation into error, you will plunge your Kingdom into schism and perhaps into a cruel war of religion."<sup>3</sup> These were truly prophetic words! But notice the date of the Brief. By the time it reached Paris, the decision had been taken. On August 24, Louis XVI informed the National Assembly that

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1 Pastor, XL, 161; James MacGaffrey, History of the Catholic Church, 1789-1908 (St. Louis, B. Herder, 1910), I, 17.

2 Ibid., XL, 162.

3 Gaugain, I, 207.

he had sanctioned the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.<sup>1</sup> Louis was soon again to be on the horns of dilemma. On November 27, 1790, the Assembly formed a further decree requiring the Clerical Oath to be taken. Now if he sanctioned this decree, he would be burdening his conscience with the persecution of the non-juring priests and would break with the Church; if he made use of his right of veto, which was still left to him, he would have to face open rebellion and his deposition. He was thus faced with open resistance or complete submission. On December 26 he "capitulated to the pressure put on him by the National Assembly."<sup>2</sup>

The decree requiring the Clerical Oath of November 27 states:

1. Bishops and former archbishops and curés maintained in office shall be required to take, if they have not already done so, the oath to which they are subject by Article 39 of the decree of 24 July last, (stipend of the clergy) and regulated by Articles 21 and 38 of that of the twelfth of the same month concerning the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Accordingly, by virtue of the latter decree, they shall swear to watch carefully over the faithful of the diocese or parish entrusted to them, and to be faithful to the nation, to the law, and to the King, and to maintain with all their power the Constitution decreed by the National Assembly and accepted by the King; to wit, those who are absent therefrom, but are in France, within a month; and those who are abroad, within two months; all dating from the publication of the present decree.<sup>3</sup>

On December 27, 1790, the first to take the oath was Grégoire, the parish priest of Ambermenil and representa-

1 Gaugain, I, 207; Piolin, I, 69.

2 Frederic Le Coq, Documents authentiques pour servir à l'histoire de la Constitution Civile du Clergé dans le département de la Mayenne. (Laval: Chailland, 1890), I, x.

3 Moniteur, #332, dimanche, November 28, 1790, VI, 484; Duvergier, II, 59.

tive of the clergy of Lorraine. <sup>1</sup> After the first allegiance, sixty-two clerics, including fifty-one cures followed suit. <sup>2</sup> On January 2, 1791, the oath was taken by two bishops, Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun, and Gobel, Bishop of Lydda in partibus, co-adjutor of the Bishop of Basle. Two days later the time limit for the oath taking "pure and simple" was to expire. <sup>3</sup>

The revolutionaries know that many of the clergy were not in favor of the oath, and to avoid an impasse, pressure was brought to bear. There were numerous pamphlets passed about, cries, and threats of death. The gallery was filled in the Assembly as the roll call began. Each ecclesiastic was to answer with the oath. The roll call began, but had to be suspended frequently because of the lack of cooperation. The President, addressing the Assembly, said: "For the last time, I invite the ecclésiastiques present to take the oath. <sup>4</sup> No one rose up. In short, out of forty-four bishops or archbishops, only two defected (Talleyrand and Gobel). Of the simple priests, two-thirds refused the oath. Thus, the Bishop de Bethisy of Uzes wrote the next day. "This day has honored religion, and we have retired, proud of our glorious poverty." <sup>6</sup>

1 Pastor, XL, 169.

2 Ibid.

3 Duvergier, II, 142.

4 Mourret, VII, 156.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.



Thus, an active schismatic Church was created, even though the National Assembly's hope of subjugating the whole of the clergy was frustrated by the majority's loyalty to the Church. Constitutional bishops and cures began to fill their new posts.<sup>1</sup> In regions where there were no constitutional ecclesiastics, they were imported from neighboring countries,<sup>2</sup> and in consequence, there was resistance. The loyalists refused to receive the sacraments from the constitutionals; and thus according to the Pope's words,<sup>3</sup> the whole country was soon split into two hostile camps, consisting of the adherents to the "State" priests who had been sworn in (assermentés) and the supporters of the non-jurors (insurmentés), namely the loyal Catholics who followed the lawful clergy.

News of the tragic French situation reached the Holy Father. The condition had been heightened by the decrees of January 26, 1791, which provided for the deprivation of their function and replacement of bishops and curés if they had not taken the oath;<sup>4</sup> and those of February 5, which interdicted all ecclesiastics who had not taken the oath from

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1 See decree of 27-30 January; Duvergier, II, 180.

2 Pastor, XL, 173-175.

3 See brief of July 10, 1790 - supra p. 29

4 Duvergier, II, 180-181; Piolin, I, 129.

preaching in any church whatsoever.<sup>1</sup> And lastly, the decree of April 5, which required the oath to be administered to all priests indiscriminately who were charged with the office of public instruction, to all professors, even laymen, as well as to the chaplains of hospitals and prisons.<sup>2</sup>

Yet on one hand, the Holy Father was consoled with the loyal action of the clergy of January 4, 1791, but the creation of a schismatic church forced him to a speedy condemnation of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. In two Briefs, March 10, 1791 and April 13, 1791, he formally condemned the Constitution.<sup>3</sup> The first, Quod aliquantum, was addressed to the deputy bishops of the Assembly. It stated that heresy served as the basis for the decrees of the National Assembly, for ecclesiastical authority does not depend on the authority of the princes, but on God. He pointed out the exaggerated thought, and said it again falsely manifested itself in the new mode of electing episcopal officers. This method was simply an embrasure of the errors of Luther and Calvin, not a return to the primitive church. He further stressed that the election of metropolitans and bishops, with no reference to the Holy Father, was against the rights of the Papacy. He likewise deplored the invasion

1 Duvergier, II, 196.

2 Ibid., II, 285.

3 Andreas Advocatus Barberi (coll.) Bullarium Romani Continuatio Summorum Pontificum Clementis XIII, Clementis XIV, VI, Pii, VII, Leonis XII et Pii VIII, (Rome, Typographia Reverendae Camerae Apostolicae, 1845) IX, 10-18; Piolin, I, 176-77; Barruel, 99-100.

of property rights; the extinction of chapters, whose principal occupation was the solemn celebration of the Divine Office; the general suppression of the religious orders so useful to the Church; the abolition of monastic vows, whose dispensation is reserved to the Holy See; and the problem of so many consecrated religious, now without cloister, of whom many desired to persevere in their eternal engagements.<sup>1</sup>

The second, the Papal Bull, Charitas, has been summarized: "Damnatio juramenti civilis praestiti ab ecclesiasticis in regno Galliarum, et reprobatio non-nullarum electionum, et consecrationum pseudo-episcoporum."<sup>2</sup>

Charity, which as the Apostle Paul teaches, is long suffering and benign, suffers and endures all things so long as any hope remains . . . in order to establish a barrier to the growing schism at the very first opportunity . . . we declare that all . . . who have taken the civil oath pure and simple as prescribed by the National Assembly, which oath is the poisoned fountainhead and source of all errors and pre-eminently a cause of mourning to the Catholic Church, shall be suspended from the tenure of any office whatsoever and liable to the charge of irregularity if they exercise such office, unless within forty days, dating from today, they have retracted said oath.

The elections of certain prelates were declared illegitimate, sacrilegious, and were and are absolutely null and void. We declare that consecrations of same were and are criminal . . . and we declare them suspended from all rank and of the episcopal office . . . Under penalty of suspension are all those, who wrongly elected and illicitly consecrated venture to perform any episcopal jurisdiction.

Moreover, in order to anticipate a sequence of greater evils . . . we decree and declare that all other elections to French churches were, are, and shall be void, illegitimate, sacrilegious and absolutely non-effective, and we rescind, cancel, and abrogate them now and forevermore.

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1 Picot, Mémoires, VI, 83-85.

2 Barberi, Bullarium, IX, 11.

Finally, we beseech you in the Master's name, dear sons, Catholics everywhere in France, and reminding you of the religion and faith of your fathers, we, moved in our heart of hearts, urge you not to abandon your religion . . . Be steadily on guard, lest you lend an ear to the insidious voices of the philosophy of this century which lead to death; and shun all invaders whether they be called archbishops, bishops, or parish priests . . . hearkening to your legitimate pastors who are still alive . . .

Finally cleave to this one statement from us: no one can be in the Church of Christ unless he is one with its Visible Head, and established in the Chair of Peter.

Dated at St. Peter's, Rome, April 13, 1791, in the seventeenth year of our pontificate.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Church had spoken. The Bull was distributed throughout France, but the consequences were serious for the future of the Gallican Church. As a result of the Papal decree, many of the jurors retracted their oaths. This development was so unwelcome to the National Assembly that on June 9, 1791, it promulgated a decree restricting the publication of Papal decrees.

The National Assembly, having heard its united Constitutional and Ecclesiastical Committees, considering that it is important for the national sovereignty and for the maintenance of public order within the kingdom to establish constitutionally the conservative forms of the ancient and salutary maxims by which the French nation always has avoided encroachments of the Court of Rome, without lacking in the respect due the head of the Catholic Church, decrees as follows:

1. No briefs, bulls, rescripts, constitutions, decrees, or dispatches of the Court of Rome, under any denomination whatsoever, may be recognized as such, received, published, printed, posted, or otherwise put into effect within the kingdom; but they shall be null and non-effective therein unless they have been presented to the legislative body, considered and verified by it, and unless their publication or execution has been authorized by a decree sanctioned by the King and promulgated in the forms established . . .

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<sup>1</sup> Barberi, Bullarium, IX, 11-18.



2. Bishops, curés, and all other public functionaries, either ecclesiastical or lay, who, in contravention of the preceding article, read, distribute, have read, distributed, printed, posted, or otherwise give publicity or execution to briefs . . . not authorized by a decree of the legislative body, sanctioned by the King, shall be prosecuted criminally as disturbers of public order, and punished with the penalty of civic degradation.<sup>1</sup>

This was not the only mark of reprisal. The Paris patriots made an effigy of Pius VI "holding in one hand the Brief against the Civil Constitution, in the other a dagger."<sup>2</sup> A band around the forehead bore the label "Fanaticism" and the other around the chest, "Civil War."<sup>3</sup>

The anti-Catholic spirit was now becoming more prevalent among the revolutionaries. The work of the National Constituent Assembly was almost at an end, for on September 3, 1791, the Constitution was declared complete. The Constitution represented the spirit of assiduous application and work of the deputies of the Assembly over a period of more than two years. No provision was made in the document for presentation to a referendum, only the King's acceptance was needed. This came on September 13, and the following day the King signed the document. Then there were a few days of last minute miscellanea and the convention closed September 30, 1791.

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1 Moniteur, #161, vendredi, June 10, 1791, VIII, 621; Duvergier, III, 10.

2 Barruel, p. 100.

3 Ibid., p. 101.



## CHAPTER II

THE ANTI-CLERICAL PROGRAM  
OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
(OCTOBER 1, 1791 - SEPTEMBER 20, 1792)

The new Assembly, the Legislative Assembly - as it came to be known, because it legislated under the Constitution of 1791 - held its first session on October 1, 1791. The situation in France was becoming more critical, not only in the field of religion, but in the political, social and economic fields as well. The situation called for legislators - political leaders of mature judgment, patriotism, and perhaps, most of all, experience - in order to implement the new Constitution effectively. But the Assembly had unwittingly prevented this type of leadership in its desire for freedom, equality, and liberty. The Assembly had passed the "self-denying" ordinance which prevented any of the National Assembly's deputies from serving in the new Legislative Assembly.

The new Assembly was characterized by Gaugain as: "half Jacobin, more advanced in opinion than the National Assembly, but it is much inferior in talent and morality."<sup>1</sup> The seven hundred and forty-five members were largely petty

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<sup>1</sup> Gaugain, I, 259.

bourgeois. In theory, most of them supported the Constitution which they were to inaugurate in France, yet, in practice, differences of opinion were soon to divide them into three groups. Some two hundred and fifty conservatives, supporters of the constitutional monarchy, were called Feuillants. This group was lacking in strong leaders, and therefore sought guidance from the outside, from the real leaders of the ex-Estates General and the National Constituent Assembly. At the other extreme, some hundred and fifty radicals constituted the "Left", a compact, ambitious group, supported by the Jacobin and Cordelier Clubs, inclined to distrust monarchy, to favor a greater degree of political democracy than existed, and to be highly critical of the work of their predecessors. Later, the Left split into two factions. The Brissotins were nominally led by Brissot, and dominated by such men as Carnot, Vergniaud, and Condorcet. Most of the leaders came from the Gironde and later, the entire group came to be known as the Girondins. The remainder of the Left were led by such men as Couthon, and dominated from the Clubs by Robespierre, Danton, and Marat. They were known under the title of "Jacobins" and represented radical, popular republicanism, and in general, the interests of Paris.

The first work of the Legislative Assembly was the consolidation and extension of the achievements of the National Constituent Assembly. Scarcely had the Assembly gathered when Couthon, coping with the religious problems, raised the question of the refractory priests (those who had refused to take the oath.)<sup>1</sup>

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1 Piolin, I, 297.

The leader of the Left continued: "We have come here to establish peace, and we will never reach it unless we take vigorous measures against the refractory priests."<sup>1</sup>

These words set the tenor of the first year's work. It would further subdue the Church, the non-juring clergy, and the emigres. Abbé Jager remarks, "Compared to the new men, the old members were angels."<sup>2</sup> The retractions of the juring clergy became increasingly numerous, and it seems that nothing contributed more to this than the spirit and attitude manifested in such invectives as that of Couthon.

According as the men of the Revolution, departing from vague idealism, from the dubious Christianity that had presided from the beginning, took a clearly anti-Catholic attitude, the Christianity that had been slumbering in many priestly souls of the ancient regime again recovered its strong vitality.<sup>3</sup>

The faithful, too, gathered around the non-jurors, and complaint was heard in the Assembly that the non-jurors were drawing large congregations, while the Constitutionals were avoided and even assaulted.

On October 9, the Assembly was presented a report by Genonne on this opposition to the Constitutionals, especially in the Vendée. So bitter was it, that it was feared that if the two churches were allowed to exist together it would come to a civil war.<sup>4</sup>

1 Piolin, I, 297.

2 Gaugain, p. 357.

3 Mourret, VII, 170-171.

4 Piolin, I, 297.

The National Assembly began its deliberations on the matter a few days following. The result of these turbulent discussions was the law of November 29, 1791, which Louis XVI had the courage to veto. (He had also vetoed the law ordering émigrés to return to France - November 9, 1791.)<sup>1</sup> Yet, in spite of the King's veto, the decree was put into effect in approximately half of the départements.<sup>2</sup>

The National Assembly, having heard the report of the civil commissioners dispatched into the département of the Vendée, the petitions of many citizens, and the report of the Committee on Civil and Criminal Legislation relative to the disturbances instigated in several départements of the kingdom, under pretext of religion, by the enemies of public welfare:

Considering that the social contract must bind, as it must protect equally, all members of the State; decrees as follows:

1. Within a week, dating from the publication of the present decree, all ecclesiastics, other than those who have complied with the law of 27 November last, shall be required to present themselves again before the municipality of the place of their domicile, there to take the civic oath in terms of Title II, Article 5 of the Constitution, and to sign the procès-verbal.

.....

4. No other ecclesiastics may henceforth, receive, claim, or obtain any pension or stipend from the public treasury, except by presenting proof of having taken the civic oath in conformity with Article 1 . . .

.....

6. Besides the forfeiture of all stipend and pension, ecclesiastics who have refused to take the civic oath, or who retract it after having taken it . . . shall be deemed suspect of revolt against the law and of sinister intent toward the Patrie, and, as such, more particularly subjected and recommended to the surveillance of all constituted authorities.

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1 Moniteur, #314, jeudi, November 10, 1791, XX, 332-333.

2 John Hall Stewart, A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution (New York, Macmillan, 1951), p. 275.



9. Every ecclesiastic convicted of inciting disobedience to the law and the constituted authorities shall be punished with two year's detention.

18. Since it is of the utmost importance that the people be enlightened with regard to the snares which are constantly being set for them in the matter of the so-called religious opinions, the National Assembly exhorts all worthy souls to renew their efforts and increase their teachings against fanaticism; it declares that it will regard as a public benefit the writings which are within the capacity of citizens of rural areas, and which are directed to it on this important matter; and, after a report to it thereon, it shall have such writings printed at State expense, and shall compensate the authors thereof.<sup>1</sup>

The term "civil oath"<sup>2</sup> was chosen, it seems, to give the impression that it was an oath of allegiance to the order of things that had been fixed by law for the public safety and public good, whereas it did include the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.<sup>3</sup>

This further implementation of the power of the Civil Constitution and the flagrant defiance of the Constitutional bishops and priests caused the Holy Father to speak again, March 19, 1792, in a brief, Novae hae litterae, addressed to the bishops, clergy and people of France; he added to the penalty of suspension already decreed by the brief of April 13, 1791, the penalty of excommunication if they did not repent within 120 days.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Duvergier, IV, 20-22.

2 See Article 1 of Decree of 29 November, 1791.

3 Pastor, XL, 193.

4 Picot, VI, 93-95.



On May 5, 1792, the Calvinist François Nantes reported to the National Assembly that the number of non-juring priests was between 15,000 and 20,000.<sup>1</sup> The coercive measures employed up to this time were inadequate. In order to restore domestic peace to the people, the refractory clerics must be interned. The Girondists and the Mountain wanted to be sure of their position, so they proposed deportation. The law of May 27, 1792, which was passed provided:

1-2. That all non-juring priests were to be deported who had not taken the oath under the law of 26 December, 1790, or the civic oath subsequent to 3 September, 1791, the day on which the French Constitution was declared complete, or those who have retracted either oath.

