

The Suppression of Religious Houses in France 1880, and the Attitude of Representative British Press

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I

The suppression of religious houses in 1880 was but one of the climatic points in the overall educational question of the early Third French Republic.¹ That question was a particular manifestation of the wider conflict between the Catholic Church and the “Principles of 1789,” and therefore, was inextricably interwoven with contemporary religious and political policies. One of the cardinal principles of the Third Republic was its anticlericalism,² which, in the guise of educational reforms, burst forth in the drive against the religious orders.

After 1875, the Catholics legally enjoyed freedom of instruction at all levels, and their institutions were all managed in one form or another by the

¹ Reconstruction of the events is based largely on the following sources : E. Acomb, *The French Laic Laws: 1879-1889*, (New York, 1941); P. Bert, *Le cléricisme: question d'éducation nationale*, (Paris, 1900); E. Barbier, *Histoire du catholicisme libéral et du catholicisme social en France 1870-1914*, 5 vols., (Bordeaux, 1924), vols. I and II; J. E. C. Bodley, *The Church in France*, (London, 1906), and *France*, 2 vols. (New York, 1898); A. Dansette, *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine*, 2 vols., Rev. ed. (Paris, 1951); A. Debidour, *L'Eglise catholique et l'Etat sous la Troisième République*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1906), vol. I: 1870-1889; E. Dufeulle, *L'Anticléricalisme avant et pendant notre République*, (Paris, n.d. [1911]); G. Hanotaux, *Contemporary France*, 4 vols. (New York, 1903-1909); R. P. Lecanuet, *L'Eglise de France sous la Troisième République*, 2 vols., New ed., (Paris, 1910); G. Weill, *Histoire du catholicisme libéral en France 1828-1908*, (Paris, 1909) and *Histoire de l'idée laïque en France au XIX^e siècle*, (Paris, 1929); R. Acollas, “Jules Ferry et l'école laïque,” *Revue politique et parlementaire*, CLIV (1933); J. Rivero, “L'idée laïque et la réforme scolaire,” *Revue pol. et parl.*, CXLVIII (1931).

² Cf. Weill, *Histoire de catholicisme*, p. 201; and Debidour, I, 147.
Reminiscing about those days, one of Ferry's assistants later wrote that “En matière de l'enseignement plus qu'en aucune autre, nous avions un mot de ralliement: ‘le cléricisme, voilà l'ennemi’.” F. Buisson, *La loi laïque extraits de discours et d'écrits*. 2nd ed., (Paris, 1913), p. 253.

Church. In 1879, claiming the monopoly in education for itself, the State first of all, had to exclude by legislation, the participation of the Church in that field.

As soon as their victory in the Senatorial elections of January 1879 was consummated, the republicans became increasingly intolerant, and launched their offensive against the Church. On February 4, Waddington formed a new Cabinet in which Jules Ferry became Minister of Education. Endowed with mediocre intelligence but with a strong will and great energy for work, Ferry set out to fulfill an educational program in accordance with his own postulate that the “State wants, demands and will re-take all domination” in education.³ Being given the portfolio of Education, Ferry was so engrossed in the reform of education that he kept the same Ministry in five different Cabinets, in order that he could carry out the plan and the policy. In the long preparation for the task before him, Jules Ferry was inspired by Condorcet, guided by Quinet, and taught by Comte.⁴

The determination of Ferry, after whom the laws were named, to reform the existing system of education caused the government to expel the teaching religious orders in 1880, and demonstrated the use made of education as a pretext to enforce an antagonistic political policy.

On March 15, 1879 Ferry introduced two bills: the first, on a High Council of Education and Academic Councils; the second, on Freedom of Higher Education. This was the beginning of Ferry’s educational reforms.⁵

The bill on Freedom of Higher Education, in essence, was designed to revoke the Law of 1875. Of the ten of its brief clauses, particularly controversial was Article Seven. Its wording, and its inclusion in a bill aimed ostensibly at reform of higher education, made in the *cause célèbre* of the struggle and an object of passionate polemics.

Article Seven of this bill read as follows: “*No person belonging to an unauthorized religious community is allowed to govern a public or private educational establishment of whatsoever order or to give instruction therein.*”

Historian Hanotaux called this article “. . . irritating in character and

³ Cited by Lecanuet, II, 18.

⁴ Cf. G. Goyau, *L’Ecole d’aujourd’hui*, (Paris, 1910) p. 72; and Weill, *Histoire de l’idée laïque*, p. 120, n. 3.

⁵ The first of these two bills was to rescind the provisions of the Law of 1873 for an enlarged basis of the Councils. On July 19, 1879, after only two days of debate, this bill was passed in the Chamber of Deputies. Lecanuet, II, 31.

Among other provisions, this new law was to exclude from either Council all clerics of all denominations. *Ibid.*, II, 19.

anti-Catholic in particular, [and] striking with no preliminary warning.”⁶ By it, the government had made a declaration of its position regarding the majority of religious orders. To checkmate the Jesuits and their numerous and remarkably well-administered educational institutions was the obvious aim of the article. According to Debidour, it was “... a most telling blow which the Republic could have brought down on the illicit congregations and on the most powerful as well as the most unpopular of all... the *Society of Jesus*.”⁷

II

Stunned momentarily, the Catholics quickly rallied to offer strong resistance to the new bill. In all parts of France, the bishops protested, often vehemently. Cardinals Guibert and Bonnechose were among the most active of the prelates. By the end of May, the petitions occasioned by this article contained more than one-half million signatures, despite all the handicaps put in their way.⁸ By the summer there accumulated 1.8 million signatures.⁹

Jules Ferry said on April 23, 1879: “If the republic does not act at this time, when it is all powerful, if it does not profit by this maximum force which belongs to every new government ... when will it do so?”¹⁰

The debate on the Ferry bill on higher education opened in the Chamber of Deputies on June 16, 1879 and was very stormy. On June 27, 1879, describing the nature of the education given by the Jesuits as clearly anti-modern and anti-revolutionary, he admitted: “We attack the Jesuits because the Jesuits and their adherents are the soul of the organization which we have been combatting for the past seven years.”¹¹ Asking the deputies in the Chamber for support, Ferry exhorted them: “If you do not pass Article Seven, gentlemen ... you will have accorded for all time to this country free instruction by the Jesuits. Is there one among you who desires to take the responsibility for this?”¹²

And so it went. In an atmosphere polluted by bickering, on July 9, Article Seven and the new bill as a whole on Higher Education were passed

⁶ *Op. cit.*, IV, 448. This Article was to “... rend asunder the Republican party and the country...” and it was a “...trumpet call for warfare on religious beliefs.” J. Bainville, *The French Republics*, (London, 1936) p. 77. For the full English text of this Bill, see E. About, “Clerical Education in France,” *Nineteenth Century*, VI (Sept. 1879).

⁷ *Op. cit.*, I, 210.

⁸ Lecanuet, II, 24 and n. 1.

⁹ Barbier, II, 28.

¹⁰ J. Ferry, *Discours*, III, 59, cited by Acomb, p. 123.

¹¹ Cited by Hanotaux, IV, 469.

¹² *Ibid.*, IV, 470.

by the Chamber with a majority of better than two to one.¹³

During the summer recess, agitation over Article Seven reached every corner of the French countryside. Both the episcopate and leading Catholic men carried on the campaign with numerous speeches in Paris and across the country. Not to be outdone, the republican leaders, solidly backed by the anti-clerical press, did the same, soliciting popular approval for their action.

Being suspicious of Ferry's preponderance in the government, and lacking enthusiasm for Article Seven, just before Christmas 1879, Waddington resigned. The President, Jules Grévy, asked De Freycinet to form a new Cabinet, in which Ferry kept the same portfolio.

Without haste, the Senate committee, with Jules Simon as its chairman and reporter, studied the Ferry bills, which did not come up for debate in the Upper House until January 23, 1880. The first Ferry bill was passed by the Senate on February 23, 1880 in its entirety. The same day, the Ferry bill on Higher Education was introduced. The first six articles were discussed one by one, and on March 2, they were all passed. Then came the crux of the matter: Article Seven.

III

The major exchange in the debate was between the two Jules, Simon and Ferry, each representing the acerbity of his respective House in the Assembly. In a powerful harangue, Ferry surveyed the history of secondary and higher education after the Revolution. Ostracizing the teaching methods of the Jesuits and stressing the political and social aspects of the educational question, Ferry called on all "who have received the inheritance of the French Revolution to join" in this conflict, because their first duty was to "... save the soul of the new generation from the influence of those who disdain the political and social order of the world."¹⁴

Jules Simon was the next to address the Senate. Moved by the boldness of Ferry's speech, he proceeded to shatter Article Seven. He found the article useless because the fears which Ferry had expressed had no foundation. Next, it was ineffective and would achieve nothing. The Jesuit dogmas to which Ferry objected were taught wherever there was a Catholic priest, and would continue to be taught by Jesuit successors, secular or regular. Thirdly, it was, unfortunately, unjust; and fourthly, it was supremely ill-advised (*impolitique*).¹⁵

Fearing a reversal of sympathy after the impression made by Simon's eloquence upon the Senators, Prime Minister De Freycinet intervened on behalf of Ferry. His words revealed his own helplessness, and foreshadowed

¹³ Barbier, II, 28.

¹⁴ Cited by Hanotaux, IV, 520f.

¹⁵ Based on a citation in Lecanuet, II, 43

the future: "... it is impossible to escape a similar law, or some other law, which probably will be less moderate than this one ... *"If this measure is not passed, the executive power will, in any case, be forced to apply laws much more harsh than these.* Vote for Article Seven, it is the most moderate you can obtain."¹⁶ In the end, the Senate rejected the article on March 15, 1880 exactly one year after Ferry had introduced the bill.¹⁷ Except for Article Seven, the two Ferry bills were now passed by both Houses of the Assembly. Though Article Seven was thereby buried, the issue behind it was not.