3. Whenever twenty active citizens of the same canton unite in requesting the deportation of a non-juring ecclesiastic, the departmental directory shall be required to pronounce deportation if the opinion of the district director is in conformity with the petition.

11. . . . ecclesiastics subject to deportation shall be enjoined by an order of the departmental directory to leave the district . . . within twenty-four hours, the department within three days, and the kingdom within a month.

16. Ecclesiastics against whom deportation has been pronounced (and) who remain in the kingdom after having declared their withdrawal, or who return after their departure, shall be condemned to the penalty of ten year's imprisonment.<sup>2</sup>

The King did veto this law (according to his suspensive veto power in the Constitution of 1791.), but it was ignored. "In that all-prevailing anarchy, the persecution of the loyal clergy could pursue its course unhindered."<sup>3</sup>

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1 Pastor, XL, 195.

2 Duvergier, IV, 177-178.

3 Pastor, XL, 196.

Perhaps these two decrees which the King vetoed, hastened his own downfall. Rumor of this veto reached the National Assembly, and on August 10, 1792, an insurrection resulted in the arrest of the King and his family. One week later, a decree was passed establishing a Special Criminal Court.<sup>1</sup>

Now the Jacobins and the Girondins could renew their attack on the Church more furiously than ever, and their actions could be legally implemented.

On the same day, the female orders, which had been spared until now, were condemned to the same fate as the other religious orders. They were ordered to vacate their institutions before October 1. A further decree of August 18, 1792, ordered the dissolution of all teaching and nursing congregations.<sup>2</sup> The work of persecution was crowned with a law of August 26, which decreed that all priests who had not yet taken the oath in accordance with the laws of November 27, 1790, and April 15, 1791, or who, after having sworn, had recanted and persisted in their state of non-juror, were to leave their départements within a week and the Patrie within two weeks. Those who would not obey would be taken to the penal colony of Guiana in South America, and if they returned to France, they would be imprisoned for ten years.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Moniteur, #232, dimanche, August 19, 1792, XIII, 444-445; Duvergier, IV, 317-318.

2 Pastor, XL, 196.

3 Moniteur, #241, mardi, August 28, 1792, XIII, 540; Duvergier, IV, 361-362.

This law could also be applied if any priest in the country stirred up trouble, or if a request for its application was made by the prescribed number of citizens.<sup>1</sup> Those who were too old or sick to be deported were to be interned together in one house.<sup>2</sup>

After the introduction of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, the fate of all who refused to take the oath of loyalty was definitely sealed by the deportation decree of August 26, 1792 - unless they very quickly left the country. Many clerics did leave.<sup>3</sup> Later, the priests who failed to take the oath of "liberty and equality" were banished and thus the figure was bound to change. Even those who took the oath were not sure of their fate, for if six citizens denounced them as suspects, there was danger of the most severe judgment and punishment. Most of the fugitives' exile lasted until the Napoleonic Concordat of 1801.

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1 See law of May 27, 1792.

2 Pastor, XL, 197.

3 Sicard, Clergé, III, 130 - arrives at the total number, 30-40,000 this way. England, 10,000; Spain, 6,000-8,000; Italy, 6,000; Switzerland, 5,000, and several thousand in Germany and Holland and some to America. As quoted in Pastor, XL, 271.

## CHAPTER III

## THE ANTI-CHRISTIAN

## PROGRAM OF THE CONVENTION

(SEPTEMBER 20, 1792 - JULY 28, 1794)

In one of the bloodiest months in history, the September (1792) massacres began; the French secured the victory of Valmy and the turn of the tide of battle; the National Convention was elected, and was entirely republican. This convention was in session from September 20, 1792 until October 26, 1795, although its history was broken into phases.<sup>1</sup> Among the Paris deputies were such men as Danton, Marat, Robespierre, Desmoulins, and the Duke of Orléans (Philip Égalite). The abolition of the monarchy was agreed to, but this measure obliged the Convention to decide the fate of the royal family. The newly elected deputies were divided into three hostile groups: the Gironde (Girondists), the Plain, and the Mountain. All the turbulence and passion of these three groups was to be turned on two forces - the Church and the monarchy.

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1 First phase - September 20, 1792-June 2, 1793; second phase - the reign of terror, June 3, 1793-July 28, 1794; last phase, the Thermidorian reaction, July 29, 1794-October 26, 1795. Quoted in Stewart, XVII-XIX.

The political work of the Convention can be summarized as follows: the proclamation of the Republic, September 22, 1792; the struggle between the Mountain and the Gironde; the trial and condemnation of the King; the first Coalition; the fall of the Gironde; the uprisings in the provinces; the war, and the pretext of Jacobin dictatorship; Carnot's organization "for victory", the organization of "the Terror"; the guillotine permanently established; the fall and death of Marat, Hebert, Danton, and Robespierre; the military triumphs of France; and finally, in October, 1795, the Assembly declared its mission ended, having prepared the way for the Directory, the Consulate and finally, the Empire.

The policy of the Convention remained unchanged on one point, the religious persecution. One of the first concerns of the Assembly was to assure the execution of the deportation decree against the non-juring priests; the last of its acts was the proclamation of general amnesty, from which the refractory ecclesiastics were expressly excepted.<sup>1</sup>

The policy of the Convention against the King began in the first session held in the M<sup>e</sup>nage, September 20, 1792. Toward the close of the first session, Callot moved, and Gr<sup>e</sup>goire seconded, the abolition of the monarchy.<sup>2</sup> This was

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1 Stewart, 643.

2 Gaugain, 437.



actually putting the legal touches to what was already the fact since August 10, 1792. From this time on, there was real friction in the Convention - the Girondins and the Jacobins were beginning their struggle for power. Yet, although the monarchy had been disposed of as an institution, the actual figure-heads were still captives. In the royal apartments secret incriminating evidence was found, and on December 6, 1792, a commission was appointed to draft an indictment, which was delivered to the Convention five days later, December 11. This Convention, heir of the National Constituent Assembly and the Legislative Assembly declared: "Louis, the French people accuse you of having committed a multitude of crimes in order to establish your tyranny by destroying its liberty."<sup>1</sup> The indictment ranged from the charge of attacking the sovereignty of the people by suspending the assembly and driving them from the place of meeting (June 20, 1789); doubling the Royal Guard and the calling of the Flanders Regiment; allowing the national cockade to be trampled in the royal presence; taking oaths not kept (July 14); fleeing; keeping silence after the Pillnitz agreement between Leopold of Austria and Frederick William of Brandenburg, therefore showing tacit acceptance and agreement; intriguing with all the governments of Europe and many specific individuals,<sup>2</sup> and according to Article 25:

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1 Moniteur, December 13, 1792, XIV, 720; Duvergier, V, 74.

2 Ibid., December 13, 1792, XIV, 720-723; Ibid., V, 74-76.

"On November 29 (1791) the Legislative Body issued a decree against rebellious priests; you suspended the execution thereof."<sup>1</sup>

These were the main grievances. On January 14, 1793, three questions were submitted to the Convention. The strong debates were over, and the three questions each deputy "would respond to by a written vote, justified and signed."<sup>2</sup> The King's fate was now in the hands of these few. What would be the outcome?

To the first, "Is Louis Capet guilty of conspiracy against public liberty and of attacks upon the general security of the State?", the deputies present agreed almost unanimously. On January 15 the second question, "Will the judgment of the Convention against Louis be submitted for popular ratification?" was vetoed by substantial majority. There still remained the third question, "What penalty will be inflicted?" This was voted in the session of 16-17 January, a dramatic session lasting twenty-four hours, and during which the deputies cast their votes, as before, individually and by word of mouth. The final result was a majority in favor of the death penalty.<sup>3</sup>

The King of France met his death on January 21, 1793, after hearing Mass, and on January 23 the Proclamation of the Convention was given to the French people.

Citizens, the tyrant is no more! For a long time the cries of the victims, whom war and domestic dissensions have spread over France and Europe, loudly protest his existence. He has paid his penalty, and only acclamations for the Republic

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1 Moniteur, December 13, 1792, XIV, 723; Duvergier, V, 76.

2 Gaugain, p. 437.

3 Ibid.

and for liberty have been heard from the people.<sup>1</sup>

After August 10, 1792, when the monarchy was overthrown, a new decree was passed which prescribed the taking of the patriotic oath in these terms: "I swear to maintain with all my strength liberty and equality, or to die in their defense."<sup>2</sup> This oath was called the "Little Oath" as it makes no reference to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Although this fact is true, it seems that the cleavage was too strong and permanent for any universal juring, for the words, "liberty and equality" were all important.

If we are to interpret the words "Liberty and equality" by the acts of those who apply them under the aegis of the government, these words signify only a revolutionary liberty and equality, destructive of the legitimate government and the Catholic religion.<sup>3</sup>

The Pope, faithful to his prudent and patient policy, made no pronouncement. But on the fourteenth, the Assembly decreed that the oath be taken by all Frenchmen receiving a salary or pension of the State, and on the fifteenth, a new decree extended this obligation to all public functionaries within eight days.<sup>4</sup>

The death of the King was a pretext to the European coalition for a fierce war against France; and the foreign

1 Moniteur, January 29, 1793, XV, 295.

2 Duvergier, IV, 291; Pastor, XL, 250; Pisani, I, 270; Piolin, II, 89-90.

3 Mourret, VII, 194.

4 Duvergier IV, 305-306.

war which would become the occasion of an unprecedented revival of persecution by the Convention.<sup>1</sup> The first act of the dictatorship was the establishment of the Revolutionary Tribunal; this was part of the "Emergency Decrees". The Revolutionary Tribunal was proposed by Danton as a "public safety measure."<sup>2</sup>

1. A Special Criminal Court shall be established at Paris to take cognizance of all counter-revolutionary activities, all attacks upon liberty, equality, unity, the indivisibility of the Republic, the internal and external security of the State, and all plots on behalf of the re-establishment of monarchy or of any other authority hostile to liberty, equality, and the sovereignty of the people, whether the accused be civil or military functionaries or ordinary citizens.  
 . . . the decisions of this Court would be final, without any appeal to the Court of Cassation.<sup>3</sup>

A few days later the Convention extended the organization of the dictatorship. On March 21, 1793, it decreed a revolutionary committee in each commune, so that the magistrates of the people might have "means of watching the evil and checking the progress thereof."<sup>4</sup> On April 6, 1793 the Committee of Public Safety was formed; this was an executive committee designed to provide more effective action and cooperation between the executive and legislative branches.

2. This committee (of nine) shall deliberate in secret; it shall be responsible for supervising and accelerating the work of administration entrusted to the provisional Executive Council, the decrees of which it may even suspend when it be-

1 Gaugain, p. 442.

2 Stewart, p. 409.

3 Moniteur, #71, mardi, March 12, 1793, XV, 676; Duvergier, V, 190-191.

4 Ibid., #82, samedi, March 23, 1793, XV, 764; Ibid., V, 206-07.



lieves them contrary to the national interest, upon condition that it inform the convention thereof without delay.<sup>1</sup>

The enemies of "liberty and equality" were most frequently refractory priests. On March 18, 1793, the Convention decided that "any citizen who knows of a priest or emigre refractory to the law of deportation, is authorized to arrest him";<sup>2</sup> and that the priest or emigre found guilty shall be put to death within twenty-four hours.<sup>3</sup> According to the decree, the:

Emigres are: First, every French citizen, of either sex, who, having left the territory of the Republic since July 1, 1789, had not given proof of his return to France within the time limits established by the decree of 30 March-8 April, 1792.<sup>4</sup> The said decree shall continue to be executed in so far as it concerns the pecuniary penalties pronounced against those who have returned within the time limit prescribed.<sup>5</sup>

The penalties for emigration as defined in the above were:

1. The emigres are banished in perpetuity from French territory; they are civilly dead; their property is acquired by the Republic.
2. Infraction of the banishment pronounced in Article 1 shall be punished with death.<sup>6</sup>

1 Moniteur, #99, April 9, 1793, XVI, 76; Duvergier, V, 240.

2 Article 82. Duvergier V, p. 226.

3 Article 79. Ibid.

4 Decree concerning the property of emigres. Duvergier IV, 93-95. Emigres who returned to France after February 9, 1792, or who returned after the promulgation of this decree of 30 March-April 8, 1792, would be reinstated in their property, provided they paid their regular share of the war indemnity.

5 Duvergier, V, p. 219.

6 Ibid., V, p. 218 (section 1.).



A decree of April 21-23, 1793, extended the obligation of the oath and the penalties attached to refusal to take it, "to all ecclesiastics without exception, regulars, seculars, and lay brothers."<sup>1</sup>

The decree of October 21, 1793, (30 Vendemiaire) implemented more fully these laws. It punished with death not only the emigre priests who should set foot on French soil and those who should not leave the country within 10 days, but also every non-juring priest found having arms. With a reward of 100 livres (Article 18), every citizen was invited to denounce, arrest, or have arrested any priest subject to deportation.<sup>2</sup>

Now throughout France they began to arrest priests en masse. "Four hundred priests were held in the Cordelier Convent in Laval under the penalty of deportation for their attachment to the faith."<sup>3</sup> But the persons threatened were no longer only the clergy, but all their helpers, all the faithful, all persons under any suspicion of loyalty. The Convention made this latter fit almost any living being, by their decree of September 17, 1793 - the Law of Suspects. This stated:

1. Immediately after the publication of the present decree, all suspected persons within the territory of the Republic and still at liberty shall be placed in custody.

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1 Duvergier, V, 256; Gaugain, p. 458; A. Aulard, The French Revolution: A Political History (New York; Scribner, 1910) III, 155.

2 Moniteur, #32, mercredi, October 23, 1793, XVIII, 184-185; Duvergier, VI, 241-242.

3 Piolin II, 35.

2. The following are deemed suspected persons: First, those who, by their conduct, associations, talk, or writings have shown themselves partisans of tyranny or federalism and enemies of liberty; Second, those who are unable to justify, in the manner prescribed by the decree of March 21 last, their means of existence and the performance of their civic duties; Third, those to whom certificates of patriotism have been refused; Fourth, public functionaries suspended or dismissed from their positions by the National Convention or by its commissioners, and not reinstated, especially those who have been or are to be dismissed by virtue of the decree of 14 August last; Fifth, those former nobles, husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, sons, or daughters, brothers or sisters, and agents of the emigres, who have not steadily manifested their devotion to the Revolution; Sixth, those who have emigrated during the interval between 1 July, 1789 and the publication of the decree of 30 March-8 April, 1792, even though they may have returned to France within the period established by the said decree or prior to.<sup>1</sup>

The decree of October 21 applied the penalties pronounced against the non-juring priests to the "Public school teachers, lay brothers, and laymen."<sup>2</sup> and the decrees declared liable to deportation any citizen guilty of harboring a refractory priest (Article 19).<sup>2</sup> The law of Prairial of the Year II (June 10, 1794), in the organization of the revolutionary tribunal, seemed to express the last word of arbitrary procedure and ferocity. Article 4 says: "The revolutionary tribunal is instituted to punish the enemies of the people."<sup>3</sup> Article 6 says the enemies of the people are:

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1 Moniteur, September 19, 1793, XVII, 680-681.

2 Ibid., le 2 du 2 mois de l'an 2 de la République Française, 2 Brumaire, October 23, 1793, XVIII, 185. (Article 10).

3 Ibid., 24 Prairial, Year II, June 12, 1794, XX, 696-697; Duvergier, VII, 190-192.

those who have instigated the re-establishment of monarchy, or have sought to disparage or dissolve the National Convention and the revolutionary and republican government of which it is the center;

Those who have betrayed the Republic in the command of places and armies, or in any other military function, carried on correspondence with the enemies of the Republic, labored to disrupt the provisioning or the service of the armies;

Those who have sought to impede the provisioning of Paris . . .

Those who have supported the designs of the enemies of France, either by countenancing the sheltering and the impunity of conspirators and aristocracy, by persecuting and calumniating patriotism, by corrupting the mandataries of the people, or by abusing the principles of the Revolution or the laws or measures of the government by false and perfidious applications;

Those who have sought to inspire discouragement, in order to favor the enterprises of the tyrants leagued against the Republic.

Those who have disseminated false news in order to divide or disturb the people;

Those who have sought to mislead opinion and to prevent the instruction of the people, to deprave morals, and to corrupt the public conscience, to impair the energy and the purity of revolutionary and republican principles, or to impede the progress thereof, either by counter-revolutionary or insidious writings, or by any other machination;

Those, who charged with public office take advantage of it in order to serve the enemies of the Revolution, to harass patriots, or to oppress the people;

Finally, all who are designated in previous laws relative to the punishment of conspirators and counter-revolutionaries, and who, by whatever means or by whatever appearances they assume, have made an attempt against the liberty, unity, and security of the Republic, or labored to prevent the strengthening thereof.<sup>1</sup>

Article 7 states that the "penalty provided for all offenses under the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Tribunal is death."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Moniteur, 24 Prairial, Year II (June 12, 1794) XX, 696-697. Duvergier, VII, 190-192.

<sup>2</sup> Duvergier, VII, 191.