The same day, the Chamber started the second deliberation on the bill on Higher Education. Though he could see no alternative but the application of the Law, De Freycinet suggested that the government should accept the verdict of the Senate. The onus, therefore, was placed squarely on the Chamber. The leaders of the major republican groups then agreed in principle that, as far as the spirit of Article Seven went, its rejection in the Senate was not binding in the Chamber. The next day, by a formal motion, the Chamber expressed confidence in the government, relying on its perseverance in the application of laws relating to non-authorized religious associations. Without debate, the Chamber then passed the bill on Higher Education as it was returned from the Senate, and the Law was promulgated on March 18.

Perhaps in order to set the mood for the bold action which was to follow, a Deputy, Paul Bert, spoke at length at a private meeting on March 21 in Le Havre. A few ideas expressed on that occasion illustrated the principal avenue of his own thoughts, as well as that of Ferry, Brisson, Gambetta *et hoc genus omne*. The Jesuits were the main target of his invective:

These alleged teachers have placed themselves outside of society by their vows, discipline and doctrines including their garb ... we cannot bear to see the education of youth entrusted to them any longer ... in their eyes, France comes long after Rome; their teaching crammed with mystical nonsense, is a daily protest against the most precious of things that the French Revolution bequeathed to us : freedom of conscience.¹⁸

The government was committed to yield to the antagonism toward the Jesuits. But few anticipated the extremes to which it was ready to go. The dead article seven was to exclude the Jesuits from education; the government now prepared a measure to exclude them from France itself.

IV

¹⁶ Cited by Lecanuet, II, 44 and Hanotaux, IV, 52. My italics.

¹⁷ The rejection was by a vote of 187:103, and "... Christian France drew an immense sigh of relief." Barbier, II, 29..

¹⁸ Bert, p. 118.

On March 29 the President signed two Decrees to carry out this decision. The provisions of the first of the *Decrees of March 29* allowed the Jesuits, specifically, three months in which to disperse and to evacuate the establishments which they occupied. The second Decree demanded that all other non-authorized orders apply, within the same period, for authorization from the government.¹⁹

From then on, this radically anti-clerical measure dropped all pretensions of being motivated by anything but political reasons. Hanotaux stated that "... Free thought and Free masonry intervened no less energetically, convinced that nothing could be done in France until she was released from Roman Catholic influence."²⁰

Conversely, just three days before the Decrees struck and stunned the Catholics, Cardinal Bonnechose wrote to the Pope: "I can only acknowledge that the thoughtless imprudence of many Catholic laymen has occasioned this violent reaction against the religious communities and against the Church."²¹

Following publication of the Decrees, the highly-aroused emotions of the Catholics in France were contrasted by restraint and caution in the Vatican. The French Ambassador sought to persuade the Pope, Leo XIII, and others in the Curia to abandon the Jesuits in effect, by allowing them to vacate France so that the remaining orders might be spared.²²

The Pope, supported by the Cardinals, did not assent to such a transaction. Thus, the policy of the Vatican evolved: it judiciously refrained from actively engaging in the conflict, which was, in reality, an internal affair of France; yet it remained steadfast in the face of diplomatic pleas to counsel the Jesuits and others into submission to the governmental ordinances against them.

In France, Catholics, lay and clergy, unanimously sprang to their feet. Universally aroused, they allowed more rein to their emotions than to a sober analysis of the situation. As in the past, but even more energetically, the bishops raised the cry in defence of the threatened Congregations. Bishop Bouret told the Jesuits: "Your cause is that of the Church itself. We will make your pain ours. Your persecutions are ours."²³ In this spirit, the secular clergy resolutely adhered to the episcopal protests. All the laymen joined in,

¹⁹ There were nine religious congregations engaged in teaching at this time, but only the Lazarists among them were authorized to teach in accordance with a decree of July 27, 1876.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, IV, 526.

²¹ Cited by Hanotaux, IV, 528, n. 1.

²² *Cf.* Lecanuet, II, 60f. On the activities of ambassador Desprez in Rome at this time, see Barbier, II, 34f.

²³ Cited by Lecanuet, II, 49.

and the leaders among them undertook a tour of the country to campaign against the Decrees.

Nor did the affected orders remain idle. Assuming the Jesuits irrevocably condemned, the remaining orders considered the second Decree as having left ajar a door to some accommodation. The Superiors of various orders in Paris met at the Oratorian house and agreed unanimously to endorse two essential points: to assert solidarity in their ranks; and to discountenance authorization. In addition, they decided to hold a plenary assembly on April 27, to which all Superiors throughout the country were invited.

At this meeting, more than sixty Houses across the country were represented. After a brief discussion, they emphatically reiterated their unity and their decision to decline compliance with the Decree. The lines were drawn; there was nothing more but to await the hour of reckoning: the execution of the Decrees.²⁴

Except those actively engaged in teaching, for whom the moratorium expired on August 31, the deadline for the Jesuits' evacuation was June 29. They had made no move to comply with the Decree. Bent on their expulsion, the government saw no alternative but to use force.

At dawn on June 30, members of the Paris police called at various local Jesuit establishments, broke in, and began ejecting the priests, most of whom were old and infirm. The prefect of police, Andrieux, a Free-thinker himself, supervised the operation, and left this description:

The clearing of the houses lasted a long time; it was a painful matter for those responsible for its accomplishment. The police met with passive resistance, and had to turn defenceless priests into the street; their prayerful attitude, their calm, resigned expression contrasted painfully with the use of public force.²⁵

That same morning, almost at the same hour and in the same manner, the wholesale expulsion of the Jesuits was carried out across France. They were thus purged on schedule and almost without incident. There were numerous touching and dramatic scenes. For example: in Toulouse, a former army chaplain, ninety-year-old Father Guzy was the first Jesuit expelled. Bearing on his chest the cross of the Legion of Honour, he was helped out, while the *gendarmes* who knew the old priest cried and saluted.²⁶

V

²⁴ Description of this phase based closely on Barbier, II, 30-36.

²⁵ L. Andrieux, *Souvenirs d'un préfet de police*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1885), I, 229.

²⁶ Lecanuet, II, 63. Jesuit of foreign nationality under the diplomatic protection of their respective countries were exempted from expulsion, at least temporarily.

The firmness bordering on brutality with which the expulsion was carried out, and the widespread reprobation it caused, placed the government in an embarrassing situation. Within virtually a week, the Prime Minister assumed a mollifying attitude, while a certain number of prelates began to show conciliatory inclinations.

By virtue of his position, the Archbishop of Algiers, Lavigerie, had good contacts within governmental circles, at the same time enjoying a considerable reputation in the Vatican. He was thus well qualified as a mediator. In June, he travelled to France, detouring through Rome, where the Pontiff, seeing little chance for the Jesuits, asked him to endeavour to save the remaining orders.²⁷ From the moment of his arrival at Paris, Archbishop Lavigerie undertook a series of confidential conferences, particularly with De Freycinet.

On June 20, the prelate was able to inform the papal nuncio, Czacki, that a formula for solution of the impasse could be reached. The government could overlook the failure of the Congregations to apply for authorization, if the Superiors would sign a *Declaration* disavowing any intention of political hostility or opposition to the existing institutions of the country.

This solution was favoured initially. But, after consultations with Cardinal Guibert and having witnessed the expulsion of the Jesuits, the Committee of Superiors unanimously rejected it. Archbishop Lavigerie was not discouraged by this refusal. Pointing out the potential damage of such a stand in a letter to the Pope, he blamed it on an obduracy to “preserve ill-contracted political alliances,” and entreated the Pontiff that he alone could break those ties.²⁸ On the other hand, in order to expedite a solution, De Freycinet entered into direct negotiation with Rome through his own diplomatic channels.

The silence concerning the remaining orders was broken on August 10, when Leo XIII wrote to Cardinal Bonnechose saying that he had been persuaded by episcopal letters of a possible way out of the dilemma. At the same time certain assurances he had received from the French government confirmed his hope of being able to save the congregations from complete dissolution. This could be done by an act which was not at all opposed to the maxims of the Church or the constitutions and rules of each congregation.²⁹ The Pontiff obviously had in mind a compromise solution – the impending *Declaration*.

Only after considerable persuasion, and after being confronted with authentic documents and the papal letter, did the Superiors relent. With heavy hearts, they agreed to sign the *Declaration*. Within a few weeks,

²⁷ Ibid., II, 66.

²⁸ See extract from the letter in Barbier, II, 56.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

declarations from fifty-two male and 280 female orders arrived at the Archbishopric of Paris.³⁰

All negotiations connected with the *Declaration* were conducted in utmost secrecy. The first hints that something might be under way came from De Freycinet in a speech at Montauban on August 20, 1880. He stated that the recent expulsion of the Jesuits had demonstrated the power of the government, which might allow the remaining congregations to take advantage of a law then being prepared to regulate all lay and ecclesiastical associations.

Thinking that the time for discretion was past, the Catholic paper *La Guyenne* on August 30 published the text of the *Declaration*, thereby divulging the whole process. A storm of indignation and protest was raised on both sides. De Freycinet clumsily attempted to weather it by issuing a formal denial of any government engagement with the Pope, but it was of no avail. The ensuing Cabinet crisis exacted its pound of flesh for the radicals in the form of De Freycinet's resignation. On September 19 Jules Ferry, perhaps as a vindication, was called on to form a new Ministry.³¹ An honest attempt to bring about a truce between the Church and the Republic had disintegrated.