The last terroristic article (Number 13) declares "if material or moral proofs exist, witnesses' testimony will not be required."<sup>1</sup>

Nothing had been spared in the war to enforce the new legislation. The French hierarchy had been rent in two, priests by the thousands driven out, churches and property had been turned over to secular use. The Convention even proclaimed a new era dating from September 22, 1792, the date of the proclamation of the Republic.<sup>2</sup> But no definite plan for a revised calendar was proposed. It was not until autumn of 1793 that definite steps were taken. The French era was proclaimed October 5, 1793, dating "from the establishment of the Republic on 22 September, 1792 . . ."<sup>3</sup> On October 24, 1793, it was further established that the twelve months of the year were made exactly equal; each was divided into three decades, of ten days each, the last day of each decade being dedicated to rest. Thus the Sunday disappeared. In the place of the feast days of the saints, names of flowers, plants, animals, and farm implements were substituted. Not only was Christianity rejected, but the worship of the goddess of reason proclaimed. Later, this was officially decreed in the worship of the Supreme Being or Deism.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Duvergier, VII, 192.

2 Ibid., V, 2.

3 Ibid., VI, 208.

4 Moniteur, #229, nonidi, 19 floreal, (Thursday, May 8, 1794), XX, 411.



The revolutionization of the calendar was decreed in the complete form on November 24, 1793<sup>1</sup> and the program lasted until January 1, 1806. Its ultimate failure may be partially attributed to its anti-religious character, partly because it reduced the number of days of rest each month (three instead of four), and no doubt, chiefly, because of the difficulty of the people in understanding it and their reluctance to learn something new and varied. This was the policy of de-Christianization, the cult of reason was a substitute for Christianity.

Thus from the numerous laws passed by the Convention we see that jurors and non-jurors alike were entwined in the legal mesh. The law of August 26, 1792 had decreed deportation against all non-jurors who were the servants of the state.<sup>2</sup> The decree of March 18, 1793, stipulated that, if they re-entered France they would be liable to the death sentence.<sup>3</sup> But despite these new regulations, some priests continued to remain in concealment, and so the law of the 30 Vendemiaire of the Year II (October 21, 1793) constrained them to appear before the local authorities within ten days, to be transferred to the Guianas. Once this time was passed, they were to be executed.<sup>4</sup> Any jurors who took the "Little Oath" were authorized to maintain

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1 Duvergier, VI, 294-301.

2 de la Gorce, III, 269.

3 Moniteur, #80, jeudi, March 21, 1793, XV, 751.

4 Duvergier, VI, 241-242; de la Gorce, III, 269.



their domicile, but condemned to exile if denounced; those who refused to take the oath were deported immediately.

Soon, the jurors, too, were exposed to danger. The law of 30 Vendemiaire of the Year II specified that they could be deported if denounced by six citizens.<sup>1</sup> But the law of 9 Nivôse of the Year II (December 29, 1793) enjoined the Liberty-Equality oath on nuns under pain of being treat as suspects.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the law of 22 Germinal of the Year III (April 11, 1794) condemned to death any man, woman, or girl who concealed a priest in his home.<sup>3</sup> But the accusation of the crime of religion could be brought against anyone since the famous Law of Suspects. This law regarded as guilty anyone who would not manifest his devotion and attachment to the revolution.<sup>4</sup>

The various departmental representatives of the government saw to it that these laws were enforced in all their rigor. These officials had at their service revolutionary tribunals and commissions which sentenced persons arraigned before them after little or no trial. The victims were divided into three classes; the recluses, the deported, and those condemned to death. The recluses were aged or infirm priests, who had been herded together in the départements.

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1 de la Gorce, III, 370.

2 Duvergier, VI, 361; de la Gorce, III, 370.

3 de la Gorce, III, 370.

4 Duvergier, VII, 138.

They were subjected to the worst kind of privations and sometimes constrained to change prisons, enduring the greatest hardships, because of which many died.

## CHAPTER IV

## MARTYRS OF LAVAL, FRANCE

At no time was the exercise of the Catholic Religion interrupted throughout all of France, This is a fact of great historical importance, as it proves that it was materially impossible to suppress the Catholic religion in France no matter how much legislation battered the foundations.<sup>1</sup> The "Eldest daughter of the Church" clung to her Catholic dogmas even though she may have been disappointed in some of her juring priests. The faithful clung tenaciously to the faith in the region of Laval and the Generality of Tours.<sup>2</sup> Most of the population was Catholic and they remained so. Morin de la Beauluère gives the reason:

A numerous clergy leading irreproachable lives preserved our region from the spirit of error, which made rapid progress in France. In spite of the example of the lords who might have embraced the Reformation and sometimes a large portion of the nobles, who, following the lords, gave in to the prevalent heresy, the inhabitants of Laval were always faithful to the religion of their fathers. They may congratulate themselves on keeping their pristine faith.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Aulard, III, 181.

2 Laval was the chief city in the département of Mayenne, of the province of Maine, and grouped together with the Generality of Tours for the writing of the cahiers in 1789.

3 Morin de la Beauluère, Annales de la Doyen - as quoted in Emile Gesbron, Les Martyrs de Laval (Rome: Guanelle, 1955) pp. 7-8.

We see that Laval and the Bas-Maine during the two centuries that followed the Edict of Nantes enjoyed "a Christian life of such intensity that one can scarcely imagine that such union could reign between all members of society, rich and poor alike."<sup>1</sup> The two parishes in Laval, Trinity and Saint Vénérand, vied with each other in praiseworthy emulation to perform corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and to practice Catholicism in all its possible ceremonies. The Feast of Corpus Christi provided the Lavallois with the opportunity to manifest their love and devotion towards the Blessed Sacrament. The preparation and the decoration of streets over which the procession would pass were so elaborate that the faithful could manifest legitimate pride.<sup>2</sup>

Besides the two great parish churches, Saint Vénérand and Trinity, there were two collegiate churches, Saint Tugal and Saint Michel. To the latter, one of the Blessed (François Duchesne) was attached. It is interesting to note that none of the Canons of Saint Michel ever took the schismatic oath.<sup>3</sup> There were also numerous communities of religious to attest to the strong Catholicism of the region: The Priory of Saint Martin, the Priory of Sainte Catherine, the Convent of the Cordeliers, the Dominican Convent, and a Convent of the Clares, known under the name of Patience.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Emile Cesbron, Les Martyrs de Laval (Rome, Tipografia Don Luigi Guanella, 1955), p. 8.

2 Ibid., p. 12.

3 Ibid., p. 13.

4 This was the last prison of the 14 priest-martyrs.

Besides these, there were a Capuchin monastery, an Ursuline convent and a house of the Benedictines.<sup>1</sup> These convents and monasteries attest to the spirit and fervor of the locale.

Christ was seen in the poor also, and accordingly, Laval provided excellent hospitals and homes for the aged. This latter work was such a success that King Louis XIV "having been informed of it, declared by a lettres-patentes of August 1682, that he was 'the preserver and protector' of the General Hospital of Charity of Saint Louis de Laval."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, he wished that this inscription be engraved on the main entrance door. The Sisters of Charity had the maintenance of this hospital. The young were educated by the three parish schools of the Trinity, and an orphanage called "La Petite Providence." Saint Vénérand, likewise, had its schools. However, these schools disappeared during the Revolution when the oath of "Liberty and Equality" was enjoined on the lay teachers, both men and women.<sup>3</sup>

The Eighteenth Century marked, both in the greater part of France and the Christian world, a noticeable decline in faith and morals. This was the era during which Jean Jacques Rousseau, by his sophisms, and Voltaire, by his sarcasms, endeavored, and not without success, to de-Christian-

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1 Frederic Le Coq, Documents Authentiques pour servir à l'histoire de la Constitution Civile du Clergé dans le Département de la Mayenne (Laval: Chailland, 1890), I, 3-16.

2 Cesbron, p. 19.

3 Ibid., p. 20.



ize the upper classes of French society, especially the intellectuals. The peasants and the artisans of Laval were too attached to the true faith to succumb to the impious propaganda; and the bourgeoisie were only slightly affected. However, the new ideas crept through the literary circles and the clubs, but in a group so confined that the harm was only superficial.<sup>1</sup> Even Free-Masonry, which was established in Laval, took on an innocuous aspect. The Lodge of Laval, l'Union, in its records lists the name of Jean Marie Gallot for a two year period, 1787-1788.<sup>2</sup> Père Gallot is one of the priest-martyrs of January 21, 1794. Yet the document also attests to the respect that was shown to the Church and the clergy. This perhaps, answers the doubt of how the Lavallois looked on the organization of Free-Masons: "It was, in their eyes, an inoffensive organization, concerned solely with social progress, scientific progress and beneficence."<sup>3</sup>

Much more to be feared was the doctrine of Jansenism that was spreading throughout France. In a region so given to God, the sometimes scrupulous Christians would look to this heresy rather than to the heresy of the Deists or other "enlightened" religious ideas. In the defense of their religion against the doctrines of Rousseau and Voltaire, we

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1 Cesbron, p. 24.

2 Ibid., p. 25.

3 Ibid.

see that several canons of Saint Tugal and Saint Michel were contaminated with the errors of the Jansenists. One of these was René Louis Ambroise, another one of the future martyrs.<sup>1</sup>

Although Laval and Mayenne did see some heretical infiltrations, they were not sufficient to shake the respect for the Holy See and the ministry of the Church. Thus, neither the philosophes, nor the Free-Masons, nor the Jansenists seemed to seriously modify the morals and religion of the Bas-Maine. On the eve of the Revolution, they remained a region of believers as Isidore Boullier states:

Laval, then, actually formed a species of a little republic, ruled by patriarchal simplicity, by deep principles of religion and a profound respect for all former usages.<sup>2</sup>

The cahiers also bore witness to the profound religious spirit of the country. They spoke with respect of religion, which was the "unique base of happiness and of morality."<sup>3</sup> They also gave witness to the deep attachment to the Christian tradition: "every change in religion ought infallibly to bring a change in our own rule, if necessary."<sup>4</sup>

In the beginning, the Revolution did not excite the same enthusiasm in Laval that it did in other places.

1 Cesbron, p. 25.

2 Isidore Boullier, Mémoires Ecclésiastiques concernant La Ville de Laval et ses environs, diocèse du Mans, pendant La Révolution, 1789-1802 (Laval: Genesley-Portier, 1842), p. 3.

3 Gaugain, p. 99.

4 Ibid.

In the early years they gave it little sympathy. They held to their morals and the level of society that they deemed worthy to retain. The reason was, that in Laval there were "few nobles, but many old bourgeoisie families."<sup>1</sup> These bourgeois were highly esteemed, for they carried on a profitable commerce, occupied the Bar, engaged in public works, and in the office of magistrates. This type of aristocracy was not oppressive to the inferior classes, and the heritage of their religion brought very close unity between all classes of society.<sup>2</sup>

Yet when the National Assembly decreed a new law, it was followed in Laval and the département, but perhaps, without the hatred and jealousy that was manifested in other départements. Accordingly, on June 28, 1790, the electors gathered in Laval in order to draw up the new territorial boundaries of Mayenne decreed by the law of February 23, 1790.<sup>3</sup> The sessions were held in the church of the Cordeliers and lasted until July 7. The procès-verbal, which was kept, proves that all passed with both "propriety and dignity."<sup>4</sup>

The decree of November 2, 1789, which placed the ecclesiastical goods at the disposition of the nation; the law of February 13, 1790, which prohibited the taking of religious vows by both men and women; and the provision for the "secularization" of the religious who wished to return

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1 Boullier, p. 2.

2 Supra p. 60.

3 Boullier, p. 6.

4 Gaugain, p. 171.

to civil life - all these provisions were executed according to law. The municipalities took the lead and the directors of the districts followed. After the law of November 2, 1789, the "nationalized goods" were placed on sale. But the first sale of church goods was accompanied with a canon shot!<sup>1</sup>

However, the real canon shot was heard in July of 1790 when the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was decreed. Even members of the Assembly saw its far reaching implications and disavowed it. Boissy d'Anglas did so thus: "The Assembly has committed an irreparable fault in having established the schism."<sup>2</sup> Since the time of the appearance of the Constitution, all the ecclesiastics of Laval and the surrounding territory strongly protested against the law which overturned the discipline of the Church. "In the beginning, those who submitted to it were later not able to believe. They soon spoke contrary to it."<sup>3</sup> The first measure taken in execution of the law was one which the directors of the département rendered on November 13, 1790. The decree stated:

. . . it would be forbidden to the canons of all the colleges to continue the canonical services in their churches; for this purpose the administrators of the districts would place seals on objects used for divine worship in the said churches.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Boullier, p. 14.

2 Jacques d'Ars, Les Martyrs de Laval sous La Terreur (Paris: Œuvre Populaire d'Education et de Rénovation, 1945) p. 14.

3 Boullier, p. 17.

4 Ibid.



Consequently on November 23, some members of the district went to the Chapters of Saint Tugal and Saint Michel and showed the departmental decree to the Canons, "and enjoined them to cease the Office in the Chapters."<sup>1</sup>

Soon after, Laval was the scene of another historic development of the Civil Constitution. The city in la Mayenne was chosen as the site of the new episcopal See. So according to the Constitution, the electors of the département were called on Sunday, December 12, 1790, to proceed with the nominations.<sup>2</sup> The site they chose was Trinity Church in Laval, where the elections would be held, after the High Mass, at which all the electors would assist. The clergy and the loyal faithful were very anxious, for although the Holy See had not officially condemned the Constitution and its policies, this was foreseen in the near future.

On the day appointed, the electors gathered in the Trinity; "their number was placed at 425."<sup>3</sup> The electors chose M. Desvaupons, the "grand vicaire de Dol."<sup>4</sup>

During the election, the electors sent Père Turpin du Cormier, pastor of the Trinity, a deputation, that he should sing a High Mass after the elections were completed. This was a trap, for it would mean that he would be taking part in the operations of the Assembly. The respected pastor answered that the law did not oblige him to say the Mass and he

1 Boullier, p. 17.

2 Piolin, I, 92.

3 Boullier, p. 18.

4 Ibid., p. 19.



did not have the leisure to do so. This verbal response excited the bad humor of the assembled electors, and they demanded that a response be made in writing. It was given to them and it contained the same answer that he had given viva voce. They had to be contented with this.<sup>1</sup>

At first, Père Desvaupons did not accept the nomination, but finally on Thursday, August 16, the electors returned to the Trinity and on that day a Solemn High Mass was sung, at which the Bishop-elect was proclaimed the Bishop of the Department of Laval, although he had still not officially accepted.

However, the religious affairs were taking a more furious course. The Articles in Title II of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy (Articles 21 and 28) decreed that the Bishops and cures must take the oath before assuming their priestly functions. Therefore, in order to include all the ecclesiastics, there was decreed a new law of November 27, 1790, that prescribed the oath to be taken in one month's time. The Mayenne administrators ordered that this law be obeyed. This was in the month of January, 1791. A few ecclesiastics did take the oath, but most of them added a restrictive phrase . . . "in the temporal sphere," . . . or . . . "in all that is not contrary to the Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic religion, in which I wish to live and die."<sup>2</sup> The oath was to be taken on Sunday at High Mass, and each was to present his document of attestation to the municipal

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1 Boullier, pp. 20-21.

2 Ibid., p. 24.

authorities as soon as the law had been fulfilled. At the time of expiration of the decree,

. . . there were not in the whole district of Laval, ten priests who ended by submitting to it. They sometimes hesitated, but they did not take the oath. We must notice that they (State officials) only asked it officially of the public officers enumerated in the law. It was only later that they enjoined it on other priests and religious.<sup>1</sup>

February 22, the Holy Father addressed a Brief in which he refused to accept the nominated bishop, M. Desvaupons. This Brief, Omnes Litterarum tuarum partes became very important to the clergy of all France, for it gave the opinion of the Successor of Christ on these perilous problems. Pius VI praised M. Desvaupons for not accepting the nomination, and for persisting in his refusal, even after he was so declared by the electors. He did not condemn outright the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, but his sentiments became known to both the faithful and the clergy.<sup>2</sup> The conduct of M. Desvaupons was public "and his conduct became a new title of condemnation against that law which threw the Church into schism."<sup>3</sup>

The Patriots, bitterly disappointed and full of hatred at their defeat, determined that they would meet with better success on the second attempt. In the department there was not another able ecclesiastic who would accept the nomination. The directors were forced to turn their election to

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1 Boullier, p. 25.

2 Ibid., pp. 26-28.

3 Ibid., p. 28.

a strange priest outside the department. This was a direct violation of Article 7 of Title II of the Civil Constitution, for it provided that:

To be eligible for a bishopric, one must have performed for at least fifteen years the duties of ecclesiastical ministry in the diocese, in the capacity of cure, officiating minister, or vicar,<sup>1</sup> or as superior, or directing vicar of the seminary.

Their selection fell on the "dogmatic President of the College de la Flèche,"<sup>2</sup> Gabriel Noel Luce Villar, born in Toulouse, on December 13, 1745. It is not exactly known why Villar was chosen; after all, he was quite unknown. Boullier conjectures that he was recommended by some of the old students of the College de la Flèche, who were then quite numerous in Laval.<sup>3</sup> Again in the Church of the Trinity on Sunday, March 20, there was only one ballot taken. There were 289 voters, and Villar received 159.<sup>4</sup> The procès-verbal required 130 votes for the election.<sup>5</sup> On the twenty-first of the month, Villar accepted the nomination, and la Mayenne had a Constitutional Bishop. He was consecrated in Paris the twenty-second of May and returned to Laval on the thirtieth of May, 1791.

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1 Duvergier, I, 245. Note: this term was reduced to 5 years - January 7, 1791.