All that remained for the Congregations was to die, since the Minister of the Interior, Constans, had pronounced sentence.³² A war of nerves followed, as the papers continued daily to forecast the purge for the next day, or the next. The axe began to fall on the morning of October 16, when the police swooped down on the houses of the Carmelite and Barnabite Fathers in Paris, forcibly evicting them. That same day, all Carmelite Fathers were purged across France, while the Italian order of Barnabites was asked to leave the country immediately.

The operation was suspended for the next three weeks, but apprehension mounted. In many places, the Orders took precautionary measures, raising barricades and mounting sentries. The well-planned raid came at dawn on November 5. An odd assortment of police, their agents, and firemen descended upon eleven houses of various congregations and all were forcibly evicted. The wholesale operation, often requiring *manu militari* to carry it out, was thereby under way.

Among others, a famous and embarrassing incident occurred in a section

³⁰ Lecanuet, II, 74.

³¹ Cf. Hanotaux, IV, 533f. From September 13 to 18, 1880, the Grand Orient Lodge held its annual meeting, "...which may have helped bring about the fall of the Freycinet cabinet and the decision to execute the decrees against the unauthorized orders." Acomb, 117. On that occasion Jules Ferry was honoured. Lecanuet, II, 78.

³² In a letter of September 18, 1880, to the Superiors who had forwarded the Declaration on behalf of their Congregations. For the text, see Lecanuet, II, 80f.

of Tarascon. Acting on a rumour that the monks were preparing for energetic resistance, a whole regiment of infantry, five squadrons of dragoons, and several pieces of artillery were summoned and placed under the command of General Billot. The siege lasted four days. Finally, the troops stormed the door and flushed out – thirty-seven monks engaged in prayers.³³

For various reasons, several communities were spared. In some regions, confronted by the hostility of the local population, the Trappists were spared. The Oratorians, expelled in Tours, were not disturbed in Paris, thanks to the energetic intervention of Dufaure. Certain houses of Eudists and of *Prêtres de la Miséricorde* were allowed to remain, on the pretext that they had no vows. No community of women was dissolved.³⁴

By way of an epitaph, on December 31, 1880, in making up its balance sheet, the French government published the result of its victory 261 communities with 5,643 members were suppressed.³⁵

On that note ended the bitter and colorful first decade of the Third French Republic, in which the struggle for control in education had ramifications and repercussions far beyond the bounds of education. The republican legislation, designed to solve the educational question, fell short of its goal, and only aggravated the struggle, which continued for quite some time, because the clash was, in essence, between two dogmatic and diametrically opposed concepts of life.³⁶

VI

The attitude of the British lay periodicals examined for this study showed a certain underlying similarity, though not for the same reasons, nor from the same motives.

By the quality of their writing, the quantity of their readers, and the

³³ Lecanuet, II, 85.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 80-88, *passim*.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 89.

Some unofficial statistics : In 1880, the Jesuits had fifty-six establishments in all, with 1400 members; but twenty-two of these, with 475 members, were not schools open to the public. *The Times*, March 31, 1880, p. 5.

There were some sixteen non-authorized teaching congregations, with 1556 men in eighty-one establishments. *Dublin Review*, 3rd ser., IV (July, 1880), p. 167.

The grand total of educational establishments run by the Church, regardless of kind, reached 19.574, with approximately 2.2 million children, out of a general total of 4.9 million pupils. Hanotaux, II, 679.

³⁶ In 1889, A. Aulard wrote i.a.: “The fight against clericalism ... has as its object defence of the principle of the Revolution... It is therefore over education that these two parties presently are fighting. The struggle is between the laic university and the religious congregations.” See Bert, Preface vi.

duration of their publishing, the *Tablet* and the *Dublin Review* must be considered as the most renowned Catholic periodicals in England.³⁷ Journalistic first cousins, these two periodicals were as similar in attitude as they were dissimilar in form. The *Dublin Review* published only two articles bearing directly on the situation in France, and these articles indicate a basic agreement with the *Tablet*.³⁸ The *Tablet* therefore remains, more or less, the sole Catholic source examined, and it may be assumed that the opinions of one coincide with those of the other.

At the outset, the *Tablet* accepted the Republican victory in January 1879 and counselled its co-religionists in France to patience and moderation, as the cause of the monarchical restoration seemed untenable.³⁹ But after the Republicans showed their intentions, and Ferry had introduced his Bills in the Chamber, the *Tablet* changed its attitude and espoused the cause of the French Catholics.⁴⁰ From issue to issue, as the plight of the French Catholics became worse, the writings of the *Tablet* became more gloomy, while its sympathetic clamour rose accordingly. Occasioned by the expulsion of the religious orders, that clamour reached its crescendo in the *Tablet's* compassion for the Catholics and resentment against the republicans.⁴¹

The *Tablet's* line of reasoning, especially after March 1880, seems fairly straightforward: that is to say, Republicanism and Radicalism were the chief enemy of the Church;⁴² Gambetta represented all the protagonists of that villainy; there was a deplorable process of de-Christianization in France, caused largely by an equally deplorable upsurge of Comptism, atheism, and anticlericalism, which fostered overt attacks on religion and Catholicism. But there was a warm bond of sympathy for the religious life of the French

³⁷ For a historical sketch and discussion of these two periodicals, see J. J. Dwyer, "The Catholic Press," in G. A. Beck, ed., *The English Catholics: 1850-1950*, (London, 1950).

³⁸ See "Church and School in France," *Dublin Review*, 3rd ser. I (April, 1879) and "The Suppression of the Congregations in France," *ibid.*, IV (July, 1880).

³⁹ Editorial, "French Senatorial Elections," *Tablet*, LIII (January 11, 1879).

⁴⁰ Cf. Editorials: "The French Legislature and the 'Unrecognized' Congregations"; "The French Education Bills"; "The French Education Bills" and "The French Education Bills and the Teaching Congregations." *Tablet*, LIII (March 29; April 5, 12 and 19, 1879, respectively).

⁴¹ Cf. e.g. Editorial "The Execution of the Decrees," *Tablet*, LVI (October 23, 1880). In November 1880 a special feature was introduced, in which a detailed story was given of the expulsion in the provinces. See, "The Execution of the Decrees in the French Provinces," (November 6, 1880); and "The Persecution in France," (November 13, 20 and 27, 1880) after which silence fell.

⁴² Cf. *i.a.* Editorials "The Ferry Education Bill"; "French Radicalism and the Catholic Church." "The French Decrees of the 30th of March." *Tablet*, LV (February 28, March 20, April 3, 1880, respectively).

people.⁴³ All these were variation on the main theme: a defence of all manifestations of Catholicism, theological and secular, stemming from the unquestionable spirit of Ultramontanism, with which all the *Tablet's* writings were inspired.

During the period under consideration, the *Tablet* never had a harsh word for the Catholics of France, lay or clergy. It appears that the *Tablet* failed to recognize the French Catholics' share of the guilt. The writings of this periodical were constantly pitched in the same key, until its monotonous tone acquired the quality of a cliché. Allowing the *Tablet* the right to a partisan attitude on the political reality of France, objectively speaking, it was purely defensive. Its writings lacked originality and breath and its editorials seemed to follow, never to lead. The stereotyped attitude in these particular writings never represented a thesis, but invariably an antithesis: they expressed a reaction to the events, and never contributed to the action itself.

In this manner, salvaging from other publications, the *Tablet* was prone to borrow the smallest utterance from divers sources, if they conformed to its own opinion. It gave prominence in its editorials to any hopeful sign from others not considered pro-clerical.⁴⁴ Jules Simon was treated sympathetically when he attacked Article Seven.⁴⁵ At the same time seeing *The Times* and other English publications side more with the French government, the *Tablet* deplored these occurrences time and time again.⁴⁶

In the government's drive to suppress the religious orders, the Jesuits primarily, gained a great champion in the *Tablet*. It wrote that no civil or political offence was alleged against the Jesuits and other orders: their only crimes were their religion, their devotion, and the fact that they were “. . . obnoxious to French Radicalism simply because they were... ‘*Les serviteurs d'un nommé Dieu.*’”⁴⁷

The resolute defence of the Jesuits was constant and extensive in the

⁴³ Cf. *i.a.* Editorials, “A Forthcoming French Congress”; “The French Councils. General and Liberty of Education,” *Tablet*, LIV (August 23 and September 6, 1879, respectively); and “The Ferry Education Bill,” *ibid.*, LV (February 28, 1880).

⁴⁴ Editorial “An English Free-thinker Upon the French Educational Crisis.” *Tablet*, LIII (May 10, 1879) citing an article by John Morley in a recent issue of *Fortnightly Review*.

⁴⁵ *Tablet*, LIII (June 7, 1879), p. 706.

⁴⁶ Editorials “The Latest Substitute for Christianity,” *Tablet*, LIV (September 6, 1879) and “English Public Opinion and Article Seven,” *ibid.*, LV (March 13, 1880).

For sympathy evoked in England, see Editorial “English Opinion on the French Education Question,” *ibid.*, LIII (May 24, 1879).

⁴⁷ Editorial “The French Decrees of 30th March,” *Tablet*, LV (April 3, 1880).

Tablet. One passage will suffice as an illustration: the editorial of March 20, 1880, stated: “French Radicalism ... demands the proscription of the Church in France, the destruction of Christianity, the effacement of the idea of God; and following the precedent of the last century, it begins with those who bear the sacred name of Him who is the supreme object of its hatred.”