2 Boullier, p. 29.

3 Ibid., p. 30.

4 Ibid., p. 32.

5 Ibid.

Many non-juring priests found themselves without parish or employment. In their place, other cures were named by district electors. In Laval, two parishes were closed. The cathedral needed a pastor other than the Constitutional Bishop; the rural parishes needed forty-eight curés, so all-told, forty-nine new priests were needed. Five native Lavallois had taken the oath, thus reducing the number to forty-four.<sup>1</sup> Between July 24, 1791 and February 17, 1793, the electors assembled eight times in order to make the nominations. One of the most important pastorates vacant was that of Saint Vénérand. Of twenty nominees, only fourteen accepted, and only after several refusals. The pastorate of Saint Vénérand was filled by Charles François d'Orlodot, born September 19, 1756, at Chalade, in the diocese of Verdun of a noble family.<sup>2</sup> After ordination and a few years as acting cure, his wealth and good breeding made him seek more worldly positions. At the beginning of the Revolution, he was Mayor of Authon, a position not uniquely incompatible with the "enlightened clerical" conscience.

These electors met for the last time on February 17, 1793, and each elector according to Articles 29 and 32 of Title II of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy

. . . before depositing his ballot in the ballot box, shall take oath to vote only for that person whom he has chosen in his soul and conscience as the most worthy, without having been influenced therein by gifts, promises, solicitations, or

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1 Gaugain, p. 222.

2 Cesbron, p. 81.



threats. Each oath shall be taken for the election of bishops as well as for that of the curés. In order to be eligible to a living, it shall be necessary to have performed the duties of vicar (assistant) for at least five years in a parish, or in a hospital or other house of charity of the diocese.<sup>1</sup>

During their eight sessions, the electors made eighty-three nominations, but as several curés had been simultaneously elected for two parishes, the number actually chosen was seventy-four.<sup>2</sup>

Persecution against the loyal Catholic clergy was now inevitable. In the beginning, banishment from their pastoral duties or deportation from the country were the punitive measures. Bloody executions were not yet in season! The curés expelled from Laval retired to neighboring villages and continued to carry on religious services, and on the whole, they remained faithful. Soon the patriots closed the hospital doors to the non-jurors, and the sacraments had to be administered in private homes. However, priests were dispensed from administering the sacraments in cassock, surplice and stole and other distinguishing priestly marks. This permission, dated June 18, 1791, came from the Bishop of Mans.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the loyal priests did not discontinue the administration of the sacraments or the saying of Mass - it was merely more private.

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1 Duvergier, I, 245-246.

2 Boullier, p. 67.

3 Ibid., p. 75.



It was not only Mayenne that became a source of trouble in the execution of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. The calamity extended throughout France. In early 1792 journals revealed that in different parts of France very vigorous measures were taken in the program against the non-jurors. In January, 1792, the départements of Maine-et-Loire (Episcopal See - Angers) and Loire-Inférieure (Episcopal See - Nantes) and several other départements, enjoined the non-jurors to present themselves within 24 hours to declare their presence and their domicile. A law of March 23, 1792 decreed very close supervision of the non-jurors, in fact, internment!<sup>1</sup> It is said that this measure was undertaken at the particular time (Friday, the fourth week of Lent) to prevent the priests from providing the faithful with the opportunity to make their Easter Duty.<sup>2</sup>

All the measures taken against the non-jurors did not lessen their constancy, and far from estranging them from the people, it only endeared them. All the faithful had respect for those "suffering persecution for justice' sake." More stringent measures were taken by the Patriots, and soon the deportation of priests was necessary as a "measure to ensure the triumph of liberty."<sup>3</sup> "Joseph Fouché himself came to Laval on March 25, 1793 to inaugurate the Terror."<sup>4</sup> On June 20 a petition was signed for the arrest

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1 See facsimile, following page, as quoted in Cesbron, p. 87.

2 Boullier, p. 84.

3 Ibid., p. 97.

4 Gaugain, pp. 453-54.



**A R R Ê T É**  
**DU DIRECTOIRE DU DÉPARTEMENT**  
**DE LA MAYENNE,**

*Contenant des dispositions d'Ordre public sur les Ecclésiastiques  
insérentes ou non-conformistes.*

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*SÉANCE DU 23 MARS 1792,*

*l'An IV<sup>e</sup> de la Liberté.*

**V**U les Lettres missives, Pétitions & Requête multipliées, tant des Directoires de Districts, que d'un très-grand nombre de Municipalités & d'Individus, portant que de toutes parts dans ce Département la présence des Prêtres non-assermentés excite la fermentation la plus alarmante; que la disposition des esprits semble annoncer un soulèvement général; que déjà même dans plusieurs Villes & Paroisses, des troubles avoient éclaté; que le Peuple inquiet, fatigué de sentir que presque tous les Ecclésiastiques ayant refusé de satisfaire à l'obligation

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Fac-similé de l'Arrêté du Directoire Départemental prescrivant l'interdiction des prêtres non assermentés.

of all non-jurors gathered in Laval, even if they had been exempt from the current laws passed by the National Assembly. Ten days later all the priests were ordered to the convents of the Capuchins or the Cordeliers. Each had a choice between the two.<sup>1</sup> The National Guard was under arms and was posted to see that all went without protest. All the priests obeyed, including the Bishop of Dol with two of his curates. The shepherds presented themselves to be incarcerated.<sup>2</sup> Both prisons were in great disorder, for they had not been used for a year; the entrance of the 480 priest-prisoners had to be gained through windows as the keys had even been lost. Needless to say, the prison conditions could not have been very pleasant.<sup>3</sup> Until August 10, the prisoners were not strictly confined. They were allowed visitors who often brought them needed food and medicine. But following the insurrection of August 10, a change was wrought. The measures taken saw redoubled furor; it was impossible to send letters in or out, and visitors were admitted only with difficulty and under surveillance.

On August 26, the Assembly rendered the definitive law of deportation. This law, cumulative with that of May 27, which made liable for deportation any priest denounced by 20 citizens, thus included all priests, jurors and non-jurors

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1 Boullier, 102.

2 Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 104.

alike. On September 8, two commissioners arrived at Laval under "the executive wish"<sup>1</sup> to see that the law was enforced. But it was not until the middle of September that the law was fully executed. This search (provided for in the decree) lasted until the middle of October. The number marked for deportation was just a little under 400 priests. These were imprisoned in Laval.<sup>2</sup> Of this number, 107 were secular priests who exercised their ministry in the district of Laval. By October 14, the house of the Cordeliers was entirely evacuated. Those priests, who were either too old or infirm, were transferred to the Convent of the Urbanists, commonly called Patience. Concerning inmates of the prison, records give these facts: "Only eight were less than 50 years old, 75 were more than 60 and 28 more than 70. There were 5 octogenarians and one priest who was blind."<sup>3</sup>

France was now rent with civil war as well as engaged in war with the foreign European powers. On Wednesday, October 23, 1793, around nine in the morning, the Vendéen Army entered Laval. They stayed nine days, leaving on November 2. One of the first acts of the pro-Catholic forces was to open the prisons and give the priests their freedom. The curé of Trinity, Jean-Baptiste Turpin du Cormier, took possession of his ex-parish and the doors were opened to the

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1 Boullier, p. 109.

2 Ibid., p. 114.

3 Ibid., p. 130; Piolin, II, 186.



faithful. Now the Catholics could openly assist at the acts of worship of which they had so long been deprived. The Vendéens returned twice to Laval, the first time around November 25 on their return from Granville, and again on December 13 after the battle of Mans.<sup>1</sup> But the priests held in Patience did not long enjoy freedom. The exact date of their re-imprisonment is not absolutely certain, but all facts seem to establish that it was sometime after the first departure of the Vendéens. All the priests were ordered by public decree to return to prison; this they did willingly without exception.

The Terror is usually held to have begun between May 31 and June 3, but it was slower in reaching Laval. On December 23, 1793 a decree was promulgated that declared:

There shall be a Revolutionary Commission, composed of a president, a public accusateur, three judges and a recorder . . .

2. This Commission shall judge definitely and without any appeal to a higher court, within 24 hours, all the rebels that are brought before it.

4. The judgments shall be carried out according to all the revolutionary laws and those contained in the penal code.

8. After having consulted the popular societies of Laval and Mayenne, Citizen Clement, Justice of the Peace at Ernée, shall exercise the functions of President. Citizen Volcler, Mayor of Lassay, that of Public Accusateur, Citizen Pannard, merchant of Mayenne and member of the Watch Committee of that city, Marie Colinière, Justice of the Peace at Juvigne, Faur, municipal officer and printer of Laval, those of Judges, and Citizen Guilbert, attorney in Laval, that of recording secretary.

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<sup>1</sup> Piolin II, 385.



À Laval, le 2 Nivôse an second de la République,  
une et indivisible et le premier de la mort du  
tyran.

Bourbotte, Bissy (representatives of the people)<sup>1</sup>

This law authorized that the Commission go about the district where "there was need."<sup>2</sup> They held the first session in Laval on December 23, 1793; they proceeded to Ernée just before Christmas and returned to Laval on January 5, 1794. Until the twelfth of that month, they employed the firing squad to execute their victims. They did not begin using the guillotine until January 13, 1794.<sup>3</sup> But after that date, it was the sole means of executing their decisions and judgments. In their travels they carried the guillotine in a sort of hand cart, and gloried in showing this horrible apparatus as a trophy.

From the beginning, this tribunal only fulfilled the letter of the law; they made their own spirit. They spoke indistinctly, deliberated an instant, then rendered their sentence of death. They did deliver a few acquittals, but these were rare. This is a record of their judgments.

Condemned in Laval	243 men	82 women
Condemned in the environs	116 men	20 women
	<u>359 Men</u>	<u>102 Women</u> <sup>4</sup>

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1 Piolin, II, 514-516.

2 Boullier, p. 178.

3 Positio, I, 6.

4 Boullier, p. 181.

Of this number, they put to death 22 priests, one tonsured clerk, a Religious and 3 Sisters of Charity.<sup>1</sup>

The nineteen martyrs of Laval were numbered among these victims. A brief chart will show that fourteen of the martyrs were interned at Patience,<sup>2</sup> and died together the same day for their faith. The other five died for the faith a short time later. All the fourteen were not jailed simultaneously on October 14, 1792. Five were interned respectively on these dates: October 22 - Father Duchesne; November 2 - Father Philippot; December 17 - Father Morin; December 18 - Father Gallot, and finally, two entered the following year. Fathers André and Triquerie entered January 5, 1793.<sup>3</sup> The name of Patience was a rather recent name for the prison. Originally it had been called "Vineyard of Paradise" when Guy XV and his wife, Catherine d'Alençon built the convent for the Clares in 1523. At the outbreak of the Revolution the Superior was the sister of Father Pellé, the confessor for the religious community.

Let us examine each of the martyrs, and see their pre- and post-Revolutionary lives and their heroic deaths. Did they die solely for the honor of religion and the glory of the Mystical Body, or were there other motives as well? Are they strictly martyrs in the exact sense of the word?

1 Boullier, p. 181.

2 See page 79 for chart: Positio, VI, 138; X, 152.

3 Positio, VI, 138.

<u>Cures' Name and Age</u>	<u>Entrance into Prison</u>
Ambroise . . . . . a priest living at the Trinity (74)	October 14, 1792
André . . . . . senior curé of Rouessé- Vassé (50)	January 5, 1793
Turpin du Cormier . . . . . curé of Trinity (64)	October 14, 1792
Duchesne . . . . . chaplain of Saint Michel (58)	October 22, 1792
Dulliou . . . . . curé of Saint Fort (66)	October 14, 1792
Gallot . . . . . sous-chantre of Trinity and Benedictine Chaplain (46)	December 18, 1792
Gastineau . . . . . chaplain at Port Brillet (66)	October 14, 1792
Migoret . . . . . curé at Rennes-en- Grenouille (65)	October 14, 1792
Morin . . . . . priest living at Saint Vénérand (61)	December 17, 1792
Moulé . . . . . curé at Sauleges (77)	October 14, 1792
Pellé . . . . . curé living at Trinity and chaplain to the religious of Patience (74)	October 14, 1792
Philippot . . . . . curé at Bezouge-des-Alleux (77)	October 14, 1792
Thomas . . . . . attached to the hospital of Château Gontier (75)	October 14, 1792
Le P. Triquerie, OFM. . . . . chaplain to the religious of Buron in Château Gontier (57)	January 5, 1793

These servants of God beatified in June, 1955, were nineteen in number. The first were the fourteen (chart, page 79) who died together by the guillotine on January 21, 1794 in Laval. A fifteenth priest, Jacques Burin died by gun fire, when he went to hear a confession of "a person who wished to be converted" to the faith. This was a trap to snare the non-juring priest. Besides the priests, there were two sisters of the Congregation of Charity of Chapelle-au-Riboul (today known as Our Lady of Evron); a Religious of St. Julien's Hospital, of Château Gontier, and finally Françoise Mézière, a Christian lay teacher. These nineteen were chosen from all the victims of the Revolution of the diocese of Laval because their cause had the maximum chance for success.

For this reason it was necessary to separate every victim of the Revolution whose death could have been attributed, at least in part, to political motives, and not to motives of a religious character only.<sup>1</sup>

At the head of the group of priests was a true and noble leader, Jean Baptiste Turpin du Cormier, curé of the Trinity and doyen rural of Laval, since 1783.<sup>2</sup> He was born September 8, 1732, son of Julien Turpin du Cormier and Madeleine Leroy.<sup>3</sup> His family belonged to Trinity parish in Laval, where he was baptized the day of his birth. He was the oldest of the children. Two of his five brothers em-

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1 Gesbron, p. 29.

2 Piolin, II, 528.

3 Positio, I, 3: Boullier, p. 370.

braced the religious life, one dying at the onset of the Revolution and the other among the deportees to England.<sup>1</sup> The future martyr made his studies at the University of Angers and then entered Holy Orders. He was ordained on Christmas, 1756. He continued his studies at Angers while exercising his ministry at Saint Vénérand; in 1760 he became attached to the Trinity, which he never left.<sup>2</sup> He was then a doctor of theology. In the register of the Trinity, between the years 1764-1783 we find not less than 150 entrances in his own handwriting. He was a very devoted and holy priest, caring first of all for the needs of his flock. In the Insinuations ecclésiastiques du Mans of 1778 his superiors wrote that he was "a very good priest, pious."<sup>3</sup> This, no doubt is the reason that he was named the curé of the Trinity and the doyen rural in February, 1783, to succeed Thomas René La Chauve. His curate, l'Abbé Changeon writes of him:

M. Turpin was a holy man and a pastor full of zeal. He employed time to study his duties, he instructed his flock, reconciled sinners to God, helped the poor, and visited the sick. His heart was full of goodness and kindness, his company pleasing and affable. His conduct was regular and beyond reproach, and his life a model of all the priestly virtues.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Positio, I, 3; Boullier, p. 370.

2 Ibid., II, 25-26.

3 Ibid., II, 27.

4 Ibid., I, 8; Piolin, II, 529; Boullier, p. 370.



His priestly attrait seemed to be the Sacrament of Penance. He would pass long hours in the confessional awaiting souls who wished forgiveness.<sup>1</sup> When he was the pastor, he often sought out souls of allwalks of life and tried to bring them back to the sacraments if they had strayed from them. He received the nickname, "Mabon" because he addressed women of a lower class in the words, "ma bonne."<sup>2</sup> It is necessary to mention this peculiarity for this name is used in several books while speaking of the venerable priest. The patriots, too, saw his excellent qualities and sought in December, 1790, to elect him to the office of bishop in the département of Mayenne.<sup>3</sup> He refused on the spot, as was attested by his curate, Abbé Noel Changeon. He also refused to say the High Mass on Sunday, December 12, 1790 during the election of the Bishop. He flatly refused all the demands of the electors.<sup>4</sup> He set the example by refusing the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy because as pastor and doyen rural he was the leader of his priests. Only one of his sons took the oath, and this, "A man without talents, and without esteem, who moved from one place to another, never staying in any parish very long."<sup>5</sup> For his leadership in the matter of the anti-religious program, he was to

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1 Positio, I, 4.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., p. 4-5.