The *Tablet* was interested in reaction elsewhere, and endeavoured to transmit information about it to its readers. It reported solemn protests made by the Catholics of Montreal against governmental measures in France. Over 7,000 inhabitants had demonstrated by making a procession to the Church of Gésu, where Senator Trudel had read the protest.⁴⁸

VII

While the attitude expressed by the Catholics in England is discernible, that of the non-Catholic press is more difficult to define with precision. But the emerging pattern is sufficiently rich as to indicate their reaction. The pervasive principle of these publications was esoterically Liberal.⁴⁹

It may be said that *The Times* reported on France regularly and with fair detail; while the *Saturday Review* commented prolifically, although its attention was more diffuse. The *Nineteenth Century* contains much valuable material, but requires a great amount of discretion and sifting in order to penetrate the truth. It had no distinct attitude to events at home or abroad.

With particular reference to this period in France, the *Nineteenth Century* was a tribune from which French defenders of the parties in the conflict over education sought to present to the English public the pleas and explanations of their respective groups.⁵⁰ Therefore, with the exception of hospitality offered to the penmanship of opposing French debaters, it may be said that the *Nineteenth Century* kept aloof from the conflict in France. If it had a private opinion, it was not made known within the covers of the publication during this period.

The most puzzling was the *Edinburgh Review*, because in all this time, it contained no reference to the situation in France. When contrasted with most other English publications of the day, which wrote at least occasionally on France, the absence of comment in this one becomes conspicuous. One

⁴⁸ *Tablet*, LVI (July 24, 1880), p. 97.

⁴⁹ Those consulted in this category – four periodicals and one newspaper – were: *Church Quarterly Review*; *Edinburgh Review*; *Nineteenth Century*; *Saturday Review*; and *The Times*. [Hereafter cited thus: *C.Q.R.*; *E.R.*; *N.C.*; and *S.R.*]

⁵⁰ See Abbé Martin, “The Education Question in France”; and the answer by one of Ferry’s staunch supporters Edmond About “The Clerical Education in France,” *N.C.*, VI (July and September 1879, respectively). There was a comment on both of these articles by the *S.R.*, XLVIII (July 5 and September 6, 1879), pp. 14f and 284f, respectively.

might only suggest that this silence implied lack of concern, or perhaps total endorsement of the French governmental measures.

The silence of the *Church Quarterly Review* must be noted as well. The wording of a brief passage in a book review facilitates speculation that its Anglican-inspired editorship disapproved of the anti-religious measures exhibited by the Third Republic. This was the main thought expressed on that occasion: “We do not care to examine whether the new measure is directed against Jesuits, Jansenists or Gallicans, Dominicans or Oratorians, Lutherans or Calvinists; the principle which has inspired it is the only point about which we are concerned, and we exclaim for the hundredth time, *vous voulez être libres et vous ne savez pas être justes*.”⁵¹

However, the prevalent attitude of the Anglicans behind this *Quarterly*, from historically inherent theological consideration *vis-à-vis* the Church of Rome, may have been a key factor in its lack of comment.⁵²

The remaining two heralds which were considered among the press in Britain, the *Saturday Review* and *The Times*, were journals of a different timbre. A weekly and a daily respectively, both wrote abundantly and almost constantly on French events. *The Times* had a permanent correspondent in Paris, and carried his despatches in every issue. Editorial comment appeared irregularly, presumably when the occasion warranted. In contrast, the distinction of the *Saturday Review* was in its short articles, where divers comments on many aspects of French life were aired.

In respect to the situation in France, both *The Times* and the *Saturday Review* shared very similar views. Both were enthusiastic toward the Republic, in which they saw the fulfillment of individual liberties. They did not favour Catholicism or the Catholics: “Englishmen at large have no love for Popery, and still less for Jesuitism.”⁵³ In a very narrow sense, their initial attitude was akin to that of the French anticlericals.

The Times and the *Saturday Review* wrote under the banner of liberalism, which served as the basic principle for their censure or their defence of the adversaries in France. In this spirit, they directed their barbs against the expulsion of the religious orders. It is important to notice that these papers objected or counselled, continuing to disapprove, but always

⁵¹ Review of G. Compayré, *Histoire critique des doctrines de d'Education en France depuis le seizième siècle*, in *C.Q.R.*, VIII (July 1879) p. 503.

⁵² It is interesting to note that the English Church Union on behalf of twelve bishops, 2,500 clergymen and 15,800 of the Anglican laity sent a letter to Cardinal Guibert and all the Catholics of France, expressing their “warmest sympathy” and “indignation with which they were inspired by the persecution to which the Religious Orders [were] ... subjected in France.” English text of this message and the reply by Cardinal Guibert are printed in the *Tablet*, LVI (November 20 and 27, 1880) pp. 654, and 681f. respectively.

⁵³ Editorial, *The Times*, July 1, 1880.

stopping short of categorical ostracism of the French Republicans. Nonetheless, the resignation and liberal patience of the *Saturday Review* and *The Times* was taxed to the limit, and from March 1880, when the Ferry Bill was in the Senate, their pulse quickened, their comments became more frequent and more agitated.⁵⁴

They asserted the right of the Catholics to freedom of religion and conscience. But they claimed that Catholic theology was inevitably being overtaken by the new, fresh spirit with which these papers themselves were imbued, and that action was therefore unnecessary. According to *The Times*, the “unworthy fear” of the priest and the Jesuit in education was a sign “either of weakness or intolerance” among the Republicans. Even the Jesuit was to be little feared, and the use of force against them was “... the most effective way of strengthening their waning influence.”⁵⁵

Both papers, *The Times*, in particular, censured the excesses in treatment of the religious orders, and candidly expressed their disapproval of the ruthless demonstration of intolerance by the Third Republic.

Whatever may be said, this campaign against the clergy is a bad affair, and reflects no credit on the reputation of the Government that has entered upon it, the country which is looking at it, the particular orders that have provoked it, or the leader of the left, who gave the signal for it.⁵⁶

Most of all, these papers condemned the violence with which the Decrees were enforced, although they appeared to accept the prescribed measures. Their liberalistic conscience repeatedly deplored the brutality being committed in France, finding the government to have usurped privileges and suppressed liberty.⁵⁷ They expressed the fear that such deportment would popularize the Jesuits, the religious orders and Catholicism in general, by making martyrs of them.⁵⁸

In a notable anticipation of Jules Simon’s attack on Article Seven, the Paris correspondent wrote in *The Times* of June 10, 1879, that no amount of eloquence on the part of its advocates was “. . . able to make the Bill anything but inopportune, illiberal and inapplicable...” and proceeded to enumerate several very similar reasons to Simon’s own.

⁵⁴ *S.R.* saw from the beginning that the object of the Ferry measure was “... probably not to improve Catholic education, but to destroy it.” XLVII (March 22, 1879) p. 354.

⁵⁵ This and more in an Editorial, *The Times*, March 11, 1880.

⁵⁶ Editorial, *The Times*, June 29, 1880.

⁵⁷ Describing the expulsion of the Jesuits, the Paris correspondent of *The Times* lamented: “Such are the victories achieved by the Republic today – victories over unarmed, and, in many cases, aged men.” July 1, 1880, p. 7.

⁵⁸ Editorial, *The Times*, July 1, 1880.

Like Jules Simon, these papers did not object strenuously to the Ferry Laws, but they clearly saw the *arrière-pensée* of Article Seven. *The Times* considered the article “...beyond the sphere of the higher grades of instruction . . .” and that it could “.. only be regarded as an injudicious and tyrannical expression of anti-clerical anomisity.”⁵⁹ Recognizing it as a measure having little bearing on reform in education, they were disappointed with its anti-religious context, and saw thereby the handicap placed upon the undeniably right of the Catholics to religious liberty. In the opinion of these papers, the controversy over the proscribed religious associations assumed a specific anti-religious form.

Despite a professed lack of love for Catholicism in France and despite an overt sympathy for the Republic, a segment of the British press under unspecified editorship, particularly the *Saturday Review* and *The Times*, did denounce the violence of the anticlericals during the contest in 1880. When the final act of expulsion took place, *The Times* showed, on November 8, 1880, the extent of its irritation in this passage:

No palliation, or even explanation, can be offered for the campaign to which M. Jules Ferry has compelled his friends, except the imagined necessity of demonstrating the vigour and supremacy of ‘Liberal’ convictions. The religious have been expelled, not so much because their hostility to the Republic was dreaded, as that the advanced section of French Liberals might be taught its ascendancy.

Whatever sympathies and approbation, criticism or condemnation, the segment of British press just examined may have had toward the legislation of 1879-1880 in France, one generalization may be made. Aside from the particular reaction of the individual papers to the course of events, the press did not remain blind. It saw clearly the fundamental issue which, from the spring of 1880 onward, no one tried to conceal. The question of education was only a minor issue in a much larger conflict. The words in an editorial of *The Times* succinctly expressed the situation in France, and the picture it conveyed to the eyes of the press in Britain: “There is no longer much hypocrisy about the nature of the contest. It is admitted to be not the fight for a new system of education, but an episode in the war against clericalism.”⁶⁰

VIII

The educational question in the first decade of the Third French Republic was an integral part of an organic whole, inseparable from the

⁵⁹ Editorial, *The Times*, March 6, 1880.

⁶⁰ March 31, 1880.

multitude of elements which conditioned it. During the last two years of that decade, a massive legislative program was introduced, in and out of education, which left no doubt as to its inspiration, nature and purpose. Among the proposed laws were: the drafts concerning the subject of public instruction; the abolishment of military chaplaincies; bills on divorce, cemeteries and funeral rites; the liability of the clergy for military service; suppression of the budget for Public Worship; the abrogation of the Concordat, the fight over which went on into the twentieth century; and many others.

Of course the dominant issue during 1879-1880 was the Ferry bill on Freedom of Higher Education, with all the odious ramifications of Article Seven. Therefore, it was unavoidable for this brief study to deal, almost exclusively, with that Bill and its more immediate consequences.