4 Supra, p. 66-67; Positio, I, 5.

5 Ibid., I, 5-6.

suffer more than even death. Volcier, the public accusateur, said, "So this is Turpin du Cormier, the curé of this commune; it was he that fanaticized the clergy against us; I demand that he be executed last."<sup>1</sup>

As curé he continued his priestly functions until the installation of the constitutional bishop, Villar, May 31, 1791. He then retired to nearby churches and chapels where he could execute his ministry. On June 20, 1792, he was incarcerated in the house of the Cordeliers. His age (64) exempted him from deportation, so he remained in prison after his younger confrères departed for other lands. He was then transferred on October 14, 1792 with other infirm clerics or sexagenarians to the Convent of the Urbanists, Patience. When the Vendéens freed the incarcerated priests Father Turpin du Cormier took possession of the Trinity again, and began his priestly ministry with such fervor that his health began to break down.<sup>2</sup> His freedom was short lived, for all the priests were recalled to prison and the Revolutionary Commission enforced the laws with all their vigor. He remained in Patience with his confrères until the day of their trial and condemnation, January 21, 1794.<sup>3</sup>

Another martyr, René Louis Ambroise was born in Trinity parish, Laval, March 1, 1720, son of Louis François Ambroise

1 Positio, I, 6.

2 Ibid., I, 7.

3 Since the martyrs were the defendants in a common trial, their individual testimonies will appear infra, pp. 125-129.

and Perrine Charlotte Chevillard.<sup>1</sup> He was one of sixteen children, of whom only four survived. His father inherited the printer's trade from his father and grandfather; this firm dated from the first half of the seventeenth Century.<sup>2</sup> Rumor spread that from these presses came the Jansenist publication, Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques, but this accusation has never been proved.<sup>3</sup> His family was also reported as being Jansenistic, and it seems that he had

the misfortune of sharing the errors of his relatives. He was put under an interdict, but he gave the satisfaction that the religious authority demanded and his sentence was revoked in 1779.<sup>4</sup>

The judgment of Isidore Boullier is lighter, "M. Ambroise was moderate in his opinions, and only briefly incurred the censure of his religious superiors."<sup>5</sup> He was ordained a priest at the end of 1745 and exercised his priestly powers in his native parish, the Trinity. Frequently, his name was seen on the parish register between the years 1745 and 1790.<sup>6</sup> From the beginning of the schism, he constantly manifested his true attachment for the Church. His age and his infirmities exempted him from detention in the month of June,

1 Positio, I, 12; II, 40.

2 Ibid., II, 40.

3 Ibid., I, 12.

4 Ibid., I, 12; Piolin, II, 530-531.

5 Ibid., I, 12; II, 44. Boullier, p. 372.

6 Ibid., II, 41.

1792; when the deportation law was enforced, however, he was interned in Patience, October 14, 1792.<sup>1</sup> Frequently, during the time of incarceration, M. Ambroise retracted the errors that he had been accused of<sup>2</sup> and he did this again before the Revolutionary Tribunal.<sup>3</sup> He wished to make amends for any bad example that he had the misfortune to give. The measures taken by the Revolutionaries seemed only to give him a firmer attachment to the Catholic Church and the Supreme Pontiff.

Jacques André was born October 13, 1743 in the village of Origne, in the parish then known as Saint Pierre la Cour and today known as Saint Pierre sur Orthe in the canton of Bais.<sup>4</sup> His parents were Étienne André and Anne Thebault. He was ordained a priest in 1768 and was first assigned as curate in Rouez en Champagne in the Sarthe. In 1783 he became curé of Roussé en Vassé, bordering on Mayenne; shortly after he was made doyen rural of Sille le Guillaume.<sup>5</sup> These important positions show in what esteem the diocesan administration held him. His confrères said of him, "a talented and well-instructed priest."<sup>6</sup> The parish chronicle of Roussé - Vassé records:

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1 Positio, II, 45.

2 Ibid.

3 Boullier, p. 372.

4 Positio, I, 15; Boullier, p. 418.

5 Ibid., I, 15-16; II, 61-62.

6 Ibid., II, 61; Gesbron, p. 41.

His natural aptitudes cultivated by study were enhanced by his personal and sacerdotal virtues. Nothing pleased him more than to render service to all, especially his confreres, who loved and esteemed him very much. The poor were the object of his particular affection; he would often take the food set before him and send it to a poor family.<sup>1</sup>

M. le Chamoine Gadnier, in his notes, makes another interesting remark:

The inspection of the parish registers reveal an exact and singular solicitude. It is thus that all the marriages that required dispensations were taken care of by the Bishop and by Rome. These were always accompanied by authentic documents and delivered by a competent authority.<sup>2</sup>

His ministry was visibly blessed by God, for of a population of 2,000 inhabitants, of whom 300 were very poor, he was able to list 1,500 communicants in 1790.<sup>3</sup>

When the schismatic decrees were promulgated, he refused to take the oath, and his two sub-curés with him. This drew him into disagreement with, then persecution from, the authorities. His life was in danger and a strange priest, Lefebvre, installed himself in his rectory, so it was necessary for him to leave his parish in late 1792, and to withdraw to Laval.<sup>4</sup> He was first put into the prison of the Capuchins, then released because of grave illness. He recovered sufficiently and on January 5, 1793 he entered Patience.<sup>5</sup> On March 30, 1793, there is a notation by a

1 Positio, I, 15; II, 62; Piolin, II, 532-533.

2 Piolin, II, 533.

3 Cesbron, p. 42.

4 Positio, II, 66.

5 Ibid.



Dr. Hubert, one of the three Département doctors for the prisoners. This is the report on André:

Gouty for a long period of time - the joints of his deformed hands and feet are made almost immovable by the course of the disease. I assure you<sup>1</sup> he will be laid up for at least six months, in bed.

Thus we see that our future martyr suffered intensely before his supreme sacrifice on January 21, 1794.

François Duchesne was born in Laval, (Saint Vénérand's parish) on January 8, 1736,<sup>2</sup> the son of Jean and Renée Roziere, and was baptized the same day.<sup>3</sup> His family were well to do, and made their living in the weaving trade. He was ordained in 1760 or 1761, and he gave the first years of his priestly life to teaching, first as a master at the college in Sablé and then in Laval. In 1778 he was named professor, semi-prebend, and deacon of the religious services at the College of St. Michel, with the office of saying three masses a week at the Hôpital des Incurables.<sup>4</sup> He was not charged with the office of preaching or the hearing of confessions, for, it has been said, he was very scrupulous. A witness, F. Le Lasseur describes him:

Very scrupulous, living a retiring life, not practicing the regular priestly functions. He fasted every day, gave generous alms, spoke to no one, and passed whole days in prayer. He

1 Positio, II, 67.

2 Ibid., II, 71.

3 Ibid., I, 14.

4 Boullier, p. 380.

enjoyed a tremendous reputation for holiness and leading the life of an anchorite.<sup>1</sup>

The veneration by which the Catholics of Laval surrounded him exasperated the revolutionaries; for this reason they pursued him furiously. Like some of the other priest-martyrs, Père Duchesne was not imprisoned under the first decree because he was "infirm". He was not yet 60 years old. On September 23, 1792, he was ordered to be interned in prison under the new law. A month later, on October 22, he entered Patience.<sup>2</sup> It seems that the revolutionaries did not stop their revenge at seeing him incarcerated. On the list of 89 names of the old or infirm priests - the nature of whose illnesses was stated - there is nothing listed after his name. On another list, he is simply cited as "citizen-suspect."<sup>3</sup> Finally, the surgeon, Hubert, who had the confidence of the revolutionaries, re-visited Patience on April 5, and records:

An ulcer of long duration is situated in the middle anterior of the left leg and affects the whole thigh. It is extremely sensitive and irritated so that it is almost impossible for him to walk without support, usually of a cane. He suffers convulsions of pain throughout his whole body, which I have witnessed several times. He is further afflicted with an inguinal hernia on the right side - these infirmities are always with him.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Positio, II, 54-55; Piolin, II, 531-532.

2 Ibid., VI, 138; X, 152.

3 Ibid., II, 56.

4 Ibid., II, 56-57.

These painful afflictions can well give more value to the long 16 months that he spent in jail before shedding his blood, January 21, 1794.

André Dulicou was born in Saint Laurent des Mortiers, then a part of the diocese of Angers, July 19, 1727. He was the son of André Dulicou and Jacquine Brion.<sup>1</sup> From his childhood he was noted for his piety and manifested an inclination for the religious state. After making his classical studies at the college of Château Gontier, and his seminary work at Angers, he was curate for eight years in the parish of Mire and was afterwards named curé of Saint Fort, near Château Gontier, where he remained until the Revolution.<sup>2</sup> "He was a simple man, but his zeal and his piety supplied what was lacking to his talents."<sup>3</sup> When the authorities commanded him to take the oath, he mounted the pulpit and vociferously expressed his horror of the schism and his attachment for the Catholic faith.<sup>4</sup> He spoke on that day with a fire and an ardour so great that those who had ever heard him before were astonished. He did not have the gift of eloquence. This simple priest had all during his life manifested a fidelity to his work and his charges. Fulfilling his duties to the best of his ability, completely detached from the goods of this world, he had used the life annuity of his parents to perform good works and to give alms to

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1 Positio, I, 17; Boullier, p. 418.

2 Ibid., I, 17.

3 Ibid., II, 69; Piolin, II, 533.

4 Le Coq, III, 56.

the poor and needy.<sup>1</sup> In 1792 he was cast into prison and then transferred to the Patience Prison in Laval on October 14, 1792.<sup>2</sup> Witnesses, loyal to the faith, say that until his last moments he showed a sincere joy. On the day of execution he walked to the guillotine with a free and easy stride. Usually, if he walked unsupported, it was with great difficulty because of a serious leg injury.<sup>3</sup>

Jean Marie Gallot, sub-chanter of the Church of the Trinity in Laval and chaplain of the Benedictines, was born, one of eight children, on July 14, 1747 in the parish of the Trinity. He was the son of René Gallot and Jeanne Cosson, a very holy couple who were rewarded with the privilege of giving their three sons to the Church.<sup>4</sup> When Jean was twelve years old, his oldest brother left his curateship at Saint Berthevin and became sub-chanter at Trinity. Without a doubt, the desire to guide the education of Jean Marie was the prime motive for this decision, as Jean manifested a desire to follow his brothers in religion and to give himself to God.<sup>5</sup> On December 31, 1769, we find his signature, "Jean Marie Gallot, tonsured clerk" at the death of one of his nieces, Marguerite Peslier, age 15."<sup>6</sup> In

1 Positio, II, 68.

2 Le Coq, III, 56; Positio, VI, 138; X, 152.

3 Positio, I, 17.

4 Ibid., I, 9; II, 29; Boullier, p. 371; Piolin, II, 529.

5 Ibid., II, 31.

6 Ibid.

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1 Positio, II, 68.

2 Le Coq, III, 56; Positio, VI, 138; X, 152.

3 Positio, I, 17.

4 Ibid., I, 9; II, 29; Boullier, p. 371; Piolin, II, 529.

5 Ibid., II, 31.

6 Ibid.



1772, he signed the register of the parish "assistant in this parish"<sup>1</sup> but this ministry in Laval was to last only a short time. The next eight years were to be spent at Bazougers, under three successive pastors, where he led a very active life. In 1781 he returned to Trinity where he was curate, and in 1787 he became the sub-chanter; in 1788, he was titular of the Valettes chapel and chaplain to the Benedictines. M. Boullier depicts him as "a man of great physical stature and size."<sup>2</sup> He refused to take the oath so when Villar arrived as the constitutional bishop, Gallot went to a small house he owned on Rue des Tuyaux; there he gave hospitality to M. Gastineau, his future companion in captivity and martyrdom.<sup>3</sup> He was only 45 years old, but he was already "gouty and so paralyzed that he was not able to use his hands easily."<sup>4</sup> On December 18, 1792, he was interned in Patience.<sup>5</sup> On the thirtieth of March, he was first visited by the doctor who said, "Very infirm;"<sup>6</sup> thus he was exempt from deportation. The second medical visit made by F. Hubert, M. D., was on

1 Positio, II, 31.

2 Boullier, p. 371.

3 Positio, II, 33.

4 Cesbron, p. 34.

5 Positio, I, 9; II, 31; VI, 138; X, 152.

6 Ibid., II, 34.

April 5, 1793; of this visit he gave the following account:

Jean Marie Gallot has a weakness in his wrists to the point that he cannot use his hands, thus giving the appearance that he is paralyzed, and he is troubled with frequent attacks of colic gripes.<sup>1</sup>

He constantly refused to take the oath and thus paid for his fidelity with his life on January 21, 1794.<sup>2</sup>

Louis Gastineau was born November 11, 1727, the son of Jean Gastineau and Julienne Beaumesnil. There is little we know of him until his signature is seen on the parish register: "Louis Gastineau, tonsured clerk" in 1752. He was ordained in 1754 (November 1) and in 1764 he was named curate, at the same time acting minister of Madeleine du Flessir Mil Cent.<sup>3</sup> He remained in that parish until 1785 when he was named chaplain to the blacksmiths of Port Brillet in Brulatte.<sup>4</sup> But a few years later he returned to his native parish, Saint Berthevin, near Laval. It was here that he was marked by his ecclesiastical superiors as "a priest of eminent piety."<sup>5</sup> His special attrait seems to be "zeal for the instruction of children."<sup>6</sup> This curé's name appears for the last time in the parish records,

1 Positio, II, 34.

2 Ibid., I, 9; II, 35.

3 Ibid., I, 18.

4 Boullier, p. 389.

5 Piolin, II, 534.

6 Positio, II, 75.

April 14, 1790; he then moved to the home of his sister and that explains why he is no longer mentioned. He had refused the oath and thus was hiding in this home. Yet he still continued to exercise the ministry. His gentle exterior, especially in the confessional, endeared him to the people. What he did not possess in remarkable talents, his zeal and his piety amply made up for. He preached very precisely and in a way to interest and hold the attention of his hearers. He gave particular care to the instruction and the confessions of the young in his apostolate.<sup>1</sup> Although he had a rather grave exterior, he was always gay with others, and all the persons that he came in contact with considered him a saint.<sup>2</sup> He was imprisoned October 14, 1792, after the departure of the other priest-deportees.<sup>3</sup>

François Migoret was born on August 28, 1728, at Saint Fraimbault de Lassay, son of André Migoret-Lambertière, a royal bailiff, and Marie Cosseron.<sup>4</sup> He was destined from an early age to the ecclesiastical state. He entered the seminary at Mans and was ordained there about the year 1753.<sup>5</sup> All of his ministry was passed in two parishes - Oisseau, where he was charged with a small college of about 60 students; and Rennes en Grenouille, where he was named

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1 Positio, I, 18.

2 Boullier, p. 389.

3 Positio, VI, 138; X, 152.

4 Ibid., I, 18; Boullier, p. 419.

5 Positio, II, 83.

pastor and where he restored right order in April, 1777. His charity urged him to take on the education of a promising young boy, Jean Baptiste Volcler, who later became a priest, but who during the Revolution apostatized, then was named by the Département of Mayenne as the Public Accusateur on the Commission that condemned Migoret and his thirteen companions to death.<sup>1</sup>

Becoming somewhat paralyzed in the last years of his stay in Lassay, Migoret was conscious that his faculties were failing. In this somewhat weakened condition, the good prelate took the oath that created a schismatic church.<sup>2</sup> He did not long remain a juring priest, for he retracted publically and made reparation for this mistake during the rest of his life. Another proof that he did retract, was the severe treatment that he received at the hands of his captors in prison. First, he was incarcerated in the convent of the Cordeliers in Laval in June, 1792. Later he joined the other priests on October 14 of the same year in Patience.<sup>3</sup> He was put in the same cell with M. Philippot, curé of Bazouges.

Julien François Morin de la Girardière was born December 14, 1733 at Saint Fraimbault de Prières, son of

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1 Positio, I, 20; II, 82; XLVIII, 398; Le Coq, VII, 29.

2 Ibid., II, 84; VIII, 142; XLVIII, 481.

3 Ibid., II, 86; VI, 138; X, 152.

Julien Morin de la Beauvuère and Julienne Richard, both excellent Christians. Julien made his classical studies at Caen and his theology in Angers, and was ordained a priest in 1763. He exercised his ministry until 1772 at Saint Martin in Mayenne, where he lived with his family.<sup>2</sup> The years 1769-1772 were most regular, but then Jansenism gathered a number of the faithful from the parish of Notre Dame. Father Morin's poor health never allowed him to carry the burden of an assiduous apostolate, yet he fought the heresy without ceasing. Just before the outbreak of the Revolution, he went to Laval to live with a married brother. There he lived in the parish of Avenièrès a quiet and hidden life, and was little known. His life was filled with prayer and he gave much care to the education of his nephews. It is said that he had a very gentle character and gave all that he possessed to the poor.<sup>3</sup> All that knew Father Morin held him in great estimation and veneration. He was quite crippled and these infirmities caused him to be interned later than the rest of his confreres. It was not until December 17, 1792, that he was taken to Patience.<sup>4</sup> In April, the district physician examined all the prisoners in Patience. This is the record of M. Morin. "Walks with great difficulty, as the left leg

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1 Positio, I, 13; II, 47; Boullier, p. 376; Piolin, II, 534.

2 Ibid., I, 13.

3 Ibid., II, 47; Boullier, p. 419.

4 Ibid., I, 14; VI, 138; X, 152.



is shorter than the right one. He complained of a pain in the leg and was often subject to oppressions."<sup>1</sup> Because of this affliction, it was impossible for him to be deported, thus he paid with his life, January 21, 1794, for refusing to take the oath prescribed.<sup>2</sup>

M. Julien Moulé was born March 26, 1716 in Mans, the son of François Moulé and Renée Quaison.<sup>3</sup> Before coming to exercise the holy ministry in the diocese of Laval, he was a curate at Beaufay in the Sarthe, and Principal of the college. On January 12, 1765, he was named to Sauleges, but soon his zeal was curtailed by sickness. From 1778 on, he is characterized as a "good priest, but infirm."<sup>4</sup> These last ten years of his life were years of suffering sanctified by patience and prayer. He was a victim of gout and confined to bed for long periods of time, but as often as he could, he said Mass, although he needed assistance to ascend the altar steps.<sup>5</sup> This curé and his two assistants thought they could best serve the interests of the Church by taking the oath, although a restrictive one, on Sunday, February 6, 1791 at High Mass in Sauleges.

I swear to watch with care the faithful that have been confided to me by the Church, to be faithful

1 Positio, II, 49; Boullier, p. 376.

2 Ibid., VI, 138; X, 152.

3 Ibid., I, 20; II, 87-88; Boullier, p. 419.

4 Ibid., II, 89.

5 Ibid., I, 20.

to the nation, to the law, and to the King, and to maintain with all my strength in the purely temporal order, the Constitution of the Kingdom, decreed by the National Assembly and sanctioned by the King, with the formal reservation of that which belongs essentially to the authority of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church.<sup>1</sup>

But this oath was not of value in the eyes of the Revolutionaries, for in 1792, when it was decided that all non-jurors should be banished, these three priests were taken to Laval.<sup>2</sup> From there, the youngest, Jacques Houlard, went to England, and the other, Jacques Jusseaume, died in Patience on October 29, 1792, crippled and infirm.<sup>3</sup> Père Moulé entered Patience, October 14, 1792, and died with his confrères January 21, 1794, at the age of 77 years.<sup>4</sup>

Joseph Pellé was born in Laval in Trinity Parish January 22, 1720, and was baptized the same day.<sup>5</sup> He was the son of Joseph Pellé and Barbe Mesle, honest shopkeepers.<sup>6</sup> There are few official reports of his early life, but his nephews do furnish some early events. "He was not very talkative and he lived with two of his nieces."<sup>7</sup> They died soon after the Revolution and left no details of him. His

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1 Positio, II, 90; VIII, 143; Piolin, I, 470; Le Coq, V, 59.

2 Ibid., II, 90.

3 Ibid., II, 90-91; Le Coq, V, 58.

4 Ibid., VI, 138; X, 152.

5 Ibid., II, 36.

6 Boullier, p. 372; Piolin, II, 529.

7 Positio, I, 10.

family possessed no papers concerning him, except his baptism certificate.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, there is little information concerning the period immediately following ordination. The only definite fact is that of his chaplaincy to the community of the Urbanists of Patience while he lived at Trinity. Though very quiet, he was considered to have excellent judgment based on solid instruction. He was frequently consulted on important matters and was a much sought after confessor for his fellow priests.<sup>2</sup> As his piety was well known, it drew the veneration of the faithful, especially that of the inhabitants of Saint Martin. This respect was shown even though he had a rather negligent exterior and somewhat brusque and unpolished manners and rather common language (patois) that hindered the upper classes from taking him into their confidence and circles.<sup>3</sup>

Because of his good judgment he seemed to have a premonition of the Revolution and the excesses to which it would be carried. He seems to have had a presentiment that he would be one of the victims of these excesses. He is reported to have said, "I have a short neck, however they will cut it off."<sup>4</sup> From this period of his life to the end, he was quite infirm. He was troubled with asthma so violent that at times he could scarcely walk. It was also impossible

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1 Positie, I, 10.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.; Piolin, II, 530.

4 Ibid., II, 39.

for him to perform church functions at Trinity. He soon entered Patience where his sister had been Mistress of Novices of the community since 1773.<sup>1</sup> He entered October 14, 1792, as a refractory, for he had refused to take the oath.<sup>2</sup>

Augustin Emmanuel Philippot was born in Paris June 11, 1716, and was baptized in his native parish, St. Nicolas des Champs the same day. He was the son of Jean Emmanuel Philippot and Genevieve Lamarre.<sup>3</sup> He appears in the diocese of Mans as a curate and then in 1793 as curé of Bazouge des Alleux, where he remained until the Revolution.<sup>4</sup> He was of mediocre talents, but he had a perfect regularity of life, a profound piety, and an unshakeable attachment to his work.<sup>5</sup> For forty-nine years he administered to the parish the Sacraments and other works of charity, as can be witnessed by the parish register. He never let pass the opportunity of securing a bishop who might be in the vicinity so that his faithful could receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. The children of the parish, especially, were always well instructed in the faith, for he had a reputation for "great care in the instruction of the young."<sup>6</sup>

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1 Positio, II, 38.

2 Ibid., II, 38-39; VI, 138; X, 152.

3 Boullier, p. 419.

4 Positio, I, 21.

5 Piolin, II, 537; Le Coq, VI, 155.

6 Positio, II, 93.

For all these good qualities he was much esteemed by his confrères and very loved by his parishioners.<sup>1</sup> And on the other hand, his religious superiors noted that in 1778 that he was "a good curé, carefully governing his church."<sup>2</sup> In all circumstances he showed that he was much opposed to the innovations of the National Constituent Assembly in the matter of religion. A fellow priest, Abbé Pichon, his old friend and confessor, came to see him. They began to discuss the licitness of the oath and M. Philippot did not hesitate to answer him: "Monsieur, if you have nothing else to say to me, do not speak of the oath. I shall never take it and there is no room in this house for you."<sup>3</sup>

Pierre Thomas was born in Menil Rainfray in the diocese of Avranches, March 3, 1729, the son of Jean Thomas and Julienne Poysel. He had, as we would say today, a delayed vocation.<sup>4</sup> He celebrated his First Mass at the age of thirty years in 1760, but it was only thirteen years later that he appeared in Mayenne in Peutron. It is thought that perhaps his kinsman, M. Bagot, who was the curé, secured this transfer. In the following year he was offered and accepted the chaplainship of the Dames de l'Hôpital Saint Julien in Château Gontier. He refused the oath

1 Positio, II, 93.

2 Ibid.

3 Positio, I, 21; Piolin, II, 537.

4 Ibid., I, 22; II, 97; Le Coq, III, 5.



energetically and showed himself constantly opposed to schism.<sup>1</sup> "He was held in high esteem by the Religious for both his virtues and his gifts."<sup>2</sup> But in the last years of his life his faculties became increasingly impaired and at times his reason was completely gone.<sup>3</sup> It is believed that the emotions produced in him by the development of the Revolution contributed to the derangement of his faculties. It must be noted, however, that before the Revolutionary Commission his reason returned and he answered in full presence of mind, the questions that were asked him. He neither showed less calm nor less resignation than his confreres when mounting the scaffold.<sup>4</sup> He had joined them in Patience on October 14, 1792 and he remained there until the death of the priest martyrs on January 21, 1794.<sup>5</sup>

Père Jean Triquerie was born in the Parish of Trinity, Laval, the first of July, 1737, the son of François Triquerie and Jeanne Jarry.<sup>6</sup> He had a brother who was curé in Sion, in the diocese of Nantes. In 1747 the family moved to Nantes. It was there that Jean entered the Franciscans at the house of the Cordeliers in Olonne. He was ordained and then sent as chaplain of different women's

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1 Positio, I, 22.

2 Boullier, p. 474; Piolin, II, 538.

3 Positio, I, 22; Boullier, p. 419.

4 Ibid., I, 23; V, 106; Boullier, p. 419.

5 Ibid., I, 23; II, 99; VI, 138; X, 152.

6 Ibid., II, 58; Boullier, p. 415; Le Coq, III, 6.

Franciscan convents - first at Sainte Elizabeth of Nantes, at Montmorillon, and finally at Buron, near Château Gontier.<sup>1</sup> It was at the latter convent that he was found at the outbreak of the Revolution. The religious of Buron, who were most edifying and fervent, had a deep veneration for this "excellent religious and enlightened director."<sup>2</sup> In the Positio, he is characterized as "an excellent religious, pious, regular and an expert in the direction of souls."<sup>3</sup> This fervent community that he cared for numbered twenty-two before the dispersion in March of 1792. He was also an excellent administrator and put in order the affairs of the house that had been a bit disarranged before his arrival.

At the outbreak of the Revolution, he came to Laval to live with his cousin, Jean Duret. He remained there until he received the order to present himself to the authorities for internment in Patience. The records show that he was interned there on January 5, 1793.<sup>4</sup> On the lists of the medical inspectors in Patience, he appears as "very infirm",<sup>5</sup> and on the first list, "exempt from deportation."<sup>6</sup> On the April 5 visit, Dr. Hubert reports:

1 Positio, I, 15.

2 Piolin, II, 532; Positio, II, 59.

3 Positio, I, 15.

4 Ibid., II, 60; VI, 138; X, 152.

5 Ibid., II, 60.

6 Ibid.

"gouty for a long time, his hands and feet are deformed by the illness."<sup>1</sup> His life of virtue merited for Jean Triquerie, O.F.M., the grace to render public testimony of his faith by capital punishment to which he submitted on January 21, 1794.<sup>2</sup>

Dom Piolin in l'Histoire de L'Église du Mans durant la Révolution, estimates that during the Terror and Directory there were between 600 and 700 priests hidden in the two départements of Mayenne and the Sarthe.<sup>3</sup> These continued to minister to the needs of the faithful and gave them the Sacraments. It seems that each parish had its faithful non-juring priest. The fifteenth of the Laval martyrs was one of these priests. M. Jacques Burin was probably the first priest in Mayenne to give himself to this special clandestine apostolate, and to willingly accept a life of privation, suffering, and perpetual watchfulness in order to save souls. For this reason he was long remembered in the region and diocese of Laval.

Jacques Burin was born at Chamfleur, a parish in the diocese of Mans on January 6, 1756,<sup>4</sup> son of Jean Burin and Marie Louise Pavis.<sup>5</sup> He was ordained in 1779 and named an assistant in the Sarthe. Seven years later, he was named

1 Positio, II, 60.

2 Ibid., VI, 138; X, 152.

3 Piolin, II, 7.

4 Positio, XLIX, 498.

5 Ibid., L, 517; LVIII, 601.

curé of Saint Martin de Connée in January of 1787. So true and renowned was his reputation for zeal and goodness that he was introduced to his new parishioners as "a man of virtue, distinguished by his own merit, and much loved by all."<sup>1</sup> A priest attentive to his ministry, a good preacher, generous to the poor, catechizing the children with great care, he not only lived up to his reputation, but was a great influence on his fellow priests and his parishioners.

In 1790 he delivered to the faithful a series of sermons intended to put them on their guard against the ensuing perils that were to menace their faith. This curé was very familiar with the problems of the Church, for his was one of the signatures affixed on the cahier of the clergy of Sénéchaussée du Maine for the Estates General in 1789.<sup>2</sup> On January 30, 1791 he did not hesitate to announce from the pulpit that the Church in France was on the brink of schism. On February 2 he declared that the priests were being obliged to take an oath that their conscience should reprove. On February 19 he refused to give his parishioners a lecture of l'Instruction de l'Assemblée nationale sur la Constitution Civile du Clergé because this instruction was designed to deceive the people.

However, on February 20, it was announced that he would take the oath at the end of High Mass. The civil authorities and the faithful gathered in the Church. Père Burin began

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1 Le Coq, V, 60; Cesbron, p. 172.

2 Piolin, I, 451.

his short sermon.<sup>1</sup> "It is with a broken heart full of sorrow that I ascend this pulpit today! Alas, for perhaps the last time of my life." Then he proceeded to describe the sad condition to which the state had reduced the church in France, and continued:

They propose to me an oath, by which I must swear to shed even the last drop of my blood to authorize a constitution which forces me to applaud and defend these iniquities. Ah, never, never, . . . if we have any blood to share, then let us share it as a witness of religion which gives us our true happiness.<sup>2</sup>

Then, phrase by phrase, he explained the meaning of the oath and then proceeded to take the oath, introducing this reservation. "In all that will never be opposed to the spiritual realm and the Catholic faith of the Church, in which I wish to live and die."<sup>3</sup>

Three months later, Pius VI condemned the Civil Constitution of the Clergy<sup>4</sup> and Père Burin secured a text of the document. On the Feast of Pentecost, he gave a sermon from the pulpit on the papal text.<sup>5</sup> Then, all the hatred of the revolutionaries was unfurled against him. He was arrested and taken to the Tribunal (civil) of St. Suzanne, bound as a common criminal.<sup>6</sup> Upon his arrival at St.

1 Positio, LI, 540.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., p. 541.

4 Ibid., LVIII, 598.

5 Ibid., LII, 552; LVIII, 627.

6 Ibid., LVIII, 602.



Suzanne, the revolutionaries recoiled a little from their brutal methods, fearing an attempt on the part of the faithful to retrieve their master and leader. He was simply ordered to the prison of Laval. On August 5 he was brought back to St. Suzanne and there a lawyer interceded for him and he was freed on the condition that he keep a distance of not less than 10 leagues from Saint Martin de Connée. He then retired to his family's farm, Coffrard, but he was still a "pastor in his soul,"<sup>1</sup> and he had the plan and desire to aid his faithful and to go wherever he was needed.

Père Burin became to all appearances M. Sebastien, a thread merchant.<sup>2</sup> This was his scheme - his disguise. Where was his home? Any place would serve - narrow nooks, abandoned farm areas, warm and humid, cold and chilling - any place would do. He became fond of caves or granaries where hay was stored. The life he led was as penitential and uncomfortable as it could be. But for three years Père Burin exercised his ministry, baptizing, hearing confessions, celebrating marriages, distributing Holy Communion, and giving Extreme Unction to the dying. The parishes that he visited were numerous: Champgenéteux, Villaines, Trans, Loupfougères, Saint Thomas de Courceriers, Vimarcé, Izé, Saint Georges sur Evre, Saint Pierre sur Orthe, and even his dearly loved parish, Saint Martin.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Positio, LV, 578; Cesbron, p. 176.

2 Cesbron, p. 177.

3 Positio, LVI, 580-581.

In October, 1794, an ambush was organized for the priest. He heard that a family in Courcité named Lemayre, comprising three girls and two boys who were widely known as true revolutionaries, wished to be converted. The two girls were "patriotes exaltées" who had a deep hatred for all non-juring priests.<sup>1</sup> Feigning conversion they succeeded in getting a former housekeeper of the curé of Trans, Jeanne Treton, to find a priest that would hear their confession. This trusting servant told Père Burin who was hiding in Loupfougères. Without a moment's hesitation, Père Burin decided to go to the farm in Petit Coudray where "there were souls to save."<sup>2</sup> He went to the farm, but suddenly there was a signal given and two shots were fired. Père Burin was dead. The soldiers searched the victim and found on his person a chalice which he had taken with him. They despoiled his body and threw it on a dung heap; they took the chalice to drink from. After this sacrilege, the soldiers departed. Soon, Christians came to take his body. It was buried on a near-by farm and one of the priests, Abbé Ripault, curate of the neighboring St. Léger, placed at the head of the grave a slate with the following:

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1 Gesbron, p. 179.

2 Positio, L, 515.

Hic Jacet Jacobus Burin Rector de  
 Connée, qui impiorum ebro-  
 nientium sclopo, martyr occu-  
 buit die 17 8 bris 1794  
 teste Ripault P. C.

Ci-git Jacques Burin, curé de  
 Connée, que des impies d'Evron  
 tuèrent d'un coup de fusil, Il  
 mourut martyr le 17 octobre, 1794.  
 Temoin: Ripault, p(rêtre) c(atholique) 1

"It is clear that he died for the hatred of religion and  
 he gave an example of Christian courage."<sup>2</sup>

Fifteen days after the execution of the priest-martyrs,  
 17 Pluviôse, An II (February 5, 1794) Françoise Mézière  
 and five other victims were condemned to death. Françoise  
 Mézière was born in Mézangers, August 25, 1745 and baptized  
 the same day.<sup>3</sup> Her father, René Mézière was an excellent  
 Catholic who had a farm near the Benedictine abbey of Evron.<sup>4</sup>  
 Her mother, Françoise Rousseau, died when she was four years  
 old; in order to raise his six children, René Mézière re-  
 married in 1749.<sup>5</sup> His second wife, Marie Heurtebise, bore  
 him three children, then died in 1754. The father then  
 married again in 1758. At this time a work called Petites  
Écoles came into vogue in the Bas-Maine. Since 1720,  
 schools had existed in Evron because of the generosity of

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1 Positio, LVII, 586.

2 Ibid., LVIII, 600.

3 Boullier, p. 208

4 Positio, XXX, 287.

5 Ibid.

of the Benedictine Abbot and the zeal of the pastor. It was directed by the Soeurs de la Chapelle au Riboul, who also directed a bureau of charity organized according to the method of St. Vincent de Paul.

It was through these schools that Françoise Mézière began to prepare herself for a double role - that of a very pious Catholic and a mistress of class. About this time the pastor, Père Dioré, decided that a parish school should be opened for girls.<sup>1</sup> The direction of the girls' school was given to Marguerite Coutelle, the first cousin of Françoise's father's third wife, Marie Coutelle. The children were to be taught "free of charge" how to read and write. They were to be taught their prayers every day and their catechism on Wednesday and Saturday."<sup>2</sup> When the pastor died suddenly, he was succeeded by his devoted curate, Joseph Gigan, who was a cousin of both Marguerite Coutelle and Françoise Mézière. The school was growing, but Marguerite was aging. She needed assistance. Their first choice was Françoise, who accepted. She also visited the sick, treated their wounds, washed the linen of the church and decorated the altars. But in 1789 a period of very sad incidents began; then followed the cruel persecution. The laws leveled by the National Assembly were keenly felt, but neither the curé nor the assistants (either male or female) took the oath. But on April 14, 1791, the obliga-

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1 Boullier, pp. 208-209.

2 Piolin, III, 6.

tion of the oath was extended to masters and mistresses of schools. The refusal to swear put an interdict on their teaching and simultaneously suppressed their apostolate. Françoise did not hesitate for a moment. She followed the good example given by the pastor and the curates.

On September 4 (Sunday), with the aid of fifty National Guard, a constitutional priest, l'Abbé Heurtebise, was officially installed in the recently vacated parish.<sup>1</sup> Twelve soldiers and an officer remained to see that no trouble followed. But by Holy Saturday, 1792, the non-jurors had been reinstated temporarily in the parish. In late March they were returned to Laval.<sup>2</sup>

In the middle of July, Françoise Mézière was summoned to take the oath of Liberty-Equality or immediately leave her school. This, too, she refused and found refuge with Mlle. Duclere in Laval. The entire year of 1793 passed for Françoise in a zealous and charitable exercise of the apostolate, full of danger, but rich in merits.<sup>3</sup> At the end of 1793 the Vendéen Army again passed through Laval. Some of the soldiers were hungry, homeless and wounded. Françoise took seven and placed them in one hidden hut, and placed two in another - dressing their wounds and bringing them provisions. However, soon the last two were discovered and taken to Evron on February 2, and on February 4 or 5

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1 Cesbron, p. 189.

2 Ibid.

3 Positio, XXXIII, 292.



Françoise Mézière was arrested and taken to Evron. There is no record of her interrogation and trial; all that remains is the text of the judgment.

Françoise Mézière, the above Sister of Charity of the commune of Saint Leger, district of Evron, is accused of caring for two Vendéens for nine days and dressing their wounds, of aiding another seven hidden in a similar hut, and of guarding this clandestine work by her silence, and of refusing to take the oath of fidelity to the laws of the Patrie and showering outrageous invectives against the republican system. The Commission condemns to death . . . and judges execution immediately.<sup>1</sup>

But were these crimes? It was the hatred of God that was the real cause of her death. Thus was the sentence - condemned to death. She was joyous; she made a reverence to her judges and thanked them for the early privilege of being allowed to see her God in heaven. At that one of the judges blasphemously replied: "When you see your good God, give Him my compliments."<sup>2</sup> Thus she died on February 5, 1794 - 17 Pluviôse, II.<sup>3</sup>

On the childhood and the early youth of the next two martyrs we have very little information. We know only that Françoise Tréhet, the daughter of Michel Trehet and Elizabeth Briant, was born at Saint Mars sur la Futaie,<sup>4</sup> April 8, 1756, of a family of well-off farmers, who had numerous children. She was baptized in the church of this parish on April 9. The baptismal font is still in existence, although only for

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1 Positio, XXX, 289-290.

2 Ibid., XXXIII, 292.

3 Boullier, p. 209.

4 Cesbron, p. 199.

eneration.<sup>1</sup>

Jeanne Véron, the daughter of Jean Veron and Anne Durand was born August 6, 1766, in the parish of Quelaines.<sup>2</sup> Both of these girls came from excellent Christian families and very Christian communities. The pastors of these two parishes refused to take the oath and continued their ministries. The parish of Saint Mars sur la Putaie had a boys' school directed by the curate, and a girls' school and charity guild directed by the Soeurs de la Chapelle au Riboul, "both of which existed by the voluntary gifts of the pastor and the faithful inhabitants."<sup>3</sup>

These two girls entered as choir religious in the Convent of the Soeurs de la Chapelle au Riboul. The Congregation had been founded at the end of the XVII century in the parish of la Chapelle au Riboul. At first (1663) it had been dedicated to charity, but in 1769, Madame Taulard opened a small school for girls; then followed the creation of a noviciate for the formation of mistresses of class.<sup>4</sup> Thus the Congregation took on a double work, that of teaching and caring for the sick, and was given the name, "Soeurs d'École et de Charité." Because of the color of their habit, the faithful nick-named them the Grey Sisters (Grisettes.)

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1 Cesbron, p. 200.

2 Ibid.

3 Cahier de doléances de Saint Mars, as quoted in Cesbron, 200.

4 d'Ars, p. 54; Piolin, II, 19-20.

This work grew in scope, and at the death of the foundress, thirty parishes already had a school conducted by the religious of this Congregation. When the Revolution broke out, there were sixty-six in the diocese of Mayenne alone, all of which gave very much edification.<sup>1</sup> Their true religious spirit can be seen in the proof of their fidelity to the Church in not taking the oath. All but ten refused the oath and, as a result, their schools were immediately closed.<sup>2</sup>

Françoise Tréhet was sent in 1783 to Saint Pierre des Landes to open a school; shortly after, Jeanne Véron, who had been teaching at the school in Noyen sur Sarthe, came to join her.

Two dependable witnesses join M. Perrin in characterizing the two sisters of Saint Pierre des Landes as two very extraordinary women in the commune; they were known for their sanctity and their understanding.<sup>3</sup>

All were struck by the firmness of Françoise Tréhet's character, the keenness and the quickness of her intelligence. From the first, she realized the evil that the Revolution was to bring to France, and particularly to the Church. She wrote a letter to some of her confreres showing them the evils of the oath, and the testimony comes down that "they had never seen a letter better written, nor better thought out."<sup>4</sup>

1 Cesbron, p. 201.

2 d'Ars, p. 55.

3 Cesbron, p. 202.

4 Ibid.

Jeanne Véron was known for her piety, her gentleness, and her devotion to the grace of the present moment. With her virtues, natural and supernatural, it is not surprising that she acquired a tremendous influence in the parish and community; this influence was, however, turned against her by the enemies of the faith. The Revolutionary Committee was then in Ernée and it was very active. The President of the Committee was Quantin, the Mayor of Ernée.<sup>1</sup>

Learning that Clément was in the vicinity with the guillotine, Quantin and his Committee got word to the Tribunal that they had victims to offer. Together they drew up a list and placed thereon the names of the two Soeurs de l'École et la Charité de Saint Pierre des Landes. The two had been taken prisoner at the end of February or the beginning of March. However, Jeanne Véron had then been removed to the hospital where she remained until her death. The witnesses testify that in order for her to be condemned they sent for her in the hospital, where the records testify that she had been a patient for several weeks.<sup>2</sup>

Clément's Commission arrived in Ernée March 12, 1794. They remained there until March 20, during which time they executed 38 persons,<sup>3</sup> of whom five were women. One change had been made in the personnel. The secretary was

1 Cesbron, p. 203.

2 Ibid., p204.

3 Ibid.

now Franklin Guilbert, an apostate priest of Manche, who succeeded Chédeville, another apostate priest of Orne.<sup>1</sup> The Tribunal was installed in the church which had been transformed into a Temple of the Goddess of Reason, a few days before. The guillotine was placed in front of the prison where the next victims could watch the death of their former confreres. Perrin in Les Martyrs du Maine (II, 291) tells us that the Committee spent both days and nights in drunkenness and that the trials were just a legal formality.<sup>2</sup> It was on March 13 that Françoise Tréhet was brought before them (23 Ventôse). When leaving the prison, she said to her confreres, "Good-bye, I will never see you here below."<sup>3</sup> She appeared before the Tribunal, but there is no record of the interrogation; this is all that remains:

. . . Religious Françoise Tréhet, a woman aged 37 years, the above Soeur de la Charité de la Chapelle au Riboul, originally of Saint Mars sur la Futaie, and living at Saint Pierre des Landes, never leaving said domicile after arrest . . . is condemned to death . . . and sentence shall be executed immediately.<sup>4</sup>

The historians then complete her interrogation from witnesses who remembered the trial. When asked if she had dressed the wounds of the Vendéen soldiers, she replied:

1 Cesbron, p. 204.

2 Ibid., p. 205.

3 Positio, XXXVIII, 305.

4 Cesbron, p. 205.



"Republicans or Vendéens, they are my brothers in Jesus Christ and I would not refuse the needs of anyone."<sup>1</sup> They then wished her to oblige with the cry, "Vive la République." They even threatened her, "If you do not cry, then you will perish."<sup>2</sup> She answered, "I will never cry that phrase."<sup>3</sup> Then, "To death" President Clément concluded. That day Clément condemned to death ten men and three women. The reports of witnesses say that it was declared that she

was accustomed to hide refractory priests; she did not promise fidelity to the nation; that she was found in the lands of the Chouens and aided them under all circumstances, bringing them provisions and protecting them by her silence.<sup>4</sup>

The same day, the thirteen condemned were led to the scaffold. All along their last journey, Françoise exhorted the other victims to die a good death. In leaving the prison, she intoned the Salve Regina, but the rolling of the drums covered her voice.<sup>5</sup> At the scaffold she took her crucifix and gave it to a soldier, who always preserved this relic.

Jeanne Véron was taken to the Tribunal on 30 Ventôse (March 20) on a small stretcher, for she was completely crippled and appeared as if she were dying. This is a resume of her interrogation:

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1 Positio, XXXVIII, 306.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., XXXVI, 298.

5 Ibid., XXXVIII, 306.

. . . among many Religious Jeanne Véron, aged 28 years, a Grisetite of Saint Pierre des Landes, district of Château Gontier would not take any oath, not even the oath that stated that the Catholic religion was the sole religion in which there was salvation.<sup>6</sup>

Here are the results of the interrogation and the judgment:

In view of the interrogation . . . Jeanne Veron, a Sister of Charity, born in Quelaines and residing in Saint Pierre des Landes is guilty of hiding refractory priests, of formally refusing to take the oath of fidelity to her country, and of protecting the Vendéens with her silence, for she did not betray them. For these . . . the Commission condemns to death . . . Jeanne Véron.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, four chief accusations were levied against the two sisters. First, that they had dressed the wounds and given food to the Vendéens. Secondly, that they had aided the faithful priests in the exercising of their ministry and had secured for the refugees a place to hide and would not reveal it. Thirdly, they had protected the Vendéens by their silence, since they did not denounce them to the revolutionaries. And lastly, they had continually refused to take the oath of Liberty and Equality.

For the hatred of God these impious judges looked to persecute anyone that represented Him here below, especially the priests faithful to His laws, and the religious consecrated to His service who would not renounce Him. This hatred of God was even for His Divine Son, who had instituted the Holy, Roman, Catholic and Apostolic faith, the

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1 Positio, XXXVIII, 306.

2 Ibid., XXXVI, 300.

means by which we are saved. They manifested this hatred in many blasphemies uttered at the trials of these faithful souls. For the most part, it was because of this hatred of God that these women stood before the Revolutionary Tribunal. They went freely and joyously to their death, sacrificing their life for Him.<sup>1</sup>

Marie Lhuillier, the future Sister Monica, was born in Arquenay and baptized November 18, 1744. Her father, Guillaume Lhuillier, and her mother, Marie Sauvage, were excellent Christians who had no other riches but their faith.<sup>2</sup> They both died when they were very young parents and left three small children. Marie was taken by a relative and, at an early age, she watched the animals for her keep. She thus took her place in a line of celebrated saints who tended the flocks - Saint Geneviève, Saint Soulage, Saint Jeanne d'Arc, Saint Germaine Cousin, and Saint Bernadette. She was later employed as a domestic in a family of means in Arquenay.<sup>3</sup> As soon as she was older, she entered the Soeurs de la Miséricorde de Jesus who were charged with the Hospital of Saint Julien de Château Gontier. She entered the noviceship on October 13, 1778, and after the usual probationary period she made her vows.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Positio, XXXVII, 301-302.

2 Moriceau, p. 9.

3 Ibid., p. 13.

4 Ibid., p. 31.

From the moment that she made these vows she was completely given to the engagements she had contracted. Eminent in virtue for such a young person, she continued her apostolate in the hospital of Château Gontier. It was first in 1789 that the rigorous measures of the National Constituent Assembly were felt by her Congregation. In that year, the interdict that forbade the taking of anymore novices arrived, and the following year (1790) novices were to declare in the presence of the municipal authorities whether they intended to remain in the convent or whether they wished to profit by the freedom given them by the Assembly and to return to the world.<sup>1</sup> One after another, the members of the community testified that they wished to live and die in the house to which they were assigned and to remain faithful to their vows. Each one, forty-seven all told, signed such a declaration. They likewise refused the oath prescribed in the Civil Constitution; and for these refusals, they received in 1792 an order to leave their religious house. They continued to remain in their apostolate, and the care they gave to the wounded, revolutionaries included, won them a brief reprieve.<sup>2</sup> The hospital was prone to constant watching by the revolutionaries and one Wednesday evening (about 5:00 P.M.) on February 19, 1794,<sup>3</sup> thirty revolutionaries invaded the Hospital and

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1 Cesbron, p. 220.

2 Moriceau, p. 52.

3 Moriceau, p. 52; Boullier, p. 205.

arrested the 46 sisters, leaving only six to care for the sick presently in the hospital.<sup>1</sup> The rest were taken to the Revolutionary Tribunal and given the choice to take the oath or be condemned to the guillotine. The sisters were then detained in the Convent of the Ursulines and declared "suspects."<sup>2</sup>

While in prison, on April 14, 1794, a member of the Tribunal visited the "criminels". He was determined to make Sister Monica swear:

Since she is a saint, her example will bring the rest in line, or if she resists, she will be condemned and her death will frighten her sisters into giving up their resistance.<sup>3</sup>

He asked them if they had not given some of the goods of the Convent to the poor and wounded Vendéen soldiers. This was a trap - for if they said "Yes", then they were guilty of disposing of goods that belonged to the nation. If they answered "No", they would have been immediately punished, for there was proof to the contrary. The following day a warrant was served on Sister Monica. The Justice of the Peace laid before her the evidence of the theft:

a feather bed, some books, some shirts, a few surplices, veils, wimples, head bands, jackets, two petticoats, three Holy Communion cloths and an ornamented alb . . . all these were given to either refractory priests or soldiers, enemies of the Republic.<sup>4</sup>

1 Positio, XLVII, 367; Boullier, p. 205.

2 Moriceau, p. 55.

3 Ibid., p. 57.

4 Positio, XLIV, 326.



Sister Monica then admitted giving several dish cloths, twelve aprons and some hand towels to one of the workers at the hospital; she could not remember the rest.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of this interview it was decided by the judge that she was guilty of disposing of goods belonging to the nation, and that she, and anyone else who had refused to take the oath, were guilty of forming a counter-revolutionary movement.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, she was to be sent to the Military Commission situated in Laval to be judged on these treasonable actions.<sup>3</sup>

The Military Commission which would condemn her to death was the Huchedé Commission, but this commission was neither less blood-thirsty nor impious than the Clément Commission. On face value she was being tried for giving away a few towels and some clothing that belonged to the nation. But this was only a blind - she would not take the oath; that was the real offense! On June 25 she was called before the Tribunal.<sup>4</sup> The evidence was presented and then the ultimatum either to take the oath or to be a victim of the guillotine. She preferred the latter: "I prefer a million times to die rather than take the oath which is a threat to the loss of my soul."<sup>5</sup>

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1 Moriceau, p. 58.

2 Positio, XLIII, 323.

3 Ibid., XLVII, 369.

4 Moriceau, p. 67.

5 Positio, XLVII, 377.

The sentence was then rendered:

Marie Lhuillier, called Sister Monica, arraigned and convicted of first having joined the fanatics in counter-revolutionary measures, of refusing to take the formal oath to recognize the Republic, then of despoiling the Hospital of Château Gontier of effects and linen to give to priests, religious and patriots, and of having provoked others not to take the oath. . . . You are condemned to death, Marie Lhuillier, the above-mentioned Hospital Sister of Château Gontier.<sup>1</sup>

When she heard the condemnation, she genuflected and said, "O My God, You have given me such a number of graces, and this final grace of martyrdom, to me who am such a sinner."<sup>2</sup> One last attempt was made for her to swear, but she responded, "O God, to prefer a perishable and passing life to a life glorious and immortal. No! No! above all to die."<sup>3</sup>

Her last words were: "My God, is it fitting for me to die such a sweet death, while You died such a suffering death for me?"<sup>4</sup> It was on Wednesday, within the Octave of Corpus Christi, June 25, 1794 at 7:00 P.M. that Marie Lhuillier, known as Sister Monica in religion, gave her soul willingly to God and in witness of Him. She was fifty years old.<sup>5</sup>

The Revolutionary Commission that would put to death the fourteen martyr priests was created by the representatives

1 Positio, XLV, 333-334.

2 Ibid., XLIV, 331.

3 Ibid., XLVII, 369.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., XLVII, 377.

of the people, Bissy and Bourbotte, to judge "the armed band of brigands rebelling in the Vendée and another class of traitors called the Chouens."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, legally the fourteen priests should not have been tried before it. But the Commission was not troubled with legal points. According to the records, the Revolutionary Commission in Mayenne "had given decisions for 1,094 death penalties."<sup>2</sup> The judgments rendered by the Tribunal were without appeal. The Commission ordained that the victims would be delivered over for the vengeance of the people. This was the tried formula, and execution followed.

The decree of Bissy and Bourbotte designated the number and the names of the Commission. Clément, Justice of the Peace of Ernée, was to exercise the function of President; Citizen Volcler, the Mayor of Lassay, that of Public Accusateur; Citizen Pannard, a merchant and member of the Watch Committee of Mayenne; Marie Colinière, Justice of the Peace at Juvigne, and Citizen Guilbert, an Attorney of Laval, Judges and Recording Secretary respectively.

What were these judges like? It is said that Clément was a notary and cloth merchant of Ernee and was named as Justice of the Peace in 1792. Pannard, a shoeing smith, was ignorant, brutal, gross and nearly always in a state of drunkenness. When he was chosen by Bissy and Bourbotte, he received these orders: "Kill all those that

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1 Cesbron, p. 135.

2 Moriceau, p. 86.

shall present themselves."<sup>1</sup> Marie de la Colinière, "who had taken a second name of Brutus" was notary of the district of Mayenne before the Revolution. Following the outbreak of the Revolution, he was named Justice of the Peace at Juvigné, but he was cruel and cowardly. Faur, born in Ariège, was considered one of the most cruel and savage revolutionaries in the city. It was on his presses that Sans Culotte du Département de la Mayenne was printed.<sup>2</sup>

The other two members of the Commission were Guilbert and Volcler. They were both apostate priests, who became "providers for the guillotine."<sup>3</sup> Guilbert, the ex-curé of Viviers, apostacized in 1793 and took the name of Franklin.<sup>4</sup> Volcler, the curate of Saint Fraimbault de Lassay, took the oath in all sincerity and implemented the revolution in any manner he could.<sup>5</sup> In Mayenne, Volcler had wished to have guillotined all the eligible religious of Calvaire and la Chapelle au Riboul who were interned. It was the revolutionaries, his friends, that opposed him.<sup>6</sup> These six individuals had one trait in common:

They were animated one by another, with a fierce hatred against God, against the priests and religious, and against all those who followed God, or resembled His cause in any way: Churches, chapels,

1 Cesbron, p. 137.

2 Ibid., p. 138.

3 Ibid.

4 Le Coq, V, 122.

5 Ibid., IV, 85.

6 See Le Coq, VII, 86-92.

altars and the representation of Calvary, sacred vessels, church bells, and other ornaments of divine worship.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the body that judged the fourteen priests of Laval. The day chosen for the unspeakable massacre was January 21, 1794. It was the intention to celebrate the first anniversary of the death of Louis XVI. The members of the Revolutionary Commission said to one another:

The twenty-first is near. . . . On that day . . . order the executioner. Let us execute the fourteen old infirm calotins entered at Patience.<sup>2</sup>

After a most humiliating and injurious subjection, they were led to the Tribunal.<sup>3</sup> First they were interrogated. Reproduced below are the salient parts of the questioning.

M. Turpin du Cormier

Clément: What is your name?

Priest: Turpin du Cormier.

Clément: Your name in baptism?

Priest: Jean.

Clément: Your state in life?

Priest: Priest and councilor of Trinity.

Clément: Have you taken the oath prescribed by law?

Priest: No

Clément: The second of Liberty-Equality?

Priest: No

Clément: Did you counsel the other priests either in conversation or confession not to take the oath?

Priest: Citizen, when it was demanded of us to take the oath, we were assembled, but after having conferred on the matter, our conscience would not let us take the oath.

1 Cesbron, p. 140.

2 Positio, XVIII, 205; Piolin, II, 539.

3 Ibid., XXII, 258.



Clément: Where did you hold this assembly?

Priest: In a room near the presbytery, the ordinary place for ecclesiastical deliberations, in the presence of M. le procureur-syndic, M. Laroche.

Clément: Do you wish to take the oath today?

Priest: No.

Clément: But this oath is only to obey the law. It is for you to encourage your priests to take it. Will you take the oath of 1793 (Liberty-Equality oath)?

Priest: No, it is also opposed to the law of God.<sup>1</sup>

#### M. Philippot

To the first questions M. Philippot did not answer because he was very dear. Clement asked him this sole question.

Clément: Do you wish to obey the law and take the oath that is prescribed?

Priest: O No, No, Aided by the grace of God, I wish never to defile my old age.<sup>2</sup>

#### M. Duchesne

Clément: What is your name?

Priest: Duchesne, priest and canon of St. Michel.

Clément: Have you taken the prescribed oath?

Priest: - - - (He did not answer the question, but stated that he should not be held there nor be considered as a functionary. He was quickly interrupted by the command to take the oath. He refused vehemently.)<sup>3</sup>

Some of the patriots, less bloodthirsty than the judges, remarked that "He is a saint! What a pity that one so brave must perish, he should not die, but he will have to be guillotined."<sup>4</sup>

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1 Positio, XIV, 171-173; XVII, 201-202; XVIII, 207; XIX, 246, 252, 234-236; Piolin, II, 541; Boullier, 185.

2 Ibid., XIV, 170; XIX, 247; Boullier, 187-188; Piolin, II, 544.

3 Ibid., XIV, 173-174.

4 Cesbron, 144.

## M. Ambroise

Clément: For you, I hope that you will not rebel against the law. You do not seem to share all the sentiments of your confreres.

Priest: I truly wish to obey the government, but I do not wish to renounce my religion.

Clément: Are you not a Jansenist?

Priest: I agree that I had the misfortune to adopt the opinions that did not conform to the holy doctrines of our Faith, but God has given me the grace to see my error. I have abjured them before my confreres and I am reconciled to the Church. Ready to appear before God, I am happy to wash my crime in my blood.

Clément: Did you take the oath of 1791?

Priest: No.

Clément: The second of Liberty and Equality?

Priest: No

Clément: Do you wish to take it at this moment?

Priest: No<sup>1</sup>

## M. Pellé

To the question posed as to his age, M. Pellé answered: "74 years." Guilbert observed, "He has had a long time to eat bread." Then followed questions concerning the oath of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.

Priest: You asked me for the oath of 1791. This oath is today a derision and the Civil Constitution of the Clergy is no less crushing than the constitution of the kingdom. This oath that you wish me to take in order to save my life, I refuse. My conscience does not permit me to take it.

As President Clément insisted M. Pellé, a very lively character, answered: "You bore me with your devil of an oath, I shall never take it, I shall never take it, I shall never take it."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Positio*, XIV, 167-168; XVII, 203; XVIII, 207; XIX, 236, 247-48; Piolin, II, 542-543; Boullier, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 39; XIV, 169-170; XIX, 226, 248; Boullier, p. 186; Piolin, II, 542.

## M. Duliou

Clément: Have you taken the oath?

Priest: No

Clément: Have you the inclination to take it?

Priest: No

Clément: Do you wish to take it now?

Priest: No.<sup>1</sup>

## M. Migoret-Lamberdière

When it was his turn, Migoret looked at the accusateur and reproached him for his ingratitude. "So it is you, Volcler, that now demands my death?" "Do you remember the times that I took you in my home, admitted you to my table, and you treat me thus."

Volcler: The oath or death

Priest: Eh bien, death!

Piolin declares that at the scaffold Volcler, like Judas when he saw his evil being done, tried to move Migoret to take the oath in order to save himself. But Migoret, with a holy joy and calmness, said: "There are already four heads in the basket, mine will be the fifth."<sup>2</sup>

MM. Morin, Moulé, Gastineau, André and Thomas

No real details are known of these interrogations; it is conjectured that they were all asked the same questions and all refused to take the oath.<sup>3</sup>

1 Positio, XIV, 174; XIX, 235.

2 Ibid., XIV, 173; Cesbron, p. 147.

3 Boullier, p. 188; Piolin, II, 544-545.

## R. P. Triquerie

Clément: Have you taken the oath of 1791?

Priest: No

Clément: The oath of Liberty-Equality?

Priest: No, Citizen, I was in my bed sick when the oath was laid down.

Volcler: That does not dispense you. You should have been brought on your bed to sign the oath.

Priest: Citizen, I am a son of St. Francis; by my state, I am dead to the world and I ignore the law. My sole occupation is to pray to God, and I pray for the welfare of my country. This I have never omitted doing.

Clément: The oath that we enjoin on you is simply to be faithful to the Republic.

Priest: Truly, No, Citizen! I will be faithful only to Jesus Christ until my last breath.<sup>1</sup>

## M. Gallot

Clément: Have you taken the oath of 1791, the oath of Liberty and Equality?

Priest: - - - (He replied that he had not taken the oaths and he asked that they be explained to him.)

Clément: They are to be faithful to the Republic and not to profess any religion, not the Catholic nor any other.

Priest: Citizen, I will always be a Catholic.

Clément: Publicly?

Priest: Yes, publicly, I shall always say that I am a Catholic and I never wish to wound Jesus Christ with my infidelity.

Guilbert cried: He says that he will always profess the Catholic Faith, then why not the law that defends him? Let him be guillotined.

Priest: Let it be done soon (He added tranquilly.)<sup>2</sup>

The interrogations now ended, the apostate Volcler asked for his former confreres the penalty of death and proposed to the Tribunal that Père Turpin du Cormier, guilty of having instructed the other clergy, be executed last.

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<sup>1</sup> Boullier, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> Positio, XIV, 174-175; XVIII, 206; XIX, 235, 249; XX, 202; Boullier, pp. 185-186; Piolin, II, 541-542.

They deliberated a moment and then the President, Clément, pronounced the judgment. After hearing the sentence of death, the fourteen confessors of the faith said in a loud voice so all could hear: "Deo Gratias." They gave each other the Kiss of Peace, confessed their sins to one another and sang the Salve Regina.<sup>1</sup>

The execution of the Fourteen was not long in coming. The interrogations had begun at 8:00 A.M. and the executions were completed by noon.<sup>2</sup> When they left the interrogation site, Père Turpin du Cormier was in the lead; but when the cortege arrived at the scaffold, he was placed last, as he would be the last to die, according to Volcler's wishes.<sup>3</sup> When he heard the first head fall, he cried, "He is in heaven."<sup>4</sup> The guillotine was to fall 19 times in quick succession.<sup>5</sup> Fervent Catholics were at the windows of nearby houses, and they were seized with both horror and admiration. In one of the houses were four members of the Revolutionary Tribunal. A glass in one hand, they saluted the people with each head that fell and cried, "Vive la République."<sup>6</sup> When Guilbert saw M. André mount the scaffold,

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1 Positio, XVIII, 208. See next page for text of condemnation. (XXXVIII, 275.)

2 Boullier, p. 184; Positio, XVIII, 205.

3 Positio, I, 5.

4 Ibid., XIX, 251.

5 Cesbron, p. 152.

6 Positio, XVIII, 209.





he took a glass of red wine and toasted him.<sup>1</sup> "To your health, I shall drink this, as if it were your blood;" and the venerable prelate replied, "And I, I am going to pray for you." Père Turpin du Cormier ascended the scaffold, the last, after having recited the Te Deum.<sup>2</sup> He kissed the ground where his confreres' blood had flowed and then placed his own neck on the block. When his head was separated from his body, the executioner took the head and showed it to the people and cried, "Vive la République."<sup>3</sup>

The bodies of the fourteen priests were put on a rubbish cart and taken to la Croix Bataille;<sup>4</sup> it was there on the route to Angers that they were buried.

On August 9, 1816, the bodies of the fourteen priests were exhumed and transported to Avénières. Two days later they were placed in the church and a monument was raised in their memory; their names inscribed and the cause of their glorious death.<sup>5</sup> By an ordinance of April 15, 1839, the Bishop of Laval, with the hope of being able to have them canonized, began to gather information concerning the martyrs. In September of 1840 a copper plaque was placed in the Church of the Trinity in Laval to commemorate

1 Positio, I, 17; II, 68.

2 Ibid., II, 29.

3 Ibid., XVIII, 209.

4 Ibid., XVIII, 210.

5 Ibid., XVIII, 210-211.

their heroic martyrdom,<sup>1</sup> "but there had been no acts of public worship."<sup>2</sup> This is very important for the speedy process of their canonization.

The canonical inquest of 1839 was a work of the utmost importance. This was the work of M. Isidore Boullier, cure of the Trinity. He was born in 1791 in Ernée, but moved to Laval in 1792. As he grew up he was interested in a legal career and received a law degree. At the age of 35 he renounced his judicial career and entered the Seminary of Saint Sulpice and was ordained in 1830. In 1835 he was named curé of the Trinity. As Jean Turpin du Cormier was one of his predecessors as pastor, he began to look into the historical events of his death. He talked to many of the actual witnesses and thus began his work, Mémoires Ecclésiastiques concernant la ville de Laval et ses environs which was completed in 1842, a work of exceptional documentary value.<sup>3</sup> Thus in 1841, all was ready to open the Process of Beatification of the Fourteen Martyrs. Why then the long wait? M. Boullier in a letter to Monseigneur Bouvier gives a reason:

It does not seem that anywhere in France have steps of this kind been taken for any of the victims of the Revolution. Circumstances have never been favorable for such an enterprise and at present are less so than ever.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Positio, XXVI, 267.

2 Sacred Congregation of Rites, Positio super non cultu (Rome: Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1941) pp. 22, 30.

3 Gesbron, p. 245.

4 Ibid., p. 246.

Then in 1855, the date of the erection of the diocese of Laval, all attention was given to the organization and construction of the diocese and the two seminaries. It was not until 1917 that Monseigneur Grellier brought the cause to Rome because

If we glorify the servants of God that were so illustrious in the religious history of Mayenne, it is with the hope that our dear children (present) will live worthy lives by their faith and their piety, that they will continue in the noble tradition realizing the tradition of their fathers and enjoying the benefit of Christian education, that they will be under the authority of capable masters and mistresses and that they will reaffirm their belief in Catholic dogma and virtues commanded by the Gospel and the Church.<sup>1</sup>

The introduction of the cause finally drew to a close on May 3, 1955, with a promulgation of the decree that dispensed the martyrs from miracles because they were martyrs.

This testifies that the martyrs Jean Baptiste Turpin du Cormier and his companions are dispensed with all miracles usually needed for the process of canonization, and it is accorded that all proceeds ulteriorly.<sup>2</sup>

Given in Rome, May 3 in the year of Our Lord, 1955.

Gaetan Card. Cicognani  
Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites

Alphonse Carinci  
Archbishop of Sileucie, Secretary.

By this decree the way was opened for the solemn glorification of the martyrs. Reverend Father Antoine Soirat, of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and the Immaculate

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1 Gesbron, pp. 246-247.

2 Ibid., p. 254.



Heart of Mary, Postulator of the Cause, addressed the following petition to the Holy Father.

The anniversary of the foundation of the Diocese of Laval was created by the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX, on June 30, 1855. Nothing could prove more agreeable to the Church in France, and particularly to the Christian population of Maine, than the elevation to the altars of the 19 illustrious servants of God.

They were part of the innumerable victims chosen by God in the troubled years of the French Revolution, who paid with their lives for the fidelity of their conscience to the Church and to God.<sup>1</sup>

Then the 19 martyrs are introduced by name and the reasons for the canonization. He asked that the 19 be beatified in the centenary year.

On May 17, 1955, after the judgment of Reverend Father Salvatore Natucci, Promotor General of the Faith, the eminent Cardinals proposed to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, the Most Reverend Prelates, the Officers and Consultors of the same Congregation to express by a vote "Tuto" their judgment whether or not the Beatification could proceed.<sup>2</sup>

After which the Sovereign Pontiff, following the promulgation of the decree on the subject, agreeing with the demand of the postulation, established that the beatification of the Venerable Martyrs would be solemnly celebrated in the Vatican Basilica, the Third Sunday after Pentecost,

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1 Cesbron, p. 255.

2 Ibid., p. 259.



SANCTISSIMI DOMINI NOSTRI

PII

DIVINA PROVIDENTIA

PAPAE XII

LITTERAE APOSTOLICAE

QUIBUS

VENERABILES DEI PAMULI

**IOANNES BAPTISTA TURPIN DU CORMIER**

EIUSQUE XII SOCII SACERDOTES SAECULARES

**IOANNES BAPTISTA TRIQUERIE**

SACERDOS EX ORDINE FRATRUM MINORUM CONVENTUALIUM

EIUSDEM SOCIUS

**MARIA LHUILIER**

EIUSQUE III SOCIAE

**IACOBUS BURIN, Parochus,**

MARTYRES,

BEATI RENUNTIATUR



TYPIS POLYGLOTTIS VATICANIS

MDCCCLV

June 19, 1955. The Lavallois erected a monument to their diocesan martyrs on the fountain in the public square of their city.

On this spot on January 21, 1794, fourteen priests whose names are in the book of life, having made their choice between the oath and death, showed with their blood the purity of their faith. And conformably to their last words to one another, they gave the faithful an excellent example both of living and of dying.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Positio, XXIII, 261.

## CONCLUSION

During the month following the death of the last martyrs, the Reign of Terror subsided. This second phase of the National Convention was succeeded by a third and last phase, the Thermidorian reaction. The work of the Thermidorians assumed two forms - the obliteration of the remaining vestiges of the Terror and the completion of the task for which the Convention had originally been summoned. The last phase brought less rigorous laws against the Church, but the schism that was created was not healed for another seven years.

The French Revolution in the period 1789-1799 had succeeded in disrobing the Church of vast power, numerous privileges, and much property. The Revolution established "liberty of religion" and succeeded in making a large segment of the Church a branch of the civil government. The modern forces of secularism were taking hold, yet France was still a Catholic country. Neither the Revolution nor its attempts at a synthetic faith had altered the situation, though it did succeed in creating a Schismatic or National Church for ten years. This problem was healed by the Concordat of 1801 between Napoleon Bonaparte and Pope Pius VII.

The French Revolution was a terrible catastrophe brought on by conditions which had been accumulating; it

meant the destruction of a regime, cruelty, and suffering - but it brought out a most glorious heroism on the part of many (especially exemplified by the nineteen martyrs of Laval.) Yet two points are necessary to remember for a true historical evaluation. First, Catholicism was before and after the Revolution considered as a distinctive French tradition. The cahiers and Concordat of 1801 bear this out. Secondly, the growth of a secular and national spirit demanded independence from Papal power. This self-sufficiency was for expediency. The complete subordination of the Church to the State effected by the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was only vaguely foreshadowed at the outbreak of the Revolution. It was never a cold and calculated stripping of power; the need of the Church's wealth evoked this measure. The measures enacted by the Thermidorians and the Concordat of 1801 prove that a more balanced relationship was the object of the State for the Church. The Revolution never attempted to change any dogma of the Church, for that would have been heresy. The Revolution sought a strong National Church with the State supplanting the Papacy. This was schism and the cause for much suffering. In most cases the faithful and the clergy did not submit to the Constitutional Oath and for their refusal to swear allegiance to the schismatic Church they suffered both in spirit and blood - the usual result of revolution.

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